

***RECENT PERSPECTIVES
ON SOCIAL HISTORY OF
MEDIEVAL KERALA***

**III SEMESTER
ELECTIVE COURSE
(HIS3 E06)**

**M.A. HISTORY
(2019-Admission Onwards)**



***UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT,
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Study Material

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RECENT PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL KERALA

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Module I

Writing Social History-Perspectives and Method

Historiography and Pioneers in Social History Approaches

Social history is history of society done in social scientific perspective often made out to be contradistinction to political history. In Kerala, early attempts of writing social history are a part of colonial anthropology rather than of history. It began as community and caste studies. Works by Charles Metcalf, Henry Maine, Thomas Munroe, William Logan and Fawcett are examples of this. As specific portraits of the caste or community of the region, these works dealt with what are the socially and culturally unique points about their subjects and their surroundings, in terms of the physical feature, racial composition, kinship system, linguistic identity and village economy. It was a necessity for the colonial administrators to know the life and people to administer. William Logan's *Malabar* is something more than a manual as it depicted the social life of the people.

K.P.Padmanabha Menon

K.P.Padmanabha Menon(1858-1919) was regarded by most of the historians as the first modern historian of Kerala. He inaugurated an era of modern historical writing through his works the *History of Kerala* and *Kochirajyacharithram*. Raghava Varier and Rajan Gurukkal regarded him as the first modern historian of Kerala.His father P.Sangunni Menon, the former *Dewan Peshkar* of Tiruvitamkur was the author of *A History of*

Travancore. Padmanabha Menon was educated at Cherthala district School, Ernakulam Maharaja's High School, Thiruvananthapuram Maharajas High School, and Madras Presidency College. He took his B.L Degree in 1884 and later became a successful lawyer.

Padmanabha Menon was appointed as a member of the *Marumakkathayam Committee of Tiruvitamkur* in 1908. Menon as a member of the committee examined the constitution and history of the matrilineal joint family system among the Nairs, the warrior caste of Medieval Kerala. His experiences as a member of a matrilineal joint family induced him to study deeply about the matrilineal joint family system. Menon in his report discusses the origin of *marumakkathayam* quoting the travelers from Abdur Razak to Buchanan and sociologists like Morgan, Maine and Westermarck.

Menon made enormous contributions to modern historical writing in Kerala. While Logan and other manual writers treated the *Keralolpatti* as an important source book Menon dismisses it in a few paragraphs. He distinguishes between the contemporary and later sources on one hand and primary and secondary sources on the other. Unlike many other scholars Menon accepted that Tamil was the literary and official language of early Kerala. His persistence in collecting material is already clear in his treatment of problems in Kerala history like the Perumal problem, the customs and traditions of different communities and the role of temples in social life. His attempts were resulted in the discovery of new sources on Kerala history. He exhibited a respectful and curious approach to contemporary sources and suspicious but imaginative approach to tradition. In fact, Menon provided the starting point to Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, a teacher at the Department of Malayalam, University College.

Kochirajya charitram: Padmanabha Menon had published his two volume work *Kochirajyacharithram* in 1912 and 1914 respectively. In the preface of the work he clarifies that he wrote this work to satisfy the long felt need of a history of the Kochi state, dealing with more elaborately than was possible in state manuals. M.G.S.Narayanan regarded Kochirajyacharithram as the masterpiece of Padmanabha Menon. Menon borrowed some facts from C.Achutha Menon, the author of the *Cochin State Manual* in order to start his work. *Kochirajyacharithram* was printed at *Bharathavilasam Press*, Trissur. This work was divided in to two parts.

The first part is dealing with the early history of Kochi. The second and the third part gave information regarding the history of Kochi under the Portuguese and Dutch power. The fourth part is a survey of the history of Kochi under the British rule. The first volume of the work was dedicated to his mother Parvathi Amma and the second volume to his father Sangunni Menon. *Kochirajyacharithram* provides a detailed picture of the socio-economic and political history of Kochi. He tried to analyze the sources of Kerala history in the initial chapters. He refused to accept the Parasurama legend and not spend many pages to describe it. It was the first attempt to write the history of the Dutch and Portuguese era in a new perspective.

History of Kerala: Padmanabha Menon presented the historical facts of the land known to him in the form of descriptive notes attached to the correspondence of Bishop Canter Vissher's letters. However, when these notes published (1924-37) the editor called it a *History of Kerala*.

Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai

The works of Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai is dealing with the different aspects of Kerala history like the formation of

Malayalam language, cultural history, political-social and economic history of Kerala. His notable works including *Sahityamalika*, *Keralabhashayude Vikasaparinamangal*, *Sahityacharitrasangraham*, *Bhashayum Sahithyavum Nootandukalil*. *Anchum Aarum Nootandile Keralam*. *Charithrathinte Paschathalathil, Annathe Keralam*, *Chera Samrajyam ompathum pathum Nootandil*, *Chila Kerala Charitraprashnangal*, *keralacharithrathile Iruladanja Eedukal*, *Janmi Sambradayam Keralathil* and *Unnuneelisandesham Charitradrishtiyilude*.

Elamkulam was the first historian, who reconstructed the history of Kerala beyond the 9th century. He made a finding that Kerala is part of the early Tamilakam. Elamkulam wrote the medieval history of Kerala by using and linking the inscriptional and literary evidences. He presented a chronological list of the Chera rulers. He explains how the outside Aryans came to Kerala and dominated its original inhabitants. Elamkulam argued that the Aryans snatched the properties of the people of Kerala. The Aryan Brahmanas introduced a temple-centered life style for the medieval Kerala society by replacing the Dravida gods in the Sangam age. According to him the temples in the structure what we see today is established in Kerala by 750CE and the Aryan Brahmanas made use of the temples to expel Jainism and Buddhism, which had an influence on local people from the mainstream of Kerala society. They converted Jain and Buddhist temples into Hindu temples. They had taken away the land under the ownership of the local people by making it as the *Devaswam* and later converted it to as their private property in the form of the *Brahmasvam*.

Elamkulam argued that there was a hundred year long between the Cheras and Cholas in the 11th century. Elamkulam added that by using the opportunities provided by the war the

Namboodiris gained prominence in politics and complete ownership on the land. They made temple properties as their private property and made the Nairs as *cavers* in the war. They made use of the Parasurama epic to justify the *Namboodiri* landlordism. Elamkulam had an opinion that the *namboodiri* landlordism took its complete form in the 13th century. Elamkulam made use of the literary evidences to throw light on the social life of Kerala after the decline of the Perumal rule. Elamkulam argued that the Aryan Brahmanas destroyed the egalitarian social structure existed during the Sangam age and introduced the caste system based on untouchability in its place. He also put forward some arguments about the formation of agrarian society in Kerala. Elamkulam identified the importance of merchant guilds like the *anchuvannam* and *manigramam* in the social and economic life in medieval Kerala. He says that the development of architecture, sculpture, art, literature and education is associated with the medieval temples.

According to Elamkulam after the decline of the Perumal rule a social structure, which was completely dominated by the *Namboodiris* emerged in Kerala. He regarded this as an age of *Namboodiri* landlordism. He made use of the evidences in the medieval Manipravala texts to present his arguments about this period. He traced the origin of *marumakkathayam*, *Janmi* system and Devadasi system in this age. Elamkulam arrived in a conclusion by analyzing inscriptional and literary evidences that there is a close link between the social life and the language of the people of a particular region.

P.K.Balakrishnan

P.K.Balakrishnan (1926-1991) is a journalist, historian and writer. He was born at Edavanakkadu in Ernakulam. He got imprisonment for participating in the Quit India Movement, when he was studying in the college. He was one of the most famous

journalists of Kerala. His notable works including *Chandu Menon:Oru Padanam*, *Kavyakala Kumaranasaniloode* , *Narayana Guru*, *Tipu Sultan:Jeevacharitram*, *Jathi Vyavashithiyum Keralacharitravum*.

In 1983, he published his *Jativyavasthithiyum Keralacharitravum* by dedicating it to Sahodaran Ayyapan. The content of the book is the social history of Kerala from the emergence of the agrarian villages. In this work Balakrishnan followed K.P.Padmanabha Menon's methodology in his approach to social historical facts and D.D.Kosambi's methodology in his approach to history. This work covers the social history of Kerala up to the period 1850-1890. According to him, in that period a desirable change took place in Kerala society. He claimed that he is in an attempt to write the real history of Kerala by abandoning the methodology of writing the history of Kerala based on the old Brahmanical texts like *Keralamahathmyam* and *Jathimahathmyam*. He discusses elaborately in his work about topics like agrarian economy, caste system, monarchy and the origin of Malayalam language in his work.

Balakrishnan argued that , even though , Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai followed the method of social history introduced by Padmanabha Menon, the formation of a unified and separate Kerala state demanded the writing of a single history of Kerala, which resulted in the work *A Survey of Kerala History*, written by A.Sreedhara Menon. Balakrishnan criticized Sreedhara Menon for making a feeling that Kerala had a rich cultural heritage and a prosperous past. Balakrishnan had an opinion that there were no big empires, state or civilizations in Kerala and a rich economy and resources to support this. He added that the economy in Kerala grew by depending solely on the hard work of the *Pulayar* or *Cerumar*, the cultivating class of Kerala. Balakrishnan argued

that the local rulers were failed in effectively utilizing the possibilities of foreign trade based on spices. He says that in the past Kerala was a poor country and it was the caste system responsible for this situation. Caste system was introduced in Kerala by the *namboodiris*, who came to Kerala through Karnataka. The *namboodiris* converted the different tribal communities in Kerala as the castes with separate customs and life style of their own and blended them to the village communities. Balakrishnan viewed Manipravalam as a turning point in the evolution of Malayalam language and proudly narrates the role of Ezhuthachan. He in his work with 32 chapters handled a variety of topics like the history of the coconut and paddy cultivation in Kerala, formation of the village communities, the history of roads, canals and forests, formation of the Malayalam language, Malayali family structure, matriliney and landlord-tenant relations etc.

Scientific Approaches

According to Rajan Gurukkal following the path of Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai with more methodological clarity M.G.S.Narayanan strengthened the chronological foundations of social history of Kerala with the help of new evidences and reinterpretations. M.G.S.Narayanan was the first to demonstrate in the historiography of Kerala the primacy of socio-economic structure as the determinat factor of the political power. Kesavan Veluthat contributed to the socio-economic historiography by specifically focusing on the Brahmana settlements, the temple centered institutional composition and socio-economic power structure.

From the mid-1960s the historiography of South India began to take a new diversion with the writings of Burton Stein and his fellow researchers. The writings of M.G.S.Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat was inspired by the 'segmentary state model

‘and the idea of the ‘peasant-brahmana alliance’ by Burton Stein. Their works on the *bhakti* ideology and temple culture in Kerala was influenced by the works of R.Chempakalakshmi. M.R.Raghava varier wrote articles and works on the cultural history of Kerala, foreign trade, medieval polity and the formation of a separate Kerala identity. Rajan Gurukkal made an attempt to analyze the social formations of early South India in a work in the same name. He along with Raghava Varier wrote the history of Kerala in two volumes and a volume of the cultural history of Kerala. He in his latest work is reinterpreting the Indo-Roman trade.

K.N.Ganesh

K.N.Ganesh completed his studies from Vivekananda College, Chennai and Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. His major publications include *Keralathinte Innalekal*(1990), *Irapidiyanamarude Lokam*(1994), *Kunjan Nambiar:Vakkum Samoohavum, Pradesika Charitra Rachana Oru Kaipusthakam* (1997), *Kerala Samooha Padanangal*(2004), *Culture and Modernity inKerala*(2004, edited work), *Kerala Samooham Innu Nale*(2008), *Locality and Culture in KeralaHistory:The Case of Tirurangadi*(2010), *Exercises on Modern Kerala History*(2013, edited work), *Prakrithiyum Manushyanum*(2014) and *Reflections on Pre-Modern Kerala*(2016).

K,N, Ganesh published his *Keralathinte Innalekal* in 1990 at the age of 36. He made use of a number of new sources to write this work. This work was a detailed survey of Kerala history from the ancient period to the period when the first Communist government was came into power in Kerala and dismissed after two years. Ganesh criticized the early works on Kerala history which celebrated empires and glory of kings. According to him the details of the social life of the people of Kerala is always neglected by the historians, who wrote these works. Ganesh in

this work discussed elaborately about caste system, gender, agrarian system, trade and the social life of the people in his works. He published essays on the topics like agrarian system, medieval trade, medieval Kerala polity and society, temple culture, Malayalam literature, medieval urban culture etc.

Social History Approaches to Gender, Caste and Religion in Kerala

In the 1960s some efforts were made to understand the historical background of the land-tenures and social relations by linking it with the caste and communities in Kerala. Social anthropological works dealing with the Nair community by Cathleen Gough and John P. Mencher had depicted some aspects of the social life of the Nairs. Kathleen Gough's works were focused on the changing kinship usages among the Nairs, their ancestral worship, institutional marriage and matrilineal kinship. John P. Mencher's studies gave particular emphasis on the family organization and ritual beliefs among the Nairs of North Malabar. L.A. Krishna Iyer published his two volumes of *Social history of Kerala* in 1968. Though this work is about the social history of the whole Kerala his focus is on the ancient peoples and their cultures as reconstructed ethnographically out of the studies of the pre-Dravidians and Dravidian speaking hill tribes, communities, and castes of the plains.

As interested more in kinship and marriage or the caste and community anthropologists were least interested in probing to the depth of historical process. They regarded the medieval Kerala society had a Nair dominated structure with several landlords enjoying a higher status. In the late seventies social anthropological studies took a different turn, when Robin Jeffrey published his work on the decline of the Nair dominance in 1976. By probing deeply into the causes for the decline of the Nair dominance, he attempted to write the social history of the 19th

and the early 20th century Tiruvitamkur.K.S.Mathew's study about the society in medieval Malabar is an example of a plain ideographic narrative recounting customs and practices of Kerala as alluded to in the Northern ballads.

Several works by women historians like G.Arunima, Praveena Kodoth, J.Devika,Meera Velayudhan, saradamanee and Susan Thomas are dealing with the different aspects of family structure , gender and property rights.Meera Velayudhan interviewed a number women in Kerala related to left politics. She published a number of articles on the political participation of women in the age of political awakening in Malabar and about the participation of women in the social and political movements. G.Arunima's study is about the transformation of Matriliney in Colonial Malabar. Praveena Kodoth's research is focused on the property rights of women and matriliney. Saradamanee published works on the transformation of matriliney in colonial Tiruvitamkur and about the system of caste slavery in Kerala.A significant study of social anthropology of modern Kerala is that of Philippos Osella and Carolina Osella on the Ezhava community.

Social History and Indian Historiography

From the beginning of the 20th century, the nationalist and the Marxist historians showed interest to write on several aspects of the social life of the people of India. Muhammad Habib, the first modern Indian Muslim to study a subject pertaining to medieval Muslim India in his work *Urban and rural revolution in Northern India* explained the way that the Gharian Turks replaced the *Thakurs* as the governing class and then enfranchised the Indian city workers, who had been obliged to live outside the city walls by the caste Hindus. K.M Ashraf in his work *Life and conditions of the people of Hindustan 1200-1500*(1935), deals with the status, habits and standard of life of different classes of people in the area of the Delhi sultanate, although it leaves out

matters like administration, army, land revenue, transport, literature and religion. Sardar K.M Panikkar's *A survey of Indian history* (1947) which was a popular favourite appearing nine times in print in seven years is not a survey of political or dynastic history but aimed at portraying the life of the people. A.R Desai in his *Social background of Indian Nationalism* documents the changes that have occurred in the Indian society during the colonial rule and how it contributed to the development of Indian nationalism. This book is dealing with the development of nationalism up to the Second World War.

D.D Kosambi's writings and the beginning of the Marxist school of Indian historiography was a major development in the writing of social history in India. He, in his works threw light on the several aspects of social life of the people in the pre-colonial India. Kosambi by publishing his work *Myth and Reality* proved that interpretation of myths is essential to any study of early cultures. He discussed elaborately about the origin of caste system in India, in his most notable work *An introduction to the study of Indian history* (1956). He identified the social and economic factors behind the rise of Jainism and Buddhism in India.

R.S. Sharma in his work *Sudras in Ancient India* (1958) examines the relationship of the lower social order with the means of production and with higher orders from the Vedic age to the end of the Gupta period. He depended mainly on literary sources to explain the life of Sudras in ancient India. Sharma in his work of *Indian feudalism* (1966) linked the origin of feudalism in India in the land grants system of Early Medieval India. He in his another work *Urban decay in India* (1987) made use of the archaeological evidences regarding the origin and growth of feudalism in India.

Romila Thapar published her *Ancient Indian Social History* in 1978. In this work she is dealing with the ancient Indian social life from early times to the end of the first millennium CE. It is a collection of thirteen essays. The essays 'Society and Law in the Hindu and Buddhist Tradition' is a kind of parallel, comparative study of Hindu and Buddhist socio-religious systems. The essay 'Ethics, Religion and Social Protest' in the first millennium BC in Northern India, viewed the ethics and religion of Buddhism as a form of social protest also. The essay 'Social mobility in Ancient India with special reference to Elite Groups' questions the assumption that society in India remained in a more or less frozen condition throughout the period between 1000 BCE and 1000 CE. In the work *From Lineage to State* (1984), she traces the origin of the state system in the Ganga valley to the transition from a lineage mode of agrarian production to a peasant economy of private holdings and increasing urbanization.

Though Bipan Chandra's work was concentrated on the economic history of Colonial India, some of the works written by him like *Communalism in Modern India* and his several other essays are dealing with the social life of the people in Colonial India. Irfan Habib in his famous work the *Agrarian system of Mughal India* identified that the principle contradiction in the medieval Indian social formation lay between the centralized ruling class (the state) and the revenue appropriating class in Mughal India. His *Essays on Indian History*, a collection of essays on medieval Indian History including the studies which covers different aspects of Medieval Indian social life like the caste systems, agrarian system and ordinary life of the peasants.

A series titled subaltern studies started its publication from 1982 as Ranajit Guha as the editor and this series has introduced an almost new genre of history writing on Modern

India. The Subaltern studies are collections of monographs on diverse, inter connected topics. Their one theme is the insurgency of the lower classes. The essays in the different volume of the Subaltern studies covered different aspects of the social life of those essay belonged to different branches of social history like gender history, environmental history, history of famine, working class history, peasant history etc.

Sumit Sarkar, a renowned historian specialized in Modern Indian history published his *Writing Social History* in 1997. It was a collection of essays including an essay criticising the subaltern studies and another one on the relevance of E.P Thompson. Other important essays in this work are dealing with Indian Renaissance and Social life in the Calcutta city. Gender history as a branch of history developed in India in the 1980's and 1990's, through the writings of Uma Chakravathi, Tanika Sarkar, and Suvira Jaiswal etc. K.N Panikkar's writings on the social and cultural aspects of anti-colonial resistance in India and Ramachandra Guha's studies about Environmental history and Social history sports in India were other major developments.

Problems in the Dominant Historiography of Kerala

The most serious limitation of pre-modern Kerala history is that it is dealing only with the social and cultural life of the elite sections of the society including the *namboodiris*, *naduvazhis* and other upper caste people depended on them. Inscriptions and literary works were the major sources of study of the pre-modern Kerala society and culture. These sources are only dealing with the life of the elite sections of Kerala society.

All the historians specialized in pre-modern history including M.G.S, Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat have admitted that the non-availability of sources to study about the class of actual tillers of Kerala is a major limitation of the historiography

of Kerala. It is impossible to reconstruct the history of the non-brahmana landless peasants of Kerala by using the temple centered inscriptions and literary works written by the Brahmanas and other upper caste people. This limitation compelled the historians of Kerala to keep apart the history of the landless peasants from their writings.

But several attempts were made to write the history of the landless peasants of Kerala. This task was undertaken by several scholars, which led to the emergence of new style of history writing in Kerala. T.H.P.Chentharassery, the biographer of Ayyankali through his work *Keralacharithrathile Avaganikkapetta Eedukal* attempted to give a new dimension to the writing of Kerala history. This was an attempt to write the history of the people like *pulayas*, who were avoided by the main stream historians. He is not a trained and professional historian. P.K.Balakrishnan's work on the caste system in Kerala is an inspiration to these attempts. They made use of the oral tradition, ethnographical evidences, and the clues in inscriptions and literary works, which were neglected by the historians.

K.K.Kochu in his work *Keralacharithravum Samooharoopeekaranavum* analyzed the process of social formation from the migration in pre-historic age to the 12th century CE. Kochu in his autobiography *Dalitan* attempted to trace the historical roots of the *Pulayas*, the major cultivating class of Kerala. Aju.K.Narayanan in his work shows Buddhist knowledge survived in Kerala parallel to the Brahmanical knowledge by using the evidences in local knowledge. One of the other notable development is the doctoral thesis of K,S, Madhavan. This is about the evolution of agrarian society in Kerala from the Sangam age to 1300CE. He studied the links between the agrarian expansion and caste system in Kerala. A detailed history of the bonded labourers like *al* and *atiyar* were

included in this study. Many other dalit writers like Pradeepan Pambirikunnu and Sunny M Kapikkadu, who were not historians by profession, criticized the dominant historiography of Kerala. Rajan Gurukkal argued that the significant gap in the social history of Kerala relates to the process between the close of the chiefdom level society and the consolidation of the agrarian social formation.

Social History perspective

Social history means “the history of society or more precisely of social structures, process and trends.” G.M. Trevelyan in his *English Social History* defines social history “as the history of a people with politics left out”. Social history is a branch of history, which is very close to economic history. Fabian socialists and liberal-radical intellectuals took a prominent part in shaping the subject in Britain between the late nineteenth century and the Second World War. Arnold Toynbee’s efforts in projecting the harsh effects of industrialization on the lower classes were continued by J.L and Barbara Hammond in their works, *The Village Labourer* (1911), *The Town Labourer* (1917) and *The skilled labourer* (1919). These were the attempts to study the industrial revolution in terms of its impact on the working classes. Toynbee and the Hammonds concluded that change into mechanised production had only harmed the working class. The village labourer analysed the changes in rural England from the sixteenth to the twentieth century and accused the landlord’s classes and the policies which destroyed the pre-industrial village. *The Town Labourer* took a pessimistic view of the social consequences in the growing urban area. Elie Halevy’s work *The English People in 1815* is another important effort in social history. The writings of R.H Tawney, Sidney and Beatrice

Webb, Eileen Power and H.N Brailsford shaped the growing identity of this branch of history. G.D.H Cole and Raymond postgate's '*The Common People*' (1938) is an important work in this direction.

An attempt was made by G.M Trevelyan to write a complete social history of England through his work *English Social History* (1944). The work was published during the Second World War period. According to Trevelyan social history does not merely provide the required link between economic and political history. Its scope is that it is dealing with the daily life of inhabitants of the land in past ages, which includes the human as well as the economic relation of different classes to one another, the character of family and household life, the condition of labour and leisure, the attitude of man to nature, the culture of each age. Trevelyan defined social history and its scope in his work and presented a detailed social history of England from the 14th century to the second half of the Victorian England. E.P. Thompson, a New Left historian published his work *The Making of the English Working Class* in 1963. The work concentrates on the life of artisan and working class society in its formative years 1780 to 1832. By this work Thompson added a humanist element to social history and he made great effort to recreate the life experience of the working class, which made the work an influential one.

The *New social history*'n the UK was quickly emerged as one of the dominant styles of historiography there and as well as in the US and Canada. This new movement history is depended upon the writing of the Annales school. Jurgen Kocka, a German social historian finds two meanings to social history: at the simplest level, it was the subdivision of historiography that focused on social structures and process. In that regards, it stood in construct to political or economic history. The second was

broader and the Germans called it *Gessellschaftsgeschichte*. It is the history of an entire society from a social-historical viewpoint the social science History Association was formed in 1976 to bring together scholars from numerous disciplines interested in social history.

