

THE BULLETIN
OF THE
SRI RAMA VARMA RESEARCH INSTITUTE.

A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY
OF
MEDIEVAL KĒRAḶA HISTORY.
(825—1498 A. D.)

The History of Kĕraḷa may broadly be divided into four divisions.

I. *The 'Vāñci Epoch'*, comprising the age of the literature of the Śāṅgam (say up to 400 A. D.)' and the 'Perumāḷ Period' extending up to the founding of the '*Kollam Era*' in 825 A. D.

II. The '*Kollam Epoch*', extending to 1299 A. D., when Ravi Varman Kulasēkhara claimed to have established overlordship over all-Kĕraḷa and started his brilliant raid over Pāṇḍya and Cōḷa territories. (825—1299 A. D.)

III. *The Ravi Varma Epoch* (1299—1498 A. D.), a period of trouble and turmoil in Tamil land during which Kĕraḷa broke away politically, linguistically, and culturally from her erstwhile overlords.

IV. *The Modern Epoch*—during which the peaceful hegemony of Kĕraḷa was broken up beyond repair by the visitations of the Portuguese, the Dutch, the Muhammedans, and the English.

Sources.

Our main source of information regarding the early Cĕrās is the Śāṅgam literature supplemented by the brief notices of

1. Approximate date of *Śilappadikāram*,¹ composed by Iḷṅ-kō-Aḍigaḷ, reputed to be a Prince of Kĕraḷa.

the country furnished by the 'Periplus' and by Ptolemy. Mr. K. G. Sesha Iyer's "*Cērās of the Śāngam period*" is the most recent work on the subject. His ambitious attempt to give a complete chronological list of the Cērās, and of the extant of their territories cannot, however, be said to be entirely successful. Mr. Govinda Warrior² has made a heroic attempt to reconstruct the history of Kēraḷa from 400 A. D. to 825 A. D. by subjecting the loose traditions embodied in the '*Kēraḷōlpatti*' to a strictly scientific analysis, and adapting his inferences to the few epigraphical records relating to the period.³

On the history of Kēraḷa during the Kollam Epoch we have a few valuable epigraphs, confined mostly to Travancore. The copper-plate Grant of Bhāskara Ravi Varman is of course an exception. But to write down a continuous history we have to rely almost entirely on the pompous '*mey-kkirttiḡal!*' which occasionally merit the waggish description of them as '*poy-kkirttiḡal*'—of the Cōḷa, Pāṇḍya, Cālūkyā and Rāṣtrakūṭa kings, most of whom claim to have indulged in the favourite pastime of destroying Viḷiñam, 'finishing' Kāṇḍalur-sālai, capturing Kollam and Karuvūr, and incidentally putting an end to the great Cēra. That the sea-port mentioned could invite such repeated destructions and that the Cēra could remain 'great' in spite of repeated annihilation reveal either the 'phoenix-like' qualities of the Cēra and his sea-port or the poetic license of the epigraphists.

The next epoch begins with the brilliant reign of Ravi Varman Kulaśēkhara, whose achievements have been most ably

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2. 'Cērās of the Śāngam Period'—A Review.
V. K. R. Menon.
S. R. V. R. I. Bulletin, Vol. IV.
 3. 'Keralōlpatti'—A Historical Study.
S. R. V. R. I. Bulletin, Vol. II.
 4. The 'Cōlas'—Prof. Nilakanta Sastri.
Vol. I, page 107.

analysed by Mr. S. Krishnaswami Iyengar.⁶ Sri Virarāghava Chakravarti 'appears' immediately after Ravi Varman, and his copper plate grant to Iravi-kōrttanān makes it clear that he claimed feudal suzerainty over the Kēraḷa chiefs from Vēṇāḍ' to Ēranād. The date generally accepted for the plate is 15th March 1320 A. D. (Keilhorn). A decade hence Ibn Battuta states, "In the Mulaybar lands there are twelve infidel sultans. Yet there is no discord whatever between them, and the strong does not desire to seize the possessions of the weak". He styles Kollam "the last city on the Malabar coast,—one of the fairest cities of Malabar, with splendid bazaars and wealthy merchants and a fine mosque and square." Early in the 15th century the power of the Sāmorin (ruler of Ēranād) seems gradually to have increased, thanks to the help of Arab mercenaries, and only the arrival of the Portugese foiled his ambition of becomg ruler of all-Kēraḷa.

The history of the modern period is too well-known to be discussed at length.

No scientific attempt has yet been made to write a continuous history of Kēraḷa from the fifth to the sixteenth century A. D. To a prospective historian, the extreme paucity of authentic evidence presents an almost insurmountable difficulty. Inscriptions are few and far between, and in general give little details of the rulers of Kēraḷa or their political vissicitudes. Coins bearing the name of 'Kēraḷa Varma' are found widely

6. 'Ravivarman Kulasekhara' —S. K. Iyengar.

'New Indian Antiquary—Vol. I, No. 3.'

7. Article by Dr. K. Goda Varma in S. R. V. R. I. Bulletin No. 4. The witnesses to the grant are given as follows. (P. 32).

