CHAPTER II
NAYAR TARAWADS AND LAND MONOPOLY

The origin of Nayar tarawads in Kerala is ascribed to the 12th century, with the decline of the centralised political authority under the second Chera kingdom\(^1\) or the Perumals of Mahodayapuram.\(^2\) When the Chera Kingdom disintegrated many of their officials in the *nadu* divisions claimed independence and tried to get control and authority over land, the main source of production. Many of the Brahmin houses controlled temples or corporate property and established individual households. The *naduvazhis* and *desavazhis* established their property units known as *tarawads*.\(^3\) The period of the decline of the Cheras also witnessed the emergence of feudal chieftains. Thus political power in Kerala became fragmented and it came to be controlled by the local chieftains.

The term *tarawad* consists of two words *tara* and *wad*. *Tara* stands for a portion of a village or unit of administrative organisation for civil and military purposes among the Nayars. The *tara* comprised an area larger than

\(^1\) Elamkulam, P.N. Kunjan Pillai, *Studies in Kerala History*, Kottayam, 1970, pp 240-41

\(^2\) For details of the Perumals of Mahodayapuram see M.G.S. Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, Calicut, 1994

\(^3\) V.V. Kunhikrishnan, *Tenancy Legislation in Malabar (1880-1970)*, New Delhi, 1993, p.2
a desam, which has been the smallest social and economic unit in pre-colonial Kerala Society. Each of the tara organisation had more than one desam within its jurisdiction.4 Wad is a corrupt form of pad, meaning power, rank or authority.5 It is a group of people living as a joint family in accordance with the laws of marumakkathayam with joint property.6 It was this institution of tarawad that functioned as an agency of land monopoly in the contemporary period. The tarawad kept its predominant position for a long time even after the occupation of Malabar by the British. In fact the British administration and its legal interferences had strengthened the existence of this institution. A village7 or tara consisted of a number of houses in the parambas or uplands. These houses would be lying detached. The karanavars or the heads of different houses looked after local affairs of the tara and supervised the cultivation of the lands of their lords. This chief would be either a raja

4 M.R. Raghava Varier, Village Community in Pre-Colonial Kerala, Delhi, 1994, p.22
6 C. Sankaran Nair, Madirasi Marumakkathaya Niyamam (Mal.), Calicut, 1933, p.4.
7 The villages in Kerala are quite different from other parts of the subcontinent. Kerala villages are not nucleated but disbursed ones. Instead of living huddled in a street or in groups the Malayalees preferred to live in fenced compounds, at a distance from neighbour. Settlements of this kinds would be continuous for kilometers with no clear boundaries to individual villages. Generally there was no tendency for houses of a particular caste to cluster together except in the case of certain Brahmin communities and certain occupational groups like weavers. See also M.R. Raghava Varier, op.cit, p.10.
(king), a mere janmi or landlord or an intermediary in status. Further he was also expected to render military service to the chief.\(^8\)

In the 12\(^{th}\) century, following the fall of the kingdom of the Perumals there emerged naduvazhis and desavazhis, the heads of the territorial division of nadus and desams respectively. Often members of village community extended their kin base to an area bigger than the desam and tara and they are identified with the nadu divisions. The nadu divisions were not only units of administration but also of kinship relations. Culturally they have been coterminous with the different dialectical regions in traditional Kerala like Eranadu, Valluvanadu and Kolathunadu.\(^9\) As land controlling agents they used to exercise administrative functions at village level apart from the local rulers. These powers became hereditary in relation to the increasing fragmentation and hereditarization of powers at the local level. The fragmented nature of political power lasted upto the establishment of territorial and administrative unification under the colonial rule in the region. The fragmentation of political authority and the vesting of power in the landowning hands were the main characteristic of a feudal society.\(^{10}\)

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\(^9\) M.R. Raghava Varier, op.cit, p.23.

\(^{10}\) M.T. Narayanan, Agrarian Relations in Late Medieval Malabar, New Delhi, 2003, p.60
By the later period of the Chera rule itself different ruling groups came into existence in the *nadus*. The habitats in the form of villages were called as *desams*. Like *nadu*, the *desam* also had *desavazhi* and village assemblies. The *natudayavar* or the political head of the *nadus* had maintained his representatives and tax collectors in those villages.\(^{11}\)