Apart from England social history started to dominate the historiography in other countries. In Germany Karl Lamprecht's through volumes on the cultural development of the German people represented a kind of social history. In France, March Bloch's *Original characters of French History* (1931) tried to explore the intrinsic relationship between man's physical setting and his social institutions, while his *Feudal Society* (1939-40) is an attempt to understand medieval European society has few equals and no superior. He founded the *Journal Annals of Economic and Social History* along with Lucien Febvre. In England Eric Hobsbawm, and Asa Briggs made new attempts to write on the different aspects of English social life.

Ethnic history, Labour history, Women history, Gender history, History of family, History of peasants, History of Education, Urban history, Rural history, History of religion etc. are different branches of social history in which a number of works produced.

Module II

Social World of Early Medieval Kerala

Environment

According to Raghava Varier and Rajan Gurukkal, due to the ecological differences from the rest of the Tamilakam, the process of transformation of the social system in Kerala involved certain unique features. Extensive forests, large catchments, numerous micro watersheds, many natural aquatic network of rivers and streams, and well-drenched aquifers constituting wet plains, thickly -vegetated large marshes and isolated swamps surrounded by undulating lateritic midland terrains merging with hillocks and low-lying fluvio-marine land forms make the landscape of Kerala a major ecological distinction. When other regions of South India always suffered with a scarcity of water Kerala has a wet-rice landscape ecosystem with excess of water. Thus, when irrigation became a major problem for the people of all other regions in South India, the management of excess was always the problem of the people of Kerala since the beginning of agrarian settlements in the land of Kerala.

Kerala is an agro-climatic zone with relatively heavy rainfall due to the South West and North East monsoon winds. It was probably the 7th and 8th centuries CE that human adaptation to the water-saturated and waterlogged landscape occurred through the making of paddy fields by draining the water and reclaiming the productive soil. This change was occurred due to the spread of Brahmana settlements in the river valleys in Kerala. These settlements were concentrated in areas of wet-rice landscape eco types adjacent to the red soil terraces and between

the forested hill tracts and the waterlogged lowlands. The expansion of plough agriculture to lowlands that were marshy and waterlogged needed variety of factors such as fairly evolved technology of water management, knowledge of seasons, specialized social division of labour, effective institution for the realization of labour and a dominant class for the coercive mobilization of massive labour. Wetlands in Kerala reclaimed through draining off the water from marshes through canals and distributaries.

Life Activities and Social Life

According to RajanGurukkal and RaghavaVarier the process of the social formation in Kerala was not basically different from what it was the in the rest of Tamilakam. The material process, production relation and the transformation in the socio-political structures during the period were same. But institutional aspects of the transformation Kerala had certain unique feature due to the ecological differences of Kerala from the rest of the South India. There is a lot of ecological difference between the agro-climatic zones of Kerala and rest of Tamilakam in terms of seasons, rainfall, permeability, landscape, soil structure and so on.

The most striking difference about the wet rice landscape eco-system is the excess of water in the case of Kerala and its scarcity in the case of the other region of South India. This factor created a difference in the nature of cultivation and labour process required in Kerala and other regions of Tamilakam. When the major problem of agrarian society in the other regions of South India was management of scarcity of water through irrigation the management of excess water is the central problem in Kerala. This kind of ecological differences resulted in regional difference in the material process of nature which means difference in technology.

The nature of agrarian expansion in Kerala was different from the rest of the Tamilakam. The Brahmana households settled along the red soil fringes of the alluvial eco-system, using the clan labour drawn from the neighbourhood was the major factor responsible agrarian expansion in Kerala. There was difference in the origin and pattern of Brahman settlements in Kerala. Unlike elsewhere in Tamilakam they got organised into village not under the patronage of rulers and their land grants. The spread of Brahman household and their clustering into settlement was a complex process of a variety of simultaneous developments. The formation of a full time work-force out of the clannish people, reclamation of waterlogged and marshy low-lands into paddy fields and evaluation of a pattern of human settlement as determined by the local service requirements were the major developments of all the developments. The reclamation of paddy field was the most significant development. The reclamation of water logged and marshy plains surrounded by hill and red soil terraces was enormously labour intensive. The process included laborious tasks like the construction of numerous big and small canals to drain the water. Thus, a large mobilization of collective labour took place for the productive preparation of the lowlands. The knowledge about water, soil and landscape and the technology of water management along with an elaborate division of labour into specialised arts and crafts was essential for this task. Institutional support, leadership and ideology were also necessary. Brahmanas as a community possessing the essential knowledge, technology, ideology and institutional device and cultural powers of social control became a dominant group.

The birth of paddy fields along the low-land ecosystem and the socio-economic and cultural process in Kerala corresponding to it was a long period starting from the 6th to 8th centuries C.E. The socio-economic transformation was supported the emergence of a new state. The paddy economy of Kerala was formed by the 8th century CE. The wetland eco fields and the human settlements were integrated into it.

The integration of work force into occupation groups of hereditary specialisation with agrarian settlements involved the process of the construction of *Kammalar*(the artisans and craftsmen) and *atiyalar*(the subjected tillers) out of the clans. The transformation of kin-labour to non-in labour was the first major change. The transformation of clans into castes implies simple clannish settlements into structured agrarian villages. A millet-dominated economy was transformed into a paddy-dominated economy. Gurukkal and Varier also argued that was a transformation of the use value based exchange into exchange value based exchange.

The Brahman settlements were spread throughout Kerala in the 7th-8th centuries along with the process of the integration of the workforce and reclamation of wetlands. The temple inscriptions appearing from the 9th show that the temple-centred Brahman settlements had become well established by the beginning of the 9th century with extensive control over the fertile tracts of Kerala. Village became the basic unit of production that was organized the economy of paddy cultivation and hence the basic unit of habitation consisting of the various functionaries, who were essential for the settlement like landholders, intermediaries, artisans, craftsman society was led to the transformation of chiefdom into monarchy, more precisely the formation of the Chera state.

People and Material culture

The birth of paddy fields along the lowland ecosystem and the corresponding socio-economic cultural process in Kerala seems to have covered a fairly long period, probably starting from 6th to the 8th centuries CE. The archaeological evidences for a relatively developed material culture slowly starts forth coming in the form of monolithic shrines and isolated sculptures is were there. This socio-economic process was strengthened by the

emergence of centralised monarchy in the form of Cera state. According to RagavaVarier and RajanGurukkal the absence of fairly developed sedentary life based on agrarian economy shows that the period closes to the 8th century was the period of material and socio-cultural preparation for the development of the paddy economy. The paddy economy was able to develop the socio-political and cultural condition of its domination only by that period. Thus Gurukkal and Varier had argued that the stabilisation of the new social formation in Kerala was completed by the end of the 8th century.

The human made water channel of this period is indicating the institutional devices for the effective mobilization of the work force. There was a long process of integration of work-force into occupation groups of hereditary specialisation with agrarian settlements. This process involved virtually the construction of *kammalar* (the artisans and craftsman) and *atiyalar* (the subjected tillers) out of the clans, so the formation of *kammalacceries* (settlement of artisans and craftsman) as appeared to the village of wet-rice agriculture was the main feature of the emerging settlement pattern.

Gurukkal and Varier argued that the social structure of early Tamilakam was a collection of mutually-conflicting economies and the plough based wet-rice agriculture notified its presence in an initial form in the Sangam age itself. They added that material process and socio-political process in Kerala and rest of Tamilakam were more or less same. There was an absence of royal land grants to Brahmanas in Kerala unlike the rest of Tamilakam. The origin legend of Kerala which tells the story of the creation of the land of Kerala by Parasurama with his axe is a clear indication of the direct acquisition of arable land by Brahmanas without an obligation to anybody. They established their household along the red soil fringes of the alluvial eco system using clan labour in the neighbourhood.

The individual Brahmana households were transformed into corporate village settlements. For this process they made use of the ritual charisma, social command, legitimacy structure of control, institutional devices, and the various systems of knowledge and technologies of management and succeeded in coercing the massive labour of the clans for the conversion of the wetland eco system of Kerala into paddy fields. Specialised division of labour, its crystallisation into hereditary occupation and their non-economic coercive modes of social realisation were the main characteristics.

The inscriptions of the Perumals of Mahodayapuram show that along with the grants of land, the rulers make provision in the character for the artisans and craftsman essential for the new settlement. The artisans and craftsman were known as *ainkammalar*. The artisans and craftsman attached to the settlement produced goods locally both for exchange and agricultural production. The artisans and craftsman did not own their raw materials in certain cases. For instance, the potters had to take the clay with the landlord's permission. Similarly, the blacksmiths had to depend on landlords for extracting iron ore and the goldsmiths made ornaments only with gold and silver given by the land lords or merchants.

The rulers and chieftains showed interest in acquiring gold because it was regarded as a symbol of high status and ranking. Gold was the most important object of gift too. The main source of the gold was the long distance traders who acquired them mainly in the form of *dinaras* and *dirhams*. The exchange rate of gold and land was much higher in Kerala than in contemporary Tamilnadu.

According to K.N Ganesh the expansion of agrarian society in Kerala demanded more iron tools for tilling the soil. The nails made of wood or iron was an essential thing for the

making of plough. Other tools and implements like sickles and the tools for beating the grains were also needed. The Chera rulers were depended upon the blacksmith for getting iron weapon to fight wars.

Multiple Economies

According to K.S.Madhavan the multiple economies that existed in the Sangam age also continued in the early medieval Kerala. In a multiple economy the inhabitants of different zones have multiple modes of occupation pattern in a diverse environment. The wetland agriculture in the river valleys represented a group of settler cultivators involved in paddy cultivation. The mixed crop cultivation mostly in the laterite region also sustained various group of settlers. Pepper, cardamom and cinnamon were cultivated in the forest adjacent to settled areas. The *punam* cultivation in the forested areas also included millets and mountain paddy. Thus, there existed multiple economies in the region, which sustained different group of people in various livelihood practices.

The surplus of agricultural production was not sufficient to support the Chera state. Since income from agriculture contributed the major portion of revenue in the Chera economy under the Perumals of Mahodayapuram, the need of additional revenue from other sources induced the Perumals to welcome the traders of different regions to Kerala. Naturally, there was immense scope and absolute necessity for the trading factor in the economy and the polity of Kerala. The Perumals extracted their revenue from different sources to support the state and the people and there existed multiple economies. Kesavan Veluthat argued that the fiscal foundation of the Perumal state went beyond prestations, plunder or other arbitrary exactions. There are references to the payment of several dues on an impersonal basis, which were collected with a regular periodicity and at fixed rates.

The *Syrian Christian copperplates* and the *Jewish copperplates* referring to a large number of dues, the incidence of which may have fallen on the urban population. These include for example a toll on vehicles and boats coming into and going out of the market place, cesses on weighing and measurement fees on taking goods into and out of the town dues for roofing and building houses of more than one storey.

The most important collection made from the agrarian villages was the *attaikkol* (annual tax) or *rakshabhega* (protection fee) *attaittirai* is described as due to the *nilal* or the police force. A short record from Panthalayani Kollam shows that *attaikkol* was fixed at the rate of one sixth of the total produce, an indication that the dharmasastra rule was followed in this regard. Much of the information from the Brahmanical temple inscription related to the remissions given by the state. There is a reference to another due called *arantai* collected from agrarian villages as the term means literally misery, historians regarded it as a kind of 'war tax'. It was clear that this tax was collected from places far away from the capital and also that it went to the king.

Another item of revenue was fines. Fines imposed on defaulters are a source income for the state. In most cases the term *muttukil muttiratti* (twice as much in the event of default) could be used to denote the fine. In most of the case these fines were went to temple. But the inscriptions like the Valappalli copperplate gave information regarding a few cases where the fine was shared by the authorities of the temple, the locality lord and the king.

Local bodies carried out many of the governmental functions under the Perumals. Two kinds of them are mentioned in the records: the rural corporations with an agrarian nature and urban corporations with their interest in trade. M.G.S Narayanan has pointed out that the Perumals allowed the village assemblies and temple committees of Aryan settlements which were rural

agrarian corporations in character and the urban guilds and corporations to enjoy partial autonomy and take part in local administration. Assemblies of Brahmanas known as various as the *ur*, *urar*, *uralar*, *sabha* etc. were units of the local administration in the Cera kingdom. Their concern was mainly management of their land owned as either *devasvam* (gods properties) or *brahmasvam* (brahmanas properties). The bodies consisting the heads of those Brahmana households with their membership ranging between ten and twenty five. These Brahmana assemblies had overwhelming command over the local population. The chera state made use of these in a consummate manner. It identified and enlisted these bodies as its agents for the administration of revenue and justice. There are many instances where the bodies collected the share of the king or the land from the cultivators. In several other cases, the king gave remission to the bodies from the payment of the dues. Inscriptions from Trikodittanam, Perunnaa temple, Tirkunnapula temple and Pullur- Kotavalam gave information regarding many instances where the tax amount was shared between the king and the temple and about the remission provided by the king to the temples and Brahman village assemblies.

Two sets of copperplates, the Tarsappalli and the Jewish copperplates provides the details of the autonomous trading corporations, who controlled the urban centres. Mar Sapir Iso, who built the church of Tarsa was also the founder of the town or the trading centre, the *nagaram* of Kurukkeni Kollam. The *nagaram* enjoyed relative autonomy in the urban centres. Two trading guilds Anchuvannam and Manigramam are described as the *Karalar* (tenants) of the town. They managed the affairs of the *nagaram*. The *palliyar* (men of the church) collected different dues from within the settlement. The Anchuvannam and Manigramam were exempted from paying several taxes and were also associated in the work of fixing the duties and prices of

commodities entering the marketplace. They were the custodians of the dues collected everyday. All these show that the state maintained autonomous urban corporations and made use of it in the business of government.

Temples of Kerala, which was landed magnate from the beginning also developed into a storehouse of gold and precious jewels in the early medieval Kerala. The important item of the temple properties was land especially agrarian land the early medieval economy of Kerala was a temple centred one. The Brahmanas, who controlled the temple lands, were not cultivators by themselves and therefore, they redistributed the land to the *karalar* and the *karalar* to *kutikal*. The lands endowed were leased out to the *karalar*, who were responsible to pay *pattam*(land dues) to the temples. The medieval Kerala temples had accumulated large amount of gold as endowments and fines.

The production of food grains involved *kudi* and the *al* (enslaved or bonded labourers), artisans and craftsmen attached to the settlement produced most goods locally. The artisans and craftsmen attached to the village settlements were known as *ainkammalar*. Apart from cultivators these non cultivating groups also contributed their own share to the economy.

According to M. G. S Narayanan revenue from trade centers was a major source of income for the Perumals. The Jewish copperplate says that Joseph Rabban was exempted from the collection of *ulku* (customs duty). M.G.S. listed the names of different sources of revenue from trade centres like *Alkasu* (the payment made by the owners of the slaves), *pakutam* (the cess on vehicles, both on land and water), *Tulakkuli* (weighing fee), *niraikkuli*(measuring fee), *talaikkanam* and *enikkanam* (fetter and ladder fee), *manaimeyppan kollum irai* (a tax payable at the time of renewing the thatches of houses), etc. *Attaikal* and *arantai* two types of taxes collected from the Aryan villages.

Social Spaces and Social Divisions

The inscriptional evidences give a clear idea of the Perumal territory. According to an early medieval text the king of Mahodayapuram ruled *Kerala-visaya*, 'the land of Kerala.' Kesavan Veluthat had argued that Kerala became a separate geographical unit with more or less definite boundaries and that unit became the state by the ninth century. The Cera king called himself Mahodayapurapameswara, the 'supreme lord of the city of Mahodaya'. The newly rising agrarian settlements on the fertile river valleys must have contributed to the process of urbanization of Mahodayapuram.

The city of Mahodayapuram, which situated in the middle of prosperous agrarian settlement controlled by the Brahmanical groups, the new town had essentially a Brahmanical character. There are not too many details available about the urban complex of Mahodayapuram. Sankaranarayana, the court astronomer and author of the commentary of Laghubhaskariya, calls the town a *senamukha*, which is a type of town defined by textbooks of architecture such as *Mayamata and Kamikagama*. The town was fortified.

M.G.S. Narayanan's work gave information regarding the structure of society in the Perumal period. His arguments and observations about the nature of society under the Peumal rule was based on the facts provided by the epigraphic records, being mostly records of Brahmin village settlements and West Asian or native trade centres, which throw light on social and economic conditions than on political and administrative history. The Aryan Brahman settlers in the country dominated the socio-political set up by making use of the caste system. M.G.S admitted that the chief defect of the material used by him that it deals mainly with the Brahmin settlement and trade centres and only indirectly or infrequently refer to conditions outside them and keeping the native Dravidian part of the society practically out of the picture.

One of the most important factors in social organisation of the Perumal period was the rise and growth of a large number of Aryan Brahman settlements. The *Keralolpatti* mentions 32 Brahmin settlements in Kerala sprung up during the post-Sangam period and Parasurama as their patron deity and Ahichathra as their ancestral place. Brahmans enjoyed land as *Brahmakstara* (the land where Brahmans ruled instead of Kshatriya). In each *Tara* (ward) to supervise. Temples were the centre of life in these settlements.

The Brahman settlements of this period were scattered along the many fertile river-valleys between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea and they occupied land most suitable for rice cultivation. The Brahman settlers were largely interested in cultivation in the fields and plantations of the plains with assured water supply round the year. The temple acted as an agent in the process of accumulating landed property for the Brahman settlements. The Thiruvalla Copper Plates of the 11th century gave a clear picture about the large extent of property owned by the Brahmin assembly of a single village on behalf of the temple. The Brahman settlement of Tiruvalla supported a large number of employees like priest, musicians, dancers, accountants, cleaners etc. and the *Pattar* (Bhattar-professors) and *cattar* (chatra-pupils) of the *salai*. Besides these a large number of tenant's dependent on the temple land which were leased out for cultivation.

The position and influence of Aryan Brahmin settlement were also responsible for the emergence of traditional type of caste system in Kerala. The local people who were useful to the Brahmin as rulers and officers, commanders and soldiers of the army and skilled workers were absorbed into the new society on which the Aryan pattern of caste system was imposed. The Cera king of Makotai in the Perumal period is represented as Kshatriyas of solar race. Some of the feudatories of the Perumal

had a Kshatriya status and the suffix Varma in their inscriptions. At the same time other feudatories were designated as *Samantas* considered themselves higher than the Nair. There were a number of people like the *Potuval*, *Variar*, *Patarar*, *Cakiar*, *Nambiyar* and *Nangiyar* and *Uvaccar* or *Kottikal* were mentioned in the Cera inscriptions. The *Keralolpatt* icalls them the *Antharala* (intermediary) caste and says that they are either degraded Brahmans or the upgraded Sudras. They followed a vegetarian diet and Sanskrit culture.

M.G.S pointed out that the category of Vaisyas are absent in Kerala. The term *Cetti* is rarely mentioned in the inscription not as a caste name but as a title. The most important of the newly emergent caste groups in Kerala after the establishment of the Aryan Brahman settlements were the Nairs. According to M.G.S the Nairs were not a separate tribe or race but a section of the native Dravidian people, which was made what it was a combination of two factors, i.e. Military profession and Namboothiri matrimonial alliances facilitated by the matrilineal system of inheritance.

There were some title holders like *PerumTaccan*, *PerumTattan*, *Acar* ietc. who were mentioned in connection with temples. *Taccan*, *Tattan*, *Acari* are terms usually employed in Kerala for the *Kammalar* or artisans classes. The rulers nominated some of the people belonging to the artisan's classes as the royal architects with the title *Perum Tattan* or *PerumTaccan* (Great architect) with the right to use the kings name. These people were not admitted to the Brahmanical Hindu temples but they were given special privileges for their services to the temple. There was a '*Rajasimha Perum Taccan*' who received a '*purayidam*' (house and compound) from the *Koyil Adhikarikal*, probably as reward for some work in the temple.

Several other caste groups which are known as sub castes in Kerala society are mentioned in the inscription of the Perumal period. The Syrian Christian Plates of Kollam refers to the transfer of families to the Church of Tarsa built by Mar Sapir Iso in that place. Four families of *Ilavar* with one family of *Vannar* were transferred to the Church in the 5th year of Stanu Ravi. These people were settled on Church land as tenant's subjects of the church authorities. The *Ilava* were permitted to bring their business and the *Vannan* also permitted to do his work in the bazar and the fort. *Ilavas* were toddy tappers by profession.

The second set of the Syrian plates refers to more families, two families of *Vaniar*(oil pressers), one family of *Taccar*, carpenters or smiths and four families of *Vellalar*, who were transferred to the Church. *Vellalar* might be the *Karalar* or tenants of the land. all the lower class of the people who have no proprietorship of land settled on somebody's land as their bondsmen. *Kollurmatham* Plates says that four families of *Vellainata* and *vaniyar* were settled within the limit of Brahman gramas in order to ensure the supply of oil and ghee necessary burning lamps in temples. The lowest section of the people who were agrestic serfs like *Pulayar*, *Parayar* etc. were hold to the land.

In the Perumal period West Asian colonies were established in the chief port cities like Kollam and Kodungallur. Mar Sapir Iso founded the trading corporation (*nagaram*) of Kollam and recruited *Anchuvannam* and *Manigramam* as the members of it. He also built the *Tharisappalli* (church of Tursa). Similarly, Joseph Rubban of Muyirikode (Kodungallor) received a charter from Bhaskara Ravi recognising him and his descendants as the captains of *Anchuvannam*. *Anchuvannam* and *Manigramam* were West Asian trade corporations of Jews and Christians from Syria or Persia. They flourished mostly in Kerala and occasionally on the East coast and rarely in interior also. The

Anchuvannama and *Manigramam* had their own *Talaiyar* (head man). The Syrian Christian communities have its legends about St. Thomas, the Apostle, being the founder of their colonies. The Jews of Kochi claimed that their ancestors came to Kodungallur after the destruction of the second temple of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 C.E.

Non-Brahmana villages: *Ur* and *Kutis*

A non-Brahmana village (*ur*) was traditionally held by the ruling lineages including the local chieftains and its land was known as *Cerikkal* or the rulers land. In most of the cases these villages were red soil tracts with small fields that required migration. The village created through the land grants of the *Tharisappalli Copperplates* of 849 C.E is an example. This land grant regarded *Vellalar* as categories of tenants (*Karalar*) who made use of the subjected tillers (*alatiyar*) to plough their field. But the plate do not call the land granted *Cerikkal* and the land was probably belonged to the chieftain of Venatu. The *Tirunelli Copper plate* of 1005 CE refers a large land-grant by Kurumporai, the local chieftain of Kurumporainatu, giving his Kilkattipula *Cerikkal* to the Tirunelli temple. It is clear from the Copper Plate that the *Vellalar* along with other functionaries like the *ainkutikammalar* constituted the village. Landlords were the heads of a non-Brahmana village. It is uncertain that if the *Vellalar* were the land lords. But the inscriptions of Tamilnadu identifies an *Ur* as both the village headed by the *Vellalar* landlords (*vellan-vakai*) and their assembly.

Some inscriptions from Kerala refer to *ur* as the village assembly of the non-Brahmana and *sabha* as that of Brahmana landlords. It is unclear that whether the *natuvalis* or *Vellalar* were landlords in such villages. The *Tripurangode inscription* of 944 CE gave information regarding unanimous decision taken by *urpattar* (*bhattas* of village) *alkoil* (*natuvalis*) and *potuval* (the

mediator of the temple). *Urpattar* obviously Brahmanas and here members of the *sabha* are mentioned independent of others. In the *Trikoditanam inscription* of 1050 CE, decisions are taken jointly by the *urar*, *paritaiyar* (the temple executive) and *sabhaiyar*. It is always uncertain that whether the non-Brahmana village was merged by an assembly of its landlords or by the *natuvalis*. Even village had more or less the same pattern of settlement as regards its functionaries who sometimes varied depending upon the nature of the main economic-commercial centres.

Epigraphs refer to some non-Brahmana settlement in addition to the 32 brahman settlements. The rulers of Venatu owned a non-Brahmana settlement on the sea shore of Kurakkenikkollam. Later in 849 CE, it was granted to a foreign merchant named Mar Sapir Iso to meet the daily expense of the Christian church, which was established by him. These were many other instances of *Cerikkal* lands of the local ruling families occupied by non-Brahmana groups. Thus, two types agrarian settlements in early medieval Kerala, the Brahmana and the non-Brahmana settlements. There are two sub types under the non-Brahmin settlements: the *Cerikkal* settlement and the merchant community settlement. Clear felling of the forests and bringing more land under cultivation was an ongoing process in the Cera period and continued in the post Cera period.