"Pantiyūrkiaramamu Cōkirakiramamum.....Vēṇāḍum ḍṭunāḍum.....ērānāḍum valluvanātu-mariyakkuṭuttōm". Vēṇāḍ is obviously a feudatory, and Mr. S. K. Iyengar's claim (p. 179) that Ravi Varman's "achievements amount to the creation of the State of Travancore as it is at the present time as a political entity" is unsubstantiated.

distributed⁸, but no definite date has been assigned to any of them. Except for the Cave Temples at Thirunandikkarai, Kaviyūr and Kallil⁹, the number of monuments which can definitely be dated to be earlier than the 10th century A. D., is negligibly small. For the last two epochs, there is a plethora of conflicting literary evidence from which even the most erudite scholars are only slowly extricating themselves.¹⁰ For reliable evidence one is thus forced to depend on the inscriptions of neighbouring dynasties, especially the ones dealing with social and religious affairs. Kēraḷa was fortunate in having been visited by a series of observant foreigners and accounts given by many of them are extremely valuable, if accepted after due scrutiny.

These evidences are however sufficient to show that apart from the victorious careers of Cēran Śenkuṭṭuvan, the distinguished contemporary of Gajabāhu of Ceylon (A. D. 173 to 195), and Ravi Varman Kulaśēkhara (A. D. 1299 to 1316), the political activities of the rulers of Kēraḷa were generally confined to occasional internecine feuds and a relentlessly sustained opposition to alien domination. Though bitter enemies of the first Pāṇḍyan Empire, they were staunch Pāṇḍyan allies during Cōḷa domination, and the defeated Pāṇḍya kings were always sure of a safe asylum in the "land of the Kēraḷās"¹¹. Intimate

8. Mysore Archeological Report for 1935.

9. T. A. S., Vol. V, part I.

10. *C. F.* controversy between Prof. K. Rama Piṣharoti and Ullur Parameswara Iyer regarding the dates of the Rulers of Cochin mentioned in '*Tenkailāsa-nāthōdayam*'.

11. 'Mahavamsa' chapter 53, v. v. 5 ff; also Tiruvālangāḍu plates.

12. "The mother of Rajendra I, the only son of Raja Raja we know, was Vanavan-Mahadevi *alias* Tribhuvana-Mahadevi. (117—A of 1896; 448 of 1918). The Cōḷas Vol. I, page 226.

marital relationships" did not deter them from raising the arm of rebellion against the Imperial Cōlās¹³.

Courts and kings, or victories and defeats do not figure prominently in Kēraḷa history. As Logan wisely remarked, "It might, with almost literal truth be said of the Malayāḷis that 'happy is the people who have no history'. '*Marumakkattāyam*' with its far-reaching effects on the social organisation and political outlook of the people, the peculiar status of the Nāirs, the continued existence of a powerful confederacy of Kēraḷa Brahmins called Nampūtiris, and the absence of any Ruler who could claim anything more than a nominal overlordship over all-Kēraḷa—these unique features necessitate the study of Kēraḷa History from the Sociological and Religious stand-points than from the Political stand-point.

Social Organisation.

The matrilineal system called '*Marumakkattāyam*' is now followed in Kēraḷa except by communities of non-Kēraḷa origin, and even among them the system has penetrated to a certain extent. "*Mother-Right*"—which includes matriliney—and '*Father-Right*' are the two oldest systems of social organisation, and it may safely be asserted that the one system has as much biological justification as the other. According to Prof. Soma-sundara Bharati, '*Marumakkattāyam*' is not a recent or modern or even a post-Śāngam importation into the land of the Cērās, but is one which has been in vogue there without a break now for over 2000 years and more, from prior to and during the Śāngam eras, recognised and referred to as such even in the Śāngam literature".

In Kēraḷa, the unobtrusive transition of individuals, of families, or even of groups from one of these systems to the

13. The cause of Rajaraja I's invasion of Kēraḷa and the capture of Udagai was an insult offered to his ambassador to Kēraḷa. An inscription reveals that in the portions of Malai-nāḍ that he conquered, a severe no-tax campaign was conducted by the people.—37 of 1897; S. I. I., Vol. III.

other, has been recorded beyond dispute. The matrilineal 'Ammāvan' Nampūtiris and Nañcinād Vellālās may be cited as examples. The Rajas of Pantalām and Pūññār (Travancore) were Tamil Kṣatriyās of royal lineage who accepted '*Marumakkattāyam*' on settling down in Kēraḷa."

Thus we find that patrilineal Brahmins, Kṣatriyās and Śūdrās have adopted the '*Marumakkattāyam*' system on settling down in Kēraḷa. Transition in the opposite direction is perhaps easier. For instance, the problem of a Pāṇḍyan prince marrying a Cēra princess presents little difficulty. A simple ceremony would enable her to cast off her matrilineal ties. She definitely does not become an outcaste from Kēraḷa; on the other hand her privileged and unique position is admitted and allowed for—and in times of trouble Pāṇḍyan rulers of Kēraḷa extraction have been known to seek shelter in their mother's country."

When however a Pāṇḍyan or Cōḷa princess is married to a Cēra, the problem of succession is obviously complicated. According to Prof. Pisharoti, however, another unique custom, practised even now in Kēraḷa, could conveniently be used to solve this problem. According to this custom as followed at present an individual whose matrilineal family is about to become extinct, is allowed to adopt his own wife into the family. Thereafter her children would occupy the same status which his nephews would have occupied. The ceremonies include one by which the adopted woman sever all connections

14. c. f. Padmanabha Menon's 'History of Kēraḷa'. Vol. II, page 84—9.

15. Even now when a Nair woman is about to be married to a member of the Travancore Royal Family, she is first formally adopted as a member of the 'Ammavēḍus'—families from which the wives of Travancore rulers are traditionally chosen. This may possibly be a vestige of ancient days when the rulers of Vēnād and Kollam had intimate marital relationships with the Pāṇḍyās and Cōḷās.

with her own family. The fact that the ancient Cērās inter-married freely with the Pāṇḍyās and Cōḷās cannot therefore be taken as proof that the Cērās alone could not have followed the matrilineal system.

