Chapter – I

EARLY HISTORY OF TRAVANCORE

I

The agrarian history of Travancore had entwined with strings of political forces and historical developments at work from the remote past, this territorial division had submerged under the political suzerainty of the ancient Chera Empire. The Chera Empire did not have a politically integrated structure, but comprised of different chieftaincies and petty principalities. The central power could not effectively impose its supremacy, as most part the little kingdoms paid poor adherence to its authority. In South Travancore too, there existed tiny states which had appended nominal allegiance to the central Chera power.¹ The earliest known kingdoms which had enjoyed some political identity were Nanjilnadu, Kurunadu and Padappanadu. Out of these three, Nanjilnadu and Kurunadu emerged out as dominant political units by the close of the first century A.D. While in Nanjilnadu the Ay kingdom flourished, in Kurunadu, the kingdom of Venad exercised prominent authority. Both these countries, had very different history, affected by the vicissitudes of time and fortune. The political atmosphere of neighbouring Pandya State had substantially influenced their historical process.

¹ K.M. Panikkar, *Malabar and the Portuguese*, Bombay, 1929, p.8
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Owing to her favourable seasonal conditions and balanced ecosystem, Nanjilnadu was exposed to frequent attacks from the east, and hence it became the "cockpit of the south".² It has been generally accepted that Nanjilnadu belonged to the Ays. With their historical past, they emerged as a political power in the first and second century of the Christian era. Between 96 and 140 A.D., they had apparently replaced the feeble Pandya authority from Nelcynda to Kumari.³ The earliest known Ay king was Ay Andiran, the much celebrated in the Sangam Anthologies. It seems that Aykudi remained as his capital.⁴ The next notable sovereign who belonged to the Ay dynasty was Titian. It was during the days of Titian, Bhutapandian, the Pandia ruler, invaded Nanjilnadu and subdued 'Titian. After Titian, the Ays showed signs of eclipse from the pages of history.

The northern part of Nanjilnadu was known as Valluvanadu during the Sangam Age. Nanjil Valluvan was the most successful ruler of this hilly tract. His capital was somewhere in the Podiyil hill.⁵ Avvai, the much celebrated Sangam Poetess, refers to his prowess and generosity in unstringing terms. Though he had successfully expelled the Ays from Nanjilnadu, his dynasty soon became extinct,

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2. K. K. Pillay, Studies in the History of India with special reference to Tamil Nadu, Madras, 1979, p.474
perhaps after the battle of Thalayalanganam. Between third and eighth centuries the Ay power was reduced to a depressed level. Checked by Nanjil Valluvan in the north, Pandyas in the east and Cheras in the west, they enjoyed very little sway over South Nanjilnadu and Kurunadu. After their expulsion, they shifted their capital to Thiruvidai code in Kurunadu. The dynasty was revived in the ninth century A.D. by king Vikramaditya Varaguna. But after him the Ays lost their separate identity and were assimilated with other ruling families.

It seems that the early Pandya kings established their sway in and around Cape Comorin. With the fall of Cape Comorin, Kottar was exposed to frequent Pandya invasions. It is obvious that Bhutapandian was the earliest invader of Nanjilnadu. Right from the days of Nedunchezhiyan, the Pandyas maintained continuous contact with Nanchilnadu and before the seventh century A.D. Nanjilnadu fell to them. The successful exploits of Koccadayan against the Ay ruler at Maruthoor, Sengodi and Puthancode are referred in the Velvikudi grant. However, only in their hey days of supreme power they could extend their political paramountcy to the whole of Nanjilnadu. Jatavarman Parantaka Pandyan, who succeeded in the year 770 A.D., overran Nanjilnadu; subdued the Ay chief and made him a vassal.

The Ay kingdom acted as a buffer state between the Pandyas and Cheras. Naturally its decline opened the Chera kingdom vulnerable to incessant attacks from the Pandyas and Cholas. Around 787 A.D., Parantaka advanced to Venad and conquered it with elephants, horses and treasures.\(^\text{12}\) His successive thrust was against Karunandan, the Ay chief, who was in friendly terms with the Venad ruler. Subsequently, the Pandya power penetrated deep beyond the borders of Venad and soon it reached Vizhignam.\(^\text{13}\) Ancient Tamil literature like Madurai Kanchi, Purananuru, Pathitrupaththu, Pandikkovai etc. would reveal that as early as in the tenth century, Nanjilnadu remained under the Pandya rule.

When the Pandya control declined, the Cholas capitalised the political situation. The conquest of Madurai by Parantaka Chola marked the beginning of Chola political ascendency in the South. After the conquest of Madurai, around 920 A.D, the Cholas assumed sway over Nanjilnadu. Kulothungan I defeated the Pandyas, burnt Kottar,\(^\text{14}\) and extended Chola power upto Vizhignam and Salai. However an organised Chola invasion took place under Raja Raja I. Nanjilnadu became a part of Raja Raja as Cholavalanadu.\(^\text{15}\) His successor Rajendra Chola's suzerainty reached as far as Kurunadu and he set up military posts at Kottar. Kulothunga appeared that nothing could arrest the Chola expansion in the Chera dominion and the Chera-Chola war prolonged for about a century. However, after Chlothunga I, the Cholas could not

\(^{12}\) Ibid.  
\(^{13}\) Ibid.  
\(^{14}\) Ibid.  
\(^{15}\) P. Shunagoonny Menon, History of Travancore, p. 8.
effectively impose their sway over Chera kingdom and this decline in their political fortune was largely complemented by the events that took place at Cholamandalam. Decline of Chola power facilitated the revival of Pandya power.\footnote{16} For a while Nanjilnadu passed under the political influence of the Korava chiefs till they fell victim to the trickery of the crafty Mudaliyars.

Venad has almost an unbroken history. The early history wars centred around the capital at Thiruvudiamcode, the anglicized form of which was Travancore. Decline of Ay power exposed her to repeated attacks from the Pandyas and Cholas. When the ruling Chera family disappeared in the midst of the Chera - Chola war around 1036 A.D. Venad declared her independence.\footnote{17} The waning Pandya and Chola rule created a political vacuum in Nanjilnadu. Veera Kerala Varma, the Venad ruler exploited the situation to expand his sovereignty over parts of Nanjilnadu by the first quarter of the twelfth century.\footnote{18} Koda Kerala Varman extended his supremacy over South Nanjilnadu during successive years. In the time of Veera Ravi Varma he imposed his sway over the eastern parts of Nanjilnadu. Subsequently, the sovereignty of Venad was extended to Valliyoor and 'Nanguneri.\footnote{19} Major portion of Tinnevelly soon fell to the conquering might of Udayamartanda Varma.