The settlements maintain dispersed pattern and unique form of spatial organization and occupational structure. Essential occupation groups, which attached to each village settlement, gave it a self-sufficient entity. When a new settlement was created the services of artisans and craftsman were ensured by attaching to it. For example the *Tharissappalli Copper Plates* of 849 CE

contain provision for attaching occupational families like *Ilavar*(toddy tappers), *Vannar*(washermen), *Taccar*(carpenters) and *Vaniyar*(oil mongers) to the donated land. The *KollurMatham plates* of 1189 CE refers to the practice of attaching oil mongers, potters, washer man etc. to the settlements.

Kuti

Each plot of land located in a settlement needed required permanent workers of its own and this led to the institutionalisation of the system attaching tillers to the land. Among these attached tillers *Pulayars* constituted the main group. Through the implementation of caste system and untouchability the servitude and immobility of *Pulaya* swere ensured. Inscriptions like *Tarisappally Copper Plates* and *Trikkakkara temple and Thiruvalla Copper plate* mentions of *Pulayas* as attached tillers. Various other functionaries directly and indirectly required for agriculture became hereditary occupation groups who were accommodated under the caste system and these groups were attached to the village. Each settlement was formed as part of the village. The inscriptions including *Tarisappalli Copper Plates*, *Viraragava Copper Plates* and the *Kollur Matam Copper Plates* gave information regarding the formation of settlements. Each settlement had its own tillers and cultivators attached to the land and artisans and craftsman (*ainkammalar*) besides other functionaries like washer man, physician and astrologers.

The various artisans and craftsmen who were the settlers in the land had the right to occupy their household premise. This level of right of occupants(*kutis*) was called *kutimai*. The *Chembra inscription* mentions *Kuttithala* as an area where the *kutis* lived. It states that the landlord should not divide the *Kuttithala*, implying that it is the *Kutimakkals* hereditary right of

occupancy in land. The subjected tillers like *Pulayar* called *atiyalar*, who is in a servile state called *atiyaymai* was also a part of an agrarian settlement.

Natus and Utayavars

The Perumal territory was divided into several parts known as '*natu*'(district) in the inscriptions. The term was in general use in South India to denote such units. It was the Tamil counter part of the Sanskrit term *rashtra* found in North India and Deccan. According to M.G.S Narayanan it is impossible to fix the number of *natus* precisely because in the lifespan of the Perumal kingdom, some new *natus* were created and others eliminated. So that the total number *natus* were different at different times.

The governors of districts are usually called *Natu Utayavar*(owner of the district) in the Cera inscriptions. The boundaries of the districts are not clearly mentioned anywhere and it is difficult to know its size. But most of the *natus* of the Perumal rule have been continued with the same name even in the modern period and some of them became more powerful after the decline of the Perumals. These rulers claimed that they possess their territory at the time of his departure of the last Perumal. This claim was made in the *Keralolpatti* also.

By analysing the institution of *Munnurruvar*, *Annurruvar*, *Elunurruvar* etc. attached to different districts indicate the comparative size and resources of a district. For example, Nanrulinatu had an organisation called had an organization called *Munnurruvar*(The three hundred) and Kurumporainatu had one called *Elunurruvar*.(The seven hundred). The governors of *natus* belonged to the Kshathriya, Samanta and Nair communities. Some *natus* followed the system of hereditary governorship and others had their governors nominated from time to time and they were usually recruited from aristocratic families.

M.G.S. Narayan has listed different *natus* with its early history, headquarters, ruling families and ethnic composition of the people in the district by using various sources including inscriptions.

Kolattunatu: this was the Northern most *natu* in the Perumal kingdom and was an independent territory for a long period since the Sangam age. The Musaka Vamsa Kavya of Atula, composed in the court of Srikanta in the beginning of 11th century is dealing with the Mushaka dynasty. Rulers of the Mushaka dynasty had controlled the area belonged to the Kolattunadu till a Mushaka ruler surrendering and accepting a feudatory status under the Cera king. This feudatory relationship had been continued.

Puraikilarnatu: the *natu* located to the south of Kolattunatu which may be the same as medieval Purnatu or Kottayam principality. This name was mentioned as 'Puraikilarnadu' in the records of the Cera period. *Unniyaccicaritam* of the 14th century designates the ruler as 'Purakilar Thangal'.

Kurumporainatu: this *natu* is lying to the South and South East of Puraikilarnatu known by the same name till modern times.

Ramavalanatu: the name of this *natu* was mentioned in a record of about 11th century from Tiimannur temple near Kozhikode. Kaniyapalli Yakkon, Cellan and Paliyattu Kannan Kantan are mentioned as the rulers there. According to M.G. S the modern place name of Ramanattukara., South of Kozhikode is reminder of such a *natu* which was disappeared after the Cera period and a large part of the kingdom was absorbed in to the neighbouring Kolattunatu.

Eralanatu. This *natu* was lay to the South of Ramavalanatu and was very prominent in the records of the Sangam age. The rulers of Eralanatu are mentioned in several records as Eralanatu Utaiyavar(the lord of Eralanatu). Manavepela Manaviya, the

ruler of Eralanatu was one of the witnesses in the Jewish Copper Plates. The Kollam-Rameswaram records of the last Cera king Rama Varma Kulasekhara mentions Manavikrama, the ruler of Eralanatu was the first among *the samantas* during the Chera-Chola war.

Valluvanatu: this was the South and South-East of Eralanatu. It is regarded as *Vallabharashtram* in a Cola records of 959 C.E and the ruler is called Rajashekhra. A certain Rayiran Cattan, governor of Valluvanatu was a witness in the Jewish Copper Plate. Some stone inscription of Cera period from the Cokiram temple show that the area included in Valluvantu Territory. The mention of Valluvanatu in a 9th century records of Irinjalakuda temple show that the territory of Valluvanatu extended to the South to the neighbourhood of the capital city of Makotai.

Nedumporayurnatu: this natu lay to the East of Valluvanatu on the banks of Bharathapuzha. The records which mentions that this natu are found in Nedumporiyur temple. Governors belonging to different families such as Manalmuruttu Yakkan Kota, Kota Ravi, Pannitturutti, Polan Kumaran and Mangalattu Kumaran Ravi appeared as governors in inscriptions.

Nedumkalainatu: this was a small territorial unit with the Cera kingdom. The name of this district mentioned in a Chola inscription as the home district of one of the Malayali officer Rajaditya. The full name of the Malayali officer was Nedumkalainattu Isnimangalattu .Manavallian Kannan. Isnimangalam was one among the 32 Brahman settlements.

Kalkkarinatu: this was a small *natu* located around the Vishnu temple of Thirukkalkkarai which was the centre of Tiruvonam Celebration from early times. Pannitturuthi Yakkon Kunrappolan Kannan Porayah and Panirturutti Polan Kumaran are mentioned as governors here.

Vempalanatu: this lay to the South of Kalkarinatu along the banks of the Vempalanattu Kayal, i.e, the backwaters bearing this name. Kota Ravi ruled this natu in the 17th year of Cera king Kota Ravi and Kota Cirikantan ruled at the time of the Jewish Copper plates. Ravi Cirikantan is mentioned as governor of this *natu* in the Tiruvalla Copper plates.

Kilmalainatu: this *natu* was located on the Eastern high ranges as indicated by the name which mean the Eastern hill territory. Karikode near Thodupuzha was the headquarters of this natu. Trikkodithanam temple inscription of the 11th century identified Kantan Kumaran alias Mulavakkon as the ruler of this natu. An undated record of Thrikkakara mention Atikal Maluvakkonar as the governor of this natu.

Munnunatu: this shall be a small natu in the same neighbourhood but its actual location is not identified. Records referring to this natu kept in the temples of Perunna and Tiruvalla Adiyar, Kota and Rama Kota Varman are mentioned as governors of Munnunadu.

Nanrulainatu: this natu was located between Vempalanatu and Venatu in the extreme South Kerala. Govarthana Marthanda, the Governor of Venatu was simultaneously appointed as the governor of Nanrulainatu also in 14th year of Bhaskara Ravi Manukuladithya.

Venatu: this was a large district with its headquarters at Kollam. In the 9th century Ayyan Atikal and Rama Tiruvadikal are mentioned as the governor of Venatu. Kurakkeni Kollam, the headquarters of Venatu was developed into a big harbour city. Venadu had a strategic importance as it was located to the borders the Pandyan Kingdom. Srivallavan Kota Varma and Govarthana Marthanda and Kumaran Udayavarman were the other important governors of Venatu.

Historians from Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai to M.G.S Narayan took *natus* as mere administrative units. But they are units of social life in Medieval Kerala. Historians like K.N. Ganesh, Raghava Varier and Rajan Gurukkal considered the same aspect of the *natus*. *Natus* were witnessed for the growth of an agrarian economy, formation of caste system, the proliferation of Brahmin settlements and the spread of different religious beliefs.

Gender Relations

According to K.N.Ganesh the archaeological evidences didn't give enough evidences about the gender relations and roles in Kerala in the Megalithic age and in the so called Sangam age of the Tamil heroic songs. Most of the studies done on the gender roles in colonial Kerala had given importance to the topics like matrilineal system and sexual freedom. Megalithic remains including *virakals*(heroic stones) for the men died battlefield and sati stones for women died who sacrificed their life in relation to the same battle. The descriptions of wars in the Tamil heroic poems gave information regarding the participation of women in tribal battles and also in the victory celebrations after the battle. In the Sangam age women were part of the process of distribution and redistribution and no strict rules were imposed on female sexuality and sexual relation. But the indications of changes in this situation became visible by the end of the Sangam age. Two changes were important. The first one is that polygamy became common among the tribal chiefs. The next thing is that several restrictions were imposed on the life of widows. *Patinenkizhkanakku* , a post-Sangam text provides many examples of the beginning of a male dominated society. These text states that a wife should be loyal to her husband and her space should be limited within the house.

The socio-economic changes took place in Kerala after the Sangam age had strengthened the male dominated social system. But a section of the upper caste people like the Nairs followed matrilineal form of succession in the medieval period. The castes like brahamana adopted patrilineal form of succession. Evidences on the existence of the property right through female line is absent in the Sangam texts. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai argued that patriliney was existed in Kerala up to the 11th century and the rulers of Kerala were patrilineal till this period. Elamkulam traced the origin of matriliney in Kerala in the hundred year long Chera-Chola war in the 11th century. But Elamkulam failed to prove without doubt that patriliney was the dominant form of succession in Kerala in the period before the 11th century. M.G.S.Narayanan argued that matriliney was prevailed among the later Cheras.

Elamkulam found that the *namboodiri* Brahmans who involved in sexual relation with Kerala women were responsible for the emergence of matriliney in Kerala. The political and social instability created by the Chera-Chola war and the respectable position of the *namboodiris* were the factors induced the families of Kerala to involve in marital alliances with the *namboodiris*. The transformation from a tribal society to a feudal society also made changes in gender roles. The emergence of an agrarian society gave birth to the idea of private property. There were attempts to bring agricultural land technologies under the control of men. Major portion of the agricultural land were under the control of temples and brahmanas. Brahmana men controlled the administrative aspects of the temples and only the brahmana men had the right to work as priests in temples. Women were appointed as only sweepers and dancers in the medieval temples. Most of the new occupations emerged in the feudal social order were monopolized by men.

The *kuruvazhcha* and *koima* rights in the medieval period maintained the male line, in which men had an upperhand. Even though, there were references to some women like mother of Srivallabhan Kota of Venad and Kotha Marthanda's sister and Cirutanangacci gave donation to the temples. None of them had the *koima* right.

Rights and privileges in the *naduvazhi swarupams* were transferred through male line. Even though, women had the right on the property of the *swarupams*, they had no political power. Land, political power, temples, privileges and occupation were transferred through men in medieval Kerala. But the *avakasangal*(rights) in some of the small medieval temples were decided through female line. There were evidences about rights and privileges through female line in medieval documents. The position of the *nangyar* in temple arts is through female line in medieval documents. The rights in the households of the heroines in the Manipravalam texts were transferred through female line. Even though, the *swarupams* adopted a matrilineal form of succession, the political power were in the hands of the male members of the *swarupam*. In the matrilineal joint families, the eldest male member known as the *karanavar* is responsible for managing the properties. This rights directly transferred to his nephew.

A type of the devadasi system in Tamilnadu prevailed also in medieval Kerala. The devadasis or temple dancers in Kerala were known as *tevatikki* and *kuttacci* and their life is depicted in the medieval Manipravala kavyas.

Chiefly Powers

Kerala became a single political unit under the rule of the Perumals of Mahodayapuram, who ruled the country from 800CE to 1122CE as Makotai or Mahodayapuram as their headquarters.

According to M.G.S. Narayanan the state in this period does a loose federation of *naduvazhikal* or *nadudayavarkal* (chiefs of localities) owe allegiance to the Cera king called Perumal who lived in the headquarters at Makotai. Brahmans migrated to Kerala and established 32 Brahman settlements on the Westcoast and they interacted with the existing chieftains of different localities. Brahmans always maintained a friendly relation with the *nadu* chiefs and the newcomers arrived and settled with the active support of the chiefs. The Brahman management conferred kshatriya status on some local chiefs like those of Kolathunadu, Poraikilnadu, Kurumporainad, Venad etc. M.G.S. Narayanan argued that there existed a Brahmin- chieftain alliance under the Perumals.

The Brahmana landlords allowed their younger sons in the family to consort with the women of the ruling families. The traditional matrilineal order of succession among the natives must have made this arrangement convenient to both sides and made all the ruling chiefs as the sons of Brahmans. M.G.S. had pointed out that there was an alliance between Brahmana oligarchs and local kshatriya or samanta chiefs against the tenants and serfs whom they controlled and exploited. The Cera kings and the chiefs of the Perumal period are highly sanskritised producing Alvars and Nayanars and other patrons of temples. The Perumals used highly sanskritised names and title and caste suffixes like 'varma' and the Sanskrit terms like *adhikari*, *prakriti* etc. the actual authority of the perumal was restricted to the capital and the four adjacent settlements. The *naduvazhi* ruled in the respective *nadu* territories. M.G.S Narayanan regarded the perumal state was a feudal state with weak centre.

The Cera perumal of Makotai was recognized as the sovereign of kerala. He claimed the titles of *Mahodayapuram Paramesvara* and *Keraladhinatha* (the supreme lord of

Mahadayapura and the over lord of Kerala). But he was not the ruler of the entire Kerala and he ruled over only the walled city or Makotai and exercised certain rights over the *natu* units which owed allegiance to him. The close collaboration between the king and the Brahmanical oligarchy which possessed the best cultivable paddy lands is clear from the inspirational records. The king himself often presided over the meetings of the Brahmanical temple council. The leaders of the four Brahman gramas around the capital were given the right of management of through an organization of *nalutali* or four temples so that they can live close to the Perumal and help him with the council and support in administration

The last Perumal Rama Kulasekhara, held an assembly at the Panankavil Kovilakam at Kollam, where *Nalutali*, *Ayiram* and the samanthas assembled at the end of the war with the chola-pandya king. In this assembly of dignitaries and feudatory chiefs the perumal publicly offered *prayascitta* (atonement) for “having offended the *Ariyar*” i.e. Brahmanas. This is the earliest instance of a royal *prayascitta* by the king in Kerala and this practice was followed by many another local rulers in later times. This is an incident which indicates the subjection of royal power to Brahmin power. M.G.S.Narayanan arrives at a conclusion that the Cera perumals were controlled by the well organized Brahmin community of *uralar* in Kerala. The *Keralolpatti* chronicle gave a clear picture of the Brahman ascendancy in Kerala. The hereditary managers of the four temples of capital were expected to function as the Perumals councilors on behalf of the 32 Brahman settlements in Kerala.

There is no trace of a central bureaucracy under the Perumals. The Perumals were represented in some of the nadu courts and temple councils by a council called *Koyil Adhikarikal* or *Al Koyil*. The *Koyil Adhikarikal*, who was a member of the

royal family acted as a link between the central government and the local government for collection of revenue.

The *Keralolpatti* gave details of *nalutali* which included *meltali*, *kiltali*, *nediyatali* and *cingapuramtali*. These were the four chief temples of the capital and belonged to the four Brahman settlements which surrounded the capital- Mulikkulam, Airanikkulam, Paravur and Irinjalakuda respectively. These gramas or settlements nominated two of their members each to manage their temple. The managers of the four temples called *Tali Adhikarikal* and they formed the perumals council to help him in administration. Since the four gramas were the leaders of the 32 original Brahman settlements, they represented the Brahmanas of Kerala. The king and the *nalu tali* i.e, the *Tali Adhikarikal* from the four temples, met at *Nediya Tali* to assist the perumal to decide on important matters and these temple officials had an important voice, atleast in matters related to temples and temple properties in Kerala.

The *Nalu Tali* was intended to advise the Perumal primarily in matters relating to the religious institutions like the temple. There was a legal code known as the *Mulikkalam Kaccam*, or agreement of *Mulikkalam* (one among the four gramas associated with these temples) acquired a Kerala- wide authority.

The defence of the king and the city entrusted to a group of warriors known as '*Ayiram*' or the 'Thousand'. It was a group consisting mainly Nair members, organized on a hereditary basis meeting in the premises of the Bhagawati temple and supervising the affairs of the temple. This famous Bhadrakali temple was located near the entrance of the capital. Like the hundred groups of the *nadu* units, the *ayiram* was the executive army of the Perumal at the centre. They defended him and implemented his orders in war and peace.

The territory of the perumal kingdom was divided into several parts known as *natu* (district) each of them was placed under the control of a governor known as the *Natu Utaiyavar* or *Natuvalumavar*. The Mushakas of Kolattunatu with their large territory and ancient claims must have a special place among the governors of districts. They have the right to perform the ceremony of *abhisheka* or coronation. The mushaka king Valabha II is said to have conquered several islands of the ocean and these may be identified as the laccadives. The *Mushakavamsakavya* written in the 11th century by Atula, the court poet of Srikanta, the Mushaka king gave information regarding the history of Mushaka dynasty of the Mushakaparvatha from the time of its mythical founder Ramaghata Mushaka. The Mushakaparvata is the *kavya* is same as Elimalai near Kannur. Later the Mushaka kings accepted the feudatory status under the Perumals of Mahodayapuram. The earliest headquarters of the Mushakas were Elimalai in Kannur. Later on the city of Kollam was built at the mouth of the river prathana. Valabha II, a Mushaka king of the close of 10th century is said to have built two cities- Marahi (Matayi) and Valabhapattana (Valarpattanam or Baliapattam). Venatu was another prominent *natu* under the Perumals, which included the major portions of the former Ay kingdom, which was famous for the king Vikramaditya Varaguna (883 CE to 912 CE).

The direct administration of the Perumal was limited to the capital city and the four adjoining villages. They allowed village committees and temple committees to enjoy autonomy in their villages and the merchant corporations to manage the affairs in the urban centres. The Brahmana settlements were controlled by a Brahman assembly known variously as the *Ur*, *Urar*, *Uralar*, *Sabha* etc. The urban centres were managed by trading corporations known as *nagaram*.

Migration

According to M.G.S. Narayanan the location of the Tamil South on the Western seaboard, at the centre of the international highway of sea borne trade connecting the East and West made it a meeting point of many worlds and different races and creeds. Early Sangam age was a casteless tribal community vertically divided into topography and occupation. The first Aryan pioneers who were peeped into the South were mostly agriculturalists motivated by the possibility of virgin lands and traders who risked everything for money and few missionaries with a motive to spread the Vedic culture. More and more Aryans migrated to the South under Chandragupta Maurya and the Buddhist missionary activity organized by Asoka. Sangam works mention the early Brahmin migrants with great respect as teachers, councillors and ambassadors of king as the makers of new codes of conduct and the imparters of high philosophy and literature.

A large scale migration of the Brahmanas took place only after the decline of Sangam age when these new immigrants established 32 settlements exclusively for Brahmanas in different places in Kerala. These settlements were patronised by local rulers. The tolerant character of the non-prophetic religious enabled the peaceful co-existence of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism in Kerala as in other parts of India. The famous Buddhist Vihara of Srimulavasam near Ambalappuzha was patronised by the king of Kolattunatu, Kodungallur and Aynadu who were all supporters of Brahmanical religion. Vikrama Rama and Valabha kings of Kolattunatu repaired the Buddhist shrine in the 10th and 11th centuries. Vijayaraga, Cera king of Kodungallur at the close of the 9th century appointed a special officer to keep its property. The Jain temples of Tirukkanavay, Thiruvannur, Kinalur and Kallil existed in the heart of the Hindu Kingdom of the Ceras. The pilgrimage points of Poyilil hill and cape camorin were held

sacred by the Hindu and the Mahayana Buddhist alike. The *Cilappathikaram* composed by the Chera prince Ilanko Adikal, bears witness to the continuous dialogue between different religions took place here. Atula, the court poet of the Mushaka king Srikanta tells that many religions co-existed in the country ruled by Srikanta. The Ezhava people came to settle in Kerala from Ceylon in large numbers and many of them were toddy tapers. Some of them were *Chekavans* or fighters depicted in the famous Northern ballads. A complicating factor in Kerala social pattern was introduced by the presence of small communities of Israelite and Syrian origin. The coming of Jews to Kerala was a result of the destruction Jerusalem in 78 C.E. There were epigraphic evidences of a Jewish settlement called *Anchuvannam* in Kollam city by the middle of the 9th century. The Christian church of Tarsa built and endowed by Mar Sappir Iso was jointly protected by Jewish Corporation *Anchuvannam* and the Syrian corporation *Manigramam*. The Christian tradition attributed the arrival of Christianity to the St. Thomas legend. By about the 9th century, Christianity had sent its root deep into the soil of Kerala.

While the Muslim entered Northern India as hostile invaders, they came to Kerala as friendly merchants and ambassadors of Arab culture. The advent of Islam was took place in Kerala at the close of the Chera period in the 12th century. The story about the conversion of last Chera Perumal to Islam is a part of both Hindu and Muslim traditional chronicles. To M.G.S. Narayanan this must be taken place at the beginning of 12th century, not in the 9th century as the Perumal rule had been continued till the 12th century. Madayi, Valapattanam, Pudupattanam, Kozhikode Panthalayini, Kodungallur and Kollam developed as Muslim settlements in the middle ages. The Samutiri of Kozhikode had well patronised the Muslim traders and it is a major factor behind the success of Kozhikode as a prosperous city.

The migration wave to Kerala has a direct link with trade, especially to foreign trade. Most of the religions entered to Kerala as part of the trade. Foreign traders belonged to different religions came and settled in different parts of the country.

Trans-marine Spaces and Blue Economy in Early Medieval Kerala

Generally there are two seasonal harvests of paddy, one in the month of *kanni* (August- September) and other in the month of *makaram* (December –January) each leaving four months as the duration of cultivation. An additional harvest was possible in certain areas with enough water, while in dry areas short of water and low-lying wetlands with excess water only one harvest was possible. In all areas the labourers should be available throughout an year for one function or the other such as ploughing, sowing, transplanting, seeding, weeding, harvesting and threshing. This had give rise to various specialized arts and crafts. Each plot needed permanent workers of its own and this led to the institutionalization of the system by attaching tillers to the land. The *pulayas* constituted the main group of permanent cultivators who were transacted along with the land as mentioned in certain inscriptions like the *Tarisappalli copper plates* of Kollam, the Trikkakkara temple and the *Trivalla copperplates*. Various other functionaries directly or indirectly required for agriculture became hereditary occupation groups accommodated under the caste system.

The stone and copper plate inscriptions of the 9th, 10th and 11th century clearly show that the 32 traditional Brahman settlements in Kerala from Payyanur and Cellur (modern Taliparambu) in the north to Tiruvalla in the south had already being established by that time. The proliferation of Brahman settlements signified the institutional and organizational growth and expansion of wet land agriculture in Kerala. Clear felling of

the forest and reclaiming land for cultivation was an ongoing practice in the Cera period which continued in the post Cera period also.

