Chapter III

Power at the Centre:
Lineage, Kinship and the King

Many independent kingdoms emerged in Kerala in the period after the disintegration of the Cēra kingdom of Mahōdayapuram. We have discussed the rise of the kingdom of Kōlikkōtu under the Zamorins in the previous Chapter.¹ Vēṇāṭu, Cochin, Kōlikkōṭu and Kōlattunāṭu became prominent among the nāṭus of the Cēra period. There were other nāṭus, which claimed independence or accepted the overlordship of one of the above four nāṭus at certain times like Valluvanāṭu, Veṭṭattunāṭu, Kūṟumpoṟaināṭu, Vempalanāṭu (Tekkumkūr, Vaṭakkumkūr), etc. A brief account of the political structure of these nāṭus will provide the background to the study of the lineage, kinship and king in the kingdom of Kōlikkōṭu, which is essential for the understanding of the royalty and the culture that it patronised.

The family of chieftains that ruled the nāṭu was known as the Svarūpam, as for example, the ones like Trippāppūr Svarūpam, Perumpaṭappu Svarūpam, Neṭiyirippu Svarūpam, Āṟṇōṭṭu Svarūpam and Kōlattunāṭu Svarūpam. We translate Svarūpam as “the House”.² The term Svarūpam was used in the medieval Malayalam chronicles to mean any influential family, not necessarily a ‘royal’ family.³ In any case, families known as Svarūpams ruled the kingdoms of post-Cēra period.⁴

¹ See above, Chapter II.
² The Svarūpam is literally translated as “self form” in a recent study. Raju S., ‘Political Organisation of Medieval Self-Forms: Svaroopyam and Mūppo Vaazhchu’, Working Paper, Lateral Studies Series No. 15, School of Social Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, 1998. This study, however, fails to inspire conviction.
³ Kēralōṭṭappti Granthavari, Kōlikkōṭan Granthavari, Perumpaṭappu Granthavari, etc. use the term Svarūpam to denote family.
A common character of the kinship structure in the ruling houses or Svarūpams in all the nāṭus in Kerala was that they followed the Marumakkattāvyam (matriliny) system of inheritance. Descent was traced in the mother’s line (i.e., younger brothers and nephews, not the sons, of the King constituted the royal line). This had a crucial bearing on the politics of the period. The eldest male member in the female line became the King. Thus the eldest male member in the royal family became Vēṇāṭṭaṭi in Vēṇāṭu, Perumpatappu Mūṭta Kövil or Perumpatappu Varīya Tampurān in Cochin, Vaḷḷuvakkōṅāṭirī in Vaḷḷuvanāṭu, Veṭṭam Uṭaya Mūṭta Kövil in Veṭṭattunāṭu, and Kōḷattiri in Kōḷattunāṭu (Cannanore). The eldest male member of Neṭiyirippu Svarūpam, which that ruled Kōḷikkōṭu, became the Zamorin.

The Svarūpam or royal house consisted of various tāvalis or collateral branches (the term tāvali may be derived from tāy-vali or mother’s line). Five tāvalis existed in Cochin. It was four in Vaḷḷuvanāṭu and three each in Kōḷattunāṭu and Kōḷikkōṭu. The five tāvalis of Cochin were Mūṭta tāvali Kövilakam, Ilaya tāvali Kövilakam, Muriṅnūr Kövilakam, Cāliyūr Kövilakam and Paḷḷiviruttil Kövilakam. The senior-most in these Kövilakams on rotation basis became Perumpatappil Varīya Tampurān i.e., the Rāja of Cochin. Four tāvalis existed in the senior lineage of Vaḷḷuvanāṭu (i.e., the House of Āraṇnōṭṭu). They were Aripra,

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Mankaṭa, Kaṭannamaṇṇa and Āyiranāḷi. In Kōḻikkōṭu the senior lineage consists of 
Putiya Kōvilakam, Kilakke Kōvilakam and Paṭiṇāḷe Kōvilakam.

There was a set pattern of succession, indicated by positions in the royal 
lines in all these nāṭus. Generally five or six positions were defined in the royal 
lines. These positions were based on the chronological seniority of the incumbent 
in the different tāvalis of the Svarūpam and constituted what is called in the 
records as Kūruvāḷca. Thus, six positions existed in the royal house of Veṭṭam. 
These positions in the descending order are Veṭṭam Uṭaya Mūṭta Kōvil, Veṭṭam 
Iḷaya Kōvil, Veṭṭam Mūṇṇāmkuṭa Kōvil, Veṭṭam Nāḷāmkuṭa Kōvil, Veṭṭam 
Aṅcāmkuṭa Kōvil and Veṭṭam Āṟāmkuṭa Kōvil. In Kōḻikkōṭu five positions 
existed. Unlike in the case of Cochin, there was no rotation of position among the 
tāvalis in Kōḻikkōṭu. Thus no particular tāvali enjoyed any privilege or precedence 
in the matter of succession, as the only criterion for succession was seniority of 
age. Thus the succession to the position of the Zamorin by more than one 
incumbent from the same tāvali in quick succession was not impossible.

In addition to the above-mentioned tāvalis, which can be considered as 
constituted the senior lineage, there were many junior lineages in a few nāṭus. The 
junior lineage was a lineage parallel to the ruling lineage. The junior lineages had 
no right for Kūruvāḷca i.e., the members of this lineage could not rise to the 
positions of the royal line. This was found in Vaḷḷuvanāṭu and Kōḻikkōṭu. 
Members of the junior lineage in Vaḷḷuvanāṭu were designated as Vaḷḷōṭis and 
those in Kōḻikkōṭu, as Ėṟōṭi.9

7 KG. Vols. 7 & 14.
8 A sixth position, i.e., Netuviripple Iḷaya Ėṟōṭi, is also mentioned in the Granthavari in a few cases. Ibid., 
Vols. 7 & 14. Francis Buchanan also refers to this sixth position. Francis Buchanan, A Journey from 
The strict observance of Kuruvalca in the case of Kōlikkōtu preempted problems of succession in the ruling line. But in Cochin and Kōlattunāṭu, certain tāvalis became more powerful than others and began to deny the right of other tāvalis to succeed, which resulted in struggle among the tāvalis in both these kingdoms. As K.N. Ganesh has observed about the political structure of medieval Kerala in general, the practices of Mūppu mura and Kuruvalca involved gradations of authority within a matrilineal joint family showed elements of parcellisation of authority held together by norms of kinship ties and customary regulations.10 Thus, in the absence of any real ‘political’ character, without a permanent abode of the king and a capital, the system would work only so far as the forces of kinship and lineage prevailed.11

The Zamorins emerged as the rulers of Kōlikkōtu from the House of Netiyirippu (Netiyirippu Svarūpam).12 The House had a few tāvalis or branches.13 There was an order of descent (sthanams) which defined the position of individuals in the royal house, and this was as per the seniority (Kuruvalca). The eldest male member of the royal house became the Zamorin and the eldest female member, the Netuvirippil Mūttā Kōvil. The positions in the male line of the royal house were as follows: 1) Sāmūtiri (Zamorin), 2) Ėranāṭtu Īlamkūr Nampiyātiri (Ērālppāṭu for short), 3) Ėranāṭtu Mūnāmkūr Nampiyātiri (Mūnālppāṭu), 4) Ėṭattūrnāṭtu Nampiyātiri (Ēṭṭattrālppāṭu) and 5) Netuvirippil Mūttā Ėṛāṭi

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12 For details see above, Chapter II.

13 The tāvalis known to us are Kilakke Kōvilakam, Pattrāṇgī Kōvilakam and Putiya Kōvilakam.
On the death of an incumbent at any level, those juniors to him got promoted in the order of succession.

Among the women of the house, too, there were three such positions. Netuvirippil Mūtta Kōvil, also known as Ampāṭī Kōvilakam Tampurāṭṭī, was the seniormost, Netuvirippil Ilaya Kōvil and Netuvirippil Ĉeriya Kōvil following her in that order. Each tāvali had its Valiya Tampurān (senior male member of a tāvali) and Valiya Tampurāṭṭī (senior female member of a tāvali) as its head. The members from the respective tāvalis who made it to the ruling positions (i.e., five positions in the male line and three positions in the female line) are not considered for the post of the male and female heads of each tāvali. As stated earlier, no particular tāvali enjoyed any privilege in the matter of succession, as the only criterion for succession was seniority of age. The proceedings in two suits in the British court in AD 19th century give us a clear picture on this matter.