The ascendancy of Venad to power and its constant incursions into the

\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{16}{Travancore Administration Report, 1866-1867, p.20.}
\item \footnote{17}{Ibid.}
\item \footnote{18}{A. Padmanabha Iyer, Modern Travancore: A Handbook of Information, Trivandrum, 1941, p.102.}
\item \footnote{19}{Ibid.}
\end{itemize}
Pandyan territories displeased the powerful Vijayanagar kings. Udaya Marthanda Varma's violation of the Pandyan territory led the Pandyan prince to make an appeal to Vijayanagar for help. Achuta Raya, the successor of Krishna Deva Raya, led an army against Venad and inflicted a crushing defeat on her in 1532 on the banks of the river lambraparni. Again during the period of Veera Kerala Varma, Vijayanagar forces attacked Venad. This time the battle was fought on the soils of Nanjilnadu, and it is reported that as a result of this battle, Venad began to recognize the supremacy of Vijayanagar empire. However, after sometime Venad declined to pay tribute to Vijayanagar and once again resorted to intrusions into Pandyan regions. This had provoked the second Vijayanagar invasion. But this time, Venad emerged victorious.

The last Vijayanagar expedition took place in the year 1558. Though Vijayanagar left Venad after this incident, the 'Nayaks of Madurai believed that, as successors to the Vijayanagar power, they were entitled to be overlords of Venad. Viswanath Nayak of Madurai proceeded against Nanjilnadu, and Kanyakumari fell in 1609. Thereafter till 1634, Nanjilnadu faced no serious threats. In 1634, Thirumalai Navak led an expedition into Venad. In the battle of Kaniyakulam that followed, Iravikuttai Pillai, one of the greatest -generals of Venad, was killed. Between 1677 and 1696 Venad was disturbed.

Internal strife started and the then ruler Ravi Varma had to seek the aid of

20. Ibid., p.12.
the Badagas to subdue his feudal lords - the *Ettuvittal pillaimars*. Later he fell out with the Badagas. Rani Mangammal of Madurai sent in 1697 Dalevoy Tvarasappaya to Venad, who suffered terrible reverses in these encounters.\(^{23}\)

The political unity of Travancore at this time was greatly disturbed by the rise of feudal barons. The Vassals and feudatories of Venad, such as Yogakkars and *Ettuvittal pillaimars*, always rebelled against the throne. It was at this juncture that Bala Marthanda Varma came ot power (1729-1758) after crushing his rivals, Iyappan Thampi and Raman Thampi. With the same determination, the young prince suppressed the rebellious vassals and feudatories. While Marthanda Varma was thus engaged, Chanda Saheb of Arcot attacked Nanjilnadu, plundered and pillaged the areas, and looted the temple treasures of Sucindram. To prevent further destruction, Marthanda Varma paid a huge sum of money as ransom to Chanda Saheb who in turn withdrew.\(^{24}\)

The Dutch who were on the West Coast began to render assistance to the rebellious vassals and feudatories. Their ambitions programme of controlling the seaborne trade in the West Coast naturally dragged them into the vortex of confrontation with Travancore. The rise and consolidation of the State of Travancore acted as an obstacle to their imperialistic tendencies. This had developed in them antagonistic attitudes and they decided to settle the issue once and for all. The Dutch forces got

reinforcement from their bases in Ceylon. Under the command of Eusthacius Delannoy, they advanced upon Eraniel and from there to Kalkulam, the capital. Plundering the conquered country on the way, they, advanced to led the army and in the fierce battle that ensued in 1741 A.D. the Dutch forces were crushed and Captain Delannoy was taken as a prisoner.  By successive campaigns in the north, Marthanda Varma consolidated a vast-territory and for- administrative convenience he shifted his capital from Kalkulam (Padmanabhapuram) to Trivandrum around 1749 A.D.

The successors of Marthanda Varma were quite incompetent to administer the vast kingdom bequeathed by him. Exploiting the situation, the Mysore forces advanced deep into Travancore. The Mysorean invasion and the treaty of 1762 put a real check on the independence of Travancore. Subsequently with a view to containing the Mysore storm, the Raja Bala Rama Varma proposed the perpetual Treaty of Subsidiary Alliance in 1793. Based on his proposal a treaty was signed in 1705 A.D, which entertained British interference in the political, commercial and administrative affairs of Travancore.  

By this time the internal situations warranted a thorough overhaul of the administrative structure. The dissatisfied elements in the administrative echelon rallied under Velu Thampi and coerced the Maharaja into dismissing his advisors.

25. Ibid., pp. 61-69.
26. Ibid.
Velu Thampi soon rose in esteem and power became the Dalava. He maintained friendly relationship with the English and in 1805 entered into a treaty with the British Resident, whereby the British were to render military aid to Travancore and to quell even internal disturbances. In return, the Raja had to pay an annual tribute to the British.²⁹

The treaty, however, caused several difficulties. The British Resident started interfering with the internal administration of the State which infuriated Velu Thampi and prompted him to ask the Company for the recall of its Resident. On the contrary, the Company demanded the dismissal of Velu Thampi. The turn of events forced Velu Thampi turns to the people so as to marshal support for his campaign against foreign interference. He made a historic proclamation at Kundara in 1809 which kindled the zeal and enthusiasm of the people and ultimately resulted in the launching of a struggle for freedom from the Company's domination.³⁰ In a fierce battle that happened between the Company's troops and the halati was forces, the latter was defeated. Velu Thampi preferred death to dishonour. Therefore, he killed himself rather than allowing himself to fall into the Company's hands. Unni Thampi, who succeeded Velu Thampi, made peace with the British Resident. With this, the influence of British was finally established. Yet the Maharaja could carry on the administration as he liked without affecting the interests of the English. British administrative structure and institutions began to make headway and were slowly

supplanted in Travancore. The government became more benevolent and enlightened. This situation continued till 1947 when Travancore had to join India, and popular government was set up in the state.  

The nature of government in Travancore as prevailed in the other parts of India was monarchy based on the traditional Hindu Law of Inheritance. The kings enjoyed absolute power, whenever the monarchy was strong. The landed aristocracy assumed preponderant authority because of its nearness to the ruling families and their involvement in administration. Hence the concept of state as the wholesome authority was very often disputed. The land owning class emerged as the virtual ruler in Travancore during the troubled centuries that ensued after the Chera-Chola War. In their endeavour to re-establish their sovereignty, the rulers found themselves pitched constantly into war with this privileged aristocracy and the revenue bureaucracy only to loose. Their rapacity for power continued to dominate and reflect in the social system as well as, almost uninhibited. The government became a puppet in the hands of the landed gentry and temple authorities. No wonder, the Government of Travancore was characterised as the aristocracy, run by them only to subserve their own vested interests.