Without dogmatising on the disputed question of succession among the ancient Cērās it may safely be postulated that the rulers of Kēraḷa after the Śāngam period were definitely matrilineal.

The traditional rivalry between the indigenous warrior clans of Kēraḷa known as Nāirs and the militant brahmin immigrants known as Nampūtiris, and the 'rapprochement' effected by the introduction of a heirarchical system of marriage, form another unique feature of the Social organisation of Kēraḷa.

The origin of the Nāirs is unknown. Kēraḷa scholars have produced overwhelming evidence to prove that it would be "a travesty of facts to include Nāirs in the traditional Śūdra caste".¹⁶ "The central point of interest in any historical account of the Malayali race" writes Logan, "is the position which was occupied" centuries on centuries by the Nāir caste in the civil and military organisation of the province. Their functions in the body politic have been tersely described as the eye, the hand and the order". They also played a prominent part in the establishment and management of temples. Many of the principalities of medieval Kēraḷa were ruled over by Nāirs. Some of them were eventually raised to the status of Sāmanta Kṣatriyās. There was an infinite gradation in the social ladder and the rung which each chief and his family

16. (c. f.) Travancore Census Report, page 377. For a detailed discussion consult '*The Dravidian Culture and its diffusion*' by Mr. T. K. Krishna Menon.

17. The words Kēraḷa and Malabar are synonyms.

18. (c. f.) 'Taccuḍaya Kaimal' of Iriñjālakkuḍa temple Cochin State.

occupied depended entirely on their political status and the amount of bribe in the form of *Dānoms* which they were willing to offer to the Nampūtiri dictators of religion and social conventions. Kṣatriyās are known to have been 'created' even in the reign of the 'great' Śaktan Tampurān of Cochin State, if not by his successors as well (19th Century). Both the Nāirs and Kṣatriyās of Kēraḷa are now matrilineal.

The Nampūtiris, on the other hand, are generally patrilineal. Jeavu Dubreuil, Fawcet and others are of opinion that they trace their ancestry to the Vedic Brahmins who had migrated from North India in ancient times. This pure Aryan colony—if there was one—was definitely replenished by a series of migrations from Pallava, Paṇḍya, and Cōḷa territories. Large numbers must have gone over during the Kalabhra interregnum (4th to 6th century A. D.) *Periya Purānam*, a work of the 12th century A. D. affirms that during the time of Tīrūñānasambandār "the Brahmins of Cidambaram migrated to Cōra country in a body." Kerala traditions are also in agreement with this view.

Their penetration into Kerala was not exactly peaceful. The Nūgās—usually equated with the Nāirs—are said to have driven them out and Parasu Rāma had to bring them back again. Their activities were by no means confined to the performance of religious rites. Even at the time of arrival of the Portuguese, the chiefs of Pōrkāḷ, Parūr, and Iḍappilly were Nampūtiris, and were practising the arts of war. The '*Kēralōlpatti*' mentions an alien invasion during which the scions of 72 Nampūtiri families lost their lives in battle.¹⁹

19. "The Cōḷas" Vol. I, page 127.

Cidambaram was then known as *Perumparrap-puliyūr*. It is interesting to note—that the Puliyannūr Nampūtiris are the high priests (Tantrīs) of the Cochin Royal Family (*alias*) the Perumpaṭappu-Swarūpam.

20. 'Many of the leaders (*śēnāpatīs*) in the army (of the Medieval Cōḷas) were of Brahmin extraction and when sufficiently distinguished bore the title *Brahmādhirāja*'—'The Cōḷas' Vol. II, page 228.

The traditional rivalry between the Nampūtiri immigrants and the native inhabitants seems to have been accentuated by the influx of Buddhism and Jainism into Kēraḷa. Prof. Rama Pisharoti²¹ has discussed the problem at some length and concluded that Kulasēkhara—the Vaiṣṇava Āḷvār—of Kēraḷa who also composed the 'Mukundamāla'—(end of the 7th century A. D.)—was the first Cēra Perumāḷ to be converted to Hinduism. By the time of the great Sankarācārya the triumph of Hinduism was complete (end of 8th century A. D.) The Nampūtiris were acknowledged as spiritual overlords and they seem to have consolidated their position by instituting the peculiar custom by which only the eldest brother married in his caste while all the others maintained 'Sambandham' relations with women of Kṣatriya, Sāmanta, Nāir and allied castes. The Nampūtiris still invoke the authority of the *Anāchārams* laid down in the 'Śankarasṃṛiti' for the origin of this practice.

This custom had far-reaching effects. The transfusion of blood was accompanied by a wide dissemination of Brahminical culture and at the beginning of the 11th century A. D., the culture of Kēraḷa was far more homogeneous than that of Tamil land. On the other hand the cleavage between the homologous cultures of Kēraḷa and Tamil land was widening at every step. The distinguished line of Vāṇavan Māhūdevīs, (Kēraḷa Princesses married to Cōḷa monarchs), ceased with the end of Rājendra's reign^{22a}. The severity of the military campaigns in Kēraḷa of his son Rājādhirāja I, seems to have left an enduring bitterness behind. And about this time Tamil land finally gave up the common *Vatteluttu* script for the present Tamil script. Kēraḷa literature continued to be subject to the sway of Tamil conventions for another century, but thereafter the phenomenal

21. "Kulasēkharās of Kēraḷa"—I. H. Q., Vol. III,
page 319 ff.

