Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The present work, *Historical Geography of Kolathunadu: A Study of the Regional Formation in Medieval North Kerala*, attempts to enter into a discussion on the process of the evolution of Kolathunadu from the Iron Age early historic chiefdom to the medieval matrilineal household state called *Swarupam*. It delineates the process of the formation of the *Swarupam* over the *Nadu*. The study is mainly focused on the socio-political scenario of the region comprising Kolathunadu at the time of Nannan of the age of Tamil anthologies, *Mushikavamsa* (*Mushika* lineage) of the *Mushikavamsa kavya*, and the Kolathiris of the medieval period.

The available source materials are testifying the historical continuity of the region of Kolathunadu as an agrarian unit from the Iron age early historic period to the medieval times. The early settlements were developed in the hillocks and its slopes of the region in association with the agro-pastoral economy. The extension of food

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1. The name Kolathunadu is not used anymore and now it belongs to the present Kannur district, Kerala, India. There is a paddy field with the name *Kolathuvayal* in the Pazhayangadi river belt.
production units in the river valleys resulted in the formation of *nadu* as the grouping of agrarian settlements, in later times. The complex forms of occupational groups were developed in relation to the wet paddy production process. The production surpluses and the resources of the *nadu* were distributed or widely exchanged among the agrarian settlements. Some of the items, especially the garden or forest crops, were traded in the internal and external markets.

The formation of the *nadu* as surplus productive agrarian unit resulted in the evolution of a political power system, which could control the surplus accumulation and its re-distribution. The various elements of the system could be chiefdom, monarchy, a lineage group, household, sacred space etc, and they were formed in different chronological span of the successive socio-economic formation of the *nadu*. The relation between the agrarian settlements and the political system were governed by the traditional customs and practices. However, certain elements of state formation appeared in the early medieval period, at the time of the formation of a lineage called *Mushikas* in the region of Kolathunadu. But its developed form comes into sight in the post *Mushika* phase with the formation of *Kolaswarupam*.


Kerala, as a geographical and socio cultural entity, comprises several *nadus* in pre-modern times. They are the basic part of the socio-political formation of pre-modern South India which also formed the geographical and cultural basis for the formation of the society during pre-colonial period. Unlike Tamil country, where the *nadus* developed as a widespread mono-crop cultivation unit, the *nadus* in Kerala configured as the multi-crop agrarian unit. It consisted of both cultivated productive region and non-cultivated resourceful forest region. *Nadu* developed in the fertile tracts of elevated terraces of the hillocks and it is an admixture of productive and resourceful regions. The widespread mono-crop cultivation was not possible in this region due to the undulated nature of the terrain that included hilly regions, slopes, river valley and coastal plains. The *nadus* were the grouping of agrarian settlements and it helped in the proliferation of various occupational and craft group settlements in the land. Thus, the growth of agricultural lands either in the alluvial or in the coastal plains, the reclamation of lands, clearing forest and the emergence of new settlement pattern had contributed much to the making of a *nadu* as an independent entity. It is a complex task if we attempt to define the boundary of a *nadu* or a region of the early medieval or medieval time. It has been stated that the *nadus* have no clear cut boundaries and it functioned only within the limits of the respective territorial units of the settlements

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5 M.G.S. Narayanan listed about fourteen *Nadus* as part of the Second Chera Kingdom. M.G.S. Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, Calicut, 1996, Pp 90-105. Besides these dominant *nadus*, several units termed as *nadu*, which mentioned in the epigraphs, has also been listed. For details see, E. Rekha, *Nadus in the Age of Perumal (800-1200 A.D)*, Unpublished M. Phil dissertation, Calicut University, 2001

6 For details see, K.N. Ganesh, *Keralathinte Innalekal*, Chapters 3,4

7 Y. Subbarayalu, *Political Geography of the Cholas*, Pp 32-33
contained in them. Many studies have already placed the complexities to trace the clear cut political boundary of the region. The man-made boundaries changed frequently and rapidly with each political change and therefore the only stable boundaries are the geographical ones and even that are liable to be modified substantially through ecological changes. In the case of nadus of pre-modern South India, the natural boundaries existed were rivers, forests, mountains etc rather than a clear-cut political boundary. The nadu seems to have formed or developed on both sides of a river or bordering a forest or other natural boundaries.

The nadus have been considered as part of the centralized and de-centralized monarchies of early medieval and medieval polity of Kerala and simply considered it as the political unit. Thus in the early studies the nadu has generally been considered as an administrative subdivision or district of the major political kingdoms and it was ruled by the governors. But recently it has been argued that, in Kerala, the nadus cannot be simply described as political unit, but which developed from the paddy crop production landscape and further incorporated the production units of the elevated dry land cultivation zones. The production surplus and its distributive or re-distributive process

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8 Ibid, p 36  
9 Romila Thapar, “Regional History, the Punjab”, in Cultural Pasts, New Delhi, 2000, p.98  
in the *nadu* have corresponded to the formation of political system. In this regard, very few attempts have been made in Kerala. Such studies, in the backdrop of the studies of Y. Subbarayalu, have attempted to trace the process in the formation of the *nadu*, as the grouping of agrarian settlements, from early historic period

However, as the multi-crop agrarian unit *nadu* has no uniform pattern in its features. The nature of topography, which comprised of hills, hillocks, slopes, valleys, plains, marshy or swampy and wet lands, various water sources like streams, river, natural ponds, coastal lands, etc, of each *nadu* seems to have varied from one another. The subsistence forms and nature of settlements have also varied according to the topographical features of the *nadu*. Before going to unravel the process of the formation of the *nadu*, a brief survey of the regional and micro-level studies will be useful.

**Regional histories**

“The definition of a region has to do with how we, as historians, look at a region.” Ultimately, the region is a geographical unit and it transformed into a settlement area with the human involvement on its resources. Human interaction with the environment differs according to the nature of landscape. The undulated topography, which includes mountains, hillocks, slopes, valleys, plains, coastal zones etc, the availability of resources comprising of fresh water and other essential

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13 Romila Thapar, “Regional History with reference to the Konkan” in *Cultural Pasts*, p 109
subsistence resources, productivity of the land, seasonal climatic change etc are the decisive factors behind the formation of a region into geo-cultural entity.

No region exists without historical past. Each region gets formed into a settlement unit through a long historical process. The traces of this process will be scattered in the region and most of them are yet to receive attention. As each region has cultural resemblances and differences, a common pattern cannot be ascribed to the origin, formation and the transition. As ‘region’ is the product of human actions in a long time span, the disentanglement of the historical geography of region is a complex process.

In historical studies, regions have been referred to as fragment of whole or as part of macro history. The region is yet to get considerable space in the academic studies. Not many historical studies on the regional entities exist. Romila Thapar through her studies on the regional formation of Punjab and Konkan has emphasized on the significance of the micro-level studies in the historiography.\(^ {14}\) According to Thapar, it encourages the search for and often the discovery of new sources ranging from archaeological to archival. The formation of a region depends on the nature of topography, resources, availability of water and other living environment and productive pattern. As a regional entity, Punjab and Konkan emerged largely due to the growth of agrarian economy and the development of coastal exchange centers. Both these created more surplus in the region and that resulted in the formation of region as a

The regional wise studies were getting a significant space among the South Indian scholars in the first half of 20th century. *South India and her Muhammadan Invaders*\(^\text{15}\), *Pandyan Kingdom*\(^\text{16}\), *The Kadamba Kula; A History of Ancient and Medieval Karnataka*, *Ancient Karnataka*, *A History of South India*\(^\text{19}\), *The Tamil country under Vijayanagar*\(^\text{20}\), etc are certain examples of such studies and they have mainly attempted to unravel the political history of the region and have gone through the achievements and administrative measures of the kings and kingdoms of the region. However, K.A. Neelakanta Sastri’s *A History of South India* may be the pioneer work which furnishes signifiers on the formation of the region from the early historic period to the pre-modern times and considered South India as a broader political entity. But here the term South India has been conceived to denote a broader area consisting of three major kingdoms in ancient time, Chera, Chola, and Pandya. In the medieval portion, the study is confined to the Tamil region and delineates the development of Vijayanagara Kingdom. His *Pandyan kingdom* is one of the pioneer works that

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\(^\text{15}\) S. Krishna swami Ayyengar, *South India and her Muhammadan invaders*, New Delhi, 1921

\(^\text{16}\) K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Pandyan Kingdom*, London, 1929

\(^\text{17}\) George. M. Mores, *The Kadamba Kula ; A history of Ancient and Medieval Karnataka*, B.X Furtado &sons, Bombay, 1931

\(^\text{18}\) B.A. Salatore, *Ancient Karnataka*, Poona, 1936


\(^\text{20}\) A. Krishnaswами, *The Tamil country under Vijayanagar*, Annamalai University, 1964
introduce the concept of the ‘Kingdom’ in the south Indian studies.\textsuperscript{21} \textit{The Cholas} of the same author unravels the political history of the Colas.\textsuperscript{22} Similarly, T.V. Mahalingam, in his \textit{South Indian Polity}, treats South India as a broad political entity and went through the history of the administrative developments of the South Indian Kingdoms.\textsuperscript{23} C. Meenakshi’s \textit{Administration and social life under the Pallavas of Kanchi} is another study which belongs to the same category.\textsuperscript{24} \textit{The Kongu country} of M. Arogyaswami was another work which deals with the political history of Kongu region, the modern district of Coimbatore and Salem, from the earliest time to the coming of the British.\textsuperscript{25} Bishop R. Caldwell’s \textit{A history of Tinnevelly}, which delineates the history of the region from the earliest period to its cession to the English Government in A.D 1801, can be included in the above mentioned group of regional studies.\textsuperscript{26} All these studies gave importance to the political history of the region but the studies on the process of socio-political formation of the region were not under concern of the historians of South India till recent time.

