Chapter II

HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF NADU: THE CASE OF NORTH KERALA

Nadu is a commonly used term to denote the native place of the Malayali people in Kerala. It is not a political or administrative division of modern Kerala state and did not exist with that connotation even during the colonial times. The name of the nadu does not appear in any of the official or non-official records of modern Kerala. In the colonial period, almost all nadus of the pre-modern times were transformed into the revenue division called Taluk like Kurumbranadu taluk, Valluwanadu taluk, Eranadu Taluk etc, which was the grouping of small revenue units called as amsam and desams. However, in the local usage nadu means a settlement area. The Gundert Malayalam

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1 In the region of Kerala state, where Malayalam is the mother tongue, if one asks the question which is your nadu?, the answer will be the name of his/her native place or the place where he/she is residing permanently.

2 Villages and Panjayaths are the basic administration units of the modern Kerala state. Followed by Block division, Taluk/Municipality/Corporation and District

3 Many regional entities, which were under the rule of major matrilineal households, were merged to the then existed major Naduvalis of pre-modern times and considered as a single revenue division. For instance the Kurumbranadu Taluk, which was divided into Balusseri and Koyilandi Taluk of modern Kerala state, was comprised of the region of Kurumbiyathiri swarupam, the Nair hill chieftains of Payyormala, Payyanadu ruled by the fraction of Zamurins of Calicut, and Tamarasseri ruled by the Kottayam raja. The colonial government followed the amsam and desam division in order to collect maximum land revenue on the basis of the systematic land survey. For details see C.A Innes, Malabar Gazetteer, Kerala Gazetteers Department, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997.

4 Then naturally a question can be raised as to what are the criteria of the selection of a settlement area. The selection of settlement area is depended on various factors, including the availability of fresh water and other essential resources. The development of the settlement area is the result of the human interaction with the environment. The settlements are developed according to the nature of human occupation or the means of subsistence.
Dictionary of 1872 has mentioned nadu as cultivated land, which shows that locally the term nadu denoted the agrarian unit even during the 19th century A.D.⁵

As it is an occupied regional unit, the nadus should have had a long past. Each region, where the nadu had existed, may furnish significant traces of the continuity and discontinuity of its formation. The historical reproduction of the process of the formation of nadu is a complex endeavour. This can be reproduced only through a historical analysis. This chapter will try to go through the process of the formation of the nadu in Kerala with special reference to its northern part.

The nadu is the basic unit of the socio-political formation of pre-modern South India. A number of nadus existed in the Kerala region and that formed the geographical and the cultural basis for the formation of the society during early historic and early medieval period (9th A.D – 12th century A.D). They were the grouping of agrarian settlements which comprised of various kinds of occupation groups directly related to the agriculture and developed in the backdrop of the agrarian society. The multi-crop agrarian pattern, which comprised of the cultivating units of the wetland paddy in the plains and garden crops in the elevated lands and hillock slopes were the main feature of the nadus in Kerala. Most of the earliest wet land agrarian settlements have been developed in the river valley areas. These river valley agrarian tracts later incorporated the productive plots in the elevated areas of the nadu. It resulted in the formation of settlements of various skilled and non skilled occupational groups and their settlements.

⁵ Herman Gundert, Gundert Dictionary, Sahitya Prasadaka Sangam, National Book Stall, Kottayam, 2000 (1872), p 514
in the *nadu*. As *nadu* was the grouping of various settlements, there developed reciprocal relations between the settlers. The surpluses from the agrarian and other resourceful units were distributed among these settlers. Such reciprocal exchange processes had corresponded to the development of the exchange and the market centers in the *nadu*. And all these were related to the development of a system of political power, which functioned as a central institution for the resource accumulation and its redistribution. The system could be chiefdom, monarchy, household, etc. This chapter is an exercise in this direction and it attempts to trace the formation of *nadu* as an independent geo-cultural entity during pre-colonial period.

**Studies on Nadu**

There have been many serious attempts to study the *nadus* in Tamil country, whereas in Kerala such a study is yet to materialize. Most of the references on the *nadus* in the studies of Kerala are connected with the Second Chera kingdom (9th A.D – 12th century A.D) and with the important medieval principalities called *Naduvali Swarupam* of post Chera period like *Perumpadappu Swarupam, Kolaswarupam, Venad / Trippappur Swarupam Nediyirippu Swarupam* etc. All these studies are emphasized on the administrative aspects of the *nadu* and considered it as the political division of

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7 Most recently K.N. Ganesh is attempted to analyze the *nadu* in historical geography perspectives in the backdrop of the Tamil studies. K.N. Ganesh, ‘Historical Geography of Natu in South India with special reference to Kerala’, in *Indian Historical Review*, 36 (1) I.C.H.R, New Delhi, 2009, Pp3-21

8 M.G.S. Narayanan has listed about 14 *nadus* as the districts of the Cheraman Perumal in the Second Chera Kingdom. M.G.S. Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, Pp 90-105
the kingdom or monarchy. Some rulers of the naidu in the post Chera period have created their political genealogy on the basis of Parashurama and the Cheraman myth along with the claim of the brahmanic origin. Accordingly, most of the medieval rulers have claimed their descent from the Cheras and practiced a number of Brahmin rituals in the households in order to legitimize their power over the naidu. However, none of the studies have attempted to delineate the processes of the formation of naidu as geo-cultural and geo-political entity.

Four kinds of attempts have already been done to study the nature of naidu.

1. The naidu as an administrative unit
2. The naidu as an agrarian unit
3. The naidu as an autonomous segment of the ‘ritual sovereign’.
4. The naidu as chiefdom unit in the ‘South Indian feudalism’

**Administrative Unit**

The pioneer studies on the naidu have considered it as the administrative units of three major kingdoms like Chola, Pandya and Chera. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri in his

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9 The Keralolpathy texts have furnished the Parashurama and Cheraman myths. Accordingly the land of Kerala was created by Parashurama and granted to the thirty two traditional Brahmins and they brought the ruler for their naidu and titled him as Cheraman Perumal. Then the last Cheraman, who converted to Islam religion, divided his territory and granted it to the nadvavalis, who were the feudatories of the Cheraman Kingdom and went to Mecca for pilgrim. Major nadvavalis like Nediyiruppu, Kolathiri etc compiled their genealogical list on the basis of this myth and claimed their decadence from the Cheraman Perumal. For details see, Herman Gundert, Keralolpathiym mattum, Scaria Sacaria (ed), DC Books, Kottayam, 1992, S.K. Nayar, Keralolpatti, Madras University Malayalam Department Series, No.10, University of Madras, 1953. M.R. Raghava Varier (ed), Keralalpathi Kolathunattu Vazhakkam, Department of History, Calicut, University, 1984
studies *Pandyan Kingdom*\(^\text{10}\), *A history of South India*\(^\text{11}\) and *The Colas*\(^\text{12}\) has described *nadu* as the administrative division of the Pandya and Chola Kingdoms of South India respectively. According to Sastri, the *nadu* had a crucial role in the land revenue administration of the Chola Kingdom.\(^\text{13}\) The *Ur, Sabha,* and *Nagaram* have also been referred to as part of the larger administrative divisions of the centralised kingdom. Accordingly, the *Ur* was the common type of assembly comprised of all classes of people who held land in the village, the *sabha* was an exclusive Brahmin assembly and the *nagaram* was the locality where the traders and merchants were in dominant position.\(^\text{14}\) Similar position was taken by C. Meenakshi, in her *Administrative and social life under Pallavas of Kanchi,* and according to her, the *nadus* were administrative divisions which further got sub divided into villages.\(^\text{15}\) T.V. Mahalingam, in his *South Indian Polity,* argued that *Ur, Sabha* and *Nadu* were the organisations of the villages and were agrarian units. According to him, the *nadu* was an independent unit earlier, which become the subordinate units after the conquest of the kings.\(^\text{16}\)

In the case of Chera studies, Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai, through his number of studies, delineated the political features of the ‘Kulasekhara Empire’ and argued that the *nadus* were the ‘local kingdoms’ under the administrative control of the local

\(^{10}\) K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Pandyan Kingdom,* London, 1929

\(^{11}\) K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A history of South India from Pre-historic times to the fall of Vijayanagar,* Oxford University Press, Madras-2, 1958, Pp 158-159


\(^{13}\) Ibid


\(^{15}\) C. Meenakshi, *Administrative and social life under Pallavas of Kanchi,* Madras 1938, p 95.

\(^{16}\) T.V. Mahalingam, *South Indian Polity,* Madras, 1955, p 302
vassals of the Kulasekharas. The representative assembly known as Nattukoothangal had a crucial role in the administration of nadu. Each nadu was further divided into desam under the chiefs called vazhkai / vazhis / desavazhis, and it was controlled by desakkootams. The desams were subdivided into Kara or village and they were administered by the representative of the people of the village. In the lights of available epigraphs, M.G.S. Narayanan has cross-examined the features of Chera kingdom and argued that the nadus were the districts of the kingdom and they were under the governors of the Cheraman Perumal called Natu Utaiyavar or Natuvalumavar. According to him, it was the Tamil counterpart of the Sanskrit term Rashtra found in North India and Deccan. He also argued that the nadus were the feudatories of the Cheraman Perumal. However, all these studies have referred to nadu as part of the centralised administration of the kingdoms and it functioned as institutions to accumulate the surplus from various regional units.