The term *tara* is used to denote the places used for houses, production or entertainments, etc. When the *nadus* developed, the people in particular areas divided by hills, rivers and mountains, might have become small groups. Then the word *tara* might have been used to show such dwelling places. The gatherings of the *tara* dwellers came to be called *tarakootams*. *Tara* must have grown as a social system in such area, for the production and distribution of resources. There would be blood relations among the *tara* dwellers and this endowed them with a nature of tribal segment. No clear private property rights seem to have existed in the *tara*. The control and cultivation of the land under them became a collective responsibility of the *tara* dwellers. The name *tarawad* came to be used at first for the land which was under the control of the dwellers of the *tara*. When the members of the *tara* became land owners the *tarawad* became the family name of major members of *tara*. These related families were called *Inangal* or *Jnathi*. That is the growth of *taras* led to the establishment of hegemony over land and resources by groups having

\(^{11}\) K.N. Ganesh, *Keralathinte Innalekhal*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1990, p.50
blood relationship. It is the extended lineages which developed from the
tribal segment that became the *tara* in later year. The basis for the existence
of such lineages existed in a region for generations. The hegemony over
resources came to be called *per*. *Per* denotes permanent right. It is equivalent
to the word *janmam*. The lineage which existed in an area was used to
manipulate its resources. This right by birth given to their succeeding
generations was sometimes transferred. This is indicated by the system by
which land was given as *attiper*.12 The documents showing that land was
given as *attiper* point to this.13 The *taras* were not merely wetlands and
*parambus* with plants but a comprehensive ecosystem settled by a group of
people.14

From among the people of each *nadu* a group might have emerged as
an important lineage. The relation with the *naduvazhis*, temples and
Nambuthiris contributed to the growth of these lineages. The groups who had
resourceful *taras* under their possession gradually became strong and then
they might have spread their supremacy to the other areas. It is the surplus
production and its mobilization that contributed to their growth. They must
have used the persons from their own *taras* as *Inangal* for developing their

13 K.K.N. Kurup (ed.), *Koodali Granthavari*, Doc. No.55, section A, Doc. No. 61,
Section B, Doc. Nos. 35 and 58 section C, etc., Calicut University Historical
Series, No. 4, University of Calicut, 1995.
dominance. Lineage like this appears not as the subordinates of the naduvazhi and temples but as the lineage having autonomy in their own realm. Sometimes when the old nadus disintegrated, dominance over such areas must have come to such lineages. There are possibilities that the Kavalappara Nayar, the Punnathur Nambidi and the like chieftains must have developed in this manner. Scholars like K.N. Ganesh is of the opinion that it is only after the formation of taras that the non-brahmin landlords emerged in many a part of Kerala. But we have an example in the Tharisappalli Copper Plates (9th AD) that a merchant chief Maruvan Sapir Iso was made the lord of the land in a part of the present Kollam town enjoying the rights of a feudal lord and with the service rendered by hereditary service group in the society.

Among the non-brahmin landlords were Mooppil Nayar, Nambidi, Nambiar, Karthavu, Kaimal and so on. An important group under the naduvazhis were soldiers. Land was assigned to the heads of the soldiers and they became the owners of land.

Janmis were those who had ownership of land by janmam or birth. Sometimes land was purchased by them. But most often when the janmi owned very large area of land, he used to give the land under his control as

\[15\] Ibid
\[16\] For the text and explanation of the Tharisappalli Copper Plates see T.A.Gopinatha Rao (ed.), Travancore Archaeological Series, No.9, Thiruvananthapuram, 1910. Also see M.G.S. Narayanan, Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1972, pp.31-37 and 86-96.
kanam (lease) to his subordinates. But in course of time the janmam land came to be the land of the kanakkar. Land transaction called otti and panayam benefited the janmi. The janmi would get a constant income from kanakkar. At first land would be given to the kanakkar for 12 years. The renewal of the kanam documents after 12 years was called polichezhuthu\textsuperscript{17} Later the period of kanam would be raised to the multiples of 12 years. Thus many families enjoyed the kanam lands hereditarily. Kavalappara Nayar used to give land on mortgage or panayam. The panayam land was given to Tamil Brahmins or Pattars. The document of the agreement of mortgage is known as palisa matakola. According to the Document No.9 of Kavalappara Papers Ittunni Kumaran, the Mooppl Nayar received 12700 new panams from Abhisheka Rama Pattar who received certain land from the former as panayam.\textsuperscript{18} Land transactions of otti or panayam also were beneficial to the landowners. The landowners would receive land as panayam by giving certain amounts of money. Until the owner of the land gave back that amount the land would be in their possession. Sometimes the panayam will continue for centuries with the effect that for centuries the land would be under their possession. For example some of the panayam transactions of property in the

\textsuperscript{17} K.N. Panikkar, \textit{Against Lord and State - Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar}, 1836-1921, New Delhi, 1989, p.44.

