DEATH AND FUNERAL RITES

CHAPTER 3
DEATH AND FUNERAL RITES

The fear of the dead and the precautions taken through funeral rites against the return of the spirit of the dead are universal. Both anthropologists and archaeologists study about death, funeral rites and grave goods to reconstruct the contemporary social structure. Malinovsky, who widely studied various cultures of the world, suggests that there are two conflicting attitudes towards the dead: “death shakes the moral life of the society and public ceremonials are required to restore the cohesion of the group”.¹ V.A. Alekshin, the well known archaeologist, points out two fundamental components of funerary practices: “the first of these is ritual—the activities sanctioned by tradition that occur before, during, and after the burial and are considered essential to the transfer to the other world of deceased members of the community, both those forming its nucleus and others related by blood. The second characterizes the social position of the departed. It consists of the collection of material elements—the burial structure, the assemblage of grave goods, and the position of the deceased—required for a person of a particular age and sex to be transported to the other world. The combination of these two components of the burial rite makes up the standard (traditional) funerary

customs of any archaeological culture. These two fundamental components must not be considered in isolation one from the other”.

Unique and Universal traits

Death for the tribes all over the world is only a separation of the soul from the body. That is why the needs of the dead man could hardly be imagined as different from that of the living man. Human approach to death and funeral rites is universal in nature and the tribes of Malabar are no exception. This can be established by comparing their practices with those of the tribes in other parts of India as well as of the whole world. Though ethnically and culturally world tribes have many similarities, and a lot more in their funeral practices, certain striking differences can also be noticed. It is upon such varied features that we have to analyze the twin processes of death and funeral rites. Prominent among the similarities are the following:

1. Those who die of suicide or of murder or those ostracized are not buried in the same graveyard meant for the community. Certain locations are allotted for them within the graveyard or outside because their spirits are considered as dreadful.

2. Status differentiation is found in the funerals of headmen, elders/dignitaries, those who die unnatural death and of children. While the funeral ceremonies of all others are public events, those of

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children and those who die of unnatural causes are conducted swiftly and quietly and only a small section represent it. The reason might be that deaths of children are common events.

Blauner suggests that “degree of grandeur of a person’s funeral directly reflects his or her status in that society and that this, in turn, corresponds to the intensity of loss felt at the person’s death...”

3. Unmarried young women are buried after decorating their bodies with ornaments, flowers, colourful dresses etc just like brides who are decorated during the occasion of the marriage. But the custom practiced by certain tribes in Africa and Australia of subjecting the corpse of an unmarried girl for intercourse by a man is altogether absent among the tribes of Malabar.

4. Certain regional variations in death customs, particularly on the level of conservatism, are found in the funeral practices of the same tribe in different localities. For example, the practices of Kurichiyas of Wynād and Kaṇṇavam and of the Malamutthans of Vīṭṭikkunnu and Chōkkād differ considerably.

5. In funeral rites males have a privileged position, particularly the eldest son of the deceased, which evidently conveys the male-dominated or patriarchal character of the tribal social structure. Those who have no male issue to inherit him/her, are considered to

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be unfortunate. The funeral rites performed without a son has little
significance; the soul never reaches the land of the dead and it has to
keep on wandering.

6. In the case of death during pregnancy or at the time of child birth, the
tribes follow certain special rites because the spirits of such women
are dreadful and ferocious.

7. Orphans do not have any ceremonies connected with burial except in
the case of Kurichiyas of Kaṇṇavam because there would be nobody
to bear the expenditure in the case of such persons.

8. Tribes all over the world appoint specialized grave-diggers. Death for
the tribes is the re-entry into the womb of the mother (earth). So they
make comfortable graves for the deceased just like that of mother’s
womb.

9. The tribes in Malabar after completing the burial rites observe a
period of pula or pollution. Similar custom prevails among tribes all
over the world known as period of mourning.

10. All tribes consult oracles to find out the cause of death.

11. Deceased children will not have any biers to carry them to the
graveyard; they are carried in the arms by the elders.
There are certain striking differences as well and they are the following:

1. Unlike the tribes the world over, sinners or those who die of unnatural causes are not denied funeral rites in Malabar (except among the Kurichiyas and the Māvilāns) because they consider every person as equal before death. Pollution is observed for them as also the rites attached with burial but no ceremonies are conducted for them including the final funeral ceremony.

2. Unlike women and children of other tribes of the world, women and children of tribes of Malabar are not allowed to follow the funeral procession except in the case of certain tribes like Chōlanāikkans, Kāṭunāikkans, Koṟagas and Araṇādans because in olden days the graveyards were situated in thick forests far away from the settlements. They are also considered to be more susceptible to the fear of the dead. The possibility of menstrual pollution also prohibits women’s participation.

3. Unlike the other tribes of the world, the tribes in Malabar debar menstruating women from participating in funeral rites; they are treated as highly impure.

4. Unlike the other tribes of the world, the tribes of Malabar do not follow twin burial, i.e. more than one corpse buried in the same pit.
because a grave is considered to be the sole property of a single person and he is the only master of it.

5. Unlike other world tribes, burial and cremation are the two forms of disposal of the dead in Malabar today. Earlier they had practices such as abandoning or casting off the dead.

6. Unlike among tribes of other parts of the world where the role of the headman of the tribe is only nominal in funeral ceremonies, among the Malabar tribes headmen have a pre-eminent position in all functions connected with death in his hamlet. In this respect his role is the most important factor to be reckoned with in funeral practices.

Causes of Death

Owing in part to its early, sudden, and unexpected impact, primitive people have not frequently accepted the phenomenon of death as a natural and normal event. Even though it has been recognized as the ultimate fate of every man, it has quite generally been thought to originate from some blunders or oversight on the part of some and to be caused primarily by magic and sorcery. The tribal people consider the following as the various causes leading to death:

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I. Unnatural: Death caused by evil spirits\(^5\) and witchcraft belong to this category. The forces of darkness and annihilation act in mysterious ways striking terror in the hearts of people. The evil forces either strike directly at the victim or work in an indirect way through intermediaries. Generally intermediaries are sorcerers. The most prevalent form of sorcery among the tribes is \textit{odi-vidya}.\(^6\) The concept of natural death due to ageing and atrophying of human body is generally alien to the tribes. For them every death is non-natural. Frazer suggests that “there is a difference between death due to direct action of spirit, and death attributed to the indirect influence of sorcerers. If the death is caused by witchcraft, the guilty one must be found and killed, whereas, if it is brought about by the action of a demon, it cannot be avenged”.\(^7\) This faith in non-natural death is universally recognized by all the tribes. Frazer quotes Clement to give an example from North Western Australia where every illness is ascribed to the \textit{dguno}, an evil spirit otherwise known as the \textit{Warungu} or \textit{warruga}.\(^8\) In the island of \textit{Nvalso}, one of the New Hebrides, we hear of the belief firmly established in the minds of the natives that nobody dies a natural death except as a result of violence or poison or

\(^5\) Spirits of those who die a non-natural death like through suicide, murder or epidemic.

\(^6\) The sorcerers follow black magic known as \textit{Odividya}. According to tribal belief, the performer of the \textit{Odividya}, known as \textit{Odiyan}, kill his opponents after mutilating their limbs. This way of killing is known as \textit{Odichu Kollal}. All tribes attribute the death of a pregnant woman to \textit{Odividya}. The \textit{Odiyan} kills a pregnant woman or dig the grave of the buried pregnant woman and remove the foetus to make a kind of medicine for using it against his enemy.


\(^8\) Clement, “Ethnographical Notes on the Western Australian Aborigines”, \textit{Archives Internationals}, Vol. XVI, 1904, p. 8.
sorcery. The Wakelbura of South East Australia believe that no strong black would die unless someone had placed a spell on him. The Andamanese attribute a sudden death to the jungle or the sea spirit, with whom the deceased may recently had been in contact. The same belief prevails among almost all tribes of Malabar in varying degrees. It is much stronger among tribes like the Aṟaṇādans, Mudugas, Thachanādan Mūppans, Kuruṁbas, and Āḷar. The Aṟaṇādans believe that death of a person occurs only due to the malevolent activities of the spirit. When a Muduga dies of heart attack, they believe that it is caused by the odi-vidya committed by members belonging to the Pulaya, Cheruma, or Tiyya communities. The same reason is attributed to the death of a pregnant woman.

II. Death caused by the spirits of the departed: The spirits of the dead are thought to confer many benefits on the survivors if they are propitiated by their deeds or they would bring on them many evils and calamities like disease, death, etc. R.H Codrington says that for the Melanesians any sickness, that is serious, is believed to be brought about by ghosts or spirits. Kotvalia, a tribe in Gujarat believes that sickness or sudden death of either human beings or animals are caused by dead ghosts and witches. They consult

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10 Alfred W. Howitt, Native Tribes of South East Australia, London, 1904, p 471.
Bhuva (traditional priest) for help and treatment. According to tribal belief, the only solution for this unpleasant state of affairs is the proper disposal of the dead. Alar believe that they can wreak vengeance upon their opponents by propitiating the spirit of their eldest deceased Kāranavar called Kāvu which can unleash evil spirits who implicitly carry out all orders given to them in the most ruthless fashion. These evil spirits, in obedience to the sorcerers command, can kill the enemy sought to be eliminated. The Koragas and Māvilāns believe that the spirits of their ancestors have the power to move in the form of winds and kill anyone.

III. Escape of the Soul from the body: According to Bendann, tribal people sometimes attribute death to the escape of the soul from the body. Supporting Bendann, Hartland writes: “From Siberia to Australia, Pugot Sound to the islands of Eastern Archipelago, means are employed to prevent the soul from wandering and to bring it back to the body. The permanent loss of the soul means nothing more than death”. The Birhōrs of Bengal give a little water to the person who is nearing death, and then leave him alone, keeping the door wide open so that soul may have a clear passage! The family members lament loudly so that the rumble made by the soul is drowned in the

15 Told by Kethan, the Miippan of the Idimanna Alar settlement of Nilambur.
The belief of the escape of the soul from the body is more popular among tribes like the Iruḷas, Kurumbas, Mudugas and Kurichiyas. They call the soul Nikal (shadow or spirit. It is the colloquial variant of the term Nizhal). As far as the Melanesians are concerned, “the soul, Talegi or Atai, goes out of the body in some dreams, and if for some reason it does not come back, the man is found dead in the morning”.\(^{19}\) The Eravāḷans think that the soul goes out either through the mouth or the eyes whichever is open. Chōlanāikkans believe that “death occurs when the soul leaves the body in the form of air”.\(^{20}\) Kurumbas also hold the same belief. According to them death occurs when the soul escapes from the body through the mouth in the form of air. Likewise the Kurichiyas and Paṇiyas believe that uyiru or the soul leaves the body through the feet in the form of air.

**IV. Natural i.e. Will of God:** The idea of the attribution of death to the will of God is a new phenomenon in the case of tribal religion and it is brought about by the slow and steady process of external contact of the tribes with the Hindu, Christian and Muslim communities. This is a recent development as a result of acculturation. This process is more popular among agrestic communities like the Adiyāns and Paṇiyas of the plains of Wynād. In New South Wales, says Frazer John, when a native aborigine is killed in battle or is

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\(^{18}\) K.P. Bahadur, *Caste, Tribes, and Culture of India Vol. III: Bengal, Bihar and Orissa*, Delhi, 1977, p. 74

\(^{19}\) R.H. Codrington, *op. cit*, p. 266.

severely wounded that he dies or is crushed to death by the falling branch of a tree, or dies from some other visible cause, his comrades do not wonder because the manner of the death is manifest.\textsuperscript{21} In India, “when a Bhil dies, the Bhopa or witch-finder, is called in, seated on a wooden platform, and near him is placed a large earthen pot with a brass dish covering the mouth. This is beaten by two men of the tribe, who at the same time sing the funeral dirge. The spirit of the deceased is now supposed to enter the Bhopa, and through him to demand what it wants. If the man has died natural death, his spirit calls for milk, and repeats through the Bhopa the words he used just before death”.\textsuperscript{22}

V. Tracing out the cause of death: Various methods are employed by different tribes to find out the cause of death—whether it is natural or unnatural. Howitt points out such a practice of South East Australia: “Before the body was lowered into the grave, the medicine man, standing at the head, spoke to find out who caused its death, and received an answer from another medicine man at the foot of the grave”.\textsuperscript{23} The method the Gonds resort to is of a different type. “The chief mourner takes a stick, and saluting the pyre, takes the ashes. If any unburnt cloth or food articles are found, it indicates that the deceased was the victim of black magic”.\textsuperscript{24} In Malabar, the Mullakurumans,

\textsuperscript{21} Frazer John, \textit{The Aborigines of New South Wales}, Sidney, 1892, p.78.
\textsuperscript{22} W. Crook, \textit{Races of Northern India}, New Delhi, 1973, p.254.
\textsuperscript{23} Alfred. W. Howitt, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 464.
Kurichiyas and the Paṇiyas have the custom of consulting the Kömaram\textsuperscript{25} to find out the reasons for the illness of a person and his fast deteriorating health. Among the Kurichiyas, when a person is on his death bed, the Oracle is called in and through him the Malakkāri (Kurichiya goddess) is consulted. Sometimes the head of the tarawaād acts as the Oracle. The Oracle falls into a trance and Malakkāri reveals through him the real cause of the illness as also whether the person would survive or not. To find out the cause of death the Kurichiyas resort to another method. They keep a goblet of water, in a corner of one of the rooms of the main house, for the first seven days after the funeral. Every day the water is replaced after observing its level in the goblet. If the water level is found to fall, the death is thought to be unnatural. When a man is about to breathe his last, the Paṇiyas consult an Oracle. This practice is called Šāstram Nōkkal (examining the Šāstra). Two different methods are employed for this. In one of these methods, small bells are put in a winnowing basket and rocked to and fro. The tinkling of bells affects the oracle and he gets possessed. He then proclaims the nature of the illness as well as the time of death of the person. In the other method, a handful of rice is spread on the floor and counted. If the number is odd, death is certain and if it is even the person will survive. This process is repeated a specific number of times and the final verdict is pronounced as per the aggregate result. When a person is about to die, the oracle of Mullakurumans, who acts as the representative of

\textsuperscript{25} Kömaram is the Malabar equivalent of the western shaman or oracle.
their Goddess Pūthādi Bhagavathi, gets possessed and invites her to sit in the Daivappura (abode of Gods and ancestors). Putting a spouted vessel filled with water inside the shrine he propitiates the spirits of the ancestors. At last, he speaks out the secrets surrounding the illness and also the time of death of the concerned person as revealed to him.

Similarly, on the death of a person in their hamlet, the Koṟagas consult their oracle to find out why it happened. This ritual is called ‘Daivam Kayaral’. The headman of the dead person’s hamlet supported by three other headmen of neighbouring hamlets summon the spirits of the deceased ancestors with the help of the winnowing baskets called Thaduppan held in their hands. When the spirits appear, all the headmen get possessed and tremble vigorously and through them the spirits announce the true reason of the death. The Aṟaṉādans, on the seventh day after the death of a person, call their oracle (Kalladikkiiran) to ascertain the cause of the person’s death. He jingles an anklet in a winnowing basket and the dead man’s soul enters into the oracle’s body. He then announces the cause of death. This is known as Nālivekkal. The practice among the Adiyāns is that, on the day of Chemmappula (13th day of death), two persons stand in opposite directions, facing each other, carrying two arrows made of bamboo in their hands. When the Kanalādi (the ritual functioner) performs certain rites, the sharp ends of the two arrows, held by the two, bend by their own and touch together. Among the Kaṉṇavam Kurichiyas, at the second day of the funeral, the
Kāraṇavar places two brass vessels containing water before the mourners and perform a ritual called Mozhi Paṟayal (Mozhi is a kind of prayer or ritual chanting). Then, while he addresses Muthappan (the ancestor deity), the soul of the dead enters into the body of one of the mourners and he becomes possessed and speaks out the secrets behind the death.

Omens of Death

The faith in omens as prophesies of death is universal, though not much popular elsewhere as it is in Malabar.26 According to the Malabar tribal tradition, when a person is on the brink of death, certain animals or birds of the premises of the settlement, or of the nearby forest area, are believed to make certain inauspicious sounds or lamentations intermittently to inform the arrival of death. It is considered that these birds and animals are the messengers of death. Among the sounds of birds, the loud lamentations of Kālankōzhi or Collared Scops owl (*otus bakkamoena) are the most horrible. This dreadful bird, which forebodes death, is known among the tribes by various names.27 Besides, lamentations of other birds like Woodpecker28

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26 It is popular among various Hindu communities as well.
27 The Kurichiyas of Kaṟṇavam call them as ‘Muthul’, Araṇādans as Kottachāthan, Malamutthans as Kāvaḷan, Kādar as Kōṭṭan, Uṟḷi Kurumans as Kodakoḷai, Wayanādan Pathiyans as Chuttūppan, Karimpālans as Kuthichudu, Mudugas as Kōṭṭan and Gudipichāthu, Malapanikkans, Thachanādan Mūppans, Malayālar and Kajanādis as Kālankōzhi, and Kuṟduvādiyans as Kālānpakkī.
28 While the woodpecker is ‘Sekina’ for Iruḷas, Kurṟumbas and Mudugas, it is Chevina for the Kadar.
(Dinopium benghalense), Greater Coucal/Crow Pheasant\(^29\) (Centropus Sininsis), Magpie Robin\(^30\) (Copsychus Sauraris), Jungle Babbler\(^31\) (Turdoides Striatus), Brahmini Kite\(^32\) (Haliastur Indus), Asian Fairy Blue Bird\(^33\) (Irene Puella), Jungle Crow\(^34\) (Corvus Macrorhynchos) and Koyel\(^35\) (Eudynamys Scolopacea) are also omens of death. Certain sounds like the trumpeting of elephants\(^36\) (Elephas Maximus) or their blaring cry of anger and the howling of dogs\(^37\) (Canis Familiaris) are also omens of death. The crow, which is believed to be an omen of death, is also the bearer of the soul of the deceased.