22 a. Intimate martial relationships between the Kēraḷa and Pāṇḍya rulers continued for two more centuries and a large amount of cordiality seems to have existed up to the time of Jatā-varman Sundara Pāṇḍya 1251—70 A. D.

influence of Sanskrit in all directions was strongly felt."^(b) The growing contempt of the Kēraḷite for the illiteracy and alleged dirtiness of the bulk of the Tamil population was more than reciprocated by the Tamilian's contempt towards the social customs of Kēraḷa. Ravi Varma's triumphant raid (1312—1316 A. D.) marked the final parting of the ways; and the two peoples who had till then shared a common language and a common culture viewed each other henceforth with unconcealed hostility.

Political Conditions of Kēraḷa.

The political stagnation of Kēraḷa was due to various factors of which the social organisation based on matriliney was the most important one. The oldest male members of the collateral ruling families were chosen as the chiefs, which meant that the administration was usually in the hands of men past their prime of life. Another rule rigidly followed was that a defeated foe was not to be deprived of his ancestral territories. Moreover each collateral branch ruled in virtual independence. The fulsome accounts given in later-day chronicles of popular all Kēraḷa assemblies and the election of Perumāḷs from outside Kēraḷa have little historical value. Rājendra I found Kēraḷa in the same political condition as did the Portugese five centuries afterwards. "It was cut up into a number of petty principalities which, with their endless feuds and alliances, more or less formed a world apart".²³ Possibly the same conditions prevailed, five centuries previous to that date. One ruling family, however, seems to have claimed at least a titular overlordship over all others from Calicut to Cape Comorin. The capital of the chief of this line was, in the early days, at Mahōdayapuram, near the modern Cranganore, identical with Muziris, the famous capital of the Cērās. At the time of advent of the Portugese (1498 A. D.) there was a strong tradition that

22 b. c.f. "The evolution of Malayāḷam Morphology"—
L. V. Ramaswamy Iyer.

23. T. C. Vol. I pp. 270—1.

the Cochin Royalty represented this line, claiming direct matrilineal descent from the euphonemous Cēramān Perumāḷ who is supposed to have split up his possessions among his sons and nephews. Beginning with Stānu-Ravi (ca. 875 A. D.) who was the friend and ally of Āditya I, we come across the names of 5 of these Kēraḷa Chakravartis—

1. Stānu-Ravi (ca. 875 A. D.)—contemporary of Āditya I.
2. Vijayarāghava-dēva—contemporary of Parāntaka I.
3. Ravi Kōdai (*alias*) Gōda Ravi Varma 912—32 ? A. D.
4. Indu Kōdai (932—978 ? A. D.)
5. Bhāskara Ravi Varma Tiruvaḍi (978—1036 ? A. D.)

It must be more than a coincidence that their period is almost identical with that of the Vāṇavan Mahādēvīs. Neither their lithic inscriptions, nor their copper plate grants contain any '*Prasastis*' of historical value though all the important Kēraḷa chiefs except the Kōlattiri are cited as witnesses²⁴ of one or other of the deeds. After a gap of nearly 300 years Vira Rāghava Cakravarti makes a grant in almost identical style. His relation to the others is not definitely known. In any case, the hold of these Cakravartis over their feudatories seems to have been only nominal. A unified Kēraḷa under an absolute monarch, was, in the nature of things, an impossibility.

Yet the land remained virtually unsubjected, if not unconquered, throughout the medieval age. This was due to various factors. The geography of the land presented considerable difficulties to the intending conqueror. Mountains, dense forests, malarial marshes, and a net-work of rivers which could become unfordable over-night; and a war-like people who had taken to arms as a profession and never felt the yoke of monarchical domination—these were some of the formidable impediments in the way. Moreover the advantages of conquest

24. 'History of Kēraḷa'—Vol I p. 426.

were negligible. No chief was rich enough to rouse the cupidity of the invader. Even the temples were poorly endowed, when compared to those in Tamil land. In brief the position of the Kēraḷa chiefs with respect to the Cōḷās was analogous in some respects to that of the North West Frontier tribes to the British Empire. When they grew too turbulent, punitive expeditions were sent against them, but at other times they were generally left alone. Kēraḷa seems to have been the favourite recruiting ground for the Cōḷa army. "The presence of the traditional rulers of Kēraḷa long after the Cōḷa conquest of these areas and the capacity they retained for making trouble for their suzerain in the face of powerful viceroys," is as much proof of their innate virility and independent nature, as "of the comparatively mild character of Cōḷa imperialism"²⁵ The Pāṇḍyan country is littered with Cōḷa inscriptions; in Kēraḷa, north of Quilon, they may be counted on one's fingers.

The Kollam Epoch (825—1299 A. D.)

This epoch is conveniently taken to begin with the founding of the *Kollam Era*. Unfortunately the cause for the creation of this Era is not yet beyond dispute. As traditionally believed, the era may have commemorated the foundation of the sea-port of Kollam, perhaps as an additional capital of the Cērās. Another version is that it synchronised with the disruption of the Cēra Empire at the demise of the last Cēramān Perumāḷ. In 852 A. D. we find the Arab traveller 'Solyman'²⁶ making definite mention of Quilon (Kollam) as the "most considerable port in South India at the time". A decade, hence, Stānu Ravi makes his copper plate grant to the Christian settlers at

25. 'The Cōḷas' pp. 271—2.