The availability of water in almost all fields irrespective of the attitude of the land also helped the development of individual occupation and cultivation of small plots of lands. From the ninth century onwards the names of *purayidams*, house sites owned or occupied by individuals were mentioned in the inscriptions. Spatial organization and occupational structure of the settlements indicate interesting aspects of life in villages. Some details about the occupational groups of village settlements are provided by medieval land grants. The *Tarisapalli plates* of the year 849 CE show that the necessary occupational families like *Ilavas* (toddy tappers), *vanar* (washermen), *taccan* (carpenters) and *vaniyar* (oil mengers) were handed over to the donee along with the land. Cultivation of paddy was the major economic activity because it was the chief food of the people Kerala. Commercial crops like coconut, arecanut and pepper were also cultivated along with paddy. Different fruit trees like mango, jack, tamarind etc. and vegetable items like onion, brinjal and yam were also cultivated. Plantain of different type were another major item of cultivation.

An agrarian village of those times was relatively self sufficient settlement of people with various specialized occupation groups of hereditary character. These occupation groups were attached to the settlement of village. *Tarisappalli copper plates* mention carpenters, washerman and other workers granted along with the land to the church.

In an agrarian economy of that type existed in the early medieval Kerala commodity production and market could always be in an underdeveloped stage. The *ainkammalar* produced artifacts not only for the landlords but also for exchange at fairs.

But organized commodity production with fixed price for the commodities and independent exchange centers had not coming into existence. Markets did not exist and there were only periodic fairs at certain conventional points of exchange held in the country side. These exchange centers were seasonal and periodic fairs were merchants from different places met. The contacts with the Roman Empire were come to an end completely by the end of the sixth century CE. But the Arabs, Jews and Chinese sustained due to improved networks and contacts.

The main social products were agricultural implements, household utensils, pottery, clothes, ornaments, salt, oil, jaggery, ghee etc. Of these goods salt was the only essential non–local item that had to reach to the people through mercantile circulation. Most goods were produced locally by the artisans and craftsmen attached to the settlement. As cotton was not cultivated in Kerala, the cotton thread had to be imported from outside. The weavers of Kerala settled in streets of their own, but there is no mention on weavers streets in the inscriptions of the perumal period. *Tarisappalli copper plates* mention oil mongers (*vaniyar*), who were supplying oil to the church as the only fuel for lamps. Oil was an essential item of all religious institutions including temple. Oil was extracted from gingelly and coconut.

Long distance traders like Arabs, Jews, Persian and the Chinese were reaching the coast of Kerala during the period mainly in search of spices. The trade with the Romans came to end with the decline of the Roman empire. But the Arabs, Jews and Persians were able to revive the exchange relations after a gap of three to four centuries. They were joined with Chinese traders. During the period of the Perumals the seat of the rulers was Muziris (the highshore of Muciri), Kottankulam (Mahodayapuram). In the inscription of the ninth and tenth centuries CE, there is evidence of the presence of long distance

merchant bodies such as *Anchuvannam* (an association of Jewish traders), *Manigramam* (an association of Syrian Christian traders), *Valanciyar* (an organization of long distance overland traders) and *Nanadesikal* (the name of an organization of long distance overland traders from various regions). It was during this period that several new trade centres developed, the oldest among that was Kurakkeni Kollam or Pantalayani Kollam, which is distinct from the southern Kollam. The *Tarissapalli copperplates* had a reference to a foreign merchants-cum- market at Kollam founded by Maruvan Sapir Iso, a Syrian Christian merchant leader. Similarly, the *Jewish copper plate* of Bhaskara Ravi Varma dated 1000 CE identified Muyirikode as the site of the palace and there existed a market at Kotunkollur (Mahodayapuram).

The Tarisapalli and Jewish plates grant the conventional 72 rights and privileges of a local ruler to the two merchant leaders, Sapir Iso and Joseph Rabban. This means the merchant leaders were made rulers of the markets of Kollam and Kotunkolur. The ports and coastal markets in Kerala during the ninth and tenth centuries CE were controlled by the merchant bodies called *Anchuvannam* and *Manigramam*.

But the Arabs had an upper hand in the maritime trade through the Arabian sea. Several accounts of Arab travels throw light on the trade carried out by the Arabs and Chinese with Kollam. The ninth century CE account by Sulaiman, an Arab trader mentions that the Chinese had trade relations with Malabar and Kollam was the favoured part of call for Chinese ships. The accounts by Abu Said and Ibh Khordadbeh also supported the opinion of Sulaiman. Arab accounts mention Malibar (Malabar) as the land of pepper which covered the whole of the western coast. The Arabs involved in the trade of the other spices like cardamom, ginger, cinnamon, cedar and sandalwood herbs, silk and porcelain too.

The Arabs succeeded in monopolizing the trade between Kerala and the Persian coast. From the seventh to the eleventh centuries CE the gold *dinar* remained as the medium of exchange in overseas trade. Aydhab on the coast of the red sea was the terminal point of this sea route from where half of the ships sailed to the seaboard of Gujarat and Malabar. In the accounts of Chinese travels of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries CE the ports of Kollam and Makotai (Mahodayapuram) are mentioned. It was the foreign merchant bodies that carried on the exchange of goods and controlled the ports and marts. Local merchants acted only as cargo suppliers and middlemen. Cattan Vatukan and Iravi Cattan mentioned in the Talekat inscription and the manigramattar – namely, Kota kumaran, kumaran kota, nakan kannan, and kantun kumaran – mentioned in the Bhaskarapuram inscription were probably such merchant middlemen.

Some of the Tamil inscriptions of the eleventh and twelfth centuries CE contain references to merchants from Kotunkalur, obviously pointing to commercial importance of the place. An undated inscription from Irinjalakuda, probably belonging to the period of Bhaskara Ravi Varman, refers to the remaining of patinjayirrupotta as Bhaskarapuram and its turning into a market. Trade centres in places like Eramam and Pantalayini Kollam were located in geographically strategic places. Exchange centres may have existed in the premises of all important temples, which were themselves major consumer institution. The manipravalam work called *Anantapura varnanam* describes the Cala market near the Padmanabha swami temple.

Some of the inscriptions of Kerala mention various other merchant bodies such as, nanadesikal, *patinen-bhumi-tisai-ayiratti-annurruvarandvalanciyar*, whose domain extended all over south India. The *Valanciyar* organization appears in the Juma Masjid inscription at Pantalayini Kollam of the period of

Bhaskara Ravi. Since the local governments of the time were incapable of providing security throughout the route, the merchant bodies had to keep their own warriors with them.

Sources of the period show gradual monetization of contemporary exchanges. Inscriptions mention *dinara*, *kasu*, and *pazhamkasu* as terms of referring to money by way of gold coins. *dinara* is well known as a roman coin in the earlier period. Earlier scholars have arrived at an equation of 1 *dinara*= 1 *pazhamkasu*=3 *kalanju* of gold. *Dinara* is multi-purpose money and as a means of exchange it could be used as a general equivalent. *Valappalli copper plates* of Rajashekhara Perumal dated to c. 832CE is the first inscription that mentions *dinara*. Scholars have observed that *kasu* was struck in gold, silver and copper in different period. *Kasu* figures as early as 849 CE in the context of a price making market at Kollam in the form of a fixed amount of toll to be collected from the in-coming and out-going vehicles and boats. Each cart coming to and going out of the *angati* had to pay eight *kasu*, while each boat, big and small, had to pay four *kasus*.

Several records from the ninth to twelfth centuries refer to a gold paddy ratio which remained steady indifferent parts of Kerala. The Valapalli inscription dated to the twelfth regnal year of Rajasekhara (832 CE) mentions that a fine of 100 *dinara* to be imposed in those who obstruct the daily offerings in the temple of Tiruvarruvai. There is a sharp decrease in the use of coin money towards the end of tenth century and the use of gold as means exchange from the tenth century CE. A gold paddy ratio of 1 *kalanju* of gold=20 *paras* of paddy remained unchanged for quite a long period from *airanikkalam* (869 CE) in the north to Kollur mathom(1189CE) as clearly shown by the inscriptional records.

A couple of port towns (*pattanams*) and markets (*angatis*) or the early historical period- Muciri and Kollam had been continued to the Perumal period. New ports towns like Kurukkeni Kollam, Pantalayani Kollam near Kozhikode and Madayi near

Payyanur came up. Kurukkeni Kollam with a fortified *angadi* was the most famous among the towns. Another important feature of a port town was the presence of multicultural communities like Jews, Christians and Muslims. Association with religious centres was a feature of the local markets. There were local markets located in the middle tract of the agrarian settlement like Bhaskarapuram, Talekat and Kutavur.

Buddhists

The *Mushaka Vamsa Kavya* stated that several religions harmoniously co-existed in the Musaka country, like wild beasts who forgot their mutual conflict in the vicinity of a holy asrama. According to M.G.S Nayanan this statement was applicable to the whole Kerala during this period and the statement also reflects an attitude of religious tolerance and the fact that the same ruler often patronised institutions of different religion and sects. K.Sugathan had an opinion that it was not Hinduism but Buddhism and Jainism, which were popularised first among the people of Kerala. He added that the brahmana migration to the early Tamilakam was began only after the arrival the Buddhists to the country. But Buddhism was started to disappear from Kerala when Hinduism took root in the society. He identified the emergence of caste system as the reason for the decline of Buddhism in Kerala.

The edicts of Asoka had reference to the land of *Keralaputra* among the southern frontier kingdoms (*pratyata*) of the Mauryan empire where he sent his missionaries. This thing was also supported by the certain references in sangam literature. Buddhism had many followers in Ceylon which had close contact with the coastal areas of the Cera kingdom. There were evidence in the *Cilappatikaram* and *Manimekalai* about the flourishing of both Buddhism and Jainism in the Cera country in pre-Makotai period also.

Five Buddha images had been discovered from certain villages of Karumadi, Bharanikavu, Mavelikkara, Pallikkal and Marudurkulangara. On the basis of architectural features, it is assumed that these belonged to 8th-9th centuries. All these located in the Alappuzha- Kottayam region which was considered as a strong pocket of Buddhism in Kerala. Epigraphic and literary evidence indicates the existence of a famous Buddhist vihara in this region. The *Paliyam Copper plates* of the Ay king Vikramaditya Varaguna (9th century) begins with threeslokas in praise Saudhodani, Dharmasangha and Avalokitesvara. It refers to the gift of certain lands in the Ay country to the deity of Tirumulavatam. In the light of the discovery of various Buddha type images from Alappuzha district it is suggested that the old Vihara of Srimulavasa was located somewhere near Trikkunnappula. A village named Srimulavatam still exists near Trikkunnappula on the sea coast from where a Buddha type image has been recovered from the sea. The *Musakavamsa Kavya* tells about the threat to Srimulavasa from the sea. The poem praised the Musaka king Vikrama Rama (10th century C.E) who saved the famous Srimulavasa Vihara from the attack of the sea. Fouscher had discovered an image of Avalokitesvara from Gandhara with an inscription that says that it represented Srimulavasa, Lokanatha from Dakshinapatha.

Srimulavasa was identified as the present village of Srimulavatam located near Trikkunnappula. It was a Mahayana centre and Avalokitesvara has its chief deity. The Ay kings and Mushaka kings patronised the institution. The name of this vihara had reached even in Gandhara. The member of Trikkunnappula sat in the Perumals council along with the representatives of the four chief Hindu temples. It was in a flourishing condition from the 9th to 11th century, and after that some of the buildings were swallowed by the sea. There was a Brahmin comedian who embraced Buddhism and rejected it after sometime in the stage

version of *Bhagavadajjukam* used by the *Cakyars* of Kerala for *Kutiyattam*. In this work Sounadaliya, a poor Brahmin joins a Buddhist monastery to escape from starvation. His profession was to visit several places and to attend the funeral feast (*pindasadhya*). By hearing that *Pallimar* (Buddhist) gave free food he agreed to convert to Buddhism. Then the work describes the different steps and ceremonies performed during the conversion to Buddhism. However, when the Brahmin learnt quickly that there is only one meal a day for him. He cursed the *Pallimar* of low birth and came out of their group. He uses the word *tolattu Cerumi makkal* (son of the Ceruma slave or the cattle shed for the Buddhist monks) to abuse them.. M.G.S. Narayanan had an opinion that this work was composed in the Cera period to suit the reformed Sanskrit theatre of *Kutiyattam*. This work also pointing towards a society where conversion to Buddhism and reconversion to Hinduism was very common.

The cult of Sasta or Ayyappan was familiar to Kerala in this period as well as Tulu and Cola countries and Ceylon. The resemblance it has with Buddha is striking. The title of Sasta is applied to Ayyappan and Buddha alike. According to M.G.S Narayanan the emphasis ‘*Swami*’, the non-Brahmin character of worship and the location of the great Sasta temples in the eastern high ranges indicates a close connection between Buddhism and the Hindu cult of Hariharaputhra and Ayyappan. Sasta or Ayyappan is a Hinduised form of Buddha. But M.G.S pointed out certain thing which prevents scholars from accepting such a position. Ayyappan unlike Buddha was hunter or warrior and the husband of two female deities. The image also was different in its appearance. It is possible in some casses the Buddha figures and shines were later converted into the centers of Ayyappa cult and taken by Hindu population. But these similarities are about the influence of Buddhism on the development of Ayyappa cult in Kerala. There is a legend of Pallivana Perunal, found in some

version of the *Keralolpatti*, according to which a king of Kerala became a Buddhist after listening to their argument and was compelled by the Brahmins to relinquish the throne. It is suggested that the '*Pallivanavar*' of the Nilamperur and Kilirur nearby were most probably the representations of Budha. *Kutira* found in the rural temple festivals of Alleppey and Kottayam is a representation of the car festivals of the Buddhists. The term '*Palli*' usually applied to non-Vedic religious institutions was part of large number of village names in Kerala and some of these were Buddhist countries. Ilavar from Ceylon could also represented a Buddhist element in population.

M.G.S. Narayan formulated his argument about the idea of cultural symbiosis in Kerala on the basis of peaceful co-existence of different religions like Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam Christianity and Judaism in Kerala. Aju. K. Narayanan in his study is dealing with how the Buddhist tradition in Kerala was transmitted through local knowledge.

Jains

The most authentic study about Jainism in Kerala is by M.R.Raghava Varier. All of the Jain temples in Kerala were concentrated in the places near the South Indian states of Karnataka and Tamilnadu. The Madura region in Tamilnadu is well known as an old centre of Jainism. Shravanabalgola in Karnataka was another major Jain centre. According to Raghava Varier the Jain centres in Kerala didn't have a history older than 8th-9th centuries.

One of the major Jain centers in Medieval Kerala was Thiruchanathmala, located near Kuzhithura in the Tiruvitamkur region. A cave temple along with some Tirtankara-yakshi idols engraved on the wall and few inscriptions are found there. This region maintained close contacts with some of the major Jain

centers in South India. Thiruchanathumala itself was a major pilgrimage and study centre of Jainism. Students even from faraway places came here, where both male and female saints were taught. These early Jain centers had close contacts with the merchants. Another major Jain centre in medieval Kerala was the cave temple near Perumpavoor in Ernakulam district. We didn't get any inscriptions from here. Parsvanatha and Mahavira are the chief deities here and an idol of Yakshi also found.

Raghava Varier located a number of Jain centers in Palakkad district. Material remains of Jainism were found in the places like Jainmedu, located near the Palakkad town, Iswarankotta in Kongadu and Paruvassery in the Palakkad-Trissur road. There was a well preserved Jain temple at Jainamedu. All these Jain centers are closely linked with the major trade- cultural routes in South India. Kinalur, near Balussery in Kozhikode is an old Jain centre. An inscription in *Vattezhuthu* was found there.

Wayanad is a famous centre of Jainism even from the beginning of medieval period. Material remains of Jainism were found in the places like Kalpatta, Bathery and Panamaram. An inscription got from Pulpalli mention that a group of merchants known as the *Nalpattennayiravar* allotted a piece of land to a lamp dedicated to Yaksha. Kabani, a feudatory of Kaveri River originates from Wayanad hills and wayanad always maintained trade links with Karnataka. A Jain temple was located near Valiyangadi in Kozhikode. This temple is managed by the North Indian Svethamabaras. The Kallil temple was also dominated by the Svetambara tradition. But all other medieval Jain temples in Kerala were belonged to the Digambara sect of Jainism.

According to Varier all the medieval Jain centers were located near the local trade centers known as *angadis*. These centers were in touch with medieval trade guilds. Though, the Jain

temples followed the same architectural style of the brahmana temples, they always maintained a separate identity. Later, most of the important Jain temples in Kerala were converted as Hindu temples. The Cave temple in Tiruchanathumala and the Kallil temple became Bhagawati temples. Raghava Varier argued that the similarities between the style worship in Hindu and Jain temples made it easy to change the shape of Jain temples in to that of Hindu temples.

Brahmanas

According to the *Keralolpatti*, the traditional chronicle of the brahmanas, Parasurama created the land of Kerala by moving the sea to settle down the brahmanas. The legend also tells that the Brahmanas were migrated to Kerala at their own will without any invitation or the patronage of any local kings. There were different opinions about the native place of the brahmanas, who settled in Kerala. According to the tradition they came from Ahichatra, most probably Aryavarta of the Gangetic region. There was a chance that these brahmanas were migrated to Kerala through Tamilnadu. The thirteen brahmanical temples of Kerala were among the 108 *divyadesams* of Tamilnadu, and integral to the Tamil bhakti movement. Some historians had a different opinion that the ancestors of the Malayali brahmanas, who were known as the *namboodiris* were migrated to Kerala from Karnataka. They linked Ahichatra to Aihole of Karnataka and suggested that the migration took place through the Tulu region. They noticed certain similarities between the Brahmanas of Karnataka and Kerala. The presence of some old Kannada usages in the inscriptional language (old Malayalam) supports this view.

The *Keralolpatti* tradition provides information about 64 brahmana villages established by Parasurama, 32 were in Tulu region and 32 in Kerala. Kesavan Veluthat has identified 32

brahmana settlements in Kerala starting from Payyanur in the North and ending with Nirmanna in the South. The following are the 32 brahman settlements identified Veluthat: Payyanur, Perumchellur, Alathur, Karanthol, Chokiram, Panniyur, Karikkatu, Isanimangalam, Trissivaperur, Peruvannam, Chamunda, Iringadikudal, Avattiputhur, Paravur, Airanikkulam, Mulikkalam, Kulavur, Atavur, Chenganad, Ilibhyam, Uliyannur, Kazhuthanad, Ettumanur, Kumaranellur, Kitannur, Katamartuku, Tiruvalla, Aranmula, Chenganur, Kaviyur, Venmani and Nirmanna. Veluthat was succeeded in his attempts to identify all of these settlements. 17 of these settlements were mentioned in the temple inscriptions belonging to the same village. 4 of these settlements were mentioned in the temple inscriptions of other villages. 3 settlements were mentioned in contemporary literary works. But there were no evidence except the tradition to identify 7 brahmana settlements.

Brahmana settlements had located in the agro-climatic areas suitable for paddy cultivation. Thus, brahmana settlements were absent in the region between the settlements of Perumchellur (Taliparamba) and Karikkad as this region is not suitable for paddy cultivation due to the tidal salination. So it is evident that the proximity of river and the nature of soil were the chief factors which attracted the brahmins to live in a particular region.

Brahmanas brought with them the knowledge of irrigation and astronomical knowledge with them and introduced it in the agriculture. The coming of brahmanas was a turning point in the history of Kerala as the fundamental changes in the social life and the political structure of early medieval Kerala like the expansion of agrarian society, state formation, social stratification, the emergence of temple centered villages and the matrilineal system were its consequences.

Module III

Social Life in Later Medieval Kerala

Land- Labour

The traditional land system in Kerala has been called *Janmi-Kudiyam-Sampradayam* or *Janmam-kanam-maryda*. These terms generally denote landlord-tenant relations, but an explanation of their nature depends on the interpretation of the terms *Janmi*, *Kudiyam* and *Maryadai*. The term *Janmi* means a person with *Janmam* right (hereditary right or birth right, the term literally means birth) on the land. This right on the land is autonomous which does not imply any service or dues that he has to pay an overlord for maintaining his right. A person acquires *Janmam* right on the land from predecessor who held the land. The *Janmi* loses his right only if he transfers or sells his land, and the new owner has to pay rent or dues because he does not come to own the land as birth right. A *Janmi* could offer service to an overlord, the temple or the chief as an act of homage for political or economic reasons.

The growth of the *janmam* right has been traced back to the formation of a stratified agrarian society between the ninth and twelfth centuries during the later Cera period. Agrarian settlements formed and the Brahmins established hereditary rights over the wet lands. Rulers and *naduvazhis* made land grants and other allotments as permanent rights to temples and Brahmins which made them bigger landlords during the tenth and eleventh centuries. But Kesavan Veluthat pointed out that there was an absence of the typical *danasanas* prefaced with the usual *prasastis* found in the records of other parts of the country.

According to Veluthat, the formation of the chera kingdom in the beginning or the ninth century was itself a major economic transformation as it led to the opening up of river valleys and clearing of land in other ways for purposes of agriculture.

Land held by *Janmis* was cultivated by large and small tenants. By the twelfth century, gradation of rights over lands had emerged, with the *naduvazhi* chief at top, followed by *uralar* (land owners and temple trustees), *karalar* (tenants and intermediary landlords), *kudiyar* (settled tenants cultivators), and the *adiyar* (slave labourers) at the bottom. Legal codes (*kaccams*) were created to sustain the authority of the land owners over the tenants and servile classes. Epigraphical records of the early medieval Kerala show that temples owned vast areas of land. *Nambudiri* Brahmins and chiefs owned lands as *janmam* as the rights as they hold were inherited from their predecessors by matrilineal or patrilineal forms of succession.

Growth of the *Janmam* right also resulted in the growth of new supportive institutions like *kaccams*. But *kaccam*, which were codified regulations instituted by temple managements was declined after the twelfth century. The different strata of producers which had been formed during the later Cera period were transformed to a class of leaseholders (*pattakkar*) who held lands from the *janmi* on the basis of payment of a share of the produce as *pattam* or *varam*. With the growth of *Janmam* tenure along with the privileges associated with it, the settled cultivators in various regions become tenants paying rent or service to the *Janmi*. *Kudiyar* became a common term for different types of leaseholders. *Adiyar* (or *al*) still remained bonded slaves attached to the soil in food crop producing areas. The lands owned by the temples, Brahmins and *Naduvazhi* chiefs were known as *Devaswam*, *Brahmaswam* and *Cherikkal* lands respectively.

According to Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, during the period of the most of the eleventh century, described by Pillai as the 'Hundred Years War' between the Ceras and the Colas, destroyed the democratic and egalitarian character of Kerala society and polity. The 'Hundred years of war led to a concentration of the huge landed properties in the hands of the few Brahmana landlords giving birth to a peculiar pattern of land tenure in Kerala known as the *Janmi* system translated as 'landlordism'.

The temple inscriptions of early medieval Kerala demonstrate the Brahmanical character of the temple centred agrarian corporations of that period. According to the *Keralolpatti* tradition Parasurama created the land and donated it Brahmanas. Kesavan Veluthat had an opinion that the clues in the *Keralolpatti* tradition could not be ignored when dealing with the structure of land relations in Kerala. The *Keralolpatti* says that *ardha- brahmanas* or arms bearing brahmanas, who were exempted from studying the Vedas were given land. *Vedabrahmanas* or the brahmanas studying the Vedas got land donated from the ardhabrahmanas. Sudra cultivators were brought from different places and settled there and given several rights. The tenants were allowed a lower share (*kilaykkuru*) while the Brahmanas got the upper share (*melaykkuru*). The tenants were bestowed with the *kanam* right while the Brahmanas granted themselves the *janmam* right. *Keralolpatti* defines the system of *kanam* and *janmam* in this way. Velluthat clarified that it is not his argument that this account in the *Keralolpatti* is describing the way in which the land tenurial patterns had their origin in Kerala. A two tier arrangement with the *janmam* a superior right vested in the Brahmana lords and the *kanam* in the hands of tenant cultivators immediately below them is clearly mentioned in the *Keralolpatti*.

