

Peritally or *Perakathavazhi*. Further north was Kottarakkara called also Elayadathu Swarupam. North of Travancore and west of Kottarakkara was the estate of the Rani of Attingal, the seniormost female member of the Venad ruling family. North of Attingal between the sea and Kottarakkara was *Desinganad* known to westerners as *Signatti*. Adjoining it on the north were two little kingdoms *Karunagapalli* and *Venmani* (*Betimeni*) the former stretching along the sea and the latter lying to the east of the backwaters. Beyond that was Kayamkulam or *Qulli-Qulon*. It was a large state which ranked as the second in that part of the country. It was surrounded by the principalities of Kottarakkara on the south *Pandalam* on the north-east and *Purakkad* (*Chempakassery*) and *Thekkumkur* on the north. *Trukkunnappuzha* (*Pegodango*) was a strip of land between Kayamkulam and Purakkad. It belonged to the Raja of Edappalli. Purakkad stretched from Trukkunnappuzha to the limits of Cochin. On the east it bordered on *Thekkumkur* and *Vadakkumkur*. The latter was north of Thekkumkur and stretched as far as Cochin. Interspersed within the territory of Cochin were three small principalities of Edappalli, Alangad (*Mangatty*), and Parur (*Pindini-vattam*). Beyond these limits on the north were a number of principalities of which Cochin in the south and Calicut further north were the most important. The Rajas of Palghat and Kottayam ruled over small territories. The Zamorin's possessions (Calicut) lay between the territories of Cochin and Kolathunad (Chirakkal). The Zamoin was the most powerful among the princes of the north and was engaged in perpetual hostility with Cochin. The small territory of Ali Raja, the only Muhammeden Chief in Kerala, lay contiguous to that of the Raja of Kolathunad. The common factor in the political complications of the time was the wire-pulling of the Dutch. The rulers of Travancore and Calicut tried to resist Dutch advance, but the Dutch were successful in getting the friendship of Cochin. Vadakkumkur, Thekkumkur, Purakkad and Kayamkulam formed a confederacy with Cochin as their head to avail themselves of the assistance of the Dutch.

Assumption of the Attingal Estate.

Early in his reign Marthanda Varma assumed direct control over the so-called Attingal 'Queendom'. This was not an act of annexation or conquest, but Nagam Aiya has described the event as "the amalgamation of Travancore with Attingal". There has been some misunderstanding among contemporary

and later writers in regard to the significance of this step taken by Marthanda Varma. This is the result of a general notion that Attingal was an independent state ruled by the Ranis and that the Kings of Travancore never exercised any authority in the tract. Certain statements found in the memoirs, commentaries and state papers of the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English have only served to strengthen this notion. According to Van Rheede (1677) "the Princess of Attingal who is not alone the mother of Travancore, but the eldest of Tippaporsorewam has a large territory of her own independent of Travancore". Hamilton even refers to a regular treaty between Marthanda Varma and the Rani by which the former strengthened the position of the King. He says that "the *Tamburetties* of Attingal possessed the sovereignty of Travancore from remote antiquity, until Raja Marthanda Varma persuaded the *Tamburetty* to resign the sovereign authority to the Rajas, both for himself and for all succeeding *Tamburetties*. To perpetuate these conditions, a regular treaty was executed between the Raja and the *Tamburetty*, which was inscribed on a silver plate, and ratified by the most solemn imprecations, limiting the succession to the offsprings of the Attingal *Tamburetties*. Having concluded this arrangement Raja Marthanda Varma directed his arms against the neighbouring states"¹. The theory that the Ranis of Attingal exercised sovereign powers is, however, incorrect. The fact is that in political matters the Ranis of Attingal as such exercised no sovereign rights. Any grant of rights over immovable property by the Ranis of Attingal required the King's previous assent or subsequent confirmation for its validity. It may be noted that the so-called Queendom of Attingal had its origin in the 5th century Kollam Era when two princesses were adopted into the Venad family from Kolathunad and the revenues from certain estates in and around Attingal were assigned to them for their exclusive use². Since then the female members of the ruling family of Travancore had come to be known as Attingal Ranis. It was only the male children of these Tamburatties, either by birth or by adoption, who could inherit the throne. Thus Marthanda

1. *Description of Hindostan, Hamilton, Vol. II, page 315.*

2. The story of this adoption has already been mentioned in an earlier section of this chapter. The Attingal estates consisted of about 15000 acres of land covering the pakuthies of Edakkodu, Lamba, Mudakkal, Alamkode, Avanavancherry, Attingal and Kizhattingal.

Varma and the heir-apparent Rama Varma were both sons of Attingal Tamburatties. This tended to invest the Attingal Ranis with a special dignity in the eyes of the people, native as well as foreign, and led to the notion that they had sovereign rights over Attingal. But in reality the Kingdom of Venad extended from Kanyakumari in the south as far as Kannetti in the north, and there was no kingdom or principality intervening within its limits. When Marthanda Varma decided to assume direct control over the estates of Attingal and thus deprive the Rani of some of her rights, he was not interfering in the affairs of a sovereign state. As the head of the royal family and the ruler of the State, he had every right to interfere in the affairs of a part of his kingdom. The Rani of Attingal had neither territory nor subjects, except in the sense that the people of Venad paid respects to her as a senior member of the ruling family. What she possessed was nothing more than the control over the revenues of the estates and an outward status and dignity. Whatever powers she exercised were those delegated to her by the head of the family and the sovereign of the state. Marthanda Varma's action in assuming direct control over the Attingal estates was dictated by considerations of political expediency. The position of the Rani of Attingal was such as to create confusion in the minds of the foreign powers who were on the Travancore coast looking for centres of trade and influence. The Ranis on their own initiative and without prior consultation with the rulers had on previous occasions entered into private arrangements with foreign powers like the Dutch, the Danes and the English granting them commercial privileges and concessions within their tract. Marthanda Varma realised that such private relationship between the Rani and the foreign traders would in the long run be prejudicial to the interests of his Kingdom. He, therefore, decided to put an end to the *status quo* and exercise real and effective control over Attingal. As a political measure it was also intended to prevent the Raja of Kayamkulam who had brought Quilon and Elayadathu Swarupam in his sphere of influence from obtaining any advantage in the neighbourhood of Attingal. Thus the direct assumption of the Attingal estates from the Rani must be regarded as nothing more than an administrative action taken by Marthanda Varma in exercise of the powers vested in him as the ruling king and the head of the royal house of Venad. The alternative theories of annexation, amalgamation, and agreement must be abandoned.