\textsuperscript{18} K.K.N. Kurup (ed.), \textit{Kavalappara Papers, op. cit}, Documents No.10 and No.11, pp.6-7.
16th century are found in the *Koodali Granthavari* of 19th century. It shows that the property was not redeemed by the original holders.19

The economic relations under landlordism had a cultural form also. Many extra economic rituals, beliefs and service liabilities were elements of these relations among the various hierarchies in production relations. The rights of the ruler-landlord over producing people had the form of a hegemony. The political manifestation of these rights were the militarization and the service liabilities of the soldier under the ruler landlords.20

In Malabar the Nayars formed hereditary militia of the country. Recruitment to the army has been almost a monopoly of the Nayars. The Brahmins and Kshatriyas in small numbers used to take up arms as a profession. In the feudal set up of medieval Kerala each *desam* had its own hereditary militia training centres. It was called *kalari* and was maintained by hereditary instructors for the military training of the nayar youths of Kerala.21 *Desavazhi* was to supply troops to *naduvazhi* or the king in times of need. For the maintenance of the *kalari* or the gymnasium and the army he received land from his superior.22 The system had resemblance with feudalism in

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medieval Europe. This is clear from the history of Kavalappara Nayar. Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar has been a feudatory of the Palaghat Raja and Cochin Raja. In this position they held fiefs of land. These fiefs were a village or two or three villages. In such areas the Kavalappara Nayar had civil, judicial and military authorities. It was the land held by them that facilitated to enjoy these powers. Land was the source of power and basis of social relations. Power was intimately related with land during the pre-colonial period. This kind of feudal relations had been compared with feudalism in Europe with its characteristics as described by Joseph R. Strayer.

During pre-colonial period, at the age of seven the Nayar boys were enrolled into the kalaries to learn the use of weapons and to make their bodies fit to be a soldier. The weapons in the use of which they acquired proficiency were the sword and shield, the bow and arrow, the lance, etc. After the training every soldier had to appear before the king or the naduvazhi and receive the sword from him after the customary payments as a token of his admission to the militia. There after he was bound to fight and die whenever called to do so by the chief. After becoming a formal soldier he would never

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25 K.K.N. Kurup (ed.), *Kavalappara Papers, op.cit*, pp.XXIV-XXV.
appear in public without his sword in his hand. The instructors of the kalari who had been titled as Panikkar, Kurup, etc, were held in great esteem by their pupils. Associated with each kalari were centres of Ayurvedic treatment called Marma Chikitsa specialized in treating the wounds, fracture of bones etc. Along with the kalaries there were worshipping centres where the tutelary deity of the village was installed.

During this period the rajas of Kerala had only a small standing army and armies belonging to the local chieftains were to serve him in times of need. The armies of the local chieftains were known after their numerical strength like the Anjuttuvvar (Five hundred) and Aranuttuvvar (Six hundred) The local chieftains used to supply the troops for protection of others in return for money. This kind of troops were called Changatham.

Service in the army of the king or as Changatham was the privilege of one caste, the Nayars. Other lower groups or depressed groups had nothing to do with the military system. Invariably the Nayars had large landed property. This coveted position of the Nayars in the social and economic field

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26 C. Achyutha Menon, op.cit, p.70.  
27 K. Vijayakumar, Kalaripayattu-Keralathinte Sakhtiyum Saundhariavum (Malayalam), Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, p.56.  
underwent tremendous changes with the establishment of colonialism and the British system of recruitment to the army.

The growth of Brahmin-Naduvazhi relation also strengthened the position of Nayars. Temples were among the biggest landowners in Kerala.\(^{30}\)

The Brahmins were the custodians of the temples and their property and for the protection of the property they needed militia. It was the Nayars who formed such fighting group who were also instrumental to solve the conflicts between families. Family feuds between tarawads were common. Traditionally it was the Nayar soldiers who escorted the landlords and kings.\(^{31}\)

The member of a tarawad claims descent from a single common ancestor. Each tarawad has a name which was derived from the name of the ancestor house. The name of the tarawad used to be prefixed to the personal name of the members of the tarawad. In Malabar kulam refers to a clan.\(^{32}\)

The traditional account of the janmam right, kanam right etc and the liabilities of the landholders under the system are recorded in Keralolpathi.\(^{33}\) It gives details of the rights and privileges of the janmi and the inferior status of the kanam holder when compared with those of the janmi, duties of the kanam


holder etc. At the time of granting the land, the *janmi* would make an agreement with the *kanam* holder with regard to the rent given by the latter to the former. The *janmi* could transfer the land given to a *kanam* holder to another *kanam* holder, a third party. The transfer of right by a land holder was called *melcharthu.*

