CHAPTER - 2

THE STATE FORMATION OF KOLATHUNAD

The Mushika political tradition continued through the Kolathiriris until the late medieval period. Kolathunad functioned as an independent kingdom from the early time onwards. The rulers of this kingdom were sovereign powers, who administered the country independently. Kolathunad did not face any external intrusion in the early medieval period, except the Chola war in the period of Raja Raja Chola.¹ During that time Kolathunad extended from Chandragiri river in the north to Kotta river in the south. The kingdom was divided into a number of provinces. The king was known as Kolathiruvadi Koyiladhi̱kari, in short called Kolathiri.² He was not a despot. The king was assisted by four junior princes according to their seniority in royal position. At the same time they had secured semi-independent ruling status in Kolathunad. Like any other kings of the Malabar Coast, the Kolathiri had no standing army. The Kolathiri assigned the duty of collecting taxes and other functions of administration in different provinces to his related families and other feudal chieftains of the country.

The state formation of Kolathunad was a long process. The Aryan settlers of Perumchellur, influx of Jainism and Buddhism and later the migration of Jews and Arabs had major role in the political formation of Kolathunad. In Kolathunad

¹ M. G. S. Narayanan, Perumals of Kerala (Printed copy of unpublished thesis referred from the personal collections of author himself), pp. 54-55.

the Muslims also had a special role in the management of the state affairs. This chapter is an attempt to explain the gradual formation of a state system in Kolathunad and the main features of its political set up.

The ancient political history of Kerala started with Vel-Aye-Muvar groups, the ancient petty kings of Kerala. The Sangam literature proves that they had close relation with the Cheras.\(^3\) The movement of tribal groups from one part of the country to other part due to atrocities from neighbouring countries was a common feature of the past. Due to many political encounters with the neighbouring countries as well as internal conflicts, the ancient royal families of south India like the Gangas,\(^4\) Chaukyas,\(^5\) Rashtrakutas,\(^6\) Kalachuris\(^7\) and Hoysalas,\(^8\) were migrated from North India.\(^9\) The Mushikavamsa mentions that the Mushika dynasty, originated from their paternal family called Haihayavamsa, also came from North India, on the banks of river Narmada in Gujarat.

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\(^4\) Suryanath U. Kamath, *A Concise History of Karnataka From Pre-historic Times to the Present*, Bangalore, Jupiter Books, 2001, p. 39. The Gangas themselves said that they were the descendants of Ikshvakuvamsha and belonged to Andhra country.

\(^5\) *Ibid.* p. 56. The inscriptions of the later Chalukyas of Kalyana like Nilagunda record of Vikrama VI reveal that the family originally belonged to Ayodhya.

\(^6\) *Ibid.* p. 72. The Rashtrakutas Families had ruled in many parts of India and sources said that one of their families had their origin from some parts of Madhya Pradesh.

\(^7\) *Ibid.* p. 107 The Kalachuris of Karnataka originally belonged to central India and several branches of them had ruled Malva, Gujarat, Konkana and Maharashtra.

\(^8\) *Ibid.* p. 122. The Hoysalas also belonged to Gujarat in Central India.

\(^9\) *Ibid.* pp. 30-107
From the Mushikas of Ezhimala, Kolathiris emerged as powerful rulers of North Malabar in the tenth century. The Mushikas had political jurisdiction mainly in the region of Ezhimala and places around it. But during the Kolathiri period a large territory from Nethravathy river in the present Karnataka up to Korappuzha in South Malabar and Kudaku in the East to the Arabian Sea in the West came under the Kolathiris. Historians like M.G.S. Narayanan used extensively the term ‘Mushika’ and ‘Kolathiri’ and recognized the continuation of the Kolathiri from the Mushikas. But no mention has been made regarding the beginning of the Kolalathiri period. In this context the present study tries to prove that the Kolathiri period started in the beginning of the tenth century A.D. From the following discussion we will get a clear picture of how the Kolathiri period started in the beginning of the tenth century and what important evidences support this argument.

The period of Kolathiris began with Validhara, the maternal nephew of Palaka I. It is a period of transformation from patrilineal to matrilineal system in the dynastic history of Kolathunad. The Narayan Kannur temple inscription contains the name of a junior prince Validhara Vikramarama at the time of its execution. According to M. G. S. Narayanan, the period of this inscription is 929 A. D. During this time Validhara Vikramaram, the maternal nephew of Validhara was the Ilamkoyil or junior prince of Kolathunad. The use of the term Ilamkoyil, the corrupted form of Ilamkoor, in this inscription indicates the

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10 Narayanan, _Perumals…_, pp. 46, 91-94.

beginning of the system of Kuruvazhcha in the early part of the tenth century along with the matrilineal system of succession. Some scholars like Genevieve Bouchon are of the opinion that the term Ilankopattanam indicates Marahi, a prominent contemporary port of Kolathunad under the direct control of a junior prince. The term Ilam means junior in position, Kon denotes king or prince and pattanam means city. Therefore, the term Ilamkopattanam means the city of junior prince. Anyway this argument also pointed out the role of a junior prince in the administration and the beginning of Kooruvazhcha in Kolathunad. Thus it can be assumed that the then junior prince Vikramarama was in charge of the administration of the city of Ezhimala and came into direct contact with the trading groups like Manigaramam. Narayan Kannur is the earliest known inscription from Kolathunad which makes mention of the role of Ilamkoyil in Kolathunad.

The role played by Manigramam, a non-Brahminical trade guild in temple administration with the blessings of an Ilamkoyil also reveals the influence of junior princes in administrative affairs. The Narayan Kannur inscription is a strong proof of the beginning of Kooruvazhcha in Kolathunad. Later power and responsibilities were divided among the four regents of the dynasty according to their seniority. They were Vadakkilamkur, Thekkilamkur, Nalamkur and Anjamkur. Atula gives the name of fifteen Kolathiri rulers from Validhara to Srikanta and clearly mentioned the change from patrilineal to matrilineal system.

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of succession. Among them the two inscriptions Narayan Kannur and Eramam inscriptions referred the names of Validhara and Srikanta. The emergence of matrilineal system along with the system of *Kooruvazhcha* as mentioned in the Narayan Kannur temple inscription and *Mushikavamsa* show that a shift the in the political line of the Mushika dynasty had taken place. This political shift in the first part of the tenth century marked the beginning of the rule of Kolathiris in North Malabar.

The Srikanta Kolathiri, identified as Kandakarivarman of Eramam inscription, ruled Kolathunad in the eleventh century. He was followed by Nagaswamy Udaya Varman. His name is recorded in Kuruvakkavu temple inscription. *Mushikavamsa* does not contain the name of this Udaya Varman. On the basis of the character of *Vattezhuthu*, epigraphist Maheswaran Nair observed that the period of this inscription is tenth century. The inscription indicates that he was an independent ruler and there were many *deshavzhis* under his suzerainty. Quite naturally one question may arise that then why *Mushikvamsa*, a historical work avoided the exploits of such a prominent ruler like Udaya Varman. It happened because the period of Udaya Varman came after Srikanta. He was the only one ruler outside the chapters of *Mushikavamsa* with traditional title Ramakata Muvar. This further strengthened the fact that the Kolathiri period started in the tenth century, but the rulers adopted the traditional title ‘Ramakata Muvar’ along with their name. That system continued even after

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14 Kuruvakkavu Temple Inscription, eleventh century; See Plate No. 2.
Srikanta till Nagaswamy Udaya Varman and may be in later period also. Gradually the later rulers avoided the traditional title ‘Ramakata Mushika’ or ‘Ramakata Muvar’.

After Nagaswamy Udaya Varman no records indicate the name of any other ruler of Kolathunad till the time of Iraman Iravi Varma or Rama Ravi Varma Kolathiruvadi of Perumchellur Copper Plate Inscription. It has been suggested that he ruled the country in the middle of the twelfth century. During this period the Kolathiris completely left traditional title ‘Ramakata Muvar’. Therefore, from the above mentioned facts it is clear that the new line of rulers called the Kolathiris started to rule in the tenth century and Vaalidhara was the first Kolathiri ruler. This dynastic rule continued up to the British period in 1792.

The Perumchellur Copperplate Inscription further indicates that the wealth and power of the Kolathiri began to improve during the twelfth century. It is clear from the document got from Perumchellur that the Brahmin settlements around Thaliparamba were in close relation with the rulers of Kolathunad at that time. This document belonged to the middle of the twelfth century. This document shows that King Karipathu Iraman Iravivarman or Rama Ravi Varma of

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15 Plate No. 3
16 The references in sources like Naluthali in Chera period reveal the fact that the Brahmin oligarchy had its power even behind the throne. Kshatriya rulers showed reverence to these Brahmin Settlers. But later on after the disintegration of the Chera empire all this situation changed. The Swaroopams emerged after the disintegration of the Chera dynasty concentrated on the management of financial resources independently with the nominal representation of Brahmin oligarchy. PCPI; Narayanan, Perumals…, p. X.
17 Veluthat, A Copper Plate…, p.3.
Karipathu was the king of Kolathunad and that he had friendly alliances with the Brahmin settlements of Perumchellur.