26. He may have been the contemporary and friend of the great Saivite Saint Sundaramūrthi, and the disruption of the Cēra Empire might have led to the founding of Kollam as a capital by one of the new chiefs. A 11th century painting of this Perumāḷ leading Sundaramūrthi to heaven is found in Tanjore temple.

Kollam. Thereafter, for over four centuries Kollam finds prominent mention in many a Cōḷa and Pāṇḍyan inscription. There is therefore some justification to begin the epoch with the *Kollam Era*.

During this epoch the political destiny of Kēraḷa was to some extent under the control of the Cōḷās and the Pāṇḍyās. This epoch of alien domination may conveniently be divided to two periods, the second one beginning with the reign of the Cālūkyā-Cōḷa Emperor Kulōttunga I. The great monarchs of the Vijayālaya line, from Parāntaka I (acc. 907 A. D.) to Rājendra I (1012—44 A. D.) generally maintained cordial relations with the rulers of Kēraḷa. This cordiality must have been largely due to the presence of an unbroken series of Cēra princesses as the queens of the Cōḷa monarchs.

Vāṇavan Mahādevīs in Medieval South Indian History.

The Cōḷa queens of Cēra extraction were commonly referred to as Vāṇavan Mahādevīs in numerous inscriptions of the period. (The Cēra was frequently referred to as Vāṇavan in Tamil inscriptions). The first Vāṇavan-Mahādevī we come across was the consort of Viranārāyaṇa Śadayan (Ca. 880-900 A. D.) and their son Rājasimha II was the last ruler of the first Pāṇḍyan empire. "The name of the queen suggests that she was a Cēra princess" writes Prof. Sastri, "and it may tentatively be assumed that the name of Śēravanmahādevī, a flourishing little town—in the Tinnevely district, has some connection with the name of the queen.....The reign of this king was marked by happier relations with the Cēra kings than was usual in this age". Their son Rāja-Simha II having been defeated at Vēlūr by Parāntaka Cōḷa I sought in vain the help

27. 'The Pāṇḍyan Kingdom' pp. 79.

28 a. c. f. "Rajasimhas of Kēraḷa"—article by K. Govinda Warriar. Mr. Govinda Warriar postulates that the reference is to a Rājasimha of Kēraḷa. The inscription is paleographically assigned to the 9th century A. D.

of the ruler of Ceylon and finally betook himself to the Kēraḷa country, the home of his mother ("Gatō Kēraḷasāntikam"). He seems to have successfully claimed overlordship over Kēraḷa, and the Talakkāḍ inscription (Cochin State) of a king of Kēraḷa named Irayasinga Perumāṇḍigaḷ dated in the (third?) year of Rājasimha may be referring to him. The victor of Rājasimha II^{28a} was the Cōḷa king Parāntaka I (907—953 A.D.) and one of his consorts was a Kēraḷa princess whose son Ariñjaya later on succeeded him to the throne, though only for a short period. The Kēraḷa alliance of Parāntaka I,^{28b} "contracted possibly in Āditya's lifetime, not only gave proof of the friendly political relations that obtained between the Cōḷa and Kēraḷa rulers, but apparently furnished the occasion for a large influx of Malaiyāḷis into the Cōḷa country in search of service under the king and his sons. Vellangumaran, the Kēraḷa general of Rājāditya who built a temple in Grāmam was only the leading example of a large class of less known immigrants, figuring as donors of small charitable gifts in the inscriptions of the period".²⁹ Rājarāja the Great was the grandson of Ariñjaya. One of his stepmothers was Parāntadēvi Ammanār, the daughter of Śēramānār³⁰ (queen of Sundara Cōḷa) who

28 b. An inscription at Udaiyārguḍi, South Arcot, refers to a gift of land—by Ādittan Kōḍaipirāṭṭiyār, queen of Ariñgaivarman who died at Aṟṟur, for bathing god during Citṟai-Visu 587 of 1920. She may be the daughter of Ravi Kōḍai, a contemporary suzerian of Kēraḷa. The term 'pirāṭṭiyār' obviously means daughter; for an inscription at Tīrunāgēswarem mentions Ariñjigaippirāṭṭiyār, a Bāṇa queen and daughter of prince Arikulakēsari.

29. c. f. "The Cōḷās" Vol. I, pp. 162-3. The influx of the Malaiyāḷis was more probably due to the fact that Kōkkilan the mother of Rājāditya was a daughter of Śēramānār. The mother of Ariñjaya on the other hand was a Paḷuvēttariyar princess, though she is also referred to as a Kēraḷa princess.

30 Rājēndra's mother was also called Vāṇvan-Mahādevī though she was apparently a princess of the line of Malaiyamāns

lived till the 16th year of Rājarāja's reign, A. D. 1001. Inscriptions reveal that he had at least fifteen wives but his only son was born to Vāṇavan-Mahādēvi, *alias* Tribhuvana-Mahādēvi, before the 4th year of his reign. Rājendra I also had martial connection with Kēraḷa, his queen Vāṇavan-Mahādēvi being known from two inscriptions at Tirumalavāḍi (Trichinopoly district). One of the queens of Parakēsari Āditya II Ca. A. D. 956-73 was Uḍaiyār Villavan Mahādēviyār, S. I. I. iii 193 who set up an image at Uttaramērūr (Chingelpet district) and endowed lands to the temple there. The only other Vāṇavan-Mahādēvi we know of was one of the Queens of Uttama Cōḷa the immediate predecessor of Rājendra I. Thus from the beginning of the reign of Parāntaka I to the end of Rājendra's reign for a period of about 140 years (907 to 1044 A. D.) it was customary for every Cōḷa king to choose a Cēra princess as one of his queens. Each king had of course a number of queens, but it was the good fortune of Kēraḷa that some of the most outstanding Cōḷa monarchs had Cēra blood in their veins. Parāntaka I obviously had a great partiality for his Cēra queen and her country-men. Their grand-son Sundara Cōḷa also married from Kēraḷa, and though his son Rājarāja I was born of a Vāṇavan-Mahādēvi hailing from Malāḍu, the name suggests

