Chapter III
Swaroopam and Muppu vaazhcha

Past, as it took place, cannot be replayed in language or reproduced in historical description/representation. For the contemporary academic community this proposition may not require much elaboration. The “documents” that come from the past can be analyzed even if the past “as it took place” cannot be described. Historical documents are meaningful only within an interpretative regime, and the history that figured out through documents is primarily a discursive reality; a reality that is bound by the principles of justification in terms of the interpretative procedure carried out on the documents that are available by chance.

The term “document” requires explanation. Documents mean here the written texts that were made between the mid-fourteenth century and the early eighteenth century, the period covered in this chapter. They consist mainly of the mathilakam grandhavari which belonged to the Padmanabha Swamy temple and the palace up to the twentieth century. These documents are contemporary accounts of events that took place during the period. This archive of the cadjan leaf inscriptions consists approximately of three million records\(^1\) of which only a negligible fraction, a little less than two thousand had been transcribed and published. To be specific, these published records will be referred to as documents in this study\(^2\).

Most historical writings from the mid-nineteenth century\(^3\) refer to these documents as evidence. It is around this documental axis that most of the descriptions of the medieval period of Travancore revolve. The most repeated terms in these documents are muppu and Swaroopam. The frequency of their appearance is so high that given the published documents one can say that it is difficult not to encounter these terms in any of the pages of the transcripts of these documents. The frequency of their recurrence in the documents, the
status of these terms as the basic reference points and their relative position among the other similar referents in the documents, together show the importance of these terms. The terms, *muppu* and *Swaroopam*, became obscured by their indiscriminate translation into "king" and "kingdom" respectively. The words *raaja* and *raajyam* which may more correctly be translated as king and kingdom do not occur in the documents. But the terms *muppu* and *Swaroopam* actually used in the documents, are treated as reducible to king and kingdom, respectively. To repeat, such a translation involves two problems namely, "category displacement" and "conceptual slippage".

Historiographically, one can find three ways in which the so-called "medieval Travancore" was described. One technique involved translation of the terms *muppu* and *Swaroopam* as king and kingdom. Such translations could remain unproblematic only within the rubric of the preconceived model of "king" and "kingdom" held by the historians (Sovereignty models of different kind). This led to the category displacement, which obviated the need to probe the issue whether the terms are translatable. The conception of "Travancore" or its synonym "Venad" as a unified ontological entity is characteristic of this type of description. Thus the real implications of the terms *muppu* and *Swaroopam* ubiquitously found in the documents are overlooked.

Although weakly premised and incompletely argued the second type of description assumes that *Swaroopam* was totally independent and that there was nothing that permitted their aggregation into unit entity like Travancore. These conflicting portrayals of a unified medieval kingdom, Travancore, on the one hand and independent Swaroopams on the other were succeeded by a more or less mediated portrayal formulated during the present decade. The third type of description of "medieval Travancore" recognizes the terms *muppu* and *Swaroopam* but at the same time treats *Swaroopams* as parts of
an imagined reality of a “whole” called Venad/Travancore. Here Swaroopams are imbued with the status of “elements” assembled within the aggregate/aggregating unit called Venad. Therefore the Swaroopams become visible only by virtue of being within Venad, and not in their own terms. Instead of investigating each of the Swaroopams in themselves and the interrelationships among them, these interpretations search for the presence or absence of a centralized authority possessed by any one muppu/Swaroopam. Similarly, there is an attempt in these writings to establish that a single muppu/king exercised either partial or absolute authority over all those Swaroopams, which are identified to be within Venad. Even questions concerning the nature, structure, and/or function of authority of the muppu within each Swaroopam are rarely asked. This led to a residual characterization of the authority of muppu.9

What follows will introduce the terms Swaroopam and muppu, by providing an analytical framework that has not yet been present in existing historical writings. The distinctiveness of these terms with respect to categories in any of the variants of the “kingdom” model is obvious to any one who does not commit the conceptual slippage and category displacement described in the previous chapter. One thing that is common to all the descriptions is that they invariably link the relation between king and kingdom (muppu and Swaroopam) through the general category of kinship. In other words, usually these terms appear together or bound within a referential field of kinship relations. One of the hypothesis in this study is that kinship relations are active only within restricted relations inside the Swaroopam. The authority of a muppu over Swaroopam has only indirect connection with kinship and no role at all in the relations between Swaroopams. The focus of this chapter is the unit called Swaroopam and the place of muppu within it. It will be demonstrated that the process of determining the individual who has to occupy the
muppu position takes place through what can be called a hierarchy of age or a precisioned arrangement based on the time of birth (janmasamayam). The present re-examination will attempt to re-evaluate the connotations of the terms Swaroopam and muppu by distancing Swaroopam from the “Travancore of the late-medieval” times as it is in the prevailing literature. The attempt here is to trace how these terms are interrelated and to isolate the critical binding forces active within them.

**The Swaroopam unit**

The term Swaroopam can be more closely examined and understood as a basic unit and category in the analysis of “Travancore’s past”. The Swaroopam was a more or less formalized or coherent phenomenon during the four centuries under examination. The word Swaroopam simultaneously implies its relational and exclusive existence. To begin with, let us consider the word Swaroopam from the semantic, etiological and etymological angles. In the most general sense Swaroopam means “belonging to one’s own” or “one’s own shape” or “having one’s own form” or “the law which is identified with myself (God)” etc. and refers directly to self-existence and self-form (as in “self-formed” or “self-forming”). Semantically Swaroopam connotes a quality of self-determinance, a form that can be identified as “internal” to anything. So Swaroopam has the potential for self-regenerativity. The concept of the Swaroopam exists without reference to any other form (for example, concepts like pararoopam, the antinomy of the term Swaroopam). The identity of the Swaroopam is defined in terms of itself, as it is a “self-form”. Therefore, the concept of Swaroopam provides a fundamental unit of inquiry unlike the “comprehensive name” Travancore. To be precise, since a comprehensive term is defined by its component elements, in this case Swaroopams, the so-called Travancore or Venad regions of medieval period can only be “known”
by their constituent elements. The term *Swaroopam* overcomes the encoding effects of the comprehensive name, which was historically made available only in the “post-medieval” period. It is expected that *Swaroopam* as a category would be analytically more advantageous as a unit of analysis and it could open up new interpretative regimes. For which there are other reasons as well, which are discussed below.

