Royalty and Patronage of Culture

The Zamorins, like other potentates, were patrons of scholarship, art and literature. It is interesting to consider why the Zamorin patronised a large number of scholars, poets and artists. At the first instance it was an attempt of promoting scholarship, literature and art forms in the kingdom. It is also an attempt of patronising and controlling the scholars, poets and artists, through which the rulers got legitimacy. In a period of palmyra manuscripts and limited literacy it is futile to think that the works composed during that period enjoyed wide popularity. But the works themselves generally addressed, and communicated with the elite class. The rulers were also concerned directly with this elite class who controlled other sections of the society. Thus patronising the scholars itself became a means to control the ideology of the elite class. Apart from legitimacy and ideological control it was also a means of enhancing the splendour of the court and royalty. A larger than life image is created through it. The art forms like *Krishnanattam* would have helped to propagate the ideology of loyalty and devotion in addition to the martial spirit. While the contemporary monarchs in India constructed huge monuments, the rulers of Kerala were not in a position to compete with them due to their meagre resources. But in the case of patronising art, poetry and scholarship they were not behind their contemporaries.

This Chapter studies the dance drama namely *Krishnanattam*, the annual assembly of the scholars namely *Paṭṭattāṇam* and the literary creations under the Zamorins. It is hoped that this will help to understand the high culture and its functions in Kölikköṭu kingdom during the medieval period. The literary achievements of the poets in the kingdom of Kölikköṭu were appreciated by the earlier scholars. It is not our purpose here to evaluate the literary creations of the
period but to raise the problem why the royalty patronised the scholars, artists and poets.

*Krisnanāṭṭam*

*Krisnanāṭṭam* is a theatre art, representing Kraśna’s story in eight parts through vocal and percussive music, costumes and makeup, dance, mime, facial expressions and hand gestures. It is believed to be the creation of Mānavēda, a Zamorin. *Krisnanāṭṭam* occupied an important position in the evolution of the Kerala theatre. It occupies a position between *Kūtiyāṭṭam* (a Sanskrit theatrical performance) and *Kathaṇāṭṭi* (a classical dance drama of Kerala), showing affinities to both. *Krisnanāṭṭam* is less expansive than *Kūtiyāṭṭam* and *Kathaṇāṭṭi*. In respect to abhinaya (acting) there is no attempt to interpret the text word by word. Dance and song are equally important in it. *Krisnanāṭṭam* is the story of Kraśna depicted in a series of eight separate episodes presented as dance dramas to be performed on eight successive nights. The text forming the basis of this performance is called *KrisnagTti* composed by Mānavēda. The series starts with the incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu as Kraśna, i.e., *Avatāram* and is followed by *Kāliyamardanam*, *Rāsakṛīḍa*, *Kamsavadha*, *Swayamvara*, *Bāṇayuddha*, *Vividavadha* and *Swargarōhana*. Two background singers sing the *KrisnagTti*, a composition in Sanskrit, in the *sōpāna* style. The song is accompanied by the musical instruments like *śuddha madalām*, *toppi madalām* (barrel shaped drum played horizontally), *itakka* (an hourglass-shaped drum), cymbals, gong and conch.

The dance sequence, called *Mullappū cuṟṟal* in the choreographic parlance of *Krisnanāṭṭam*, is a delightful mixture of the classical *lāṣya* (soft-sweet curves emphasising dance movements) with traces of folk dances common in Kerala

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called *Kaikottikkali*. This type of dance features in *Avatāram* and *Rāsakrīḍa*. Two other types of dance in it are *tāṇḍava* (a sort of violent war dance) and *bhīhatsa* (a sort of witches' dance inspiring disgust and fear). Expressions through gestures (*Nṛitya*) occur in it. Improvised speaking in sign language – *mudras* – between actors, without background music is also used. The make-up contributes, by its elaborate and multi-coloured shine, to the general appeal of the performance.

It was performed in the *Kōvilakams* of the Zamorin and in the royal temples, mainly Guruvāyūr. Though the Zamorins had recorded meticulously the income and expenditure, no document belonging to the period of our study on *Krisṇaṇāṭṭam* is found in the *Granthavari*. Later documents in the *Granthavari* record the income and expenditure of *Krisṇaṇāṭṭam*.

The origin of *Krisṇaṇāṭṭam* is not an undisputed fact. Tradition connects it with a certain Zamorin, Māṇavēda. A.C.G. Raja suggests that *Nārāyanīyam* and *Gītāgīvīndra* should have influenced Māṇavēda in the composition of *Krisṇagīti*. He also says that *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* and folk dances of Kerala inspired the creation of this dance drama.² A Māṇavēda undoubtedly composed *Krisṇagīti*, a Sanskrit text. It is suggested that *Kalarippayāṭṭru* (a martial art of medieval Kerala) deeply influenced *Krisṇaṇāṭṭam*.³ It is natural that the early artists of it were Nāyars, who were the militiamen of the Zamorin. *Kēralōṭpatti Kilippāṭṭu*, a poetical work in Malayalam of later 17ᵗʰ century, refers to the performance of *Krisṇaṇāṭṭam* during the *Māmākam* festival.⁴ Thus it is obvious that *Krisṇaṇāṭṭam* was well established by

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this time. It is said that there was only a single troupe which performed *Krishnanāttam* and that it was confined to the kingdom of Kōlīkkōṭu.5

Here we seek to raise certain problems that lead us to more problems than answers. Why was *Krishnanāttam* confined to a single troupe? Who formed the audience to whom it was addressed? Apart from an art form, did it have any other functions in the medieval society? Why did the locality chiefs or local magnates in the kingdom of Kōlīkkōṭu not maintain their own troupes of *Krishnanāttam*? Did the Zamorin insist that there couldn’t be a duplicate to the original troupe? Or, was it because the local magnates did not find it worthwhile to do something which would support only the Zamorin and not themselves, particularly because their loyalty to the Zamorin was somewhat slender? We do not know.

*Krishnanāttam* addressed the elite section of the society. It was presented in the *Kōvilakams* or temples of the Zamorin. The royalty, locality chiefs, local magnates, royal functionaries, priestly class, temple functionaries and chiefs of various groups constituted the audience along with their women folk. It is said that *Bhakti* (devotion) and fighting are the dominant feelings in *Krishnanāttam*.6 It seems that both elements were predominant in the period of its origin. The sentiments of devotion to the Lord and fighting against evil were propagated through this art form among the elite. The Zamorin also demanded ultimate loyalty from his subordinates. In a period where there was continuous war, it is natural to think of oneself as divine and the opponents as demons.7 The spectators


7 It is evident in a *slōka* found in the *Granthavari*, where the Portuguese were described as *Rākṣasas* (demons). *KG*, Vol. 7, copy of the same document in Vol. 13.
did not consider the actors as mere artists, but see them as the real characters. Thus when Lord Krishna comes to the stage, they worship him. The ideology of the contemporary society was reflected in Krishna Gita. The following idea is found in it: To be born as a lizard is a bad thing, but if it is with the blessings of a Brahman it turns to be good. If we make a Brahman contented, he blesses us with everything, like a kalpataru. If he is angry he destroys everything like fire. This is repeated in the writings and tradition of that period over and over again.