The term *thali* is derived from the Sanskrit word *sthali*, which means a natural spot of ground and is commonly used in old Tamil and Malayalam records in the sense of a temple. Otherwise the term *thali* means an institution associated with the ruler and administered directly by the king. Thus the term *thali* particularly means temples attached to the king’s centre of administration and places around it, for the purpose of worship, administration and to maintain close association with Brahmin settlements.

The role of *thali* has been mentioned by M. G. S. Narayanan in his doctoral thesis ‘Perumals of Kerala.’ He pointed out that the ‘*Naluthali* must be the four chief temples of the city mentioned by this term in inscriptions. They are referred to in *Keralolpathy* as *Melthali*, *Kilthali*, *Netiyathali* and *Chingapurathali* respectively. Of these, *Kilthali* and *Chingapurathali* are still known by their old

18 PCPI


21 Narayanan, *Perumals…*, p. 85

22 Vadakkumkur, *Chellur…*, p. 13, for example Ramanthali in Ezhimala, the first headquarters of the Kolathiri, is known by that name because it became the centre of administration. There is also a Sankara Narayana temple of long antiquity. Another Thalikotta Siva temple in Kottayam district is associated with Thekkumkur royal family. The Thali Siva temple in Calicut is closely associated with the royal family and two Brahmin centers in Calicut.

23 Perumchellur Copper Plate Inscription, twelfth Century (hereafter PCPI).
names. Since “Kil” means the east and “Mel” means the west, Melthali, might be some temple to the west of “Kilthali”! temple of Siva.\textsuperscript{24} The great Tirukkulasekharapuram Vishnu temple, founded by the Alvar, as the name would suggest, can still be seen to the west of Kilthali and a record of the twelfth century found there clearly shows that it was one of the Naluthali or four chief temples. Nediyathali literally means the great temple and this title must certainly go to Tiruvanchikulam Siva temple which is the biggest and the oldest in the capital of Kerala.’ In the same way the rulers of Kolathunad were closely associated with the Thaliparamba Siva temple.

The early medieval society of Kerala was temple oriented and important decisions had been taken by the king with the consent of Brahmin oligarchy attached to these thalis. For instance, Perumchellur Copper Plate Inscription records that in the second half of the twelfth century the then Kolathiri Karipathu Iraman Iravi Varmar alias Rama Ravi Varma of Kolathunad lends money to a private land owner together with two sabhas of Perumchellur.\textsuperscript{25} This indicates Kolathiris close relation with Thaliparamba Siva temple and its Brahmin sabha. But later the ideological conflict between the Perumchellur grama and Kolathiri increased. As a result the Brahmins of Perumchellur sabha neglected the right of the Kolathiri to enter into Thaliparamba Siva temple, constructed by Sathasoma, a forefather of Kolaswaroopam.

\textsuperscript{24} Narayanan, \textit{Perumals}…, p. 85

\textsuperscript{25} PCPI
It has been suggested by historians that the Mushikas established their first capital at Ezhimalai and later on shifted to Karippathu near Taliparamba.\textsuperscript{26} Actually Karippathu was not the capital of Kolathiris but the place where the first family house of Kolaswaroopam was situated like later settlement of Kolathiri family at Chirakkal near the administrative centre at Valarpattanam. Perhaps king was resided in administrative centre but his family members resided away from him in a separate palace. Normally in ancient days the family house of the king was far from the centre of administration for avoiding internal pressures from family circle. Now Karipathu is a place about four miles in the north eastern direction from Thaliparamba Siva temple.\textsuperscript{27} It is not much far from Ezhimala. Karippathu Kovilakam is the first palace of the Kolaswaroopam, where usually resided the family members of Kolathiri. In Travancore also the female members and their children resided at Attingal palace and the abode of the king was quite often some other place.\textsuperscript{28} It is evident that the kings were known in records as Karippathu Udaya Varma Kolathiri, Karippathu Ravi Varma Kolathiri, Karippathu Kerala Varma Kolathiri, etc. That also shed light on the fact that Karippathu is the name of their family house. The traditional royal family accounts also prove that \textit{Karippathu} was the first family house and Ezhimala was

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{26} Narayanan, \textit{Perumals}, p. 85.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Vadakkumkur Raja Raja Varma (Interpretation), \textit{Chellur Nathodayam Chambu}, Kottayam, National Book Stall, 1958, p. 13
\item \textsuperscript{28} R. P. Raja (ed.), \textit{Surrender- Sree Padmanabha Swamy Temple Renovation Souvenir}, Trivandrum, Printed and Published by the Editorial Board of the Souvenir, 2002, p. 282.
\item \textsuperscript{29} M. R. Raghava Warrier, \textit{Kolathunadinte parambaragatha charithrathil ninnoredu}, Mathrubhumi daily dated August 3, 1980.
\end{itemize}
the first capital of the Kolathiri. Karippathu was very close to Taliparambu Raja Rajeswaram temple and the family had close connection with that temple. The temple was built during the Mushika period by king Satasoma\textsuperscript{30} and later renovations were executed by the Kolathiris. Unfortunately in later period as mentioned earlier the conflict between the Brahmins of Perumchellur and Kolathiri resulted expulsion of the latter from the temple. The later development of conflict between Kolathiri and Perumchellur Brahmin Sabha might have caused for the shifting of Palace from Karippathu near Taliparamba to Ezhimala. When the family was divided into two branches- Udayamangalam and Pallikovilakam - they shifted to Madayi and nearby places. Following the division of Palli Kovilakam into five thavazhis or maternal divisions they settled around nearby areas of modern Chirakkal taluk. William Logan’s statement about Madayi in his Malabar Manual, as the third most ancient house of the northern Kolathiris also supported the shifting of family house of Kolaswaroopam from Karippathu to Ezhimala and later to Madayi \textsuperscript{31} Logan also mentioned that Karippath was the earliest family seat of the Northern Kolathiris (but not centre of administration).\textsuperscript{32} In short on the basis of the above mentioned facts it can be say that the members of the Kolaswaroopam at first shifted from Karippathu near Taliparamba to Ezhimala from there to Madayi and later to Chirakkal near Valarpattanam.

**The Role of Jainism and Buddhism in the Political Formation of Kolathunad**

\textsuperscript{30} Vadakkumkur, Chellur..., p. 13.

\textsuperscript{31} William Logan, Malabar Manual, New Delhi, 1887, p. 229.
Buddhism and Jainism had its influence upon the political formation of Kolathunad. The Girnar Inscription of Asoka specially mentioned the dominion of Emperor Asoka even in the adjacent countries of his empire. This inscription suggested that the Buddhist rules and regulations practiced by the people of Asoka were also admitted by the subjects of his neighbouring countries like the Chola, Pandya, Sathyaputhra and Keralaputhra. It indicates the penetration of Buddhism after Jainism to South India and consequent development of trade and commerce in South India.

The advent of Jainism and Buddhism had important role in agricultural and commercial development of Kolathunad. Mostly the people who belonged to agricultural class were attracted to Jainism and Buddhism. They were hardworking class who received much encouragement from these religions. The agricultural and commercial classes developed in Kolathunad only after the influx of Jainism and Buddhism.

The Jaina missionaries, who penetrated through the territories of Mysore and Tamilnadu, reached different places in Malabar and selected various places for their religious activities. The modern district of Wynad, originally a part of early Kolathunad, became one of the main religious centers of Jainism. In 1970 K. K. N. Kurup discovered a vattezhuthu inscription from the vicinity of a Jaina

32 Ibid. p. 236.
33 Logan, Malabar…, p. 247.
34 S. Dutt, Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India, p. 257.
Basti at Talakkavu in Putadi village of south Wynad. This inscription indicates the establishment of a Nakaram or trading centre in the ninth century A.D by a particular trading class like Valanchiyar who believed in Jainism. Even today a number of Jain Digambaras live in the district of Wynad.