We cannot find many instances of the faith in omens that may forebode death on a world scale. Frazer quotes an interesting example from the tribal practice of West Africa. The Paga people who are the natives in the interior of the Gold Coast believe that the life of a man or woman is identical with that of his crocodile, \textit{alter ego}. (They believe that human souls reside in crocodiles and hence every person will have his/her own crocodile) When he is born the

\(^{29}\) It is called \textit{Perumātti} by Kupumbas, Mudugas and Iruḷas.
\(^{30}\) Araṇādans call it as Puḷlathi.
\(^{31}\) It is \textit{Karivyakkili} for Malasar and \textit{Pottaṁtha} for Eravāḷans.
\(^{32}\) Jungle Babbler is \textit{Anth} for Chōlanāilkans, \textit{Peruthal} for Thachanādan Mūppans, \textit{Masāru Pāru} for Iruḷas.
\(^{33}\) Among the Papiyas it is popular as \textit{Pipa}.
\(^{34}\) Crow is the messenger of death for the Eravāḷans, Papiyas and Adiyāns. (Adiyāns have the belief that the direction in which the crow turns its tail down and wail, a person living in a settlement of that direction would definitely die).
\(^{35}\) Kalanādis believe that the cry of a \textit{Kuil} (Koyel) at night would bring a death.
\(^{36}\) Elephants are omens for the Cholanaikkans.
\(^{37}\) For Malayāl, Kupuḍuvādiyans, Wayanādan Kādar etc.
crocodile is born; they are ill at the same time; they die at the same time. It is said that when a man is at the point of death, one can hear at night the groaning of his crocodile. The Mewahang Rai, a tribe of East Nepal believe that if the death occurs at night, the dogs howl in a particular way because they can ‘see’ the ghost (cāp). Also a certain bird called malami cara is said to announce death by its chirping.

In Malabar, the Thachanādan Mūppsans believe that the fall of a green tree is symbolic of an imminent death in the community. An interesting belief among the Karimpālans is that the spirits of their ancestors named Pēna or Kāliyan would appear to them in their dreams to inform them of their death in advance. The professional oracles among them called Kalaśakkār, thereafter, perform a ritual to test the veracity of this information. They sprinkle a little toddy and invoke the spirits of the ancestors to guide them to arrive at the right decision. As a result, the Oracles become possessed by the spirits of the ancestors and they act as the mouthpiece of these spirits and accordingly pronounce whether the information conveyed in the dream is right or wrong. It is also important to note that though a large majority of tribes have implicit faith in omens, a few tribes like the Kāṭṭunāikkans, Korağas and Malai-Malasar have no belief in omens at all.

Offering water to the Dying Person

When a person is believed to be on the verge of death, all his kith and kin should assemble at his hamlet and remain with him until he recovers or dies. If it is certain that the death of a person is imminent, every one of his close relatives drops a little water into his mouth. The performance of this rite of administering water to the dying man by his close relatives is prevalent among tribes all over the world. The responsibility of performing this rite lies with the closest relatives of the dying person. For example, if a father or mother is on his or her deathbed and is sinking fast the sons and daughters of such a person should perform this rite. If it is the husband who is about to die, his wife performs this rite and vice versa. Nephews and nieces are to perform this rite in the case of uncles and aunts of matrilineal communities. William E. Marshall says: “when on the point of death, the last office his kin perform for the relative is to give him milk, if only a drop or two to drink”.40 Among the tribe named Keer/Kir of Madhya Pradesh when a person is dying, a family member puts milk and Ganga-jal in his mouth.41 Offerings of food and drink to the dead before burial are frequent in the lower culture; sometimes as among the Tho of Northern Tongking, they are even placed in his mouth.42

Among the Malabar tribes, in the case of the Paniyas, the Müppan or head of the clan is given precedence over the relatives in administering the last drop of water to the dying man. The close relatives of the dying man are allowed to perform this rite only after the Müppan has performed it. At the moment of death, if no close relatives are present, any member of that settlement may serve water to the dying man. In the past, the drink given at the time of death was just fresh water but now water from rice-gruel, hot water etc. are being served. According to Campbell, water is poured into the mouth of the dying to keep the spirit from coming back, now apparently to keep evil spirits from returning to the dead body. While the Kurichiyas give tender coconut water at the time of death, Paniyas and Malayālar give ordinary coconut water; but the Paniyas insist that coconut water be served in a folded plantain leaf. The Māvilāns, when they find a person who is about to breathe his last, cut a coconut and pour its water out. Mullakūrūmans give the dying man the holy water kept inside Daivappura or the Temple House. When a person’s death is imminent, Mudugas serve him with freshly prepared ragi soup. Kāṭṭunāikkans serve the dying person with curds, Kādar with black

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44 Rajalakshmi Misra, Mullakurūmbas of Kappāla, Calcutta, 1971, pp.83-91, uses the terms Daivappura and Kōyilvīdu as being used by those of Kappāla for mentioning the Temple-House but those of Wynād use only the first term. Christoph Von Furer Haimendorf, “Ethnographic Notes on Some Communities of Wynad”, The Eastern Anthropologist, Vol. VI., Sep.1952-Aug.1953, uses the term ‘god’s house’ for Daivappura. Before burial the body of a Mullakurūman is kept inside the Daivappura for sometime. Thirumukham, Pākkam and Cheriyānmal settlement have two daivappuras, one for the dead ancestors and the other for gods and goddesses. Their main gods are Pāṭhādi Daivam, the god of agriculture, cattle and children; Kūliyvan, god of climate; Kāli, goddess of epidemics and Mudiyampuli, god of marriage and hunting. Mudiyampuli is first referred by F. Fawcett, “Notes on the Rock Carving in the Edakkal Cave, Wynad”, Indian Antiquary, Vol. XXX, 1901, p.409.
tea, Malasar with milk diluted with water and Malai Malasar spiced sauce mixed with water from rice-gruel. Wayanādan Pathiyans and Wayanādan Kādar take a bowl of water mixed with basil leaves. Then they immerse a golden ring in it. This water is served to the dying person. Kaḷanādis use water in which basil leaves, flowers and rice are immersed for serving the dying man. Chōlanāikkans give the dying person water mixed with medicinal herbs and Āḷar use fresh water kept in an earthenware for this purpose. Aṟaṇādans believe that only those who are treacherously murdered by sorcerers through Odi-vidya ask for water while dying.

**Announcement of Death**

Regarding the nature of death announcement, J. Goody observes: “Death is a matter of public concern both within the settlement and beyond its boundaries. It is announced in three ways. The moment of death itself is marked by the loud wailing of women; it is these lamentations that inform the immediate neighbourhood, which consist mainly of members of the local sector of the deceased patri-clan. Later the playing of xylophones spreads the news to the whole settlement as well as to nearby parishes, and the particular tune indicates whether it is a man or woman who has died.”

45 The Oraons of Jharkhand, after the death of a person, inform people from the same clan as

well as the in-laws; the Mama and the Phupha are especially called. Among
the Maria Gonds of Madhya Pradesh, the death of a person is announced by
the beating of a drum. The tribes of Malabar also practice ritualistic wailing
in the event of death, which is a form of death announcement.

It is a commonly accepted custom among all the tribes to first inform
the news of a death, in person, to the headman. He has the right to send
emissaries to inform headmen of other settlements and close relatives living
away. But in the case of tribes like the Irulas, Mudugas, Kurumbas and
Malasar, it is a council of elders that collectively decide to choose and send of
the messengers. Only the clansmen were informed of the bereavement of a
person in the past. The reason for this was that tribes like Malamutthans,
Malappaṇikkans, Urālikurumans and Kurichiyas had followed strict rules of
pollution as practised by caste Hindus like the Nairs and Nambūthiris. As
inter-tribal marriages are becoming a common occurrence now a days, ritual
differences are slowly losing their value. There is an interesting point
regarding the number of messengers to be sent by the headman. Only groups
of even numbers like 2, 4, etc. should be chosen because, according to their
belief, odd numbers are symbols of obstacles. Normally messengers are not
sent during night time because, they believe, spirits of the dead and sorcerers

46 Abhik Ghosh, History and Culture of the Oraon tribe: Some Aspects of their Social life, New Delhi, 2003, p.137. (Mama is mother-in-law’s brother and Phupha is father’s sister)
47 K.P. Bahadur, Caste, Tribes and Culture of India: Vol. II., Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, Delhi, 1977, p.78.
48 As regards those tribes for whom headship itself doesn’t exist now or has become obsolete, such as Aṟañādans and Eravālans, this custom has already lost its relevance.
freely roam about during that time and would cause them trouble.

The headmen of some tribes like the Irulas, and Mudugas have been following certain peculiar traditions: their messengers carry a bamboo stick, a śilakkuda (cloth umbrella with a bent handle) and a knife as symbols of death.49 In the case of the Irulas, when themessengers reach a hamlet to inform death, the headman and Vandaṇi approach them and the Vandaṇi receives in hand the bamboo stick, which symbolically indicates the acceptance of the news of death by them. Afterwards, while leaving, the stick is returned to the messengers. Death in an Adiyān settlement is first informed to the Kunnu-mūppan. He in his turn communicates the matter to Karumi, Naṭṭu-mūppan, Kanalādi and the relatives of the deceased. Messengers of Kattunāikkans, Kuṇḍuvādiyans, Paṇiyas and Adiyāns also carry with them bamboo/cane sticks. Kattunāikkans carry Muddhiyam or divine stick, Paṇiya Mūppan's staff, Adiyāns Bethavadi50 and the Kuṇḍuvādiyans a cane and a knife.

According to the tradition of the Malamutthans, aged members cannot act as messengers. The nephew of the deceased should himself act as the

49 Revealed in an interview by the Mūppan and the Vandaṇi of the Irula settlement of Vayalār
messenger. Instead of carrying a stick, which is customary among a large number of tribes, they carry a towel in their armpit. The messenger is not supposed to look back once he starts the journey. The Kaḷanādis first inform a death to their headman called Kāraṇavar. The Aṟaṇādans send one or two members to other settlements to inform their clansmen. The Chōlanāikkans who live in dense forests and in natural caves called Alais, were not able in the past to inform the death to their relatives living in distant areas. Now, to inform kinsmen of distant areas they employ paid messengers. Malamutthans who live on a hill top have no right to inform the news of death to Malamutthans living on another hill. The belief is that if the norm is violated, a second death would certainly ensue. Sending two persons as messengers was compulsory among the Malappaṇikkans in early days but today only a single messenger is sent. It is also to be noted that among Malappaṇikkans a person who is ostracized is not informed about the occurrence of death within the tribe. Among the Āḷar, it was compulsory that the son of the deceased should himself inform the death to members of all other settlements, failing which no one from other settlements would attend the funeral. Due to the lack of human consideration involved in this practice, the Āḷar do not continue this practice today. Now-a-days they send two representatives to other settlements to inform about the death. In the case of Wayanādan Pathiyans, a death should

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51 After informing the eldest Kāraṇavar, the next one in rank, the Kāraṇavar-to-be, is intimated.
first be informed to the *Nālillakkār*, a group within their clan who alone are entitled by custom to inform the matter to other members of the clans.

The Karimpālans first inform a death to their head called *Kāranavar* and then to the *Changāthi* who is the officiator of the burial rituals. Karimpālans follow this ancestral code to avoid discords and clashes that may arise within the family and among clan members with regard to the nature of funeral ceremonies. The decision of the *Changāthi* is final and unquestionable. If the deceased has married daughters it is customary to inform the families of their husbands. Like the *Changāthi* of Karimpālans, the *Karmi* should officiate over death ceremonies for the Chingathān Māvilāns. So it is compulsory to inform him about the death personally. This should be done by the headman or his nephew. The Muḷjakurumans first inform their head called *Pōruṇōn* and subsequently the *Pōrāthōn*. These two dignitaries together take decisions regarding the sending of messengers to other settlements to inform the relatives of the death. The Kāṭṭunāikkans inform about a death in the tribe to their head called *Mūppan* or *Mānga* or *Kāranavar*, Valiyachan or Modali. He sends messengers with *Muddhiyam* or *Daivavadi* (divine stick) to other

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52 The office of the *Changāthi* is essential for all such deeds as the burial of the dead, feeding the kinsmen of the dead and serving toddy to ancestors and relatives. The entire Karimpālan tribe is divided into five clans or Illams—Chappili, Puthussery, Pallath, Machini and Kalla. Each clan has a Changāthi to perform the burial ceremonies who should be from outside the clan of the deceased. For e.g. the *Changāthi* of the Chappili clan can be from any one of the other four clans. *Changāthi* is selected according to the *Pattōla* or scripture and it stipulates which one of the other four tribes the *Changāthi* of one clan should be from. *Changāthi* is the chief officiator during other occasions like marriages as well.

53 *Pōruṇōn* is the first rank headman while *Pōrāthōn* is the second in rank who is to replace the first at his death.
settlements. Kāṭṭunāikkans are the most primitive, the most backward and the most deprived of all the tribes and this deprivation is reflected in their attitude to rituals and ceremonies. Normally they attach little importance to social functions.

Certain tribes like Malamutthans, Āḷar and Iruḷas had a firm belief, in the past, that messengers should first be sent to inform their masters or Janmis before passing the news of death to others. Iruḷas had Maṇṇarkad Müppil Nair, Āḷar and Malamutthans had the Raja of Nilambūr, Adiyāns had Addiga of Tirunelli, Paṇiyas had Kuppathod Nair, Thachanādan Müppans had Kalpetta Nair, Māvilāns and Karimpālans had Kāḷyaṭ Nambiar and Koṛagas had the Dhani as their lords or masters. With the disappearance of landlordism, this practice too has come to an end. Kūrichiyyas of Kaṇṇavam had believed that the Adhikāri or the Village Officer had the right to be informed first of the news like those of birth, marriage and death. If the Paṇiya Müppan dies the elders of the tribe beat a kind of drum called thudi which is symbolic of the death of the headman. Till recently the Kāṭṭunāikkans had blown a pipe to announce the death of all their tribesmen, which was called Chīnam Vili. In the past all matters dealing with death was considered as a humane service but today this too is slowly becoming a monetary service. For e.g. tribes like Chōlanāikkans make payments to their messengers. For most of the tribes, not all deaths are informed like this. In the case of those who face evil death like suicides, death by accident or
epidemics, the body has to be disposed of immediately; only the immediate relatives are informed.

**Attendance**

On receipt of the news of a death, relatives and kinsmen should compulsorily attend the ceremony. The attendance in a funeral is compulsory for kinsfolk and clansmen because the dead person would enumerate the number of attenders and may wreak vengeance upon the ones who are absent. Tribal ancestors prescribed this kind of a tradition to strengthen the bondage and spirit of cooperation among them. It had taken many days, sometimes three or four, to start the burial ceremonies in the past. Funeral was delayed in the past due to many factors. First, the arrival of the messenger imposed an obligation on the persons who received the message to attend the ceremony and it took a very long time for tribesmen, particularly the aged, to reach the hamlet of the deceased. Second, funeral ceremony could be started only after the return of the messenger. This was to ascertain that all those who were to be informed of the death had received the information. The advent of motor vehicles has now made intimation to people of distant areas much easier than before. It is compulsory that those who have been informed should attend the function. The tribes like Irujas and Kuṇḍuvādiyans have imposed certain penalty on the defaulters. If a Kuṇḍuvādiyan headman or his nephew (who should attend in his absence) fails to participate in the funeral, the headman of
the deceased man's settlement imposes a penalty of a bottle of toddy, 25 paise and betel leaves with arecanut which is customarily called 'Thettum Pizhayum'.

Among the Irulas, at least three persons including the headman from every hamlet should attend the ceremony. If any hamlet fails to do so, the headman of the deceased person's hamlet takes certain punitive measures against the offending hamlet. The members of such a hamlet are excluded thereafter from participating in social engagements. So everyone considers it imperative to avoid such a contingency. Therefore they have devised a system to deal with this problem. As soon as the representatives from other settlements reach the spot carrying the bamboo stick, the Vāndāri receives them and keeps their sticks in his custody till all the functions are over. While they return, the sticks are handed over to them. In the case of the Kādar, if the relatives who are expected to attend the funeral ceremony do not arrive even after a reasonable span of time, a committee of ten persons including the head of the hamlet is formed to review the situation arising from the non-arrival of the relatives and to decide to proceed with the funeral ceremony. In that case the committee has the responsibility to explain why such a decision had to be taken.