Forms of art have always been regarded as a powerful medium of channelling opinion and, therefore, the state invariably tried to mediate and regulate its activities. Kautilya advised the employment of actors as spies of the king and even today, the state tries to maintain control over the arts (visual, literary and performing) and the artists through convoluted systems of patronage structures and institutions. During the period of intense political activity, such control becomes even more crucial and competitive, since the control of knowledge is ultimately of crucial importance.

The later documents show that an amount of money was collected annually from the cerikkals for the performance of Krishna Nattam. N.M. Nampoothiry says that collecting an amount permanently for the conduct of regular performance and converting it an obligation and custom made Krishna Nattam as a part of the

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11 Document dated KE 1006. KG, paper manuscript.
administrative strategy of ṇatuvaliṣ.\textsuperscript{12} It is probable that the royalty tried to enhance their splendour and prestige through kriṣṇanāṭṭam.

\textit{Paṭṭattānam}

There was an annual assembly of scholars held in Tali temple at Calicut called as \textit{Paṭṭattānam}. This was held in the month of Tulām\textsuperscript{13} on Rēvati asterism and went on for seven days to end on Tiruvāṭira asterism. Thus it is called \textit{Rēvati Paṭṭattānam}. Why and when\textsuperscript{14} this \textit{Paṭṭattānam} was instituted is not known. There are traditions about the origin of \textit{Paṭṭattānam}.\textsuperscript{15} About the etymology of \textit{Paṭṭattānam} also there are two different views. One is conferring the title and position (sthāna) of Bhaṭṭa (learned Brahman)\textsuperscript{16} and the other is the giving of gifts.


\textsuperscript{13} Though it is stated in the \textit{Granthavāri} that \textit{Paṭṭattānam} was held in the month of Tulām, in KE 854 it was held in the month of Minam. KG, Vol. 2.

\textsuperscript{14} K.V. Krishna Ayyar says that \textit{Paṭṭattānam} was founded in AD 1309. But how he gets this date is not known. K.V. Krishna Ayyar, \textit{A History of Kerala}, p. 359.

\textsuperscript{15} One of the traditions is that in an early period there were two sisters in the royal family of the Zamorin. A baby boy is born to the younger princess and later to the elder sister. As per the succession rule the prince born to the younger sister will become king before the son of elder sister. Thinking that her importance would be lost if the younger sister’s son become the king, the elder sister poisoned the baby to death. Thus the son of elder sister became the king. During the reign of this prince he tried to perform something overruling the objections of his mother. Then she told that it was due to her tactics that he became the king. When he came to know actually what happened, he decided to do atonement for this sin. Thus he consulted with the learned Brahmans, and instituted \textit{Paṭṭattānam}. Vadakkumkur Rajarajavarma Raja, \textit{Kēraliyā Sanskrita Sāhitya Caritram} (hereafter \textit{KSSC}), Vol. II, (1953), Thiruvananthapuram, Reprint 1990, p. 22. According to Kēralōppattu tradition, \textit{Paṭṭattānam} was instituted as per the advice of Vilvamanālattu (Kolkūnattu?) Sivānātha. Hermann Gundert, Ed., \textit{Op. Cit.}, p. 200.

(dānam) to the Bhāttaś.\textsuperscript{17} From the Granthavari evidence the former seems to be more probable.

It is said that in medieval period many royal families instituted Paṭṭattānams as a way of atonement.\textsuperscript{18} Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai says that Paṭṭas were originally the “Professors” of the Śālas. Paṭṭattānam or “Professorship” was considered to be the highest honour coveted by the scholars of the day and this honour was conferred only on Nampūtiri scholars of the day who proved their mettle in learned debates. These debates used to be held at temples. Tiruvalla copper plates of the Perumāl period refers to “matilakattu vakkāniccirikkum paṭṭakal orōruttar” (each of the Bhaṭṭas who participate in scholarly discourses).\textsuperscript{19} Elamkulam says that scholars who got Paṭṭattānam were given land free of tax from the temples and the records of the Manalikkara and Padmanābhapuram temples refer to Paṭṭa virutti properties. During the age of Perumāḷs Paṭṭattānam was not hereditary. But in course of time Paṭṭattānam and other offices became hereditary.\textsuperscript{20} Unnumlisandesam refers to the Bhaṭṭas who were going to the tānam.\textsuperscript{21}

Kōlikkōtān Granthavari gives a detailed account of the Paṭṭattānam of KE 854 (AD 1679).\textsuperscript{22} In addition to this, stray reference to a Paṭṭattānam of KE 902


\textsuperscript{19} Kesavan Veluthat, Brahman Settlements in Kerala: Historical Studies, p. 45.

\textsuperscript{20} Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai, Studies in Kerala History, p. 276.


\textsuperscript{22} KG, Vol. 2.
There are a number of detailed accounts of Paṭṭattānam related to a later period. These documents help us to construct a picture of Paṭṭattānam held in the temple of Taḷi. For the Paṭṭattānam of KE 854 royal letters were sent to the Sabha of Kōtamaṇṇalam Bhaṭṭas. The letter states that since the Paṭṭattānam had to be held in Taḷi temple at Calicut they were requested to reach Calicut on Dhanu 25, KE 854 (December 24, AD 1678).

The members of the Sabha arrived at Calicut on Kumbham 30 (February 26, AD 1679). On Mīnam 1 (February 27) four lamps were lit for four sāstras by Perūr Nampūtiri (Koymā), Accanmār and Pērakattu Kōvil to examine the knowledge in sāstras (sāstram pariśippān). The exposition of the sāstras (sāstra pōltti) began in this way. The charge of the feast to the Sabha was entrusted to Vāḷayūr Uṇṇirāricca Ėṛṭṭi and Pērakattu Kōvil. The accounts of the feast were entrusted to Accanmār and the charge for serving the food to Īṣvara Vāriyar. The Brahmans who were not in the Sabha was given their food from the uttu of Taḷi temple. Finally, on Mīnam 9 (March 7, AD 1679) the Zamorin ordered the successful ones to receive tāṇam. Forty-two purses of money, each containing 109 paṇams, to be given to the Bhaṭṭas, were prepared. A purse of 300 paṇams was also prepared as an offering (Vacca namskāram).

