CHAPTER V

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CRISIS - VENAD (1635-1729)

The political conditions in Vēnad during the late 17th and early 18th centuries have been recorded in all traditional and modern histories of Kerala.¹ This period has caught the attention of historians because of the episodes relating to Umayammal, princess of Āttingal, and the nobles called Āttu Vesttil Pillaimār. It has also been recognised that the decades preceding the accession of Martanda Varm, witnessed intense, political conflict in which the Pillaimār, the temple trustees and the royal family played leading roles. In this chapter, the major events that took place during the late 17th century and the early decades of 18th century, will be examined again with the purpose of showing that the political conflicts were the manifestations of the deepening crisis in the traditional socio-economic relations in Vēnad. Efforts will be made to show that problems facing the traditional economic relations provided the basis for the break down of political authority in Vēnad, which in turn deeply influenced the traditional social structure and the ideology of the region.

I

During the 17th century, problems began to emerge on the question of distribution of political power within the
branches of the Vēnād royal family. Princes of Dēṣinganādu, Elayādattu Sorūpam, Perakattūyyali and Trippāppūr assumed positions of importance and competed for the senior positions in the royal family. The tendency of the princes of various branches to establish their territorial influence simultaneously, the practice of adoptions from one into another the branch of the royal families and at times mutual adoptions between the branches also complicated the problem of seniority and the order of succession. Hence, it can be seen that information regarding the political authority over Vēnād during the middle decades of 17th century, is often confusing. We get definite information on Ravi Varma, a prince of Trippappur and Unnikerala Varma, a prince of Dēṣinganādu, who appear simultaneously in the records between 806 K.E. to 838 K.E.² Then the Padmanabha Temple records mention Aditya Varma as the senior Vēnād prince. However, other documents mention several other princes.³

This lack of clarity regarding the genealogical order of princes is further confounded when we take into account the recorded cases of adoptions discussed in the previous chapter. For example, the mutual adoptions between the Trippappur branch and Elayedathu Sorūpam in 798 K.E. enabled the head of Trippāppūr branch to become the senior prince of Elayedattu Sorūpam also, and vice versa. The competition for becoming the senior prince of Vēnād became
intense, and the number of candidates also increased because of the practice of adoptions. As a result, fresh adoptions into the royal family became matters of controversy. In 847 K.Ç., another prince, one Rama Kövil Pandala, was adopted into Tripappur from Vellarappalli Köyikkal, after the death of Rama Varma. The prince was nephew of Aditya Varma who himself was a nephew of the Desinganadu prince and belonged to the same Köyikkal. This was also approved by the senior princes of Attingal and two other junior princesses. However, Kerala Varma of Perukattayyvalli objected to the adoption and wanted a prince of his own house to be adopted. It appears that the Perukam prince had a case here, because through mutual adoptions that took place nine years before the adoptions from Vellarappalli Köyikkal, they could claim privileges in Tripappur branch as well. As pointed out in the previous chapter, adoptions of this kind were political moves. Aditya Varma wanted to sustain the privileges of his branch through the new adoption, and Vir. Kerala Varma was also pressing his claims for similar privileges.

When Aditya Varma as the senior most male member of Tripappur family died in 852 K.Ç., the issue was thrown wide open, as the earlier adoptions had made Virakerala Varma the seniormost. The question however, was whether this position would be accepted by the Tripappur - Attingal family. Members of the Tripappur - Attingal Branch clearly
did not favour the claim made by Kerala Varma, which resulted in a political conflict, the nature of which will be examined in the next section.

The question of political authority over Venad was further complicated by the Nayaka invasions starting with the raid by Tirumala Nayak around 810 K.E. We have no direct evidence regarding the extent of Tirumala Nayaka's control over the Vēṇāḍ region. From the fact that the Nāttār of Nānjināḍu still considered the Vēṇāḍ prince as the overlord, it appears that the invasion of Tirumala Nayaka did not involve the complete conquest of the region. During 1651-2 A.D. the village of Marungūr in Nānjināḍu was granted to a disciple of Munchirai Swāmiyār (the head of Tiruvattūr temple) in honour of Tirumala Nayaka and Dalaway sētupatī Kātha Tēvar, which might indicate certain privileges enjoyed by the Nayakas over Nānjināḍu, the exact extent of which is unclear. The raid of Tirumala was the beginning of a series of plundering raids that continued for a century, which brought the cultivation in Nānjināḍu into jeopardy, and most probably affected the income received by the Vēṇāḍ princes also.

In 810 K.E. itself the Nānjināḍu Nāttār complained to the Vēṇāḍ the Kar crop went waste and as the Pīsānam crop was cultivated in the wrong times, the seeds of Manavārī, Sambā and Atikkirāvi were destroyed. The prince remitted the Mālyāram that was taken on a single crop. The dues were
taken in two payments, one for the \( k\varphi \) crop and the other the \( p\i\sa\lam \) crop. From the document it is clear that the prince was prepared only to make readjustments in the payment of the \( M\e\ka\varphi\lam \) and did not remit the dues on the crop as such.

However, troubles in N\( \dd\nu\nu\lng\nu\) did not arise from Tamil country alone. The V\( \en\n\ad \) princes always regarded N\( \dd\nu\nu\lng\nu\) as a major source of income, and they tried to collect the maximum amount of dues through their representatives. These intermediaries also demanded their own share from the landholders of N\( \dd\nu\nu\lng\nu\). Two documents dated 832 K.E. and 830 K.E. describe the various troubles and complaints of the N\( \dd\tt\ar \). The M\( \ru\sa\) (trumpet) which was the insignia of the N\( \dd\nu \) was destroyed by Martandan Matham of Tiruvatt\( \ar\). The N\( \dd\tt\ar \) entered the Matham and burnt it. There appears to have been retaliation from the Matham and its servants as the N\( \dd\tt\ar \) ran away from their residence to A\( \ru\va\)my\( \mo\li \). The V\( \en\n\ad \) prince (probably Ravi Varma of Tripp\( \p\p\ur \)) who went to Bh\( \hu\ta\p\an\d\)i, gave adequate reductions (Kilivu—probably also meant compensation) to the Matham, and the N\( \dd\nu \), two bronze M\( \ru\sa\) and four silver vessels to the N\( \dd\nu \). The king also agreed to the N\( \dd\tt\ar \) that two additional cesses, Purush\( \ha\nt\ir\app\ar\ikk\ai \) and Tanitt\( \ten\d\am \) should not be realised from them.

Purush\( \ha\nt\ir\app\ar\ikk\ai \) was the tax realised when the senior member of the family died and the immediate heir assumed
seniority and Tanittendam were the fines realised by the tax collectors without the mediation of the Nâttâr. Presumably, the Nâttâr originally refused to pay the dues which resulted in the fight. Destruction of the trumpet, the symbol of the Nâttâr was clearly of ideological significance and was considered sacrilegious by the Nâttâr, which provoked them to another sacrilege, the burning of the Matham. There is another interesting aspect to the settlement made by the prince. It was made in the presence of (or in consultation with) a Srikumaran Narayanan, Ilampel Martandan Iravi and the accountants. The first mentioned was probably a representative of Perakattayvali. Ilampel Pandârathil was a landlord in the main region of Venâd who had landed interests in Nânjinâdu. It is possible that the acts against which the Nâttâr protested were perpetrated by these men.

The second document (of 830 K.E., the date given in the record probably incorrect) is even more interesting as it gave a certain degree of autonomy to the Nâttâr in managing the affairs concerning their region. The prince instructed that the earlier order exempting the Nâttar from Tanittendam and Purushântirapparikkai was to be followed. The prince also instructed that if there were outrages committed by the Mathams, including Sankêtams, the Nâttâr
themselves could punish the culprits. If there were to any transactions between the King and the Nattar, then the official royal agent would be a certain Narasimhan Krishnan, who was also given the responsibility to redress the troubles of the Nattar from any other source.

The second document demonstrates that the orders by the Venad ruler with regard to collection of dues were not followed probably by Ilampel Pandarathil and the accountants, and the ruler was forced to renew his order. The last two instructions show that the prince himself had no means to punish the accountant and Madampis, if they were to be the source of trouble for the Nattar. However, he was trying to find some alternative method to retain the confidence of the Nattar, which was shown by the appointment of Narasimhan Krishnan. How far this agent was able to contain the arbitrary practices of the 'accountants' and royal servants is not clear. The net effect was that the Nattar were left to their own resources to maintain order in their area, which essentially implied that the royal authority was declining.

The submission by the Tanattar and accountants of Bhatappandi temple that some of the original landholders had started troubling the local people to redeem their Oti holdings from where the temple expenses were met, also came during the same period. As pointed out in a previous chapter, the predominant number of tenancies in Nanjinadu...
were probably in the form of lease-cum-mortgages. The pressure on the temple tenants to redeem their lands by the original owners might have been the result of the troubled circumstances, when the cultivators could not pay the Michavāram to the original owner as well as meet the temple expenses. It indicates the strains and stresses to which the ordinary cultivators of Nānjanādu were subjected. They had to pay the arbitrary dues imposed by the tax collectors, and also to satisfy the requirements of the landlords, besides meeting the temple expenses. The Nāttār of Nānjanādu, who presumably consisted of landlords, appear to have made case of the conditions of the ordinary cultivators to bargain with the political authority.

No more direct protests and complaints have been recorded from the side of Nānjanādu Nāttār, until 852 K.E. when the raids from the Tamil country began again. During this period we find a number of non-brāhmaṇ landholders, some of them holding the position of accountants, making grants so shrines or Mathās, and there were references to sale of land as well as labourers, which have been noted in the earlier chapters. In one document, the Ur and Turakkār of Kaḍukkarai gave the privileges of constructing new canals and ‘doing the soil’ for Tiruvambalamaṇḍaiyān Vānīram, a merchant. The privileges might indicate proprietary rights over the lands. But direct references the
The period between 810 K.E. and 852 K.E., i.e. from Tirumala Nayaka's raids to the death of Adityavarma, was one of political confusion; although the seniority of Ravi Varma and later Aditya Varma seems to have been recognised, the actual control of the region of Vēnād was fragmented with Deśinganād, and other branches claiming their areas. The control of Nānjinādu by the Vēnād royal family was weakened after Tirumala Nayaka's raids. However, the Vēnād rulers sought to increase their control of Nānjinādu, by engaging royal representatives to collect dues from the Nattār of Nānjinādu, probably in an effort to compensate for the loss of income in other parts of Vēnād due to political fragmentation.

The landholders of Nānjinādu began to bargain collectively as 'Nattār' from this period. They were subject to extortions by the rulers and their representatives, the latter coming to exercise considerable authority in the agrarian relations, as intermediaries. The Nattār began to protest repeatedly against the extortions and the Vēnād rulers obviously tried to placate the landholders by redressing their grievances, which were at best temporary. The Vēnād rulers recognised the strength of the Nattār as a collective bargaining force. At the same time they were powerless to contain the intermediaries, who seem to have tried to capitalise on the troubled conditions. On the whole, the
authority of Vēṇāḍ princes was declining towards the later half of 17th century, partially due to the problems in the determination of seniority within the royal family and political fragmentation, and also due to the activities of the intermediaries who disregarded royal instructions.