Recently, Cynthia Talbot has published \textit{Pre-colonial India in practice: Society, region and identity in Medieval Andhra} \textsuperscript{27} on the historical evolution of Andhra from 11\textsuperscript{th} to 14\textsuperscript{th} century AD on the basis of the available inscriptions. According to Talbot,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} K.A Nilakanta Sastri, \textit{Pandyan Kingdom}
\item \textsuperscript{22} K.A. Nilakanta Sastri. \textit{The Colas}, (1955)
\item \textsuperscript{23} T.V. Mahalingam, \textit{South Indian Polity}, (1955)
\item \textsuperscript{24} C. Minakshi, \textit{Administration and social life under the Pallavas of Kanchi}, (1938)
\item \textsuperscript{25} M. Arogyaswami, \textit{The Kongu Country}, University of Madras, 1956
\item \textsuperscript{26} Bishop R. Caldwell, \textit{A history of Tinnevelly}, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1982
\item \textsuperscript{27} Cynthia Talbot, \textit{Pre-colonial India in practice: Society, region and identity in Medieval Andhra}
\end{itemize}

Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2001
the medieval era was a period of progressive change, characterized by the expansion of agrarian settlement, a rise in number of religious institutions, an expansion of commercial activity and an evolution of political systems and networks.28 Malini Adiga’s *The Making of Southern Karnataka, society, polity, and culture in the early medieval period AD 400-1030* has attempted to examine the emergence of state in the region of Gangavadi. The topography and climate of southern Karnataka seem to have favoured a mixed farming regime of cattle herding together with agriculture which have been developed in dependence of the seasonal rainfall and tank irrigation undertaken by the ruling elites. She has argued that larger politico-geographic units were the *Visayas* and *Nadu*. *Nadus* were primarily agrarian units that were used by the rulers as administrative units as well.29

Similar attempts have also been made in the studies of Kerala. K. P. Padmanabha Menon30, Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai 31 and A. Sreedhara Menon32 considered Kerala as a regional entity and attempted to trace the political history of Kerala. The political history of the monarchies in Travancore, Kochi and Malabar is

31 The studies of Elamkulam Kujan Pillai are the pioneer attempt to define Kerala as region which emerged from the time of *Sangam* age. He had gone through the history of the region from *Sangam* age to the medieval period. Elamkulam P. N. Kunjan Pillai, *Studies in Kerala History*, National books, (1970)
32 A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, Kottayam, 1967. This work covers the history of the region from pre-historic to the formation of modern Kerala state.
another category in the micro-level studies of Kerala. The socio-political history of the Second Chera Kingdom of Mahodayapuram is a remarkable study in this regard. The studies on the Brahmin settlements and the temple centers in the context of the early medieval social formation are significant in the micro-level history analysis in Kerala. The formation process of Kerala as a regional and political entity has also been highlighted.

Most recently a considerable amount of interest has been generated in Kerala in the writing of micro or local histories. It happened since 1990s when the Government

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37 The history of modern administrative divisions like pannayath, district, city etc is included in this category. Most of them are narrative histories which start from the early historic period, probably the description of few Iron Age sites, through which the heritage of the locality is highlighted, and jumped directly to the pre-colonial times. Then it goes through the history of local resistance against the colonial government and explains its part in the Indian national movements or the peasant movements. In the concluding session, it narrates the cultural contributions of the locale and listed the names and life history of the notable personalities of the region. Most of these studies are the compilation of the exaggerated oral information and most of them have failed to unravel the process of the formation of the locality. However, it is true that such studies will generate a number of sources from the field including the archaeological, epigraphical, oral and written source materials of different time spans. This may provide a strong base for further researches on locality. Pattam. G. Ramchandran Nair, *Thiruvananthapurathinte Itthasam*, Sahityavedi, Thiruvananthapuram, 1996. Scaria Sacaria, *Changanasseri 99’, Pradesika charithrakhyanam*, Changanassery Club, Changanassery, 1999. C. Balan, *Kasargode Charithravum Samoohavum*, Kasargode district Panchayat, 2001, *Oru Tulunadan Peruma or Ajanoorintecharithram*, Ajanoor Grama Panchayat, Koothuparamba, 2005, *Kodavalam*, Kodaval Sree
of Kerala had launched a project to make local histories in association with the people’s planning campaign. Almost all *Panchayaths* produced their history. They compiled all available oral information regarding a localities’ past and present and generated information similar to a mini gazetteer. The history part of these records often produces admixtures of the myths, legends, memories and exaggerated oral data and probably failed to reach beyond a century old memory. However, it helps to the development of micro-level or local histories in the academic and non-academic sectors of Kerala.

There is another type of study, which delineates the process of the formation of cultural landscape of the locality developing in Kerala. Such studies have been attempted to highlight the importance of historical and human geographical perspectives for micro-regional studies.\(^\text{38}\)

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\(^{38}\) The local history of Vaniyamkulam Panchayath can be considered as the pioneer attempt to reproduce the cultural landscape of the locality in the human geography perspective. The chapter “From *Nadu* to *Swarupam*” –Pp 185-219- of the work goes through the process of the formation of Vaniyamkulam as a geo-cultural entity in the belt of Bharatapuzha. For details, *Vaniyam Kulam Panchayath Vinjaaneeyam*, the local history of the Vaniyamkulam Panchayath, Ottappalam Taluk, Palakkad district, published by Kerala Council for Historical Research, Thiruvananthapuram, 2001.

K.N. Ganesh has made such an important study on Tirurangadi Panjayath, Malappuram district, Kerala and traced the process of the formation and transition of the cultural landscape of Tirurangadi and also the change from the agricultural production unit in the pre-colonial times to the less production unit in the present period. It emphasized on the transition of Tirurangadi into the region which mostly depended
The above discussion proves the juvenile condition of the studies on regional formation in Kerala. Most of the early studies try to delineate the political history of the region and keep silence on the process of the political formation. The regional formation in Kerala has been associated with the formation of *nadus*. Thus, the process of the formation of the region into the *Nadu* as the grouping of agrarian settlement has to be revealed. As mentioned earlier, the transition of geographical area into settlement unit has depended on various factors including the nature of topography, availability of fresh water sources, other natural resources, the fertility of the land, form of subsistence, the production pattern of the terrain etc. The human interaction with environment has resulted in the process of historical formation. Thus the evolution of a region into *nadu*, a grouping of agrarian settlement is a complex process. The historical reproduction of the process of its formation can also be considered a compound task. However, the present study, which is an attempt to unravel the process of the formation of Kolathunadu, commences from this context.

The region of Kolathunadu

Historically the region of Kolathunadu has a long tradition. The continuity of its formation can be traced from early historic Iron Age phase to the pre-modern times and later. But it doesn’t mean that the *nadu* had existed in that name from the early period onwards. The term Kolathunadu was not in use even during early medieval time (the time of the 2nd Chera of Mahodayapuram). The term *Kolam* refers to the

Mushikavamsakavya of 11th century as the residence place (Rajadhani) of the Mushika rulers. At the same time the ruling territory of the Mushikas was termed as Mushikarajya. The term Mushikenthra (means Mushika king) which appears in the contemporary inscription from the Tiruvattur temple may indicate the possible entity of the nadu in the name of the ruling lineage Mushika. None of the source materials give tangible signifiers on the earlier existence of the term Kolathunadu. The name Kolathunadu widely appears in the post- Mushika source materials like Perinchellur inscription of 12th century A D and Keralolpathi granthavaris.

However, the region of Kolathunadu comes through a historical process and the nadu had witnessed the formation of different political entities. There were at least three dominant political formations which appeared and disappeared in the same geo-cultural setting in different times. They were the chiefdom of Nannan of Ezhimalai, the lineage of Mushikas and the chiefs of the matrilineal households (swarupam) of the Kolathiris. However, the present study intends to unravel the process of the historical formation of the region of Kolathunadu as a geo-cultural entity. It envisions the evolution of the nadu from the kudi kind of archaic settlement forms to the matrilineal household controlled socio-political system called Swarupam.

It is argued that Kolathunadu was a political division of the second Chera kingdom and comprised the territory from Kasargode to Cannanore.39 But the available historical materials prove that Kolathunadu came under the sway of the Second Chera kingdom in a limited time. Kolathunadu was an independent geo-political entity till the

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39 M.G.S. Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, p 91
time of the political expedition of the Chera king Bhaskara Ravi (962-1021AD)\textsuperscript{40} who is referred to as \textit{Kopakkira Iravi varman} in many of the inscriptions of North Kerala.\textsuperscript{41} The Kolathunadu rulers were accepted as the suzerain of the Cheras for a short period and before the expedition of Bhaskara Ravi to the Northern Kerala this \textit{nadu} was out of the political control of the Cheras.