A major portion of the land where rice was cultivated was controlled by the temple-centred Brahmana settlements which included both the *devasvam* and the *brahmasvam* lands. The *brahmasvam* which literally means the 'property of Brahmana' was individually held by Brahmana households. The title they had over such land is described as *attiperu*. There are other instances where institution and individuals received land and other privileges as *vituperu*. The term *peru* which literally means birth. The land of members of the ruling family or other private individuals kept under the control of temples known as *kilitu*, amounting to some kind of subordinate leasehold. There is another kind of tenure called *itaiyitu*, an intermediary leasehold. The rights of the *karalar* were known as *karanmai* and the rights of the occupants of *kuti* was known as the *kutimai* rights.

The post -cera period witnessed its elaboration and the addition of further nuances in the graded hierarchy with greater land use and the diversification of crops in that period. Donald R. David junior in his study about his legal practices of medieval Kerala touched upon the land tenures in medieval Kerala. He argued that the terms *attiperu* and *janmam* are technically synonymous. *Itaiyitu* or *kilitu* in the Cera records were created and given to intermediaries often in return for a loan or security, the interest of which was adjusted against the proceeds of the land, something of an usufructuary mortgage. The terms used most frequently in the post-cera documents are *veppu*, *orri* and *panayam*.

Records of the Cera kingdom show that there were the labourers who worked in the land and were transferred along with land when transactions took place. The labourers are described variously as *al*, *atiyar* etc. The nature of land relations had marked a change in post Cera period. From the fourteenth or the fifteenth century the rights of the *janmi* over the land was expressed by

kiliyakkam and the obligations of the tenants were determined by *maryadai*. Unlike *kaccams* in the early medieval period, *maryadai* had no standardized form applicable to the entire Kerala. Disputes about the application of *maryadai* were settled by local eminent persons called *natuvar* or *naluper*. The localisation of landrights and obligations based on the *maryadai* could be expressed by the use of the terms *kilmaryadai*, *nattumaryadai*, *desamaryadaisanketamaryadi* etc.

The localized traditions were clearly the result of decentralization of politico-economic power after the decline of Cera kingdom, when different parts of Kerala came into the hands of *naduvazhi swarupams*.

By the seventeenth century, cultivation was extended to the Western Ghats also. This form of expansion indicated that new sections of population became agricultural producers and new *janmam* rights were established. The geography of Kerala with its hill slopes lead to the emergence of independent isolated settlements emerging and growing into self centered units of authority followed their own *kiliyakkam* and *maryadai*. A major portion of land in late medieval Kerala was held by large matrilineal joint families

The growth of cash economy was visible from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries itself with the expansion of foreign trade. The number of mortgages had been considerably increased from the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Lands were being in mortgage from one to twelve years on payment of a certain amount in cash or kind as *artham*, on the condition that the interest on the *artham* was deducted from the rent paid. Money was pledged with land as security (*panayam*). Direct money lending (*kadamvaypa*) with interest paid in cash or kind from land *nerpalisa* was also common.

If a land is brought under paddy cultivation, or a new tree planted, the land would be treated as *kulikkanam*. *Kulikkanam* is a kind of holding, where a reduction of rent from one third to one fourth was given a *naduvakkur* or *kilikkur*, which would cover the expenditure for the gestation period who the trees are growing or the ground prepared for food crop cultivation. The expansion of the *kulikkanam* tenure is related with the thrust towards expansion of garden crops. Growing overseas trade from the fifteenth century and the fight between various *naduvazhi* chiefs for establishing their rights over the available territories were the factors which led to the expansion of the land tenure system in late medieval Kerala.

Production-Exchange

Malabar coast one of the major centres of the Indian Ocean trade during the medieval period. Malabar, along with Coromandal and Ceylon, linked trade from the Red sea and Persian Gulf to the Chinese coast. The trade reaches its peak during 13th and 14th centuries then was transformed under the impact of the European companies.

The trade networks on the Malabar Coast were of three types: local trade, long distance overland trade and long distance overseas trade. Several factors like one or more resources regions, processes of local exchange through land, rivers and sea, ports of trade and mechanism of exchange including the use of money and credit were essential for the conduct of trade.

The inscriptions from the later Chera or Perumal period gave details regarding production and trade. Documents show that pepper, ginger, cardamom, tamarind, akil and salt were exchanged in local market centres (*angadis*). Spices and forest products were also imported through major ports of trade such as Pantalayani, Kodungallur and Kollam. Overland trade included

textiles, metals and other implements. Merchant corporations such as *Tisai Ayiruttu Ainurruvar*, *Valanjiyyar* and *Nalpattennayiravar* conducted this trade. *Anjuvannamand Manigramam* are mentioned in the port of trade in Malabar.

11th century marked the beginning of a major expansion in the Indian Ocean trade. Development of the Indian Ocean Network resulted in the more frequent visit of ships in the port of trade in the Malabar Coast, both from West Asia and South East Asia. The geographical features of the Malabar Coast enabled the merchants to use coast as an effective stopover and the merchants also gathered the spices and forest product from Malabar. This process of trade enabled the disbursement of pepper and other spices into the Red sea and the Mediterranean and the same process also ensured that wares from different parts such as gold, copper, silver, horse, silk, aromatics, bronze, ceramic and cotton textiles reached in Kerala.

The expansion of overseas trade resulted in the growth of a number of ports. The list of ports given by the Arab geographer and merchants including Ezhimala, Madai, Valapattanam, Dharmadam, Puttuppanam, Panthalayani, Kozhikode, Beypore, Ponnani, Kdungallur, Kochi, Purakkad, Kayamkulam and Kollam demonstrate this growth. The growth of ports also implied that vessels sailing from East and West found numerous centres to anchor their vessels and conduct their trade.

The proximity of production region including the Western Ghats to the sea and the presence of a number of rivers also facilitated the transport of goods to nearby port. The growth of port also implied that local products including spices and forest produce could be brought a number of coastal centres for exchange instead of a central emporium.

Among the cash crops pepper was the most demanded item for the foreigners as many of the foreigners regarded Malabar as a pepper country for a long time. The Arab enjoyed monopoly of pepper trade in Malabar. Arab merchants like Yaqut-al-Hamawi(12th century), Al Quazwini(13th century), Muhammad al-Idris(12th century) mention about the cultivation of pepper in Malabar. The Venetian traveller Marco Polo(1254-1324 CE) recorded in his accounts about the cultivation of pepper and ginger. Durate Barbosa (16th century) a Portuguese traveller speaks about different types of ginger cultivated in different parts of Kerala. Turmeric was an extensively cultivated crop in the garden land mainly for household consumption. Coconut and arecanut trees dominated the garden land and constituted a source of regular income of the several *natus*. Chinese account reveals that the cultivation of arecanut was extensive in Kerala. Forest area was full of other resources as well. The forest areas provided timber, sappan wood or canella, aloe, sandal wood etc.

Evidence regarding various *agnadis* indicates the linkages between the production zone and trade networks. Literary text refers to several *agnadis* such as Thazhakkavu in Wayanad, Kariyanad near Thiruvalla, Ayyanchithira in Valluvanatu, Kadattururuthi, Mathilakam and so on. It has been argued that there were four different kind of trading centres: rural exchange nodes, periodic fair, interior markets and small bazars and the big emporium of foreign trade. According to K.N Ganesh the pattern of exchange process is basically three kinds. One was local, often without the use of money conducted by the producers themselves. The second was the higggle-hagggle trade found in the literary texts. The third was the most organised trade with the use of money, in which itinerant and foreign merchants or their middle men participated. The coastal communities, who depended on fishing and the production of salt, coconut, coir products and toddy also depended on the exchange of their products with paddy. The

medieval temples were major consumers of local products as well as the goods brought through foreign trade. Some ports like Kannur was specialised in some of the imports like horses, which were transported to other parts of South India. The entire coast is linked to the resource regions and market centres, such as Valapattanam and Kannur (Valapattanam river) Puttupanam (Kuttiadi river) Pantalayani (Korapuzha), Kozhikode and Beypore(Chaliyar), Ponnani (Bharathapuzha), Kodungallur and Kochi(Periyar and Vembanad lake), Kayamkulam(Pamba) and Kollam(Kallada river and Ashtamudi lake).

For a fairly long period, navigation in the Arabian Sea was along the coast. Malabar is referred to by all the Arab writers as country of pepper. Ibin Battuta calls the country as *Malaybar* and states that it is a pepper country. Large amount of spices including pepper, ginger, cardamom, cinnabar and malabathuram, spikenard etc. were exported from the ports of Malabar to the Arab countries.

RagavaVarier's study threw light on the history of Chinese trade relations with Kerala and he explained how influential they were in the economy, technology and culture. Varier made use of the remains of Chinese travelogue written by the travellers like Mahuan, who accompanied Cheng-Ho during his expedition in Malabar.

The expansion of trade resulted in the growth of coinage in Medieval Kerala. The *naduvazhis* of Kerala like *thenaduvazhis* of Kozhikode, Kochi and Venad introduced gold coin, but they were limited in circulation. There are also references to *Kammattam*(mint) from the 15th century. The merchant-middlemen engaged in local and overland trade made use of the locally minted coins such as *panam*. In short, the coast of Malabar became a part of the large global network of the oceanic trade.

Labour Activities and Multiple Economies

According to K. N. Ganesh in the late medieval Kerala changes in the agrarian economy were taking place when the forest areas were cleared and used for agriculture, particularly along the coast. By the 17th century cultivation was extended to the Western Ghats also. This process was the result of the rise of the *naduvazhi svarupams*. Expansion particularly took place on land growing garden crops like coconut and pepper. Coconut spread in the sandy soil, which was extremely suited for the crops. Pepper along with other spices and fruit bearing trees were grown in *parambus* and *thottams* (garden) on the coast and the interior.

This form of agricultural expansion indicates that the new sections of the population were becoming agricultural producers, new chiefs were developing in interior areas, and new *janmam* rights were established. Apart from the Brahmanas, non-brahman chiefs and land owners increased their importance. The geography of Kerala, with its hill slopes, terrace and valleys indicates the agrarian expansion with several independent, isolated settlements as self contained units followed their own localized pattern of land rights. Fertile regions with more resources attracted the attention of rival chiefs which led to frequent quarrels. This gave rise to a military class, which was maintained by the agriculture produce of the area. Land was held by large matrilineal joint families.

Another feature was the growth of cash economy, which was visible from the fourteenth and the fifteenth century itself. The big *natus* and their *natuvazhis* like the ruler of Venatu and the Samuthiri of Kozhikode were supported by the income obtained from trade. Market centres and ports of trade remained autonomous. Numerous ports like Valapattanam, Puttupattanam, Pantalayani, Kozhikode, Chaliyam, Kozhi, Purakkad and Kollam developed. These ports were visited by Arabs, Syrian Christians

and the Chinese. Arabs controlled the trade in Kozhikode and Kannur. Kozhikode was placed under the supervision of the Muslim merchant 'Shah Bandar Koya'. The ports of trade of Kollam was separated from the control of the chiefs of Venatu and controlled by traders themselves. Market centres or *angadi* developed in the interior, particularly close to the temple. Some of them were Kadatturuthi, Kayamkulam, Mattam, Sreeparvatam, Thiruvananthapuram etc. These *angadis* were visited by merchants as well as local people to sell their goods. While Samutiri made use of the port of Calicut to involve in trading relations with the western world and Arab countries. Kollam or Kurakkeni Kollam, where Venatu had its headquarters, continued to be a prosperous centre of trade.

Evidence from food crop regions during the post – perumal period showed that cultivators of the food crop regions generally belonged to the group called Nairs. They were formed an important group within the village community. The existence of interrelated power centers such as the *swarupams*, Brahmana temple, village communities and trading centers was also a feature of the medieval Kerala under the rule of the *naduvazhi swarupams*. There were mention of social groups like *ilavar*, *vellan*, *pulayan*, *chaliyan*, and groups of *kammalar*. These groups emerged on the basis of the expanding agrarian relations and trade network particularly along the coastal region. Various references to occupations with reference to expanding agrarian society like *thachan*, *kollan*, *thattan*, *Chaliyan*, *vaniyan*, *kusavan*, *ilavan*, *pulayan*, *parayan*, *channan* and several other groups were made. The coastal people like *parutavar*, *mukkuvar* and *araiyar* occupied separate *Turas*.

Medieval Kerala inscriptions mention a division of settlement space into *vayal* (paddy field), *karai* or *karaipurayadam* (upland or house site) and *kadu* (forest). Instead of living huddled in a street like other Indians Malayali prefers privacy of his own. Compounds. Paddy fields gradually became

pozil or elevated grounds which merge onto *parambu* uplands and hill slopes. The hills and hillocks gradually descend down to the *parambu* uplands and hill-slopes.

According to Raghava Varier a study of the settlement registers of the ten villages reveals that the basic constant element of the village community consisted of *kollan* (blacksmith), *asari* (carpenter), *musari* (bronzesmith), *tattan* (goldsmith), *velan* (folk- medicine man/midwife) *vannan* (washermen or ritual dancer), *panan* (traditional singer of the songs /umbrella maker), *veluthedan* (washermen of upper jatis), *chaliyan* (weaver), *chakkalan* (oil presser), *tiyan* (toddy tapper) and the agricultural groups of *pulayan*, *parayan* and *kanakkan*.

All the medieval *nadus* were agrarian and the paddy fields dominated the central *nadus*, which is also the region with large number of watercourses. The paddy fields in central Kerala lands included 67 terms noting *kari* lands, that are *kayal* or estuarine lands in the Vembanad lake. Interestingly, forms donating forest lands (*kadu*) are also maximum in the Central Kerala *nadus*. In the northern Kerala *nadus* terms donating paddy fields (*vayal*, *nilam*, *aria* etc.) are almost equal showing relatively higher distribution of garden lands. None of the *nadus* are exclusively paddy areas, and had included numerous land terms showing a wide variation in land use and cultivation.

People's Life in Early Medieval Kerala

Kerala as an entity distinct from the rest of the south India had acquired its socio-cultural identity at the beginning of the ninth century. The earliest reference to Kerala as a separate geographical entity with the use of that name is found in the *Avantisundarakatha* of Dandin. This work belongs to eighth century and the author was a Sanskrit poet from the Pallava capital in Kanci. Kesavan Veluthat argued that Kerala came to be

defined as a geographical unit with definite boundaries, and the territory also became the territory of a political unit by the ninth century.

It was under the Perumals of Mahodayapuram that Kerala was united as a single political unit for the first time, during the eighth to twelfth centuries. During the period from the fourth to the eighth century, there are references in literature to gifts of land to fighters and Brahmanas. The fighters or the priest scholars did not cultivate the land by themselves. They made use of the labour from outside the kin groups, which resulted in the erosion of the old system. Following the emergence of a stratified society that resulted from the opening up of the river valleys for cultivation, society with a graded hierarchy and with a state established.

A large number of Brahmana settlements were established on the lower reaches of the more fertile river valleys of Kerala by the ninth century. These Brahmana settlements that were found around temples in the river valleys. The Brahmanas possessed vast estates of land both as their individual property (*brahmasvam*) and as collective property in the name of the temple (*devasvam*).

By the close of the eighth century, vast areas of land had brought under plough for the cultivation of paddy and a considerable number of the tribals were transformed into peasants in an agrarian society. This created surplus in production and through its unequal distribution a stratified society came into existence. Brahmanas as the administrators of the temples had immense influence on the economy and society and they enjoyed certain economic privileges. Thus, Brahmanical ideas and institutions such as the Agamaic religion, *jati* and *varnasramadharmawere* accepted by the society. Kerala has all the features necessary as a precondition for the formation of the

state: the production of considerable agrarian surplus, stratified society and acceptance of a hegemonic ideology.

The very first epigraphic record from the plains of Kerala is a copperplate related to a place called Valapalli near Tiruvalla in the south. Tiruvalla was one of the major Brahman settlements and Valapalli was its subsidiary. The document dated in the twelfth regnal year of Rajasekhara (820 CE), who is identified as the founder of the Chera kingdom of Mahodayapuram. The very first record from Kerala related with the presence of the state is Brahmanical in character.

The perumal had a council of Brahmana advisors known as the *nalutali*. This council was present in important meetings of the king. Kesavan Veluthat had an opinion that the Brahmanical groups emerged as powerful with a strong sense of all Kerala identity. The members of the council *nalutali* were the representatives from four important Brahmana villages in the neighbourhood. This council was present when the ‘war council’ met or an important decision such as the remission of tax was taken. Decisions taken in one of these villages, *mulikkalam* regarding the nature of conduct for the Brahmana members of the village committees had the privilege of setting the standard code of conduct, which followed by the entire Kerala.

In all probability the temple of Kali, for which the town is famous today, existed in the capital city apart from these four big Brahmanical temples of the *nalutali*. Members of the important Nair caste with their military power managed the affairs of this temple through their body called *onnu kure ayiram* (the “thousand minus one”), the *ayiram* (the thousand) was a body of the Chera king's bodyguards, his ‘companions of honor’. The real power in the state have been exercised by the chiefs at the local levels, the corporate bodies in agrarian villages, and trading groups in the urban centres.

The inscriptions from Kerala of this period have a peculiar feature. Most of the documents are related to agrarian villages centered on temples and managed by Brahmana groups and evidences of a strong non- Brahmana peasantry as it in the rest of south India in this period is missing here. The Brahmanical groups controlled most of the rice-producing land. The owned property as both *devasvam* and *brahmasvam*, and managed the affairs of the *ur* (the village). These groups, also known as the *urar* (those of the village) met regularly in the temples and decides on important affairs such as the management of the landed property, assignment of revenue, policing, law and order etc. Each *ur* or *sabha* as it was otherwise known, consisting of a handful brahmana landowners of the village, functional as a corporate groups and decided things in meetings. Members attended the meetings without fail and decisions were unanimous. Any abrogation of the decision was punished according to the provision the *dharmasastras*. Defaulters were ostracized and expelled from the territory of village and their properties were confiscated and added to the 'god's property.

A body called *nagaram* controlled urban trading centres. They had the same autonomy as the agrarian villages. These nagarams were often controlled by guilds like *Ancuvannam*, *Manigramam* etc. These bodies enjoyed considerable privileges in administrative matters. Arabs, Jews, and Christian traders had influence on the urban centres. The port towns such as Kollam or Kodungallur functioned as centres of international trade and it was through these port cities religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam entered this land.

The presence of the state as visible in the inscriptions points to the existence of differentiation and stratification in society. Wetland agriculture in paddy had spread widely with the opening up of river valleys and the widespread use of iron

technology. The process of agrarian expansion including the clearing of forests in certain areas, the leveling of undulating terrains in certain others, and the draining of waterlogged fields. Records show that temples possessed huge estates of land producing rice.

The primary producers were the labourers, who were tied to the lands they worked. There were references to the bonded labourers such as *al*, *al atiyar* etc. Grants or other transaction of land mention the transfer *al* labourers, both male and female along with such transactions. The most visible section of population in the records consisted of those who placed in the middle of the economic and social hierarchy. They included numerous tenants of the vast land owned by the temples. A section of people was there to provide various services in the temple such as garland– making, musical services, cleaning etc. were placed slightly above the tenants as they were doing ‘clean’ jobs and their proximity to the temple and the Brahmanas. Those who were engaged in artisanal activities such as the different varieties of smiths, carpenters, washermen etc. were placed lower on the scale. Native traders were rarely mentioned in inscriptions.

Jati was a tool for the Brahmanical owning groups to assert their superiority. By using the principles of the *varnashramadharmā*, they imposed the Brahmanical world view and provided legitimacy to the differentiation of society. This is one of the peculiar features of Kerala society where, unlike other parts of south India, Brahmanical dominance was accepted. The result was the spread of agamic religion. Temples dedicated to Brahmanical deities such as Siva and Vishnu had come up with fabulous amount of wealth. The Cera rulers themselves were two leaders of the Tamil bhakti movement. Many of the sacred centers of Tamil bhakti movement were located on the west coast.

Religions of west Asian origin such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam arrived in the coastal towns of Kerala. The church of Tarsa, was referred to as *tevar* (deva). The sacred oil lamp was an important offering to deva as in the case of the Brahmanical temples. The Christian groups were confined themselves to the coastal towns and remained traders. Far-reaching changes in the economy, society and polity of Kerala were taking place by the first quarter of the twelfth century due to further expansion of plough agriculture.

The area around the old capital of Mahodayapuram was still under the control of the same family of the Perumals. The medieval Manipravala kavyas and the Sanskrit literature described the Ceraman Perumal as the raja. A whole new island known as the Puduvaippu (the 'new formation') was thrown up to the south and new base of power came up gradually around the newly opened Koccali.

Dominance of Temples and Brahmanas

The Brahmanical temple structure of North India date barely beyond the fourth century C.E while their counterpart in Southern India date to the Seventh. Huge temples were built in South India during the last three centuries of the millennium. Some of these were adaptations of early Jain and Buddhist monuments. According to Rjan Gurukkal the emergence of structural temples and the formation of an agrarian society was based on which formed due to the proliferation of Brahmana Villages all over South India.

Temples acted as the institutional means of co-ordination of landed household into the corporate body. Temples emerged as the nerve-centre of agrarian settlements. According to K.N. Ganesh temples were the hinterland headquarters of agrarian society in Medieval Kerala. Each of the 32 Brahmana Settlements

of Kerala was organized around a temple central to it known as *Gramakshethra* or a village temple. Members of these villages considered the deity consecrated in the village temple as their patron deity. The inscription kept at these temples were the major source of information of the Brahman settlements in Kerala. Kesavan Veluthat compared medieval Kerala temple with the church in Medieval Europe.

The temples were managed by corporations of those who formed these settlements or their more notable representatives. A large number of Kerala inscriptions from the ninth century onwards records transaction of the temple-centred Brahmana settlements. From a study of these inscriptions it is clear that the great body of village administration was constituted by this Brahman population. This body was called the *Ur* or *Uralar* meaning literary, the village inhabitants and the owners and proprietors of the village respectively. The term *Uralar* is even now in use Kerala to denote trustees of temples and temple properties and most of them are Brahmanas. The inscriptions reveal that the administration of temple affairs was carried out by the *Urar* and all the Brahmana inhabitants were members of this assembly and the common property of the temple was virtually their property. Other terms like the *Tali*, *Tali Adhikarikal*, *Taliyar*, *Sabha*, *Sabhaiyar* etc. are also used to denote the *Urar*. The *Ur* and *Sabha* in Kerala were one and same.

An executive committee called the *Paratai*, *Paritai*, *Parataiyar* (*Parishad* in Sankrist) is there to look into the day-to-day affairs of the temple. The members of his committee were chosen among from the *Uralar* and they were always property owning Brahmanas. Introduction to Paruthi these were committee called *Kanams* (Sankrist-*gana*) to look into the matters of some specific temporary endowments. Officers called *Potuval* and *Variyan* are also known. *Potuval* is general secretary and are of

two types *Akappotuaval* and *Purapotuaval*. The duties of *Akappotuaval* are related with the internal affairs of the temple and *Purapotuaval* looked after the external affairs of the temple related to land and other items of property. *Variyan* was the accountant in charge of revenue. Certain proceedings regarding the functioning of the temple committee were also in existence. The most commonly known code is the *Mulikkalam Kaccam*, *Kothivayirveli Kaccam*, *Kaitavarattu Kaccam*, *Tavaranur Kaccam* and *Sankaramangalattu Kaccam*.

The temple properties were constituted largely by gifts of land and gold from rulers, chieftains and other well-to-do men or society. These gifts were received by the *Uralar* and *paratiyar* on behalf of the temples and were owned collaterally by them. The land received was leased out for cultivation. The income from the properties owned by the temples was allocated to the day to day affairs of the temples. Expenses of the daily rituals and several festivals of temple were met and the functionaries of the temple from the priest down to the sweeper were paid by this income. The practice of granting land as salary for the temple servant is shown by documents. This type of land came to be known as *Jivitam* or *Viruthi*.