Valanchiyar, a group of merchants, was very popular in South India, particularly in Kolathunad. They maintained the non-Brahminical temples popularly known as palli in Kerala. The Eramam inscription, one of the early inscriptions from Kolathunad, mentioned about Valanchiyar and Nanadeshikal, the two important merchant guilds of South India. M. G. S. Narayanan in his book Kerala Charithrathinte Adisthana Shilakal stated that the inscription belonged to the eleventh century A.D. This inscription describes the role of these Jain trading groups in the commercial development of Kolathunad. The rulers of Kolathunad had close connection with these trading groups. The inscription contains information regarding the mutual course of action between two non-Brahmin merchant guilds called Valanchiyar and Nanadeshikal and the temple staffs in temple affairs. According to Puthusseri Ramachandran, the Thiruvattur temple inscription comes under the category of ‘Jaina inscriptions’. The actual


36 Ibid.

37 Ibid. p. 8.

38 EI; Narayanan, Kerala Charithrathinte..., p. 82.

39 Ibid.

period of this inscription is not yet correctly stated. That inscription refers to the name of Raman Jayamni, (Jayamani II of Mushikavamsa Kavya). On the basis of the Narayan Kannur Temple Inscription M. G. S. Narayanan bring to light the fact that the period of Validhara belonged to the beginning of the tenth century (929 A.D). In that context most probably the period of Jayamani, the twelfth ruler from the first Kolathiri ruler Validhara, belonged to second half of the tenth century. Thus it can be said that Jainism and Buddhism flourished in Kolathunad in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

In Mushikavamsa there is a statement about Rajavihara, a Buddhist centre established by Rajavarman, a Mushika ruler. In the Mattavilasaprahasana of the Pallava king Mahendravikrama Varman, the name Rajavihara is mentioned in connection with a Buddhist monastery. Besides, in Mushikavamsa it is stated that Vikramarama of Mushika dynasty protected Srimulavasa from Sea erosion. The remains of Jaina Viharas in Vennyodu, Palakunnu, Puthangadi and other places in Wynad are examples for the presence of Jainism in early Kolathunad.

The tenth century inscription from Narayan Kannur in Kolathunad shed light on the role played by Manigramam, another non-Brahmin trading group, in temple administration with the blessings of the then Ilamkoyil or Junior Prince

43 Mushikavamsam, Sargam-12. Lines- 96, 97, 98.
Validhara Vikramarama. According to M. G. S. Narayanan, the date of the issue of this inscription is 929 A.D (first part of the tenth century A.D). Besides, it is stated in *Mushikavamsa* that Valabha II visited the shrine of Jaina and received blessings of Jaina monks. The period of Valabha II was overlapped to last part of the tenth century and first part of the eleventh century. All these literary evidences together with the remains of Jaina *Viharas* in the hinterlands of Kolathunad, throw light on the spreading of Jainism and Buddhism in all parts of this country, their influence on the society and their contribution to the development of a strong political unit in Kolathunad through trade activities.

The Aryanisation of Kerala is a long process. Logan expressed the view that the Arya Brahmins came to Kerala via Canara in the eighth century A.D. Some scholars argued that the advent of the Brahmins started in thousand B.C. However, the advent of the Brahmins never affected growth of Jaina and Buddha religions in Kolathunad. The people belonged to these religions engaged in trade activities under royal patronage. Their achievements in trade and commerce caused for the development of Kolathunad in later centuries.

The *Payyannur pattu*, a thirteenth century composition, also make mention about the commercial activities of the *Manigramam* and *Anjuvannam*. Besides, it pointed out the relation of Kolathunad with small Islands of Arabian

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Sea. Most probably, these were Laccadive Islands conquered the Valabhan II Kolathiri in eleventh century.\textsuperscript{48} Besides, he established Marahi city on the banks of the river \textit{Killa} (Thaliparimba) and a fortified town called Valarpattanam in the mouth of the river Parthana (Valarpattanam river).\textsuperscript{49} He was interested in the promotion of trade and the economic development of the country. The ship building industry was also in a flourishing condition from the tenth to fourteenth centuries in Kolathunad.

\textit{Unniyachicharitham}, a thirteenth century Malayalam poem also contains fine descriptions about the socio-cultural and commercial affairs of Kolathunad.\textsuperscript{50} There is no reference to Calicut. It shows that Calicut had not become a prominent city during that period.\textsuperscript{51} The poem reveals the use of an ancient coin called \textit{Anayachu} among the commercial classes.\textsuperscript{52} In the thirteenth century Kolathunad had trade relation with merchants from China and merchants from Chola, Canara and Coorg were settled in Kolathunad for the purpose of trade activities.\textsuperscript{53} The poem compared the castles of Perumchellur in Kolathunad with the citadels of Mahodayapuram. There is reference to a list of ships anchored in


\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Ibid}.

\textsuperscript{50} Mughathala Gopalakrishnan Nair (interpretation), \textit{Unniyachecharitham}, Thiruvananthapuram, The State Institute of Languages, 1990.

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Ibid}. p. 43.

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Ibid}.

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Ibid}. pp. 44- 46.
the harbour of Valarpattanam. These factors place on record the prosperity of Kolathunad achieved through trade in the thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{54}

The rulers of Kolathunad became wealthiest than any other rulers of Malabar by the commercial development of the country. The merchant guilds had a high status in society and they had a prominent place even in temple administration.\textsuperscript{55} In fact Kolathunad became a distinct polity with a different style of functioning from other Brahmin settlements in Kerala.\textsuperscript{56} Later, the installation of Tulu Brahmins called Brahmaprathishta organized by Udaya Varma Kolathiri was also the result of the contest between the Kolathiris and the Namboothiri Brahmins of Perumchellur.

E. B. Suresh Kumar in his study “The Political Processes of Kolathunad down to 1812” stated that the rulers of Kolathunad had no direct control over the trade activities and it was managed by the Muslim chiefs, who were in charge of the spice and horse trade. But this was only after the emergence of Ali Raja of Cannanor. Till the emergence of Arackal House the Kolathiri had control over the trade and commerce of his country. The expedition of Valabha II Kolathiri to conquer eighteen Islands and his direct supervision on the trade guilds like Anjuvannam, Manigramam, Nanadeshikal and Valanjiyar are good specimens of the role of the Kolathiris in trade and commerce. Even Udaya Varma Kolathiri

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid. p. 58.

\textsuperscript{55} Narayan Kannur Temple Inscription, 929 A. D. (hereafter NKTI)

\textsuperscript{56} Narayanan, Kerala Charithrathinte…, p. 4.
had given the Laccadive Islands for lease to Ali Raja for Rs. 18000/- fanams in the thirteenth century shows the direct involvement of the ruler in trade and commerce. Besides, in Kolathunad the trade and commerce were supervised by the regent of the king. That will discussed later in this chapter. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Kolathunad was in a flourishing condition and the king became the wealthiest person only because of his direct control over trade activities. But later in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with the emergence of Ali Raja in Cannanore the Kolathiri lost direct control over trade activities. The religious guilds of the Jains and the Buddhists founded a strong base for the development of trade between the Kolathunad and other parts of India. In later times the Jews and the Arabs followed the same path and they widened the scope of trading activities in Kolathunad.

**Perumchellur Brahmin Oligarchy and Their Differences with Kolathiri**

The Brahmin Settlement at Thaliparamba had close connections with the rulers of Kolathunad. But later on differences developed between the Kolathiri and the Perumchellur Namboothiri Brahmins. As a result the Brahmins were unwilling to perform the *Shodasha Samskaras*\(^{57}\) of Kolathiri royal family.\(^{58}\) According to one Palm leaf manuscript called *Jambuwepolpathi*, the Kolathiri asked the Nambidis, who were the priests of Chellur grama, to help him to

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\(^{57}\) Sixteen type of rituals in a life time of *dwijas* (twice born) from the birth of a man to his death.

\(^{58}\) Interview with Karumarathu Narayanan Namboothiri, the then chief Priest of Kolaswaroopam and the senior most member of Karimarathu *Ilam* on 29\(^{\text{th}}\) December 2004.
become the *yajamana* (master) of *yaga* (sacrifice) but the priests were unwilling to yield to his requests. So the then Kolathiri Udaya Varman asked *Thekkilamkur* and *Vadakkilamkur* to bring the Brahmins from Canara for the fulfilling of his desire. 59 Udayavarma Kolathiri made Madhavachariyar as the chief priest of this *Brahmaprathishta*. 60 This incident happened in the thirteenth century. As ordained by ancient Indian Vedic customs the presence of a Kshatria is essential for the completion of many auspicious rites.

The social structure and the production and distribution systems of Kolathunad had much impact on the Brahmin settlement of this country. Most probably Aryan or Brahmin settlers had chosen fertile agricultural lands for their habitation. Their hold on most of these productive agricultural lands sometimes gave them power to supersede the ruler and challenge the authority of the king. Kolathunad consisted of only two Brahmin settlements, Perumchellur and Payyannur. 61 Compared with southern parts of Periyar river, Kolathunad had no other Brahmin settlements except the above mentioned two. 62 The Aryan immigrants were mostly concentrated around the traditional agricultural lands, where paddy was the chief crop. They had no interest in the cultivation of

59 *Jambudweelpathy*, (Mss.), Ola No. 11-12, Malayalam, Manuscript Library, Calicut University (Even though it has been enlisted in the index of the Manuscript Library now it is missing), Cited in an article M. R. Raghava Varier, “Kolathunadinte charithrathil ninoredu,” *Mathrubhumi Varanathapathippu*, 1980 August 3, p.10.