17 Elankulam. P.N. Kunjan Pilla has given a list of the nadus under the Kulasekharas such as Venad, Odanad, Nanruainadu, Munninadu, Vempolinadu, Kizhmalainadu, Kalkarainadu, Nedumporayurnadu, Valluvanad, Eralanad, Kurumpurainadu, Puraikilanadu and Kolathunadu. For details see, Elankulam. P. N. Kunjan Pilla, Studies in Kerala History, National Book Stall, Kottayam, 1970, Pp 250-251
18 Ibid p 251
19 Ibid. There is no reference on the desa unit in the inscriptions of the Chera period and it seems to be later usage to denote a regional unit. M.G.S Narayanan did not consider Desam as a territorial unit of the Chera kingdom.
21 Ibid, p.90
Agrarian Unit

A major shift in the aforementioned position appeared in the study of Y. Subbarayalu in 1970s. In his *Political Geography of the Chola country*, Subbarayalu pointed out the *nadu* was the agricultural region formed by the grouping of agricultural settlements.\(^{22}\) The *nadu* comprised of *Vellanvagai* villages (the non Brahmin villages) which functioned collectively under the *nattar* assembly which had involved in the productive activity within the locality.\(^{23}\) In his words, ‘the basis of the political set up, be it a Chieftaincy or Kingdom, was the *nadu*. The *nadus*, which evolved out of the groupings of agricultural settlements, preceded any organized political set up in the Chola country. Any powerful personable to command these groupings of agricultural settlements could become the ruling lord of the land’.\(^{24}\) The *nadu* naturally happened to be the administrative units and was not a state made political division.\(^{25}\) According to him, ‘most of the functions of *nadu* were locality- based and were self-sufficient without state interference.’\(^{26}\) Thus Subbarayalu questioned the ‘centralised bureaucratic’ and ‘Byzantine Monarchy’ theory of the pioneer studies. Subbarayalu’s position has been widely discussed in later studies and the scholars like Burton Stein, who took a different stand on the nature of *nadu* in the Chola territory, has also used Subbarayalu’s theory to substantiate the resourcefulness of the *nadu*, which provided

\(^{22}\) Y. Subbarayalu, *Political Geography of the Chola country*, State Department of Archaeology, Tamilnadu, 1973,p36
\(^{24}\) Y. Subbarayalu, *Political Geography of the Chola country*, p.96
\(^{25}\) Ibid
\(^{26}\) Ibid, p 97
the economic stability and then corresponded to the development of autonomous territorial unit. Similarly Noburo Karashima has done a detailed survey of the Chola inscriptions and unravelled the characteristics of village settlements of peasants in the Chola country. He has suggested that the Vellanvagai villages comprised of habitation sites, cremation grounds, fresh water sources, irrigation channels, cultivated channels, cultivated lands, pasture lands, etc.27

In the Kerala studies, scholars like, Rajan Gurukkal, K.N. Ganesh and Raghava Varier have taken a similar position of Subbarayalu. Rajan Gurukkal argues in the light of his research on Pandya region that the nadus were spontaneous grouping of agricultural settlements.28 K.N. Ganesh’s Malayalam work Keralathinte Innalekal has analysed different stages of the formation of nadu as the grouping of agrarian settlements.29 Accordingly, the nadu developed as the result of the growth of human interaction with the environment and the grouping of such spaces.30 According to him, the traces of the early occupation of the human beings can be traced from the pre-historic times and their settlements were distributed in the hillocks and its slopes. These settlement units were depended on the hunting and food gathering and the early Tamil texts did not refer to such settlements as nadu. Instead, they refer to nadu as the

27 Noburo Karashima, “Village community : Myth or Realty”, South Indian History and Society, 850-1800, Delhi, 1984, Pp 40-55
28 Rajan Gurukkal, Agrarian system and socio political organization: The early Pandyas, unpublished Ph.D thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1984, Pp 105-107, cited in K.N. Ganesh, ‘Historical Geography of Nadu with special reference to Kerala’, in Indian Historical Review, 36 (1) 2009, p 4
29 K.N. Ganesh, Keralathinte Innalekal, Department of cultural publication, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997 (1990), Chapters 2 & 3
30 Ibid, p.34
cultivating units which were developed as the grouping of agrarian settlements.\textsuperscript{31} According to him, the \textit{nadus} were the groupings of food crop cultivating units which were developed in the \textit{marutam} and \textit{mullai} lands.\textsuperscript{32} He says that in Kerala, the \textit{nadu} developed as production region, starting from food crops, particularly paddy cultivation and later expanded to the garden land, cash crop areas and forest.\textsuperscript{33} Thus the \textit{nadu} had a tribal origin from early historic period and it developed in the later times with the expansion of agriculture. Rajan Gurukkal and Raghava Varier in their co-authored edited Malayalam work \textit{Keralacharithram} argues that \textit{nadu} was the spontaneous grouping of agrarian settlements and it comprised of several \textit{ur}, the basic agrarian settlements.\textsuperscript{34} Kesavan Veluthat in his \textit{The political structure of Early Medieval South India} says that the \textit{nadu} groups are seen as pre-existing groupings of peasant settlements, which spontaneously came together and the \textit{ur}, the agrarian village, is the smallest identifiable peasant community in South India.\textsuperscript{35} In an edited volume entitled \textit{Cultural history of Kerala} of Rajan Gurukkal and Raghava Varier traced the antecedents of the formation of \textit{nadu} whereby its origin is traced back to the period of

\textsuperscript{31} In a recent article K.N. Ganesh has cross examined the Early Tamil texts and located the lived spaces, which includes the habitational and operational spaces, in the early landscape. For details “Lived spaces in history: A study in human geography in the context of Sangam texts”, in \textit{Studies in History – 25,2.n.s} (2009), Sage Publication, New Delhi, Pp 151-195
\textsuperscript{32} K.N. Ganesh, \textit{Keralathinte Innalekal}, p.39
\textsuperscript{33} K.N. Ganesh, ‘Historical Geography of Natu in South India with special reference to Kerala’, in \textit{Indian Historical Review}, 36 (1), Pp3-21
\textsuperscript{34} Raghava Varier and Rajan Gurukkal, \textit{Keralacharithram}, Vallathol Vidyapeetam, Sukapuram, 1992 (1991), Pp 166-67
\textsuperscript{35} Kesavan Veluthat, \textit{The political structure of Early medieval South India}, Orient Logman, New Delhi, 1993, Pp 177-192
the Early Tamil anthologies. Accordingly, the nādu means a production unit and any land brought under cultivation came to be known as nādu. They explained the formation of nādu in association with the aintinai concepts and argued that the nādu appears widely in the Kurinji songs in association with kunru, malai, or kal such as kunrunadu, kunrukelnatu, perumalanadu, kurumporainadu, caralnātu, kanalnātu etc. There are clear references on the production unit (nādu) and resourceful units (kādu) in the Early Tamil literatures. Nādu is found in association with, but distinct from kādu, which shows the existence of the food producing and food gathering units. The nādu were under the chief called natan.

However, unlike Tamil country where the studies on nādu are focused on the Cholas period, the studies on nādu in Kerala in the backdrop of Subbarayalu’s study have attempted to trace the origin of nādus from the early historic period onwards. The above mentioned studies of of K.N. Ganesh, Rajan Gurukkal and M.R. Raghava Varier have been discussed the process of the formation of nādu in Kerala.

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36 Rajan Gurukkal and Raghava Varier, Cultural History of Kerala (from the earliest to the spread of wet rice) Vol. 1 Department of Cultural Publication, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999, Pp 174-175

37 Tinai is a poetical conception of the of the Sangam age geo- eco zones. There appears five tinais (aintinai); Kurinchi (hilly tracts), Mullai (Pastoral tracts) Palai (parched zones), Marutham (wet plain field), and Neital (coastal zones). For details, Rajan Gurukkal and Raghava Varier, Cultural History of Kerala, Pp 165-173

38 Ibid, p 174

39 Ibid

40 Ibid, p 175
Autonomous segment of the ‘ritual sovereign’

Burton Stein in his *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India* considers *nadu* as a micro regional unit in which an assembly with same name functioned.\(^{41}\) He rejected the ‘centralised monarchic’ character and the ‘Byzantine monarchy’ theory of K.A. Nilakanta Sastri and introduced the ‘Segmentary State theory’ in the Chola studies.\(^{42}\) He says *nadus* were the real centers of power and the Chola King functioned as the ritual sovereign. He agreed on the agrarian base of the *nadu* and stated that etymologically *nadu* refers to agricultural land.\(^{43}\) The *nadus* were prime units of social and agrarian organisation which provided the basis for the Chola political order.\(^{44}\) They were almost self sufficient ethno agrarian micro region which were linked together as parts of a great kingdom.\(^{45}\) However, *nadus* were the basic segment of South Indian medieval segmentary political system and they were under the leadership of chiefs.\(^{46}\) He identified three levels of structure – central zone, peripheral zone and intermediate zone- in the segmentary state system. These nomenclatures, according to Stein, occur owing to their internal organisation and their connection with other localities. However, Steins’s theory was widely debated and criticised especially by the scholars who postulated the feudal model of state formation in the Tamil and Kerala studies.

\(^{41}\) Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1980, p 90
\(^{43}\) Ibid, p 91
\(^{44}\) Ibid, p 99
\(^{45}\) Ibid, p 133-43
\(^{46}\) Ibid, p 270-71
Recently M.G.S. Narayanan has re-interpreted his earlier position on the nature of *nadu*. Now he argues that *nadus* were the autonomous political unit and the Perumal did not possess direct authority over any considerable part of territory outside the capital city of Makotai or Mahodayapuram. With contrast to his earlier position, he argued that the second Chera kingdom was under the sway of the ‘Brahmin oligarchy and they used the Perumal as ritual sovereign’. He also argued that the ritual sovereignty in Kerala was totally different from the segmentary society and state theory of Burton Stein.