It is a common belief that if a husband or wife dies and the other spouse fail to attend the funeral of the deceased, then he or she would have no
claim over his or her children or property. Moreover “if a woman dies, her kin are directly concerned to see she is given a proper burial; in the case of a man’s death, the widow’s kin publicly reaffirm the rights and duties towards her”.\textsuperscript{54} Among the Gōnd and Bhūmia of Jabalpur, a messenger is sent by the deceased person’s kinsmen and affines in other villages. “It is particularly urgent that his nat relatives, his sister’s husband and the children of his father’s sisters arrive. For, the eldest of the nat relatives has to act as the master of ceremonies and has to perform certain rites after the patient’s death”.\textsuperscript{55}

**Wailing**

The first intimation of the occurrence of a death in a family is the loud lamentations by the close relatives of the deceased. The wail commonly begins just before the death. Wailing is an expression of grief common to all human beings. But in the case of the tribes it is more ritualistic than emotional. Durkheim gives the exact nature of wailing thus: “one weeps, not simply because he is sad, but because he is forced to weep. It is a ritual attitude which he is forced to adopt out of respect for custom, but which is in a measure, independent of his affective state”.\textsuperscript{56} In many cases men and women join together in wailing while in others it is confined to women. As

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{54} J. Goody, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Stephen Fuchs, *The Gond and Bhumia of Eastern Mandala*, Bombay, 1968, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edn, p. 335. The group of families which a Gond or Bhumia is in relation to affinity is called nat (relatives). Nat relatives in Gond and Bhumia society play a more important role in the wedding and funeral ceremonies.
\end{itemize}
each person approaches the hamlet, where the body lies, he/she begins the prescribed wail. "Where the funeral doesn’t take place the same day, the wailing often breaks out with fresh force on that occasion; and it is kept up for periods of varying length among different peoples—from a few hours to months or even years. Naturally in the latter case it is only certain relatives (chiefly widows of the deceased) who indulge in it, and only at stated times of the day. Widows and other relatives, among many peoples, go to wail at the grave. The wailing is renewed at certain intervals of time—on the anniversary of death, or at certain feasts, or on the occasion of the exhumation of the bones".57 The Yënadi, a tribe of Andhra Pradesh is the only exception to this common tradition: "No wailing, no weeping is prevalent among the Yenadi".58

A particular feature of tribal wailing is that the wailing is followed by eulogizing the good deeds of the deceased through songs and words. This type of wailing is known among the tribes in Malabar as *Patham Paranju Karayal*. Among the Gõnd and Bhûmia of Jabalpur, after a death "the women begin to wail and mourn, and to sing dirges, while even the men are not ashamed of showing their sorrow and of shedding some tears.59 Wailing is a common form of lamentation in connection with ceremonies at Bank Islands

at Malenesia. Among the tribes of Malabar, soon after a death, the relatives and clansmen of the deceased are transported into a frenzy of excited behaviour. They cry, wail and scream from the time of death with intervals till the disposal of the body. As each person approaches the hamlet where the body lies he/she begins to wail. The Irujas call their wailing as Varam Cholli Paṟayal. Till the final funeral ceremony, such as the Kanji-chīṟu of the Iruḷas, the Chīṟu of the Mudugas/Kuṟumbas and the Kākkappula of the Adiyāns/Paṇiyas, the wailing is kept up at intervals. For Bendann, "noise is a potent factor in driving away the ghosts". Thus wailing is practiced to ward off the evil effects which the spirits of the deceased might have upon the living.

Leor Halevi, in a recent article, has demonstrated the way the ritual of wailing underwent a transition in the Islamic society from the pre and early Islamic to the later Islamic. He writes: "Wailing for the dead, the ritual against which Khalif ‘Umar I reacted, was a dramatic form of expressing bereavement. Muslim women would scream wa rajaḍah, wa jabalah, wa ‘nqita’u zahrah, for example, meaning ‘Oh the man! Oh, the mountain! Oh the severance from the household!’ This was a poetic form, rhyming after a fashion, lamenting the separation of the beloved person from his environment. Women were widely regarded as the most talented composer of

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61 E. Bendann, op. cit, p. 78.
poetry of lament. They saw their poetry as the product of *dhikr* or memory, whose operation (*tadhakkur*) must be understood as a vigorous, wearisome and melancholic exercise in remembering the deceased, as well as the injustice of it all. Even so, the poems were not celebrated as deliberate acts of remembrance, but rather as spontaneous and improvised expressions of sorrow. This poetry, which reflects the ritual complex vividly, was often violent in its emotional force, frequently goading the tribe to avenge the killing of the beloved. Not only did women shriek and lament in ululation, they also scratched at their cheeks, drawing blood, and tore at their hair, directing their violent emotions against themselves. The ritual sometimes culminated in the tearing of the front of the garment to expose the area between the women’s breasts, as a sign of mourning. Traditionally women had wailed outdoors, during the funeral procession and at the cemetery. But increasingly, as we shall see, they were forced in these contexts to confront Muslim men who despised wailing as an ‘uncivilized’ ritual that challenged the new Islamic order”.62

Refraining from Work

During the time between the death and the funeral, it is the duty of all kinsmen and outsiders to pay their respect to the deceased by suspending their work. For the close relatives of the deceased (sons, daughters, nephews,

nieces, husbands, wives, etc.), on the other hand, refraining from work is a part of death pollution and it has to be continued till the end of the *pula*.63 Other clansmen suspend their work only on the day of the funeral. This tradition is strictly followed by the tribes in Malabar even today. An interesting practice of the Malaimalasar is that they “observe silence and refrain from work and keep on wandering on the day on which death occurs”.64 Upto very recent times the Adiyān widow/widower had to follow an exclusively puritan and insular life for a full year till the culmination of the *Kākkappula*, which marked the end of the period of pollution. Similar practices can be cited from other tribes. For instance, after a death, a Khāsi family has to undergo ‘sang’ or taboo, and during the period, no manual work can be done.65 In many communities, the day of death of any of its members is devoted to mourning and work is suspended. This practice is prevalent among the Konds of Orissa and Enadi of Andhra Pradesh.66 In Siberia “all labour in the entire settlement used to be stopped when a Koryark died until his cremation. No one went for hunting or sealing, nobody went to fetch wood, and women did no sewing”.67 Among the central Eskimo, “singing and dancing are forbidden during the first days after a death. Moreover, for three

63 The period of pollution varies from tribe to tribe but normally it is 5, 7, 9, 11, 13 or 16 days or in the case of certain others, 3 or 4 months, 1 year etc.
days, no one is allowed to work on iron, wood, bone, stone, ice, snow, leather, to empty the oil-drippings from lamps, or to clean lamps; woman may not comb their hair or wash their faces, and all sexual intercourse is forbidden. It is believed that the soul stays with the body for three days after death. During that time any violation of the tabus affects it so much with pain by way of retaliation it brings heavy snow falls, sickness and death”.

Attitude towards the Corpse

The universal attitude towards the corpse is made up of mystical and supernatural elements. Yet physical contact with it arouses a strange feeling of disgust mingled with fear. There are certain exceptions to this. According to Frazer, when a Sulka of Melanesia dies, his relatives come and sleep besides the corpse. Among the Fijians, Wilkes observes, “the female mourners kiss the corpse”. Bronislaw Malinowski depicted the feeling of the bereaved survivors in these words: “The emotions are extremely complex and even contradictory: the dominant elements, love of the dead and loathing of the corpse, passionate attachment to the personality still lingering about the body and a shuddering fear of the gruesome thing that has been left over, these two elements seem to mingle and play into each other”.

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Todas, a “corpse must never be left unattended. Keeping vigil is the duty of the female relatives, and the widow of a dead man must stay with his body constantly, not leaving it unless it is absolutely necessary for her to go out”.\(^7^2\) Among the Dieri of Australia custom insists that the relatives of the dying man should divide themselves into two groups, one comprising of his near relatives, and the other his distant ones. While those of the first group sit close to the dying person, and even after his death throw themselves on the body, those of the other group remain at some distance.\(^7^3\) Among the Mullakurumans when a mother or father dies their children sit near the head and the feet. If a husband dies, wife sits near the head and children at the feet.

After death, generally the corpse of a tribesman is allowed to remain in the place where he breathed his last. Tribes like the Kādar, Pāniyas, Mullakurumans, Ālar and Malasar later remove the dead body to the verandah. In the case of the Mullakurumans it is taken to the Daivappura. No tribe allows the dead bodies of those who commit suicide or are killed by animals or are murdered by other men to be placed inside the house or in the Daivappura as in the case of the Mullakurumans. The Kurichiyas do not allow even the body of those who died in hospitals to be brought inside the houses. As other tribes follow this tradition on account of the fear of the factors involved in unnatural deaths, the Kurichiyas and the Malamutthans of

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Viṭṭikkunnu do it in connection with the rules of pollution and they follow the practice strictly even today.

The tribes use varied terms to indicate a corpse. The term **Marippu** is the common word used by most of the tribes such as Kaḷanādis, Thachanadan Mūppans, Kuṇḍuvādiyans, Kuṛichiyas and the Paṇiyas. The Malasar, the Malamalasar, and the Ėṟavāḷans use the term **Ponam**. **Chāvu or Šāvu** is the term used by the Irulas, Mudugas, Kuṟumbas, Kādar, Wayanādan Pathiyans, Kāṭṭunāikkans, Mulḷakuṟumans and Adiyāns. **Thadi** is the term used by Chōlanāikkans, Āḷar use the word **Chammu** and **Puṇam** is the word used by Kōṟagas. The term **Śavam** is used by Malappaṇikkans, Malamutthans, Karimpālans and Malayāḷar. Kuṛichiyas consider the use of the term **Śavam** as a matter of disrespect to the corpse. Uṟalikurumans do not use any term for the corpse. In their case, the word that indicates the survivor’s relationship to the deceased person is used to denote the dead body also. Thus the corpse is father, mother, uncle, etc. because of the fear of the potent power of the corpse. For instance, “the Kiwai Papuans of British New Guinea avoid mentioning the names of the dead in particular of those who have recently died, and are feared after death. They say that to do so would be a way of calling on the ghost, who might respond to the call, and cause sickness. It would be impolite also to mention a name which might renew the sorrow and
evoke the lamentations of the kinsfolk of the departed”.\textsuperscript{74} Similarly, among the primitive aborigines of the Andaman islands, says A.R. Brown, “the names are not mentioned during the period of mourning which lasts several months. If it is necessary to refer to a dead person, he is spoken of as ‘he who is buried by the big rock’ or ‘he who is laid in the fig tree’, or otherwise mentioning the place of burial”.\textsuperscript{75}

With the exception of the Karimpālans, all other Malabar tribes place the corpse on a mat of grass or sack spread on the floor. The Karimpālans place it on a bench or desk, which may be a recent phenomenon. It is sinful for a man to die lying down on the bare floor or earth; the mother earth would be annoyed if a corpse is laid on her bare chest. This may be the reason why the relics of the dead are kept on a stone-cut pītām in megalithic burials. According to Goody, among the Lodagaa of West Africa, it is sinful for a man to die lying down, as if he were a slave with no one to take care of him, and a payment should be made to the earth-priest who provides two poles of ebony \((gaa-diospyros mespiliformis)\) with which to move the corpse.\textsuperscript{76} Among The Gōnd and Bhūmia of Jabalpur, the nat relatives lift the corpse from the cot \((katya)\) and gently place it on the floor on an old sheet spread in the corner.

\textsuperscript{75} A.R. Brown, \textit{The Andaman Islanders}, Cambridge, 1922, pp. 112-121.
\textsuperscript{76} J. Goody, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 49.
cleansed for the purpose. The eyelids of the corpse are let closed and the two fore-toes as well as the two thumbs are tied together with pieces of clothes. Instead of cloth pieces, the Koragas use the thread from the bark of Danda tree (Madar plant) to tie the thumbs and toes. It is customary for them to plant a Madar tree at each settlement for this purpose. Frazer opines that “by tying up or mutilating and maiming a corpse he simultaneously ties up or mutilates and maims the dead person’s ghost”.  

R. Browsmyth says that “the Diery of central Australia used to tie the great toes and thumbs of a corpse together to prevent the ghost from walking”. The Todas tie the two foretoes of the corpse together with black thread. E.M. Curr evaluates: “when a man dies it is a very widely-spread custom for the relations to tie up the limbs of the corpse securely, so as to prevent his coming out of the grave in the shape of a ghost”. The Malamalasar, as a practice, didn’t tie their thumbs or toes. They believe that if they tie the dead, the spirit would not be able to walk or eat. Similarly, the Pañiyas do not tie the mouth of the corpse because, they believe, the dead man would be unable to eat and chew. The Kurichiyas too didn’t tie the

77 Stephen Fuchs, op. cit., p.336.
thumbs and toes, but they have now started doing it. The Ėråvāḷans tie the mouth and head of the corpse separately.

It is important that the eyes of the corpse should be kept closed immediately after death. The Ėråvāḷans put pieces of turmeric on the eyelids to get it closed. Among the natives of Halmahere or Gilolo, a large island to the west of New Guinea, when anyone dies and his eyes remain wide open, they say that he is looking round for a companion; hence someone else will die soon. So they are always careful to weight the eyelids of a corpse, generally with a ryksdollar, in order to keep them shut”.82 Among the Gōnd and Bhūmia, when the patient has breathed his last, a near relative closes his mouth and eyes.83 In contrast to this, Akoa pigmies laid the dead body in a seated position with arms crossed over his chest and with eyes opened ‘to see the spirit’.84

Today most of the tribes in Malabar place, near the head of the corpse, a Nilavilakku or a lighted oil lamp, two pieces of a broken coconut and burning incense sticks. According to Campbell, “the origin of burning incense in religious services seems to be partly to please the guardian and partly to scare evil spirits”.85 The use of these materials is a recent development; in the

83 Stephen Fuchs, op. cit., p.336.
85 J.M. Campbell, op. cit., Vol. XXIV, September, 1895, p.262.
past they used to burn only dammer (the resin of *Canarium Strictum*)
popularly known among the tribes as *Pungila* or *Kungilyam* or *Pantham* or
*Kunthirikkam*. Besides, at the head, the Kalanadi places a cucumber;
Kattunakkans betel leaves and arecanut; Kurichiyas two pieces of coconut
with its water; and Kadar, a measuring jar full of raw rice, black tea in a tin-
cup and cooked rice in a plate: all these being placed in a large vessel. If the
deceased Kattunakkkan is a male, a lamp is lit and kept near the body along
with coconuts and beedi (local cigarettes). If the deceased is a female, beedi is
not kept. In the case of female, the offerings are placed near the head.\(^{86}\)

Among the Khasis a small basket (*Kashang*) containing pieces (*Dykhot*) of
the sacrificed animals is hung up over the head of the corpse. A dish
containing eatables and betal-nut, and a jar of water are placed near the head
of the corpse by way of offering refreshment to the spirit of the departed.\(^{87}\)

Among the Loddaga the senior mourner takes some bunches of guinea-corn-
heads (*Kagin*) from the granary and lets them fall around the dead body. He
also drops other produces of the field, *Na’angmin Bum Burezaa*, all gods’
planted things.\(^{88}\)

It is customary for certain tribes to put money on certain parts of the
body of the dead. Alar, Kurichiyas and Kuduvadiyans place twenty five

\(^{86}\) B. Bindu, *op. cit.*, p. 98.
\(^{87}\) P.R.T. Gurdon, *op. cit.*, p.133.
\(^{88}\) J. Goody, *op. cit.*, p. 78.
paise in the mouth of the corpse soon after the death. Frazer remarks: “many
people have been in the habit of supplying their dead with money or its
 equivalent to enable them to defray the expenses of the journey to the other
world”.89 The “Kakhyens of Burma put a piece of silver in the mouth of a
corpse ‘to pay ferry dues over the streams the spirit may have to cross’.90 A
rupee coin is placed in the mouth of the dead by the Ollar Gadaba of Orissa
and relatives deposit coins near it.91 Deposits of coins, particularly Roman
coins, were found in the megalithic tombs of South India along with the relics
of the dead.

Tribes have devised various means to deal with the bewilderment or
fear of untimely deaths. When a Wynadan Kurichiyan dies at night, all
clansmen sit around the body and start singing and laughing. No Kurichiyan
 should sleep or weep. The funeral song recited by them is called Nāṭṭupāṭṭu.
Among Kondakammara of Andhra Pradesh if the dead body is not disposed of
by the evening and it has to remain overnight, all the male members of the
village gather at the deceased person’s house and spend the time by singing
songs.92 Among the Akoa Pigmy if a person died at night, the deceased

193-194.
II, p. 482.
92 Jha, Readings in Tribal Culture, NewDelhi, 1982, p. 102, cited in T. Madhavamenon ed., op. cit.,
p.280.
person’s eldest son sings the death song, while an uncle responds.\textsuperscript{93} The Malayāḷar recites hymns from the Rāmāyana sitting beside the body. (Even in illiteracy, they had learnt it).