On the basis of the survey of source materials related to the region of Kolathunadu of different periods, the present study puts forward certain premises on the extension of the \textit{nadu}. Ezhimalai and its surrounding hillocks and its slopes had witnessed the formation of early settlements. In the early medieval or even in the medieval time, Kolathunadu seems to have been existed between the Perumba river in the north and Valapattanam in the south. The core area of the \textit{nadu} developed in the surrounding resource area of three rivers Perumba\textsuperscript{42}, Kuppam\textsuperscript{43}, and Valapattanam\textsuperscript{44}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{40} It is argued that the largest number of inscriptions and their widest geographical distribution, ranging from Pullur near Kanjangad in the north to Perunna in south, belong to Bhaskara Ravi. \textit{Ibid}, Pp 28-30
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{41} The \textit{Panthalayani Inscription}, \textit{Kinalur Inscription}, \textit{Kalathur inscription}, \textit{Tirunelli inscriptions}, \textit{Thiruvangur inscriptions}, \textit{Eramam Chalappuram inscription}, \textit{Pullur Kotavalam inscriptions} are the inscriptions discovered from North Kerala, belonging to Bhaskara Ravis’s period.
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\textsuperscript{42} ‘The Perumba / Peruvamba river takes it origin from the dense forest and hill slopes of Western Ghats near Pekkunnu in Thaliparamba Taluk at an altitude of +750M.S.L. The river, which has a total length of about 25miles,after taking its source, flows through the villages of Peringam, Kuttur, Mathamangalam and Kunnimangalam. Near Ezhimala railway station, the river divides into two, and falls into the Arabian Sea. Perumba is called as Panappuzha in the Mathamangalam area. The main tributary of this river, which has its origin in the same hills as the main river, is known as Machan thodu at its upper reaches, and joins the main river at Mathamangalam. Besides, there are a number of small streams joining the main river. The important among them are Challa chal, Mukkuttonkara chal, Kallamkulam Totti and Panappuzha. The Perumba river has a total drainage area of 110sq.miles. The river has a total catchment area of 110sq.miles.’ For details, A. Sreedhara Menon, \textit{Kerala district gazetteers – Cannanore}, Government press, Trivandrum, 1972, p11
\end{quote}
rivers. It extended to Madayi creek of Ezhimalai in the West and Western ghats to the East. It further extended beyond the south of Valapattanam river in the colonial times, under the rule of Chirakkal Kovilakam.

43. Kuppam river, otherwise called Mattul, has its origin in Pandinalkand Ghat reserve forest of Coorg district in Mysore State at an altitude of + 5,000 M.S.L. It flows parallel to Valapattanam river in the south. The river runs through steep valley, and when it enters Kerala state, the bed level falls down to +750 M.S.L. and is known as Mukkutta Todu, when another stream Perimpuzha joins the river. The river makes its course in the south-west direction at a level lower than +250 M.S.L. through dense forest. Alukat todu from north and Pakkattupoya east joins the river at Tadikkadavu, where pepper is grown on the slopes of the banks. The river, known as Karirupuzha in this reach, becomes tidal at Kuveri. Taliparamba town is on the banks of this river, and at this place it is known as Kuppam river. Another important tributary having its source in Padappengad is known as Kuttikol river. The total length of the main river is about 44 miles. The catchment area of the river basin is 207 sq.miles. *Ibid*, p11-12

44. ‘The Valapattanam river takes its origin from the western slopes of the Western Ghats at an altitude of about 3,000 above M.S.L. and falls into the Arabian sea at Valapattanam, about 6 miles north of Cannanore. The river has a total strength of about 70 miles, and after taking off at its origin, it flows through Brahmagiri Ghat Reserves in Mysore State and then through the valleys of Iritti, Edakkanam, Perumana, Irkkur, Kalyasserian and Valapattanam. The river has three major tributaries and a number of other small branches. The major tributaries are 1. Sreekantapuram river 2. Valiyapuzha or Barapole and 3. Aralampuzha. The Sreekantapuram river rises from the Padivalknad Ghat Reserve in the Mysore State, and after flowing about 25 miles joins the main river at Kovantala. The Valapattanam river has a total drainage area of about 460 sq.miles including those of the tributaries. The Valapattanam River is a perennial river with a total catchment area of about 460 sq.miles. The catchment area mainly receives the south-west monsoon rains.’ *Ibid*
Map. 1. The Region comprising Kolathunadu - in the present Kannur district of Kerala

Review of literature on Kolathunadu

Historical writing on Kerala is generally assumed to have started from the last quarter of Nineteenth century A.D. But even before these efforts, there are evidences for the existence of historical consciousness in Kerala, as shown by number of works
like the Mushikavamsakavya, Keralolpathis, Granthavari traditions, Kerala mahathmyam and so on. They have produced some kind of chronological sense, which could be through the creation of the traditional lineages; myths etc. and also produced some kind of historical sense of the contemporary society.

When compared to the southern part of Kerala, the historical studies on its northern part are very limited in number. A number of historical studies are on South Kerala like Tiruvitamkoor Charithram, History of Travancore, History of Cochin etc. At the same time, there is only a Malabar Manual of William Logan, a colonial bureaucrat, in which Malabar has been considered as a political unit under the direct control of Madras Presidency of the British colonial government. Accordingly, the entire region was divided into a number of revenue divisions known as Taluks and Desams. However, it gives a broad history of Malabar on the basis of Taluk wise surveys and collection of oral documents from the actual field. The Manual has reproduced most of the traditions and myths of the region. The flora and fauna, the pattern of productive plots and the kinds of settlements have been delineated in the Manual.

Though a serious attempt has been made to trace the formation of Kolathunadu, mainly three types of references are available on the region of the nadu. The first one is

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45 Pachumuthath, Tiruvitamkoor Charithram, 1867
46 Sangoony Menon, History of Travancore, 1878
47 K.P. Padmanabha Menon, History of Cochin, 1912
related to the Velir chief Nannan of Ezhimalai, second is on the Mushikas and third is on Kolathunadu.

The earliest references on northern Kerala started in connection with Nannan of Ezhimalai, who was one of the hill chieftains of ancient Kerala. Elamkulam. P.N. Kunjan Pillai, through a number of historical studies, threw light on the political entity of Nannan.\textsuperscript{49} According to him, Kingdom of Nannan existed in Ezhimala and he had conducted a number of battles with the Kosar, Narmudicheral and carried out predatory marches over Punnad (Coorg). Pazhi was his city and Ezhimalai the capital. Elamkulam’s concept on the political institution of Nannan was mainly linked with ‘Kingdom’ which has been widely used by the scholars in South Indian studies.\textsuperscript{50} Later, the political formation of Nannan has been unraveled by the scholars like Rajan Gurukkal and Raghava Varier in their co-edited volume \textit{Cultural History of Kerala} and stated that Nannan was a velir chief of Ezhimalai. According to them, almost all references on Nannan’s career emphasize on a ‘Chiefdom’ society rather than a ‘Kingdom’.\textsuperscript{51} However, Nannan of Ezhimalai has been considered as the initial political entity of North Kerala which existed in the region comprising Kolathunadu.

Secondly, the region was referred to in the studies on \textit{Mushikavamsakavya} and considered the Mushikas as the predecessors of the Kolathunadu Kingdom. An


\textsuperscript{50} K.A. Nilakanta Sasthri has introduced the concept of ‘kingdom’ in South India in his works like \textit{Pandyan Kingdom}, London, 1929, \textit{The Colas}, Madras 1935 \\& 1937 (1984 edition is sited here)

\textsuperscript{51} Rajan Gurukkal and Raghava Varier, \textit{Cultural History of Kerala}, p 200
incomplete collection of *Mushikavamsakavya* was firstly published by T.A. Gopinatha Rao in 1914 with an English commentary.\(^{52}\) He suggested that the later cantos of the *Mushikavamsakavya* seem to be more historical and proposed a date of the *Kavya* on the basis of the discussion on *Mulavasa*. According to him Vallabha II, the *Mushika* ruler assisted the Cheras in their battle against Chola. The Chola King referred to in the *Kavya* was Rajendra Chola Deva I (1012-1044AD). Thus Vallabha and Rajendra Chola can be considered as the contemporary rulers. According to the *Kavya*, Vallabha visited Sreemulavasam during his return to the *Mushika* territory from Chera country. This may show that the Sreemulavasam seems to have been perished in the first quarter of 11th century A.D. The *Kavya* alludes to the succession of Vallabha by Sreekanta, the patron of Atula who was the author of the *Kavya*. Thus the *Kavya* was supposed to be composed during 11th century A D. Following Rao, Ullur. S. Parameswara Iyyer has postulated a date of the *Kavya* to the first half of the 11th century A D.\(^{53}\) He has taken such a position on the basis of the analysis of an inscription from the Eramam Chalappuram temple, which refers to Kandan Karivarman who is identified with Sreekantan of the *Kavya*. Sreekantan was the contemporary of Rajendra Chola (1012-1044 AD).