In Travancore, these taxes were known as *Padaivari* (army tax) and *Kappalvari* (navy tax). The exact rate of these military cesses were not clear. However, it seems  

that the collection was left in, charge of men of eminence and status in society.\textsuperscript{32} Treasure trove was another sources of constant income prescribes that if the king discovered any old treasure one half of it must go to the treasury and the other half should be distributed among the Brahmans.\textsuperscript{33} Metals detected under earth also had a due share of one-half to the king on the ground, that he was the lord of the land. Later by a proclamation the State declared its total ownership right over treasures found under earth. Presents made during ceremonial occasions also formed part of the royal income. Fines imposed by the courts of law constituted one of the principal source revenue in earlier times. Income from royal properties, such as forests, mines and associated manufacturing units and salt and other to the State. The king was entitled to of the properties lost and, subsequently one-sixth or one-tenth recovered.

There was hardly anything which escaped from the system of fiscal tyranny. Sales tax, customs, tax on cattle, gold, clothes, roots, fruits, condiments, wood, leaves, skins and earthen pots also enriched the revenue of the State. Transport taxes, dues from toll-houses also formed substantial portion of the royal income. Moreover, the rules were liberally provided during ceremonial occasions with different varieties l, of goods and services. Tributes paid by the vanquished vassal chiefs, wealth plundered during war and occasional raids on enemy territories were the additional source of income to the stretches of land and they cultivated them with

\textsuperscript{32} Nagam Aiya, V., \textit{op. cit.}, Vol.I, p.96.
the labours sufficient to meet the kings personal requirements. During the Kulasekara Empire,\textsuperscript{34} thanks to the entry of the Arabs and Chinese merchant economy emerged as a vital source of royal income. The demand for Indian spices multiply in the other parts of the world. The principal partners, the Arabs and Chinese, entered into a series of trade agreements with the Perumal kings. Indian spices and luxury goods flooded the world markets. State monopoly over pepper trade added a fresh source of propitious state revenue. This new situation modified the existing structure of the State income and henceforth revenue from trade became the major source of royal income.\textsuperscript{35}

The prolonged Chera-Chola war not only weakened the central authority but also shattered the economy of the State. Taking advantage of the political vaccum created by the war, the chieftaincies assumed independent powers. Demand for revenue mobilisation increased substantially to face the pinching postwar crisis. As a result, the, government came forward with a proposal to tax the lands under their territorial limits. Alight assessment on land was introduced on government owned \textit{Karanmai} tenures.\textsuperscript{36} It seems probable that the lands under village control, \textit{Uranmai} also faced similar assessment.

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\textsuperscript{34} According to tradition the first Chera dynasty was founded by Kulasekaraperumal carved out the Pandya Country around 216 A.D. (\textit{Census of India 1951}, Kanyakumari District Handbook, Madras, 1981, pp. 5 - 6
\textsuperscript{36} The exact date in which the assessment was made and the mode of fixation of the revenue is not clear. (Census of India, 19e-1, Kanyakumari District Handbook, Madras, 1987, pp.5-3.)
\end{flushright}
In the beginning the assessment was quite simple and the land was leased out permanently to individuals and institutions. The cultivators enjoyed more or less customary property rights over the lands they cultivated. The village assembly, was entrusted with the work of collection of government dues as is revealed in the Manalikarai inscription dated 1235 A.D.\(^{37}\) A form of collective responsibility was imposed on the village community in the matter of collection and payment of dues; of course with the concurrence of the chiefs, village assembly and the individuals.\(^{38}\) The whole village was made responsible for the tax and if any portion of the crops failed it was inspected by the village assembly. The drought sufferers had to pay \(\frac{1}{5}\) of the normal dues, while the balance was adjusted from the lands of those whose crops did not fail, if the whole village lands failed then they had to pay \(\frac{1}{5}\) of the assessment of the year and the unpaid account being adjusted in the years of plenty.

By the Proclamation of 1235 A.D, assessment of land tax on permanent basis was abolished and the ryots were instructed to surrender their permanent rights to the fixed exactly annually and for harvest to be renewed from time to time so that the government cultivator would have no chance of abusing his rights.\(^{39}\) \textit{Pattaviruthi} and \textit{Onachelavu} were made as additional taxes. \textit{Pattaviruthi} was probably a present made to the king on the occasion of the commemoration of the coronation celebration. It synchronized with the annual national festival of \textit{Onam}. Taxes on handloom

\(^{37}\) V. Nagam Aiya, \textit{op.cit.}, Vo1.I, p.256.
\(^{38}\) \textit{Ibid}.
\(^{39}\) \textit{Ibid}, p. 257.
products continued as a good source of revenue because of the progress achieved in the weaving industry. In addition, a tax on palmyra was levied for the first time in 1315 A.D. It seems that the tax had to be paid for tapping Palmyra and not for using it otherwise.

The political situation that emerged at the close of the Chera-Chola war acted as a serious constrain to royal authority. The ancient Chera empire had to pass through severe political strain and it undermined the concept that the king was the universal protector. In the process the symbolic support the central power. It favoured fissiparous tendencies and encouraged the emergence of small principalities. As a result from the twelfth to the seventeenth century Chera kingdom was nothing more than an agglomeration of more than forty small kingdoms, united by ties of vassalage to the three layers political of the monarchy. This political confusion seriously disturbed the revenue administration and created anarchy in the society. The tax-gatherers who were recruits from the upper stratum of the society exploited the situation to exact unauthorised taxes without the knowledge of the king. Karakukattalai, Panam, Padavaram, Padippanam and Anivari were some of those taxes referred above.

The atomisation of the political system created a favourable trend for the establishment of Namboothri settlements all over the country. With the result, a

40. *Ibid*, P.198
unique situation which favoured the large scale transfer of lands to temples and through temples to the Brahmins emerged. The system of land tenure had been totally transformed and by the end of the thirteenth century, the Namboothiris established themselves as great landed proprietors with hereditary right. From this time onwards the prevailing practice of paying part of the harvest to the political authority disappeared.\textsuperscript{43} The \textit{janmon} lands got exemption from taxation wind thus a major portion of land revenue slipped off from government control. The appropriation of temple land by the Brahmins in addition to their private lands naturally had repercussions on the economic foundation which underlined the political power.