Encountered in different semantic structures of speech, the term *Swaroopam* is circulated as a referential world also. For example, Threppappur, Deshinganadu, Chiravay, Kunnummel etc were recognized as *Swaroopams*. Here *Swaroopam* functions as a common noun, which by definition is a referential word. However, when the word *Swaroopam* comes as suffixed to a specific entity, as in the case of Threppappur *Swaroopam*, it functions as a proper noun. So whenever any *Swaroopam* is singled out in relation to others or employed to refer to any one or more individual *Swaroopams*, say Threppappur or Chiravay, then it is invariably used as a referential word. In this case as an object, *Swaroopam* refers to a subject and never assumes, in expressions, a subject position by itself.

What we find is that the word *Swaroopam* functions referentially as well as non-referentially; both as common and proper nouns, and perhaps also as an abstract noun which makes it possible to use it as subject, object and appositive. This immense semantic richness of the word is itself an indication of the complexity of the *Swaroopam* phenomena and opens up the vista for a multidimensional inquiry. There appears to have been a heterogeneous use of *Swaroopam* in language itself, parallel to the co-existence of different *Swaroopams* in the non-discursive terrain as well. The differentiated senses of the word suggest the co-existence of several “self-formed” entities, something “that has presented itself to the eyes”. In this context, one
begins to see the significance of focusing on the points of differentiation and formation of these constellations of Swaroopams.

The term Swaroopam denotes at the same time a family and a region. For instance a phrase such as Chiravay Swaroopam denotes simultaneously the proper name of a family of individuals and households, and a given geographical and social space. In this study, when we use the term Swaroopam (with capital letter “S”) it denotes a given social space with mutual relations among the inhabitants and when it begins with lower case “s” it refers to the family. If Swaroopam is a projection of the family name over a spatial continuum, then one can assume that Swaroopam combines the former entity within its power relationships. A sense of territoriality concomitant with the projection of the family name as generally applicable over a given geographical and social space is at work here. The conditions that permitted the projection of a family name over a given domain were the foundations of the exercise of authority. A realization of this would enable one to formulate a project of ascertaining how, and to what extent, the swaroopam is articulated into the Swaroopam organization as against the account of Swaroopam organization in terms of the authority possessed by swaroopam or muppu.

The fact is that several self-formed phenomena (Swaroopams) coexisted with interstices as well as continuous relations among them, not simply one self-form or even a self-form in opposition to some other kind. The co-existence had both referential and non-referential implications. Any analysis of the Swaroopam/swaroopam unit has to traverse between its common noun and proper noun denotations to the endomorphic status of the term. Compared to the reliance on convenient “comprehensive names” which are often found to be given ontological status in the history books. The treatment of Swaroopam as a descriptive and analytical term gives more space for
social-scientific contemplation. The realization of the semantic difference between Swaroopam and kingdom will be made clear in the next section. Differentiation of the word Swaroopam as family and as generalized social space, and the existence of it both referentially and non-referentially, testifies to the analytical advantage of Swaroopam as a category and unit of inquiry.

When there are several autonomous and formalized entities having self-formativity and self-determinacy, how are the differences and intersections among them to be ascertained? There were both integral and differential relations among Swaroopams. These relations had given rise to certain set of practices that are manifest, and perforce the inquiry has to turn to a study of these practices. What needs to be highlighted are the semantic and other political fields generated interstices and intersections among Swaroopams, which are bypassed by narratives of meta-unity and "comprehensive name". In the course of our discussion it will be shown how the Swaroopam is organized outside the "swaroopam/pararoopam antinomy. Perhaps, in determining the pattern of relations of inter-self-forms there could have been a recognition of one's own form in another individual Swaroopam without loosing one's own unity and coherence.

**Muppu vaazhcha**

We have already introduced the terms Swaroopam and swaroopam into our analysis, now let us proceed to incorporate into this basic unit the other term, muppu. In a S(s)waroopam, muppu is the most distinguished position and bears a unique presence. This is true at least from the fourteenth century to the mid-eighteenth century, as one can glean from the existing documents. Muppu means, provisionally speaking, the eldest among a given set of family members (the members are called as swaroopikal if the unit entity is swaroopam) and who is the most distinctive individual in any
S(s)waroopam. Reference to muppu are not restricted to the S(s)waroopam unit alone; it is identifiable in other units like thaivazhi (descent group), kutumbam (family), clan, sect, and in other transient groupings. Within each of these unit entities there would be a unique and distinguished position designated as muppu. In other words, muppu is not exclusive to S(s)waroopam. In several other unit-entities, therefore, there were muppu positions that were occupied in various conditions by various individuals, but the muppu position in a Swaroopam is differentiated from those positions in other unit-entities in terms of its respective activities and the functions that the activities entail. Although this position is repeated in different unit entities, muppu in a Swaroopam is the most distinguished agent with unique roles and he is positioned within manifold relations having bearing on other muppus within the swaroopam. One should not lose sight of the play of distinction between the identical positional terms.

The Swaroopam muppu position is actualized in acts of vaazhal and thus coinage of the expression muppu vaazhal.11 Vaazhal or vaazhvu means "being in the world", not in a simple sense of existing but, existing distinctively. This distinctiveness is articulated by joining the expression with another one aruli (proclaimed)—hence the common phrase vaanaruli.12 The word aruli does not refer to the act of speech, but invariably goes as the honorific suffix to the term vaazhal. It renders distinctive both the act of vaazhal and the muppu as in the usage muppu-vaane-aruli. This expression implies the activity of the muppu: to be in the world/people with distinction. At a general semantic level the term vaazhal refers to the individual's being in the world and the existential condition of the position as exemplified by the phrase irunnaruli (sat and proclaimed-literally). The death of the muppu is denoted by the term mutinjaruli (mutinju=ended). Vaazhal is distinct from mere existence for it is the
quality of being in the realm of happiness and prosperity. More than the functional connotation of the activity, the term refers to the modality of the existence of the position in the activity or role and the human condition of the existent actor in the position. His existence is defined by the human matrix and the ordering of positions within and between the Swaroopams, not by the order of “things” and territory as in the case of a king. This is one of the reasons why translation of muppu as “ruler” is conceptually faulty, for this would confuse between the existential aspect and the functional aspect of the term muppu. This would become clear when the contrast between vaazhal and bharanam is demonstrated.

A pattern that stands out is the repeatability of vaazhal in several other unit entities apart from Swaroopam. For instance there are expressions like naatuvaazhi and deeshavaazhi which are positions of two jurisdictional entities namely naadu and desham. Here the position itself is defined through the activity and the object of its function that is naadu or desham. The position is not spelt out but it is connoted through the activity that binds the position within the unit-entities. Therefore, both muppu and vaazhal are repeatable, but only independently, at various levels of unit-entities of any Swaroopam; the position of muppu and act of vaazhal get linked exclusively within the Swaroopam; and there is no multiplicity of muppu vaazhal within any one Swaroopam at any given point in time.