M.G.S. Narayanan has conducted two kinds of historical exercise on the *Kavya*. First he has focused on the historical validity of the later part of genealogical description of the *Kavya* through the corroborative exercise with certain inscriptions

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discovered and deciphered from Northern Kerala.\textsuperscript{54} On the basis of Narayan Kannur Inscription, M.G.S. Narayanan has proved the historical entity of Validhara (102\textsuperscript{nd} ruler of the genealogy) and Vikramarama (104\textsuperscript{th} ruler of the genealogy), the nephew of Validhara, who is referred to in the \textit{Kavya} as the rulers of the region. He identified Kantan Karivarman of Eramam Chalappuram inscription with Kundavarman as well as Sreekantan of the \textit{Kavya}\textsuperscript{55} and Nandan, the second ruler of the \textit{Mushika} lineage, with Nannan of Ezhimala, the \textit{Velir} chieftain who refers to the early Tamil literature.\textsuperscript{56} He has also made an attempt to trace the original home land of the Mushikas on the basis of a mythical story and stated that their origin was in the Vindhya region, where the place names like Ramghat still exists.\textsuperscript{57} He has postulated a date to the \textit{Mushikavamsakavya} as 1020 A.D on the basis of the reference about Baskara Ravi (962- 1021 A.D) in the

\textsuperscript{54} M.G.S. Narayanan discovered and deciphered about 200 hundred inscriptions from different parts of Kerala of the 9\textsuperscript{th}, 10\textsuperscript{th}, and 11\textsuperscript{th} century AD. Among them \textit{Narayan Kannur, Eramam Chalapuram, Tiruvattur, Maniyur, Kayalkkad, Velam} etc belonged to the present Kannur district, the region under the study. For details, M.G.S. Narayanan, \textit{Kerala Charithrathinte Adisthana Silakal}, Calicut, 1971, p 87, 98-99, \textit{Reinterpretation of South Indian history}, Trivandrum, 1977, Pp 58-66

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid (1971)

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid (1977) No reliable evidences are there to identify Nannan of Early Tamil period and Nandana of \textit{Mushikavamsa Kavya}. The basis of M.G.S. Narayanan’s argument is etymological similarity of the names. But it can be seen that no single sign on the existence of the \textit{Kola} or any other names referred to in the \textit{Kavya} in the Tamil Literature and also no references are there to prove the existence of the splendor of \textit{Pazhi} city of Nannan in the \textit{Mushikavamsa Kavya}. However, there is another possibility that Atula, the court poet of Sreekanta, seems to have heard the splendor of Ezhimala Nanan, who ruled the region long before the \textit{Mushikas}. Atula might have incorporated this Nannan as Nandana into the \textit{Mushika} lineage.

\textsuperscript{57} M.G.S. Narayanan, \textit{Re-interpretation of South Indian history}, Pp 58-66
Eramam inscription. In addition to this he has also attributed a matrilineal succession pattern to the Mushika rulers.

Secondly, M.G.S. Narayanan has considered Kolathunadu as part of the centralized polity of the Second Chera Kingdom. According to him, Kolathunadu was one of the fourteen nadus or political divisions or districts of the Perumals of the Mahodayapuram (the second Chera Kingdom). However, the possible independent entity of Kolathunadu before it was incorporated to the Chera Kingdom and the possible existence of the Mushikas as the predecessors of the Kolathunadu are not under consideration in his work. K. Maheswaran Nair has also made a close observation on the aforementioned studies and also discovered certain epigraphs from the region and suggested that the Kavya seems to have been compiled in 12th century A.D.

Since the publication of the extracts of the Kavya by T.A Gopinatha Rao, K. Raghavan Pillai republished it in a single text titled as Mushikavamsa with an introductory note in English and Malayalam separately. In this volume he raises an interesting question which may lead to further researches. Was Mushikavamsa a chronicle of the Kolathiri kingdom? Similarly, it is the first work which has made an

58 Ibid
59 Ibid
60 M.G.S. Narayanan, Perumals of Kerala, Pp 91-94
61 K. Maheswaran Nair, Epigraphia Malabarica, Trivandrum-3, 1972, Pp 41-56
63 Ibid (1977)
attempt to describe the geographical peculiarities of the "nadu" represented in the Mushikavamsakavya. In addition to these, he also gives a list of the fictitious and historical rulers from the founder ruler Ramaghata to the last ruler Sreekanta. The shift in the succession line from male to the female is also mentioned in the work.

A. Govinda Warrier has made an attempt to trace the historicity of certain invasions like Gangas, Cholas etc to Kolathunadu. He has proposed the date of Chola invasion of Kerala as 1092 AD. This invasion has taken place during the period of Valabha, about 120 years after Validhara’s period. He identifies the name of the city Marahi with Madayi. For such identification, he sites all its forms like Marabia, Marawi, Madavi, Madia, Maudry etc, which have been mentioned by various travelers. The identification of Vapra River that is mentioned in the Kavya with Neytara or Valapatanam river is also a notable contribution. All observations of Warrier are mainly related to the political history of Mushikavamsa especially the details of battles with various powers of South India mentioned earlier. However, the dates proposed by him have not received support from other historians.

Chirakkal. T. Balakrishnan Nair of Chirakkal family has identified most of the places, rivers, exchange centers, temples etc, referred to in the Mushikavamsakavya,in

\[\text{Ibid}\]


\[\text{Ibid}\]
the region of Kolathunadu.\textsuperscript{67} However his identification of the Sreemulavasam, a Buddhist shrine with Pallikkunnu, in present Kannur district is a debatable matter.

Unlike earlier studies N.P. Unni’s *History of Mushikavamsam* is a remarkable study which delineated the political history of the *Mushika* kingdom.\textsuperscript{68} The polity, art, religion, culture etc of the *Mushikas* are examined with the help of inscriptions and other available source material. Few other articles have also to be mentioned here like the *Sacred Geography of Mushika Kingdom* by C. Girija in which she has described the references on the temple in the *Kavya*\textsuperscript{69} and *Studies in Sanskrit literature* by N.V.P Unithiri\textsuperscript{70} in which he has made an attempt to identify the location of Achalapattanam with Kunneru (*Kunnu* in Dravidian language is similar to the *Achalam* in Sanskrit, both meaning hill) near to Ezhimala. However, all these studies mentioned above are mainly emphasized on three matters; historicity of the *Kavya*, date of the *Kavya*, and the nature of the political form (kingdom) of *Mushikas* identical with Kolathunadu.

Thirdly, Kolathunadu appears in the colonial studies as revenue division and \textsuperscript{71} as part of Kerala History texts which provides political history of the *nadu* at the time of

\textsuperscript{67}Chirakkal. T. Balakrishnan Nair, *Terenjedutha Prabandangal*, Kerala Sahitya Acadami, Trissur, (1981), 1996, 40-57. His argument on the etymology of the term *Mushika* is more interesting and has influenced the present researcher to take a position regarding the title of the *Kavya* as well as the ruling lineage. According to him, the term *Mushika* is the synonym of the *Nenmeni Vaka* (Albesia lebbeck).

\textsuperscript{68} N.P. Unni, *A History of Mushikavamsa*, Trivandrum, 1980


\textsuperscript{70} N.V.P. Unithiri, *Studies in Kerala Sanskrit Literature*, University of Calicut, 2004, Pp 65-97

Mushikas and the period of Kolathiris.\textsuperscript{72} Few descriptive Malayalam works which are the compilations of various articles belonging to different periods of the region have also referred to the broad history of Kolathunadu. Most of these studies are prepared on the basis of the Sangam literature, Mushikavamsakavya and travelers reports.\textsuperscript{73}

However, all these are contained the fractional representations of the region under study in different times. They have furnished the empirical data on the political histories of the region of different time spans. None of them attempted to trace the formation of the region as a geo-cultural and political entity.

**Sources for the study**

The present study mainly focuses on the available traces of the social formation from the field and the texts. The textual materials will be corroborated with the sources collected from the primary context. The nature of the sources has created a lot of problems in the unraveling process of the formation of the nadu. Almost all sources are selective in nature and they may represent a selective memory of the past. This selective nature will be reflected in the epigraphs, literatures, granthavaris, the memories, oral compositions etc. The field observation of the researcher is also not free from the subjective elements or selective documentation.

\textsuperscript{72} Kerala Charithram, Vol I, Kerala History Society, Ernakulum, Cochin -11, 1974, Pp 312-349.

A. Sreedara Menon, \textit{A Survey of Kerala History}, Pp 178-184

The reconstruction of the formation process of Kolathunadu is an extremely difficult task as its traces are too scarce and mingled with fiction. There are limited sources including primary and secondary, which will be described in the following part.

**Archaeological evidences**

The northern part of Kerala is yet to get serious consideration from the archaeologists. Apart from the three excavations conducted in the region; two sites excavated by K.J. John at Chitrari and Naduvil, Kannur district,74 and the other by Archaeological Survey of India at Ummichipoyil, Kasargode district,75 no other systematic explorations and excavations have been conducted in the region. The stray findings of Roman gold coins from Kottayam Poyil and remains of gold object from Naduvil are referred to as the two important finds from northern Kerala.76 The possible presence of gold in the region is testified by the Early Tamil literatures in their mentions of the Nannan of Ezhimalai as a chief who treasured and wore gold sumptuously. It is

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assumed that the city of Pazhi of Nannan was a place of gold treasures. However, an extensive survey in the areas of Perumba and Valapattanam rivers belts has been conducted. It led to the discovery of a number of Iron Age burial sites. No direct finds related to the Iron Age habitation are reported from the region under study. However, the distribution pattern of the burial sites helps us to generate a few insights on the occupation of early people. The field study helped to generate certain new archaeological knowledge on the agro-pastoral economic pattern of the region. The discovery of certain animal engravings at Ettukutukka, near Payyannur, seems to be a remarkable contribution in this regard. Though the period of the engravings is obscure, the contextual reasoning possibly pushes it back to the early historic time. A few sherds of Turquoise Glazed Painted pottery, which show the maritime trade links between west coast of Kolathunadu and the western world, have also been discovered from the laterite plateau of Madayi.


78 The detailed list of the explored sites is given in the appendix of this study.


80 The engravings found between the clusters of Iron Age burials. A detailed discussion will be done in the third chapter.