**A Chiefdom unit**

*Nadu* was the chiefdom and it was ruled by the feudatories of the feudal monarchies. Kesavan Veluthat, who criticised Burton Stein’s “Segmentary state theory”, has postulated a feudal model. According to Kesavan Veluthat, who introduced the concept of ‘South Indian Feudalism’, the *nadus* were the chiefdoms ruled by the chiefly houses. There were thirteen such chiefdoms under the Chera. He disagreed

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48 “A strong, well organized and self conscious Brahman community, ruling over the territory of Kerala and using the Perumal, a member of the ancient dynasty, as a ritual sovereign to ensure legitimacy and unity among the *Nadavalis* who were powerful in their own right in different parts of Kerala.” *Ibid*, Pp 115-116

49 *Ibid*, p116

50 Kesavan Veluthat, *The political structure of early medieval South India*, Orient Logman, New Delhi, 1993, p 114
with the Segmentary state theory and argues that there existed a feudal hierarchy of chiefdom, which resembled the typical feudal pyramid.\textsuperscript{51}

However, all these studies have discussed the features of \textit{nadu} as part of the larger political system like Chera, Chola and Pandya. As \textit{nadu} was the grouping of agrarian settlements, more comprehensive and separate study of \textit{nadu} is required to disentangle the process of the formation. There will not be uniform pattern in the formation of the \textit{nadu}. In the undulated topography of Kerala, some \textit{nadus} were developed in the river valleys and the cultivated units are spread mainly in the plains than the gardens. In some other \textit{nadus}, the amount of wet land was less compared to the garden lands.\textsuperscript{52} About 14 \textit{nadus} were listed as the major \textit{nadu} in Kerala\textsuperscript{53} and a number of other \textit{nadus} are referred to the epigraphs which are yet to be considered as the part of the socio-political formation of early medieval and medieval Kerala.\textsuperscript{54} All these studies are mainly focused on the \textit{nadus} mentioned in the epigraphs of the Second Chera period. Not many studies are there that furnish the historical process of the formation of different \textit{nadu} separately. The researches of K.N. Ganesh on the agrarian relations of

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid, p 130

\textsuperscript{52} The proportion of the cultivated lands in wet and garden lands of revenue units of the colonial time given by Innes which have shown that in some areas like Kurumranadu the area cultivated in the garden land was higher than the wet, where as in Chirakkal taluk it was almost equal. In the Valluvanadu region wet land cultivation was too higher than the garden land. This pattern can be applicable to pre-colonial Malabar. For detail, C.A. Innes, \textit{Malabar Gazetteer}, Kerala State Gazetteer Department, Thiruvananthapuram, (1908), 1997, p 208

\textsuperscript{53} For details, M.G.S. Narayanan, \textit{Perumals of Kerala}, Pp 90-105

\textsuperscript{54} For details, E. Rekha, \textit{Nadus in the age of Perumals (AD 800- AD 1200)}, unpublished M. phil thesis, Department of History, Calicut University, 2001, Pp 48-81
medieval Travancore and the study on the historical geography of Valluvanadu of A. P. Greeshmalatha are the two serious attempts in this regard. Both these studies have considered nynthesis as the grouping of agrarian settlements and discussed the process of the formation of the nady as a geopolitical entity.

The following part indents to delineate the process of the nady formation on the basis of the available evidences from Kerala, with special reference to the northern part of Kerala.

**Formation of Nadu**

The above discussion shows that there is no unanimous opinion on the function of nady. It refers to as political division of the major kingdoms or as the grouping of agrarian settlements or the micro regional unit. However, the available source materials including colonial documents, pre-colonial records, granthavaries of the medieval households, inscriptions and literatures of early medieval and early historic periods have been highlighting the agrarian basis of the nady. In Kerala, the spread of monocrop cultivation was not possible due to the undulated nature of the terrain which included hilly regions, slopes, river valleys and coastal plains. Here, the formation of nady was associated with the spread of agriculture in the wetlands, garden lands and the seasonal cultivations in the mountain regions. The paddy cultivating wet lands were

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57 Generally the topography of Kerala is divided into three - highland, midland- lowland. For details, Rajan Gurukkal and Raghava Varier, *Cultural history of Kerala*, chapter 2
distributed between the hillocks and the cultivation was mainly depended on the monsoon flood from these hillocks. The water level of the rivers of the region is also depended on the availability of rain.

The term *nadu* denoted the cultivated land even during the second half of the 19th century, which means, as the agrarian units, the term *nadu* has been under usage or common even in the colonial times. But at the same time, as mentioned earlier, the *nadu* has not even functioned as the political or revenue division. It shows that the difference between the *nadu* and *kadu*, the cultivated and non-cultivated resourceful units respectively, was very clear even during the modern period. However, the colonial government officials systematically surveyed and listed the entire cultivated and resourceful lands. On the basis of such surveys, the lands in Malabar were divided into wet, dry and garden. The wet lands were devoted almost exclusively to the cultivation of paddy and coconut; areca nut and jack trees were grown in the garden lands. The dry lands were two kinds, occupied and unoccupied. The dry crops (*punam* is the main dry cultivation) and cash crops like pepper, cardamom, etc were widely cultivated in the

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58 If we go through the land of North Kerala, the undulated nature of the landscape can very much be experienced. The wet lands are distributed in the valley of the hillocks. The wet plains are narrow and lengthy, but the hillocks are larger. It is stated that most of the lands in the Chirakkal Taluk (of colonial times), the region under study, was unoccupied. The proportion of the occupied and unoccupied dry lands in 19th century A.D was 1: 12.72 (35:275 acres). The proportion of wet and garden land cultivated areas was almost equal (53:50 acres). Such large variations were not existed in the neighboring Taluks like Kottayam, Kurumbranad and Calicut, where the unoccupied lands were too less than the wet, garden and occupied lands. This may show that the amount of unoccupied dry lands were higher in the region under study even during the 19th century. For details, C.A. Innes, *Malabar Gazetteer*, p 208. Most of the laterite plains have been recently occupied.

59 *Ibid*, p 208

60 *Ibid*
garden lands. The slash and burn cultivation (*punam* cultivation) was active in the hillocks and its slopes even during the second half of the 20\(^{th}\) century in Malabar.\(^6\) It required less attention and it was sown in April and reaped in September.\(^6\) However, all these demonstrate that the *nadu* was the consortium of wet, garden and dry cultivated zones and the habitation sites in a dispersed, continuous pattern. Its features were visible even in the 19\(^{th}\) and the beginning of 20\(^{th}\) century A.D. Such indications help us to make a journey through the pre-colonial source materials to bring out the formation of the *nadus* in Kerala, especially in the northern part, the region under study.

**The antecedents**

The early references of the evolution of *nadu* appear in the *Sangam* literatures of early historic period. The undulated features of the landscape of early Tamilakam are represented in the five types of songs termed as *kurinchi*, *mullai*, *palai*, *marutham* and *neital*.\(^6\) The early subsistence forms of the people developed in the hills, hillock slopes, plains and coastal regions are referred to in these songs. Mainly three terms – *Nadu*, *Ur* and *Kuti* - are mentioned in the literatures in association with the settlements, which

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\(^6\) The term *Punam* is applied to cultivation on the forest-clad hills at the foot of the ghat slopes themselves. For details see, C.A.Innes, *Malabar Gazetteer*, p 215

\(^6\) *Ibid.* The mountain cultivation termed as *punam* was active up to the 1960s in the northern Kerala.

\(^6\) The region represented in the Tamil literatures is classified into five physiographical divisions like *Kurinji* (hilly region) where the slash and burn shifting cultivation and hunting and food gathering are practiced. *Mullai* (hillock slopes), the slash and burn cultivation and cattle rearing were the predominant subsistence forms, *Palaii* (the parched zone born out of the demise of the *kurinchi* / *mullai* tracts generally) with robbery as subsistence form, *Marutham* (the wet land cultivation plains), where the wet cultivation was developed as the main subsistence forms, and finally the coastal zone *Naital*, where the fishing and salt making developed. For details, Rajan Gurukkal and Raghava Varier, *Cultural history of Kerala*, Pp 165-173
evolved as the result of the spread of cultivation. *Akananuru* and *Purananuru* literatures have considerably referred to the entity of *nudu* as the agrarian units. The *nudu* and *kadu*, the production unit and forest land respectively, appear as distinct entities. *Nadu* (agrarian unit), *Kadu* (forest), *Kunnu* (hillock) and *Kuzhi* (pit) are mentioned in a single context in *Purananuru*, which denoted the undulated nature of landscape and the separate entity of the food gathering and food producing units in the region. *Nadu* is also found in association with, but distinct from *Kadu* as a resource region. The term *malainadu* in the context where *nudu* and *kadu* appears together indicated the formation of *nudu* in the hillock forest region. Thus the *nudu* developed within the *kadu*. Similarly, the term *chunai* like *paimchunai* (water source) *parainetumchunai* (big water source in the laterite areas) etc. indicated the availability of fresh water source, which are the essential factors in the formation of agrarian settlements, in the hillocks.

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64 Nadakonro Kadakonro
   Avalakonro Michaiyakonro
   Evvazhinallavaradavar
   Avivazi nallai vazhiya nilane,


65 Rajan Gurukkal, Raghava Varier, Cultural history of Kerala, p 174

66 P N. 150


68 A N.1

69 A N. 2
Nadu widely appears in the Kurinji songs in association with the kunru, malai or kal, the term denoting the mountains and hillocks. They are found in areas that include habitational spaces and productive spaces. The punam cultivated units of kurinji tracts generally appeared as nadu. The Tinaipunam cultivated lands were distributed in the Kurinji tracts. The prosperity of such production units in the kurinji zones testified the terms like Nalvarainadu, Nalmalainadu etc. The nalnadu is generally located in food production region with water resource. A few references of nalnadu are also found in association with chiefs, especially the velir or ventar, like Nannan nalnadu, Pulli nalnadu, Vanavaramban nalnadu etc. However, all such references shows that the formation of the production units (nadu) are in association with the resourceful units (kodu).