One cannot generalize that wherever there is muppu, the act of vaazhal is implicit in the position. In the case of unit-entities like the family, thaivazhi, clan etc, as noted above, there could be muppu positions but vaanaruli is never used when referring to them. It is not the act of vaazhal that gives distinctiveness to these positions. Similarly, in the case of the unit-entities like naadu and desham there is no muppu position although the act of vaazhal does occur.
there. Therefore, the confluence of the position and activity, expressed in the phrase *muppu vaazhal*, was unique to the *swaroopam* taken as a unit, although *muppu* and *vaazhal* were repeatable in many other unit-entities. Another fact worth highlighting is that the positional term *muppu* repeatedly occurs in *S(s)waroopam*, family, clan etc., whereas the term *vaazhal* appears in *S(s)waroopam*, *naadu* and *desham*. The term *S(s)waroopam* is employed to designate the unique combination of the two entities the family *swaroopam* and the extra-familial and territorial *Swaroopam*. We get two different groupings here. In one group what unifies the disparate entities is the position of *muppu*, be it *swaroopam* or clan. In other group the unifying factor is *vaazhal*, be it *Swaroopam* or *desham*. In the former configuration the *muppu* position is placed within a kinship network or other familial relations which are strictly internal to the respective unit-entities (when taken independently). The latter, bases itself on the activity of the *muppu* whose functional implications extend beyond the kinship relations to territoriality. The only unit entity common to both the groups is *S(s)waroopam*, the instance where the position and activity are combined and becomes visible as an unique entity. That is why *Swaroopam* and *swaroopam* simultaneously appear in both the groups. The *muppu vaazhcha* gives us clues to the link between kinship systems and political systems involved in the organization of *Swaroopam*. The term *muppu* and *vaazhal* taken independently show the presence of interstices between them (in other words possibility of separate existence) while the combined expression “*muppu vaazhal*” depicts the fusion which is operative in the organization of *Swaroopam*.

This expression *muppu vaazhcha* and its distinctiveness with respect to territoriality can be clearly brought out by differentiating it from *raaja-bharanam* (rule of the king); *bharanam* often follows the term *raajaave* and thus the expression *raaja-bharanam*. But the
phrase *muppu-bharanam* does not occur in the documents. The distinction could be elucidated in the following manner: it is important to emphasize that although the word *raajaave* and *raaja-bharanam* were known during the period, these words were never treated as substitutes for or synonyms of *muppu vaazhcha* in the available documents. The term *bharanam* means “to support”, “to carry” and implies “to contain”. At one level the difference between “to contain” and “to be with distinction” is self-evident. Historically however, it is useful to note that in the beginning of the eighteenth century we see a shift from *muppu vaazhcha* to *raaja-bharanam*. In a *raajyam* (kingdom) the positional name *raajavu* is not repeatable at any other level unlike the *muppu* position. Two *raaja*-positions for a kingdom is paradoxical. Within the *Swaroopam* organization, *muppu* position and the activity of *vaazhcha* are repeatable at several sub-units within the *Swaroopam*. In the case of the *raajyam* or kingdom; *raajavu* cannot be the positional name for positions within any of the other unit-entities. If there is a *raajavu*/king, then invariably there must be a *raajyam*/king.dom; they are synchronically bonded in such a way that it would be an exception if either of them existed independently. However, no such bonding occurs between *muppu* and *Swaroopam*, at least at the level of language or in any other evident social articulation. King is unique to the kingdom because this position is defined in terms of a disposition to encompass a “total” domain. If there are “kings” for *deshams* or *naadus*, then they would function to contain the domain while they will be in turn “contained” by the king of that particular kingdom. This nullifies the function of kings of the former units and necessitates their representation with the help of prefixes like “sub” or “micro” etc. In the case of *muppu vaazhcha* several *Swaroopams* can exist “with distinction” without being mutually exclusive and without involving linear successive containment of any one by the other. Even when
more than one Swaroopam comes within one's muppu vaazhcha, the identity of the individual Swaroopams remains unaffected.

While “king” implies a set of functions that constitute the position, muppu position derives its significance not from functional considerations but rather from the placement of the position among other positions in the Swaroopam and also among muppu positions of its sub-units like clan, thaivazhi etc. When we take Swaroopam as a unit there would be only one muppu position for it, but at the same time, there would be respective muppus for its thaivazhies, family units or any unified group. However, there is no delegation of authority to these positions by the Swaroopam muppu. The distinctiveness of muppu depends not on the fact that he is the muppu but on the unit of which he is the muppu. The Swaroopam muppu was the most conspicuous among the various positions present in different social units and muppu vaazhcha was the most distinctive activity. But then muppu vaazhcha does not involve “containment” of any other muppu position within the Swaroopam unit, unlike raaja bharanam. This aspect will be taken up for further elucidation contextually.

The positional aspect of muppu will now be elaborated in order to understand its foundations in a Swaroopam. When the word muppu was introduced, it was pointed out that this word directly refers to seniority of age among “certain” members of the unit in question. This word “certain” requires elaboration. It is also true that the term muppu circulates as a relative term. It is a position (sthaanam) and has two implications, while it is a position of distinction, the distinction that is conferred upon it is located within a matrix of placement. Therefore it can never be absolute as in the case of Raaja. The word thus means both position and place. There is a domain of co-existence of several positions in which the muppu is however distinctly visible. That is, there is a continuum of
individuals from which the senior most among them is singled out. In the case of Swaroopam, its muppu would necessarily belong to a swaroopam; others in the Swaroopam unit are excluded. This is the first level of disaggregation to identify the "certain" members. Thus, for a Swaroopam there is a single swaroopam family, this family is defined in terms of both kin and affinal relations) from which individuals would be drawn to occupy the position of the muppu. The same individual would be the muppu of that family as well. Here the specific individual who occupies the position is not the central concern. The central problem here is: from where these individuals are drawn? Rather than the particular individual and kinship relations, it is the homogenized family unit, whatever its form may be, that is critical. A swaroopam is identified with Swaroopam in such a way that the former would be the legitimate hereditary reserve of the heirs to the positions of distinction in the organization of the latter.

Before we proceed further a question becomes germane: what was it that gave legitimacy to such identification? Such an identification would not have become problematic during the period for this had already been normalized. The fixity of this identification is a distinctive feature of the period under consideration. In that case the question would be what were the mechanisms that perpetuated the identification. These questions will be examined later, but they are raised here to allude to the political implications of the identification of an individual family with a collectivity composed of several unit-entities and to the exclusion of several other social units. At present, what has to be recognized as important is not so much the unit-entity of swaroopam as differentiated by kinship relations. But it is important to treat it as a composite unit consisting of kinship relations inclusive of affinal relations), and as a network of "genealogical relations" immanent in the interlocking of
several elementary joint families, (which can be roughly called "genealogical relations"). These genealogical relations are taken as homogeneous at this level of disaggregation. Another question is whether this family is a kinship group centered on a single ancestral root or not. This question is difficult to pursue in our present state of knowledge but it is still a question that can be formulated clearly.

