

MEDIAEVAL KERALA

P. K. S. RAJA

BY

P. K. S. RAJA, M. A., M. LITT.,

Department of History & Politics,

ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY, ANNAMALAINAGAR

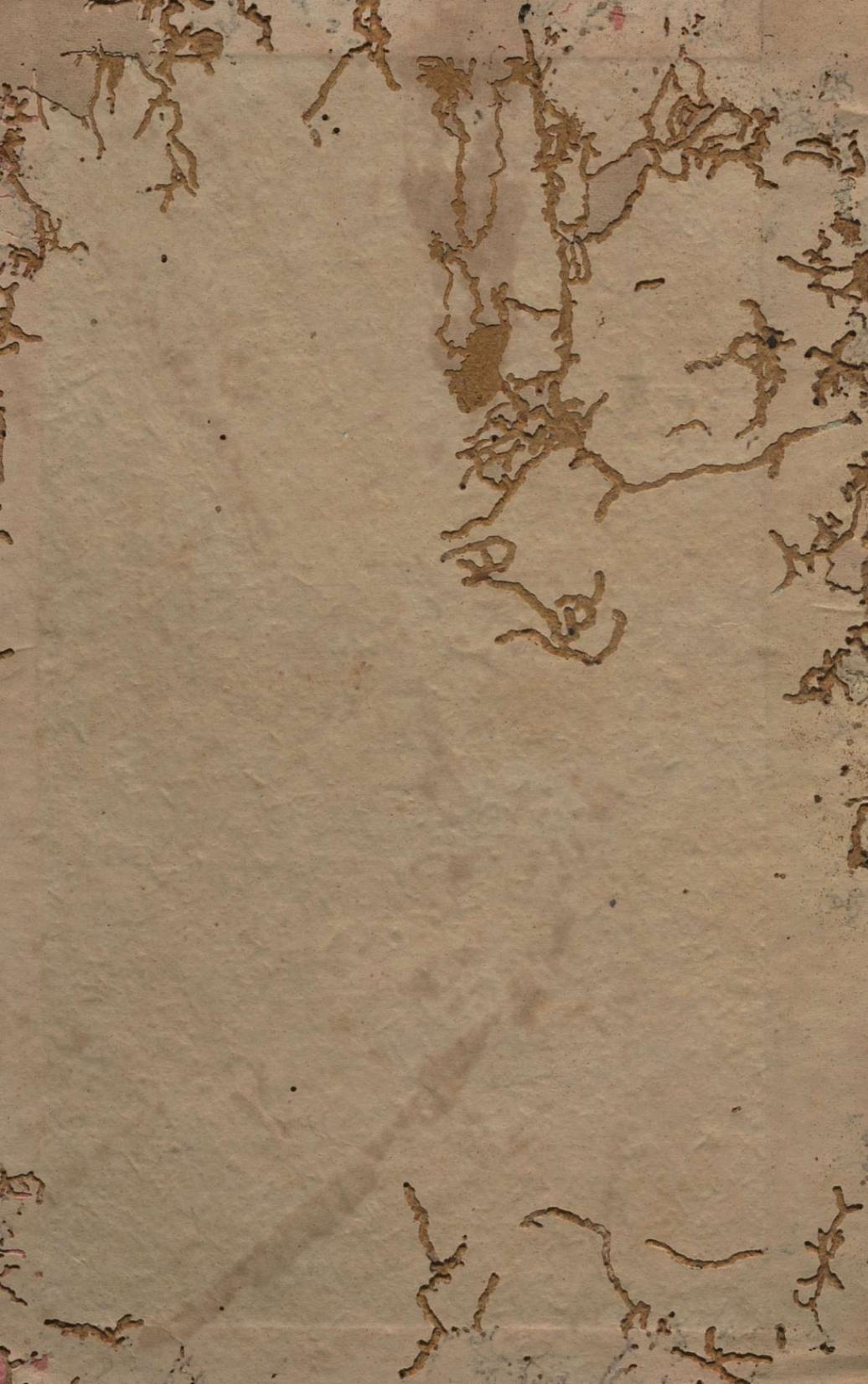
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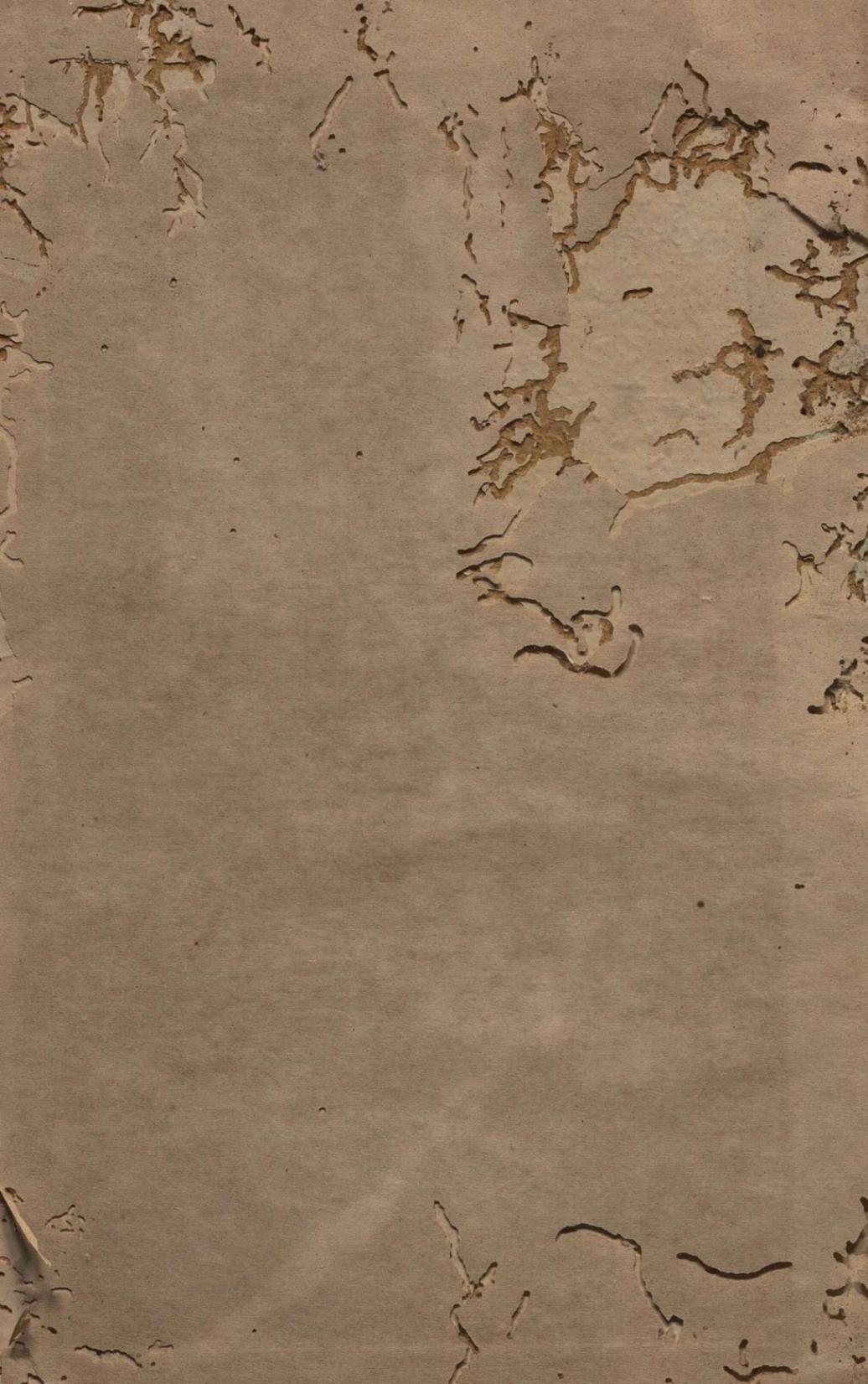
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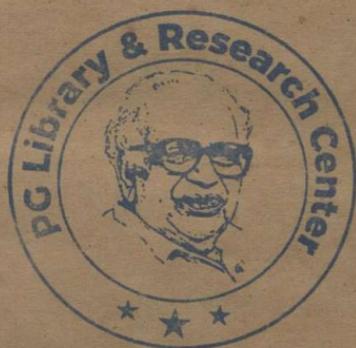
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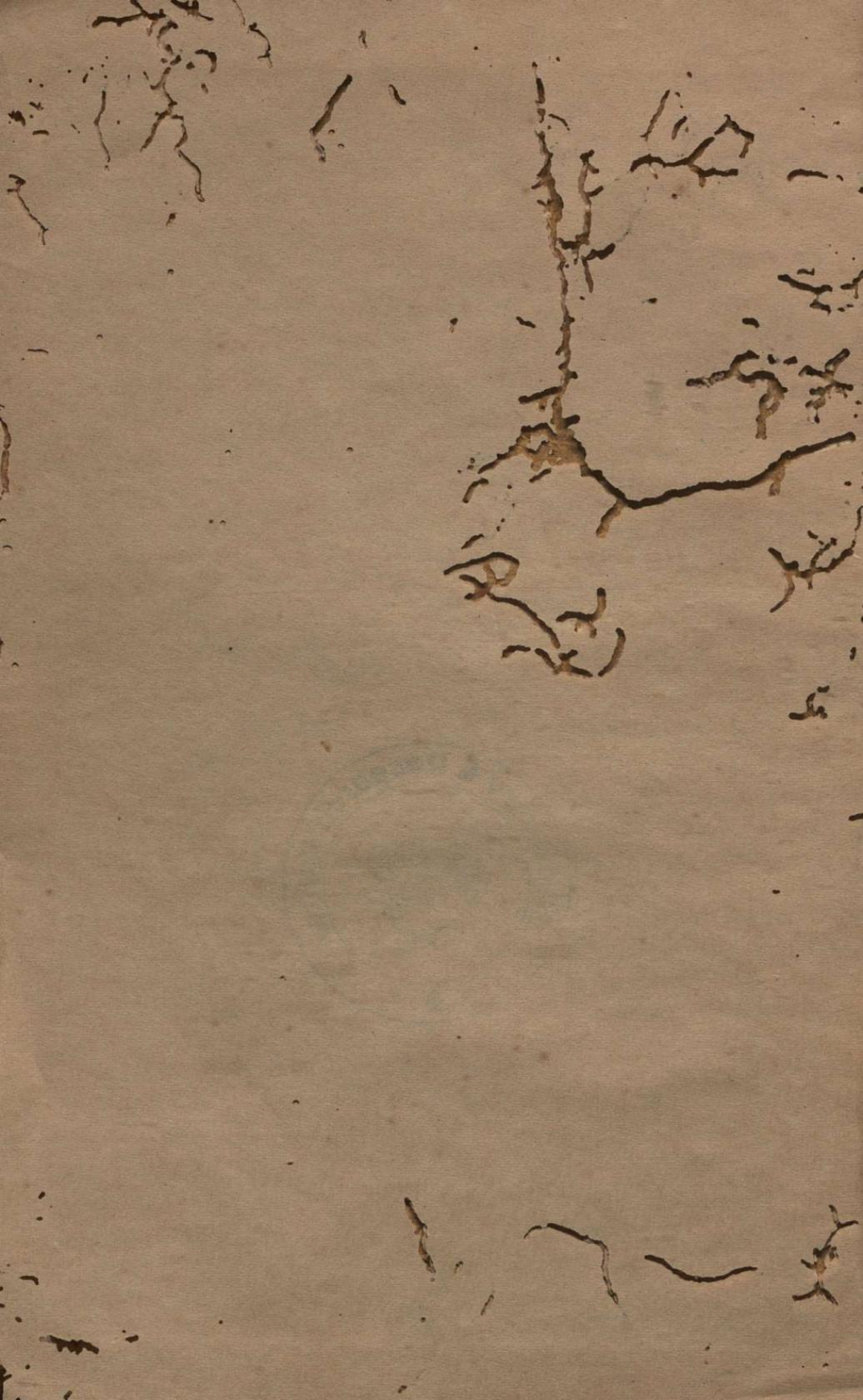
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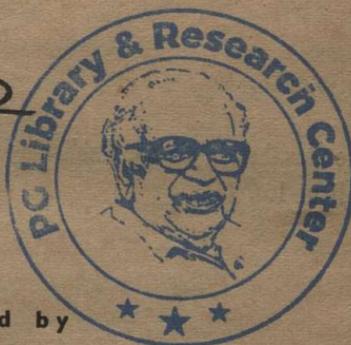
P. K. S. RAJA, M. A., M. LITT.,

Department of History & Politics,

ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY, ANNAMALAINAGAR

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Author:

P. K. S. RAJA, M. A., M. LITT.,
Department of History & Politics,
ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY.

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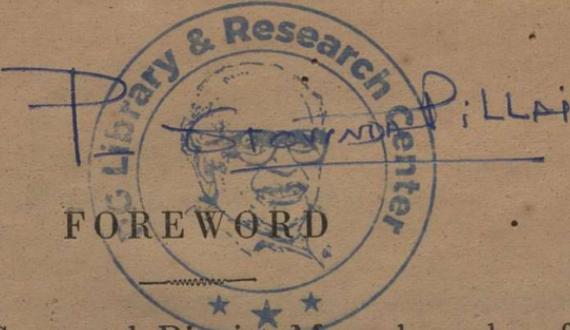
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FOREWORD

DESPITE State and District Manuals and a few monographs like Dr. P. C. Alexander's *Buddhism in Kerala* (Annamalai University Historical Series, No. 8), the history of Kerala is almost a *terra incognita* dismissed with a few words in treatises on general Indian history. Kerala or Cheramandalam was an integr al part of Tamilakam not only in the Sangam age and before but also in the days of Tirumular, who refers in his *Tirumandiram* to the five Tamil mandalams. The distinctive features of the civilisation of Kerala began to take shape in the ninth century, which witnessed the advent of Sankaracharya, the decline of Buddhism, the passing away of the regime of the Perumals, and the foundation of the Kollam Era (A. D. 825). In his M. Litt. thesis Mr. Raja discusses the political and institutional history of Kerala from the ninth to the eighteenth century. The rise and fall of the Zamorins of Calicut marked the beginning and end of the Middle Ages in Kerala. The author shows how the Nambutiris and the Nayars, like the Church and the Baronage in Mediaeval Europe, checked royal autocracy and how Martanda Varma of Travancore (1729-57) administered the *coup de grace* to the long-standing feudalism of Kerala. I commend the thesis to all students of South Indian history and of Indian feudalism.

ANNAMALAINAGAR, }
July 11, 1953 }

R. SATHIANATHAIER,
Professor of History & Politics.

PREFATORY NOTE

THOUGH their peculiar customs and manners clearly distinguished the people of Kerala from their neighbours, they were similar to their brethren in the other parts of India in their gross neglect of historical study. Since the early mediaeval period was dominated by religion, the poets and writers of those days generally wrote on other-worldly topics, though occasionally they indulged in *prasastis* or panegyrics. A treatise on purely secular, to say nothing of political or historical theme was almost unknown and always unpopular among the higher sections of the society. Thus the ballads of North Malabar which are of much historical value were popular and prevalent only among the common people. Even the author of the *Patapattu* or the War Song, who lived presumably in the latter part of the 17th century, introduces his book with an apology for writing on a subject which is wholly secular. Therefore it is no wonder that those who try to unveil the past of our country have to surmount a number of difficulties. Genuine indigenous materials are indeed so scarce that even to this day no historian has attempted to write a connected and systematic history of the whole of Kerala. The title in four volumes of Mr. K. P. Padmanabha Menon's "*History of Kerala*" is highly misleading. Written in the form of notes on Vissecher's "*Letters from Malabar*", the accounts given in the book are disjointed and overlapping as it naturally would be. At best it can be called an "unclassified Encyclopaedia of Kerala History."

A full history of the whole of Kerala is thus a desideratum today. This thesis attempts to supply the needs of Kerala History in the Middle Ages with special reference to administration and social life. Since Kerala historians are just crossing over to the

historical age from the legendary age, political history deserves much more attention than is generally given to it in the history of other countries. It is only with the background of a reliable and authentic political history that social and cultural history could be correctly written and properly understood. A book on Mediaeval England could overlook political history, because it would be superfluous. But we are not so much advanced in the field of historical investigation as to overlook political history. Hence the present thesis deals with political history and administration of Mediaeval Kerala, without however ignoring the social life of the people.

In the preparation of this thesis, I had the good fortune of being guided by two distinguished scholars of Indian History. I am indebted to the late Dewan Bahadur C. S. Srinivasachariar for guiding me through the greater part of my work and to Prof. R. Sathianathier whose valuable help was responsible for the completion of this thesis.

Annamalainagar, }
June 1953. }

AUTHOR.

INTRODUCTION

THE History of Kerala, like the history of any country, can be divided into three periods, ancient, mediaeval and modern. But these periods do not correspond to the traditional division of European History. Mediaeval period in European History starts with the dissolution of the Western Empire in the 5th century A. D. and ends with the beginning of the 16th century. This mediaeval period was not merely a period of transition from ancient to modern Europe. Though Gibben has represented this period as "a long night of ignorance and force" it had its own special features which contributed to the civilisation of Europe. The essential features of Mediaeval Europe were the feudal organisation and the supremacy of the Church. In the 12th and 13th centuries feudalism was the basis of all aspects of administration—of local government of justice, of legislation, of the army and of executive power. Feudalism, it is true, had begun to decline in many countries in Europe by the beginning of the 14th century; but the spirit and principle of feudalism pervaded the whole of mediaeval history. The supremacy of the Church in religious matters was an established fact during this period. It is true that the attempt of the Popes, with their pretensions to infallibility, to impose a theocratic form of government on the people of Europe ended in a colossal failure as a result of the Protestant Reformation. Nevertheless, religion played an active part in the politics of the middle ages and the whole period was marked by the attempt by the church at imposing a theocracy on the people.

The history of Mediaeval Kerala comprises, like that of mediaeval Europe, a period of thousand years. But the period begins only after 300 years of its

beginning in Europe and ends after a corresponding 300 years — from the 9th to the 19th century. Throughout this period the two institutions of feudalism and theocracy played as much an important part in the politics of Kerala as in that of mediaeval Europe. The Nambutiris who resembled the priestly class succeeded where their spiritual brothers had failed in Western Europe. They were able to impose a theocratic form of government on the land and its people. They were supported by the Nayar nobles in checking royal power so that the weakness of central authority became a common feature of the mediaeval period.

In Europe the period begins with the dissolution of an Empire. The Roman Empire was able to unite the greater part of Europe under its rule and under one civilisation. In almost the same way the Perumals had unified almost the whole of Kerala under their rule, though their authority in the extreme south is called in question. The end of the rule of the last Perumal in 825 A.D. let loose centrifugal tendencies and political unity was completely broken up. The nobles and rulers of petty principalities who had owned allegiance to the Perumals assumed independence and increasing internecine warfare was the inevitable result. Thus the 9th century in Kerala like the 5th century in Europe marks the beginning of a new order and a new era.

The 9th century also witnessed the end of the intimate connection of Kerala with the Tamils and the beginning of a separate language. The Nayars with their matrilineal system superseded the patrilineal Tamils of the former period. Though the Nambutiris and other foreigners who settled down in Kerala influenced its culture, they left the social organisation — the matrilineal system — untouched. To some extent they themselves were influenced by that system; the “*Ammavan*” (uncle) Nambutiris and Nancinad Vellalas as well as the Rajas of Pantalarn and Punhar may be cited as examples.

Another sign of the new order was the rapid decline of Buddhism and the growing influence of the Brahmans, the Christians and the Muslims. Till almost the 9th century Buddhism had been widespread and prominent in the whole of Kerala. Introduced and encouraged by the missionaries of Asoka, it succeeded in converting a large number of people including one of the Perumals. But the preachings of Sankara and the changed character of the religion as well as its followers led to its rapid decline in Malabar as elsewhere in India. This facilitated the rise of Christians and Muslims, especially the latter who were carrying on profitable trade with the West Coast.

In short the end of the Chera monarchy and the assumption of independence by its ministers and feudatories, the ascendancy of the Nambutiries and their attempt at imposing a theocracy on the land and its people; the growing influence of Brahmanism at the expense of Buddhism; the prominence of the matrilineal Nayars as opposed to the patrilineal Tamils of the former period and the gradual establishment of cultural homogeneity in the face of political disunion—, all these characteristic features of the 9th century mark the end of an old order and the beginning of a new one, in fact the transition from the Dark to the Middle Ages in Kerala.

Just as the beginning, the end of the Middle Ages also does not correspond with that in Europe. But some scholars regard the beginning of the 16th century as the end of the Middle Ages in Kerala. True, the arrival of the foreigners in this country changed the whole face of the political history, but it did not mark the beginning of modern period. Characteristic changes in the life of a people should constitute the basis of division. Vasco da Gama and his followers did not bring about any change in the life of the people. There was hardly anything 'modern' in the chivalrous Nayar soldiers who tried to stem the tide of Portuguese

artillery with their crude swords; in the innumerable petty rulers who eternally quarrelled with each other; or in the unchangeable Nambutiris, who, while professing to be exclusively religious-minded, exercised temporal authority through the temple Sanketams. Feudalism continued to be the basis of civil and military organisation till the power of the Nayar nobility was broken by Martanda Varma in Travancore, and by Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan in Malabar and Cochin. The arrival of the foreigners in Indian waters was, no doubt, of far-reaching importance in the political history of Kerala; but, as it brought no visible change in the life of the people, that alone cannot be regarded as the basis of the beginning of a new era. Feudalism and theocracy, the two outstanding and inseparable features of the Middle Ages, continued to exercise great influence in Kerala politics till the British occupation in 1792. Therefore the Middle Ages in Malabar lasted roughly from 825-1800.

The history of mediaeval Kerala could be divided into two parts—the first (cir. 825-1500) ending with the arrival of the Portuguese and the second (1500-1800) with the close of the Middle Ages. The first part witnessed the assumption of independence by the feudatories of Cheraman Perumal, the ascendancy of the Zamorins and the exploits of Ravi Varma Kulasekhara of Travancore. His praiseworthy achievements made Ravi Varma's rule the brightest period in the history of mediaeval Travancore; but the rule had no bearing on Kerala history in general. Ravi Varma was concerned more with the Pandyas than with the Zamorins or the Kolattiris. The rapid rise of the Zamorins to power with the help of Arab traders and Moplah soldiers and the position the Zamorin was able to occupy as the protector or the *Rakshapurusha* of *Mamankam* made him the central figure of Kerala history during this period. A number of nobles and feudatories who were enjoying independence after the departure of Cheraman Perumal were forced to recog-

nise his suzerainty and pay tribute to him. His almost unchecked advance southwards towards Cochin and Travancore in the 15th century would have led to the political unification of Kerala had not his progress been suddenly and unexpectedly checked by the arrival of the Portuguese.

The period also witnessed the ascendancy of the Nambutiris who influenced politics through religion. According to the *Keralotpatti* they were entrusted with the rule of Kerala after its reclamation from the sea by Parasurama. It was the Nambutiris who brought the Perumals to rule over them from the neighbouring kingdom (according to the *Keralotpatti*). Whether this tradition has any historical value or not, they seemed to have lost some of their influence in politics during the perumal regime. But in the 9th century they regained their importance chiefly as a result of the enormous prestige they gained consequent on the spiritual conquest of India by Sankaracharya. They claimed that the rigid and unique customs that they observed in their daily life were laid down by Sankara. They exercised great influence in politics throughout the Middle Ages.

The period is important in another respect as well. It ended the intimate contact of Kerala with the Tamilnad and the country came to be sharply distinguished from its neighbours by certain peculiar characteristics. The *Kanom* system of land tenure, the non-nucleated character of the villages and the *Marumakkathayam* system of inheritance were some of the distinguishing features of Mediaeval Kerala. The building up of this cultural unity was a slow process extending over a number of years. But it was completed by the end of the period.

The second part begins with one of the most important events in Kerala history—the arrival of the Portuguese in Calicut. They checked the expansionist policy of the Zamorin and even threatened to invade

his own dominions with the help of the Raja of Cochin. The Portuguese, who at first fought for their very existence in this country—for the right to trade—gained in power and prestige during the governorship of Albuquerque and eventually claimed the sovereignty of the sea and a sort of general control over a number of Malabar princes and chiefs. These claims were challenged by the Zamorin which resulted in a prolonged conflict between the two powers. At the end of this conflict the Portuguese had to admit defeat and abandon their claims. While the Zamorin disputed the Portuguese supremacy at sea, the Dutch, the newcomers from Europe, challenged their monopoly of trade with the East. In the 17th century Malabar thus became the battle ground for the two European nations resulting in the downfall of the Portuguese.

The accession of Martanda Varma to power in Travancore in 1729 shifts the centre of interest of Kerala politics from the north to the south. His reign witnessed the beginning of the end of Middle Ages. The annihilation of the powerful Nayar nobility, the establishment of a strong central government and the annexation of the neighbouring kingdoms and principalities were the most remarkable achievements of this resourceful prince. His rapid advance northwards like that of the Zamorin's southwards three hundred years ago, would have resulted in the political unification of Kerala had it not been for another 'foreign' invasion—this time from Mysore. This frustrated Martanda Varma's ambition of uniting the whole Kerala under one rule. Thus foreigners interfered in both cases and prevented the unification of Kerala.

The Mysorean invasion brought about the downfall of the Zamorins and the Kolattiris and ended the civil and military organisation of the Nayars in Malabar as well. The British occupation gave the final blow to the Nayar Nobility and to the Middle ages.

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ABBREVIATIONS IN THE TEXT

<i>C. S. M.</i>	<i>Cochin State Manual.</i>
<i>T. S. M.</i>	<i>Travancore State Manual.</i>
<i>T. A. S.</i>	<i>Travancore Archaeological Series.</i>
<i>E. I.</i>	<i>Epigraphia Indica.</i>
<i>I. A.</i>	<i>Indian Antiquary.</i>
<i>M. & P.</i>	<i>Malabar and the Portuguese.</i>
<i>M. & D.</i>	<i>Malabar and the Dutch.</i>

CHAPTER I

Cheraman Perumal and the Kollam Era

THE life and date of Cheraman Perumal are the most difficult problems of South Indian History. References to him are found in both Tamil and Malayalam works. Since no dated records of Perumal have been discovered so far, we have to depend entirely upon the traditions available in those works.

Of the Tamil sources the most important is Sekkilar's *Periyapuranam* written in the 12th century A D. Like his hero Cheraman Perumal, Sekkilar himself was a great Saiva devotee and gives a string of names of Saiva devotees. In two cantos entitled "*Cheraman Perumal Nayannr*" and "*Vellanacharukkam*" he fully describes the life of the saintly Chera as well as his miraculous ascent to Kailas on horseback.

Of the Malayalam sources the most important is *Keralotpatti*. It is the only work that has something to say about the events of Perumal's reign from beginning to end. It is certainly written much later to *Periyapuranam*. Its authorship is given to Tunjan, the father of Malayalam Literature. But it is clear that the work could not be older than the 16th century. There is much that is legendary and inconsistent in the account given in *Keralotpatti*; but it is built round a solid substratum of truth.

According to *Keralotpatti* Cheraman Perumal was the last in succession to a series of Perumals who ruled over the greater part of Kerala from A. D. 216¹ to 428 when the partition of his empire took place. It says that Parasurama reclaimed from the sea the land between Gokarnam and Kanya Kumari (Cape Comorin)

1. This corresponds to the chronogram :
"*Bhu-man-bhu-po-yam-pra-pya*".

and organised a Brahman theocratic Government there. The Brahmans divided the country into four and appointed a protector of Rakshapurusha to each of this division or *Kalakam* to supervise its administration. But since the distance between the *Kalakams* made combined action impossible the system did not last long. A meeting of the people was held therefore at Tirunavayi where it was unanimously resolved to invite a ruler from outside for a period of 12 years. Accordingly the Brahmans brought as many as 21 such rulers or Perumals from the neighbouring kingdoms and the last of them was Cheraman Perumal. His rule was so prosperous that they made him their king for life. Another version of the *Keralotpatti*² has it that when Kulasekhara, one of the Perumals, died, the Nambutiris chose to govern the country themselves. But this proved to be unsatisfactory and so they waited upon Krishna Raya of Anagundi to request him to send them a Perumal once in 12 years. Accordingly the Raya first sent Adi Raja, then Pandi Raja and after that he sent Cheraman Perumal. But elsewhere the *Keralotpatti* simply says that he was brought from Cholamandalam.

The traditionary reclamation of the land by Parasurama and the Nambutiri sovereignty are without historical foundation and nobody seriously believes in them. The Nambutiris who came from the north settled in Kerala in independent village republics. Later they transformed these village republics into temple republics to back their authority with a certain amount of sanctity and for their greater safety from the warlike Nayars who were their neighbours. The village assembly functioned as the trustee and managing body, doing everything in the name of the Deity. But in course of time quarrel arose among the different villagers, and Peruvanam, one of the biggest and most powerful of the existing villages, ("which controlled an

area of three to four hundred square miles with no less than 108 temples and temple-states within it") decided to celebrate the *Mahamagham* festival, which had so far been conducted under the auspices of Tirunavayi. Thereupon the Tirunavayi assembly sought the protection of the Chera Emperor of Cranganore³. The Emperor agreed to become its *Rakshapurusha* or Protector and he was installed as Perumal. This installation ceremony or *Perumal Avarodham*, as it was called, later became a regular and indispensable rite. But the introduction of monarchical system did not in the beginning curtail the powers of the Nambutiris. Though the *Keralotpatti* says that they gave away Kerala to the Perumal as a poured-out gift with water and flowers they were free to choose whom they liked as their king, as the *Keralotpatti* says, whether from the Chera, the Chola or the Pandyan country.

The *Keralotpatti* story throws some light on the parentage and early life of the Perumal, but it gives two versions. Since Krishna Raya of Vijayanagar, the only Krishna Raya known to history, reigned in the 16th century he could not have sent Cheraman Perumal in the 8th century or in the 5th century according to *Keralotpatti*. But according to another version of the book the Brahmans brought Cheraman from Cholamandalam and crowned him king and this led to the invasion of Kerala by the Pandyan king, since the latter feared that if Cheraman continued to rule Kerala the whole land would pass to the Chola country. The *Periya Puranam* says that Cheraman was directly descended from Utiyar Cheral and Imayavaramban Cheralatan⁴ and that he was born at Kotumkolor. This is not, as it would appear to be, inconsistent with the *Keralotpatti* story because it is said in the Tamil work that Cheraman had come to rule according to the matrilineal system of inheritance.

3. Known also as Tiruvanchikulam. Vanji, Kodungallur, Kotumkolor and Mouziris.

4. Chapter entitled *Cheraman Perumal Nayanar*—95, 145, 156.

Therefore he must be related to Utiyar Cheral through his mother, not through his father. His mother was a Chera princess and therefore he was regarded as descended from the Cheras, while his father was a Chola. According to tradition Cheraman's sister married the Perumpatappu Numbutiri who passed on his family name and property to his children. Thus the ruling house of Cochin, which is called Perumpatappu Swarupam to this day, came into existence. Cheraman himself married a lady of the house of Nediyrippu, and their son called Manavikraman, became the first Zamorin after the death of his father.

According to Sekkilar, Gengorporaiyan, the predecessor of Cheraman Perumal abdicated his throne to lead an ascetic life and left the kingdom⁵. This upset the ministers because he had not nominated his successor as it was the practice in ancient India for outgoing monarchs. This serious omission might be due to a foreign invasion, for we are told that Rajasimha Pandya who reigned from 740-765 invaded Vanji towards the end of his reign⁶. The ministers therefore requested Cheraman to fill the vacant throne and he accepted it after getting sanction from his Deity. That the ministers were upset and that Cheraman got the sanction of his Deity before he accepted the throne show clearly that the former were doing something unusual in asking Cheraman to succeed to the throne and that the latter was not the natural heir.

On his accession, the Perumal, according to *Keralotpatti*, conducted an elaborate survey of his kingdom and erected the temple and reconstructed the fortress of Tiruvanchikulam. Barboza⁷ tells us that it was the Perumal who introduced the matrilineal system

5. Chapter on Cheraman Perumal—10, 15.

6. Prof. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri: *The Pandyan Kingdom*.

7. Laurte Barbosa: *Description of the Coasts of Africa and Malabar in the Beginning of the 16th Century*.

of inheritance among the Nayars, so that they could devote themselves, entirely to military training without the responsibility of bringing up and maintaining their children. But it is doubtful whether such a sweeping change affecting an entire community would have been introduced by a ruler like Cheraman Perumal who respected the tradition and law of the land. Vissecher says in his *Letters from Malabar* (Letter 8) that the Perumal was responsible for the establishment of the Great Schism in Kerala in order to create a martial spirit among the warrior classes. He feared that if the people lived in perpetual peace they would "sink into effeminacy and become a prey to the surrounding nations." It is highly improbable that the Perumal would have resorted to such unwholesome and Machiavellian tactics. Further even in the 14th century—300 years after the departure of Perumal—the Schism had not culminated in blood shed.

Varaguna Pandya was the strongest rival of the Perumal. After defeating the Pallavas at about 780 A. D. he invaded Kerala, advanced as far as Taravar and erected a fortress there. The Perumal sent Manavikraman, according to *Keralotpatti*, against this fortress and the latter not only destroyed the fortress but compelled the whole garrison to leave the country. Nothing more is known about the relation between the Perumal and the Pandyan ruler. Obviously friendship was established between the two, for we are told that when Cheraman went to Madura in the course of his pilgrimage he was cordially received by his former rival.

An impenetrable mystery seems to surround the religion of the Perumal. "The Christians claim him as one of their early converts, the Muhammadans as their very first convert on Indian soil. At the same time the Hindus look upon him as one of their saints".⁸

8. K. V. Krishna Ayyar: *Cheraman Perumal—a new study*, 1, 9
in Bharatha Kaumadi.

A few scholars think that towards the close of his reign he embraced Jainism.⁹ There is no doubt that at first he was an ardent devotee of Siva. According to Sekkilar even in his early childhood the Perumal spent most of his time in worshipping Lord Siva in the form of Nataraja. Two stories given in Periya Puranam—his salutation of a washerman who reminded him of Siva and his attempt at sacrificing himself when he failed to hear during his prayer the usual tinkling of anklets of the dancing Siva—show the excessive piety and otherworldliness of the Perumal in his early life. But Malayalam works like *Keralotpatti* and Muhammadan accounts like *Tofut-ul-Mujahideen* would mention that he turned Muslim in his later days, went to Mecca on a pilgrimage and died there as a Muhammadan saint. The *Tofut* says “amongst the Muhammadans of Malabar the conversion to Islamism of the king is believed to have taken place in the time of the Prophet, it having been occasioned by that monarch’s perceiving in a vision during night the partition of the moon, which miraculous circumstance induced him to set out upon a journey to visit the Prophet”.¹⁰ And he met the prophet himself in Mecca according to the Calicut Muhammadans. Obviously it was not possible for the Perumal to meet the prophet in the 9th century—300 years *after* the death of the prophet. The *Keralotpatti* says that the sojourn at Mecca took place in 355 A.D. This would be about 200 years *before* the birth of the Prophet and of Islam. “The meeting, therefore, of the apostate king and the apostle of Islam must necessarily be a figment of the imagination—a pious invention of the Muhammadans.” Ibn Batuta (1342) gives a detailed account of the Muslims in Malabar and records stories of conversion alleged to have been brought about by miracles. But nowhere does he

9. Mr. Kelu Nair in his memorandum on the Syrian and Jewish copper plates says that “the Perumal became a convert to Jainism and made a pilgrimage to Magadha which was later corrupted into Mecca.

10. Rowland’s Translation—pp. 74, 75.

allude to the miracle of the vision of the split moon and the conversion of an Emperor of Malabar in the ninth century. Exactly a hundred years later, Abdur Razaak visited Calicut with the express purpose of converting the Zamorin to Islam. But he betrays no knowledge of the tradition which would have helped him much to fulfill his object. But half a century later the Portuguese heard the story on their arrival at Calicut. Nevertheless there is reason to believe that the story was not taken seriously, for writing in the 15th Century, Zeinuddin, himself a pious Muslim, denounces the whole story though he gives an account of the miracle and Vissecher in the 18th century dismisses the whole tradition as filled with trifles. It was therefore much later that the story gained popularity.

The ninth century was a period when Buddhism was rapidly declining in Malabar. Therefore it is highly unlikely that the Perumal would have embraced it and made himself the champion of a lost cause.

The version that the Perumal embraced christianity and that he went to St. Thomas Shrine at Mylapore is also untenable. The only two writers, De Couto and Faria-Y-Souza, who uphold this tradition do not agree on dates. De Couto himself was not certain whether the conversion took place in the fourth or in the 6th century and Faria-Y-Souza cuts the ground from under his feet by his surprising statement that the Perumal was one of the three kings who visited the Baby Christ at Bethlehem.

His intense devotion to Siva in his youth is itself proof positive against the possibility of conversion to any other religion.¹¹ It is true that he went on a pilgrimage to some place toward the close of his reign.

11. The following titles of the Perumal found in Kailasanatha Temple show his great devotion to Siva: *Rishabha lochana, Sri Sankarabhakta, Sri Agama Priya etc.*

The fact that he worshipped Siva in his dancing aspect confirms the account given in the *Periya Puranam* that he went neither to Mecca nor to Mylapore but to Chidambaram.¹²

All available Malayalam sources agree that there was a *bhuvibhaga* or partition of the Empire by the last Perumal before his abdication. The *Keralotpatti* gives a detailed account of this event. It says that the whole territory was divided into three grand divisions under three independent sovereigns. These were subdivided into minor principalities under chiefs who were responsible to their immediate superiors. Udaya Varma Kolattiri was made the sovereign of the north; the Venad Atikal was to be the sovereign of the southern portion consisting of Venad and Otanad. To the Suryakshatriya was given 52 *katams* of land and under him were placed 18 barons and 42 ministers. He was also given the title of Perumpatappu. The text then gives an account of the distribution among minor chiefs. Donations and territories were made over to Porlatiri of Polanad and Valluvakonatiri was given a nad (territory) and the privilege to conduct the Mahamagham festival. The one *desam* that was left with him, so small that a cock crowing could be heard all over it, was given to the Erati brothers (later, the Zamorins) who had helped him during foreign invasion. The *Kerala Mahatmyam*, a Sanskrit work, gives a different account of the origin of the four principal ruling houses of Kerala, but it does not deny that there was a partition. Further, the copper plates of Bhaskara Ravi Varma (700 A. D.), Vira Raghava Chakravarti (744) and Sthanu Ravi Gupta testify to the existence of some of the kingdoms even before the accession of Cheraman Perumal. Therefore what the Perumal did was not so much as partitioning the Empire as to release these feudatories from their allegiance to him. Since he was going on a long and arduous journey the Perumal

12. The *Periya Puranam* gives a detailed account of his journey to Chidambaram and his meeting with Sundaramurti Nayanar.

could not but make some arrangement for the Government of his kingdom. His son Manavikraman could not succeed him because he did not belong to the Perumal's caste. So the only way out of the difficulty was to recognise the independence of his feudatories. "The most correct representation of the country ruled by Perumals" says Dr. Gundhert "is that of a feudal state with a powerful hierarchy close to the person of the king and deeply rooted in each province through richly endowed colonies". In such a feudal state if the king had departed without providing for the Government the whole country would have plunged into chaos. Therefore "the partition of Kerala does not seem to be a convenient fiction invented by the chiefs of Kerala to establish their titles".¹³ The abdication of the Perumal however led to the political division of Kerala and the domination of feudal principles over nationalistic ideas.

The date of the partition and the journey of the Perumal could be fixed only approximately. While the *Keralotpatti* says that he ascended the throne in A. D. 355 it also makes him a contemporary of Sankaracharya. There is almost general agreement among historians that Sankara lived between A.D. 788 and 820. The Perumal is also said to have met Sundaramurti, a great Saiva devotee, at Tiruvalur and Sundaramurti seems to have lived in the early 9th century.¹⁴ Since Cheraman is mentioned as a cotemporary of both Sankara and Sundaramurti there is every reason to believe that he reigned in the early 9th century. This is corroborated by foreign writers like Sheik Zeinuddin and Barros. The former says that the Perumal must have left the kingdom about 200 years after the flight of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina, that is, about A. D. 816. According to Barros the Perumal was reigning at Tiruvanchikulam 672 years before the

13. K. V. Krishna Iyer—"Cheraman Perumal—a new study." in Bharatha Kaumadi.

14. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri: *The Pandyan Kingdom*—pp. 41 and 67.

Portuguese landed in India; that is, in 826 A.D. In their almanac the Malabar astrologers note an era called the Cheraman Perumal Era the initial year of which is 826-27 A.D. in memory of his ascension to heaven. So we may regard A.D. 826 as the date of his death and the partition must have taken place sometime before 826 A.D.

This gives us a clue to the date of his birth. It is believed that the Perumal celebrated his *Satabhishekam* before his death. *Satabhishekam* is performed on the completion of a 1000 full moons, that is about 84 years. So the date of his birth must be about 742 A. D.

The *Kollam Era*:— The departure of the Perumal strangely coincides with the beginning of a new era called the Kollam era. So it has led many scholars to the conclusion that the era was started in memory of his departure. There is even now a wide divergence of opinion among historians regarding the origin of this era.

In Malayalam the word Kollam literally means year. But when referred to as the attribute of an era it has a different meaning. A number of places in Kerala end with the word Kollam¹⁵ and all these places had been at one time or another residences of kings. The residence of a king is called Kovilakam in Malayalam and it is possible that Kollam is a *truncated* form of that word. Quilon and Pantalayini are even now called Kollam.

The era began on the day denoted by the Chronogram *a-cha-rya-va-ga-bhe-dya* which corresponds to September 17, 825 A. D.¹⁶ The earliest document which

15. Pantalayini Kollam, Kodungallur Kollam, Kurakkani Kollam and Kulli Kollam.

16. It is said that Kaliyuga began on Vishu i. e. the Vernal equinox of B.C. 3102. Calculating 365½ days for a year, we get 182nd day of 3927th of Kaliyuga as the exact date of the beginning of the Kollam Andu and that happens to be September 17. See *Kollam Era* by K. V. Krishna Iyer in the Zamorin's College Magazine—October 1945.

refers to this era so far discovered is the Mampalli plate of the year 149.¹⁷ The clue to discover the origin of the era is found in the early documents dated with reference to it. These documents used to begin with the words "*Kollam tanri Andu*". The word '*Tanri*' in Tamil means came into existence. (Madras University Lexicon). Therefore the era must be regarded as commemorating the building of a place or Kovilakam which later became a great town.

This is the widely accepted view. But there are other explanations as well. It was commonly believed that the era dates from the day on which Cheraman Perumal set sail for Mecca from Kodungallur Kollam. But there is very little foundation for the conversion of the Perumal. Further, even granting that it is true, it is improbable that an era would be started on the basis of such an event. Eras have been begun for various reasons — to commemorate great victories like the Vikrama era (B. C. 58) or the Saka era (A. D. 78), to mark the ascension of a great man or a saint to Heaven like the Kaliyuga which started with the *Swargarohana* (ascension to heaven) of Srikrishna, to perpetuate the memory of the birth of a great preacher like the Christian New year or to mark an important event in his life like the Hejira which dates from the flight of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina. But it is quite improbable that a people would start an era to perpetuate the memory of an apostate, who, deserting the religion of the same people and embracing another, had brought national disgrace to his country. The new era is accepted throughout Kerala. It is surprising that the whole country should have united to start an era at a time when the very unity of their land was threatened by the apostasy of their Emperor.

17. It is dated in the 149th year of the Kollam Era. On a Sunday corresponding to the *Aswati Nakshatra* in the month of *Vrischika* when the planet Jupiter stood in the constellation *Tula* (Epigraphia Indika, Vol. 9).

Since the conversion of the Perumal is a myth it is probable that the era was started in commemoration of his pilgrimage from Kodungallur Kollam to Chidambaram—not to Mecca. But even this does not explain the words "*Kollam tanri*" which clearly and unambiguously mean "Kollam came into existence" Kodungallur Kollam had already been in existence and was a great city even before the time of Cheraman Perumal. Further, the era commences on the 1st of *Chingam* in the south and on the first of *Kanni*, a full month later, in the north Kerala. The theory does not explain this fact. Above all his pilgrimage and death have already been perpetuated by an era called the Cheraman Perumal era, the first year of which began in the month of *Adi* (July-August). Therefore the Kollam era must have been started to commemorate another event.

Another explanation is based upon the chronogram *a-cha-rya-va-ga-bhe-dya*, which corresponds to the first day of the Kollam era. It means that *Acharya's* word or law is unalterable. *Acharya* is taken as referring to Sankaracharya and the chronogram is supposed to give the date of the promulgation of his ordinances to the people of Kerala. The *anacharas* or irregular customs of the Nambutiries are supposed to have been laid down by Sankara at Kurakkeni Kollam (Quilon) on the 1st of *Chingam* and at Pantalayini Kollam on the first of *Kanni*, these two Kollams being the capitals respectively of the southern and the northern Kolattiris. The tradition receives support from *Keralotpatti* which says that "at the time when the Perumal was ruling over Kerala prosperously.....there arose the celebrated genius Sankara, an incarnation of Mahadeva, who laid down laws for the guidance of the Malayali Brahmans in all the ordinary business of life as well as for the Sundra (Navars) and other classes." The explanation is also satisfactory in so far as it gives a reason for the different dates of the beginning of the era in the north and the south. But certain serious flaws in the theory make it unacceptable. The commonly accepted date for Sankara

is A. D. 788–820. Historians are almost unanimous in their opinion that the only definite date that can be assigned with any degree of probability to his death is 820 A. D.—more than four years before the date on which he is supposed to have laid down his rules for the people of Kerala. Further there is no historical evidence to show that Sankara had framed any laws for the people. The so-called *Sankarasmriti* which lays down these *anacharas* is clearly a later work. The *Keralotpatti*, on which the tradition is based refers among the merchant immigrants, to the “men of round hats” of whom there were four castes, namely Parin̄ki (Portuguese) Lanta (Dutch), Parantries (French) and Inkiriss (English) and says that Sankara laid down rules for these foreigners as well! Above all, laying down certain rules does not constitute sufficient reason for the starting of a new era.

A few scholars seek to associate the Kollam era with *Onam* the annual Kerala national festival. *Onam* falls on varying days at or about this time of the year. It is said that the new year used to begin immediately after noon of the *Tiruvonam* day. “In the title deeds, horoscopes and other writings in North Kerala the year is still sometimes written as having ended on the day preceding the *Tiruvonam* day”¹⁸. It was the usual practice to refer to the days *before Onam* as *Pokku chingam* or the part of the months which ends a year; and to the days *after Onam* as *Pukku Chingam* or the part of the month which became part of the new year. This was regarded as a relic of the time when the new year was calculated from the *Onam* day. Mr. Logan thinks that it is reconcilable with the theory which he supports by assuming that the day on which the Perumal sailed for Mecca was the *Tiruvonam* day. This, he says was not impossible because *Tiruvonam* was the day on which acknowledgement of fealty should have been made. But it is a purely unwarranted assumption not supported by facts.

18. Logan: A manual of the Malabar District—Vol. I, p. 150.

The theory gives a reasonable answer to the different dates for the beginning of the era in the north and south Kerala. *Onam* rarely falls on the first of *Chingam* and it is inconvenient to commence an era in the middle of a month. Therefore the northerners began the new year on the first of *Kanni* after *Onam* and the southerners on the first of *Chingam* before *Onam*. But the theory cannot be sustained for the following reasons: *Onam* is a festival observed by the people of Kerala from ancient days. It is supposed to commemorate an event which goes far back into the Puranic ages. Therefore it is difficult to believe that it was instituted on any particular day by any particular person. Further, if the era was started in commemoration of this festival why should it be called the Kollam era? It would have been more appropriate to call it the *Onam* era. *Onam* has nothing to do with any Kollam in particular and this theory does not explain the words "*Kollam tanri*" of the early documents.

It is said that the Kollam era was really inaugurated by a Christian merchant Maruvan Sapir Esodathapirayi who appears in Ayyan Atikal's grant sometime before 900 A. D. This Christian merchant reckoned his years, months and days from the date of his landing in Quilon or the date he set up his factory there. Those who had dealings with him gradually adopted his practice. But it is hard to believe that an era could be founded to commemorate the building of an obscure factory by an ordinary Christian merchant. This theory further fails to explain why the people of north Kerala did not begin their new year on the first of *Chingam*.

Dr. Gundhert, the eminent Malayalam scholar, suggests that the era was meant to commemorate the building of a Siva temple at Quilon. As it was a Temple era it was not immediately adopted by the kings and chiefs of Kerala. Since Quilon was a great emporium of trade, the new era gradually spread to other places through the merchants who carried on trade

with all parts of Kerala. The objections raised in connection with the previous theories exist in this also. Kollom does not mean a temple and therefore "*Kollam tanri*" remains unexplained. As Prof. Sundaram Pillai observes "In the nature of things we should expect a grander event of greater national importance, in justification of the starting of an era than the building of a nameless temple."

Mr. Shungoony Menon in his *History of Travancore* attributes the origin of the Kollam era to a meeting convened by Udaya Marthanda Varma in Quilon. "After making some astronomical researchs and calculating the solar movements throughout the twelve signs of the Zodaic and counting scientifically the number of days occupied in this revolution in every month it was resolved to adopt the new era from the first of *Chingam* that year, 15th August of 25, as Kollam year one, and to call it the solar year." This does not correspond to the date which the chronogram is supposed to give (Sept. 17 or 1st *Kanni*). Another explanation is given in connection with the summoning of the meeting. Some scholars do not regard the Kollam era as an era. They term it as a cycle. Till the Kollam era was founded years had been reckoned in Kerala, it is said, according to the Parasurama Cycle of 1000 years. The first of these cycles began in B. C. 1176, the second in B. C. 176 and the third in A. D. 824. Till the third cycle began the new year had been reckoned from the first of *Kanni*. But the years of the Parasurama Cycle were all solar years. Therefore Udaya Marthanda Varma decided to start the new year properly, summoned a conference of astronomers and resolved to start the new year on the first of *Chingam*.

This explains why the new year began on the first of *Chingam* in the south only. But no documents dated according to the so called Parasurama Cycle have been discovered so far. The grant of Ayyan Atikal and other grants earlier than the earliest document so far

discovered referring to Kollam *Andu* make no mention of a Parasurama Cycle. Further we could not lay down with any degree of certainty that an era was founded by that conference. It might as well have been a meeting of astronomers to effect the change from *Kanni* to *Chingam*.

According to Prof. Sundaram Pillai the Kollam era was a mere modification of another older era current in Upper India under the title of *saptarishya* or *sastrasamvatsara*. "The peculiarity of this Northern era is that though it is today 4972 (He wrote in 1897) it is spoken of as 72, so that omitting all hundreds it will be found to be identical with Malabar year except 4 months beginning with *Mesha*..... It would thus appear that up to the year 99 the Kollam year is identical with the *Saptarshi* year May it not be true that our Kollam year is simply the *Saptarshi* year with its origin forgotten and therefore counted on to the hundred? It is by no means extravagant to suppose that the people who lived in the Kollam year 99 went on to name the next year 100 and not the cypher year, in spite of whatever astronomical reminiscences which survived in the minds of the almanac makers of that age." He also explains why the Kollam era begins with *Chingam* while the *Saptarshi* era commences with *Mesha*. This according to him was to convert the *Saptarshi* year into a purely solar one. But the Northern and Southern astronomers did not agree as to the number of months to be left out and that accounts for the difference in the commencement of the era in the North and South Kerala. The Professor thinks that a convention like the one summoned by Udaya Marthanda Varma took place to effect this change. The "astronomical researches, calculations and scientific countings" show that they were adopting and amending for their purpose an era that was actually current at that time.

That a people of the extreme south made a new era out of an old one current in the extreme north might

look strange but is not impossible when we consider many other similarities between them—similarity in the style of architecture between Nepal and Malabar and similarity in customs and manners between the Nayars of Malabar and the Newars of Nepal. It is also likely that the Aryan Nambutiris in their migration from the North brought the *Saptarshi* era with them.

Apart from its laboured nature, this theory also fails to explain the significance of the word *Kollam tanri*, which clearly and unambiguously means Kollam came into existence. This cannot be taken to mean as Kollam era came into existence. Therefore any explanation of the era without its association with a Kollam is bound to be intrinsically fallacious. One of the numerous Kollams in Kerala might have given its name to the era. The two important places during the period were Pantalayini Kollam, the capital of the Kolattiris and Kurakkani Kollam, the capital of the Venad Atikal, pantalayini Kollam was a great centre of trade under the Kolattiris. But the Kollam era could not have been founded to mark the building of their place by the Kolattiris for the simple reason that a tombstone bearing (Hejira 166 A D. 788) discovered there proves its existence as an important place before the beginning of the era. But Vissecher is sure (L 25) that the era got its name from the Northern Kollam. Therefore it is not improbable that it commemorates the building of his palace by the Zamorin after he conquered the place from the Kolattiris, though in the absence of an undisputed evidence this cannot be regarded as a satisfactory solution. The chronogram according to which the era started on the first *Kanni* and not on the first *Chingam* faintly suggests a northern origin of the era.

But it is equally possible that the era got its name from Quilon. In Sanskrit Kollam era is called *Kolamba Varsha* (the Trikkannamkuti Inscription) and Quilon, at least in the beginning of the 14th century was also known

by the name of *Kolambum*¹⁹. Still it is a mistake to say that the era commemorates the foundation of the town for there is a reference to it in an episcopal letter written by Jesu babu of Adiabene who died in 660 A.D. to Simon, Metropolitan of Fars (a province of Persia). In his letter he mentions Quilon²⁰.

Thus both Pantalayini Kollam and Quilon could claim to have given the name to the era. But considering the all round importance of Quilon during the years immediately following the beginning of the new year and the fact that the era was called *Kolamba Varsha* in Sanskrit, which means Quilon era the Southern Kollam seems to have a better claim than the northern one, though in the absence of a definite inscription or any other indisputable evidence the question cannot be solved with complete satisfaction.

19. Jordanus (1328) calls it Colombum. Letter to Pope John XXII to the Christians of Quilon.

20. The passage in the letter says that not only in India, "which extends from the coast of the Kingdom of Fars to colon, a distance of 1200 miles parasangs deprived of a regular ministry but Fars itself is lying in darkness."

CHAPTER II

The Ascendancy of the Zamorins

THE Zamorin was the central figure in Kerala History in the middle ages as the *Rakshapurusha* or protector of *Mamankam* or the great national assembly which met at Tirunavayi once in twelve years. The rise and fall of the Zamorins synchronise with the beginning and end of the Middle Ages respectively. Further there is every reason to believe that but for the arrival of the foreigners like the Portuguese and the Dutch, the Zamorins would have been able to unite the whole Kerala under their rule. But despite this unique position occupied by them the origin and early history of the Zamorins are enveloped in mystery. The *Keralotpatti* says that when Cheraman Perumal had reigned for 36 years his master Krishna Raya sent an expedition to subdue the country. An emergency meeting which met at Trikariyur selected two Erati brothers named Manichan and Vikkiran of Puntura to command the army because their stars indicated victory and conquest. The battle with Raya lasted three days and finally he was driven out and the fortress occupied. The Perumal decided to make the Erati brothers his heirs but they left for Benares intending to come back and act according to the wishes of the Perumal. Sometime after this the Perumal decided to abdicate and go on a pilgrimage. He divided his kingdom before his departure and when the Eratis came back the Perumal was able to give them only a small *desam* "where the cock crows" and a thorny jungle. The Perumal also gave his sword to them with the injunction to "die, kill and annex".