Deprived of their revenues, the local chieftains then imposed a series of obnoxious taxes on the subjects. Taxes on the Namboothiris established themselves as great landed prop marriage shed, tying of the marriage bond (\textit{talikaram}) and \textit{Savukanikkai} (tax on funerals), etc, became customary. Renewal of thatching rights and profession also were assessed with new taxes.\textsuperscript{44} Tax on slaves, poll-tax and festival dues were imposed additionally. Fishermen and their nets too were not spared. Titles and privileges were sold to all classes of pole without any reservation.\textsuperscript{45} The privileges of using sandals, travelling on palanquins, frying \textit{pappadams} and tiling houses were sold to individuals. Dues were imposed on all commodities of trade and agricultural products, not to speak of implements on which were attached a series of

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\textsuperscript{43} Lemercinier, \textit{op. cit.}, p.171. \\
\textsuperscript{44} Travancore Archaeological Series, Vol. II, p.63 \\
\textsuperscript{45} Travancore Aracheological Series, Vol. V, p.171
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taxes. Numerous other dues like Kumara *Kachavan, Meenpattom, Elavania pattom, Attupattom, Tharaku kooli*, etc., were levied and collected.\(^{46}\) Additional cesses like *padukalam* (debt arrears), *ubhayam palisa* (interest on arrears), *tanitandam* and *kottapanam* were strictly collected.\(^{47}\) To satisfy the war-time needs numerous fresh taxes were imposed in the name of defending the soil. Petty cesses of different items and all that was considered taxable petty taxes amounted to three hundred and seventeen.\(^{48}\) However, the government plunged into rough weather in the subsequent years. The worst economic crisis caused by costly wars and the increasing necessity for resource mobilisation to tide over the exigency added to the difficulties of the administration. The Nayak and Badaga invasions ruined the state economy and the cultivating class did not have the wherewithal to sustain their life.\(^{49}\) Furthermore, the privileged minority of the *janmies*, capable of paying taxes, were either exempted from taxation or denied payment to the State. Since they were powerful, having their own armed retinue the State was always at their mercy. The kings enjoyed very feeble power and in many aspects they had only nominal authority. The feudal barons, called *Ettuvittil Pillamars* allied with *Yogakkars*; inferred with the rights of the king and even obstructed him in the discharge of his duties. Therefore, there developed a clash of interest which persisted for a long time. Ultimately, by organised terror, the

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46. T.L.R.M., Vol. IV, p.60  
47. V. Nagam Aiya, *op.cit*, Vol.I,  
Ettuvittil Pillaimar became the virtual rulers of the land.\(^{50}\)

In due course, the feudal barons enjoyed authoritative powers over the State and the subjects. They plundered the unheard of ever before.\(^{51}\) The cultivators had to pay additional new taxes on different items and if failed their lands, grains and other properties were confiscated. This organised and systematic exploitation of the peasantry led to a further decline in State revenue. In one way or other, the king was an unwilling partner to it and his inability being exploit & consistently. But when the people represented their grievances, the king came upon with Orders cancelling all heavy taxes; prohibiting tyranny in the land regulating the original taxes imposed.\(^{52}\) In the long run this sympathetic consideration could be of no avail as the political and military powers of the barons remained to be strong. The atomisation of the political units and lack of strong central monarchy safeguarded their interests uninhibited till the ascendancy of Martanda Varma.

In 1729, when Martanda Varma ascended the throne, anarchy reigned supreme in South Travancore. The Yogakkars, Madampimars and Pillaimars in collaboration with the Thampi brothers made a valiant bid to assassinate the young prince. However, the new king was too strong to his antagonists, who were scattered and exterminated without much difficulty and their lands annexed with the State.\(^{53}\) The kingdom began to expand towards the north and in this process more land was


\(^{52}\) *Ibid.*, p.321

brought under State partnership. The king took keen interest in promoting agriculture. He constructed the Ponmanai and Puthen dams under his personal supervision at heavy capital expenditure.\textsuperscript{54} In addition to this, the huge war-bribe offered to Chandra Sahib pressurized the state to identify new sources of revenue. The rent theory also supported the claim of the State to levy additional dues on lands, as improvements were made on the cultivated lands. However, it seems that Martanda Varma chose to obstat from imposing land tax.

The defeat of the Dutch and the enforcement of State monopoly over spice trade and other cash crops, improved the State income considerably. In 1750 A.D. Marthanda Varma dedicated the State to Sri Padmanabhasamy and ruled himself as a tutelage of the deity. Introducing costly rituals to appease the deity, he engaged in charities to Brahmins. The \textit{murajepam} and \textit{thulaparam} ceremonies together with a variety of new endowments completely devastated the economy and depleted the treasury.\textsuperscript{55} His successor Rama Varma, the 'Dharma-Raja' went a few steps further and the entire State was left \textit{under the mercy of} 'Bramins and brahmanic rituals. Consequently the government underwent serve financial distress and to salvage the situation money was borrowed from the temples at exorbitant rate of interest.\textsuperscript{56} Also the Government was pinching with financial crisis and submerged under chronic debt. To extricate the strata from, the calamitous Situation, Dewan Kesava Pillai,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{54} V. Nagam Aiya, \textit{op.cit.}, Vo1,T, p.336.
\item \textsuperscript{55} P. Chidambaram Pillai, \textit{Right of Temple Entry}, Nagercoil, 1933, pp.193
\item \textsuperscript{56} \textit{Ibid}, P.198.
\end{itemize}
introduced a new tax Called nilavari (land tax) on all sirkar pattom lands in 1762.\textsuperscript{57} Additional tax was levied in 1774 to pay the war indemnity to Raider A1i.

**The Agrarian Class Structure**

The aggregates of land owners, chief tenants, subtenants and agrestic workers formed the class formation in Travancore. By class we mean a category of persons occupying specific position in the system of production.\textsuperscript{58} Classes were subdivided in terms of the nature of ownership and control over land and the types of services rendered in the process of production. Rentiers, farmers, cultivators, sharecroppers and agrestic workers formed separate groups only at the conceptual level. The various classes were not separated as watertight compartments because classes in principle and to a certain extent distinct entities only as conceptual categories. One and the same person could be an owner and a tenant. In the process of production a form of vertical solidarity forced the land owners and their dependants to maintain reciprocal relation.