It was a kind of eviction. Usually it was when the *kanam* holder fell in arrears of pay that the landlord entrusted the land with another *kanam* holder. But the *kanam* holder would be very powerful and in practice they would not be evicted. But the *kanam* holder would sublet his land to other tenants on similar conditions he received the land from his superior. These tenants were generally called *verumpattakkar* and thus the *kanam* holder was an intermediary between the *janmi* and the cultivator. The *kanam* holder could evict such land holders who received land from him. This *melcharthu* and eviction was a common feature of the land relations and agrarian system of South Malabar in the 19th century. It was common in the Ernadu and Valluvanadu taluks of South Malabar. It was against such evictions that the Mappila tenants rose against the landlords, which resulted in a series of agrarian revolts, called the Mappila riots.

Sometimes the holder of land as *kanam* would yield more profit than the holder as *janmam.* For example the rent received by the Kavalappara Nayar from a *kanam* holder was two hundred *paras* of paddy in a particular

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34 Also see, K.K.N. Kurup (ed.), *Kavalappara Papers, op.cit,* p.xxii.
year. At the same time the kanam holder received thousands of paras of paddy from his sub-tenants.\textsuperscript{36}

The \textit{Kavalappara Papers} shows that the Mooppil Nayar was both a \textit{janmi} and \textit{kanam} holder at the same time.\textsuperscript{37} This was the case with many a feudal family of Malabar. The \textit{Koodali Granthavari} shows that the Koodali family also was both a \textit{janmi} and \textit{kanam} holder.\textsuperscript{38} The Koodali tarawad used to have the temple land of Koodali kavu as \textit{kanam} land. As far as the tenant was concerned there was no difference between \textit{janmam} and \textit{kanam} land. In Malabar the bulk of the land was concentrated in the hands of a few families in the form of \textit{janmam} land. These \textit{janmis} were the Zamorin of Calicut, \textit{Raja} of Nilambur, Kavalappara Nayar, Kottakkal Kizhakke Kovilakam, Raja of Kollamgod and so on.\textsuperscript{39}

The land given as \textit{panayam} had the characteristic of a \textit{pattam} land. It included both Wet land or \textit{Vayals} and up land or \textit{parambus}, along with attached labourers. In certain parts of Malabar \textit{panayam} land was called \textit{otti}


\textsuperscript{37} He was a \textit{Kanam} holder of Palakkad Raja and Cochin Raja, see K.K.N. Kurup, \textit{Kavalappara Papers, op.cit,} p. xii.

\textsuperscript{38} K.K.N. Kurup (ed), \textit{Koodali Granthavari, op.cit,} Doc. No. 3,4,5 etc., Section B.

\textsuperscript{39} K.N. Panikar, "Agrarian Legislations and Social Classes in Malabar", \textit{op.cit,} p. 885.
Land was given by the *janmi* to certain persons on lease as means of living. The documents of such land grant was called *vakayolakaranam*. It would be specified in the agreement that the receiver of the land was to give customary dues and services to the *janmi*. The title deed executed at the time of giving land on *kanam* was called *marumpattolakaranam*. Though legally the lowest tenure was *verumpattakkar* they also had tenants under them. But it would not be documented. Thus the land included *kanam* land, *panayam* land etc., rendering a complex structure to land relations in Malabar.\footnote{K.K.N. Kurup (ed.), *Koodali Grandhavari, op. cit.*, p.69.}

The *kanam* tenant built their houses on the land held by them as if it was their own land. It became a tradition that shrines for family deities were also built in these lands. The name of the tenancy land was given to their houses also.\footnote{See the table on Land relations in K.K.N. Kurup (ed.), *Kavalappara Papers, op.cit.*, p.xxiii.}

Feudal families used to have *kanam* land especially from the temples and the bulk of the *kanakkar* were big landlords. *Janmi* would inherit the *kanam* land received by his predecessors. The *pattam* given by the *verumpattakkar* was the chief income of the *kanam* holder. The *kanakkar* belonged to a dominant group. *Verumpattakkar* were dependent on this