81 Few ceramic sherds have been discovered from Madayi by Sreelatha Damodaran, the research colleague of the present researcher. The present researcher had got the material analyzed by Dr. Derek Kennet, West Asian Cheramic expert, of Durham University and he commended that this would be of 7th and 9th century A.D.
Epigraphs

Also, though the numbers of inscriptions are inadequate, they help to reproduce a broad picture of the political geography of the nadu in early medieval times by a corroborative exercise with the contemporary Sanskrit literature Mushikavamsakavya and other literary and oral compositions. About 12 inscriptions are available from the region of Kolathunadu. They are,

1. *Narayan Kannur Inscription* of A.D 929 discovered from Narayan Kannur temple at Ramantali refers to the name Validhara Vikkiranayina, Validhara and Vikramarama of the Mushika lineage. It refers to Muzhikkalam Kaccam, the customary contract prevailed in the Chera country. The presence of Manikkiramam (Manigramam), one of the early medieval merchant corporations of South India is also evident in the inscription.

2. *Eramam Chalapuram Inscription* of A.D.1020 discovered from Chalapuram temple at Eramam. It refers to Kandankari Varmanayina Iramaghata Muvan (Kandankari Varman alias Ramaghata Muvan) along with the Chalappuram Tali and the merchant corporation like Valanchiyar and Nanadesikal. The term panimakkal, which shows the presence of the various labour group of the temple, appears in the inscription. The political presence of the Chera ruler

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82 Most of the inscriptions from North Kerala are deciphered and published by M.G.S. Narayanan, M.R Raghava Varier and K. Maheswaran Nair.

83 It is published in, M.G.S. Narayanan, Kerala Charithrathinte Adisthana Silakal, Pp 98-99, Index to Chera inscription, (c.800-1124 A.D), a companion Volume, to the doctoral thesis on “Political and social conditions of Kerala under the Kulasekhara empire”, University of Kerala, 1972, Index No B 3,21
Bhaskara Ravi (*Kopakinaravi*) in the Northern Kerala is also evident in the inscription.  

3. *Tiruvattur Inscription* discovered from Tiruvattur temple. There are two sets of inscriptions which shed light on the political entity of *Mushikas* and the presence of a number of Brahmin households. First set of inscription refers to *Iramanjemaniyayina* (Iraman Jayamani refers to the *Mushikavamsakavya*) and Vijayam Sreekantan (Jayamani and Sreekantan of the *Mushikavamsakavya*). This is an important inscription to identify the independent entity of *Mushikas* before the emergence of Kolathiris. Second set of inscription provides details of various endowments to the temple by the devotees and details on the number of brahmin households. It also refers to the *Sabhai*, the Brahmin council and *Cheyyur kazhakam* (*Chellur Kazhakam*).  

4. *Kannapuram Inscription* of 1122 AD discovered from Kuruvakkavu temple at Kannapuram. This is important as it furnishes direct hints on the production and habitation pattern of the region under study. It refers to the *puncha vayal* and the *punam* cultivating units. *Nakkayar vayal* and *Kuyavan vayal* are the two paddy fields (*vayals*) of the Kannapuram region. The distribution of land as reward called *Viruti* to the temple functionaries are also mentioned. There appears the name *Uthaiya Varmanayina Iramaghata Muvar* (*Udayavarman* alias *Ramaghata Muvar*) as the overlord of the temple.  

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85 The text of the inscription published in K. Mahesvaran Nair, *Epigraphia Malabarica*, Pp 72-74  
5. *Maniyur Inscription* of 11th century AD discovered from Maniyur temple. Two sets of inscription are discovered which give details on the temple land which include the wetlands and garden lands. It refers to *Ur, Poduval*, and *Koyil* as the main component of the temple administration and the temple functionaries like *Uvvachar* (drummers), *Santi* (priest) etc.  

6. *Trichambaram Inscription* of 11th century AD discovered from Trichambaram temple. The inscriptions refer to *Manavepala Manaviyatan*, Governor of Ernadu, who creates endowment for *Tiruvilakku* at *Tiruccemmaram*. A certain *Kapali Narayanan Bhattavijayam*, some land and the arrangements for weekly supply of oil are also mentioned.

7. *Kayalkkad Inscription*, discovered from the Kizhattiri Kayalkkad Temple. According to this inscription, the Kayalkad temple is a *Mukkalvattam*. It refers to various temple functionaries like *Ayiravar, Atikal, Potuval, Karalar, Uralar, Chanti* etc. The betel leaf and areca nut appears as the regular income of the temple.

8. *Madayi inscription* of 1124 AD discovered from Madayi mosque. According to the inscription, the mosque was found in Hijara 518 (1124 A D) and this is a significant sign of the formation of Muslim settlements in the region.

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88 M.G.S. Narayanan, *Index No: C I, A 61*. On the basis of this inscription M.G.S. Narayanan argued that Kolathunadu was part of the territory of the Chera sovereign, *Index to Chera inscription*, p 68.
9. *Pavannur Inscription*, probably of 12th century A.D., refers to the details of the land endowed to meet the expenses on account of *Kumaraka Chanaththu Celavu* in the Temple. The deity is referred to as *Tiruvaaypadi Tiruvati*. The terms related to the wet lands like *Kalam, Kalappadu, Pothi nellu*, which shows that the granted lands seems to be exclusively paddy cultivation units, occurred in the inscription. The distribution of *viruthi* lands to the *Chanthi (Santhi-* priest) is also evident in the inscription. ⁹¹

10. *Velam Inscription* of 12th century AD discovered from Velam Siva temple. The inscription belongs to first half of 12th century and it refers to the temple committee resolution. It lays down punishment for those who obstruct *Tiruvaratinai, Pumi*, and *purushar of velattu tevar* and their accomplishment. ⁹²

11. *Perumchellur inscription* of 12th century A.D., which refers to the *Karumpath Iravivarman* appears as the ruler of Kolathiri, is the important epigraph of Kolathunadu in the medieval period. It gives details on the multi-crop production pattern of the region under study. ⁹³

12. *Kuttiatur Inscription*, discovered from the Kuttiattur Siva Temple. This inscription refers to the Perinchellur settlement and the *Nattars* of

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⁹¹ *Pavannur* inscription, (Kuttiyattur, Kannur), published in K. Maheswaran Nair, *Epigraphia Malabarica*, Pp 89-90

⁹² M.G.S. Narayanan, *Index No. C 4*

Kunjimangalam. The Ur, nadu, prakriti, nalvar, Devaswam etc of the Kuttiattur region are mentioned in the inscription.  

Most of these, excluding Perumchellur inscription, belonged to the Second Chera period (800-1124 A D) and some of them refer to the name of Ko Pakkira Iravi or Bhaskara Ravi, the Chera king who ruled between 962 AD-1021 AD. It shows the extension of the Second Cheras to the northern part of Kerala. Pullur Kodavalam of Kasargode district was the northern outpost of the Cheras. The Perumchellur inscription represents the post Mushika phase and it is the first evidence that proves the existence of Kolathiris as the independent political entity in North Kerala.  

However, the inscriptions, even though less in number, have signified the formation of the agrarian units and the possible existence of the agrarian based settlements in the region. All these epigraphs have represented the formation of an agrarian society. The formation of the region into a surplus productive unit, which gradually corresponded to the development of political forms, can be generated through the analysis of the records. The corresponding corroborative evidences are available in the contemporary literatures, especially the Mushikavamsakavya and Keralolpathi Granthavari.

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94 T. Pavithran, “Kuttiattur Silalikhithavum Charithravum”, in Patayali Samayam Masika, August 11, 2011, Kannur

95 Pullur Kodavalam Inscription refers to Bhaskara ravi manukuladichcha of the Chera ruler, which shows that Bhaskara Ravi’s political expedition reached up to the Pullur Kodavala region. M.G.S. Narayanan, Kerala Charithrathinte Adisthana Silakal, Pp 74-75, Perumals of Kerala, p 92
Literary sources

The literary sources are conveniently classified as; the Early historic, Early medieval, Medieval and Colonial.

1. Early historic literature

The anterior formation of the region of Kolathunadu into an agro-pastoral unit has been traced through the analysis of the early historic Tamil literatures, generally termed as Sangam literatures. It includes Akananuru, Purananuru, Patittupattu, Kurunthokai, Pathupattu, etc. The main focus in the study is on the poems related to the predatory Velir chief Nannan of Ezhamalai. These are heroic poems and they used to eulogize Nannan’s splendor and his predatory marches. A picture of early chiefdom which had been developed out of an agro-pastoral society is evident. Along with the portrayal of the majesty of the chief Nannan the poems have bestowed the features of the contemporary landscape and the subsistent strategies developed in the region. Among this the Pattupattu, which seems to belong to post Sangam period, gives hints on the formation of agrarian society and probably deals with the story of the followers of Nannan.

98 Patittupattu, (Malayalam Translation), Ayyer, G.Vaidyanatha, (ed), Trissur, 1961
99 Kurunthokai, (Malayalam Translation), Narayanankutti, Melangathu (ed), Trissur, 1983
100 Pathupattu, (Malayalam Translation) edited by Melangathu Narayanankutti,Kerala Sahitya Academy, Trissur, 2000 edition
2. Early medieval literature

*Mushikavamsa Kavya*¹⁰¹ is an admixture of mythical and historical references about the origin and the development of the Mushikas in early medieval Northern Kerala. It is believed to be authored by Atula, the court poet of the last ruler Sreekanta of the Mushika lineage. It is a genealogical description or *Vamsacharitha* of the Mushikas from their founder ruler Ramaghata Mushika to the last ruler Srikanta. The *Kavya*, composed in 11<sup>th</sup> century AD, comprises of fifteen *sargas* or cantos, describes the origin and genealogy of the Mushikas and hints at the geographical features of Mushika territory. The representation of the region in the *Kavya* may be considered more historical as the poet himself composed the description of the landscape. However, the *Kavya* does not directly furnish the geographical setting or extension of the *Nadu* under the sway of the Mushikas. Instead, it reflects in the narration of the army marches of the various rulers who passed through the lands and crossed the rivers and mountains. Occasionally the *Kavya* furnishes names and peculiarities of rivers, mountains, certain habitation sites, river valley settlements, agrarian sectors, exchange centers and so on. Except the 15<sup>th</sup> Canto, which was composed in the present tense, all other 14 chapters were composed in the past tense.