The right of hereditary succession to the muppu positions in Swaroopam rests on the genealogical relations among the members of the swaroopam and the relations that bind it to other unit-entities of significance in the Swaroopam. It should also be kept in mind that this identification does not mean that the swaroopam and Swaroopam can be conflated, it does not also suggest that essence of the Swaroopam can be found in the swaroopam. One is not reducible to the other.

**Distribution and order of swaroopikal**

Once a particular swaroopam is identified with the Swaroopam, then the second level of disaggregation becomes discernible. At this level, disaggregation takes place within the swaroopam to isolate a set of individual members who can be the hereditary successors to the positions of distinctions like muppu. The muppu would invariably be a member of the swaroopam, but he is not necessarily be the eldest one among the entire population (swaroopikal) of the swaroopam. A disaggregation of the unified interior of the swaroopam takes place here. At this level of operation over the swaroopam, it is not treated as a homogeneous entity but as one differentiated in terms of kinship, including distinctions based on gender. The totality of the members is differentiated and only a specified set the senior-most among those included in the mura (a given ordered sequence of individuals) could be the legitimate occupants or successors to the position of muppu. The remaining members in the mura would occupy other positions of distinction in
the Shwaroopam. This term "mura" has to be elaborated. By doing this it would also be possible to isolate principles that enabled one to justifiably occupy positions of different orders, especially Swaroopam Muppu.

The word mura means "what is binding", "duly" etc, and can come in a place to refer to "having a turn of duty". Mura may be conceived as a schematized diagram, which reveal certain patterns of precedence internal to the swaroopam. The objects of the mura diagram are individual members of the unit entity, that is swaroopam. If the mura diagram is the form, then the swaroopikal are the ullatakkam (content). Individualization of the membership in the unit is concomitant with the operation of the diagram. It is indispensably the individualized members who get bound by the mura. It differentiates members of the swaroopam in terms of their positions and create an inside and outside within the swaroopam; some members are placed within the mura and others are placed outside it. The mura order recognized the place of the individual within kinship relationships and projected normalized distributions of kinship relations into hierarchies of power. It is at this level that kinship enters into the process of aggregation and disaggregation of individuals within a swaroopam. Here, the political dimension, as in the identification of the swaroopam with the Swaroopam, is not present. The field of politics in this case consists of different objects and justificatory criteria compared to the first level of disaggregation of a family from other unit-entities of the Swaroopam. The way kinship and politics operate within the swaroopam could be seen in the exclusion and inclusion that the mura order entail. It should be repeated that the nature and form of politics that is immanent in the grouping of certain individuals from within the swaroopam clearly differs from the identification of swaroopam with Swaroopam, their respective domains of operation but also due to the divergent
justificatory grounds, objects and strategies of exclusion and inclusion employed within them. This leads us to the question of lineage and succession, the principles of inclusion into the *mura* diagram.

The next question to be taken up is how some of the individual members are included in the *mura* or excluded from it. The principle of exclusion is unanimously said by historians to be founded on kinship relations. But the specific kinship basis of succession is still not very clear. There have been attempts to see whether matrilineal or patrilineal orders of succession were prevalent, but no unchallenged conclusion in this regard have appeared. Nevertheless, it is believed that a matrilineal system of succession prevailed, but without any reliable substantiation. There were marital relations by the *swaroopams* with both matrilineal families as well as the Tamil patrilineal groups. In addition, there existed knowledge about other models of kinship and successes in the *Swaroopams*. Further, different orders of lineage and succession were followed by different groups of people. These factors could have influenced the specificity of the succession system and criteria of inclusion of *swaroopikal* into the *mura*. What is important at present is to note that there is an ambiguity. The documents, which describe the events of succession, do not state the kinship relationship of the successor to the "ego". This itself is a question that needs to be elaborated.

The available documents on succession in general refer to the following: proper names of the ego and the successor, the time, date and year of successors birth, the proper names of the family to which the successor belongs (at times this will be clubbed with the name of some ancestral family known as Kilperur which existed in the remote past), the temples the successor's visits and the offerings that are made, gifts and other ritualistic gestures of "giving", oblations to
various human dignitaries and extra-terrestrial deities etc. With minor variations, these are the items that generally appear in the documents that refer to succession. What is curious is that although many things are precisely stated, the documents do not state the kinship relation. This has already been pointed out, but the answer that exists now is far from satisfactory. The existing explanation is that the kinship relation was obvious, and therefore it was not included in the documents. Posing a counter-question could bring out the weak basis of this explanation. If kinship relation has not been included because it was obvious, does it mean that all the other details in the document have been so stated because they were far from evident?

This leads one to say that more than kinship relationship, what was considered more significant to be recounted was the time of succession and time of the incumbent’s birth into the family. They are invariably inscribed in the documents as the distinctive qualities of the successor while the kinship relation of the successor to the predecessor is left unsaid. Before taking up how members included in the mura are distributed in terms of age, some other features of mura need to be stated. Mura is operative only within the swaroopam or other unit entities because it requires unit-entities consisting of more than one individual. The mura orders both male and female members separately, that is any one mura order would consist exclusively of female or male members of the swaroopam. An existing mura order gets altered only in the event of birth or death, with the consequent chain effects in the order being as in the case of any other sequential ordering. This alteration in the ordered sequence can be called a change in the mura order. But there can be shifts in the criteria of ordering the sequence, as when a transition takes place from marumakkathayam (matriliny) to makkathayam (patriliny) and vice-versa, or from a multilineal to a unilinear system of
succession, or as a result of adoptions when there are already members within the mura order\textsuperscript{22}. In such cases we can say that there is a shift, rather than change, in the mura order.