It is curious that the fifth one in the order of succession should enjoy this position, which literally means the “Seniormost Ėrati of the House of Netiyirippu”. This may indicate some major changes that had taken place in the order of succession, some usurpation or other kind of dislocation, about which we have no evidence. It is also intriguing to note that the title of the seniormost lady in the House of Netiyirippu is Netuvirippil Mūtta Kōvil, an exact counterpart by name to Netuvirippil Mūtta Ėrati.

In A.S. 7 of AD 1843 the Sudder court had before them a suit in which it was sought to recover a debt due by a deceased prince during the time that he occupied the position of Mūnāḷppāṭū, or third prince in the royal line, from the heads of the Kōvilakam to which he belonged as the legal heir. The following extract is taken from the judgement:

"It is fact well known to all, and therefore only requiring mention, that between the junior members or Tamburans residing in the different Kōvilagams, or palaces, and their senior relations filling any of the Kurvalchas, or Rajahships, there is not, and cannot be from the nature of things, any reciprocity of interest or right to each other’s property, their establishments, income and duties being distinct and under separate management. The Kōvilagam is the family residence in which all who have not succeeded to one of the Rajahships remain under the management of the eldest resident female, or Tamburatti, of each branch of the family. The Kurvalcha, or Rajahship, is the dignity to which each male succeeds according to the priority of birth no matter to which of the Kōvilagams or families he may belong. Besides the above mentioned, there is a sixth Kurvalcha, or dignity, which is always filled by the eldest Tamburatti, or female, or the family, no matter with which of the Kōvilagams she may be connected, whose proper residence is the Ambadi Kōvilagam. Like the other Rajahships and Kōvilagams, her own income, Malikhana allowance from Government, and establishment are distinct and under separate management. It is obvious from these arrangements that, although all are originally of the same stock, an impassable line of distinction has been drawn between the interests of each branch of the family and the
This Chapter examines the Zamorin, his kinsmen and the lineage as a whole.

The Zamorin

The Zamorin, the ruler of the kingdom, held titles such as Pŭnturakkōn ("the Lord of Pŭntuṟa") and Kunnalakkōn ("the Lord of the Hill and the Sea" translated into Sanskrit as Śailābhedhiśvara). The title Pŭnturakkōn was usually found in the official records viz. inscription\(^\text{16}\) and Granthavari.\(^\text{17}\) Pŭnturakkōn is found in very early records dating from AD 12\(^{th}\) century onwards.\(^\text{18}\) The epithet interests of such members of these families who may in after life respectively succeed to the Rajahships. The one can exercise no control over the acts of the other, and, where there can be no lawful responsibility."

The final decision of the Court was that the defendants were liable only to the extent of the assets, real or personal, which could be proved to have been acquired from the estate of the deceased Mūnālppātu. Lewis Moore, *Malabar Law and Custom*, (1882), Madras. Reprint 1905, pp. 354-55. The following is the judgement of Madras High Court in *Vira Rāyan Versus Valiya Rāni of Putiya Kövilakam*.

"The parties to this suit are members of the family of the Tamudri Rajahs of Zamorins of Calicut. The family comprises three Kovilagams or houses the Pudia, Padinjara and Keyake Kovilagams. Of these, each had its separate estate, and the senior lady of each Kovilagam is entitled to the management of the property of the Kovilagam. There are five *Sthanams*, or places of dignity with separate properties attached to them, which are enjoyed in succession by the senior male members of the Kovilagams. These are in order of dignity 1) the Zamorin, 2) the Eralpad, 3) the Munarpad, 4) the Edatharapad, and 5) the Nedutharpad; and it would seem that, at the beginning of the century, there was also a sixth *Sthanam* known as the Ellēraudī Tirumulpad but, as no mention is made of this *Sthanam* in the present proceedings, it may be that it has ceased to exist.

The senior lady of the whole family, who is known as the Valia Tamburatti, also enjoys a *Sthanam* with separate property; this *Sthanam* is termed the Ambadi Kovilagam.

In the management of the properties of the three Kovilagams, the senior ladies are often assisted by the males or Rajahs who in time may pass out of the Kovilagam and attain one of the separate *Sthanams*. There are no family names, and the *Sthanam* holders are distinguished after their deaths by the name of the year in which they respectively died. All property acquired by the holder of a *Sthanam* which he has not disposed of in his life time or shown an intention to merge in the property attached to the *Sthanam*, becomes on his death the property of the Kovilagam in which he was born". \(^\text{Ibid.}\)

\(^{16}\) Kollam Rāmēsvaram inscription of Rāmavarma Kulaśēkhara (AD 1102) uses this title.

\(^{17}\) The writs of Zamorin are called Pŭnturakkōn *tīṭu*. *KG*, Vols. 38 & 63.

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Kunnałakkön⁹ and its Sanskritised form Śailābhdhiśvara⁰ are found mostly in literary works dating from the fifteenth century. It is enigmatic, however, that the title Pūnturakkön is used only once in the early documents; the next use found is in AD 1748,²¹ and profusely thereafter. We are not able to explain this.

The dynastic title of Sāmūtiri, with its variants as Tāmūtiri, Tāmūri etc., and spelt in European languages as Zamorin, is of obscure etymology with different scholars offering different derivations depending on their imagination. Varthema, the Italian traveller of early 16th century AD, writes that “Samory, which in the pagan language means “God on earth”.²² There is no convincing evidence available to speculate on the derivation of the term Sāmūtiri. Thus we do not put forward our own version in this regard. Instead we have attempted an analysis of the function of those epithets in the contemporary society.

The titles or epithets highlight a person’s position or his claims to a position. Kunnałakkön with its Sanskrit variant Śailābhdhiśvara appears to be significant. One of the earliest references to this title is in a Manipravālam text called Kōkasandesam. A verse there follows:

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⁹ See above, Note 16.

¹⁰ This epithet is used in the Manipravālam works like Kōkasandesam and Candrośavam. Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai, Ed., Kōkasandesam, I:21, p. 38; Idem, Ed., Candrośavam, I: 50, p. 34.

²¹ KG, Vol. 63.

²² R.C. Temple, Ed., The Itinerary of Ludovico di Varthema of Bologna from 1502 to 1508, p. 54. John Nieuhoff, the Dutch traveller says that Sāmūtiri in Indian language means emperor and was also called as Tambrana (Tampuran) which means god. K. Sivasankaran Nair, Ed. & Trans., Nieuhoff Kaṭa Kēralam, p. 58.
Next you see the Ōtuparampu, where the cycle of feudatories pay obeisance to Vikrama, the King, who is renowned in all the seven worlds and takes the title of Kunnalakkōn at the opening of the Māmākam festival.23

This suggests that the Zamorin claimed the overlordship over a number of lesser chieftains.24 The statement that the title of Kunnalakkōn was taken at the festival may indicate the overlordship over Kerala, a name by which the land was known being Malayāla, meaning the same thing as Kunnala or Śailābdhi. Kunnalakkōn or Śailābdhiśvara will therefore mean overlord of Kerala. That was precisely what the Zamorin pretended to be. This title is believed to have been conferred on the Zamorin by none less than the Cēramān Perumāl, the last Cēra king, as is stated in the Kēralōṭpatti tradition,25 which claim was also an important point in the legitimisation of the ruler.26

The implication regarding the title Pūnturakkōn is not clear. If it means the Lord of Pūntura, the latter being taken as a port, it is a humble, unpretentious, epithet. This was, as we already noted, the title that the Zamorin had from the beginning.27 Mānāvikraman, Mānāvedan and Vīrāyān were the personal names of the Zamorins. Every male member born into the lineage had one of these three names. This has posed serious problems in the identification of individual rulers and fixing the chronology and details of political history. These names indicated qualities which are thought to be necessary for kings such as honour,