60 *Ibid*.

61 *Keralolpathy*, Mangalore, 1874, pp. 4-5.

commercial crops like pepper, cardamom, etc. That could be the reason why the Brahmin settlements were less in number in Kolathunad than in other parts of Kerala.

The influx of Jainism and Buddhism in Kolathunad further changed the situation. These people who were interested in commercial activities preferred the cultivation of commercial crops. Geographically Kolathunad was suitable for the cultivation of commercial crops. So followers of the Semitic religions, who were mostly commercial class, also settled in Kolathunad and that resulted further weakening of the dominance of Brahmins in Kolathunad. This gave way to the opening of a new economic system in Kolathunad.

In this context, it is noteworthy that the kings of Kolathunad were less interested in the Vaidika Samskara. Unlike other rulers of Kerala, from very ancient period onwards, the Kolathiris wanted to handle the financial resources without involving the Brahmin oligarchy. This approach to economic management was mentioned by Marco Polo when he visited Kolathunad in the second half of the thirteenth century. He had rightly observed that the king was wealthy and was not a tributary to anyone.63 The presence of the Jains, Buddhist and Jews in Kolathunad64 and their active participation in trade and commerce led to the disappearance of Brahmin supremacy in Kolathunad. The Kolathiri’s close

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association with these commercial classes had alienated the Brahmins from Kolathunad.  

The differences between the Kolathiri and the Brahmins of Perumchellur started from the twelfth century onwards. It is the first time in the history of Kerala a Kshatriya ruler came forward to openly challenge the Brahmin supremacy. The actual reason for this attitude of Perumchellur Brahmins was that, then the ruler of Kolathunad was financially self-sufficient and he was able to control the high handedness of the Brahmin oligarchy. The payments of the people directly went to the hands of the king. The sabha of Perumchellur was reduced to a nominal Namboothiri Brahmin oligarchy. Therefore Namboothiri Brahmins of Perumchellur began to refuse to act as priests of Kolaswaropam. So, Kolathiri had to look for other Brahmins. Udayavarma Charitham, Brahmaprathishtakaranam and Deshyashtakam in Sanskrit and Jambudweepolpathy in Malayalam prose literature reveal the historical significance of inviting Tulu and Kanarese Brahmins by Udaya Varma Kolathiri. He brought Panchadravida group of Brahmins from 237 illsams or house of Brahmins (in Malayalam letter form Sagaram) to Kolathunad and settled them at Cheruthazham, Kulappuram, Thiruvattur Temple Inscription (hereafter TTI), Eleventh Century. According to this inscription Mushika ruler Iraman Chemani alias Raman Jayamani (Jayamani II of Mushika Vamsa) brought twenty houses of Brahmins to Kolathunad from Iringalakuda, Avittathur, and Perumanam and settled them in Thravdur, the eastern part of Thaliparamba. Jayamani II ruled Kolathunad in eleventh century; Unni, A History..., p. 116. This indicates lack of Brahmins in Kolathunad during this period.


Veluthat, A Copper Plate..., p. 5.

Ibid.
Arathil, Kunnaru and Vararuchimangalam. Later they adopted the customs and manners of Namboothiri Brahmins of Kerala.

Udaya Varma Kolathiri had suffered a lot of harassment from the Perumchellur Namboodiri Brahmins. They refused to perform the *shodasha samskaras* of the royal family as mentioned earlier. Even in recent past, the Brahmins did not allow a member of Kolaswaroopam to sit in a line or row with the Brahmins for meals. They tried to excommunicate the Kolathiri from the status of a Kshatriya. It is said that in Perumchellur the Brahmin settlements consisted of ten houses and they came to be known as *Pathillam*. Each house of these Brahmin settlers adorned the position of chief priest over a turn of one year. During the period of this hostility only the Brahmins of Karumaram house, one of the houses of this *Pathillam*, agreed to solve the problem of excommunication and to help the Kolaswaroopam to upgrade their position as kshatriyas by the performance of *Hiranyagarbha*.

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70 According to traditional belief Kolaswaroopam had a state of excommunication from Kshatriya status. Traditionally a kshatriya had right to had their meals together with Brahmans (*panthibhojanam)*.

71 Interview with Ravindra Varma, an elder member of the Chirackal Palace on 28th December 2008.

72 Interview with Karumarathu Narayanan Namboothiri, the then chief Priest of Kolaswaroopam and a senior most member of Karimarathu *Illam* on 29th December 2004.

The degradation of the Kolathiris from the Kshatriya status was only a revenge shown by the Perumchellur grama towards the royal family. The origin of Mushikas as described in the Mushikavamsa, by Athula indicates their origin from a Kshatriya clan. Everywhere in Kerala the royal families revered the Brahmins, who had alliance with women of the royal house, traditionally known as sambandham. Then Brahmins were even ready to marry Nair women of the country by means of Sambandham. But they never entered into such alliance with a princess of Kolaswaroopam. Those developments were basically of later origin and political by nature because, the king, being so wealthy and powerful, was unwilling to obey blindly the orders of Brahmin Sabha.

It is evident from various sources that the Kolathiris, at one point of time gave great encouragements to the Jains and Buddhists. The Brahmins might have very strongly opposed and condemned these encouragements of the Kolathiris and might have dissuaded the Kolathiris from giving such support to these religions. Evidences are in favour to presume that the Kolathiris did not give any importance for the persuasions of the Nambothiri Brahmins. As it has occurred all over the world, provocation of the priestly class naturally resulted in some kind of condemnation. The Kolathiris would have encouraged Jainism and Buddhism

\[74\] It is an interesting thing that the Naboothiri Brahmins of Kerala had sambandham (Medieval Kerala marriage alliance of a Brahmin with a girl belonged to any other forward caste) with the royal families of Zamorin, Cochin, Kodungallur, Beypore, Punjar, Panthalam, etc. But the royal family of Kolaswaroopam had no marriage alliance with Namboothiri Brahmins. They followed Vaidika form of marriage. Normally the marriage ceremonies of the royal family of Kolaswaroopam lasted five days. The function was conducted as true veli with Oupasanam, lajahomam and sapthapathi. This negligence from the part of the Brahmins might have been the result of a prolonged struggle between the Kolathiri and the Brahmin Oligarchy in
for improving the material and financial prosperity of his kingdom. It is possible that the Brahmins misunderstood the behavior of Kolathiris as opposing their canons. Naturally they felt that the Kolathiris were challenging the vedic religion. All these factors would have played a part for the self alienation of Namboothiri Brahmins from Kolaswaroopam.

In Kolathunad the financial power of the king, its geographical condition, presence of Jainism and Buddhism, the ruler’s patronage towards these religions, presence of trading communities like the Jews and the Arabs, cultivation of commercial crops in the hinterlands, lack of Brahmin settlements, etc., contributed to the development of Kolathunad as a powerful state in the early medieval period. It was a process of state formation that did not help the establishment of Brahmin dominance in the society. In contrast social and political formations in rest of South India had been attested by Brahmin hegemony.

Thus Kolathunad became one of the four important kingdoms of Kerala in the early medieval period. It was the only dynasty having a tradition of long rule even before the partition of Kerala by the last Perumal before his departure to Mecca. In the fifteenth century, Zamorin, the southern neighbour of Kolathiri, emerged as a strong commercial power posing challenge to the Kolathiris.

Kolathunad. Interviews with members of the royal family like Ravindra Varma, R. P. Raja, and late Narayanan Namboothiri of Karumarathu Illam.
Chera Interactions with Kolathunad

During the Mushika period and to some extent in Kolathiri period politically Kolathunad came under the influence of Cheras. In the second half of the ninth century Chera empire expanded over a large part of Kerala. During this time Sthanu Ravi Kulasekara was the ruler of Mahodayapuram (844-883). Kotha Ravi Vijayaraga, the Chera ruler mentioned in the Mushikavamsa, ruled Chera country between 883- 913 A.D. During this period the Chera country expanded to the south up to Thirunandikara and to north up to Balusseri. According to Mushikavamsa Kavya, Ishana Varman II was the brother-in-law of Jayaraga, a Chera King. Jayaraga of Mushikavamsa is identified as Vijayaraga of Chera dynasty. After Sthanu Ravi Kulasekhara, Kotha Vijayaraga ascended the throne in 883 A.D. During the period of Bhaskara Ravi Manukuladitya, the Chera kingdom expanded up to Kolathunad. After the death of Bhaskara Ravi Manukuladitya in the first part of the eleventh century (1021 A.D) the Chera suzerainty on Kolathunad gradually started to diminish and the Kolathiri became almost independent.