Let us now move on to the third level of disaggregation which precessions (precise time of birth is observed as it is critical for the ordering of individuals across positions) the time of jananam or janmam (the terms refer respectively to birth and birth right), the mura ordering could be schematized by the partial introduction of another term kuuru. Kuuru is a hierarchical prioritization based on the seniority of the male members of the swaroopam; it is the order of the male siblings in terms of age within each mura of the female members. The kuuru-mura schematic diagram do not merely single out one individual as successor. It consists of several persons in a serialized order of priority. Whatever may be the system of succession, the diagram is an ordering that moves from the existing muppu to either the eldest son if makkathaayam or to the eldest nephew in marumakkathaayam and so on. Succession to muppu position involves the precisioning of the temporal and the founding of a hierarchical web of individual relations based on it. Precise ordering of the time of birth and its status as the foundation for relativization of a certain set of individuals stabilized the system of succession and maintained inter-positional relations within the unit-entity. Thus, whatever may be the specific system of kinship relations involved in the hereditary succession, once a group of individual members are demarcated and included in the mura, the process of inclusion/exclusion based on kinship ended. What is made explicit in the documents is the successor's positional relation with the others in a spectrum of seniority. Even if there are seniors in the family who are not included in the mura, it does not influence the question as to who should be the legitimate successor.
It should be pointed out at the outset that the *kuuru-mura* schematized diagram which isolates and hierarchically orders individuals was operative in all social units where consanguinity, be it close or remote, was operative. The *kuuru-mura* diagram relates different individual bodies and positions, and prescribes precise sets of aims and activities to those whom it isolates and sequences in a hierarchy. Its function was not to represent a world of individuals. Rather it was a blueprint that was coextensive with the whole social field. One should not think that there was one grand scheme of *kuuru-mura* order that enabled the ordering of each and every member of the *Swaroopam*. But this diagram must be analyzed to understand the interior of the *swaroopam* organization and the way in which this diagram created exteriority and interiority among the members of *swaroopam* and serialized members and positions through a classification of the *swaroopikal*.

For better clarity the *kuuru-mura* diagram can be explicated using notations. The horizontal sequence \([a_{11} a_{12} a_{13}... a_{1k}]\) represents *kuuru* order and the vertical sequence \([a_{11} a_{21} a_{31}... a_{m1}]\) represents *mura* order. In other words, the rows represent the ordering of *mura* and columns represent *kuuru*. Such serialization can be generalized for 'k'\(^{th}\) member in the *kuuru* order and 'm'\(^{th}\) member in the *mura* order. A simple model of *kuuru-mura* diagram is re-presentable on a two dimensional plane with obvious limitations of simplification, but with added clarity about the web of relations among the positions.

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
    a_{11} & a_{12} & a_{13} & ... & a_{1k} \\
    a_{21} & a_{22} & a_{23} & ... & a_{2k} \\
    a_{31} & a_{32} & a_{33} & ... & a_{3k} \\
    \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\
    a_{m1} & a_{m2} & a_{m3} & \ldots & a_{mk}
\end{array}
\]

In a hypothetical situation, the sequential order of distribution would follow from \(a_{11}\) to \(a_{1k}\) and then from \(a_{21}\) to \(a_{2k}\) and like this up to \(a_{mk}\).
If $a_{12}$ succeeds as *muppu*, then the rest of the elements would be reallocated in such a way that $a_{13}$ would be the junior successor (*ilayathe*) and so on. If $a_{32}$ happens to be the *muppu*, due to death of $a_{11}$ to $a_{31}$, then he would be repositioned as $a_{11}$, and the rest of the positions get re-serialized accordingly. Now it can be seen that age works to order different siblings of an ego, supplementing the kinship basis of succession and ordering. But age works in a more central way undermining kinship relations in the diagram. The distribution of individuals within a particular *mura* does not follow principles of kinship relations but solely age based seniority. The third level of disaggregation that takes place in the *mura* ordering, order of *kuuru*, will be focused below. An important aspect that needs to be noted here is that the coverage of individuals included in the diagram is limited. This limited coverage of the order is exemplified by the high incidence of *dathu* (adoption) of individuals from other families due to paucity of successors. In short, the *mura* includes only a restricted range of kinship relations.

*Muppu vaazhcha and kuuru-mura Schemata*

Counterfactually speaking, if the inter-positional relations among the members included in the matrix are primarily kinship-based or if the horizontal serialization of *mura* is primary as we have seen, then the matrix can be a representative model. However, if age is the determining factor in the internal ordering of the matrix and only the outer boundary of the matrix is defined by kinship principle, then this model may not be valid. Because there will then be a unilateral descending serialization of individuals (only a vector) irrespective of kinship order, based on their respective distribution of ages. To be precise, within the first *mura* there will be a serialization of priority of *kuuru*. This serialization of the siblings introduces the age factor or *mura* into the *kuuru* ordering. The eldest of the first *mura* (*muppu*) will be followed by his junior brother who

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would be called *ilayathu* and the position he occupies in the matrix is termed as *ilamkuuru*\(a_{12}\).

Now *kuuru-mura* can be investigated in a more meaningful way. At present the question that is to be addressed is the following: if the age of \(a_{11}\) is lesser than say \(a_{21}\) as in the above matrix, who would be considered as *muppu*, the former or the latter? (This question arise only when kinship alone is considered for ordering) it is known that age or *muppu* as eldest is the primary determinant of the *muppu mura* and not the kinship relationship at the third level of deductive operation on *swaroopikal*. In this case age factor undermines the exclusive determinability of kinship. If it is so the implication is that there is an element exogenous to kinship that is the age factor. Perhaps it is kinship, which determines the outer limit of the matrix, but its internal distribution of individuals across positions rests on age based *kuuru*.

One has to be a member of the *swaroopam*, be within the bounds of given kinship relations, above all, be the eldest among (the *mura*) those in the kinship set in order to be the *muppu*. That is, once a member of the family gets included into the *mura*, then age becomes the critical factor in determining his mutual relations among the positions of distinction within the matrix. Within *kuuru-mura* ordering the principle of ordering is not so much kinship but seniority in *kuuru*. It is important to note that while the *kuuru-mura* order combines several members of the *swaroopam* into a universe by disaggregating a set of individuals from the entire *swaroopam* in terms of kinship relations. Simultaneously it individualizes and reallocates each of them (included in the order through age) and assigns to each a specified place within the web of inter-positional relationships. Thus, this complex system of succession and perpetuation of inter-positional relations in *swaroopam* can be conceived in terms of a *kuuru-mura* schema. This diagram should
not be understood as a structure (a set of possible relations among variables which is more or less stable, in so far as the alliances among the individuals who can be included in any one diagram form a supple and changeable network. The field of kinship was open in the sense that modifications could be accomplished by, say adoption. The *kuuru-mura* diagram becomes visible in its finalized functions like succession to positions of distinction and at the moments when the positions come into contact with one another.