In association with nadu, the basic settlement units like kuti, cirkuti and ur appear, along with the cultivation of tinai, varaku and nel. The most archaic and basic settlement form of early Tamil society was ur. It was kin based settlements consisting

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70 Rajan Gurukkal and Raghava Varrier, Cultural history of Kerala, p 174
71 Such nadus are mentioned in the literature – Kunrunatu, Kunrukelnatu, Perumalainatu Perumkalanatu, karumporainatu, Caralnatu, kanalnatu etc. Ibid
73 A kind of millet seed cultivated widely in the hills, hillock slopes and garden lands. A N. 12
74 A N. 12, 178,
75 Rajan Gurukkal and Raghava Varrier, Cultural history of Kerala, p 174
76 Ibid
77 Ibid
78 Ibid, p173. There are hints on the big settlement units as perur and small units as cirur. The old settlements termed as muthur and new settlements as puthur.
of few *kuti* and the kin-groups living in small huts called *kurampu*. The distribution of *Ur* also shows the rise of agrarian settlements.

The distribution of Iron Age relics are furnishing evidences to study the formation of the clusters of settlements in the region. As the Iron Age habitation sites are yet to be explored, the only available evidence are the burial relics, which are mainly found in the hillock slopes and elevated garden lands. The pattern of the burial sites may help to make certain surmises on the distribution of the Iron Age settlements. The discovery of iron plough share from Kuppakkolli (Waynad)\textsuperscript{80}, Arippa\textsuperscript{81} and Changaroth (Perambara)\textsuperscript{82} and the black and red ware (BRW) sherds from the graves all over Kerala have signified the formation of sedentary agriculture.\textsuperscript{83} A wide variety of burial monuments including the rock-cut sepulchres, stone circles, umbrella stones, cist burials and urns have been unearthed from the northern part of Kerala.\textsuperscript{84} These are the important signs of the evolution of the agro-pastoral settlements in the region.

\textsuperscript{79} *Ibid*

\textsuperscript{80} Rajan Gurukkal, “Historical Antecedents”, in P.J Cherian (ed), *Perspectives on Kerala History*, Kerala Gazetters, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999, p 26

\textsuperscript{81} Rajan Gurukkal and Raghava Varier, *Cultural history of Kerala*, p 127

\textsuperscript{82} The present researcher, along with the students and teachers of the C.K.G.M Government College Perambra, has explored few sherds of an iron plough. It is added in the *K.C.H.R.* explorations. Archaeological data base, Kerala Council for Historical Research, Vyloppilli Samskriti bhavan, Nalanda, Thiruvananthapuram.


However, both archaeological and literary sources have hinted at the gradual shift from the food gathering to the food producing society. The production units were developed in the elevated fertile tracts of the hillocks and its slopes. It gradually extended to the valleys and these processes have corresponded to the formation of settlement sites in the garden slopes, probably closer to areas of the production units. The monument types are the ostensible sign of the existence of wide variety of occupational groups like iron smiths, potters, stone masons, braziers, goldsmiths, peasants, etc which are widely referred to in the contemporary early Tamil texts.

However, the nadu was food production units which started through the reclamation of forest lands and it was begun in the hillock plains which later spread into the slopes and valleys. The Urs, the basic typical agrarian settlements were developed according to the expansion of agriculture in the river valleys. The resources from the forest and production units were widely circulated in the nadu. The spread of agrarian villages in the lower plains, which are widely referred to in the early medieval epigraphs, caused the further expansion of nadu as the grouping of agrarian settlement. The major evolution in the production and settlement pattern occurred during this period.

**The spread of agrarian settlements in the river valleys and expansion of Nadu**

The food crop cultivation was extended to the wet plains in the valleys of the hillocks and river valleys of the nadu. The major food grain was paddy, which was cultivated in the available plains particularly in the river valleys and the low laying
regions between elevated surfaces and hillocks. The cultivation in the plains depended on monsoon. The monsoon flood, which brought all natural wastes of the hills, hillocks and all elevated space, has been the fertilising factor of the fertile land in the plains. Thus the food crop cultivations in the wet lands in the plains and garden lands in the elevated plots have been chiefly depended on monsoon. There are indications of three types of cultivations in the epigraphs. They are:

1. The paddy cultivations in the wet fields in the valleys were the major type. The wet fields known as Vayal, Padam, Kazhani, Keezhal, Nilam, Kantam, etc.
2. The multi-crops in the garden lands known as Parambu, Vila etc, and the dwelling plots called Purayidam, were the second type.
3. The slash and burn cultivation Punam in the hillocks and its slopes, which is termed as Adumari in the inscriptions, was the third one.

The expansion of plough agriculture occurred by the end of the early historic phase. Two crops Kanni and Makaram and probably third Punja cultivation were active in the northern Kerala and accordingly the wet lands were divided into Orupugil, Irupugil and Muppukil, one, two and three crops respectively. The terms like

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85 K.N. Ganesh, “Agrarian Unit in Kerala (1500-1800)”, in P.J. Cherian, Perspectives on Kerala History, p 123
86 The later portion of Patittupattu and post Sangam work like Kizhkanakku have mentioned the term pirammatayam (land holdings of Brahmans), which shows the formation of Brahmin households by the end of early historic phase. Rajan Gurukkal and Raghava Varier, Cultural history of Kerala, p 239-240
87 This pattern seems to have been continued from early medieval period and there are no such details to unravel the pattern of agriculture in the epigraphs. Even though it can be said that the wet land cultivation was so active in the field, it was because of the basic motives behind the formation and
Kalappad, Pothi Vithupadu, Thunippadu etc, which appeared in the inscriptions, have shown the possible existence of the extensive wet paddy fields.  

The spread of agrarian settlements in the river valleys have been explained in association with the Brahmin migration. The process of the expansion of wet rice landscape, the development of servile labour groups, which gradually resulted in the formation of hierarchical occupational groups or Jati, etc have been explained in association with the proliferation of Brahmin households. The Brahmins were not cultivators by themselves, but they managed the cultivation process in the lands which were granted to them. As they were the right holders of large amount of fertile lands, which have been granted by the local chiefs as reward to their ritual services, they seem proliferation of various occupational groups’ settlements. The same pattern was documented by Innes in Malabar Gazetteer. For details C.A. Innes, Malabar Gazetteer, Pp 209-211

88 These terms are appeared in several inscriptions of North Kerala, which will be discussed at length in the Chapter 4 & 5 of this thesis. A measure of seed sufficient for 100 yards of rice-field, about 1 ½ Idangazhi (= 86,400 rice grains W). There is a measuring basket termed as Thunikkotta. Herman Gundert, Malayalam English Dictionary, p 460.

89 It has been stated that the newly formed Brahmin households were depended on the earlier tribal kinship labour forms to cultivate their land. Consequently the kin group disintegrated and the newly non-kin-group complex labour groups were developed. However the process of such change has been delineated as the “Great transformation” in the history of Kerala. For details, Rajan Gurukkal and Raghava Varier, Cultural history of Kerala, Pp 235-272

90 “In the plains the Brahmins must have concentrated in areas of wet-rice landscape eco-types adjacent to the red soil terraces and between the forested hill tracts and water-logged low-lands. The expansion of paddy cultivation beyond these small patches was not easy under the socio-political setup of the heroic age. It was not possible for the period to expand plough agriculture to low lands that were marshy and water logged, because the task necessitated a variety of factors like a fairly evolved technology of water management, knowledge of seasons, specialized social division of labour, effective institutions for the realization of labour, a competent class for the mobilization of collaborative labour and so on.” Rajan Gurukkal and Raghava Varier, Cultural history of Kerala, p 241
to have brought or incorporated the actual tillers to the newly occupied land. Almost all the Brahmin centers were developed in the region where the production processes have already been active.\textsuperscript{91} Thus the proliferation of Brahmin households was related to the expansion of wet rice landscape in the river valley plains.

Animal husbandry was the integral part of the plough agriculture. There are a few signs on the existence of cattle keeping. Dairy products like ghee were listed as regular gift to the temples.\textsuperscript{92} Such signifiers have shown the importance of the cattle keeping in the agrarian economy the early medieval time.

The food crops and cash crops were widely cultivated in the \textit{Parambu} or garden lands and it was the backbone of the surplus produce in the northern part of Kerala. The proportion of garden and wet fields was almost equal in North Kerala and in certain occasion the garden land cultivation was higher than in the wet fields.\textsuperscript{93} The inscriptions of \textit{Chembra, Maniyur, Tirunelli} etc have emphasised the prominence of the garden land cultivations in the northern part of Kerala. The areca nut, coconut, \textit{Moden nellu} (paddy sowed in the garden land), pepper, jack fruits, banana, betel leaf etc were grown in the garden lands. The garden products were widely exchanged in and out of the natural

\textsuperscript{91} Most of the traditional Brahmin settlements of Kerala have Iron Age burial complexes in their vicinity. This shows the earlier entity of the agro-pastoral society in the region. The \textit{Perumchellur} the earliest Brahmin settlement, (located in the present Talipparamba of Kannur district), \textit{Payyannur, Tiruvattur} where lot of Iron Age relics are reported, shows that the burial complexes predated the brahmin settlements as consolidated entities. See for details, Rajan Gurukkal and Raghava Varier, \textit{Cultural history of Kerala}, .p 239


\textsuperscript{93} C.A. Innes, \textit{Malabar Gazetteer}, p 208
boundaries of nadu. The extension of Kuzhikkanam land was another feature of the medieval economy. It shows the development of cash crop cultivation in the nadu.

The spread of purayidam also indicated the extension of the garden land cultivation. The purayidam were the dwellings of the non-brahmin occupational groups and it spread over the garden lands. The wide presence of purayidams in the inscriptions have shown two things; the proliferation of agrarian settlements along with expansion of multi-crop agriculture and formation of labour group settlements in association with the production process. The terms such as kutyirunna purayidam, kutiyirikka purayidam etc indicated the settlements of the agrarian community, probably the actual tillers, in the region.