According to another version Manichan and Vikkiran received from the Perumal the broken sword,

(*Otinha Val*) the broken conch (*Utanha Sankhu*) the land that was still left after the partition (*Ullanad*) and a faithful Panikkar (*Ulanad Panikkar*) who was to be their servant. They could conquer and annex but they should also protect cows and Brahmans. The sword and the conch, though broken, should be taken great care of, for with their destruction will disappear the good fortune of the dynasty.¹ *Dua te Barbosa*, whose account is earlier than the *Keralotpatti*, gives almost a similar story regarding the origin of the Zamorin. He mentions the partition of the kingdom by the Perumal and also the gift of the sword to his nephew "the future Zamorin".² The sword was presented according to Sheik Zeinuddin with the injunction "Strike with this and thou shalt reign".³ The *Mamankam Kilipattu* composed in the 17th century says that the Perumal gave him a plot of land as small as a hencoop, his sword with the overlordship of Kerala from Putupattanam to Kannetti and the privilege of conducting the *Mamankam* festival.⁴

1. Kunhikuttan Thampuran : *Keralam* (Mal.) pp. 103-104.
2. *Book of Duarte Barbosa*, Vol. II—pp. 1-16.
3. Sheik Zeinuddin : *The Tofut-ul-Mujahideen*.
4. The renowned Portuguese poet Camoens, who visited India in the 16th century, in his great epic poem dealing with the discovery and conquest of India by Vascoda Gama mentions the conversion of the Perumal and the partition of Malabar before his pilgrimage to Mecca thus :

He (Cheraman Perumal) mans his ships and loads with
merchandise

And many an offering curious, rare and rich,
And there religions life to lead he hies
Where lies our Prophet who our law did preach.

But e'er abandoned home, his Satrapies,
That lacked lawful heir, he parts to each
And all he loved ; Hence his intimates he
From want made wealthy, and from serfdom free.

To this Cochin, to that falls Cananor,
On hath Chale, another the Isle Piment,
A third Coulam, a fourth takes Cranganor,
The rest is theirs with whom he rests content
Only one youth, for whom warm love he bore
When all was parted, did himself present :
Nothing save Calicut for him remained.
Which, by her traffick, wealth and rank had gained.
On him the title paramount he bestows
Of Emperor, with sway o'er every state ;
And, made his partage, there he diligent goes

These are some of the prominent traditions regarding the origin and early history of the Zamorins. The first mention of the Zamorin is found in the Kottayam copper plate of Vira Raghava Chakravarti. "With the knowledge of Ernadu and Valluvanadu (rulers) have we given it." In Bhaskara Ravi Varman's grant the name of the province as well as of the chief is mentioned. "Thus do I know Manamebala Manaviyan, the owner of Erala Province." The *Kerala Mahatmyam* also mentions him as a *Samanta* prince. Thus both traditions and inscriptions agree that the ancestors of the Zamorin were the Eratis of Nediyruppu (in Ernad). Further the traditions recorded by the Dutch writers go on to say that one of his ancestors was the son of Cheraman Perumal. Vissecher writing in 1717 says that the Perumal "assigned the kingdom of the Zamorin to his illegitimate children, who, according to law could not inherit him and his property." The Dutch commander Moens writes in 1781. "The kingdoms of Travancore, of the Zamorin and of Colastry (Kolattiri) he gave to his three illegitimate children, but the kingdom of Cochin to his sister's son, the natural or nearest heir to the kingdom according to the Malabar rule of succession." The Dutch writers regard the Perumal's sons as illegitimate because they did not understand the implications of the local system of marriage. One of the Cochin *Grandhavaris* (Chronicles), also support this view. "The Rajas of Nediyruppu Swarupam were the sons of Cheraman Perumal..... born before he changed his faith. On the eve of his departure for Mecca he gave them the country of Calicut and formally invested them with sword and robe."⁵ In the light of these facts one has to subscribe to the view that the Zamorin who succeeded the Perumal was his own son,

Where, after Santon-life, he met his fate:
 Thus, 'twas the name of Samorim arose,—
 Of all this region proudest potentate,—
 Born by the youth, and by his heirs from whom
 This now wields imperial power is come.

Ethel M. Pope: *India in the Portuguese Literature*—pp. 49-52.

5. K. V. Krishna Aiyar: *The Zamorins of Calicut*—p. 70.

but that since he was not his father's own caste he could not directly inherit the Perumal's dominions. Therefore the Perumal had to recognise the independence of his feudal vassals.

The Zamorin's first victim of aggression after the departure of the Perumal was *Porlatiri*, the cheifstain of Polanad, the fertile hinterland round Calicut. The *Keralotpatti* says that the Zamorin came down to Panniankara and besieged the ruler in his own capital. After forty eight days of fruitless struggle he resorted to treachery. The minister and the wife of Porlatiri were bribed and his troops consisting of 10,000 Nayars were also won over. The Zamorin's troops were admitted to Porlatiri's fort and tatter took refuge in flight. In return, the minister of Porlatiri was offered a governorship with 5000 Nayars and the title of Ernad Menon. The wife of Porlatiri obtained four elephants and forty thousand *fanams* and the title of "head of the four houses of Chalapuram." The Zamorin's residence was transferred from Ernad to the newly conquered territory. He founded a town with a Siva temple at its centre. This town came to be called Kolikkotu. It is a combination of two words—Koyil and Kota—Koli being a corruption of Koyil—meaning a fortified palace, which was the chief feature of the new town.⁶

The exact date of its foundation is not known. No reference to Calicut is found in any writings before Ibn Batuta. (A. D. 1342—47) But what Ibn Batuta witnessed was a busy town where merchants from different parts of the world met and exchanged their products. Therefore the town must have been founded much earlier than the 14th century. According to a Sanskrit chronogram (De—vo—na—ra—ya—na—vyal) Calicut was founded in 1042—A. D. At about the same time the Arab merchants arrived at Calicut and helped the growth of the city. They were followed by the

Chinese with a view to sell their wares and obtain cargoes of western merchandise.

The rise and prosperity of Calicut were due to its position as the capital of an expanding Empire and as the waterway that gave access to the upper country and "to the character and policy of the Zamorins which induced them (the Arab and Chinese merchants) to flock to this port in such large numbers."⁷ The Muhammdans preferred Calicut to any other ports on the west coast to take their cargoes both because it was "a perfectly secure harbour" and because it was religious policy of the Zamorin allowed absolute freedom of worship. This forced the Chinese also to go to Calicut to trade with the Arabs.

According to *Keralotpatti* it was with the help of these Muslim settlers that the Zamorin made his next great act of aggression. When Cheraman Perumal divided his kingdom the privilege of conducting the *Mamankam* festival was given to the Raja of Valluvanad along with Thirunavayi sand bank and country and ten thousand Nayars. *Mamankam* was a national festival held once in twelve years on the banks of the Bharatapula where all Kerala was expected to be represented. Before monarchy was introduced the festival was conducted by the *Rakshapurushas* of the four *Kalakams*. Later it came to be conducted by the Perumals till the partition of Kerala in 825 A. D. The Zamorin wanted to subdue the Valluvanad Raja and preside over the *Mamankam* festival. The Rajas of Chaliyam, Beypore and Parappanad already looked upon him as their protector. He was practically the overlord of all the lands stretching from Calicut to Ponnani. Thirunavayi was situated on the Bharatapula, which was the main artery of communication with the interior." In the interests of expansion therefore its conquest was inevitable. The *Kurmatsaram* or the rivalry among the

7. Ibid—p. 85.

Nambutiris gave him a pretext to march toward Tirunavayi.

Originally *Kurmatsaram* was a war between the two Nambutiri villages of Panniyur and Chovvaram situated in the Ponnani taluk. It is difficult to trace historically the causes and the origin of this Great Schism. One tradition attributes it to Cheraman Perumal himself who is said to have created it to keep up the martial spirit of the people. But it is improbable that such a country-wide faction spirit would have arisen at the bidding of a single individual. Further even before the ninth century Kerala had been divided into these two factions because in the Viraraghava Chakravarti's grant the two villages appear as the representatives of the Nambutiris.

De Couto who wrote in the beginning of the 16th century and Canter Vissecher in the 17th century refer to this rivalry "The people of Malabar" says De Couto ".....were divided into two parties on account of the hatred that existed between the King of Cochin and that of Calicut. These parties were known as Paydaricuros and Logiricurous—the former being the Zamorin's party and the latter that of the King of Cochin". "Not only is the whole of Malabar" supports Vissicher "occupied by a multiplicity of kings and potentates, a circumstance causing in itself endless discussion, but these again are broadly ranged into two parties, whose hatred is the more effectual, and probably the more interminable, seeing that it arises from the unfair distinctions introduced by the original laws of the Kingdom".

We do not know when the *Kurmatsaram* ended, nor the causes of the war which Vissecher alludes to. Though Panniyur had been from the very beginning an important settlement of the Nambutiris, it lost much of its influence and power owing to dissensions among the members of the *gramam*. The reformers who

wanted to import strangers and introduce new forms of worship were opposed by the conservatives who wished to maintain the *status quo*. Tradition says that the former thereupon defiled the temple of *Varahamurti* (the pig incarnation of Vishnu) by covering the image with a red-hot vessel. The horror-stricken conservatives fled from the place and the Zamorin degraded the Brahmans who were responsible for this. This Panniyur sacrilege might have hastened the end of the *Kurmatsaram*. The war which led to the final disappearance of *Kurmatsaram* is also traced to foreign intervention. The Panniyurkars were Vaishnavites while the Chovarkars were Saivites. The Rashtrakutas who were Saivites supported the latter and the Vaishnavite western Chalukyas the former. Further, boar was the emblem of the Chalukyas. Mr. Logan says that when the Chalukyas invaded Malabar a more or less successful resistance was made by the people of Kerala. So it is probable that the decline of the Panniyur *gramam* and the ascendancy of the Chovaram were brought about at this time. Another story connects the quarrel between the two villages with the temple of *Dakshinamurti*. Though Panniyur was first associated with the government of the country its neighbour Chovaram gradually came into prominence. The Panniyur villagers thought that this was due to their worship of Siva; so they also resolved to worship Siva in his most powerful aspect as *Dakshinamurti*. This frightened the opposite party who succeeded in secretly removing the image to their village. The Panniyur thereupon attacked and devastated Chovaram. The latter appealed to Perumputappu (Cochin family) and the former to Nediyruppu (the Zamorin) for help. "Thus the war gradually spread to every nook and corner of Kerala and arranged it in two hostile parties ready to fly at each other's throats."⁸

Tirumanasserinad consisted of 146 desams and its Raja, a Brahman, was the head of the Panniyur

8. K. V. Krishna Aiyar : Op. Cit.—p. 101.

Nambutiris. It lies between Arangot and Perumpā-tappu "like an earthen pipkin between two iron pots" and when it was invaded simultaneously by both neighbours; the Raja appealed to the Zamorin for help and ceded Ponnani as its price. After a bitter and protracted campaign the Zamorin occupied Tirunavayi and assumed the proud title of the Protector of *Mamankam*. Two princes of Vellatri⁹ of fighting. The Calicut Koya who had given invaluable help to the Zamorin in connection with this expedition was given the title of *Sahabantra Koya* and all the privileges and dignities of a Nayar chief. In effect he became the right hand man of the Zamorin.

Ever since the conquest of Tirunavayi, the Zamorin functioned as the Protector of *Mamankam*. This national festival held once in twelve years lasted for 29 days. The details of the ceremonies do not vary from *Mamankam* to *Mamankam*. They remained the same through out as the palace chronicle shows. On the first twenty five days there would be processions "resembling a Roman triumph in its imposing grandeur, each day surpassing its predecessor in pomp and display." But all the while the Zamorin's person was guarded with strict vigilance especially on the last seven days of the procession. The last four days were marked by fireworks and mock fights between ships arranged by *Sahabantra koya*. On the last day of the festival the Zamorin used to come in procession, ascend the *manittara*, a wooden scaffold erected on a hillock facing the Deity in the Tirunavayi temple and stand with a drawn sword. It was during this time that the followers of the Valluvanad Raja attempted to kill the Zamorin and avenge the death of the princes in the Tirunavayi war. They were called *chavers*, because they were sworn either to do away with the Zamorin or to perish in the attempt Mr. Hamilton in his *Account of the East Indies* describes an incident which

9. Short for *Valluvakonathiri*; the ruler of Valluvanad.

shows the reckless daring of these *chavers*. "In Anno 1695 one of these jubilees happened when the tent was pitched near Ponnany.....There were but three men who would venture on that desperate action, who fell on with sword and target, among the guards, and after they had killed and wounded many, were themselves killed. One of the desperadoes had a nephew of fifteen or sixteen years of age, that kept close by his uncle in the attack on the guard, and when he saw him fall, the youth got through the guards into tent and aimed a stroke at His Majesty's head and had certainly despatched him, if a large brass lamp which was burning over his head, had not prevented the blow; but before he could make another he was killed by the guards....."¹⁰

Mr. Logan corroborates this view. "Those who acknowledge the Zamorin's suzerainty sent flags in token of fealty..... The Valluvanad Raja instead of sending a flag used to send men called Chavers (men who have elected to die) whose office it was to endeavour to cut their way through the Zamorin's guards to his throne..... If they had succeeded in killing him, as on the occasion cited by Hamilton..... It is uncertain what would have happened; but probably if a capable Raja had been ruling in Valluvanad at such a time, popular opinion would have endowed him with the suzerainty." But the *chavers* sought merely to avenge the death of the Vellatri princes and nothing but the fall of an equal number of Nediirippu princes could stop them. That had been the custom of the country from time immemorial. Says Sheik Zeinuddin "should a Raj or Chieftain of any tribe in Matabar be slain in battle, his troops continue a war of extermination against those who were on the occasion of his death attacking them and their city, until they have succeeded in annihilating the one and laid desolate the other."¹¹ The *chavers* however failed in their attempt because of

10. Vol. I, Chapter XXV.

11. Zeianddin: *Tofut-ul-Mujahideen*—p. 61.

the strict vigilance of the guards of the Zamorin and therefore the blood feud continued till both were alike swept away by the Mysorean invasion.

At the close of the celebrations the Zamorin received at *manittara* the various Rajas, ministers or chieftains who approached him according to merit and rank to pay their homage.

Mr. Hamilton's account of the *Mamankam* festival of 1695 has misled many people into believing that it had been the custom in Malabar for rulers to sacrifice themselves after twelve years on the occasion of the *Mahamagham* festival. "It was an ancient custom for the Zamorin to reign but 12 years and no longer. If he died before his term expired it saved him the troublesome ceremony of cutting his own throat on a public scaffold erected for the purpose. He first made a feast for all his nobility and gentry, who were very numerous. After the feast he saluted his guests, went on the scaffold and very neatly cut his own throat in the view of the assembly. His body was, a little while after, burned with great pomp and ceremony and the grandees elected a new Zamorin." Misled by this account, Sir James Frazer constructed a theory of succession by the sword. Dr. Day makes the same mistake in his *Land of the Perumals*.¹² Some historians led by these writings conclude that the festival was called *Mahamagham* or the great sacrifice to indicate the self-immolation of the ruler, "truly an apt designation for the ceremony which ends with the sacrifice of the king who presides over its celebration."

But tradition does not support Hamilton or Day. It says that the Perumals retired to their own country after their term of office while Dr. Day asserts that they cut their own throats. Hamilton was obviously misled by the attempt of the *chavers* to kill the Zamorin. But as has already been stated the *chavers* were merely

actuated by the motive of avenging the death of their princes. Further the festival was called *Mahamagha*, not because it was the occasion for the self-immolation of the king, but it was held in the year called *Mahamagha*, one of the twelve years in the lesser *Brahmaspatya* cycle.¹³ This samskrit word became *Mamankam* in Malayalam. Neither the *Keralotpatti* nor the *Keralamahatmyam* corroborates Hamilton's story of self immolation. From the conquest of Tirunavayi to 1743 when the last *Mamankam* was celebrated it was the Zamorin who presided over it and functioned as its protector.

The conquest of Tirunavayi which resulted in the humiliation of the Valluvanad Raja and the death of two princess of his dynasty, made peace between the two *swarupams*¹⁴ impossible. In the course of these hostilities the Zamorin extended his authority over Nilambur on one side and Venkatakotta on the other. The ruler of Nedunganad who had provoked his subjects to rise against him by his oppressive policy sought the help of the Zamorin. When the latter sent an army under the *Eralpad*¹⁵ to Nedunganad its people offered submission and recognised the suzerainty of the Calicut ruler and "the warlike expedition was transformed into a triumphal procession." Nedunganad was annexed by the Zamorin and the *Eralpad* was appointed its Governor with his headquarters at Karimpula. Soon afterwards the Rajas of Talapalli were also subdued. According to tradition they were originally Numbutiris who lost caste for manslaughter. In course of time the family was divided into five which gave rise to quarrels till Punnathur, one division of the family, sought the Zamorin's help. Eventually they had to submit to him and Punnattur became a strong supporter of the Zamorin ever afterwards.

In or about the same period the Zamorin conquered large parts of Cochin and reduced its Raja to the

13. Sewell. *Indian chronography*—p. 65.

14. *Dynasties*.

15. *Eralpad* is the title of the heir apparent to the Zamorin's gadi.

position of a feudatory chief. These conquests raised his prestige and position to such an extent that he adopted the high-sounding title of *Kunnalakonatiri*, the ruler of the hills and waves and exercised a sort of overlordship over the greater part of Kerala. The Zamorin's attitude towards the conquered was generally marked by generosity. The former chief of a conquered territory was allowed to hold a part of it as his vassal. Sheik Zeinuddin who wrote in the 16th century says: ".....Wherever he commenced hostilities against any of the chiefs of Malabar, provoked to do so by an aggression on their part after subduing them, it was his practice to return some portion of their possession provided he had not been irritated beyond measure; and his restitution, although delayed for a long time, he always made in the end, evincing a public regard for the prejudices and feelings of the people of Malabar." It was this moderation in the face of success that enabled the Zamorins not only to conquer territories but to consolidate them and resist Chalukya and other foreign invasions.

History of Travancore

I

THE common belief that the State of Travancore came into existence along with other Malabar States after the partition of Kerala by Cheraman Perumal is now regarded as without foundation. Whether the assertion that "Travancore is one of the oldest Indian States and possesses a continuous history of over 2000 years"¹ is correct or not there is evidence of inscriptions and chronicles, apart from traditions and beliefs, to show that the Travancore rulers belong to the original Chera stock. The sway of the Perumals had not extended to Travancore. Lying far in the south it was outside the "Kerala" described by the *Keralamahatmyam* and the *Keralotpatti*. Kerala was in fact the name given by the Nambutiris to the middle half of the country inhabited by Malayalam speaking people. It is stated that the Perumal, ruling from Tiruvanchikulam, owed his election to the Nambutiri Brahmans distributed in sixty-four *gramams* or villages. None of these villages established by the original colony of Nambutiri immigrants can be placed anywhere in South Travancore, and the Perumals were said to have held sway over these sixty-four villages.

Further, the striking difference between the theories of land tenure in these villages and in Travancore prove conclusively that the latter existed as a state previous to and during the Perumal regime. The theory of land tenure in the former is that all lands belonged to the Brahmans who got it from Parasurama. The agreement between the landlord and the tenant

1. T. K. Velupillai : *The Travancore State Manual*—p. 14.

was to be renewed at the end of every twelve years. The bulk of the Nambutiri landlords have their families and estates in Malabar, Cochin and to some extent in North Travancore but not in South Travancore. Moreover in other parts of Kerala there was no tax on land. Land tax was first introduced in Malabar in the 18th century. Writing in the 16th century, Zeinuddin says that Malabar Rajas never realised land tax from their subjects. Though this view had been challenged by Mr. Arthur Thomson of the Madras Civil Service it has been corroborated by many other more reliable authorities. The Madras Board of Revenue declared that it was a most remarkable circumstance that "until the conquest of Malabar by the Mussalman princes of Mysore, this right (i. e. the *Janmam* right) seems to have been held by the *Jenmekar* free from any condition of a payment in money or produce to the Government for until that period a land revenue appears to have been altogether unknown to the people." European writers like Buchanan and Burton also subscribe to this view.

In Travancore on the other hand the land tax was recognised as an important source of revenue. According to the Manalikkaraï, inscription of the year 410 (1235 A.D.) recording an edict of Sri Vira Iravi Kerala Varma Tiruvadi, King of Venad, the land tax has been imposed in South Travancore in his time. The king himself had vast lands which disproves the theory that all lands belonged to the Brahmans, as in that case he could not take possession of their property.

Further, the *Keralotpatti* and the *Keralamahatmyam* do not record any grant by Cheraman Perumal on the occasion of the partition of Kerala to the ruling family of Travancore. Logan observes that it was only about 825 A.D. that the Northern Kolattiris obtained the dignity of a separate dynasty, whereas the Southern

Kolattiris (Travancore) had been a distinct ruling family for some time.²

Though politically Travancore remained unaffected by the changes in Malabar, social evolution proceeded on the same lines as in the rest of Kerala. The "close fist" policy of the orthodox Nambutiris led to the introduction and progress of other religions like Buddhism and Jainism. The Buddhist relics are found generally in Middle Travancore especially in the Taluks of Mavelikkara, Kunnathur, Karunagapally and Ambalapula (Kottayam). The Jain shrines are found in the extreme south and in the extreme north of Travancore.³

Before long, however Brahmanism was able to check the advancing tide of Buddhism and Jainism and maintain its ground. Hieun tsang in the 7th century found the Buddhist monasteries in Malakuta, identified by a few scholars with Kerala, in ruins, many of them being displaced by Hindu temples. The degeneracy among the followers of the Buddha was partly responsible for the ascendancy of Hinduism. The monks who had done disinterested service for the progress of their religion were succeeded by lazy and pleasure-loving priests who alienated the common people by keeping themselves aloof from them. The preachings of Sankaracharya at this opportune moment gave the final blow to Buddhism and ensured the supremacy of Brahmanism. Thus there were social and religious changes in Travancore on the same lines as in the other parts of Kerala.

Mr. T. K. Velupillai, the author of the *State Manual*, gives the following reasons in support of his contention that the Travancore rulers belonged to the original Chera stock. Kulasekhara Alvar, one of the

2. Logan: *Malabar*—pp. 231 and 232.

3. In "Kallil" in North Travancore.

early kings of Travancore, used the title of "*Cherakulapradipa*" (The light of the Chera dynasty) subsequent rulers like Ravi Varma Kulasekhara (1282-1313 A.D.) and Udayamartanda Varma (1282-1444 A.D.) adopted similar titles showing their descent from the ancient Cheras. The title *Vanchi-pala* which means the protector of Vanchi, the ancient capital of the Cheras, is assumed only by the rulers of Travancore. He repudiates the contention of Dr. Day and others that the State of Travancore and its ruling family came into existence only after the partition of Kerala by Cheraman Perumal and he concludes that the "Chera line has been respected and kept alive in uninterrupted continuity." Whether this contention is right or not there is proof to show that Travancore had a distinct ruling family even before Cheraman Perumal.

Another view is that though Travancore was originally an independent political entity it was later conquered and subjugated by the imperial Cheras of Tiruvanchikulam. This view is based mainly on three copper plate grants and a few inscriptions on stones. The first, executed by Ayyan Adikal Tiruvadikal of Venad in the fifth regnal year of Sthanu Ravi conferred certain privileges on the congregation of the Therisa Church at Quilon. The second, executed by Bhaskara Ravivarman conferred certain privileges on the Jewish colonies of the Malabar coast. Govardhana Martanda, King of Venad, is mentioned as one of the witnesses to the document. The third grant was made by Viraraghava Chakravarti with the knowledge of the rulers of Venad, Odanad, Ernad and Valluvanad and the inhabitants of Panniyur and Chovaram. It is contended by certain authors that as the first grant mentions the regnal year of Sthanu Ravi and the other two contained the name of the ruler of Venad as one of the witnesses the subordination of Venad to the Cheras of Tiruvanchikulam is proved beyond doubt. The genuineness as well as the dates of these grants are matters of controversy and they by themselves do not

establish the actual subordination of Venad to the Cheras, though the owner of Venad is mentioned as one of the witnesses.

The earliest mention of the king of Venad is in 311 A.D. In that year according to tradition Virakerala Varma was crowned king and he assumed the title of *Kritapati* and Kulasekhara Perumal. His capital was Virakeralapuram.

Little is known of the history of Travancore from the fifth to the eighth century A.D. The reign of Udayamartanda Varma in the 8th century deserves special mention. It is said that in this period the Travancore royal family resided at different places and was known by five different names viz. Vanavanad or Venad, Srivalumcode or Tiruvitamcode, Sripadam or Trippapur, Sriwaye or Cheravai and Desinganad *swarupams*. All these *swarupams* were collectively named Venad, Travancore or Tiruppur and sovereignty was resumed under these three designations only. "It is difficult to definitely describe the relation between the various principalities above referred to. But there are circumstances which seem to indicate that the senior of all these collateral branches, or the most competent among them ruled as Kulasekhara Perumal."⁴

Some scholars believe that Udayamartanda Varma was the founder of the Kollam era.⁵ Whatever might be the truth of this contention there is reason to believe that he convened an assembly at Trivandrum pagoda consisting of the members of the five royal houses of Travancore as well as the ecclesiastical head and introduced certain new rules for the conduct of the daily, monthly and yearly performances of *pujas* and other ceremonies.

4. K. P. Padmanabha Menon: *History of Kerala*—Vol. I, p. 5.

5. See Ch. I.

Ayyan Adikal Tiruvadikal is the first king of Venad of whom there is inscriptional evidence. The copper plate grant executed by him says "In the time of Sthanu Ravi Gupta who now rules gloriously..... treading under foot hostile heads, in his fifth year..... the following grant of a free hold has been given by His Excellency the Ayyan Adikal to the Therisa Church established by Isodatta Virai of Curakkani Kollam."⁶ The grant whether made by Sthanu Ravi Gupta or by Ayyan Adikal brings out clearly the superior position occupied by the former though the latter might be independent of him.

The next ruler of whom inscriptional evidence is available is Sri Vallabhan Kothai (974 A.D.).⁷ It may be inferred from the inscription that his authority extended as far north as the Tiruvalla Taluk. Between 974 and 990 there ruled over Venad two kings—Kothai Aditya Varma and Virakerala Varma. Govardhanamartanda who was reigning in 992 was, according to some writers, only a Governor of Venad under Bhaskara Ravi Varman. But no sufficient proofs exist to show that Venad had been conquered by the latter.

The latter part of the ninth century witnessed the decline of the Pandyan power and the ascendancy of the Cholas and the Pallavas. Parantaka Chola defeated Maravarman Rajasimha (900-970 A.D.), the Pandyan king, who was forced to flee for life. The authority of Parantaka Chola extended as far as Suchindram. Raja Raja Chola (985-1014 A.D.) was more successful in his aggressive activities than his predecessor. He captured Kottur, Viliyamkulam and other places and Kanyakumari was renamed Raja Rajeswaram. The inscriptions found in large numbers at Kanyakumari and the adjoining tract testify to the extension of Chola authority upto Nanjanad in the tenth century.

6. *Travancore Archaeological Series*—Vol. II, pp. 22-25.

7. Logan: *Malabar*—Appendix 12, pp. IV, V.

Certain epigraphical records like Sinnamanur plates and the Madras Museum plates show that the Pandyas and Cholas invaded parts of Travancore during this period. Nedunjelivan, it is said, invaded Venad, despatched the king to the other world and conquered the country. But Prof. Nilakanta Sastri says that the conquest could not be regarded as final. "We have evidence in the Trivandrum Museum stone inscription that the king was still fighting on the neighbourhood of Vilinjam more than ten years after the first invasion."⁸

An inscription found at Senur in North Arcot District says that Raja Raja destroyed Madura and conquered the kings of Kollam, Kalladam and Kotumkolor. But inscriptions found in obscure places of one's own dominions cannot be taken as conclusive proofs. Raja Raja is also said to have conquered Vilinjam (which was renamed Rajendra Cholapattanam) and Kanthalur. The latter is identified to be Trivandrum by some writers but not on sufficiently reasonable grounds.⁹

According to an inscription at Ramesvaraswamy's temple at Quilon of 1103 A.D. Venad was ruled by Ramar Tiruvadi who assumed the title of *Chakravarti*, which shows a substantial rise in the status of the rulers. After the death of Kulottunga, the last of the great Cholas, there is reason to believe that Venad was invaded by Parantaka Pandya. An inscription at Kanyakumari says that he inflicted a severe defeat on the Venad ruler and captured Vilinjam and other places.

Under Virakerala Varma (1117-1145) Travancore was "a well-organised kingdom with an efficient Government."¹⁰ He annexed Nanjanad and maintained peaceful relations with the Cholas and Pandyas. But

8. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri: *The Pandyan Kingdom*—p. 64.

9. T. K. Velupillai: *op. cit.*—p. 60.

10. *Ibid*: p. 77.

his successor Sri Vira Ravivarma (1151-1164), though a powerful ruler, had to recognise the overlordship of Maravarma Sri Vallabha, the Pandyan king.¹¹

Vira Ravivarma was succeeded by Vira Kerala Varma (1164-67) Vira Athicha Varma (1167-73) and Udayamarthanda Varma whose date of accession could not be ascertained. He appears to have ruled till 1189. The Gosala inscription refers to him as Kotā Martanda the lord of Kolamba. Identifying Kolamba with Quilon, the *Travancore State Manual* says that "the kings of Venad were exercising authority in such distant places like Chengannur, Tiruvalla, Udayamperur and Punjar." Reference is also made by this inscription to the existence of village assemblies, and the assembly of Trivandrum.

Another valuable inscription which throws more light on the social and political conditions is Ramavarman's record at Vellayini (1196 A.D.)¹². Commenting on this inscription Prof. Sundaram Pillai says "Besides the village associations..... Venad..... had an important public body under the name of the "Six Hundred" to supervise the working of temples and charities connected therewith. What other powers and privileges this remarkable corporation of 'Six Hundred' was in possession of future investigation alone can determine. But a number so large, nearly as large as the British House of Commons, could not have been meant, in so small a state as Venad was in the 12th century, for the simple function of temple supervision." The learned professor further notes the reference in the inscription to the 'Valanjiyars of the eighteen districts' and contends that "they were feudal barons of the realm..... forming, as it were, his Government or Cabinet ministry."¹³ But it is now clear that the Valanjiyars were not feudal

11. *Historical Inscriptions of South India*—p. 112.

12. *T. A. S.* Vol. iii—p. 33.

13. *Some Early Sovereigns of Travancore.*

barons but constituted an economic group like Manigramam.

The inscription of his successor, Sri Vira Rama Kerala Varma (1209–1214 A.D.) shows that “in 384 M. E. (1209 A.D.) Trivandrum like so many other villages, had a *Sabha* or assembly with a *Sabhanjita*, chairman or secretary of its own, and that it used to meet on occasions of importance in the old temple at Mitranandapuram about a furlong to the west of the present shrine of Sri Padmanabha.¹⁴ This ruler founded a village called Virakeralapuram or Viralam near Attingal.

Ravi Kerala Varma, his successor, (1216–1237) is mentioned in the Kandiyur (1218 A.D.) and Manalikkara (1235) inscriptions. Prof. Sundaram Pillai calls the latter “one of the great charters of Travancore.” This royal Edict defines the nature and fixes the amount of land tax and the manner and time of paying it. It fixed Government dues “exactly and unalterably per year and per harvest.” The lease was to be renewed from time to time so that Government farmer would have no chance of abusing his power and the Government demand is reduced to $\frac{1}{5}$ in times of famine. The importance of the *Sabhas* is also stressed by this inscription.

A *vattelutu* inscription at Varkala shows that in 1252 A.D. Sri Vira Padmanabha Martanda Varma Tiruvadi was ruling Venad. He has been identified with Kotha Martanda Varma who, according to the *Lilatilakam*, was the overlord of eight tributary princes. The *Lilatilakam* throws valuable light on the ancestry of Ravivarma Kulasekhara. It says that in 1266 A.D.—the year of Ravivarma’s birth,—the reigning king Kotha Martandavarma gave costly presents to the Brahmans because of the birth of a prince. The prince is called *Yadusisu* i.e. belonging to the Yadu race because his father Jayasimha is said to have belonged

14. T. A. S.—Vol. iv, pp. 69–70.

to that race. An inscription says that Ravivarma was proud of his title the *Kupaka Sarvabhauma* which shows that though he was the son of a Yadava prince he regarded himself as belonging to *Kupa Vamsa*. Kupadesam is identified with Attingal—the queens of Kupaka are known as the queens of Attingal. Therefore Kupaka cannot be regarded as the ancestral home of Jayasimha. Ravivarma therefore succeeded to the throne of Venad according to the matrilineal system. Jayasimha himself was held in great esteem by the people. He was the *de facto* ruler of Venad during the interval between the death of Martanda Varma and the accession of Ravivarma. In recognition of his valuable services, Quilon came to be called Jayasimhanad or Desinganad.¹⁵

II

The inscriptions of Ravivarma Kulasekhara, found scattered in a number of places from Trivandrum to Poonamalle, constitute an important source of information for his history and achievements. The Trivandrum inscription is not valuable from the point of view of information; it merely gives the *birudas* or titles of the king.¹⁶ But the Kanchipuram inscription¹⁷ gives a brief history of the life and achievements of Ravivarma with the dates of important events in his reign. It is neither fragmentary nor uninformative like the first. The Srirangam inscription deals with the services rendered by the king to temple in restoring it after its plunder by the Muslims¹⁸. The Tiruvadi record refers to certain ceremonies that the king performed in the temple there.¹⁹ The Poonamalle inscription reiterates and supports the above facts. It contains “a significant pictorial representation of the supremacy of the Chera kings over the Pandyas and Cholas. The picture

15. *T. S. M.*—pp. 93–95.

16. *T. A. S.*—Vol. ii, pp. 56–59.

17. *Epigraphia Indica*—Vol. iv, pp. 145–148.

18. *Ibid*—pp. 148–152.

19. *Ibid*—Vol. VIII, pp. 8–9.

shows the Chera emblem, the *ankusa* surmounting the Pandyan fish and the Chola tiger.”²⁰

Stripped of all the conventional eulogies the inscriptions are of considerable evidentiary value. They specifically mention the prominent conquests without omitting the dates. The facts mentioned in different inscriptions are not contradictory; they do not run counter to the known facts of South Indian History, but only supplement them and the version given by the inscriptions is corroborated by an endorsement known as the *Kanchikontan Matham* in the Trivandrum temple “where the *Kanchikontan puja* instituted by him is performed to this day”.²¹

Ravivarma (born 1266 A.D.) was a minor on the death of king Martanda Varma, and the task of governing the kingdom fell to the lot of his father Jayasimha. It is probable that the Pandyas invaded Travancore during this period. The Kanchipuram inscription states that “this prince (Ravivarma) having crushed the host of his adversaries as he did the power of the Kali age and having taken for his consort, like the fortune of victory, a daughter of the Pandya, when thirty three years of age took possession of Kerala as he had done of fame and ruled his territory like the town of Kolamba”.²²

Apart from the Kanchipuram inscription another source of information which throws light on this question is the *Lilatilakam*. It is a Malayalam grammar in Sanskrit supposed to have been written during the time of Ravivarma. It says that the boy Ravivarma of Venad defeated Vikrama Pandya and married his daughter. Unlike the Kanchipuram inscription this verse does not say that he was 33 years old on the occasion of his marriage. Therefore the year in which

20. T. S. M.—p. 106.

21. T. S. M. (1940)—p. 107.

22. E. I.—Vol. IV—p. 147.

the battle took place could not be determined. It may be concluded that soon after the death of Udaya Martanda Varma the Pandyan king invaded Travancore and subjugated territories, and that soon after, he was defeated by the young Ravivarma followed by the establishment of friendly relations between the two by means of a marriage alliance.

The military activities of Ravivarma were not confined to Kerala. The political condition of South India was favourable to the ambitious projects of the young ruler. The Chola power was progressively declining and dissensions in the ruling family further worsened the situation. The Hoysalas and the Pandyas both attempted to take advantage of this situation which resulted in frequent fights between them. Eventually the Pandyas came out victorious. They pushed back the Hoysalas beyond Nellore. But soon the Pandyas quarrelled among themselves. During the last years of Maravarma Kulasekhara his two sons Sundara and Vira Pandya contested for the throne. The former appears to have caused the death of his father to advance his own claims. This threw the country into a civil war. On his defeat by Vira Pandya, Sundara appealed to Malik Kafur, Al-aud-din Khilji's general, for help. Kafur invaded the dominions of the Pandyas after defeating the Hoysalas on the way and enthroned Sundara Pandya. The plundering forces of Al-aud-din's general advanced as far as Rameswaram. A portion of this force seems to have appeared in Travancore as well.

After Kafur's departure Ravivarma resolved to make political capital out of the confusion prevailing in South India and inflicted a severe defeat on Vira Pandya. Though his brother had been enthroned by Malik Kafur, Vira Pandya was the more powerful of the two. Therefore his defeat meant the establishment of the victor's authority over the Pandyan dominions. Ravivarma suppressed the feudatories of the northern

parts of the Pandyan dominions as well and celebrated his coronation at Kanchipuram in 1313.²³ The coronation ceremony was repeated at Srirangam and Tiruvadi.

The reign of Ravivarma Kulasekhara is important not only because it was the brightest period in the mediaeval history of Travancore but because he was the first ruler in the south to realise the danger to Hinduism owing to the advance of Islam. It is true that the Hoysala Bellalas and the Rayas of Vijayanagar are credited with safeguarding Hinduism from the onslaughts of Islam. True that the work done by Vira Bellala III and Kumara Kampana were of a high order and remarkable. But they have been to some extent anticipated by the Travancore ruler. "The role of champion of Hindu rule in the south fell to the lot of the last great Ballala, Vira Ballala III, because of the disappearance of Ravivarma Kulasekhara who struggled hard throughout the last decade of his reign and fell in the efforts in his turn. Notwithstanding his failure the work that he attempted was carried to a successful conclusion by those who succeeded him and ended in the establishment of the Hindu Empire of the south which became known in history as the Empire of Vijayanagar. Ravivarma Kulasekhara's effort may therefore be regarded as the first effort of this struggle which culminated in the successful establishment of the Empire".²⁴

A man of deep learning and the author of a Sanskrit drama, the *Pradyumnabhyudayam*, Ravivarma was also a patron of scholarly poets and thinkers. He is supposed to have encouraged the authors of *Lilathilakam* a Malayalam grammar in Sanskrit language and

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23. Kanchipuram was one of the most important cities of South India at that time. In ancient days it had been the "meeting point" of Dravidian and Aryan cultures. It was also the stronghold of Hinduism as it successfully resisted the tides of Jainism and Buddhism. The city was of special significance to the people of Kerala since Sankaracharya had established a muth there.
24. Dr. S. Krishnaswami Ayyangar in the *New Indian Anti-quary*—Vol. I, No. 3, p. 180.

Unnunilisesandesam—a sandesakavya in Malayalam. He is called Dakshina Bhoja (the Bhoja of the south) in one of his inscriptions.

Ravivarma died in or about 1313 A.D.²⁵ and was succeeded by Sri Vira Udayamartanda Varma. According to the Keralapuram inscription he took the title of Vira Pandya. In 1315 the Travancore ruler was driven out of Kanchipuram by the Kakatiya sovereign through his general Muppidi Nayak. Aditya Varma, the next sovereign, appears to have been a powerful king who extended his sovereignty over some of the northern *Devaswams*, particularly that of Vaikom. The *Unnunilisesandesam* pays glowing tributes to his eminence as a soldier and ruler. During his reign two princesses were adopted from the northern Kollatiris. They were "installed" in a newly constructed palace at Attingal as the Attingal Mutta Thampuram and Elaya Thampuram. The country around Attingal with the revenue derived therefrom was assigned to them. Nagam Ayya and Shangooni Menon assign the adoption to the year 480 M.E. (1305 A.D.), in which case it must have been made when Aditya Varma was a junior prince.

The eldest son of the senior adopted princess succeeded Aditya Varma in 1335 or thereabouts. The fact that he had his headquarters at Kalakkad shows that Travancore was having considerable influence and position in Tinnevely which had been conquered by Ravivarma. According to Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple records, in the year 520 M.E. (1345) there was a king who was known as *Kunnimel Sri Virakerala Varma Tiruvadi*. The records say that the king made a grant of 157 *paras* of paddy lands to the temple in addition to the payment of a fine of 30,000 *fanams* in atonement for causing the death of certain *Desis* (Brahmans).

The duration of the reign of his successor is difficult to determine as the inscriptions and temple records give different versions. According to the former it would appear that he reigned till 541 M.E. (1366 A.D.) but till 1382 according to the latter. The temple records say that in 557 (A.D. 1382) king Martanda Varma made atonement for offences committed in the estates of the temple. But we cannot conclude from this that the king ruled till 1382, because the inscription says that two rulers by name Ravivarma and Aditya Varma were ruling Venad in the years between 1366 and 1382. A document of 1375 A.D. refers to Iravi Adya Varma as Venattil Mutta (eldest) Tiruvadi. Perhaps they might have been members of the different branches of the royal family. It is probable that the eldest members of the different branches of the royal family managed or ruled over the various tracts of the country indiscriminately and the two princes mentioned might be such members.²⁶

Two kings ruled over Venad in 1383. Vira Ravi Varma, who seems to have inflicted a defeat on Jata Varma Parakrama Pandya, was succeeded by Kelar Kulasekhara who assumed the title of Kulasekhara Perumal. But he also died in the same year according to the Matilakam *Grandhvari* (chronicles).

The reign of Udayamartanda Varma (1383-1444) was, according to Shangoony Menon, the longest in the history of Travancore. Nagam Ayya mentions other rulers like Vira Kerala Martanda Varma, Vira Ravivarma and Martanda Varma who reigned during this period. But it is possible that the Martanda Varmas mentioned by him were the same ruler, Udaya Martanda Varma. The "mild and unwarlike" disposition of this sovereign let loose centrifugal tenden-

26. Nagam Ayya says, "Two or more kings of the same dynasty are mentioned as ruling at the same time. It may be that both were independent chiefs over small tracts. Or it may be that the senior associated the Junior with him in Govt. affairs." (*State Manual—Vol. I, p. 276*).

cies in the kingdom. The Zamindar of Rattiyapuram invaded Valliyur and defeated the king's nephew. The king was not able to suppress the feudal chieftains who continued to be powerful. Between 1444 and 1484 three kings ruled over Venad. Vira Ravi Varma (1444-1458), Vira Rama Martanda Varma Kula-sekhara who describes himself as the head of the Jayatunganad and Kothai Aditya Varma, who, according to a bell inscription at Trikkanamkudi was ruling over Venad in 644 M.E. (1469).

III

Aditya Varma was succeeded by Ravivarma in 1484. His reign witnessed the growing influence of Vijayanagar in South India and the arrival of the Portuguese in Malabar. The progress of Vijayanagar which was unchecked in Tamil and Telugu countries was stemmed in the extreme south by Travancore. Albuquerque alludes in his *Commentaries* to a victory won by the Travancore ruler over the "King of Naransinga."²⁷

Ravi Varma was succeeded by Ravi Kerala Varma but Nagam Ayya mentions other sovereigns like Udayamartanda Varma and Jayasimha Deva II as reigning along with him as well as two co-regents. He says that there were many princes ruling over bits of territories. Evidently the feudal chieftains had become overbearing and recalcitrant resulting in a substantial reduction of the king's powers.

But Udayamartanda Varma who ascended the throne in 1516 was one of the most powerful kings of Travancore. He defeated the Pandyas and subjugated tracts of territories in Tinnevely. He came into conflict with the Vijayanagar Empire and suffered a defeat at the hands of Achuta Raya. The cause of the conflict with Vijayanagar seemed to have been the

27. *Commentaries*—Vol. I, p. 11.

failure of Travancore to pay the "agreed tribute." It is true that the conquest or even the invasion of Travancore has not been alluded to before. "There is no previous victory recorded." But Nuniz who lived in Vijayanagar during the reign of Achuta Raya says that Coullad (Quilon), Ceyllo (Ceylon), Paleacate (Pulicat) and many other countries paid tribute to Vijayanagar. The Raya got an opportunity to punish the Travancore ruler, when the latter was fighting against the Pandyan king. Virasekhara Chola seized the territories belonging to Chandrasekhara Pandya in or about 1520. Krishna Deva Raya sent Nagama Nayak against the Chola king. Nagama defeated the latter but turned rebel against his overlord and the Raya had to send Visvanatha the son of Nagama himself to suppress him. Visvanatha was subsequently made the Viceroy of the south and the Pandyan chief was assailed from the west by Visvanatha and from the south by the Travancore ruler. When, finally, two of his chieftains who rebelled against him sought asylum in Travancore the Pandyan king appealed to the Raya for help against Travancore. Achuta Raya advanced south and a battle was fought on the banks of the Tamraparni in 1532 A.D. According to the *Achuta Rayabhyudayam*, Travancore was defeated by the Raya of Vijayanagar. The Kanchipuram inscription of Achuta Raya corroborates this view. In spite of this defeat, however, the reign of Udayamartanda Varma was fairly prosperous.

Vira Ravivarma, his successor, ruled till 1545 and was succeeded by Vira Kerala Varma. He gave every possible encouragement to Francis Xavier in his missionary enterprise on the coasts of South India and thus was able to maintain friendship with the Portuguese. But he came into conflict with the Raya of Vijayanagar. Molested by the forces of the Vijayanagar ruler, the Paravas, inhabiting the fishery coast of Travancore, sought the protection of Vira Kerala Varma and were given shelter by that high-minded

ruler. This led to an invasion of Travancore by Vijayanagar. Though the Nayar forces of the Travancore ruler defeated the invaders, Travancore submitted to Vijayanagar subsequently and continued to pay tribute. Since the tributes were paid grudgingly their enforcement required frequent armed intervention by the Raya of Vijayanagar. This subordinate position of Travancore receives confirmation from the Suchindram inscription of 722 M. E. (1547). It says that the then king of Travancore called Bhutala Vira Iravivarma, "who took the earth by conquest, provided for special offerings to be made to the Vishnu shrine at Suchindram on the birthday of Vithaleswara Maharaja." This establishes the subordinate political relationship of Travancore with Vijayanagar.

Viraravi Ravivarma who ascended the throne in 1595 was a pious king who took delight in repairing temples and performing religious ceremonies. His inscriptions are found in two or three places in Travancore. They show that a number of rulers were exercising sovereign powers within limited dominions. They were presumably the eldest members of the different branches of the Travancore royal family. Each was practically independent of the other though occasionally there was co-operation among them.

Visvanatha Nayak founded an independent dynasty of his own without incurring the displeasure of his overlord. Some Tamil chronicles say that Visvanatha himself conquered certain chiefs of Travancore. But its invasion on a grand scale was undertaken only by the great Tirumala Nayak. The fertile plains of Nanjanad which escaped the notice of his predecessors attracted Tirumala Nayak's attention. An army was sent to Travancore under Ramappayya. The Travancore army commanded by Iravi-Kutty Pillai met the Madura forces at Kaniyakulam. The Travancore leader was killed in the battle and his army was

defeated. This invasion of Travancore by Tirumala Nayak's forces is corroborated by the cadjen documents published in the Travancore Gazette supplement in 1899. According to that document the king had to remit arrears of tax on land in the Nanjanadu country "owing to heavy losses sustained by the people on account of the Nayak's invasion between 1674 and 1694 A.D." Further it appears that the Nanjanad Raja took part in the Nayakar's war against the Sethupati. "This confirms Tirumala's success in the Travancore campaign."²⁸

Ravivarma who became the ruler of Venad in 1652 seems to have been put into considerable trouble owing to the frequent irruptions of the Madura forces. It was he who issued the cadjen edict already referred to. His successors were Rama Varma (1663-1672) and Aditya Varma (1672-1677). Both of them were adoptees from Cochin and equally weak and incompetent. During the reign of the latter trouble arose on the question of management of the temples which was to have far-reaching consequences on the history of Travancore.

The temples of Travancore and generally of South India were not merely religious institutions but were organisations where economic, cultural and to some extent political activities were concentrated. The authorities of the temples were frequently able to influence and even mould the politics of the surrounding places. The *Uralars* who collected the income from the properties of the temples were only under the nominal *melkoyma* or supervision of the king. The king's power in the temple affairs were restricted by

28. There is also a reference in *Ramappayyan Ammanai* to the conquest of "Malayalam Country" by Madura. The effect of the invasion seems to have lasted for a long time. John Nieuhoff remarks in 1664 that the King of Travancore "constantly keeps a garrison of ten thousand negros (Nayars) here to secure it (the capital) against the Nayak of Madura whose power is much dreaded here" (*Voyages and Travels into Brazil and East Indies*—p. 265; also R. Sathianatha Aiyar—*History of the Nayaks of Madura*—p. 121.

well-known obligations and customs. Trouble arose during the reign of Aditya Varma on the question of management of the temple of Sri Padmanabha, which is briefly described in the *Travancore State Manual* in the following words. "The management of the temple of Sri Padmanabha and its properties were vested in the *Ettara Yogam*, a committee of seven *potti* Brahmans, one Nayar noble, and the king. According to Shangoony Menon and Nagam Ayya there was a reorganisation of the managing body about 225 M.E. (1050 A.D.). Each of the other members exercised, one vote, but the sovereign is said to have possessed the right of a half vote only. Thus there were in all eight and a half votes. Hence the name *Ettara Yogam*.²⁹ The consultation was however, not confined to the eight members of the council and the ruler. The meetings were generally held in the temple and attended by the higher functionaries and other men of importance in the locality. The presence of the *Swamiyar*, the spiritual head, appears to have been indispensable.....Two members of the *Yogam* formed an executive known as the *Variyam*, the office being held by rotation. No matter of any importance relating to the temple was transacted without the previous assent of the council and the ultimate sanction of the sovereign.

"The *Yogakkar* (The councillors) made themselves responsible for the conduct of affairs, seeking the advice and obeying the directions of the *Swamiyar* and the sovereign within their allotted spheres. They assigned the temple lands to the tenants for cultivation and collected the revenues. There were certain officers in the temple called *Matattil Pillamar*, each of whom was charged with the duty of managing the properties belonging to one of the six *mathams*. These officers combined in themselves the functions of the secretary and the accountant."³⁰

29. The Council of Eight and a half.

30. *T. S. M.*—pp. 265-6.

The king possessed little or no influence over any well-organised temple, though he was generally consulted in matters regarding its management. The political and religious influence that well-organised temples usually exercised went a long way in undermining the authority of the king.

Another factor that contributed to the decline of the royal power was the ever growing influence of a baronial clique called the *Ettu Wittil Pillamar*. The ecclesiastical commission of the temple of Sri Padmanabha, as we have already seen, had been given full authority to collect the revenues and administer them. The temple possessed vast lands which were divided by the councillors into eight districts. Over each district they placed a nobleman who was entrusted with the collection and administration of revenue. These noblemen were called *Ettu Wittil Pillamar*—Lords of the Eight Houses.³¹ In course of time while the councillors exercised all religious authority this baronial clique came to control all political power. They virtually partitioned the territory among themselves and reduced the Raja to a nonentity. They were able to exercise their authority to the full especially when a weak king like Aditya Varma was on the throne.

Feudal anarchy was exhibited in its most violent form during his reign. Nagam Ayya says that the intention of the baronial clique was “to extirpate the royal family and establish a republic to be ultimately converted into a monarchy under the rule of one of themselves.” A plan engineered by the clique reduced the royal residence to ashes. Eventually they succeeded in doing away with the king himself. “The yogakkar began to forward to the king every day *naivedyams* or

31. These Eight Houses were:— *Martandamatham, Ramanamatham, Kulathur, Kalakuttam, Venganur, Chempalanti, Kutaman and Pallichal*. These were not the house names but the names of the villages to which they belonged.

sweetmeets offered to the image of Padmanabhaswamy for *puja*; and one day this being mixed with poison, the king partook it, became ill and died suddenly.³² The setting fire to the palace and the poisoning of the king are called in question by some recent writers on the subject.³³

Ravivarma, the nephew of Aditya Varma, was only a boy of nine years when his uncle died. So his mother Umayamma Rani held the reigns of administration in her own hands. An energetic woman of remarkable courage and determination, the queen addressed herself to the task of suppressing the feudal barons and restoring peace and good government. But her stern measures against some of her officers only worsened the situation.

The question of adoption was another factor that encouraged factions. The members of the different branches of the Travancore ruling house disliked the adoptions from Cochin. When Raman Koil was adopted from Vellarapilli by Aditya Varma, Kerala Varma of Nedumangad protested in vain. Later a nominee of Umayamma Rani was also adopted notwithstanding the protests of Kerala Varma. The latter therefore decided to invade Trivandrum but gained nothing substantial.

While thus anarchy was reigning supreme in Trivandrum a Mughal soldier in about 1680 led his forces to Travancore. Finding no opposition he advanced towards the Capital, but the Rani secured the support of Kerala Varma, a prince of North Malabar, who drove out the Mughal invader. Kerala Varma took a genuine interest in the ruling family and administration of Travancore. The nobles dreaded

32. Shangoony Menon: *History of Travancore*—p. 99.

33. An enthusiastic, if not very convincing attempt to disprove the above incidents is made in the *Travancore State Manual (1940)*—pp. 213-19.

his accomplishments and prowess and hated him because he was a foreigner. A conspiracy was formed against him and he was murdered in his palace by the agents of the baronial clique.

In 1684 Ravivarma attained majority and took over the administration though the queen mother continued to take an active interest in the Government. The Madura forces invaded Travancore during this time. They advanced without any opposition and captured even the capital city but a sudden and unexpected attack by the enemy drove them out of Travancore³⁴. Another invasion on a bigger scale was undertaken by Mangammal the queen-regent of Madura in 1697. This army under its commander Narasapayya seems to have subdued Travancore "after much hard fighting and returned to Trichinopoly."³⁵ It was through Nanjanad that these repeated invasions took place and therefore the people were put to much misery. Ravivarma issued an edict in 1698 with a view to alleviate the miseries of the unfortunate people of Nanjanad.

Ravivarma died in 1718. In 1708 two princes had been adopted from Kolattunad. The elder of the two succeeded Ravivarma. There appears to have been some confusion with regard to the succession. The temple record show that Aditya Varma, the adopted prince was the senior Tiruvādi of Chirava in

34. It is said that Ravivarma conceived a daring plan to free himself from both his overbearing ministers and from the Madura army. At first he came to an understanding with the latter promising them a part of his dominions in return for their assistance against the *Ettuvittil Pillamar*. After putting down the nobles he suddenly turned against his allies and defeated and pursued them.
—R. Satyanatha Aiyar: *Op. cit.*—pp. 208-9.

John Lockman says about this plan. "It would have been the height of folly in him thus to receive the enemy into the heart of his dominions and by attempting to break eight small chains, to have loaded his neck with one infinitely more weighty had he not at the same time so contrived matters as to be able to drive the Badagas out of the Kingdom when they should have put him in a condition to recover the royal power."—(*Travels of the Jesuits*).

35. *Madura Manual*—Part III.

1719 and Unni Kerala Varma the senior Tiruvadi of Jayasimhanad. Aditya Varma was succeeded by Ravi Varma. The power and authority of the nobles assumed such formidable proportions during his time that virtual anarchy became the order of the day. His inadequate standing army and financial embarrassment made the king quite powerless to save the people from the tyranny of the barons. Disputes between the ruler and the councillors of the Sri Padmanabha temple frequently led to clashes between the king's officers and the tenants of the *devaswam* lands. Side by side with this anarchaic conditions the people, especially those of Nanjanad, had also to face the repeated raids of the Madura forces. Matters were complicated by an unfortunate incident in Attingal. The English had established a factory at Ajengo to break the Dutch monopoly of the pepper trade. A number of English Factors, it is said, were murdered at the instance of the queen of Attingal. In spite of this, however, the English concluded a treaty with Travancore evidently to get rid of the Dutch.

Ravivarma was succeeded by Ramavarma who was a weak ruler. His weakness and unpopularity, since he was an adopted prince, were fully exploited by the ambitious nobles. The members of the other branches of the royal family fomented this ill-will between the ruler and the people. The Trivandrum temple itself organised opposition against the encroachment of royal authority within their dominion. Ramavarma realised his own weakness and the mounting hostility against him in the kingdom and deputed his nephew, prince Martanda Varma, to conclude a new treaty with the English. This was concluded in 1723 on the following terms.

1. The king of Travancore by the end of June of the current year is bound to order the erection of a fort in his country at collache and give the die with the

people to coin *fanams* on account of the Honourable Company.

2. "If, within the time specified a fort is not built at collache, the Honourable Company may bring the die to Ajengo and the Government will be obliged to send men to Ajengo to coin the *fanams*.