The way *kuuru* undermines the kinship based *mura* at the terminal point of distribution of those included into the mura order has already been highlighted. The *kuuru* ordering can be analyzed further. The word *kuuru* also means part, share, alliance, attachment, etc.\(^{26}\) All these qualities, which were already eulogized in the past itself, are made ordinal by reducing them to age as in the *kuuru-mura* diagram. This shows the centrality of age. The distribution of individuals over a precisioned time-scale, based on their respective time of birth, and who are differentiated through the relations of age, is immanently unequal. Age relations are to be placed in a continuum; time of *janmam* is invariably hierarchized. The time will be measured on the basis of the moment of birth of those who are to be included in the *mura*. Precisioning of time of birth (of any mortals) has always been quite meticulous as is seen in the "astronomic" calculus prevalent from ancient times. Moment of birth is measurable with precision and thus employable in any relations of inequality, which requires unarbitrary criteria. Hierarchy becomes all the more precisionable at the moment age-wise distribution cuts across generational and kinship hierarchies. This is so especially because age-factor undermines kinship which it may not be possible to order sequentially (especially when the generational differences are included in the system of lineage and succession). Age distribution can be placed in a hierarchy so as to
create a correspondence between the positions that are to be filled and the order of mura. The schema binds the two hierarchies, namely kuuru and positions of distinction; this will be taken up shortly for elaboration. For the present purpose it can be inferred from the above decomposition of the schema that what is made stable and fixed is the hierarchy of kuuru as against the positions. Determinacy and un-arbitrariness in the distribution of positions is accomplished through the determination of the time of janmam, this in turn gives stability, continuity and permanence to the Swaroopam. This precisioning of time as in kuuru-mura order was permanent, exhaustive and continuous within the organization of S(s)waroopam.

**Permanence, continuity and certainty in kuuru-mura**

The materiality of the kuuru-mura diagram can be deciphered. One, in the fact that it individualizes members of the swaroopam and places them in a sequence of subject positions. Two, the way in which it creates a one to one correspondence between the hierarchical distribution of positions in the origination of Swaroopam and the kuuru-mura order. The kuuru-mura order is not only applicable to swaroopam muppu but implies a general classification of positions in the organization of Swaroopam that specifies which individual member should occupy which position. The members in the order would be assigned positions spread across the Swaroopam in terms of the kuuru. But the principles behind the designation of each and every specific position, that is the spatial distribution of these positions, is not discernible from the historical documents.

Further the kuuru-mura diagram is not only active at the instance of succession, but more than that, it also has a permanence in the sense that It maintains the one-to-one-correspondence between kuuru-mura order and the positions. It ensures that the individual is assigned a fixed place in the inter-positional relations. Thus the schema operates most visibly at the point of succession.
where it becomes the basis for justifying one's claim to be the successor. It is more than just a guide in that it provides a permanent map of the inter-positional relations within the Swaroopams. This has profound ramification for the life and activity of individuals from birth to death. Specifying not merely the functions that he is expected to perform but even determining and ordering his daily life within a ritual grid. Thus the kuuru-mura diagram constitutes a continuum both across space and time, that is across the positions of the Swaroopam and through the individuals life from birth to death. Above all, the diagram not only orders the present but also the future in as much as it anticipates future positions and the incumbents decisively who are to occupy it. An extreme example can be given here. When an unborn child is designated “garbhashtha Sriman” (literally, one who has succeeded the throne while yet in the womb) it was not merely a honorific title but a palpable reality in experiential terms. This ordering of the future made possible the calculation and control of the size and nature of the set of people whom should be included/excluded from the kuuru-mura. Thus when one is designated as the “garbhashtha Sriman” it not only “anticipates” the successor but also anticipates the displacement of others positions and thus a shift in kuuru-mura. In short, the schemata was continuous and perpetuative in the organization of the Swaroopam. These positive features which makes possible the repeated use and reuse of the diagram can be called “ordering in time” and “distribution in space” Materiality of the diagram is achieved when it vets correlated with the ordered positions, and that is where kuuru-mura and politics converge. The Diagram enables the enclosure of strictly individualized relations within the swaroopam and serialization of them in terms of relations of inequality. Kuuru-mura diagram is an unarbitrary and stable
mechanism for inclusion, ordering and placement, which are not only legitimizing but always already legitimized.

Age as a principle of differentiation is least sensitive to historical changes and differences in individual capabilities, this was another positive feature of the diagram. Once the age norm is applied, the outcomes—decision about who should be designated to which position—follow decisively and they are least prone to ambiguity and imprecision. The criticism that the schema is highly fatalistic is likely to arise. Nevertheless, it has to be noted that the age factor as normalized and generalized criteria for hierarchical ordering is discursively formed. The justifications for an age based hierarchy among those included in the kuuru-mura order is made possible within the discursive formation which is contingent and responsive to human will. But then, in the precisioning of time as noted above one could see man's will to create principles and norms which once began to operate among people, escapes from individual's will and becomes autonomous. The norms and principles then work as if from "above" and shape course of action and existence of men. Although they are formed in discourse once formed they affect non-discursive realm also, which are beyond the effective field of the creator's will. The lure for the human artifacts is most significantly decipherable in the way time is precisioned and put to use in the kuuru-mura ordering of subjectivity. Persons in the kuuru-mura continuum from the senior most to junior most commonly shared the norm. The legitimacy of one's claim to be in a particular position is on age.

If there is a hierarchy among the muppus of different swaroopams on the basis of age, then the principle of kuuru determines the relations between the two "identical" positions. In this sense there ought to be a senior-most when we consider several swaroopams together because the respective muppus are, of course, different in age. This is another terrain where the age factor engages
in the active politics of the Swaroopams. So, it was not kinship that was the basis of succession to the muppu and other positions nor was it central to inter-positional relations within the Swaroopam. Kinship relation was a necessary condition for one to be included in kuuru-mura order, but to be the muppu, conditions regarding seniority of age are to be met with. At this terminal point of application of the kuuru-mura diagram, inter-positional relations are not mediated by kinship but by age and the technology for precisioning time. Now a general question can be raised as to whether there is any society that has devised precise modalities for mediating relations between equals. Once the equals are identified the next question is who among the equals should succeed. This question becomes crucial because the positions are already hierarchised with fixity.

Once the hierarchy of age comes to be commonly accepted by all the members of the swaroopam, then the inter-positional relations become beyond individual wills. This can be explained by differentiating the situation in question with a hypothetical alternative. If the primary factor, which determined the nature of the inter-positional relationship, had been “individual efficiency” or “personal capability” instead, then the possibility for interpreting the relations in a different way arises. If the efficiency is the parameter to determine the hierarchical positions, under conditions of competition, exercise of will for the enhancement of one’s efficiency becomes a prerequisite. The efficiency norm makes it possible for any one individual in the kuuru-mura order to aspire to higher positions in the hierarchy and competition becomes universalized. Once the exercise of will for efficiency is triggered off, surpassing the one’s above one becomes an end in itself. Efficiency thus acquired, in turn, becomes deployable on the “other”. Superior efficiency justifies the actions. “Efficiency” as the norm of superiority is also inherently
arbitrary, for different measuring principles order efficiency differently and this, at times, results in the inversion of order relations. Thus an efficiency-based norm is more amenable to discursive and non-discursive manipulations conducive to the furthering of one's own interest. At the same time, irreducibility of efficiency to any single principle of measurement makes it a more convenient criterion in strategic manipulations. Efficiency as a norm is intrinsically amenable to one's will in hierarchically determining place within inter-positional relations. If the norm for relating one position to another is based on age, then these relationships would be determinate and predictable, and the nature of the interrelationship cannot be changed by contingent or historical factors. Age as a norm determines the outcome. Unlike the efficiency-based norm, which leaves the question of the positions within the hierarchy open, the age-based norm, is determinate. One cannot structure a determinate factor like age, but efficiency is amenable to structuration. Indeterminate efficiency norm would provide the justification for the preferment of kuuru member or another, if it accords with one's notion of efficiency. This would lead to subjectivism and indeterminacy.