(c. f. Tiruvalangāḍu plates VV 65—66; also 236 of 1902), chieftains of Malāḍu, a district on the banks of the Peṇṇār which had Tirukkōyilūr for its centre. Parāntaka I married a Paḷuvēttaraiyar princess, whose father is referred to as a Kēraḷa Raja in the Anbil plates of Sundara Cōḷa. His inscription states that even in the 7th century, "Anḍnargalāna Malalyāḷar, avarlittum Paḷavūr-Araṣan," was a title held by his ancestors. An inscription of the 12th year of Uttama Cōḷa mentions a Vāṇavan-Mahādēviyār, daughter of a Paḷuvēttaraiyar, as one of his five queens. Vāṇavan-Mahādēvi is thus a term found applied to the Cōḷa queens coming from the royal lines of the Cēras, the Paḷuvēttariyars and the Malaimāns of Malāḍu. The last two chiefs were occupying the hilly tracts of Trichinopoly and Arcot districts. It is likely that they traced their descent from the ancient line of Cēras, as did the Adigamāns of Tagaḍūr.

that the Mālamāns (of South Arcot) were at that time related in some way or other to the rulers of Kēraḷa. The great Rājarāja had about 15 wives, yet his only son Rājendra was born to his Kēraḷa queen. She most probably belonged to the Kūpaka dynasty—which was at that time independent of Vēṇāḍ—, for in the quelling of the Pāṇḍya-Kēraḷa rebellion by his son Rājādhirāja, the latter claims to have made ‘the strong Villavan (Cēra)’ hide in terror, destroyed in anger the Senior (chief) of Irāma-kuḍam”—the Kōlattiri chief—“sent the undaunted king of Vēṇāḍ to heaven,” and “*liberated* the king of the Kūpakas,”³¹ from his bondage, apparently to the ruler of Vēṇāḍ. Rājendra was the last great Cōḷa monarch to marry from Kēraḷa. The political destiny of Kēraḷa during this long period of Cōḷa domination over South India must have been considerably influenced by the presence of this distinguished line of Cēra princesses as queens of the Cōḷa monarchs.

The second half of the Kollam epoch may be taken to begin with the reign of Kulōttunga I (acc 1070 A. D.) Himself of Cālūkyan extraction, Kulōttunga and his successors ceased to have marital alliances with the Royal families of Kēraḷa. It was a period of growing alienation during which the severe repressive measures adopted by the Cōḷas only served to augment the vigour of Kēraḷa opposition, culminating in the triumphant career of Ravi Varman Kulasēkhara. On the other hand the Rules of Kēraḷa seems to have gone over to the side of the Pāṇḍyas.

Kulōttunga I led more than one punitive expedition against the Kēraḷa-Pāṇḍya alliance and claimed to have “subdued the numerous forces of Kēraḷās”, and to have captured Kollam in 1101 A. D.³² But he was forced to fix Kottāru, the fortified

31. SII. iii. p. 56.

32. The *Pāṇḍyan Chronicle* mentions a *Kollam Alinda Era*. It begins on A. D. 1096 and may refer to the capture of Kollam by Narakavīra the commander of Kulōttunga I.

c. f. N. Venkataramanayyar’s article on ‘Ma’ Bār’ (1311—23 A. D.), in J. O. R., Vol. XII, part II.

frontier town as the boundary of his kingdom. “Kēraḷakēśari Adhirājādhirājadeva whose gifts to the Viṣṇu Temple at Tirukaṇṇapuram are recorded in 1106 A. D. was perhaps a Kēraḷa feudatory of his ; a certain Bharadvajan Māra-nārāyaṇan is mentioned as a minister alike of this Cēra Prince, and of his over-lord Kullōttunga. There is a record of his 22+18 years at Paḷani (711 of 1905)”. Vikrama Cōḷa claimed the “king of Vēnād who banished Kali from the earth (by good rule)” as a feudatory, and incidentally mentions that Kōttār and Kollam were at that time in Pāṇḍyan possession. The ruler of Kollam or Kūpaka-dēsam at that period was evidently a Pāṇḍyan ally, since his daughter was married to Jaṭāvarman Parāntaka Pāṇḍya, who, in his Kanyākumāri inscription, claims to have defeated the Cēra and levied tribute from him. The next Pāṇḍyan king claimed Vira Ravi Varman of Vēṇād as his tributary. Kēraḷa again comes into the picture during the first Pāṇḍyan civil war ((1169—77 A. D.) “Kulasēkhara, whose cause was advocated by the Cōḷa kings, was eventually successful, his opponent Vira Pāṇḍya being finally crushed by Kulōttunga III in 1190 A. D. “It is just likely that the Sucīndram record (T. A. S. Vol. ii. pp. 18 ff.) is an inscription of this Vira Pāṇḍya. If so, he must have married a Kēraḷa Princess after his campaign mentioned in 1. 3. of the record” and this will explain his flight to Kollam after his final defeat. Virakēraḷa dēvar was apparently his ally and Virakēraḷa Pāṇḍyakkōnar the uttra-mantrīn at the time of his coronation may be identified with his son of the same name who continued his father’s fight and was crushed by Kulōttunga III. After the final defeat of Vira Pāṇḍya, Kulōttunga held a great Durbar in the Pāṇḍyan capital (1190 A. D.) at which Vira Pāṇḍya had his Cēra colleague did obeisance to Kulōttunga. The next Pāṇḍyan ruler was Jaṭāvarman Kulasēkhara (1190-1215 A. D.) whose reign marked the beginning of the Second Pāṇḍya Empire and the final eclipse of the Cōḷās. “Another early inscription of Kulasēkhara refers to a gift by him to a temple in the name of his brother-in-law Kōdai Ravi Varman undoubtedly a Cēra prince.”³³ He claimed the contemporary