3. "The fortress which is to be built shall be at the cost of Government....."

4. "The artillery and main items of war for the fort the Honourable Company is obliged to supply

5. "The Government will be in league and united in good friendship with the Honourable Company..."³⁶

In signing this treaty with the English the young (barely twenty) prince Martanda Varma saw an opportunity of strengthening the hand of the sovereign with their help. But the English, unlike their European rivals, were not actuated by motives of conquest at this time. Therefore, though they were desirous of strengthening the royal authority by breaking the power of the Nayar nobility, they refused to give military assistance to the king as it would undermine their position as traders. Therefore he was forced to look outside Travancore for support. He persuaded his uncle to conclude a treaty with the Nayaks of Madura. "In 1726 A. D. King Ramavarma in consultation with and on the advice of prince Martanda Varma, his nephew,.....determined once and forever to completely break the confederacy of the *yogakkars* and the *Ettuvittil pillamars*. With this object the king..... entered into a treaty with the Madura Nayak by which he acknowledged the Madura sovereignty and agreed to pay a sum of three hundred rupees annully as tribute for supplying a suitable force to punish the nobles and other rebels."³⁷ The treaty is of far-reaching

36. T. S. M.—p. 252.

37. Nagam Ayya: *State Manual*—Vol. I, p. 327.

importance in the history of Travancore. It showed that the young prince Martanda Varma realised that the suppression of the overmighty Nayar nobility was an indispensable prerequisite to the establishment of peace and good government in the country. The treaty concluded with his erstwhile inveterate enemy also showed Martanda Varmas's determination to strengthen the royal authority by making a treaty with the devil himself if necessary. This was a blow aimed at the decayed feudal institutions of Travancore and for that matter of the whole of Kerala.

CHAPTER IV

A Political Geography of Malabar at the Close of the 15th Century

Its peculiar customs and social organisation sharply distinguish Kerala (which extends from Mount Delli N. Lat. $12^{\circ}2''$ to Cape Comorin) from the rest of India. That chain of natural fortresses, called the Western Ghats not only prevented the land from any effective intercourse with the people of the East Coast but it also imparted a uniqueness to the land and its people. But though Malabar formed a single geographical and ethnical unit as of old, at the close of the 15th century it was divided politically into a number of petty principalities, each under a Raja or a chief who possessed unfettered independence in internal affairs but was bound by a nominal allegiance to one of the major Rajas. These principalities were so small and so numerous that a Malayalam proverb says that "though two steps might be taken in one territory, a third must pass the boundary." Only three rulers possessed full sovereign rights at the close of the 15th century; the *Kolattiri* or the king of Cannanore, the *Samutiri* or the king of Calicut and the *Tiruvadi* or the king of Travancore. All the other rulers and chiefs owed nominal allegiance to one or other of these rulers. Among such minor chiefs mention should be made of the Rajas of Tanur, Cranganore, Cochin, Mangat, Idapalli, Vadakkumkur, Kayamkulam and Quilon. Neither these Rajas or chiefs nor even the major Rajas possessed unfettered sovereign authority. It was checked to a considerable extent by the Nayar nobles like the *Kaimals* and the *Kartavus* who possessed armies of their own. The feudal nature of the military organisation made even the major rulers dependent upon the willing obedience of these Nayar soldiers.

Thus the almost total absence of a unifying central power was the outstanding feature of Malabar politics on the eve of the Portuguese arrival. This enabled the Portuguese to play off one against the other and establish their political authority in many parts of the West Coast.

The Kolattiri :— Of the three sovereign rulers, the Kolattiri whose dominions lay in the northern most part of Malabar was the least powerful. There was no love lost between the Zamorin and Kolattiri. The latter refused to recognise the sovereignty of the king of Calicut and prided on his higher social status—he was a Kshatriya. Not much is known about the original history of the Kolattiris. While the *Keralamahatmyam* says that Parasurama installed a *Soma* Kshatriya as the king of Kolattunad and assigned to him the tract over which he was appointed to rule, the *Keralotpatti* assigns the emergence of Kolattunad as an independent power to the partition of Kerala by Cheraman Perumal.

It is not certain whether the Kolattiri was independent of the Perumal or not. His independence in the 8th century alluded to by Dr. Gundbert is called in question by Mr. Logan. But Logan's contention was based upon the Muslim tradition about the introduction of Islam into Malabar. He says that "the last of the Perumals had sufficient influence over the north Kolattiri to induce him to grant a site for a mosque at Madayi and to endow the institution."¹ But the Muslim tradition does not allude to any order given by the Perumal to the Kolattiri. Further his prime concern in welcoming the Muslims in his dominions was the encouragement of his trade in spices and later he consented with equal grace to the building of churches by the Portuguese.

There are reasons to believe that the Kolattiri was a powerful ruler even as late as the 13th century. During

1. Logan : *op. cit.*—p. 238

that century the Travancore ruler proposed an adoption from that family but the latter refused and it was only through stratagem that the former was able to realise his object. Travancore is called the South Kolattiri and the *pulasambandham* (observing pollution at death) between the two perhaps started after this adoption. But the *Keralam-ihatmyam* says that the kings of Travancore and Kolathunad, installed as such originally by Parasurama, were cousins, being sons married according to the *marumakkatayam* system. This explanation is however untenable since the Travancore royal house was most likely of non-Malayali origin. In any case the refusal of the Kolattiri to have any connection with Travancore shows the importance of the former in Malabar during that period.

Marco Polo gives the earliest information about Kolattunad. Writing in the 13th century he says that the "kingdom of Eli" (Kolathunad) was "tributary to nobody.....pepper and ginger grow there and other spices in quantities. The king is rich in treasure, but not very strong in forces. The approach to his kingdom however is so strong by nature that no one can attack him, so he is afraid of nobody."² After Ibn Batuta, who also refers to it, little is known about the history of this kingdom till the arrival of the Portuguese.

Though nominally the Kolattiri exercised his authority from "Kasarcodde in the north to Korappula in the south" there were numerous small kingdoms within the kingdom. The chief principalities were, Cannanore under a Muslim Raja, Randattara under *Achanmars*, Kottayam and Kadattanad.

Cannanore :— Ali Raja of Cannanore was the only Muslim chieftain in the whole of Kerala during this period. The *Keralotpatti* traces the family history of Ali Raja back to Cheraman Perumal. The Perumal

2. K. P. Padmanabha Menon : *History of Kerala*—Vol. I, p. 192.

invited a Muhammadan and his wife to come from their native land of Aryapuram and installed him at Cannanore. He was called "Ali Raja" Lord of the Deep or Sea (Ali-Deep). But the prevailing tradition goes against this story. The chieftain of Cannanore was not a Muhammadan at first. He was a Nayar by name *Aiyakulangara Nayar*, one of the ministers of the Kolattiri who embraced Islam and changed his name to Muhammad Ali in the beginning of the 12th century. But the Raja continued to entertain his services because of his loyalty and wealth. His successors were known as *Mammali Kitavus* (children of Muhammad Ali) who became the hereditary ministers of the Kolattiri.³ Ali Raja is said to have conquered some of the Maldive Islands in or about 1183 A. D. The Laccadive Islands which had been colonised by the Kolattiri were given over to Ali Raja for an annual payment of 18,000 *fanams*. The date of this colonisation and transaction could not be determined. In the beginning of the 16th century the Maldive king was a tributary of the Raja of Cannanore. But in spite of their power and influence the Muslim Rajas of Cannanore continued to remain loyal to their sovereign. It is said that Muhammad Ali and his successors were admitted to all the important counsels of the Kolattiri and that "they used to stand on such occasions with sword point resting on the box implying that whatever was determined on they would find the money to do it."⁴

Later, however, when the power of the Kolattiri declined they assumed their independence but not before the 17th century. When Sheik Zeinuddin wrote they could not have occupied an independent position in Malabar. The Muslim historian refers to them only

3. A different version is given by M. M. D. L. T. in his *History of Hyder Shah alias Hyder Alikhan and of his son Tipoo Sultan*. "This Ali, son of one of the most rich and powerful Moplahs had the good fortune in his youth to be beloved by the daughter of Raja of Cannanore a Nair prince. The father in spite of the diversity of religion.....consented to the marriage of his daughter with Ali and dying left him his principalities....."

4. Logan: *op. cit.*—p. 362.

in one or two places.⁵ Had he been independent and powerful at that time Zeinuddin might have spoken more about the only Muslim ruler in Malabar. After he became independent he introduced new methods of administration and increased his trade with other countries.

Randattara :— The small principality lying to the south-east of Cannanore was under *Achanmar* or Nayar nobles. Tradition says that on his way to Mecca Cheraman Perumal spent one day in Pantalayini Kollam and then proceeded to the island of Dharmapattanam or Tellichery. This island adjoins the *Randattara Achanmar's* territory and therefore *Randattara* is called the "*Poyonad*" (the country whence Perumal went or set out on his journey to Mecca). The *Achanmar* were powerful nobles who enjoyed unfettered freedom in internal affairs and possessed the right of private war.

Kottayam :— To the east of *Randattara* lies *Kottayam* whose chief was styled the Raja of *Kottayam*. He was also called the *Puranattu Raja* (the Foreign King) since he was believed to have been descended from foreign Kshatriya Rajaputs. They enjoyed more power and status than the *Achanmar* their influence extending over the mountainous country of Wynad. They differed from ordinary Malabar families, presumably because of their foreign descent, in not recognising the eldest female as the head of the family. Though nominally under the sovereignty of the *Kolattiri* they were independent for all practical purposes. Later they shook off even this nominal allegiance and secured complete independence and the "*Cotiote Raja*"—as the English

5. On one occasion Zeinuddin pays a tribute to him for championing the cause of Muslims against the Portuguese. "And during the warfare against the infidel Franks Alee Azrajar a Muhammadan leader of great consideration (upon whom may God shower down his best blessings) greatly distinguished himself with superior zeal and bravery and lavished his wealth without sparing the cause." (K. P. P. Menon: *op. cit.*—Vol. ii.)

called the Kottayam Raja—was one of the first with whom the Company came into formal relations.

Kadattanad :— The Raja of Kadattanad was a comparatively less powerful chieftain during this period. Later Kadattanad became famous as the centre of well equipped *Kalaris* or Gymnasiums and as the scene of several deeds of daring of a fearless hero named Taccholi Otenan. Its ruler was called 'Balenuor' or *Valunnavar* (one who rules or governs, a governor). When the Zamorin was fighting the ruler of Polanad the latter fled with his family and took refuge under the Kolattiri. From one of the ladies of this family is descended the ruler of Kadattanad. It was only during the Portuguese period that Kadattanad became semi-independent and its rulers styled themselves "the Lords of the Sea."

The Zamorin :— Southwards from Kadattanad begin the dominions of the Zamorin. On the eve of the Portuguese arrival the Zamorin's authority extended from Putupattanam in the north (28 miles from Calicut) to almost Arukutty in the south—the present border line between Cochin and Travancore. Owing, however to the unique position he occupied as the protector of *Mamankam* his influence and sway extended practically from Cannanore to Quilon. He was undoubtedly the richest and most powerful ruler in the whole of Kerala. Both Indian and foreign records bear ample testimony to the important position occupied by Calicut at this time. The accounts given by the Indian records both literary and historical are confirmed and supplemented by foreign travellers like Ibn Batuta (1324) from Tangier Ma Huan (1403) from China, Abdul Razaak (1442) from Persia and Athanasius Nikitin (1468-74) from Russia. Their writings disclosed the extensive trade carried on by the city⁶ and its consequent wealth. The

6. "One of the great ports of the district of Malabar in which merchants from all parts are found".—(Ibn. Batuta). "Much pepper is grown on the hills. Cocoanuts are extensively cultivated, many farmers owning a thousand trees."—(Ma Huan). "Calicut is a perfectly secure harbour, which, like that of Ormuz,

security of the harbour, the justice of the ruler, the high standard of honesty of the people⁷ and the all-round importance of Calicut during this period.

Calicut at this time was a maritime city eight miles in circumference. Though the Hindus constituted the bulk of the population the whole foreign trade was concentrated in the hands of a few Muslims who were therefore the wealthiest people of the city. They had settled in Calicut long before the arrival of the Portuguese. Writing in 1324 Ibn Batuta says "the greatest ports of the Muhammadan merchants of this place are so wealthy that one of them can purchase the whole freightage of such vessels as put in here and fit out others like them." These Arab traders scrupulously refrained from interfering in the politics of the State and thus gained the good-will of the successive rulers of Calicut.

The only two rulers in Kerala who did not recognise the sovereignty of the Zamorin during this period were the North and the South Kolattiris. The area between these two kingdoms recognised his overlordship. This does not mean however that the Zamorin had unfettered authority in dispensing with the affairs of all principalities in this area. He rarely went against the Malabār custom which prevented the sovereign from deposing a rebellious feudatory or annexing his dominions.

brings together merchants from every city and every country. In it are to be found abundance of precious stones articles brought thither from maritime countries and especially from Abyssinia, Zirbad and Zanzibar."—(Abdur Razaak). "The country produces pepper, ginger, colons, plants, muscat, cloves, cinnamon, aromatic roots,.... and every description of spices, and everything is cheap and servants and maids are very good."—(Athanasius Nikitin).

7. "In other parts a strange practice is adopted when a vessel sets sail for a certain point, and suddenly is driven by a decree of providence into another roadstead, the inhabitants under the pretext that the wind has driven it there, plunder the ship. But at Calicut, every ship, whatever place it may come from, or wherever it may be bound, when it puts into this port, is treated like other vessels and has no trouble of any kind to put up with (Abdur Razaak).

Further, since the stability of his power depended upon the willing obedience of these feudal chiefs, the Zamorin, like other major rulers, seldom interfered in their internal affairs. Therefore, as in the dominion of the Kolattiri, many Rajas and Chiefs enjoyed virtual independence. Though a few of them were in perpetual revolt a good number of them remained loyal to their sovereign.

Kurumbarnad :— The Kurumbarnad Raja was at first under the Kolattiri. The *Keralotpatti* narrates an incident which led to its invasion by the Zamorin. The Viceroy of the Kolattiri at Pantalayini Kollam eloped with a princess belonging to the Zamorin's family and in order to wipe away this insult the Zamorin invaded and occupied Kollam. This led to an offer of peace by the Kolattiri which the Zamorin accepted on the cession of the territory he had already occupied.

The Kurumbarnad family was closely connected with the Kottayam family. The *Keralotpatii* says that at the partition of Kerala the Raja obtained 36 *katams* of land and 30,000 Nayars. They always supported the Zamorin in his aggressive undertakings and contributed to the extension of his authority.

Payyormala Nayars whose lands lay to the north of Kurumbarnad were powerful and almost independent chieftains who owed nominal allegiance, at first to the Kurumbarnad Raja and later to the Zamorin. Tamarasseri, a piece of land lying between Polanad and Kurumbarnad, was subject to the Kottayam Raja.

Polanad was the country round Calicut. It was one of the first victims of the Zamorin's aggression and was immediately subordinate to him. Beypore, south of Calicut, and south Parappanad were under Kshatriya rulers, independent for all practical purposes, but recognising the sovereignty of the Zamorin. The

Pulavayi Nayars acknowledged the allegiance of both the Kurumbarnad and the Zamorin Rajas, while Ramnad, Chernad and Ernad all acknowledged the latter as their direct ruler.

Valluvanad :— Valluvanad was one of the oldest royal houses of Malabar. That it existed as more or less an independent kingdom even before Cheraman Perumal is certain. The Jewish copper plate of A. D. 700 refers to the Valluvanad Raja as “Rairan Chattan, owner of Valluva Province.....” Mr. Logan thinks that Valluva might be another form of Pallava and that Valluvanad might mean the Pallava country. Considering the importance of the Pallavas in the history of South India an invasion of some parts of Malabar by them could not be ruled out of possibility. “It is quite possible that the dynasty is still represented in Malabar by the Vellodi or Valluvanadi caste of Nayars.”⁸ Whatever be their origin there is no doubt that on the occasion of the so called partition of Kerala in the 9th century the Raja held a distinguished position in the whole of Kerala. Cheraman Perumal regarded him as the most powerful ruler and gave him the right to conduct the great *Mamankam* festival and to be its protector. In this case he appears to have superseded even the claims of his lawful heir, the Raja of Cochin. From 825 A. D. till he was defeated by the Zamorin, the Valluvanad Raja enjoyed the unique privilege of being the *Rakshapurusha* of Mamankam.

The Raja is also known as *Valluva Konatiri* and *Arangot Utayavar* which means the chieftain who holds the country on the other side of the river.⁹

Though he exercised sovereign rights over a large portion of South Malabar formerly his territory was

8. Logan: *Malabar (1906)*—p. 258.

9. In the present context the Ponnani river, to the north of which lay his dominions.

gradually broken up by the Zamorin. There was constant fighting between these two rulers which was ended only by the Mysorean invasion. Though the Valluvanad Raja ceded large parts of his dominions to his rival he still remained an independent ruler of all those places which had not been ceded to the Zamorin.

Palghat:- To the south of Valluvanad lay the dominions of the Palghat Raja. Though independent of the Zamorin, he was in constant dread of the latter's incursion into his dominions. Little is known about the early history of his dynasty. Cheraman Perumal does not mention it on the occasion of the partition. As he was on intimate terms with Cochin, an inveterate foe of the Zamorin, there were occasional conflicts between the Zamorin and the Palghat Raja. On one occasion the Zamorin sent his own son against Palghat. This enterprising general "drew a wedge right through the centre of Palghat splitting it into the two divisions of Temmalapuram and Vatamalappuram, neither of which could be directly reached from the other. This new conquest of the Zamorin was named *Natuwattam*."¹⁰ Ever since this episode there had been continued warfare between these two rulers till the Palghat Raja had to turn to foreign help and invite Haidar to invade Malabar.

Cochin:- Cochin was indubitably the most important among the minor powers of this period. According to tradition it came into existence on the division of Kerala by Cheraman Perumal. The first king of Cochin was the son of a sister of the last Perumal and thus his direct and lawful heir according to the Malabar law of succession. Therefore this dynasty was considered to be the noblest in the whole of Malabar. The name of the first king was said to be Vira Kerala Varma who is referred to in the Syrian copper plate as the "King of Kings, Vira Kerala Chakravarti". "Vira

10. K. V. Krishna Iyer: *op. cit.*—p. 133.

Kerala" thus became a part of the full official designation of the rulers of Cochin. Very little is known about the early history of Cochin. The dynasty is called *Perumpadappu swarupam* because "Cochin is that part of Kerala which came under the eldest son of Cheraman Perumal's sister by Perumpatappu Nambutiri."¹¹

In or about the first century A. D. a number of Jews and Christians immigrated into Kerala and settled in Cochin. They gradually became so important a community that they were given the powers and privileges of *Naduwalis* (nobles).

Cochin was a powerful kingdom in the years immediately following the departure of Perumal. As the Perumal's direct heir, the Raja of Cochin occupied a unique position in Kerala. But his power was gradually weakened by dissensions in the royal family and frequent incursions into his dominions by the Zamorin. We have already seen how the *Kurmatsaram* divided Kerala into two the Rajas of Calicut and Cochin fighting on either side. "For four or five centuries the rivalry between these two powers was the important factor in the politics of Kerala,"¹² The Raja's claim for independence were summarily rejected by the Zamorin by a series of invasions and he was reduced to the position of a feudatory by the end of the 13th century. Though the kingdom of Cochin extended from Purakkad in the south to Chetwai in the north nominally, even in the dominions immediately surrounding the capital the Nayar nobles had virtually set aside the Raja's authority. He did not possess the right to wear crown or coin money. The peculiar custom of forcing the eldest member of the family to retirement¹³ led to constant internal dissensions

11. K. P. P. Menon: *op. cit.*—p. 92.

12. C. Achyutha Menon: *The Cochin State Manual*.

13. See Ch. VII.

and the Zamorin never failed to fish in the troubled waters.

Paliyat Achan:- Though the Paliyat Achan was the hereditary Prime Minister and the Commander-in-Chief of Cochin he was the ruling chief of his own territories round Chennamangalam, the seat of his ancestral home. The origin of the family is traced to Cheraman Perumal. It is said that the Raja of Cochin was entrusted with the service of 42 ministers by the Perumal of whom the chief was Paliyat Achan. He possessed vast estates throughout the kingdom and had so much wealth and influence that at times he openly defied the authority of his overlord. The power and influence of this family increased during the Portuguese period. One of them, Paliyat Komi Achan, was chiefly responsible for the alliance between Cochin and Travancore in the year 1761 which led to the reinstatement of the ruler of Cochin.

Apart from Paliyat Achan there were other land proprietors and nobles under the Raja of Cochin such as "Coddachery Caimal," "Changarancoda Caimal" and Anji Kaimals whose power and privileges greatly undermined royal authority.

Cranganore:- Cranganore is a small principality lying to the north of Cochin at the southern end of the Chetwai island. This tract of land is supposed to be a grant to the ruling family by Cheraman Perumal. As the capital of the Cheras it had been the centre of Kerala civilisation in ancient days. It was also the centre of trade in the whole of Malabar and the Phoenicians, Egyptians, the Greeks and the Romans had been acquainted with this city. The city was then known as *Muyirikodu* Muziris of Pliny and Muchiri of the Tamils. The *Periplus* says "Muziris is a city at the height of prosperity, frequented as it is by ships from Asriake.....and from Egypt." But this early glory of Cranganore had disappeared by the ninth

century and eventually a new *swarupam* or dynasty came to be established there. It is doubtful whether the unfortunate Rajas of this *swarupam* were ever independent. They found themselves freed from the yoke of the Cochin ruler only to be under the more powerful Calicut ruler, and when finally they became independent of both they were placed under the protection of the Dutch East India Company. During the period under review they were actively supporting the Zamorin in his wars against Cochin. Their support was invaluable to the Zamorin because they commended the shortest route to Cochin.

An interesting feature of the administrative system of Cranganore is noted by Moens. "When important and embarrassing affairs have to be settled, which they feared would have had bad consequence, all the ministers would then come together.....When they could not agree, then had recourse to their idol in the big pagoda. A decision was then asked for from this idol who is supposed to be interrogated secretly by one of the most prominent and cunning ministers of the pagoda. It was then looked upon as an oracle even as the oracles of the ancients."¹⁴

Airur was a small principality ruled by a branch of the Cranganore House subject to the sovereignty of the Zamorin. The princes of Purakkad, Vatakkumkur, Parur and Mangatty, formally recognised the overlordship of Cochin and they were considered to be "the four pillars of Cochin state." The Raja of Purakkad was a Nambutiri Brahman and his country according to Vissecher "is very productive of rice and all the necessaries of life, so that this Raja is one of the wealthiest in Malabar."¹⁵ Parur was another principality under a Nambutiri ruler. "It is a beautiful piece of land.....there are warlike Nairs there. It produces

14. K. P. P. Menon: *op. cit.*—Vol. II, p. 106.

15. Vissecher: *Letters from Malabar*—L. 9.

annually 150 candies of pepper.....¹⁶. Vatakkumkur and Mangatty (Alangad) were ruled by high-caste Nayar chiefs, pepper being the important export of both. The Portugues called the former *Pimenta* or the pepper kingdom because of the excellent quality of pepper produced by it. These four principalities continued to exist with varying fortunes till they were annexed by Martanda Varma.

Idapally :— South of Alangad is the principality of Idapally ruled by a Brahman Raja. Though the State was small and not particularly rich or powerful it occupied an important place in Malabar. This was because the ruler was a Nambutiri of the highest class who traced his origin to Parasurama himself. The Idapally chief was an enthusiastic supporter of the Zamorin in his wars against Cochin and the Portuguese. The island of Cochin at first belonged to him but by the 15th century it came under the Raja of Cochin. In the 16th and 17th centuries "it was a kind of asylum.....to which people who were afraid of prosecution and punishment retreat and where they are safe." Because of the sacerdotal nature of the ruler the secular Rajas venerated him and even the ambitious Martanda Varma did not draw his sword against this Brahman ruler.

The influence of the Zamorin extended to all these places but not to the south of Vatakkumkur.

Travancore :— Though Travancore was an independent kingdom which refused to recognise the sovereignty of the Zamorin, its influence in Malabar politics during the period under review was negligible if not nil. Even under well known rulers like Ravivarma Kulasekhara it had more to do with the Tamil kingdoms in the East than with the Malabar principalities in the north. The Travancore royal family was only one of the five collateral branches which together constitute one *swarupam* or dynasty called Trippapur swarupam; the

16. Gollonnesse: *Memoirs*.

other four being Attingal, Quilon (Desinagnad or Signatty) 'Peritally' and 'Elayata' swarupams. In the 15th century their authority did not extend beyond Quilon. Between Quilon in the south and Vadakkumkur in the north there were two principalities which were unrelated to and independent of the Travancore ruler. They were Tekkumkur which "interposed and acted as buffer between the rival states of Travancore and Cochin" and Karunagappalli of which Māvelikkarā formed a part. There were two more principalities, Kayamkulam and Quilon, which were related to the Travancore royal house but which were virtually independent. The former was also known as *Odanad*, one of the eighteen nads into which Venad had originally been divided. In the Kottayam copper plate of Viraraghava Chakravarti the ruler of Odanad is cited as a witness along with those of Venad, and Ernad. It continued to enjoy virtual independence till it was annexed by Martanda Varma.

The kingdom of Quilon was known to the Europeans as Signatty, a corruption of Desinganad or Jayasimhanad. It was named after Jayasimha, the father of the illustrious Ravivarma Kulasekhara, who established his capital at Quilon and ruled over Travancore. The city was at one time a great political and commercial centre. Foreign travellers visited the city from the sixth century A. D. though it was known under different names for different travellers. Besides Solyman (852 A. D.), who refers to Quilon's trade with China, Al Kazurini (1263-75) and Marco Polo (1298) have left their accounts and impressions of this city. Among its products Marco Polo mentions ginger, pepper, brazil and indigo. "The merchants from Mauzi (China) and Arabia, and from the Levant come thither with their ships and merchandise and make great profits both by what they import and what they export." The accounts of subsequent travellers show, however, that the trade of Quilon was gradually on the decline.

Nevertheless the city was still an important one, for Ibn Batuta in the 14th century describes Quilon as one of the fairest cities of Malabar with splendid bazaars and wealthy merchants and Barbosa in the 16th century speaks of it as a "very great city..... with many great merchants..... whose ships traded to all the Eastern ports as far as Bengal, Pegu and the Archipelago." The gradual decline of the trade of Quilon was presumably due to the competition of Calicut for commercial supremacy.

Attingal was the maternal house of Travancore. It remained a separate principality till it was amalgamated with Travancore by Martanda Varma.

When the Portuguese came to Malabar they found Travancore a powerful kingdom. The Travancore ruler was called by them the *Roy Grande* "because he is greater in his dominions and in the state which he keeps than those of the Princes of Malabar."¹⁷

The political geography of Kerala briefly outlined above shows that a total absence of political unity was the outstanding feature of Malabar polity on the eve of the Portuguese arrival. Even major rulers depended upon the willing subordination of their tributary principalities and the Nayar militia. Annexation or amalgamation of a neighbouring principality ran counter to Malabar tradition and custom, and custom in mediaeval Malabar had the binding force of law. It was this absence of political unity that enabled the Portuguese, soon after their arrival, to obtain a monopoly in pepper trade and establish themselves as a power to be reckoned with in Malabar politics.

The Zamorin, however, had made the first attempt at establishing political unity when he became the *Rakshapurusha* of *Mamankam*. He rapidly advanced southwards towards Cochin and Travancore and forced

17. D'Barros: *op. cit.*

the former to recognise his overlordship. Of course the Zamorin never went against the prevailing custom; he never dethroned the reigning chiefs or annexed their territories. Zeinuddin says that "Whenever he (the Zamorin) commenced hostilities with any of the considerable chiefs of Malabar, after subduing them it was his practice to return to them their possessions, and the restitution, although sometimes delayed for a long time he made always in the end"¹⁸. "Therefore no radical change in the political set-up would have taken place even in the event of the whole Kerala coming under the Zamorin's suzerainty. The Nayar militia with the temple *sanketams* would still have been powerful enough to prevent the Government from becoming an autocracy. And it would have been possible for the nominal sovereign to rally all the forces round him against the foreigner. But the Portuguese appeared on the scene before the Zamorin had finish his task. They checked his progress with the help of other Malabar chiefs and this frustrated the hopes of a United Kerala that the Zamorin had entertained. With the arrival of the Portuguese the Zamorin had to face not only the rivalry of a formidable foreign foe but the recalcitrant attitude of his subordinates as well, for the policy of the Portuguese ever since their arrival had been to turn the small powers against their sovereign. These powers were only too ready to oblige the Portuguese, knowing only too well that with their help they could defy their sovereign. Therefore though the Zamorin was ultimately victorious in his prolonged struggle against the Portuguese, he lost his position irrecoverably as the potential Emperor of a United Kerala.

18. The chief nobles who were thus reinstated were the Irvanad Nambiar, Kavalappara Nayar, Koratty Kaimal, Mannarghat Nayar and Punnathur Nambidi.

CHAPTER V

The Advent of the Portuguese



THE small and insignificant country of Portugal played such an important part in establishing and promoting intercourse between the East and the West that the Portuguese could be regarded as the pioneers of modern civilisation in India. A spirit of national independence was fostered among the Portuguese by Afonso Henriques who first took the title of the king of Portugal in 1140 A.D. after defeating the Arabs. The Arab rule in Spain during the middle ages established contact between the East and the West which stimulated the ambition of the Portuguese for commerce with the Orient and voyages of exploration began in 1412. It is said that two factors influenced these voyages. They were Prester John and pepper. Prester John was believed to be a Christian king of the East. According to one version his dominions were reputed to be in India but no one knew exactly where India was. This legend which had taken such a hold on the imagination of the people of Portugal was the immediate factor of influence in the discovery of India—it was one of the explorers sent in search of Prester John's dominions who arrived at Calicut.

Another factor that influenced these explorers was their desire for pepper. The spices of Malabar in general and pepper in particular always attracted the attention of foreigners. Pepper was "the cheapest but by no means the least useful of spices" that the Europeans got in such abundance from this country that Vissecher calls Malabar "the mother of pepper." It has been an article of export to European countries from the West Coast for centuries and, though it could be available from other countries in the East as well,

Malabar pepper was considered to be the best.¹ It was highly useful not only for seasoning food in general but for the preservation of meat consequent on the practice of seasonal slaughter of animals. According to Vissecher the Dutch purchased on the average 2,000,000 lbs. of pepper annually during their palmy days in Malabar. With this was added the desire for maritime exploration in the western countries of Europe especially Portugal.

This desire was given a great and lasting impetus by Prince Henry the Navigator who conceived the idea of reaching India by rounding the southern point of Africa. Dom Joao II who was as enthusiastic as his predecessors fitted out an expedition in 1486 under Bartholomew Diaz. Diaz rounded the Cape of Good Hope which opened the way for an expedition to India. Dom Manuel who succeeded Dom Joao in 1496 decided to complete the valuable project of his predecessor. A new expedition consisting of three ships specially constructed for the purpose and fully equipped and provisioned set sail from Lisbon on 8th July 1496 under Vasco da Gama.

Rounding the Cape after a stormy and perilous voyage the expedition reached Melinde, on the east coast of Africa at the end of April and received from the king of that place a pilot to direct Gama to Calicut. With the help of this pilot the Arabian Sea was crossed without difficulty and after a journey of ten months and eleven days the party reached Calicut on 20th May 1498.²

1. In the Imperial days it was considered to be an article of luxury by the Romans though Pliny failed to understand why people should take so great a fancy to such a hot article. A pound of white pepper was sold at 7 *dinars* or Rs. 2. Later when Attila was besieging Rome he demanded among other things 3000 lbs. of pepper as ransom for the city.—(Vide K. P. P. Menon, *op. cit.* Vol. IV, p. 395).

2. Ethel M. Pope: *India in the Portuguese Literature*—p. 19.

As a large crowd had gathered on the shore to witness the curious ships, the Portuguese decided not to land without hostages. Accordingly communications were opened with the Zamorin's officers. The Zamorin who was then at Ponnani sent a pilot to take their ships inside the harbour at Pantalayini Kollam where they could be safe from storms resulting from the outbreak of the monsoon. The *Kotwal* of Calicut was also instructed to receive the Portuguese and bring their captain with befitting honours to his palace at Calicut.

Gama and his followers landed on shore. But on their way their astonishment reached its height when they found people worshipping the image of a Goddess which they thought was Virgin Mary. This led them to the conclusion that all the people of India except the Muslim settlers were Christians. This confusion combined with their ignorance of the language led to many interesting incidents. "Here they took us..... to a large church.....of the size of a monastery.....and had at the principal door a bronze monument at the height of the mast of a ship and on the top of this monument was a bird..... And in the middle of the body of the church was a spire all of stone and it had a door in which a man could enter and a flight of steps leading to this door which was of bronze. And inside was a small image, which they said was of Our Lady... Here the chief captain prayed and we also with him. And we did not enter inside the chapel, because it was their custom that only certain men should enter who were in the service of the Church and whom they called Quafers.³ These (Quafers) wore some twisted threads over their left shoulder and the shoulder of their right arm just as the priests of the Gospel wear the stole. They sprinkled us with holy water and gave

3. Quafers is a corruption of the Arabic word which means Pagan. Evidently here it refers to the Brahmans.

us a white clay which the Christians in the country used to put on the foreheads and on their chests..."⁴

The Portuguese were received by the Zamorin in a special *darbar*. After the customary greetings Gama and the Zamorin retired to another chamber to talk about the mission on which Gama had come, the interpreter being the only other man present. Gama gave out that he was the ambassador of the king of Portugal "the most powerful of the Christian sovereigns in the west, both in extent of dominions, numbers of people and riches"⁵ who wished to enter into friendship with the Christian king of Calicut. The Zamorin expressed his satisfaction with the embassy and welcomed the Portuguese to his capital.

Next day Gama sent his presents to the Zamorin which consisted of "four scarlet cloaks, six hats, four branches of coral and twelve boxes each containing seven brass vessels, a chest of sugar, two barrels of oil and a cask of honey." This trifling present of the Portuguese combined with the prophecy current among the Arabs that a vessel would come from a far country bringing the conquerors of India, the destroyer of the Muhammadans and the enemies of the Hindus, convinced the Arabs that the Portuguese were a parcel of pirates and they also foresaw the danger to their trade from the competition of the new-comers.⁶ When these forebodings were represented to the Zamorin he was influenced by their arguments. He summoned da Gama to his presence and questioned as to who he really was. Gama protested against the suspicion cast by the Arabs and produced the letter of the Portuguese King which was to the following effect. "As soon as it became known to the king of Portugal that the king of Calicut was one of the mightiest kings of all the

4. Alvero Velho in *Roteiro*, quoted by Ethel M. Pope in *India and the Portuguese Literature*—p. 21.

5. K. V. Krishna Aiyar: *op. cit.*—p. 144.

6. K. M. Pannikar: *Malabar and the Portuguese*—p. 33.

Indies and a Christian, he was anxious to establish a treaty of amity and commerce with him that he might procure spices which were in great abundance in his country..... And if His Highness would give a licence to send for spices he would send many things from his kingdom..... or if these things were not satisfactory..... he was willing to send money, both gold and silver, to purchase the spices. And finally His Highness is requested to refer to the General for further information." This letter removed the suspicious of the Zamorin and he was willing to allow the Portuguese to establish trade with the Arabs and the Nāyars. But the sale was poor, partly because the Arabs had developed a dislike at first sight for the new-comers and partly because the commodities they had brought from Portugal were not suited to the Indian market. But the Portuguese attributed this lack of demand from the Indian side to the intrigues of the Arabs. When the monsoon season was over Gama sent a messenger to the Zamorin with some presents to inform him that it was time for him to go back to Portugal. He requested the Zamorin for permission to leave a Factor at Calicut to look after the remaining merchandise. The Zamorin required the usual custom duties to be paid. This disappointed Gama as he had thought that the Zamorin would instantly comply with his request. But instead, the Zamorin detained the Portuguese Factor as security for payment, which enraged the Portuguese Captain to such an extent that he seized some Nāyars and fishermen who had come on board to see the ships. The Zamorin then released the Factor but da Gama refused to send the fishermen back. The unyielding attitude of the Zamorin and the inveterate hostility of the Arabs convinced the Portuguese Captain that Calicut provided no fertile soil for sowing the seed of Portuguese trade in India. But the Portuguese themselves were to be blamed for this "Throughout the whole stay of the Portuguese, the *Samuri* showed no signs of treachery..... On the other hand da Gama's conduct in carrying

off the five men he had entrapped on board his ships is indefensible.⁷

Gama left Calicut in August 1498 and reached Cannanore where he was received by the Kolattiri who was a hereditary enemy of the Zamorin. Though the Zamorin had warned all other rulers of Malabar against the Portuguese, the Kolattiri entered into an informal agreement with them and helped them to load their ships from Cannanore they set sail in November and reached Portugal in 1499.

The triumphal return of Vasco da Gama to the capital of Portugal evoked so much enthusiasm among the people that the King, apart from granting a knighthood and a pension of 3,00,000 *Ries* per annum to Gama communicated the fact of the discovery to the king of Castile and the Court of Rome. The Portuguese king also assumed the title of the "Lord of the Conquest, Navigation and Commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia and India."

The expedition as a financial investment was so profitable⁸ that the Portuguese king resolved to establish permanent relations with India at any cost. The new Captain General of the expedition, Pedro Alvares Cabral, was instructed to make an alliance with the Zamorin if he was friendly or with his enemies if he was hostile. "If the Zamorin would not quietly consent or give sufficient loading to the ships, he should make cruel war upon him. If the Zamorin consented to the establishment of a factory and trade, the General was secretly to request him not to allow any of the Arabs of Mecca to remain or trade in Calicut or any other harbour in his dominions, and promise that the portuguese should supply all such commodities as used to be brought by the Arabs, of better quality and cheaper

7. Whiteway: *The Rise of Portuguese Power in India*—p. 82.

8. The first voyage not only paid its way but brought in a profit of sixty times the cost of the expedition—(*T.S.M.P.* 138).

price than theirs.”⁹ The policy of the Portuguese in Malabar outlined in these words was sure to lead to a rupture with the Zamorin in the long run.

To start with, however, Cabral who anchored off Calicut on September 13 was accorded a most cordial reception by the Zamorin. Rich presents were exchanged at the interview and a treaty of friendship “as long as the sun and moon should endure” was entered upon.

To test the strength and ability of his new allies, the Zamorin asked Cabral to capture a vessel belonging to Cochin which was attempting to pass the harbour. Cabral pursued it to Cannanore and captured it. This pleased the Zamorin, but roused the fears and jealousies of the Arabs who saw in the king’s favour for the Portuguese a danger to their own trade in Calicut. But the Zamorin assured them that he would not forsake them in favour of the strangers. Still they were not satisfied and they managed to prevent the Portuguese from obtaining any large supply of the commodities that they wished to have. The short-tempered Cabral was enraged at the conduct of the Arabs. He attacked and seized an Arab vessel that was loading in the harbour and this set fire to the sentiments of the Moplahs who were already chafing under the restraining influence of the Zamorin. An angry and excited mob of about 4,000 Moplahs surrounded the Portuguese factory razed it to the ground and slaughtered fifty Portuguese in sight of their countrymen. The Portuguese captain, in turn, seized ten large ships lying in the harbour and killed 600 Arabs. Three elephants that were found in one of the ships were killed and salted for the return voyage. Cabral then bombarded the city and caused much destruction. The Nayars and Moplahs were not able to hold their own against the unerring marksmanship of the Europeans. “The natives brought down to the shore such small

9. Castaneda: *The History of the Conquest of India*—pp. 396–97.

pieces of ordnance as they possessed, which they fired off against us, but without being able to do us any injury, whereas not a shot of ours missed taking effect....."¹⁰ The ships that had been captured at the harbour were burnt at night and sent against the shore. Avenging the death of his countrymen in this brutal fashion, Cabral sailed for Cochin with the remark that truth and honour were alien to Calicut and that people could not be trusted there.

This ill-advised action of Cabrel made the Zamorin the most determined enemy of the Portuguese. "The Portuguese king could not have selected a worse officer if he wanted to establish peaceful relations with the Indian rulers and carry on trade"¹¹ Cabrel lacked foresight, was tactless, hasty, short-tempered, inordinately vain and completely regardless of the sacrifice of human life. He slaughtered Moplahs and Nayars indiscriminately at the slightest provocation which made them believe that the Portuguese were uncivilised barbarians who could not be trusted.

Cabrel reached Cochin in December. He knew that the Raja of Cochin was subordinate to the Zamorin and that he was intriguing for sometime past to throw off this humiliating yoke. When the envoys of Cabrel met the Raja at his residence the latter was demonstrably pleased to hear about the quarrel between the newcomers and the Zamorin and readily granted permission to the Portuguese to build a factory in Cochin. Cabrel, in his turn, promised on behalf of his master not only to make him independent of the Zamorin but install him as Emperor in the Zamorin's palace at Calicut. "Thus were sown the seeds of a revolution in Kerala, which arrested the progress of the Zamorin and subjected the Raja of Cochin to three centuries of dependence upon a foreign power, more abject and humiliating than what he had sought to rid himself of."¹²

10. Castaneda: *op. cit.*

11. K. M. Panikkar: *Malabar and the Portuguese*—p. 40.

12. K. V. Krishna Aiyar: *op. cit.*—p. 160.

Meanwhile the Zamorin was able to equip himself with a fleet consisting of 80 ships and 1,500 men. This fleet was sent against Cabrel. When it was sighted off Cochin, Cabrel who did not want to risk the cargo he had collected with so much trouble, stole away from Cochin at night. In the hurry of his departure he not only took along with him the Nayar hostages who were on board the ship¹³ but abandoned the Portuguese who were on land numbering about thirty, among whom was Duarte Barbosa. On his way Cabrel met the Kolattiri, a determined opponent of the Zamorin, and concluded a treaty with him before sailing for Portugal.

Thus their first naval encounter with the Zamorin was not favourable to the Portuguese. But this was mainly due to "the incapacity and ineptitude of its commander." It is true that the people of Malabar were as good seamen as the people of Portugal. But the deciding factor in naval warfare was equipment and the Portuguese equipment was almost the best of the time. The Indians were able to do nothing against the new firearms and accurate marksmanship of the Portuguese. But despite all these, the Indian ships were able to harass the Portuguese trade and cause considerable damage to them for a long time.

The voyage of Cabrel was important for more than one reason. First, the breach with the Zamorin, due to the tactlessness of the Portuguese leader, became irreparable. The Portuguese realised that they should curtail the power and influence of the Zamorin before they could establish trade connections firmly with India. Secondly, the alliance with Cochin for which Cabrel was responsible radically altered the policy of the Portuguese. They were able to play fast and loose with

13. One of the Nayar hostages, a relation of the Raja, was treated with special honour by Cabrel and was presented to Dom Manuel. Eventually he was converted to Christianity and employed to draft the Portuguese king's letters to Malabar Princes. His tomb can still be seen in the cathedral of Evora.
—(K. M. Panikkar: *M. & D.*)

the discontented and powerless Raja of Cochin who hoped to regain his independence with the help of the new foreign power. The frequent interference of the Zamorin in the domestic affairs of Cochin, particularly during the time of succession to the throne was also partly responsible for the Raja's alliance with the Portuguese.

The alliance with Cochin was beneficial to the Portuguese both because of the submissiveness of the Raja and because of the superiority of Cochin harbour compared to "the open roadstead at Calicut." The Portuguese desired not a trading factory but a port where they could be safe and well-protected. A trading factory like the one at Calicut could not be defended against the attack of the enemy. It was situated on the mainland and was surrounded by the Zamorin's men. But "Cochin is separated from the mainland by the backwaters and so narrow that every part of it could be defended from the sea. Its acquisition gave the Portuguese a strong foothold from which no land power could expel them."¹⁴ Further, situated in the centre, Cochin provided a suitable and strategic point to control the politics and trade of the whole Kerala. From the commercial point of view the excellent "pepper country" which lay behind it¹⁵ provided much better opportunities to further their trade than Calicut. From the political point of view as well Cochin was well-suited to establish their power and influence in the country. The petty chieftains around the principal town were all engaged in incessant fighting against one another. There was no prince powerful or resourceful enough to resist the Portuguese aggression. Therefore they were able to establish themselves firmly in the centre and gradually dominate the neighbouring areas as well. With the help of his enterprising Moplah traders the Zamorin could afford to quarrel with the Portuguese; but Cochin had no other trader on which it could rely

14. K. M. Panikkar: *Malabar and the Portuguese*—p. 45-46.

15. viz Parur, Vatakkumkur and Alangad.

for support. Therefore the Portuguese were certain of having the chief on their side, as he could look to them only to support his position.¹⁶

Though the return of Cabrel after a long absence had dissipated his earlier optimism about India, the Portuguese king, Dom Manuel, inspired by religious, profit and prestige motives, decided to fit out another expedition to maintain permanently the Portuguese connection with India. The high-sounding title that Dom Manuel had assumed¹⁷ would remain an empty phrase if Cabrel's experience in India were to occur again. To restore the Portuguese prestige it was therefore essential that a larger fleet under an abler captain should be sent to India. Further the king also desired the propagation of Christianity among the Indians. Therefore a new Armada consisting of about 20 ships was placed under the control of Vasco da Gama who was to retaliate against the Zamorin.

“The role of da Gama now was not that of a messenger as it had been in his first voyage, but of an avenger”.¹⁸ The catalogue of inhuman cruelties which he committed in Malabar on his second visit forms a blot in the history of Portugal. Off Cannanore he came upon a ship containing about 300 pilgrims returning from Mecca. The ship belonged to the Zamorin whom Gama regarded as his worst enemy. The ship was seized and the goods were plundered. After removing all the merchandise to his own vessel, Gama set fire to the ship and the pilgrims perished to a man. The loot was said to have consisted of as many as 72,000 ducats in cash and 10,000 in goods.¹⁹

Concluding a commercial treaty with the Kolattiri, Gama proceeded to Calicut. Ignorant of his inhuman

16. Whiteway: *op. cit.*—p. 80.

17. See *supra*—p. 70.

18. K. V. Krishna Aiyar: *op. cit.*—p. 162.

19. Jayne: *Vasco da Gama and his Successors*—p. 66.

cruelty the Zamorin sent messages of peace, but Gama replied by hanging the messengers. When the Zamorin said he was prepared to come to an agreement, Gama insisted as a preliminary that all the Arabs in the city should be expelled and, when this impossible and arrogant demand was refused, he began a bombardment of the city. Gama made no attempt to land as his object was not to capture but to destroy the city. The local guns made a deafening noise but their bark was greater than their bite, while the well-directed and vigorous discharge of the Portuguese burnt all the huts within its reach and destroyed many godowns in the bazaar near the beach. About 24 rice vessels coming from Mangalore at this time were seized with their crew. Gama "ordered his men to cut off their hands, ears and noses and a Brahman who had gone to him disguised as a friar was also similarly treated..... They were then put on board, heaped one on the top of the other, and covered with mats and dry leaves; the sails were then set for the shore and the vessel set on fire. The friar with all the hands and the ears that had been cut off, was sent on shore by himself in a small vessel, which was not fired, with a palm leaf letter to the king, telling him to have a currey made to eat of what his friar brought him".²⁰

This outrage of Gama convinced the Zamorin that even if peace was possible with the Portuguese it was not desirable. Had the Portuguese fleet been entrusted to a statesman of average tact and ability he would have succeeded in gaining the friendship and co-operation of the Zamorin and both the parties would have been immensely benefitted. Just as the Portuguese were anxious to establish trade with Malabar which supplied them with the precious commodity of pepper and other spices, the Zamorin was also equally anxious to maintain a durable Portuguese connection which would enable him to raise his navy and artillery to the level

20. Danvers: *Portuguese in India*—Vol. I, p. 85,

of those of the advanced countries of the world. But the tactless policy of the Portuguese, begun by Cabrel and continued by Gama, frustrated all hopes of establishing peace with them. They offended the Zamorin and his people in all possible ways, plundering and burning his ships, bombarding his capital, and encouraging the Raja of Cochin to rebel against him. As Dr. Francis Day observes in *The Land of the Perumals* "Gama tortured messengers, executed ambassadors and his deeds were a blot on the Christian nation, and a disgrace to the name of humanity....."²¹ The result was that successive Zamorins occupied the throne with a mission in life to expel the Portuguese from Malabar and decided "to expend the whole kingdom if necessary" to fulfill that mission.

After bombarding Calicut for three full days Vasco da Gama set sail for Cochin and received the envoys sent by the Raja. After the customary exchange of presents and gifts the Portuguese were allowed to load their ships with merchandise. It was after these ships were sent safely to Portugal that the interview between the Raja and Gama took place and the latter came out in his true colours. As a condition precedent to the establishment of friendship between Cochin and the Portuguese, Gama demanded that there should be a fixed rate at which merchandise should be delivered to the Portuguese, that they should be permitted to raise factories and storehouses wherever they wished, and that no one else should be permitted to do so. The Raja was genuinely surprised and naturally hesitated to grant these conditions as it would simply mean changing masters as between the Zamorin and the Portuguese. Gama, in anger, broke up the interview and returned to his fleet. The Raja hurriedly followed him and begged his forgiveness as he knew fully well that the vindictive and cruel temper of the Portuguese captain would lead to the destruction

21. Dr. Francis Day: *The Land of the Perumals*—p. 85.

of Cochin just as it had led to the bombardment of Calicut. The Raja promised to concede all his demands if they were given in writing. "The blame of the misunderstanding was laid on the stupidity of the interpreter and the interests of Portugal and Cochin were discovered to be identical."²² Accordingly a new treaty was signed between Cochin and Portuguese. "The Raja made only one stipulation which was that no cows should be slaughtered in his dominions."²³

Meanwhile the Zamorin began great preparations to realise his cherished ambition of the expulsion of the Portuguese from Cochin. In order to avoid the losses and miseries which war would bring with it he at first tried diplomacy. The Raja of Cochin was made acquainted with the barbarous and cruel nature of the Portuguese and was assured that if he would renounce his connection with them he could gain the lasting and ungrudging friendship of the Zamorin. The *Keralapalama* describes how in his final letter before the outbreak of the war the Zamorin asked the Raja of Cochin whether he wanted the friendship of a foreigner or the friendship of Calicut. But the Raja turned a deaf ear to all these appeals and said that he would not be guilty of surrendering his new friends.

The Zamorin was also trying in the meantime to spy out the extent of the strength and weakness of his enemies. One of his spies, a Nambutiri, feigning an admiration for Christianity, and his willingness to become a Christian, succeeded so far as to make the Portuguese captain invite him to the ships. But his silly ambition of seizing the captain himself, instead of being content with what he achieved and withdrawing tactfully, doomed him. Gama came to know that he was a spy and allowed him to walk into the trap. After listening to all that he had to say Gama tortured him and in his agony he confessed to be a spy. "His

22. Day: *op. cit.*—p. 86.

23. *Ibid.*

lips and ears were cut off and with a pair of dog's ears sewn to his head he was sent back to Calicut." ²⁴

The failure of diplomacy left no room for the Zamorin but to declare war on Cochin. He had already assembled 50,000 Nayars at Ponnani and collected a large naval force under Koja Kassim with a view to attack Gama off Cochin. But the Portuguese captain who had got all he required—the virtual subordination of the Raja of Cochin and seven vessels of cardamom and other spices—did not want to risk his cargo by defending his ally. His sole interest was to see that the valuable merchandise reached Lisbon safely and as early as possible. Therefore turning a deaf ear to the entreaties of the Raja to remain and protect him against the Zamorin he left Cochin with his cargo. The Raja was thus left alone to face the storm that he had created for the sake of his faithless ally.

CHAPTER VI

The Portuguese Fight for Power

THE Zamorin fully knew the danger which lay in the alliance between Cochin and the Portuguese. It was clear to him that if the Portuguese were able to establish themselves in Cochin, or for that matter anywhere in Malabar, all Malabar princes in the long run would be forced to recognise their authority. At first he sought the help of diplomacy to realise his ambition and that having failed he decided on war. But just before the outbreak of war he came to know that Gama had sailed for Portugal leaving his ally in the lurch. So the Zamorin made one more attempt to avert the war. His hope that the departure of Gama would open the eyes of the Raja of Cochin prompted him to ask the Raja to surrender the remaining Portuguese to him or, in case his honour forbade that, at last to send them out of Cochin. This appeal of the Zamorin received the support of the officers and nobles of the Raja of Cochin himself. They endeavoured to persuade the Raja to deliver up the Portuguese whom he had taken under his protection partly because of their fear of the threatened invasion but chiefly because of their conviction that the Portuguese were treacherous and untrustworthy, "alien by birth and arrogant in their behaviour."¹ But the Raja rejected all their counsels "preferring to submit to all the anticipated evils of invasion rather than to commit such a breach of faith"² He continued to believe in Gama's promise that he would make the Raja the ruler of Malabar and refused to yield to public opinion.

The Zamorin thereupon summoned a council of nobles and pointed out to them that the prosperity of

1. The *Keralapalama*—p. 35.

2. Danvers: *The Portuguese in India*—Vol. I, p. 94.

Calicut was largely due to the mercantile enterprise of the Moplahs. He contrasted the friendly way in which they had behaved for the last 600 years with the conduct of the Portuguese who within four years brought about so much loss and disaster to Malabar. He pointed out that they had also openly encouraged the Raja of Cochin to rebel against the Zamorin and that therefore the Raja should be adequately punished and the Portuguese expelled from Cochin. The whole council agreed with this except the Zamorin's nephew whom the Portuguese called "Nambiatirin". He held the Arabs who dreaded the loss of their trade responsible for the quarrel between the Zamorin and the Portuguese. But his objection was waived aside and the Zamorin determined on a punitive expedition against Cochin.

The plan of the invasion was to attack Cochin both by land and sea. The Zamorin started from Ponnani at the head of his army while a large fleet manned by the Moplahs set sail for Cochin to blockade it. When the Zamorin arrived at Idapalli and the Calicut ships entered the Cochin backwater, Vincent Sodre, the Portuguese Captain, arrived with his squadron at Cochin. But in spite of the earnest request of the Portuguese and the Raja to assist them Sodre sailed away on the excuse that it was the best time to plunder the Muhamadan ships in the Red Sea. The handful of Portuguese in Cochin were thus left to the feeble protection of the Raja. However, the Zamorin's attempt to cross the frontier by forcing the passage of the Chetwai river near Cranganore island, was not successful as the heir-apparent of Cochin, Prince Narayan, at the head of 5,500 Nayers, repelled the attack and succeeded in defending the island. Meanwhile the fleet that entered the Cochin backwater effected a blockade which brought about a famine in the city. The Zamorin also bribed the Cochin paymaster. It was not possible, moreover, to send provisions regularly to Prince Narayan and consequently his

followers began to desert him. Taking advantage of these circumstances the Zamorin attacked the Cochin forces already thinned in number. After a protracted resistance the Cochin prince was overpowered and killed along with two of his nephews.

The panic that followed in Cochin was so intense that people clamoured for the immediate abandonment or death of the Portuguese. The Zamorin again sent envoys to the Raja of Cochin declaring that he only wanted the Portuguese to be expelled from Malabar. When this was refused the Zamorin advanced to Cochin, defeated and wounded the Raja and carried fire and sword into the country. Accompanied by his family and European allies the Raja of Cochin retired to Vaipin. The Zamorin could not attack him there as it lay within the jurisdiction of a temple. So after establishing a strong garrison at Cochin he returned to Calicut.

The outbreak of monsoon put a temporary stop to further operations. During the next three months when he stayed at his capital the Zamorin was chiefly employed in reorganising his artillery. He realised that if the Portuguese, who were sure to return soon and begin war in dead earnest, should be successfully resisted it could be possible only by their own superior weapons. For this purpose he employed in his service two Italians, Pero Antonio and Joa Maria who had deserted Cochin after the death of prince Narayan. They helped him to cast as many as 400 guns.