Lamps and other paraphernalia were kept in the agrasāla. Among the four members of the old Sabha Tiruttiyil Paṭṭatiri was not well and so did not attend the ceremony. The remaining Āriyanpellī Paṭṭatiri, [Mullappallī] Paṭṭatiri and Payyūr Paṭṭatiri sat near the lamps and other paraphernalia. The Zamorin asked the Bhaṭṭas who sat in the Vāṭil maṭam to receive tāṇam. Due to the conflict among

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23 Ibid.
24 Krishna Ayyar says that in KE 854 forty-six persons received the tāṇam and the purse of 114 ½ paṇams. K.V. Krishna Ayyar, ZC Notes, p. 298. The amount of money stated by Ayyar is not correct. The amount of money stated in the Granthavari is 109 paṇams and the total amount for 42 purses of money is 4578 paṇams.
the members of the Sabha the list of eligible persons for tānam was not given. The Sarvādhi kāram Eranāṭṭu Mūnnāmkūr Nampiyātiri conferred with a few members of the Sabha, but could not solve the stalemate. The Zamorin himself tried to solve the problem and decided to give away purses to forty-six persons instead of forty-two. The names of these forty-six Bhāṭṭas were written on the palm leaf. Then Mahānāṭṭacan saluted the Zamorin and the Sabha and read the names. Firstly, he read the name of Tiruvillāykkāṭṭu Śrīkumāra Paṭṭatiri (in Prābhākāra Mīmāṁsa). Kummil Iḷēṭṭatu Nampūtiri, the maṇisam (representative/servant) of Mullappaḷḷī Paṭṭatiri, with a lamp welcomed and brought Śrīkumāra Paṭṭatiri to the Zamorin. Śrīkumāra Paṭṭatiri sat in front of the Zamorin, where the paraphernalia was kept. The Zamorin gave betel leaves, arecanuts, sandal paste and jasmine to him. Kōyum Pērū Nampūtiri handed over the purse brought by the Piṣāraṭis to the Zamorin. He presented the purse to Śrīkumāra Paṭṭatiri. Then Śrīkumāra Paṭṭatiri blessed the Zamorin and sat with the old Sabha. The names of the Bhāṭṭas were read out in order and they were brought to the Zamorin and presented with the purse and other things in a like manner.

The following persons received tānam on this occasion.

Prābhākāra Mīmāṁsa

1. Śrīkumāra Bhāṭṭatiri
2. Toṭṭappāye Tuppa Paṭṭatiri
3. Cāttamaṇṇalattu Nampōta Paṭṭatiri
4. Arappāṭṭu Vāsuḍēva Paṭṭatiri
5. Kallampalḷi Nīlakanṭa Paṭṭatiri
6. Corōṭṭūr Paruttippare Nārāṇa Paṭṭatiri
7. Netumburattu Vāsu Paṭṭatiri
8. Pērūr Nārāṇa Paṭṭatiri
9. Tūsiyil Paramēṣvara Paṭṭatiri
10. Paruttippallī Tenan Paṭṭatiri
11. Kāriyūr Nārāṇa Paṭṭatiri
12. Perumpatappil Nātuvil Cāta Paṭṭatiri
Bhatta Mīmāṃsā

1. Meppattūr Cankara Paṭṭatīri
2. Kappiyūr Nīlakaṇṭha Paṭṭatīri
3. Paḻippāṭṭu Paramēśvara Paṭṭatīri
4. Talavanāṭṭu Cankara Paṭṭatīri
5. Cūlamaṇḍa Aṣṭāmūrtti Paṭṭatīri
6. Mūttāṭṭu Nārāṇa Paṭṭatīri
7. Kaṇṭanūr Tekkēṭattu Uṇirāma Paṭṭatīri
8. Āṟṟupurattu Bhāskara Paṭṭatīri
9. Perumpilāvīl Mullappalḷī Aṣṭāmūrtti Paṭṭatīri
10. Tiruttīyil Dāmóda Paṭṭatīri
11. Mele Perumpaṭṭappil Pramēśvara Paṭṭatīri
12. Kaṇiśśākke Śrīkumāra Paṭṭatīri

Vvākaṇa

1. Maṟavaṇcēri Tekkēṭattu Śankara Paṭṭatīri
2. ...rikkate Pramatta Paṭṭatīri
3. Anāllūr Nārāṇa Paṭṭatīri
4. Cerupallī Tupa Paṭṭatīri
5. Paḻippurattu Padmanābha Paṭṭatīri
6. Pe...kka(rko?)ḷattu Kurūmūru Nārāṇa Paṭṭatīri
7. Eṭakkara Kurūmūr Pramatta Paṭṭatīri
8. Kalppeḷḷī Paramēśvara Paṭṭatīri
9. Elapallī Kappiliṅṅaṭṭu Vāsudēva Paṭṭatīri
10. Ĉelēri Vāsudēva Paṭṭatīri

Vēḍānta

1. Kuruvattūr Nārāṇa Paṭṭatīri
2. Kirāṇnāṭṭu Nārāṇa Paṭṭatīri
3. Ujuttuvāḷ Vāsudēva Paṭṭatīri
4. Pāṭḍykkare Paṭṭiṅṅārēṭattu Pramēśvara Paṭṭatīri
5. Maṇniyakkōṭṭa Tiruttiniyakkattu Iravi Paṭṭatīri
6. Mūṭṭarāṅṅōṭṭu Pōṭrāṭa Paṭṭatīri
7. Karumāṭṭu Paramēśvara Paṭṭatīri
8. Kāṅekkal ...(Anāvrita) Paṭṭatīri
9. Kāṅṅūr Śākhara Paṭṭatīri
10. Eṭakkēṭṭu ...(Pārampattu) Vāraṇaṇī Iravi Paṭṭatīri
11. Iṭtighetṭappattu Pāru ...(yil Nīlakaṇṭha Paṭṭatīri
12. Iyāpappattu Porutayil Tekkēṭattu Pramatta Paṭṭatīri

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25 There is a lacuna in the document and so a few names are incomplete.
Those who received the purses sat with the old Sabha. The Zamorin and other princes circumambulated the gathering, prostrated and sat on the wooden planks. Then the Bhāttas of the Sabha blessed them. All the Brahmans performed japam and the Zamorin gave 1100 pāṇams as daksīṇa to them.26

A reference to the Paṭṭattānām of KE 902 (AD 1726) is found in the Granthavari. Those who received tānam composed ślokas on the Zamorin. The document is dated on Kumbham 22, KE 902 (February 19, AD 1727), four months after Paṭṭattānām, and the Zamorin was then residing at Camravaṭṭam. It is not clear from the document whether the Bhāttas composed the ślokas from Camravaṭṭam in Kumbham KE 902 (AD 1727). In an account of a Nampūthiri of the Veḷḷa family it is stated that the examination of sāstra for Paṭṭattānām was held at Camravaṭṭam after building a Kōvilakam and a Netumpura there. And it is stated that the people called the then Zamorin as Sāstra Rājāvu (the king proficient in sāstras). The date of this Paṭṭattānām is between 882 and 904.27 After the Mysorean attack in 1766, Paṭṭattānām ceased to be celebrated. Paṭṭattānām was re-instituted in KE 1026 (AD 1850) with certain variations.28

The purpose of Paṭṭattānām seems to be the patronage of scholarship. The royalty encouraged the scholars to be proficient in the sāstras and duly recognised their excellence by conferring the Bhāṭṭa position and a purse of money. Scholars from different parts of the kingdom and even outside participated in it. This was a much-coveted position among the scholars in the medieval period. It is evident that only the Brahman scholars were allowed to participate in this assembly. The patronage of scholars by the Zamorin was a source of legitimacy for him.