The Kolaswaroopam, which had an independent history of its own like the Cheras of Mahodayapuram, came under the influence of the Cheras dynasty in the

75 M. G. S. Narayanan, Perumals…, p. 25.
76 N. M. Namboothiri, Kerala…, p. 204.
77 Mushika Vamsa, Sargam 12 line- 6.
79 PKI
ninth and the tenth centuries and continued upto 1021 A.D.\textsuperscript{80} The Narayan Kannur inscription (the tenth century), Pulur Kodavalam inscription (the eleventh century) and Eramam inscription (the eleventh century) are good source material that indicates nature of Chera suzerainty on Kolathunad. Narayan Kannur is the first inscription contains the name of first Kolathiri ruler Vikramarama.\textsuperscript{81} During the period of this inscription Vikrmarama was Ilamkoyil or regent of the then King Palaka. This inscription pointed out that Muzhikalam Kacham was accepted by the rulers of Kolathunad. Muzhikalam Kacham came into prominence in the eighth or ninth centuries A.D.\textsuperscript{82} According to Muzhikalam Kacham if the temple authorities had committed errors they were ordered to pay a fine and one part of it must be given to Perumal. The Eramam inscription mentions about involvement of Chera ruler in the religious matters of the Kolathunad and mentions about fifty ninth regnal year of Bhaskara Ravi Manukuladitya.\textsuperscript{83} At the zenith of his ruling period the Cheras became more powerful and their influence extended to the area of Kolathunad. The Pullur Kodavalam inscription also indicates Bhskara Ravi Manukulditya’s gift of gold to the temple in the fifty eighth regnal year of his rule.

\textsuperscript{80} Pulur Kodavalam Inscription (hereafter P K I), Eleventh Century; Ramachandran (ed.), \textit{Kerala Charithrathinte Adisthana…}, p. 401. Though the expansion of Chera empire started in the period of Sthanu Ravi in the middle of the ninth century it was completed during the reign of Bhaskara Ravi Manukuladitya in the last half of the tenth century, when his empire expanded to the areas of Kolathunad.

\textsuperscript{81} NKTI

\textsuperscript{82} Narayanan, \textit{Kerala Charithrathinte…}, p. 93.

\textsuperscript{83} El. Ramachandran (ed.), \textit{Kerala Charithrathinte Adisthana…}, p. 84.
All these above mentioned inscriptions showed not a complete political overlordship of the Cheras on Kolathunad.\textsuperscript{84} The Chola conquest started during the period of Bhaskara Ravi Manukuladitya in 988 A.D\textsuperscript{85} destroyed power and wealth of the Cheras.\textsuperscript{86} So they failed to continue their suzerainty over their neighbouring states like Kolathunad. Besides, Vallabha II independently conquered many Islands in the Arabian sea.\textsuperscript{87} This shows that during the last part of the tenth century itself Kolathunad became able to overcome the Chera supremacy. The establishment of Marahi and Valarpattanam, the famous port cities during this time by Vallabha, indicates the development of Kolathunad and its independent position in the last part of the tenth century. A feudatory king could not have conducted independent conquest of territories and established prominent port-cities etc. All these facts indicate independent position of Kolathunad from the last part of the tenth century. Kolathiri Vallabha II’s march towards Kerala for joining with the Chera army\textsuperscript{88} can not be considered an action of a feudatory. Then he was a crown prince and when heard about the sudden demise of his uncle Jayamani he returned to Kolathunad for taking the charge of administration. Moreover, in Pulur Kodavalam Inscription and Eramam Inscription, there is no particular indication of payment of tribute to the Cheras in any form.

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\textsuperscript{84} P K I. \\
\textsuperscript{85} p. 52. \\
\textsuperscript{86} K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, \textit{A History of South India from Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar}, Oxford University Press, 2002. p. 164. \\
\textsuperscript{87} Mushikvamsa. 14.69. \\
\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Ibid.} 14-7.
\end{flushright}
From the last part of the eleventh century onwards Kolathunad became absolutely free from Chera control. In Kuruva temple inscription there is a description about Nagaswami Udaya Varman alias Ramakata Muvar. Moreover in Mushikavamsa Atula gives genealogy of all rulers up to his patron Srikanta and there is no reference about such a ruler in between Validhara and Srikanta. Therefore this Udaya Varma must be ruled Kolathunad in between Srikanta and Iraman Iravi Varma alias Rama Ravi Varma, mentioned in Perumchellur Copper Plate Inscription. It mentions about particulars of the land set apart for the expenses of Thirukkannapuram temple. He also made an order to maintain expenses to provide meals for Brahmins. Further this inscription is a strong proof of the growing power and position of the Kolathiri in Kolathunad and it indicates that the ruler of Kolathunad was quit independent during this time and many deshavazhis or feudatories were ruled many parts of Kolathunad under him. Generally in the post-Chera period a system of Hundred Organization, which marked the beginning of the Nayar militia in medieval Kerala, prevailed in Nadus or localities of Udayavar or Naduvazhis. But there was no information about such a system in Kolathunad. All these facts indicate that Chera suzerainty over Kolathunad lasted for a short period of time and Kolaswaroopam was not a mere family of Naduvazhi and Udayavar but they had an independent existence and

90 Kuruvakavu Temple Inscription (hereafter KTI)
system of administration like Chera and Chola ruling families from very early

time onwards.

Commercial Developments and Political Formations of Kolathunad

The poem Pyyannur pattu is of good historical value. The poem describes
the glorious stage of Kolathunad in the thirteenth century. Geographically, most
of Kolathunad consisted of hard lands.\textsuperscript{92} Therefore, the expansion of crops into
the dry lands, what has been described as the parampupurayatam system of
agriculture, involved cultivation of commercial crops, a feature of the post-Chera
period.\textsuperscript{93} This poem is a strong proof of the presence of Anjuvannam,
Manigramam and Nagaram, the then famous trading groups of Kerala.\textsuperscript{94} Besides,
it throws light on the wide trade contacts of Kolathunad with Kaveripattanam and
Thanjavur in Tamil region and progress of shipbuilding in Kolathunad.\textsuperscript{95} The
poem described the role of the Chettis and Nagaram the traditional trading group
in Kolathunad and their production of Silk in Kolathunad.

Even now Madayi, Valarpattanam, Thaliparambu, Chirakkal, Kannur, etc.,
in Kolathunad are the centers of weaving. Number of families belonging to
shaliya community lived around these places. According to traditional sources,

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\textsuperscript{92} N. M. Namboothiri, \textit{Kerala}…, p. 280. \\
\textsuperscript{93} Kesavan Veluthat, \textit{A Copper Plate}…, p. 4. \\
\textsuperscript{94} Zacharia, \textit{Pyyannur Pattu, Part- 92}, line- 5-7. \\
\textsuperscript{95} \textit{Ibid. Part- 36, 43, 44.}
\end{flushright}
they belonged to ancient *Nagarakkar* and were engaged in trade activities.\textsuperscript{96} These wide commercial activities enriched the treasury of the ruler of Kolathunad. The Kolathiri became the wealthiest among the rulers of Malabar in thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

In Kolathunad the ruler personally supervised the social customs like slave-trade.\textsuperscript{97} Madayikavu, the seat of the tutelary deity of Kolaswaroopam, was a prominent place of all public meetings.\textsuperscript{98} In each and every issue the Kolathiri took decisions in front of the deity by considering the goddess Madayikavu *Bhagavathy* as the witness.\textsuperscript{99} When the upper-caste people bought a slave he gave one part of the amount to the temple deity and another part to the state treasury. Mostly the upper caste society exchanged the people of Pulaya community as slaves. Each section of society had their own headmen.\textsuperscript{100} When the ruler conducted slave trade he sought consent of the head of Pulaya community.\textsuperscript{101} The people assembled at Madayikavu in the presence of Kolathiri for taking decisions in respect of all political and social issues. In Kolathunad, assembly of people

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\textsuperscript{96} S. Gupthan Nair, “Payyannur Pattu Ottanottathil”, in Zacharia, *Payyannur Pattu*, p. 46.
\textsuperscript{100} R. C. Karippathu, *Kolathunattile Teyyamkathkal*, Payyannur, Nattu Samskriti, 2004, p. 10
\textsuperscript{101} *Thottam Pattu* of Pulimranja Thondachan Theyyam; Vishnu Namboothiri, *Theyyamthirkalude Thottampattukal*, p. 26.
\end{flushright}
had special rights in administration. The famous thottam songs of Vattyan Polla theyyam\textsuperscript{102} and Pulimaranja Thondachan theyyam\textsuperscript{103} reveal this fact.