Kesavan Veluthat in his case study of the 630-line long *Thiruvalla Copper Plate* Inscription of the 12th century C.E reveals that temples processed fabulous extend of land. People even from distant places including Ceylon had made donations to the temple. In addition to land, the temple possessed wealth in the form of gold. The temple used to grant loans and acted as a bank. In some cases, the right to collect taxes from certain Villages was the privilege of the temple and often the power of the temple committee was placed above the authority of the king and feudatories. The temple looked into public utility such unit service as education, banking and hospital. Temples had certain daily and seasonal ceremonies.

The lands under the control of the temple were leased out to the *Karalar* who was responsible to pay *Pattam*(land dues). An official called '*Pattumuluvan*' collected the land dues on behalf of the temple corporation. The important source of income of temple was the landdues paid by the *Karalar*. The right of the *Karalar* over the temple land was known '*Karnamai*', which was hereditary. The temple was discharging a land redistributive function through it gave away only subordinate rights like '*Karanmai*' and '*Kudimai*' (occupation right) to the *Karalar* and *Kutikal*(the artisans and craftsmen) respectively, while it retained the '*Uranmai*' (property right) in the hand of the members of the *Sabha*. According to Rajan Gurukkal 'the temple standardized the inter commodity exchange rates. Certain records refer to a stable gold paddy exchange ratio. Gurukkal added that the temple emerged as the site of economic transaction in the hinterland.

The non-Brahmin functionaries of temples became a separate caste came to be known as the *Ambalavasikal*(temple servants). The male dancers of the temple were known as '*Cakkaimar*', who performed *koottu*(dance-drama). The female dancers known as '*Nangaimar*' or '*Thevidichikal*'. *kottikal* was the term used for the drummers. In addition to the employees associated with daily rituals of the temple, there were few artisans and craftsmen(*Kammalar*), *Vannar*(*washerman*), *Vaniyar*(oil monger) and *Pulayar* and *Cerumar* (actual tillers) who were part of a temple-centred society. Temple was a cultural centre too. There are separate art form like *Koottu* and *Kootiyattam* came to be known as temple arts. In the post Chera period the territory around the temple developed in to what came to be known as *sanketam*, a somewhat judicial political territory. The *sanketam* enjoyed unlimited political power within its territory independent of the local chieftain.

Political Structure of Natus and Swarupams

The rule of the Perumals of Mahodayapuram came to an end by the beginning of the 12th century. Thereafter a fragmented polity consists of several *nadus* and *swarupams* had been emerged in Kerala in place of the centralised *nadus* under the Perumals. Different *naduvazhis* under the Perumals became independent by controlling their own specific territory. K.N. Ganesh has argued that along with the disappearance of the Perumals many factors that sustained the political power of the Perumals also declined and the most important among them was the disappearance of the legal procedure codes like the *Mulikkulam Kaccam* and the institutions like the *Nalu Tali*. According to M.R. Ragava Varier, *swarupams* had gained prominence after two centuries from the disappearance of the Perumal rule.

Each *nadus* are known for the name of the locality, where the joint family of the *naduvazhi* originally situated. This original location of the joint family was known as the *swarupams*. Some of the *nadus* under the perumal rule with a *swarupam* became independent in the medieval period. For example, the Samuthiri of Kozhikode was known for the Nediyrippu *swarupam*. The other important *swrupams* were Perumbadappu (Kochi), *Kolathiri* (Chirakkal), *Porlathiri* (Kadathanad), Tarur (Palakkad), Arangottu (Valluvnad), Thrippappur, Ciravaand Desinganadu (Venad). The *swarupams* were joint families and they had followed the matrilineal system of inheritance. The form of succession existed in *swarupams* was known as '*Kuruvazhcha*'. In this system, the '*Muthakur*' (The senior most male member of the matrilineal joint family) became the ruler. The other members were known as *Ilamkur* (Junior one). The senior most person among the junior members would become the ruler after the death of the existing

ruler. Gradation was existed among the Junior members as each of them had their own right and privileges.

According to Ragava Varier and Rajan Gurukkal the emergence of *natus* was considered by historians as a result of the disintegration of the Perumal rule but the historians must relook into this argument as the process of economic growth facilitated the development of the autonomous *natus*. According to the *Keralolpatti* tradition the entire Perumal kingdom (*160 katam.of land*), located between Putupattinam in the North and Kanneri in the South was divided among the seventeen *natus* of which Kolathunatu, Venatu, Perumpadappu, Kurumporainatu, Polanatu, Valluvanatu and Eranatu were the major ones.

Among the *natus* Venatu was the most powerful *natu* in terms of wealth, resourcefulness and long history. The headquarters of the ruling joint family was Kilperur near Kilimanur. Later, a branch of the joint family settled in Tripapur near Thiruvananthapuram which was growing into an important trading centre. The main sources of income of the rulers of Venatu were land dues from land lords, taxes on trade goods, tolls from trade routes and customary dues. Within a period of two centuries the ruling families splitted into three lineages: Thripappur, Cirava and Desinganadu. The kingdom of Venatu had been located between Kollam in the north and Tirunelveli in the south. Kollam town was very prosperous.

After the disintegration of the Perumal kingdom Venatu became independent and Ramavarma Kulasekhara was the first ruler of independent Venatu. The rulers of Venatu had continued to use the title Kulasekhara to indicate their descent from the Perumals of Mahodayapuram. There were a few inscriptional references like the *caturvedimangalam* inscription (1161 C.E) which mentions the names like Vira Kerala Varma (12th century) and his successors Viraravi Varma (12th century), who ruled

Venatu as the subordinate of the Pandyan king Maravarman Srivallabha. Literary sources and inscriptional evidences gave information regarding a number of kings of Venatu including Aditya Varma, Udaya Marthanda Varma, Virarama Varma, Virarama Kerala Varma, Ravi Kerala Varma, Padmanabha Marthanda Varma and Ravi Varma Kulasekhara. Kandiyur inscription tells that at least eight natus, north of Venatu were under the influence of the king of Venatu.

The Pandyas started to dominate the southern part of Venatu during the second half of the thirteenth century. Kota Marthanda Varma was the ruler of Venatu during Sundara Pandya's invasion. Kota Marthanda Varma's successor, Ravivarman Kulasekhara was the first Venatu king who ascended the throne through the matrilineal forms of succession. Vira Kerala Marthanda Varma, Sree Vira Udaya Marthanda, Sree Veera Kerala Varma, Rama Varma, Unni Kerala Varma, Udaya Marthanda Varma and Viraravi Varma were some rulers of Venatu till the 16th century. Ma Huan mentioned about the coinage of the Venatu King, which included gold coin weighing one *fen* (5.75 grains) each.

The descendants Eralanattutayavar, whose name was mentioned in the Jewish plates of Bhaskara Ravi Varma of 1000 C.E became independent after the decline of the Perumal kingdom and came to be known as the Samutiris of Kozhikode. The *Keralolpatti* shows that they managed to attach to their kingdom the areas of Polanadu with Kozhikode as its capital and Valluvanatu with its centres at Ayiranzhi, Katannamanna, Mankta and Aripara. The Eranatu chieftain of Nediyrippu known as the *Eratis* defeated the Vellattiris of Valluvanatu and Porlathiris of Polanatu in the Northwest. Through these conquests, they extended their control over Kozhikode, a place rich in spices and to Pantalayani Kollam, the

main natural port famous for spice overseas trade. The major share of the revenue of the early Nediyrrippu Swarupam came from spice and salt trade. Other sources of revenue were *ankam*(duel), *cunkam*(toll), *ela*(fee for owing unclaimed cattle), *kala*(service charge, *Vali* (route tax), *pila*(fine) and Changatha mukam nokku(providential gifts). *Eratis* snatched Valluvanatu and became the patron of *Mamankam*, a festival celebrated once in a twelve years at Thirunavaya on the banks of Bharathapuzha. It was a fair attracted merchants even from very distant places. The Arab-Chinese accounts provide a clear documentary evidence about their political control, which extended up to Arukuti in the south and Pudupattinamin the North.

The Samutiris had been maintained a strong contingent of warriors, who were well trained in martial arts or *Kalari*. These warriors were known as *lokar* who were posted in different parts of the territory. Nediyrrippu chronicles regarded them as Padinjarrumuri lokar, vadakkum lokars etc. In addition to the *lokar*, there were guards called *Kaval Cangatam* for the maintenance of internal peace and security. Samuthiris minted coins in the royal *kammattam*.

The prosperity of the city of Kozhikode was one of the important factors behind the success of the Nediyrrippu Swarupam. The *Eratis* acquired the title of Samutiri (*Swamisree*, *Swami* meaning king and *Sree* being the honorary suffix) through wealth, power and rituals and strategies of legitimacy. Documentation was an important feature of the Nediyrrippu *swarupam*. Everyday events were documented as items of expenditure and the sources of income constituting the basics of revenue administration.

Mamankam was a big fair at Tirunavaya on the banks of the Bharathapuzha river where merchants even from faraway places came together to exchange goods. Due to the economic

significance of the fair and the strategic importance of the site, Samutiri captured Tirunavaya from its traditional owner, the chief of *Vellattiri* and annexed it to the kingdom of Kozhikode. After that the Valluvand chief started sending warriors as *caver* (suicide squads) to kill the Samutiris. These warriors rushed to the king who was seated on the special platform(*nilapaduthara*) and will make a suicidal attempt to behead the Samutiri. According to William Logan the last Mamankam was conducted in 1755 and stopped after the conquest of Kozhikode by Mysore.

Administration of justice

Administration of justice and punishment continued to be based on local customs. Codified laws in the earlier period like the Mulikalam Kacham had been disappeared. Another change was the introduction of ordeals based on water, poison and fire. The most common was the ordeal of dipping finger in boiling oil. If the finger of the accused burnt, the accusation against him would be confirmed. Sucindram in Kanyakumari, Kalarivathukkal in Kolathiri's domain, Lokanarkavu in Kadathanad Raja's domain and the Thiruvallayanatu Kavuvu in Samutiri's domain were famous for the conduct of the five ordeals.

Ankam was the most common method used for the resolution of a conflict. It was a form conflict resolution that involved fight between hired fighters unto death. The person involved in a dispute could hire a fighter known as *Cekavar* by giving him a good amount of money. The dispute was settled in favour of the owner of the fighter, who won the fight. Usually a fight will end in the death one of the fighters. The *Puthooram Pattukal* in the *Vadakkam pattukal* depict the life of *Cekavars* and the way of settling a dispute through *Ankam*.

Ordeals as a means of producing evidences in legal matters are mentioned in several sources or different periods. Accounts of foreign travellers contains several description of ordeals that the authors witnessed or collected from information. Stone or copper plate inscription and archival records mentions ordeal performances. Elamkulam refers to various type of ordeals in Kerala during the period. There were six documents on Viralmukku Ordeal in the srivalayanadu temple in the suburbs of Kozhikode. There are accounts of income and expenditure of the *viralmukku* rituals in the temples of Valayanatu, Lokanarkavu, Kudalikavu etc.

The *Dharmasasthra* texts and legal texts of the later period refer to the other forms of ordeals such as *Jalapariksha*(ordeal by water), *agnipariksha*(ordeal by fire), *visapariksha*(ordeal by poison) etc. In some cases, the accused was refused to perform the ordeal. When one Kumkamma of Kappally family in Kadathanatu was refused to perform the ordeal of *Agnipariksha* and the authorities were forced to settle the issue by realising an amount of fire.

Social Stratification and hierarchy

The earliest evidence of social formation in Kerala was in the Tamil region in the period between 300 BCE to 300 CE here South India was remained as a single cultural zone regarded as Tamilakam. It was a semi-tribal system combining multiple forms of subsistence such as hunting and food gathering, animal husbandry, primitive cultivation, plough agriculture and primitive commodity production. Plough agriculture was the superior form of production in terms of technology and productivity. Through it was more or less self-locked system while functionig it generated a series of contradictions, which according to Rajan Gurukkal acted as the transforming force.

As per the clues from the early Sangam poems there was not a system of relations based on caste. But it was not a complete egalitarian society without any differentiation but the differentiation was of a flexible nature. Brahmana enjoyed the highest social status by distancing from other people as purest. The heroic Tamil poems refer to both Brahmanas and gods as *uyarntor*. *Tholkapiam* describes the Tamilan counterpart of the Varna system consisting of *antanar*, *aracar*, *vanikar* and *Velalar* as the four Varnas. In the Sangam age the term *kuti* denote settlement of the *Tutiyar* (people with a kind of drum called *tuti* as macro-religious symbol), *Panar* (people composing and singing bardic poems), *Paraiyar* (people with kind of drum *parai* as their macro religious symbol) and *Katambar* (people with the *Katambu* trees as their symbol). Tamil Anthologies mention clannish groups that had clan ties like the primitive cultivator *Itaiyar* (cattle rearers), *Valayar* and *Minavar* (fisherman), *Paratavar* and *Umanar* (salt manufactures and distributors) and *Ulavar* (plough agriculturalists). All the forms of production were based on kinship ties of the agnatic or official type, which were submerged division and specialisation. Though these were certain specialists in arts and crafts such as *taccar* (Carpenters) and *Kollar* (blacksmith) and there is a nothing to show that they constituted themselves as groups outside clan ties. There was nothing leading to the break up of kinship.

Regular plunder raids and booty redistribution among people outside the clan ties too were causing economic differentiation. Sometimes the booty included productive lands and their redistribution among people outside the clan caused the disintegration of kinship as the base of production. Productive land was given away to Brahmanas who were entitled to share booty as a reward for performing rituals, composing eulogies to chieftains and functioning as preceptors. It gives rise to a new system of production relation transcending the framework of

kinship. The Brahmana household signified the new system of production relation. It involved a new kind of relation between Brahmanas and the tillers who were non-cultivating land holders and cultivating landless people respectively. It was a relation involving two objectively antagonistic classes. According to Rajan Gurukkal, the concept of *Jati* system must have existed in the localities of Brahmana household during the days of the anthologies, but the number of Brahman household in Tamilkam was not large enough for the *Jati* system to characterise the society. The social formation in the period of the anthologies had undergone a total crisis during the fourth and fifth centuries of the Christian era, which was a logical culmination of the contradictions in the formation of accentuated .by more extensive predatory marches, migrations and the entailing .disintegration of the kinship ties in the production. Another important feature of this development was emergence of large Brahmana villages, which means the virtual extensive of the new system of production relation to a large society and the emergence of the *Jati* system as a new development.

During the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth centuries the *Brahmadeya* or Brahmana villages proliferated all over Tamilakam as a result of royal land grants to Brahmanas. The expansion of immigrated agriculture as well as of the new system of relations was the out-come of the dissolving semi-tribal system and the formation of new social relation and new forms of society based on a Brahmana headed agrarian economy. Brahmana were proprietors of land but their often leased their lands to a group of the people, who emerged as a class of intermediaries between the Brahmanas and peasants. The hierarchy of entitlement to the surplus had provided the real foundation of the Brahmana-headed agrarian society of Kerala. A basic feature of this system was the separation between the primary producers and the full time non-producing functionaries like administrators and warriors who

were extracted the lion share or surplus through their managerial and protective functions. The groups, who enjoyed a higher share of surplus, distanced themselves from the people who directly involved in cultivation.

Brahmana villages became temple centred as temple acting as the headquarters of the agrarian villages. Temples were biggest land owners and the most important custodian of wealth. The period from the eighth to twelfth century saw the proliferation and consolidation of temple centred agrarian village by Brahmans. The establishment of these early settlements must have taken place during the Seventh and Eighth century. The waterlogged and marshy landscape ecosystem of Kerala necessitated extensive mobilisation of hard labour for reclamation of agrarian fields. The labours were recruited from the clan families living along the red soil hill-slopes besides the marshy wetlands, who cultivated millet and highland paddy. They were attached to the land on payment basis under the institution of bonded labour, probably enabled by the persuasion of their headman by the Brahmanas who were already recognized for their scholarship, tradition and charishma. Vedic, epic, puranic and sastric ideas and institutions were effective devices of social control and domination and part of ideological coercion used by Brahmanas. Brahmans laid the foundation of a stratified society based on objective antagonism between the landlords and tillers.

The 32 Brahman villages became well established in the fertile tracts suited for paddy cultivation by the period. A temple cantered Brahman village had its required functionaries around it. Once settled they became attached and obligated to the villages, that is to the landlords. All the functionaries enjoyed one or other types of rights over the village land and the intermediaries enjoyed the *Karanmai*(tenancy) while the artisans and craftsmen had the *Kutiyaymai*(occupancy)

The temple centred nature of society and economy led to the formation groups, classes and castes attached to the temple. Through its control over land it maintained landed intermediaries, lease holders, artisans, craftsmen and tillers into a society that can be called a temple society. Rich agamic specialist among the Brahmanas emerged as a separate group called *Thanthrikal*. The landlords among the Brahmanas were known as *Adhya* and others called *Asya.Potuvai* and *Varier* are two important categories among the temple castes. *Potuvai* was the secretary of the temple and *Varier* was the member of temple committees(*Variams*). The drummers in temple were known as *Kottikal* or *Uvaccakkal* and their modern caste name was *Marar*. *Cakkiyars* are the male dancers and *Nangyars* are the female dancers. The temple castes were generally regarded as the *Anatarala Jati*, caste between the Brahmanas and other non-Brahmanas.

Most of the temple lands and the individual Brahmana holding were leased out to the *Kararlar*, who were non-Brahmanas. The Nairs are the most dominant among them. The relation of the women of this caste with the Brahmanas through a peculiar marital institution called *Sambandhma*. There were certain divisions among the Nairs according to this status. The ruling aristocracy differentiated themselves from the rest of the Nairs by adopting a Kshathriya titles like *Varma*. A few others on the basis of land control through high military position differentiated themselves as *Panikkar*, yet another group distinguished themselves Menon, who acquired high ritual status through their association with the Brahmana landlords as the latter accountants.

In the same manner, artisans and craftsman also became caste groups. Inscriptions refer to groups such as *Taccaar*(Carpenters), *Kollar*(Blacksmith), *Kalavaniyar*(Potters), *Vaniyar*(Oil mongers) and *Vannar*(Washermen). They enjoyed

occupancy right over village land at the base of the temple society was the actual tillers who constituted the most servile group and their only privilege was *Ataiyma* (servility). They were attached to lands and were transacted with lands.

The *Syrian Christian Copper Plates* of the 9th century mention the grant of certain caste groups like *Illavar*(toddy tappers), *Taccar*, *Vellalar*(agricultural people) and *Vannar* to the Tarsa church. It may be said that the Kerala society witnessed the formation of caste groups all over the agrarian region during the Ninth and Tenth centuries.

The highest right in land was kings's suzerainty (*Koima*), the holders of the Brahmana land (*Brahmasam*) and temple land (*Devaswam*) enjoyed autonomous right of the landlords. Below the ownership of landlords was leaseholders right (*Karanmai*), while the artisans and craft people were entitled to occupy the land (*Kutiyaymai*) by way of reward for their service to the settlement. At the base were the tillers attached to a land, a people of bonded servitude and immobility. As people of hereditary occupation, they began to be called by the name of their vocations. These occupation names subsequently became caste names, a process indicating their transformation into endogamous caste.

It was the Brahmana household economy, required a permanent association of full-time function specific families and hence involved relations cutting across kinship. This led to the formation of hereditary occupation groups. Hereditary occupation groups gave rise to occupations labelled, who later turned to endogamous castes. Formation of castes acquired greater dimension in the wake of agrarian expansion through the establishment of *Brahmadeya* and *Devadanans*. Caste became an institutional manifestation in a hierarchically structured agrarian society.

Caste and Gender

According to Uma Chakarabarti caste and gender are interlinked. The most important feature of the Brahmanical Hinduism based on the Varnashramadharma system is that it always treats woman unequally. Kerala was known as *Pennarasunadu* in the 19th century. Kerala got this name as majority of the upper caste people in Kerala followed matrilineal form of succession, in which women had the property right. M.R,Raghava Varier wrote a book under the title *Ammavazhikeralam*. But J.Devika had an opinion that to denote Kerala in this name is a wrong thing, because majority of the people of Kerala are not matrilineal.

There were no common laws, restrictions and practices applicable for the women in Kerala. A woman born in a particular caste is forced to live according to the rules applicable for the women belong to that community. Man and woman of each caste had its own gender rules. The *namboodiri* concept of 'ideal woman' is not applicable to the Nair and *ambalavasi* women. The *pativrata* concept is imposed on brahmana women indirectly by the most widely read texts in medieval Kerala like the puranas and *Lingacarita*. But at the same time, the *namboodiris* argued that the *pativrata* concept is not applicable to all women. The *Keralamahathmya* says that the Nair and *ambalavasi* are not responsible to be chaste. They were allowed to follow polyandry.

In the medieval Kerala society women belong to each caste had their own rules and ways for leading their daily life. *Namboodiri* brahmanas, who followed patriliney imposed strict restrictions on the life of the *namboodiri* women. Even though, the Nair women enjoyed more freedom than the *namboodiri*women , their freedom was regulated according to the rules of caste hierarchy. For instance, if a Nair woman had sexual relation with a low caste man, she would be expelled from the

caste. The custom known as *mannapedi pulapedi* is intended to restrict the sexual freedom of the Nair women. Medieval foreign travelers were mentioned about this system. The matters of a matrilineal Nair joint family are managed by the eldest male member of the family known as the *karanavar*.

But women of the untouchable low castes enjoyed almost the same rights enjoyed by their men. The untouchable women belonging to the cultivating class were free to work in the field with their men. Unlike the upper caste women, they had the opportunities to do different occupations. The rules about the way to behave to their men found among the upper caste communities are not prevailed among them. But historian should search for and to locate new sources to recollect the facts about the social life of the lower caste women in medieval Kerala.

Caste Slavery

According to Sanal Mohan 'caste slavery' is the term used by him in the meaning of a unique form of social oppression and exploitation that existed in Kerala since the early medieval period, which included transactions of untouchable men, women and children. From 9th century CE to 19th century the term 'slave castes' used to denote dalits in several records. Kesavan Veluthat argued that in the records from Kerala, although there is no reference to *visti* or its Tamil form *vetti*, the practice of *corvee* (forced labour) was widely prevalent.

The primary producers in the land in the early medieval Kerala were the labourers. There are references in the documents to labourers being tied to the land they worked. When ownership or the superior rights over a piece of land changed hands the ownership over the labourers also transferred along with it. There were references to bonded labourers such as *al*, *al atiyar* etc. Grants or other transactions of land mention the transfer of *al* labourers, both male and female along with such transactions. The sections of the bonded labourers in the society are often identified

by the names of ethnic groups to which they belonged, names such as *pulayar*, which denoted the castes of agrestic labourers in later times.

Bonded labourers who were called *al* provided the required agricultural labour for both food and cash crops. In the epigraphical sources, the *al* labourers are always attached to the arable lands and are also transferred along with the land. These landless labourers, who were tied with the land, were the main source of agricultural labour. Theoretically they had no right over what they produced but the minimum requirements for life for them were provided by the owner or holder of the land to which they were attached. The *al* workers received some other articles such as grains and vegetables in addition to the usual food, clothing etc. The *al* groups consisted of *pulayas*, *parayas*, *kanakkas*, *ezhavas* and *cannar* who were engaged in various types of hard manual labour. The labourers known as *alatiyar*, who had been placed at the lowest rung of the caste hierarchy were the most subjected group almost like slaves and addressed as *pulayar* in several inscriptions.

Pulayas were the major slave caste of Kerala. They were treated as untouchables. The total number of *pulayas* in Tiruvitamkur is 98,766 in 1854, it was 187,812 in Malabar in 1856. P.K. Balakrishnan had an opinion that the total number of *pulayas* before the 19th century was not more than three lakhs. P. K. Balakrishnan added that those limited number of *pulayas* had cultivated at least two third of the total agricultural land in Kerala.