24 Pyrard of Laval writes, “All the Nair kings of this coast are his vassals, except the king of Cochin”. Albert Gray, Ed., The Voyage of François Pyrard of Laval, Vol. I, p. 408.
26 Nicholas B. Dirks says that “all vamaṇvalis make it clear that honours and emblems are only meaningful when given by a superior, a king or a deity”. Nicholas B. Dirks, The Hollow Crown, p. 82.
27 See above, Note 16.
aggressiveness and heroism.  \textit{Māna} means honour and \textit{vikrama} means aggressiveness. Thus \textit{Manavikraman} means one who had both honour and aggressiveness. Honour is again part of the name \textit{Mānavēdan}. Mānavēdan may be a contraction or overcorrection of \textit{Mānaviyatan} or \textit{Mānavīyan}, the forms found in documents of the Čēra kingdom as borne by the chiefs of Ėrālanāṭu. What \textit{viyan}, \textit{viyatan}, etc. meant is not clear to us. This term figures in a verse in \textit{Kōkasandesam} which describes the town of Koṭūṇāllūru. That town, “where \textit{viyan} resides”, is said to hold the land of the Čēramāns on its eye brows.\textsuperscript{28} The exact significance of this description is not clear although one is tempted to connect it with \textit{Mānavīyan} or \textit{Mānaviyatan}. This reminds us of the claim that the Zamorins made about being the overlord of the whole of Kerala and the statement that this position they got directly from the Perumāls themselves.\textsuperscript{29} Viṇarāyan also denotes a personal quality. \textit{Viṇa} means hero or brave and \textit{raṇ} a variant of \textit{rajan}, means the king, thus it means a heroic king or brave king. It is exactly these personal qualities of the founders of the royal house of the Zamorin that are highlighted in the \textit{Kēralōṭpati} tradition.\textsuperscript{30}

The emergence of the Zamorins as independent rulers from the position of petty chiefs will help us to understand the purpose of high sounding titles used by them. The Zamorin emerged as the King of Kölikkōṭu from a meagre position of Ėrānāṭuṭayavar, a locality chief. Thus the Zamorin used various methods for the legitimisation of his power. The \textit{Kēralōṭpati} tradition of the partition of Kerala by Čēramān Perumāl and his gift of a small tract of land, his sword, and a set of privileges with the injunction to “die or kill to annex”\textsuperscript{31} is an indication of both his

\textsuperscript{28} Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai, Ed., \textit{Kōkasandesam}, I:76, p. 76.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., pp. 190-191.
humble beginnings and also a means to seek legitimacy to the aggrandisements he undertook later. The deceased Zamorins were designated as “uncle” by the successor, irrespective of their relation.

*Kövilakams* of the Zamorin and his kinsmen

The residence of royal personages was called *Kövilakam* in Malayalam. A number of *Kövilakams* are mentioned in the *Granthavari* in relation to the Zamorin. The residence of the locality chiefs and Ėратіs (who were a junior and parallel lineage to the royal house of the Zamorin) was also called as *Kövilakam*. The *Granthavari* uses the term “*Kövilakamäkuka*” to refer to the overnight stay of the Zamorin and the princes. It implies that wherever they resided, their place of stay became the *Kövilakam*. The symbolism of palace moving with the King is evident, which ascribes importance to the King than the palace.

Though the capital of Kōlikkōtu kingdom was at Calicut, Ponnānī was no less important. Since the boundaries of the kingdom extended to the south, the Zamorin began to reside frequently at Ponnānī. The documents of *Kōlikkōtan Granthavari* available to us record more the incidents when the Zamorin was residing at Ponnānī or its neighbourhood than at Calicut.

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33 Pyrard of Laval writes, “The king [the Zamorin] resides most part of his time at these two towns, [Calicut and Ponnānī] and chiefly at Ponany, because of the perpetual war that he wages with the king of Cochin, as also because it is the pleasantest residence in his country”. Albert Gray, Ed., *The Voyage of François Pyrard of Laval*, Vol. 1, p. 399.
34 See above, Chapter I.
We have vivid accounts of the Zamorin’s Kovilakam at Calicut by foreign travellers. Castanheda’s account on Vasco da Gama’s visit in AD 1498 gives the following description of the palace of the Zamorin at Calicut.

Though only constructed of earth, the palace was very extensive and seemed a handsome structure, having great numbers of trees interspersed among the different buildings, with pleasant gardens full of fine flowers and odoriferous plants, and many fountains…. On coming to the gate of the house in which the king resided, they were met by the chief Brahmin or high priest of the household, who embraced him and his people into the palace…. On passing the last gate, the general and his attendants went along with the noblemen into a great hall, surrounded with seats of timber raised in rows above one another like our theatres, the floor being covered by a carpet of green velvet, and walls hung with silk of various colours.\(^{35}\)

Varthema gives the following description of the palace of the Zamorin.

The palace of the king is about a mile in circumference. The walls are low, as I have mentioned above, with very beautiful divisions of wood, with devils carved in relief. The floor of the house is all adorned with cow dung. The said house is worth two hundred ducats or thereabouts. I now saw the reason why they could not dig foundations, on account of the water, which is close to them.\(^{36}\)

He also writes,

In the house of the King of Calicut there are many chambers, in which as soon as evening comes they have ten or twelve vases made in the form of fountain which are composed of cast metal, and are as high as a man. Each of these vases made in the form of a fountain which are composed of cast metal, and are as high as a man. Each of these vases has three hollow places for holding oil, about two spans high from the ground. And, first, there is a vase in which is oil with cotton wicks lighted all round. And above this there is another vase more narrow, but with the same kind of lights, and on the top of the second vase there stands another yet smaller, but with oil and lights ignited. The foot of this vase is formed in a triangle, and on each of the faces of the foot there are three devils in relief, and they are very fearful to behold. These are the squires who hold the lights before the king.\(^{37}\)

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\(^{35}\) Quoted in K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *ZC*, pp. 142-43.


\(^{37}\) Ibid., p. 69.
The contemporary anonymous narrative on Cabral’s voyage speaks that “The houses of the said king [the Zamorin] are very large, and in these houses there are many fountains of water in which the king bathes”.\(^{38}\) Pietro Della Valle, the Italian traveller of AD 17\(^{th}\) century, writes on the palace of the Zamorin as follows.

The first and principal gate of the palace [at Calicut] opens upon a little Piazza, which is beset with certain very great Trees affording a delightful shade. I saw no Guard before it; it was great and open, but before it was a row of Balusters, about four or five palms from the ground, which serv’d to keep out not only Horses and other Animals but also Men upon occasion. In the middle was a little flight of Stairs, outside the Gate, leading into it, and another within on the other side. Yet, I believe, both the stars and the Balusters are movable, because ‘tis likely that when the King comes forth the Gate is quite open; otherwise it would not be handsome, but this is only my conjecture. We enter’d this Gate, ascending the Stairs above Rails, where we were met by the Messenger whom the above said person had sent to the King and who again invited us into the Palace by the King’s Order. Within the Gate we found a great Court, of a long form, without any just and proportionate figure of Architecture; on the sides were many lodgings in several places, and in the middle were planted divers great Trees for shade. The King’s chief apartment, and (as I believe by what I shall mention hereafter) where his Women were, was at the end of the Court, opposite to the left side of the Entrance. The Edifice, in comparison of ours, was of little consideration; but according to their mode, both for greatness and appearance capable of a Royal family. It had a cover’d porch, as well their structures have, and within that was a door of no great largeness leading into the House.\(^{39}\)

Pietro Della Valle gives a rough and unmeasured ground plan of the Zamorin’s palace and the place where the Zamorin gave them audience.\(^{40}\)

N.M. Nampoothiry has made an attempt to list the Kövilakams of the Zamorin.\(^{41}\) Laudable as this attempt is, he has not taken into consideration the fact that the Zamorin resided temporarily at the houses of local magnates, locality chiefs, royal functionaries and Brahmans, and that even such overnight stays were

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\(^{38}\) William Brooks Greenlee, Ed., *The Voyage of Pedro Alvares Cabral to Brazil and India*, p. 80.


\(^{41}\) N.M. Nampoothiry, *SCK*, pp. 40-49; see also *Idem.*, *A Study of Place Names in the Calicut District*, p. 520.
described by the term Kovilakam. Nampoothiry does not differentiate between these two categories of Kovilakams and takes any mention of the term as indicating a residence of the Zamorin. We have constructed a list of the Kovilakams of the Zamorin, other princes and princesses mentioned in the Granthavari, leaving out such overnight stays and taking into consideration only those places which belonged to the Zamorin or his family.