\footnote{S. Ramachandran Nair, *op.cit.*, p.20.}
dominant group. They would cultivate the land received from the kanam holder. At the same time he would work in the holdings of others as agricultural labourer.\footnote{K.K.N. Kurup (ed.), Kavalappara Papers, op.cit, p.xxiv.} If the land on verumpattam was a parambu or upland it was called kuzhikanam. Kavalappara Nayar used to give land on kuzhikanam and verumpattam. The kuzhikkakanakaran did not need to give pattam during the first 12 years. After this period he was to give pattam to the kanam holder. This must have been on the ground that the parambu received would be fallow or forest land and it would take years to have yield from the same. The Kavalappara records show that one Madathil Kanniyil Narayanan received land as verumpattam from the Kavalappara Amma Nethiyar in 1868. verumpattam has been a simple rental agreement executed on stamp paper. This is evident from the documents of Kavalappara Papers Document No. 43 which reveals the details of the verumpattam deed of Madathil Kanniyil Narayanan and his brother Kunnar\footnote{Ibid., Document No. 43, p.47.} In the agreement written on the occasion the details of the land transferred including the extent of the land, nature of crops etc, were shown. It was specified that the recipients would cultivate the land and give the share to the granter without putting forward any excuse like failure of rain, drawbacks of cultivation, etc; The rent fixed for the wet land received was 1,601 paras, and 3 edangalis of paddy, 10 paras of millets, 1 para of dry turmeric, 1 para of blackgram, 1para of
Karumpayiru, (a kind of cereal) 1 para of horse gram, 1 para of tuvara, 3 edangalis of gingelly seeds, 1½ edangalis of inchí, 4 paras and 2 edangalis of gingelly oil along with bananas, other plantains, bundles of fire wood, pumpkins, brinjals and other vegetables and tubors. The rent included even brooms, straw, medicines like kurunthotti roots etc. Thus the rent included not only paddy but also various kinds of cereals, chama, items like black gram, green gram, millets etc.45

The serfs attached to the soil were to do the ploughing work and the works attached with the fencing, roofing and thatching of the granary, etc. It was also specified that on the day following ucharal (the end of agricultural season) the receivers of land would quit and surrender possession of the property in accordance with the agreement.46

A similar agreement of verumpattam deed was executed to Logan, Esquire, the Collector of Malabar district who was the agent to the Court of Wards in charge of the Kavalappara Estate jointly by one Narayanan Nayar his brother and sons belonging to Cherakattupulam Desam, Koonathara Amsam, Valluvanadu taluk. In this also it was agreed to surrender the

45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
possessions covered in the rental agreement on the day following the ucharal.47

Regarding kanam there were different varieties in Malabar. The kanam tenant would be under the janmi. At the same time he would be overlord of the verumpattam kudiyans. While janmi would not evict the kanamdar, the kanamdar could evict his tenant. The kanamdar of South Malabar has been an intermediary between janmi and the kudiyans.48 There has been the practice of levying a periodical fine for the renewal of kanam and it was the nature of a succession duty or purushantharam.49 It added to the social status also of the janmi.

As the trustees of the Koodalikavu, the Koodali tarawad was the sole custodian of the temple and its property. The karanavar of the tarawad received the temple lands as kanam. He used to have land on mortgage from others. The absolute transfer of land was called attiper in North Malabar also. The straight purchase of land based on market rate or annuperumartham was a rare transaction. The temple uralar transferred the attiper right of certain land perhaps for raising capital to effect more profitable transaction.50 The Koodali tarawad used to have panayam and kanam land as noted before. In

49 S. Ramachandran Nair, op.cit, p. 20.
the *Koodali Granthavari* there are 75 documents regarding *kanam* agreements. The number of *panayam* or mortgage comes to 71. The number of absolute transfer or *annuperumartham* is 78. These documents reveal the complex nature of land relations and land transactions and they show the evolution of Koodali *tarawad* as a landed magnate. Sometimes those who gave land on *panayam* to the *tarawad* would not redeem it for centuries with the effect that it was difficult to differentiate between *kanam* land and *panayam* land held by Koodali *tarawad*. The Koodali *tarawad* extracted interest on the sum given at rate the of 5% during the three centuries from the 16th century. Later the interest is seen increased to 10%.\(^{51}\) The Koodali *tarawad* received landed property also as compensation for certain offence committed by the members of the family who owned that property. Document No.53 section B of *Koodali Granthavari* gives a typical example to this. This document is a *Vilayolakaranam* which details the fine placed before the *Daivathar uralar* in the form of land. During the period under study social formation has been based on the cultivation of the lands. As rice was staple food, the paddy yielding wetland was treated more valuable than the uplands as an asset. As in South Malabar loan of money was advanced to a property owner by the temple trustees in return for the surrender of a paddy land in favour of the temple. For example document

\(^{51}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{52}\) *Ibid.* pp. xi-xii.
No.4 section B of Koodali Granthavari refers to a *panayam* land in return for 900 *Cannanore Puthiyapanam* from the Koodali family who was the *Daivathar uralar*. Sometimes interest was given as service, like ploughing. In this document one Narannan Perumman and his brothers agree to give the interest for 200 *Cannanore Puthiyapanam* at a rate of 5% for ploughing a particular wetland belonging to the *Daivathar uralar*. The Koodali *tarawad* as the trustee of the temple of Koodalikavu enjoyed the annual rent payment in kind from that property for the loan’s interest. The property was in its hand as a surety.