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26 KG, Vol. 2; see also, N.M. Namoothiry, SCK, App. 9, pp. 268ff.
27 N.M. Namoothiry, Ed., Vellayute Caritram, pp. 54-55.
28 KG, Vol. 38.
Royalty and the Patronage of Literature

"Patinettarakkavikal"

It is believed that an assembly of poets called *Patinettarakkavikal* existed under the king called "Mānavikrama Zamorin". These poets or scholars are said to have been the nine members of Payyūr Paṭṭīri family (eight brothers and a son), five Nampūtiris of Tiruvappara or Tiruvēgappuṟa, Mullappallī Paṭṭīri, Cēnnās Nārāyaṇan Nampūtiri, Kākkaśēri Paṭṭīri, Uddanda Śāstri and Punam Nampūtiri (who is considered as half poet-arakkavi).29 Many literary scholars have written extensively on them. Historians like K.V. Krishna Ayyar accepted this tradition in toto. He writes, “In the history of Sanskrit literature in Kerala the second half of the fifteenth century after Christ marks an epoch. It witnessed an outburst of genius in literature and philosophy similar to the Periclean age in ancient Athens and the Elizabethan age in modern England. It was an age of giants, the Zamorin Manavikrama towering high above them all. A veritable treasure of learning, or Sarasvataniḍhi, as he was called by Kakkasseri, round him were gathered some of the greatest poets and philosophers of Kerala, who were known collectively as the *Patinettarakkavikal* or literally the Eighteen-and-a half Poets”.30 Later scholars repeated these traditions,31 though a few raised certain doubts about its validity.32

30 K.V. Krishna Ayyar, ZC, p. 298. Krishna Ayyar’s writing on *Patinettarakkavikaḷ* was based on the writings of Appan Tampuran, Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer and Govinda Varier.
But none has convincingly proved the veracity or otherwise of the tradition. Here we have sought to address this problem.

First of all we will examine the historical evidence related to the assembly of poets. According to tradition Uddanda was one of the *Patinettarakkavikal*. Uddanda composed works like *Mallikāmārutam* and *Kōkilasandēśa*, which are available to us. Kākkaśēri Dāmōdara Bhaṭṭa, author of *Vasumatimānavikrama*, says that the play was written at the instance of the Zamorin, the hero of the play being the king himself. From the prologue of this play it is clear that Māṇavikrama Zamorin patronised Dāmōdara Bhaṭṭa from childhood onwards. Cēnnās Nārāyaṇan Nampūṭiri is the author of *Tantrasamuccaya*. Punam Nampūṭiri composed *Rāmāyaṇam Campu*. Uddanda mentions a Payyūr Pāṭṭēri in his *Kōkilasandēśa*. There is reference to a Payyūr Paṭṭēri and a Mullappalli Paṭṭēri who were present as the members of old *Sabha* for the *Paṭṭattānam* of KE 854. It is likely that the predecessors and successors of the above stated scholars were patronised by the Zamorin. Thus the historicity of a few of the scholars and poets who were ascribed to be in the assembly of poets called *Patinettarakkavikal* is in evidence – or is at least probable. Many more scholars and poets in the kingdom of

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33 Even though there were no debate on the historicity of the assembly called *Patinettarakkavikal*, there were debates on the etymology of the term. Scholars expressed various opinions on the derivation of the term *Patinettarakkavikal*. Early scholars believed that *arakkavi* means half a poet, a metaphor for the Malayalam poet – who is not a complete poet like the Sanskrit poet. K.P. Narayana Pisharati pointed out that *arakkavi* derived from the term *aracan* (king), and *Patinettarakkavikal* means eighteen royal poets. Scholars like Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai also supported this argument. Scholars have reservations on the number of poets also. They believed that eighteen is a formulaic number in Indian tradition and need not be taken seriously.


37 KG, Vol. 2.
Kōlīkkōtu are also known to us. Keeping this in mind we will consider the case of “Mānāvikrama the great”.

K.V. Krishna Ayyar gives the date of “Mānāvikrama the great” as AD 1466-74.³⁸ K. Kunjunni Raja has suggested the first half of the fifteenth century as the date of Mānāvikrama.³⁹ He also says, “All that we can say definitely is that Uddāṇḍa Śāstri, Kākkaśerī Dāmodara Bhaṭṭa and some members of the Payyūr family including one Rṣi and his son Paramēśvara, were contemporaries of Mānāvikrama, the Zamorin of Kozhikode…. Perhaps the number ‘Eighteen and a half’ of the story need not be taken seriously; it is an auspicious number in Kerala. There can be no doubt that Mānāvikrama of Kozhikode was a great patron of letters”.⁴⁰ The date of Mānāvikrama is generally reconstructed from the date of Cēnās Nārāyaṇanampūtiri who refers to the Kali year 4527 (AD 1427) in the concluding verse of Tantrasamuccaya.

The basic problem of the earlier scholars is their attempt to connect all the references of “Mānāvikrama” in various literary works to a single “Mānāvikrama the Great”, the patron of Patinentṭarakkavikal. They have not taken into consideration the fact that Zamorins used only three names, Mānāvikraman, Mānvēdan and Vīrāyan, in the entire length of 500 years or so covered by their reign. The number of years that each Zamorin reigned was comparatively short due to their typical way of succession, which we have discussed elsewhere.⁴¹ A few earlier scholars⁴² believed that a Mānvēdan followed a Mānāvikraman. But

³⁸ K.V. Krishna Ayyar, ZC, p. 336.
⁴⁰ Idem, CKSL, p. 67.
⁴¹ See above, Chapter III.
⁴² For instance, Vadakkumkur Rajarajavarma Raja.
in the *Kūruvaśca* no such order is followed since it was purely a question of seniority, which was a matter of accident. Further there is evidence of a Virarāyiran’s investiture as the Zamorin after the death of a Mānavikraman in KE 841 (AD 1666).43

There is no doubt about the patronage of the scholars or poets by the Zamorins, which is corroborated by evidence, and they can be even called as court-poets. But the case of the assembly of poets called *Patineṭṭarakkavikāl*. No reference is found in any contemporary or later literary works regarding *Patineṭṭarakkavikāl* has to be reconsidered. Even in the works of those belonged to this group no reference is found. A Payyūr Paṭṭēri is described in Uddanḍa Ṣāstri’s *Kōkilasandēśa* in three *slokas*, where only nouns in the singular such as *gurōḥ, maharṣēḥ*, etc. are used.44 This indicates that he speaks only about just one Payyūr Paṭṭēri, not about nine Payyūr Paṭṭēris. It can be argued that those days the assembly of poets should not have been designated as *Patineṭṭarakkavikāl*, and that the appellation came into existence at a later period. If we accept such an argument then the question raises itself as to when that practice started. Except for the so-called tradition, no reference is found even in the later sources. It is futile to search for it in the *Granthavari* as well as in foreign accounts for such a reference, because the purpose of those sources is entirely different. In the case of *Granthavari* no document prior to KE 700 (AD 1525) is also available to us. It is curious that even in the collection of tradition called *Kēralōṭpattī* no reference to *Patineṭṭarakkavikāl* is found. It is disturbing to see such a silence in the literature of later period. Even after a total absence of evidence, how *Patineṭṭarakkavikāl* became a part of our history is an intriguing question.