We have sifted information from the sources, mostly the Granthavari, the particular document in which the reference occurs is not mentioned every time, as a single Kovilakam itself is mentioned in several times and in various documents. But we have restricted ourselves to the Kovilakams referred in the documents of the period of our study. Thus the later Kovilakams such as the Zamorin’s Kovilakam at Mankävu are not included in the list.

1) Kolikkottu Kovilakam, i.e., the Zamorin’s Kovilakam at Calicut
2) Putiya Kovilakam at Calicut
3) Paţiññâre Kovilakam at Calicut
4) Ampâti Kovilakam, i.e., Kovilakam of Netuvirippil Mûtta Kôvil at Calicut
5) Cälappurattu Kovilakam
6) Trikkâvil Kovilakam at Ponnâni
7) Vairanellîr Kovilakam at Ponnâni
8) Vâkayûr Kovilakam at Tirunâvaya i.e., the Kovilakam where Zamorin resided during Taippûyâm and Mâmâkam
9) Venkôtte Kôttakkâl
10) Tiruvaçculkâlam Vâtakkôttâ at Koţiûnâllûr
11) Vaçakkécçîrâ Kovilakam at Triśśivapèrûr (Triśśûr)
12) Cempalañhåṭî Kovilakam
13) Ariyakkottu (Arikkottu) Kovilakam
14) Karîmpûlâ Kovilakam, i.e., the Kovilakam of Êrälppâtu
15) Paţiññâreppâttu Kovilakam at Tiruvaçciçîrâ
16) Karîkkåttu Kovilakam, i.e., Kovilakam of Êrälppâtu
17) Anantapuram Kovilakam at Kollâm (Pantalâyani)
18) Câvakkåttu Kovilakam

The Zamorin possessed this Kovilakam for a very short period. Vâtakkôttâ at Koţiûnâllûr also not always remained in the hands of the Zamorin.
Apart from the above Kövilakams the Zamorin resided, as we have noted above, temporarily at the houses of various local magnates. We have reference to the Kövilakams of the Erāṭis, who were a parallel lineage of the Zamorin’s royal family, such as Nallaṅṇappuṟa Naṭuvile Kövilakam, Pālikkunnattu Kövilakam, Kurṟicceri Kövilakam and Veṭṭikkāṭṭu Kövilakam. The junior princes also had their own Kövilakams. But the specific locations except that of the Erāḷppāṭu are not known. The reference to the Kövilakams of the locality chiefs is also found in the Granthavari. The Tālekkāṭṭu Kövilakam of Veṭṭam Uṭāya Mūṭta Kövil, Tirumanaccērī kōṭṭa of Tirumanaccērī Nampūṭiri, Karippa Kövilakam of Paṟappūr Karippuva Kövil, Kaṭaluṇṭi Valavil Kövilakam of Paṟappūr Valavil Kövil are examples. What is interesting regarding the Kövilakams of the Zamorin and his kinsmen is that they are found scattered in the kingdom. It may not be accidental; several of them may have been built for specific reasons. It may have helped them to maintain relatively strong control over the area. Kövilakams may have acted as functional centres.

Erāṇāṭṭu Ilāmkūr Nampiyāṭṭirī

Erāṇāṭṭu Ilāmkūr Nampiyāṭṭirī also called the Erāḷppāṭu was the second in the royal line of the House of Neṭiyirippu. Krishna Ayyar says that Erāḷppāṭu had a palace at Calicut, i.e., the Erāṃpirī Kövilakam south of the Ampāṭī Kövilakam. Ayyar also says that the important achievement of the Erāḷppāṭu was the conquest of Neṭunṇanāṭṭu, and that he was appointed as its governor with his headquarters at

43 Kalpakaccērī Kövilakam at Tirunāvāya is mentioned several times in the Granthavari as well as in the Kēralotpatti Kilippāṭṭu. But it is not clear whether it was a Kövilakam of the royalty or the royalty staying their as the guests of the Kalpakaccērī family.

44 KG. Vol. unnumbered (A).
Karimpula. His minister was Ceruḷi Accan and his secretary, Punnaśēri Nampi. It may be noted here that the Ceruḷaḷi Accan was dismissed by the Zamorin from the position of Veṇṇinanāṭṭu Nampaṭi in Dhanu, KE 780 (AD 1604).

From the Granthavari evidence it is clear that Eranṭṭu Ilamkūr Nampiyāṭiri had a residence called Ėrāmpirī Kōvilakam located at Calicut. In a later period we have evidence of the kotticcēlunnallattu (royal procession with music ensemble) of Ėrālppāṭu to Karimpula after his investiture ceremony. The document of Taippūyam in KE 845 (AD 1670) states that the kotticcēlunnallattu of Ėrālppāṭu to Karimpula was performed after his investiture ceremony. It seems that Ėrālppāṭu’s kotticcēlunnallattu to Karimpula was a regular feature after his investiture. The emblem on the flag of the Ėrālppāṭu was Hanumān (Hanumalkkoti). The deity of the royal temple at Karimpula, where the Ėrālppāṭu resided, was Śrīrāma and that may be the reason for the selection of this emblem by Ėrālppāṭu.

The documents in the Granthavari inform that each of the junior princes had his own Kōvilakam and servants. Ėrālppāṭu had his own sources of revenue.

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45 Krishna Ayyar, ZC, pp. 10-11. But elsewhere Krishna Ayyar says that Ceruḷi Accan was Ėrālppāṭu’s secretary and chief minister, and that Punnaśēri Nampi was his treasurer. Ibid., p. 269. P. Kunhikrishna Menon says that Ceruḷaḷi Accan was the Prime Minister (pradhāna mantri) and āṭṭha Mēṇon of Ėrālppāṭu. P. Kunhikrishna Menon, Ariyittuvāḷcayum Kotticcēlunnallattum, Calicut, 1910, p. 78.

46 The commonly used form of the title is Veṇṇinanāṭṭu Nampaṭi, but the Granthavari refers him as Veṇṇinanāṭṭu Nampaṭi and Veṇṇananāṭṭil Nampaṭi. We have followed the title Veṇṇinanāṭṭu Nampaṭi uniformly in the thesis.


48 P. Kunhikrishna Menon, Ariyittuvāḷcayum Kotticcēlunnallattum, passim.

49 KG, Vol. 7, copy of the same document in Vol. 14; see also below, App. V.

50 KG, Vols. 7 & unnumbered (B).

51 Ibid., Vols. 7 & 13.
He received an amount from the different royal estates (cerikkals) and pattam (rent from land) from various lands. A reference to his revenue in paddy as pattam from Payyanāṭṭu[ka]ra dēṣam is found in the Granthavari.52 We have several references to the separate treasury of the Eralppāṭu, particularly in the documents related to his investiture known as tirumūṭippalavariccārttu.53

During the Taippūyam festival54 of KE 809 (AD 1634) on the day of Taippūyam the Zamorin stood in state at Maṇittāra (platform on the northern bank of the river Pērār at Tirunāvaya). After that Īrāṇāṭṭu Iḷakūr Nampiyāṭiri along with Tirumanaccēri Nampūṭiri stood in state on the southern bank of the river. After the mortars and muskets were fired they crossed the river and proceeded to Maṇittāra. On the way they prostrated on three spots. After getting consent from the Zamorin they mounted the Maṇittāra and stood on the right side of the platform. Then the lōkar (militiamen) made joint obeisance.55 The same details were gone through in the Taippūyams in KE 821,56 KE 845,57 KE 85758 and KE 905.59

52 Ibid., Vol. unnumbered (A).
53 For details, see below, Chapter VI.
54 For details. see below, Chapter IX.
57 Ibid., Vol. 7, copy of the same document in Vol. 14; see also below, App. V.

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During the *Māmākam*, the Zamorin stood in state at Manittara and Ėranāṭṭu Iḷamkūr Nampiyāṭiri along with Tirumanaccheri Nampūtiri stood in state on the southern bank of the river at Tirunāvāya. This procedure continued through the first 19 days of *Māmākam*.