The Koodali *tarawad* had large holdings of land as *janmam*. As the holders of land of various nature the feudal families used to give or receive money through land transactions. We have seen how the Kavalappara Nayar used to give land as mortgage to the Tamil Brahmins and how the Koodali *tarawad* used to give money by accepting land as mortgage. The mortgage of land by the feudal families were often for the discharge of the financial obligations to their superior. The Koodalikavu had considerable access to liquid money when compared with other landed groups. Actual beneficiary of this liquid money was the custodian of the Koodalikavu, the Koodali *tarawad*. Koodalikavu might have acquired deposits of coins by giving their silver and

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53 *Ibid*, p.5  
54 *Ibid*, Doc. No.5, Section B, p.5  
55 *Ibid*, p.11
gold metals to the ruler who minted the money. More landholdings were acquired with this coined money. Thus land was accumulated. Koodali tarawad always had access to the coined money acquired by the temple under its custody. Interest to the money advanced to the tenants were given in paddy. The Koodali Granthavari shows a list of the money advanced by the temple at different periods from 1593 to 1740. The traditional political elite consisting of the ruling chieftains samanthas or feudatories, devaswams etc., held much of the land. All these were fragments of a political system. This class as such had political, judicial and military responsibilities and functions connected with religion and temple.\(^5^6\)

The land owning groups functioned as a coherent group who were always eager to reserve their class interest and privileges. As the proprietor of the means of production they succeeded in establishing their hegemony over all fields of social life. Thus they became the pivot of the political, social, economic, religions and cultural activities. They had the proprietary right over the agricultural labourers.\(^5^7\)

The families who enjoyed the monopoly over land also had their own temples. The important temples under the control of Kavalappara family

\(^{56}\) K.K.N. Kurup, "A note on the political elite and land control under the British rule in Malabar", Paper presented to the ICHR Seminar, Mysore University, 1985.

\(^{57}\) For details see Francis Buchanan, *A Journey through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar*, Madras, 1870, Vol.11, p.153
were those of Puthukulangarakavu, Aryankavu, Trikkunyavu, Eruppa, Kunnakkattkavu and Mulamkunnukavu. All these temples had property administered by the Kavalappara family. Being the owners of the bulk of the fertile land, this family had vast and varied powers. Temples were not only under the control of Nambuthiri brahmins but also under powerful families like Koodali and Kavalappara. Through the *kavus* and temples they held sway over their respective locality.

A *tarawad* consisted of descendants of a common ancestors and the descent and inheritance were only through female line. Still the affairs of the *tarawad* were looked after by the senior most male member of the family called *karanavar*. The *karanavar* was the most powerful member of the *tarawad*. The traditional set up of a feudalistic structure and the powers of the *tara* as a political organisation had considerably added to the powers and privileges of the *tarawad* and its head, the *karanavar*. The head of the *tarawad* very often functioned as the *desavazhi* or *naduvazhis* from the earliest times. The unit of military organisation in the society was the *desams* and that of the military organisations was the *tara* among the feudal families. There was a tendency to merge the civil and military organisations.

The *Koodali Granthavari* is an important source for the study of many a judicial and social practice of medieval Kerala. The nature and functioning of *kalaris*, the nature of military training imparted are all reflected in them. It
also denotes the rituals connected with the *kalari*. As landlords these landed families had military duties and for this they maintained a *kalari* or traditional military training centre.

The *Koodali Granthavari* reveals facts regarding the *Kalari* of Koodali family. Document No.1 and 5 of section A of the *Koodali Granthavari* are related to the Koodali *kalari*. The rituals in the *kalari* are referred to. It also mentions the *poithu*, the meetings in the *kalari* and rituals like the sacrifice of cock.