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This tradition was first reported in the early 20th century. In AD 1907 an anonymous author wrote that the scholars who received a kili (purse of money) from the Zamorin for Paṭṭattānam were his courtiers and were called Patineṭṭarakkavikal by the older generation (Paḷamakkār). He refers to the 19 scholars or poets as Patineṭṭarakkavikal. Following this started the exercise of finding relationship with these 19 scholars and “Mānavikrama the great”. Scholars have discussed more on the etymology of the term than on the historicity which was taken for granted, though a few scholars expressed their doubts. Collating the names of many poets and scholars who lived in different generations and constructing an assembly of poets such as Navaratnas, Astadiggajas, etc. is an oft-repeated practice in India. It presents the rulers as great patrons of literature and the fine arts, what the cultivated patrons are expected to do. It is well known that the Zamorins sought legitimacy through a series of means. Was the tradition of an assembly of poets under one of the earlier Zamorin also such an attempt? Since no reference is found in the palace chronicle of the Zamorin to this effect, we cannot be affirmative in our answer. No folk literature is reported so far on this tradition. Since the tradition is not reported anywhere else, but by the anonymous author for the first time, it is likely that this tradition is a later invention, perhaps by the anonymous author himself, on behalf of the old generation. Thus the lore about the Patineṭṭarakkavikal is at best an “invented tradition”.


Literature and royalty

Whether the tradition of an assembly of eighteen or nineteen poets is valid or not, it is a fact that many literary works were composed during the period of the Zamorins. That the Zamorins had patronised scholars is evident from references in the literary works and scholarly assembly like *Pattattānam*. A survey of literary works is not intended here; earlier scholars have already done that. The nature of the relationship between the royalty and the poets or the scholars and the picture of the royalty in the works are sought to study here.

The patron-protégé relationship is evident in the literary works. Dāmōdara Bhaṭṭa wrote the play *Vasumatīmānnavikrama* at the instance of the Zamorin, the hero of the play being the king himself. From the prologue of the play it is clear that Mānāvikrama Zamorin patronised Dāmōdara Bhaṭṭa from childhood onwards. There are a few poets/scholars who say that they composed their work due to the inspiration of the Zamorin. The commentator of *Vṛttaratnakara* called *Kavicintāmaṇi* (who is believed to be one Karuṇākaraṇa) says that he composed the work on the order of the Zamorin. Another Karuṇākaraṇa, in his commentary on *Bhōja Campu* also states that he wrote the commentary as directed by the

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49 K.T. Madhavan, *Vasumatīmānnavikrama of Dāmōdara Bhaṭṭa*, p. 56.


Many poets have composed verses in praise of the Zamorin. This sort of eulogy is found in the literary works as well as in single verses (ślokaś). Many of these stereotyped descriptions of the king constitute a part of the court lore of the Zamorin. A few of the ślokaś are typical of the image projected by the Zamorins themselves and are taken up here for a discussion. In Bhramarasandēśa the Māṇavikrama Zamorin is hailed as follows: Vikrama, the king, excelled by his prowess, who is capable of opposing the sea with his own forces and who conquered the world, who is praised among the ladies of various places, who kills the wicked, stood in state at the Māghōtsava. A Malayalam verse believed to be composed by Punam Nampūthiri also expresses a similar idea. About the Māṇavēda Zamorin the following description is given by Nārāyaṇa Pancīta in the

52. "Ittham narēndravacanāṁrita pānatripta-
citīō bhavannāṃvitādāraṇīya śīlāh
śrī Bhōjarājakrita campu mahāprabandha-
bhāva prabōdhanakrīte sucīram yatēyanī", Vid, p. 178.

53. "Śrīmanuuddāṇḍa vidvan śrīnu vacananidam māmakam kāmadgoddhri
vāpi nāṁyasi iśanu parīsadīyat jagrati vaṅgīlāśe
tasmādāhnaṁyā samyak prakaraṇamūtalam mālikāṃmāruṭākhyam


55. "Yasmin vismāṇita bhujalā bhakramō vikramakṣmā-
bhandhūsindhu pratisbhaṭacamucakra vikrāntulōkāh
nāṁ dēśōccalita sumanōvrdhā padaṇḍadāta-

56. "Tārāntanvākāṭsāḍācāla madhupakūṭārāṁ māṁjanāṁ
nirālāṁbhāṅgam, vairākāra niṅkaratāṁmāṇḍalī caṇḍabhāṅgā
treitāvātā līyāṁ tōtkuṭri kalayākkunnumēśā kulīkkum
nērattinippupam vikramanirvāra, dhāra hanta kalpāntatōyē", K. Kunjunni Raja, 'Māṇavikramanre kālam', in Mangajodayam, Vol. 19, No. 12, p. 637.

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Mēya portion of Mānamēyōdaya. In this universe whose fame is not measurable, the command of whom the group of kings obediently fulfils, who is excellent in drama, logic and poetry and a grammarian, one who is a devotee of Viṣṇu that Mānavēda is reigning the kingdom.57

Another individual ślokā believed to be composed by Uddana also praises a Zamorin as a great scholar.58 In another verse Uddanda praised a Vikrama likening him to the rain clouds of the floods that extinguish the heat of the valour of enemy kings and wishing longevity to the king.59 It is believed that the following was said when Uddanda was introduced to the Zamorin. The flagstaff of the king in his marches of victory is soaring so high that it passes even the sun and that the tiger sign of the flag drives away the deer on the moon enabling it to vie with the faces of the ladies of the harem and that the king may ward off this possibility.60 The above eulogies highlight the valour and prowess of the king, the protection of good and punishment of wicked, the scholarship of the king and the

57 “Yatākritirmahī hanta mātī mahatī brahmaṁdaṇḍabhaṇḍōdarē
yasyōjānṃ prapataiḥ śirobhiranīśam ṛhatē nrīpāṇāṃ gāpah
sōyam nātaṅkatarkkā kāvyāṇpruṇah prakhyāṭaṅtaṇjātī

58 “Nṛityasuddhājati karagasta dāmaruka dūmeḍuṃ paturava paripanthyāḥ
kalpakṣmāruḥ vikasita kusuṃja madhurasa madhurima sahacārīṇyāḥ
mahbhaṃ₂ṣmāḥara vimāthita jalanidihi ghunughumu ghanarava madamanthyāḥ
śailābhiḥśvara nrīpavara vidhadaṭu budhasukhamayi iṣv vacamsām śrēṇyāḥ”. K. Kunjunni Raja, CKSL, p. 79. A verse in Malayalam believed to be composed by Punam Namputiri also hails a Zamorin as a great scholar. Idem, “Mānavikramanaṃ kālaṃ”, in Mangalodayam, Vol. 19, No. 12, p. 635.

59 “Pratyarthi bhūṃjīḷa pratāpakharmothapuṣkalāvarta

60 “Uddandaḥ paraṇḍaṇḍabhairava bhavadyāṭrāṣu jaitraśrīyō
bētuḥ kēṭuraṭiṣa sūryasaranīṃ gaṭchān niṇyaṃstaṭvā
deī talpatasambṣṭalaldālaśaṣṭhārddīla mudradravasa-
tārangam śaśibimbamēṣyaitulān iṣva prēyaśitaṃ mukhaiḥ”. Ibid., pp. 25-26.
allegiance of minor kings to him. This image of the king constructed by the court poets is a part of the court culture.