According to M.G.S. Narayanan the lowest section of the people in the caste hierarchy were *pulayar*. M.G.S. Narayanan regarded them as agrestic slaves. He added that there were some medieval records which show that *pulayar*, *cerumar* etc. were bought and sold as slaves and often transferred with or without land from one owner to another as part of a transaction. The

names of land and *pulayar* were mentioned together as the *peruvayalbhumi* and *pulayar*, *vettikkarikkattu bhumi* and *pulayar*, and *kannamangalattu vayalkarai* and *pulayar* being donated for the conduct of certain routine expenses in Trikkakkara temple. Similarly, a piece of *bhumi* (land) and *al* (slaves) were surrendered to Uliyanur temple. The plot of Kataipanangatu and *al* were surrendered to Tiruvakkiram and Kulaikkattu *bhumi* and *al* were placed as *kilitu* at Tiruvalla temple. The system of assigning pairs of slaves along with land to each one *uralar* in Brahman settlements is mentioned in the Kilimanur record of 1168CE.

Alkasu is mentioned as a source of royal income in the Syrian plates. The Chera ruler exempted Anchuvannam and Manigramam from this payment also. *Alkasu* was a payment made by the owners of *atimai* (slave). A large number of slaves were employed as labourers in the market place. This payment called '*atimaikku alkasu*' may be the same as '*atimappanam*' which formed as a source of income of the medieval kings of Kerala.

The identity of the slaves was closely bound up with the land. They were described as 'being held precisely under the same, tenures and terms as the land itself'. It was a product of the absolute control superior castes over the untouchable castes. Slaves of all castes were held as entirely impure and compelled to keep a stipulated distance from their superiors.

Socio -spatial Exclusion

The distribution of the Brahmana villages in Kerala shows that they are invariably in the agro-climatic areas suited for paddy which was the chief economic resource of the period. It is notable that the region between Perumcellur (Taliparamba) and Karikkad (Malappuram) which is not ideal for paddy cultivation due to the

tidal salination of even the upstream, had not attracted the Brahmanas. All the traditional Brahmana villages are therefore situated on the fertile river banks of the Periyar and Perar rivers.

George Kurien in his population studies argued that a high rate of correlation between agricultural practices and linguistic and cultural distribution existed in Kerala. The disbursed settlements in Kerala are different from the nucleated villages of Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Andhra. According to Eric J. Miller instead of living huddled in a street like so many other Indians Malayali prefers the privacy of his own fenced compound at a distance from his neighbors. For Eric J Miller, this pattern is due to several causes like geographical features, nature of terrain, availability of water and climatic conditions. Paddy fields gradually became *poyil* or elevated ground, which merge on to the *parambu* uplands and hill-slopes. The hills and hillocks gradually descend down to the lying fields. Availability of water in almost all areas at a maximum depth of five or six meters in another natural facility which resulted in the proliferation of dispersed settlements. Each habitational site in a medieval Kerala village is surrounded by a compound where articles like coconut, areca nut, betel leaves, ginger, pepper etc. was grown.

Availability of water in every field made it possible for every household to have own sources of water and therefore the so-called untouchable or polluting sections could live in the neighbourhood of 'pure' section without polluting the most important source of water. Outside Kerala the untouchable section of society were accommodated far away from the 'village' but in Kerala they are found within the villages. According to M. R. Raghava Variar some medieval village settlements remained without change from the tenth to the nineteenth century.

In a village community, there were several components including different types of owners, holders of different

enjoyment rights, rulers, and their retainers and so on. There were certain occupational groups of artisanal sections, skilled workers and menial servants found in every settlement, big and small, and their permanent occurrence indicates that they are essential elements in a village community.

Place names indicating the presence of a community as its inhabitants have a common pattern. Each item is composed of two component parts of a generic and specific, the specific indicates the name of caste and the generic shows the type of the site. Place names like Asarikandi and Asaritodika (*asari* means carpenter, *kandi* means a portion of a compound and *todika* means a compound adjacent to a house) are examples. Agricultural groups representing the section of untouchables were present in every medieval villages. These agricultural groups are generally accommodated in the settlements in places which were adjacent to the cultivable fields though they are settled rarely in other parts also. The agricultural groups were known in inscriptions as *al* or *pulayan*.

One of the other widely distributed occupational group that of *kollan* (blacksmith) which clearly indicates the extensive use of iron implements in the settlements. They are found in Kerala villages residing in separate compounds. In the royal seats like Kodungallur, there were extensive areas set apart for settling blacksmiths. The carpenters were considered to be an essential element of village community and their availability was ensured when a new settlement was established at Kollam by the venad rulers in 849 CE, as shown by the Tarisapalli plates.

The *Tattan* (gold smith) and *musari* (bronze smith) are not found in all villages. Pattern of distribution of these communities in the villages show that they tend to cluster in villages, where wealthy sections resided. Goldsmiths and bronze smiths are skilled workers in expensive luxury items. Therefore their

services are more required by a wealthy section of society. There was a presence of more *Tiya / ilava* (toddy tappers) on the coastal villages where coconut plantation is found in abundance.

The household of weavers are found scattered in compounds earlier but later they tended to form a linear form of grouping in the *teruie.*, street within the settlements. One of the widely distributed service groups is the oil-presser (*vaniya*), whose residential compounds are indicated by *chakku* meaning an oil press. Washermen are distributed in all villages. The washermen with high social status are called *veluthedan* and those with low social status as *vannan*. It was the duty of the *vannan* to perform ritual dance in non- brahmanical *kavu* temples. *kaniyans*, who were the local astrologers with acquaintance in the calendrical wisdom and astrological prediction. Most of the communities in a medieval Kerala village were landless and residing in the compounds owned by royal families, local chieftains, and aristocratic families of the village or religious institutions.

Malabar Society under Hyder Ali and Tipu

The military might of Mysore under Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan was a constant threat to the *Swarupams* of Kerala as they can easily reach in to north Malabar from Mysore or breach the southern boundary from Thirunelveli. Hyder's and Tipu's interest on Malabar could be viewed in the background of the prolonged rivalry between Mysore and the Marathas. Hyder Ali invaded Malabar in the intervals took between the Mysore- Maratha fights. The factional fight between the local rulers of Malabar was the major factor responsible for the Mysorean invasion in Malabar. In 1756-57 Samuthiri attacked Palakkad. Komi Achan, the head of the Palakkad ruling family asked for the help of Mysore. In return Mysore demanded an annuity of 12,000 *panam*, which he agreed. At the instructions of the Raja of Mysore, Hyder

Ali, who was the faujdar of Dindigal dispatched a large battalion under Makhдум Ali to Palakkad. To avoid a fight with the Mysorean army Samutiri entered into peace with the Mysore ruler by agreeing to pay a lumpsum of 12 lakh rupees to Mysore.

Hyder's and Tipu's Campaign

The Raja of Mysore was enraged when the Samuthiri was failed to pay the promised sum. Meanwhile,, Hyder Ali deposed the raja of Mysore and became the ruler of Mysore in 1761. Hyder demanded for the money from Samuthiri. When samuthiri refused his demand , Hyder led his army to Malabar. Samuthiri's each and every attempt to prevent Hyder's army from reaching Kozhikode was failed. His army reached Kozhikode and camped outside the south-eastern corner of the Kovilakam. The area where Hyder army were halted is still known as *Palayam*(military camp). Samuthiri who, had no other options pleaded for conciliation. Hyder Ali demanded ten million gold coins. The Samutiri did not have the resources to raise that money. On 27 April 1765, the Samuthiri shut himself in the armoury and burnt it killing himself and destroying the palace completely. After this Hyder Ali stationed two of his people at Kozhikode- Raza Ali, to take care of the military oppressions and Mathanna to collect tax. Hyder withdrew to Coimbatore via Palakkad. All along the way local people revolted against Hyder Ali's military march and he suppressed all these uprisings because of which he had to bear heavy losses. In 1766, he led his army in a counter-offensive against the Nair troops at Puthiyangati of Vettathunatu. When the 1766 battle was over and the situation eased, members of the Kizhakke .Kovilakam returned. Arakkal and Chirakkal dynasties sided with Hyder Ali. In 1773, a large battalion led jointly by Sayyid Sahib, Hyder Ali's favourite commander and Srinivasa Rao , a powerful commander of Mysore came via Thamarassery

pass. They looted and plundered the region they captured. Thus, many parts of Malabar came into the possession of Mysore.

In 1776, Hyder made more attempts to invade Venatu. Some years earlier, he had plans to attack Venatu but did not materialise. During his march to Venatu, Thrissur and Kotunkolur Kovilakam surrendered before him and Kochi Kovilakam bought peace and subsidiary status with four lakh rupees and ten elephants. But Hyder Ali had to give up his plans to invade Venatu as the Dutch and the English resisted the progress of his army. The French offered him help but it was in vain.

This incident provoked Hyder and he turned against the Dutch and English. In 1782, while countering the forces of the English major Abington, Hyder Ali's military leader Sardar Khan was fatally injured, taken prisoner and died shortly afterwards. With that several the territories captured by Sardar Khan, including Palakkad, Dharmadam, Mahe and Nettur came under the control of the English East India company. In Kerala, Mysore retained just one piece of territory called Palakattusseri. Makhdum Ali, led the regiment stationed at Palakkattussery to Chavakkad. After capturing Chavakkad he moved to Kozhikode. The English regiment led by Abington and Colonel Humberstone marched from Talassery to Kozhikode to help the Samuthiri. Makhdum Ali, was forced to return to Ponnani. Hyder Ali, had entrusted the regiment at Palakkattusseri to his son Tipu Sultan. Hyder died on 7 December 1782 and Tipu became the ruler of Mysore.

Tipu continued the military raids of the Mysore army in Malabar. Tipu's officers camped in Malabar to estimate and to impose revenue and collect taxes. But the people of Malabar never paid the taxes because they didn't accept Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan as their lawful rulers. There were other problem too. Tipu as an able administrator identified the need of a well-

established system of revenue administration in Malabar. He made arrangements to measure the land, to classify it according to the type, to assess the yield and to impose proportionate taxes. Land lords who had apprehensions about the new land tenure system obstructed and under their instigation many settlers and peasants put up resistance. But Tipu suppressed their resistance and there were a few instances of religious conversion as well. Fearing Tipu's attack members of the royal house of Chirakkal, Kurumporainatu, Parappanatu, Nilampur, Kavilumppara and landlords and commoners fled to the southern territories of Kerala.

One regiment of Tipu's army under the commands of Srinivasarayar marched north from Palakkad through Mankavu and Cheruppullassery to Kozhikode. The new Samuthiri sought help from the French outpost at Mahe. Comte de Prath, the officer in charge at Mahe decided to help the Samuthiri. But the French government, who were in alliance with Tipu Sultan recalled Comte de Prath. Meanwhile, the financial crisis of the 1770's compelled the English to end the war with Tipu and they started negotiations with Tipu Sultan and when it was progressing, the English attempted to destroy Tipu's military camp.

Arakkal family of north Malabar was a close ally of Mysore. Tipu set free Arakkal Beevi, who was subjugated and imprisoned by English force under General Macleod in 1782. On 14 November 1783 colonel Fullerton subdued Palakkattussery and captured the fort and gave it to the Samuthiri. But Tipu's force defeated Samuthiri and recaptured the fort within a few days. In 1785, the Kadathanadu Porlathiri, Godavarma surrendered Wayanad to Tipu.

In 1788, Tipu Sultan invaded Iravainatu and subjugated Kurungott Nair. By 1789, the entire territories in North Malabar came under Tipu's control. Tipu made a failed attempt to conquer Venatu and was successful in capturing one of bastions of Venatu,

the Nedungotta. Tipu turned his attention to Kozhikode and the city and its surroundings were burnt down. The English recaptured Kozhikode in December 1790. Colonel James Hurltely's regiment defeated Tipu's army at Thirurangadi and the same was repeated by Robert Abercromby at Kannur. The English blocked French ships at Mangalapuram and the land movement of the army and the supply to Mysore, which greatly weakened the military strength of Mysore. In 1792, with the signing of the treaty of Seringapattanam, the dominance of Mysore over Malabar ended and Malabar was transferred to the English.

The Consequences of Tipu's Campaign

Tipu's military raids affected the social and economic life of the people of Kerala especially of the people of Malabar. His raids resulted in heavy losses of life and property. Territorial chieftains and landlords were looted and killed. *Granthavaris* at several palaces make direct references to incidents of religious conversion and the destruction of the temple property. They mention that Tipu's troops under Sardar Ahamad in 1790 and under Saikatpatty Sardar in 1791 ransacked Etattara, Koliyati desam, Tirumangalattukottadesam, Ganapativattam, Kitanganattu desam Wayanad, Pulppally,, Puthati etc. Men were taken prisoners or killed, cattle were captured and grains including seeds were looted. Some places including Wayanad and the surrounding localities were set on fire.

During Tipu's time Malabar was a collection of different independent territories such as Kurumporainatu, Vettattunatu, Chirakkal and Arakkal. The native state didn't have strong ruler, centralised administration, law and well established system of revenue administration. According to the feudalistic and hereditary Zamindari system prevailed in Malabar the produce from the land was the birth right of the upper caste people.

Besides the share from the produce, the landlords demanded many other levies of different type in cash and kind from the peasants. The concept of taxation was absent in Malabar and there were no proper documentation for these taxes. Tipu attempted to setup an official revenue collection machinery in Malabar.

Tipu sultan suppressed and eliminated many of the local landlords and rulers. Many of the landlords and Zamindars fled to Venatu during his campaign. Tipu also tried to eliminate the Nair regiments which were loyal to their lords. Tipu wanted to suppress the Nair militia to facilitate his dominant role in Malabar. Thus he abolished matriliney and polygamy among the Nairs. He ordered the lower caste people not to salute or respect the Nairs. Nairs were converted to Islam in a large scale. Tipu abolished the birth right of landlords in the land. He assessed land in terms of fertility crop-yield and levied proportionate tax and ensured regular collection of taxes.

In order to improve trade, he made arrangements for the protection of ports and markets. He posted armed men in all ports in order to ensure peace and order in transaction. He made some structural reinforcement with wharfs and dockyards at Ponnani and Beypore. He made Feroke as a good market. He built many road linking resource centres with port and markets. He constructed the main route connecting Malabar with Mysore through the Wayand pass for the movement of his soldiers. Most roads were built for commercial and defensive purpose. Tipu made the sale of coconut, pepper, sandal wood, teak etc. as the state monopoly.

Module IV

Social History Perspectives of Selected Themes in Medieval Kerala

Social stratification and Development of Castes in Medieval Kerala

The nature and structure of caste system in Kerala is very unique and different from the caste system existed in other regions of India. This uniqueness was starting from its origin and grew in every stages of its development and gradually reached in a full-fledged form. Different generations of historians from K.P.Padmanabha Menon to K.N.Ganesh maintained different opinions about the origin and development of caste system in Kerala.

E.M.S.Namboodiripad (*Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubhumi*): According to him the Aryan Brahmanas introduced caste system in Kerala. But he added that caste system in its initial form was existed in Kerala even before the arrival of the Aryans. The *Namboodiris* divided the society in Kerala into different castes related to different occupations. They imposed on the people of Kerala the caste hierarchy by placing the Brahmanas at the top.

M.G.S.Narayanan (*Perumals of Kerala*): He says that the origin of caste system and its hierarchy is due to the influence of the Aryan Brahmana settlements. This process was started in the post-Sangam period by the arrival of the Brahmanas and their belief in caste superiority and purity.

K.P.Padmanabha Menon(*History of Kerala*): He found the origin of caste in occupation not in varna system. He classified the entire Kerala society on the basis of caste. He considered the Nair as a dominant caste and *Ceruma* as the lower caste.

K.N.Ganesh(*Keralathinte Innalekal*): His work basically focuses on the labour groups in the Sangam literature when discussing about the origin of caste system. He identified the origin of caste system as part of resource mobilization, production and distribution. The first evidence of social division depicted in the Sangam works is Tinai. Tinai was not only a geographical division but also a form of division of labour. He argued that the process of the formation of caste system in Kerala had been completed in the Cera period. Caste system was emerged in the *nadus* and its emergence was linked with the growth of the concept of private property. After the disintegration of clan based society there emerged new labour groups. For Example, the *Ilavas* became a major caste with the expansion of coconut cultivation. The service of *vaniyas*, community of the oil pressers became essential in a society without electricity. Weavers became the separate *chaliya* caste and other castes linked with occupation like *thachan* , *kollan*, *thattan* and *kusavan* came into existence. Caste and occupation is linked together and caste based occupations are hereditary and it was unable to move from one occupation to another.

K.Damodaran(*Keralacharithram*): According to Damodaran there were only clans and tribes existed in the Sangam period. In the Sangam age, options were there for the people to shift from one occupation to another. Elamkulam argued that if a *vedan* or *kuravan* in the Sangam age would go to the *Mullai* region and selects the occupation of the *idayar*, they will also become *idayar*. Damodaran argued that caste system was emerged in Kerala in medieval period. Some of the

occupational groups and the tribes of the Sangam age became castes in the same name. He opposed the argument that caste system was emerged in Kerala because the Brahmanas introduced the *varna* system to the society. According to him the castes like the *Namboodiris*, Nairs and Ezhavas were not migrants. He arrives in a conclusion that caste system had its origin in feudalism.

Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai and A.Sreedhara Menon: They also focused on the establishment of Brahman settlements in Kerala as the cause for the emergence of caste system.

P.K.Gopalakrishnan(*Keralathinte Samskarikacharithram*): According to him the influence and the involvement of Brahmanas in politics in the last decades of the 8th century became the chief factor which led to the development of caste system.

Rajan Gurukkal and Raghava Varier(*Cultural History of Kerala*): They identified the origin of caste system in clan. The linked its origin with the Brahmana households. The disintegration of clan-kin ties became almost total along with the growth of an agrarian society. Formation of the agrarian society was led to the emergence of a stratified society and division labour through specialization. Later the clan identity disappeared and substituted by *jati*. Clan names were turned into caste names.

Matriliny and Patriliney

There were two different forms of succession for lineage and property prevailed in medieval Kerala: Patriliney (*Makkathaym*) and Matriliny (*Marumakkathayam*). According to the *Keralolpatti* tradition Parasurama asked the Aryan Brahmana settlers of Kerala to adopt Matriliny for the atonement of his matricidal sin. But among the 32 Brahman villages of Kerala only the inhabitants of the Brahmana settlement in Payyanur, the

northernmost Brahmana village of Kerala adopted matrilineal form of succession. Other *Namboodiris* of Kerala followed *Makkathayam*, which means the descent and the inheritance of property were traced through males. In a Namboothiri family only the elder son was permitted to marry from their own community and the younger members involved in a loose relation with the women of the matrilineal castes and this system was known as *sambandham*. The sons of the elder brother in a namboodiri family could inherit his father's property, while the children of his younger brothers born from *Sambandham* with a women of matrilineal caste didn't have any claims on their father's property.

A unique system of inheritance existed in medieval Kerala was *marumakkathayam*, which literally means the order of inheritance of the household (*taravad*) property by *Marumakkal*(sisters children) -a matrilineal system of inheritance. Several castes including *Ambalavasis* followed the system but it was predominant among the Nair community. The most important feature of matriliney is *taravad* system or Joint Family. The members of matrilineal family live in a common residence known as *taravad.karanavar*, the eldest male member of matrilineal family was the manager of the property of the joint family. Children from a matrilineal joint family can't inherit their father's property.

There were different opinions among the historians about the origin and development of matriliney in Kerala. Inscriptional evidences show that this system had been existed in Kerala from 11th century. P.T Srinivasa Iyengar hold the view that *marumakkathayam* was unknown to Kerala till the 10th century C.E. K.P. Padhmanabha Menon had an opinion that *marumakkathayam* system was not existed in Kerala till the 13th century and it was came into being in the 14th century due to some compelling circumstances. Friar Jordanaus Severic (early 14th

century) was the first foreign traveller, who mentioned about Marumakkathayam in Kerala. Elamkulam accepted Srinivasa Iyengar's view about the period but, he also supported the argument of Padmanabha Menon about the certain compelling circumstances.

Elamkulam Kunjanpillai identified certain compelling circumstances behind the birth of matrilineal system in Kerala. He linked it with the 100 year long Chola- Chera war in the 11th century C.E. He argued that the war created many socio - economic changes like the political and religious dominance of the *Namboodiris*, their rise to as landlords and the formation of suicide squads or *cavers* in the Chola-Chera war was the compelling situation which led to the transition from the patrilineal system to matrilineal system in Kerala. But M.G.S Narayanan found this view as exaggerated. He argued that the rulers of Mahodayapuram were matrilineal at least from the ninth century and that some of the other local rulers in Kerala like the Mushakas accepted matrilineally under their influence.

Some non-Hindu communities in Kerala were followed matrilineal system. The Mappilas of North Kerala including the members of the Arakkal royal house and the Keyis of Tellichery and Koyas of Kozhikode followed matrilineally. There are few Muslims in the Mayyanad and Paravur areas of South Kerala, who were matrilineal.

The literary works, folk songs and some travel accounts of Medieval Kerala had frequent references on matrilineal system. Sheikh Zainuddin made some interesting observations about this system in his work *Tuhfat-ul-Mujahidin*. Many of the *Vadakkanpattukal*(Northern ballads) including tales about different aspect of matrilineal system among the Nair and the Thiyya community. Medieval travellers like Burbosa have

recorded many interesting facts about *marumakkathayam* in their travel accounts.

K.P. Padmanabha Menon had an opinion and he expressed it in his *Marumakkathayam Committee Report* that this system had its origin in the 14th century. His observation based on an observation in the account of Friar Jordanus and he traces a late origin to it. Elamkulam attributed the prolonged Chera-Chola war (100 years of war) in the 11th century as the major factor which behind the origin the matrilineal system as male members were in the battle field for a long period or died there. M.G.S. Narayanan says that *Marumakkathayam* existed among the same communities like the Nairs and Kshathriyas even during the 9th century . But Elamkulam states that the Chera kings followed patrilineal form of succession. M.G.S Narayanan made use of inscriptional evidences to which Elamkulam had no access. He ascribes an earlier origin to matriliney. He identified that matriliney was prevailed among the Perumal as a form of succession from the 9th century itself. The ruler Stanu Ravi was succeeded by vijayarayadeva, who was the son-in-law and nephew of the former . The Parthivapuram inscription of the 10th century insc refers to the cowherds followed matriliney. Another 10th century inscription refers to one *Valiyakumaran Iyakkam* who gave some gift to the temple. His mother and mother's sister are mentioned in this inscription. *Thiruvalla Copper Plates* of the 11th century mention matrilineal succession prevailed among certain families near Thiruvalla. The *Jewish Copper Plates* mention about *marumakkal* (nieces and nephews) of Joseph Rubban. According to Varier and Gurukkal matrilineal systems had its origin in the formation of an agrarian society in Kerala. With the expansion of agriculture, there emerged the concept of private property which necessitated to create certain rules and practices to inherit the property.

Heroines in *Manipravala Kavyas*

Manipravalam (literally ruby-and –coral) was a style of poetry, which had been developed as an amalgam of Malayalam and Sanskrit as a ‘new language’ used for literary production in Kerala from the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries. This particular style was also used for writing scientific treatises on science and medicine. Some of the Manipravalam works during the 13th to the 15th centuries were composed by poets at the instance of the royal patrons and the *devadasis*. According to *Lilatilakam*, a 14th century work on the grammar, poetics and rhetoric of *Manipravala* defines ‘*Manipravalam* as a blend of *bhasa* and Sanskrit. The term *bhasa* is used to indicate ‘the language of Kerala (*Keralabhasa*)’.

Kesavan Veluthat identified certain common features for all *Manipravala Kavyas* like its urban life world and the influence of the Sanskrit works including the *Kamasutra* and the *Natyasastra* on it. The prominent characters in the Manipravala works were the *ganikas* (public women), the *cetis* (servant maids), the *nagarakas* (men-about towns), the *vitas* (libertines), the *lampatas* (the profligate) and so on. The celestial *apsaras*, *gandharvas*, *caranas*, *siddhas*, *yakshas*, *kinnaras* and *vidhyadharas* appears frequently in the Manipravala works. The Manipravala works were generally classified into two as the *champus* and the *sandeshakavyas*.