33. All quotations, except when otherwise acknowledged, are from Professor Nilakanta Sastri’s monumental works on the

Tiruvaḍi of Jētunganāḍu³⁴ as his feudatory. His brother Māravarman Sundara Pāṇḍya I continued to treat Kēraḷa leniently. But with the increase in political status, the Pāṇḍyās sought marriage alliances outside Kēraḷa. Sundara Pāṇḍya II (acc 1238) refers to the Hoysala king Somēs'wara as *Mūmāḍi*, leading one to suppose that his father Sundara I married Sōmēs'wara's sister. History repeated itself and this cessation of marital relationship was inevitably accompanied by political estrangement between Kēraḷa and the Pāṇḍyās. Jaṭāvarman Sundara Pāṇḍya (acc 1251) assumed a hostile attitude towards Kēraḷa. 'Hatvā Cēram' and 'Kēraḷavams'anirmūlana' appear among his high-sounding titles. He probably defeated (killed?) Vīra Ravi Udaya Mārṭāṇḍavarman of Vēnāḍ (1251 A. D.) and commemorated his success by naming a village *Ravi-Venrā Caturvēdimangalam*. In spite of his boast of having annihilated Kēraḷavamsa, his successor Māravarman Kulasēkhara (acc 1268) had to start the fight all over again. He claimed the capture of Kollam as the chief incident of the campaign. His reign marked the end of the Pāṇḍyan Empire, for the second civil war, this time between the sons Vīra Pāṇḍya and Sundara Pāṇḍya, led to sack of Madura by Malik Kafur, the general of Alauddin, Sultan of Delhi in 1311 A.D. Towards the close of his reign Maravarman himself was forced to eat the humble pie and seek the help of Ravi Varma, (who was reigning at Kollam), to subjugate Vikrama Pāṇḍya, a rebellious feudatory of his.

Some idea of the chequered political history of the border principalities of Kēraḷa during the Kollam Epoch may be gained by a cursory survey of the history of Kollam during this epoch. Kollam, we have seen, is popularly believed to have been founded in 825 A. D. Thirty years hence it is mentioned by 'Solyman' as a prominent port in South India. The fact that the early

Cōḷās and the Pāṇḍyas. My indebtedness to him is too great to be formally acknowledged.

34. Jaitugi, son of Billama, was king of Yādavās from 1191—7 A. D. He was defeated by Ballāḷa II.

monarchs of the First Pāṇḍyan Empire* (590-920 A. D.) make no mention of Kollam may be taken to indicate that the popular version of the founding of Kollam in 825 A. D. may after all be true. Kollam is first mentioned in the copper plate grant of the Cēra King Stānu Ravi; and from the time of Rājarāja I onwards, finds frequent mention in Cōḷa and Pāṇḍyan inscriptions.

In the 20th year (1005 A. D.) of his reign, Rājarāja claims to have conquered the haughty kings of Kollam, Kolla-dēsam and Koduṅḡōlūr (394 of 1911; A.R.E., 1912).

The Tiruvālangāḍu plates wax poetic over Rājēndra's first invasion of Kēraḷa (1018 A. D.). "Who else, other than this supreme lord can entertain the thought in his mind of humiliating that ancient land protected by the glory of the ornament of Bhṛḡukula and free from the inroads of enemies? The fearless Madhurāntaka crossed the Sahya (mountain) and forthwith set upon Kēraḷa in great force, and there ensued a fierce battle which brought ruin upon kings". His second invasion, under the command of his son Rājādhirāja, was a deliberate attempt to bring Kēraḷa under complete subjection. The Kūpaka king alone, was leniently dealt with. Kulōttunga I claims to have captured Kollam in 1101 A. D. but was soon

35. Arikēsari Parāṅkuṣa (670—710), according to the Vēḷvikkūḍi grant, "defeated on several occasions the Kēraḷa King and captured him alive with his near relations and his forces". His successor Kōccaḍayan bore the title of Vāṇavan. The Madras Museum plates mention that Nedunjaḍayan (765-815) conquered the king of Vēṇāḍ, and for the first time in recorded history, destroyed the fortified port of Viliṅgam. The great Saivite Cēramān Perumāl, contemporary of Sundara-mūrti, may have reigned about this time. He is referred to as king of Koduṅḡōlūr, showing that Koduṅḡōlūr or Vāñci, had not yet shed its glory. On the other hand the copper plate grant of Stānu Ravi reveals that powerful trading guilds like the Añjuvanam, and Maṅigrāmam had opened branches at Kollam as well as Christian traders from Syria, by about 870 A. D.