3. Medieval literature

*Keralolpathi Traditions* and other *Granthavaris.*

This is a household records deal with the matters of the *Kolaswarupam.* This has three sections, first has 67 palm leaves on both sides which mainly hint at the formation and nature of the *Kolaswarupam* copied by Edanadan Raman, second is called *Jambudweepolpathi* which comprises of 25 palm leaves dealing with the alterations in the *Acharam*, the consequences and results of the confrontation between Kolathiri Udayavarman and the Perinchellur Brahmins, and the last has only 4 palm leaves dealing with the matters of *Cheruthazham Yogam* and the amalgamation of the *acharams* of Anjudesam and Perinchellur. The matters referred in the text seem to have broadly covered a long period probably between 12th to 16th centuries A.D.


103 Few hints are there on the chronology of the text. The Perinchellur inscription of 12th century A.D refers to the Karippath Iravivarman Kolathiri who appears in the Granthavari as the immediate successor of the Karippath Udayavarman. According to the *Granthavari* during the time of this ruler the Karippath Kovilakam declined and was shifted to Kavinisseri Kovilakam and Kolathiri shifted to the Valapattanam fort. These references show that some of the story depicted in the text seems to be of 12th century or later. Udayavarman and Ravivarman are the two rulers mentioned in the *Granthavari.* The period of Udayavarman Kolathiri and Krishnadevaraya of Vijayanagara (1509-30 AD) seems to be contemporary according to the Vijayanagara invasion under Krishnadevaraya mentioned in one or two occasions in the *Granthavari.*
Payyannur pattu and Payyannur Pattola 104

Payyannur Pattu is an oral composition which delineates the activities of Vaniyas or chettis, the traditional traders of North Kerala. 105 It represents the active role of itinerary merchant groups in the hinterland and coastal exchange networks. The main thread of the Pattu is the Neelakesi myth which hinted at the development of trade in the region. 106 The region represented in the Payyannur Pattu lies in the Perumpa river belt to the north of Ezhimalai, Kannur district, which was under the sway of

104 It's generally misunderstood that the Payyannur Pattu and Payyannur Pattola are the same. The first one is an oral composition that deals with the story of the Vaniks or traders while the second is the household record of Payyannur brahmins.


106 The myth of Payyannur Pattu is connected with a woman named Nilakesi, who desired to obtain a male child. She met Nambu Chetti of Kachilpattanam and made alliance with him and later gave birth to his child, Nambu Seri Aran. During the celebration of Nambuseri’s birth, a group of traders, (Kulavaniyas) who were ignorant about the customs and practices of the city, arrived at the city where the birth day celebration staged. Due to the violation of customs, Nambu Chetti, the chief of the city, killed the Kulavaniyas who were actually the brothers of Nilakesi. After this incident Nilakesi left the palace and her son and began wandering begging. The son grew up and become an expert in trade activities and ship building. He then went on a mercantile voyage to Pumpattana for trading as well as collecting goods and returned to Kachilpattanam. In this context Nilakesi in the form of a female monk reached Kachilpattanam once again and invited Nambuseri Aren to participate in a night feast of women at Payyannur. His father did not give consent to participate in this function initially but, after a long discussion, Nambu Seri Aren succeeded in getting the consent. Here the Pattu comes to an end at an incomplete stage. However, through this mythical story, the Pattu has provided a chunk of information on the production, exchange networks and the existence of various functional groups of the region. It also reveals the prevailing social practices bounded by customs and traditions and the knowledge distribution process of the region. The pattu alludes to the social tension and its consequences in the context of the execution of Nilakesi’s brothers due to their violation of the customs that existed inside the city at Payyannur. The pattu also reflects the transmission of traditional technical knowledge forms to the younger generation through the description of Nambuseri’s education under the instruction of his father.
Kolattunadu rulers (*Kolattiris*). Possibly, the *pattu*, seems to have been formed in the manner of an oral composition in between the twelfth and fourteenth century A.D. i.e. during the medieval period of North Kerala and compiled in the later time.\(^\text{107}\)

*Payyannur Pattola* deals with the matters of the Payyannur Brahmins, the only Brahmins who were not the Vedic ritual performers who followed the matrilineal succession pattern.\(^\text{108}\)

*Sagara Granthavaris* \(^\text{109}\)

The *Sagara Granthavari* is a significant record as it refers to the story of the second Brahmin migration to Kolathunadu. They belong to three *Gothras* – *Idukuncha, Vilakur, Gunavanda-* and mainly distributed in the five regional units- Cheruthazham, Kulappuram, Araththil, Kunneru, and Vararuchimangalam (Korom, Pallithara region)

\(^{107}\) It has been stated that the *pattu* must have been composed or compiled in thirteenth or fourteenth century A.D and its lyrics have a lot of resemblances with the *Vadakkan Pattukal* (Northern ballads of fourteenth century A.D)\(^4\) The *Payyannur Pattu* does not provide ostensible allusions regarding the date of the composition. Instead, it gives us certain signifiers to trace an approximate chorological frame. The *Pattu* refers to the existence of *Anjuvannam* and *Manigramam*, the mercantile corporations that were active in the trade networks of South India, which did not appear in the historical testimonies, especially inscriptions, after twelfth or thirteenth century AD. The only reference after this period is Payyannur Pattu in which the Kovalatha Chetti groups have also appeared along with Anchuvannam and Manigramam\(^4\) whose historical entity in South India can be traced from ninth to fourteenth century AD. The fourteenth century would seem to mark the end of these powerful merchant organizations in Tamilnadu which can also be applicable in the case of Kerala due to their absence in the historical sources. Hence it can be assumed that the *Pattu*, possibly, was formed in the manner of an oral text in between the twelfth and fourteenth century A.D. i.e. during the medieval period of North Kerala.

\(^{108}\) *Payyannur Pattola*, copied from Thazhakkat Mana, Payyannur, Kannur by Dr. V Dinesan, Assistant Professor, Government Brunnen college Talassery

\(^{109}\) N.V.P Unithiri, (ed), “Sagara Granthavariyile Oretu” in *Athyuthara Keraleeyam*, Kairali books, Kannur, 2008, p 37-57. Few palm leaves records have also been found from the Chettur Illam by the present researcher also. The list of the Brahmin settlements is given in the appendix. See Appendix 3
of Perumba river belt. This settlement is known as Anjadesam and they were functioning with sabha. The ruler Kolathiri was also present in the meetings.\textsuperscript{110}

\textit{Udayavarma Charitham,}\textsuperscript{111}

This is a Sanskrit charitha which delineates mythical story of the migration of Anjadesam Brahmins to the region of Kolathunadu with the royal patronage of Kolathiri. The charitha seems to be composed by the migrant Brahmins. Accordingly a few Brahmins happened to be killed during the military expeditions of Kolathiri and due to the reluctance of the Perinchellur Brahmins to conduct the traditional ritual routines of Kolathiri and the regret of this sin, he decided to invite a group of Brahmins from Karnataka, who belonged to Idukunchi, Gunavathi, Sreevalli villages, to Cheruthazham (krisagha kshetram) and granted land as brahmaswam.\textsuperscript{112}

\textit{Brahma Pradishta}\textsuperscript{113}

\textit{Brahma Pratishtha} is a Sanskrit metrical account of the introduction of Kanarese Brahmins into his kingdom by Udayavarma of Kolathunadu. They were granted temples, residence and lands by Udayavarma and made the language, dress and customs of this Kanarese Brahmins the same as those of the orthodox Brahmins of the

\textsuperscript{110} Sagara Granthavari, copied from the private collection of Iswaran Nambuthiri, Cetturillam, Payyannur, Kannur. N.V.P. Unithiri, “Sagaragranthavariyile Oretu”, \textit{Athyuthara Keraleeyam}, Kairali books, Kannur, 2008, Pp 37-57

\textsuperscript{111} K. Sambasiva Sastri, \textit{Udayavarmacharitha Brahmapratishtata},, Government press, Trivandrum, Trivandrum Sanskrit series No. CXXXIII

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid canto 28

Perinchellur *Grama.*\(^{114}\) Under the auspicious supervision of these Brahmins, the king performed the *Hiranyagarbha* ceremony, gave them *Mahadana,* and other gifts.\(^{115}\)

*Kolanrhpotpatti* \(^{116}\)

It is composed in the form of *Umamaheswarasamvada* (the conversation between Siva and Parvati) and supposed to be the 11\(^{th}\) chapter of the *Bhavisyapurana,* the work deals with the genealogy of Kolathiris. It comprised of eighteen and a half verses in the *sloga* metre.

*Chellur nadodayam Champu*\(^{117}\)

It praised the majesty of *Chellur Brahmins* and the *Chellur grama* established by Sutasoma, one of the Mushika rulers who installed a *Siva linga* at Chellur. Accordingly, coastal exchange centers (*pattanangal*), micro productive units seem to be under the local chiefs (*desangal*). Hinterland production zones (*ulnadukal*), auspicious sacred spaces (*sath kshetra,* could be temples also) etc are referred to as the components of the nadu. It refers to the term *thungadhikara* (autonomous power) of the Chellur settlement. Accordingly the village rule or administration was completely under the sway of the Brahmins, which shows the prosperity and greatness of settlement. The village was following several kinds of traditional norms (*acharangal*).