II

This brings us to the series of events that took place in the Padmanabha temple and the Vēṇāḍ region between 848 K.E. and 860 K.E. The most systematic account has been recorded in the Ėadjan scroll termed 'Kṣetra-kāryam cūruna' and several other documents help to fill some of the gaps in the narrative of the scroll, even though there are unclear parts. Kṣetra-kāryam cūruna mainly describes the circumstances leading to the closure of the temple during this period and since the temple was a politico-economic institution, incidents within the four walls of the temple were directly linked to the political conditions in Vēṇāḍ. The incidents also reveal the interlinkages between ideology and society as the temple practices often were the direct results of the general socio-economic conditions.

The first incident occurred in 848 K.E.; the Ponnin-sribeli procession could not be conducted as Perianambi found that the lamp and container of incense meant for the procession were missing from treasury. When the priest
went to the ruler (Aditya Varma) staying at Kalkuḷam and informed him about the incident, the prince cited a precedent of Sṛibeli being conducted without such an article being found, and told them to conduct the ceremony. The ruler sent a royal servant (Ānaival) along with the Nambis. However, one of the Vāriyam Neydassēri pōtti argued that until the missing articles were found, he would not come to the yōgam (and carry out his duties). His place was taken by Kupakkara pōtti who was the other Vāriyam, and the Sṛibeli was conducted.

The next day the Tirumēnikāval (chief guard of the shrine) was beaten up by Neydassēri pōtti for helping the Periyanambi to conduct the Sṛibeli ceremony. The kurup refused to carry out his functions, presumably in protest. Hence, the offerings and Sṛibeli were once again stopped and the temple was closed down. The Vēṇād prince Aditya Varma (Chiravāy senior prince) and the princes of Attingal (of Āyilyam star) instructed that the shrine be reopened after conducting 'Pasudānam' (gift of cow) and Punyāham (ritual oblation).

The above quarrels within the temple where one of the Vāriyam fought with others in the yōgam, show that the Vāriyam, the executive body of the yōgam was not functioning effectively anymore. It was the general practice of the temple not to conduct the routine offerings, if any essential
item in the treasury was missing. Here Aditya Varma and Attingal Rani violated the tradition of conducting the ceremonies and imposed direct supervision on the temple by sending an ānaivāl. Even after puja was resumed the Tirumēnikkāval refused to turn up as he did not get any redressal on the assault by Neydasseri. Neither the princes nor the yōgam bothered about his absence, as it was not the tradition once again to compensate for assault on non-brahmanas, and replaced him by another person. The latter was also dismissed as he allowed certain articles belonging to the Periyanambi to be taken out of the temple, which amounted to aiding a theft of temple property. Since, it was the service of Tirumēnikkāval to bring the lamp for Puja, no one else would bring it (until the yōgam met and found a solution), and no offerings could be conducted again. The last incident shows clearly the crucial position of specific services in the temple.

Unlike the previous instances, we do not hear about representatives of Dēşinganādu, and Trippāppūr supervising temple affairs, probably because Aditya Varma occupied both positions. Interestingly, the princes of Attingal played a direct role in managing temple affairs, which was a new development. Despite the recognition of Attingal as the mother's house, the male princes of Trippāppūr and Dēşinganādu were controlling the temple and during late
17th century, it was shared by the princes of Attingal. This was presumably because of the necessity of keeping the main lineage of Vēṇād alive, as the order of seniority had become complex because of adoptions and also because Aditya Varma himself was an adoptee.

The next important incident was the death of Aditya Varma in 852 K.S. and his burial at Tiruvattār. After the funeral ceremony, Umayammai, the junior princess of the Attingal, and two other princes called/members of the yōgam for Sri Padmanabha Temple and Śrīkarapam Palliyāti to Kalkulam and asked them to inspect the Karuvukaram collected at various Koyikkāls or residences of the princes. After removing the amount prescribed for royal expenses from the collected amount the remainder was brought to Sivagiri Karuvukarappura and kept under lock and key.

It is clear that the Karuvukaram was collected by the princes, but it appears that the temple official had also some authority over the amount collected. The Karuvukaram included a number of ornaments, and articles made of copper and bronze. Why the princes chose to keep them safe during this period by transferring them to Sivagiri has not been made clear.

After this, the princes came to Trivandrum and Ravi Varma immediately assumed Dēśingañād Mūppu at the Rāmanāmatham in Trivandrum Ravi Varma preferred not to go to Kallada
near Kollam, the traditional centre of Desinganadu family to assume seniority since it would cause delay. After that Ravi Varma proceeded to Trippappur to assume Trippappur Muppu. It is clear that he wanted to undergo the formal ceremonies of assuming seniority before another prince would think of challenging his right. However, events that took place during this period apparently delayed his accession for a while.

The princes wanted to resume the normal functioning of the temple which had been closed from 848 K.E. onwards. They entrusted the work of accounting for the income and expenditure of all adhikarams to the Karuvukarattil pillamār. The number of Karuvukaram accountants were now increased from five to six. Here, the adhikārams may denote the territorial divisions under Vēñād, though from the available evidence it is not clear when they came to be introduced since the Karuvukarattil pillamār were employed as tax collectors. It is possible that adhikārams did not denote temple lands alone but included all lands in a particular territorial unit. Strangely, enough later records for example from 860 K.E. when pūjas and ceremonies were completely restored to the temple, refer only to the older divisions Chūrikkals and Dēşams, and do not mention the term Adhikāram.

The Accountants were also ordered to prepare the accounts by Ilampēl Pandarathil, Idathara pōtti and other
landlords in the service of the sorūpams, and to frame Parrumurig i.e. documents showing the estimated income from their lands. Royal officials were sent by the princes for that purpose. This was resisted by the landlord families and they began to leave the services of Trippāppūr sorūpam and ran away to the east' i.e. the region of Neyyāttinkarai and Perakattāyvāli, to the east of Karamanai river.

Kerala Varma of Perakattāyvāli was not inclined to recognise Ravi Varma as the senior Tiruvati of Desinganāḍu and Trippāppūr. The conflict began probably from the adoption of Rāmakōil Panḍāla from Vallārappālī Kōvikkal of 847 K.E. referred to earlier, which was not recognised by Kerala Varma, Ilampēl Pandārathil and Edathara pōtti, previously attached to Trippāppūr sorūpam, probably deserted Trippāppūr in view of the order to assess their lands and fixed income for the overlords, the temple and ruler. The income must have been due as customary privilege of the overlords, and the exact reasons for their desertion is not stated in the records. It is possible that these two landlords regarded their services to Trippāppūr in various ways as sufficient to show their subservience and would not recognise any survey and assessment conducted in their lands. The orders were probably given by a prince and princess whom they did not consider as the legitimate authority. This was the result of the fragmentation of authority and problems of seniority due to adoptions and
and other arrangements among various branches. Whatever, be the reason, these two major landlords along with other accountants and landholders deserted their overlord and joined hands with Parakattayvali. They were joined by a prince of Elayedathu Sorupam, simply mentioned as 'Kottarakkarai Tampuran' as well as by the Karavukarattil Pillamār of Arukittam (six departments) and the accountants and Kuruppus of Kalkulam.

With the desertion of the accountants and chiefs attached to Trippappur, the Parakattayvali, and Elayedam prince could easily occupy Kalkulam. A certain Kaḻakātta Chidambaranātha Pillai from Tamil country also joined them with this cavalry and infantry. This is one of the first instances where the Tamil forces under their local chief joined the vēnād chiefs in their internecine wars. During the same year, 852 K.E. the Nānjinādu Nāṭṭar complained about the destruction caused by Nayaka armies, the soldiers of Chidambaranātha Pillai might have caused the trouble.15 The combined forces moved to Neyyattinkarai and set up a fort there, which meant that the political nucleus of Trippappur princes, Tiruvitāmkōḍu and the surrounding regions, were completely in the hands of the 'rebel' forces. Ravi Varma and the princess were left with Attingal and Trivandrum temple.

Ravi Varma tried to check the rebel advance at Kara-
manai but was defeated and the combined forces entered
Trivandrum. They advanced to Kunthallur and Edakkodu near Attingal and camped there. Ravi Varma and the Attingal junior princes escaped to Varkallay. During the confusion, the godown that stored Karuvukaram at Sivagiri was destroyed; its contents were robbed. Then the course of events took an important turn. The senior princess of Attingal who was settled at Avanacheri came down to Attingal as a result of the political disturbances. For Kerala Varma, the major issue was the privilege enjoyed by Ravi Varma and Attingal junior princess and not the position of the senior princess, who was a mother figure to all the branches, next in importance to the deceased Aditya Varma. This was due to the mutual adoption and ties among the branches. The conquest of Attingal would have also meant that the roots of their own family were being attacked, which would have been an infringement on customary privileges. Hence it appears that Kerala Varma and his forces never proceeded from Kunthallur and Edakkodu, and the Kottarakkara prince went to negotiate with the senior princess. The actual nature of the settlement is not mentioned in the documents. It appears that Attingal senior princess along with Ravi Varma as well as Kerala Varma retained their respective positions.

Even while the disturbances were continuing, Kerala Varma who came for a pilgrimage from Northern Kerala was adopted into Vennad family and was allotted the Ranasinganallur Kovikka. The adoption was obviously to strengthen
the Attingal branch. The authority exercised by this prince at Rānasigannallūr was only nominal as the area was under the rebel forces. There is also reference to a Pulakkettu Tirukalyānam of the two princesses of Attingal family, which indicated that the territory of Attingal was considered free of danger from the rebels.

Meanwhile, the Attingal senior princes and Kottarakkarai prince called together the leaders of the rebel forces. Kerala Varma of Pērakattāyvāli, one of the leaders, was given a share of the income of Trippāppūr as Yappiyakkūru (ownership privilege) clearly the Attingal senior princess refused to entertain the claims of the prince of Pērakattāyvāli on the basis of his earlier connection but was forced to concede him a share of the privilege enjoyed by the ruling family, with which he was apparently satisfied. Another Yappiyakkūru had been given to Pērakattāyvāli earlier in 810 K.E. and the present one was considered as an addition to earlier grant, thus increasing the influence of Pērakattāyvāli over the region. Ilampēl Pandārathil was also called to Trivandrum and the obstruction on his lands and gardens were removed. During 856 K.E. one prince Rama Varma was allotted apparently could not assume the position of Trippāppūr senior prince immediately.

It was only in 859 K.E. that Ravi Varma could become the senior Tiruvati of Trippāppūr. While assuming seniority, the following persons accompanied the princes:-
1) Randuveettill Pillamār (accountants of two houses)
2) Ilampēl Pandārathil, 3) Kulathūr Kālikāli, 4) Kalakkūttathu Kanakkku Perumāl Kandan, and 5) Pakottu Kanakkku Ayyappan Ayyappan. This shows that a rapprochement
between the landlords under Trippappūr and the princes preceded the assumption of seniority by Ravi Varma. This presents another feature of customary relations, that for a prince to assume seniority in a royal branch it was necessary to ensure that he got the services of the landlords and militia traditionally attached to the Sorūpan.