The slash and burn cultivation known as punam was active in the hillock slopes of the region. This could be the most archaic form of cultivation. As mentioned earlier, in the early historic period the punam cultivating units of the high ranges were known as nadu. The inscriptive evidences have shown that the slash and burn cultivation has been continued in the later time. The term Adumari which appears in the Kannapuram and Chokkur inscriptions show the process of such cultivation. The occurrence of

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94 K.N. Ganesh, “Agrarian Society in Kerala (1500-1800)” in P.J. Cherian (ed), Perspectives on Kerala History, p 144
95 Here mainly focussed on the inscriptions of North Kerala. Chokkur inscriptions refers to - Kuraicheekantan Purayidam, Kulaththinu vadakkinuk Purayidam, Patinjattu Purayidam, Kutiyirikka Purayidam, Tiruvattur inscription –Kutiyirunna puthhillaththu Purayidam, Thanneermukkath Purayidam, Chembra inscription –Kunnathu Purayidam, Tirumeli Purayidam, Vengayat Purayidam, Ezhikkat Purayidam, etc
96 Chokkur inscription, line 9, published in Puthussery Ramachandran, Keralacharithrathinte Adisthanarekhakal, Kerala Basha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 2007, Pp24-25, Kannapuram
shifting and slash burn cultivation was evident in this term. This cultivation required less effort and caution. The peasant groups occupied the hillocks in every season and reclaimed the forest region and prepared for the cultivation. Around ninety days (Malayalam months of Kumbam, Meenam and Medam) was required to harvest the paddy.\textsuperscript{97} The quantity of the yield in the mountain cultivation was higher than the yield from wet and garden lands. This process was live in the northern part of Kerala up to 1960s.

**Land ‘ownership’ of the Nadu**

There are no concrete evidences on the development of land ownership in the early times. The kin based collective rights over the land seem to have developed in the Sangam period.\textsuperscript{98} They seem to have enjoyed collective rights over the resources, graze land etc, not on the land. It could be a predatory control over the resourceful region. Such right seems to have been enjoyed by the tribe under the chief. The surplus accumulation from the land was functioned under the supervision of the chief. The Nannan nalnadu which appears in the Akananuru literature seems to have indicated the rights of Nannan over the prosperous nadu. The land grants of the tribal chief to the warriors, bards and Brahmins, which seem to have started in the later phase of Sangam

\textsuperscript{97} The living memory of the hillock cultivation, which continued up to 1960s are available in the northern Kerala. The same description has also been referred by C.A. Innes in Malabar Gazetteer and it stated that Punam cultivation was common in northern Taluks of Malabar. C.A. Innes, Malabar Gazetteer, Pp 215 -216

\textsuperscript{98} K.N. Ganesh, Keralathinte Innalekal, Pp 111-115
age, have shown the inception of the land ownership rights and the formation of the tilling and non-tilling classes in the society.\textsuperscript{99} However, the land ownership forms seem to have appeared by the end of Megalithic period.\textsuperscript{100} This period had witnessed the decline of kinship labour forms and the formation of various occupational groups.

The clear-cut evidences on the formation of ownership rights over land occurred in the early medieval time. The \textit{Cherikkal}, the land of the \textit{Naduvazhis}, \textit{Brahmaswam}, the land owned by the Brahmins, and \textit{Devaswam}, the land under temples, were the three main types developed in this period.\textsuperscript{101} The \textit{Cherikkal} lands of Kurumranad ruler is mentioned in the Tirunelli inscription. Accordingly, \textit{Keezhkattipozha Cherikkal} was under the sway of Kunjikkutta Varmman Kurumbiyathiri.\textsuperscript{102} The process of the land grants on \textit{Attipper} (compete transfer of the freehold) to the temple functionaries was also evident in the inscriptions.\textsuperscript{103} But not much indications on the developments of the \textit{brahmaswam} land except few traces from the Tiruvattur and Tiruvalla records. The Tiruvattur inscription refers to the name of certain Brahmin settlements, which will be discussed fourth chapter of this work. All these shows that the process was already started in the early medieval period. Along with these three types, the \textit{Jannam} and \textit{Kanam} land ownership types were developed in the medieval North Kerala. Rajan

\textsuperscript{99} \textit{Ibid} p 114
\textsuperscript{100} \textit{Ibid}
\textsuperscript{101} For details, M.G.S Narayanan, \textit{Perumals of Kerala} Pp 108-111, Raghava Varier and Rajan Gurukkal, \textit{Keralacharithram}, p 117
\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Tirunelli Inscription}, line 5,11,18, published in V.R. Parameswaran Pillai, \textit{Pracheena Likhathangal}, Kottayam, 1963, p 122
Gurukkal argues that the *janmam* and *kanam* forms of possession of land seem to have begun only at the later phase of the evolution of the land system. ¹⁰⁴

The land grant received as *attipper* with libation of water (*Neer attipper / Neer Attikkodutha*) later transformed into hereditary land ownership right, which was inherited by birth. The term *Janmam* appears in the later records. It was actually the hereditary titular rights over the production units, the process of production and distribution. ¹⁰⁵ Such lands were mainly made for brahmana, temple and church. ¹⁰⁶ The major agrarian settlements were developed in the river valleys in connection with the temples and brahmin centers. Such process has already been started in the Second Chera period. The profusion of such land ownership occurred in the post Chera period. The formation of autonomous matrilineal households of the local chiefs called *Swarupam* and the semi-autonomous Brahmin settlements called *Sanketham* were the unique features of this period. However, these terms does not correspond to the actual ownership over the land. Instead it provides the traditional and hereditary right over the land, the means of production and production relations. The concept of individual ownership was not developed in that period and it was unknown up to the arrival of colonial time.

¹⁰⁴ Rajan Gurukkal, *The Kerala temple and early medieval agrarian system*, p 87
¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p 140
Another feature was the development of mortgage system. The term Otii, and Kanam, which already appears in the Chera inscriptions, shows the development of mortgage tenure. This involved obtaining lands or any service for a stipulated period of time after paying a certain amount of money as security. But this practice was apparently concentrated in Southern Travancore and very few instances for such transactions are found from other parts of Kerala. At the same time, another term Panayam (pledge or mortgage of lands) occurred in the North Kerala context. Perumchellur inscription refers to the Panayam of land, which include wet, garden and dwelling plots along with Aladiyar, to obtain 705 Anaiachu. This will be explained in detail in the fifth chapter of this work.

Settlement geography of Nadu

The basic unit of the settlement was kuti and the larger unit was ur, which appears in the early sangam works, early medieval inscription and even medieval documents. Kuti was the standard name of the settlement in the sangam context. The

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107 According to K.N. Ganesh, this practice was apparently concentrated in southern Tiruvitamkukur and very few instances for such transaction are found from other parts of Kerala. K.N. Ganesh, “Agrarian Unit in Kerala (1500-1800)” in P.J. Cherian, Perspectives on Kerala History, p 142

108 Ibid


110 It is argued that kutis are the settlement of occupational groups and the chief of the kuti known as Kutipathi, Raghava Varier and Rajan Gurukkal, Keralacharithram, Pp 160-161

term *kutimakkal*, which frequently used in the *sangam* song, refers to identify the settler with the habitation.\(^{112}\) The *kuti* right was based on the seniority order and it involved a certain gradation of privileges, which were handed down through generation.\(^{113}\) In the *Sangam* context, *Ur* was habitational space, which appears in all *Tinais* (*Kurinj, Mullai, Palai, Marutham and Neital*), and hence identifiable with *kuti*.\(^{114}\) Different kinds of operational spaces including the production units, pastoral tracts, settlements of different artisanal groups, exchange spaces, cultural and ritual space etc are also identifiable with *Ur*.\(^{115}\) Thus the *Ur* appears in the early historic context as the grouping of settlements and it can be seen in all physiographical divisions including hills, hillock slopes, plains and coastal areas.

In the early medieval epigraphs, *Kuti* appears as the basic settlement of various occupational groups including actual tillers and craft groups.\(^{116}\) *Alkutis* of *Pulaya* and *Cherumar, Vannarakuti, Izhakuti, Velalakti* etc are mentioned in the inscriptions as the settlements of the agricultural labours and other labour groups.\(^{117}\) All these settlements were developed in the backdrop of the formation of agrarian production landscapes. In early medieval context, especially in Kerala studies, it is argued that *Ur*, which appears in the Chera inscription, were the temple centered Aryan (Brahmin) villages and

\(^{112}\) *Ibid* p 168  
\(^{113}\) *Ibid*  
\(^{114}\) *Ibid* p 189  
\(^{115}\) *Ibid*  
\(^{116}\) It is argued that the settlements of all kinds of Paniyals, which frequently appears in the inscriptions, were termed as *Kuti*. Raghava Varier and Rajan Gurukkal, *Keralacharithram*, p 118,  
\(^{117}\) *Ibid*, Pp 160-161
Uralars, the proprietors of the Ur, were Brahmans.\(^\text{118}\) Accordingly, the Ur and Sabha were the Brahmin bodies which supervise the functions of the settlements. In the light of inscriptions like Triprangot, Thrikkodithanam, Chembra etc and few Tamil studies where Ur is considered as Vellanvagai villages, the later studies of Kerala point out that the Ur and Sabha seem to have represented non-brahmin and Brahmin villages and their bodies.\(^\text{119}\) The Tirunelli inscription refers to Vellalars as agrarian groups in association with the Ur.\(^\text{120}\) However, it can be assumed that Ur seems to have continued as non-brahmin settlement units which were later occupied by the Brahmin. A number of Ur appears in the inscriptions of early medieval Kerala and most of them were the grouping of non-brahmin and Brahmin villages.