\(^{114}\) *Ibid,* p 143  
\(^{115}\) *Ibid*  
\(^{116}\) *Kolanrhpotpatti,* copied by N. Vaidyanadhan from the Kilimanoor Palace, Transcript No 362, Oriental Research Institute and Manuscript Library, Kerala University, Thruvanathapuram.  
\(^{117}\) *Chellurnathothayam bhasha champu,* Kerala Sahithya Academy, Trissur, 1968
Tottam pattukal

*Tottam pattukal* are the songs related to the *Teyyam* cult which is orally transmitted by the traditional *Teyyam* performers of Malabar. The folklorists have recently compiled and published such *pattus.* Being oral compositions, it is quite difficult to fix them to a particular chronological span. But the societies reflected in most of the *Pattus* are of the late medieval and pre-colonial periods. A few significant traces on the production process including the mode of production and forces of production, the development of hinterland and maritime trade etc are found. Almost all *Pattu* represent the movement of people to the more resourceful and settlement areas. The good example of the same is *Marakkalathamma Tottam.*

*Chirakkal Records*¹²⁰

This record includes miscellaneous documents belonging to the *Kola Swarupam.* The subject matter of the record is related to various routines of the Kolathunadu and the *Kolaswarupam* in the 18th and 19th century AD. They are free from the exaggerations and the myths and provided almost reliable details of the accounts related to various functions and entitlements in the *Swarupam.* The details of the offerings to

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¹¹⁹ M.V, Vishnunambuthiri, *Utharakeralathile Tottampattukal,* Pp 152-256

¹²⁰ *Chirakkal palavaka kanakkukal,* (hereafter *Chirakkal Records*- *C.R *) Record No:12990, The Manuscript Repository, Oriental Research Institute, Kariavattom Campus, University of Kerala, Thiruvanathpuram
Tiruvarkattu Bhagavathi, the household deity of the Kolaswarupam, at the time of the hand-dipping ordeal (*Kaimukku*) are one of the interesting records. This record, known as *Vambolakkanam*, is written by Thamarappalli Bhattathiri in front of the representative of *Vadakkilamkkooru* of Kolaswarupam at Thiruvarkattukavu.\(^{121}\) Similarly, the details of the distribution of *Cherikkal* and *Viruti* lands are also significant. It also hinted at the existence of various title holders and service groups associated with the *Kolaswarupam*.

*Vilayolakkananangal* \(^{122}\)

This document is discovered from Pulleri illam, a Brahmin household at Korom, near Payyannur. This is a record of the day to day economic affairs relating to the production process of the dominant Brahmin households, which was dynamic in the Korom area even during the late medieval and pre-modern time. The record shows that the cultivation in the wet and garden lands was very active in the Perumba river belt. The developments of *Kuzhikkannam Verum kanam*, and *Vila kanam* lands were also distributed in the Perumba river belt. The records belong to 18\(^{th}\) and 19\(^{th}\) century A.D.

*Thalaseri rekhakal,* \(^{123}\)

This is the collection of 1429 letters in old Malayalam which transacted between the East India Company and local *Naduvalis* and *Desavazhis* from 1796 to 1806. Some

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\(^{121}\) The list of the items offered in connection with the ordeal, which functioned under the supervision of Vadakkelamkur of *Kolaswarupam* is given as the appendix.

\(^{122}\) This record found from *Pulleri Illam*, Korom, Payyannur, Kannur District

of the letters hinted at the process of the political domination of the Chirakkal Kovilakam over Kolathunadu. The political subordination of a number of minor chieftains to the Kolathiri, the same Chirakkal Raja is evident in this record.

**Travelers’ records**

The travelogues of A.D first centuries and the 13th to 16th centuries refer to the flourishing maritime trade centers of the west coast of Malabar Coast. The city of Naura was famous for the spice trade with the Roman world. The semi-precious beryl beads were widely transported to Naura. The travelogues divulge the impediments occurred during their voyage at the port Nitria, probably north of Naura and nearby area of Ezhimala.

The later travelogues refer to Valapattanam, Madayi and Canannore as the flourishing trade centers of the Nadu, from where considerable amount of spices including pepper, cardamom, ginger etc seem to have been widely exported. Barbosa refers to Balaerpartam located a short distance along the river coast where a very fine Moorish and Heathen town existed in the same name. The King of the region permanently resided at Balaerpartam (Valapattanam), where he had a great and fair palace and on the strand there was a hill (probably the hill near to the Kalarivathukkal

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124 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 Wilfred H Schoff, Longmans Green & Co. New York, 1912, Pp 44-46

Temple) on which stands a fortress. The existence of the small town and port on the south bank of the Valapattanam is also mentioned in the travelogue of the Malacca of 16th century AD. However, all the travelogues indicated that Valapattanam was the major trade center of the nadu where spices were extensively traded to the western and west Asian world. It includes pepper, ginger, cardamom, miraboclans and a little cassia.

Colonial records

Gazetteers and Manuals

Francis Buchanan’s A Journey from Madras through the countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar mentions Colastry or Colattory Raja (the king Kolathiri) in the northern part of Kerala with two divisions or Kovilakams, the Tekkelamkuru and Vadakkelamkuru. There also exist Nalamkuru and Anjamkuru. The oldest member of these fractions was the Colastry. Owing to the struggle between these fractions for the

126Ibid.
129 Philip Baldaeus (ed), A true and exact description of the Malabar and Coromandal and also the Isle of Ceylon, “translated from the high- Dutch printed at Amsterdam 1672”, volume III, Asian Educational Society, New Delhi, 2000, p 623.
129 Francis Buchanan’s A Journey from Madras through the countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar, Vol II, Asian Educational Serious, New Delhi, 1988, Pp 553-566
130 Ibid, Pp 555-556
exclusive possession of authority, each again got subdivided into separate houses. The Palli branch possessed eight Kovilakams and was always the most powerful.\textsuperscript{131} Later due to the dispute among the Palli branches, the Chirakkal Kovilakam become more powerful and later Kolathunadu came to be generally known as Cherakkal.\textsuperscript{132} The multi-crop cultivation patterns of Kolathunadu by the end of 18\textsuperscript{th} and the beginning of 19\textsuperscript{th} century AD were also mentioned by Buchanan.\textsuperscript{133}

William Logan’s \textit{Malabar Manual} is the first historical work delineating the history of Kolathunadu in which he compiled all traditional information.\textsuperscript{134} Logan depends on the \textit{Keralolpathi} text to define the early development of Kolathunadu. As part of the Taluk revenue division of the British colonial Malabar district Logan gives the nature of production pattern and the resource features of Kolahunadu. Similarly, Ward and Conner’s \textit{Descriptive memoir of Malabar} and C.A Innes’s \textit{Malabar Gazetteer} have furnished the fiscal potential of the Chirakkal Taluk. These gazetteers never mentioned the name Kolathunadu and referred it as Chirakkal. The Taluk division of the colonial period was based on the same lines and used the name Chirakkal Taluk in place of Kolathunadu.\textsuperscript{135}

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\textsuperscript{131} Palli, Cherical (these two were united later), Palngat, Caunachery, Puduvaly, Panarayly, Chinga and Tenacode, were the eight Kovilakams of Palli branch. The other great branch of the family divided in the same manner into three houses – Odemangalam, Metale and Taya. \textit{Ibid}, p 556
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\textsuperscript{132} \textit{Ibid}, p 557
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\textsuperscript{133} \textit{Ibid}, Pp 559-566
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Archival records

Mackenzie Manuscripts

Genealogical accounts of Kolathiri Raja are clearly mentioned in the Mackenzie Manuscripts, which seems to have been copied from the Keralolpathi traditions records available in Malabar. Accordingly, Udayavarma was the first chief of Kolathunadu and the chief of the city Valapatanam. He came to be known as Kolathirivadakkan Perumal. His kingdom extended from Perumbalam in Thulurajya in the north to Puthupatnam Ali (Azhi) in the south. The manuscript has given the names of three kovilakams – Pollikkolagam alias Ambukolakam, Puthuppallikkolakam Udayamangalattukolakam- as the early households and five others as later households-Cherakkal Kologam, Panirijnarikkolagam,Cenjakkolagam, Kavaniriserikkolagam, and Tevenagottu - Udayamangalam- Nuttile-Kolagam. In the later time, owing to the quarrel between the heads of the Kovilakams regarding the succession, the ultimate power reached the hands of the Chirakkal kovilakam. Ramavarma of the Chirkkal Kovilakami became the head of the swarupam and he was succeeded by his nephew Udayavarma Maharaja.