The political events between 848 K.E. and 859 K.E. show clearly that traditional forms of establishing royal authority were being seriously challenged by the newly developing political forces, including members of other branches of the royal family and the intermediary landlords. The southern part of Vēnād, including the entire Kanyakumari region and the parts to the south of Trivandrum were being controlled by the intermediaries. At the same time, even the rebels did not question the authority of the 'Ammaveedu' i.e. Attingal princesses which resulted in the political truce that was arrived at between Keralavarma and the main branches of Vēnād royal family. The political truce also involved a redistribution of the resources coming to the royal family, as shown by the royal order allotting the income from various lands in different parts of Venad to Kerala Varma. Similar allotments were made to other princes also. Even after the political truce, fragmentation of royal landholdings and the growth of non-brāhmana landlords reduced the authority of the Vēnād Chief to the minimum. The customary authority vested in the senior princes could
not be exercised because of the tenuous relations among
the branches of Vēnād family.

III

The conflicts during this period are also reflected
in the temple affairs. The Padmanabha temple was a
politico-economic institution and its survival as the supreme
royal temple also depended on the sustenance of the custo-
mary land relations as well as the acceptance of the
customary network of service obligations and authority within
the temple. The Political crisis was reflected in the
crisis in temple administration. As we saw earlier, all
the Pujaś had been stopped between 848 K.E. and 851 K.E.
and one indirect reason for the conflict was the efforts by
Vēnād prince to resume the temple offerings. The temple
authorities began to interpret various occurrences as
supernatural events that came as a result of the crisis in
temple affairs. For example, blood was noted in the southern
wall of the temple, which was was interpreted by the brahmanas
as due to divine anger, since the Attingal princess and
her relatives (probably Ravi Varma and Rama Varma) ordered
the Pujaś without informing the Desinganād branch and
'troubled' the temple servants in several ways. Hence the
brahmanas did not conduct the offerings.
There are also references to the appearance of snakes from time to time within the temple premises, also interpreted as bad omen by the brahmanas, but showing also that the temple was not functioning properly for quite some time. However, it should be assumed that the pujas began as soon as the hostilities were over, neither the brahmanas nor God himself had any reason for complaint as Ravi Varma himself was the senior Tiruvati of both Desinganad and Trippappur.

Even after the resumption of Pujas in the temple, normalcy could not restored in its administration. During 857 K.E. Athiyarai and Muttavilai were to become Variyam. Muttavilai Potti demanded the Karanakanakku to produce the accounts of the transfer of Variyam (Variapakaracha) Karanakanakku did not do so. Muttavilai Potti ordered that the accountant should not enter the temple premises and probably as a result, the transfer of Variyam did not take place. During 858 K.E. Neydasseri and Kupakkaraai were to become the Variyam. Muttavilai potti argued that only when his tenure was over that Neydasseri and Kupakkaraai could assume Variyam. This meant that the temple was functioning during this period without an executive body. For 24 days the regular offerings were not conducted in the temple. Ravi Varma of Trippappur intervened and ordered the accountant to arrange for the transfer of Variyam. The incident demonstrated the lack of understanding among the Yogakkar how much it had become subject to the accountants.
who wielded authority in the actual financial matters. Once again the authority of the yogam inside the temple was superseded by the political authority of the ruler.

In 857 K.S. itself a quarrel between a Sevugam of Chiravāy senior prince and a disciple of the Pushpanjali-swāmiyar was recorded. The Sevugam accused the Swāmiyar of stealing gold from the temple treasury. The allegation was probably correct as the swāmiyar ran away from Trivandrum to 'the east' and efforts to trace him failed. The failure was due to a 'Purushāram' (literally the mob) in the Neyyattinkara fort, consisting of Pillāmar and Kuruppus. This appears to be a reference to a meeting or an assembly. It is possible that the Pillāmar and Kuruppus were protecting the swāmiyar. This record also mentioned the 'Pilgrim' Kerala Varma who was adopted into Trippappūr, as being presented in the place of assembly, the exact reasons for which are unclear. It may be that Kerala Varma was negotiating with the rebel forces, as well as establishing the titular authority of Vēṇād princes over the rebel regions, in his capacity as the junior prince of Eraniel. The incident demonstrated that despite the princes holding Kalkuḷam, their actual authority was weak. This also illustrates the decline in the authority of temple, as such a temple robbery would not have gone unpunished a century before.
The robbery also indicated along with the quarrels within the yogam, that the administration of Padmanabha temple had broken down, almost entirely. From the third day of the robbery, all the offerings were stopped and the shrine was closed down. This situation apparently continued for two years, until 859 K.E. Difficulties in the temple were further aggravated by the death of the two major priests, Periyanambi and Panchagavvattu Nambi. However, the Attingal junior princess and Ravi Varma tried to get the temple reopened and offerings resumed during 859 K.E.

It appears that during this period, when the regular offerings in the Padmanabha temple were suspended, special offerings by kings were being conducted by Tantri Tarananallur Nambi. One such ceremony was for the birthday of Virakerala Varma of Pōrakattayvali at Kalkulam Devarappura which meant that Virakerala Varma still retained considerable hold over Kalkulam. As there was no heirs in the house of Tarananallur, Cheruvalli Nambi was made Tarananallur, by adoption. The new Tarananallur Nambi was apparently not acceptable to the brahmanas for conducting the required functions for reopening the temple. The reason for the objection by the temple authorities are unclear. One probability hinted in the documents was that the Nambi conducted ceremonies during the birthday of Keralavarma of Pōrakattayvali.
Conducting birthday ceremonies seem to have been the privileges granted only to the direct overlords of the temple and the yogam did not recognise Keralavarma of Përakattâyali as the overlord. There appears to be another reason also. Cheruvalli Nambi was adopted to become Taranaṉallur Nambi under the persuasion of the 'sorūpi gal' i.e. the accountants and the Madampis, who made war against ēttingal junior princes earlier. The temple might have feared that the Nambi would use his position for the benefit of these landlords. Finally the yogam decided to appoint a Nārāyaṇa-mangalattu Nambi as Tantri for reopening the temple.

Similarly, a new Pushpānjali Swāmiyar and periyanambi were appointed.

The crisis within the temple still remained unresolved and it was reflected in the political situation also. The panchadēsi brahmans, servants of the Padmanabha temple, were opposed to the Navagrahapūja to be conducted by the new Tantri, Nārāyaṇa Mangalathu nambi. They wanted it to be conducted by the newly appointed Periyanambi, or they would not allow the offering to be conducted at all. We have already seen that the appointment of Nārāyaṇamangalam itself was controversial, which might have provoked this situation. The temple authorities tried to reason with the brahmans, but there was no compromise. The removal of Cheruvalli Nambi adopted as Taranaṉallur must have angered the Sorūpi landlords also. We have references to
the 'Sorupis' assembling along with a large band of Nāḍārs, which appears to be a kind of collective action once again, probably in support of the Desi brāhmanas. As a result, Attingal princess and Ravi Varma took refuge in Matilakam i.e. the premises of the Padmanabha temple. However, Navagrahapūja could not be conducted. There is a reference that the princes and Ravi Varma were staying in Matilakam without having their Amrathēthu (royal feeding) the significance of which is not clear.

It is difficult to reconstruct the picture between 858 K.E. and 860 K.E. It appears that the problems were resolved during this period, probably by the ānāpyivāl of the princes capturing the brāhmanas who led the revolt, and the princes themselves organising the offering with the loyal bāhmans. During 860 K.E. preparations were being made for the Alpasi festival the major festival in honour of the ruler. The vōgam was being convened and fresh appointments were made for Karapakanakkku and Sri-pandārakanakkku. Appointment these accountants from the same family as the previous accountant had become a customary procedure, which is shown by the appointment of Sri-pandārakaakku during this time. A new Pushpānjali Swāmiyar and priests were also appointed. Privileges held by the six accountants of the karuvukaram had also become customary, as shown by the adakkuvathu being paid to them on these appointments23 offerings were probably resumed from 88 K.E. The situation of the temple lands
During this period is indicated by a document recording an order by the princess to the Srpepdarakaryam Cheyur of Kanchipuramkonam Matham to conduct the 'Palpavasam' offering in the temple. Apart from this they were also presumably under instructions to conduct offerings during Asvati start of the month of Paingudi, which appears to have been the birthday of the princess. The total amount for the expenses was calculated in cash which included the Otti aratham on several lands. This might be an indication that the temple started large scale mortgage of lands in order to realise the cash for conducting the expenses. Many of which were being enjoyed by the landlords and accountants. There are other documents from the same period mentioning the Malpathi due from Kusavurkal Edavagai (presumably) held by relatives, and the pattam due from Mampalli Pandarathil. At the same time the old practice of assigning the Cherikkal lands as Teerpu and pattam for temple servants had not been changed. However, this practice did not have a real impact, as they themselves depended on and the income from the mortgaged lands from large scale pattam holders. During the long years of confusion when the landlords, accountants and even the brhamanas were rebellious, rent collection would have been virtually impossible even if the yogam had decided to reopen the temple.

During the next year, 861 K.E. the temple had again to be closed down for a while because a section caught fire. To the medieval mind, fire in the temple would
have signified a dark period, as in the case of the oozing of blood and seeing serpents that were mentioned before. The discussion above shows that the 'dark period' was as much the result of the crisis within the temple as the political situation outside and provided the starting point for the general turbulent situation that prevailed in the region during the turn of 18th century. The above discussion also reveals the interlinkages among the activities of the princes, the nobles and the temple. The intermediaries had become powerful enough to get a brāhmana adopted as Tarananallur Nambi, later they combined with the Deśi brāhmanas and intervened in temple affairs, and the situation clearly developed into a political conflict between the landlords and the Vēnād princes, who sought to protect the interests of the temple administrations. The intensity of the conflict can be judged from the fact that the princes had to seek asylum in Matilakam. Thus, internal quarrels within the temple could develop into serious political affairs, under the existing conditions.

IV

The problems faced by the Nāttār of Nānjinādu after Tirumalai Nayaka's invasions were indicated in Section I. There is no direct evidence on the state affairs in Nānjinādu between 848 and 860 K.E. but it can be safely assumed that the Vēnād rulers were unable to exercise direct control over Nānjinādu during this period. After the occupation
of Kalkulam by rebel forces and the continuing authority that they exercised over the area, the peasants of Nanjinadu did not have an effective overlord for a long time. We have references to Rajakaram collected but the princes collecting the dues are not mentioned. Land transactions were going on independently of the approval of the overlord. During this period, Nanjinadu had to face the yearly invasions of the Nayaka mercenary armies, basically intended to forcibly collect the dues on land from Nanjinadu, but always involved plundering of crops. Another raid was by a Muslim mercenary, i.e. The 'Mukilappaดา' in which the soldiers of the princess of Attingal and Kerala Varra of Eraniel Koyikkal fought. The documents indicate that the Vénad princess were powerless to prevent any such plundering raid from upsetting the conditions of the people of Nanjinadu.