During the *Māmākam* after the elephant was adorned with gold trappings, the akampaṭi (escort) to the Zamorin for eight days was given by various personalities including the junior princes. Ėranāṭṭu Iḷamkūr Nampiyāṭiri gave akampaṭi on the sixth day after the elephant was adorned with gold trappings, i.e., the 25th day of the festival. On the last three days of the festival (i.e., 28th to 30th days) also Ėranāṭṭu Iḷamkūr Nampiyāṭiri along with Tirumanaccheri Nampūtiri stood in state on the southern bank of the river. On the last day they acted as on the day of *Taippūyam*, which we have discussed above. Tirumanaccheri Nampūtiri was a locality chief of the neighbouring region on the southern bank of the river and he is described as the *Śāmanta* of Ėṛāḷppāṭu in the Tamil version of the *Kēralōṭpattā*. The close association between the two in both *Taippūyam* and *Māmākam* is, in any case significant; perhaps this bears out the veracity of the tradition.

An interesting aspect related to the Ėṛāḷppāṭu is that he took care of the affairs of the kingdom when the Zamorin was busy with the war operations at Koṭuṇṇallūr against the Dutch and Cochin in KE 845 (AD 1670). The following details are found in the *Graṇthavari*. Since the Ėṛāḷppāṭu had to proceed to

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60 For details, see below, Chapter IX.
61 *KG*, Vol. 2; see also below, App. VI.
62 Ibid.
64 *KG*, Vol. 7, copy of the same document in Vol. 14; see also below, App. V.
Karimpula after his investiture, he proceeded to Cempalannyaṭu Kövilakam, entrusted Kunnattupalṇṇāṭu to Eṭattūnṇāṭu Nampiyāṭiri and sent his men to the land on the southern bank of Karuvanappula. Then he proceeded to Karimpula and returned to Cempalannyaṭu by Makaram 10 (January 7, AD 1670). Mannattaccan and Tinayaṅcēri Ilayāṭu stayed put at Calicut. Hence it was the Eṟalppāṭu who sent royal letters to them and the respective lōkars (militiamen) to the effect that the lōkars of Polanāṭu and Payyanāṭṭukara should be brought to Tirunāvya for Taippūyam.

Before that Eṟalppāṭu sent a royal letter to Taṟakkal Uṇṇirāma Mēṇōn, the royal functionary at Kāḷaṭi cēṛikkal, for the construction of a temporary palace on the northern bank of the river at Vākayūr. Eṟalppāṭu sent people for the work on the southern bank of the river at Tirunāvya. Since the Zamorin did not arrive for the Taippūyam after the consolidation of Koṭuṇṇallūr, on Makaram 20 (January 17) the Eṟalppāṭu proceeded to Guruvāyūr and sent Eṭattūnṇāṭu Nampiyāṭiri, [Netuvirippil] Iḷḷaya Ēṛāṭi, Maṉṉāṭṭu Rāricca Mēṇōn and a few militiamen from Punnattūr and Maṉakkuḷam to Koṭuṇṇallūr. Münnāmkūr Nampiyāṭiri proceeded to Pāppinivaṭṭam, ready to advance to the place, somewhat as a rearguard.

On Makaram 25 (January 22), the Zamorin reached Ponnānī Vāḷke at night. The Eṟalppāṭu too reached there by that time. On Makaram 26 (January 23) the Zamorin and the Eṟalppāṭu proceeded from Ponnānī Vāḷke. When they reached the west of Māṭṭūr four mortars were fired from Vākayūr. They reached the southern bank of the river opposite to Vākayūr by noon. The Eṟalppāṭu proceeded from there to the Maṉṉīl Trikkōvīl (temple). For fear of being late, the Zamorin did not proceed to Vākayūr Kövilakam. He was adorned with royal ornaments. Since there was no time, the coconut was not broken and he adorned the sacred ash consecrated by Cēnnamaṅṇalattu Nampūṭiri. Since the Eṟalppāṭu did not send the money from the southern bank of the river for daksīṇa and payments to the
musicians, the Zamorin gave the royal ring (tiruvāli) as security to Pāra Nārāṇa Nampi to meet the expenditure.

Krishna Ayyar says on Kōlikkōtu kingdom that “When the head of the state could not discharge his functions due to old age or sickness he did not retire into religious seclusion, as was the practice at Cochin; the Ėralpad or the heir-apparent ruled the country in his name as in 1670”.65 As we already noted the Ėrāḷppāṭu looked after the affairs of the kingdom, not because the Zamorin was sick or too old but as he was preoccupied with war operations against the Dutch and Cochin at Koṭuṇṇallūr. In Kōkasandesām, a Manipravālam work of early 15th century AD, a Ėrāḷppāṭu is highly praised for his exploits.66 K.P. Padmanabha Menon says that an inscription speaks about the renovation of Perumanam temple by Ėrāḷppāṭu. Tirumulppāṭu is the honorific used by all the princes including Ėrāḷppāṭu and princesses as found in the Granthavari.

Ērāṇāṭṭu Mūnṇāṁkūr Nampiyāṭiri

Ērāṇāṭṭu Mūnṇāṁkūr Nampiyāṭiri, called Mūnṇāḷppāṭu for short, was the third in the royal line of the house of the Zamorin. Krishna Ayyar says that Mūnṇāḷppāṭu’s chief duty was to guard the southern frontier. Ayyar also says that as he was always on active service, marching from one place to another according to the needs of the situation, an umbrella with a cloth tied to it became his emblem.67

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67 Krishna Ayyar, ZC, p. 10; see also, P. Kunhikrishna Menon, Ariyittuvāḷcayum Koṭṭiccelunnaḷattum, p. 60.
The investiture ceremony of Ėranāṭṭu Mūnnāmkūr Nampiyāṭiri was usually held along with that of the Zamorin and the Ėrālppāṭu. The information of the tirumutīppalavariccāruttu of Ėranāṭṭu Mūnnāmkūr Nampiyāṭiri in KE 836 (AD 1661) and KE 837 (AD 1662) is available in the Granthavari. The utavālanakkal (investing with the sword) ceremony was performed prior to the investiture ceremony. The detailed description of the utavālanakkal ceremony of Ėranāṭṭu Mūnnāmkūr Nampiyāṭiri held at Ponnāni Trikkāvil Kōvilakam in KE 841 is available in the Granthavari.

As we have already noted, in KE 845 immediately before the Taippuyam in the midst of political chaos Ėranāṭṭu Mūnnāmkūr Nampiyāṭiri proceeded to Pāppinivaṭṭam and stood ready for advance to the place, where any help would require. On Tulām 16, KE 849 (October 17, AD 1673) Ėranāṭṭu Mūnnāmkūr Nampiyāṭiri and Sarvādhikāram Vallattāvali Kuṇṇi Kurikkal caused at Ponnāni Trikkāvil Kōvilakam to present before the Zamorin “the sword and the robe” to Piṭikappurattu Kaṭiṇṇi Mēnōn as Matilakkattu Koṇnaccēri Mūṭṭa Nāyār. In KE 854 (AD 1679) and KE 858 (AD 1683) Ėranāṭṭu Mūnnāmkūr Nampiyāṭiri acted as Sarvādhikāram. In KE 854 Ėranāṭṭu Mūnnāmkūr Nampiyāṭiri visited the Netuvirippil Mūṭṭa Kōvil (senior princess of the royal family) at Calicut. Netuvirippil Mūṭṭa Kōvil had insisted that she wanted to see the Zamorin. Thus

70 For details, see below, Chapter VI.
71 KG, Vol. 7, copies of the same document in Vols. 13 & 14. For the details of this ceremony see Chapter V.
72 KG, Vol. 7, copy of the same document in Vol. 14; see also below, App. V.
73 Ibid., Vol. 7. For the ceremony of “the sword and the robe”, see below. Chapter IV.
74 KG, Vol. 2.
Eranattu Munnamkur Nampiyatiri sent Tarakkal Iremma Menon, the Talaccennavar of Cunahnatu, along with Vaitti Pattar, functionary of Eranattu Munnamkur Nampiyatiri’s Kōvilakam, with money and royal letter to Ittikkarunakara Mēnōn and Tamaracceri Nilakantha Nampi to bring the royal insignia to Calicut, for the elunnajattu of the Zamorin by a boat. They were sent to Cempalannāṭu Ciṟankara Vēṭṭakkarumakan Kōṭṭam (temple), where the Zamorin was then residing. During the royal procession of the Zamorin in KE 854 (AD 1679) Eranattu Munnamkur Nampiyatiri and Etattumattu Nampiyatiri proceeded from Calicut to Tiruvacciṟa and paid obeisance to the Zamorin. Eranattu Munnamkur Nampiyatiri, Etattūrānṭṭu Nampiyatiri and Netuvirippil Mūṭta Ėṟāṭi gave akampati to the Zamorin for his royal procession from Tiruvacciṟa to Calicut.75