The land ownership pattern in Travancore was largely determined by the feudalistic structure that prevailed over a long period. It is believed that ownership right over land was in the hands of the village communities in the beginning. When the rulers claimed sovereignty over land, it became a State monopoly. Since the king was considered the lord of the land he was at liberty to transfer lands to spiritual and

\textsuperscript{57} T.L.R.M., Vol. IV, p.54.
temporal heads as reward for their services. Thus an individual and institutional right over land was established.

In Travancore, Brahmins were the chief beneficiaries of the new situation. For their temple services, large estates were transferred to them under *Brahmadeyom* grants. The temples were bestowed with vast stretches of arable lands with revenue rights, so as to meet expenses in connection with the temple sacrifices.\(^{59}\) The Chera-Chola war came as a pleasant surprise to the Brahmins. Since *devadanom* and *Brahmadeyom* 'Lands enjoyed' immunity from tax and destruction from enemy hordes, cultivator transferred their lands enmass to the Brahmins and temples.\(^{60}\) According to the established custom, lands once alienated to the temples and Brahmins could not be redeemed. So, those who alienated the lands lost it for ever. To make them content, the Brahmins invented stories and spread the impression of merit accruing out of such transfers.\(^{61}\)

Accumulation of land rights diverted a section of the Brahmins from their ritual function. Instead, they became managers of the temple lands with enormous wealth. In the process soon the temple lands were transferred to their person by fraud and fabricating stories with ritual sanction. Temple lands were sold on various pretexts for their personal luxury.\(^{62}\) Their supposed social superiority and spiritual

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60. T.C. Varghese, *Agrarian Change and Economic Consequences*, New Delhi, 1970, p.17
combination discredited those who opposed the transfer of *devaswom* lands to the Brahmins. To silence those who disputed with their land rights, they concocted and fabricated the legend of Parasurama and the presentation of lands to them.

Nayars were the biggest land holders next to Nambudiris. Originally, land rights passed on to them as they were instrumental in displacing the ancient ruling dynasties. The new rulers who acquired power conferred on them the right to land in lieu of their military and administrative services. Further, as they were blood relatives of Nambudiris, they enjoined upon themselves the privilege of collecting revenues from the temple - lands and the private lands of the Brahmins.\(^{63}\) In this process, they duped their masters and possessed more landed wealth. Soon they disputed the claim of their Nambudiri masters and by organized tenor eliminated them.\(^{64}\)

Nanjilnattu Vellalas acquired land rights from the Pandyas and koravas chiefs. When the Chola power established political supremacy, they realised enormous land grants for their secular and religious services. They supported Marthanda Varma in his claim for the throne and were richly rewarded with land rights and special concessions. Soon they replaced the Nayars from the State service and became closer to the ruling families, which favoured their more affluent economic life. Most of them were employees village accountants, who were notorious for the revenue fraud.\(^{65}\) In the long run, by forgery and fraud they usurped more land

\(^{63}\) E. Kunjan Pillai, *op.cit.*, p.362  
\(^{64}\) V. Nagam Aiya, *op.cit.*., Vo1,I, p.304.  
rights and became the sons of Nanjilnadu.

The Chettis enjoyed ownership rights over land chiefly through their money power. They were moneylenders to the landlords and cultivators alike at an exorbitant interest rate. In due course unable to repay the debt the lands were transferred to them by the cultivators, Muslims also had access to them when trade and commerce with the existing feudal set up failed them due to decline in the monetary system. However, the absence of Muslim political power, failure of their religion to enjoy state patronage and their dissociation with State administration limited their landhold in privileges substantially. At the same time land grants were conferred on the Krishnavaha for the ghee and milk they supplied to the temples and for royal sacrifices.\(^\text{66}\)

Thus the Nayars and Vellalas became the chief tenants of the State and janmon lands. To a certain extent the Krishnavaha pastoral caste also enjoyed the status of chief tenants. Since the Brahmin jannies were debarred from manual labour, they left their lands to these chief tenants parcelled out and gave them to sub-tenants who were mostly Nadars.\(^\text{67}\) More over the dry and barren table lands which came under their chief tenantship were given to the Nadar Sub-tenants.

The Pallans, Parayans and Pulayans constituted the chief labouring class. Most of them were agrestic slaves attached with their lands. The sub-tenants also formed part of the total labour force and they worked as casual labourers. Compared

\[^{66}\text{E. Thurston, Caste and Tribes in Southern India, New Delhi, 1976, Vol.IV, p.75.}\]
\[^{67}\text{Robert L.Hardgravem Jr., The Nadars of Tamil Nadu, Berkeley, 1969, p.56}\]
to the agristic slaves, they enjoyed a better social position because of their economic edge over the other categories of workers. The inelastic nature of land and growth of population place these share-croppers in an advantageous situation. Tenancy was at the will of the landowners, who often utilised the situation to increase their demand. Dues and fines increased, feudal obligations became numerous and the economics of subservience of the labouring classes were always at peril. They had to pay taxes both to the janmies, and chief tenants. With the meager sum left out to them they had to lead a hand to mouth subsistence. The condition of the agristic serfs were so miserable that they were treated as marketable animals; openly bought and sold.

II

The Royal House of Travancore traces its descent from the Chera Dynasty, the most ancient of all the ruling dynasties in India. From very ancient times, there were three Kingdoms in South India, the Chera, the Chola and the Pandya. Travancore was under the Cheras. The hegemony of the First Chera Empire was believed to have continued till 600 A.D. The Cheras ruled over South India. Their territories lay on both sides of the Western Ghats. When the great Chera Empire broke up, a branch of that dynasty which had settled down at Padmanabhapuram, was able to exercise its sway over a small part of their former possessions.

At the beginning of the fourteenth century, Ravi Varma Kulasekhara (1299 – 1311) of Quilon not only brought the whole of Kerala under his sway, but also took advantage of the internecine quarrels of the Pandyas and the hopeless efforts of the Cholas to push his conquests as far as the Chenglepat district and crown himself Emperor of the whole of South India at Congeevaram in 1312 – 13 A.D. Ravi Varma was also a distinguished poet and patron of letters. He was popular as ‘Samgramdhira’ or firm in battle. The possessions of Venad, however, were lost in the deluge of the Mohammedan inroad that swept the Carnatic shortly after.  

But when Kampana of Vijayanagar drove the Mohammedans from Trichinopoly and Madurai in 1371 A.D. and the Pandyas returned to power, it became possible for Venad once again to extend her conquests as far as Kayal, a sea-port in the Tinnevelly district in the middle of the fifteenth century, as testified to by the Mohammedan traveller Abdul Razzack.