A *kalari* and *kavu* were attached to every landowning Nayar family of North Malabar. Many landlords and *tarawads* patronised deities, particularly in their courtyard and infront of the granary house.⁵⁸ The *kalari* did much to keep the martial spirit of Nayars intact. The Northern Ballads are replete with the heroic deeds of the trained persons in the *kalari*.⁵⁹ The uncle or the *karanavar* of Koodali Kunnath house maintained the Koodali *kalari* and enjoyed the traditional rights in connection with the same. When an uncle became a *Gurikkalachan* there were elaborate ceremonies. Among other things he was to wear a *Pattu* (red colour dothi), brandish and Urumi (damascene blade) and the like.⁶⁰

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⁵⁸ K.K.N. Kurup, *Land Monopoly and Agrarian system in South Canara with special Reference to Kasargode taluk*, University of Calicut, 2000, p. 28.
⁵⁹ M.T. Narayanan, *op,cit*, p.68.
The influence of feudal families has been a factor to be reckoned with in the social relation of the North Malabar. It comprised numerous petty principalities. In these principalities powerful feudal families exerted influence over the society and economy. Koodali tarawad is an example for this. An ideology was also spread among the labourers that it was their duty to work hard for the landlord. Here the landed class has created an ideology for exploitation of the labour force. The presence of the goddess was reminded through annual festivals and elaborate rituals. These festivals functioned as a safety valve at theoretical and empirical levels against all protest movements of the working class.\(^6^1\)

During the period of nationalism there developed peasant organisations to rescue the peasants from exploitation. In the thirties and forties of the 20\(^{th}\) century social and political activists who led the peasant movements even stopped the rituals and performance of teyyam in several places as part of their anti feudal struggles.\(^6^2\) The temples had all activities of land management including the role of financiers for the rural peasantry. It had all the functions of a big landowning institution.\(^6^3\)

\(^{6^1}\) K.K.N. Kurup, *Land Monopoly and Agrarian System in South Canara with Special Reference to Kasargode taluk*, op.cit, p. 28.

\(^{6^2}\) Ibid.

\(^{6^3}\) Ibid.
Most of the tenants came from the inferior castes. The slaves attached to the soil were the lowest in the social hierarchy also. They were often sold or exchanged along with their lands. The inferior sections were mostly employed in pepper and cardamom gardens in the highlands by landlords or tenants. The caste consciousness and the fear of the deities (teyyam etc.) were deep among these sections. The dominant class had propagated an ideology of serfdom and bondage among them through such religious cults. Such introduction was the ideological part of the production relations.

Agrestive slavery has been a dominant feature of the feudal structure revealed in the *Koodali Granthavari* and *Kavalappa Papers*. Slavery has been part of the production system all over the world in one way or other. This system prevailed in ancient, medieval and colonial Kerala also. An important form of slavery in Kerala has been the agrestic slavery.

The term agrestic slave is used here to denote the sections of producing classes, attached to the cultivating field, and transferred along with the land. The labour power for agriculture production was mainly supplied by these groups of people. They were entirely rustic being engaged in agricultural activities.\(^{64}\)

Traditionally the origin of this system also is tied up with the Parasurama legend. It is well known that the advent of Brahmins to Kerala

\(^{64}\) M.T. Narayanan, *op.cit*, p. 124.
caused the proliferation of agriculture. The *Keralolpathi*, while discussing the gift of land to the Brahmins by *Parasurama* says that the slaves were introduced by the sage for the tillage of the land of the time of the gift.\(^{65}\)

The important sections of the agrestic slaves belonged to the castes of *Cheruman, Pulayam, Parayam* and *Kanakkan*. These caste groups kept a distinction between each other. These groups are referred to as *Al-adiyar, Valliyalar, Vallichathanmar* etc. In the folk songs they are referred to as *adiyans*.\(^{66}\) The caste system had provided inexorable way to create the labour force for agriculture production. Thus almost all the direct works in cultivation were undertaken by these sections of people belonging to the lowest strata of the society. They were servile groups who were exchanged along with the land. When compared with hired labourers their labour was cheap. The landlord had complete control over the labour of agrestic slave.\(^{67}\) Regarding agrestic slavery in Malabar Innes and Evans write that the important representatives of the agrestic serfs are *Cherumar* or *Pulayam*. The *Cherumans* were almost solely employed as agricultural labourers and coolies.\(^{68}\)


\(^{67}\) M.T. Narayanan, *op.cit*, p.193.

In Wayanad area the tribals, Paniyar and Adiyar were agrestic slaves. They were given remuneration called Thalapanam by which they were to work for a whole year under the master. This was called Vallyapani. Actually this Vallyapani was a contract in which the tribals of Wayanad were mortgaged for a nominal payment. The contract was renewed every year. It was on the eve of the festival in the Valliyookavu in Wyanad that new contracts were formed and old ones renewed. The beginning of this contract is in the seeking of janmis help for going to the festival. On receiving seven and half ser paddy, a piece of rough cloth, two plates of rice and five rupees as nippupanam a tribal mortgages himself to the landlord. He would be under the control of this landlord from the second day of the festival to the festival of next year. The family of this agrestic slave as a whole would be under him. In short “slaves are not born but they are made”. As opined by Toynbee, slavery is a non voluntary system of personal relations resting wholly upon force.