There are literary works which deal with the story, real or imagined, of the Zamorins. In this category Vasumatīmāṇāvikrama of Dāmodara Bhaṭṭa is most significant. The theme of this Sanskrit drama is the love and marriage of Māṇāvikrama and Vasumati, the adopted child of his minister Mantragupta. The work is a stereotypical Sanskrit play with little relation to reality.\(^6\) Even then it is interesting to note the plot of the play to get insights on the patron-protégé relationship and projection of a minor king as a dhīrōdāttā type of hero. The theme of the play is as follows:

Māṇāvikrama Zamorin was a most outstanding ruler. He ruled the country to the utmost satisfaction of his people. He was the seat of all virtues and a patron and promoter of knowledge. Māṇāvikrama led the life of an ideal husband. His wife Śrīmatī, the queen, shared his pleasures and sorrows.

King Māṇāvikrama, on an expedition, destroys the kingdom of Mahārāṣṭra with the help of his minister Mantragupta. The king of Mahārāṣṭra and his relatives are killed. The young daughter of the Mahārāṣṭra king, princess Vasumati, alone is left in her royal palace. Mantragupta, who led the campaign, brings her to his mansion and looks after her with all warmth of affection which a childless man can feel. An anchorite Bhadracāṇḍika, who resides near the mansion of the minister, shows motherly affection for Vasumati. The anchorite gives a Mañjari, a bunch of Kalpaka flowers of marvellous powers, to Vasumati for protecting herself from all sorts of dangers. Vasumati is marvellously beautiful and desires to marry king Māṇāvikrama. Both Vasumati and the king meet each other first in a dream and then in person with the help of Bhadracāṇḍika. They fall in love. The queen Śrīmati becomes furious of the new development and tries to detract the mind of her husband. On failure she resolves to put an end to her life and goes fervently to the mountain Kṛḍāśaila. The king and her attendants try to pacify her and request her to give up the terrible decision.

By this time a Rākṣasa (demon) who has already seen Vasumati comes to Calicut accompanied by his wife Rudhirakhaṇṭhi. The demon desires to marry Vasumati. Rudhirakhaṇṭhi helps him to fulfil his husbands desire to marry Vasumati. She enters the body of the queen and enrages her. The furious queen tries to commit suicide. The accidental fall of Mañjari upon the queen brings her

to the normal nature. Immediately the queen requests her husband to save the citizens who have gone to put an end to their lives thinking that they lost their king and queen. Now the king takes speedy steps to save Mantragupta and others.

On failure of his wife’s plan the Rākṣasa abducts Vasumati in the night. On the way he meets another Rākṣasa who has also a desire in Vasumati. Placing Vasumati safely on a rock in the dense forest of Citrasāṇu mountain he goes to fight with the rival and both of them smash each other. Hearing the news of abduction of Vasumati, Mānnavikrama goes in search of her to the woods of Citrasāṇu. There he sees Vasumati sitting on a rock. Bhadracandika and her desciple also arrive there. After a while all of them return to their respective places. Knowing the details of Vasumati and hearing the requests from Bhadracandika the queen Śrīmāti is very happy to receive Vasumati as her co-wife. She happily takes the hands of Vasumati and puts them upon the hands of king Mānnavikrama happily.⁶²

The following things can be stated on the drama.

1. It is stated that the Zamorin sent an expedition to Mahārāṣṭra and devastated the kingdom. Except the princess all others were killed. It is a stereotypical picture. It is also possible that the prevailing idea in the high society under the Zamorins did not find fault in devastating a kingdom and killing the rulers. The policy of aggrandisement of the Zamorin may have been reflected or justified in it.

2. Due to the nature of succession followed by the royal house of the Zamorin when a prince made into the apex of the hierarchy, he was of an old age and not a youth. But the play does not consider such anomaly when it speaks of Vasumati’s love to the Zamorin.

3. In the high-society polygamy was prevalent during the medieval period and so a second marriage should not have created any problem. But we are not certain whether the Zamorin followed monogamy or polygamy.⁶³

4. The attempt of the people to kill themselves thinking that they lost their king and queen is also a stereotypical construction. But it is also possible that the prevalent idea of loyalty is expressed in it.

5. Though the drama is fictional, presenting the Zamorin as a dhīrōdāṭṭā type of classical Sanskrit drama itself has significance. It is a way of adorning a minor king with the make up of a great emperor.

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⁶³ Pyrard of Laval says about a Zamorin, “He has but one wife, like, the other Brameny Nairs”. Albert Gray, Ed., The Voyage of Francois Pyrard of Laval, Vol. I, p. 409.
6. The concluding *slōka* of the drama is as follows: “As long as Lord Viṣṇu is eager to have the heartbeat of Goddess Lakṣmi, God Brahma is afflicted with the love pangs of Goddess Sarasvati and God Śiva embraces Goddess Pārvati, may the king Mānavikrama rule and lead the country from prosperity to prosperity”.

Another similar work is the *Lakṣmīmāṇavēdam* of Cidambara Kavi. Paraśurāma as the high priest unites Mānavēda Zamorin in marriage with Rājyalakṣmi, the Goddess of kingdom, who is the daughter of Samudra Rāja or the king of ocean. The description of the Zamorin as the “husband” of Rājyalakṣmi or the prosperity of the kingdom is important, particularly as this prosperity itself is presented as emerging from the Ocean. It is well known that the kingdom of the Zamorins owed its sustenance to seaborne trade, a point suggested by another court poet, Uddanḍa. Among those who take part in the ceremony is Goddess Nīla (Pērār). The drama seems to be a poetical expression of the prevailing tradition. According to the *Keralotpatti* tradition Paraśurāma granted the land of Kerala to the Brahmans, they appointed Perumāḷs and the last Perumāḷ partitioned it among his relatives and friends including the Zamorin. Making short this line as Paraśurāma and Zamorin seems to be an adaptation of this legend. Rājyalakṣmi is stated as the daughter of Samudra Rāja that is a metaphor found in *Kōkilasandēṣa* also. That the Zamorin called as Samudragiri Rāja is also of importance here. The mention of Nīla, the river, is very significant including the performance of many ceremonies on its banks.

During the 17th century Rudradasa, a protégé of Manaveda, composed a play in Prākrit called *Candralekhashaṭṭaka* (also called

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Manavedacarita). It deals with the marriage of Mānavēda with Candralēkha, the princess of Anga.67

The Zamorins patronised other works of poetry as well. According to tradition Mullappaḷḷi Nampūtiri and Cēnناس Nampūtiri were once punished by the Zamorin for composing some verses which were not very complimentary. He ordered that at the next Paṭṭuttānam, Mullappaḷḷi should be awarded the tānam before the opening of the Sabha, an unbearable humiliation for a scholar, and Cēnناس should produce an original work on Tantra sāstra. It is said that this resulted in the composition of Tantra samuccaya.68 Even if the tradition is not true, it is significant if it was prevalent in that period. It implies king’s right over the scholars and ultimately control of scholarship.