The ruler consulted with the assembly of people in important matters. The nattukoottam or assembly of people existed even during the Portuguese period. A historically important theyyam of Vattyan Polla belonged to the Portuguese period. It shed light on the fact that Ettikkulam fort and Bakkel fort actually belonged to the Kolathiri.\textsuperscript{104} But in the sixteenth century the Portuguese captured these forts from Kolathiri. Besides, it reveals that the Kolathiri sought support from all classes of people for the protection of his country. It further pointed out the courageous action of Pulaya community against the European armies.\textsuperscript{105} When the traditional Nair militia failed to recapture forts from the Portuguese one able Pulaya youth named Vattyan came forward to save the country and its ruler from European enemies.\textsuperscript{106} Even now in Kannur Pulaya community performed the theyya Kolam of Vattyan Polla in respect of this man.

**Ezhimala**

The kings of Kolathunad changed their headquarters, for the convenience of administration and to get direct access to Sea. We can see parallel cases of shifting of administrative centers in other regions of Kerala. For instance, the


\textsuperscript{103} Vishnu Namboothiri, *Theyyamthirkalude Thottampattukal*, pp. 20-30.

\textsuperscript{104} Vishnunamboothiri, *Thottam Pattukal- Oru Padanam*, 274-276

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
Zamorin of Calicut transferred his administrative centre from Nediyruppu, a remote village near Kondotti in present Kozhikodu district to the coastal town of Calicut for the purpose of promoting commercial activities under his direct supervision and close contact with the traders. The same thing happened in the case of Perumpadappu Swaroopam. The king shifted the centre of administration from Perumpadappu to Thrippunithura in Cochin. All these Swaroopams shifted the centre of their administration to the sea coast for the purpose of trade activities and to control the financial resources of the country. Likewise the Kolathiri shifted his centre of administration from Ezhimala to Madayi and later to Valarpattanam. Generally the kings changed their centre of administration from place to place, especially on the basis of its strategic, geographic and commercial importance.

Ezhimala was an isolated hill and the strategic importance of that region prompted the rulers to settle there and continued to maintain that place as their capital. A number of Roman coins have been unearthed from the foothills of Ezhimala in Cannanore. This shows brisk trade activities that were going on in the Ezhimala region with the Roman empires. At that time one important

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108 Archaeological remains like palaces, forts, observatory, temple of Kolathiris etc., still remind us the glory of the past. Besides, a number of Roman coins had been discovered from here, which recall the story of a flourishing trade activity between the Roman empire and the Koadlthunad.


source of income for the king was trade activities with Rome. The importance of this place was that the Ezhimala hill was a good identification mark for the mariners.\footnote{111}

N. M. Namboothiri in his book \textit{Kerala Samskaram Akavum Puravum} suggested that \textit{Vakaiperumthurai} in Sangam literature is modern Vakayur near Thirunavai. But the close examination of geographical as well as literary sources throws light on the fact that \textit{Vakaiperumthurai} is another name of Ezhimala. The term \textit{Vakai} is the Tamil name of Vaka, Perumthura means large port. So we discern the meaning of this Tamil term as large port with full of Vaka trees. The Sangam classics refer to ‘Ezhimalai of Nannan, where the black stemmed Vengai trees are found.\footnote{112} According to this reference, once Ezhimalai was abound with \textit{Nenmeni Vaka} trees and once it was a large port, where number of ships anchored for trading purpose.\footnote{113} Later due to the silting in Ezhimala river the Kolathiri shifted the capital to Madayi. Besides, the place Vakayur near Thirunavai is outside the limits of Kolatunad. Hence it is reasonable to point out that the \textit{Vakaiperumthurai} described in the Tamil literature is Ezhimala.

\footnote{111}Gasper Correa says that Vasco da Gama’s pilots foretold that “the first land to be sighted would be a great mountain which is on the Coast of India in the kingdom of Cannanore which the people of the country in their language call the mountain Dellelly….” Cited in P. J. Cherian (ed.), \textit{Kerala State Gazetteer}, Vol.II, Part.II, 1999, p. 29.

\footnote{112} \textit{Akam}, 345, 349

\footnote{113}Bouchon, \textit{Regent of the Sea}…, pp. 5-12.
Madayi

The Sangam literature like Akananuru and Nattini contain references about Pazhikunnu. The Sangam poet Paranar had written about Pazhikunnu. It was located in Madayi. The geographical condition of Pazhi as recollected by the Sangam poets throws light on the fact that Pazhikunnu is the Tamil term of Madayi hill. The Sangam poet Azhissi made a literary appraisal about the peacocks found at the premises of Pazhikunnu. As mentioned the poet Azhissi even now we can see the peacocks around Madayi rock. It is evident that the strategically and geographically very blessed Madayi and Nannan’s Pazhi are one and the same. Later in Kolathiri period Valabhan II had built a fort in Madayi and made it as an important trading centre. Geographically and strategically it was an important place. From where the king could see the position of ships, that anchored in the Madayi river.

The progress of the offshore bar closed the port of Ezhi. Besides, the advent of a large number of traders from different parts of the world and the settlement of the Arabs, Jews and many other trading groups around Madayi made this place a prominent port-city. The port-city of Madayi was situated on the banks of a large river called Thaliparamba and in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it had a good estuary through which ships could easily anchor near the

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115 Akam. 152.

coast. The newly emerged facilities in Madayi and its access to the sea encouraged the then king to transfer his capital from Ezhimala to Madayi. It is said as noted earlier that the king Valabhan II had established the city of Madayi\(^{117}\) and Kerala Varma established *Madayikavu Bhagavathy* temple, the famous temple of Kolathiris.\(^{118}\) The mosque at Madayi was the second Muslim religious centre established by Malik Dinar in Malabar.\(^{119}\) Further, the archaeological remnants of an old palace and fort of Kolathiri throw light on the past glory of that place. There is an ancient pond called Jewish pond that recalls history of the settlement of a prominent merchant class in the place.

Actually Madayi was under the control of trading communities for a long time.\(^{120}\) The merchants from Arabia, Gujarat, Bengal and China were settled in Madayi for the purpose of trade. Indigenous traders like the Muslims and Chettis of Malabar were also settled there for trading purposes.\(^{121}\) The Arabs were one of the important trading groups at that time. Gradually they took leading role in the Malabar trade.\(^{122}\) They were the intermediaries of the trade between the Western

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\(^{117}\) He was also responsible for the establishment of Madayikavu Bhagavathy temple at Madayi in A.D. 344. Madayikavu bhagavathy was the tutelary deity of Kolaswwaroopam. So the construction of the temple might have commenced along with the establishment of the capital in Mdayi; M. S. Nair, *Madayikavu...,* p. 19.

\(^{118}\) *Kolanripolpathy* (Mss.), ORI, Kariyavattom, Trivandrum.


\(^{120}\) *Ibid.*


world and Eastern world. They were peace loving people. The commercial activities of the indigenous Muslims and the Arabs brought much wealth to Kolathunad.

**Valarpattanam, the Last Capital**

Valarpattanam was the last capital of the Kolathiris. The Valarpattanam fort was built by Valabha Kolathiri on the southern bank of the river Thaliparamba in the last half of the tenth century. Now there remains only an old granite frame of a door and some laterite steps. The later Kolathiri kings made it as the headquarters of their administration. Many factors had induced the Kolathiri to prefer Valarpattanam as their headquarters. The first reason was that Valarpattanam was already a trading centre. Besides, Naura one of the famous ancient trading centers of Malabar coast had been near Valarpattanam. It has been said in *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* that Naura was a flourishing centre of trade in Kolathunad. Scholars like T. Pavithran and Kumaran M. P opined that modern ‘Narath’ near Valarpattanam may be identified with the famous ancient trading centre called Naura. Secondly Valarpattanam had better access to sea than former seats of Kolathiris (Ezhimala and Madayi). Thirdly number of

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125 Plate No.5.


Arab and local Muslim merchants settled around Valarpattanam for the purpose of trade and commerce. Silting in Madayi river blocked its access to sea\textsuperscript{128} that caused shifting of many Arab and Muslim traders from Madayi to Valarpattanam. It was very difficult to control and supervise the trade and commerce far from Valarpattanam. Therefore, Valabhan Kolathiri later decided to build a fort at Valarpattanam. Later Kolathiris started famous \textit{Valore Perum Kalari} in Valarpattanam.\textsuperscript{129}

The two famous heroes in \textit{theyyam Vayanadu Kulavan} and \textit{Kathuvanur Veeran}\textsuperscript{130} were closely associated with this \textit{Valore Perumkalari}. Valarpattanam, the last headquarters of the Kolathiris was a centre of Hindu-Muslim friendship. It is said that Kalkkulangra mosque near Valarpattanam was established by the then \textit{Ilamkur} Ravi Varma. He was in charge of the commercial activities in Valarpattanam. Then the Muslims were prominent trading groups at Valarpattanam. He maintained good relationship with them. His close association with Muslim traders inspired him to understand more about that religion. Finally he converted to Islam and built a mosque near Valarpattanam. The fourteenth century Arab traveler Ibn Battutta also mentioned this incident in his travel accounts.\textsuperscript{131} During the latter half of the fifteenth century itself Cannanore emerged as the most popular port-city under the Arackal house. By the middle of

\textsuperscript{128} Regent of the Sea…., p. 9.