In KE 854 during the Pattattānam (an annual assembly of learned Brahmans at Taḷi temple, Calicut),76 the Brahmans did not suggest the names of those who were qualified for tānam (position of Bhaṭṭa) due to the rivalry between the members of the sabha. Eranattu Munnamkur Nampiyatiri, who was the Sarvādhikāram, negotiated with a few members of the sabha, but could not resolve the stalemate.77 For the construction of the Kōvilakams of the Zamorin and Eranattu Munnamkur Nampiyatiri and the bars and pillars for the platform of the latter at Vākayūr for the Māmākam in KE 858 (AD 1683) 8382 ½ pāṇams were given from the treasury of Eranattu Munnamkur Nampiyatiri.78 During these days Mānṇattūr Kōru (the blacksmith) repaired the damaged sword of Eranattu

75 Ibid.

76 For details, see below, Chapter VIII.

77 KG. Vol. 2.

78 Ibid.
Munnamkur Nampiyātiri. Ēranaṭṭu Munnamkūr Nampiyātiri (*Sarvādhikāram*) gave the amount of money from the treasury to Pāra Cankara Nampi to present the *dakṣiṇas* to the musicians for the ritual at Vākayūr Pālakkal during the *Māmākam* (Makaram 8, KE 858 i.e., January 6, AD 1683). Ēranaṭṭu Munnamkūr Nampiyātiri gave *akampati* (escort) to the Zamorin on the 24th day of the *Māmākam* festival. On 29th day of the festival, in the evening when the Zamorin and Ērālpāṭu stood in state on both banks of the river Ēranaṭṭu Munnamkūr Nampiyātiri stood on the platform of Kūriyāl (pipal tree)79 facing west in the northern bank, which was cleaned by his men.

According to *Kēralōtpattī* tradition one of the men of Vēṇāṭu ruler obstructed the daily ritual of a Brahman at Kannēṛri Kaṭavu. The Mūnnālppāṭu proceeded there, stabbed the man of Vēṇāṭu ruler to death. Thus the Brahman resumed his daily rituals.80

**Ēṭattūrnāṭṭu Nampiyātiri and Neṭuvirippil Mūṭṭa Ēṛāṭi**

Ēṭattūrnāṭṭu Nampiyātiri and Neṭuvirippil Mūṭṭa Ēṛāṭi were the fourth and fifth dignities in the hierarchy of the royal house. Information of the *tirumutippalavariccarttu* of Ēṭattūrnāṭṭu Nampiyātiri and Neṭuvirippil Mūṭṭa Ēṛāṭi in KE 83681 and KE 83782 is available in the *Granthavari*. The information on the *uṭavaḷanakkal* (investing with the sword) ceremony of these princes in KE 841 is

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79 Āl in Mālyalam means banyan tree (*Ficus indica*), but here it is *aravāl*, a pipal tree (*Ficus religiosa*). Now also a pipal tree namely Kūriyāl survives at Tirunāvaya, probably a new tree planted instead of the old one. Krishna Ayyar translated Kūriyāl as stunted banyan.


also available in the *Granthavari*. Thus it is evident that they too had their own investiture ceremonies similar to those of the Zamorin and other princes.

In KE 845 Ėṟāḷppāṭu, who had charge of the affairs of the kingdom on behalf of the Zamorin, entrusted Kunnattupāḷḷināṭu to Ėṭattūrnāṭṭu Nampiyāṭiri. Since the Zamorin did not arrive for the Taippūyam in KE 845 as he was preoccupied with the war operations against the Dutch at Koṭūṅṇallūr, Ėṭattūrnāṭṭu Nampiyāṭiri, along with Kāryakkār, militiamen, et al. proceeded to Koṭūṅṇallūr. During Māmākam on the 22nd day of the festival Neṭuvinippil Mūṭṭa Ėṟāṭi gave akampaṭi (escort) to the Zamorin, whereas Ėṭattūrnāṭṭu Nampiyāṭiri gave akampaṭi on 23rd day of the festival. As we have already noted, they gave akampaṭi to the Zamorin during his royal procession from Tiruvaccira to Calicut in KE 854.

Neṭuvinippil Mūṭṭa Kōvil

Neṭuvinippil Mūṭṭa Kōvil was the seniormost female member of the House of Neṭiṭyirippu. She was also called Ampāṭi Kōvilakam Tampurāṭi after the Kōvilakam where she resided. She was addressed as the “Mother” by the Zamorin, irrespective of the actual relationship between them and even if she was younger in age.

84 Ibid., Vol. 7, copy of the same document in Vol. 14; see also below, App. V.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid., Vol. 2.
87 Ibid; also see above, p. 71.
88 KG, Vol. 44.
As already noted, Ėranāṭṭu Mūnṃāṃkūṛ Nampiyyāṭiri visited the Netuvirippil Mūṭṭā Kōvil at Ampāṭī Kōvilakam in Calicut in KE 854 (AD 1679). Netuvirippil Mūṭṭā Kōvil had told the Mūnṃāṃkūṛ Nampiyyāṭiri that she wanted to see the Zamorin. Thus the Zamorin proceeded to Calicut. The Zamorin met Netuvirippil Mūṭṭā Kōvil at Ampāṭī Kōvilakam. He bowed and prostrated Netuvirippil Mūṭṭā Kōvil. All paraphernalia was kept at the Paṭiṇṭāre tālam (western hall). The Zamorin sat in front of the lamps facing east and keeping the sword on his lap. Netuvirippil Mūṭṭā Kōvil sprinkled the rice and the flower (tumpappūvu, flower of Leuca indica) on the head of the Zamorin, standing behind him.90

Netuvirippil Mūṭṭā Kōvil had her own separate private estates (cērikkals). She received an amount of money for caṇṇātam (caṇṇātappāṇam).91 Putiya Kōvilakattu Kōvil, was another dignity among the women. This was the senior lady of Putiya Kōvilakam, who too had her own royal estates (cērikkals).92 The princesses such as Netuvirippil Iḷaya Kōvil, Netuvirippil Ceṭiya Kōvil, Paṭiṇṭāre Kōvilakattu Kōvil and Kīlakke Kōvilakattu Kōvil had separate revenue sources. This is supported further by the writings of the Portuguese traveller, Duarte Barbosa. He writes,

their [Malabar Kings’] nieces and sisters from whom the heir to throne is to proceed are well watched and served, and have their own revenues on which they live.93

Barbosa continues on the princesses of Malabar,

90 KG, Vol. 2.
91 Ibid., Vol. 41.
92 Ibid.
and when any of them attains the age of twelve or fourteen, and is fit for intercourse with men, they send to summon some youth of noble lineage from outside the kingdom, appointed there for that purpose, sending him money and gifts in order that he may come and take the maidenhood of that girl.

When he has come, they do him great honour, with feasts and ceremonies as if it were a wedding; then he ties round her neck a small golden jewel which she wears for the rest of her life as a token that they have performed that ceremony for her, and thereafter she may dispose of herself according to her own desires, which until then she may not do. The young man remains with her some days, being very well served, and then goes back to his own land. Thenceforward she can choose any Bramene that pleases her and as many as she likes, and bears them children.94

A letter of Cochin Rāja to the Dutch states that the members of the Paṭiṇāṛṛetattu Kōvil (Koṭuṇnallūr Rāja) family were the persons marrying the princesses of the Zamorin’s family.95

A document in the Granthavari records the ṭīṇḍam (offering cooked rice ball to the dead as a part of the obsequies) of Netuvirippil Mūṭṭa Kōvil performed by the Zamorin on Mēṭam 22, KE 812 (April 18, AD 1637).96 The Netuvirippil Mūṭṭa Kōvil, Netuvirippil Iḷaya Kōvil and Netuvirippil Ceriya Kōvil (the three senior most ladies of the royal house in the descending order) received a share of tārams (silver coins) from the royal mint (kammattam) in KE 822 (AD 1647).97 This share may be theirs by right. This happened immediately before the Māmākam.