During the later half of 17th century, agricultural operations in Nanjinadu were apparently in a state of disorder. A document inscribed in Vadáseri and Idarayakudi during 873 K.E describes the various concessions and remittances made by the King to the people of Nanjinadu during 870 K.E. The decisions included:-

a) The arrears of 2 kár crops and 13 pisānam crops were due between 847 K.E. and 867 K.E/remitted. This indicates that the King's customary share was not being collected properly during the time. The payment of 'Rajakaram' itself seems to have been nominal.
b) The claims for the dues Aniāli, Kuttagai, Kottai, Pativu, Kānikkai, castor oil for torches, Kachchayāvina (payment in cloth) and presents of paddy during birthdays of princes were also remitted.

c) As boxes containing the Olai documents (containing deeds for their landholdings) were lost by the people, if anybody was found in possession of a document, it should be destroyed. The documents were probably lost as a result of the mercenary raids. This instruction was clearly meant to prevent people from producing false documents and claim lands. This also indicates that the situation in Nanjanādu, had deteriorated to such an extent that the rights of cultivators to lands themselves were under suspicion. Since most of the landholders were lease holders or mortgages, loss of that title would mean that the could be arbitrarily evicted or lands could be appropriated by a false claimant.

d) The documents pertaining to the karaipulli and Kānivyatai tenures were to be in force. This instruction was to safeguard the interest of the powerful group of landed proprietors.

e) Documents brought by persons other than the rightful owner of the land were not valid. This clause was included because of the circumstances mentioned in (c).

f) Fattam and Mēlvāram on all lands shall be levied only in paddy. It was not to be paid or demanded in money at
commutation rates. This probably indicates a shortage of money supply which caused by plunder or due to the shortage of cash reserves with merchants and temples.

g) As Umhavam palisai could not be realised on Padukalam lands and Kadانmuri, it was not to be demanded. This is a curious instruction with regard to lands pawned or held as a loan and the lands held on yearly interest to be realised by the person who was the original holder. It appears that the debtors could not pay the interest because of the prevalent conditions and hence it was stipulated that they would not be demanded. However, the document does not clarify whether this was applied to all forms of Padukalam and loans, or only to those given by the representatives of the king.

h) TanITTendam and Cuvukanikkai, two extra cesses would not be demanded. Collections of extra cesses had become subject of dispute earlier also.

i) If the Ulpattil (i.e. fields) in Sanketaparru and Perumparru were kept under distraint, then the obstruction was removed. This was carried out by the royal representatives, and the practice is mentioned in earlier documents also.

j) For the debts (presumably meaning arrears) incurred by men of the Sanketam lands, they should be adjusted along with the payment of the Melvaram and the lands were not to
be distrained.

K) For Melvaram and Pattam, the kuri for that year and the Talalikkuri (the original document showing the amount due) should be shown for obtaining fresh receipt.

1) If the royal representatives were visiting the area, then 12 Nāli of paddy should be given for the expenses of a brahmana and nine nāli for a non-brahman. The last entry indicates that the royal representatives might have demanded arbitrary payments from the local people for their maintenance, and how this was being regulated.

The problems faced by the people of Nanjinādu obviously did not arise out of the Nayaka raids alone, but also from royal servants of Vēnād also. Nayaka raids aggravated the situation, and the crucial indication of the crisis appears to be the inability of Nanjinādu cultivators to commute their rent into cash. As noted earlier, the land transactions of the merchants of Kottār, Ālūr, and other places, and the numerous Otti transactions along with the garden crop areas, enabled the cultivator to pay rent in cash, but by 870 K.E. this was no longer possible. The instructions given above also indicate that a number of landholders lost their rights over land either, due to the mercenary raids, or they had to forfeit their lands as they were unable to pay the rent arrears. Excessive demands from the rulers and intermediaries also increased their burden, and numerous independent landholders might have become dependent
on the intermediaries.

The instructions of the Vēṇād prince to alleviate the situation were not effective, if one is to judge from an Oppuravu Moli Īlaī by Nānjinādu Nāttār five years later (878 K.B.). The document lists several grievances of the Nānjinādu Nāttār. It again mentions the attacks of the "armies from the East" and the imposition of Rājakaram (probably as a military levy). The other grievances mentioned are:

1) The royal representatives were appropriating the property i.e. Karaipulli Kaniyāṭtci held by the Nāttār. As seen Kaniyāṭtci were proprietary holdings and the royal representatives trying to appropriate them was held as an infringement on the right to possess lands by the Nāttār.

2) They were harassing the Nāttār by producing forged Padukalam documents and forcing them to pay. As we saw earlier Padukalam deeds had become a common means appropriating of land, which were clearly being used for the benefit of the royal servants.

3) Similarly, it appears that Rājakaram was being consolidated into loan deeds (Kadanmurus) and the royal servants were preventing cultivation and harvest if the Rājakaram was not paid according to the bond.

4) The artham for Chittotti and Chōra Otti were demanded again. This must be applicable to lands leased out
as Okti by the royal servants.

5) General harassment of the property, the family and the Paraiyar bondmen of the Nāttār by the royal servants.

After citing all these forms of harassment, the Nāttār assembly stipulated that if any person, Village or Pidāgai (hamlet) was affected by such outrages, then they should report it in a common forum. From there all the Pidāgaīs would be informed of the matter and representatives from the Pidāgaīs would collect and decide on the matter. Years earlier the people of Alagiyapandiyyapuram Pidāgai protested in a similar fashion, but now such protests acquired a generalised form, any outrage being met by the collective action of the Nāttār as a whole.

The breakdown of the royal regulations and the decision of the Nāttār to take matters into their hands showed once again that the effective authority of the king had broken down and also the fact that the princes were absolutely dependent on the Pillaimūr and figures like Ilampēl Pandāratthil, who also had a landholdings in Nānjinādu. Hence, the protest of the Nanjinadu Nāttār was against a royal family which could not rule in the customary way and the representatives who had broken customary relations even with their own overlord.

The raids by Nayakas into Nānjinādu continued during the period of Mangammal of Madurai from 892 K.E. It is very difficult to determine how many of these raids were actually initiated by her. For instance, the raid by
Dalavai Narasappayya may have been such an invasion, but the raids mentioned by Nāttār of Nānjinādu from Srinivasapāku, Peddareddy, Anantōji Nāyaka etc, were apparently unauthorised by the Nayakas. One example/the raid by Anantōji Nāyaka. He camped at Muppandal and robbed the entire region to the east of Tālakkudi. When the Nāttār of Nānjinādu represented to the Venād prince, the prince denied any connection with it. He also expressed his powerlessness to stop these raids and requested the Nāttār to take care of themselves and remove the impediments created by the raid. Incidentally, the document was drafted by a Kaṇakku thampi Raman Raman who might have been the royal accountant for Nānjinādu.30

Such raids provided further excuses for the princes and their representatives to impose further dues. The response by the Nāttār came in the form of another series of joint declarations (Opparuva Moli Ḫla) one example being the document found from Isāntimangalam.31 The document, drawn up in 894 K.E. gives the following details:

a) After 882 K.E. Nānjinādu was subjected to plundering raids every year with horses and soldiers, and collected excessive taxes - even Devadānam, Brahmadéyam, Mānipam and Maṭappuram lands were excessively taxed with the result that offerings in temples were stopped.

b) The robbing of the cattle by Sreenivasarāku and by another person called Fērāṭṭiyān (peddareddi) who robbed
c) Plundering raid by Anantoji Nayakka who carried away cattle, paddy seeds and even ornaments that women wore.

d) Plundering and burning of Suchindram Sānkētam and the resultant impoverishment of Suchindram and Āsramam.

e) Robbing shops and market places in several areas.

In all these incidents, the Kāryakkār appointed by the King and Sorūpājanāngal (Sorūpigal, i.e. Mādampīs and accountants) did not try to remedy the grievances of the Nāttār. Hence the Nāttār decided to abstain from cultivating their lands from 892 Kār onwards and to resume cultivation only if the officials remedied their grievances.

The above document brings out some other points also:

1) The plunder of the Suchindram sānkētam by the raiding troops indicates the breakdown of the ritual 'Sanctity' of the temple holdings, which was already eroding during the previous decades.

2) The reference to Pillaimār appointed as Kāryākkār by the Venad king and the Sorūpājanāngal shows that at least from the point of view of the Nāttār, the Pillaimār had been acquiring as much importance as the princes in the affairs regarding Nānjinādu.

3) Though not stated explicitly, the marauding raids
were supplemented by incursions of the Vēnād soldiers themselves.

The above discussion shows that by the early decades of the 18th century, Nānjinādu had practically slipped out of the control of Vēnād, and the Nattār of Nānjinādu had developed into a powerful organisation that assumed the role of protecting the interests of the landholders. Customary practice of realisation of the share of the produce and other obligations had come to a standstill, and conflict between the intermediaries and the Nattār had completely disrupted the economic activity of Nānjinādu.

V

The political instability in Vēnād, combined with the disruption of economic activity in Nānjinādu provided the background for the events that took place towards the end of 17th and the beginning of 18th century.

The course of political events in Vēnād after 860 K.E. is rather hazy. Kerala Varma who was adopted into the Vēnād family and was probably responsible for the rapprochement between Pillaimār and Vēnād princes, seems to have played a crucial role in later politics. He was apparently responsible for the banning of the customs, Mannāppādi and Pulappādi in 871 K.E.32 since the customs affected Nāyar women, the ban appears to have been due to the pressure
of the Madampis; yet, Kerala Varma was murdered by the Pillaimār. Although Kerala Varma role was more than of negotiator and in fact, was not against their interests, Pillaimār seem to have been instigated by the fact that he belonged to Eraniel Kōyikkal and could have been a threat to the autonomous positions enjoyed by the Pillaimār. To them he was not only a adoptee, but an outsider and by eliminating him, the possibility of another adoptee becoming the senior Tiruvadī of Vēnād could be avoided. This might be also in the interests of other princes of Vēnād, who claimed more direct lineage.

Some light on this affair is thrown by a document describing the Paditharam on the visit of prince Aditya Varma to Suchindram temple in 871 K.E., which adds to the complications regarding the order of succession during this period. The document first refers to the visit of Kerala Varma, the Chiravāy Senior prince in 871 K.E., to Elayēdattu Sorūpam to deal with 'matters' arising there and his subsequent abnormal death. This Kerala Varma was presumably the same as Kerala Varma who came as the pilgrim, it is possible that Kerala Varma’s selection as the Chiravāy senior prince was controversial as Ravi Varma, who had earlier assumed the Muppu of Trippāppūr and Dēsīnānādu, was another claimant for the title. Elayēdattu Sorūpam probably challenged the authority of Kerala Varma, and the death of the latter was probably a consequence of the
controversy. Aditya Varma of Kolattunādu, who did the ancestral rites for Kerala Varma probably succeeded him and he visited Suchindram temple in 871 K.E. If this is correct, then Aditya Varma was probably in Venad from 871 K.E. to 896 K.E. Rama Varma became the Senior Prince Chiray in 896 K.E. The accession also increased the problems regarding the order of succession within Venād family. In 863 K.E. there were a series of adoptions from Kolattunādu initiated by Vira Iravi Avani Pillayar (Umayammal Rani) when at least five princes and princesses were adopted into Trippāppūr family.