Udaya Marthanda Varma surnamed Bhuthalavira, who ruled over Venad at the beginning of the sixteenth century, was a sovereign of singular prowess and may not be inaptly compared to Edward III of England. He ruled over large portions of Tinnevelly and exacted tribute even from Ceylon. He also married a Chola princess, just as Ravi Varma had married a Pandyan princess in the fourteenth century and the Chola kings Parantak I and Parantaka II had married Kerala princesses in the

tenth century. A treaty was also entered into with the Portuguese in 1516, this being the first treaty of Travancore with a European power. In 1532, Achyuta Raya of Vijayanagar overran South Travancore and Venad had to make peace with that great Hindu empire. In 1544, there was another invasion of Travancore by Vittala Deva, son of Rama Raya of Vijayanagar, apparently for the recovery of the tribute left in arrears by Venad and with a view to chastise her for being an ally of Portugal. The impending calamity was averted by a timely peace with Vittala. Muthuvirappa Nayak in 1606 and the great Tirumalai Nayak himself in 1635 led expeditions against Travancore.

It is said that Francis Xavier, the Catholic priest and missionary marched in front of the Travancore army with a crucifix in his hand and his sudden appearance produced a panic in the ranks of the enemy. The enemy was beaten back with great loss. The Maharaja received Francis Xavier and said, “They call me the great king, but hereafter for ever they will call you the Great Father”.

During the reign of Unni Kerala Varma, Thirumalai Nayak of Madurai sent an army to invade Travancore about the close of 809 M.E. (1634 A.D). Eravi Kutti Pillai, the matchless soldier was the commander of the Travancore army. He fought bravely to the last though he was treacherously attacked by an assassin from

behind. His head was to be sent to Thirumalai Nayak, but one of his soldiers rescued it from the enemy and placed before the Maharaja. The Maharaja attended his funeral procession and then called on the hero’s mother and consoled her. As a result of the invasion, crops were destroyed, houses plundered and the ryots suffered heavily. The southern parts of Nanchilnad remained under the rule of the Nayaks for sometime more. Unni Kerala Varma granted to the English merchants a site for a factory at Vizhinjam. K.M. Panikkar in his ‘Malabar and the Dutch’ says, “during the reign of Raja Aditya Varma who ruled from 1661 to 1677 the feudal anarchy in the State took the most violent forms. The palace of the Raja was set on fire and later on the ruler himself was poisoned”.

As there was no male heir to Aditya Varma, Umayammai, the Queen of Attingal, succeeded to the throne. Attingal was one of the five branches of the Trippappu family. The others were Travancore, Desinganad, Elayadathu Swaroopam and Nedumamgad.

A Mughal soldier of fortune known as Mukilan invaded the southern part of Travancore in 855 M.E. (1680 A.D). The invasion is known as ‘Muklan – padai’ (Mughals invasion). The Yogakkar and Pillamar did not oppose him. He, therefore advanced on Trivandrum and encamped at Maqnakad. The Rani herself left the

79. K.M. Panikkar, Malabar and the Dutch, Annamalai Nagar, 1959, p.162.
80. P. Sundaram Pillai, Some Early sovereigns of Travancore, Madras, 1943, p.35.
81. T.K. Vely Pilli, op.cit., p.75.
capital. Thus the Mughal Sardar became the master of the country between Thovalai and Edava. The Rani appealed for help to Kerala Varma, Raja of Kottayam. Prince Kerala Varma was a great soldier and poet. He collected a large army and defeated the Mughal chief at Thiruvattar. Mukilan fell in the battle. After restoring the Rani to the former position, he built two palaces at Trivandrum and lived in one of them. But Kerala Varma was assassinated in his palace by the agents of the Ettuveetil Pillamar. Umayamai Rani was a very remarkable queen. In 1684, the English East India Company obtained permission from her to build a factory at Anjengo. The English had then established their factories in Travancore viz., Anjengo, Vizhinjam and Kovalam.

The Dutch East India Company which was formed in 1502 A.D. had progressed steadily. They had formed many settlements on the Malabar Coast after driving the Portuguese from most of their possessions. In 1653, they drove the Portuguese from Cochin. The Portuguese influence disappeared from Malabar by the year 1663 and the Dutch became masters of the entire commerce of Malabar. By 1664, the Dutch had concluded treaties of alliance with the chief princes in Travancore viz., the Rajas of Kayamkulam, Travancore, Quilon, Purakad and Kottarakarai. The main object of these alliances was to secure a monopoly for the trade in pepper and opium. The chief

Dutch settlements in Travancore about 1667 were Quilon, Kayamkilam, Purakad, Karunagappalli and Thengapttinam.  

Ravi Varma, the youngest surviving son of Unayammai Rani, having attained his 16th year was crowned king in 1684 A.D. Two princes Unni Kerala Varama and Rama Varma and two princesses were adopted from the Kolathu family. Ravi Varma was an able ruler. He defeated and annihilated the Nayak army of Madurai that attacked Travancore. When the news of the disaster reached Mangammal, the Queen Regent at Madurai, sent her minister Narasappa with a large army to Travancore in 1697 and Maharaja’s army gallantly defended the country. The Madurai army was not able to defeat the Travancore forces. Narasappa then plundered the outlying portions of Nanchilnad.

Unni Kerala Varama, the elder of the princes adopted from Kolathunad, succeeded Ravi Varma. He was weak and unpopular, the people looked upon him as a stranger. The pillamar became so powerful that the king removed his residence to Neyyatinkari.

In 1690 A.D. the English had been permitted to build a fort at Anjengo by the queen of Attingal. It was completed about 1695. In 1697, the Pillamar and

84. P. Shungoonny Menon, *op.cit.*, pp.78 – 79.
Madampimar attacked the fort while the Rani gave her support to the factors. In 1721, a great disaster fell upon the factory at Anjejgo. The factor who was on his way to Attingal with his annual nuzzur, escorted by a body of soldiers, was attacked and murdered by the chieftains. In 1723 a treaty was concluded by the English East India Company with the Raja of Travancore.\(^{88}\) The Raja was to be in league and united in good friendship with the East India Company. The Company agreed to supply the Raja with the necessary artillery and ammunition for a fort at Colachel to be erected by the latter. This is the first treaty concluded by the East India Company with an Indian State.\(^{89}\)

Unni Kerala Varma died in 899 M.E. (1724 A.D). He was succeeded by his brother Rama Varma, who was adopted with him.\(^{90}\) In 1726, Rama Varma on the advice of his nephew Prince Marthanda Varma, arrived at the most important decision in the history of Travancore. This was to pay homage and allegiance to the new Mughal governor of the Carnatic and to seek his aid for the Destruction of the Yogakkar and Pillamar.\(^{91}\)

With this objective the king went to Tirchinopoly and entered into a treaty with the Governor of the Carnatic. He agreed to pay an annual tribute of Rs.3000/- to the Nawab of the Carnatic. The Nawab took him under his protection and sent an army of 2000 infantry and 1000 cavalry to crush the refractory nobles. The Maharaja

\(^{89}\) P. Shungoonny Menon, *op.cit.*, pp. 81 – 82.
\(^{91}\) P. Shungoonny Menon, *loc.cit.*, p.81.
was to meet the expenses of the army which was to remain under his orders. The
*Pillamar* and *Yogakkar* fled for their lives.