The above discussion gives us a clear picture of the patronage of high culture by the Zamorin. Art forms were utilised to create and propagate the environment of loyalty and devotion. By patronising the scholars the ideological control of the society is intended to achieve. The poets supported by the Zamorin created a dhīrōḍāṭṭā type of image in their works and helped in the making of the larger than life image of the Zamorin. This patron-protégé relationship is important in the development of a court-culture in the kingdom of Kōḷikkōṭu.

History

A few works, which can be described to belong to the genre of history, may be taken up here. It is not our contention that the Zamorins patronised the “discipline” of history in the “academic” sense; what was done was to commission

68 K.V. Krishna Ayyar, ZC, p. 301.
and use history for purposes of building up a particular picture of the dynasty, and individual rulers there. One aspect of the history of this period, which has not received adequate attention of earlier scholars, is the way in which images of the past were pressed into service as an apparatus of legitimation. Least of all has this been considered in the case of the Zamorins.

Three different genres of the family history of the Zamorins have come down to us, each expressed in a different mode and produced at different points in time. They are the narrative of Kerala history, originating and passing down as oral tradition and then getting reduced to writing as a text called Kēralōtpatti, the panegyric poem called Kēralōtpatti Kīlippāṭṭu and the family history recorded by the Zamorin or his functionaries in reply to queries of Colin Mackenzie in AD 1810. All the above versions share a common tradition, but vary in details, mode of presentation and perhaps their purposes.

a) Kēralōtpatti

The tradition spread throughout Kerala in different versions narrates the creation of the land from the sea by Paraśurāma known as Kerala and the subsequent social and political developments. There are different versions, each with a particular medieval principality as the centre of gravity. All the versions of the tradition are similar in its narrative till the partition of Kerala by the Cēramān Perumāl. The shift is in the last part where the history of different Svarūpams is taken up, obviously with a view to project a particular Svarūpam. There is a whole version devoted exclusively to the fortunes of the Neṭiyirippu Svarūpam, the house

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of the Zamorins, for the post-Cēramān Perumāḷ period. Significantly reference to “our Lord” (Nompate Tampurān) in this version is invariably to the Zamorin.70

The Kēralōtpatti, as mentioned above, has several versions. All of them have a more or less similar beginning. The narrative begins by the creation of the land of Kerala by Paraśurāma, the donation of the newly created land to Brahmans and the establishment of their rule in that land. Seeing this rule as a failure, the Brahmans invite kṣatriya princes from outside for twelve yearly terms and establish them as the rulers of Kerala. The last of these, known as Cēramān Perumāḷ, is said to have overstayed and, at the end of a term of 36 years, is said to have been stricken with a sense of guilt, partitioned the kingdom and disappeared to Mecca after embracing Islam. The different principalities of Kerala were, thus, donations of the last Perumāḷ. The different versions in relation to the different principalities have this common beginning. Variations start after this point.

Even before the variations start, those who were destined to become the founders of the kingdom are properly introduced. The last Perumāḷ, on the advice of Brahmans, looks for a person destined by the stars to be successful in wars and the choice falls on two Ėṟāṭī brothers, Māniccan and Vikkiran. These brothers, the choice of the Perumāḷ himself and the advice comes from the Brahmans, lead the army of the Perumāḷ to success in many battles. They are stated to have got the blessings of Ālvāncēri Tamprākkāḷ, a highly respected Brahman spiritual of Kerala, who was able to read a mysterious sign about the greatness of the brothers on the feather of vulture that was eating the carcass of a dead cow. Receiving the Tamprākkāḷ’s blessings, the Ėṟāṭis command the forces of the Perumāḷ in a war against Krisṇa Rayar of Ānekoṇṭī, obviously a situation in which absolute chronology simply collapses. In a slightly different version, these brothers are

stated to be the chiefs of Pūntuṇa and belong to the solar race. A detailed narrative of the war follows, in which the tactical and fighting abilities of the two brothers are brought out very effectively. Those who fought most valiantly were amply rewarded with the most fertile land.

The Perumāḷ finally partitioned the kingdom among his relatives and other dependents. The Ėrāṭi brothers were not present on the occasion. The Perumāḷ, curiously, forgot them. When the Ėrāṭis arrived on the scene, it was already too late. The Perumāḷ had only a small tract of land left with him. He gave them this land, control over the Qadi along with other Muslims, the right to navigate to Mecca and, most important of all, his own sword with the leave to “die or kill to annex”.

This story is significant in many ways. The Ėrāṭi brothers were “naturally” suited to the job they were selected for as the stars had foretold it. The mystery of the dead cow and the blessing of the Tamprākkal are further indication of suitability. They were valiant heroes, as the narrative of the war shows. Finally, they were specially privileged among the “successors” of the Perumāḷ as they got his own sword and his express authorization to “die or kill to annex”. The ground is well and truly prepared.

The historical tradition contained in the later portions of Kēralōṭpati in the version of Kōlikkōṭu kingdom presents the picture of an aggressive policy. Accordingly, he clashed and captured the area around Ėranāṭu. This expansion of the kingdom led to further clashes. He attacked Pōlanāṭu, Vaḷḷuvanāṭu, Cochin, Vēṇāṭu and Kōlattunāṭu.
The Zamorin came down to Panniyankara and attacked the Pörłatıiri in his own capital. The siege of the fort proved to be long and tedious. Even after forty-eight years the Pörłatıiri remained as strong as ever. So the Zamorin resorted to stratagem and won over the men and functionaries of Pörłatıiri by the promise of bribes and higher position, so much so that even the wife of Pörłatıiri was lured into betraying her husband. The gates of the fort were promptly kept open and the Zamorin entered the fort and occupied it with ease. It goes without saying that those who helped the Zamorins were appropriately rewarded. This made it possible for the Zamorin to move his residence to the newly captured territory, to the fort of Vēḻapuram in Calicut.

A similar account of the conflict with Vaḷḷuvakkōṇātīrir, to the south, follows. The Kōya of Kōḷikkōṭu, who had witnessed the Māmākam, was impressed by the prestige of the kings of the Covvaram faction, who presided over it. He told the Zamorin that he should take all this importance. But the Zamorin was not confident: it was beyond his means. The Kōya offered to secure it by force. The Zamorin agreed, promising a respectable place for the Kōya on the dais of the Māmākam. Soon the Kōya proceeded by sea and others by land to the south and subdued the nāṭus and towns, villages and temples. Before the next Māmākam they occupied Tirunāvāya. Thus the Zamorin took possession of all the rights and privileges connected with the temple and its festival. The Zamorin gave the Kōya inexhaustible wealth, conferred on him the title of Kōḷikkōṭu Kōya and gave him the right to stand on his right side on the dais of the Māmākam festival. It follows that the suicide squads (cāvēr) of Āṟañṇōṭṭu Svarūpam (the royal house of Vaḷḷuvakkōṇātīrir) try to avenge this humiliation from that day on. Netiyirippu became suzerains of Āṟañṇōṭṭu that day and the march of the former, conquering town and country, goes on. None can stop this.
The *Kēralōtpatti* narrates the conflict between the Zamorin and the Portuguese as well. The Portuguese had started their trade by building a fort at Calicut. They attacked Calicut when all the important persons except Tinayaṅcēri Iḷayatu were out of station. Iḷayatu sought the help of Kurumpiyāṭiri *Svarūpam*. With their support the Portuguese were defeated and they were evacuated from the fort at Calicut.