Towards the close of the monsoon nine Portuguese ships arrived under their commanders, Affonso de Albuquerque, Francisco de Albuquerque and Antonio de Saldhana. When Fransisco heard of the course of events in Cochin he sailed immediately southwards and forced the Zamorin's garrison to retreat precipitately to Cranganore. The Raja of Cochin was so overwhelmed with gratitude that he was willing to do

anything that the Portuguese desired. When the Portuguese expressed their desire to build a fort in Cochin for the greater safety of the factory the Raja asked them to select a spot, supplied the necessary labour and material and himself came and encouraged the builders "little knowing that he was loading the pistol against his own breast."³ The Portuguese continued their success against the Zamorin by attacking and plundering Idapalli. When he realised his inability to expel the Portuguese the Zamorin organised a boycott which would compel them to go to other towns for cargo. Though the Portuguese continued their destructive raids against the Zamorin's territories they were not able to load more than one ship. Cochin, being a small kingdom torn by discontent, could not provide the Portuguese with what they wanted, though it was valuable as a base for operations. Therefore Francisco Albuquerque decided to open negotiations with the Zamorin and eventually succeeded in establishing a truce with him.

Francisco then tried to strengthen the position and authority of the Raja of Cochin in order to have by their side a powerful and reliable ally. He pointed out to the Raja the necessity of curbing the chiefs and nobles under him. Anji Kaimals were powerful barons who held the territory on the mainland side of the Cochin river. The Raja concluded a treaty with them by which they definitely accepted the Raja's sovereignty and swore allegiance to him. "This treaty is of great importance, because it is the first testimony of the course which the Portuguese attempted to follow as a part of their policy, that of aggrandising their power with the small chieftains under cover of a nominal suzerainty of the Cochin Raja."⁴

Afonso Alberquerque made a treaty with the Raja of Quilon also. This treaty secured for him sufficient

3. K. M. Panikkar: *Malabar and Portuguese*.

4. *Ibid*—p. 59.

cargo to load his ships with. After this they could afford to be indifferent to their truce with the Zamorin. They attacked some of the ports carrying merchandise belonging to Calicut. They refused to give any explanation for their action and this renewed hostilities between the Zamorin and the Portuguese.

The Zamorin made elaborate preparations for the ensuing campaign. With the support of other kings and nobles of Malabar like the Kottayam Raja, the Bettat Raja etc, he collected a large fleet well equipped with cannon. But Albuquerque was able to get all the relevant information regarding these preparations through a Muhammadan spy named Koyapakki. Both Francisco and Affonso wanted to stay and fight the Zamorin's forces but their homesick soldiers were bent upon reaching Portugal. So they entrusted the fortress of Cochin to Duarte Pacheco and left for Lisbon.

The army collected by the Zamorin was said to have amounted to 50,000 men, of whom 4,000 were to attack Cochin by sea and the rest by land. Pacheco had with him about 100 men with the best military equipment of the age and another 300 belonging to the Raja of Cochin. The Moplahs in Cochin tried to help the Zamorin by fomenting revolt within the city but they were terrorised into submission by the Portuguese captain. He placed sentries at all available places to prevent any one from leaving the island and this vigilance put down the opposition of the Arabs.

The Zamorin led his army into the Cochin territory and reached as far as Idapally without any opposition. But near Kumbalam there was a practicable ford to the island of Cochin. In order to defend this ford Pacheco had erected a stockade in the middle of the river without his enemies suspecting it, so that when the Zamorin's army approached the ford and encamped on the other side it found the passage strongly guarded. An effort to break through the defence was unsuccess-

ful. The channel was too narrow to allow free and easy movement of the Calicut fleet. "The boats..... hindered each other and our fire did prodigious execution among them.....without any hurt on our side."⁵ A frontal attack by the Zamorin's forces to cut down the stackade also failed. Pacheco gallantly defended the ford for 3½ months and the Calicut forces were forced to withdraw. The outbreak of monsoon and the arrival of Lopo Soares, the Portuguese captain, with fourteen ships compelled the Zamorin to suspend all hostilities and return to his kingdom. Soares bombarded Calicut and attacked Cranganore which had served as a base of operations for the Zamorin against Cochin. A fresh attack with a reinforced army and navy made by the Zamorin also did not succeed. Soares planned and carried out a surprise attack at night destroying many ships, Mammali the admiral of Calicut fleet himself being among the killed. The Zamorin returned to Calicut "thus bringing to an end this war which had lasted for five months, during which it is alleged that the army of Calicut lost about 19,000 men together with a considerable number of his ships."⁶ A peace was subsequently concluded between Cochin and Calicut in 1504.

The failure of the Zamorin to expel the Portuguese from Cochin and his return to Calicut marked the close of the first round of the fight of the Portuguese for establishing their right to trade with India. The Zamorin, the most powerful ruler on the coast, and the Arabs who realised the ominous significance of the advent of the Portuguese, not only opposed them but used every possible means to drive them out of Malabar. But the rivalry between the Raja of Cochin and the Zamorin was fully exploited by the Portuguese who found in the former "a willing ally and a convenient tool."⁷ In the first round of the fight, though they did

5. Castaneda : *op. cit.*—p. 480.

6. Danvers : *op. cit.*

7. Panikkar : *Malabar and the Portuguese*—p. 63.

not succeeded in emerging out as a political power, they undoubtedly established their right to trade. Moreover they also gained considerable commercial interests because of the relations they entered into with Cochin, Quilon and Cannanore. Though they were not masters either on land or at sea, they forced both the Arabs and the Zamorin, their most determined opponents, to recognise their right to trade in the Indian waters. Thus they secured a foothold in India as a stepping stone to the establishment of their power in this country.

The Zamorin who still cherished the idea of driving the Portuguese out of Malabar knew that it was their superiority at sea that was responsible for their success. Though the Portuguese were outnumbered in manpower and material, they were much superior to their opponents in effective equipment and discipline. In order, therefore, to pay them back in the same coin, the Zamorin started to construct bigger and better ships. He also tried to strengthen his position by concluding alliances with powerful contemporary Muslim rulers and sent ambassadors to Egypt, Persia and Gujarat whose rulers were not unacquainted with the Portuguese menace to the Indian Ocean.

The king of Portugal also adopted a new and vigorous policy to meet these fresh developments. The Portuguese interest in India had grown to such an extent that the king realised the necessity of substituting order and system in the place of "the old haphazard method of piracy and pillage."⁸ The policy so far followed of sending out a fleet every year, in the hope that it would destroy Indian shipping and reserve for the Portuguese a monopoly of trade, was found to be ineffective because these annual separate voyages exposed the Portuguese Factors to the danger of attacks from the Zamorin and other opponents in the interval

8. Jayne: *op. cit.*—p. 72.

between the departure of one fleet and the arrival of another. Moreover seasonal winds occasionally prevented navigation, endangering the safety of the isolated Portuguese factories. The king realised as a result that for the growth of commerce it was necessary to appoint a permanent representative in India armed with authority to initiate a stable and continuous policy and to build more fortresses in strategic places to strengthen their position in India. Accordingly Dom Fransisco D'Almieda sailed from Lisbon in March 1505 invested with full power to wage war, conclude treaties and regulate commerce. He was, however, not to take the title of Viceroy without having first built fortresses at Anjediva, Cannanore and Cochin. He was specially instructed to destroy the power of the Arabs on the seas and to cripple the power of the Sultan of Egypt. The Portuguese king thought that the Zamorin had the backing of the Egyptian Sultan and it was to break the communication between Egypt and Calicut that Almieda was to erect a fortress at Anjediva.

After erecting a fortress there Almieda reached Cannanore in October. Thanks to Duarte Barbosa, the Portuguese Factor there, who had already persuaded the Raja to grant them a site at the head of the Bay, the fortress at Cannanore was built within five days and Almieda left for Cochin which he reached in the same month.

But it was not so easy for Almieda to build a fortress in Cochin. There he had to face a political crisis which was to have far-reaching consequences on their policy in Cochin. Generally in the Cochin royal family it was the second eldest member who ruled as sovereign, while the eldest member took the title of *Perumpatappu Muppil* and retired into religious seclusion. Accordingly, when the Muppil died in 1505, the ruler Unni Goda Varma, who was the only avowed and sincere friend of the Portuguese, retired from his throne according to the custom and the heir apparent

was an open opponent of the Portuguese. The Zamorin, who, as the overlord, had been interfering in succession and such other domestic affair of Cochin, supported the rightful prince and insisted on the maintenance of the dynastic law. But Almeida saw the danger in it and exerted pressure on the Raja to supersede the heir-apparent and nominate a more submissive Prince who was made to take the oath of fealty and allegiance to the king of Portugal. Cochin thus became a fief of Portugal and Almeida stabilised his position by building a new and strong fortress there.

Almeida's second object was to safeguard the Portuguese from their enemies and this could be realised only by destroying the naval force of the Zamorin and the Arab trade which was competing keenly and effectively with the portuguese trade. An opportunity soon came for crippling if not crushing the Zamorin's naval force.

The Zamorin who had heard the case with which Almeida was able to build a strong fort at Cannanore made hurried preparations for a war against the Kolattiri. By March 1506 everything was ready for an action against that prince both by land and sea. But unfortunately Almeida came to know everything that was being done by the Zamorin through an Italian spy named Ludvic Varthema who was living in Calicut disguised as a Muslim fakir. Almeida immediately sent his son Lorenzo to attack the Calicut fleet on its way to Cannanore. Though the Zamorin's fleet consisted of 200 large vessels Lorenzo was able, with his fully-equipped eleven ships, to scatter the whole fleet and return unhurt.

But the Zamorin did not give up hope because circumstances in Cannanore suddenly turned in his favour. The new ruler was not friendly towards the Portuguese and the Zamorin fully exploited this favourable turn of events by pointing out to the

Kolattiri the humiliating position of the Raja of Cochin as a result of his alliance with the Portuguese. An act of cruelty perpetrated by the Portuguese gave the Kolattiri sufficient cause for reversing the traditional policy of hostility to the Zamorin. The Portuguese always insisted upon the Arab ships obtaining passes from their commandants. But in spite of these safeconducts the Portuguese captain Gonzalo Vaz. sank an Arab ship with all the men inside. Among the bodies washed on shore one was identified to be that of a nephew of Mammali Marakkar, a merchant prince of Cannanore.⁹ The Kolattiri immediately declared war on the Portuguese and concluded an alliance with the Zamorin.

This alliance converted the two hereditary enemies into close friends bound with the one object of destroying the power of the Portuguese. The Portuguese fortress at Cannanore was besieged by the Kolattiri and the Zamorin sent 24 guns and 60,000 men to assist him. The fort was reduced to the greatest straits, "the occupants being forced to live upon cats-rats and lizards..... The water supply for the garrison was from a well situated at a short distance outside the walls, and each time the Portuguese wished to draw water they had to fight for it....."¹⁰ At last on August 27, when everything edible was exhausted and the Portuguese were on the point of surrendering, Tristao Da Cunha arrived with his fleet from Portugal and retrieved the fort, thus demonstrating the futility of land-power against sea-power. The Kolattiri was forced to conclude a treaty virtually on the terms dictated by the Portuguese.

Almieda, who knew fully well the importance of maritime power as a means to commercial supremacy, now set out to completely destroy the naval power of the Zamorin. He thought that with the new reinforcements that da Cunha had brought he would be able to

9. *The Keralapalama*—p. 85.

10. Danvers: *op. cit.*—p. 123.

attack Ponnani, the naval base of the Zamorin. In November, with all the vessels at his command, he appeared before the place, and after effecting a safe landing, he stormed the earth works captured many guns and looted and burnt the bazaar.

The attack did considerable damage to the Zamorin but did not destroy his naval power. He invoked the aid of the Sultan of Egypt who was ready to support anybody against the Portuguese because of the incalculable harm they had done for the Egyptian trade. The Sultan fitted up and despatched a large fleet with 1,500 men under an experienced and able officer Mir Husayn. Lorenzo who proceeded to intercept the fleet met it off Chaul. His attempt to board the Egyptian vessels was unsuccessful and, when the latter were reinforced by the Turks next day, Lorenzo thought it best to withdraw. But his flagship was hit and the captain himself was killed¹¹. All his followers perished under the Egyptian fire and the battle ended in a complete victory for the Egyptian fleet.

On the receipt of this disastrous news the viceroy himself took the command of the fleet. Determined to avenge the death of his son, he sailed for Diu where Mir Husayn had established his base. Almiada fully realised the gravity of the disaster which had temporarily deprived the Portuguese of the command of the sea. The Portuguese, who were winning easy victories over the inefficient and ill-equipped fleets of the Zamorin, had underestimated the strength and superior skill of the Egyptian fleet. Therefore Almiada collected all the ships, men and arms that were available. He also weakened the Indo-Egyptian force by buying off the Governor of Diu, Malik Aiyaz. The long and stubbornly contested battle which was to decide whether

11. "A cannon ball shattered both his legs, but he sat by the mainmast and continued calmly to direct the navigation of his ships until a second shot killed him"—Jayne: *Vasco da Gama and His Successors*—p. 74.

Egypt or Portugal should rule in Indian waters was fought on February 3rd. "Courage availed nothing against artillery" and in the end the Indo-Egyptian force was routed.¹²

This success of the Portuguese closes the first round in their naval fight for power. The battle was decisive as far as the command of the sea was concerned. Unlike in the land fight in which they were engaged for right to trade—that is, for their very existence in the East—in the naval encounter the Portuguese were fighting for establishing their power in the East. In the first round of the land-fight they were able to gain their object, namely the right to trade. Even the Zamorin and the Arabs were forced to recognise this right. But in the first round of the naval fight in which they fought for power they were not able to gain their objects fully. In spite of continuous fighting for a decade the Portuguese were not able to establish their authority anywhere in the East. True, they secured the command of the sea, which was a necessary preliminary for any western power to flourish in the East. But even their supremacy at sea was not undisputed. The Portuguese fleet, no doubt, was superior in equipment and discipline to the fleet of the Zamorin. But their clash with the Egyptian fleet showed clearly that, with proper handling and better equipment, the Egyptian fleet could resist if not destroy the Portuguese naval authority.

The Portuguese power which was not undisputed at sea was precarious on land. Their abominable

12. "As an engagement it (Battle off Diu) was inconclusive. Neither side could claim victory but disgusted with the treachery of the Sultan of Gujarat [the Egyptian fleet sailed away shortly afterwards. Thus without a decisive battle the supremacy of the sea passed to the Portuguese.....It left them free to pursue any oceanic policy they desired and laid the firm foundation of the European mastery of the Eastern seas which has continued for over 400 years."—K. M. Panikkar; *India and Indian Ocean*—p. 43.

cruelty, which expressed itself in an absolute disregard for the lives of the Indians, Hindu or Muslim, combined with their missionary zeal had alienated all their friends and supporters in India except Cochin which had already been reduced to the position of a dependency. The Kolattiri found the Portuguese so dominating and cruel that he was ready to come to an agreement with his hereditary foe against them. Thus both on land and sea their position was perilous. "From this perilous position the Portuguese power was saved by the unaided genius, extraordinary resourcefulness and unflinching courage of Affonso Albuquerque....."¹³

CHAPTER VII

The Portuguese Stabilise their Power

Afonso de Albuquerque who succeeded Almedia came to India with a view to complete the work of his predecessor. The Portuguese victory off Diu had laid the whole coast exposed to their raids. Albuquerque's idea was to take advantage of this situation and destroy Calicut itself. The Portuguese Governor who combined "the traits of a visionary with those of a financier" had conceived this idea as early as 1503 when he first visited India along with his cousin. But then he had neither the means nor the authority to put this idea into execution. He had again visited India in 1506 when he accompanied Tristao da Cunha as Chief captain over six ships and 400 men. On his way to India as the Governor-designate of the Portuguese possessions between Gujarat and Cape Comorin, he anchored at Ormuz and demanded its king to be a tributary of Portugal. On his refusal Albuquerque destroyed the king's fleet in the harbour, landed his men and burnt all the houses in the suburbs. The king was forced to agree to the terms, and, apart from undertaking to pay an annual tribute, granted the Portuguese a site to build a fortress on.¹ But a bitter quarrel arose between Albuquerque and his captains on the distribution of the spoils. The king took advantage of this quarrel and refused to ratify the treaty. The captains opened direct negotiations with him and proceeded to India, leaving Albuquerque behind, to make representations to Almedia whose term of Viceroyalty had not yet over, about the unjustifiable and high-handed manner in which the Governor-designate had acted at Ormuz.

1. Albuquerque called this fortress "Nosa Senhora da Victoria" Our Lady of the Victory.

Albuquerque took care to reach India only at the close of Almiada's term of office so that he would not be legally under him. Almiada who was on his way to Diu at that time refused to hand over charge even on his return after that expedition. This disagreement between the outgoing and the new officers assumed serious proportions. The Raja of Cochin sent word to Almiada that since the Portuguese king's letter had appointed Albuquerque his representative, goods could be handed over only to him. Almiada took this opportunity to accuse Albuquerque of intriguing with the Raja. He was arrested at Cochin and packed off to Cannanore.

The deadlock continued for more than six months till Marechal Dom Ferdinando Cutinho arrived with a fleet and the king's order which forced Almiada to surrender his authority and Albuquerque became the Governor.

The assumption of office, however, did not put an end to his difficulties. The Marshal who ranked above him in India-proper was a rash and reckless warrior who insisted on obeying the king's order of destroying Calicut immediately. Albuquerque was also bent upon the destruction of the Zamorin's power but he knew the difficulties in the way and advised the Marshal to wait for a better opportunity. But the latter regarded this as an unnecessary precaution. "He vowed that he was ashamed to cross swords with a rabble of half-naked niggers, and that he would take the Samuri's palace with no weapon but a cane in his hand."²

Albuquerque agreed half-heartedly and summoned a council of war which was attended by the Raja of Cochin. The Raja pleaded poverty and succeeded in staying out of the projected expedition. Nevertheless, the Governor pushed on with his scheme and sent Brahman spies to Calicut to find out the nature and

2. Jayne: *Vasco da Gama and His Successors*—p. 79.

extent of the enemy's preparations. The spies reported in due course that the Zamorin with a considerable portion of his army was away from the city and that therefore its defence was weak. A Portuguese fleet consisting of twenty ships besides numerous *paraos* supplied by the Raja of Cochin started for Canicut immediately. Albuquerque landed and captured the jetty at Kallayi driving the Moplals into the city. The Marshal was not pleased with the success of the Governor, and, not to be outdone by Albuquerque again, he ordered an advance towards the palace to conquer and destroy it. The Marshal himself led this army and asked Albuquerque to follow him in the rear.

The Marshal marched into the city, over-powered the guard without much difficulty and desecrated the whole palace. While the plundering was still going on a body of Nayars entered by the back door and attacked the Portuguese. The Marshal with his chief officers was cut off from the rest. The Marshal tried to rally his men round him and, to direct the attention of the Nayars, set fire to the palace. But this only worsened the situation and Albuquerque who came with the rearguard saw that it was impossible to retrieve the fortunes of the day or save the Marshal. He therefore ordered his men to retire to the ships as fast as they could. Albuquerque himself was wounded while retreating and his flag-bearer and captain were killed. "The Marshal died fighting. Those who were still scattered about the rooms unaware of the fate that had overcome their comrade were sought out and killed, while many, cut off from the rest, perished in the flames which they themselves had kindled." ³

The adventure having thus ended in disaster Albuquerque sailed for Cochin. Determined to avenge the death of the Marshal, he sent an envoy to Krishna-deva Raya of Vijayanagar to solicit his help against

3. K. V. Krishna Aiyar: *op. cit.*—p. 183.

the Zamorin. But he refrained from informing the Raja the disaster that had overtaken the expedition. The Raja was informed that the palace at Calicut and "the city itself had been all burnt and...all its artillery captured, and that the Zamorin did not venture to succour the city, but kept himself aloof...until he knew that all had withdrawn from the place."⁴ Though Krishnadeva Raya wished to maintain friendship with the Portuguese he did not want to give them any material help against the Zamorin who had done him no harm. Therefore Albuquerque was not successful in his attempt.

Albuquerque who took a statesman like view of his position now realised that it was well-nigh impossible with the forces at his disposal to crush the power of the Zamorin. The latter also knew that though the Portuguese were supreme at sea they were not powerful enough on land. Since he controlled the entire coastline from Pantalayini to Chetwai, the Zamorin was able to impede the commerce and navigation of the Portuguese by avoiding pitched battles and carrying on a sort of guerrilla warfare at sea. These new tactics were so effective that Albuquerque himself writes about them in one of his letters thus:- "He had now had 60 caturis made in his land and as the ships of Cochin enter they sally out endeavouring to capture them... The factor of Cannanore did not dare to send supplies in paraos to Cochin for fear of being captured"⁵. Albuquerque therefore realised that the best and only way by which the foundations of the Portuguese power in India could be laid on a durable basis was, not by attempting to subdue the Zamorin, "and reduce him to the position of a dependent like the Raja of Cochin" which was impossible under the existing circumstances, but by abandoning the futile Cochin policy which from the time of Pacheco they had accepted as their own and making an honourable peace with the Zamorin.

4. Affonso Albuquerque: *The Commentaries*—Vol. ii, p. 75.

5. K. M. Panikkar: *Malabar and the Portuguese*—p. 81.

Further, the new tactics adopted by the Zamorin made it necessary for the Portuguese to secure another base for naval operations. In his search for a new base Albuquerque pitched upon Goa because this port could be defended easily and could not be attacked easily from the land. Further, Albuquerque could get the support of the Raya of Vijayanagar who was desirous of having a port free from Muslim control to get their supplies. Though the expedition gained an easy initial victory and the place was taken, the Muslims under Adilshah, the ruler of Goa, rose up in arms and drove the Portuguese out. Albuquerque returned to Malabar, gathered another and stronger force and started again for Goa. After a bloody battle the island was occupied and the bloodier massacre that followed secured for him the submission of the Muslim citizens of the place. Thenceforward Goa supplanted Cochin as the chief Portuguese settlement and became the centre of their activities in India.

The port of Cochin thus began to lose its importance though it continued to remain the Portuguese capital in name for sometime longer. The victory of Albuquerque in Goa was followed by his activities in Malacca. Cochin was thus grossly neglected and as a result anarchy reigned supreme there. When Unni Goda Varma, who had retired from active politics with the dignified title of Perumpattappu Muppil, died the Portuguese interfered in the succession question. According to the curious custom prevailing in Cochin to which reference has already been made, the ruler then in authority was to retire and the eldest in succession next to him was to mount the gadi. Since the prospective ruler was in friendship with the Zamorin, Albuquerque decided to set aside this system and asked the Raja to continue as ruler though the latter himself was willing to retire. But the people of Cochin especially the Brahmans insisted that the custom should be adhered to. As a last resort Albuquerque had to imprison the Raja within the area under the direct

control of the portuguese, lest he should be persuaded by the Brahmans and members of his family to retire and keep up the age-long custom. " Brahmans' words have ceased to rule the Kingdom " said Albuquerque to the king. " The mighty arm of the foreigner must be respected in future. "

The result of this policy was the outbreak of civil war in Cochin. The Zamorin readily exploited the situation and supported the claims of the people. Though Albuquerque came from Goa and fought against the Zamorin he was able to do little or no injury to Calicut. In fact it was becoming clearer to him every day that no benefit would arise from this continued hostility with the Zamorin. He came to realise in the long run that hostilities with Calicut did not serve the interests of Portugal, but only those of the Rajas of Cochin and Cannanore. By perpetuating the hostility between the Zamorin and the Portuguese the Kolattiri and the Raja of Cochin hoped to prevent the invasion of their territories by the Zamorin and to reduce his power and influence. In one of his letters to the king of Portugal Albuquerque says " I know why the king of Cochin having 30,000 Nairs and the king of Cannanore having 60,000 do not go to destroy Calicut, because they want to keep up this dispute (between the Zamorin and the Portuguese) till the end of time. They do not wish to make war, but that we should do so " ⁶

Further, even if war with Calicut would serve the interests of the Portuguese, the Governor realised that it would be impossible to reduce the power of the Zamorin by open war. The policy of blockade with which Albuquerque hoped to starve Calicut into submission failed miserably. Since his activities were not confined to Malabar the Governor was not able to apply himself diligently to his policy so that the

blockade was inevitably slackened. Moreover, he knew that it was a vain endeavour to guard Calicut in such a way as to cut off all supplies "because there is much rice in the land, Dharmapatanam and Cannanore will always supply it in large quantities and this cannot be stopped except by stopping the navigation of Cannanore."⁷

The war with Calicut was not only fruitless, because it was productive of no beneficial results to the Portuguese but only to the Rajas of Cochin and Cannanore, but it was also positively harmful to the stability of the Portuguese power in the East. Peace with Calicut would enable Albuquerque to go in search of new places for conquest and colonisation. "If you wish to stop (Calicut's) commerce with Mecca" Albuquerque wrote to the king of Portugal "you could better effect it by peace (with Calicut) than by warfare".⁸

With these objects in view he opened negotiations with the Zamorin. But there were many obstacles to be overcome before the conclusion of an honourable settlement. For one thing, though the circumstances were in favour of the Zamorin the terms that Albuquerque wanted to impose upon him were those of a conqueror. The acceptance of those terms would have meant virtual surrender and it is no wonder that not only the Zamorin but his mother and sister were also against settlement on those terms. Then there were the Arabs who were dead against any settlement between the Portuguese and the Zamorin. Further Albuquerque had many enemies at Cochin who tried to instigate the Raja to invade the Zamorin's kingdom so that the Portuguese also might be dragged into it. Albuquerque, however, thought that the only serious obstacle that blocked a settlement was the attitude of the Zamorin. The *Eralpad* or the heir-apparent

7. *Ibid*—p. 82.

8. *Ibid.* .

was disposed to be friendly with the Portuguese. Therefore Albuquerque intrigued with him to poison the Zamorin. Whether due to this intrigue or not the Zamorin died in August 1513.⁹ His death, however, did not remove all the difficulties. The king of Portugal who had vowed to destroy the Zamorin and had sent successive fleets for that specific purpose was averse to a treaty with Calicut. The Portuguese enemies of Albuquerque at Cochin who supported this view persuaded the Raja to write a letter to Portugal protesting against the proposed treaty with Calicut which had been arranged without consulting him. But Albuquerque, who was bound to the new Zamorin with secret agreement, succeeded in securing a half-hearted permission from the king by pointing out the advantages that would arise from this treaty. Accordingly a treaty was concluded on December 24, 1513 according to which the Portuguese were given some concession in their purchase of spices and drugs and allowed to build a fort in Calicut in return for issuing safeconducts to the ships of the Zamorin.

The treaty concluded after so much discussion and surmounting so many difficulties did not last long; war broke out again between the Zamorin and the Portuguese within a short time after the departure of Albuquerque. All the same it was of considerable importance in the history of the relations between the Portuguese and Malabar. The treaty was inevitably a product of compromise; there was much give and take on both sides. On the one hand the Zamorin, who had been disputing the very right of the Portuguese to trade in the Indian waters, had not only to recognise their right but even to grant permission for them to build a fort in his own dominions. It would have been

9. "Albuquerque however claimed that he had succeeded in his diplomacy. In one of his letters to the king he says "I hold it for certain that the *Nambiatiri* slew the Zamorin with poison, because in all my letters I bid him to kill the Zamorin with poison and that in a peace treaty I will come to an agreement with him."

unwise on his part to shut his eyes to the changed circumstances that stared him in the face. It was abundantly clear, as result of the continuous warfare for the past ten years, that the Arab merchants who had been furthering the trade of his kingdom in return for the protection he afforded them, could no longer hold a monopoly of Eastern trade. Therefore it was essential for self-preservation that he should be friendly with the new traders who were superseding the old. On the other hand the Portuguese also had to abandon some of their original demands. Albuquerque succeeded Almeda with the intention of completing his predecessor's work. The latter had established Portuguese authority in Cochin and Cannanore. The aim of Albuquerque was to extend this authority throughout Kerala from Mangalore to Cape Comorin. But Calicut, though lying between Cochin and Cannanore, the two Portuguese strongholds, turned out to be the most formidable foe and the sole but effective stumbling block in his path. All his attempts to capture or destroy Calicut proved futile. "In spite of the war which Your Majesty had waged for years against Calicut it is even this day the wealthiest place in India" wrote Albuquerque to his king. Therefore he was forced to Abandon the idea of conquering Malabar and conclude a treaty with the Zamorin reversing the traditional policy of the Portuguese, unmindful of the continued protests of the Raja of Cochin.

The treaty with the Zamorin combined with the conquest of Goa which became the virtual Portuguese capital marked the decline in importance of Cochin and Cannanore. The Portuguese ceased to have any serious interest in those two places and the treaty, as far as the history of the Portuguese in India is concerned, marks the shifting of their centre of interest from Cochin to Goa.

The treaty was resented by the Arabs because they thought that the Zamorin would hereafter be a mere

tool in the hands of their inveterate opponents. Though the Zamorin, as subsequent history shows, refused to dance to the tune of the Portuguese, the Arabs remained irreconcilable. Their trade suffered to a great extent having had to face the keen competition of the Portuguese merchants. "The king of Calicut" bewails a Muslim Historian "rolled up the carpet of destruction and pursued the path of friendship with the Feringis".

Though Albuquerque was mainly responsible for bringing the profitless conflict with the Zamorin to an honourable conclusion, which enabled the Portuguese to look beyond Malabar for power and trade, his irritable temper and dictatorial manner made him unpopular both among the Indians and among the Portuguese in India. His intervention in the states subjects to his authority and his refusal to recognise the points of view of his colleagues led to his recall in spite of the valuable services he had rendered to his country. At Cochin, for instance, when the Raja wanted to obey his priests in certain matters he was told to obey not the Brahmins but the king of Portugal. At Cannanore, again he asked the Raja to dismiss the *kazi* on the frivolous charge that he was friendly towards the Arabs. The Raja naturally grumbled at this unwarranted intrusion. The *kazi* was supported by many Portuguese officers themselves against the Governor. The result of these strained relations was neglect of trade in Cannanore and Barbosa and others wrote to the king intimating the unsatisfactory conditions there. As a result of these representations orders from Portugal reached Goa to the effect that Albuquerque was superseded by Lopo Soares.¹⁰ Albuquerque who had already been very ill died when he heard of this appointment just as his ship was reaching Goa from Ormuz.

10. At this news he lifted up his hands and cried "In bad repute with men because of king and in bad repute with the king because of men. It were well that I were gone."—Jayne: *op. cit.*—p. 97.

In spite of the outstanding defects of his character—his fierceness of temper and inordinate cruelty—Albuquerque richly deserved the title “great”. The Portuguese had neither the resources nor the ability to build an Empire in the East. But, despite these inherent handicaps, Albuquerque was able, because of his high conception of duty and a strong sense of discipline, to establish and stabilise their power in India and other parts of Asia. By the conquest of Goa he founded the Portuguese authority at least in a part of India. By the control of Malacca, Aden and Ormuz he established the commercial ascendancy of Portugal in the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea. In order to secure the sole monopoly of trade in Asia he set out to suppress his enemies though he was not completely successful in this. Further he realised the importance of sea power. He knew that supremacy at sea and a flourishing trade would enable the Portuguese to establish a durable empire. In order to ensure maritime supremacy Albuquerque built a chain of fortresses from Aden to Malacca, at Ormuz Goa, Cannanore and Cochin. Each one of these fortresses could be easily defended from the sea. The change of Portuguese headquarters from Cochin to Goa effected by Albuquerque was a masterstroke of statemanship. He saw that if Goa were made a central base where ships could be repaired and provisions accumulated it would mean “security, commerce and an assured status for Portugal among the nations of the Orient.”¹¹ He compares Cochin and Goa in one of his letters to the king “In Cochin you cannot cut a stick without taking leave of the Raja. If one of our men refuses to pay full market price in the bazaar, or touches a Mussalman woman, the fort is besieged. In Cochin 500 extra men mean famine. There is no fish, no flesh and souls are dear. In Goa (these) are plentiful and an additional; 2000 men are scarcely noticed; in Goa there (is) everything we require.”¹²

11. Jayne: *op. cit.*—p. 104.

12. *Ibid.*

The maintenance of this chain of fortress meant a regular supply of soldiers. Without a permanent squadron on the seas and a regular military force in each of these fortresses their defence would be difficult. But sufficient men and money were not coming from Portugal in spite of the repeated requests of the Governor who pointed out rightly that the best way to avoid war and losses in trade was the maintenance of a good army. It was this numerical inferiority of the Portuguese that was responsible for the disastrous policy of mixed marriages. Albuquerque encouraged low class men to marry Indian women hoping to bring into existence a class of people who could be entrusted with the task of defending the fortress and man the ships and factories. But the policy was not successful. It merely degraded the victims and did nothing to fulfill the hopes and intentions of the Governor.

The general principles on which Albuquerque founded his regime outlived the Portuguese power in India. It was he who initiated the policy of conquering India by Indians which was successfully adopted and rigorously applied by subsequent European powers in India. "More than even Dupliex or Clive he was the man who discovered that Indians trained on European methods and using European arms provided a most effective instrument for imperialistic aggression"¹³. Albuquerque also realised that their authority in India, if it should be lasting, must be founded upon respect for Indian usages and tolerance of Indian creeds. But he was not able to instil this idea into the minds of his colleagues among whom he was not popular. His successors revised his policy and embarked fanatically on missionary activity which wrecked their future in India. The regime of Albuquerque certainly redounds to his credit when we consider the innumerable difficulties that he had to face, especially official corruption and intrigue and the lack of man-power and material.

13. K. M. Panikkar : *M. and P.*—p. 91.

His achievements were indisputably glorious and "he could legitimately claim to have been a great Empire builder, one who has consciously changed the course of history, and determined on a large scale the shape of events to come"¹⁴.

14. K. M. Panikkar: *India and Indian Ocean*—pp. 49-50.

CHAPTER VIII

Alternate Success and Failure

LOPO Soares who succeeded Albuquerque as Governor had formerly been to India and was not unacquainted with the conditions of Malabar. There had been no love lost between the two and the new Governor seemed to be determined to undo whatever his predecessor had done. All the Portuguese officials whom Albuquerque had expelled for gross corruption, disloyalty or lack of political ability were brought back by his successor. He was accompanied by a fleet of 13 vessels carrying 1,500 soldiers, many of them hoping to be reinstated in their office. After a tour of inspection through the Portuguese possessions in India he gave orders for the supersession of all the captains and Governors of Forts appointed by Albuquerque by his own favourites. He also reintroduced private trade which had been suppressed by his predecessor and thus brought back more corruption and disloyalty.

His expedition to Egypt which he fitted out after these preliminary acts was a disastrous failure. His subsequent and by no means more successful military adventures, combined with plunder and piracy of the officials for their own benefits, not only made his regime very unpopular in this country but brought about considerable loss to the Portuguese trade and injury to the Portuguese settlements in general. The *Keralapalama*, a Malayalam work, mentions the atrocious cruelties perpetrated by his followers especially on Muhammadan ships. In fact the Governorship of Lopo Soares was only a record of plunders and blunders the Portuguese committed on land and at sea.

The Governor, however was able to conclude a treaty with Quilon which was distinctly advantageous

to the Portuguese. This was the only political event of considerable importance during his regime. That hostility with Calicut was not renewed during his time was only because of the Pacific disposition of the new Zamorin. But their policy had infuriated the people of Calicut and the outbreak of hostilities was only a question of time.

The relation between Quilon and the Portuguese had always been friendly. Even as early as 1500 A. D. when Cabral was at Cochin he received an invitation from the Queen to visit Quilon who promised him pepper and spices at a cheaper rate than what he could obtain at Cochin. But Cabral declined the offer because of his engagements at Cochin and Calicut.

In 1502 when Vasco da Gama was at Cochin on his second visit the Queen renewed the invitation requesting the Portuguese captain to send two of his largest ships to be loaded with pepper on the same terms and conditions as those at Cochin. She also promised to provide him with the same quantity every year. Gama did not accept the offer immediately because he feared to run any risk in regard to the recently established friendship with Cochin. He said he could accept it only with the Raja's consent. The Queen who was on friendly terms with the Raja immediately sought his consent. The Raja had genuine apprehensions that, should the Portuguese go to Quilon to load pepper, his revenue and trade would be prejudicially affected as most of the pepper sold in Cochin came from Quilon. But after consultation with the Portuguese and on the understanding that they would not trouble to send ships to Quilon so long as they could obtain all the pepper they required from Cochin, the Raja had to acquiesce in the proposal. The Portuguese undertook not to open a factory at Quilon but only to send ships when there was a scarcity in Cochin and accordingly sent two ships

to the Queen which immediately came back loaded with pepper and spices¹

Contrary to Gama's promise, however, Almedia opened a factory in Quilon and built a stone house capable of defending it. But soon a quarrel broke out which led to the destruction of this factory. Joao Homem, a captain of the Portuguese fleet, arrived in Quilon and finding some Muslim vessels loading pepper, took possession of them immediately. But soon after his departure an infuriated mob pulled down the Portuguese factory and set fire to the house which resulted in a number of casualties. Albuquerque who succeeded Almedia saw that the blame lay with Portuguese and opened negotiations with the Queen. The Zamorin realised the danger of giving a foothold to the Portuguese in Quilon both to himself and the Queen and warned her against the foreigner. But the Queen was immune to these warnings. Albuquerque himself visited Quilon and concluded a treaty according to which the Queen agreed to grant all the spices in her territory annually to the portuguese at prices stipulated. Another clause of the treaty was "who ever was left agent for the king of Portugal, should have the right of punishing or trying any of his Portuguese Majesty's subjects who should remain on the land."² Being an interference with her judicial right the Queen approved this clause only with reluctance.

The existence of a party opposing the Portuguese coupled with the instigation of the Arabs continued to create so much troubles and disturbances in Quilon that Lopo Soares the new Governor saw the necessity of concluding a new treaty with Quilon. The treaty was concluded with the regent since the ruler was a minor. According to this treaty she agreed to pay 500 *bharas* of pepper to the Portuguese in three yearly instalments as compensation for the trouble in the land

1. Danvers: *op. cit.*—Vol. I, p. 87.

2. K. P. Padmanabha Menon: *History of Kerala*—Vol. 2, p. 38.

to let the Portuguese have all the spices they require; to permit them to erect a fort in Quilon and to give the local Christians unfettered freedom of worship and conversion.

The last clause was the outcome of the attitude adopted by the Christians towards the new comers. The Christians of Malabar who regarded themselves as foreigners for all practical purposes looked upon the Portuguese as sort of saviours. When Gama was at Cochin the representatives of the local Christians approached him and offered their allegiance to the king of Portugal and even suggested to them that, if a fort was built by the Portuguese in the area where they were strong, the whole of Malabar could be conquered without much difficulty. Ever afterwards the Portuguese were willing to grant privileges to the Malabar Christians though later the latter suffered severe persecution at the hands of their co-religionists.

Though the relations between the queen and the Portuguese were friendly after this treaty, the general public in Quilon continued to be hostile to the newcomers. The atrocities committed by the Portuguese, let it be said with the connivence of the queen, only tended to increase the discontent. The *Keralapalama* gives an instance of such cruelty practised by the Portuguese. Captain Roderigues got information that 5000 bullock loads of pepper which certain traders in the east coast had collected in barter were being taken across the Ghats *via* the Ariankavu pass. Since the queen had given the Portuguese the control of the pepper trade Roderigues demanded that these should be handed over to him. When the queen tried to point out that the convoy could not be stopped as the pepper was *Brahmaswam* (the property of the Brahmans) Roderigues employed 500 Nayars to sieze the bullock loads by force promising them Rs. 50/- for every human head they produced. They succeeded in bringing the hole 500 bullock loads with the heads of five of

the leaders of the convoy. The east coast merchants thenceforward avoided the land route which lay through the Quilon territory.

The effects of the three years' office of Lopo soares are thus summed up by one of his subordinates in a letter to the king. "Lopo Soares in an evil hour came to india.....His whole care and mind is no other than traffic.....Before he came the whole world was at peace; wherever the breath of your Portuguese went it was obeyed; and now you have India all in revolt and no one will obey us and even the most obedient people in India who are the *mukkuvers* (fishermen) want to oust us....."³ The high handed actions of the Governor had caused trouble both in Quilon and Cochin and friendship with Calicut remained unbroken only because the new Zamorin was not in a mood to fight. Above all the sense of discipline and responsibility which Albuquerque had inculcated into the minds of the Portuguese were replaced by "an utter disregard of national interests resulting in gross corruption and base intrigue which became the striking features of the Portuguese affairs in India."⁴

Diogo Lopez de Sequiera who succeeded Soares was no better than his predecessor. His initial military expeditions with a view to capture and fortify Diu and to open up Red Sea ended in failure. But the most important event during his regime was the outbreak of hostilities between Cochin and Calicut which wrecked the Portuguese treaty with the Zamorin. In accordance with this treaty the Portuguese had been allowed to build a fort in Calicut. The Zamorin was so bent upon maintaining this friendship that he sent two envoys to the king of Portugal expressing his readiness to supply the necessary materials for the construction of the fort.

3. K. M. Panikkar: *M. and P.*—p. 97.

4. *Ibid.*

But Lopo Soares had been so arrogant and unfriendly towards the Zamorin that the treaty would not have survived the death of Albuquerque in 1515 but for the peaceful attitude of the new Zamorin. In 1517 even an attempt was made on his life though the Zamorin escaped unhurt thanks to the timely warning of a Portuguese officer.⁵ Apart from this unjustifiable attitude of the new governor there were other factors which made peace with them extremely difficult. The treaty concluded after so much discussion and surmounting so many difficulties caused annoyance to both the friends and foes of the Portuguese. The Raja of Cochin was trying his best to cause a rupture between the Zamorin and the Portuguese as friendship between them meant loss of money and prestige to Cochin. The Raja had hoped to destroy the power of the Zamorin with the help of the Portuguese when he welcomed them to his kingdom. This however resulted only in his own humiliation as he had to surrender his national independence to the foreigner. He was deprived to some extent of his material prosperity as well after the Portuguese had come to an understanding with the Zamorin, because as he himself complained "merchants of Calicut all along the coast who had come to ask of me safeconduct for navigation now proceed to ask for them of the king of Calicut."⁶ Further he was also waiting for an opportunity to avenge his relatives who fell fighting against the Zamorin.

Then there were the Arabs who had foreseen in the Portuguese their potential rivals in trade and commerce. Though they had represented their case to the Zamorin he had not been able to redress their grievances and therefore they gradually began to take law into their own hands and harass the Portuguese wherever possible. The bitter enmity existing between them led to the outbreak of an unofficial naval war soon after the

5. Zeinuddin: *op. cit.*—pp. 63–64.

6. K. M. Panikkar: *M. and P.*—p. 98.

building of the fortress. As soon as "the accursed Portuguese established themselves firmly in Kalikut and acquired a steady position"⁷ they forbade the Arabs to export ginger and pepper and thus monopolised the trade of these commodities, and, what is more, they seized every Arab ship with its contents and crew whenever they saw even a small quantity of the two spices in it. Thus the *Keralapalama* says that the Portuguese took by force what was not given willingly. The Arabs also retaliated. They not only captured Portuguese vessels and harassed them in all possible ways but on one occasion actually bombarded the Portuguese fort at Calicut.

In 1519, the Raja of Cochin, determined at any cost to bring about a rupture between the Portuguese and the Zamorin, invaded certain territories belonging to the Zamorin's feudatories. This immediately led to a general war between Cochin and Calicut and when the former was decisively defeated the Raja appealed to the Portuguese for help. Sequiera sent about 40 soldiers to assist him and the Raja himself put 50,000 men in the field. But even this force which invaded Chetwai was hopelessly outnumbered and the campaign went wholly in favour of the Zamorin's forces. But the war which was a military failure was a diplomatic success to the Raja of Cochin since he achieved his object of alienating the Zamorin from the Portuguese.

The new Zamorin who succeeded to the throne in 1522 was not very friendly towards the Portuguese and the Arabs fully exploited this advantage. Duarte Meneses, the new and notoriously corrupt governor, was openly insulted by them which led to an open fight in the bazaar between the Arabs and the Portuguese. Soon the Zamorin came to the rescue of the Arabs and that wrecked the treaty with the Portuguese.

It was at this time that Vasco-da-Gama reached Goa as the Viceroy of the Portuguese possession

7. Zeinuddin: *op. cit.*—p. 63.

invested with the full power and authority of that distinguished office. He discerned the unsatisfactory conditions of the Portuguese in India and proceeded in his usual high-handed fashion to restore the fallen fortunes and prestige of his countrymen. He knew that private trade, which gave ample scope for profit and corruption, was the principal reason for this deterioration. Therefore Gama issued a proclamation prohibiting private trade and ordered the confiscation of all ships which navigate the seas without his permission. After giving effect to these essential reforms he left for Cochin.

While at Cochin he realised that the efforts of the Portuguese for more than two decades to secure the mastery of the sea had not succeeded, since the Calicut ships, which were smaller, faster and lighter, openly defied the Portuguese authority everywhere at sea. Gama immediately ordered the building of similar ships with a view to adopt more vigorous measures against the Zamorin. But before anything could be done he fell seriously ill and died in Cochin on 24th December, 1524.

Henry Meneses who succeeded Gama with the title of Governor took up the work where his predecessor had left and set out to destroy the maritime power of the Zamorin. Meanwhile, in the same year, the leading Muhammadan merchants of Cochin, Ahamad Marakkar his brother Kunhali Marakkar, and others left Cochin because of the oppression of the Portuguese and settled down at Calicut to render help to the Zamorin against their common enemy. Henry Meneses finding that most of the Muslims and the Zamorin were firmly opposed to him, collected about 50 ships, appeared off Ponnani and stormed it, burning many ships, killing a number of Moplachs cutting down all the cocoanut trees on either side of the river and destroying all mosques

and shops⁸. These atrocities were repeated at Pantalayini the "emporium of the trade with Mecca" where it was said that the Portuguese carried off 250 pieces of cannon and vast quantities of ammunition, besides spices which provided loading for forty ships. The blockade of Calicut, which the governor next undertook with a view to starve the Zamorin into submission, was not however successful.

Directly the monsoon set in, the Zamorin's forces retaliated by besieging the Portuguese fort. Supported by a band of Arabs under a skilled European engineer who had become a Muslim, the Calicut forces forced the Portuguese to abandon their outlying ware-houses and retire within their fort for protection. As the siege of the fort progressed the Zamorin himself came with an additional force and added vigour to it. Provisions were getting exhausted and, in a desperate attempt to retrieve the fortunes of the day, Dom Joao de Lima, the factor of the place, managed to send a messenger to Cochin imploring help. When boats reached from Cochin after much difficulty due to the heavy monsoon, only 35 out of 140 men were able to land at Calicut. The rest went back to send more men. The Zamorin's attempt to take the fort before reinforcements came was not successful. Towards the end of August food and reinforcements came from Cochin and the fort was saved.

In October the governor himself came with 20 ships and a joint attack was made on Calicut from the sea and the fort. Two thousand besiegers were killed including the European engineer. But the governor was forced to abandon the fort because he had news from Europe that the Turks, now rulers of Egypt, were organising an expedition to the East and the Portuguese could hope to resist them only by concentrating all their strength. Further, with the Zamorin and the Arabs attacking frequently, it was difficult for

8. *The Keralapalama* (mal.)—p. 75.

the the Portuguese to maintain the fort at Calicut for long. "They made an opening from within the fort in a part of the wall which was not visible to people outside and escaped....."⁹ The last man to leave it set fire to the fort and destroyed it. Thus "for the fourth time during 25 years the Portuguese had to acknowledge defeat and to withdraw after prolonged conflict with the Zamorin."¹⁰ No doubt the war inflicted heavy damages on the Zamorin, but the commerical losses of the Portuguese were much greater. Further the failure of the Portuguese made the Arabs bolder and aggressive. The Marakkars did great damage to the Portuguese trade sinking every ship they could lay their hands on. They avoided pitched battles with the enemy so that their own losses were negligible.

Meneses died in 1526 and Mascaranhas who had been nominated by Gama as the successor to Meneses was superseded owing to his absence in Malacca by Lopo Vazda Sampayo who was to hand over charge to Mascarenhas on his arrival in India. But he refused to relinquish his office which created a split among the Portuguese.

During his term of office Lopo Vaz was mainly engaged in suppressing the destructive activities of the Marakkars. Under their leader Kuttiali, they were not only harassing the Portuguese by sinking their ships and killing the crew; but they were also sending merchandise to Persia, Egypt and Arabia in defiance of the Portuguese ships. The governor was engaged in dealing with them till he was superseded by Nuno de Cunha in 1529.

Lopo Vaz who came to power by unfair means was extremely arrogant in his behaviour towards the rulers of Malabar. On one occasion he went to the

9. Zeinuddin: *op. cit.*—p. 66.

10. K. M. Panikkar: *M. and P.*—p. 110.

extent of imprisoning the Raja of Cochin in his own palace because he claimed port dues. It was such high-handed actions, coupled with his inability to deal successfully with the Arab harassment, that led to his supersession, though he was a fearless soldier and an efficient administrator.

The new governor blockaded Calicut and captured as many as 27 ships laden with merchandise. Da Cunha wanted to build a fort at the mouth of the Beypore river at Chaliyam. Situated on the road to Ponnani and Cochin it was "the highway through which the Samuri, his troops and all the travellers used to go"¹¹. A fortress there would enable the Portuguese to threaten the internal communications of the Zamorin and "command the trade between Arabia and Calicut." The feudatory chief who owned the area around Chaliyam was the Raja of Tanur. The Rajas of Bettet, Beypore and Chaliyam who were Kshatriyas and therefore superior to the Zamorin by birth, resented the way in which their suzerain was treating the Kshatriya ruler of Cochin. The reverses of the Zamorin at the hands of the Portuguese who were in alliance with Cochin made them favourably disposed towards the foreigners. The *Keralapalama* narrates an incident in which the Bettet Raja actually invited the Portuguese to his kingdom, but, not daring to defy the Zamorin openly, sent them back with numerous presents. On another occasion he gave shelter to a Portuguese ship dropped anchor off his coast and refused to surrender the crew to the Zamorin.

The Raja of Chaliyam was willing to grant permission to erect a fort but not without the consent of his suzerain. Therefore the Portuguese sent one of their ablest men, one who was "very intelligent, cunning and deceitful in the fullest sense"¹² to negotiate with the Zamorin. He succeeded in getting

11. Zeniuddin: *op. cit.*—p. 69.

12. *Ibid.*

the Zamorin's permission and the Portuguese began the work of construction immediately. "They demolished the ancient cathedral mosque which was built there on the first introduction of Islam in Malabar..... and made use of its materials for the building of the fort and the Church"¹³. Soon a fort of great solidity and strength was built and the ease with which the Portuguese could harass the Arab trade and the Zamorin's communication through this fort is described thus by Logan. "Securely posted at Chaliyam, the Portuguese with the aid of their armed boats.....were in an unequalled position to harass the Zamorin by overhauling all traffic between the portions of his dominions lying to the north and to the south of that river. This armed patrol service in fact cut his dominions in half and all merchandise passing to Calicut from the southern territory could be overhauled and passed. Even his troops unless they swam the river whilst the Portuguese patrol were absent could not cross the stream without seeking permission."¹⁴

It is evident that the Zamorin had not seen through the deep stratagem of the Portuguese official who negotiated with him when he allowed the construction of this fort. He thought he could tide over an impending financial crisis by demanding from the Portuguese half the custom duties on the traffic that passed through the river in return for his permission to build the fort. Though the financial situation was temporarily eased the fort turned out to be a grave menace and the Zamorin had to devote all his energies to expel the Portuguese from this fort in 1571.

The unofficial naval warfare continued even after the erection of the fort and the Portuguese who now felt secure at Calicut tightened their grip on the Muslim trade. Kutty Ahamad Marakkar, the leader of the

13. Ibid.

14. Logan: *op. cit.*—pp. 331-32.

Moplahs, was captured and put to death by them. But his place was taken by Kunhali, who, being a product of the new school in naval warfare, knew the Portuguese tactics inside out. He paid them back in the same coin, and killed the entire crew whenever he happened to capture a Portuguese ship. This intensified the naval warfare and both suffered severe losses.

Meanwhile the Portuguese had to face the hostility of a formidable combination. As a preliminary to an alliance between the Zamorin and the Turks who had become the masters of Egypt, the former attacked Cranganore. But the Portuguese defended themselves with the help of the Raja of Cochin. Martin de Sousa who was in charge of the Malabar squadron attacked the Raja of Idapally, a close ally of the Zamorin, and plundered his capital. The Zamorin's forces which were coming to the rescue were held up on the way. But Kunhali with a fairly large fleet appeared before Cochin and this diversion was successful since de Sousa had to withdraw his forces to meet Kunhali's fleet.

In 1538 de Sousa defeated the Marakars in a pitched battle and got the sea cleared for a short time. Luckily for the Portuguese, it was at this time that the Egyptian fleet appeared under Sulaiman Pasha intending "to avert the evil deeds of the Portuguese infidels and remove their flags from the sea." The timely success of the Portuguese over Kunhali enabled them to mobilise their whole strength against the Pasha.

The Pasha however did nothing. He returned to Egypt after an abortive naval demonstration and this was a blow to the Zamorin as he had counted upon his continued and effective support. The prolonged conflict with the Portuguese had caused a severe drain on his treasury and he was willing to negotiate peace with them. But the immediate conclusion of a peace was prevented by an unexpected turn of events in Cochin.

After attending the annual assembly held in Cranganore in 1536, the Zamorin resolved to perform the traditional ceremonies on the sacred stone. This stone had been removed from Cochin to Idapalli by his predecessor when he had attacked the Raja of Cochin in 1503. The Raja who wanted to prevent this at all costs requested the assistance of the Portuguese. This resulted in a general war between Cochin and Calicut. Assisted by the Portuguese the Raja was able to bring back the stone and place it in his own territory. The Portuguese were also benefited by this war as it enabled them to erect a fort at Cranganore.

As a result of this war the treaty between the Zamorin and the Portuguese came into effect only in January 1540. According to this treaty the Zamorin was to sell all the pepper available to the Portuguese at the rates prevailing in Cochin and ginger at 92 *fanams* per *bhara*, but he could send $3\frac{1}{2}$ *bharas* of pepper to Portugal on his own account for every 100 *bharas* bought by them. The Portuguese were to sell part of their merchandise at Calicut so that the Zamorin might have his customary dues on imports. He agreed not to make war with the friends of the Portuguese and to accept their passports for the Arab vessels, and the Portuguese, in turn, agreed to remain neutral in any war in which the Zamorin was involved.

The benefits gained by the Zamorin by this treaty were considerable. He got unfettered freedom of action against the Raja of Cochin since the Portuguese promised non-intervention. He also secured a settled income from the Portuguese trade as a result of which the trade of Calicut flourished. The Portuguese also gained considerably. They could be sure of getting exclusively the pepper and ginger of Calicut. They also secured freedom of action against other Malabar princes since the Zamorin promised non-intervention. This mutual abandonment of proteges and allies was

necessitated by the prolonged war between the two. This peace lasted for ten years.

The governorship of Martin Afonso de Sousa (1542-45) does not redound to the credit of the Portuguese, as the Governor was mainly engaged in pulling down and plundering the temples of South India and converting and persecuting both Hindus and Muslims. The only event of considerable importance during his time was the new treaty that de Sousa negotiated with Quilon in 1544. This treaty gave special privileges to the Christians in the country. If a Portuguese or a native Christian was guilty of any crime he was sent to the Captian for trial and punishment. The portuguese were also to be axempt from all dues and the Church of St. Thomas was to be specially protected.

Dom Joao de Castro who succeeded de Sousa in 1545 continued the Christianising policy of his predecessor with more enthusiasm and vigour. He undertook this mission with the consent of the king of Portugal who exhorted him to take effective steps in this direction. The governor wrote to the king of Cochin to grant special privileges to the Christians and later succeeded, among others, in converting a Raja of Tanur.

Meanwhile after ten years of enforced friendship war broke out again between the Zamorin and the Portuguese. The renewal of hostilities was mainly due to the high-handed methods of the Portuguese in their dealings with the smaller Rajas. The Portuguese took advantage of the neutrality guaranteed by the Zamorin and began to attack and reduce systematically the smaller Rajas to submission. The immediate cause of the war was a dispute between the Rajas of Vadakkumkur and Cochin. Though both agreed to submit to the arbitration of the Portuguese, Francisco de Silva, the Captain, was in favour of a war with Vadakkumkur.