94 Ibid., pp. 11-12.


96 KG, Vol. 44.

97 The Netuvirippil Mūṭṭa Kōvil, Netuvirippil Iḷaya Kōvil and Netuvirippil Ceriya Kōvil received 800 tārams (50 panams), 512 tārams (32 panams) and 256 tārams (16 panams) respectively. Ibid., Vol. 21.
The consort of the Zamorin was called Neyttiyar, which may be a corruption of Nayattiyar (a Nayar woman). Krishna Ayyar says that "the Zamorin’s consort was dignified by the title of Neyttiyar. She could not assume it, however, before it had been formally conferred upon her. This honour entitled her to the privilege of having long-handled lamps carried before her whenever she went out".98 Palanceri Iṭṭiccirūṭevi is conferred with the kuttuvilakku (long-handled lamp) on Makaram 5, KE 853 (January 2, AD 1678).99 But she was referred to as Neyttiyar prior to it. The document of the Dutch attack on Koṭūṇnallūr in KE 845 (AD 1670) refers Paḷaṅcēri Iṭṭiccirūṭevi as Neyttiyar,100 and also the document of vāḷum pūṭavayum (the sword and the robe) of Pīṭikappūṟattu Kaṭṵṇi Mēṉōn as Matilakattu Koṇṇaccēri Mūtta Nāyār in KE 849.101 Thus Krishna Ayyar’s opinion that the title Neyttiyar can be used only after it is formally conferred upon seems to be inaccurate. In any case, Paḷaṅcēri Iṭṭiccirūṭevi was not conferred with Kuttuvilakku immediately after becoming the consort of the Zamorin. Thus it is possible that the privilege of kuttuvilakku was not necessarily conferred on all Neyttiyārs.

Another interesting piece of information related to Paḷaṅcēri Iṭṭiccirūṭevi Neyttiyar is regarding her husband, the Zamorin. From the above details it is clear that Paḷaṅcēri Iṭṭiccirūṭevi was the Neyttiyar at least from KE 845 to KE 853 (AD 1670 to 1678). According to the chronology constructed by Krishna Ayyar a

98 Krishna Ayyar, ZC, p. 262.
100 Ibid., Vol. 7, copy of the same document in Vol. 14; see also below, App. V.
Zamorin died in AD 1671\(^{102}\) and as per N.M. Nampoothiry a Zamorin died in AD 1674.\(^{103}\) We gather from the documents that a Māṇavikrama Zamorin died in AD 1666 and a Virarāyan took over in that year.\(^{104}\) Paḷaṅcēri Itṭiccirutēvi was the consort of the reigning Zamorin in AD 1670.\(^{105}\) There is another document which speaks of a certain Māṇavikrama as the Zamorin in AD 1679\(^{106}\) and yet another which speaks of Māṇavikrama having completed 13 years in AD 1683.\(^{107}\) These facts suggest that this Māṇavikrama, who had his consort in Paḷaṅcēri Itṭiccirutēvi, comes to office in AD 1670 and continues at least up to AD 1683. The death of the Zamorins in AD 1671 and 1674, which Ayyar and Nampoothiry speak of, are not borne out by documentary evidence.

Kaitamana Itṭiccirutēvi Nēytyiyār was conferred with *kuttuvilakku* (long-handled lamp) in KE 760 (AD 1585).\(^{108}\) On both the occasions of the conferment of *kuttuvilakku*, i.e., KE 760 and KE 853, the Nēytyiyārs presented to the royal functionaries an amount of money.

The account of the Portuguese traveller Duarte Barbosa on the consorts of Malabar kings is relevant in this context. He writes,

These kings do not marry, nor have they any marriage law. They keep as a concubine a woman of good family, of Nayre descent, and beautiful for their delight. These they keep in an inn near the palace, quite independently and very

\(^{102}\) Krishna Ayyar, *ZC*, pp. 222, 337.

\(^{103}\) N.M. Nampoothiry says that no evidence on the death of the Zamorin in AD 1671 is found in the *Granthavari*, and that a Zamorin died in 1674. N.M. Nampoothiry, *SCK*, p. 40. We have not come across any evidence of the death of a Zamorin either in AD 1671 or 1674 from the *Granthavari*.


\(^{107}\) *Ibid*.

well supplied. They receive a certain sum by the month or year; and when they
are dissatisfied with one, they let her go and take another. Nevertheless many of
them out of regard for the royal honour will not change or send away these
women, and among them it is held a great honour for a maiden to become one of
the King's women. The sons which the King has by them are not held to be his
sons, nor do they inherit the Kingdom, nor anything that is the King's, they take
only what comes to them from their mothers. As long as they are young the King
treats them with great favour, like children of another whom he is bringing up, but
not as his sons: for when they are men they receive no more honour than comes to
them from their mother's rank, yet the Kings oftentimes make them presents of
money, so that they can live better than the other Nayres.109

Pyrard of Laval also writes about the consort of the Zamorin,

As for the queen, she lives in a separate palace, yet with in the same enclosure as
the great palace. She never eats with the king, and is seen but rarely, and then
only at the windows and galleries of her palace or of the king's, whither she
frequently proceeds by a gallery which communicates between the two, and there
they see each other in private. She bathes in the same manner and with the same
ceremony as the king, and in the same pond; but they cannot see each other, for
they each have their own end of the pond with a space covered in. She has
ordinarily her ladies about her, who pass the time for her. The pond where they
bathe is well enclosed and locked, and none but the king and queen do bathe
there; there is a gallery whereby the queen descends on her side, and another for
the king on his side. The ladies who are present to wash the queen do not enter the
water, but remain in the closets and pavilions that are upon the pond, where the
oiling, drying, and perfuming is done; and these ladies use all the same artifice
and ceremony towards her as the lords use toward the king. The queen is of the
Brameny race as well as he.110 She has her own Pagode, where she betakes herself
with her ladies, then to her own apartments to take her food, and so on, as with the
king. Only great ladies are about her person, and she has the pavements or boards,
and the walls and passages where she goes, cleaned with this cow-dung of which I
have spoken....

But to return to the queen: in her dress and attire she differs in no respect
from the other Nair wives and ladies, or even from the princesses and great ladies,
except that their ornaments are a little more charged with pearls and jewels. The
mark of the greatest honour and grandeur with them is to have their ears large, as
already described, and this queen had them so large that they reached the nipples.

110 It seems to be a misunderstanding of the author due to his unfamiliarity to the life style of the Zamorin
and his family.
She is nude from the waist upwards, like all the other women, but covered all over with divers trinkets, pearls, and jewels, as are all other women of every rank.\textsuperscript{111}

Palāńcēri Itṭiccirutēvi Nēyttiyār moved along with her husband, the Zamorin, even during the political chaos. It was during the conflict against the Dutch in AD 1670 Palāńcēri Itṭiccirutēvi Nēyttiyār and her daughter along with the Zamorin went to Koṭuṉṇallūr. When the Dutch attacked the house of Velutta Nampiyār, where the Zamorin was residing, Nēyttiyār and daughter were rescued along with the Zamorin.\textsuperscript{112} A few ladies were killed or injured and were captured by the Dutch. It is not very safe to generalise from this that the Nēyttiyārs always accompanied her husband. Nor need it be assumed that all Nēyttiyārs were consorts of the Zamorins. Certain prominent families with military and landed privileges were conferred with the title Nāyar (from Sanskrit Nāyaka = “leader”) and women of those houses were invariably Nēyttiyārs (Nāyattī being the feminine gender of Nāyar). What is likely is that the Zamorins generally took their women from these houses. Thus, all Nēyttiyārs were not the consorts of the Zamorin; but in all known cases of the Zamorins, the title Nēyttiyār is unmistakable for a consort of the Zamorin. How the consorts of the junior princes in the royal house are called is not known.

Nature of Kingship

This Chapter discussed various aspects related to the king and his kinsfolk. A study of the nature of kingship in the kingdom of Kōlikkōtu is relevant in this context. Krishna Ayyar says that the government of the Zamorin was in form an autocracy. He qualifies it by saying that usage and precedent strictly defined the Zamorin’s privileges and responsibilities, no less than the obligations and rights of


\textsuperscript{112} KG, Vol. 7, copy of the same document in Vol 14.
his subjects. We have elsewhere noted that most of the Zamorins were too old and physically disabled. They depended on the princes, royal functionaries, local magnates and locality chiefs much for the conduct of the affairs of the kingdom. In fact, this was not just a result of the physical state of individual rulers; the structure of power was like that. There is no autocracy at all in evidence whether in form or in content; the Zamorin was the head of the structure while the other nodes of power exercised real power under various shades of authority.