Aditya Varma seems to have by passed several other claimants as there are references to other princes from Trippāppūr and Desinganād during the same period. One Dēsinganād prince is mentioned as approving an adoption into Karuvai Illam holding Urānmai over Padmanabha temple. Ravi Varma who became Trippāppūr Māppu in 859 K.E. apparently continued in the same position in 880 K.E.

Confusion in political authority had resulted in almost total anarchy in the economic affairs of the region. Several instances of robberies are reported from various parts of Venad. One of them was from the Padmanabha temple on 877 K.E. when the Srībhandāram kept in the southern chamber of the temple were taken away by the royal servants. The temple
treasury included cash. The Sriveli Tiruvutampu (idol taken in the Sriveli procession) and an idol of Bhūmidevi. 38 The tevāri of the Vēnād prince offered to recover the valuables for the temple failing which, agreed to compensate by making another idol of Bhūmidevi for the temple. Another instance was that of the prince of Kunnimmel Klayādam robbing the temple lands including Vempāykuṇram and Talaiyāṟṟumalai in 891 K.E. and obstructing the lands from being cultivated (Dēsattadai). 39 It appears that Karakulattu Pillai, one of the landlords was also involved in this act and both the prince and the pillai were made to do Prāyaschittam for their offence. 40 In 894 K.E. Aditya Varma of Chiravāy and Unnikkerala Varma of Dēsinganād offered to compensate for the destruction of the Sankētam lands by granting Dēsams providing 12000 paṇam per year, elephants and labourers (ālādiyār). The provisions made were reminiscent of the Karuvakettu made by Vēnād princes more than hundred years earlier. It appears that the Prāyaschittam of 12000 paṇam was for the period between 808 K.E. and 894 K.E., i.e. throughout this period, intrusions into temple lands went uncompensated. 41

The robberies of the temple lands and the temple treasury in which the landlords, princes and even the temple managers provide a clear picture of the state of anarchy that that prevailed in Vēnād. The state of anarchy was not the contribution of a few rebel landlords as the historians of
of this period have believed so far, but the result of the breakdown of the customary overlordship of the temple and the Vēnād royal family. The anarchy could thus be seen as due to the Collapse of Kiliyakkam or Kilmarivadaip the conditions of service obligations to the overlord, which had so far resulted the politico-economic relations in Venad. In the case of Vēnād royal family itself, the breakdown of Kiliyakkam is demonstrated by the position assumed by Kerala Varma and Aditya Varma, who though adopted apparently from a different family bypassed the regular members of different branches of the ruling family. Even the relations between the princes and the temple had become strained as the princes did little to protect the temple lands from robberies and did not even compensate the damages caused.

VI

It may be useful to have an overview of the politico-economic conditions in Vēnād during the early decades of 18th century. The crisis affected the economic transactions during this period. As royal protection and divine authority of temples proved insufficient for the landholders, they had to resort to different methods for maintaining their holdings. One feature that was developing in Nānji-nādu has been noted before that most of the land grants that
were made to shrines or Madhams were left in the protection of Urār or Gramattār, i.e. the major land owners of the village. Usually the grants during seventeenth century were made with an appeal to brahmanical retributions, i.e. those who violated the grant would incur the sin of a person who killed a milch cow on the banks of Ganga without invoking the protection of the village assembly or groups of landholders. However, this appeal to Mahāpātakas proved insufficient in the protection of the grant and hence the recourse to the protection by the village. The Urār of the village, the dharmabhaktā and the Pandāram (treasurer) of the Matham were made in charge of grant. A grant by an accountant of Kadigaipattinam for feeding brahmanas was entrusted as brahmāsvam to the village of Tiruvitaikkōdu and Kaninjānkōdu.

This form of protection was the product of the uncertainty that prevailed during the period, when the landholders of Nanjindū were not free from the raids of armies from Tamilnadu or royal representatives. One interesting record of 867 K.E. mentioned that the Śāliya or weaver community of Bhūtappāndi (called Śāliyanagarattār) were protected by the temple of Bhuttappandi. It appears that the Śāliyar were forced to make pledges of property, presumably to the royal representatives or to the temple, when offences were committed by them. There was also the practice of receiving Al-panayam i.e. giving oneself as
pledge, a form of bondage redemption was granted to the cases of ṛṭi-panayam by the temple.

In the Trivandrum temple, the earlier arrangements for the collection of rent seems to have continued during this period also, with one modification that has already been noted, that Teerpū and pāttam holders began to be appointed for each Dēsam. Another change was also taking place, that the actual management of the Dēsam was not with the brāhmaṇas but with the Pillaimār. A scuffle in Rājkākkamanagalam during 892 K.Ś. would be illustrative. Misdeeds were committed by a certain Perūr Kālakutti Ariyakkutti of Rājkākkamanagalam. The Pillaimār of the Desam destroyed his house. Kālakutti Ariyakkutti collected people and destroyed the Teruvu (main street, where the shops were located) of Rājkākkamanagalam as well as several houses for which the Yögam imposed a Dendam on the person.45 Thus the Pillaimār were acting as the Manāhym. There was probably a second change also. During 895 K.Ś., Kulikkattu Kandan was given Udāmai for 24 years, as he was Teerpū and pāttam holder of Māṭhūr Dēsam.46 This meant that one person could hold a Dēsam as pāttam for prolonged periods, just as other Otti or pāttam tenures. Such assignments were slowly getting transformed into relations between the landlord and the tenant rather than an administrative arrangement, for the temple.

However, arrangements of the earlier kind were also used to some extent. During 894 K.Ś., as there was no money for conducting Karuvelamkulam Eliā, pāttam was received from
lands allotted for Nityanadai expenses. During another occasion when Pūjai could not be conducted in 895 K.E., Periyanambi Arumanai Vishnu Krishnan took 1600 pañam as loan from the temple treasury. Similarly when Karuvēlakulam Pūjai stopped again in 895 K.E., arrangements for the Pūjai were to be conducted by four Teerpu and pāttam holders of the temple, along with their Talaichelavu.

We have already seen that differences had cropped up among the members of the yōgam, which made the Vārīyam practically disfunctional. During the early decades of the 18th century, many of the Urālar died and left no heirs, as in 894 K.E., when there were a number of adoptions into the Urālar family. The senior adoptees also became members of the yōgam, presumably in an effort to make the Urālar body functional. However, how far these appointments were able to restore the lost credibility of yōgam was another matter.

By the end of 17th century, merchants and money lenders (often they were the same, and they could be landholders also at the same time) had become important in this region. Their major centre was Kōttar, and there were bodies of merchants (Nagarattār)/Tāḷakudi, Ālūr and Ālagiyapāndiyapuram. Chālai had become an important bazaar near Padmanabha Temple and there are references to other Teruvu and Peruntheruvu. Merchants of Nānjinādu played an important role in the actions of Nānjinādu Nāttār. Even though direct
references to the activities of merchants in the main Vendd region are very few, there are indirect indications of pepper trade. Merchant companies from the West were drawn to the Kerala Coast by the flourishing pepper trade, which was presumably carried on independently by several merchants. It is recorded that the Dutch already had settlements at Tengapatanam and Kolam (Quilon) by 1684 K.E. and the British were given the choice of four places by the king of Travancore from where they could procure pepper, cinnamon and cardamom. They were "Maumbo Alee", "Anje Tengalee" (Anjengo), Perevevaroo (Paravur) and Viliñan. The British were allowed to set up their factor anywhere, and they finally chose Anjunço. An interesting document on the list of debts due to the factor of Anjengo, William Gifford in 1719 provides information regarding the pepper merchants dealing with the British. The list includes the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Amount due to William Gifford</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Olivan Channár</td>
<td>For money paid to him in part for 4 candy of pepper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Serriangure Cunjee Momee</td>
<td>For money paid to him in part for 11 candy of pepper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Andrew Gomez Niaccor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Olivan Channár</td>
<td>(Another debt, the amount unclear)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ignatio (Name incomplete)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Allyee Mercarr and Camelee Mercarr</td>
<td>For 50 candy of pepper with 325 panam per candy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Mauden Poola</td>
<td>For 50 candy of fine coire.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Canjee Mercarr and Condeel Mercarr
   - 12 new candy of pepper

9. Iloor Naranachar
   - 123 new candy of pepper

10. Chagarachar
    - (His name has been repeated several times and pepper was due from him).

11. Perumal Nayar
    - (Pepper due from him)

12. Domingo Naycar
    -

13. Narayana Chago of Mamply
    - (Pepper due)

14. Checanda Matrece and Cunjee Moma
    - (Pepper)

15. Namoradee Curriculum
    - (Pepper)

It is clear from the above list that merchants of pepper and other products from Vēṇād included Muslims, Shānār, Christians including Portuguese converts and probably some Nāyars. The major share of the trade was apparently held by Muslims, who sometimes held the title Maraccar. "Narayana Chago of Mamply" could be related to the Māmpallī family or he could be a native of the place called Māmpallī. Olivan Chānnār has been more than once in the list, which would imply that despite social degradation the Chānnār community enjoyed an important position as a powerful commercial group.

The record of William Gifford also indicates that the Factors of Anjengo entered into separate contracts with individual merchants, and the price of pepper also varied, e.g., from 280 paṇam per candy to 325 paṇam per candy. Part of the money was advanced to the merchant and once the merchant brought in the full supply according to the contract, the rest of the money was given. However, we have little corroborative evidence regarding the residence of the merchants and
their activities. It is possible that the activities of the merchants were around the region between Quilon and Chirayinkil in Trivandrum District, and the major source of pepper was around Quilon and the region held by Perakattayvalli. Reference to coir sold on a largescale indicates the growing of coconut and probably household production of coir from the same area. However, an interesting letter during 1687 K.S. to William Gifford at Port St. George from a Persian Tombee Mercaun, presumably a pepper merchant, shows that availability of rice was extremely poor in the West Coast "by reason of the present troubles" probably indicating the political situation between 1673 to 1685 A.D. 53

Evidence regarding land sales has already been mentioned in an earlier chapter. A number of land sales involved merchants, and the sales included the sale of labourers. It appears that sales of vilai (garden lands) and Manal (house sites) were more common than food crop areas. Such sales might have helped the growth of independent landholders, which included merchants, but there is nothing to indicate that such landholders had become powerful to replace the traditional landholders. In cash crop areas less affected by customary relations, sales might have been more effective in changing the nature of rights over land. Sales also indicated that a large section of labourers were bonded, and destitute cultivators sold themselves or their
family members. During the worsening political and economic conditions, the condition of the bondmen appear to have extremely poor.

The political and economic crisis of early 18th century was already transforming the agrarian relations, customary relations controlled by the temple, the brahmanas and the royal authority were slowly being replaced by permanent land-lord tenant relations between the intermediaries and the cultivators. The Nattar and Urar of southern Vēnād and Nānjinādu were landholders of the new type, and even in northern Vēnād, the Nāvar landlords who rose from the positions of military men and accountants were replacing the brahmanas the dominant agrarian class.