He insisted on the unconditional surrender of the Raja and invaded his territory on his refusal. In the first engagement that took place the Raja himself was slain and the palace was burnt. The defeated enemy who regarded this as the worst offence possible rallied his forces once more and attacked the Portuguese with such vigour that their Captain was killed and they fled with much loss.

The Portuguese action against Vadakkumkur brought the Zamorin into the field against them. The Vadakkumkur prince who was slain in the battle was not only the Zamorin's feudatory but also an adopted relative. The custom of the country required him to fight against the Portuguese in order to avenge the death of his relative. The Zamorin occupied Vaduthalai where the first engagement had taken place. The Portuguese blockade was ineffective. The new Governor Dom Affonso de Noronha was not enthusiastic about the war on the sea where an unofficial war was already going on between the Portuguese and the Arabs in which the former had attacked and plundered many ships. But on land the Zamorin retained his supremacy. Three Cochin princes fell fighting and peace was concluded in 1555. But the war on sea continued with its increasing catalogue of cruelties and losses on both sides. After causing much harm to the Portuguese trade Kunhali the Moplah leader was forced to fight a pitched battle with Luiz de Mello off Cannanore in which Kunhali was defeated and three of his ships were captured. Besides this victory de Mello continued to cause much destruction to the Calicut fleet till he was recalled in 1560.

The Portuguese were at this time carrying on a war against the Kolattiri as well. Martim de Sousa had caused the murder of a nephew of Mammali Marakkar whose family was one of the richest and most influential in Cannanore. The Kolattiri immediately declared war and the Zamorin sided with him.

In 1564 the allies besieged the Portuguese fort at Cannanore. Since Kunhali was still causing much harm to the Portuguese at sea, the Governor was anxious to come to terms with Cannanore.

The peace that followed enabled the Portuguese to conduct the naval war against the Arabs with greater vigour but not with better results. Kunhali cleverly eluded the vigilance of the Portuguese vessels and attacked them only under favourable conditions. On one occasion he gained a victory over the Portuguese fleet in which the Captain himself was wounded. The Portuguese also retaliated and caused destruction to the Arabs wherever possible.

Though the Zamorin expressed his willingness to end the hostilities, the Portuguese refused to come to terms since they were bent upon taking revenge on Kunhali's actions. Therefore the Zamorin received in 1569 envoys from the Adil Shah of Bijapur and the Nizam Shah of Ahamadnagar. They undertook to launch a joint enterprise against the Portuguese. The three strongholds of the Portuguese on the West Coast, Goa, Chaul and Chaliyam, were to be simultaneously attacked by Adil Shah, Nizam Shah and the Zamorin respectively. While the first two ended in failure the Zamorin's attack on Chaliyam was completely successful. With a large force at his command he arrived before the fort which was then commanded by Dom Jorge de Castro. The fort was so completely surrounded and besieged that when supplies came from Cochin the Portuguese were not able to get them inside the fort. According to Sheik Zeinuddin "Muslims from various towns also came there in flocks to take part in that holy war. They dug trenches around the fort and sat round it keeping watch all the time..... The besieged who could not get fresh supplies exhausted all provisions available in the fort and ate dogs and such loathsome food animals..... When the Portuguese were in an extremely dangerous condition for want of food.....

they sent messengers offering to surrender the fort..... The Samuri agreed..... giving them a safe passage..... The Portuguese reached Kashie (Cochin) in a state of depression..... The Samuri took possession of the cannon and other things found in the fort. He pulled down the fort and removed stocks and stones and left the arid ground.”¹⁵ A Malayalam verse commemorates this event thus: On *Tiruvatira* (the sixth asterism) the fifth lunar day in the month of *Vrischika* (November-December) in the year 747 M. E. (1571) King Manavikrama routed the satanic army (of the Portuguese) and conferred prosperity on all by destroying the Chaliyam fortress.

The Chaliyam fortress had been a thorn in the Zamorin's side ever since its erection in 1531. Though he failed at first to see its strategic importance the Zamorin soon realised that it would be a constant source of trouble to him and that its destruction would be indispensable to the peace and commercial prosperity of Calicut. That was why he razed the whole edifice to the ground “leaving not one stone upon another.” The Portuguese policy of subduing Calicut by means of building a fortress, as in Cochin, had not been successful because on the first sign of their assertion of political authority the fortress was besieged and finally they themselves had to destroy it. Chaliyam fort built on a more strategic place enabled them to harass the Arab trade for forty years but not to subdue the ruler or diminish his power or influence. Their hopes of conquering the whole of Malabar were frustrated once for all by their expulsion from Chaliyam. The war with the Zamorin which began with the invasion of Calicut by Coutinho ended only in 1571. “Seventy years of conflict had come to nothing and the victory in this prolonged struggle lay decisively with the Ruler of Calicut.”¹⁶

15. Zeinuddin: *Op. cit.*—p. 88.

16. K. M. Panikkar: *Malabar and the Portuguese*—p. 135.

CHAPTER IX

The Last Days of the Portuguese in India

“THE accursed Portuguese” says Zeinuddin “were in a fit of violent anger after the subjugation of their fort at Shaliyot (Chaliyam). They were raging at the Samuri and the Muslims and were waiting for an opportunity to destroy the towns of the Samuri and erect fortification either at Fannan or at Shraliyat.....” Thus the expulsion of the Portuguese from the Chaliyam fort did not mean the termination of all hostilities with them. Though driven from the main land they were powerful at sea and they continued their naval warfare against the Zamorin harassing and plundering the coastal towns. On one occasion they succeeded in cutting off the rice trade with Tulunad which caused a famine in the country. Therefore the Zamorin decided to renew his alliance with the Adil Shah of Bijapur.

Thereupon the Portuguese opened negotiations with the Zamorin. Since the latter was absent at Kodungallur performing a religious ceremony, the negotiations were carried on by his ministers. But they ended in failure because the Portuguese insisted on building a fort at Ponnani which the Zamorin would not concede though he granted them permission to build a fort at Calicut. On the failure of their negotiations with the Zamorin the Portuguese persuaded the Raja of Cochin to conclude an alliance with them and the allies attacked Cranganore; but “the Samuri..... in spite of his small army, was able with the help of Allah, to defeat the Portuguese and the ruler of Kashi.”¹ The subsequent attempts of the Portuguese to capture Chaliyam and destroy the ports on the sea-coast were also not successful.

1. Sheik Zeinuddin : *op. sit.*

Meanwhile trouble arose in Cochin as a result of disagreement between the Raja and the Portuguese on the question of port dues. Hitherto these were shared between the Raja and the Portuguese. In 1583 the Governor persuaded the Raja with much difficulty to give up the right of charging the Portuguese these dues. The surrender of such an important source of revenue caused great discontent among the people who realised that they had been robbed of their just rights and rose in revolt. The situation turned out to be so grave that the Portuguese withdrew their claim and consented to pay the dues.

The result of this agitation was that the Portuguese were forced to reopen negotiations with the Zamorin. In 1584 a peace was concluded by which the Portuguese were allowed to build a factory instead of a fort at Ponnani in return for the restoration of all the prisoners by them. But Kunhali the Admiral of the Zamorin did not like this concession granted to the Portuguese because he knew that the factory at Ponnani would obstruct his activities and harass his trade. Therefore, even after the treaty with the Zamorin, Kunhali continued to be a source of trouble to the Portuguese. Kunhali's nephew Khwaja Mousa attacked a Portuguese squadron in 1589 and caused much damage to their trade. The Kunhalis became so powerful that they practically intercepted their trade on the Malabar coast and contemplated even an attack on Colombo. These successes combined with their dislike of the *rapprochement* between the Zamorin and the Portuguese turned their heads. Kunhali forgot his allegiance to the Zamorin and set out to make himself independent. He grew so powerful that the Zamorin was forced to conclude an alliance with the Portuguese to bring the rebel to his knees.

The defiant attitude of the Kunhalis was noticed by the Zamorin only when it threatened to be a menace to the establishment of peace in his dominions. After the expulsion of the Portuguese from Chaliyam Pattu

Marakkar obtained permission from the Zamorin to build a small fort at Putupattanam. Since then he regularly carried on a destructive warfare against the Portuguese. He captured many of their richly laden ships and appropriated much booty. His brother's son Kunhali Marakkar inflicted even greater losses on the Portuguese. Ambitious and conscious of his power, he cherished the idea of carving out a little principality of his own where he could be free from the Zamorin's intervention and Portuguese molestation. Therefore he enlarged the fortress to make it a small town. Knowing that the Portuguese would take revenge sooner or later for the injuries inflicted by him, he fortified the town by land and sea. Having thus protected himself safely from attack, "by indiscriminate plundering and piracy, he accumulated great wealth which he stored up in his peninsula fortress."²

It was now clear to the Portuguese that the rising power of this adventurer should be curbed for the safety of their vessels in the West Coast. The Governor therefore sent an envoy to the Zamorin pointing out the necessity of reducing Kunhali to submission and requesting his co-operation in an expedition against him. The Zamorin was loth to take up arms against one of his own supporters who had been "the life and soul of the sea fight against the Portuguese," but his continued defiant attitude forced the Zamorin to "combine for his destruction with the very people who thirsted for his blood."³ Meanwhile Kunhali adopted the high-sounding titles of the "King of the Malabar Moors" and "Lord of the Indian Seas." Further he grossly insulted his overlord by cutting off the tail of one of his elephants and ill-treating the messenger whom the Zamorin had sent for securing an explanation for his conduct. Therefore the Zamorin concluded a treaty of joint action with the Portuguese against Kunhali and attacked his fortress. The Portuguese

2 Danvers: *op. cit.*—Vol. II, p. 95.

3 K. V. Krishna Aiyar: *op. cit.*

attempt to capture the fortress in 1598 had been unsuccessful and had resulted in heavy losses. The Zamorin now agreed to put in 15 elephants and 5000 men, while the Portuguese were to attack by the sea with as many ships as were required. Furtado, the Portuguese commander, proceeded with caution and pressed the enemy with so much vigour that Kunhali found his position untenable and opened negotiations with the Zamorin. He surrendered on the promise of pardon. In accordance with his treaty with the Portuguese the Zamorin handed him over to them to be kept in honourable custody. But the Portuguese broke their promise and put him to death at Goa.

“The King of Calicut” says Pyrard de Laval “had great regret for having delivered up so valiant a man, for Cognailly and his brother were esteemed the bravest captains in all the East Indies.”⁴ His execution by hanging like a common criminal ended the alliance between the Zamorin and the Portuguese. The Raja of Cochin had all along spared no pains in bringing about a rupture. When the Zamorin decided to co-operate with the Portuguese against Kunhali, the Raja had caused a rumour to be circulated, taking care to see that it reached the ears of the Portuguese commanders, to the effect that the Zamorin had agreed with Kunhali to suddenly fall upon the Portuguese when they would be engaged in attacking the fortress. The report merely caused the Portuguese commanders to act with additional caution. While the Zamorin was engaged in fighting Kunhali the Raja of Cochin attacked Cranganore, one of the feudatories of the Zamorin.

4. “Kunhali was not only an old sea dog, the hero of a hundred fighting, but also a great organiser. The ease with which he fought successive fleet on the sea and kept up the fight continuously in spite of the most determined efforts of the Portuguese for a period of forty years bears witness to his resourcefulness and skill.....Kunhali’s methods on the sea were simple. The speed of his vessels enabled him to appear at the most unexpected places.....and to refuse action except when weather and position favoured him.”—(K. M. Panikkar:

India and Indian Ocean,—p. 49).

After the campaign against Kunhali, therefore, the Zamorin decided to expel the Cochin forces from Cranganore. The Rajas of Cranganore had been the feudatories of the Zamorin from the earliest times. But when Cranganore came under the possession of the Portuguese the Raja threw away his allegiance to the Zamorin and declared his independence with the help of the Portuguese. Therefore the Zamorin's object in attacking Cranganore was not only the expulsion of the Cochin forces but also the reduction of a reaclitrant feudatory. The town and fortress of Cranganore were under the possession of the Portuguese who decided to defend them at all cost.

The Zamorin was helped in his effort by the Raja of Parur and the Dutch who had meanwhile arrived in the Indian waters. According to an agreement concluded with them in November 1604 the Dutch were permitted to open a factory at Ponnani in return for their help in connection with the Cranganore project. The attack on Cranganore was effective in the beginning when the fort was reduced to great straits. But the Dutch were not able to render effective help as their ships were intercepted on the way and the siege was raised by Noronha.

But the arrival of the Dutch in the Indian waters had far-reaching effects on the fortunes of the Portuguese in Malabar. The minor chiefs of Malabar who were struggling under the yoke of the Portuguese were quick to find that their European masters were no longer the monopoly-holders in the Arabian sea; and that with the help of this new force they could free themselves from the Portuguese. The Dutch in their turn were also equally quick to discern the unpopularity of the Portuguese and the precariousness of their position owing to the hostility of the Malabar chiefs. Therefore in the beginning the Dutch directed their energies mainly to earn the goodwill of and in maintaining friendly relations with these chiefs. As a result,

subsequent to the arrival of the Dutch and other European powers, the Portuguese wielded very little influence in the politics of Malabar. Their history during these years was merely the story of a series of wars in which they were involved against a combination of the Dutch and the Zamorin which eventually led to their downfall.

The succession question in Cochin was the immediate cause of the outbreak of war. The royal family of Cochin consisted of five branches—Mutta Tavali (senior branch), Ilaya (junior) Tavali, Maringur, Chaliyar and Pallivirutti. In the 16th century Albuquerque had interfered in the succession to the Cochin throne and had dispossessed the senior branch on the ground that the rightful claimant was a supporter of the Zamorin. The reigning branch became extinct in 1664 and adoptions were made not only from the elder branch which had been dispossessed by Albuquerque but also from the collateral branch of Pallivirutti. But the adoptees quarrelled among themselves resulting in the rise of two factions headed by the rival adoptees. With the help of the Portuguese the Pallivirutti prince drove the Mutta Tavali prince out of the country. The *Patappattu* or the War Song, a historical poem in Malayalam, says that the dispossessed prince sought the help of Manakkulattu Nambiti, a powerful Nayar chief, but the latter was slain in an attempt to restore the Mutta Tavali prince to his rightful place. The Pallivirutti prince died soon after and the throne became vacant in 1650. So five princes from Tanur (Bettet) who were the friends of the Portuguese were adopted on the ground that their house had rendered valuable help to the Cochin royal family on a former occasion. The Portuguese elevated the eldest Bettet prince to the throne with the help of a Travancore prince called Raman Koil. Thereupon the exiled prince of Mutta Tavali appealed to the Zamorin for help who lost no time in taking up his cause. The intervention of the Zamorin split the Malabar chiefs into two, the Rajas

of Vadakkumkur and Idappalli supporting the dispossessed princes and the Rajas of Purakkad and Valluvanad the adopted princes. The chief of Paliyati, the most powerful noble and the hereditary Prime Minister of Cochin who had cultivated a hearty dislike for the Portuguese, supported the exiled prince. Moreover, the prince strengthened his hands by befriending the Dutch. Raja Virakerala Varma of the Mutta Tavali proceeded to Colombo, where the Dutch had established themselves, met the Dutch Governor-General and sought his support to the cause of the exiled prince. The Governor General, who was only waiting for an opportunity to secure a footing in the Malabar coast, readily acceded to the proposal and promised to restore the prince to his inheritance.

In the same year, when the Dutch commander Van der Meyden came to the Malabar coast, the Eralpad also interviewed him. It was agreed that the Zamorin should attack Cochin from the north, Virakerala Varma the exiled prince from the south and the Dutch from the sea. After dispersing a Nayar regiment the Dutch Admiral appeared before Palliport and occupied it, the Portuguese giving no resistance. But when the Dutch left for Batavia the Portuguese succeeded in reoccupying that port in 1661.

The Supreme Government at Batavia fitted out another expedition in the same year with Van Goens as commander. Reinforced with heavy artillery from Colombo in October, the fleet appeared before Quilon in December.⁵ The Dutch captured Quilon after a vigorous resistance by the Nair soldiers of the Queen, the portuguese remaining passive. Van Goens joined the expedition on 1st January 1662. Recovering Palliport he proceeded to lay siege to the fort of Cranganore. The fort was defended by Urband Ferreira "a man of

5. Captain Nienhoff the writer and explorer accompanied the commander in one of the ships.

great courage and valour.” After a protracted resistance the fort was stormed by the Dutch. They were successful because the Paliyam chief had betrayed to them the plans of the besiegers. This was followed by a new treaty with the Zamorin by which the Dutch secured the monopoly of pepper trade at Calicut in return for the cession of Cranganore and Vaipin.

The Dutch proceeded to Cochin through Vaipin fixing their headquarters in a Roman Catholic Church and fought a battle in front of the place. Though the Nayars gave a fierce resistance⁶ they were unable to hold for long against the disciplined array of Dutch soldiers. According to Tavernier about 1600 Nayars were killed in this battle. The Raja of Cochin fell fighting with two of his juniors while the last of the Bettet adoptees had withdrawn to Ernakulam before the battle and the Mutta Tavalī prince was installed on the throne by the Allies.

Soon afterwards the Portuguese fort at Cochin was besieged by the Allies. Though the fort was defended heroically by the Portuguese it capitulated in 1663. The Portuguese commander “who had fought hard and revived even in defeat the memories of Pacheco and Albuquerque” surrendered the keys of the town to the Dutch Admiral. “With this act of surrender the Portuguese flag ceased to fly over Malabar... Over the fortress of Cochin, Cannanore and Quilon the flag of the Portuguese had given place to the flag of Holland. The ruins of a fine fortress, a small population of *topasses* and a Bishopric are all that is left of the glory of Vasco da Gama and Albuquerque.”⁷

6. “They (Nayars) all appeared in arms against us and several times attacked us like mad men throwing themselves among our ranks though they were sure to die in the attempt and thrust themselves upon our swords and spikes not like men but like wild boars and enraged bears.” (Churchill’s Collection of Voyages and Travels—Vol. II.

7. K. M. Panikkar : *Malabar and the Portuguese*—p. 161.

During their so called supremacy in India the Portuguese failed to build a durable Empire in this country though they had many advantages over their European rivals. But the Portuguese posed as lords of India and subsequent historians have also held that view. Except Goa, however, they held no other territorial possession of any considerable extent for any considerable time, and they were able to hold Goa because it was easily defensible. There was absolutely no resemblance between the British power and the Portuguese power in India and therefore it is historiographically incorrect to speak of a Portuguese Empire in India. Even the monopoly of trade in the Indian waters which they practically enjoyed till the arrival of their European rivals was never accepted at least by some of the Indian powers. The Zamorin was able to question the Portuguese supremacy at sea with the help of the Kunhalis. The sea power of the Zamorin was no doubt broken with his rupture with the Kunhalis and the capture of their fort by the Portuguese in 1599. But by that time the Dutch had already appeared on the scene and the Portuguese had to face a more powerful rival at sea. Thus even with reference to the monopoly of trade the Portuguese could not be said to have established their unquestioned supremacy in India.

Except in two or three towns like Cochin, Purakkad and Quilon they were not able to establish their authority any where in Malabar. The war with the Zamorin, which lasted for about a hundred years, was a war waged by them for the establishment of their political and commercial supremacy. But this war ended in a colossal failure with the capture of Chaliyam by the ruler of Calicut. In no place between Cranganore and Cannanore the Portuguese were successful in establishing their authority.

But in Cochin and Quilon their political supremacy was real. Ever since the Raja of Cochin concluded

the ill-fated alliance with the Portuguese, he was virtually reduced to the position of a vassal who owned his throne to the king of Portugal. Cochin remained the official residence of the Viceroy till 1530 when it was transferred to Goa. Ceasar Frederick describes Cochin in 1581 as "the chiefest place that the Portuguese have in the Indies next to Goa." Even the crown which the Raja wore was "made in and sent from Portugal." Even as early as 1505 the Raja was asked to take an oath of allegiance to the king of Portugal. The Raja invariably took the line of least resistance in his relations with the Portuguese because they never hesitated even to imprison him on the slightest provocation. Occasionally he was treated with extreme incivility by the Portuguese who arrogantly interfered in his family quarrels.

Quilon and Purakkad were the other two places where the Portuguese exercised their authority. The first treaty concluded by Governor Lopo Soares with the former gave the Portuguese a monopoly of trade with Quilon, but it also stipulated that the State should receive a share of the customs. Therefore when the Portuguese became more powerful under Roaderigues they scrapped the treaty and made the Raja of Quilon a vassal of the king of Portugal. The position of the Raja of Purakkad was never so servile as that of the Rajas of Quilon and Cochin. Though the Portuguese under Lopo Vaz raided the city and inflicted severe damages on the Raja in 1528, they remained friendly with him ever afterwards.

The Portuguese established their authority in the above places as they were able to build fortresses there and maintain an army intact and because the power of these Rajas did not extend much beyond the confines of their capital. The territorial possessions of the Raja of Cochin, for instance, were limited to the immediate neighbourhood of the fortress. The Anji Kaimals and other powerful Nayar barons owed only nominal

allegiance to the Raja. Not only was there no love lost between the Portuguese and these barons but they actually sympathised with the Zamorin. Therefore the political suzerainty that they had in Cochin did not help them much in the direction of territorial expansion or commercial progress. In Quilon and Purakkad as well they built strong fortresses which ensured their authority. Though these were the only three places where the Portuguese established their authority they maintained friendly relations with the minor chieftains and others whose co-operation was necessary for the procurement of spices for which they had been sent from home.

The Kolattiri was perhaps the wealthiest and most powerful chieftain who remained friendly with the Portuguese during their stay in Malabar, barring a few days of hostility against them. The cordial relations established between the two during the early years of their contact would have continued but for some of the high-handed actions of the Portuguese already referred to. The Raja successfully resisted the interference of the Portuguese in his internal affairs so that though they succeeded in erecting a fortress at Cannanore they failed to establish political power there. They bought the friendship of other minor chieftains by a subsidy in gold. "This subsidy kept the Rajas in good humour, increased their sense of importance and secured their friendship."⁸

Trade and not territorial acquisition or expansion, was the primary concern of the Portuguese. But Albuquerque believed that a firm military power was a necessary prerequisite to the establishment of an extensive trade with the East. With this intention in view, he encouraged building strong fortresses in the coastal towns which were easily defensible. Thus even the greatest of the Portuguese representatives in India

8. *Ibid*—p. 167.

had no intention of building up a territorial empire. Alameda was uncompromisingly opposed to territorial expansion. He held the view that "the greater the number of fortresses you hold, the weaker will be your power" and regarded supremacy at sea as the principal if not the sole factor which would ensure their success in the East.

But the fortresses that they built in the coastal towns not only controlled the export of pepper and other valuable commodities but they also served to impress the local ruler and his subjects with the authority of the Portuguese. In certain parts of the country like the Zamorin's dominions where the political purpose was difficult to be achieved the commercial objective was made abundantly clear. Thus the Chaliyam fortress was built with the express purpose of controlling the trade of the Zamorin's territory. By means of these fortresses the Portuguese were able to segregate their dependents in small arrears because "each fortress was practically a Portuguese settlement." Within the area surrounded by the walls only Portuguese and Latin Christians were allowed to stay. The others were either forced to become Christians or expelled from the area.

This segregation of their dependents and the exclusion of the non-Christians from their territory enabled the Portuguese to exercise their authority without coming into conflict with the local rulers. Wherever they had built their fortresses the Portuguese meted out their own justice to their subjects without allowing it to clash with the native judicial administration. This division of judicial administration was laid down in clear and unambiguous terms. "When any Nair or native of the land or Moor had any strife or contention (he) shall be tried by the local ruler, while Portuguese subjects were sent before the captain of the fortress." This was a privilege to which the Portuguese were entitled but it was a privilege for which nobody

envied them, because the Portuguese justice, for all its quickness and impartiality, was invariably more barbarous and cruel than that of the local rulers. In 1524, when Vasco da Gama started for India as Viceroy he caused three women to be publicly flogged for the trivial offence that they were detected in the ships after they had passed Belem which was against the orders of the Viceroy.⁹

It must be said in fairness to the Portuguese that they were impartial in meting out justice and showed no discrimination as between Portuguese citizens and Indian Christians. But the privileges of the nobles were kept intact. While Vasco da Gama and other Viceroys were determined that the lower classes should be taught to keep their proper station, they never encroached upon the privileges of the nobles who were exempt from punishment in India.

The division of justice avoided friction between the Malabar population and the Portuguese. Perhaps they adopted this wise attitude to ensure their safety in those places where they had already gained a footing, for except in Cochin and Quilon their dealings with the Indian states and rulers were based only on the principle of strength. They had stoutly resisted the encroachment of the Portuguese and regarded them as cruel barbarians. Mention has already been made of some of the shocking cruelties committed by them in Malabar.

The Portuguese rarely missed any opportunity for plunder even when it involved a complete negation of every species of honour and scruple. Though the Raja of Cochin was their closest ally one of his temples was plundered by the Portuguese because of rumours that it contained untold wealth. A resourceful Portuguese

9. "The justice of the king our Lord" intoned the town crier "It orders these women to be flogged because they had no fear of his justice and crossed over to india despite his prohibitions."
—(Jayne: *Vasco da Gama and his successors*—p. 125).

Captain started the practice of issuing safe-conduct to the following effect:— “The owner of this ship is a very wicked Moor. I desire that the first Portuguese captain to whom this may be shown may make a prize of her.” It was this attitude of the Portuguese towards the Indian subjects that furnished their rivals with many willing supporters. The Portuguese made themselves unpopular and hated not only by inflicting physical violence upon the people, but by destroying and devastating land and property. On one occasion in 1554 at Cannanore they cut down as many as 40,000 palm trees “which was a very serious thing for the people of those parts as the produce of these trees formed their principal source of food and income.”¹⁰ Such destructive activities naturally drove the majority of the people straight into the enemy’s camp.

With the exception of the governorship of Albuquerque the government of the Portuguese settlement throughout their stay in India was at best incompetent. The captain who controlled the town worked under the orders of the Governor who shifted his headquarters to Goa after Albuquerque’s time. The controller of revenues who collected the customs at the port of Cochin was, like the captain, directly appointed from Portugal. As the volume of trade with Malabar appreciably decreased this office was found to be of little use. Though Albuquerque was able to restore some sort of financial order, corruption was still rampant and Government continued to be inefficient.

The religious policy of the Portuguese deserves special mention since that was a potent factor that led to their downfall. In the 15th century Europeans knew no religion outside Christianity except Islam. In fact Vasco da Gama mistook a temple of Kali to be a church, the idol of Kali for a representation of the virgin and the Zamorin and his subjects to be Christians

10. Danvers: *Op. cit.*—Vol. II, p. 529.

though Christians of a peculiar type. Cabrel who also regarded the inhabitants of the Indies as a sort of primitive Christians wanted to change their crude methods of worship. But later they came to know of the existence of a Hindu religion from the Christians of the Syrian church who recognised the sovereignty of the king of Portugal and even invited him to conquer the Hindu kingdoms in Malabar.

The intolerent policy of the Portuguese towards the Hindus developed with the extension of their authority in this country. Special privileges were extended to the converts. They even insisted that Christians should be given privileged treatment by the local rulers. Albuquerque went a step further and inaugurated the policy of expelling all non-Christians from within the walls of the Portuguese fortresses. In its early stages the motive of conversion was not religious zeal but strengthening the Portuguese hold on the Coast. But Joa III, whose court was likened by Francis Xavier to a well disciplined monastery, was a weak but zealous bigot who encouraged conversion for its own sake. Bishoprics were created at Goa and Cochin and the king wrote to the Viceroy, Joa de Castro, that all the power of the Portuguese should be directed towards conversion and annihilation of idol worship in the Portuguese dominions in India. The Viceroy was "to discover by diligent officers all the idols and demolish them and break them up in pieces where they are found.....proclaiming severe punishment against any one who shall bring to light any figure of an idol....."¹¹ Thus conversion was also combined with the destruction of the idols and other Hindu symbols. Temples were plundered not only to destroy the relics of Hinduism but to amass wealth as much as possible. The religious policy of the Portuguese wounded Hindu and Muslim susceptibilities to such an extent that the Government came to be always involved

11. K. M. Panikkar: *Malabar and the Portuguese*—p. 187.

in troubles with some Hindu or Muslim power. There was no peace which was essential for promoting commerce and conserving the scanty resources of the kingdom, and the Government usually had to pay the expenses of one campaign by the plunder got in another. The conversion of Hindus and the maintenance of a church which "rivalled the state in authority and wealth" drained the income of the state.

Further the policy of conversion was not only unpopular but unsuccessful as well since the bulk of the population of Malabar was under Hindu rulers. Therefore the Portuguese tried to convert the Rajas themselves. Though the Raja of Tanur offered to become a Christian and underwent formally the ceremony of baptism at Goa he denied the conversion and continued to keep his old customs. The Raja of Cochin, subservient to the Portuguese in all other respects, stood firm on the question of religion and refused to be converted. But the Portuguese still continued their policy of allowing only Christians within their fortress, so that many people were forced to accept Christianity in Cochin and Cranganore.

The Indian Christians, for all their privileges and special treatment, were not in an enviable position under the Portuguese. The latter regarded them as heretics and attempted to make them conform to Roman practices. But the attempt proved to be not very successful, though de Meneses succeeded in bringing to the fold of the Catholic Church a large number of Syrian Christians at the Synod at Diamper.

Any account of the religious policy of the Portuguese will not be complete without mentioning the missionary activities of St. Francis Xavier. His extreme religious fervour gained for him the acquaintance of Ignatius Loyola and he was one of the first six who founded the society of Jesus. He was sent to India for missionary work in 1540. Xavier took the

first step towards the establishment of an organised system of conversion by founding a college at Goa for the instruction of boys from every part of India. His main work in India was accomplished in the Malabar coast among the fisher folk and other low caste people of Travancore who flocked round the pious, transparently sincere and barefooted mendicant and got themselves baptized in thousands. Xavier's mission is of interest because he was "the first missionary in our modern sense".¹²

12. K. M. Panikkar: *Malabar and the Portuguese*.

CHAPTER X

The Dutch in Malabar



UNLIKE the other parts of India, Malabar had never been ruled by a foreigner till the Europeans came and settled in this country. While the whole of North India and most of South India were under Muslim rule, Kerala had its own kings and chieftains. But not unlike in other parts of India, it was internal dissensions that mainly accounted for its subjugation by foreigners. If the rivalry between Cochin and Calicut was responsible for the assumption of authority by the Portuguese the dissensions among the members of the royal family of Cochin opened the door to the Dutch.

The prestige and profits that the Portuguese acquired as a result of the monopoly they secured in the trade with the East led other European nations also to seek a share in it. The Dutch were the first to take active steps in this direction. But Holland was for a long time under the influence of the king of Spain who had also become the king of Portugal. Even though they had freed themselves from the Spanish domination by 1581 the Dutch were not in a position to challenge the naval power of Philip II. But the defeat of the Armada in 1588 indirectly profited the Dutch as well as other European nations who now became emboldened to question the monopoly of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean.

The French, the Dutch and the English vied with each other in establishing themselves in different parts of India. The English were the first to secure a footing in Malabar. In 1615 Captain Keeling visited the Zamorin who was at Cranganore and concluded a

treaty with him.¹ The Zamorin hoped after this treaty to secure the support of the English against the Portuguese. But he was thoroughly disillusioned when they got into their ships and sailed after making the necessary arrangements to build a factory.

Captain Cornelius Houtman arrived in Malabar in 1595. Earlier in 1592 at a meeting held in Amstardam the leading Dutch merchants had decided to found a company to carry on organised trade with India. The arrival of the Dutch changed the whole political situation in Malabar and the Portuguese were forced to be on the defensive against the intruders. In 1604 they concluded a treaty with the Zamorin "with a view to the expulsion of the Portuguese from the territories of His Highness and the rest of India." After building a fortress in Malabar they set out to secure a firm footing in the Eastern Archipelago. They captured Java and made Batavia their headquarters and the seat of the Government. In 1639 Goa was besieged in vain. Capturing Vingorla in 1655 they reached Ceylon in 1658 and drove away the Portuguese from there.

After the capture of Colombo they turned their attention to the Malabar coast using Ceylon as a base of operations against the Portuguese. The war of succession in Cochin and the resulting confusion facilitated their ambitious project. The dispossessed prince of the elder branch negotiated with the Dutch in Ceylon. This resulted in the arrival of Admiral Rykloff Van Goens and the capture of the fortress at Quilon in 1698 which was only a prelude to the capture of Cochin and the expulsion of the Portuguese from Malabar.

The Dutch were placed in a more advantageous position than the Portuguese in Malabar. For one thing the Portuguese had already established a political

1. This was the first treaty concluded between a Malabar Prince and England.

and commercial system which the Dutch had simply to administer; they were not faced with the difficulty of finding a political system and then to administer it. Further, unlike their vanquished rivals the Dutch had not had to face the hostility of the Muslim trading community; the Arab commercial power had already been shattered in the previous century. So there was no serious competition in the internal trade. But they were definitely at a more disadvantageous position than their predecessors as far as the monopoly of the Indian waters was concerned. The French and the English were their formidable rivals. The English had established a factory at Tellicherry as early as 1664. They had also a fort at Ajengo where the Rani of Attingal gave them protection. The French were just waiting for an opportunity to appear on the scene and contribute their share to the prevailing confusion.

The Dutch were on firmer ground than their rivals because they had inherited from the Portuguese a system of political relations with the kings and chiefs of Malabar. The Raja of Cochin realised that he had simply changed masters, for the Dutch from the beginning regarded him only as a vassal whose rights were derived from the company. The Paliyat Achan had already recognised their suzerainty. The feudatories of Cochin like the chiefs of Mangat and Parur were also forced to recognise the overlordship of the Dutch since the Raja of Cochin himself had done so. The Zamorin had already concluded a treaty with them in 1604 which established friendship between the two. In 1662, on the eve of their attack on Cochin, they concluded another treaty with the ruler of Calicut by which the Dutch secured the exclusive right for the purchase of pepper in Calicut territory at the market price and the Zamorin was promised in exchange the island of Vaipin. When the Zamorin, however, demanded its cession after the expulsion of the Portuguese it was refused and this embittered the relations between the Zamorin and the Dutch.

The Dutch treaty with Travancore established friendship between the two and secured for them a monopoly of pepper trade in Travancore. These negotiations with the rulers on the coast were held because they constituted a necessary prerequisite to securing a monopoly of trade in Malabar. The prominent chiefs with whom they concluded such agreements were those of Kayamkulam, Purakkad and Madathukur. The last, though a small principality, was an important centre of pepper. Owing to the opposition of the Muslims who had settled down there captain Nicuhoff who had been sent to conduct the negotiations had to modify his terms to some extent. But ultimately he succeeded in securing a monopoly of trade in pepper. It was only after concluding these valuable treaties that the Dutch settled down to trade. Unlike the Portuguese they never forgot that their main business was trade and therefore they avoided many blunders that their predecessors had committed.

The success of the elaborate arrangements with minor princes on the coast which secured for them a monopoly of trade in the spices depended primarily upon their ability to control the Raja of Cochin, and they set out to subordinate him completely. The nephew of the dispossessed prince, Virakerala Varma, was crowned Raja and the very coronation ceremony showed the altered position of the new ruler. The crown bore the cypher of the Dutch East India Company and Van Goens accompanied by two captains placed the crown on the head of Virakerala Varma with all pomp and ceremony. After the coronation a new treaty was signed by which the Company and the Raja pledged to be friends, the Dutch were confirmed in all the possessions which were previously under the Portuguese and the Company was to be the protector of the Raja and to have a monopoly of trade in spices from Purakkad to Cranganore. The Raja also declared his willingness to give his support to the Company in men and money and the Company was given permission

to construct fortresses if necessary. The entry of opium into Cochin was prohibited. There was also to be division of justice between the Christians and Nayars as during the time of the Portuguese. This treaty made the position of the Dutch secure in Cochin since they obtained the monopoly of trade and permission to construct fortresses for their defence.

This was followed by treaty with Purakkad chief who had formerly sided with the Portuguese against the Dutch. By this treaty both decided to let bygones be bygones. The Purakkad Prince also promised his support for the Dutch and the Cochin Raja against the enemies of either of them or both of them.

The Dutch in Cochin :— Cochin was a beautiful and rich city when the Dutch came in possession of it. Among the Portuguese possessions in India it had been second only to Goa. The Portuguese had built a number of churches and building in various parts of the city. Many of them were razed to the ground by the Dutch who built a fortress there surrounded by a broad and deep moat.

The arrival of Van Rheede as Commandeur in 1673 marked a definite change in the policy of the Dutch towards the Rajas of Malabar. A young officer who had distinguished himself at the siege of Cochin, Van Rheede desired not the prosperity of the Dutch in India as a result of increased trade but the establishment of their political authority. Soon after he had taken charge he made the Raja of Cochin entirely dependent upon the Company. The civil list of the Raja and the Elaya Raja (heir apparent) were fixed at 30000 and 16000 *fanams* respectively. The administration was handed over to Paliyam chiefs, the hereditary Prime Ministers of Cochin, and it was laid down that adoption to the Cochin royal family was not to be made without consulting the Dutch Commander and except from the descendants of the lawful families. Van

Rheede made his position further secure by negotiating another treaty with the important nobles of Cochin.²

The intervention of the Dutch even in the internal affairs of Cochin and their attempt to create a split among the junior princes and nobles were resented by the latter who rose in revolt against the company. The Raja was weak and incompetent. He withdrew to the interior when civil war broke out. The Commander, however, adroitly fished in the troubled waters and succeeded in concluding another agreement with the Raja (1678) which made Cochin virtually a dependency under the Dutch. The Company was allowed to exercise its authority without consulting the princes and to punish those who opposed its authority. Further all the actions of the Raja were to be subject to the approval of the company.

This treaty made the enraged nobles to take up arms openly against the Dutch. The Company realised that if the Raja was to be retained on the throne they should take over the management of affairs openly. Accordingly a new agreement was concluded with the Raja on 3rd May 1681 by which he was asked to accept a Dutch official as his minister. Though the chief of Paliyam was to continue as Prime Minister the affairs of the State were to be regulated and managed on the advice of the Company. When in course of time the Paliyam chief died leaving a minor as his heir, Captain Henrik Reine was appointed to that post thus virtually abolishing the hereditary prime ministership of Cochin.

This treaty made Cochin "less a dependency than a mere proprietary estate of the Dutch Company" and the Raja became a non-entity. But the position of the Dutch, though outwardly all right, was really precarious.

2. Viz. The thirty thousand Nayars of Karappuram, the three hundred of Badattula, the three hundred of Kandamthuruthy, the Melur Madathil Kaimal, the three hundred of Vaipin and those of Paliyat, by which they agreed to form a league against all those who are the enemies of the Company.

The high-handed measures of the commandeur enraged the nobles of Cochin to such an extent that they began preparations for an all out rebellion against the Company. The Raja, for all his weakness and vacillation, was thoroughly disgusted at the dominating attitude of the Dutch and secretly encouraged the rebels. But his attempt to adopt a prince from the Chaliyur family indirectly saved the Dutch because it plunged the country into civil war which enabled them to consolidate their position.

Martin Huysman, the commandeur of Cochin, and the Paliyam Chief advised the king to adopt two princes and four princesses from the Chaliyur branch. This was resented by the Nayar nobles because the Chaliyur chief was a dependent of the Dutch. The nobles believed that the Dutch were not so powerful as the Portuguese had been and that they could not give effective help to the Raja of Cochin in regaining his possessions which the Zamorin had wrested from him. The chief nobles of Cochin under Ayini Kutty Nambidi therefore started an agitation for adoption from Vettattunad instead of from Chaliyur. The Company could not accept this suggestion since the Vettattunad faction was violently anti-Dutch. The leading nobles of Cochin like the Rajas of Parur, Mangat and Manakkulam supported the Vettattunad branch. Their attempt to include Paliyam chief as well in this confederacy was not successful. When, in spite of this general anti-Dutch feeling, the Chaliyur adoption was made in 1689 the Vettattunad prince gathered his supporters in Mangat and resolved to decide the adoption issue on the point of the sword. The Raja of Cochin had personally disliked the attitude of the Dutch from the very beginning and had secretly supported the rebels. Nevertheless, he was forced to throw himself completely into their hands. The Dutch also now faced a difficult situation. The support of the Rajas of Parur and Manakkulam made the Vettattunad prince so powerful that the Dutch realised their inability to curb the rising without the

support of a strong ally. Public opinion in Cochin was against the Chaliyur adoption. The only leading noble man who continued to support the Raja was the Paliyam chief. Therefore both the Raja and the Company were in search of a powerful ally and strangely enough they turned to the Zamorin in their extremity. The Zamorin had never been on good terms with the Raja of Cochin and had recently had an occasion to nourish a grievance against the Dutch. In return for the assistance given to them in the conquest of Cochin the Dutch had ceded only Cranganore to the Zamorin and had not heeded his claims on Vaipin. But in spite of these strained relations the Dutch commandeur visited the Zamorin at Cranganore in order to gain his support against the Vettattunad prince.

The reigning Zamorin, the Bharani Tirunal, being a ruler of considerable ability and foresight, was unwilling to help the Dutch against a popular rising. But the ambassador of Cochin succeeded in persuading him to conclude a truce with the Dutch for 12 years by which the Zamorin was to render help to the Raja of Cochin in return for the cession of Chetwai and all military expenses. The combined forces of the Zamorin, the Dutch and the Paliyam chief met the rival army encamped near Alwaye and defeated and dispersed them. The palaces of Alangat and Parur were plundered and reduced to ashes by the Dutch before they returned to Cochin. In accordance with the treaty Chetwai was ceded to the Zamorin.

Chetwai was a place which the Zamorin long coveted. But while gaining Chetwai the Zamorin lost his position as the supporter of the popular cause in Cochin. In concluding an alliance with a foreign power and his vassal to put down a righteous and popular anti-Dutch rebellion, the Bharani Tirunal Zamorin, for all his ability and statesmanship, made a revolutionary break with the traditional policy of his ancestors. The Zamorin, it is true, was still powerful, but he was no

longer the leader of the popular forces. Therefore "the war of Vettom succession was an event of utmost importance in Malabar history. It consolidated the power of the Dutch at Cochin by making the Raja completely dependent on the company and by breaking the power of his anti-Dutch nobles. It saw the reversal of the traditional policy of the Zamorins who so far had been the champions of popular cause against the autocratic pretensions of the Raja of Cochin... By allying himself with his hereditary enemies, and those who were historically the enemies of Malabar freedom, the Zamorin lost at one stroke the singular position which two centuries of war in the cause of Kerala had earned for him."³

The close of the war and the defeat of the Vettatunad faction did not end the rivalry between Cochin and Calicut. The Zamorin refused to evacuate the territory occupied by him during the war on the pretext that the military expenses had not been adequately paid. Well established in Chetwai and Cranganore, the Zamorin was in a very good position to bolster up trouble in Cochin by encouraging the feudatories against the Raja. With the help of such feudatories he captured many places belonging to Cochin—Mapranam, Urakam, Kattur etc., and the Dutch did nothing to end the hostilities. In fact they were only glad at this desultory war since it kept the Raja of Cochin occupied. The Raja's successor Ravi Varma tried to play the same game inciting the Company against the Zamorin. But Van Rhee de cautiously avoided all actions that would lead to a clash with the ruler of Calicut.

The Raja of Cochin was dissatisfied not so much because of his failure to bring about a conflict between the Zamorin and the Company as because of the continued interference of the latter in the administrative affairs of his dominions. The Dutch who had come to

3. K. M. Panikkar: *Malabar and the Portuguese*—pp. 25-26.

support the Raja against the Zamorin now remained to dominate him perpetually. As a result of the three or four treaties concluded between them the Raja was to consult and get the approval of the Dutch in appointing his counsellors and recognise the right to levy and execute capital punishment. These were insolent encroachments upon his authority and no wonder the relations between the two were becoming progressively strained.

In 1687 Isaak Van Dielen reached Cochin as commandeur. Dissensions among the Dutch officials led to further complications in the relation between the Raja and the Company. Further, Bavan Prabhu, the Companies notorious Indian Agent, made matters worse by intriguing with the Zamorin and the Dutch against his own master with the help of the Paliyam chief. The Raja was forced in 1694 to write a letter to the Governor-General at Batavia in which he bitterly complained of the attitude of the new Paliyam chief and the corrupt and unfaithful practices of Bavan Prabhu. He said that there are enemies both inside and outside the fortress. Bavan was particularly accused of being in the pay of the Zamorin. The supreme government at Batavia, anxious to keep out from all quarrels with the Zamorin, took no heed of the complaints of the Raja and evasively replied that the new commandeur Adrian Van Matten who had succeeded Van Dielen, had been given all necessary instructions. In effect the company did nothing to stop the activities of Bavan Prabhu and the Paliyam chief. Further, Van Matten's attitude towards the Raja was even much less friendly if not more insolent than that of Van Dielen. Therefore in 1696, the Raja once more wrote to Batavia describing the mischiefs that were being committed by Bavan and the Paliyam chief and complaining of the friendship existing between the Company and the Zamorin. He pointed out how the commandeur along with Bavan visited the Zamorin at Ponnani when hostilities were actually

going on between himself and the Zamorin. But the Government at Batavia refused to take note of the Raja's allegations.

The hostile attitude of Bavan Prabhu created a lot of trouble to the Raja. The finances of the State were not on a sound basis. The last struggle against the Portuguese had ruined the state treasury. The mint and the customs constituted the only substantial sources of revenue. But since the mint was run as a joint enterprise between the Dutch and the Raja the former claimed a part of the national treasury and the Raja found it difficult to realise anything substantial from customs and duties as a result of Bavan Prabhu's attitude. Thus the treasury was bankrupt and the Dutch were pressing for the payment of their debts.

In 1697 Henrick Zwaadekroon who became the commandeur made a new agreement in which he laid down the principles governing the relations of the commendeurs with the prince. This latest treaty with the Dutch "set the seal of servitude on the Cochin principality and made it merely an appendage of the Dutch Company."⁴

The Zamorin and the Dutch: The Zamorin found himself in an exceptionally advantageous position after 1691. Nearly sixty years earlier the Dutch commandeur Van Goens had handed over Cranganore to him and now he came to take possession of Chetwai as well in return for his support against the Vettatunad faction. It was only through Chatwai and Cranganore that the Zamorin could attack Cochin from the north. Having got possession of these two strategic places he was in a position to give a lot of trouble to the Raja of Cochin. Chetwai was particularly valuable to the Zamorin as it lay in the dominions of one of his wealthy and influential Nayar feudatories. To make his position firmer

4. K. M. Panikkar t *M. & P.*—p. 29.

and more secure he also built a line of fortresses on the Cochin frontier—Pappinivattam, Kattur, Mapranam and Urakam. Further he was also able to control the other boundaries of Cochin by means of his close alliance with the Rajas of Mangat and Parur in the north and with Thekkumkur and Vadakkumkur in the south. Owing to these advantages it was considerably easy for him to attack and inflict heavy losses on Cochin whenever he desired.

Though the Company maintained neutrality as far as possible and showed its anxiety to be friendly with the Zamorin, the Raja of Cochin was bent upon getting back Mapranam and Chetwai. This brought matters to a crisis in 1700. The Company was legally bound by treaty to support the Raja of Cochin. In order to avert a probable conflict between Cochin and Calicut into which they might also be drawn the Dutch tried to settle this question by arbitration. Not only was the Zamorin asked to send his representative to Cochin, but the Dutch also invited representatives of Purakkad, Vadakkumkur, Marta and Parur to meet and help in the settlement of the matter. But the Zamorin refused to agree to any sort of arbitration. Even before the representatives reached Cochin he had attacked its northern border. The Dutch thereupon decided to support the Raja, and Purakkad and Parur the Zamorin. The war which was started in 1701 lasted nine years and it cost the Dutch much money and many men. Governor Moens says that all the troubles that the Dutch had to face were due to their decision to help the Raja of Cochin. The Zamorin in this war secured the support of the Thekkumkur chief besides Purakkad and Parur by promising adoption into his family. When the Zamorin invaded Cochin from the north the Purakkad Raja assisted him from the south and caused some damages. But "officially" he was not fighting the Dutch but only Cochin. So the Dutch were able to interfere and settle the disputes between the two Rajas by giving some concessions to the Purakkad chief.

The Zamorin however made matters worse by attempting to create a split between Cochin and Vadakkumkur. He promised to adopt two princes and two princesses from Vadakkumkur family. The Zamorin knew that if he succeeded in his attempt the Raja of Cochin would be in a very difficult situation with an enemy in the north and another in the south.

The Raja of Cochin was very much dissatisfied with the march of events. He complained to the Government of Batavia that the Company was not sincerely and seriously supporting him. He wrote that if the company did not give the utmost help with men and money and ships and weapons the Zamorin would capture the whole of Cochin. He claimed that the Company was bound to give all assistance to him according to the treaties between them. The Raja even tried to threaten the Company by saying that the Zamorin was negotiating with the French company for a settlement at Calicut. The Governor-General's reply to this letter was blunt and to the point. It showed the line of policy which the Dutch were determined to pursue in Malabar. "I myself do not know how much money I have spent and how many soldiers we lost in trying to put down the Vettattu Raja.....But I know one thing..... Your Highness disregards all our advices. Your Highness has lent your ears to the selfish and cunning advice of Chettis, Pattars and Nambutiris who try to bring about disorder and confusion in the country.....But the Company is not averse to give support to Cochin according to our treaty and past practices; but they will not send their soldiers to fight for all insignificant purposes. Your Highness should lend your ears to the advice of..... the Honourable Company. For the last 50 years Malabar has been a source of much expense and little gain".⁵ At the same time, he agreed with the Raja that the Zamorin was their most powerful enemy and impressed upon him the necessity of capturing the

places which had been taken by the Zamorin. He pointed out that if the line of fortresses on the border was recaptured, the Zamorin would not be able to invade Cochin again. After prolonged and serious consideration the Company decided to help the Raja in his attempt to recover Mapranam. Though the Raja, following the Company's decision, succeeded in securing certain places on the northern border in October 1707 and received congratulatory message from the commandeur, the Zamorin took them back before the month was out. The Calicut ruler was also carrying on negotiations with the English with a view to the establishment of an English factory in his capital. This seriously alarmed the Dutch. On 27th October the commandeur wrote to the Zamorin requesting him to end hostilities with Cochin and to settle all disputes and reminded that Cochin was under the protection of the Company and that therefore an attack upon Cochin would amount to an attack upon the Company. The Zamorin replied that he was willing to come to an understanding with Cochin and that he did not wish to be an enemy of the company. The conciliatory tone of the Zamorin's reply encouraged the commandeur to invite the representatives of all parties to meet at the fort at Cochin. Though the talks were apparently friendly no definite agreement was reached on any point and hostilities between Cochin and Calicut continued. Being unwilling to fight at that time, the Dutch gave lame excuses to the requests of the Raja of Cochin who therefore had to face the Zamorin single-handed.

The new Zamorin was a peace-loving ruler who desired to end the continuous war with Cochin. But the leading army officials including Dharmot Panikkar, most of the nobles and the Eralpad himself were for continuing the war. But as the *Mamankam* festival was approaching he decided to conclude peace with Cochin and the Company. On September 18, 1768, he asked the Company to send the terms of the treaty in writing

and in January 1710 the terms were approved. By this treaty Chetwai was handed over to the Company and the Raja of Cochin gained considerable additions to his territory.

But four years later in 1714, war broke out again between the Zamorin and the Dutch on the question of Chetwai fort. The commander of his army and his heir apparent pointed out to the Zamorin the importance of Chetwai and Cranganore. Chetwai provided a base from which the Zamorin could attack Cochin whenever he desired. But now that the Dutch were established there he was disabled from taking the offensive in any future war. Further, to prevent the Zamorin from taking Chetwai back the Dutch started building a fort on the northern border. On its completion the Dutch would be in a highly advantageous position and the fort would turn out to be a perpetual menace to the Zamorin's dominions. He was therefore highly incensed and began openly negotiating with the English. The Raja of Cochin also spared no pains in inciting the company against the Zamorin. He purposely created a dispute between himself and the Zamorin about the ownership of certain tracts of lands. On the ground that they belonged to him the Raja handed them over to the Company. The Dutch took over the place and began constructing a strong fortress on the banks of the river which was to be regarded as the southern border of the Zamorin's dominions. This was a blow to the position and prestige of the Calicut ruler who decided to hinder the construction of the fortress as far as possible and to capture it if possible.

The English had built factories in and were carrying on trade with various parts of Malabar at this time. When the Dutch conquered Cochin they had driven the English out of that place. The two European powers were on constant rivalry ever afterwards. In 1673 the Dutch had attempted to capture the English settlements at Bombay with no result. They also tried to prevent

the English from building a factory at Ajengo. In 1690 the English set fire to the Dutch factory at Ajengo for the alleged reason that the Dutch had given shelter to one of their foes. Now the English Factor at Tellicherry, the energetic and reckless Robert Adams, offered to help the Zamorin with munitions and money in hindering the erection of the fortress at Chetwai. The Zamorin promised in return to hoist the English flag on the Dutch fortress after its capture. Adams had his own reasons for offering this almost unasked help. He knew that the war between the Dutch and the Zamorin would weaken both and hoped to bargain with the latter in establishing the English influence in Malabar. Further Chetwai under the Zamorin had been a source of considerable profit to the Company as well as to Adams owing to its opium trade.

The Zamorin before resorting to force warned the Company against the disastrous consequences that would follow if they persisted in erecting the fortress. But the Dutch only proceeded to complete the work in great haste. Though the nobles and his commander advised the Zamorin to declare war on the Dutch he decided only to capture the particular area by force as he held that that area belonged to his dominions and as such the Dutch had no power to build a fort there without his permission.

Alexander Hamilton and Canter Vissecher give different accounts of the methods by which the fort was captured by the Zamorin. "The fort was almost completed" says Vissecher "and he saw that the time for his attempt was come. He was encouraged by learning that the garrison consisting of forty eight men were lodged outside the half-finished fortress and that none of the requisites had been provided for its defence. This showed the greatest want of foresight in the commandant... The Zamorin perceiving the advantage crossed the river at night with 600 men who were soon followed by more and all was effected so quickly that

at about 4 o'clock in the morning of 22nd January 1715 they surprised the soldiers who were sleeping in their huts before the fort. They took to flight in great alarm and the Zamorin obtained possession of the place without striking a blow." Hamilton says that having failed to prevent the construction of the fortress the Zamorin resorted to stratagem. He got some of his men disguised as labourers who were asked to surprise the Dutch. "The two lieutenants who had the overseeing work were on one evening diverting themselves with a game at tables in a guard room about half a mile from the fort. They had let some of the soldiers struggling about, and the disguised natives took the opportunity to kill the sentinals, signal to the ambuscade and take the half-built fort." Vissecher who was chaplain in Cochin from 1717-1722 does not even mention this fact as the cause of the failure.

The Zamorin's attempt to capture the fort, however, was completely successful. One of the lieutenants was killed in the action. The other, instead of attempting to recapture the fortress, retreated to Cochin for which he was court-martialled and executed. Barent Kietel the commandeur of Cochin immediately collected a large force and hastened to retrieve the fortunes. He was met on the way by the Raja of Mangat at the head of a detachment of Calicut force. Though he was defeated in the action the Raja successfully prevented the commandeur from attacking the fortress immediately. This enabled the Calicut general to reinforce his forces with a heavy artillery and Kietel found himself in a difficult position. He could neither fight nor retreat; the force which he had brought was not strong enough for a major operation against a fully equipped army. Further his communication was also unsafe as the defeated Raja of Mangat was threatening an attack by the back water. Since retreat would be equally dangerous the commandeur resolved to attack. The attack was however repulsed with heavy losses and the Dutch returned to Cochin. The Raja of Cranganore

who was at the mercy of the Zamorin after the fall of Chetwai recognised allegiance to him who strengthened his position by building a fortress at Pappinivattam between Chetwai and Cranganore. The news of the fall of Chetwai and the withdrawal of the Dutch from Pappinivattam was received in Batavia in November 1715. In December reinforcements were sent to recapture all the places especially Chetwai. In January 1716 an attack was made on the fortress but was repulsed. Thus two successive attempts to retake the fortress failed. This was a serious blow to the prestige of the Dutch and their position in India. There was every possibility of their ruin in trade and the disappearance of their power because their failure would encourage every chieftain and ruler in Malabar to turn against them. The Government at Batavia realised this and began elaborate preparations to regain their lost possessions.