The agrestic slaves had to work hard for the pittance they received. In fact nearly all the paddy cultivation used to be carried on by them. The influx of European planters helped, to an extent, in releasing the slaves from their bonds. But the difficulty of providing for their women was the chief obstacle

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to their complete release from their bondage. The women were to have dwelling of some sort somewhere and the masters used to provide them with huts and allow the men to go to work on plantations on condition that they would return in time for the rice cultivation and to handover a portion of their earnings.\textsuperscript{72}

The history of the feudal family of Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar reveals many an aspect of agrestic slavery in the colonial and pre-colonial period. The *karanavar* used to mortgage *Valliylars* along with the land. During the decades just before the establishment of British rule in Malabar this feudal family had assigned land to certain Tamil Brahmins on *pattam* or rent. The document showing this assignment mentions the names of agrestic slaves who were transferred along with the land are stated and these slaves are referred to as *Valliylars*.\textsuperscript{73} In another documents of 1771 the Kavalappara family seems to have transferred a family of agrestic slaves along with the lands mortgaged to a Tamil Brahmin called Rama Sinku Pattar. These agrestic slaves belong to the caste of *Kanakkan*.\textsuperscript{74} Slaves belonging to the *Paraya* caste and *Erala Cherumakkal* also seem to have been mortgaged along with the land. For example the document showing the mortgage mention these slaves as

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\textsuperscript{73} K.K.N. Kurup (ed.), *Kavalappara Papers*, op.cit, Doc. No.9, p.5
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\textsuperscript{74} Ibid. Document No. 10, p.6. The names of these slaves were Chathi, his son Parakkadan and his younger brother Chathan. These names have been commons to the *Kanakkan* caste of the area.
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belonging to the castes _Paraya_ and _Erala Cherumakkals_.

In 1817 the Kavalappara Nayar transferred a family of slaves along with the land on _kanam_ or on rent. The names of the members of the _Valliyalar_ family (Kannan Cheruman, his wife Kuppicherumi, daughter Kuchicherumi and two _Cherumi_ girls and son a _Cheruman_ boy) are clearly mentioned. The mentioning of the names of these agrestic slaves was because they were included in the property transacted. In 1872 the Kavalappara Nayar received Rs.139/- (Rupees one hundred and thirty nine only) as a rent from the slaves. The above said documents show that the sale or mortgage included a family and not a single person. The nature of land transfer was not absolute transaction (sale) but mortgage on receipt of an advance payment and assignment for a stipulated rent or _pattam_. Buchanan details the nature of this system. According to him in _pattam_ tenure the borrower could extract the slave’s labour. He was to maintain the slaves and give an annual rent to the landlord from whom he received the land and slaves. Buchanan also specifies that the annual rent for a male slave was 8 _fanam_. (3½ _fanams_ were equal to one rupee) and a woman four _fanam_.

The agrestic slaves of Malabar had certain rights and privileges and holders of these slaves were to protect the same. These slaves were not to be

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75 _Ibid.,_ Doc. No. 11, p.7
76 _Ibid._ p. XXXVI.
77 Francis Buchanan, _A Journey through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar_ , Vol. III, Madras, 1888, p. 423.
sold even though they could be transferred or given as gift for new cultivators. Certain folk songs of Malabar refer to the rights and privileges of these agrestic slaves.\textsuperscript{78} The slaves were to be provided with a hut and maintenance. The expenses for their marriage would be met by the master. In the 18\textsuperscript{th} century under the Dutch there were slave markets in Kerala where slaves were transacted to meet the requirements of foreign market.\textsuperscript{79} But this was different from agrestic slavery.

This chapter looks into the origin of tarawads, aspects of land relations and institutions like kalari. Monopoly over land has been the basis of the economic and social status of the tarawads and this is clearly revealed in the cases of Koodali tarawad and Kavalappara family. As landlords these families had agrestic slaves. The feudal families with vast areas of land held by them, temples under their control and the slaves held by them were centres of power in their particular localities.

\textsuperscript{78} Chirakkal. T. Balakrishnan Nair, \textit{Kerala Basha Ganangal} (Malayalam), Vol.1 (1979), Thrissur, 1993, pp.240-45.

\textsuperscript{79} K.K.N. Kurup (ed.), \textit{Kavalappara Papers, op.cit}, p. XXIX-XXX.