The *Champus*

(1) *Unniyaccaritam*: *Unniyacchicaritam* (The story of Unniyacci) is a *champukavya* set in the northern parts of Kerala (present day Kannur and wayanad districts). It is the love story of Unniyacci, who lives in the town of Kollam, the capital of Purakilarnatu and a gandharva youth, who came to earth to win the love of unniyacci. The gandharva youth saw Unniyacci during

a temple festival. He was helped by a *catta*(a brahmana student) to trace Unniyacci. The Gandharva youth had decided to meet Unniyacci at her house and he proceeds to her house along with the *catta*. Thus, the main portion of the work is dealing with description of the places and persons noticed by *gandharva* during his journey.

(2)**Unniyaticaritam:** *Unniyadicaritam* is the story of unniati, daughter of the ruler of otanatu(Central Tiruvitamkur) and a danseuse called Kuttatti of the Cherukara house. She was actually a *gandharava* woman born on earth due to a curse fell on her.

(3) *Unniccirutevicaritam:* This story was set in Poyilam, a place in the beautiful brahmana *grama* of Cokiram(in the present day Malappuram district). The heroine Unniccirutevi was lived there. Indra visited unniccirutevi's house by hearing a poem composed by a poet about her.

The Sandeshakavyas

The *saneshakavyas* in the *Manipravala* literature were composed in the style and structure of *Meghasandesha*.

(1) ***Unnuneelisandesham:*** This poem has two parts: The *purvasandsesha* and *uttarasandesha*. The theme of this poem was the separation of the hero from his lover and a message sent by him to his lover through a messenger. The hero was kidnapped by a *yaksi*, when he was sleeping with his lover and she dropped him at Thiruvananthapuram. He met Adityavarman, the prince of Trippappur there and requested him to take his message to his lover, who was in Kadatturutti. The poem had a detailed description of the places located between Thiruvananthapuram and Kadatturutti.

(2)***Kokasandesham:*** The hero is sitting with his heroine in Desinnanatur was separated in a dream as a celestial

being(khacara) kidnapped him and dropped him on the banks of a tank. He sent a message to his lover through a *chakravaka* bird. The route from Trippannotu in Malappuram district to the destination is described with all details.

Other Kavyas

(1)**Chandrotsavam:** It is a *sargabandha* of five cantos set in the background of a moon festival.

(2)**Vaisikatantram:** It is a collection of verses about advice from a veteran courtesan to her daughter in the craft of prostitution.

(3)**Padyaratnam:** It is a collection of several short kavyas about courtesans containing one, two, eleven etc..verses about individual heroines. The largest of this collection consists 50 verses.

(4) **Anantapuravarnanam:** It is a description of the city of Thiruvananthapuram with its famous temple.

The *Manipravala* works is the most dependable literary source to study medieval Kerala society and culture. Evidences in the *Manipravala* literature indicates a high level of trade and urbanization during this period. These texts consists of detailed description of towns and market places. *Unnuneelishandesham* states that Kollam is a town putting even Indra into shame. There are elaborate description of the market of Tirumarutur in *Unniyaccicharitam* of Kantiyur in *Unniyaticaritam* of Ayyancira in *Unniccirutevicaritam* and of various towns in *Unnuneelishandesham*. The *Manipravala* works also gave information regarding the Arab-Chinese trade in Medieval Kerala. The *Manipravalam* works describes other aspects of the towns such as the royal places, temples, other residential mansions, the roads, gardens and tanks. The herpines in *the*

Maniprvala kavyas were well educated and well versed in music, dance, painting, story telling and games like chess.

The life of the heroines of the Manipravalam works was an area of interest of many historians dealing with the medieval Kerala history. Historians starting from Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai studied the structure and historicity of the *Manipravalam* works in detail. Elamkulam's works like *Keralabhashayude Vikasaparinamangal*, *Unnuneelisanesham Charitradrishtiyil* were dealing with several aspects of the *Manipravalam* works. Most of the historians used it as only a source to study the life of the devadasis (temple dancers). Kesavan Veluthat criticized the historian who interpreted the *Manipravalam* works as a real expression of the cultural and moral decay of Kerala. The reason behind this interpretation is that most of the heroines in the *maniprvala* works are devadasis, who had been worked as prostitutes in medieval Kerala. Veluthat argued that these works should be used as a source material to study and analyze the social and cultural life of Kerala.

Brahmanical Patriarchy and Gender Positions

Caste hierarchy and gender hierarchy are the organising principles of the Brahmanical social order and are closely interconnected. The term 'Brahmanical Patriarchy' was popularised in the academic circles by Uma Chakravarti. Her studies about Brahmanical patriarchy were focused on the relationship between caste and gender and how the upper caste men were made use of the tools of Brahmanical patriarchy and subordinated and sexually controlled their women to maintain patriliney and caste purity.

The *Namboothiri* Brahmins had been placed at the top of the medieval social order as they were the dominant caste and the landlords. They had developed an elaborated set of customary

rituals, which guided their relations with other castes and communities. Most of these practices were centred around the patriarchal *Namboothiri illam*, the residence of the *Namboodiri* Brahmanas. The ritual functions of the household was regulated by the rules set by the *Dharmasasthra* text and some other local text composed by the *Nambudiri* Brahmanas. These ritual texts were written by the *dwijas*(twice-born) for the *dwija*. It should be noted that the category of *dwija* never included Brahmana women, who shared the household. One of the major religious observances by the Brahmana is the votive rites known as the *vratas*. Persons competent to perform *vratas* are both men and women. But any of the Smritis didn't mention the independent observance of *vratas* by the Brahmana women. The *Sankarasmriti* never mention anything regarding the *vratas* to be observed by Brahmin women.

Namboodiris followed patrilineal type of inheritance and their household was patriarchal. The *Namboothiri* woman is called *antharjanam*, the name itself indicates the meaning 'people inside'. According to the custom prevailed among the *Namboodiris* only the elder son was allowed for an endogamous marriage (called *Veli*) and all other used to have *Sambhandham*(conjugal relation) with other caste women. The elder brother can conduct more than one *Veli* up to three. This system had created various problem like increase in the number of widows and aged unmarried women, the decline in the population of the *Namboodiris* and internal problems within the household due to co-wife rivalry. Younger girls were married by aged *Namboodiris* which resulted in unhealthy children and early widowhood. An *Antharjanam* was strictly controlled by the tools of patriarchy throughout her entire lifespan. The birth of female child(*penkidavu*) is not very much welcomed as the birth of an *unni*(boy). *Unnis* are allowed to wear gold ornaments from their childhood but girls were denied that right and were allowed only

brass/bronze bangles. Piercing the ear called “*Karnabhedham*” is a function and is compulsory for all girls and *Koradu* is fixed into a hole in order to grow it. The girls wear a small loin cloth known as a *Ettukonaam* till the girls attain puberty . After the primary years they wear a small *mundu* that reaches the knee. When they go out, they use *Puthappum Kudayum*(Umbrella and blanket) to cover the upper part of the body and face. All these differences were maintained to denote the caste superiority and thus a differences from other women maintained and their mobility was restricted to the temples and relative houses.

Girls were educated at home and unlike boys not sent to *Othupalli* for Vedic educations. But they were taught to recite Puranas orally and the stories of *Seetha*, *Seelavathi*, *Savithri* etc. they were also taught to count numbers and seeing time by measuring shadows, seeing *Puchangam* to find out auspicious days Vratas days.

Sankarasmriti denies book education to women making her a complete home bird, through the rules as mother and wife. Her role is limited to keep her husband happy and bringing up the children. A Brahman woman was sexually controlled by *Pativrata* concept. Brahmanical patriarchy kept the Nambuthiris women different from other upper caste women through her limited mobility, lack of education, her space inside the household, her inferiority to man and *Pativratha* concept.

Social Divisions as Reflected in Medieval Texts and Oral Tradition

Localisation of culture and formation of regional identity were prominent in the works of art and literature during the 14th and 15th century CE. These works belonged to various literary genres such as poetry, commentaries, plays, tantric texts, astronomy and mathematics. A number of works were written in

Sanskrit and Manipravalam. *Ramacaritam* by Ciraman, who was probably a member of Venatu ruling family was written in the 13th century CE. Ullur.S. Parameswara Iyer identified him as Viramarthanda or Manikanta, the ruler of Tiruvitamkur from 1195 to 1208 CE. *Ramacaritam* narrates the events in *yudhakanta* of the Ramayana. This work abandoned the Sanskrit meters and adopted Malayalam meters, which marks the shift from Sanskrit poetic tradition to regional narrative tradition.

The poets of Kannassa family at Niranam(also called Niranam poets)-Madhava, sankara an their nephew Rama(14th to 15th century CE) wrote several works including the Malayalam versions of Bhagawat Gita and Mahabharata. These works were the liberation of Malayalam from Manipravalam and the work *Brahmandapuram* represents an early style of writing literary works in prose. The Niranam poets adopted a distinct meter for their composition, which subsequently became popular in the *tullal* poems.

Thunchathu Ramanujan Ezhuthachan (16th century CE) of Trikandiyur near Tirur continued in the tradition of the Niranam poets, enriching the Malayalam literature. Puthussery Ramachandran has shown a direct relation between Rama Panikkar's *Ramayanam* and Ezhuthassan's *Adhyathma Ramayanam*, though the latter followed a different meter .Ezhuthachan was the first great Malayalam poet, who popularized the *kilipattu* (parrot song) method of storytelling. He made major contribution through the standardization of alphabet and popularized the cult of *bhakti*.

Cherusseri, a courtier of Udayavarman Kolathiri, the ruler of Kolattunadu (15th century CE) wrote *Krishnagatha*, which became a turning point in the development of Malayalam language. Although *Krishnagatha* followed the same tradition of *Ramayanam* and *Bhagawatgita* in the selection of themes, it

adopted a new style of writing. Kalakkath Kunchan Nambiar (18th century) was another great poet, who popularized and devised *tullal*. Nambiar wrote his popular *tullal* songs and other works by selecting puranic themes but adopted a distinct style of presentation noted for their distinct touch of humour and satire. Nambiar wrote his *tullal* songs for the performance of *ottantullal*, a typical temple art of Kerala. Nambiar composed more than forty *thullal* songs on puranic themes and they belong to three types: *ottan*, *sitankan* and *parayan*. The most important of his *tullals* are *Syamanthakam*, *Ghoshayatra*, *Kiratam*, *Santhanagopalam*, *Kartavirarjulavijayam*, *Bakavadham*, *Tripuradahanam*, and *Sabhapravesham*. He criticized the social evils in late medieval Kerala society.

Oral Tradition

Vadakkan Pattukal or Northern ballads were associated with the medieval agrarian system and feudal society. It is related with the Katattanad region in North Malabar. These songs are orally circulated among the people of North Malabar. According to M.C. Appunni Nambiar, the compiler of Northern ballads, these songs should be called as *kadattanadan pattukal*, because they were in circulation only among the people of the Kadattanad region and dealing exclusively with the life of the people of this particular region. Appunni Nambiar classifies the entire Northern ballads into three categories: *Putturam Pattukal*, *Thocholipattukal* and *ottapattukal*.

Puthuram pattukal: These stories are dealing with the story of the Putturam household, a family famous for the *cekavars* or fighters. According to Chelanattu Achutha Menon Putturam songs had more than thousand year's old. But Ullur had an opinion that these songs were composed in the 13th century or in a period close to that. It was age when the disputes in villages had been resolved by elected and influential local assemblies like *taraand*

tarakoottam. The disputes, which were not settled even by the involvement of these assemblies and the local chiefs, had been settled by *ankam*, a sword fight between two *cekavars*. Each person involved in a dispute can hire a *cekavan*, who will fight for him. The fight will end in the death of a *cekavan*. The dispute will be settled in favour of the owner of the *cekavan*, who won the fight. The *cekavars* were members of the influential Ezhava families and they received many titles, rights and privileges from the local chiefs. They occupied the position of the masters in *kalari* and provided training in martial arts. Main characters in the Putturam songs were Putturam Kannappa *cekavar*, his son Aaromal *cekavar*, his daughter Unniarcha, his nephew Chanthu and Unniarcha's son Aaromalunni. The disputes between the local chiefs, love, feud, betrayal and revenge were the themes in this songs.

Thacholi Pattukal: These songs represent a period, when things were decided by the use of physical power. The period to which *Thacholipattukal* is dealing with was an age dominated by the *naduvazhis* and *samanta* lords under them, who had enjoyed limitless power in the territories under them. Conflicts between these local feudal lords were very common. Some of these feudal lords were as powerful as to question even the authority of the *naduvazhis*. Most of these local feudal chiefs were the Nairs, who excelled in martial arts known as *kalari* and Otenan was one among them. There was a proliferation of *kalaris* in late medieval Kerala and to take training in *kalaris* became compulsory for all Nairs. The Nairs have the responsibility to conduct the war. Some of the Nair warriors, who were experts in martial arts like *otenan* started to control even the *naduvazhi*.

According to Chelannatt Achutha Menon the period of Otenan is not beyond four to five centuries. He had an opinion that Otenan was born in Malayalam year 759 for Appunni

Nambiar when comparing the content of the Thacholi songs with the existing social system in Kerala Tacholipattukal is not older than four years. Othenan's birthplace was Meppayil near Vadakara and he was the son of Puthupanam Vazhunnar. Koma Kurup was his elder brother. Thacholi songs are dealing with the life of Othenan's son Ambadi and his nephews Kunjikelu and Chanthu. According to the tradition Othenan was died at the age of 32.

Ottapattukal: These songs usually have a single theme. The songs like the *song of Kunhicheran, Ramathalimele Kunhipachan* and *Ponnammayum Kadalumkara naduvazhiyum* were included in this category. These songs gave information regarding medieval legal system, caste oppression and the beginning of the British rule in Malabar.

The peasant community was responsible for popularizing these songs. Northern ballads had an unknown authorship. The composers of Northern ballads made use of the same style, composition and metaphors of their predecessors. Raghava Varier shows how some common words and numbers are repeating in every songs. Northern ballads are dealing with several regions of North Malabar, which included in the present day Kozhikode, Kannur and Waynad districts. According to Varier these songs were sung by peasants when they were tilling the soil. He added that a unique style was followed when composing the Northern ballads. Varier says that a common style was adopted for composing folk songs all over the world. Heroic tales were the main theme of Northern ballads and there was a fight or *ankam* in every song. William Logan made an attempt to collect the Northern ballads he included it in his *Manual* as the appendix. Several others like Chelanttu Achutha Menon, S.K.Nair, M.C.Appunni Nambiar and K.Sreekumar collected and compiled

Northern ballads. Raghava Varier wrote a book entitled *Vadakkanpattukalude Paniyala*.

Pattukal became a unique writing style in the age of the *naduvazhi swarupams*. In the heydays of the *Nediyirippu Swarupam*, *kilipattu* emerged as a branch of poetry. The song *Mamankam Kilipattu* gave information regarding the period of Samutiri.

Tekkan Pattukal or Southern ballads were songs in circulation in the Tirvitankur region. *Iravikuttipillaipattu* and *Valiya Tampi Kunju Tampi Katha* were examples of Southern ballads.

Ideology and Knowledge in Medieval Society

Ideology is a collection of ideas and beliefs that distort and hide the truth about the conditions of human existence. It justifies the exploitative social relations, inequalities and domination. Ideology helped the local rulers to justify their rule and to overcome their weaknesses. For this purpose they used high sounding titles and qualifications. The Venatu Kings made use of the titles like *Kulasekhara Caravarti*, *Venatumankonta Bhutalaviran*, *Samgramadhiran*, *Dharmanganathan*, *Manne Sultan* etc. The Nediyirippu adopted different titles such as *Sailabdhiswaran*, *Samutiri*, *Manavikraman*, *Puntura-kon* etc. Kolathiri took titles such as *Karipat Unnitiri*, *Udayavarman Kolathiri* and *Vadakkan Perumal*. Ancient rituals like *tulapurushadanam* (gift of gold equals to men's weight) and *hiranyagarbham* (golden womb) continued to be performed by the rulers.

It was during the time of the *naduvazhi swarupams* the ideology of devotion (*bhakti*) became more popular. The cult of devotion induced the people to accept the contradictions in the social system and to bear the miseries as the decision of god. In

the same period, Malayalam became an independent language , which was clearly distinguished from the Cola-Pandya languages was an effort inspired by regional identity. A popular oral culture had been developed parallel to the written tradition. Oral songs praising the local heroes was circulated among the people. *Vadakkan Pattukal*(Northern ballads) and *Tekkan Pattukal*(Southern ballads) were best examples. Oral tradition had regional variations. *Thottampattukal* was a part of the oral tradition existed in the late medieval period. It was sung during the performances of some of the local art forms like *Teyyam* and *Tira*. These songs depict the life of subaltern classes and their resistance.

Expansion of Knowledge

In the case of Kerala, further expansion of the agrarian system paved way for the growth of material culture but without any new technology, because of the opening up of new areas of agriculture and accumulation of increased surplus. Technological development metallurgy was essential for the growth of an agrarian system. There were three communities of artisans related to metallurgy-blacksmith, coppersmith and goldsmith. Families specialized in the craft of making bronze emerged as an endogamous caste called the *musari*. New families engaged in metal crafts at places like Aranmula and Atakkaputhur became experts in manufacturing high-tin bronze mirrors. Literary works of the period gave information regarding gold and silver ornaments, metal works and iron implements kept for sale in markets.

A branch of knowledge that developed was astronomy. Like other places, two systems of astronomical calculations, theoretical and practical were spread in Kerala. Practical system of astronomy means methods and devices used for reckoning. Making of calendar is an example of a practical system of

astronomy. Estimation of the value of π or formulation of theorems for higher trigonometric functions is a few examples of theoretical astronomical knowledge. Mathematics knowledge was essential for measurement of seasons. With the expansion of agriculture and trade the knowledge of arithmetic became necessary for merchants, landlords and astrologers. These changes were resulted in the codification of arithmetical knowledge.

Another branch of knowledge was medicine. Many medical books in Sanskrit were produced during this period. Medical works also began to be written in Malayalam. Literary works of this period mention about physician such as Alathur Nambi. In village settlements families of *Mannan*, *Velan* and *Panan* represents the little tradition of popular healthcare in villages.

Several works of K.V.Sharma and the work by George Gevarghese Joseph is dealing with the history of the Kerala school of Astronomy and Mathematics. Madhava of Sangamagrama of Irinjalakuda(c.1340-1425 CE) made remarkable contributions to mathematics and astronomy by developing infinite series approximations, which detailed in his work *Venuaroham*, which was a development of the inferential items in *Aryabhatiyam*. After G.W.Leibniz (1646-1716 CE) had published his notation and differential method after Madhava, the power series in the initial series of calculus came to be known as the *Madhava-Leibniz Series*. By using the ideas provided by Madhava new scholars like Paramesvaran(1360-1425CE), and his sons Damodara(1390-1470CE) and Govinda(1380-1460 CE), Puthumana Somayaji(1410-1490 CE), Nilakanta Somayaji(1444-1544CE), Jyestadeva(1500-1610CE), Mahisamangalam Narayana(1540-1610 CE), and Melpattur Narayana Bhattatiri(1559-1645CE) made further contributions to Kerala School of Astronomy and Mathematics.

The knowledge of eclipses was essential for the performances of certain sacrifices and rituals in medieval Kerala. Thus, the rulers started to patronize astronomers and promoted them to produce predictive knowledge about planetary positions and movements. Puthumana Somayaji well known for his *Karanapadhati* that has contributed in improving Madhava's series was a prominent scholar in astronomy. He wrote *Grahanastakam Grahanaganitam*, exclusively on eclipses. Nilakanta Somayaji in his work *Thanthrasangraha* has devoted two chapters almost entirely to discuss various trigonometric techniques and algebraic means of reckoning on the incidence of the eclipse.

Paramesvaran wrote a treatise called *Dragganita*, a mathematical model of astronomy. He wrote commentaries on *Mahabhaskariya*, *Aryabhatiya* and *Lilavati* of Bhaskara II. He propounded a mean value theorem and he is regarded as the first mathematician to provide a radius of a circle with an inscribed cyclic quadrilateral. Nilakanta Somayaji in his *Tantasamgraha* gave special attention for the expansion of the Sine-Cosine series of Madhava. This work is composed in eight chapters and 432 slokas in Sanskrit, generally on the epicyclical and eccentric models of planetary motion. His other important works were *Yuktidipika* and *Grahapariksakrama* and *Sidhantadarpana*. His masterpiece, *Aryabhatiyabhasya* provides a heliocentric model of the solar system and many results calculus.

Jyostadeva's *Yuktibhasa*, a Malayalam text was the world's first book on calculus. *Yukthibhasa* is his *bhasya* of *Thanthrasangraha*. He introduced a convergent infinite process capable of attributing the value of π to arbitrary accuracy. Another significance of the text is that it was written in Malayalam and the replacement of poetic genre by prose. Astronomical knowledge is transmitted through the *gurukula*

system. But the astronomical knowledge was limited to the *Namboodiris*. Even the people of other upper castes access to astronomical knowledge is limited. But there were chances for non-*namboodiris* with an upper caste status can approach a *Namboodiri* teacher. For example Sankara Varier , an astronomer was a student of Nilakanta.

Literacy and Communication in Medieval Kerala

KesavanVeluthat in one of his essays made an attempt to examine the ways in which pre-modern Kerala stored and communicated information. In that study he is dealing with the inscriptions of early Medieval Kerala- their appearance and disappearance, features, function and implications and about the way in which these patterns have a relevance for the society produced them. According to Veluthat the real beginning of writing within Kerala is with *Valappalli Copper Plates* assigned to the early part of the 9th century CE. The inscriptions from the ninth century onwards announces the presence of the state. These inscriptions dated in the regnal years of the Cera rulers are found throughout Kerala from Kasargod district in the North to Thiruvananthapuram district in the South.

The inscriptions dating from the period of the Cera kingdom, a little over fifty in number are largely located in Brahmanical temple and executed on stone or forming part of the structure on the plinth, door frame etc. and a few of them are copper plates. Most of the Copper Plates from Kerala are documents recording the proceeding of village assemblies and local bodies with only two records the *Syrian Christian Copper Plates* and the *Jewish plates* are an exception. Another Copper Plates record, the *Paliyam Copper Plates* recording a grant to a Buddhist Vihara. Most of the inscriptions mentions the names and regnal year of the kings. The information in these inscriptions is of a public nature.

The script of these records except *Paliyam Copper Plates*, which was written in *Nagri*, is *vatteluttu* with an occasional use of *Grantha* characters to represent Sanskrit or Sankristic words. Most of the inscriptions kept in temple controlled by the Brahmanas. The Perumal of Mahodayapuram had its connection with the Tamil speaking region than with the other parts of the West coast. Some Chera rulers had frequent contacts with the Tamil Brahmin Saints. So the Chera rules made use of the *Vatteluttu* script to compose their inscriptions the earlier forms of which are seen in the Tamil-speaking regions, particularly in the neighbouring Pandya territory. The identity of the scribes used to compose inscriptions were mostly gold smiths and this thing was revealed by their signatures. Literacy was a special skill, cultivated by professional groups.

The early epigraphists and historians, who published and used these documents, were working under the assumption that it was Tamil. The text did not conform to the grammar and structure of Tamil language, they explained such 'inconsistencies' as a deviation '*Malainattu Valakkam*' (the practice of the hill country). Most of these records are dated in the regnal years of the ruling Cera king. Different eras such as the Saka era, Kali era and in just two cases the Kollamera is used to date these inscriptions.

These are royal orders among these inscriptions with the sole exception of the *Jewish Copper Plates*. Most of the records document the resolution of local bodies, particularly committees of Brahman land owners managing affairs of temples. Many of

these inscriptions related to transactions of land. There was an absence of inscriptions about the non-Brahmana Villages in this period. The age of inscriptions came to an end with the end of the Perumal rule. An alternative practice of storing information regarding governmental business and property transactions of a major nature begin in what is known as the *granthavari* or palm leaf documents. There were *Matilakam Grantavari* of the rulers of Venatu and the *Kolikkotan Granthavari* for the Samuthiris of Kozhikode. There were similar archives of the palm leaf documents for the big temples such as Irinjalakuda, Peruvannam, Kumaranellur etc.