\textsuperscript{129} Balakrishnan, Kannur Kotta, p. 179.

\textsuperscript{130} \textit{Ibid.}

the sixteenth century the Arackal Rajas, the official governors of the Kolathiri, became independent and emerged as a powerful ruler in the region. Cannanore became the centre of his administration. Thus the commercial and political growth of Cannanore affected the power and interests of the Kolathiris.

The king did not directly involve in commercial activities. He assigned the duty of management of the trade to the house of Muslim merchants called Arackal at Cannanore. The Ali Raja, the head of that house managed the whole commercial activities. It is said that King Udaya Varma had bestowed Laccadive Islands on Arakkal as Jagir in return for their services. The Arackal house had collected duties from the foreign traders. He fixed the duty of the importing items and collected it from the traders through his intermediaries. Later Cannanore emerged as one of the important centers of horse trade in the Western Coast. From this trade Kolathiri collected twenty five *ducats* as duty for each horse. The growth of Cannanore lowered the position of the Madayi Port.

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Royal Family

The first family house Karippathu Kovilakam was divided into two Udyamangalam and Palli Kovilakam. Later Udayamngalam shifted to near Cherukunnu. After the establishment of Madayi fort the Palli Kovilakam branch shifted to Madayi. Again the Palli Kovilakam divided into two Palli Kovilakm and Puthuppalli Kovilakam. In 1304 A.D (479 M.E) the Puthuppalli Kovilakam completely shifted to Travancore by adoption. The Palli Kovilakam again divided into five they were, Chirackal Kovilakam, Chirackal Chenga Kovilakam, Kawnisseri Kovilakam, Thevanamkodu Kovilakam and Aduthila Kovilakam and they settled around Valarpattanam, the last administrative headquarter of the Kolathiri. The eldest male member from among these branches of the family would be elected as the king. Similarly the position of the regents of the king was determined by considering the seniority of the male members from all branches.

Among all the branches of Kolaswaroopam the Palli Kovilakam branch had superiority in the administration. Often disputes arose between Palli Kovilakam and Udayamangalam. It grew to the level of frequent skirmishes.

136 Personal writings of late Ayilyamnal Kerala Varma, the member of Ennakkad Palace (unpublished).

137 Interview with R. P. Raja, a member of the Mavelikkara palace on 23 December 2009.

138 The Palli Kovilakam had more branches and member strength. So they showed superiority and advantage in administration.
resulting in the death of some princes of Udayamangalam Kovilakam. These clashes were not based on seniority or any other internal issues, but on purely political matters and the balance of power. Most of the Kolathiris and their regents were members of Palli Kovilakam. So gradually they overthrew the members of the Udayamangalam Kovilakam.

Among the Palli Kovilakam branches the Chirakkal Kovilakam had every advantage; it had extensive power and received support from the Nair chiefs of the country and established political alliance and friendship with European Companies. Frequent wars and family quarrels converted the kingdom into an assembly of small principalities. Therefore, in later period the administrative purview of the Kolathiris, which originally extended from Nethravathy river to Kotta river, decreased and confined to the area around Chirakkal. Finally the ruling power also was vested in the Chirakkal branch of the Kolaswaroopam.

Like any other Kshatriya family of Kerala, the Kolaswaroopam had followed matrilineal system of inheritance. According to this system, after the


140 Ibid.

141 Kareem, Kerala Under..., p. 267.

142 Ibid.

143 During the medieval period, in Kerala, among the upper classes of the society a particular system of marriage called *anuloma* prevailed. According to this system the ladies married from the higher grade classes of the society. In the *anuloma* system the husband belonged to a higher Varna or class and the wife belonged to the lower Varna. Among the kshatriyas, who followed the *anuloma* system of marriage, in the early period the princesses married the Brahmins or higher grade kshatriyas.
death of a ruler his brothers or his nephews, born of female members of the family, succeeded him following the principles of seniority.\textsuperscript{144} The eldest princess of all branches of Kolaswaroopam was known as \textit{Achamma Mooppasthanam}.\textsuperscript{145} She possessed many rights and privileges.\textsuperscript{146} In Kolaswaroopam the princesses became the mothers of future kings. Therefore, the princesses of the royal family enjoyed a prominent position in family administration. In all family matters decisions were taken by the eldest woman of the royal family called \textit{Achamma Muthasthanam} and the king was only the executive official.\textsuperscript{147} If any problem for want of male heirs occurred, the eldest princess of the royal family had the right to rule the country as a regent.

\textbf{Kingship}

The kingship was hereditary. A king was followed by his younger brother or the eldest nephew by order. The king was known as

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{144} H. E. J. Stanley, \textit{A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar in the beginning of the Sixteenth Century} Duarte Barbosa, pp. 106-107.
\item \textsuperscript{145} Logan, \textit{Malabar}..., p. 346.
\item \textsuperscript{146} \textit{Ibid}.
\item \textsuperscript{147} Interview with R. P. Raja, a member of the Mavelikkara palace on 23 December 2009.
\end{itemize}
Kolathiruvadikoyiladhikari	extsuperscript{148} and the people called him as Valarpattanamkottavanavare.	extsuperscript{149} The king resided at the fort of Valarpattanam. The Kolathiri ruled over the whole kingdom but he had retained the direct control over the middle portion of the kingdom alone. Though Kolathunad consisted of a number of feudatory chieftains as compared with its neighbouring country like Calicut, the king was not able to bring those feudatories under his suzerainty. The four *Kooruvazhchakkar* or regents supported the king in his administration. He entrusted the administration of other parts of the kingdom on those regents. The installation of all regents in their respective positions was celebrated in a grand manner. The Udayamangalam Kovilakam had no role in the coronation of the Kolathiri and other installation programs. They could only get the position of *Anjamkur*. The *Anjamkur*, whose residence was in the Udayamangalam Kovilakam, had only the duty to look after the family affairs and to serve the king and the three regents.	extsuperscript{150} The male members of the Chencheri house were the traditional ministers of Kolathiri.	extsuperscript{151} The position of the Commander-in-chief of the militia was traditionally assigned to the house of *Chittottu Kurukkal*.	extsuperscript{152}

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	extsuperscript{149} Meaning ‘the king, who ruled the country from Valarpattanam fort’. The folk song of the *Thiruvarkattu Bhagavathy Theyyam*, Cited in M. S. Nair, *Madayikava…,”* p. 84.


The chief principalities under the Kolathiris were Nileswaram, Cannanore, Kadathanad and Kottayam. Under them there were a number of petty chieftains or *Desavazhis* like Chuzhaly Nambiar, Koodali Nambiar, Iruvazhinad Nambiar, Randuttara Achanmar and Kurungothu Nair. Therefore, at the time of arrival of the Europeans the administration of Kolathunad scattered among these principalities and chiefdoms. Besides, *Vadakkilamkur* and *Thekkilamkur*, the representatives of the Kolathiri, possessed semi-independent right in their respective areas and power of the king as the sole sovereign over the entire Kolathunad was confined to only a small territory around modern Chirakkal taluk.

**Division of Power and Kooruvazhcha**

The system of *Kooruvazhcha* started in the beginning of the tenth century along with the dawn of Kolathiri period. We got first written evidence about the system of *Kooruvazhcha* from Narayan Kannur temple inscription. It mentions about an *Ilamkoyil* Validhara and his connections with *Mnigramam*. *Ilamkoyil* or *Ilamkur* had special rights on administration, especially in trade activities. The role played by *Ilamkurs* or regents in the economic development of the country by maintaining good relations with contemporary religious groups, who engaged in trade activities, need special attention of the scholars. The economic development of Kolathunad in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was the result of diplomacy of *Ilamkurs* of Kolathunad

In the tenth and eleventh centuries trade groups like *Mnigramam*, *Anjuvannam*, *Nandeshikal* and *Valanjiyar* were more prominent in Kolathunad.
As mentioned earlier in this chapter lack of Brahmin settlements in Kolathunad provided favourable conditions for these trade groups. At that time the trade groups mostly belonged to Jaina and Buddha religions. So at that time the Ilamkoyil maintained good relation with those religions. In later period there were evidences about the role of another Ilamkoyil Ravi Varma in commercial activities. He was in charge of trade activities in Kolathunad. At the time of his administration Arabs and Muslims were prominent trade groups. He maintained close connections with these religions and finally converted to Islam. All these things shed light on the fact that the Kolathiris maintained cordial relations with all people of all religions.\textsuperscript{153}

Beginning of subdivisions in the position of regency like Vadakkilamkur, Thekkilamkur, Nalamkur and Anjamkur and division of power among them according to their positions were later developments in Kolathiri administration. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the regents of Kolathiri whole heartedly granted land to the Portuguese and the English for promoting trade and commerce in Kolathunad. Unfortunately in return they had to face ingratitude approach of these European Companies.