Similarly, there are terms related to Brahmin settlements like mangalam, sabhai etc. It is believed that 32 traditional Brahmin settlements were developed in Kerala and they were distributed to the south of river Perumpula (Chandragiri).\(^\text{121}\) Among the listed 32 settlements the Perinchellur and Payyannur are the only two settlements in the northern parts. Besides these, many Brahmin settlements are noticed in the region. The Edanur settlement, Valicheri settlement, Tiruvattur settlement etc were prominent in the

\(^{118}\) M.G.S. Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, Pp 109-112


\(^{120}\) “Urum Uridavakai Vellalarum”, *Tirunelli Inscription*, line 7-8, Published in V.R. Paramesvaran Pillai, *Pracheena Likhithangal*

\(^{121}\) 10 settlements were developed between the river Perumpula and river Karumpula, 12 settlements were formed between the Karumpula and Churni rivers, 10 settlements were evolved between Churni and Kannyakumari rivers. For details, M.G.S. Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, p 142, Kesavan Veluthat, *Brahmin Settlement in Kerala*, Pp 19-33
northern Kerala. The proliferation of Brahmin centers and the temple centers also indicate the expansion of agrarian unit.

Unlike the Tamil country, there are not many evidences to prove the formation of Brahmadeya villages in Kerala except, Kollurmatam plate, Mampilli and Tiruvatur inscription. But there are frequent references about the Brahmin settlements, which were named as mangalam, madam, illam and probably urs. As the Vedic ritual performers, the Brahmins had received land as grant or gift from the ruling chiefs. These lands or settlement areas were managed through the councils like Ur and Sabhai. The Kilimanur and the Kollur matam plates throw light on the nature of the country Ur and Sabhai had two different functions. The Ur was the organization of non-brahmanic villages and the Sabhai was the brahmanic council. But in Kerala, both have been considered as the brahmanic councils or organizations. The functionaries of Urs and Sabhas were Brahmins. There are a number of place names ending with the term Ur like Kulathur, Viyyur, Thalakulathur, Tiruvatur, Etanur etc where the Brahmins have been settled. This may show that though earlier these Urs seems to be non-Brahmin villages later it could be occupied or incorporated by the Brahmins.

122 Edanur sabha appears in the Chembra Inscription, Published in M.R. Raghava Varier, Keraleeyatha Charithramanangal, Vallathol Vidyapidham, Sukapuram, 1990, Pp 92-102 Valicheri sabha appears in the Tirunelli inscription, Published in V.R. Paramesvaran Pilla, Pracheen Likhithangal, p. 170 a number of Brahmin households occur in the Tiruvattur inscription, Published in K. Mahesvaran Nair, Epigraphia Malabarica, Pp 72-74
123 Kesavan Veluthat, Brahmin settlement in Kerala, p 7
124 Ibid
125 Ibid, p 55
The nature of Brahmin centers had changed in the post Chera period – from the 12th century onwards. It is suggested that the political de-centrality of the nadus correspond to the change in the nature of Brahmin settlements gradually transformed into complete autonomy.\textsuperscript{126} The Tiruvalla Copper plate clearly mentions about the land grants to the Brahmins with complete beneficiaries including the right to collect taxes and the market duties.\textsuperscript{127} The period also had witnessed the proliferation of ‘Upagramas’ throughout nadu.\textsuperscript{128}

The formation of large agrarian tracts, as well as the Brahmin centers in the nadu leads to the emergence of Temples. It has been suggested that the temples had developed in the agrarian belt which marked the expansion of agriculture.\textsuperscript{129} Most of the temples were developed in the surroundings of the Brahmin settlements. The temples had large amount of land as ‘Devaswam’ which was ruled by the Uralas or Sabhaiyyar.\textsuperscript{130} The Uralas or Sabhayars generally belonged to the Brahmin community. The temples had also developed in the parambu (garden lands) dominated nadu and in the productive regions as well as in the vicinity of exchange centers.\textsuperscript{131}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid, p 83
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid, p 89
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid, p 69-74
\textsuperscript{129} Rajan Gurukkal, \textit{The Kerala temple and the Early medieval Agrarian system}, p 16
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid , Pp 50-51
\textsuperscript{131} For instance, the Kulathur temple of Kurumbranad, a nadu developed in the backdrop of the surplus accumulated from the garden land than the wet land. Walicheri (Balusseri) which was an active trade centre of Kurumbranadu was developed in the vicinity of Valicherikotta Paradevada temple and Kulathur temple. K.P. Rajesh, “Geo-political Formation of Nadus in North Kerala: A Study of the Regional Configuration of Kurumbranadu”, \textit{Advances in Arts and Ideas}, Vol.4, Nos. 1&2, 2008, Trissur, Pp 53-61
\end{flushright}
During the early period there were no structural temples in Kerala. Instead, there had been only Kavus or non–brahmanic sacred grooves. Most of these Kavus later transformed into the structural temples.\textsuperscript{132} Thus, the brahmanic deities dominated these temples and the other deities were considered (number of non brahmanic deities) as the subsidiaries of the brahmanic deity. The coming of Bhakti movement also facilitated the process of the development of structural temples.\textsuperscript{133} Most of the structural temples were constructed by the Naduvalis as part of their political legitimacy. Mushikavamsakavya refers to the establishment of the temples like Vatukesvara, Ahiranesvara and Narayanapura by the rulers of the Mushika lineage like Vatu kavarmman, Ahirana and Kuntavarmman, respectively. Sreekanta, the last ruler of the Mushika lineage, has renovated the temples like Vatukesvara, Ahiranesvara and Kharakanana, which will be discussed in the fourth chapter. The Brahmin migration has also facilitated the development of the structural temples.

Similarly, there are indications about the non–Brahman settlement in the nadu. Tirunelli inscriptions and Tarisappalli Copper plate, mention about a group called Vellalas. On the basis of these epigraphs, Raghava Varier and Rajan Gurukkal argued that the Vellalas, in the Kerala context, were the Karalars, who held the Karanmai rights over the land.\textsuperscript{134} In the Tamil country there are clear references on the Vellan Vagai villages, but in Kerala, references the Vellalas do not signify the landlords.

\textsuperscript{132} Kaliyamvalli temple of Kaliyamvalli, Koyilandy, Calicut district, from where we found archaic iconic form of Saptamatrikas, and Pisharikavu, the temples of merchant groups, etc are the good examples from the north Malabar. However, this process requires a separate study.

\textsuperscript{133} M.G.S. Narayanan and Veluthat, Kesavan, *Bhakti movement in South India*, In D.N. Jha, *Feudal Social Formation in Early India*, Delhi, 1987, Pp 348-375

Instead, they must have been included within the village community. However, this is a matter of debate which has to be further explored.

The agrarian expansion and the brahmanic domination within the nadu, resulted in the development of the occupational hierarchy based on caste. The earlier tribal society had no caste and the community organisation was on the basis of occupation. But in later centuries, the society had witnessed the transformation of the occupational groups into the caste identity. The formation of occupational divisions had led to the development of settlement areas within the nadu. But the distribution pattern of the village community had no homogeneity. The topographical and ecological factors of nadu closely influenced the distribution pattern of the village community. The undulated nature of nadu may indicate that the earliest settlement was in the hilly region and the expansion of agriculture encouraged the process of migration from the hilly region to the low lying plains.

However, the nature of geography, the caste gradation etc were all influential in naming settlements that probably show the forms of occupation as well as the caste form. Hence, the place name like asarikandi, kollankadi, tattankandi etc shows the existence of occupational division on the one hand and the compound of particular jati (caste) on the other. The Tarisapalli copper plate refers to the names of occupational groups such as carpenters, washer-men, coconut pluckers, toddy tappers, and oil mongers who were transferred along with the land. Similarly, the Kollur madham plate also threw lights on the village communities of nadu.

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136 Ibid p 7
The crafts groups were spread throughout the *nadu* locality and their settlement were known as *ceris*, *terus* etc. Both *ceris* and *terus* have been settled by the weaving and merchant communities. There are a number of place names like *Kannancheri*, *Kakkancheri*, *Kammalacheri* etc in the Northern part of Kerala. The caste (*jati*) based field names are pointers to the presence of the respective caste occupational groups in the region.\(^{137}\)

The terms like *tara* and *desam* occur in the medieval period. *Tara* was the nucleus of the settlements. The *taras* were developed according to the spread of occupational groups. Each occupational group had their *tara* with kinship ties and customary rights. The *tara* right would not be violated in normal case. There was no concept of private property in *tara* unit. *Tara* right was actually the monopoly of the occupational groups over their profession.\(^{138}\) *Tara* was indicating the spread of the non-brahmin settlements of the *nadu*. Similarly the term *Desam* was not common in the early records, instead it appears in the later records. The term *desavazhi*, the chief of the *desam* unit occurs in the Keralolpathi *Granthavari* of 14\(^{th}\) or 15\(^{th}\) century A.D.\(^{139}\) There is references on the *Anjudesam* (five regional units) and *Naludesam* (four regional units) settlement units of newly migrated Brahmins in the Perumba river belts of

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\(^{138}\) K. N. Ganesh, *Keralathinte Innalakal*, p 49

Kannur district.\textsuperscript{140} It happened in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century A D. The substantial references on the Desam units occur in the colonial records. The Settlement Registers of British colonials, which give an account of the settlement pattern of the region, were prepared on the basis of the Desam units.

**Development of exchange**

The expansion of food production units was resulted to the growth of settlements and population. The non-cultivating groups and intermediaries had considerably increased. They consisted of the ruling families with their branches placed at different centres in their jurisdiction, their retainers, landed intermediaries, ritualists, artisanal/occupational groups, medicine men, tradesmen etc.\textsuperscript{141} The production surpluses from multi-crops agrarian units, craft products, fish, salt etc have been widely exchanged among the non-cultivating groups in the nadu. The resources from the forest tracts and the garden lands have also been the articles of exchange. The wild flesh, honey, fish etc were also exchanged. Three kinds of exchange networks have been developed in the region- the reciprocal goods to goods exchange in the local level, long distant exchange and the maritime exchanges.\textsuperscript{142}

The early form of exchange was reciprocal.\textsuperscript{143} The goods to goods exchange were active in the early centuries. The term kodai, notuthal etc and the distribution of

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{140} Sagara Granthavari, published in N.V.P. Unithiri, Athyutharakeralaleeyam, Kairali books, Kannur,2008, Pp 37-57
\textsuperscript{141} M.R. Raghava Varier “Socio Economic Structure” in P.J. Cherian (ed), Perspectives on Kerala History, p 99
\textsuperscript{142} M.R. Raghava Varier and Rajan Gurukkal, Cultural history of Kerala, Pp 176-183
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid, p 176
\end{flushleft}
the exchange centers like *avanam, angadi, chanta* etc in the regions have been referred to in the early Tamil literatures.\(^{144}\) Paddy and salt were the chief exchange items among the hillocks, wet plains and the coastal zones and it was the chief medium of exchange.\(^{145}\) The movements of the merchants caused the formation of path ways between different zones.\(^{146}\) *Umanar*, the salt merchants, reached agricultural spaces, pastoral lands and forest.\(^{147}\) The itinerary merchant groups (*vanikas*) were moved throughout the region and gathered and transported the goods from region to region.\(^{148}\) There are references on the movement of *umanchath* through the *palai* zones. This seems to have been the early known exchange forms in the local level.