There are certain other techniques to ward off the fear of the dead. The Malamutthans of Viṭṭikkunnu have recently started the practice of drawing two circles on the floor, around the corpse, with rice and paddy respectively. Campbell reminds that “spirits fear circles, and cannot cross them”.\textsuperscript{94} And, after removing the dead body for disposal, they dig out the soil of the floor where it was allowed to rest because of the fear of pollution. Among the Adelaide tribe of the Australian aborigines, when the body is lifted upon the bier, the ground upon which the man died is dug up by wives or women related to him with their long sticks, occasionally assisted by men. A little heap of earth is thus formed, supposed to contain the ‘Wingko’, or breath that has left the body, and which this digging is intended to set free.\textsuperscript{95}

In the past, the Irulas, Kuṟumbas, Mudugas and Kādar, did not bury the dead immediately. They kept the body for three or four days. In order to prevent the body from decay, Irulas smeared turmeric paste on the corpse, while the Kādar forced large quantities of Gingelly oil down the throat of the dead person. Both the Kuṟumbas and Mudugas, immediately after death, put

\textsuperscript{93} Carleton. S. Coon, \textit{op. cit}, p. 333.
\textsuperscript{94} J.M. Campbell, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. XXV, March 1895, p 128.
the dead body seated in a yogic posture. Piles of wood and grass are lighted to
create a large fire in order to give light and to allay fears about spirits.
Campbell remarks that light and fire terrify all that is evil and this belief had
prevailed over many ancient peoples including the Persians, Greeks and the
Romans.\textsuperscript{96} Kuřumbas and Mudugas engage in singing and dancing all through
these days which are forms of spirit worship as well.

\textbf{Attachment to the Birth place}

It is the earnest desire of every tribesman to sleep in the lap of his own
homeland. Thus the funeral has to be invariably done at one’s own birthplace.
H.J. Rose, who wrote about celestial and terrestrial orientation of the dead,
says that “the dead are buried near, or in, their old homes because they are
wanted back again, in the form of babies born of women of their own clan,
tribe or family”.\textsuperscript{97} “In Malanesia”, Seligman reports, “at Kawaiawta the body
of a man who dies away from his village must be brought to his native hamlet
by his sister’s children”\textsuperscript{98}. Similarly, in Western Australia, “dying persons
especially those dying from old age, generally express an earnest desire to be
taken to their birth-place that they may die and be buried there. Parents will
point out the spot where they were born so that when they become old and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{96} J.M. Campbell, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. XXIV, January, 1895, pp. 18-19.
\item \textsuperscript{97} H.J. Rose, “Celestial and terrestrial Orientation of the Dead”, \textit{Journal of the royal
Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland}, 52, 1922, p. 127-140.
\item \textsuperscript{98} Seligman, \textit{Malenesians}, p.725, cited in E. Bendann, \textit{op. cit}, p. 207.
\end{itemize}
infirm, their children know where they wish their bodies to be disposed of". 99 Akoa Pigmyes of Australia are reported to have believed that a "person died far away from the settlement is a bad omen and this kind needs special sacrifice to appease the ancestor spirit". 100 Dalton records that among the Oraoans even when one of them dies far away from home, his relations will, if possible, sooner or later, recover the fragments of his bones, and bear them back to the village, to be deposited with the ashes of his ancestors. 101

It is customary for all tribes of Malabar, except the Kāṭṭunāikkans and Úraḷikuṟumans, to conduct the funeral ceremony of the deceased persons of their settlements in their own hamlets though they may have been buried elsewhere. For this the inhabitants of the settlement must receive concrete proof of their death outside their hamlet. On the reaching of the report of the death of a man away from his hamlet his close agnatic kinsmen leave to find out the truth. If the corpse is in a good condition they bring it with them and bury it in his/her native settlement. If this is not possible, may be due to the distance or the bad condition of the body (for instance, if death occurred because of the attack of wild animals), the burial service is celebrated first at the place of death and later at one's own settlement. The case of the Kāṭṭunāikkans is that if one dies at a far off place, the disposal and all the funeral ceremonies are done at that place itself. In the case of the

100 Carleton S. Coon, *op. cit.*, p. 332.
Úralikuṟumans when a man dies away from the settlement, three dignitaries from the deceased person’s settlement go there and perform the funeral rites, Daivam Kāṇal, etc. The burial of a married woman is conducted at her husband’s graveyard with the consent of her relatives and headman.

An interesting story about a Chōlanāikkans’s love for his abode is told by an informant. A Chōlanāikkans named Chellan who was a native of Meenmutty Alai, had come to stay in a cottage allotted to the Chōlanāikkans by the government at Mānchēry. He lost one of his legs in an encounter with a wild boar. When he was seriously ill, he abandoned the Mānchēry settlement and reached Meenmutty Alai which is in the dense jungle and far away from Mānchēry. In this miserable condition, he spent three days there and then died.

**Bier-making**

For most of the tribes of Malabar, the graveyards are situated away from their hamlets and hence, the dead body has to be transported to the spot through an inhospitable terrain. It cannot be safely carried to this place by a single person or two; group effort is required. It also presupposes the necessity of some device to reduce the strain of carrying a corpse through a

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102 In certain ritual functions or occasions like the last rites, disease, etc their priest Bijakkālan summons the ancestor-souls.
103 V. P. Moinkutty is the agent of the Nilambūr Tribal Cooperative Society at Mānchēry Chōlanāikkkan hamlet.
104 *Alais* are caves or natural rock shelters where they live even today.
difficult terrain. To enable two or more members to carry it, they prepare biers. From the ritual point of view as the corpse is polluting, people avoid physical contacts with it. Moreover, the sight of the corpse itself is fearful; it is needless to say that touching it generates even greater fright. On the morning of the funeral day a bier is prepared by expert bier-makers of the settlement. The method of bier making and its name varies from tribe to tribe. But the stuff used for its preparation in most cases are bamboo poles and bamboo sticks and in certain cases, wooden poles.

The bamboo bier used by the Adiyāns and the Malamutthans of Vittikkunnu are known as Kaṭṭil. They take two long bamboo poles and place them on the ground parallel to each other. Then these poles are connected with strong fiber strings at equal intervals. It has the appearance of an improvised stretcher made of bamboo poles and stretched strings. It is customary that two Karumis with knives send by the Nāṭtu-mūppan should collect and bring the required wood/bamboos to make the bier. The Chōlanāikkans, Malayālar, Malappaṇikkans, Thachanādan Mūppans, Karimpālans, Paṇiyas and Mulḷakurūmans prepare bamboo biers which look like ladders. The Chōlanāikkans, Kuṇduvādiyans, Kājanādis, Mulḷakurūmans, Wayanādan Pathiyans and Paṇiyas call this bier as Thandu or Athippēri. The Koṟagas call the bier Bhadru, the Malayālar and Thachanādan Mūppans Paṟam and Malappaṇikkans Paricha. For the Wayanādan Pathiyans, the bamboo stretcher is known as Padam. The Māvilāns used to make the
wooden stretcher with two poles of a tree named *Maruthu* (*Terminalia Alatha*).

The Malamutthans of Viṭṭikkunnu still follow the tradition that if a person dies while lying on a bamboo screen he has to be taken to the graveyard on the same screen folded round and fixed on to two wooden poles of *Punnamaram* (*Indian Laurel tree*) with the help of the vines of the *Kayyōna*. In the case of the Paṇiyas, the bamboo for the bier has to be first cut by their headmen. In the first half of the twentieth century, A. Aiyappan had observed that a Paṇiya bier is made of banana stems, two pieces about eight feet length, and seven short bits about eighteen inches in length serving as cross pieces. This clearly indicates the changes that have been taking place in their funeral practices. Recently the Malappaṇikkans, instead of preparing the bier, the ritual significance of which is slowly disappearing among them, has started using benches for transporting the corpse. In former days Thachanādan Müppans had not allowed outsiders to prepare the *Paṟam* but today no such restrictions exist. Today, they along with the Karimpālans, use coffins made of *Pāla* tree (*Alstonia Scholaris*), *Murikku* (*Erythrina Indica*) etc. instead of biers. The Kūṟiĉhiyas of Wynād make bamboo biers only for their headman or Kāṟaṇavaṟ while for other members, like the Kūṟiĉhiyas of Kāṟṇavam, they use a ladder like stretcher called *Thandum Nārum*. They

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prepare their bier with two poles of *Pottiambi* and from its bark they make three long fibre strings which are then used to make a ladder-like stretcher.

The Wayanadan Kadar use the bamboo stretcher made from two bamboo poles on which a wooden plank is fixed. Ālar make their stretcher with the help of two bamboo poles with bamboo sticks arranged in ‘V’ shape between them. The stretcher called *Satpaibadi* of the Kāṭṭunāikkans is made with bamboo stems and wild creepers. Bamboo pieces are tied vertically and horizontally with creepers to get the appearance of a stretcher. Among them custom insists that the headman himself has to cut the bamboo poles needed for bier making.

An interesting tradition is followed by the Üralikurumans in preparing bier which they call *Kalukāyal*. Experts are appointed for collecting particularly tall bamboos with curved tips. Such bamboos are extremely rare. If an extra-ordinarily tall bamboo with a curved tip is found and a bier is made out of it for a dead person, such a person is believed to have been fortunate. He is deemed to have had a long fruitful existence and to have completed a full life cycle. On the other hand dead persons who have had to use biers made of ordinary bamboos are presumed to have had incomplete lives and premature deaths. The bamboo selected by the expert is cut into two long pieces and nine splints are also taken from it. The two poles are tied by
strings made from the fibers of a vine called *Kivirikalai*. The bamboo nodes are cut off before the preparation of the bier.

Among the Kaṇṇavam Kuṟiṇiyas, when a death is confirmed to have taken place, the kinsmen immediately throw a sickle out of the house which is symbolic of the occurrence of pollution. Those who stand outside the house at that time will have to take the sickle thrown from the house and go for collecting stem and fibre for making the bier. This process is known as the collecting of *Thandum Nārum*. It is a tradition among them that the first splint of wood cut is collected and kept in the lap of the wood cutter.¹⁰⁶

The tribes of Aṭṭappādi and Paṟambikulam make particular type of decorated biers like those of the Todas, Badagas and Kottas of the Nilgiris which anthropologists call funeral cars. Clement. W. Meighan gives a description of the funeral car thus: "The use of a funeral car is a custom which has a somewhat wider distribution. The term ‘car’ is actually a misnomer, since the funeral car is in no sense a vehicle of transportation. Instead, it is merely an elaborate structure in which the corpse lies in state before it is cremated or buried. The corpse is transported to the funeral car on a cot or litter, and is laid at the bottom of the car. The car is decorated with ribbons and sometimes with belongings of the deceased and is dismembered by the

assembled crowd before the disposal of the body”.\textsuperscript{107} The Kotas of the Nilgiris have an elaborate ritual; a car “about fifty feet high is made of bamboo and sticks, decorated with flowers, the body is placed in it over a bit of animal skin, tobacco, grains and implements used by the departed re deposited in it, before it is taken in procession to the place of burial”.\textsuperscript{108}

All the three tribes of Vittikkunnu prepare bamboo stretchers with certain kinds of elaborate decorations. The Iruḷas take two bamboo poles and prepare a ladder-like bier known as \textit{Sapram}. Like the Üralikuṟumans, the Iruḷas follow a set of traditional rules in the collection and use of bamboos. At first they collect three bamboos from the forest and cut it into equal pieces. Their belief is that after preparing the funeral bier, no piece of bamboo should be left unused; if any piece remains, another death would follow. They take four bamboo poles and fix them upright in the ground. Only the elder members have the right to fix the four posts. The ladder-like bier is placed in between the four posts and then firmly fixed to them. A thin bamboo stick is attached to the upper end of each upright post and the free ends of the thin sticks are tied together into a pyramid top. Then the three sides of the stretcher and the pyramid top is neatly covered by colourful saris. The stretcher is then decorated with gilt papers and by fixing stems of plantain

trees on the four posts. The stretcher is now removed from the earth taking utmost care to see that the whole thing remains intact. Among the Irulas the entire process of the decoration of the funeral car is known as Gudikkeṭṭu. Same types of cars are made by the Kurumbas and the Mudugas. The only difference between the Irula and the other two in the making of the funeral car is that, the Kurumbas and the Mudugas do not dig the earth and fix the four posts in the ground; instead, they keep the poles upright using brick pieces, stones or cement hollow-bricks (the practice of using bricks is of course a recent development). For the Kurumbas the stretcher is called Kūdākkāram and for the Mudugas, Kaṭṭakkāl.

The Kādar and Malasar prepare the same type of decorated biers and the former call it Kaṭṭal and their decorated portion tēru. They neither place the brass pot nor the umbrella on it. The Malasar put the corpse in a bamboo box and it is upon this box that they construct the tēru. Before laying the dead body inside the tēru, the Maṇṇūkkāran propitiates the spirits by making a mark of blood on his forehead and on that of the corpse, and also on the four posts of the tēru. The blood for this is taken from cutting a cock’s leg. Subsequently the cock is sacrificed. Campbell observes that blood seems to keep off spirits. In China, when a person is sick or possessed by evil spirits, goat’s blood is smeared on his forehead.\textsuperscript{109} The Kādar doesn’t prepare the tēru for infants, pregnant women and those who die of epidemics. The Ėravāḷans

\textsuperscript{109} J.M. Campbell, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. XXIV, 1895 May, p.125.
prepare a bamboo stretcher with decorations which is known as Pallāk or Patāka and the decoration is called tēru. Unlike all others, they place four brass pots on all the four corners of the tēru and one on the top. The tēru is prepared only for the dignitaries among them. If a tēru is prepared for the husband, it is compulsory that one should be prepared for the wife too when she dies. All the tribes who make funeral cars put their dead bodies inside it in a sitting posture.

The Malamalasar use a bamboo cot called Pallākku without any decorations. The Aṛaṇādans is the only tribe who doesn’t have a bier to carry the deceased as they bury their dead near their houses. Like the Malabar tribes, the Keer/Kir, a tribe in Madhya Pradesh, make Kathi (bier) with the help of bamboo and grass strings. Among the Australian aborigines of Adelaide, when a man dies, a rude bier is prepared by fastening together ten or twelve branches, so as to form the radii of a circle. But, however, the use of bier in the transportation of the corpse to the graveyard doesn’t appear to have much recognition among tribes elsewhere.

Grave-digging

The grave is the residence of the departed, so the tribes all over the world have their own graveyards and specialist grave-diggers. On the Gold

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Coast, among the Tanala of Madagascar, among the Nicobarese, and some of the British Columbian tribes the families have common burial grounds.\textsuperscript{112} The Gônds and Bhûmias have their own burial grounds and their burial ground is known as \textit{Mar-ghat}.	extsuperscript{113} In the case of Malabar tribesmen, there are strong traditions associated with graveyards and strict rules regarding grave-digging. \textit{Chodalai} is the common term for the graveyards among tribes such as Pañiyas, Kuñduvâdiyans, Muḷḷakuṟumans, Āḷar, Mudugas, Malaimalasar and Kuṟumbas. \textit{Chudukâd} is the word used by Thachanâdan Mûppans and Malasar for their graveyards while it is \textit{Chudalakkâd} for Malamuthans, Malappaṉikkans and Kuṟichiyas.

In very old days, due to great fear of the dead, most tribesmen had buried their dead anywhere in the forests much afar from their hamlets in a very casual and hasty manner; but today they have a common graveyard. Some graveyards are close to their settlements while in many cases they are far away. Each settlement has its own graveyard; the area of most of these graveyards is small and can accommodate only less than a hundred dead bodies. Thus the settlers are compelled to bury the dead in the same spot again and again. In the course of digging if they come across the skeletal remains of a dead body buried earlier, custom requires that a second grave should never be dug; the remains should be put in the burial pit and buried

\textsuperscript{112} James Hastings ed., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 423.
\textsuperscript{113} Stephen Fuchs, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 338.
along with the new body. Majority of the tribes believe that digging of a second grave would invariably bring about a second death. All those who get a pristine spot are considered to be truly fortunate.

The grave diggers are required to undergo an apprenticeship in the work. At the bottom of the graves, almost all tribes prepare a side cavity, or an inner chamber, which too appears to be universal in practice, in order to put the whole body inserted inside. The tribes give us two explanations for this practice: to save the body from the falling of soil upon it while filling the grave and to prevent the soul from escaping from the grave. The Egyptians in the latter part of the pre-dynastic period had devised a special type of grave called ‘Pit-cave’ in order to prevent the earth used to fill up the grave from touching the body. It consisted of a shaft terminating in a recessed chamber. The Theddora of South East Australia believes that the dead do not always remain in the grave but at times come out. Thus their graves are dug in cylindrical pits with a side chamber in which the dead body is placed, surrounded by pieces of wood. This arrangement is for the purpose of providing the Egress if such is ever desired by the deceased. Among the Ngarlgo, we find graves made like a well with a side chamber; again, they were constructed by digging out a cavity just as we find among the

114 As all the tribes consider burial at the graveyard as extremely sacred, no outsider is allowed to either witness the ritual or excavate the graveyard. Therefore all the information on it comes from oral sources and field study.
Theddora.\textsuperscript{116} Kondakammara, a tribe in Andhra Pradesh, make a side tunnel at the bottom of the pit into which the body is kept.\textsuperscript{117} The Irulas, Aṟanādans and the Kādar follow a different practice; they make a small inner hole, as the area of head-rest, at the southern wall of the pit and is called \textit{Thalakkuzhi}. For all the tribes dead body is extremely sacred and so it has to be properly buried; but the reason behind the practice of making a cavity seems to be to protect the corpse from being eaten away by wild animals. Scooping out a side chamber presupposes considerable amount of expertise and, therefore, the grave diggers are required to undergo an apprenticeship in the work. The geological factors\textsuperscript{118} combined with the cultural influence of the migrant settlers have now induced certain tribes to imitate the Christian practice of coffin burial; the Kurumbas, Karimpālans and the Māvilāns have almost shifted to this practice.