In 1728 A.D a party of men sent by the *Ettuveetil Pillamar* attacked the senior Rani and her little son Rama Varma on their way from Trivandrum to Attingal. The Rani’s consort, Kerala Varma Koil Thampuran saved them by sacrificing his life. He belonged to the Kilimanur House. The Kilimanur estate was conferred upon the Koil Thampuran’s family as a free – hold grant in recognition of his heroic services to the royal family. Rama Varma died in 1728 A.D. The early history of Travancore closes with his reign.

Travancore attained its territorial configuration during the reign of Maharaja Marthanda Varma (1729 – 1758 A.D), who enlarged the kingdom of Venad, consolidated the royal authority, reorganized administration and founded the modern Travancore. He reintroduced the land tax in 1739. When the kingdom expanded and administration became unwieldy, the Maharaja formed a ministry, headed by the Dewan. Administration was now centralized. In addition, he shifted his capital from Thiruvithancodu to Padmanbhapuram in 1756 A.D. He modernized the administration but along with it the State was transformed into to ‘Hindu State’, where Brahmins reigned supreme.

To quote the words of his illustrious descendants, the late His Highness

94.  The Madras State Directory, Cochin, 1934, No. VIII,p.3.
Visakham Tirunal Maharaja, as great in letters as his ancestor had been in arms. “Marthanda Varma succeeded to a heritage as thorny as it was poor. The feeble rule of a series of his predecessors had fostered the greed of the surrounding chieftains and the turbulence of internal malcontents to such an extent that their kingdom was almost a misnomer and their authority nothing better than a mockery. But Marthanda Varma was one of those whom the world produced as a rare individual. He was born to command and conquer. He had the best of schooling and hardship. He was served by one of the ablest of ministers, Ramayyan Dalwa. Ramayya was unrelenting, unsparing and often unscrupulous to his masters enemies, but his self was merged completely in that of his master. He was as fearless in the council room as he was in the battlefield. With such a minister at his right hand, and with a strong will, abiding patience, and indomitable courage, the Raja not only won back what his predecessors had lost, but subjugated one after another the neighbouring chief who were a perpetual source of trouble”.

The Maharaja, assisted by Ramayyan Dalawa, his trusted minister added Attingal to Travancore, conquered the principalities of Kottarakkarai, Quilon. Kayankulam. Ambalapuzhai (Chaempakasserry), Tekkumkur and Vadakkumkur, and severely defeated the Dutch at Colachel, compelling them to conclude a treaty with him at Mavelikarai in 1753, under which they agreed to recede from all engagements entered into by them with other Malabaaar princes and on no account to interfere in

95. Ulloor S.Parameswara Aiyer, op. cit., p.20.
their quarrels. The 1741 battle fought at Colachel gave a shock treatment to the Dutch designs in Kerala. The Dutch thought of packing themselves off from the Kerala Coast after this battle. This is the first defeat of a European power at the hands of an Asian power – Travancore. The Zamorin of Calicut was repulsed and treaties were entered into with the Raja of Cochin and the Nawab of the Carnatic. This remarkable career of conquest and annexation was followed by consolidation and reform. The suppression of internal dissensions and the establishment of peace had been accomplished from one end of the country to the other, from Cape Comorin to Mamala near Udayamperoor in Cochin, but the order thus restored could not be considered stable in view of sedition within and jealousy without. The characteristic foresight of the Maha Raja did not fall him at this juncture. He resolved to signalize his reign by a great Act of State. On the 17th January 1750, he publicly dedicated the entire territory to his family Deity Sri Padmanbha, undertaking to administer it thereafter as His servant and agent. This epoch making event was one of supreme significance. It meant the collection of revenue in the name of God and the expenditure of the same in the interests of the people. The solemn religious character thus stamped on the constitution of the State has never been lost sight of by

99. Selections from the records of Travancore, part. II, p.16,
his successors on the throne, “everyone of whom has loyally and faithfully striven to discharge the sacred trust”.

Maharaja Marthanda Varma was, in every sense, a great ruler, but the crucial test of his greatness lay in the attitude of faith and friendship which he adopted towards Englishmen. The English had established a factory at Vizhinjam in about 1644, followed by another at Ruttera (Valiyaturai) a few years later. In 1684 they obtained a piece of land at Anjejgo from the Rani of Attingal, where a factory was built in 1695. The Natives attacked the Anjengo factory in 1697 and murdered the foreigners in 1721. The English in their turn resolved to put down all enemies and subject the country to the ruling dynasty. A spirit of mutual attachment thus grew up between the Maharaja of Travancore and the English East India Company, which was strengthened by the helpful solicitude of Marthanda Varma. In 1757, in a letter to the Governor of Madras he is found referring to the Company as his ‘old and faithful friend’ from whom he was continually receiving great favour. How sincere he was in the profession of this friendship may be seen from the solemn and prophetic death-bed advice that he gave to Rama Varma, the heir-apparent to the throne, in the very next year. He called his heir to his bed-said and advised him with all emphasis he could command. Their Englishmen appear to be destined to rise such power and glory as are hitherto unparalleled. Be it your constant aim and endeavour to secure their

102. Ibid.
friendship and support. The subsequent history of Travancore has proved how far this advice has been cherished by the Maha Rajas of Travancore as their most priceless heir-loom.

His successor Karthikai Thirnal Rama Varma (Dharma Raja) reigned during the period between 1758 A.D and 1798 A.D. During the fag end of his rule, he entered into a treaty of perpetual alliance with the English East India Company in 1795 A.D. It was he who permanently transferred the capital from Padmanabhapuram to Trivandrum. He was assisted by two able ministers Ayyappan Marthandan Pillai and Raja Kesavadhas.