The evidences on the extensive development of institutionalized form of exchange were found in the early medieval and medieval context. The consumable goods for the daily life were the major item of the local exchange and it functioned according to the good to goods exchange principle. Accordingly, each one has to sell and also buy a product. The articles of the local exchanges were food products, craft products, luxurious item etc. Besides luxury articles and food-grains, considerable

\(^{144}\) M.R. Raghava Varier and Rajan Gurukkal, *Keralacharithram*, p 82
\(^{145}\) M.R. Raghava Varier and Rajan Gurukkal, *Cultural history of Kerala*, p 179
\(^{146}\) It has been argued that movement of carts and people, including exchangers resulted in the formation of pathways called *aru*. Such pathways went through and crossed large open spaces or cross roads called *kavalai*. For details, K.N. Ganesh, “Lived spaces in history: A study in human geography in the context of Sangam texts”, p 178
\(^{147}\) Ibid
\(^{148}\) One of the first century AD Tamil Brahmi inscriptions refers to the caravan merchants like *Panitivanikan*, means merchant trading in beauty articles like jewels and ornaments, *Koluvanikan*, means a merchant dealing with plough, etc. T.V. Mahalingam, *Early South Indian Paleography*, University of Madras, 1974
amount of metals, medicinal herbs, silk and other fabrics, etc, were brought to Kerala.\textsuperscript{149} However, due to scarcity of evidence, more items of exchanges in the early medieval period of the \textit{nadu} cannot be listed out. The \textit{Payyannur pattu} and few \textit{Tottam Pattus} of North Kerala have given certain hints on the items that traded in the local markets, which will be discussed at length in the fifth chapter of this work.\textsuperscript{150} Institutional forms of this kind of local exchanges could be seen in the village markets which were held at regular intervals on fixed week-days.\textsuperscript{151}

The evidences of the development of long distance exchanges can be traced from early historic time. The available assemblages from the burial monuments like Russet coated painted ware, Black and Red ware, black burnished ware, beads of carnelian, steatite etc have shown the possible existence of the trade relation between Kerala with its northern counterparts.\textsuperscript{152} The huge amount of artefacts from the excavated sites of Pattanam including semi precious stones like carnelian, amethyst, garnet, chalcedony, beryl, topaz, onyx and the ceramics including the rouletted ware are the direct

\textsuperscript{149} M.R. Raghava Varier “Socio Economic Structure” in P.J Cherian (ed), \textit{Perspectives on Kerala History}, Pp 99-100


\textsuperscript{151} The presence of such markets is attested to by the medieval Malayalam literary texts like \textit{Unniccirutevicaritam, Unnunilisandesam, Anantapuravarvanam} etc M.R. Raghava Varier “Socio Economic Structure”, p 100

\textsuperscript{152} The huge assemblages of the russet coated painted ware, black burnished ware, black and red ware, beads etc were found from the excavated site at Anakkara, Palakkad district (Rajan Gurukkal, \textit{Anakkara Excavation report 2008-09}, unpublished, M.G University, Kottayam), beads from Pulpalli, Waynad district (discovered by Ajesh .C.A, Researcher, Department of History, University of Calicut), Black and red ware from most of the sites explored in the region under the study.
archaeological evidences on the early historic trade relations between the west coast of Kerala and North India.\textsuperscript{153} The passes of the Western Ghats were active trade routes of the inland merchants.\textsuperscript{154} The discovery of the carnelian and steatite beads from the burial sites of Anakkara of Palaghat district has shown the possible movements of merchants through the Palghat gap between North Kerala and North India in the early times.\textsuperscript{155}

The presence of itinerary merchant groups like \textit{Anjuvannam}, \textit{Manigramam}, \textit{Nanadesikal}, \textit{Nalpattennayiravar}, \textit{Patinenbhumi}, \textit{Tisai Ayirattu Ainnurravvar} and \textit{Valanciyar} were active in the inland and overseas exchange networks in the early medieval time.\textsuperscript{156} This seems to have shown the possible continuity in the exchange networks in the early medieval time. These bodies engaged themselves in commercial activities cutting across the boundaries of the various political regions of South India.\textsuperscript{157} Interestingly some of these groups were getting favours from the ruling powers of the region.\textsuperscript{158} It has been stated that \textit{Manigramam} was an itinerary merchant group who


\textsuperscript{154} A. Sreedara Menon, \textit{A Survey of Kerala History} (Revised ed), S Viswanathan printers Pvt Ltd, Thiruvananthapuram, 2003 edition, Pp 5-6


\textsuperscript{157} M.R. Raghava Varier, \textit{Ibid}, p 100

\textsuperscript{158} According to Ramanthali Narayankunnur inscription, the \textit{Manigramam} groups were appointed as the guardian of the temple affairs by the junior \textit{Mushika} prince. M.G.S Narayanan, \textit{Index to Chera Inscription. Index No.3}
concentrated on the local base agrarian hinterland.\textsuperscript{159} Through each of the local bases they integrated and formularized exchange networks for servicing the hinterland with foreign merchandise and collecting the rural surplus.\textsuperscript{160} The Valanchiyars also took part in long distance trade in Kerala. It flourished and continued in the medieval time. The term Chozhiyar (Cholas) and Pandiyar (Pandyas) that appears in the Payyannurpattu are the direct indications on the existence of mercantile transaction between these regions and North Kerala in medieval time.\textsuperscript{161} It is argued that the coastal Karnataka ports had brisk trade contacts with the port of Valapattanam, Cannanore, and Dharmapattanam during the fourteenth and fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{162} However, all these have shown that the long distant trade has a long tradition and its traces can be seen from early times and it continued in modern times.

Malabar Coast had brisk maritime trade relation with the western world from very early period. The main attraction for this was the spice products like pepper, cardamom, ginger etc which were cheaply available in the region. The archaeological evidences on the West Asian and Roman world have recently been unearthed from Kerala.\textsuperscript{163} The references in the early Tamil texts\textsuperscript{164} and the Greek-Roman classical

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\textsuperscript{159} Rajan Gurukkal, \textit{The Kerala Temple and the early medieval agrarian system}, Pp.92-95

\textsuperscript{160} \textit{Ibid}

\textsuperscript{161} \textit{P. P. 40}


\textsuperscript{163} A considerable amount of Roman Ceramics – Terra Sigiliata, Amphorae- , West Asian Ceramics – Turquoise Glazed Painted Ware, Torpedo and glass fragments, especially the pillared Roman glass bowl, probably the frankincense fragments etc have shown the active trade contacts of the region with western

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accounts\textsuperscript{165} have given the corroborative proof of the development of early historic maritime trade relation. They refer to the brisk maritime contacts of Malabar Coast with Mediterranean coast and West Asia.\textsuperscript{166} The continuity in the coastal based overseas trade activities in the early medieval time has testified the presence of the merchant guilds like \textit{Manigramam} and \textit{Valanchiyar}, which were centred mainly in the coastal towns.\textsuperscript{167} The West Asian merchant’s settlements, as the result of the expansion of maritime trade, have been developed in various part of Kerala, especially in the port cities of Kollam and Kodungallur.\textsuperscript{168} The presence of \textit{Manigramam} and \textit{Valanchiyar}, the Christian and Jewish merchant groups, in North Kerala seems to have shown the possible spread of West Asian merchants in the early medieval time.\textsuperscript{169} The Arab merchants lived in the Northern part of Kerala. \textit{Payyannur Pattu} mentions the term \textit{Chonavar}\textsuperscript{170} which shows the presence of Arab traders in the coastal ports of North

\textsuperscript{165} J.W. Mc Crintle, \textit{Ancient India as described by The Commerce and Navigation of the Erithean Sea and Ancient India as described by Ktesian the Knidian}, Today’s & Tomorrow’s Printers and Publishers, New Delhi, (1879, 1882), 1984, Pp136-138

\textsuperscript{166} \textit{Nauru, Tindis, Muziris, Bacara, Nelcynda} etc are referred to the Sangam literatures as the major port towns of ancient Kerala. For details, Elamkulam. P .N. Kunjan Pillai, \textit{Studies in Kerala History}, Pp 56-64. Most of these port towns are mentioned in the Greek-Roman classical literatures. For details, Wilfred H Schoff, \textit{, The Periplus of Erythrean Sea, Travels and trade in the Indian ocean by a merchant of the first century}, translated from Greek and annotated by Longmans Green & Co. New York, 1912, Pp 44-46.


\textsuperscript{169} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{170} \textit{Payyannur Pattu} 40
Kerala. The foreign travellers’ records refer to the immigrant merchants; include Arab and Jewish, being engaged in the medieval trade of Kerala.\(^{171}\)

However, the above discussions on the spreading out of the complex form of agrarian settlements and exchange networks lead us to think about the political involvements over the *nadu*, which seems to have been controlled the surplus accumulation and its redistribution.