The Adiyāns bury the dead in the north-south direction for which they dig a pit of about 3 or 4 feet in depth and nearly 9 feet in length. Then a six or seven feet long central cavity, large enough to hold the corpse, is made at the bottom of the pit in the north-south direction along one of the sides of the pit by scooping out earth. The corpse is laid securely in this side chamber. Their graveyard is known as \textit{Kidakkai} and the Celt, \textit{Savagundu}. During the time of

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{116} Alfred. W. Howitt, \textit{op. cit.}, p.462.  
\textsuperscript{118} While digging, if they come across impregnable rocks, custom doesn't allow them to shift the grave to another spot; so grave-digging is always a nightmare for them. The use of coffins mitigates these tensions: there is no fear of the falling of soil on the body, of the attack of wild animals or of the escape of the soul.}
Celt-digging, their Naṭṭu-Mūppan and Karumi enquire about the progress of the digging with a question: “Akam Kittiyo?” (Have you got the Celt?) And the diggers reply in the positive or negative or as “Buddhimuṭṭāyi” (it is difficult).

Among the Paṇiyas, the headman (Chemmi) is considered to be the owner of the graveyard and he has to symbolically start the digging process after receiving a nominal fee from the family of the dead. (Earlier, it was 7 panams, i.e, Rs.1.75, for a spot seven feet in length and three feet in width. The fee for such a piece of land now-a-days is ten rupees.) It is reported that in former days, the Chemmi threw out a spade and a knife from the deceased person’s house to be collected by the daughter of the deceased person’s brother and later to be handed over to the Chemmi himself.119 He then appoints four specialists for digging the grave. A pit nine feet in length, three feet in width and three to four feet in depth is dug with a cellar at the bottom of the grave. The cellar is called Allēkkuzhi. Writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, Edgar Thurston attested to the same practice of making a ‘receptacle for the corpse’ at the bottom of this excavation by scooping out earth from the western side on a level with the floor.120 The Chemmi digs up four clods of earth first and this is kept apart, care being taken that it does not mingle with the soil deposited around the grave while digging.

120 E. Thurston, Ethnographic Notes in Southern India, Part I, Delhi, 1975, Reprint, p.144.
The Ùralikuṟumans call their graveyard *Chodalakaṇdi*. Their burial pit is six feet deep; like the Paṇiyas they too insist that the soil removed should be spread evenly on all four sides. The grave-diggers do not use shirts and it is important that they should not perspire while at work. The headman has the right to start digging. Particular areas are set apart for infants, for those who commit suicide and for those who die in the hospitals. The grave-digger dismantles the spade and carries the metal-head and the handle separately before and after the work; the handle should be fixed on the metal-head only at the time of work. After filling the grave, if excess soil was found in heaps over the pit, it implies that the person has died prematurely and if enough soil is not left over the pit, the person is assumed to have completed the full span of life. If a suckling child dies, it has to be buried under the *Pāla* tree (*Alstonia Scholiris*). This practice reflects the intense emotional attachment of a mother to her child and indicates that even after death the child can grow by sucking the milk-like sap of the tree instead of its mother’s breast-milk. Today the Ùralikuṟumans make a bamboo box and put the dead body inside it and bury it in the grave. Sometimes, instead of a box, they use a mat folded in the shape of a box and after laying the body inside the grave they cover it with this folded mat from the top.

The graves of the Aṟaṇādans are six feet in length and three feet in width with a special inner hole scooped out at the head portion to insert the head of the dead person. There is a unique practice among them. The relatives
of the deceased place a bottle of toddy in the graveyard before the digging
starts. In the past it was meant for the consumption of the grave-diggers.
Since the graveyard was located in the middle of dense forests, they had to
muster courage to carry on their work in such hostile environment,
consumption of toddy served their purpose. Now, as they have started burying
the dead in the premises of the houses, a change has taken place: the toddy is
drunk by the near relatives themselves. The Māvilāns, too, used to provide
toddy to the grave-diggers as a means to avoid the fear of the dead.

It is customary among the Kāṭṭunāikkans for the headman to mark the
spot of the burial pit with the help of a stick, called Badukka, which he carries
to the graveyard. They dig a pit 3 feet in depth and scoop out an L-shaped
cavity towards the side. The soil from inside the grave should not be left
unused; it has to be piled over the grave. They call their graveyard
Chudumālai or chodalai and the side cavity as Hoddamaṇṇu. The
Kāṭṭunāikkans are reported to have a peculiar rite at the graveyard. The whole
funeral party, in chorus, requests the dead person to dig the grave by himself
by saying “Bēga Ninagulla Manai Bēga Akku, Ithu Minakketta nînthalē
Āpathille. Bēga Nanga hokku. Nâna Hottēkku Thîni kâne. Šathavanu Ini
Onthum Kâne”.121 (Your grave should be dug by yourself; we don’t have
much time to waste for it; we want to return fast; we have to satisfy our
hunger; the dead doesn’t have any more worries).

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As regards the Kuṇḍuvādiyans, if a married woman dies at the home of her husband, existing custom insists that the Pādi Mūppan (headman of the settlement of her native hamlet has to purchase a piece of land in the graveyard of her present settlement by paying twenty five paise to the Pādi Mūppan of that settlement. One should rest permanently only on one’s own land. Among the Māvilāns, at every death, the funeral officiator called Kārmi demarks a six feet land in the graveyard and it is for him to start the digging, ceremonially, by scooping two or three clods of earth. The sons or nephews are prohibited from the digging work. For the Kālanādis the Pāṇiyas should act as the grave-diggers whom they call as Modali. They dig a six feet deep grave with a side cavity. The soil removed from the head portion of the pit has to be kept apart for filling the grave; this portion of soil should first be sprinkled over the corpse. As a reward for their service in grave-digging, the Pāṇiyas are given paddy, rice, new clothes and money. The Mullakūrumans generally dig deep, trench-like graves which are of six feet depth; but the Mullakūrumans of Nadavayal and Sulthan Batheri make a side cavity in addition. Tradition doesn’t allow cavities to be dug at Koranjivayal and Pākkam, which are the foremost Mullakūrumans settlements. The spades and knives needed for the digging purpose are supplied by the headman. In former days the nephew of the deceased fixed the place for digging and later this responsibility fell on the shoulders of the sons of the deceased.
Both the Malayālar and Wayanādan Pathiyans prefer cremation to burial and hence graves are unnecessary. They bury only dead infants and youths. These two groups also don’t have common burial grounds; they cremate the dead at the precincts of their own houses. The adoption of cremation appears to be a fairly recent practice, a clear evidence of ritual acculturation. The Wayanādan Kādar has no specialist grave-diggers; for them the kinsmen dig the graves. They have almost abandoned their old practice of making cavities called Mādi; today they use bamboo coffin and just bury it inside the grave. It is the right of the headman to start the digging of the grave. While, in former days, the Thachanādan Mūppans started grave-digging only after the corpse was washed and brought to the graveyard, now they insist that the dead body should be washed only after the grave-digging is finished. Their graveyard, which was earlier called Chudukād, is now known as Šavapparambu. Before laying the dead body inside the grave, seven wooden sticks of the same thickness are laid crosswise at the bottom of the pit. In addition to this, a specially thick stick is placed inside the pit for the head of the dead body.

The Koṟaga graveyard is known as Kuṟta; their headman fixes the spot of the burial and start the digging process himself with a ceremonial three scoops. Now-a-days the Koṟagas bury the dead in the neighbourhood of their houses. The Kuṟichiyas-graveyard is known as Chudalakkād. The relatives of the dead place a spade, a knife and an iron bar on the way to the graveyard.
The Kāraṇavār of the Taṟawād selects the grave-diggers, bier-makers and water-carriers. He appoints five persons for digging the grave, three for making the bier and two for bringing water. It is the Naṟṟu-mūppan who starts the digging and grave-diggers generally are his heirs. The Kurichiyas, too, dig side chambers or cavities called Thollu; but those for men should be at the right-hand and for women at the left-hand sides of the pit. If the soil removed from the pit is found to be in excess to the need, which is symbolic of an imminent second death, the oracle is consulted. He tosses a coin and if the desired side of the coin is got, there will be nothing to worry. The process is repeated three times, six times or nine times; the average of the results decides the fate.

The Chōlanāikkkan graveyard is called Šavuṇḍi; the grave is dug with a depth upto one’s waist and with a side chamber called Mada. Near the Mada they dig another inner chamber to deposit the dearest belongings of the dead person. They give a nominal amount as wage, called Chāvupaṇam, to the grave-diggers. The Malamuthans dig a special type of grave. They first dig an unusually wide pit which is six feet in length. Then in the middle of this pit they dig another narrow, rectangular pit of the same length. A bamboo screen is laid at the bottom of this pit (in the case of Malamuthans of Chōkkād, bricks are laid at the bottom of the pit) and the corpse is placed upon it. Before starting the grave work, among the Malappaṇikkans, the eldest Kāraṇavār circles round the house three times and then hand over digging
tools to the workmen. After the pit is dug, they make small holes in a row at equal intervals on the two lateral walls of the pit and put small cross-bars of wooden pieces to provide a platform just above the bottom of the pit and thus make an improvised cot for the corpse. The Āجار follow the same practice of the Malappanikkans; their headman called Tharawāṭukāran clears the spot selected as the burial place and then symbolically removes the two spade-ful of soil from the right side to the left and from the left to the right. The Āجار of Munderi and Kapp settlements demand a payment if they help other Āجار men in digging graves for the funeral.

For the Kādar the cemetery is called Chudalakkāvu; they dig a five to six feet deep burial pit with a cavity. Before the starting of the grave work, they perform certain pujas or ritual oblations at the graveyard; the bier-makers as well as the grave-diggers offer coconut, banana and incense sticks to the deceased ancestors. While digging, they remove the soil from the pit and deposit it in the opposite direction — i.e. the soil from the south is deposited in the north and that from the west is deposited in the east. Among the Malasar, the Maṇṇikkāran of the hamlet throws a stone into the graveyard and prays to the ancestors: “open the door; the new king is coming”. The spot where the stone fell is being chosen as the site for digging. The grave is six feet deep and it has a lateral cavity known as Thurangam. They give the grave-diggers liquor as remuneration for the work. Malamalasar call their graveyard Chudukād; the headman decides the ideal spot for the burial.
According to the Malamalasar tradition, only six graves are permitted to be
dug in a graveyard. The deceased are buried in one of the six graves. It is
believed that burial in any grave other than the six may lead to the eventual
collapse of the whole settlement. The eldest brother of the deceased should
start the digging work which is followed by others.

The Ėravālans have a common graveyard for three to four settlements
together, so the same spot is used again and again for burying. Their pit is six
feet deep and six feet long. They make side chamber or Thurangam only for
those who have tēru and also for those who raise this demand as their last
wish. Iruḷas graveyard is Koppai. While approaching the cemetery, an expert
among the grave-diggers (probably Kurutalai), will announce: “ūrāru
Varigāru; Kādāru Olinthu Pōyi” (hamlet-dwellers are coming; forest-
dwellers should quit”). Their burial pit is 6feet long and with a width of 3feet
and has Thalakkuzhi or cavity for head rest. The Muduga graveyard is
Chudalai and their cavity is called Aḷḷēkkuzhi. Thurston’s splendid description
of the ideal behind the Muduga grave-digging, at the beginning of the
twentieth century, runs thus: “For man, judged sufficient if the grave-digger,
standing on the bottom, finds the level of the ground upto his waist, but, for a
woman it must be upto his armpits. The reason is that the surviving women do
not like to think they will be very near the surface but the men are brave, and
know that if they lie north and south, nothing can harm them, and no evil
No such belief, or any gender distinction in grave digging, is found to exist today. Among the Kūrumbas, the Maṅṇükkāran finds the spot of the grave; he, after a moment’s prayer, fixes a stump on the site of his choice shown by his inner eye. The grave is six feet deep and has a side cavity called Aḻēkkuzhi. For the Kūrumbas, the sons-in-law of the dead should make the grave. Recently they have started coffin burial and in this case anyone can act as a grave-digger. In certain Kūrumba settlements there are special graveyards exclusively for children. The Wayanādan Pathiyans and Malayālar, today, use graveyards only for burying the orphans; others are disposed off in the premises of their own houses.

**Funeral Dance**

Funeral dance and music represent an important phase in the tribal practice of spirit worship. It is through music and dance that they allay the fear of the spirits of their dead. Campbell argues that music, dance and songs are used by men as a medium to scare the spirits of the dead. Such practices are popular among the tribes of Africa, Australia, America, Eastern India and the Nilghiris in Tamil Nadu. After placing the corpse inside the funeral ‘car’, all the Badaga of the Nilghiris proceed to dance round the ‘car’ to the music of the Kota band (the Kotas are another tribe in the Nilghiris and are the

123 For details see J.M. Campbell, *op. cit.*, June 1895, pp. 165-168.
musicians of the (Todas and Badagas). Among the Lodagaa of West Africa, the dancers start from the perimeter of the circle formed around the funeral stand, dance toward the corpse, then break off and retire to the places where they were sitting. Their dance is accompanied by the sound of the xylophone.125

The custom of funeral dance and music has had no roots among the Malabar tribes except among those in the Aṭṭappāḍi and Paṟambikulam regions of the Pālakkād District. This great exception is supposed to have been brought about by the great cultural links that the tribes of this area had kept with the tribes of the Nīlghiris and Coimbatore areas for whom dance and music is a must in funeral rites. After the purificatory rite, the corpse is removed from the house and is laid on the specially prepared decorated bier in the courtyard. All the men and women assemble at the courtyard and all those who have not already saluted the corpse do so. A group of clanswomen who have gathered at a corner of the bier make a loud wailing. No differences can be noticed between the funeral dance and music of the Kurumbas and the Mudugas. Men and women together form a circle around the funeral bier and dance and sing in honour of the deceased. The close relatives of the deceased person do not participate. Anyone of any age, who has expertise in dance or music, could join the group. The musical instruments used are Dhavil,126

125 J. Goody, op. cit., p.103.
126 It has the shape of a Chenda (drum), the two sides of which are covered with cow’s skin.
Khol,\textsuperscript{127} Jhālra,\textsuperscript{128} Perai\textsuperscript{129} and Dhambatta.\textsuperscript{130} These instruments are played by experienced elders. Dancers wear anklets while dancing. Unlike the Mudugas and Kurumbas, for the Irulas funeral music and dance starts only at the time of the removal of the body to the cemetery and with the dismantling of the funeral bier. The following is an Irula funeral song:

Ā Chakka Athaka Chakka

Kūkke Maṇṇu Nīmanth Vāru

Ā Chakka Athaka Chakka

Mēlē Vaṭṭē Peṇ Maka

Ā Chakka Athaka Chakka

Ādiya Vaṭṭē Peṇ Maka

Ā Chakka Athaka Chakka

Āṭṭathukku Vāyinkō... rrr...urr...rrr...urr

Ā Chakka Athaka Chakka.\textsuperscript{131}

The Irula funeral dance is known as Īttāṭṭu Parai and that of the Kurumbas and Mudugas as Īṭṭāṭṭu or Malayāṭṭu. In olden days each settlement had a collection of all musical instruments; today these are being hired from professional band troops. Songs and dance actions have a

\textsuperscript{127} Blow pipe
\textsuperscript{128} Cymbal-like instrument made of brass.
\textsuperscript{129} An earthen pot covered with the skin of the cow and rope (like the Pulluvakudam)
\textsuperscript{130} A kind of drum
\textsuperscript{131} Sung by Kaṇṇamma, 65, of Vayalur Irula settlement of Āṭṭappādi.
mourning effect. The steps of the dancers perfectly suit to the tune of musicians and the tunes go on changing in its course. The wailing clansmen occasionally join with the dancers and singers and the process of wailing and dancing proceeds one after the other.

The Kādar and Malasar of Paṟambikulam follow the same practices of the tribes of Aṭṭappādi. But the musical instruments of the two differ. They use instruments like Chendai,¹³² Urumi or Udukku,¹³³ Karimbu or Kuzhal.¹³⁴ The traditional funeral dance of the Kādar is called Āṭṭam. Among the Malasar funeral dance is not a must today but for the funeral of the elders songs are compulsory. The Ėṟavāḷans have lost this tradition because of their migration to the plains. In the past their women engaged themselves in traditional wailing along with songs. Their instruments were Matthāḷam or Koṭṭumara,¹³⁵ big and small, and Koval or Kuzhal. These also have become things of the past. Aṟaṇādans have a particular kind of grave dance after the cremation of the body: under the leadership of their headman who wears a garland of small bells on his waist, the Aṟaṇādan men sing and dance around the grave. But it is customary among all tribes not to dance or play music in the event of an unnatural death like suicide, death in pregnancy, death by epidemics or death during rainy seasons.