The political structure of medieval Kolathunad was a complex one. It was based on the organization of a large number of territorial units or Swaroopams and system of Kooruvazhcha. Kolaswaroopam followed matrilineal system of succession. In medieval Kerala the rulers and chieftains followed Kooruvazhcha

\textsuperscript{153} K. Balakrishnan, Kannur Kotta, p.182.
and matrilineal system as a mode of preserving rights, privileges and the control of the Swaroopam territory within the royal family itself. In Kolathunad the different branches, which branched out from their main stem had involved in personal intrigues. The system of Kooruvazhcha also created many other problems. The Vadakkilamkur and Thekkilamkur belittled the status of the Kolathiri. This political situation had been used by his vassals for their advantage.

**The Role of the Thekkilamkur**

The Thekkilamkur was the southern regent of the Kolathiri. He had separate charge of the southern parts of the country with his head quarters at puthupattanam on the banks of the Kotta river. He resided in Kottippur fort in Kadathanad. It is said that the Kadathanat Rajas were able to occupy the territory around Kadathanad by their marriage alliance with one of the regents.

**The Role of the Vadakkilamkur**

The Vadakkilamkur was second in position among the regents of Kolathiri. He was the regent of the northern parts of the kingdom. But he had powers to manage the whole affairs of the state in the absence of the king. During the time of the advent of the English East India Company, the Vadakkilamkur was

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the de facto ruler of the kingdom.  He played an important role in the development of English Company in Kolathunad. The English East India Company built a fort in Tellicherry with the consent of the Vadakkilamkur, he was the de facto ruler of Kolathund and special charge of northern parts of Kolathunad

The princes of Kolaswaroopam mostly married from the Nair community. They gave land and wealth to their consorts. But the children had no right on the property of their father. They had only right on the property of their mother.

It is said that one of the Kadathanad Raja’s female ancestors acquired territory for their family by marriage alliances with one of the Southern regents. Likewise, that the Nileswaram Rajas were also able to acquire a part of the northern kingdom under their control. The system of matrilineal system and anuloma system of marriage, that prevailed in Malabar including Kolathunad created a lot of problems. The consorts were able to achieve more landed

157 Logan, Malabar…, p. 347.


160 Ibid.

161 Padmanabha Menon, History of…, p. 205.

162 During the medieval period, in Kerala, among the upper classes of the society a particular system of marriage called anuloma was prevailed. According to this system the ladies married from the higher classes of the society. In the anuloma system the husband belonged to a higher Varna or class and the wife belonged to the lower Varna.
properties with the approval of their husbands. If he was the king or regent of the king, he would be able to satisfy his wife much more than usual. The emergence of Alladam Swaroopam in the northern region as well as Kottayam and Kadatanad in the southern region as independent dynasties in the later medieval period shows the negative features of the Marumakkathayam system.\textsuperscript{163} Those systems created antagonism between the nephews, the rightful sovereigns of the king and his direct progenies.\textsuperscript{164} The struggles and intrigues were regular features of the kingdom.

The internal wars and conflicts created anarchy in Kolathunad. Along with it the feudal system also emerged in Kolathunad. There was a chain of feudal as well as semi-feudal chieftains in Kolathunad. The children of the king came into struggle with the next rulers. They conspired against them and even led armies against the next ruler. From the foreign sources itself we can learn that the princes from different branches had secured foreign support to achieve their position as they wanted. Since there was no standing army of the state, feudal lords served the king at the time of external attacks or wars. In Kolathunad most probably the problems were solved by conducting ‘honour’ fights using the martial art form called Kalariipayattu between the two or more persons. Opposing parties brought the contesters for this purpose. This was also known as Ankam. Among the one hundred and twenty two traditional Kalari houses of Kerala, thirty

\textsuperscript{163} Logan, Malabar…, pp. 346-47.

\textsuperscript{164} Nileswaram rajas in the north were emerged as semi – independent rulers in the medieval period. They were the direct offshoots of Kolathiris. Later these direct descendants of Kolathiri disagreed to obey the orders of Kolathiri.
two were in Kolathunad.\textsuperscript{165} Besides, the Kolathiri was one of the rulers of Kerala having the right to mint coins.\textsuperscript{166} But unfortunately we could not get any of the coins minted by the king of Kolathunad. The dynasty had its own seal and flag.\textsuperscript{167}

The feudal chiefs helped him to collect annual taxes from the people through their intermediaries. According to the system of \textit{Kooruvazhcha} the king had appointed his regents at important parts of his kingdom. This was a good system of administration because the regents would be able to understand the situation of the territory, which came under his direct control. It gave better administrative experiences to the junior princes. But it had some demerits also. If the king was not a capable person, his regents would become independent in their particular area of administration. In Kolathunad, at the time of the advent of the English East India Company, the \textit{Vadakkilamkur}, the northern regent, the most powerful among the regents of Kolathiri had signed several treaties with them.

\textsuperscript{165} Manoram Varma, “Kolathunadum Koalpazhamaum”, in \textit{Samakalika Malayalam Varika}, 2000 January 21, p. 27.

\textsuperscript{166} K. S. Mathew, \textit{The Poretuguese Trade with India in the Sixteenth Century}, New Delhi Manohar, 1983, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{167} The royal golden seal has three inch length and width. In it the official title of the king as \textit{Kolathirivadikoyiladhikarikal} was inscribed in half circle shape on the top of the seal. Besides, under the official title the symbols of \textit{Vakapoongula} or the bunch of flowers of \textit{Albizia Lebberck}, \textit{Nandakam} (the sword of Madayikavu Bhagavathy) and a \textit{changalavatta} or a lighted chain lamp. These symbols were carved on the top of the symbol of a beautiful boat. In the flag of the Kolaswaroopam the figures of \textit{Vakapoongula} or bunch of flowers of \textit{Albizia Lebberck} in between two swords and under them the figures of reversely arranged four small boats according to their size were beautifully painted on a white surface of the cloth.
Then he was independent in his own territory and almost all other parts of the kingdom.\textsuperscript{168}

**Conclusion**

In short in the early medieval period Kolathunad enjoyed a prominent place under the Kolathiris. Political formation of Kolathunad under the Kolathiris started in the tenth century A.D. In the same period Kolaswaroopam, the maternal line of ruling family from the Mushikas started to rule in Kolathunad. Validhara, the maternal descendant of Palaka was the first ruler of the Kolathiri line of rulers. The country acquired a lot of wealth through commercial activities. The merchant classes from the foreign countries lived in Kolathunad for many years. Jainism and Buddhism had a major role in the political development of Kolathunad. These religions mostly contained commercial classes. The trade guilds like *Manigramam, Anjuvannam, Nanadeshikal* and *Valanjiyar* had a special role in the economic development of Kolathunad. This made Kolathunad the wealthiest country in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The rulers had changed their capital from the foot hills of Ezhimala to Valarpattanam for getting more access to the Sea.

In fact, the nature of state formation clearly indicated the necessity of generating more revenue for the government. Besides voluntary contributions and taxes from people, inland trade and external trade were the sources of revenue. It

\textsuperscript{168} The Vadakkilamkur was able to allow the English to build a fort at Tellicherry, it was the region come under the administrative purview of the Thekkilamkur; *Royal writing from the prince Vadakkilamkur of the Palli Palace to the English East India Company in the year 1708*, No. III, Regional Archives Calicut (RAC), p. 2.
is noteworthy that overseas maritime trade had a special role in generating the revenue for the king. The transfer of capital from Ezhimala to Madayi and then to Valarpattanam vividly exemplifies the dependence of Kolathunad on an external source of income. Therefore, the state formation of Kolathunad can not be understood without explaining the commercial and other economic considerations of the state. In this context, it is also important to mention that the rulers of Kolathunad, whether the Mushikas or the Kolathiris, maintained cordial relations with all classes of people irrespective of their religious, caste, cultural and linguistic differences, although there were some conflicts with the Brahmins, who could not establish their religious and social dominance in the region. Religious toleration was the hallmark of Kolathunad throughout its existence.