Though there was no actual fighting between the English and the Dutch there was no love lost between them.⁶ An unofficial war was going on between the two ; the English firing at their ships or capturing them when possible. On one occasion when a ship flying the English flag was captured Robert Adams demanded an explanation. The Dutch commandeur replied that he could not allow import of ammunitions to Calicut and that in so doing the English were acting in an unfriendly spirit to the Dutch. The commandeur further asserted his right to capture the ships of the Zamorin even though they fly English flag. While these protests were going on between the English and the Dutch the latter were collecting their forces from all parts of India with a view to effect an all-out attack against the Zamorin.

The Zamorin received in May a letter from the Portuguese Viceroy at Goa demanding the restoration

6. "Every means must be employed and effort made to have the English expelled from the land of the Zamorin..... It will never do to have that nation settled so near us." The authorities at Amsterdam wrote in May 1667.

of the guns and other properties that he got from Chaliyam. If they were not returned by September, the Dutch and the Portuguese decided to attack the Zamorin together from the south and the north.

In November 1716 William Baker Jacobs was sent from Batavia as Admiral and Commander-in-chief with instructions to prosecute the war against the Zamorin with the greatest possible vigour. Soon after his arrival in Cochin the Admiral addressed a letter to all the princes and chiefs of Malabar in which he declared that he had come with sufficient forces to suppress the ruler of Calicut. He made no secret of his elaborate preparations. His army consisted of soldiers from Europe, Java and Bali. When the Cochin forces were also added to them they became powerful enough for a sustained campaign.

In early January 1717 the Dutch reached Chetwai. Apart from the thousand Singhalese who were to come and join them from Ceylon the Dutch force there consisted of more than 3,000 soldiers, 193 to passes and 113 lascarins. In the same month the fort at Pappinivattam was besieged by the Dutch. Commanded by the Dharmot Panikkar, the Zamorin's forces put up a commandable resistance but were forced to evacuate unable to withstand the heavy artillery of the Dutch. Vissecher says that the engagement was a most sanguinary one and due to some confusion a number of the Zamorin's men were killed during the evacuation.

The Zamorin avoided further bloodshed and withdrew his forces from Chetwai. Along with Chetwai the Dutch General also captured some minor fortresses like Mapranam, Urakam and Arattupuzha, the second after a bloody battle, the Dutch causing heavy losses to the Calicut army.

After this battle the Dutch were as much reluctant to continue the war as the Zamorin. In spite of their

successes the war was terrible drain on their treasury ; it cost them nearly two million guilders. Though the Zamorin had been defeated in pitched battles the Dutch did not succeed as the commander-in-chief had boasted, to suppress the Zamorin. His army in spite of heavy casualties was still intact and the campaign had so far been conducted in the territory of the Raja of Cochin. Vissecher says that had the General followed his success with an attack on Calicut "he would have made himself master of the Zamorin's court at Ponnani and of Calicut itself." But the Dutch at that time possessed neither the strength nor the resources to defeat the Zamorin in his own dominions.

However the Zamorin at this time was so weary of warfare that he was prepared to submit to an honourable peace. As he was unable to pay the war indemnity demanded by the Dutch in cash, he offered land to equivalent. But the Dutch demanded both land and money and therefore the peace negotiations broke down. The advent of the rainy season however prevented the continuance of military operations. But Balinese and Singhalese soldiers, contrary to the orders of their commandeur, attacked and plundered a rich temple belonging to the Punnathur chief. He had been hitherto a close ally of the Zamorin and had rendered valuable help to him in the capture of Chetwai. The latter in return had presented him with all the booty that he secured after the fortress had been razed to ground. But now the chief found out that he could get no support from the war-weary Zamorin. While negotiations were being carried on between the Zamorin and the Dutch he deserted the former and concluded a separate agreement with the latter.

Negotiations continued between the Dutch and the Zamorin for some more time till the Supreme Government at Batavia sent a new force under Seignor Admiral William Bakker. But before this army was put into action peace was concluded in 1717 by which the

Zamorin agreed to pay an indemnity of 85,000 *fanams* (about 30,000 rupees). He was also forced to dismiss Dharmot Panikkar who had been mainly responsible for the capture of Chetwai fortress. His property on the borders of Pappinivattam was confiscated by the Company. The Dutch were given the right to trade in the territories of the Zamorin. The Punnathur chief was to continue his allegiance to the Calicut ruler; the Company withdrew its claims over him. The Zamorin gave an undertaking not to protect the refugees of the Company. Pappinivattam was also given over to the Dutch. This treaty was concluded on Friday, December 17, 1717.

Though the Dutch failed to realise their object of suppressing the power of the Zamorin in this prolonged and arduous campaign and though they had to incur a huge expenditure of two million guilders this victory placed them in a very advantageous position.

The *Dutch Dairy* and Hamilton say that the Zamorin was helped to some extent by the English. The English Factor at Tellicherry Mr. Adams had provided the necessary materials for the building of the fortress from Calicut without payment of any duties. Adams tried to create split between the Dutch and the Zamorin after they had concluded the treaty. But the Zamorin was not willing to renew the hostilities.

CHAPTER XI

The Dutch Political Ascendency

THE peace with the Zamorin, in spite of its shortcomings, placed the Dutch in a singularly advantageous position. This was the most opportune moment to assert their political authority in Malabar. Though the defeat of the Zamorin at Chetwai had neither crippled his authority nor weakened his position permanently, it rendered him powerless, at least temporarily, to check the growing power of the Dutch. True, the English who had established themselves at Tellicherry, Calicut and Ajengo and the French at Mahe were successfully though slowly breaking the pepper monopoly of the Dutch in Malabar. But they were not sufficiently strong to question the authority of the Dutch. Thus the Zamorin was rendered powerless on the one hand and on the other their European rivals, though constituting a factor to be reckoned with, had not yet become powerful enough to prick the bubble. But instead of making the fullest use of these advantages and acting in a vigorous manner the Dutch followed a policy of "nibbling interference" in the different principalities of Malabar, disregarding the susceptibilities of the chiefs, and thus created a number of enemies against them.

The Dutch possessed political authority only in Cochin and to some extent in Karappuram, one of its suburbs. Their ambition was to reduce all other Malabar princes to the position of a feudatory like the ruler of Cochin. Commandeur Hartenburg went to the extent of saying that "all the Rajas, princes and nobles of the kingdom shall lay their complaints and disputes before him....."¹

1. K. M. Panikkar: *Malabar and the Dutch*—p. 43.

In 1684, according to a treaty between Cochin and the Dutch, even the civil list of the Rajas and the Princes was settled by the latter and the Raja had to consult them even in connection with purely domestic matters, as for instance adoption. Their treaty with the seventy two chiefs of Karappuram in April 1710 had enabled them to assert their political authority there. By this treaty these chiefs recorded their willingness to obey the orders of the Raja of Cochin and to help him in all his military undertakings. Though these were the only places where the Company possessed such legal political authority, they were able to make their authority felt in Purakkad and Quilon where they had strong establishments. In order to effect the political conquest of the whole of the West Coast they determined to intervene in the domestic affairs of all the neighbouring principalities and try to reduce the status and power of the chiefs. They got ample opportunities of interference owing to the character and activities of the rulers.

In spite of his abject submission to them the Raja of Cochin, due to his character according to Vissecher, was not liked by the Dutch. The Raja on his part was also displeased at the insolent behaviour of the commandeur towards him. Writing in May 1710 to the Batavia company he complained that no one in the state paid any heed to him consequent on the open contempt in which he was held by the commandeur. The letter also contained a request for the permission of the company for an adoption from the Chaliyur branch for succession to the throne after his death. Chaliyur, according to the Raja, was the only place from which adoption could be made. The Vettom family was out of the question since it was openly inimical to the company. Then there was the Ainur family which was of the same caste as that of the Raja of Cochin. But the Raja contended that they were unfit to rule after their adoption into the Murianad Nambiar family, as they had lost caste. Therefore the

Raja sought the Company's permission to adopt three more princes from Chaliyur.

Meanwhile the Dutch in Malabar had made known to the petty Rajas and chieftains their intention of establishing overlordship in Kerala. When Murianad Nambiar—"between 40 and 50 years old, very proud and conceited"—approached the Dutch for support in the matter of adoption to his family they in turn asked him to sell all his pepper to them. The Nambiar was afraid that after his death his land would be appropriated by the Raja of Cochin or the Dutch and therefore adopted some princes from the Ainur family though the latter, being Kshatriyas were above him by caste. The Dutch now found a good opportunity to exercise their power of intervention as a prelude to the assertion of political authority in his land. They declared the adoption illegal, claiming their right to pronounce on its legality as the overlord of Kerala.

But their claim to the overlordship of Kerala was soon challenged by the Zamorin who had already recovered from the losses of the late war. To check the power and intrigues of the Dutch in and around Cochin he proposed an alliance with Thekkumkur by means of an adoption of a prince from that family. Vadakkumkur and Thekkumkur belong to the same family and together they were known as Vempalinad. The former was already on the side of the Zamorin and the adoption would bring the latter as well under his influence. Such an alliance would eventually lead to the ruin of Cochin. There was no love lost between the Thekkumkur prince and the Dutch. But though he disliked their frequent intervention in his domestic affairs and their demand for the monopoly of pepper trade. The prince was not powerful enough to offend the Dutch outright. As Golloneosse observes: "His Highness has always shown good will towards the Company and although he even now makes, since he has noticed that the company is determined to take

serious steps to make itself master of the pepper trade, open profession of his warm regard for the company, still it is quite certain that he is of one accord with the other chiefs of Malabar to undermine and reduce the company's power.² His open alliance with Calicut showed that this contention was right. The Zamorin hoped to isolate and then attack Cochin from both north and south by means of these alliances.

The Zamorin also succeeded in securing the support of Kayamkulam and other places, thanks mainly to the overbearing and insolent attitude of commandeur De Jong towards these chiefs. The Dutch realised this as also the fact that a combination of the principal southern chieftains with the Zamorin at its head might be strong enough to crush their political power in Malabar. Therefore they instantly recalled De Jong in 1730 and adopted a conciliatory attitude to the southern chieftains to prevent them going over to the enemy's camp. They also tried their best to prevent the proposed adoption from Thekkumkur to Calicut.

Further complications arose as a result of the succession question in the Mangat principality. The domain of Mangat which comprises the present taluk of Alangad and few lands adjoining it was situated to the north-east of Cochin on the banks of the Periyar river. It was governed by Nayar chiefs owing allegiance to the Zamorin. It was the chief of Mangat who defended Chetwaye when the Dutch attacked it in 1715. Nominally, however, the principality was under the Raja of Cochin, though its chiefs never accepted this overlordship willing or seriously. Besides the chief there were only two members in the family the heir-apparent who had been adopted from the Murianattu family and his sister. To prevent the extinction of the family the chief decided to adopt a lady from the

2. K. P. P. Menon : *Op. cit.*—p. 85.

house of Koratty Kaimal an equally powerful Nayar chief.³ In adopting this lady from Koratty the Mangat chief over looked the claims of the sister the heir apparent. Therefore the latter objected to this adoption and upheld the claims of his sister. On the chiefs refusal to reconsider his decision and emboldened by the Dutch, the heir apparent to the principality rose in revolt in 1733. The Dutch were keenly interested in the internal dissensions of Mangat as it would prevent the establishment of peace there. The Mangat chief was the overlord of 16000 Nayars. Dissensions in his dominion would disable him from giving effective support to the Zamorin. Therefore it suited the purpose of the Dutch to keep the principality weak and disunited. They supplied the rebellious prince with arms and ammunition and the Raja of Cochin also gave secret support to the Prince. Finally the whole matter was left to the arbitration of the Dutch and the Raja of Cochin.

The Dutch decided to make capital out of this opportunity. The claim of the sister of the heir apparent was upheld. She was to be the first princess and the adopted lady was to be the second. To secure future powers of intervention a further clause was introduced by which no adoption was to be valid without the previous sanction of the Dutch and the Raja of Cochin. But since the prince did not want to be bound hand and foot either to the Raja or to the Dutch, he bluntly refused it. Therefore civil war continued in Mangat which necessitated the constant attention of the company in that quarter.

Mangat was not the only place where the Dutch had to be vigilant. Earlier in Cochin the Paliyam chief had defied the authority of the Company. The

3. Gollonnesse says "the territory of the Caimalinne (feminine of Kaimal) of Coratty.....is of no great importance, still it exports 120 candies of pepper; but this worthless woman has the pepper carried elsewhere.

Dutch had decided not to support the Raja in his endless warfare with the Zamorin after 1721, as per instructions from the Supreme Government at Batavia, because the war with the Zamorin had become a costly and fruitless adventure as far as the Dutch were concerned. It was at this time that the Paliyam chief created disturbances from inside. Vissecher says that he was the most dreaded of the Company's foes. "He is the general-in-chief of the kingdom at this time..... His vast estates and his excellent army combine to make a dangerous neighbour even to his sovereign in the island of Vypeen where he resides and a great portion of which belongs to him. His enterprising spirit was manifested four years ago when he had the effrontery to slay a wealthy influential Canarese called Malpa, one of the Company's merchants, and to boast of the dead; and as the Company, probably fearing more serious consequences, let the crime go unpunished, his arrogance increases..... he is occupied with endeavours to foment angry feelings against the Raja and the Company."⁴ Though the recalcitrant attitude of this Paliyam chief whose name was Komi Achan lasted only for some time, it was another factor that claimed the attention of the Dutch.

There were dissensions and disturbances elsewhere also. The Raja of Vadakkumkur was assassinated by the heir-apparent resulting in the outbreak of civil war there. The prince next in succession requested the Dutch and the Raja of Cochin to settle the quarrel and to resolve all disputes. In February 1734 Tottasseri chief was murdered by his nephew at the Trichur temple. Above all there were also dissensions in the Cochin royal family. In the quarrel between the Raja of Cochin and the Parur chief the Elaya Raja of Cochin took the side of Parur against his own kingdom and king. Parur was also fighting Mangat and there were hostilities between the petty principalities of Kayamkulam and Maruturkulangara.

4. Letters from Malabar, No. 8.

The Dutch had to watch all these developments with the greatest vigilance. They did not want to take part in the quarrels of the petty principalities directly. But as the Raja of Cochin took one side or the other their aim of preventing enmity among the princes was realised. The company however had to face considerable trouble in north Malabar at this time. The English had established a factory at Tellicherry as early as 1683 and had fortified it between 1704 and 1705. In November 1730 the English came to an agreement with the Regent of Kollatiri by which he received a monopoly of trade in Iruvanad, Dharmapattanam and Randattara. The Dutch who were at Valarpattanam joined the combination of Malabar princes organised by the Regent of Kolattiri against the Canarese. The English who had taken a leading part in forming this combination had promised that they would not intercept the trade of the Dutch to the north of Cannanore. In April 1736 the Canarese were defeated but soon after that the Dutch quarrelled with the Kolattiri on the question of the sale of a certain quantity of pepper, and this led to a lot of misunderstanding with the English and the Dutch as well. Meanwhile the French who had established themselves at Mahe were also intervening in political affairs of North Malabar. Their intervention eventually led to war with Iruvanad Nambiars. Though the French suffered serious reverses in the beginning, La Bourdonnias arrived in 1741, defeated the enemy decisively and concluded a favourable peace with him. The English had nothing to complain against this treaty since it did no harm to their position. Thus both the English and the French settled down amicably and this unity among their rivals gave intense dissatisfaction to the Dutch.

In Cochin and its surroundings, however, they continued to pursue their policy of gradually asserting their political authority. Their policy and diplomacy of which they made no secret are revealed in a letter written to the fort at Cochin on 8th October 1735 by

the Supreme Government at Batavia. This letter directed the Commandeur at Cochin to gain the goodwill of the Zamorin, since he was well disposed towards them, but to prevent friendship between Cochin and Calicut. The Commandeur was further asked to create incidents, which without being serious, would lead to the continuance of unfriendly relations between them. This policy of creating differences among the Rajas who would consequently be dependent upon them and seeking their help was skilfully followed by the Dutch. The Company refrained from interfering in these quarrels among princes since it would have been "a costly pastime for a trading corporation". Instead, it made a cat's-paw of the Raja of Cochin who readily consented to intervene in the fond belief that it would increase his power and prestige. The Company on the other hand knew its own limitations and therefore proceeded with extreme caution. The company was bent upon maintaining the treaty that had been concluded with the Zamorin while the Raja was always trying to rake up old quarrels. For instance in 1717 even before the Company and the Raja had retired to their camps after the treaty with the Zamorin the latter began his encroachments upon Cochin. The Raja of Cochin believed that the Zamorin's target this time was the Enemakkal fortress. When he wrote to Batavia to that effect he was asked in reply not to go to war with the Zamorin again for such rumours without foundation under the impression that the Company would always protect him⁵. Thus the company always succeeded in preventing actual outbreak of war between the two kingdoms and at the same time never allowed them to be friends.

This policy which it sedulously followed changed the whole situation in Malabar by 1740. Circumstances

5. Gollonnesse observes: "We have seriously warned the king of Cochin to avoid carefully every occasion of new disturbances and to bear and swallow a small injustice rather than to bring upon himself greater wrongs in as much as the honourable company cannot help him at present."

in that year were so favourable to the Company that it thought of territorial conquest on a small scale. They found that they had succeeded wondrously well in spreading anarchy the continuance of which, they thought, would enable them to stand forth as the arbitrator of Malabar. In May 1741 the Company decided to annex Anji Kaimal, Maruturkulangara and portions of Vadakkumkur. Baron Imhoff who came to examine and report on the accounts of the Dutch was "like Albuquerque a born Imperialist." In order to improve the finances of the Company in India the Supreme Government had on numerous occasions directed the authorities at Cochin not to interfere in political affairs. Imhoff saw that the financial position of the Company was even much worse than what the Supreme Government had thought. This was partly due to the fact that the several Rajas who had concluded commercial agreements with the Company to sell the whole quantity of pepper at stipulated prices had not been in the habit of keeping these agreements. But such complusion would mean a substantial increase in the military establishment which would be an additional strain on the Company's finances. Imhoff however stressed the necessity of solving these problems immediately as otherwise the growing power of Travancore would affect the strength and prestige of the Company. He also suggested that if some of the recalcitrant princes were sent to Batavia as prisoners the others would be frightened into submission.

Another suggestion put forward by Imhoff to improve the finances was to conquer portions of Malabar and govern them directly. He believed that this would make them strong enough to counteract the growth of British trade in Malabar. The Dutch had never looked upon the English trade in Malabar with a friendly eye. After establishing themselves in Cochin the Dutch succeeded in driving the English out of Purakkad and spared no pains in their attempt

to expel them from Calicut as well. But the Zamorin urged them to stay on as they would help him against the Dutch. But though the English support was valuable to the Zamorin in capturing the Chetwai fortress, it was not useful for the defence of the fortress and as we have already seen the war with the Dutch ended in a "dishonourable and disadvantageous peace." But this did not put an end to the influence of Robert Adams at Calicut who continued to enjoy the valuable friendship of the Zamorin. Adams had been given additional privileges in 1710 for the help rendered by him in the capture of Chetwai. The English flag was flown over the fortress and they were given permission to build a fort there. After the restoration of Chetwai in 1717 Adams returned to Tellicherry where the English trade and influence had been growing by leaps and bounds.⁶

Another place where the English were equally if not more firmly established was Ajengo. In 1684 the English East India Company obtained from the Rani of Attingal permission to erect a factory at Ajengo and fortify it. It commanded the line of water communication towards the north and when the place was fortified the cannon of the fort commanded the river which was the main means of traffic. Further pepper and calicoes of excellent quality were procurable in abundance in Ajengo. In 1693 the English secured the monopoly of pepper trade at Attingal. The intrigues of the Dutch aroused the suspicion of the queen against the English but she was not able to prevent them from building a fort there. Therefore she decided to be on friendly

6. This was due to some extent to their national character. "Our frank, unaffected and generous national character.....bore in the eyes of the Indians a very favourable comparison with the silly, senseless sanguinary bigotry of the Portuguese; with the unsocial dryness, imperious conduct and keenness after gain of the Dutch and the super-refined designing politeness of the French." (Mr. Grose (1750) quoted by K. P. P. Menon: *History of Kerala*—p. 391.)

terms with them. The building of the fort was completed in 1695 and Ajengo became the first port of call for outward bound ships. Bruce says that the Ajengo fortification was so formidable that the Dutch closed their factories at Cochin. The local nobles disapproved of this action of the queen which made the English so powerful. In 1697 they joined together and attacked the fort but the queen supported the English.

In 1721 the factory at Ajengo met with a great disaster. The imprudent Factor Mr. Gyfford had insulted some Nayar nobles of the queen. Soon afterwards "accompanied by all the merchants and Factors and taking all his best men." Gyfford started for Attingal to meet the queen and give her the yearly presents which had fallen into abeyance for some years. Seeing his large military following the Nayar chieftains thought that he was out for further mischief, attacked him and massacred his following. Their subsequent siege of the fortress was, however, unsuccessful and reinforcements sent by Mr. Adams from Tellicherry enabled the siege to be raised. In 1722 Alexander Orme concluded a treaty with the queen by which the Company got exclusive right to pepper trade and the right to build factories on the queen's dominion wherever they pleased. The queen was to return all arms taken in the late outbreak and furnish timber to rebuild the church which had been burnt. In 1723 the English concluded a treaty with the Raja of Travancore which united them in good friendship. The Company consented to provide the necessary artillery and munitions to the Raja for building a fort at Colachel. This is the first treaty negotiated by the English East India Company with an Indian State which exists in the present day. The Company promised to help the Raja to put down his rebellious chiefs. But except exchanging arms and munitions of war for pepper, spices and piecegoods they gave no positive support to the Raja who had therefore "to go over the border and seek the

aid of his old enemies the Nayaks of Madura.”⁷ The trade of the Company especially in piecegoods increased tremendously as a result of this treaty. The twelfth clause of the treaty says: “Every year in various kinds which Honourable Company require, I will order to supply upto 1,00,000 piecegoods.”

These and other stipulations of the agreement were by no means agreeable to the Dutch. They possessed a factory at Ajeñgo and were all along striving to gain a monopoly of trade there. But the serious rivalry of the English had not only made a monopoly by the Dutch impossible but it showed that they were gradually being out-distanced by the better tactics of their rival. The growth of English trade was a sure sign of their potential political importance. They had established themselves firmly at Tellicherry in the north Ajengo in the south and no amount of political intrigues and diplomacy would enable the Dutch to eliminate their competition. The arrival of the French at Mahe and their amicable settlement with the English had made matters worse. The Dutch now realised that they were in the same position as the Malabar princes on the arrival of the Europeans. The Dutch were able to gain power and assert their authority in certain Malabar principalities by playing one prince against the other. The prominent Malabar princes like the Raja of Travancore or the Zamorin could now play the same game of setting one European power against another or both. Under these circumstances the monopoly of the Dutch in Malabar trade became impossible. They would have had to face either the competition of the European powers or the competition of Malabar princes. The imprudent policy of frequent intervention which they followed landed them in a plight where they had to face the rivalry of both.

7. K. P. P. Menon: *Op. cit.*—p. 342.

CHAPTER XII

Feudalism ends in Travancore and Cochin

I

THE accession of Martanda Varma in 1729 opened a new chapter in the history of Travancore as well as in the history of Kerala. Hitherto Travancore had played only a very negligible role in the politics of Malabar. Even Ravi Varma Kulasekhara, whose conquests extended beyond Kanchipuram and who had been a zealous champion of Hinduism against the advancing tide of Islam, had not been able to influence, much less to shape, the course of events in Malabar. The reason for this is to be found not only in the subdivision of territories and the frequent conflicts between the various branches of the royal family, but also in the fact that the southern portion of Travancore belonged to the Tamil districts and "its political and cultural affiliations were more with Madura and Trichinopoly than with Calicut, Cochin and Quilon."¹

But its affinity and close relations with the Tamil districts did not change the organisation of society or the nature of civil government in Travancore; they were similar to those of Malabar. In the kingdom of Madura there existed a strong central government, the ruler concentrating all authority in his own hands. In Travancore, on the other hand, in addition to the never-ceasing conflicts between the different branches of the royal family, the feudal nobles were much more recalcitrant and powerful than anywhere else in Malabar. The settlement made in 1050 M. E. regarding the government of Sri Padmanabha temple which owned most of the lands in the country, removed all hopes of

1. K. M. Panikkar: *Malabar and the Dutch*—p. 57.

curbing the power of the nobles in the near future. Subsequent events only strengthened their position more. Even the last vestiges of power and authority were removed from royalty which was thus reduced to impotence.

Martanda Varma therefore succeeded to no enviable legacy. "The country was honeycombed" says Nagam Ayya "with petty chieftains who collecting round themselves bands of brigands, subsisted on pillage and plunder and harassed the Raja and his subjects by turns frustrating all attempts to established order or any settled form of government."² Side by side with this political anarchy prevailed financial confusion. The tribute due to the Nayaks of Madura according to a treaty concluded during the previous reign, had been in arrears for a long time. But Martanda Varma rose to the occasion and conquered all these difficulties in course of time. By following a vigorous and aggressive policy abroad and a healthy progressive policy at home extending over twenty seven years the Raja was able, not only to bring about the political unification of Travancore, but to strike at the root of feudal polity in Malabar by curbing the turbulent Nayar nobility.

The new king possessed a clear vision. He was as ruthless and unscrupulous as the *Ettuvittil Pillamar* themselves. He realised clearly that these nobles and with them the anarchy could not be put down without a powerful military organization. The Nayars were of course the best soldiers available, but their system of military organization, which was based on service and obedience to the immediate feudal lord and not to the sovereign, rendered it impossible for the king to depend upon the local militia. Therefore he had to rely on foreign support. He got help from the Nayaks of Madura and the Mughal governor of the Carnatic-2000 infantry under Tripaty Naiker and 1000 horse under

2. Nagam Ayya: *The State Manual*—Vol. I, p. 333.

Venkatapati Naiker. With this army he set out to crush the power of the nobles.

This first act of the new Raja was to establish his undisputed claim to the throne. Sri Padmanabhan Tampi the eldest son of the late ruler, claimed the throne and he was enthusiastically supported by his brother and the Pillamar though they knew as well as the Tampi himself that the rule of succession in the royal family was matrilineal. Realising that they could not get support within the country, the Tampis secured the services of a certain Alagappa Mudaliar from beyond the ghats but Martanda Varma convinced him of his legitimate claim to the throne whereupon the Mudaliar went back with his forces. The Tampis were thus deserted by the "foreign" mercenaries, but supported by the leading local nobles, they were still so strong that the king dared not attack them openly. Therefore he set out to round out the whole band of rebels without letting them know of his plans. All the chieftains were to be arrested simultaneously at a given signal. In 1733 the elder Tampi who was the leader of the faction was assassinated when he went to pay his respects to the Raja. This was the signal for the arrest of all the recalcitrant nobles. The *Pillamar* and many others were seized and immediately executed.

This was an outright violation of one of the principal customs of Malabar according to which the Nayar lords should not be punished with death even if they rebelled against constituted authority. But this was not the only custom stood to be swept away by the young king. He was determined to break through old feudal ties and to found an autocratic state even though it would run counter to the Malabar political system. The ruthless suppression of all the recalcitrant nobles was "the first and most important blow struck against the Malabar political system. With it went the feudal conception of Malabar polity."³

3. K. M. Panikkar: *Malabar and the Dutch*—pp 62-63.

After crushing all internal opposition the king turned his attention to the expansion of his dominions. Quilon was the first victim of his aggression. Though a branch of the Travancore royal family, Quilon was an independent principality. In 1731 the Raja of Quilon adopted some members from Kayamkulam. Martanda Varma resented this adoption and regarded it as an alliance of the two houses against him. On this pretext he led an army against Quilon which was annexed following a gallant defence by the chief minister of the Raja. The Raja became a state prisoner. "This was the first occasion in which a state was thus dealt with in Malabar history, for until this time, the custom was merely to reduce the ruler of a conquered territory to the position of a subordinate chief and leave him in the enjoyment of his territory."⁴ Attingal, the maternal house of Travancore, followed suit, and was incorporated with his dominions by Martanda Varma.

The annexation of Quilon alarmed the other principalities of South Kerala. They organised a confederacy to liberate the Raja and reinstate him at Quilon. The minister of the Kayamkulam Raja, Easwara Bhattatiri, tried to persuade the Dutch to take the leadership of this confederacy. But the Batavia Government had forbidden the Dutch authorities at Cochin, except under exceptional circumstances, to interfere in local affairs. Further the Company had not yet realised the full significance of the policy of Martanda Varma. They never thought that it would eventually threaten their very existence in the West Coast. Therefore they were in no mood to help the Kayamkulam chief. Thereupon he turned to the northern principalities. The Rajas of Purakkad, Vadakkumkur and Cochin agreed to support him in his endeavour to restore the Raja of Quilon. The latter meanwhile escaped from internment and joined them.

4. Ibid.

The Travancore forces commanded by Arumugam Pillai put up a gallant resistance but were obliged to retreat and the Quilon Raja was restored.

Martanda Varma lost no time in reorganising his army with additions of cavalry and infantry. He divided his forces into two and simultaneously attacked both Quilon and Kayamkulam. Though the Quilon campaign was successful Kayamkulam continued to resist. When its Raja was killed his brother took the field and the vigour of the resistance was unabated. So Martanda Varma once more turned to foreign aid. His minister and adviser Ramayyan, "an intriguing and unscrupulous Brahman" who had gained the confidence of the king, succeeded in securing the services of a Marava force though the Poligars of Tinnevely. With the help of this force Kayamkulam was again attacked. The Raja was defeated and he sued for peace. But his military power still remained unbroken.

In 1734 Elayedattu Swarupam, a small principality lying to the East of Quilon, was annexed by Travancore. The princess who succeeded the ruling Raja had been a mere figurehead and she was now forced to relinquish all her claims.

Meanwhile the Raja of Quilon died. The Kayamkulam chief took over the territory basing his claim on adoption. Martanda Varma claimed it for himself and repudiated the claims of the Kayamkulam chief. War was about to break out when the Dutch interfered.

At first the Dutch were indifferent to the successes of Martanda Varma. Even the annexation of Quilon and the war with Kayamkulam failed to impress them, though they had factories in both places. But the incorporation of the principality of Elayedattu Swarupam and the readiness of the Travancore ruler to declare war on Kayamkulam opened their eyes. They realised that a new factor had appeared in the Malabar

politics. The existence of numerous principalities and their eternal quarrels had secured for the Dutch the position of the arbitrators of Malabar. Except in the case of the Zamorin in the north they had interfered in the internal affairs of the Malabar chiefs and had settled all disputes. But these Principalities had begun to vanish at the touch of Martanda Varma, the man of action. This was a challenge to the suzerainty of the Dutch in Malabar. It was no longer possible for them to remain mere spectators and the Dutch Governor at Cochin, Adrian Matten, asked the king to stop further aggressions on Kayamkulam and Quilon. Martanda Varma was ignorant of the position that the Dutch occupied in Malabar politics. But ignorance was bliss in this particular case. He peremptorily told them to mind their own business.⁵ The Dutch were enraged at the attitude of the Raja, but they were not in a position to attack Travancore immediately due to troubles in Java and Martanda Varma got sufficient time to make extensive preparations.

Van Imhoff, the Governor of Ceylon, who came in 1739 to examine the Dutch position at Cochin, was impatient to wait for reinforcements from Batavia. He resolved to take immediate action in spite of the paucity of troops—the Dutch troops in Cochin consisted of only 472 infantry and 33 artillery. The exiled prince of Elayadattu Swarupam was installed on the throne in return for which the Dutch gained a large farm at Ainoor and Vechur. Imhoff's plan of campaign was a simultaneous attack on Travancore from both south and north—a powerful force from Ceylon to land at Colachel and march northwards and another force

5. This was followed by an interview between Imhoff, the Governor of Ceylon who had come to Cochin in 1739 and Martanda Varma. Imhoff threatened the Raja with an invasion of Travancore when he found that the Raja would not yield to threats. The Raja replied that doubtless he might do so, but there were forests into which he would retire in safety." Imhoff retorted that "where Travancoreans could go, Dutch could follow." The Raja then broke up the conference sneeringly observing he had "been thinking some day of invading Europe." Logan: *Malabar*—Vol. I, p. 395.

from Quilon to march southwards. But before the campaign was opened Martanda Varma marched against Elayadathu Swarupam, routed the forces of the princess and reoccupied the territory. His plan was to defeat the Kayamkulam chief as well and then to advance to the south and meet the Dutch at Colachel. But meanwhile the Dutch had already landed at the latter place and were rapidly progressing in consolidating their position between Colachel and Cape Comorin. So Martanda Varma abandoned his northern campaign and proceeded south. To safeguard his position he started negotiations with the French at Pondicherry and met the Dutch forces at Colachel on 10th August 1741. Ramayyan's forces broke through the Dutch garrison and threw it into confusion. The Dutch were forced to retreat to their fort. But the fort itself was besieged and taken within a few hours.

The decisive victory of Martanda Varma at Colachel is of great significance in the history of the Dutch in Malabar. The defeat of the Dutch was no doubt due to the superiority of the Travancore forces. But it was the first serious defeat sustained by them in Malabar. The Dutch had so far maintained their prominent position in Malabar without suffering any serious reverses at the hands of any foreign or Indian power. It was only in the Zamorin's dominions that their influence was negligible. This unique position of the Dutch was now questioned by a powerful prince of Malabar. Martanda Varma ignored their position as the arbitrator of Malabar politics and continued his annexationist policy without minding the protests of the Dutch. In fact this defeat marks the beginning of the end of the Dutch power in Malabar. As Sirdar Panikkar observes "It was the first great blow inflicted on the Dutch arms and its moral effect was so great that the Dutch never recovered from it at all. They were too powerful on the sea to yield immediately, but from this time except for unimportant diplomatic

skirmishes with Travancore, the Company was reconciled to the position of mere traders.”⁶

Two of the prisoners taken at Colachel, viz. Eustachio D Lanny and Duncan, a French man, were selected by the Travancore ruler to organise a standing army trained on the Western model. This army he found very useful in carrying out his policy of conquest and annexation.

The victory at Colachel removed the greatest obstacle in the path of Martanda Varma who could now follow a policy of unchecked territorial expansion. As a matter of fact the Raja himself did not realise the magnitude of his achievement, being ignorant of the supreme position occupied by the Dutch in Malabar. The Dutch could no longer interfere as the allies of minor states. Therefore the political unification of Kerala under a single sovereign—the cherished ambition of Martanda Varma—could now be realised.

After the battle of Colachel the Raja proceeded northwards to conclude the unfinished campaign against Kayamkulam. The Dutch were secretly giving assistance against Travancore. The war dragged on for some time without any decisive results. In 1742 the Travancore soldiers attacked the Dutch fort at Quilon but suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the gallant Achuta Varriar, the commander of the Kayamkulam forces. In 1743 the Kayamkulam troops attacked Kilimanur a territory of the Travancore Raja. Martanda Varma immediately mobilised all available troops with additions of arms and ammunitions which he procured from the English at Ajengo and the French at Mahe and hastened north to meet the advancing Kayamkulam forces. They put up a gallant resistance for sixtyeight days, but finally were forced to surrender and the fort was captured. The retreating Raja was

6. *Ibid*—p. 70.

chased to his own capital and was forced to sign a treaty according to which the Raja ceded half his territory, became a tributary of Travancore, paying an annual tribute of Rs. 1000/- and an elephant and promised to regard the enemies of Travancore as his own enemies.

The victory at Kayamkulam was followed by an attack on Thekkumkur and after its annexation another on Vadakkumkur. The Raja of the latter place fled to Calicut and Vadakkumkur was also added to Travancore.

The rapid and unchecked expansion of Travancore convinced the Dutch that further hostilities would be disastrous to their trade and they sued for peace. The Raja was also willing to come to an agreement on a reasonable basis. A conference was held at Mavelikkara in 1742 where Ramayyan and Talavadi Kochumasad met the Dutch representatives Ezekiel Rabbi and Captain Sylvester Mendes. Since each party demanded impossible concessions from the other, the conference failed. Martanda Varma would treat them only as a commercial corporation; he could not allow them to interfere in Malabar politics. The Dutch had not sustained such a severe defeat as to shed all their political ambition; especially their freedom to interfere in the internal affairs of Malabar princes. Therefore negotiations were postponed *sine die*. Sometime later, however, negotiations were renewed and a conference was held at Parur. But as Ramayyan refused to budge an inch from his original position it came to nothing.

Meanwhile the Kayamkulam Raja was struggling to regain his lost position. He tried to secure the help of Ambalapula and other principalities and evaded the payment of tribute to Travancore to maintain his dignity. When Martanda Varma directed Ramayyan

to proceed against the Raja he abandoned his dominions which were forthwith incorporated with Travancore. On the pretext that the Raja of Ambalapula gave support to Kayamkulam the Travancore army marched against the Brahman ruler of that principality.

The continued successes of Martanda Varma convinced the Dutch that they could not get further concessions from Travancore. By refusing to accept the conditions of the Raja in the hope of gaining more concessions the Dutch lost what they cared most in Travancore—the monopoly of pepper trade, for the English were exploiting the situation. The conciliatory policy followed by the English at Ajengo secured for them a monopoly in pepper trade which had been the main concern of the Dutch in Travancore. To regain that they were prepared to come to an agreement at any cost. As Moens said in his memoirs, they “learnt the lesson from the ruinous war with Travancore that it was not expedient to entangle the company in another war, the expenses of which were always certain, but the issue uncertain.” He pointed out the inexpediency of remaining hostile to Travancore even if she were defeated. “Travancore, suppose she succumbed, would still not remain idle; but now that she has already become so large would each time recover and so keep the Company continually in travail..... The Company in either case, whether Travancore alone remained in possession of Malabar, or the Company continued to support the other kings, would equally have no hope of more pepper and equally would have to bear excessive burdens.” The conquest of Quilon, Kayamkulam and Vadakkumkur by Travancore had increased their losses in pepper trade. These considerations induced the company to accept the proposal. On 15th August 1753 the treaty of Mavelikkara was signed. By this treaty the English were to be left undisturbed in their factories at Ajengo, Edava, and Vilingam; but Travancore was not to give further encouragement to the English or footing in its territories for any other European power.

In return the Dutch were to take their hands off all political disputes. They were to renounce all their engagements with Malabar princes, particularly with those against whom Travancore wanted to go to war. If any European power attacked the Raja the Company was to give their support both by land and sea. The Dutch were to supply Travancore with war materials annually to the value of Rs. 12,000 at cost price; and Travancore in return should sell to the Dutch a stipulated quantity of pepper at certain fixed rates both from the territories then in possession of Travancore and from those which she might conquer afterwards.

Before the actual ratification of the treaty the Dutch tried to insure Cochin against invasion by Travancore by inserting a new clause that "Should the Raja of Cochin or Chetwai island be attacked by Travancore such was to be considered equivalent to war." But Martanda Varma was not prepared to go further than to give an oral promise that "Travancore should live in friendship with the Raja of Cochin provided he gave no cause to the contrary" which meant nothing more than that Travancore would remain friendly only so long as she chose to attack her. It was the ninth clause of the treaty—the Company shall renounce all alliances with the other chiefs and nobles of Malabar with whom His Highness might desire to wage war and shall not thwart him to this matter in any respect, give asylum to any such persons or oppose His Highness's enterprise—that was most damaging to the prestige of the Dutch. They had to surrender all pretensions to political authority and content themselves as a mere commercial corporation. The Dutch had concluded treaties of alliance with most of the states in Malabar promising them help in case of invasion. The treaty of Travancore was thus a betrayal of their allies who were now flung to the wolves. The Raja of Cochin fully understood the disastrous implications of this treaty but could do nothing more than complain bitterly to the supreme

government at Batavia. The Dutch had always stood in the way of any understanding between the Zamorin and Cochin since they feared that it would be detrimental to their interests in Malabar. Thus when they were taking up the cause of Cochin against the Zamorin, they were also championing their own cause. But when it came to the question of their dealing with a powerful prince, they discarded their old policy as well as their old ally. The Dutch acquiesced in the humiliating proposals submitted by Martanda Varma only because they wanted to regain their trade in pepper which they had lost during the war. To achieve this they were prepared to throw overboard all their allies who had put their trust in them. This ended their political power in Kerala.

The treaty of Mavelikara enabled Martanda Varma to continue his policy of expansion and consolidation unchecked by any foreign power. The conquest of the neighbouring principalities brought him to the borders of Cochin. The Raja of Cochin found himself threatened by two powerful enemies—the Zamorin in the north and Martanda Varma in the south. His position was worsened by factions in the royal family. In the Cochin royal family there were two titles. Perumpatappu Muppil was the title of the eldest of all the members ruling and non-ruling, and then the Raja who was the head of the ruling branch. But in 1748 a prince belonging to the dispossessed branch became the Perumpatappu Muppil. The Raja however refused to recognise the title and the disinherited prince sought the help of Martanda Varma. The Travancore ruler readily agreed to help and that resulted in a clash between Cochin and Travancore.⁷ In the battle that followed near Shertaly the Cochin forces were defeated and the Raja had to agree to the terms proposed by Travancore. The claims of the

7. The Trippunittara Chronicles mention another reason for the conflict. Martanda Varma took possession of the temple of Tiruvalla which belonged to Cochin though situated in Travancore.

dispossessed princes were to be recognised and Karappuram was to be ruled by them. All the pepper in Cochin, except 500 candies for the use of the Raja, were to be handed over to Travancore and Cochin was to pay an indemnity of Rs. 25,000. The Raja of Travancore was not to attack Vadakkumkur and Ambalapula since they were feudatories of Cochin. The question of the rights of the dispossessed princes was to be decided after consultation with the nobles.

This treaty left Martanda Varma free to pursue a policy of conquest and annexation. But the people of Kayamkulam, Purakkad and Chengannasseri rose in rebellion against Travancore. They resented the conquest of one Malabar state by another with the aid of foreigners. The Raja of Purakkad escaped from Travancore and joined the rebels. This unexpected rebellion of the newly vanquished was welcomed by the Raja of Cochin. The nobility of Cochin was even more bent upon checking the progress of Martanda Varma as they knew fully well what their fate would be had they come under Travancore. Further Martanda Varma himself violated one of the clauses of the treaty by leading an army against Ambalapula and that led to further conflicts.

The forces of the Brahman chief of Ambalapula commanded by a valiant soldier, Mattu Panikkar, seemed to be formidable with their poisoned arrows and firm determination not to surrender. Ramayyan's forces were at first obliged to retreat.⁸ But the intrigues of Ramayyan succeeded in winning over the principal officers of the Ambalapula army, Mattu Panikkar and Thekkedattu Bhattatiri. They wanted to end the hostilities, but the Raja continued to fight. With their non-co-operation and with the arrival of De Lannoy's troops, the Raja was easily defeated,

8. The Hindu soldiers of Ramayyan believed in the rumours current that Krishna the diety of Ambalapula Raja, was himself leading his soldiers. Therefore panic seized them and they refused to fight.

removed to Trivandrum as a state prisoner and his territory was incorporated with Travancore.

But the Ambalapula Raja escaped and joined Vadakkumkur and Kayamkulam. A formidable combination was formed against Travancore consisting of Kayamkulam, Ambalapula, Changanasseri and other principalities under the leadership of the Raja of Cochin. They made hurried preparations for recovering their lost possessions. The leading nobles of Cochin forgot their old rivalries for the moment and became united for the common cause of the nobility. But the Dutch Governor at Cochin privately informed the Travancore Raja about the preparations going on evidently to gain his favour and friendship. The two armies met at Purakkad. The superiority of the Travancore forces led by Ramayyan and De Lannoy carried the day. Prominent nobles of Cochin including Paliyat Achan and Kodacheri Karthav were taken prisoners. The war was carried into the Cochin territory. His palace at Maduthumkara, the original seat of the Raja of Cochin (hence Mata Bhupati), was seized by Ramayyan. He continued his advance and reached Arookutty. The Raja of Cochin sued for peace and Ramayyan stopped further aggression and returned to Mavelikkara.

It is true that if Ramayyan had continued to advance he could easily have hoisted the flag of Travancore in the heart of Cochin. But he desisted from such an attempt because he knew as Moens writes that "the conservation of his conquests requires as much prudence as their acquisition." The policy of annexation followed by Martanda Varma, combined with his unchivalrous attitude towards the conquered princes, was resented by every prince and chief outside Travancore. Though Cochin was defeated the conquered principalities again rose in revolt. The whole country north of Kayamkulam openly participated in it and the position of Travancore was none too safe.

In this predicament the Travancore ruler, true to his policy of suppressing internal troubles with foreign help sought the assistance of Haider Ali who was an officer under the Raja of Mysore at Coimbatore. Haider promised to send a powerful army. This news terrified the rebels into submission. Consequently Martanda Varma declined the offer of Haider, but the latter could not be shaken off so easily. He was as much an expert in diplomacy and statecraft as the Raja himself. Therefore Haider decided to wait and watch the course of events and wreak his vengeance when opportunity would arise.

The conduct of Martanda Varma in invoking foreign help at the slightest symptom of a revolt in the state is indefensible. It is true that the above revolt had been much more serious than all the others which preceded it. But the Raja's policy had always been to secure the support of foreign troops not only for suppressing revolts in the state but for subduing the neighbouring states as well. Therefore Sirdar Panikkar says: "He showed himself during the whole of his career entirely devoid of a feeling for Kerala Dharma and the basis of his statecraft was the utilisation of foreign help for subduing the chieftains opposed to him..... From the point of view of Malabar history, Martanda Varma's policy was disastrous in another way. His attempt was to sweep off the whole Malabar polity and establish in its place an autocracy of the type which prevailed in Madura under the Nayaks and in Trichinopoly under the Nabobs."

It is true that the social organisation of Malabar was unique. But apart from the social factor there was nothing else that could promote the idea of Kerala nationalism or bring about a United Kerala. The idea of nationalism could not flourish in an age of feudalism. A petty state in Malabar regarded another state in Kerala with as much distrust and suspicion as Madura or Trichinopoly. Further it was not respect

for Kerala Dharma that prevented other rulers from invoking foreign aid. They had neither the opportunity nor the means to venture on such schemes. The Raja of Cochin did not hesitate to give asylum to the Portuguese whose help he sought against the Zamorin. Martanda Varma was determined to sweep off all the petty states that lay scattered, hardly able to subsist by their meagre revenue. And it does not matter whether he achieved this object with a Marava force or a Nayar force. The existence of a large number of small states side by side, often unfriendly with each other and always suspicious of one another, was certainly not conducive to the well-being of the people, particularly, in Travancore where the Nayar nobles were exceedingly powerful. Being a practical statesman Martanda Varma realised the necessity and advantage of political unification. Conquest was the only method by which unification could be brought about in those days and the interests of Travancore promoted. Therefore he readily embarked upon a policy of annexation, though his high-handed actions were resented by every section of the people.

Martanda Varma's policy of resorting to foreign help in the early years of his reign is understandable and defensible, because he had no other alternative. The evils of feudal organisation rendered the raising of a native army impossible. The leading nobles were against the king and the common soldier owed his allegiance first to his feudal overlord and then only to the king. It was this factor that made him realise the fact that the total annihilation of the recalcitrant feudal nobility was an essential prerequisite to the establishment of orderly and peaceful government. This could have been possible only with foreign aid.

But the defect with the king's policy was that he sought the foreigner's aid even at the phantom of a revolt in any part of his dominions. It is all right so long as he was confident of preventing the friendly

foreigner from turning into an unruly aggressor. In this light the invitation that the king sent to Haider was both unpatriotic and imprudent. It is true that the rebellion was more serious than those which preceded it, but its suppression with the help of an ambitious adventurer like Haider would have proved to be a remedy more disastrous than the disease. Though this was temporarily averted by the good sense shown by the people themselves, many of the troubles that Travancore had to face at a later date were the outcome of this invitation.

Another criticism that is levelled against his conduct was that he was unjust and utterly devoid of scruples in his dealings with the Ettuvittil Pillamar and the Tampis. This has got to be admitted. The fact is that the king realised that unless severe treatment was meted out to the rebels there could be no peace in the country. However, the readiness with which he hired foreign mercenaries and the methods by which he liquidated those who created troubles in his dominions show that he was too much of a realist and practical politician to be guided by scruples or similar idealistic principles.

With all his limitations he was easily the greatest ruler that occupied the throne of Travancore. On the eve of his accession Travancore had been one of the smallest kingdoms of Malabar with a powerless monarch and an empty treasury. The Dutch were supreme in Malabar politics especially to the south of the Zamorin's dominions. In about a decade the whole situation was changed. Travancore emerged as the most important power in Malabar and the Dutch became a political non-entity though what Martanda Varma wanted was simply to render them innocuous so that they could no longer be a stumbling block in his path of conquest and consolidation. The period also witnessed the beginning of the end of mediaevalism in the history of Kerala as the annihilation of the nobility and the policy of

annexation and political unification followed by the king gave a death-blow to feudalism at least in Travancore. Thus the reign of Martanda Varma was a remarkable period in the history of Kerala.

II

The loss of the political power of the Dutch gave the ruler of Calicut his opportunity to recover Chetwai and other places which he had lost to them. The reigning Zamorin—according to Gollanosse “boasts that he intends to live and die a mortal enemy of the Honourable Company.” In 1752 he attacked Enamakal and this was followed by the capture of the fortresses of Chetwai, Parur and Trichur. The feudal elements in many areas offered no resistance. Within nine months the Zamorin succeeded in conquering almost all the possessions which the Dutch had taken from him. The Zamorin pursued his success further and hoisted the flag of Calicut in Cochin. The Dutch commander Cunes and the Cochin heir-apparent tried hard to force the Zamorin to relinquish Chetwai. But they were not able to stop his progress. He proceeded against Cranganore, and secured the submission of Mangat and Parur which took him almost to the new border line of Travancore.

It was at this time, when the Zamorin was at the height of his power, that he suddenly concluded a treaty with the Dutch by which he agreed to give up Matilakam, Chetwai and Pappinivattam and to pay Rs. 65,000 as war indemnity.

Though the Zamorin was victorious throughout he had to conclude this treaty with the Dutch because the new Zamorin who succeeded in 1758 was anxious for peace at any price. There were rumours that Haider Ali was going to invade Malabar and therefore it was necessary for the Calicut ruler to conserve his forces to resist him. Moreover the Zamorin was also watching

with mounting anxiety the rapid progress of Travancore. With Calicut advancing southwards and Travancore northwards a clash between the two for supremacy in Malabar would be inevitable. Therefore the Dutch had to be propitiated and kept neutral in the coming struggle for supremacy. The fight between Calicut and Travancore however did not come off as a result of Haider's invasion.

The Raja of Cochin now realised that he could not resist the advances of either Calicut or Travancore without the help of a powerful ally. He could not expect active assistance from the Dutch either against Travancore because of the treaty of Mavelikkara (1753) or against the Zamorin because of the above treaty. Peace with Calicut was out of the question and therefore the Raja turned to Travancore. Negotiations were very ably and fruitfully conducted by Komi Achan of Paliyam. It was after he was taken prisoner in the battle of Ambalapula that this remarkable diplomat realised that an alliance with Travancore would be in the best interests of Cochin. He knew that the Dutch had ceased to be a political power in Malabar and therefore cultivated the friendship of Martanda Varma while he was at Trivandrum. As early as 1757 he saw his desire fulfilled when Martanda Varma concluded a treaty with the Raja of Cochin at Mavelikkara. But Martanda Varma died in the same year and therefore a fresh treaty was concluded. This treaty signed on 26th December 1761 maintained perpetual friendship between Cochin and Travancore. The Raja of Cochin promised to render no help to the enemies of Travancore and to bear all expenses in the coming war against the Zamorin and relinquished his claims over the Karappuram territories. In return, Rama Varma, the new Raja of Travancore, promised to reinstate him in Cochin.

In 1762 the Travancore troops under the command of De Lannoy formed into three divisions and simulta-

neously attacked the three strongholds of the Zamorin in Cochin-Cranganore, Parur and Verapoly. The troops of De Lannoy trained under European methods drove out the Zamorin's forces from all these three places. From Parur the advancing army formed into two divisions one marching against Trichur and the other against Ponnani. The Zamorin was forced to completely withdraw his forces from Cochin. De Lannoy even contemplated an attack on Calicut but meanwhile the Zamorin sued for peace since he had to face a much more powerful enemy than Travancore; the troops of Haidar were at the gates of his dominions. The Travancore ruler was also willing to come to terms as he had no personal enmity against the Zamorin. His only obligation had been to restore the Raja of Cochin to his dominions. Above all Rama Varma was endowed with sufficient foresight to realise that the impending invasion of Haidar Ali would be as much a concern of Travancore as of Calicut. Accordingly the treaty between the two Rajas was concluded in 1763. Perpetual friendship was to be maintained between Travancore and Calicut, the Zamorin was to pay a war indemnity of Rs. 1,50,000. Cochin was to be left unmolested by him and disputes between Cochin and Calicut were to be settled by Travancore. There was also a clause to the effect that in case of foreign attack each was to help the other.

This treaty which ended the perpetual warfare between the Nedyirippu Swarupam and the Perumpatappu Swarupam is of great significance in the history of Kerala because it effectively broke the military power of the Nayars of Cochin. As subsequent events showed it was the second step towards the annihilation of feudal institutions in Kerala, the suppression of the Nayar nobles with the aid of foreign mercenaries by Martanda Varma being the first. The Prime Minister of Cochin, Paliyat Komi Achan, was a true disciple of Martanda Varma in diplomacy and statecraft. He wanted to reorganise the administra-

tive system of Cochin on the model of Travancore. Though the Raja was reinstated after the war with the Zamorin his territorial authority was confined to a very small area. The Nayar chiefs surrounding this area were virtually independent. In fact the help rendered by the chiefs had been partly responsible for the easy conquest of Cochin by the Zamorin. The Prime Minister therefore realised the necessity of curbing the power of these Nayar nobles. He had already set the stage for this when he succeeded in inserting a clause in the treaty between Cochin and Travancore in 1701 to the effect that the Travancore Raja might render his help in putting down the power of the nobles in Cochin.⁹

Soon after the war the leading nobles like the Mankada Raja, Kotesseri Karthav and others who had helped the Zamorin were brought to the temple at Tiruvanchikulam and compelled to take an oath of allegiance to the Raja of Cochin. They promised to be loyal to the Rajas of Perumpatappu (Cochin) and Trippapil (Travancore) Swarupams and not to have any connection with their enemies. Among these rebellious nobles was also the second chief of Paliyam. Apart from the oath of allegiance he expressed his regret for all his youthful misdemeanours and promised to be obedient to his brother. The properties of many of the rebellious chieftains were confiscated by the state. Henceforth the Nayar nobles of Cochin like those of Travancore ceased to have any political power. On this bedrock of ruined nobility the Prime Minister set out to build a sound and stable state with power and authority concentrated in the ruler.

The treaty of 1763 thus marks the end of feudalism in Cochin like the reign of Martanda Varma in Travancore.

9. K. P. P. Menon: *History of Cochin (Mal.)*—Vol. II, p. 330.

The Close of the Middle Ages

I

The fall of the Zamorin.

THE close of the war between Cochin and Calicut ended the military power of the Nayars of Cochin. They had to relinquish the position they had occupied in civil and military organisation and the concentration of all power and authority in the person of the ruler meant the end of feudalism in Cochin. In Travancore they had already been abolished by Martanda Varma; but in North Kerala the feudal nobility continued to be powerful and there was no indication of its immediate disappearance. The Zamorin was able in his dominions to keep these feudal barons under control and gain their unswerving loyalty. Therefore he saw no reason why they should be rendered powerless. In fact there was every reason to believe that the existing system of civil and military organisation would have continued in North Kerala, but for the Mysorean invasion. The invasion of Haidar Ali in 1765 gave the death blow to their military power in North Kerala as well, thus putting an end to a unique experiment in the realm of government. The close of the Mysorean invasion is thus synchronous with the close of the history of Mediaeval Kerala.