¹³² Tambore
¹³³ Small drum
¹³⁴ Blow pipe
¹³⁵ Small drum
The funeral dance and music have undergone some modification in recent times owing to the intervention of the communities of the plains. Formerly the musicians had played traditional tribal mourning tunes. Today tunes of the musicians are based on eastern and western popular songs from the cinema. These dances and songs are now confined to just five or ten minutes or at the most continued up to an hour. In olden days starting with the death they ended only with the burial. Now they hire musical instruments and have to pay for that. A person who dies with no relatives or successors is denied of these privileges today as nobody comes forward to meet the huge expenditure incurred in this respect.

**Bride price**

Instead of dowry, which is popular among the larger communities, the system of bride price prevails among the tribes in Kerala as well as over the entire tribal world. The bride price plays a vital role in the funeral ceremonies of the tribesmen in Malabar. If a married male fails to pay the full amount of the bride price to his father-in-law before his wife’s death, he along with all his clansmen will not be allowed to participate in his wife’s funeral ceremonies. Moreover he doesn’t have any claim over his children. Similarly, at his death, the wife’s relatives would refrain from his funeral ceremonies. So the payment of the bride price in time is a vital tribal law for banishment is a crime the worst feared of and punishment the most shameful. Today tribal law
allows certain concessions regarding the bride price. A committee consisting of members from both the husband’s and wife’s part, under the authority of the headmen of each side, points out solutions upon certain conditions. The defaulter therefore is allowed sufficient time for payment; now-a-days, no one is denied the right to participate in the last rite of his wife.

The bride price among the Irulas, Kurumbas and the Mudugas is commonly known as ‘Pariyapaṇam’. In early days it was only after paying Pariyapaṇam that the funeral of the husband was allowed by his wife’s clansmen. At that time the value of Pariyapaṇam was below Rs.100/ (it varied from Rs. 1\textsuperscript{1/4} to 2 to 7\textsuperscript{1/2} to 50\textsuperscript{1/4}). The bride price currently in practice ranges from Rs.101\textsuperscript{1/4} to 501\textsuperscript{1/4} and to 1001\textsuperscript{1/4}. The practice of the payment of Pariyapaṇam is still followed by all the three tribes, though symbolically. The other tribes of Malabar are not much particular in the payment of the bride price now. Among the Lo Dagaba, unless the second installment (doe) of bride wealth has been paid, the husband’s agnates do not have the unequivocal right to bury the body of the dead woman. It is said of them “they don’t own the dead body” (be be so a ku). If the wife’s lineage wished to enforce the claim, they could arrange for a third party to scatter some ebony leaves outside the husband’s compound; after this act no one will dare to continue with the funeral, since the Earth has now been invoked”.\footnote{J. Goody, op. cit., p. 52.}
the Gonds, the bride price (Sukh) is fixed at nine silver rupees. All the above mentioned rules regarding bride price in Malabar are applicable to the Gonds as well.

Washing and other Rites before Burial

In the event of a death, the corpse along with the close agnates of the dead, have to undergo a series of purificatory rites. Washing of the corpse is the prominent earliest care. Among all tribes of Kerala great care is taken in regard to the toilet of the corpse. The significance of purifying the dead body with water is explained by W. Crook: “As the body is cleansed from physical pollution, so the soul likewise is purified”. All the methods of purification of a corpse are concerned with the removal of various kinds of dirt of which the most important are: intercourse with wife/husband, illness, the clothes worn by a man/woman etc. The tribes all over the world believe that the body dirt makes a dead man defenseless against certain sorts of malevolent attack by evil spirits.

After the arrival of all the relatives and clansmen, the preparations for washing the deceased person’s body starts under the direction of the headman. But in the case of the Adiyans, Kurichiyas, Karimpalans, Paniyas, Urlikurumans and Mavilans, all funeral rituals are performed under special functionaries i.e., Changathi or Munnaman or Munnan for the Karimpalans.

137 Stephen Fuchs, op. cit., p.273.
and Wayanâdan Kuŗichiyas; Karumi for the Adiyâns and Mâvilâns and Bijakkâlan for the Üralikuṟumans. Likewise, the funeral functionary or funeral shaman of the Sora of Eastern India is known as Sanatung Kuran (who are normally women) and that of Stlatum H of British Columbia are Wultzewultzetca. Among all tribes in Malabar, the dead body of the headman/his wife has to be washed by their children, nephews or nieces. In the case of ordinary tribesmen, all clansmen apart from the sons, nephews and nieces, also actively participate in the purificatory rites. While in the Western world washing of a corpse is the duty of the female members of the clan, in Malabar, the corpse of men are washed only by men and that of women only by women. The only exception was the Thachanâdan Müppans among whom, in the early days, the corpse of a person belonging to the clan, irrespective of gender differences, were washed by aged female members; but they too have changed the practice now. “Among the Loddaga of West Africa...those women from the neighbourhood who are acquainted with the funeral procedures gather there to arrange for the bathing of the corpse. There are two points to note about the women who carry out these tasks. First, they are classificatory ‘wives’ and ‘sisters’ of the deceased...Second, these arrangers of the corpse are always women of advanced age...It is prescribed that these women should have passed the menopause, that they should, to use the

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139 See Piers Vitebsky, *Dialogues with the Dead: The Discussion of Morality among the Sora of Eastern India*, New Delhi, 1993, p. 18.

Lodagaa phrase, have turned to ‘men’ (*Lieba daba)*. Among the Gonds and Bhūmia of Jabalpur, a man’s body is bathed by his male relatives, a woman’s body by women.

It was not customary among many tribes in Malabar to wash the corpse in former days. The fear of the dead coupled with the hostile environment of their dwellings and circumstances around had compelled them to leave the corpse anywhere in the jungles or to bury it hurriedly without any purificatory rites. It was their contact with the people of the plains that had led the tribes to adopt their ideas and rituals associated with the purification of the dead body. On the world scale, certain tribes use cold water and others hot water to wash the corpse but the Malabar tribes had used only cold water for the purpose and several tribes including Karimpālans, Ürālikurumans, Thachanādan Mūppans, Adiyāns, Kāṭṭunāikkans, Kuṇḍuvādiyans, Wayanādan Pathiyans, Māvilāns, Kaḷānādis, Paṇiyas and Malayāḷar have opted for hot water, in recent times. Those who use cold water explain that it cools the soul as well as the body of the dead and facilitates an easy travel to the other world, while hot water would burn the soul as also the body and make the spirit furious and ruthless. On the other hand, the exponents of the use of hot water contend that, hot water lends warmth to the soul and makes its journey to the other world easier and more pleasant. Among the Khāsis the body is bathed in warm water from

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141 J. Goody, *op. cit.*, pp.55-56.  
three earthen pots. Similarly, the old Lodagaa women of West Africa wash the dead men in hot water. The Sora of Eastern India wash the dead in cool turmeric water. If an Akoa chief died, body is carried by his clansmen into the forest for drying. Several months later they took the dried body and placed it in the stream for cooling it. There it would remain in the cold, which Pigmies fear, and its spirit could not wander to harm them. It is also to be noted that tribesmen like Chōlanāikkans, Malamalasar and Ájar even today do not wash their corpse at all.

Among some tribal groups certain preliminary rites have to be performed before washing the dead body. In Malabar, all tribes shave the beard of the male corpse before washing it. In the case of Paṇiyas the shaving of the corpse is done by the nephew of the deceased. Tribes like Wayanādan Kādar, Irulas, Paṇiyas, Ürālikurumans, Kattunāikkans, Kuduvādiyans and Kurumbas anoint the dead body with turmeric paste before washing it. Others like Kaṭanādis, Māvilāns, Aṭanādans, Malamutthans, Malappaṇikkans and Wayanādan Pathiyans smear oil (Gingelly oil in former days and coconut oil today) on the corpse and then wash the body using soap. Karimpālans use only soap for washing. The use of soap is evidently a recent development and is indicative of the fast growing process of culture change. Kurichiyas and

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144 J. Goody, *op. cit.*, p.56.
145 Piers Vitebsky, *op. cit.*, p.49.
Malayàlar use only coconut oil for smearing on the dead body. In the past Malayàlar had used a kind of shampoo prepared from certain leaves like that of the hibiscus for applying on the corpse. The Mudugas, Thachanàdan Mùppans and Adiyàns apply both turmeric and coconut oil on the corpse before it is washed. The Mùllakurùmans wash the corpse in turmeric water using soap-nut in place of soap. The Koçagas wash the corpse after smearing turmeric powder and coconut oil. Māvilàns, Kaçanàdis and Karimpuùns never use soap for bathing the body of dignitaries like the oracles, teyyam dancers, etc. because they consider such persons as divine personalities and using artificial things like soap would pollute the corpse. The Malasar do not wash the body of dead women because they are afraid of the spirit of the female soul and consider even the touching of the dead body of a female as harmful to them. The È ravànlans smear a combination of turmeric, tumba (Leucca indica) and Erukku (calotropis) on the corpse before washing it. A.A.D. Luiz’description of the Àrañàdans’s practice of washing the corpse is that the “Àrañàdans bury their dead and are anxious to dispose the corpse in the best manner possible. Often poverty prevents them from anointing the corpse”.

Anointing the body before washing is a universal practice. The dead body of an Ollar Gadaba of Orissa is massaged with turmeric while it is being bathed. Among the Ho of Bihar, the body is smeared with turmeric and

147 A.A.D. Luiz, Tribes of Kerala, Delhi, 1962, p.30.
The Lodagaa of west Africa rubbed the corpse either with Kabur, the black, greasy by-product of shea butter, or else with chewed ground nuts — in order to remove all the body dirt (deo, deghr). Campbell points out the need of anointing oil as: "oil is a medicine; oil heels wounds; and, rubbed over the body, relieves cramps, seizures, and weariness. Oil is also both food and drink. It is a giver of light and giver of heat. For all these reasons few spirit-scarers are either so powerful or so popular as oil".

Certain tribes have their own special practices with regard to the washing of the corpse. In the case of the Mullakurumans, if the deceased is a female, her sisters-in-law or her uncle’s daughters wash the corpse; if it is a male, it is washed by the nephews or the brothers-in-law. The head and feet of the corpse are placed on pieces of wood on this occasion. It has been observed that if a man dies, water for washing his body has to be drawn from the well by his sisters. It is the dead man’s uncle who should first pour water on the corpse. He is followed by the headman of the tribe. Then it is the turn of the dead man’s sisters to do so and then only the other relatives pour water on the dead man’s body. The pot used for this purpose should invariably be made by the Úralikurumans. Each house will have such kind of pots which are kept inside the Daivapura. After all such purificatory rites, the corpse is taken to

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150 J. Goody, op. cit., p.56.
the Daivapura and placed inside. The Kāṭṭunāikkans, before washing the corpse, “send a person to bring a Nelli (crab), two kinds of tree barks and a leaf. Once they are brought, the body is given a bathe”.153 After the arrival of all the relatives, the Modali or headman orders to wash the corpse. A stone is placed in one corner of the hut and the Modali first pours turmeric water followed by his wife and then by others. The Ùraḷikurūmans, Èrvăḷans and Malappaṇikkans, after washing the body, put the pot used for it upside down. It is again used only after the end of the period of pollution as, they believe that, everything connected with the corpse is equally polluted. As regards the Malappaṇikkans, only the hands and legs of the body were washed in former days; full body wash is a recent development among them. If a person of a particular clan among the Thachanādan Mūppans dies, he/she is washed by members of another clan only.154 They are the only tribe who untie the knots of the thumbs and big toes before washing; though they tie them down afterwards. Chummar choondal records that before washing, fresh turmeric pieces are pound in a mortar and mixed with water; oil is smeared on the corpse and then using the freshly prepared turmeric water the dead body is cleaned.155

154 Among the Tachanādan Mūppans there are so many clans like Māmanmār, Kottanmār, Mādanmār, Mundanmār, Mattuppathi, Chēnnanmār, etc. the tradition of the Tachanādan Mūppans insist that members from the clan should not wash the corpse and it should be from members of another clan. For example, Mādan for Chēnnan and Chēnnan for Mādan.
In the case of deceased Adiyān headmen/elders a temporary thatched shed is constructed for washing the dead body. By applying oil all over the corpse and rubbing it thoroughly, they make the corpse a little more supple and then bend its arms in a Yogic posture. After washing, the corpse is taken to the western corner of the shed. In the case of the common clansmen, arrangement for washing the dead body is made by enclosing a place using empty sacks. After washing, the body is taken to the courtyard and is placed in the north-south direction.

When a Kuṇḍuvaldiyan dies, two female heirs of the deceased person, wearing bodice, boil water in an earthen pot and all kinsmen, as well as clansmen, pour three handfuls of water on the corpse. The Malayāḷar, Kaḷanādis and Malamuthans place their dead body in a plantain leaf in a sitting posture for washing; the Kaḷanādis make a temporary pandal of cloth for washing the dead body. Likewise, the Koṟagas wash the corpse in a sitting posture on a mat. In earlier days they used the spathe of areca palm for this purpose. Four headmen, including that of the hamlet of the dead, pour a pot of water each on the corpse. Though only females can bathe the body of a female corpse, water should be poured by men.

The Kuṟichiyas of Wynād follow a peculiar tradition in washing the corpse; before washing, all the ornaments of the woman/man are removed from the body except a ring in the case of women and a Kadukkan (ear-ring)
in the case of men. Coconut oil is anointed on the body in a particular manner: two persons, consisting of the Changāthi and a close relative of the dead, stand on either side (left and right) of the body and anoint oil on the two halves of the body simultaneously. Starting from the toes they proceed upwards and reach the head. Then they anoint the upper arms, lower arms and finally the hands and the fingertips. In the case of women, the function is performed by the wife of the Changāthi assisted by one of the relatives of the dead. The kuduma or the tuft of hair is untied while washing and tied again after it. For washing, water should be taken by the son or the nephew of the deceased in an earthen pot. Washing starts from the feet and proceeds upwards to the head. Regarding the peculiar gestures shown during the washing process, Goody remarks: “Anointing the body is a part of the normal routine of bathing, but what I call the ritual of pretended gesture (tun) is specific to funerals. These pretense rituals serve to point up an occasion that is marked of from the ordinary, and they can therefore be considered as an example of those rituals of reversal, so often found in funeral ceremonies, in which actions are performed in a manner different from, and often opposed to, the ways appropriate in normal circumstances”.

When a Kādar man dies, his body is washed by his son/s, and in the case of a woman this duty is performed by her daughter/s. Among the Irujas, the eldest son has to take a pot-full of water from a nearby stream and only

156 J. Goody, op. cit., p.60.
this water has to be used for washing the dead body. In the case of the death of a female too the son has to bring the water from the stream, though the body is washed by female members. In the event of the absence of a son, the nephew has the right to do it.

After washing, all the tribes bedeck the corpse with new clothes; the only exception being Óraḷikuruṃans among whom wearing of clothes after washing is taboo. For the Malasar the clothes worn before is not replaced by a new one even after washing. Among the Adiyāns, after washing, the corpse was covered upto the neck with a black mundu for men and a black sari for women till recently. Now they dress their corpse in ordinary clothes instead of black mundu or black saree. K. Panoor writes that the Paṇiyas believed that the wearing of a new dress was the prerogative of the dead; no men alive should wear new robes. If they happened to wear a new one, they smeared soil on it to give the dress an old look. Bedecking the corpse with new and good clothes, which is a universal practice, is done with meticulous care; otherwise, the tribes fear, they would incur the wrath of the spirits of the dead. L.A Krishna Iyer points out the need for dressing the corpse with new clothes thus: “the dead body is washed and well dressed in new garments, for the spirits should enter the spirit world in the best array”. Among the Gonds,

after the body is washed in oil and turmeric, it is covered with new cloth.\textsuperscript{159}

Among the Penobscot Indians of Maine when a person died, he or she was dressed in his or her best clothing, complete with ornaments, and wrapped in birch bark.\textsuperscript{160} The Kādar, Adiyāns, Paṇiyas and Kāṭṭunāikkans also comb the hair of the corpse after smearing oil on the head.

In addition to the washing of the corpse, there are certain other rites prevalent among the tribes of Malabar. The Iruḷas “to purify their corpse put crushed and moistened turmeric into its mouth. This, it is believed, will facilitate the eternal rest of the soul of the departed in the domain of their lord”.\textsuperscript{161} The Mudugas and Kuṟumbas put a pinch of turmeric and a four Anna (25 paise) coin on the forehead of men/women and in the pockets of men after they are washed and dressed. The Muḷḷakuruḷmans put a coin dipped in sandalwood paste into the mouth of the corpse. The tribes believe that the money is to be used by the deceased as ferry fees to cross the river of death. Today all tribes place near the corpse a \textit{Nilavilakku}, burning incense sticks, dammer and broken coconut. Campbell argues that the yellow colour (turmeric), fumes of incense sticks and fire from \textit{Nilavilakku} scares away the evil spirits.\textsuperscript{162} But the real reason seems to be that the medicinal qualities of turmeric and the fumes from the incense sticks and the fire of the burning

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{159} Haimendorff, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 373 cited in T. Madhavamenon ed., \textit{op. cit.}, p.281.
\textsuperscript{160} Carleton. S. Coon, \textit{op. cit.}, p.335.
\textsuperscript{162} J.M. Campbell, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. XXIV, June 1895, p156, Sep. 1895, p.262.
\end{footnotes}
lamp, all together, ward off harmful insects from damaging the corpse and
check to an extend the bad odour emanating from it.