Another new element viz., the merchants was introduced into the economic relations during early 18th century when the Dutch and the English set up their trading centres along Vēnād coast. Documents left by the Western trading companies give a glimpse of the merchants in Venad also, and trade with the English and the Dutch was to become the crucial factor that guided the economic fortunes of Vēnād during 18th century.

VII

The last phase of the crisis in the traditional politico-economic system in Vēnād is represented by the period of Rama Varma (1722-1729 A.D.). The period of Rama Varma has been discussed in the histories of Travancore, where the
prince is referred to as a weak ruler at the mercy of the rebellious nobles, and as a person who sought the help of Tamil rulers to sustain his authority. The problems that Ramavarma faced developed due to a century of instability and it will be seen that his failure was the result of the traditional socio-economic relations which he was seeking to preserve.

Rama Varma became the Chiravāy senior prince at Timuvattār palace on 1st Panguṇī 896 K.E. We are not informed about the rank that he occupied within the seniority list for apparently, he did not have any contenders. It appears that his first action was to settle the complaints of Nānjinādu Nāttār who had suspended cultivation from 892 K.E. onwards. (see Section IV) The Neettu from the prince to the Nāttār of Nānjinādu gives the following details.

1) The horses and footmen (Irānu) from the east were removed from the Sevugam and sent back. We have already seen that one of the major complaints of the Nāttār was against the atrocities by the armies from the east. Now we have confirmation that these armies were in the service (Sevugam) of the prince themselves, being called in at their behest. The princes were perhaps seeking the help of the mercenary armies against the influence of the chiefs and Pillaimār, ever since they lost hold over the southern
part of Vēnād from the last decades of 17th century.
The inactivity of the royal officials which the Nāttār complained of was also due to this reason.

2) The Sorūpajanangal (i.e. the Mādamps and Pillaimār) were told to observe the customary practices (Kīlmariyadai) that prevailed earlier. Hence the people of Nānjinādu were asked to come back to their home and start cultivating immediately.

The second reference appears to mean that Rama Varma was able to establish a rapport with the landlords, which his predecessors Aditya Varma or Kerala Varma also failed to achieve. It is also clear that RamaVarma sought to restore the customary relations by preserving the Kīlmariyadai.

The prince was anxious that the Nāttār should resume cultivation as the prolonged non-cooperation of the Nāttār seem to have jeopardised the food supply of the region. The uncompromising attitude of the Nāttār which lasted for four years also displayed the inability of the Vēnād prince to intervene.

The prince also made a tour of the Nānjinādu region on the sixth of day of his assuming Mūppu. Rama Varma visited Bhūtappāndi and Dariṣanamkōppu where he listened to the complaints of the Nāttār of the area. The Nāttār complained that lands help as Karaippulli Kāniyātocci were seized by the intermediaries and they had to pay arrears as Kalpanakuri,
Anjālipanam, Kōtaippanam and Marakkālpanam. A variyōla was prepared on the arrears and read out to the prince. The Soñpajanangal who had accompanied the prince confirmed the document; The variyōla was probably made in order to remove arbitrary impositions of the intermediaries, while ensuring due payments of the actual dues. The prince ordered that the procedure of payments from Nānjinādu was to be according to the procedure followed before 837 K.E. 56

This reference taken along with the earlier instructions regarding the collection of rent according to the Kilmaryadal indicates that Rama Varma was envisaging a return to the situation that prevailed in Vēnād before the crisis that broke out during the later half of 17th century.

While he was settling the problems in Nānjinādu Rama Varma got into a serious conflict with the temple. As there was no money for conducting the Karuvelamkulampūja, the task of conducting the offering was assigned to the leaseholders of Nityanadai Chelavu Chērikkal from 895 K.E. onwards. 57 This provision was not as successful as expected, and one of the pattam holders did not provide for the expenses at all. 58 Hence, Saktimugams and Kuris for accounts (on the amount to be realised) were issued for raising funds from the Nityanadai Desams. Representatives of the temple went to different Desam, and the leaseholders and the accountants went to Vīranārāyanassēri for collecting the dues. 59
It appears that the cultivators in Viranārāyanassēri had to pay a Rajakaram for maintaining a cavalry in the area. The amount allotted for puja from Vāmpannūr in Viranārāyanassēri was ordered to be forcibly realised as Rajakaram. To this effect a Palliambu (royal order) was placed by the Anaivāl of the king on the village. Representatives of the Teerpu holders of Nityanādai Deśams, presumably the same people who were sent to collect the amount for Karuvēlamkulam offering, disobeyed the Palliambu and along with the Manushyam started getting the land cultivated. The officers of Rama Varma went to Viranārāyanassēri and tried, to seize the lands paying dues to the temple, in their effort to implement the royal order. This was resisted by the temple servants and in the resulting fight, the royal servants raided the temple lands and killed temple servants and labourers. The temple servants returned to Trivandrum, and hoisted a Rudhirakkūra (bloody flag) over the western Gōpuram of the temple. The yōgam was convened to discuss the situation.

Since the Rudhirakkūra was hoisted the temple servants would not carry out their normal duties until their grievances against the royal servants were redressed. The yōgam made a formal complaint to the king. As there was no response from Rama Varma, the yōgam instructed the Panchadēsi brāhmanas to go before the prince and begin
**Pattini Anyāvam** (Protest fast) do a maximum of 8 days.
The king would not still entertain their complaint and the temple servants suspended their fast after 3 days and returned to Trivandrum. The temple offerings had come to a standstill, as the Pattam holders of Nityanada desams, informed that they could not supply for the expenses of the pūjas even by taking loans.

Afterwards, the vōgakkār formally demanded from the prince to do Prāyaschittam for the injuries to temple servants at Vīranārā yaṇassēri as well as fulfil the agreement by his predecessor, Aditya Varma, to compensate in cash and kind the outrages on temple lands upto 894 K.Ś. Still there was no response from the king. The deadlock continued upto 897 Chingam 7, when the Vōgam themselves began Pattini. However, it appears that the second fasting also proved fruitless. Karuvelamkulam pūja, for which the conflict began, could not be conducted from 896 Karkatakam to 899 Makaram when it was resumed under the Vāriyam of Neydassēri and Kūpakkaraī. However, we have not been able to trace the exact sequence of events following the fasting by the vōgakkār and also, the actions of the king regarding this matter.

Conflict between the temple and the Vēnād prince was also related to the collection of rent and it occurred when both tried to collect their dues from the same region. We already saw that Rama Varma sent back the armies from the east, according to the promise to the Nattār of Nānjinādu
but later the tamil armies were called again and stationed at Kalkulam for which the Rajakaram was collected. The temple servants were collecting dues for Karuvelamkulam puja, which was similarly an additional cess. The prince obviously regarded as obligatory that all the inhabitants of the Dēsam should pay for the maintenance of the cavalry which was being objected to by the temple servants. However, one should note that the principle of such arbitrary realisations was regarded as customary from both sides.

A more important point from a political angle was that the prince turned a deaf ear to the Pattini by the Panchadēsis and Pattini by the yōgam, which meant that he refused to conduct the customary Prāyaschittam for the outrages committed in temple lands. This form of complete disregard to the dictates of the temple was unusual.

Here we have to examine the probable reasons that made Rama Varma adopt such a stand. It is clear that Rama Varma sought military help from outside to sustain his position in the area, and it is also possible that he was trying to influence the Chiefs and Pillamār who had become quite powerful. This meant that Rama Varma, at least during the period in which he became Mūppu was trying to enforce secular authority with the help of the militia and landlords, not seeking the "blessings" of the temple. The continuous use of mercenaries from the Tamil country by Vēnād prince may also be attributed to the total disintegration
of militia or 'Arisippadi Jenam' who had by now joined the Pillamar. This process may have started with the revolt of Keralavarma of Perakattuvalli. Apart from the group of accountants and tax collectors the princes could not mobilise their own personal guards and this function was slowly taken over by the Tamil soldiers, even though we are informed that the armies were sent back. It is possible that a many of them remained to become the followers of King.

Despite the instructions given by Rama Varma as soon as he came to power, the situation remained unstable in Nanjinadu, particularly due to fresh incursions by the Tamil armies. Reference is made to a certain Nayaka Appaiyan and an army that came from Trichinopoly. The army camped at Ithan Kattu Veli in Nanjinadu. The document mentioned that 'there was delay' in sending them back and the cultivation was disrupted in Nanjinadu.

During the same year or the year before one Sivasaila Mudali and his troops camped in Nanjinadu. In order to meet the expenses of the troops, the income from the Kār and piğanam crops of 897 K. proved insufficient. The king ordered an additional cess of 30 panam per ma on all lands, including Dēvadānam, Brahmadevam, Kandulavu and Tarisu (waste lands). The king and officers persisted in collecting the dues even when the Kār crop was destroyed in 898 K. The following dues were collected:
a) From those lands yielding \( \frac{1}{4} \) or \( \frac{1}{4} \)th of the total yield 125 pāṇam per kōttai was forcibly collected.

b) From lands giving Pātivāram double the amount was collected.

c) Paddy was collected from waste lands in Nallurvillipāṟṟu (in the Kandulavu lands).

d) From another land, from where pāttam was already collected and receipt given, fresh chitti was made by Turakkāraṇ and Pāttam demanded.

e) After the dues demanded by the King, Kōttaiippāṇam and Maṭṭālpanam were collected and entered into the accounts of the Karuvukarattil pillaimar, the Balawāy sent men to collect the money per each bond (Muri).

f) Lands given as private property (to various people) were seized again (by officials) and cultivated.

g) For sowing the kaṭṭukkarai Punjai lands after paying the Kadamaippāṇam, fresh pāttam was demanded.

h) One-fourth was forcibly demanded from the cultivation of Kār punjai in 898 K.E.

i) Kōṭṭaiippāṇam was demanded for Nāttadi lands from where paddy seeds, boiled rice, gold silver, bronze vessels etc., were plundered.

Apart from all these a certain Māthupillai and his men seized cattle, robbed paddy and seeds, and broke pots
carried by women at Darişanamkōppu.

The Nāttār of Nānjināḍu apparently sent seven persons to represent their grievances before the prince as well as the Pōttis, Panḍālai (probably Ilampēl Panḍarāṭhil as he was connected with Nānjināḍu) and Sorūpajananggal. But they took no steps to stop these excesses.

In protest against the excesses, the Nāttār stopped cultivation and assembled at Kaṟukkarai. Muthupillai, one Chirrāmbala pandārām and a hundred men surrounded the Nāttār and forcibly realised money. The village of Kaṟukkarai was plundered and the frightened people escaped to the hills.

Finally, the Nāttār assembled at Chempakarāman putuvūr Kalmadam, Aḷagiyapāndiyapuram and took the following decisions:

1) Kōṭṭaippānām for Ḫāṭtādī lands would not be given.