Balarama Varma (1798 – 1810 A.D) the weak successor of Karthikai Thirunal Rama Varma came under the influence of the three ministers, Jayanthan Sankaran Nambudiri, Sankaranarayana Chetti and Mathu Tharakan. These ministers raised forced contributions form the people to improve the finance of the State. The most important event that occurred during this period was the rise and fall of Velu thampi. Velu Thampi supported by a large body of men, revolted openly against the practice of extracting money from the people. As a result the Dewan was suspended. Velu Thampi became the Dewan in 1801. During his rule, a revolt in the barracks forced Travancore to conclude a modified treaty of alliance and friendship with the East India Company and to become a subsidiary ally. As per the treaty of

1805 A.D Travancore had to pay a tribute of Rs. 80,000 annually to the Company. The insistence on prompt payment in spite of a bankrupt economy forced Velu Thampi to raise the banner of revolt along with Paliath Achan, the Dewan of Cochin who also came into conflict with the Resident on grounds of interference of the Company in the internal affairs of his State. The uprising was crushed and Velu Thampi committed suicide in 1809 A.D.\textsuperscript{106}

With his death, Travancore practically lost its independent status, even its army was disbanded. From then onwards the British interest became the main plank of the administration. All succeeding Rajas and Dewans were satisfied with one aspect of sovereignty, viz, the internal sovereignty.\textsuperscript{107}

The death of Balarama Varma on 16 November 1810 made Rani Lakshmi Bai to ascend the throne in 1810 A.D.\textsuperscript{108} She dismissed Ummini Thampi and in his place appointed Colonel Munro, as her Dewan. He undertook a state tour and personally assessed the performance of the officers. The system of recruitment of officers for public services was improved. The economic status of the State was also improved by abolishing the sinecure establishments and expediting collections of long fallen arrears of taxes and simultaneously the oppressive taxes were abolished. An effective system of accounting and audit was introduced. He built up a centralized

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\textsuperscript{106} C.M. Augur, \textit{Church History of Travancore}, Madras, 1903, pp.528-529.
\textsuperscript{108} C.M.Augur, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.528-528.
\end{flushright}
system as it was in practice in Madras Presidency. The reforms of Colonel Munro considerably influenced the future political system of Travancore.¹⁰⁹

Rani Lakshmi Bai died and was succeeded by her sister Gowri Parvathi Bai (1815-1829 A.D) during whose reign also Colonel Munro continued to be the Dewan. She too opened a period of administrative and social progress.¹¹⁰

In 1829, Rama Varma Swathi Thirunal ascended the Travancore throne. He introduced many administrative reforms, like establishment of the munsiff courts for trying small civil and criminal cases. Codification of Law on the British model, introduction of Western education and the creation of separate departments for spreading European engineering, education and for irrigation were some of his reformative measures. He thus represented a period of enlightened administration.¹¹¹

Swathi Thirunal was succeeded by Uthiram Thirunal Maharaja. He ruled Travancore from 1847 – 1860.¹¹² He improved the financial condition of the State, by introducing an effective system of collection of revenue.

It was during his reign a crisis developed in South Travancore. The core of the crisis was the agitation of the Nadars of South Travancore for securing their womenfolk the right to wear the upper garments on bar with the women of the higher

¹⁰⁹ P.Shungoonny Menon, _op.cit._, p.291.
¹¹¹ P.Shungoonny Menon, _op.cit._, p.298.
castes. When the agitation took a serious turn, the king called the army to maintain law and order.

Ayilyam Thriunal Maharaja succeeded Uthiram Thriunal in 1860 and he continued in power till 1880. His reign witnessed certain improvements in the field of agriculture. His successor Visakam Thirunal (1880 – 1885 A.D) initiated some reformative measures. He condemned the old police system and reorganised it. He separated the police form the magistracy with a view to important measure introduced by him was the inauguration of Revenue Survey and Settlement. He extended grant-in-aid to the elementary education. The native industries were encouraged.

Sri Moolam Thirunal succeeded Visakham in the year 1885. The period of Sri Moolam Thirunal can be viewed as the period of genesis of political consciousness among his subjects. In 1888 A.D, he inaugurated a Legislative Council to understand the pulse of the people, which was the first institution of its kind in any princely State of India. In 1904, he inaugurated the Sri Moolam Popular Assembly. His death in 1924 made the senior Maharani Sethu Lakshmi Bai (1924 – 1931 A.D) rule as regent to the minor prince, Chitra Thirunal Balarama Varma. The reign of Sri Chitra Thirunal Balarama Varma (1931 – 1948 A.D) constituted a period of Constitutional, administrative and social reforms. His period witnessed political

struggles, the Temple Entry Proclamation of 1936, the establishment of the Travancore University in 1937 and the formation of the Travancore State Congress in 1938.\textsuperscript{116}

After India’s independence, linguistic in several states were making concerted agitations for reorganization of states on linguistic basics. To study and report on the demands advanced, a commission was appointed and announced in Parliament on 22\textsuperscript{nd} December 1953 by Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister.\textsuperscript{117} The States Reorganization Commission appointed on 29\textsuperscript{th} December, 1953 submitted its report in 1956 favoring the reorganization of States on linguistic basics.\textsuperscript{118} On the basics of its report on 1 November 1956, the Kerala State was formed, South Travancore comprising the four Tamil Speaking taluks viz., Thovalai, Agasteedwaram, Kalkulam and Vilavancode were merged with Tamilnadu.\textsuperscript{119} Besides these political relations, Travancore had social and commercial intercourse with Madras Presidency from very early times. The richness of the soil and the facilities which the country had offered for trade, Banking and other business, coupled with the means of communications available through the passes at Arienkavu, Aramboly and other places had attracted a large number of people from the east coast.

\textsuperscript{117} Report of the States Reorganisation Commission, New Delhi, 1955, p.I
\textsuperscript{118} \textit{Ibid}, p.279.
Thus in different ways that formed the bulk of population in Travancore had come into close contact with their neighbours.

Agriculture was the mainstay of the people and more than eighty per of the people depended on agriculture either as renters or tenants or laborers. By and large it was subsistence agriculture in which every family produced for its living however the existence of commercial farming was not completely absent. The predominant rice belts of Nanchiland the Granary of Travancore had quite a good number of commercial farms.

Land owners and tenants in Travancore formed distinct entities only as conceptual categories. One and the same person could be a land owner, and a tenant. A tenant of one year could be an owner, cultivator in the next year. Similarly an agricultural labourer could become a tenant and vice-versa. Due to this multiple class affiliation the same person was pushed by conflicting interests in different directions. In the process of production a form of vertical solidarity forced the land owners tenants and agrestic workers to depend upon each other.