Certain tribes and a few tribes in the case of their dignitaries, in
Malabar, follow the universal practice of putting a mark on the forehead of
the dead body after washing it. Thus a mark is made on the forehead of all the
deceased among the Kurichiya, Adiyams, Wayanadan Pathiyams, Wayanadn
Kadar, Paniyas and Mullakurumans, the teyyam dancers of Kalanadis,
Mavilans and Karimpalans and Korum or oracles of all tribes. These tribes
believe that without a mark on the forehead after burial, the person’s spirit
will become wild and beastly. The Kalanadis, Mavilans and Karimpalans
mark the forehead of their dead Teyyam dancers with turmeric paste,
Kurichiya with bhasma or ash, Wayanadn Pathiyams and Wayanadn Kadar
with sandal paste, Paniyas with turmeric paste and Adiyams with raw rice
paste. The Mullakurumans smear sandal paste on the forehead of men and
turmeric on that of women. The Andamanese, after shaving the corpse’s head,
place a lump of olive-coloured clay called dela, just above their foreheads.
This applies to men, for women usually place the dela on the top of the
head. Among the Chippewa, a tribe in America, if a person happens to be a
member of the Grand Medicine Society, his mid (medicine) bag was placed
under his arm. Frequently his face, moccasins, and blankets were painted with
brown fungus and vermillion. A round spot of brown was placed on each

163 E.H. Mann, The Aboriginal Inhabitants of the Andaman Islands, Delhi, 1975, Reprint, p.73.
cheek over it and was painted with a horizontal line of vermillion. Among the Koragas, in case the deceased happens to be a *Mutṭaidē*, a woman whose husband is alive, a vermilion mark is made on the forehead after the body is washed. Like the Koragas, among the Oraons “the body is washed and wrapped in a white cloth, and if it is a married woman, her husband is alive, oil mixed vermilion is applied”. A married woman, who dies while her husband is alive, is fortunate according to the Brahmanical Hindu concept.

The Ėravālans, Kāṭṭūḷaikkans, Malayāḷar, Adiyāns and Māvilāns walk in a circle round their corpse after purification. “The custom of walking round the corpse or the grave is found in the culture of central Eskimo, the Russian Leppis, the Buriate, the Shans and the Arawakks of British Guyana. There can be little doubt that the rite is magical, intended to keep the dead in the grave and prevent him from disturbing the survivors”. The Ėravālans walk round the body thrice throwing rice on the corpse each time. Before taking the corpse to the graveyard, the Māvilāns bow before the dead and go around it thrice throwing rice. Paying homage to the dead before the burial is a universal practice. Among the Todas of the Nīlgiris, all those present go one by one to the corpse, go down by the side of the bier and touch the body with

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their foreheads.168 In Montenegro, everyone who attends a funeral must kiss the corpse.169 The Kāṭṭunāikkans circle round the corpse seven times with lighted oil lamps made of Churakka (gourd shell) in their hands. The Malayāḷar go round the corpse thrice after purifying themselves by bathing. Among the Adiyāns, the relatives and clansmen touch the head of the corpse of their headman/elders and, after prostrating before it, walk round it thrice. But the touching of a corpse is avoided by other clansmen, particularly non-kinsmen, because they believe that touching or even the proximity to the corpse cause defilement. In Malabar, a teyyam dancer, whichever tribe he may belong to, shuns touching a corpse even though it may be that of a very close relative of his. He is bound by tradition to maintain absolute purity. So he keeps away from all people (even remotely) related to a dead person. He abstains from taking food from a deceased person’s house and he refrains from staying in his own house in case death occurs in his family.

The Kajanādis place the corpse of the teyyam dancer, after washing it, inside a shed made of cloth. Nobody has the right to see the corpse at that time except those who decorate the body and its face. The deceased Teyyam dancer is then dressed up in the same costumes with the same make-up and facial paintings of the teyyam which he used to perform when he was alive. Three or four persons engage themselves in beating the thudi till the

decorations are over. It is believed that the god who has possessed the deceased teyyam dancer will quit his body only after the completion of the ritual of decorating and dressing up of the corpse. If this ritual is not properly performed, there is the great danger of an immortal god being interred in the grave along with the mortal being. The Kāṭṭunāikkans sprinkle holy water brought from the temple on the corpse for purifying it. Campbell reminds us that the holy water that has been touched by the religious teacher or in which the Sālagrāmam stone has been dipped is believed to have special purifying powers.\textsuperscript{170} In the case of dignitaries, they wave flowers around the corpse to exorcise evil spirits.

Among the Adiyāns, the corpse of the headman/elders are placed in a sitting posture on a bamboo chair; the eldest son of the deceased will hold the head of the corpse or will put a Y-shaped stick at the back of the head in order to prevent it from drooping. It is also observed that if the Chemmakākran/headman of the Adiyāns die, the corpse after being washed, a pāṭṭu or red silk cloth is tied around its head with a peacock feather and an anklet is tied on his legs. A bamboo chair is prepared and the corpse is put in a sitting posture. It is carried to the grave in the same bamboo chair.\textsuperscript{171} The bamboo chair is prepared by the Kaṟmi. The Perumans or elder male members who are well versed in Śāstra recitation stand near the corpse.

\textsuperscript{170} J.M. Campbell, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. XXIV, Feb. 1895, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{171} C. Narayanan Nair, \textit{Kāṭṭūrum Avarudē Kalamozhiyum}, Trissur, 1980, p.96.
reciting it. Rice, paddy, lighted Nilavilakku and 21 rupees are placed near the head of the corpse. The chanting of the Šāstra and beating of tūdis are also performed for ordinary clansmen. In the case of ordinary clansmen, the Adiyāṇs place rice, coins, bells, metal lamp, six tappubaja (the rituals associated with tappubaja have almost vanished now) and a tray (which is meant for collecting money from people attending the funeral ceremony) near their head. The corpses of women are laid in the verandah and Šāstra is recited from the courtyard. After reciting the Šāstra, they prostrate before the dead person and throw money and betel leaves on the corpse. The headmen also do the same. All these are later collected by the Karumi. Similarly, among the Loddaga of West Africa, when the corpse is ready for funeral, the musicians standing near the corpse play tunes in their xylophones glorifying the achievements of the dead. There are words for these tunes, but, as usual with Loddaga xylophone music they are rarely sung. For men his achievement as a farmer, hunter, etc. is stressed and in the case of a woman it is the loss to her husband that is stressed. Among the first act of anyone coming to funeral is to halt before the dead body, cast some cowries at the foot of the corpse, and then stand in front of the xylophones and toss more shell money on the instruments that are being played. The former contributions are collected by the grave diggers, the latter by the musicians.\textsuperscript{172}

Unlike the Adiyāṇs and the Loddagas, among the Badagas, a peculiar type of

\textsuperscript{172} See J. Goody, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 77, 80.
recitation is practiced. The recitation is an after-death confession of a dead man’s sins and is made by an elder of the tribe standing at the head of the corpse. He waves his right hand during each line towards the feet. The recitation is repeated thrice, and a few Badagas repeat the last words of each line after the elder.\textsuperscript{173}

The Kunduvadiyâns and Wayanâdan Pathiyans after washing the corpse put into its mouth crushed areca nut and betel leaf in case the dead person was in the habit of chewing betel leaf when he/she was alive. In the case of the Paṇiyas, a towel is tied around the head of the corpse of the headman, turmeric paste is applied on his forehead and 25 paise coin is stuck on it. Beating of the tudi and blowing of the chïni (pipe) are also part of the traditional ceremony connected with the burial of the headman. In the case of ordinary Paṇiya, Aiyappan observes, “a small measure of rice is placed on a leaf near the head, and on the rice is placed a coconut cut into halves. The water from the coconut is collected in a saucer and placed near the leaf with rice. Over the rice is placed a lighted cotton wick. With a leaf-spoon, the chemmi and other functionaries pour a few drops of the coconut water into the mouth of the corpse. While doing so, the Chemmi says: “so long you gave us water. This is the last time we give you something. Hereafter, we cannot give you anything”. If the deceased is a man of some means, rice will be placed at the foot/end and also on the sides and 25 or 50 paise coins will be placed on

\textsuperscript{173} For details see Edgar Thurston, \textit{op. cit}, (n-124), pp. 113-16.
all the four heaps of rice. Then the Chemmi collects the rice and coins on one large banana leaf and hands the whole of it to the son of the deceased man, saying “in the presence of the functionaries of the hill of the region (nādu), with the knowledge of the people of the region, here I hand over these to the heirs”. The son receives the rice etc. in a piece of cloth and keeps the bundle on the small platform for the ancestral spirits inside the hut. It remains there for seven days”.

In the event of the death of an eldest brother, among the Kurumbas, his cross cousins called Maithini, bathe the corpse. Each one of them dip his/her right hand in a vessel of oil and puts the back of the hand on the chest of the corpse placing 5 or 10 paṇams and then puts the palm of the same hand on his/her own chest. If a sister dies, her cross cousins called Maithina perform the same rite. The back of the hand indicates the dead and the palm the living and the money given, called Urumaipañam, is for the expenses in the other world. The tribes like the Wayanādan Pathiyans and the Koṟagas decorate the corpse with flowers and Malamalasar with a garland of flowers. Among the Kondakammara of Andhra Pradesh the corpse is washed with water and decorated by turmeric, vermillion and flowers. According to Lillian Eichler, “decorating corpse and graves with flowers and wreaths is an old custom handed down to us through many generations. The Egyptians adorned

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174 A. Aiyappan, op. cit., pp.140-141.
their Mummies with flowers, and the mourners carried flowers in their hands".176

Another rite connected with the corpse before its burial is a custom called Kōdiyidal. The essential feature of this ceremony is that the close relatives of the dead put new clothes, white for men and brightly coloured ones for women, on the corpse. It is an auspicious ceremony and it takes place in the middle of a crowd, who are gathered round the corpse. If a husband dies, the Kōdi is supplied by his wife’s relatives and vice versa. In the case of the death of the father/mother all their married daughters’ husbands and their relatives, and relatives of the wives of the married sons and other close relatives of the deceased have to bring Kōdi. In early days bringing new clothes were the right of the close relatives but today anyone can bring it and put it on the corpse. This new development has come as a great relief to certain poor tribes like the Aṟañādans, Kāṭṭunāikkans, Koṟagas, Malamalasar, Malasar, Ėṟavāḷans and Ėḷar; for in the past out of sheer poverty they had to use fresh leaves for covering the corpse. G.S.Ghurye, who by making a comparison of the funeral practices of Egyptians and Indians, observed that new cloth, sometimes more than one, was spread over the body before it was cremated.177 Among the Todas, there is a ceremony called Kachutthti (Kach: cloth, utthi or utiti: he puts). The essential feature of this ceremony is that a

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177 For details see G.S. Ghurye, op. cit., p.83.
cloth is given by a relative of the dead person to those who have married into his family, and the cloth is placed on the dead by the wives of those of whom it is given. This ceremony takes place at the funerals of both sexes and for members of all clans. In the case of the dignitaries like headmen, teyyam dancers, elders and oracles etc. the tribes use Pațtu or red silk cloth along with Kōdi as a mark of respect. The Kōdi put on the corpse is never taken back but the Pațtu will be removed and reused. While all others spare the facial part while covering the corpse, the Kădar covers the whole body including the face. Before burial they remove the cloth that covers the face of the corpse and tear it into two pieces and these are used to keep the things that the deceased person had habitually used when he/she was alive (like betel leaves, beedis, etc.) in accordance with his/her personal preferences and tastes. These things are bundled in two pieces of cloth by tying them in knots. The materials inside the bundle are to be replaced from time to time. The funeral cloth of Kăṭṭunäikkans is known as Hossabetta or Hossachela and of the Malappaṇikkans as Mūdupadam.

The ceremony of Kōdiyidal is Kōdivirikkal for the Irulas and they along with the Mudugas share a special custom associated with it; as purchase of new clothes was very difficult in the past due to the want of money in an emergency caused by an unfortunate or unexpected death or due to the absence of shops in the nearby areas, they used to keep a few clothes in an

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earthen pot called *Paśathuchaṭṭi* (*Pijāḍ Chaṭṭi* for the Mudugas) and it was from this set of clothes that the *Kōdi* for the corpse was taken. The clothes kept in the *Paśathuchaṭṭi/ Pijāḍ Chaṭṭi* howsoever old or damaged were treated as new. Every house had a *Paśathuchaṭṭi* in the past but now with the process of urbanization this practice has almost lost its relevance and continues only symbolically in a new form among the Iruḷas: the *Mūppan* in his house keeps an earthen pot called *Madam* containing pieces of cloth to be utilized by the whole settlement.

The widow/widower also has to perform certain rites which are common to all tribes of Malabar. Compared to a widow, restrictions laid upon a widower are less stringent. In Malabar on the death of her husband, the marriage-badge (*tāḷi*) is removed from the neck of a widow and her bangles are broken. In some cases, the *tāḷi* is thrown into the grave and in other cases it is tied with the legs of her dead husband. In early days the widow had no right to remarry, though she was young, or to wear coloured dresses or ornaments or to bedeck her hair with flowers. But widow marriage is allowed today, widows are also allowed to wear coloured dresses and ornaments; after one year or at the completion of the pollution period, all ornaments are returned to them except the *tāḷi*. (The ceremony marking the completion of the pollution period for the Iruḷa is *Kanji-chīṟu*; for the Mudugas and Kuṟumbas it is *Chīṟu*; and for the Paṇiyas and Adiyāns it is *Kākkappula*). If the ornaments are not returned by her husband’s relatives, she is not supposed
to wear any, even if married, and has to remain unostentatious all her life. In most cases it is the widow’s sisters-in-law who have the right to remove the tāli and to break the bangles after the death of her husband; but among the Iruḷas, Mudugas and Kuṟumbas it is done by the widow’s brothers-in-law; among the Kādar another widow who is called Mundachi undertake this responsibility; among the Ėṟavāḷans it is performed by the dignitaries/headmen/brothers/nephews. The Kādar, Malasar and Ėṟavāḷans follow a practice even today by which the Manjkakkayar tāli (Yellow yarn) tied by bridegroom during the wedding day is removed and is tied on the leg of the husband’s corpse. At the time of dismantling of the funeral car, the Badaga widow is brought close to the cot, and removes her nose ornaments (ela mukkuthi), and other jewels. The Malaimalasar, along with the tāli, tie a few strands of hair of the widow on the leg of the dead husband. Among the Iruḷas it is compulsory that the knot connecting the big toes of the right and left feet of the corpse has to be untied by the widow in the case of the husband, and the widower in the case of the wife. If a husband/wife among the Mudugas or Kuṟumbas dies, the hair on the left side of the head of the wife/husband has to be cut and tied on the leg of the corpse; in the case of the wife it is done only if she has no intention of getting remarried. Naturally, aged wives are exempted from this practice. This custom is known as Sēma Cheyyal. The Malasar also perform the same ritual but they don’t insist on the

179 E. Thurston, op. cit, (n-124), p.113.
hair from the left part of the head; for them hair from any part of the head will do. Cutting the hair or tying it on the corpse’s limb is a universal practice. The significance of this rite is to break off all relations with the deceased. A Badaga widow of the Nilgiris removes a bit of wire from her earrings, a lock of hair, and a palm leaf roll from the lobe of the ear, and ties them up in the cloth of her dead husband. Before the procession starts for the burning ground, some female relatives of the dead man tie locks of their hair round the toes of the corpse. Among the Chechens of the Caucasus the long queue of hair of the widow of the deceased is cut off and thrown into the grave. For the Mudugas the widow has to perform another rite: taking an earthen pot on her head and a brass pot in her hands, she goes to a nearby stream, takes a dip in it and fills the pot to the brim. In the earthen pot is pure stream water whereas turmeric is added to the water in the brass pot. After carefully covering her head with a cloth, she then returns to the house with the pots of water and goes round her husband’s dead body thrice. The elder/younger brother of her husband then pierces the earthen pot on her head thrice with a sharp knife making the water from it fall on her deceased husband’s body. At the end of the third round she breaks the pot at the feet of her husband by throwing it backward taking particular care not to look behind. The smashing of the pot, according to Aiyappan, symbolizes the destruction by death of the

180 Ibid.
The Malasar also follow a similar practice. When a Wayanādan Kurichiyan dies, his wife and children prostrate before the corpse, circle the body thrice and then entrust the Mūnnāman and nephew the responsibility of the burial. Certain tribes like the Thachanādan Müppans, Kāṭṭunāikkans and the Paṇiyas bedeck their dead man/woman with ornaments or other sacred or beautifying articles. The Thachanādan Müppans adorn their dead women with bangles, necklace and a black thread around her wrist while a black thread is tied around the waist of the dead man; the black thread is intended to ward off evil spirits. In olden days it was compulsory for the Kāṭṭunāikkans to make a deceased woman wear certain specific ornaments after the washing of her body like the Ungāram (finger-ring), Vangāram (necklace) and a nose-stud. Then only her body was taken to the grave.\textsuperscript{183} This is not strictly followed now. Among the Paṇiyas, in the case of the death of a male the Kūṭṭan Bala (Chemmi’s bangle) is put on his hand and in the case of the death of a female Kallubaḷa (beads necklace) is tied around her neck.\textsuperscript{184} In conclusion it has to be noted that a dwelling where death has occurred, the whole place is cleaned and cooking is done only after the completion of the burial.