**Kuuru-mura schemata as generalizable**

Now let us ask whether there were any members of the swaroopam who were outside the kuuru-mura diagram. It was seen that some of the members belonging to the swaroopam were excluded from the specific kuuru-mura diagram, which was particular to the muppu and other distinguished positions of Swaroopam organization. Nevertheless, all the members in the Swaroopam would be positioned in one or other kuuru-mura. Any possible inter-individual relations could be ordered by activating the diagram, whatever may be the level of aggregation or disaggregation of the S/s)swaroopam. It can either appear momentarily, for example,
at the time of deciding the matrimonial relations and succession, or it can be active permanently among the members within a unit like a household under a roof. Further, one individual would appear simultaneously in different diagrams which are applicable for different things, situations and purposes, and different diagrams would order each individual differently. This age-based spectrum within the unit-entities leaves none outside the *kuuru-mura* ordering. It is in this wider sense that this diagram achieves its repeatable materiality during the period that falls within the purview of our analysis.

Generalisability of the *kuuru-mura* should not be taken to mean that some single continuous diagram could be activated over the whole social body of the *Swaroopam*, with the *muppu* at the pinnacle of the resultant linear hierarchy. In fact, as the diagram individualizes and posits each of them with well-defined rights and obligations, there would be a non-generalisability of any one position over others in the order. There would be fields where one individual position cannot exercise his authority even over its next junior position, be a position immediately lower to it or far distanced from it in the order. Generalisability does not mean exhaustiveness with respect to the territorial spread of the *Swaroopam*. Nor is the individual unit with its manifold relations completely brought under any particular hierarchy. There is no *kuuru-mura* diagram encompassing the whole *Swaroopam*.

Another unit-entity has to be examined to understand the working of the diagram, namely the exclusive order of *kuuru-mura* of the female members. In the case of the female members of the Threppappur *Swaroopam* who had been residing at Attingal, there is evidence regarding existence of an exclusive *mura*. The *muppu* of this matrilocal residence had always been the senior-most female member from the *kuuru-mura*. In Deshinganadu *swaroopam* even
though there is no separate residence of female members as in the above case, there existed a separate *kuuru-mura* order for its female members as well. Thus female members of the *swaroopam* were also not exempted from the ordering. The *kuuru-mura* diagram is applicable irrespective of gender difference, but always separately for each gender. The *kuuru-mura* diagrams for the male members and the female members are independent of one another. There is no *kuuru-mura* diagram that lays down the modalities of the interpositional relationships (between men and women) in the organizational realm of the *Swaroopam*. This interstice gives room for indeterminacy and is prone to strategic manipulations.

Is there any correspondence between the two orders based on gender? Within patriliny the correspondence could be remote, or the female order will not exist. But if matriliny is the principle of inclusion of individuals in the *kuuru-mura* order, then mura of both male and female are necessary. But, if age (*kuuru*) is the principle of internal ordering, then there need not be any strict one to one correspondence between *kuuru-mura* orders of the male and the female. The changes in the respective orders within a *swaroopam* will not influence one another. Once again, what determines ultimately is the age factor, and hence the position of *muppu*. Once age becomes the discriminant factor, in the final instance, the male siblings are grouped together irrespective of the age of their mothers, and similarly within the female order. If there is a mother- *muppu* (or elder sister- *muppu*), then she is commonly related to all the siblings as the mother or sister, biological continuum is not at work in the instance. The internal ordering of the mothers/sisters is thus independent of the order of their male or female siblings. The age hierarchy among the female order is made independent of the *kuuru-mura* of the male members. The vertical serialization and the ordered relation of *mura* male members does not influence the female order. The specific
physical parentage of the *muppu* both in terms of maternity and paternity is thus nullified in the kuuru *mura* diagram, but his position is linked to the other *muppu* namely the *muppu* of a matriloclal family. Age in that way undermines kinship in manifold ways. In the diagram of inter-positional relations and the field of politics, what is more visible is precisioning of time than kinship.

Had a hierarchised schema of positions been created in correspondence with the *kuuru-mura* order, then the system would have become determinate, leaving no room for arbitrary individual maneuvers. The schemata of *kuuru-mura* interconnects and relativeses different *swaroopikal*, and different positions of distinction in the *Swaroopam*. This enables a justified distribution of them into relative positions of hierarchy including *muppu* without any exogenous factors. One is required to be only the first in the kuuru to be the *muppu* of the *Swaroopam*. *Kuuru* and mura could be said to be the principles of differentiation operating in the *swaroopam* which identifies individuals and, in turn qualifies them to fill the different positions.

If there is only one *kuuru-mura* order of a *swaroopam* which is applicable to more than one *Swaroopam* then a complication is introduced. Over the time there can be changes in the specific *swaroopam* from which *muppu* and *kuuru-mura* are derived, but that aspect is not considered at present. Here the question is, if the source of the members included in the *kuuru-mura* remains the same and if there is only one *kuuru-mura* order applicable to more than one *Swaroopam*, what would be the principle of designating members between, say, the two *Swaroopams*? Some principle or criteria external to the *kuuru-mura* order would be required for placing two hierarchised members on two different *muppu* positions of different *Swaroopams*. It seems difficult to empirically verify whether each
swaroopam had its own exclusive kuuru-mura order or not. At least the existing works do not raise this issue.30

**To the exterior of kuuru-mura**

Distribution of individuals on the basis of age essentially ranks them, and interrelates them in terms of activities that each position entails. So we find one generalisable aspect which is the precisioned distribution of individuals in terms of age, as in the diagram. It appears simple but it will be shown to be quite intricate. The *kuuru-mura* diagram continuously defines not only the individual position but the interrelations among them as well. Distributional problems will be integral if there are two or more identical positions distributed among different Swaroopams and only one *kuuru-mura* from where individuals would be chosen to fill those positions. The *kuuru-mura* diagram is, by definition, hierarchical. Therefore, any determinate distribution of the members warrants another hierarchical distribution of positions, not only within the *Swaroopam* but also across *Swaoopams*. To elaborate, if the hierarchical distribution of positions in one *Swaroopam* is identical to that in another one, then under the hypothetical condition of two *muppu* positions needing to be filled, what would be the basis of allocation? For example, if a₁₁ and a₁₂ (senior and junior) were to be allocated to two identical *muppu* positions of different *Swaroopams*, what would be the basis of equating them? Is it possible to equate them at all without sidelining the *kuuru* order? The designation of each member into the positions will be indeterminate for, the differentiation between a₁₁ and a₁₂ is maintained through the logic of age hierarchy (relationship of inequality), where as there is equivalence between the positions. Thus if the hierarchised members are to be placed into equivalent positions *kuuru-mura* order cannot provide any determinate solution.