Haidar's ancestors were natives of the Punjab who migrated to South India during the latter part of the 17th century. His father Nadan Saheb joined the service of the Hindu ruler of Mysore and eventually became the Governor of a Province. Haidar was born in 1702, lived an obscure life showing none of the symptoms of his later greatness till he was forty seven

years old. In 1749 he attracted the attention of Nanja Raja, the *Sarvadhikari* (Finance Minister) of Mysore at the siege of Devanhalli where he exhibited striking abilities as a soldier. He was made the commander of a division which consisted of fifty cavalry and two hundred infantry.

The ruler of Mysore, Chicka Krishna Raja, had been reduced to virtual impotence by two brothers, Deva Raja and Nanja Raja, the *Dalavai* (Commander-in-chief) and the *Sarvadhikari* respectively. The country was consequently in a disturbed state and this provided Haidar with excellent opportunities for the display of his talents as a loyal lieutenant of Nanja Raja. In 1750 he fought the French army in Hyderabad which secured for him the possession of "two camel loads of treasure besides a large number of horses and muskets."¹ He utilised these in training up his new recruits in novel methods of warfare with the help of some French sepoys. This newly trained soldiers won for him further distinctions at Trichinopoly. There he fought side by side with the English and gained valuable experience in the art of western warfare. In 1755 he was appointed Faujdar of Dindigal where he soon became a power to be reckoned with after the remarkable manner in which he suppressed the risings of the Poligars of that place.

In 1751 he was asked by Nanja Raja to go over to Seringapatam. There in the same year Haidar brought about a reconciliation between Nanja Raja and Deva Raja whose quarrel had been leading the country to anarchy and scored a brilliant victory over the Marathas who had invaded Bangalore at that time. From that time onwards he embarked upon a policy of conquest and annexation. His invasion of Malabar, conquest of Bennore and friendship with the Portuguese and the Dutch made him eventually the *de facto* ruler of Mysore.

1. Travancore State Manual—p. 376.

It was while he was the Faujdar of Dindigal that Haidar received an invitation from the Raja of Palghat who offered his help in an invasion of Malabar. The invitation was necessitated by the inability of the Raja to withstand the successive onslaughts of the Zamorin from the north. In 1750 the Zamorin invaded the dominions of the Palghat Raja and carved out for himself a territory in the midst of the Palghat territories calling it *Natuwattam*. His intention no doubt was to conquer the whole territory and the Raja of Palghat, who knew this, only too well, turned to Haidar for help. He placed himself under the protection of the king of Mysore agreeing to pay an annual tribute of 12,000 *fanams*. Haidar sent his brother-in-law Mukhdam Ali Khan with 2,000 cavalry, 5,000 infantry and 5 guns. Part of the Zamorin's troops at this time was engaged in fighting against Cochin and the Dutch. The rest tried to put up a resistance but were forced to retreat. The Zamorin agreed to restore the conquered territories to Palghat Raja and pay twelve lakhs of rupees to Haidar to meet the expenses of the expedition. Meanwhile Haidar succeeded in his *coup d'etat* which made him the real, though not the *de jure*, ruler of Mysore. He then sent envoys to the Zamorin demanding the sum due to him. The Zamorin who had promised to pay it off by instalments was not able to satisfy Haidar. Ali owing to the enormous expenses he incurred during the war with Travancore. Haidar made this a convenient pretext to invade Malabar and annex it to his expanding dominions. He had been only waiting for an opportunity to realise his ambition of wreaking his vengeance on the Raja of Travancore who had declined his offer of support earlier. Haidar therefore decided to invade Malabar at the head of twelve thousand chosen soldiers.

Haidar was helped in carrying out his design by the anarchical condition of North Malabar and by the Ali Raja of Cannanore. "North Malabar was at this time in a state of anarchy, a sea of intrigue, conflicting

interests and mutual jealousies.”² The authority of the Kolattiri was confined to Chirakal alone. Ali Raja ruled Cannanore. To the south of it was the small principality of Kadattanad and then there were Iruvalinad Nambiars and Kottayam Rajas. Their mutual jealousies prevented them from uniting against the common enemy. Further the Muslim ruler of Cannanore was determined to give the utmost help to his coreligionist. When Haidar attacked and captured Mangalore Ali Raja went over to him and promised his loyal help in the invasion of Malabar. Many of the Moplahs of North Malabar were rich merchants who were able to secure a virtual monopoly of the trade of those parts. Ali Raja had a powerful fleet at his command and Haidar was considerably encouraged by these factors. Further, in order to strengthen his position, he wrote a letter to Breekport, the Dutch Government of Cochin, which secured for him the neutrality of the Company. He also made extensive preparations for the invasion, his army consisting of 40,000 soldiers including 450 Europeans.

The English at Tellicherry had undertaken by a treaty to protect the Kolattiri from all his enemies. But when in 1764 they received a letter from Haidar announcing his intention of invading Malabar they were forced to forsake their ally since they did not wish to come into conflict with such a formidable rival like Haidar. In February 1766 the Mysore troops invaded Chirakal, which was easily captured and entrusted to the Cannanore chief. The Kolattiri escaped to Travancore with his family.

The Zamorin went to Kotta river at the head of a large force but he was defeated by Haidar and forced to withdraw. Ali Raja was then sent to Calicut at the head of 1000 soldiers. He plundered the capital with the help of the local Moplahs. All attempts by the

2. N. K. Sinha: *Haidar Ali*—p. 252.

Zamorin to establish peace with Haidar were futile. The Zamorin was unable to pay the exorbitant sum of a crore of gold *mohurs* which was demanded from him. In April Haidar arrived at Calicut and besieged the Zamorin's fort. Realising that resistance was of no use he sent his family to a place of safety and set fire to the powder magazine which blew him up along with the fortress. The Nayars carried on guerrilla warfare and Haidar had to adopt stern measures to put them down. But the invasion of his own dominions by the Marathas demanded the immediate return of Haidar to Mysore. The conquered dominions were restored to the new Zamorin on his agreeing to pay an annual tribute.

The Dutch who were watching the progress of Haidar with anxiety wanted to prevent him from advancing to the south. He had already gained the friendship of the Dutch on the eve of his invasion of Calicut by pointing out to them the dangers of the English advance in India. The Company now wished to maintain a perpetual friendship with Haidar. Therefore they sent their commissioners to Calicut to see him. The Dutch wanted that the rights and privileges that they had enjoyed in the Zamorin's dominions should be respected and that their allies (Travancore and Cochin) should not be attacked. Haidar was willing to establish perpetual friendship with them and supply them with the products of his country on the following conditions:- (1) The Company should enter into an offensive and defensive alliance with him. (2) The Company should help him with a thousand European soldiers *minus* their expenses for his southern campaign. (3) He was prepared to respect the privileges of and to cede more territories to the company subject to the right to march through the territorial possession of the Company; he would not however molest the vassals of the company. Since Haidar neither gave a promise not to march through the Dutch territories nor gave a guarantee that he

would not attack the king of Travancore, the Dutch were not in a position to accept these proposals. Still they did not want to displease Haidar and therefore replied that the matter, since it was not under their jurisdiction, should be referred to the Supreme Government at Batavia. But Haidar refused to be put off so easily and asked the Company to prevail upon the Cochin and Travancore Rajas to contribute towards the expenses of his wars if they wanted him not to "pay a visit" to their countries. He demanded four lakhs of rupees and eight elephants from the Cochin Raja and fifteen lakhs of rupees and thirty elephants from the Raja of Travancore. The Cochin Raja entrusted his affairs to the Company and the Travancore Raja began strengthening his defence works in reply to these humiliating proposals. Both the Rajas however said that they were willing to contribute something towards his war expenses if the Kolattiri and the Zamorin were reinstated in their respective dominions. But Haidar had to go back to Mysore to defend his possessions against the Marathas and the Nizam which temporarily averted the invasion of Travancore.

In the first Mysore War (1768-69) though Haidar and his ally the Nizam were at first defeated in the battles of Changama and Tiruvannamalai and the English captured Mangalore, he was soon able to regain his lost position by taking the offensive and marching against Madras. One of the clauses of the Treaty of Madras (1769) concluded between the English and Haidar was that Travancore should not be attacked by the latter as it was under the protection of the Company. To strengthen his position further the Travancore Raja sent his *Dalavai* to the Dutch in Cochin to ascertain if they would help him. The commandeur said that the Company would be friendly to Travancore so long as the Raja remained so and agreed to help the Raja by rifles, guns and ammunitions besides giving him Rs. 25,000 in exchange of pepper. But it was clear from this as well as from a subsequent talk that the

Dutch were not prepared to do anything that would offend Haidar. The utmost they could promise was to try peaceful methods of persuading Haidar not to extend his invasion to the south. Therefore the Raja tried to get help from elsewhere.

After the first Mysore war Haidar was engaged in another war with the Marathas. From 1768 to 1774 nothing was heard of him. Therefore the Zamorin who had returned to Calicut agreeing to an annual tribute made no arrangements for paying it in the hope that Haidar would not be able to keep his enemies away.

But unfortunately for the Zamorin Haidar succeeded in coming to an understanding with his enemies and lost no time in sending an army through Wynad to punish the Zamorin for his negligence and occupy his dominions. The Zamorin appealed to the French at Mahe for help "submitting himself, his country and his subjects to the king of France." Monsiur Duprat, Governor of Mahe, came to Calicut at the head of a small army. He hoisted the French flag in the Zamorin's dominions and informed Haidar that Calicut was under the French who were therefore bound to defend it. But Haidar's forces took no notice of the warning and continued their advance. When they entered Calicut the French Governor deserted the Zamorin and went back to Mahe. The Zamorin also left his capital and fled to Cranganore. But when he found that the Dutch were afraid to give him protection he crossed over to Travancore where the Raja gave him shelter.

Haidar demanded Rs 2,00,000 and a few elephants from the Raja of Cochin and Rs. 3,00,000 and two elephants from the Cranganore chief. Travancore persuaded Cochin to satisfy Haidar's demands lest a refusal should lead to the invasion of both countries, and even advanced the necessary amount to Cochin. Though the Dutch tried to save their protege, the Raja

of Cranganore, Haidar forced him to agree to pay Rs. 50,000 by two instalments.

The Dutch also tried their best not to displease Haidar. But the latter accused them of allowing the Zamorin to conceal his treasure in his possession. But Governor Moens satisfied him by conducting a search of the alleged places in the presence of Haidar's representatives. He also tried to propitiate Haidar by sending him presents. But these efforts did not produce any lasting friendship between them. What Haidar wanted was an offensive and defensive alliance with the Dutch to which they were not prepared and gave only evasive replies, the usual excuse being that they did not hear from the Supreme Government at Batavia.

Meanwhile Haidar demanded further subsidies from the Rajas of Cochin and Travancore. But the Dutch persuaded him to withdraw this demand. Immediately after this in 1775 they supplied him with a few elephants and fire arms when he was at Negapatam. By thus coaxing and cajoling him they hoped to achieve their objects.

In 1776 Haidar resolved to invade Travancore and demanded a passage through the Dutch territories. On receiving an evasive reply he made preparations for a forced march with ten thousand soldiers. Haidar also demanded a full account of the administration of Chetwai since it had formed part of the Zamorin's dominions. Though an account was sent by the Dutch, Sirdar Khan, Assistant to Srinivasa Rao, Haidar's General, was bent upon taking possession of Chetwai. He seized the custom house near Pulikkara and demanded twenty years' revenue from the Dutch officials as well as the treasure concealed by the Zamorin. The protests of the Dutch were of no avail. The Mysore forces occupied Chetwai and Pappinivattam and Sirdar Khan explained his action to the Dutch Governor in a letter in which he stated that his master had been

insulted by Moens by not replying to his letters. He also expressed Haidar's willingness to remain friendly with the Dutch provided they granted a passage to his troops and gave twenty years' revenue from the occupied lands. The Dutch by themselves were not strong enough to resist an invasion and so they sought the assistance of Cochin and Travancore. But the Raja of Travancore had already concluded an alliance with the English East India Company and the Nawab of Arcot according to which his allies would help him only if he was attacked by Haidar but not if he attacked Haidar. Therefore Travancore Raja was not in a position to assist the Dutch.

The Dutch believed in the rumours that were prevailing that Ayacotta near the northern boundary of the island of Vypeen was to be the target of Haidar's attack. But while the defence of Ayacotta was being strengthened Haidar attacked the Chetwai fort and captured it without much difficulty. This was a great blow to the Dutch. Haidar took the whole garrison as prisoners though he had promised to allow them to withdraw safely to Cranganore.

Moens resolved to strengthen the defence of Cranganore. The Zamorin's forces were also there to help him. Both Moens and the Zamorin wanted to launch a joint expedition against Haidar with the help of Travancore and Cochin. But neither of them was prepared to take the offensive against Haidar and so the Dutch Governor decided to go forward without them.

Moens was fortunate enough to get a convenient opportunity for attacking Chetwai. The Calicut Nayars headed by Ravi Varma of the Zamorin's family were carrying on guerrilla warfare against Haidar. Though the Moplahs in general supported the Muslim adventurer from Mysore, one enterprising chieftain by name Hydros kutty of Chavakkad, who quarrelled with Haidar on the question of his annual tribute, helped

the rebellious Nayars. When Haidar's troops were busily engaged in putting down this rebellion the Dutch stormed the Cranganore Raja's place and bombarded Chetwai three days later. But they were not successful. They retreated to Cranganore palace pursued by Haidar's troops and they had to withdraw to the Cranganore fort.

But Haidar was not able to lay siege to Cranganore fort or Ayacotta since the English had declared war on him. Had he succeeded in capturing the above two forts he could have attacked and possibly occupied Travancore. Moens was alive to this danger which he pointed out to the minister of the Travancore Raja when the latter visited him. When he found that the Travancore minister turned a deaf ear to him Moens was even prepared to sign an offensive and defensive alliance with Haidar to gain his friendship. But now Haidar paid no attention to Moen's offer.

The Governor's overtures to Haidar, however, were not approved by either Cochin or Travancore who regarded them as a probable alliance against themselves. Therefore Travancore began to strengthen the defence of Pallipport with the consent of Cochin. Van Angelbeck who succeeded Moens as Governor, strongly protested against this in a letter to the Cochin Raja. But the protest was of no use.

Meanwhile war broke out between the English and Haidar. Ravi Varma of Calicut and Travancore ruler openly supported the English and the former helped them to occupy Calicut in 1778, and to pursue Haidar up to Palghat. In the midst of the war on December 12, 1782 the great adventurer died and Tipu inherited his vast dominions.

The English sent a strong army to Malabar under Colonel Fullarton. He captured Palghat without much difficulty and the Zamorin was placed in charge

of it. But Tipu's soldiers soon arrived and surrounded the fort and the Zamorin was forced to evacuate it.³ The Mysore forces proceeded as far as the Kotta river, but dared not cross it since a British force was ready on the other side. Meanwhile Fullarton followed up his success by capturing Cannanore and the Sultan was now willing to come to terms. By the treaty of Mangalore (1784) the English gave up their claims on Malabar, and Tipu once more became its suzerain. The Raja of Travancore was specially mentioned as an ally of the English whom the Sultan was forbidden to molest in any way.

Tipu completely set aside the ancient system of administration in Malabar and established in its place an autocracy untempered by feudal or popular institutions. When this autocracy was guided by religious fanaticism it became unbearable to the people. Tipu's policy was aimed at improving the morals of the Malayalees by "honouring them with Islam" which meant a regular policy of forcible conversion. His religious persecutions combined with the annihilation of the power of the Nayar nobility led to widespread rebellions in Malabar. The rebels were again led by Ravi Varma who succeeded in making himself master of some territories south of Calicut. Tipu immediately sent one of his generals to suppress the rebels and Ravi Varma was defeated. The Sultan now thought of coming to terms with the Zamorin. He was willing to reinstate the Zamorin if he would assist the Sultan in the conquest of Travancore. Ravi Varma agreed at first but when he found himself safe in Malabar he repudiated the whole agreement. Enraged at this treachery Tipu invaded Malabar once more, drove the Zamorin out of Calicut and forcibly converted many people to Islam. A number of Hindus including the

3. It is said that the Mysoreans resorted to stratagic methods to make the Zamorin evacuate the fort. "Tipu's soldiers daily exposed the heads of many Brahmans in sight of the fort. And the Zamorin rather than witness such enormities, chose to abandon Palghat."

—(Fullarton, quoted by Logan in *Malabar*.)

Zamorin escaped to Travancore where they were given protection by the Raja.

This gave an excuse for Tipu to invade Travancore though it would be against the treaty of Mangalore in which he had recognised its independence. The Sultan tried to win over Cochin to his side by inducing the Raja to put forward his claim on Parur and Alangad. He also induced the Raja to meet the Travancore ruler to explore the possibilities of a peace between Travancore and Tipu. But the Raja of Travancore firmly adhered to his policy of friendship with the English and declared that he would do nothing without the permission of the Company. This offensive reply precipitated an invasion.

Knowing fully well that the fortresses of Cranganore and Ayacotta would be the greatest obstacles in his attack on Travncore lines the Sultan started negotiations with the Dutch to buy them off. But the Raja, who also realised the importance of these places, offered to take them from the Dutch for Rs. 3,00,000/-. Since the Dutch had come to realise that these settlements were unprofitable investments causing a lot of trouble, they were willing to part with them. The sale of these fortresses to his enemy enraged the Sultan beyond measure. But he could not wreak vengeance upon the Dutch immediately since he was intent on attacking Travancore. He claimed those possessions on the ground that they belonged to the Cochin Raja who was his tributary. The Travancore ruler was asked to withdraw his troops from Cranganore and surrender the refugees from Malabar. On his refusal Tipu sent a letter to the Dutch in Cochin in which he severely rebuked them for allowing the Travancore Raja to occupy Cranganore. He addressed the Dutch as "merchants in the Cochin fort which was under his protection" and warned them that their friendship with him was in danger. The Dutch replied that they valued his friendship greatly but regretted their

inability to drive away the Travancore troops from the fortress since the transactions were all over.

In 1789 Tipu attacked the Travancore lines.⁴ Cochin which Tipu claimed as his territory lay partly to the north and partly to the south of the lines and the Sultan naturally demanded a passage through the territory of his tributary. He caused a breach in a weak part of the lines and succeeded in possessing them for three miles in extent. But the Raja's reinforcements came from the right and left simultaneously and threw the whole army into confusion. Tipu himself was thrown into the confusion and thrown down from his palanquin. He escaped only with much difficulty and the "lameness which occasionally continued until his death was occasioned by the severe contentions he received on this occasion."⁵

Deeply mortified and enraged at this disastrous failure Tipu swore that he would demolish the Travancore Lines—"that contemptible wall." He sent an anti-dated letter to the Madras Governor in which he accused the Travancore Raja of opening fire against his soldiers while they were searching for fugitives. The Madras Government's support for the campaign against Tipu had been half-hearted and negligible. The Governor now informed the Sultan of his readiness to appoint commissioners to adjust the points in dispute. This only encouraged Tipu.

4. These lines had been constructed in 1764 by the Travancore Raja on the advice of his dependent General de Lannoy. The lines are described thus by George Powney the English East India Company's agent at Trivandrum. "They run from west to east commencing at the sea on the island of Vaipin and continue to a broad river called Chinnamangalam on the opposite bank of which they begin again and extend to Annimally or Elephant mountains where they terminate on the top of them.....The Lines consist of a ditch about 16 feet broad and 20 feet deep with a thick bamboo hedge in it a flight of parapet and good rampart and bastions on rising grounds, almost flanking each other. From one extremity of the lines to the other they are only available by regular approaches from the north." (Banikkar: *Malabar and the Dutch*—p. 107).

5. Wilks: *History of Mysore*—Vol. II, p. 146.

Therefore the Raja appealed directly to the Governor-General. Cornwallis instructed the Madras Governor to regard any attack on Travancore by Tipu as a declaration of war against the English East India Company. He severely criticised the Government of Madras for criminal disobedience of the orders of the Supreme Government. In his despatch to the Madras Government dated 30th March 1790 Cornwallis stated ".....I sincerely lament the disgraceful sacrifice..... of the honour of your country by tamely suffering an insolent and cruel enemy to overwhelm the dominions of the Raja of Travancore, which we were bound by the most sacred ties of friendship to defend."

The Sultan started his second attack on the Travancore Lines in 1790. Cornwallis sent two battalions of sepoys and one company of artillery. But the Madras Government again mismanaged everything. The English soldiers gave no help on the ground that they had no instructions to join the war. They were to assist the Raja only in Travancore territory and as the fort of Ayacotta and Cranganore belonged to the Dutch and stood on a portion of land claimed by the Raja of Cochin, who was an acknowledged tributary of the Sultan, it was open to him to capture these forts. The Sultan started a vigorous attack on the Travancore Lines after taking the Cranganore fort. For nearly a month the Travancore forces resisted, but were forced to retreat eventually and the whole Lines fell into the hands of the Sultan. He carried fire and sword into the country and fulfilled his vow by completely demolishing the fortifications. "The whole army off duty was regularly paraded without arms and marched in divisions to the appointed stations. The Sultan placed on an eminence set the example of striking the first stroke with a pick axe; the ceremony was repeated by the courtiers and chiefs and followers of every description." ⁶

6. Wilks: *Historical Sketches*—Vol. II, p. 154.

In spite of his success, however, the Sultan's march to the south was halted by floods in Periyar. While waiting for the flood to subside he received news that the English army was advancing against Seringapatam. General Meadows, the Commander-in-Chief, assumed command of the army at Trichinopoly the same day. So Tipu had to leave Malabar destined never to return.

The Third Mysore War between the English and Tipu ended in 1792. The Sultan was completely defeated and compelled by the treaty of Seringapatam to cede half his dominions, pay a war indemnity of three crores and thirty lakhs of rupees to the English and send two of his sons as hostages. Among the districts ceded to the English Alangad, Parur and Kunnattunad, which had not been under Tipu, were also included. Though the places had formerly belonged to Cochin they had been secured by Travancore in 1762 according to the treaty between the two states in that year. The Travancore Dewan, Kesava Pillai, asserted the rights of his state over these places. Both Mr. Powney, the English Resident at Travancore and Lord Cornwallis, the Governor-General, realised the justice of the claims of Travancore and finally these territories were recognised as part of the Travancore State.

II

The Fall of the Dutch: The Mysorean invasion brought about the final extinction of the Dutch power in Malabar. The whole Kerala came under the supremacy of the English. The Cochin Raja concluded a treaty with them on March 6, 1792, by which he recognised the sovereignty of the English East India Company renouncing his allegiance to the Sultan of Mysore. He was to administer his dominions as a vassal of the Company paying a tribute of Rs. 70,000 in the first year, Rs. 80,000 in the second year, Rs. 90,000 in the third year and Rs. 1,00,000 in all the

subsequent years. The English however did not want to disturb the friendly relations existing between the Dutch and Cochin and they contended therefore that the Cochin Raja need recognise their sovereignty only in those places with which the Dutch had no concern. Ever since the English had become their rival in the East, the Dutch had tried their utmost to prevent the extension of English influence in Malabar. They were even prepared to side with Haidar Ali against Travancore and the English. They knew perfectly well that if the English were allowed "to insert their little finger into the affairs of these regions, they would not rest until they had managed to thrust in the whole arm."⁷ But in spite of their efforts the Dutch had none to recognise their supremacy in Malabar.

Three years later, on 17th November 1795, a treaty of perpetual friendship was concluded between the Company and the Raja of Travancore. By this treaty the Company renounced all its claims to the three Taluks of Parur, Alangad and Kunnathunad and agreed to protect the Raja against foreign attacks in return for which the latter agreed "to pay annually at Ajengo, both in peace and war, a sum equivalent to the expense of three of the Honourable Company's battalions of sepoy, together with a company of European artillery and two companies of Lascars."⁸ Further, it was also agreed that all disputes of a political nature are to be decided by the Company. The reigning Raja and his successors, were not to enter into new alliances with any European or Indian states without the previous consent of the British Government of India, nor to allow citizens of any nation which is at war with Britain or the English East India Company to remain within his dominions. As in Cochin this treaty established the English sovereignty in Travancore. After the treaty with the English the influence of the Dutch had

7. *Memoirs of Angelbeck*, quoted by P. C. Alexander in "*The Dutch in Malabar*"—p. 115.

8. *Travancore State Manual*—p. 433.

been negligible in Cochin. It now became nil in Travancore, while in North Kerala they had already lost all their influence when its princes and chiefs entered into new alliances with Travancore and the English.

Nominally, the Dutch now possessed their fortress at Cochin and few acres near Quilon. But even these they were not able to hold for long. In the French Revolutionary War Holland was forced to conclude an alliance with France. This gave the Company an opportunity to capture the Cochin fort. When the Dutch refused to yield to the demand to surrender a force was sent under Major Petrie. As soon as the British force opened fire the Dutch surrendered (20th October 1795) and with that the last relic of the Dutch political power in Malabar disappeared.

Policy and Methods: Even during the zenith of their power and prosperity the authority of the Dutch extended only from Quilon in the south to Chetwai in the north. Even within this area they exercised sovereign authority only in Pappinivattam and in certain scattered places where they had built their fortresses. In other places they had nothing more than a kind of superintending authority. The Dutch settlements in Malabar were only a few of their innumerable possessions in the East⁹ and they were more expensive than useful. In Malabar, which was under

9. *The Dutch possessions in the East in 1725.*

(1) Moluccas under a Governor. (2) Amboina and ten other islands under a Governor. (3) Banda and nine other islands under a Governor. (4) Macassar under a Governor. (5) Solar and Timor, under a Chief. (6) Malacca with various subordinate factories in the Malay Peninsula and on the East Coast of Sumatra, under a Governor. (7) West Coast of Sumatra, under a Chief. (8) Jambi, under a Chief. (9) Palambag, under a Chief. (10) Malabar, under a Commander. (11) Surat, under a Director. (12) Mocha, under a Chief. (13) Persia (Gomlerom), under a Director. (14) Ceylon, under a Governor with a subordinate commanders at Jaffna and Galle. (15) Japan (Island Desima off Nagasaki), under a Chief. (16) Coromandal, under a Governor. (17) Bengal, under a Director. (18) Batavia, under a Governor-General. (19) Samarang or north-east Coast of Java, under a Commander. (20) Bantam (Java), under a Chief. (21) Cheribon (Java), under a Chief.

a Commander, the Dutch had not merely commercial interests and were maintaining, as we have seen, forts and garrisons. Important among these forts were those at Kayamkulam, Purakkad, Cranganore, Palliport, Chetwai and Cochin. The fortresses at Cranganore and Calicut were comparatively insignificant. To the Portuguese the loss of their Indian settlements meant the loss of their Empire in the East; to the Dutch it meant nothing more than the loss of a negligible part of their possessions and they retained their sovereign authority in other parts of the East. But though Malabar was a more expensive and troublesome settlement than the others the Dutch were bent upon retaining it because of its valuable pepper trade. They thought of securing a monopoly in pepper trade by driving out to Portuguese from Malabar and by agreements with the Rajas and chieftains whose dominions lay to the south of the Zamorin's kingdom. Since their policy had invariably earned for them the hatred of all Malabar chieftains, the Portuguese were easily defeated and their stronghold was captured without much difficulty. And immediately after the conquest of Cochin they concluded agreements with the princes and chiefs of Cochin all of which contained the important clause that pepper was to be sold only to the Dutch Company. This could be enforced only by effective political power. Therefore the policy of the Dutch was directed towards the achievement of political authority.

In order to enforce the pepper contracts they embarked on a forward policy in those principalities which were powerless to resist them. The Raja of Cochin was reduced to virtual impotence. They interfered not only in the administrative affairs of Cochin but even in the internal affairs of the royal family. In Cranganore, where they possessed a small but strong fort serving as an outpost against the Rajas of Cranganore and Purakkad, their authority was equally effective.

But they were not able to follow this policy for a long time. They were not wise enough to realise that their monopoly of pepper trade depended upon the willingness of the princes and chiefs to sell the valuable commodity to the Dutch. In their inordinate thirst for profit the Dutch always insisted upon the performance of pepper contracts at a low rate while their European rivals readily paid the market price or even a little above it. Therefore the princes looked towards the English or the French rather than the Dutch to dispose of their pepper and this meant the violation of the contract. In order to enforce the contract therefore the Dutch had to establish military posts all over the coast, which entailed vast expenditure. Further the military posts, since they were generally in an unfavourable condition, did not serve to put down the defiant attitude of the princes. They intimidated only minor chiefs and the major princes openly defied the authority of the Dutch. By 1697 the Company saw the futility of the policy and reduced or withdrew this garrison from a number of places. They undertook an extensive reduction in military establishment in general after 1796. The number of vessels were reduced and all military outposts were withdrawn except those of Pappinivattam, Purakkad and Kayamkulam.

These reductions were undertaken mainly to improve their trade in Malabar. But this did not help the Company in any way, because, soon after this, war broke out between the Zamorin and the Dutch. This war which ended only in 1717 placed the Dutch in an advantageous position since the Zamorin was rendered at least temporarily powerless to act in an aggressive manner. But the expenditure that they incurred in this prolonged conflict was condemned by the Supreme Government at Batavia which forbade further conflicts with the princes of Malabar.

The defeat of the Zamorin, however, enormously increased the prestige of the Dutch and enabled them

to bring many minor chiefs under their control. But they were still so actuated by the thirst for profit from pepper trade that from 1717 they followed a policy of intervention in the internal affairs of these minor chiefs. They found that the English at Tellicherry, Calicut and Ajengo and the French at Mahe were getting a considerable share in the pepper trade of Malabar. This was made possible because the rulers and chiefs of these places were secretly selling pepper to them. In order therefore to reduce them to the position of the Raja of Cochin they started the policy of intervention and Gollonnesse even vaguely suggested the conquest of the principalities of Vadakkumkur and Peritally.

This policy of intervention with the ultimate aim of establishing political authority in Malabar ended in complete failure consequent on the rise of Martanda Varma. His rapid expansion northwards necessitated the intervention of the Dutch and in their struggle against Martanda Varma they had to give up all their political pretensions and remain as merchants pure and simple after the treaty of Mavelikkara. As Dr. Day observes this treaty "brought neither credit nor money to the Company." Their policy from start to finish had been governed by their desire to establish monopoly in pepper trade and this desire "to remain masters of the pepper trade in Malabar" brought about their ruin as a political power.

A direct product of the effect of the Dutch to establish a monopoly of pepper trade was their constant rivalry with other European nations trading with India. They watched with the greatest disapproval the establishment of English factories at Purakkad and Ajengo and the French factory at Mahe. At first, however, the Dutch did not realise the potential danger in the English establishments. After the downfall of the Portuguese the Dutch found themselves in a very advantageous position. Being a purely private concern

the English Company lacked the support of the Home, Government. It was the "weakling child of the old age of Elizabeth and of the shifty policy of King James" while the Dutch Company was "the strong outgrowth of the life and death struggle of a new nation with its new Spanish oppressors."¹⁰ But the rapid growth of English commerce in the East strengthened the Company and it became a source of trouble and danger to other European nations. At Ajengo the jealousy between the two led to the burning of a Dutch factory in 1695 by the English. The Dutch tried their best to bring about a rupture between the Zamorin and the English, and failing in that they attempted to prevent merchants selling pepper to the English. Even this "blockade from the land" was unsuccessful and was given up in 1669. The friendship between the Zamorin and the English only increased when Robert Adams arrived as the chief of the Calicut factory. Adams "who had been brought up in Malabar from his childhood and who spoke Malayalam like a son of the soil" soon became a favourite of the Zamorin. With the arrival of Adams real competition between the Dutch and the English began and that put an end to the monopolistic pretensions of the Dutch in Malabar.

The English were able to score diplomatic successes over the Dutch by remaining contended as a commercial corporation and keeping aloof from the political complications of the country. The arrogant interference of the Dutch in the internal affairs of the princes and chiefs made them unpopular among the people. This was fully exploited by the English whose growing influence due to the defects of the Dutch were noticed by some eminent Dutch men themselves. Vissecher writes "The English cannot but look with envious eyes upon the great influence our Company possesses in India and the confidence they inspire among the nations with whom they trade. It would

10. W. W. Hunter—Op. Cit.

be better if our neighbours would examine more closely into their own behaviour and see whether their arrogance is not the cause of the mistrust and dislike with which they were regarded." ¹¹

In course of time the Dutch were forced to recognise the importance of the English in the East. Side by side with the decline of the political power of the Dutch the stability of the English power increased by the union of the two rival companies and the Dutch realised that they could not afford to be unfriendly with such a powerful Settlement. They seemed to have joined in a combined expedition against some pirates in 1750. The Dutch even proposed joint action with the English against the Mysoreans; but to this the latter gave only an evasive reply. The Dutch had nothing noteworthy to do with the French and the Danes since their factories were too weak to be serious rivals to the Dutch.

Trade. Pepper was the sole attraction for the Dutch in Malabar and they never concealed it. Gollonesse says "it was for the sake of this grain that the Company maintained its expensive establishment on the coast." Their principal object was the establishment of a monopoly of pepper trade but the changed circumstances of European trade rendered it almost impossible. The Portuguese succeeded in securing this monopoly since there was no competition from other European nations. Further the profit motive underlying the whole commercial policy of the Dutch proved disastrous in the end.

Even from the very beginning the Dutch understood the changed conditions of the Indian trade owing to the presence of the other European nations. Therefore they tried to adjust their policy to these conditions. They invariably introduced a clause in the treaties that they concluded with the various princes that "nobody

11. Letter 3.

without any exception shall be permitted to export any pepper or cinnamon out of this country or sell it to anybody except the said Company." But this attempt was futile and the Company soon learnt that it was only getting itself involved in further wars and in more expenditure by compelling the princes to observe this contract. Though the Dutch stigmatised the selling of pepper to other countries as contraband trade they were unable to put it down since the Supreme Government at Batavia was not prepared to incur the heavy expenditure which it would involve.

Thus as a result of the rivalry of the other European nations and the short-sighted policy followed by the Dutch the trade of Malabar was much less profitable to them than to the Portuguese. But the breakdown of the pepper monopoly did not mean the breakdown of their whole trade with Malabar. Gollonnesse mentions many articles of trade other than pepper such as piece-goods, cardamom, cotton, areca, sandal etc. South Travancore was an important place for cotton cloth. Cardamom was one of the chief products of Kottayam in North Malabar and the Company traded a good deal in it. The Dutch introduced an exhaustive scientific cultivation of indigo in Mangat and gained considerably from trade in it. Further, the Company had a monopoly for sale of opium in Malabar and in the beginning great profits were realised from this. But later on Malabar became less important since they were able to sell it at a much higher price in Java. They also imported into Malabar other commodities like sugar, coffee and arms and ammunitions and made considerable profits though in the beginning much damage was done by the pirates on the seas.

In spite of this fairly extensive trade Malabar was considered by the Company to be an expensive settlement. This does not mean that the Dutch did not make large profits from their trade; it only means that the profits fell below their expectations. The Company

could be satisfied only by cent per cent. profit. Even this they could have obtained had they followed a less ambitious policy and remained as one of the European powers carrying on trade with India. It was their attempt at establishing monopoly and, later, political authority that was responsible for the enormous expenditure that they had to incur in military establishments. Further they sold pepper in Europe at 400% profit; but this they did not regard as trade with Malabar! The only difference between their factories in Malabar and those in other regions like Java and Ceylon was that the former involved considerable military expenditure and this was responsible for the statement of Vissecher that "the profits obtained on the goods which are here (Malabar) sold are far from defraying the expenses required for its support."¹²

Administration: The difference between the administrative system of the Dutch and that of the Portuguese is the difference between the Government of Holland and that of Portugal. While democratic institutions had been built up in Holland even before the beginning of the 18th century, Portugal possessed all the principal features of the *Ancien Regime*. Therefore the Dutch were able to bring with them "an elaborate and highly efficient administrative system" while that of the Portuguese during the period of their power in Malabar was feudal, ill-disciplined and inefficient. The frequent and unnecessary interference of the king and high officials from Portugal and the direct access of every Government Factor in India to the court at Lisbon rendered the Viceroys and Governors powerless to act and often placed them in very difficult and delicate situations. The Dutch methods, on the other hand, were "so superior to the colonial systems then in vogue that it was the ambition of the English Company to copy them and develop a system as much like the Dutch Government in the Indies as possible."¹³

12. Letter VI.

13. K. M. Panikkar: *Malabar and the Dutch*—p. 132.

Malabar, which was only one among the many possessions that the Dutch had in the East, was under a Commander and was subordinate both to Ceylon, which was under a Governor, and to the Supreme Government at Batavia which was under a Governor-General. The Governor-General-in-Council at Batavia governed the settlements in the East. The Council consisted of four Governors of the outlying settlements and five others. Malabar was governed by the Commander and a Council consisting of members of the political department and the military officer on the coast. The Home Government rarely interfered in the affairs of the Company. Therefore practically the Governor-General-in-Council possessed sovereign authority as far as the possessions of the Dutch in the East were concerned.

The services of the Company were divided into three main sections, political ecclesiastical and military. At the head of the political service was the Governor or the Commander as the case might be. The seat of the Commander was in Cochin. Below him was a hierarchy of officials, the lowest being the Apprentice. The low salary of the officials,¹⁴ was compensated by large perquisites and commissions. The government of the Malabar settlement was analogous to the government at Batavia - the Commander being assisted by a Council of nine. Such political committees existed in factories as well and there were even Dutch settlements under officer who had only the rank of Under-Merchants.

The head of the ecclesiastical service as well as educational department was "the Preacher." The

14. Grade and pay of political servants :—

Governor—200 guilders; Commander—150 to 180 guilders;
 Upper Merchant—80 to 100 guilders; Merchant : 60 to 70 guilders;
 Under Merchant—40 guilders; Book keeper—30 guilders;
 Assistant—24 to 36 guilders; Junior Assistants—16 to 20 guilders;
 Apprentice—9 to 10 guilders.

military establishment¹⁵ in Malabar was small and simple. The chief military officer in Malabar usually possessed the rank of a Captain under whom was one Captain Lieutenant and six Ensigns. The military power being thus negligible they had to get reinforcements from Colombo and Batavia at the time of the war with the Zamorin. The naval base at Colombo was used by them to control the Indian seas when necessary.

The judicial administration was sound and just. The court of justice in Cochin was presided over by the Second-in-Council and the Chief Administrator. The Members of the Council were also Members of the Bench and they settled both civil and criminal cases. A subordinate court of Cochin presided over by a member of the Council dealt with small cases. The Commander was formally forbidden from interfering in the affairs of the court. But as head of the Government he possessed the appointing authority and Moens says "he should take care in selecting the judges." The chief however could recommend prompt hearing and impartial justice. Usually he refrained from interfering in any way in the course of judicial administration; but without his consent execution of the sentences could not be carried out. In case of his disagreement with the judgment the matter was referred to the Supreme Government at Batavia.

One defect in the judicial administration was the lack of a proper system of pleading and advocacy, the Government Lawyer pleading both for and against the accused. Criminal cases which affected the people of the country were conducted in Dutch with the help of interpreters. On the whole it must be said to the

15. Grade of military service in Malabar :—
Captain—80 to 100 gilders; Captain Lieutenant—70 gilders;
Lieutenant—50 to 60 gilders; Ensign—40 gilders;
Sargeant—20 gilders; Corporate—14 gilders;
Private—9 gilders.

credit of the Dutch that they imparted justice with impartiality and without delay.

The Dutch administration was different from the Portuguese in many ways. Apart from its efficiency it was beneficial to the people in a number of ways. Their connection with Malabar was not stained by acts of inhuman cruelty as that of the Portuguese. In their emphasis on religious toleration they stand in striking contrast with the fanaticism of their predecessors. They rarely indulged in forcible conversion or religious persecution.¹⁶ They foresaw clearly the unhappy results that would inevitably follow an intolerant religious policy. The Portuguese were very slow to realise the fact that by preferring conversion to commerce they were digging their own grave in Malabar. The Dutch themselves were proud of their humanity and benevolence when compared to their European predecessors.¹⁷ The religious policy of the Portuguese made both the Hindus and Syrian Christians hate them, because backed up by sovereign authority the Portuguese were able to convert not only Hindus but many Syrian Christians to Catholicism. Therefore they looked up to the Dutch for protection from religious persecution. In 1663 they came under the protection of the Dutch Company after the treaty between the Dutch and Cochin. This religious policy was one of the causes that made them more popular than the Portuguese.

Comparing the Portuguese and the Dutch administration Sirdar Panikkar writes "Unlike the Portuguese, the Dutch never claimed that they had conquered India

16. The only occasion when the Dutch soldiers desecrated a temple was in the case of a pagoda belonging to the Punnattur Nambutiri when they were fighting the Zamorin. But even this outrage was committed by Balinese soldiers who refused to obey the orders of Dutch Government.—(Panikkar : *Malabar and the Dutch*—p. 125.

17. When Captain Nimhoff was asked by the Raja of Travancore as to whether he would do less than the Portuguese did, Niuhroff replied "If we should follow the footsteps of the Portuguese we must be guilty likewise of the same enormities in murdering, plundering etc. things that are not customary with us....."—(Alexander P. C. : *The Dutch in Malabar*—p. 202.

or any portion of it. As their pretensions were less and their desire to do profitable trade evident, they caused less friction and created less trouble than the Portuguese.....Their connection with Malabar was not marred by any of those atrocious deeds of barbarism which made Portuguese name a bye-word in the East. Calculating, matter of fact and well trained in the doubtful arts of diplomacy, the Dutch presented a striking contrast to the arrogant and incompetent Portuguese whose finances were always on the brink of bankruptcy but whose pretensions were never less than those of universal dominion and empire."

The decline of the Dutch power was not due to the defects of the Dutch administration. Their officers were generally highly competent both in business and in government. Therefore the Dutch Government was never bankrupt or inefficient. Their downfall was brought about by a variety of reasons over which they had no control. The first factor was the rise of Travancore as a powerful state. The annexation of all small principalities that surrounded his dominions by Martanda Varma made it impossible for the Dutch to maintain a balance of power among those principalities on which they depended for their trade. Another factor was the rivalry of other European nations, especially the English. This rivalry helped the Malabar states to organise opposition against the Dutch and prevent them from establishing a monopoly in pepper trade. A third factor was the Mysorean invasion. It destroyed at one stroke the military power of the Nayar nobility and established the supremacy of the Mysoreans in Malabar. This supremacy was transferred to the English by Tipu and the Dutch had to withdraw from the scene.

Strangely enough the Dutch rule with all its efficiency and tolerance left no permanent marks as the Portuguese rule, with all its incompetence and fanaticism did. Relics of the Portuguese connection with

Kerala can still be seen, in the language, where many Portuguese words have crept in, in religion—the religion of the Portuguese reigns supreme in some parts of Malabar coast—and in the mixed caste of Topasses¹⁸ who follow the old Portuguese traditions to this day. The word “Paranki” is even to this day a by-word for cruelty and barbarism—not a legacy to be proud of. The Dutch rule left no lasting results. The language, traditions and religion of the Dutch have disappeared with them from Malabar. But though they have left no concreat results, they are still remembered in Malabar for their just and liberal policy. In short in spite of their few defects—their arrogant interference in the internal affairs of the Malabar principalities, their inordinate thirst for profit, and their short-sighted political activities, the eventful hundred years of their connection with Malabar constituted a fruitful period in the history of Kerala.

18. Moens says: Topasses, were the descendants of the Portuguese. Some were slaves who had given their freedom, others were the offspring of native women with whom their masters had formed temporary alliances Prior to 1663 they had a Bishop of their own, and a cathedral within the town of Cochin. When the Company took the place they came under their protection.”—(Alexander P. C.: *Ibid*—p. 137, footnote).

CHAPTER XIV

Social Life and Administration

THE original name of Malabar was not Kerala but Chera and Tamil works referred to the land only by that name. This was because ancient Kerala was part and parcel of Tamilakam. Its culture and language were the same as those of the Cholas and Pandyas. Though these three kingdoms were politically distinct and independent of one another, they were closely knit together by religion and culture and Tamilakam, like Christandom, was one from these points of view. The *Tolkappayam* hints even at a geographical unity when it refers to the "famous three within the four boundaries."¹ Tamil was the language of all the three rulers (the "*Muvarasars*") Malayalam evolving only later. This accounts for the fact that the authors of a number of famous Tamil works came from Cheranad, the most famous of them being Ilango Adigal, the author of the *Silappadikaram*. The ancient history of Kerala thus merges into the history of Tamilakam.

It was only since the advent of the Arayans that the name Kerala came to be applied to the former Cheranadu. Obviously Kerala is only the Sanskritised form of the Chera, though Dr. Caldwell thinks that Kerala is the original and Chera the adaptation. The name Cheraman means the son of the Cheranadu.² It is the direct Dravidian equivalent to "Keralaputra." Different writers give varying interpretations to this word.

1. These four boundaries are explained by the commentator of the classic as Venkatam (Tirupati Hill) in the north, Kumari in the south and the seas on either side.
2. A good number of Chera rulers had this title before their names.
Cheraman Chenguttuvan (A.D. 125-180)
Cheraman Kuttuvan Kotai (A.D. 180-225)
Cheraman Vancan (A.D. 300-325) etc.

Perhaps there is nothing to interpret except that the Aryans changed the word to give it a Sanskrit garb.

It is likely that from very early times Kerala became a separate political entity. The epics and the Puranas as well as the edicts of Asoka make reference to it. In the first century A. D. Pliny refers to the rulers of Kerala as Calobotras (evidently Keralaputras) and mentions Muziris which has been identified with Cranganore.

Though Kerala became a separate political entity long before the Christian era it is difficult to define its geographical boundaries precisely even during the beginning of the Middle Ages. This is largely because of the fluctuations of the boundaries from time to time according to the character and policy of the rulers. The traditional belief is that originally Kerala extended from Gokarnam to Kanyakumari (Cape Comorin). The account given in the *Keralotpatti* in this connection is confused. It says that during the government by the early Perumals the country came to be divided into four:—

1) The Tulu kingdom, extending from Gokarnam to Perumpula (approximately the present north and south Canara.)

2) The Kupa kingdom, extending from Perumpula to Putupattanam (the present North Malabar *minus* the Kurumbarnad taluk.)

3) The Kerala kingdom, extending from Putupattanam to Kannetti (the present South Malabar *plus* the southern half of Kurumbanad taluk, Cochin state and North Travancore.)

4) The Mushika kingdom, extending from Kannetti to Cape Comorin (the present South Travancore). This division chops out a big slice on the north and another in the south of the Present Kerala. Arya

Perumal extended it to the southern border of present Kerala. The Cheras steadily declined after the reign of Chenguttuvan (A. D. 125-180). Under him the Chera Empire included Gokarnam in the north, Mysore, Arcort and Palani in the East and Cape Comorin in the south. After his reign the Cheras had to give up all their possessions beyond the ghats and Tulunad in the north. The centrifugal tendencies that were let loose at the close of the reign of the last Perumal led to the permanent disruption of the political unity of Kerala. They were not only irreconcilably divided among themselves but were shut out from the influence of the neighbouring Cholas and Pandyas.

But this division of the country and its isolation from its neighbours were not without their beneficial results. Though the political division of the country brought about "a multiplicity of kings and party hatred" resulting in perpetual strife, its people gradually became distinct in customs and manners from those on the other side of the Ghats. Cheranadu which was hitherto a part of Tamilakam now became a world apart with its own language, culture, nomenclature, traditions and institutions. From this period begins the Middle Ages in Kerala History.

II

The Nambutiris and Nayars: The two notable features of the Middle Ages were an attempted theocracy and feudalism. An attempt at establishing a theocratic form of Government was made by the Nambutiris, the Brahmans *per excellence* of Kerala. The wide prevalence of feudal institutions in the country was a direct result of the peculiar civil and military organisation of the Nayars. Like the church and baronage of Mediaeval Europe the Nambutiris and Nayars so effectively checked royal authority that the autocratic systems of Government which existed in contemporary Madura and Kanchipuram were conspi-

cuous by their absence in Kerala. Thus these two communities occupied a prominent position in the history of Mediæval Kerala.

The popular tradition that Parasurama reclaimed the land from the sea between Gokarnan and Cape Comorin and gave it as a gift to the Brahmans perhaps mean only the colonisation of Kerala by the Nambutiris. The date of the arrival of the Nambutiris in Malabar is still a debated one and opinions on this question differ widely, ranging from 700 B. C. to 700 A. D. According to Logan they must have arrived in Malabar in the early years of the 8th century A.D. *via* the Tulu country. This strange conclusion is based on three arguments:— (1) That when Hieun Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim visited South India, west of the Ghats in A.D. 629-46 either he found no Vedic Brahmans at all or they were in such numbers and influence as not to deserve mention. The naked heretics whom he met in large numbers were digambara Jains and not Brahmans; (2) that the settlement deed of the Jews at Cranganore about the beginning of the 8th century was not attested by the Brahmans while they have attested the Syrian deed in A.D. 774. Therefore it may be inferred that “they became a power in the land somewhere between the early years of the eighth century and the year A.D. 774” ; and (3) that two non-Malayalee traditional accounts affirm that it was a Mayura Sarman, a Kadamba king of Banavasi, who peopled Kerala with Brahmans. This Mayura Sarman, according to Logan, ascended the throne in the last years of the 7th or the beginning of the 8th century A.D.

Regarding (1) it is true that Hieun Tsang visited Malabar though Logan himself doubts it Mr. Talboys Wheeler observes “Hieun Tsang had proceeded to Conjeevaram along the eastern coast. On his return route he crossed the Peninsula to the Western Coast, known as the Malabar side ; and then turned towards the north through Travancore and Malabar. Here he

found the people illiterate and devoted to nothing but gain. Most of the monasteries were in ruins, but there were hundreds of flourishing temples and the usual swarms of naked heretics." Now there is nothing strange in Heiun Tsang regarding the Nambutiris as naked heretics, for they are "notoriously a scantily clothed race" and they were "heretics" to him, because they were irrepressible enemies of his own faith." Therefore the naked heretics mentioned by Hicun Tsang might be Nambutiris themselves.

(2) Not only the Brahmans, but the Syrian Christians who had become an important community by this time and the *Tiyyas* do not find a place among the witnesses to the deed. Therefore the absence of the Brahmans in the deed does not prove their absence in the country.

(3) Logan says that Mayurasarman ascended the throne in the last years of the 7th or the beginning of the 8th century A.D. But we now know that Mayurasarman ruled between circa 345 and 370 A.D. Further, according to the inscription translated and commented upon by Dr. Fleet in the *Indian Antiquary* Mayurasarman brought 18 brahmans in succession from Ahikshetra and established them in Kuntala³. Kuntala is not Kerala. It has been identified with Kolattur in the extreme north west of Mysore.

The Maratha tradition by itself is a refutation of this theory. According to that Parasurama turned fishermen into Brahmans⁴ and later condemned them to

3. The text of the inscription: "He (Mayura Sarman) performed the sacrifice called Asvamedha, and having himself brought eighteen Brahmans in succession from Ahikshetra and having established them in the radiant country of Kuntala, and having acquired powers, Mayura Sarman was resplendant in the government of the earth."
—(I. A. Vol. 10, p. 250).

4. The tradition regarding the conversion of the fishermen into Brahmans is not foreign to Malabar. Vissecher says that Parasurama "persuaded them (fishermen) to remain and settle there, and in order the more to attract them, he invested them with the dignity of Brahmans....."—(Letter 1).

the position of a degraded class. Consequently Mayurasarman imported a purer set from elsewhere. This clearly acknowledges the existence of Brahmans in Malabar long before Mayurasarman's reign.

Another theory is that they immigrated into Malabar between the first and fourth centuries of the Christian era. Child marriage is unknown among the Nambutiris. According to Mr. Dutt, it was the frequent invasion of foreigners in the Buddhist age (B.C. 400-320) and the general insecurity of the times that fostered this custom among the Brahmans and the Nambutiris might have separated from them before it became a custom—at least before the 4th century A. D.

The Nambutiris are the followers, not of Vedic Hinduism, but of the later Hinduism which bears the influence of Buddhism. So they might have come to Malabar only after the changes in Hinduism were brought about by Buddhism. It was only in the period of Asoka that Buddha's teaching became popular throughout India and influenced Hinduism considerably. A reasonable time, say about a century, has to be allowed for the complete working of the process. So they could not have come to Malabar before the Christian era.

This theory presumes that the Nambutiris brought their present religion intact from their original home. It is possible on the other hand that they settled in Malabar first with their ancient Hinduism but succumbed to the influence of Buddhism later. One of the edicts of Asoka mentions Keralaputras to whom missionaries were sent. Further there is every reason to believe that 'Karala' is the Aryanised form of 'Chera' and since Asoka mentions it the Aryans must have settled down in Malabar before the time of Asoka. Therefore we can accept the first part of the above theory—that the Brahman colonisation of Malabar must have taken place before the fourth century A. D. but not the

second part—that it could not have taken place before the 1st century A. D.

The Nambutiris are thus Vedic Brahmans who migrated into Kerala long before the beginning of the Christian era. Their original home is regarded to be either Ahikshetra⁵ in the north or the Narmada and Krishna valleys and the region of the Cauveri delta.

Whatever may be their original home the Nambutiris soon came to identify themselves almost completely with the land of their adoption. They were able to pose before the rude chieftains with whom they came into contact as “God compellers”—superior beings who have chained God by their powerful *mantras*. This attitude combined with their learning and intellect and their simple life⁶ enabled them to superimpose their power on the people. According to the tradition current in Malabar, after reclaiming the land from the sea Parasurama made a gift of it to the Nambutiris. Therefore in ancient times it was they who ruled over the country.

Whether this tradition of a pure Brahman rule was correct or not with the introduction of the monarchical system they came to possess no secular authority. Nevertheless they continued to occupy a dominant position in the whole of Kerala because of their peculiar socio-political organisation and the position they occupied as the priestly class. It was perhaps the Nambutiris who introduced caste as a political institution in Kerala including the term ‘sudra’ as applicable to the Nayars. They laid down in Sanskrit language rules of life regulating even their most trivial actions. The Nayars were prohibited to learn Sanskrit so that all the learned professions came

5. Ahikshetra, capital of Northern Panchala is the modern Ramnagar in the Barcilly District near the south-western corner of Nepal.

6. Says Camoens: “To crown their meal no meanest life expires.
Pulse, fruit and herb alone their food requires.”

to be monopolised by the Brahmans. The rigid caste observances they followed and the position they occupied in society as God-compellers had made them a powerful sacerdotal class by the beginning of the Middle Ages. They exercised their power in all the sixty four villages in which they settled down extending from South Canara to Central Travancore. Under their aegis numerous temples sprang up in different parts and they exercised their power through these temples. What they wanted was not to get hold of secular power directly but "to bring into the meshes of their moral influence, those in whose hands the universal law places such powers." Further the land exclusively belonged to them according to tradition and this sovereignty over the land increased their authority and prestige. But they were farsighted enough to see that the gradual degeneracy of religious feelings which time must produce would have adverse effect upon their supremacy in the land. Therefore they devised large tracts of lands and their revenues to certain temples built and consecrated by them so that even those who did not hesitate to rob a priest would think twice before robbing the property that had been dedicated to God. Almost every temple of importance had a synod of wardens who were all Brahmans. Generally they invited the leading chief to the membership of the synod and entrusted to him the stewardship of the whole temple subject to their superior authority. Generous endowments by charitable people made these temples immensely rich. The temples together with the endowments attached to them are called *devaswams*—the properties of God. The Devaswam is in law a corporation sole and acts through its officers.

Most of the important temples were founded by the Brahmans. They vested the general superintendence of all endowments in the sovereign. This general superintendence or *melkoima* did not entitle him to possess the temple and its property but merely to protect them.