Likewise the *Kēralōtpatti* speaks of the conflict between Calicut and Cochin, on a rather silly issue, which led to the ultimate demolition of the fortifications in Cochin by the Zamorin. So also, there is a vivid description of his advance upto Uṭayanāṭu beyond Ālappuḷa and Kārttiṇappalḷi, where the king of Vēṇāṭu submitted to the Zamorin and acknowledged his suzerainty. The *Kēralōtpatti* makes a similar claim about the Zamorin’s fight with Kōlattiri in the north, at the end of which the right of overlordship of the temple of Taḷipparāmpa was conceded to him.

It hardly needs any emphasis that what are presented, as history in these accounts is particularly manufactured images of the past. These images are of such a nature that they could together constitute a secure and usable past for the kingdom and the dynasty which presided over it. Among the most important aspects of this past of the dynasty were the heroism and heroic qualities of the ancestors. Another aspect is the way in which the Zamorins would reward those who supported them. The picture is that of a “universal emperor”, as it were, with all other rulers in Kerala paying allegiance to him.
b) “Kēralōtpatti” Kilippāṭṭu

Another specimen of “historical” writing is contained in a narrative poem, which the publisher in the early 20th century has chosen to call the Kēralōtpatti Kilippāṭṭu. It was composed in the second half of AD 17th century and follows a narratological technique called Kilippāṭṭu, which had by then become fashionable in Kerala, of putting the story into the mouth of a parrot. As Velcheru Narayana Rao, et al. have said, each community writes history in the mode that is dominant in its own literary practice. The poem recounts the history of the family of the Zamorin and, more particularly, gives a eulogistic account of the Zamorin who began his reign in AD 1684. The poet identifies himself as a member of the Brahman family of Kāṭaṅcēri and a protégé of the Zamorin. The poem begins with the inevitable Paraśurāma story and goes on to the beginning of the kingdom of Kōlīkkōṭu following the donation of the Cēramān Perumāḻ. Here it is the Perumāḻ himself who confers on the Zamorin the right to preside over the Māmākam. The contestary relationship between the Zamorin and the rulers of Vaḷḷuvaṉāṭu, and the brahmanical factions that they espoused, are explained as the jealousy or peevishness of the one over what the other got.

A detailed description of the way in which the city of Calicut was built, with no stereotypical detail wanting, follows. The Zamorins ruled for generations with no enemies and with all the paraphernalia of court, royal insignia, retinue and the womenfolk. The narrative really begins with the accession of the hero, the Zamorin who was born on the asterism of Bharāṇi. The stage is prepared by giving stories of his ancestors who had performed various rituals and ceremonies, captured different towns and forts and thus established themselves firmly as strong

72 Velcheru Narayana Rao, et al., Textures of Time: Writing History in South India 1600-1800, p. 5.
monarchs. The poet’s hero was anointed in AD 1684 (the date is given in Kollam Era). Everything was in order, the country prosperous and the enemies fear-stricken during the reign of the Zamorin. He visits the Neṭuvirippil Mūṭta Kōvil, who was in her deathbed at Calicut. He performs her last rites upon her death and performs several other rituals such as mahāmrityunjaya japam at Tirunāvāya. He enters into a treaty with the Dutch and goes on to capture the Ceṟaḷayam fort. Then the parrot narrates the festival of Taippūyam in KE 868 (AD 1693). A detailed account of the festival of Taippūyam follows. Only the Zamorin who had died in Triśṣūr long ago equalled this ruler in qualities. The personal qualities of the Zamorin are celebrated. In fact, the poet indulges in such hyperbole that people gave up the worship of gods and started treating themselves lucky that they were living in the age of this Zamorin.

The details of the Māmākam of KE 869 (AD 1694) and also in the next year are narrated vividly in the poem. This is the most detailed part of the poem, so much so that some scholars, including K.V. Krishna Ayyar, have chosen to call the poem itself as the Māmākam Kīḷippāṭṭu. The preparation for the Māmākam here corresponds in details with the description of it in the Granthavari. The Zamorin surveys the venue of the Māmākam from the balcony of the Kōvilakam. The elaborate accounts of the preparation are followed by even more elaborate accounts of the festival itself. It is a combination of details that we know otherwise from the sources and flights of romance typical of court poetry. The poem, however, ends abruptly and what we have is an incomplete text.

This poem is extremely significant from the point of view of a ruler seeking legitimacy through various means. No detail of the image of a typical king, as one

73 K.V. Krishna Ayyar, ZC, pp. 118, 331.
74 KG, Vol. 2.
that might have been taken from the medieval Sanskrit texts such as kāvyās, nātakas and dharmaśāstras, is left out in this poem. In order to sharpen the contours of such an image, the poet uses details from the past. This past is of the ancestors of the rulers, real or imagined. So also, in claiming military glory to the patron, the poet uses events from the recent past. The ruler is invariably presented as a patron of religious ceremonies and as presiding over a festival of great pomp and pageantry. He was a paragon of virtues and of an attractive mien. He was himself very cultivated and patronaged cultural activities in his kingdom. All in all, this work, with the Neṭiyirippu version of Kēralōppatti, can be looked at as a typical instance of history being a way in which the present looks at its past, not so much as satisfying some idle curiosity but to serve a specific purpose.

c) The family history send to Colin Mackenzie

There is another way in which the Zamorins wanted to look at their past. This is expressed in the depositions given to Colin Mackenzie in the beginning of the 19th century,\textsuperscript{75} long after the rule of the Zamorins came to an end. This seeks to recapture the past glories of the Zamorins from the ubiquitous Perumāḷ till they lost power following the Mysorean depredations. It says that documents had been lost and that whatever statements it makes are based on traditions handed down from the generation to generation. What is of interest to us is that such traditions existed and that their uses underwent a substantial change by the time the Zamorins became mere pensioners under the colonial regime. History becomes a means to sigh over past glories. Whether those glories really existed or were merely conjured up is another matter.

\textsuperscript{75} AG, Vol. 53; see also, Krishna Ayyar, ZC, pp. 67-69; N.M. Nampoothiry, SCK, pp. 20-27.
This discussion brings out interesting details. For one thing, the Zamorins are seen patronising cultural activities, more particularly what is described as the high culture. By addressing those sections of society, whose culture the Zamorins were patronising, they were obviously coming to terms with such sections which mattered in the power structure. Temples were an important arena there. Not only did they visit them and preside over activities there, they also adopted some of them as their own, as it were. This had a very positive effect particularly in terms of his social and ritual status in the “caste” society that had come to be established in medieval Kerala. More important, however, were the patronage extended to *Krispanattam*, which has come to be known as an exclusive “Zamorin art” and the inauguration and continuance of the *Pattattanam* of Taḷi temple. Patronage of literature goes beyond the ordinary sense of the term. Most of what has come down to us is the court literature and this, it needs no special emphasis, served the purpose of lending the necessary legitimacy to the ruler. The most important aspect about the patronage of culture is perhaps the use to which historiography was put. On the whole, we see that the Zamorin fitted the bill to be a stereotypical ruler of the medieval Indian type with all the details present there.