2) From 898 K.E. Pīsānam crop onwards the Nāttār would give only the Anjāḷī Mēḷvāram as was customary before. If excess taxes were demanded it would be resisted. Even if the Pīsānam yield is destroyed the Nāttār would preserve the privileges of the Nāḍu (Nāṭṭuṣṭhānam) by assembling and deserting the lands.

3) If anyone gave the excess taxes either by accepting Kaikkūli of 10 panam or betraying the Nāttār, he along with family and relatives would be punished.
4) Refers to an incident when the ambalakkārar were injured and killed as the Nāttār were assembling according to Nāttusthānam. It appears that the Nattar pledged that such outrages would be dealt according to Tānām, (custom of the Nādu).

5) If anyone from the villages or Pidāqais in Nāijnādu was subject to extortion or plunder then it would be compensated from the common stock.

6) When the people of both Nādu were moving away (migrating or leaving their houses and fields), if anyone fell into the hands of the tax collector accidentally and paid the taxes, he would also be subject to punishment of the Nādu.

7) This refers to an earlier instruction of the ruler at 896 K.E. where the grievances until the Pīśānam crop of 896 K.E. were rectified, the bronze trumpets and vessels given (recovered), the anjāli Mālvāram from 897 kār onwards collected according to the customary practices, all excess duties were remitted, and all punishments and arbitrations within the Nādu left to the Nāttār themselves. It appears that after this order, when the Nāttār enforced punishment of certain offenders, the king ordered the demolition of two houses in each Pidāqai presumably in retaliation. According to Nāttusthānam the Nāttār would requisition the prince, and if the ruler did not compensate for the lost, then the Nāttār would undertake the compensation.
8) If anyone from Nanjinādu agreed to become a soldier of the king, he would be punished. Here also an earlier order of the king where the Nanjinādu Nattār were given exemption from military service and a Ṛolā declaration by the Nattār are mentioned.

9) Those violating caste obligations would be punished.

10) If soldiers were camping in any villages, then either by informing the king or by withdrawing from the area en masse, the Nattār would try to prevent the soldiers from camping.

Finally the document was given brāhmanical sanctity by stating that those violating these decisions would incur the sin of killing a milch cow on the banks of Ganga and those observing the directions would attain the merit of granting a milch cow on the banks of Ganga. This statement was unusual in a text which was essentially composed by non-brāhmanas. It may, however, be surmised that destruction of brahmaswam lands and Suchindram Sankētam mentioned earlier, might have forced the brahmanas also to join hands with the Nattār.

The long list of excesses committed by the ruler and his representatives indicates that the concessions given in the orders of 896 K.E. and 898 K.E. were only temporary. The policy of the Trālar was soon reverted to demanding excess taxes on various lands. Excesses of Sivasailamudali
and by Muthupillai the people of Kadukkarai show that
mercenary armies were still at large, despite the promises
by the ruler. Similarly the ruler clearly interfered
in the customary trial and punishment by the Nāttār.
The strictures against these collaborating with the royal
representatives indirectly or directly and paying the
excess dues show that the royal representatives were able
to win over certain sections of the Nāttār by using threats
or promises.

The document gave another probable reason for the
reliance of Rama Varma on Tamil military forces, that the
Nāttār refused to render military service to the king.
The excess dues were levied because the king was desperately
trying to raise financial resources, perhaps because the
ruler was no longer getting his customary allotments from
the landlords and accountants.

The conditions of the times forced the king also
to collect dues arbitrarily even from temple lands, as
we saw in the case of Padmanabha temple lands, and from
a powerful community of land owners in Nanjinadu. This
practice resulted in the further alienation of the ruler
from the people.

Despite the defiant stand of the Nāttār of Nanjinadu
the royal policy towards the peasantry did not change.
Another document of 899 K.E. mentions that the armies from
the east were camping in three places: (a) Ithankätuvellī in Nānjinādu, (b) Vaḷakkampāra to the east of Suchindram river (c) Viravilai in Irāniya Singanallūr. Obviously they were being stationed in Nānjinādu inspite of the declaration that the Nāttār would not allow the armies to camp in Nanjinadu. We have also a reference to a reduction of Melvāram pāttām and Ubhayampalisa by 25% from 899 Piśānam crop. During the subsequent year (900 K.E.) we find that the armies of Alagappamudali were camping in Nānjinādu in Tiruppatisāram, Peruvilai and Chāliyamvilai on the eastern side of Rānasīnganallūr. There was also reference to fighting in Nānjinādu (from Mangalam to Manaṅkkuḍī). Clearly the rent was not paid by the Nāttār from 897 to 900 K.E., as shown by the reference to rent arrears. The army of Alagappamudali was also not an invading army but was requisitioned by Rama Varma himself to settle the problems he was facing. The documents indicate that the fighting presumably between the tamiḻ army and the Mādampic left the cultivation in Nānjinādu in complete disarray which might have led to a serious economic crisis in the entire Venad as the food crop supplies from Nānjinādu dwindled.

The situation had completely overturned the relations as well as obligations by each section of the society, and Rama Varma apparently was forced to become harsher in his bid to sustain himself as the ruler. In one example, the king sent 20 men to the salt pans of Rājākkamangalam to
collect and sell the salt. Traditionally, the right had
been held by the Trivandrum temple, and hence the four
temple servants protested to no avail. Then the Desingal
went to the place and demanded Turappanam (probably
charged over the sale of salt). The Maravar who were present
assaulted the Desingal. The brahmanas also received sword
injuries. The Manushyam went back and hoisted the red
flag in the Western Gopuram. It should be noted that
the normal place of Anavil and other royal servants were now
being taken over by the Maravar, who must have belonged to
the mercenary troops used by Rama Varma. Apart from the normal
conflict, the sight of the Maravar as royal servants was
probably to demeaning to the brahmanas, which appears to
have been one reason behind the flag hoisting, even though
nobody was apparently killed.

A Ninavu given to the Nattar on 899 K.S. shows Rama
Varma continued to charge special dues on Nanjinadu presumably for maintaining the crops. The king replied to a
representation by the Nattar, that for the Arisippadi chelavu
(presumably for the soliders) and some other expenses, six
panams per ma should be given to Panchangam Govinda Pillai.
Another document related to this mentions only this money
collection, clearly because Rama Varma was badly in need of
finances for maintaining the troops. The king apparently
sent two men as his representatives in the region, Kuppan
and Kalakuttipillai. In a later reminder, Rama Varma again promised that their grievances would be removed by him directly, but the dues demanded (presumably at the rate of six panam per mā) should be paid. The document was signed by Kanakkku Thampi Raman who was presumably the accountant for Nanjinadu (one of the Karuvukaram accountants). 69

The nature of relations between Nattar of Nanjinadu and the Vēnād ruler could be seen/ the desperate efforts, by Rama Varma to preserve his authority by recruiting Tamil mercenaries and by forcing the landholders to increase their payments in order to maintain the army. At the same time Rama Varma tried to placate the Nattar as well as the nobles of Vēnād, but it is clear that he was not successful in his efforts. His excessive demands were resisted by Nanjinadu Nattar as well as the authorities of the Padmanabha a temple, and the ruler could not contain the atrocities of the landholders who supported him.

The unsettled conditions were not only reflected in the activities of the ruler, and also by the incidents involving the temple authorities of landholders. In 998 K.C., there was a fight between the men of Kuppakkarai Potti and Mampalli Pandarathil. From then onwards Mampalli Pandarathil who had served the temple for generations as adhikaraṇa-dārtham could not enter the temple. It appears that Mampalli could enter the temple only after Martandavarma donated
an elephant as Prayaschittam in 921 K.E.

In a fight between two important landlords, Vanjimuttathu Pillai and Kudaman Pillai took place in Nellaman near the local temple, One Nampi Kannan went to Kudaman pillai and requested him not to destroy the Sanketam and the Pillai assured him that he would not do it. The request and the assurance once again indicate that robbing the temple lands was no longer considered a sacrilege. The nambi was probably doing the right thing, even though he incurred a fine of 2 panam for not consulting the yogam. 70

All this points to a period of turmoil in the region. The crisis is reflected in the correspondence of the factors of Anjengo. In a letter to Madras, William Gifford and other factors of Anjengo complained that there was difficulty in procuring pepper 'that trade being now being wholly lost except what is on your coast'. Similarly, very little grain could be procured by the factors of Anjengo from the west Coast. 71 The arrears due from the merchants to the factors of Anjengo according to the estimates left by William Gifford again point to the same conditions.

By about 900 K.E. king Rama Varma had practically no relations with the Padmanabha temple, as well as the landlords and chiefs, and was sustaining himself with the help of mercenary troops from Tamil country, the armies of
Alagappa Mudali was probably the last to be sent to Madurai. It might also be that Rama Varma entered into an agreement with the Madurai Nayaks agreeing to pay a tribute of Rs. 3,000 per year and the troops stationed in Nanjnadu were part of the agreement. However, the Tamil troops apparently did nothing to check the authority of the Pillamar, nor did these armies penetrate to the north of Kanyakumari District. Since the customary ‘Sevugam’ of the king had broken down, Rama Varma himself and to collect dues. There is nothing to show that he entered into a serious conflict with the Pillamar. It is possible that he had amicable relations with them.

An interesting and final incident took place in 903 K.E. Rama Varma, who had broken off connection with the temple for some time, came to Trivandrum, and did the necessary Prayaschittam required by the temple authorities. A Trikkalasam was conducted in the temple and an elephant was granted to the temple on that day. The king had been staying at Kalkulam and probably had never ventured north for years. The reason why this change of mind occurred are not clear. However, Rama Varma did not survive for long and by the next year, we find Martanda Varma assuming the Cheravay Muppoo.

The period of Rama Varma thus witnessed the last effort at maintaining the customary authority of the Venad ruler; This was attempted to be sustained by non-customary means, by the use of force and the help of mercenary armies.
There was an essential contradiction in the policy adopted by Rama Varma, his attempt to build a strong political centre was not backed up by basic changes in the socio-economic system. His efforts were resisted by all those sections that wielded influence in Vēnād society. His almost complete alienation from his own people was a demonstration of the incompatibility of the traditional system with the attempt to build a unified and centralised Government in Vēnād.

The history of Vēnād from the period of "Umayamma Rani" to Rama Varma has been recorded in both tradition and historical accounts as a period of crisis, characterised by the conflict that the Vēnād kings had with the Pillamar led by a group of chiefs called 'āttuveettill Pillamar'. It is not necessary to recount the romantic tales that have been woven around this conflict. The incidents recorded in the preceding pages might be useful in underlining certain features of the crisis, which do not conform to the accepted versions of the "conflict". The first is that we find certain clear stages in the evolution of the relations among the landlords, Vēnād princes and the temple authorities.