**Political formation of the *nadu***

The political system, which controlled the process of surplus accumulation, could be a chief, king, *Naduvalis* or *Desavazhi* etc that developed over the *nadu*. In a chiefdom society, the process was under the supervision of the chief. The predatory marches and booty capture were the surplus accumulation mechanism of the chiefdom. It was the early political form developed in the *nadu*. Mainly three lineages - *Kizhar*, *Velir* and *Ventar* - are referred to in the literature as the major chiefly systems.\(^{172}\) The magnificent burial monuments of the Iron Age, which have been unearthed from the region of Kerala, have also underlined the possible presence of the political power,

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\(^{172}\) The *Kizhar* (*Ur-kizhar, Ur-mannar*) were generally lowland chiefs of small settlements, mostly in dry land zone (*Vanpulam*). The *Velir*, most archaic form, were the hill chieftains. The *Ventar* represented by the three major chiefly lineages- Chera, Pandya and Chola. For details, Rajan Gurukkal and Raghava Varier, *Cultural history of Kerala*, Pp 199-213
possibly chieftains.\textsuperscript{173} The social organisation of this chiefdom is based on clan kinship ties and a complex system of redistribution.\textsuperscript{174}

The expansion of agriculture, formation of different forms of labour, and proliferation of settlements of the early medieval time resulted in the development of chiefly households, which became the feudatories of the major political system termed as the Later or Second Chera or Perumal Kingdom. It has been stated that there are thirteen nadus\textsuperscript{175}, which differed widely in size and political and social status.\textsuperscript{176} Different terms appear in the epigraphs of the early medieval time like Kotai, ko kon, koyiladhikari, koyil, Atikal, Tiruvati etc to denote the chiefs of the nadu.\textsuperscript{177} They were accompanied by the martial groups like, Ayiram Nurruvar\textsuperscript{178} and body guards like nizhal and prakriti.\textsuperscript{179} The matrilineal succession pattern was followed in the chiefly houses. Accordingly, the senior most male member of the household was elevated into the status of a chief. The matrilineal lineage positions like Ilamkuru and Muthakuru

\textsuperscript{173} “Differences in size of the monuments and the nature of mortuary valuables suggesting differentiation in status and ranking point to the nature of contemporary political power. The construction of a huge monument involving the mobilization of substantial collective labour implies the power the buried individual to command it.” Rajan Gurukkal and Raghava Varier, \textit{Cultural history of Kerala}, Pp 145-46

\textsuperscript{174}~\textit{Ibid}


\textsuperscript{176} Kesavan Veluthat, \textit{The political structure of Early medieval South India}, Orient Logman, New Delhi, 1993, p 114

\textsuperscript{177} M.G.S.Narayanan has mentioned various titles used by the Chera rulers like, Perumal, Atkal,Ko,Koyil, Ko Konmai kotan ko, etc. M.G.S. Narayanan, \textit{Perumals of Kerala}, Pp 78-80

\textsuperscript{178} \textit{Ibid} Pp 122-129

\textsuperscript{179} \textit{Ibid} Pp 73-89
(junior and senior chief respectively) enabled them to enjoy certain privileges in the nunu. For example, the senior chief of the Kurumbranadu had Elunnuruvar (seven hundred) and the junior chief had Munnuruvar (three hundred) martial groups. There are also references of nizhal, the body guards and prakriti, the constitutive elements of the Kurumbiyathiri. All these thirteen chiefdoms were the feudatories of the second Cheras kingdom and the decline of the Chera rule in the first half of 12th century A.D caused the development of independent matrilineal household units, which were termed as Swarupam. Some Nadus of the Chera time disintegrated and others continued, becoming Swarupams.

The formation of the Swarupam was another important shift in the political structure of the nadus of Kerala in the medieval period. Swarupam indicated the autonomous region controlled by the secular authority of the ruling joint family, and often the term was applicable to both the family and the region controlled by them. It has been argued that the political authority in medieval Kerala was based on the organization of a large number of small territorial units, over which a powerful matrilineal joint family called swarupam exercised their hereditary political and

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180 Tirunelli Inscription, published in V.R. Paramesvaran Pillai, Pracheena Likhithangal, p 170
181 Kinalur Inscription, published in M.G.S. Narayanan, Cultural symbiosis in Kerala, Trivandrum, 1972, p 76
182 K.N. Ganesh, “Structure of Political Authority in Medieval Kerala”, in P. J. Cherian (ed), Perspectives on Kerala history, p 222
183 Ibid
juridical authority. The eldest member of the matrilineal households becomes the head of swarupam. This system was known as the muppumura and kuruvazhcha. Each swarupams had many lineage fractions or Tavazhikal and they had Kovilakams or Koolakams, (the residence). They maintained their own militia called Ayirathvar, Pathinayirathavar, Nuttuvar and were also accompanied by the bodyguards Nizhal or Nikal.\textsuperscript{185} Ariyittuvazhcha, the coronation ceremony conducted by the Brahmins probably belonging to the traditional thirty two settlements, was also important in the political system like Swarupam. The Swarupam had non-brahmanic and brahmanic temples. The household deities were generally non-brahmanic mother goddess called Paradevada and they were more of a private worshiping space in nature and probably confined to the ruling households. The brahmanic temples were mostly Vaishnavite and Saivite, which were under the over-lordship of the Swarupam. The entitlement at the time of the coronation was another feature of Swarupam. This process enabled the Swarupam to incorporate different minor power units of the region into the territory of swarupam and also integrate the surplus from various resource units.

Therefore three types of political development can be seen in the case of nadus of Kerala; as part of the kinship based early chiefdom, as feudatories of the Second Chera Kingdom and the Swarupam state which was controlled by matrilineal households.

\textsuperscript{184} “The origin of the term Swarupam is obscure and it indicated the autonomous region controlled by the secular authority of the ruling joint family, and often the term was applicable to both the family and the region controlled by them.” For details, Ibid, p 222
\textsuperscript{185} Nikal was the companion or body guards of the Nadavalis referes to the Chera Inscription. For details, M.G.S. Narayanan, Perumals of Kerala, Pp 123-124
Social systems in the Nadu

The formation of complex form of occupational groups, redistribution of surpluses and the development of social hierarchies in the Nadu have also shown the possible evolution of certain system, which seems to have governed the entire social relations. The form of this system seems to be different in time and space. Different types of the Iron Age burials and its mortuary assemblages, including different ceramics and metal objects, have shown the contemporary complexities in the social hierarchy. Such hierarchical relation seems to have proposed the possible existence of certain social customs or practice. But we have no direct sign of the existence of such a system in the sangam literature.

The direct indications on the contemporary customary contracts have appeared in the early medieval epigraphs of Kerala in association with the temple affairs. They were termed as Kaccam, Vyavastai, Ozhukkam etc.\textsuperscript{186} The Muzhikkalam Kaccam was the prominent one and the Kaccams like Tavaranur Kaccam, Katangattu Kaccam, Sangaramangalathu Kaccam and Kaitavarattu Kaccam, were also mentioned.\textsuperscript{187} It is not sure whether this code was subjected to the entire society or confined to a specific category.\textsuperscript{188} As this was appeared only in the Chera inscriptions, it seems to have functioned in the spaces, which were under the sway of the Second Chera Kingdom. This could be true as these codes were absent in the post Chera source materials. After

\textsuperscript{186} Ibid, p 114
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid, Pp 116-120
\textsuperscript{188} It has been argued that the Mulikkulam kaccam was followed as the model by Brahmin settlements all over Kerala. M.G.S. Narayanan, Perumals of Kerala, Pp 114-116
the Chera period, the term Maryadai, Kizhmaryadai, keezhiyakkam etc, are occurred in connection with the code of conduct in the medieval society. The entire political relations between the swarupams and the matrilineal households and the contemporary society had functioned according to the traditional customs and practices called acharam and maryada. They were as the governing force of the medieval society. Different Maryadai like nattu maryada, desa maryada, tara maryada, jati maryada, sudra maryada, sanketha maryada etc were under practice in medieval and pre-colonial society, especially in North Kerala. Avakasam and Mura, the traditional rights of different occupational groups and political entities, have been maintained according to the maryada. The violation of maryada caused the social crisis. The maryada could be the archaic system which upheld the production relations and political hierarchies of the region and this could also have emerged in earlier times. However, the system continued as the managing code of the entire social practices and relations up to the colonial times, when the institutionalised colonial legal system was introduced.

Conclusion

It can be seen from the above discussion that nadus in Kerala developed as an agrarian unit in a process that broadly corresponded to the formation of naidu in

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189 K.N. Ganesh, Keralathinte Innalekal, p 133
190 The colonial government, who was ignorant about the ground level social practices of the region, has given modern legal status to the traditional customs. Earlier the land right of the landlords were the right over the produce and the means of production. But now this right was transferred as the ownership right over the land. Thus the land got the commodity status and the landlord got the actual legal right over the land, which enabled him to legally punish the tenants. Thus the eviction became a common practice in the colonial times, which was not under practice in pre-modern time owing to the dominant presence of Achara Maryada.
Tamilakam. However, a few distinct features are visible in the *nadu* formation in Kerala. While the *nadu* developed from wet land paddy cultivation zones, they came into incorporate *parambu* and *purayidam* in elevated regions. They had hence a pattern of multiple economic system including production of paddy and other food grains, coconut, pepper, spices within the same terrain. This meant that a complex form of reproduction of exchange was evolved along with the complex division of labour, which is shown by the occupational hierarchies appearing in the various kinds of source materials including archaeological, epigraphical, *granthavaris* and household records. In course of time, *nadu* evolved as political units dominated by the *Nattudayavar*. This process of the political formation was facilitated by Brahmin settlements, which have conducted various ritual ceremonies in order to legitimate the rule of *Nattudayavar*.

However, this is only a framework, which is prepared on the basis of the existing studies in south India. This pattern may be or may not be applicable in the case of Kolathunadu. However, from this premises, the next four chapters will examine the process of the formation of Kolathunadu.