There are certain other arguments, which is not particular to the Zamorins but a generalised view on the South Indian Kings, such as that of Burton Stein. Stein says,

South Indian kings were essentially ritual figures except in the often circumscribed core territories of their capitals where they commanded and managed resources and men by virtue of their compelling coercive power (kṣatra). They are the most important symbols of the sacred, moral order to which all men must belong and, as such theirs is a sacred and moral authority (dharma) beyond the limited territory of their kṣatra.

Stein also gives a passing reference to the Zamorin that the great chiefs like the Zamorin of Calicut recognised the overlordship of Vijayanagara. He says that the Zamorin responded promptly to a command from Dēvarāya II for the presence at the royal court of the Persian ambassador Abd er Razzak, who has himself recorded the event. It seems that the overlordship of Vijayanagara over the kingdom of Kōlīkkōṭu is very much doubtful.

113 Krishna Ayyar, ZC, p. 261.
114 See below, Note 121. However, we are not denying the possibility of comparatively young Zamorins taking charge on some occasions as at times the family was on the verge of extinction and adopted from other royal families.
115 See below, Chapters IV & V.
116 Burton Stein, Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India, p. 24.
117 Ibid., p. 382. Stein has either misunderstood, or chooses to misrepresent, the statement of Abd er Razzak whom he cites in support of this statement. Razzak, however, says just the opposite! He writes: 'On a sudden a man arrived, who brought me the intelligence that the king of Bidjanagar, who holds a powerful
Though there are a large number of recent attempts to study the kingship and political structure of medieval South India, kingdom of Kōlikkōtu, and any other medieval kingdoms of Kerala for that matter, has received scanty attention from the scholars. It is important to clarify that the Zamorin was not the king of a large territory with vast resources. He was slightly better than a locality chief and the ruler of a little kingdom. The predominant feature of the kingship of Kōlikkōtu is that a hierarchy of the royal line based on seniority was strictly followed. An incumbent hardly surpassed the hierarchy and usurped the power. The seniority of the male member of the royal family in the mother’s line was always followed. This was pointed out by the Persian traveller Abd er Razzak, who visited Calicut in AD 1442. This type of Kuruvalca helped the kingdom of Kōlikkōtu since it preempted problems of succession which had affected the contemporary kingdoms of Cochin, Vēṇāṭu and Kōlattunāṭu.

As noted earlier, there were several tāvalis in the royal house of Neṭiyirippu. No tāvali enjoyed precedence and it was the seniority, which decided

empire and a mighty dominion under his sway, had sent to the Sameri a delegate charged with a letter, in which he desired that he would send on to him the ambassador of his majesty, the happy Khakan. Although the Sameri is not subject to the laws of the king of Bidjanagar, he nevertheless pays him respect, and stands extremely in fear of him.” R.H. Major, Ed., India in the Fifteenth Century, p. 1:19.


119 Afonso de Albuquerque, the Portuguese Viceroy of early 16th century, later revealed that he had suggested to Nampiyāṭīri (i.e., Erālppāṭu) that he get rid of the Zamorin and rule in his place. And Albuquerque believed that the Erālppāṭu poisoned the Zamorin. Genevieve Bouchon, Regent of the Sea: Cannanore’s Response to Portuguese Expansion, 1507-1528, p. 132.

120 Abd er Razzak writes that “The sovereign of this city bears the title of Sameri. When he dies it is his sister’s son who succeeds him, and his inheritance does not belong to his son, or his brother, or any other of his relations. No one reaches the throne by means of the strong hand”. R.H. Major, Ed., India in the Fifteenth Century, p. 1:17. Did Abd er Razzak err when he says that the brother of the Zamorin does not
the hierarchy in the royal line. That is, no rotation of position among the tāvālis and so, two consecutive Zamorins from the same tāvāli was plausible. There was a parallel, if junior, lineage to the house of Neṭiyirippu. They were called as Erāṭis. Though they had their own Kōvilakams and source of revenue they were not eligible for Kūrvalca. As a result of there being several tāvālis and each tāvāli having several members in it, by the time an incumbent became the Zamorin, he would be too old. Thus many of the Zamorins were not in good physical conditions and suffered from many disabilities as is evident from the documents in the Granthavari. It is evident in the writings of Duarte Barbosa also. He writes,

The heirs of these Kings are their brothers, or their nephews, sons of their sisters. They consider that these are their true sons, for they know who is their mother, and in this country for that the women are very free of their bodies, the true stock of the Royal descent is through the women, and the first son born to the King's eldest sister is heir to the throne, and thus call the brothers inherit one after the other, and when there are no brothers, the nephews, sons of the eldest sister succeed. If the sisters do not happen to have borne sons there is no heir to the crown, and the King dies without one; then they meet in council and elect a relative as King, and if there is none, then any person who may be suitable. For this reason the Kings of Malabar are always old.

Many a time the junior princes died without making into the kingship. The junior princes, as we noted, acted in various capacities in the affairs of the kingdom. Though the royal family had several tāvālis, at times adoption was made for the continuance of the ruling line, as in the case of KE 880 (AD 1705) from Nilēśvaram royal family.


121 The documents in the Granthavari speaks about Zamorins who were hard of hearing (Triccevi kēḷēṭṭa), not able to walk (Trikkāḷ vayyāṭṭa) etc. We can have also the following inferences from the documents about the physical disability of the Zamorins. A Zamorin could not mount the elephant due to his physical weakness, another Zamorin could not take bath twice a day on account of his health, another Zamorin was supported to walk by two persons and yet another Zamorin lamented (trikkangīr vārkkūka) when he was asked to move to Kōṭunallūr to face the Dutch attack. KG, Vols. 7, 8, 13 & 14.


123 N.M. Nampoothiry, Ed., Vellayute Caritram, p. 54. Krishna Ayyar says that this adoption was in the year of KE 881 (AD 1706). Krishna Ayyar, ZC, pp. 4-5.
The Zamorin used high-sounding titles. He emerged as the King of Köljikkōtu from a meagre position of Ėranāṭṭiṭayavar, a locality chief. Thus the Zamorin used various methods for the legitimisation of his power. The Zamorin considered the protection of Brahmans and cows as his duty, which is highlighted in the Kēralōṭpatti\textsuperscript{124} and family traditions.\textsuperscript{125}

We can sum up the above discussion of the nature of kingship in Köljikkōtu in the following way:

1. The Zamorin was the king of a little kingdom and was projected in an image larger than life.
2. Kingship was hereditary in nature and marumakkattāyam (matriliny) was followed for succession.
3. Hierarchy of dignity (Kūruvāḷcā) in the royal line, based on seniority of age existed.
4. The House of Netiyirippu was divided into tāvalis (branches in the mother’s line). Each tāvali had its own head in the male and female lines.
5. After entering into one of the five dignities (Kūruvāḷcā) one ceased to be the head of the tāvali.
6. A parallel, junior, lineage not eligible for kingship existed.
7. There is a conspicuous absence of problems related to succession.
8. When an incumbent became the Zamorin, he was generally old since there were several tāvalis and a number of members, a feature of joint family system. Even with a number of tāvalis and a large number of persons in the royal lineage adoptions were made to the royal family when threatened of extinction.

\textsuperscript{125} KG, Vol. 53.
9. The seniormost lady of the royal house was designated as Neṭuvirippil Mūṭta Kōvil and the Zamorin addressed her as the “mother” irrespective of their personal relationship. So also, the deceased Zamorins were designated as “maternal uncle” by the successor, irrespective of their relation. Both these indicate that members of the house paid respect to these positions – seniormost male and female.

10. Though Calicut was the capital of the kingdom, the Zamorin resided at different places depending on the situation.

11. The king conferred various honours on different persons on different occasions and for different purposes.

12. Though the Zamorin was the head of the family and so the chief of the kingdom, the junior princes also shared responsibilities. Ėṟāḷppāṭu, the heir apparent, looked after the affairs of the kingdom on behalf of the Zamorin in times of emergency.

13. Importance was given to the position, not to the person (i.e., importance to Zamorin, Ėṟāḷppāṭu, etc. and not to the person who became the Zamorin). Though the persons died, the offices continued.