(a) The revolt or war against Ravi Varma and the Attingal princess (who has been without any clear basis, construed as a "regent" Queen, a term used without even trying to find out whether any such system of regency existed at all)
by the "sorūpical and Pillamār" was led by Kerala Varma of Perakattāyvazhi. However, by 860 K.E., many "rebels" Kerala returned to the fold of Trippāppūr branch; b) Kerala, the adopted prince from Kōlathunādu was killed. Here, there is nothing to show that those responsible for eliminating Kerala Varma were the same as those who participated in the earlier revolt. c) After the death of Kerala Varma, no serious conflict between the Pillamār and the Vēnād princes has been recorded. However, the acquisition of Tamil armies by the princes have been taken to be against the Pillamār. However, it is curious that these armies rarely ventured beyond Iraniel, and did not touch the areas of the Pillamār beyond Karamana river to the east and south of Trivandrum. It appears that Nānjinād was divided into Bhūtappāndī, Chōlapuram and Chēramangalam and representatives were posted to collect the dues during the early decades of 18th century. However, this arrangement was disrupted by the Pillamār during 898 K.E. 75

In the case of Rama Varma, he came in to open conflict with the temple, raiding its lands and collecting Rājakaram, and refusing to pay the compensation demanded by them. In this respect, he behaved just like any other landlord. This leads us to the suspicion that the prince was in fact so, protecting his own lands and dues, and staying in Kākulum. As pointed out earlier, the Tamil troops essentially subordinated
for his customary guards, who had all become landlords
or chiefs and were holding on to their possessions. This
would mean that an uneasy balance was existing among the
landlords, including the prince, and the fragmentation of
political authority was complete. Thus instead of conflict,
a picture of compromise and sharing of spoils emerged, where
the prince still held his ritual authority without any
political powers, and the "sorūpis and Pillaimār" under him
were in effect politically and economically autonomous.

This autonomy extended to Nanjinadu nāttār, who demanded
and claimed the right to determine the law and order in
their lands by themselves, but were subjected to raids and
plunder by Tamils as well as Vēnād landlords. The same
autonomy was enjoyed by the merchants also, who clearly
negotiated with the Anjengo factors on their own terms.
During the time of Aditya Varma and Rama Varma the kings
apparently did not try to establish closer trade links with
the British.

The crucial index of the nature of economic and political
fragmentation appear to be the temple lands. Continuous
inability of the Padmanabha Temple servants to conduct their
expenses from their own lands, shows the complete breakdown
of customary relations. It also underlines the bankruptcy
of the earlier form of land management, where the income
coming from various Desams were leased out to different
brahmanas. When the Desams themselves came under the control
of erstwhile 'accountants' and chiefs, the temple could not hope to gain much from them. The temple did not have the resources to enforce their demand on such areas. Hence they had to adjust with the income from areas directly under their control which was insufficient. The attitude of the princes, who were struggling to maintain their own bases, and hence could not have assisted the temple to restore its position, also added to the problems of the temple authorities.

The fragmentation of political authority, and the anarchic conditions must have resulted in a severe economic crisis also, indications of which were found in the comments by the Anjengo factors mentioned before. The most severe among the problems was the crisis in Nānjinādu, which was the major food crop region and supported the rest of Vēnād also. However, we have no direct evidence regarding the response of the ordinary man towards the crisis, except from Nānjinādu.

In this general picture, it would be difficult to discuss a crisis created by a small group of rebellious landlords, in fact there is very little to show that the Āṭṭuveettil Pillamār, whoever they were, acted as a cohesive group. The character of the families exterminated by Martanda Varma was heterogenous, as will be shown later. It would be more reasonable to surmise that the crisis was the result of the breakdown of customary hierarchial relations,
which sustained the society and economy of the region during medieval times. The fragmentation of the royal family, the nature of their succession and complexities created by the nature of adoption, rise of a new group of landlords from the earlier "companions" and confidants of the Kings - all played a role in accentuating the crisis. The more important feature was apprrently the lack of incentive from the customary landlords or the new landlords for innovations in the productive process and for an effort to look for new avenues for obtaining revenue. The temple, the princes and the landlords grilled the poor producer for their income without transforming their conditions. The incentive shown for agricultural expansion, which continued upto 16th century was now completely lost. The battle was between the force of custom and the force of military or social might; and toward s the end of this period even the princes were clearly resorting to military might to ensure their rights.

However, two communities have looked for different sources of income: merchants and cash crop producers. The merchants of Kottār had their textiles and land produce, including grains and the merchants of Attingal and Quilon, had pepper. The cash crop producers/their coconuts, pepper and other crops and as shown earlier the unsettled political conditions and the tolls charged by various chiefs including the Vēnād prince and the temples, affected their growth. However, we have very little material to trace
their history during this period basically because of the "upper caste" bias of the sources. Apart from the ordinary cultivators, these people also sought a way out of the crisis.
CHAPTER V

1. Almost all surveys of the history of Travancore, which are somewhat vague on the early history, give considerable attention to this period. They include P. Shungoony Menon, A History of Travancore (Trivandrum, 1878), T.K. Velu Pillai, Travancore State Manual Vol. II (Trivandrum 1940) A.F. Ibrahim Kunju, Rise of Travancore (Trivandrum, 1976), Pachu Moothathu, Tiruvitakur Charithram (Reprint, Ernakulam, 1985).


3. Ibid. (KSP Series 3) Document F 847 K.E.

4. Ibid. (KSP Series 4) Document E 843 K.E.

5. TAS VIII No. 50 pp. 8-9 No. 1 of 1104 1574 Saka Sra.

6. TAS V pp. 208-9, 810 K.E.

7. S. Desivinayagam Pillai, "Mudaliar Manuscripts" Doc. 4 (KSP Series VII) 832 K.E.

8. Ibid., Doc. 5, 830 K.E. (probably later document).

9. TAS VII No. 80 pp. 91-93 834 K.E.

10. PMM 0.96, 0.99, 0.102, 0.126 etc.

11. Ibid, 0.127 834 K.E.


13. Other documents that dealt with a 'narrative of the events of this period C.34/83 0.9-10, 848 K.E.; 0.12-13. 0 C742 0.29; 0.31-32 C 2458, 0.113; 0.400 etc.

14. It is possible that the term Karuvukaram originally referred to the dues collected by the rulers for payment of Karuvukettu or the retribution made by the princes for destroying temple lands. Later it probably became permanent annual collections, for which a group of Karuvu karattil Pillamar came into being. Apart from customary dues and tolls enjoyed by princes Karuvukaram was probably the only regular form of revenue and hence the accountants in charge of the dues became important.
15. S. Desivinayagam Pillai, Mudaliar Manuscripts (KSP series 7) has given a list of the Tamil incursions into Nanjinaudu, which started from 852 K.E. and went into upto the times of Maranda Varma. From the documents, it is difficult to assess how many of these raids were actually under the command of Nayakas of Madura, and how many were by the growing Palayakkars. It is, however, possible that Kalakkattu Chidambaranatha Pillai's assistance was solicited by the rebels and the Nayakas were trying to make use of the situation to control Nanjinaudu.


17. M. Rajarajavarmaraja Ibid. (KSP Series 6) Doc. 3 810 K.E.

18. C 742 0.32


20. Ibid., (KSP Series 6) Doc. 4.

21. C 2602 0.15 853 K.E.

22. This incident is described in details in C. 2303 0.247, 0.272, 0.273, 860 K.E.

23. C.68 0.5-6 860 K.E. Aarakkuvathu for Karuvukarattil Pallamär.

24. C. 2293 0.46 859 K.E. The same record mentions the lands allotted for Pulpayasam offerings from the holdings of Panayarai and Pachillur.

25. C. 1686 0.1 860 K.E.

26. C. 1439 0.85 860 K.E. Pattam fixed from the Purayidam held by Hampalli Naryanan Kandan.

27. C. 2548 0.361 861 K.E.

28. TAS V pp. 210-2; Vadasseri pp. 212-5 Idarayakudi 873 K.E. TAR No. 112 of 1099.

29. TAS V pp. 215-7 878 K.E.

30. S. Desivinayagam Pillai, "Mudaliar Manuscripts" (KSP Series 7) Doc. 6

31. TAS V pp. 219-20 894 K.E.
32. **TAS VII** pp. 26-9 Tiruvidângodu 871 K.E. **TrR** No. 68 of 1096.

33. M. Rajarajavarmaraja *Op. cit.* Document H. 871 K.E. mentioned the death of Kerala Varma Chiravây Senior prince, at Pullikkottu Köyikkal. The Attingal princess asked Aditya Varma of Kölattunâdu to conduct the ancestral rites, which indicated that the dead prince was probably the same as the adopted from Kölattunâdu in 852 K.E.

34. See Note 31.

35. C. 2600 0.9 863 K.E.
36. C. 23/83 0.19 894 K.E.
37. C. 23/83 0.22 880 K.E.
38. C 2601 0.1 877 K.E.
39. C. 2601 0.3 891 K.E.
40. C. 2601 0.2 891 K.E.

41. Mâtilakam *Granthavâda* No. 1 0.290-5 Entry of 894 K.E.
42. **TAS VII** pp. 30-2 887 K.E.
43. **TAS V.** pp. 149-51 902 K.E. Tiruvidiâkkâdu.
44. *Ibid., VII* No. 81 pp. 93-4 867 K.E.
45. C. 1408 0.45 892 K.E.
46. C. 1433 0.143 895 K.E.
47. C. 2601 0.185 894 K.E.
48. C 28 0.31 895 K.E.
49. C. 1668 0.30 895 K.E.; C. 2601 0.185 894 K.E. Nîtyanâdai chelavu Dèsams were meeting the expenses for Karuvelumkalâm pûja.

50. See Note 43. Other documents are C. 81 0.86; C. 81 p. 0.179 C.2601 0.217. Adoptions were made to Karuvali, Athiyarai, Mutavilai, Kollūr Athiyarai Illams.


53. Ibid.

54. M. Rajarajavarma Raja STDR (KSP) Doc. I 896 K.E.

55. TAS V pp. 220-1 896 K.E.


57. C. 1668 0.30 395 K.E.

58. C. 1408 0.48 896 K.E.


60. C. 2600 0.85 896 K.E.

61. C. 28 0.105 897 K.E.

62. C. 81 0.179

63. S. Desivinayagam Pillai Mudaliar Manuscripts (KSP Series 7 Doc. 7. 898 K.E. Also see TAS V pp. 221-2 898 K.E.

64. TAS V pp. 222-7 898 K.E. Kaţukkarai.

65. TAS V. pp. 228 899 K.E.

66. Ibid., V. p. 228-9 900 K.E.

67. C. 1721 0.95 900 K.E.

68. S. Desivinayagam Pillai, Mudaliar Manuscripts, (KSP Series 7 Doc No. 8 899 K.E.

69. Ibid., Document 17.

70. C. 1691 0.48 899 K.E.


72. C. 1721 0.95 900 K.E. The salt pans of Rājākkulam were raided by Maravar who could only have been brought from Tamilnadu. Records from Nānjinādu mentioned the coming of Alagappa Mudali along with the trānu (Cavalry) of 'Arunanāyār' during 900 K.E.

73. The problem of the payment of Tributes by Kings of Travancore is recorded in the letters of the Jesuits given as appendix to R. Sathianatha Iyer, A History of Nayaks of Madura, e.g. Letter of Father Peter Martin to Fr. Le Gobien-Camies Naken Patti in the Kingdom of Madura dated 1st June, 1700.


75. V. Nagam Aiyar, Travancore State Manual p. 327.