Under such a condition there would be bifurcation between two different types of distributions, one an essentially asymmetric order
of kuuru-mura and the other based on equivalence. For example, at
the same time $a_{11}$, $a_{12}$ and $a_{13}$ cannot be *muppu* of three different
Swaroopams without hierarchy among positions. This is so because
the principles of mutual differentiation among them preempt any
relation of equivalence among them. Given this, if there is asymmetry
between "identical" positions (say, *muppu* position of two
Swaroopams), then the *kuuru-mura* diagram requires the help of no
external elements in distributing individuals between positions. The
diagram of *kuuru-mura* necessitates a hierarchy of inter-positional
relations that is to say, whether it operates, hierarchy is the
outcome.

Are there any documents, which would enable us to decide
whether any one *muppu* or any other person occupying a
distinguished position exercised general control over the *Swaroopam*
or other *muppu*? Other than poetical eulogies there is little that
prorogates any *position superior to the muppu*. The title of
"*kulashekhara perumal*" is at time said to indicate a position, which
had general authority over several Swaroopams and by implications
over other *muppu* positions. But it can be argued that it was the
title assumed by the *ilaya-Threppapppur-muppu*, at least during the
period under consideration. The hierarchy of age might have had
implications for inter-*muppu* relations but it was never articulated in
language. Such articulation is a prerequisite that gives distinct
existence to any such position in power relations. Perhaps,
superiority of age of one *muppu* over others did not give rise to the
formation of any other position, which warranted delimitation and
verbal articulation. Perhaps the relations of a *muppu* with his
respective *Swaroopam* may be independent of his relative age among
other *muppu* positions. Only the inter-personal relations would be
affected by their relative ages, which had little bearing upon inter-
positional relations. There seems to be a discontinuity between these two types of relations.

Distinctiveness of inter-muppu relations in Swaroopam organization could also be examined in another way. There is hardly any historical evidence to suspect that a muppu by virtue of simply being the eldest projected himself over another muppu. Additionally, there is the instance in which one of the senior-most muppu had to be persuaded to assume the position of Threppappur muppu a position, which was generally occupied, by the senior-most among the contemporary counterparts in other Swaoopams. Therefore, the senior-most among the contemporary muppus cannot be portrayed as the head of the hierarchical pyramid of muppus. The right of one to become the senior-most muppu or any other position within a Swaroopam and their inter-relations are grounded in age. However, age is not the legitimizing factor of the specific activities of those positions which has a bearing on the general organization of the Swaroopam. The activity content of the positions is organized outside kuuru-mura diagram.

So far the discussion had, by and large, focussed on the interior of the S(s)waroopam. Now the discussion should turn towards the forces and fields where several Swaroopams and muppus got interrelated. In the next chapter the attempt will be to delineate how actually muppu positions get filled, when several Swaroopams are taken together. It will be shown how at times force of the precisioned time of kuuru-mura diagram is altered. This opens before us a field of cultural and political interaction, a field of politics that is immanent in the relations between the Swaroopams. This would shed light not so much on whether there are separate kuuru-mura orders for different Swaroopams or whether there is a single kinship network of relatives which formed the reserve of the kuuru-mura etc, but on
other unprobed analytical trajectories such as multiple-\textit{muppu} \textit{vaazhcha}.


4 What follows in this and the next paragraphs is summary presentation of the previous chapter. Rajaraja Varma M, (1941); Velu Pillai T.K, (1940) etc. Although, all of them commit this common mistake they were not written with the same spirit or under the same historical condition. While Paachu Muthathu and Shangoonny Menon wrote with a spirit overwhelmed by the pride of “local kingdom”, the “Manual” writers were more compelled by the needs of a “kingdom with a colonizing Paramounty”.

5 For example, see, Raghunandana Menon, (1939).

6 There is a conscious attempt by this set of authors not to translate them as king and kingdom.


8 This is denoted by the term “conceptual slippage”.


10 The documents that are at stake give the exclusive term \textit{vaanaruli}, whenever they refer to \textit{Swaroopam-muppu}.

11 This is the recurring expression in the published documents.

12 In this study this moment is not taken up for any discussion.

13 The term political refers to the act of generalization of the interest of a particular individual-unit (in our case, \textit{swaroopam}) as that of a collectivity (\textit{Swaroopam}).


17 This general belief that matrilineal system of succession was followed is evidenced in Ganesh K.N, (1990:21). Surprisingly enough, in the same text the contrary belief that there is indecisiveness about it is also offered, see, Ganesh K.N, (1990:17).


20 Rajaraja Varma M, (1941).

21 It will be shown that this situation is not merely hypothetical but something for which there is documental evidence.


24 This interpretation is based on the decomposition of the \textit{kuuru-mura} schema that is presented in the previous section.


26 There are documents like those appeared under the title “Some Travancore Dynastic Records” published by Rajaraja Varma Raja M, (1928-33) especially the Document No. VII, see, Rajaraja Varma M, (1931) which provides an example for the way positions are assigned to members of \textit{swaroopam}. In this document each one is specified to specific locality, but the nature of the rights they have over the locality and people are not specified. Another aspect worthy of note in the document is that there is no mention of the basis for specifying each one to respective localities.

27 I have borrowed these categories of analysis of power from Foucault M, (1979:163).

28 This family could be said, as a matrilocal one because the female members never resided outside the residence even after establishing matrimonial relations.
Nevertheless, for the time being it can be said that at least the *kuuru-mura* of Threppappur swaroopam was applicable to Chiravay and Deshinganadu *swaroopams* also. This issue is elaborated in the next chapter.

For example some hold the view that “The senior-most among the Venad *Swaroopam* were made *Kulashekhara perumal* by the ceremony performed by the Brahmans”, Ganesh K.N., (1996:104).