All important devaswams in Malabar had their own *sanketams* or independent jurisdictions—possessions beyond the control of the sovereign or local chieftains who are simply protectors of these jurisdictions.⁷ These *sanketams* were well-defined and in some cases they were of large extent. Since most of the temples and the lands attached to them were originally the creation of the Brahman lords and communities these *sanketams* were places in which they possessed independent jurisdiction. Within these limits the temple corporations exercised sovereign authority. Later on, in order to guard themselves against encroachment, they associated with themselves a secular leader to defend these possessions; but they never gave up their right of ownership or management. With the help of this secular ruler they managed the temple lands and ruled the tracts lying within the *Sanketam*. They, along with the other persons attached to the temple, were collectively termed a *Yogam*. Thus a *sanketam* meant an independent institution governed by its own members and presided over by a sovereign elected by them.

The very existence of such an extraordinary corporation is called in question on the ground that no trace of any *sanketam* exists in the present day. Mr. J. C. Ramyngton, arbitrator in disputes between the states of Travancore and Cochin regarding the exercise of sovereign rights within the limits of the lands attached to the temples, rejected the existence of independent *sanketams*. "That a sovereign who founded a pagoda and endowed it with lands should give to the managers the power of emancipating themselves at pleasure from sovereign authority and adopting at will a different and probably a rival chief as sovereign is well-nigh incredible."⁸ It is not

7. The *Sanketam* has disappeared in course of the many political revolutions in the country. The term itself has lost its original significance. It is now used simply to mean a tract lying within certain defined limits.

8. Quoted by K. P. P. Menon, *History of Kerala*—Vol. IV, p. 90.

correct to say that an institution did not exist since its traces could not be detected in the present day. No trace of *kutippaka* (blood feud) or *changatam* could be found now and on this ground their existence in the Middle Ages could not be denied. The early Jewish and Syrian copper plates show that there were guilds in existence which exercised similar functions as the *sanketams*. These bodies—corporate like the Anjuvannam (of the Jews), Manigramam (of the Christians) and “six hundred” (of the Nayars) constituted the political backbone of the country. Traces of these corporate bodies, like those of *Sanketams*, could not be detected in the present day. Mr. Ramyngton is not correct when he says that the temples were founded by secular rulers and the lands attached to the *Devaswams* were a gift from them. Most of them were Brahman foundations and the local chief was there only to protect the temple and its endowments. The ecclesiastics of Malabar, like those of Rome, were able to control secular chiefs to a large extent. As Ramiengar, a former Travancore Dewan, says “If there was such a thing as the Hanseatic League.....in existence till the 15th century exercising acts of sovereignty and judicial power which were incompatible with the supremacy of the rulers in whose states they were enforced.....there is nothing incredible or extraordinary in the existence of such independent hierarchies as are implied by *sanketams* in a country at all times acknowledging the domination and influence of its priesthood.” It was not at all impossible for these *sanketams* to possess sovereign powers within their limits. Like the church in the Middle Ages these *sanketams* whose jurisdictions were not confined to any particular locality constituted a vast inroad on monarchical authority. And the rulers, however powerful they might be, never hesitated to respect the rights and powers of these institutions. The Portuguese writers mention the *sanketam* of Elagunnapula as a “sanctuary the Samorin dared not violate” and to which the Raja of Cochin retreated for safety.

Thus there are ample proofs to show the existence of such institutions. "An imperium in imperio is not more extraordinary in Mediaeval Malabar than in Mediaeval Europe."⁹

The nature and extent of authority exercised by these corporations with the tracts ruled over by them differed in different places. They possessed almost sovereign powers within their limits. From the Vykom Grandhavari we understand that the committee of management possessed the right to inflict punishment on all the offenders within their jurisdiction. Before hoisting the flag for the annual temple festival it is said that the committee had to see those convicted by them of murder hanged. According to the above Grandhavari this was observed till 977 M. E. i. e. 1802 A. D.

Even the sovereigns were liable to be punished for acts of tyranny within the sanketam. If the sovereign commits an act of tyranny the sanketam would be held to be dissolved which would precipitate a constitutional crisis. If the Raja failed to make amends immediately he would be liable to a further penalty for not restoring the sanketam earlier. The accounts available in different parts of Malabar including the archives of the Trivandrum pagoda show several entries of heavy payments exacted by the Yogam.¹⁰

From Cochin Law Reports and other Grandhavaris we are able to conclude that the sanketam in itself constituted an independent institution exercising sovereign authority. It was a self-working and self-contained community recognising no sovereign except the Yogam (the committee of the sanketam). The

9. K. P. P. Menon: *Op. cit.*—pp. 94-95.

10. The earliest entry (1325 A.D.) in the Accounts preserved in the Archives of Trivandrum says that a sum of 30,000 fanams had to be paid as fine together with the surrender of valuable lands to the temple by Kunninmel Sri Vira Kerala Varma Tiruvadi (of Travancore) for killing the officers of the temple.

administrative functions of the committee were complete and there was no provision for the intervention of an outsider. The governing authority was vested jointly with the *uralars* or the trustees and the *aka koimas* or the managing members, representatives of the secular chiefs elected for the purpose. The governing body possessed the right to punish offences including capital punishment and to collect the various kinds of land revenue from the villages and levy house tax on the houses of certain classes of the inhabitants. The sanketams were thus fully self governing units. They disappeared with the rise of secular power and the corresponding decline of religious influence. They were the strongholds of the priestly class and they went a long way in curtailing the powers of the secular ruler. As in Mediaeval Europe these religious corporations lived a vigorous and self-contained life for the space of many centuries. Their immovable properties were augmented by endowments from private individuals as well as from princes. Often they served as asylums to the vanquished and the distressed, but always they saw that no secular ruler encroached upon their powers. They were centres of social and cultural life in Kerala. Respect for religion and everything religious which was the prevailing sentiment during the greater part of the middle ages was responsible for their importance in the body politic. When that sentiment gradually gave way to materialistic ideals of life, they sank to the position of voluntary associations or mere centres of worship, losing their political significance.

The sanketam was the principal but not the sole institution through which the Brahmans exerted their influence in mediaeval politics. In an age when religion was inextricably mixed with politics the suggestions and advices offered by religious heads were never ignored by the rulers. The Brahmans associated themselves with the government of the country in various methods. "They were the ministers of the Rajas, their officers on the Bench, their generals in the

field and above all their spiritual preceptors." It was the king's Brahman that led Gama to the Zamorin."¹¹ It was, again, a Brahman who went to Gama as the spy of the Zamorin.¹² Further they were not bound by any territorial restrictions. A dependant of the Cochin Raja had as much liberty to visit the Zamorin's palace and enjoy his hospitality even during the zenith of hostility between the two rulers, as a dependant of the Zamorin had in the Cochin palace. Irreconcilably divided on all questions, the Zamorin and the Raja of Cochin were one in their respect for the Brahmans. This was of course not peculiar to Malabar, but in no other part of India did the Brahmans possess so much voice in political affairs. Like the Catholic Church in the middle ages, they constituted a supra national body and owed only nominal allegiance to the temporal power.

Another factor that contributed to the enormous influence wielded by the Brahmans on the politics of the day was their alliance with the royal families and the leading Nayar aristocrats. According to the custom among the Nambutiris only the eldest son of a Nambutiri is allowed to marry in his own community.¹³ Therefore the younger members sought alliance with royal and high-caste Nayar families. Most of the wealthy Nambutiri families were thus matrimonially connected with a number of such families and that enabled them to wield considerable influence on the political as well as religious affairs of the day.

11. "The patriarch Brahman (soft and slow herose)
Advancing now, to lordly Gama, bows
And leads him to the throne"—*Lusiad*.

12. Barbosa says: "The king used to employ these Brahmans as messengers and ambassadors to go from kingdom to kingdom because they passed in safety in all parts without anybody molesting them, though the king may be at war."

13. The *Sankara Smriti* does not prevent junior members from marrying in their own community. The object of its author, whoever he is, was simply to prevent partition of the family. So he says that if the brothers love each other well and are of one mind and desire marriage, it is best that all should marry with a view to increase the family.

The Nambutiris were not generally warlike ; but it is believed that a section of them did arm themselves for a long time. According to the *Keralotpatti*, Parasurama, after the colonisation of Malabar by the Brahmans, organised a militia of 36,000 Brahmans and gave them their chief swords of office. So these Brahmans came to be called *ayudhapanis* (those who bear arms). There were also stray instances of Brahman rulers as in the small kingdoms of Idapalli and Ambalapula. The area to the south of Cochin was politically split up even more than the territories of Cochin and Calicut. In the small district of Tiruvalla alone there were ten Brahman families who ruled with as much authority in their petty principalities as other chiefs elsewhere in Malabar.

The importance of Idapalli, since its ruler was a Brahman, was much greater than its size would warrant. The sacerdotal character of this Raja was responsible for its unbroken independence throughout the middle Ages. It was the place which usually gave asylum to the Cochin Raja whenever he was defeated by the Zamorin. Even Travancore which conquered all Cochin territories in its neighbourhood spared the small state of Idapalli because of its priestly ruler. Moreover, Moens says that it was "a kind of asylum, like a free town, to which people who are afraid of prosecution and punishment retreat, and where they are safe ; and more especially when they are able to reach a temple or pagoda there." This privilege which was acknowledged and respected by all Malabar kings was also due to its Brahman ruler.

Apart from the rulers there were many rich Nambutiri Jenmis or landlords. Their gifts and endowments to the temples gave them considerable voice in the sanketams. Since the ruling and the fighting classes were preoccupied with aggressive or defensive warfare in almost all the twelve months of the year, the Nambutiris were able to strengthen their sectarian

organisations and establish solidarity in the community. Their class-consciousness made them an extra-national community which resulted in considerable diminution of royal authority. During the whole of the middle ages the Nambutiri Brahman was sometimes regarded as a more important personage than the king himself; "he is the holiest of human beings..... the representative of God on earth."¹⁴

The Nayars constituted the next important division of the population. Throughout the mediæval period they were the militia of the land. They were the typical knights—errant of the middle ages who scorned "the toils of culture and of art" as well as riches and lived upon military service to their overlord. Jonathan Duncan who visited Malabar more than once gives a description of the typical Nayar soldier "who walks along holding up his naked sword, with the same kind of unconcern as travellers in other countries carry in their hands a cane or walking staff."¹⁵ These Nayar soldiers whose chief occupation was fighting were retained in their service by rulers of different parts of Malabar. They were so faithful to their lord and master that they usually pledged their life for his sake.¹⁶

The martial spirit of the Nayars was kept up by a number of institutions designed specially for that purpose. It is even said that Cheraman Perumal partitioned the country and introduced the *Kurmatsaram* to perpetuate this martial spirit in the Nayars "lest living in perpetual peace, the Malabar people should sink into effeminacy and thus become a prey to surrounding nations."¹⁷ The annual sham fights on the Onam festival, in which the adult members of the community divided themselves into two parties under their respective leaders and tried their strength in the

14. *Travancore Census Report, 1874-75*—p. 191.

15. *Asiatic Researches*—Vol. pp. 10 and 18.

16. Logan: *Op. cit.*—Vol. I, p. 140.

17. Vissecher: *Op. cit.*—Letter 8.

open field, resembled the warlike tournaments which were so popular and so common in Mediaeval Europe.¹⁸ Fighting duels was a common method of settling disputes and keeping up the martial spirit. The duels which loomed large in the mediaeval period were also a source of income to the state. The duel was not necessarily fought by the disputants themselves. There were professional fighters called *Chekors* who would fight for them. The principals in the quarrels had to pay the customary payments—a stipulated sum to the fighter, another to his house and a third to the state. It was essential for deciding the dispute that one of the combatants should fall. Therefore both settled all their wordly affairs before the day of the combat. These professional fighters or *Chekors* were invariably Nayars.

Kutippaka or family feud was another institution which engaged them in killing and being killed. If a member of a family was killed it was incumbent on his family to avenge his death by killing a member of the slayer's family. It is said that his relations would steep a cloth in his blood and vow never to lose sight of it till they would have avenged his murder by the death of the murderer and the destruction of his house. But generally the chieftain intervened and usually selected an outhouse to burn the corpse. The thirst for revenge inevitably perpetuated deadly hatred between the two families.

The *Kalari* or gymnasium was however the most popular institution that braced up the martial spirit of the Nayars. In ancient Kerala the *Kalari* was a school where instructions were given both in warfare and letters. The teachers were generally Nayars and the system worked well so long as they controlled the various activities of the State. But when the Nambutiris appeared on the scene with their superior Sanskrit

18. A fine description of an *Onam* tournament is given by Forbes in his "*Oriental Memoirs*".

learning, indigenous culture succumbed to its influence. Knowledge of Sanskrit was considered to be an essential requisite for any scholar. The Brahmans thus became the acknowledged teachers and the Nayars were forced to concentrate their attention on military training at the expense of intellectual equipment. By the beginning of the Middle Ages the *Kalaris* lost their position as schools for imparting education and became mere gymnasiums or centres of military training. A *Kalari* was generally attached to the *Bhagavati* (Goddess) temple of each village. The *asan* (fencing master) who presided over it supervised the training of the people. Though an institution common to all parts of Malabar it was most popular in the north. The Kadathanad locality was the scene of several deeds of daring of a great hero named Taccholi Otenan. In these gymnasiums young Nayar soldiers were trained to despise death and regard fighting as a sport. "The Nayars bestowed as much attentions as the Greeks or Romans of old did on the physical development of their youths."¹⁹

Since training in the *Kalari* was considered to be indispensable to every Nayar youth, all Nayars were *ipso facto* soldiers. By virtue of their descent they must always bear arms. The similarity between the Nayars of Mediaeval Malabar and the chivalrous barons of Mediaeval Europe is only too obvious in the account given below by a European writer. "Nayars of the ancient type were so many Spartan warriors, so many knights of a court of love. All knew how to read and write, but the chief part of their education was carried in the gymnasium and the fencing school where they learnt to despise fatigue, to be careless of wounds and to show an indomitable courage often bordering upon foolish temerity... War and gallantry, love and battle. My sword and my mistress! These were their devices and they were ticklish sticklers for the point of honour."²⁰

19. K. P. P. Menon : *Op, cit.*

20. Elic Reclus : *Primitive Folk.*

Militarism and chivalry were however not the only points of comparison between the feudal knights and the Nayars—in fact they were the least important points of similarity. The Nayars like the Barons of the middle ages were the leaders of the struggle for liberty against the tyranny of the ruler. While the politico-religious organisation of the Nambutiris cut down the royal power from one side, the politico-military organisation of the Nayars reduced it from the other. In fact, the part played by the Nayar nobility in preventing the monarchy from degenerating into tyranny was indeed so important that it can be rightly said that the history of Mediæval Malabar is practically the history of the Nayars. The position they occupied in the body politic has been correctly and aptly described by Logan in the preface to his *Malabar*. “The central point of interest..... in any descriptive and historical account of the Malayalee race (is) the position which was occupied for centuries on centuries by the Nayar caste in the civil and military organisation..... a position so unique and so lasting that but for foreign intervention there seems to be no reason why it should not have continued to endure for centuries on centuries to come. Their functions in the body politic have been tersely described in their own traditions as “the eye”, “the hand” and “the order” and to the present day (1887) we find them spread throughout the length and breadth of the land, but no longer—I could almost say, alas;—“preventing the rights (of all classes) from being curtailed or suffered to fall into disuse.”

The word ‘Nayar’ is said to be a corrupted form of the word ‘Nayakar’ which means protector. They are not a caste but a community. The Nayars were the protecting class of the land, for they constituted a bulwark against tyranny and oppression of the Rajas. Besides being protectors they had other functions to perform. According to the *Keralotpatti* Parasurama organised the Nayars into taras and gave them the functions of *kan* (eye), *kai* (hand) and *kalpana* (order)

that is, they were entrusted with the functions of supervision, execution and the giving of orders so as "to prevent the rights from being curtailed or suffered to fall into disuse." Thus the most important functions of government fell to this section of the population.

The Nayers were able to prevent the rulers from becoming tyrannical by means of national assemblies, which consequently occupied a prominent place in the political organisation of Kerala. These national assemblies, or *kuttams* as they were called, were of three sorts composed of the representatives of the various divisions of the country. For military purposes the country was divided into a number of *nadus* and each *nadu* was sub divided into *desams*. For purposes of civil administration each *nadu* was again subdivided into *taras* or villages presided over by *Karanavars*—probably called *Taravalis*. The three kinds of *kuttams* were (1) the *kuttam* of the *tara* (2) the *kuttam* of the *nadu* and (3) the *kuttam* of all Kerala. The Kerala national assembly met under ordinary circumstances only once in twelve years at Tirunavaye on the occasion of the great *Mamankam* festival. All Kerala was expected to be represented in this assembly. It possessed immense powers and according to some writers it had even the power to remove the reigning monarch and install a new one. The *kuttam* of the *tara* met to discuss generally matters of local importance. The *nadu* which was a collection of *taras* had its own assembly. The old tradition as embodied in the *Keralotpatti* and ancient documents and accounts furnished by reputed mediæval writers prove the existence of these different kinds of *Kuttams*. These assemblies played an important part in the government of the country. "The influence of the *Tara* organisation cannot be over-rated in a political system tending always to despotism." The Nayers who were very sensitive with regard to their rights and liberty were in constant dread of their suppression by an irresponsible executive. Since the

executive could not be made responsible to these assemblies in those days, they controlled the king through his ministers. "These Nayars resemble the Parliament and do not obey the king's dictates in all things but chastise his ministers, when they do unwarrantable acts." ²¹

The origin of these village communities could be traced to Parasurama according to tradition and the *Keralotpatti*. Tradition says that Parasurama handed over the Government to the Nambutiris who spread themselves in sixty four *gramams* and established village communities. The village communities of the Brahmans were called *gramams* and those of the Nayars the *taras*. The Brahmans introduced a republican form of government of four *kalakams* or councils consisting of representatives of the sixtyfour *gramams*, presided over by an officer styled the *Rakshapurusha* who was their elected executive officer for a term of three years. This experiment gave way to the rule of the Perumals. But even during their regime the Council retained large powers and the Perumal had to consult them on all important matters. After the so-called partition of Kerala the *Kalakams* went out of existence and their position was taken by the *kuttams* of the Nadu. During practically the whole of the middle ages these *kuttams* constituted an effective bulwark against the tyranny of the ruler.

Apart from these there was another factor which exercised a restraining influence on the powers of the king, *viz* the established custom of the land—*maryada*, *acharam* or *nattunadappu*—as it was variously called. In fact the powers and privileges which the Nayars and the Nambutiris possessed were themselves a product of the custom of the land. Even the ruler dared not violate the established customs. There were certain things which the chiefs were expected to do and certain

21. *Tellicherry Factory Diary* of 28th May 1745.

other things which they were expected not to do. Thus the chief of a *Nad* or *Naduwali* was expected to interfere in the case of a *kutippaka* and see that the body of the murdered was burnt in the house of the murderer. Every chief would have to do many things against his wish and will to satisfy public opinion and respect the custom. "If it were necessary to sum up in one word the law of the country as it stood before the Muhammadan invasion (1766 A. D.) and British occupation (1792) that word would undoubtedly be the word "custom."²² In Mediaeval Kerala custom occupied the place of the statute law and its sanction was not necessarily derived from the central authority.

But this should not lead us to the supposition that the mediaeval kings of Malabar were mere political nonentities. If the rulers were bound by custom so were the subjects. Custom compelled them to obey the law and their ruler. Though a singular lack of central authority was a common feature of the mediaeval period, the rulers played the most important part in the government of their respective kingdoms. It is true that most of them were dependent upon the willing allegiance of their feudal nobility. But they secured this obedience as a matter of course, since there were few occasions when the interests of the ruler clashed with those of the nobles or the people. Mr. Logan's contention that the political system of Malabar was always tending to despotism can hardly be substantiated at least during the early middle ages. Though the Zamorin conquered the neighbouring principalities he did not annex them to his dominions by depriving the chiefs of their possessions. The chiefs were asked to pay certain customary tributes to him and recognise his overlordship. The rulers generally respected the rights of the chiefs and feudatories under them. It is therefore wrong to interpret our mediaeval history as the story of conflict between the forces of right led by

22. Logan: *Op. cit.*

the feudal Nayars and the forces of evil represented by the king. Nor is it right to go to the other extreme and represent the mediaeval history as a long conflict between the forces of order led by the ruler and the forces of disorder represented by the intransigent nobles. An armed baron, it is true, is a dangerous servant, but not under a strong master. It is true that in the later middle ages the over-mighty barons like the *Ettuvittil Pillamar* succeeded in reducing royal authority to virtual impotence in Travancore. But such instances were few and far between and were the results of peculiar circumstances. Therefore they cannot be taken as the basis for wide generalisation. In fact both these views are misleading in so far as they imply an irreconcilable cleavage of interest between the ruler and his vassals. It is reasonable to consider the matter from a different point of view. It is wrong to regard public life in the mediaeval period as a civil war between the king and the nobles. The nobles willingly obeyed the ruler so long as he ruled the territory on the basis of the established customs and traditions, and the rulers invariably respected the rights of the feudal nobles who supplied him with soldiers during war. The king himself was a nobleman, the tallest among them and he regarded himself only as first among equals not above all. There was every reason to believe that harmony of interest prevailed between the two. This does not however minimise the importance of the national assemblies or the sanketams. They constituted a ready remedy for any abuse of power by a technically irresponsible executive.

The relation between one ruler and another was also governed by certain established customs, as the relation between the ruler and his subjects. Perpetual strife among the different states made the maintenance of peace peculiarly difficult in the Middle Ages. But there were certain rules of war which were generally obeyed by the belligerents. One such rule was that the defeated ruler should be reinstated as a feudatory.

This rule was generally followed by the Malabar rulers till it was summarily set aside by Martanda Varma when he annexed Quilon to his dominions and made the Raja a state prisoner. Another similar rule was that the Nayar lords should not be punished as ordinary individuals even when they rebelled against constituted authority. This rule was also violated for the first time by the same Travancore ruler when he arrested the leading nobles and executed the Tambis. Till the accession of Martanda Varma, however, these rules were generally obeyed. These regulations, especially those in relation to inter-state disputes, went a long way in mitigating the hardship of the people who were always living in a state of war. Ibn Batuta's account brings out the truth of this statement. "There are twelve infidel Sultans in Malabar, the more powerful among them having an army of fifty thousand troops, the weaker ones only three thousand. But there is no discord among them, and the strong does not covet what the weak possesses. At the boundary of each state there is a wooden gate on which is engraved the name of the Sultan whose territory begins there... When a Mussalman or an infidel flees from the state of one of these princes because of some delinquency, and reaches the gate of security of another prince, he is safe and cannot be caught by him from whom he had fled, though he may be powerful, having many troops at his disposal." ²³

III

General Features of Administration. The relative position of the ruler, the nobles and the priestly class shows that the Government was based on the principles resembling those of the feudal system of mediaeval Europe. In its social aspect feudalism still remains to some extent in many parts of Kerala as a relic of the past. But its civil and military aspects have com-

23. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri : *Foreign Notices of South India*—p. 236-37.

pletely disappeared with the British occupation of Malabar in 1792.

For the purpose of military administration the land was divided into *nadus* and *desams*. But for civil administration *nadus* were divided into *gramams* and *taras*. Thus while the *desam* was the unit of military organisation, the *tara* was the unit of civil administration. The *nadus* and *desams* consisted of not so many towns and villages but of so many Nayars such as the "Five Hundred" of Kodakaranad, the "Four Hundred" of the Annamanad and the "Three Hundred" of Chengalinad. This non-nucleated character of the village was one of the peculiarities of the Malabar administration. Every division and subdivision had its own head. A Nayar village or *tara* consisted of a number of houses lying detached in the midst of gardens. It had its own organisations for civil and administrative purposes. The *Karanavans*, or the eldest members of the different houses, looked after the local affairs of the *tara* and superintended the cultivation of the lands of their chief who might be either a Raja, a mere janmi or any lord in between them. In return for this each *Karanavan* received a share of the produce. Apart from this he was also expected to render military service to his chief whenever called upon to do so. The headmen of the villages were called *Gramadhipatis* or *Janmivalis*. In some places they were called *Desavalis*, the difference between the two being only one of degree. Besides being the sole proprietors of the lands in their respective villages they enjoyed certain special privileges such as (1) *Ambalapati*²⁴—the direction of the ceremonies of the village pagoda; (2) *Uraima* or the management of the pagoda lands; (3) *Asaima* or the control of all the ceremonies in the families or houses of his village and (4) the *Desadhipatyam* or the general superintendence of the village. A village

24. *Ambalapati* = Ambalam (temple) plus *pati* (a step or bench). It was the seat of honour, a certain step or degree in a temple to which only particular persons are entitled.

headman who did not possess the first two rights was known as *Janmivali*. There was a *Desavali* to every village except where the village was the private property of the *Naduvali* or the Raja, in which case the rights of the head of the village belonged to the chief. The chief also acquired lands by purchase. Since the Nayers constituted the military class, most of them were retainers of chiefs or kings of Kerala. As they were bound to serve their chief in war and to protect his dominions, they had to be in the fields of battle frequently. So most of them held their estate in fief from their chief, who was thus able to possess lands in this manner also. In those villages which the Raja acquired by purchase the old *Desavali* still retained his office though shorn of much of his authority.

Though the *Desavali* was mainly the military chief of his village who marched at the head of the quota of his soldiers during war time, he had other duties as well. He assisted in the collection of fines forfeitures and other dues to the Government. He decided petty suits and was responsible for establishing law and order. In police and judicial matters he was assisted by two prominent and respectable citizens of the village called *Pramanis*. The *Pramanis* who were neither appointed nor hereditary were generally drawn from the Nambutiris and Nayers though the other castes were not excluded altogether. They should be acceptable to both parties and if both attended they disposed off the matter without reference to the *Desavali*. If one of the parties demanded the case was to be taken to the village court or Panchayat. If the defendant however refused to attend the *Desavalis* interfered and issued the summons directing the *Pramanis* to decide the case in their court. The summons were generally obeyed but in case of refusal the *Desavali* applied to the *Naduvali*, the chief, who settled the case himself. If a village had no *Pramani*, which might be the case sometimes, the case would be referred to a neighbouring village.

The *Desavali* could settle only minor disputes. Major disputes, like theft for instance, were settled by the chief after a preliminary investigation by the *Desavali*. The punishment for theft was fine and restoration of the stolen property for the first offence and death for the third. The *Desavali* and the *Pramanis* received fees for suits decided by them which were paid in equal shares by both the defendant and the plaintiff.

Thus every village was almost fully self-governing. Each had its own headman, *Pramanis*, the hereditary village servants, panchayats, *kuttams*, police (*kaval*) and watchmen (*kavalkar*). The functions, rights and privileges of each of these were well-defined. The village council was generally held in the temples some of which were exclusively owned by the Nayers. The council was held at the beginning of every month for the administration of affairs connected with caste. This socio-religious ceremony was attended by all the important villagers.

Next to the *Desavali* was the *Naduvali* or the chief of the *nadu* or district. He enjoyed the same powers and privileges in the district as the *Desavali* in the village. Except for the fact that they have to render military service to the Raja when called upon to do so, the *Naduvalis* were virtually independent rulers in their respective districts. Unlike the feudal barons of Mediaeval Europe, who held their estate in fief from the king these Nayar lords claimed to hold office by a tenure as ancient as that of any of the Rajas. Like the *Nambutiris* they also claimed to have derived their ownership from Parasurama. All the *Naduvalis* were not however equally powerful or rich. In some cases the *Naduvali* himself was the *Desavali* of every village in the district. But there were also those who owned only one or two villages in the district, the other villages being under separate *Desavalis* or under the Raja directly governed by him. In fact, the line of demarcation between the *Desavali* and the *Naduvali* was so thin that sometimes a

successful village headman ripened into a *Naduvali*. The minimum qualification for a *Naduvali* was that he should have at least one hundred Nayars attached to his range. Any number below that made him only a *Desavali*.

The *Naduvalis* differed in their status and position which were indicated by different names. They might be *swarupis*, *prabhus* or *matambis* and styled *Achan*, *Kaimal* or simply Nayar. The tributary Rajas like those of Purakkad and Alangad or subordinate chiefs like the Kaimal of Koratty or Nambiyar of Murianad were *Naduvalis* of very high status possessing the power of life and death over their subjects. The *Prabhus* were inferior to Kaimals in so far as they were denied this power. The *matambis* who belonged to the third class of the *Naduvalis* were petty chiefs with limited powers, their armed retainers rarely exceeding hundred in number and they were not much different from the *Desavalis*.

The *Naduvali* was the chief police and judicial officer of his district. He was also the revenue officer and collected the ordinary and extraordinary revenues. In this he was assisted by two accountants who kept the account of his collections and records of transfer of land. He had a share of every branch of the Raja's revenue—customs, fines, and confiscation of the property etc. All the *Naduvalis* had to pay certain fees to the Raja—a succession fee or *purushantaram*, an annual tribute or *andukalcha* and an annual contribution for special protection called *rakshabhogam* etc.

The *Naduvali*, being the military chief of his district, was bound to march at the head of his soldiers at the command of the Raja. He would be accompanied by all the fighting men of his district under their respective *Desavalis*. Even during times of peace he was expected to keep up the martial spirit of the soldiers by mock fights (always accompanied by the loss

of a few lives) exhibited in front of the ruler. Since all the soldiers of the district were under his control he was a very powerful officer. Even when the command of so many soldiers tempted him to rebel against constituted authority, custom did not permit the Raja to abolish his office or confiscate his estate, though the rebel himself was generally punished. Therefore the prestige and office of the *Nadwali* continued though often it encouraged centrifugal tendencies.

At the apex of the system was the Raja. He was the supreme ruler of the land. But, as has already been stated, his power was not unlimited. Since he rarely maintained a standing army he was entirely dependent upon the willing obedience of his subordinates. Further, the Nayar nobles were themselves the owners of their lands, so that unlike the feudal barons, their only connection with the ruler was the military service rendered by them.

Buchanan gives an account of the administrative system of the Zamorin which could be regarded as the general standard of administration in Malabar. According to this the ruler was assisted by four *sarvadhikaryakars* (major officers) whose offices were hereditary and certain minor officers appointed and removed at the pleasure of the sovereign. The *karyakars* were (1) Mangat Achan, a Nayar lord (2) Tinayancheri Elayadu, a Brahman (3) Dharmot Panikkar, a Nayar and (4) Paranambi, a Nambissan. The minor officers managed the private estates of the Zamorin and collected his revenues consisting of customs or a fifth part of the movable estates of every person that died and fines. The *karyakars* were also responsible for the administration of justice in which they were assisted by four assessors, but the selection being left to themselves, this provision gave little security to the subjects. For inflicting capital punishment, however, the ruler's mandate was required. Appeals from the decisions of

the *Nadualis* and the *Desavalis* were decided by a Court of Panchayat in the presence of the ruler.

IV

Sources of Revenue.

One curious feature to be noted regarding the sources of revenue is that no land-tax was levied by the Rajas. Though this fact is called in question by some scholars we have the authentic statement of Zeinuddin in this matter. Writing in the 16th century the Muslim historian says that "they (the rulers) demand no land tax from the tenants of the lands and gardens, although they are of great extent."²⁵ Mr. Logan however thinks that "there was a public revenue in Malabar originallybut with the extinction of the supreme kon or king in the 9th century A.D. the share of the produce due to him did not pass to those who supplied in some measure his place but to the great bulk of the people - the Nayars....."²⁶ In any case it is clear that land tax was unknown in the middle ages. Its absence can reasonably be explained. The prevailing tradition—we do not know when it originated - was that the whole land belonged to the Nambutiris as a gift from Parasurama. Therefore no tax could be levied on *Brahmaswam* (property of the Brahmans). Granting that the legend gained currency only later, it is possible that the majority of the janmis who were Brahmans, were exempt from certain taxes under the Hindu system. Secondly since there was no standing army other sources of revenue sufficed for the purposes of Government. The chief sources of revenue were.

1) *Ankam*: This literally means fight or duel. Disputes between two parties were sometimes settled by combats. The actual fight generally took place not between the principals in the dispute but between their

25. Sheik Zeinuddin: *Op. cit.*—p. 73.

26. Logan: *Op. cit.*—pp. 602-3.

respective professionals called *Chekors*. Each party was obliged to deposit with the ruler a certain sum of money in three separate purses — *nattukili*, *vittukili* and *ankakili*. (*kili*=purse). The last two went to the house of the combatant and to the combatant respectively, while the first went to the ruler in his capacity as the umpire between the two combatants. It varied according to the means of the parties sometimes amounting to a 1,000 *fanams* (Rs. 250).

2) *Chunkam* or customs. Custom duties on imports and exports both by land and sea constituted an important source of revenue. The duties differed with different rulers and with times. In some cases it was only $2\frac{1}{2}$ or 3 per cent. But Zeinuddin says in the 16th century that the amount was as high as 10 per cent.

3) *Ela*: According to Dr. Gundhert, *ela* was fine, penalty or forced payment. A powerful ruler sometimes appropriated the estates of neighbouring Rajas or *Nadualis* and in token thereof they were forced to make annual or occasional payments to him in cash or kind.

4) *Kola*: This was forced contribution from tributary principalities, especially on occasions of emergency. The amount varied with circumstances.

5) *Tappu* or blunder. *Desavalis*, *Nadualis* and rulers received fines from people for accidental or unintentional crimes.

6) *Pila*: This was fine levied in the same manner as the above for intentional crimes. The amount depended upon the magnitude of the crime and the circumstances of the individual, extending sometimes to the total confiscation of his property.

7) *Purushantaram* or succession fee. This was a fee levied by the Rajas "from *Nadualis*, *Desavalis*, heads of commercial corporations, from the holders of lands in free gift or under conditional tenure and generally all persons holding *stanam* (position) *manam* (prestige or

official dignities) in the state, "whenever an heir succeeded to a vacancy caused by death. Mappilas (Muslims) who possessed considerable wealth and held situations or privileges dependent upon the will or favour of the Raja, were also liable to pay this fee. "This tax, so similar to one of our feudal sources of revenue in the West, often reached the extent of 1200 fanams."²⁷

8) *Pulayattu Pennu* or adulterous woman was a source of double profit to the ruler. Degraded women were made over to the Raja to be taken care of. As a compensation for their maintenance their family had to offer to the Raja as much as 600 fanams (Rs. 150). The ruler however used to dispose them off for money generally to the coast merchants called *chetties*.

9) *Kalcha*: This consisted of presents made by all ranks of people to a Raja or *Naduvali* when they had to offer congratulations or condolences—his succession to the gadi, marriage or death in his family. This tax which is also similar to one of the feudal levies in the West sometimes amounted to about 2,000 fanams. These fanams were also made on occasions of national festival like *Onam* and *Vishu*.

10) *Dattu Kalcha* or adoption fee. Persons desirous of making adoptions had to obtain the sanction of the Raja and to pay a fee which is a fixed proportion of the estate to which the adoptee would become entitled. Like the other fees this also varied according to circumstances.

11) *Ponnarippu* or sifting of gold. Certain rivers used to wash down gold and the quest for it was allowed only after a payment of royalty to the Raja or the *Naduvali*, as the case might be.

12) *Attaladakkam* (Attal=on decease+adakkam=subjection) or escheat. When a man, whether a

27. Burton: *Goa*—pp. 196-97.

Naduvāli, *Desavāli* or a mere *Adiyan* (vassal) died without heirs, the Raja took his property especially when the lands were held in free gift. The *Naduvāli* and the *Desavāli* had similar rights with respect to their tenants. The right of escheat did not however apply to the extinct Brahman families, for the sastras say that the king should not covet *Brahmaswam*, which was generally conferred on another Brahman.

13) *Atimappanam* was the yearly payment of one or two *fanams* levied by the lord, prince or patron on every one of his vassals.

14) *Cherikkal*. *Cherikkals* were private domains which the Rājas possessed in proprietary rights acquired by purchase, lapse or escheat.

15) Certain kinds of bulls, cows, elephants and pigs belonged exclusively to the Raja. They are: cows with five or three dugs (*aimula* and *mummula*), cattle that killed a human being or an animal (*chencompu*, Literally 'red horned') cattle with a marked tail (*puvāli*) beeves born with a peculiar white spot near the corner of the eye (*kannadapulli*), wild elephants caught in jungles (*anappidi*) and pigs that had fallen into wells (*kinattil panni*).

16) *Utanha and Atinha Urukkaḷ*. Ship—wrecked vessels and vessels drifted ashore. Both these belonged to the ruler. Another custom which prevailed was plundering the ships which were bound for some other port. Abdur Razaak however says that this custom did not prevail in Calicut. This often proved to be a very important source of revenue.

17) Certain royal perquisites from hunting expeditions such as *kompū* or tusks of dead elephants, *kuravu* or the hind quarter of any hog, deer or other edible animal slain in hunting, *valu* or the tail and *tolu* or the skin of all the tigers similarly slain.

18) *Talappanam* was a sort of poll-tax levied on occasions from poor classes amounting to about five fanams.

19) All precious metals which might be discovered — as also cardamoms, teak, jack etc.

20) *Valappanam* was a tax levied by fishermen for exercising their profession.

21) *Changatam* or protection money. No trace of this peculiar custom could be noticed now anywhere in Kerala. It is to some extent similâr to the tributes paid by the Indian states to the British Government as paramount power in India under the system of subsidiary alliance for the purpose of protecting them against external and internal enemies. Whenever a man wished to place himself under the protection of a Raja or a *Naduvâli* he paid a stipulated sum to his overlord called *changatam* or protection money and made an assignment of particular lands as guarantee for payment. The sum was devoted to the maintenance of a kind of sentinel for his protection, but this implied also an obligation on the part of the patron to assist with a stronger force when necessary.

When the travellers paid protection money to the ruler they would be escorted by armed Nayars (paid by the ruler) who guaranteed their security with their own lives. The institution is sometimes called *kaval changatam*, i. e. guard companion. Fahien says that “those who desire to proceed thither should first pay a certain sum of money to the king of the country who will then appoint people to accompany them and to show them the way.” Nieuhoff perhaps had in mind these stiff guardsmen when he remarked that the Nayars are “extremely courteous and will venture on anything for a small sum.”²⁸

28 Vincenzo Mario writing in 1672 says: “the safest of all journeyings in India are through the kingdom of the Nayars and the Zamorin if you travel with Giancaças (*changatam*), the most perilous if you go alone. The Giancaças are certain heathen men, who venture their own lives and the lives of their kinsfolk for small remuneration to guarantee the safety of travellers.”

Not only travellers, but the adjoining chiefs of a powerful neighbour, who were not strong enough to resist molestation from others, sometimes placed themselves under his protection, who would thereafter be responsible for the safety. Later this custom was extended to companies of Nayars who undertook on payment to protect those who stood in apprehension of another. To a powerful ruler *changatam* often proved to be a good source of revenue.

22) *Rakshabñogam* was another form of protection money. It differed from *changatam* only in the point *viz.* the engagement to protect was a general one not limited to any specific aid in the first instance.

These were the various sources of revenue of the rulers of Malabar in the middle ages. Fixed taxes and assessments were rare. A revenue system based on forced contribution and perquisites is naturally open to abuse and tyranny. But here, as in other cases, we could not neglect the influence of custom and other factors. As Burton observes "the influence of the Brahmans and the jealousy of the chiefs generally operated as efficient checks upon individual ambition." The rulers seldom turned a deaf ear to the advice of their Brahman ministers. Further, extraordinary contributions if frequently called for were sure to provoke agitation. Therefore perquisites and forced contributions were not liable to be abused to any very great extent.

V

Law and Justice. There was no written code of law. All laws proceeded from the king and were administered by officers appointed by him. But above these laws and king there was the unwritten law—custom—which really ruled the land. As a result the administration of justice was a very simple affair. According to the prevailing custom the landlord could forbid the tenant

from cultivating the land without evicting him. He had only to send his servant with a bundle of leaves of some trees and a handful of clay which the servant was to deposit in the middle of the land, from which rent was due, and then swear that his landlord had forbidden him to cultivate the land or enjoy its fruits till he paid the rent. The tenant immediately stopped all cultivation of the land. The manner in which debts were realised by creditors is another instance in point. When payment was demanded of the debtor the custom was to draw a circle round him with a green branch and to demand payment in the name of the Brahmans and the ruler.²⁹ Custom was so powerful that such simple formalities sufficed to settle many important disputes. As Logan says: "custom, when once it has become law, arrays the whole community in arms against the law breaker....." and therefore nobody dared to violate it.

In the theocratic days of the Middle Ages we could not expect to find equality of justice. Justice was administered according to the *Sastras*, the Bible or the Koran according to the parties concerned. Civil disputes were decided by the king assisted by his advisers and occasionally by the Brahmans if the case happened to be very important or very obscure. Though the king was regarded as the fountain of justice, the *Naduvalis* and the *Desavalis* as well as the *Karanavars* had their respective share in the dispensation of justice in the *nadus* and the *desams* under their control. The *Tara* organisation, as we have seen, also played its part in the administration of justice. The *Karanavars* disposed of minor disputes but grave criminal cases involving loss of life or property were made over to the king for disposal after investigation by *Karanavars* or the *Desavalis*. Law and justice were different to

29. Varthema says that the words spoken to the debtor inside the circle by the creditor were "Bramani raza peratha polle i. e. *Brahmanarane Rajavane purathu pokalle*. This means "I swear by the Brahmans and the Raja, do not go out."

different individuals ; they depended upon the position and status of the accused. The Brahmans, for instance, were punished for grave crimes only by loss of caste or banishment. Women were sold as slaves. The decisions of the *Karanavars* in civil cases were generally acquiesced in by the parties ; but there were occasions when the defeated party tried to get the decision reversed by appealing to the king. Caste disputes were generally decided by the Brahman judges. One remarkable feature of the judicial administration was that justice was absolutely free.

The use of torture was not known during judicial investigation. But a popular method employed in detecting crimes was trial by ordeal, which was not peculiar to Malabar. It was in vogue in Mediaeval England, and many other places. Both the princes and subjects placed their implicit faith in these ordeals. Originally resorted to only in criminal cases, it was later extended to civil disputes as well.

There were four principal kinds of ordeal :—

(1) *Water ordeals* of various kinds were very popular. The suspected person was asked to swim through a river full of crocodiles and reptiles ; if he came out unhurt he was innocent. Another common form of water ordeal was used in cases of theft. The names of all the inmates of the house from which the articles was lost were written on slips of paper. Each was enclosed in a ball of wax and all were thrown together in a vessel full of water. It was believed that the ball containing the name of the guilty person would float on the surface.³⁰

30. Forbes gives a singularly interesting instance of it in his own household. "Residing in a family at Surat, my sister lost a gold watch which she set a particular value. Several modes of detection were practised to discover the thief. One was similar to that used among the ancient Chaldeans of Egypt found among the shepherds of Carman.....The name of every person was placed in a separate ball of wax or paste and thrown into a vessel of water. Only one swam on the surface..... On opening the floating ball it contained the name of an unsuspected female, who immediately confessed"—*Op. cit.*

(2) *The fire ordeal.* The suspected person in this ordeal was asked to dip his hand upto elbow in boiling ghee or oil. "They threw in leaves of trees" says Barbosa "and with the great heat of the pot the leaves fly out, and this is in order that the parties may see that the oil is hot and boiling." If the hand showed no sign of blister or burning after three days, he was declared to be innocent. Otherwise his guilt was established and he was executed after attempts at getting a confession.

(3) *Ordeal by poison.* There were two kinds of this ordeal. The accused had to take a stipulated quantity of poison from the hands of Brahman and remain unaffected; or he had to draw out a coin or some other thing from a deep earthen pot containing a cobra.

(4) *Ordeal by balance.* In this the accused was to fast for twentyfour hours and weigh himself in a balance, then to take his bath and weigh himself once more, with a recorded accusation fastened on his forehead. If he weighed less he was innocent; if more, guilty. Other minor forms of ordeal were also practised. Thus in both civil and criminal cases appeal to the supernatural was the most common method employed in detecting crimes. The ordeals continued to be employed till the British occupation. There were stray instances of them even after that in connection with caste disputes.

The accused were not always given the option of the ordeal. There were five great crimes for which the extreme penalty of law was invariably inflicted except in the case of the Brahmans. They were the murder of a Brahman, drinking spirits, (probably a crime only among the Brahmans), theft, disobeying teacher's rules and cow-killing.

In spite of the crude methods of detecting guilt and the barbarous ways of inflicting punishments³¹

31. Capital punishments were inflicted sometimes by cutting the body in halves and exposing them, impaling alive or being torn as under by elephants.

justice was impartially administered as between one religion and another. 'Joseph, the Indian' says "In the palace of Calicut which resembled a theatre there were four courts of justice, for the Hindus, Muhammadans, Jews and Christians respectively, in which the cases of these different races were judicially investigated." Discriminating justice between the Brahmans and others was inevitable in the middle ages.

Justice was also severe. "They put a thief to death" says Ibn Batuta "for stealing a single nut or even a grain of seed of any fruit." But this was not peculiar to Malabar. Criminal law was barbarously cruel in Europe till the 19th century. Foreign travellers generally testify to the conspicuous fairness of judicial administration.

As a result of the weakness of central authority the mutual jealousies and mediaeval notions of chivalry of the nobles and the exciting nature of tournaments and festivals like Mamankam, Mediaeval Malabar was always in a state of political turmoil. But amidst the constant political changes we find an unbroken continuity of social life. The *Marumakkattayam* system of inheritance and the consequent economic independence of women were two unique features of the social life of Malabar. Since women had the right to own their own property and were not dependent upon men they enjoyed almost equal rights with men in many walks of life. The marriage laws of Malabar were particularly and surprisingly modern. If either party desired a dissolution it was generally granted by the other party and the woman like the man was free to marry again. Widowhood and its rigours were unknown among the Nayars. This form of marriage laws have misled many people to think that chastity was an unknown virtue in Malabar. But as Logan says "Nowhere is the marriage tie-albeit formal more rigidly observed or respected, nowhere is it more jealously guarded or its neglect more savagely

avenged.”³² Zeinuddin was surprised to note that Nayar women never wore gosha. “.....neither do they (Nayars) conceal their women from the sight of any one; for whilst the females of the Brahman caste are kept veiled from sight, the Nayars adorn their women with jewels and fine clothes and bring them to their great assemblies.” Della Vella says that at the interview which the Portuguese Captain had with the Zamorin, two of his nieces were present in addition to the other female members of the Zamorin’s family viewing the scene from the gallery. The great amount of freedom enjoyed by the Nayar women was a modern feature that existed in the mediaeval period.

This advanced outlook however is not to be found in the other aspects of mediaeval civilisation. Enthusiastic writers, however, forgetting the fact that mediaeval society was dominated by religion, caste system and foolish notions of chivalry, and tainted by the institution of slavery and segregation of a section of the population, try to find out every modern feature in mediaeval life. This too much reliance upon the benefit of doubt is detrimental to the cause of historical truth; for as a historian observes, “the doubtful satisfaction that may be derived from claiming modern wisdom for our ancestors is purchased at the cost of any chance of our knowing them as they were.”³³ When we say that the mediaeval king was not a despot and that his powers were limited by custom and national assemblies we do not mean that he was a constitutional monarch or that the national assemblies were the real governing body of the land. Democracy with its ideal of equality of opportunity for all is essentially a modern conception. Therefore, to regard these national assemblies or *kuttams* as sovereign or representative bodies with legislative powers in the modern sense of the term would be “reading the present into the past.” Far from being an ornamental figure-

32. Malabar—p 138.

33. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri: *Studies in Chola History and Administration*
—p. 98.

head, the mediaeval kings had many prerogatives in connection with the work and procedure of the *kuttam* and possessed controlling influence in the internal administration.

But one important thing to note in connection with the political organisations of mediaeval Kerala is that while the king often meddled with the national assembly he never tried to destroy it. An attempt of that sort would have been undoubtedly attended with serious political consequences. But a strong ruler determined to face the consequences could have made an attempt to subvert the civil organisation. There were a number of strong rulers in different parts of Kerala, but none of them attempted to do so at least till the time of Martanda Varma. This was because like the nobles the rulers also realised that "the existence of the civil organisation, under the direction of the community with the military organisation under the headship of the king was deemed a necessity each striving to support the other."

This political organisation, which was one of the unique features of mediaeval civilisation, may be defective from modern points of view. The militarism of the Nayars and the influence of custom make progress almost impossible under such a system. But it is unfair to apply modern standards to mediaeval conditions. With all its defects it was a stable political system providing against some of the inevitable evils of autocracy. We find no more fitting epitaph to this account than the words of Logan, the distinguished historian of Malabar, who says that the civil organisation of Mediaeval Kerala "secured for the country a high state of happiness and peace and if *foreign* peoples and *foreign* influence had not intervened it might, with almost literal truth, have been said of the Malayalees that 'happy is the people who have no history'."

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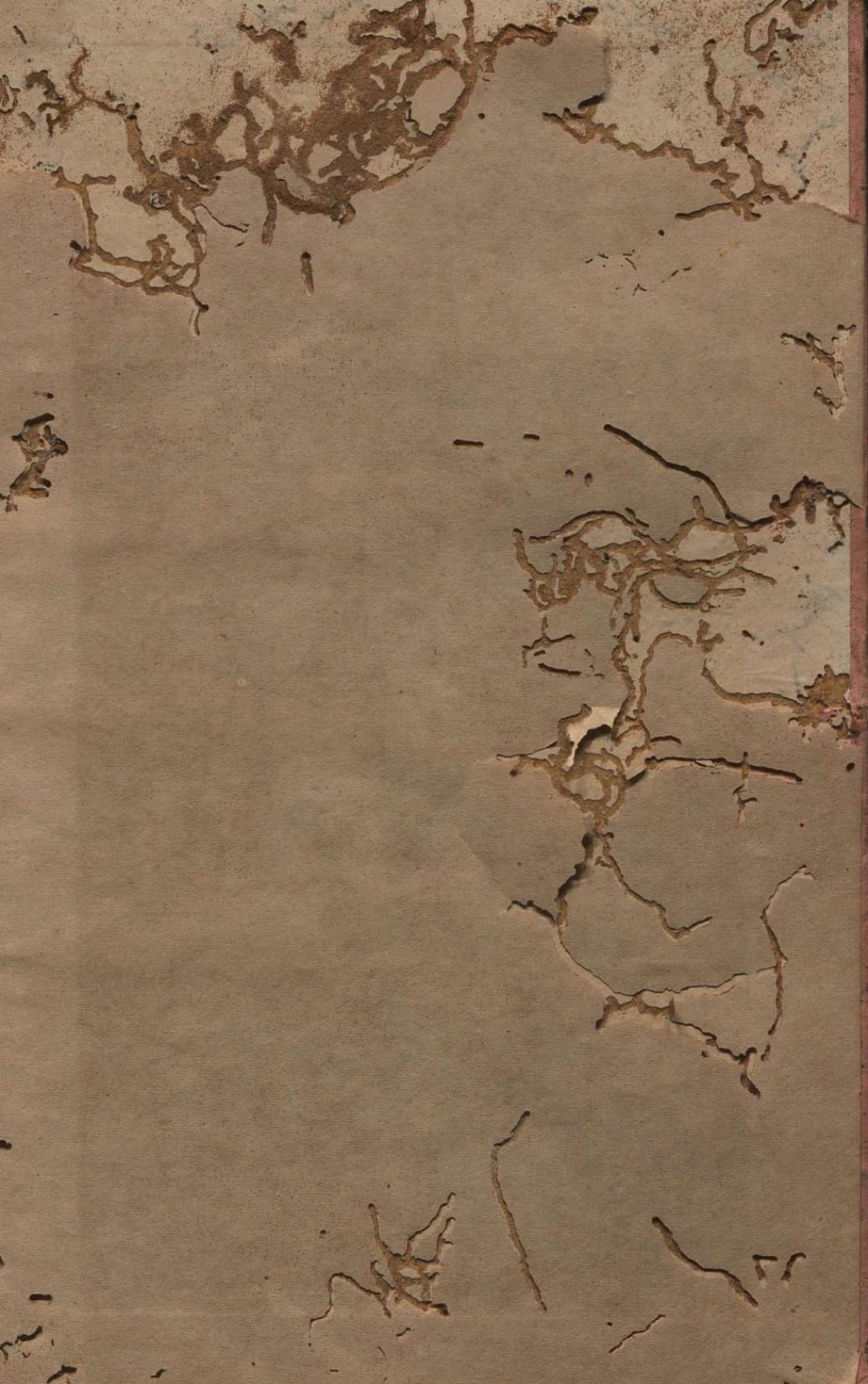
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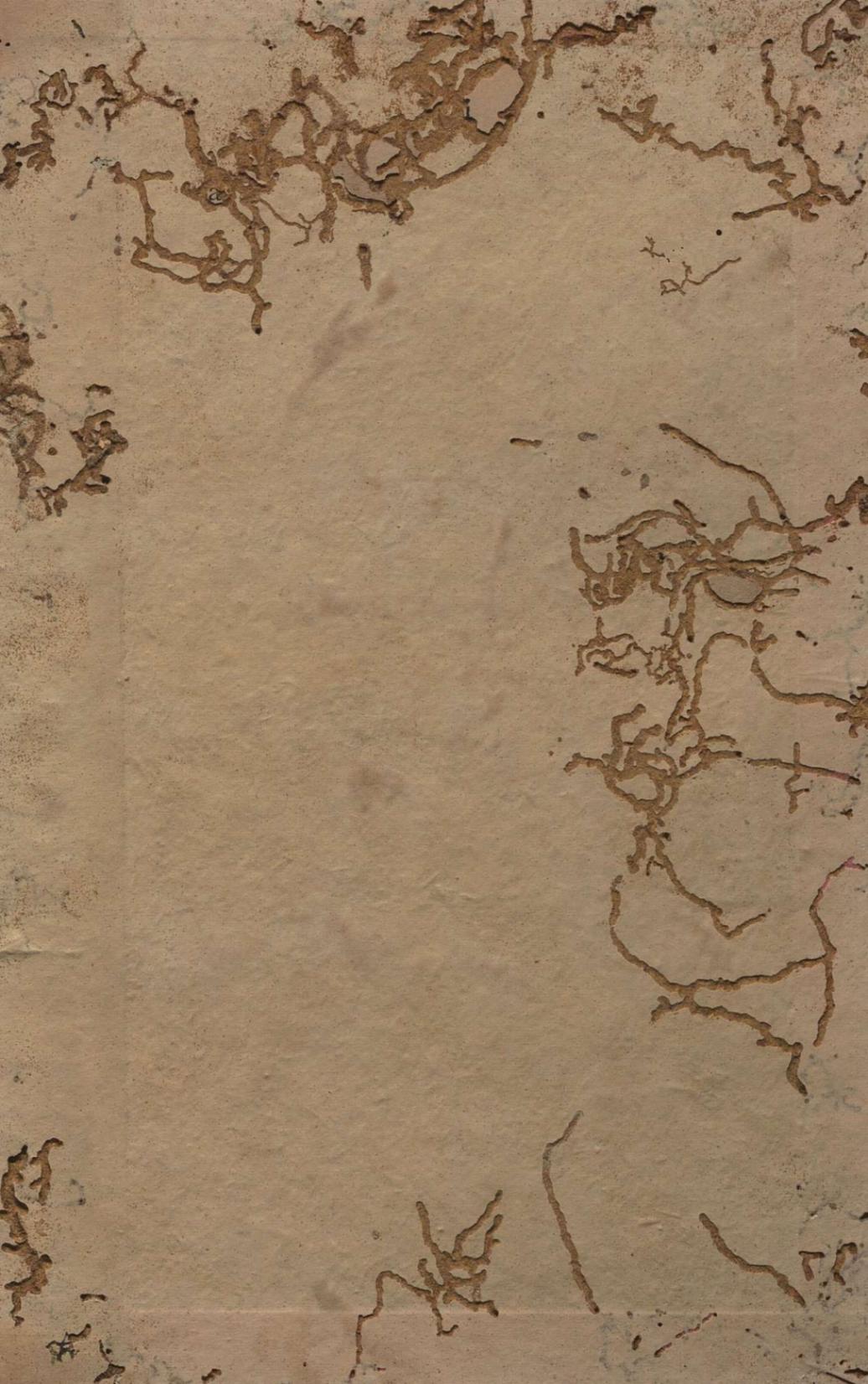
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P. K. S. RAJA

BY

P. K. S. RAJA, M. A., M. LITT.,

Department of History & Politics,

ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY, ANNAMALAINAGAR

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