forced to retreat and fix Kottāru as the boundary of his Empire. His successor Vikrama Cōla is friendly with Vēṇāḍ but refers to Kollam as "belonging to the Pāṇḍyas". It only means that the ruler of Kollam and the father-in-law of Jaṭāvarman Parāntaka Pāṇḍya was, at that time a staunch Pāṇḍyan ally. This alliance continues, and the unfortunate Vira Pāṇḍya (1170-90 A. D.) seeks refuge in Kollom after his final defeat by Kulōttunga III. At the beginning of the 13th century the Pāṇḍyan king claims the ruler (Tiruvaḍi) of Kollam as a feudatory. Relations thereafter become strained, and Mūravarmān Kulasēkhara (acc 1268) who takes pride in having captured Kollam, is obliged to acknowledge the power of the great Ravi Varma. Ravi Varma seems to have cemented the relationship between the chiefs of Kollam and Vēṇāḍ³⁶ and thereafter the two principalities merge into one. These evidences make it clear that in spite of repeated onslaughts by the Cōlās and Pāṇḍyās, the Kūpaka kingdom—of which Kollam was the capital—retained its individuality throughout the middle ages. This being the case it can be safely assumed that the Rajas of Central Kēraḷa ruling the territory between Kollam in the south and the kingdom of the Kōlattiris in the north, were always virtually independent of the Cōlās, the Pāṇḍyās, or Hoysalās, though occasionally forced to acknowledge the nominal overlordship of these powerful neighbours.

(*The Ravi Varmā Epoch*) 1299—1493 A. D.

Ravi Varma's reign marked the beginning of a new cultural epoch in Kēraḷa; a 'Romantic' epoch, during which the phenomenal influence of Sanskrit led to the almost complete disappearance of Tamil conventions, not only in literature but also in the social life of the people. The triumphant raid of Ravi Varma across the territories of the erst-while overlords of Kēraḷa was in a large measure responsible for this welcome renaissance of Kēraḷa culture. On the other

36. Ravi Varma is referred to as 'Vēnāttin uḷaiyōru Ravi Varmākhyō yadūnām patih' in a Malayalam verse quoted in "Lilātilakam," a Kēraḷa treatise of the (14th) century.

hand his political achievements were ephemeral, both at home and abroad. They certainly did not “amount to the creation of the State of Travancore as it is at the present time as a political entity.”³⁷ In 1320 A. D.—four years after the alleged demise of Ravi Varma—. Virarāghava Cakravarti, who most probably belonged to the Koṅṅōlūr dynasty, mentioned the ruler of Vēnāḍ as a feudatory. In 1342 A. D. Ibn Batuta asserted that Kēraḷa was ruled by 12 ‘infidel Sultans’, each one independent of the others. Ravi Varma’s successors ruled over Kēraḷa south of Kollam, and were known as the ‘Tiruvadīs’, the ruler being the eldest member among the five collateral (matrilineal) branches, into which the amalgamated royalty of Vēnāḍ and Jayasimhanāḍ was apparently split up, at least from 1375 A. D. onwards.³⁸

With the rapid rise in power of the Zamorins of Calicut, the centre of culture was shifted from Kollam to Calicut, its chief rival being Cochin, the new Capital and residence of the Rajas of Cochin State (Perumpaṭappu Swarūpam.)

The Rajas of Kēraḷa seem to have played their part in the successful establishment of the Vijayanagar Empire. Ferishtah mentions that “in A. H. 744 (1343—4 A. D.), Ballaḷa Deva (Bukka I) induced the Rajas of Malabar and Kanara countries to join him” and that in 1378 A. D., “the roies of Malabar, Ceylon—kept ambassadors at his court and sent annually rich presents”. The rulers of Vijayanagar, in fact, seem to have claimed nominal overlordship over the Kēraḷa Rajas. According to Abdur Razzak, envoy from Persia to the Zamorin and the king of Vijayanagar; the Zamorin, though independent, stood “extremely in fear” of the Vijayanagar ruler. Nuniz mentions the chief of Calicut as a vassal of Krishna Deva Raya. The ‘Tiruvadīs’ of Southern Kēraḷa seem to have been rather rebellious, and invited more than one punitive raid from the

37. New Indian Antiquary. Vol. I, No. 3, page 179.

38. The five branches were Vēnāḍ, Tiruvitāmkōḍe, Tṛppappūr, Cēṛavāi and Jayasimhanāḍ.

Vijayanagar rulers, because of their repeated encroachment on Pāṇḍyan territory.³⁹

The Rajas of Kēraḷa were, however, left entirely to themselves within the limits of their own territories. The Zamorin who was perhaps the most powerful chief of Kēraḷa, was engaged in an endless feud with the Rulers of Cochīn and might have been eventually triumphant, but for the timely arrival of the Portugese, K. M. Panicker goes to the extent of asserting that but for this alien intervention, the Zamorin would have become the ruler of all Kēraḷa; an assertion which is belied by the fact that even his neighbour, the Kōlattiri (Chief of Irāmakuṭam), was always independent of him.

This Epoch therefore marked the final emancipation of Kēraḷa from the domination of her Tāmil neighbours. It synchronised with the revival of Kēraḷa culture and a new orientation in Kēraḷa literature. It was also an era of growing wealth and prosperity, though frequent internecine feuds continued to be a lamentable feature of Kēraḷa History. We have seen that cultural homogeneity and political disunity characterised Kēraḷa at the time of Rājendra I; and in spite of a growing political consciousness, Kēraḷa continued to be in this state right up to the end of the Ravi Varma Epoch.

39. 'History of Kēraḷa—Vol. II, page 17.