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136 T.V. Mahalingam (ed.), Mackenzie Manuscripts summaries of the historical manuscript in the Mackenzie collection, Vol I (Tamil and Malayalam), manuscript number (hereafter M.M. 4).
137 Ibid. M.M 7, Pp 7-8
138 Ibid. M.M 7, p 8
Settlement Registers\textsuperscript{139}

Settlement registers have been widely used for the preparation of the field work of the present study. As they are the registers of the colonial administrators for making revenue assessment, it covers the entire landscape either under production or non-productive waste lands. It was prepared on the basis of the extensive field surveys. Therefore, it provides a clear picture of the landscape and hinted at the pattern of settlements. The plot names indicate the nature of settlements, production pattern, topography etc.\textsuperscript{140}

**Approaches to the study**

The present work is using the tools provided by historical and human geography. The continuous collective actions of the human beings in their cramped geographical spaces caused the formation of cultural landscape.\textsuperscript{141} A number of units of settlements were formed in this cultural space in the milieu of the emergence of settled agrarian production tracts. According to E.W. Gilbert, the historical geographers must describe

\textsuperscript{139} The settlement registers of the *Chirakkal Taluk*, 1900-1905, Regional Archives, Civil Station, Kozhikode

\textsuperscript{140} For instance the place names like *Asarikkandi* (the settlement area of carpenters), *Chalakkuthazha nilam* (the wet field in the lower part of the settlements of actual tillers), *Puzhayarunilam* (wet field near to the river), *Peedikaparamba* (the land where merchant shop existed), etc

\textsuperscript{141} “The study of geographies of past times, through the imaginative reconstruction of phenomena and processes central to our geographical understanding of the dynamism of human activities within a broadly conceived spatial context, such as the change in the evaluation and uses of human and natural sources, in the form and functions of human settlements and built environments, in the advances in the amount and forms of geographical knowledge, and in the exercising of power and control over territories and people.” R.A. Burtlin, *Historical geography through the gates of space and time*, London, p 1, Cited in Dileep. K. Chakrabarti, *Archaeological geography of the Ganga plain – the lower and middle Ganga*, Permanent black, New Delhi, 2001, p 34.
the settlement, movement and occupation of man within a given region at a stated period.\textsuperscript{142} Then the contexts of the historical evolutions become significant. The possible chronological phases of the historical formation in a geo-cultural space will have to be observed through a \textit{longue duree} perception.\textsuperscript{143}

The scholars like Carl Sauer has defined the historical geography as the study of the cultural landscape and emphasized the significance of field work in historical geography. Field research aims to collect the traces of the past from an encoded area. Two methods have been used for the field survey in the region under study; the plot to plot survey and village to village survey. Through the transept walking an extensive area has been covered. In this walking method, the field work will start from a particular point and by the end of that survey the researcher will reach the same point after covering one transept. All available details of the triangular space will be collected. Two kinds of documentation have been pursued in this study. First one is the documentation geographical peculiarities of the region and secondly the sign of the historical and cultural settings of the region. For instance, the documentation of the Iron Age sites -The features of the monument whether it is disturbed or intact, what kind of

\textsuperscript{142} Cited in Dileep K. Chakrabarti, \textit{Archaeological geography of the Ganga plain – the lower and middle Ganga}, p 36

\textsuperscript{143} The \textit{longue durée} (English: the long term), is an expression used by the French Annales School of historical writing to designate their approach to the study of history, which gives priority to long-term historical structures over events. The approach was carried on by Fernand Braudel. The approach, which incorporates social scientific methods, such as the recently evolved field of economic history, into general history, was pioneered by F. Braudel, \textit{The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world in the Age of Philip II}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edition 1966, English translation 2 volms, London, 1972-3, Peter Burk, \textit{The French Historical Revolution : The Annals School-1920-89}, Cambridge, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edition Cambridge, 2005
material is used, the aesthetic features of the monuments, etc will be documented. In the second step, the geo-cultural context of the monument site including the nature of topography, types of vegetation, availability of natural resources, the description of other cultural spaces in the nearby area etc will be documented. The photography, drawings and sketches of artifacts, redrafting, copying or digitalization of the written documents etc have been done.

The field research will take into account every sign of the human interaction with the environment. For such documentation, an extensive area has covered by foot and observes all the signs of the geographical and cultural features of the region. Such survey helped to reconstruct the history of this micro unit under study and probably furnish the sign of the continuation and discontinuation of the life of the people. A number of historical evidences of the micro level evolution of human life have been generated from the field study.

The actual boundary or extension of Kolathunadu need not correspond to the present political boundary of the region and roughly it can be broadly stated that the nadu existed in the region of the present Kannur district. But it may not be prolific if the study confined to a particular village or panjayath or taluk of Kannur district and it need not help to unravel the past of the nadu that belongs to the pre-modern times. Therefore, the first step in the study is to mark out the extension of nadu on the basis of the available documents. Accordingly, the field work is confined to the region between Perumba in the north and Valapattanam in the south, the coast of Arabian Sea in the west and the western ghat in the east. The archaeological, epigraphical, anthropological,
oral traditions, local traditions, personal collections, memories, households’ records, myths, and every perceivable remnants of the past in the region have been documented to reproduce the geo-cultural setting of the region.

The topographical features like hillocks, hillock slopes, plains, rivers, rivulets, and streams, marshy or swampy lands etc have dominant role in the making of the culture of the region. The culture of each micro unit seems to have resemblances and differences. The presence of jungles, forests, other natural vegetation zones, the productive tracts including wet and garden lands, the nature and processes of the production and the nature of seeds etc, have been documented in a systematic manner. Thus the present study may produce enormous primary information on the micro level formation of Kolathunadu.

**Time span**

The periodisation like ancient, medieval and modern, which has been considered as the standard periodisation in historical writings, will not be valid or possible to unravel the process of historical formation of the *nadus*. A more feasible method for the study is to trace the formation of the region as an agricultural production landscape that corresponded to the development of settlement units and later to the development of a system of surplus accumulation and its redistribution.

The present study attempts to reproduce the process of the formation of Kolathunadu from Iron Age early historic time to the fifteenth century AD; ie up to the formation of *Kolaswarupam*. As the study focuses on the historical geography of
Kolathunadu, three broad classifications, which has been done on the basis of the transition occurred in the material culture, may be followed such as Iron age Early historic (upto c.5th or 6th century A.) , Early medieval (c. 6th to 12th century A.D) and Medieval (c.12th to 15th century A.D). The first phase had witnessed the formation of agro-pastoral chiefdom in the hillock and hillock slopes of the major river belts like Perumba, Kuppam, Valapattanam and Pazhayangadi.

The extension of the agrarian settlement in the wet plains and the garden lands, the development of exchange centers and the proliferation of the settlement of various craft groups etc have occurred in the Early medieval phase. This period had observed the formation of lineage or Vamsam in the patriarchal succession pattern, which gradually shifted to the matrilineal line. The wide expansion of the wet land and multi-crops in the productive plots, reclamation of marshy lands in the Perumba river belt owing to the configuration of the new settlements of the Brahmins and the dwelling plots of the non- Brahmins, the spread of cash crops in the hillock slopes and in the garden land etc seem to have ensued in the medieval time. The proliferation of the matrilineal household units and the formation of the agrarian settlements in the newly formed productive units in relation to the households and the formation of Swarupam, which is governed under the principles of the matrilineal succession line and the traditional customs and practices of the society etc were the central features of the medieval time in the nadu under study. However, the medieval era was a period of progressive change, characterized by the extension of agrarian settlement, rise in the
number of religious institutions, an expansion of commercial activity and an evolution of political systems and networks.\textsuperscript{144}

The study concluded in the fifteenth century, ie with the formation stage of Kolaswarupam. The \textit{swarupam} becomes its flourished form in the fifteenth century and later it extended with the fractional divisions, which resulted into the formation of the independent political household units like \textit{Arakkal swarupam} and \textit{Allada swarupam}, which will not be discussed in the present study. This study only attempts to understand the formation of the region of Kolathunadu and also the formation of the \textit{Kolaswarupam} over the \textit{nadu}. Therefore the structure of the \textit{Kolaswarupam} will be examined in detail with the help of source materials of 14\textsuperscript{th} or 15\textsuperscript{th} century. A few later records related to the fractions of \textit{Kolaswarupam} and some major households in the Perumba river belts have also been used to examine the structure of \textit{Kolaswarupam}. Among the later sources, the \textit{Chirakkal Records}, which gives a number of hints on the structural elements of the \textit{Swarupam} in 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} century, have been used extensively. This record is used with the assumption that the elements of the \textit{Chirakkal Swarupam}, which occurred in the record, seems to have originated in earlier phase, probably between the 12\textsuperscript{th} or 15\textsuperscript{th} century AD and common to all fractions of \textit{Kolaswarupam}. The same pattern must have continued in the later period.

\textbf{Content}

The present work is organized into six chapters, which delineate the process of the formation of Kolathunadu as a geo-cultural and political entity.

\textsuperscript{144} Cynthya Talbot, \textit{Pre-colonial India in practice : Society, region and identity in Medieval Andhra}, p. 2
In the introductory part, an attempt has been made to place the problem of the present research and also a brief review of the academic research on region in different parts of India. A cross examination has been done to analyze the micro and local histories of Kerala. The chapter proceeds with an appraisal of the existing references on Kolathunadu in various historical works. The methods and methodology of the present study are also delineated. The second chapter titled as “Historical Geography of Nadu: The case of north Kerala” interrogates the formation of region into the *nadu*, with special reference to the *nadus* in Kerala’s northern part of Kerala.

Third chapter, “Agro-pastoralism and the early chiefdom” examines the formation of the region of Kolathunadu as an agro-pastoral unit in the iron age early historic phase. Expansion of *nadu* as a result of the spread of agrarian settlements in the river valleys and the evolution of the ruling lineage called *Mushikas* are the focal theme of the fourth chapter, “Transition into agriculture and the *Mushika* genealogy”. The successive formation of the *nadu* as the multi-crop production unit with the expansion of new cultivation zones in the Perumba, Valappttanam and Kuppam river belts and the formation of matrilineal households as part of the *Swarupam* is the subject of the fifth chapter, “Consolidation of Agrarian Society and the formation of *Kolaswarupam*”. The concluding part, “Conclusion- Historical Geography of Kolathunadu,” summarizes the process of the formation of Kolathunadu as a geo-political entity. Appendices, a few representative photographs, drawings and maps have also been provided to support the basic arguments of the work.