\textsuperscript{182} A. Aiyappan, \textit{op. cit.}, p.142.
\textsuperscript{184} V.K. Tandon in K.S. Singh ed., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 1185.
Disposal of the Dead

"The chief objects of the proper disposal of the corpse" Sidney Hartland observes, "and the fulfillment of all the rites and customs in connection therewith, are to free the living from the defilement of death and to give rest to the deceased". The disposal of the corpse has taken a variety of forms among tribes all over the world. They are inhumation, cremation, water burial, sitting away in vaults or canoes or houses, scaffold burial, exposure or simple abandonment, mummification, dismemberment, etc. In their early history, the tribes of Malabar had followed mainly three forms—exposure or simple abandonment, inhumation and cremation. Almost all tribes in Malabar today follow the two methods of inhumation and cremation, and the same tribe follows both practices, though in different contexts. Luiz Binford points out three reasons for mortuary variability among the same group—one, the limiting effects of environment, obtaining at the time of death, on the free exercise of all forms of body disposal; second, mutual effects of inter-societal contacts in producing amalgamations or replacements of ritual forms; and third, the characteristics recognized as relevant to the relationships either severed or established at death between the deceased and the remaining members of a society.

185 Hartland in James Hastings ed., op. cit, p. 419.
Exposure or simple abandonment of the corpse had two forms: one, the corpse being taken to a place in the forest bundled in leaves or a grass mat and left leaning against a tree or in the crevice between two rocks and exposed to the action of scavenger beasts. This kind of the disposal of the corpse was practiced by Malabar tribes like the Kādar, Malamalasar and Kāṭṭunāikkans in early days. Among the Khāsis of North East India, the corpse is placed in a hollow tree and the next development is the use of a tree trunk as a coffin. The Australian tribes and Tasmanian tribes practiced exposure; it was usually on a rude platform of boughs or in the branches of a tree. The Hopis of America placed the bodies of their dead in blankets and deposited them with food offerings among the rocks of the Mesas. Among the Veddas of Ceylon, the body would be left where it was or placed in a crevice between rocks to protect it from wild animals. The second type of abandonment was the leaving of the corpse in the dwelling cave with the desertion of the cave and resettlement at a new place. Cave dwellers of Malabar like the Chōlanāikkans and Malamalasar had followed this practice till very recently. They had lived in steep mountain ranges and it was difficult for them to practice pit burial. The Pueblo tribes of the south west of the

188. A.A.D. Luiz, *op. cit*, p.139.
United States, in a similar way, buried their dead in their cave dwellings.\footnote{Hartland in James Hastings ed., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 424.}

The Kabin Nāgas also place the dead in caves hollowed out in the side of a hill.\footnote{M'Culloch, \textit{Account of the Valley of Munnipore}, p. 52, cited in Bendann, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 214.}

Inhumation is the placing of the corpse in a pit dug in the ground and filling the grave after covering the body with earth. This is the predominant pattern of disposal today among all tribes in Malabar. Along with inhumation, Malabar tribes prefer cremation in certain special situations: males and females above the age of sixty, headmen and others who are popular and efficient, even if less than sixty, oracles of Kuṟichiyas and teyyam dancers of Kaḷanādis are normally cremated. Clement Meighan observes: “it will be seen that in most of the status differentiations, cremation is the honorific form of disposal of the dead”.\footnote{Clement Meighan, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 152.}

Like the tribes in Malabar, the Gōnd and Bhūmia of Eastern Mandala buried only unmarried, children, or persons who have met with sudden death, either by accident or by an epidemic like cholera, smallpox or who have committed suicide. All married adult members and prominent members are burnt.\footnote{Stephen Fuchs, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 337.}

In Port Jackson of South East Australia, the tribes buried young people and those who had passed middle age were burnt.\footnote{Alfred. W. Howitt, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 463.}

The Malabar tribes have come to accept the Hindu method of cremation due primarily to their recent proximity to the Hindu settlers: a large
number of them were wage labourers of one or the other Hindu Janmi in former days. Cremation is the placing of the corpse in a funeral pyre made of a pile of wood sufficient in quantity to ensure the reduction of the body to charred bones. The ashes required further disposal, which took different forms among different tribes, that is, floating in streams, rivers or canals and kept in an earthen jar and buried later.

Certain tribes like the Malamutthans, Malappaṇikkans and the Thachanādan Müppans had followed a strange custom in the past: after removing the corpse out of the house they burnt down the house both to prevent the return of the dead spirit and to escape from the fear of pollution. Same practice has been noted to exist among various world tribes. Among the Savaras, an important hill tribe of Southern India, on certain days, every house in which a death has taken place during the last two years is burnt down. After this, the ghost of the deceased (Kulba) is supposed to give no more trouble, and does not come to reside in the new hut that is built on the site of the burnt one.199 Among the Jaguas, an Indian tribe in the upper valley of Amazon, when a death has taken place, the survivors burn the hut of the deceased and build a new one.200 In early days, this system was followed by tribes like the Malamutthans and Malappaṇikkans since they were followers of strict rules of pollution. Census of India (1961) Kerala observes:

“Malamutthans do not allow a person to die in his dwelling house. The moribund person is taken out of the house before he breathes his last. If anyone happens to die lying within the hut, it will be considered polluted and will be burnt down”.\textsuperscript{201} Thachanādan Mūppans used to burn their huts along with all the belongings of the deceased after disposing of the dead. Even today, because of fear, all tribes abandon and burn their houses if anyone dies of epidemics like small pox or cholera, or if anyone commits suicide, inside a house.

Cremation was not a popular practice among the tribes of Malabar who very rarely follow this practice even today. There are two reasons for the unpopularity of this method: firstly, it is more expensive than inhumation, and the poor economic condition of most of the tribes in Malabar compel them to choose less expensive methods like inhumation; and secondly, general attitude towards cremation is that if they resort to it, the soul of the deceased will perish along with the body. Cremation is more popular among the tribes who have close contact with the Hindus and who are comparatively better off economically and socially such as the Kurichiyas, Mullakurumans, Wayanādan Pathiyans, Wayanādan Kādar, Malayālar, Karimpālans and Māvilāns.

Beside these, mention may also be made to the observations of some foreign as well as Indian anthropologists about a particular type of disposal, that is, disposal after the dismemberment of the corpse (like the hands, legs, head, etc.). But no tribe appears to have any idea about such a practice today. This may be a wrong notion received by the scholars from the practices of the Iruḷas, Mudugas, Kuṟumbas, Kādar, Malasar, Ėṟavāḷans and a few others who perform special rites for their dignitaries. All these tribes put the corpse in a sitting posture on the funeral car in order to perform special funeral rites before the disposal of the body and after reaching the graveyard they try to straighten the corpse and this leads to the mutilation of the limbs. M.K. Devassi reports about the Paṇiyas: “...before throwing sand into the pit, the corpse is mutilated, by severing head, hand and legs from the torso. This, according to them, is to prevent the ghost of the dead taking back the body and moving about ‘playing the living’. It is their faith that the ghost of the dead cannot take back the mutilated body and it is thus made invalid”\(^{202}\).

Neither the elaborate studies on Paṇiyas by Dr. Aiyappan nor the present fieldwork among them gives any hint to substantiate this observation.

Just before taking the corpse to the graveyard, certain last rites are performed at the house of the deceased. The Kaṇṇavam Kuṟichiyas take coconut oil and water in separate coconut shells/gourd-shell (Churakka). The eldest son/nephew of the deceased takes oil and rubs it on the forehead of the

\(^{202}\) M.K. Devassi, \textit{op. cit.}, p 246.
corpse and then he smears it on all parts of the corpse with the back of the right hand without removing the clothes that cover the body; the process is repeated thrice. The same process is performed, again three times, by using water as well. They take the corpse from the courtyard with the chanting of a prayer and after getting the consent of the clan deity and ancestors (or Nikal), with the Changāthi acting as the officiator. This rite is known as Mozhi Paṟayal. Among the Malasar, in the case of the death of a wife or husband, the surviving partner chews betel and areca nut and spit it on the head as well as the feet of the deceased. Among the Lodagaa of West Africa if a homicide is dead, before burial another homicide chews a portion of the root of soro (Cochlospermum tinctorium), and the reddish fragments are spat on the dead man’s left arm.203 J. Abbot points out that ‘spitting is resorted to avert evil’.204 The Māvilāns put a few grains into the mouth of the corpse before taking it to the graveyard. The nearest relatives of the Oraons, likewise, make offerings of rice to the dead and put rice into the mouth of the corpse.205 Īrāliṟṟumans place a coin or a piece of metal between the lips of the corpse. The Irulas, Mudugas and Kurumbas carry their bier to a special place nearby, before being taken to the graveyard. This place of temporary stay is called by the Irulas as Kainappally or Sirukidapally and it is here that the decorations on the bier known as Gudikeṟṟu is dismantled and cut into

203 J. Goody, op. cit., p.63.
204 J. Abbot, Indian Ritual and Belief: The Keys of Power, New Delhi, 2000, p 34.
pieces. It is compulsory to cut every inch of this decoration in order to prevent
the recurrence of another death or a repeated use of the bier. At the time of the
dismantling of the Gudikeṭṭu, traditional Iruḷa music and dance is performed
for five minutes. If the deceased is an orphan, the body will not be taken to
this place. It is here that the widow’s tāli is untied by her brother-in law to
signify her attaining the status of widowhood. The brother-in-law of the dead
is called Kokunthanmār and his sisters rub the chest of the corpse thrice with
the back of their hands and then go to the house of the dead not turning back
or touching any of the belongings of the dead. Women and children are
permitted to accompany the corpse upto the Kainappally. Mudugas and
Kuṟumbas throw away the decorative parts dismantled from the bier at a spot
called Idukād after cutting it into pieces. The decorations on the funeral car
such as the brass pot and umbrellas are taken back by all the three tribes. Like
the Iruḷas, Kuṟumbas and Mudugas, the funeral car of the Badagas of Nilgiris
is stripped of its trappings and is hacked to pieces in an open space between
the house and the burning ground.206 The Malasar throw away the broken
pieces of the earthen pot, which is used during the time of removing the
widow’s tāli in the Idukād. The Koṟagas abandon two or three clothes of the
dead in a place called Pāla Pādanaṇa.

All the tribes wrap the corpse in two or three Kōdi or new clothes. They spread a mat or cloth or a plantain leaf on the bier and tie the corpse with the help of ropes or vines of particular plants or fibers taken from particular trees. Even in this case, the tribes of Malabar follow certain particular tradition. The Malayālar and Kuṟichiyaś spread only that particular plantain leaf on the bier, which was earlier used to lay the body for washing. The Aṟaṇādans spread a mat on the floor and cover it with old clothes of the dead. Then they place the corpse on the mat, put new clothes over it and tie the mat round the corpse at three points of the body: at the chest, at the waist and at the legs. The Koṟagas tie the head, waist and legs of the body with the Nāṟalvalli vine. The Kuṟichiyaś of Kaṟṇavam tie the corpse with a seven-piece-fibre-rope known as Kāvuḷṇāru. The Wayanādan Kuṟichiyaś use coir rope for this purpose and the Karimpālans, the Nāṟalvalli vine. Wrapping of the corpse before burial is a universal practice. The Gōnd and Bhūmia place bundles of grass on the bier. A sheet is spread over the grass and the corpse is laid on it, with the face upward. The body is covered with another cloth and fastened to the bier with strings tied crosswise over the body, to prevent it from falling off.207 Among the Wonkongru of the Lake Eyre district of Central Australia, as soon as a man dies his body is tightly bound up with hair or fibre rope until it is a stiff package.208

207 Stephen Fuchs, op. cit., p. 336.
The corpse is laid in a lying posture on a bamboo bier or on a frame supported by wooden poles by all tribes except Iruḷas, Mudugas, Kūṟumbas, Kādar, Malasar and Ėṟavāḷans who convert their bier into a funeral car and place the corpse inside it in a sitting posture. In Āṭṭappādi and Parmbikulam regions, if two persons die together, a big bier is made and the dead bodies are placed in sitting posture face to face. But other tribes in Malabar make separate biers for separate dead bodies even if death strikes the victims at the same instant. Placing the corpse on the bier both in lying and sitting postures is a universal practice. The Gōnds and Bhūmia laid their dead on the bier in lying posture.209 The Akoa pigmies carry the corpse of their chief on a strip of bark in a lying posture to the forest; but they place their common people in a seated position with their arms crossed over their chests.210 Ramalingam, the Iruḷa Mūppan of Vayalūr, informs that the Badagas of the Nīlghiris, who use funeral cars just like the Iruḷas, laid the corpse in the bier in seated posture. The Koṟagas and Ėṟavāḷans break a coconut at the time of placing the corpse on the bier. Similarly, before lifting the bier Khāsis throw a handful of rice and water from a jar outside and a goat (u’lang sait ksuid) is sacrificed. According to Gurdon, these are purificatory ceremonies.211 Among the Malasar, the corpse carriers lift the bier up and lower it down twice before leaving to the graveyard. According to Campbell the object of lifting appears

211 Gurdon, op. cit., p. 133.
to be to lessen the risk of spirits entering the person lifted.\textsuperscript{212} The tribes like Malasar and Üralıkuruğmans use bamboo coffins, the Kuruñbas, Māvilāns and Karimpālans use wooden coffins and Malappaṇikkans, wooden benches for placing the corpse. The Ho of Bihar use a very ornate coffin of wood for their respectable personalities.\textsuperscript{213} The Eskimo and Indian tribes of the North West of America use coffin or grave box of wood. According to Eskimos, grave boxes kept the dead people’s shades “...from wandering about as they used to do; besides, it was bad to have the dogs eat the bodies”.\textsuperscript{214}

The carriers of bier/coffin should be close affines of the deceased, particularly sons, except in the case of Māvilāns and Koṟagas. According to the tradition of Māvilāns and Koṟagas, the nephews have the right to carry the bier, but it is compulsory that the sons should touch the four corners of the bier; in the former days of \textit{Marumakkathāyam}, sons had little role in the funeral procession, nephews not only carried the bier but also stood on the four sides of it. In the absence of son/sons, the carriers are nephews/brothers/brothers-in-law/ husbands and in the case of mother, sons-in-law. Four persons usually carry the bier, except in the case of Chōlanāikkans, Ājar, Kāṭṭunāikkans, Koṟagas and Kaṇṇavam Kuṟichiyas, for whom two persons carry it. The Mullakuğmans of Thirumukham and Pākkam colonies of Wynād and the Aṟaṇādans do not use biers or coffins to

\textsuperscript{212} J. M. Campbell, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. XXIV, Nov. 1895, p.316.
\textsuperscript{213} K.P. Bahadur, \textit{op. cit.}, (n-18), p. 66.
carry the corpse to the graveyard and bury the dead in the precincts of their settlements. Besides, more men are needed to carry the corpse without the help of a bier. So, among the Mullakurumans, the corpse is carried by four persons and, among the Arapađans, by six. In the case of the Mullakurumans of settlements other than Thirumukham and Pākkam, the sons carry the bier upto the border of the settlement, thereafter it is carried by other clansmen to the graveyard. The dead body of the Kolgha tribe in Gujarat is carried to the cemetery on a bamboo bier. It is placed on the shoulders of four persons, who are generally close relatives of the deceased.215 Similarly, among the Mewahang Rai of East Nepal, the close relatives are the carriers of the corpse.216 The tribes in Malabar, like the Kiwai of British New Guyana217 and the Gōnds and Bhūmias of Jabalpur,218 carry the dead body to the grave head foremost because they believe that if they carry the corpse in the reverse order there is a chance for the returning of the ghost to their hamlet.

It is a common practice among tribes of Malabar (except among the Kāṭṭunāikkans) not to put the bier on the earth while carrying it to the graveyard. The Kāṭṭunāikkans place it on the ground at three points on the way; at each point the carrying group hands over the bier to a new group. According to the Úraljikuurumans tradition, the carriers are not supposed to

216 Martin Goenzle, op. cit., p. 52.
218 Stephen Fuchs, op. cit., p. 336.
sweat while walking. The Wayanādan Kurichiayas’ tradition sanctions all male attendees of the funeral procession to carry the bier one by one before the procession reaches the graveyard. The tribes in Malabar believe that if the bier breaks while being carried to the graveyard, the deceased is an evil person. The bier is accompanied by all male members who have gathered at the house of the dead, headman of the settlement, headmen from other settlements and other functionaries (in the case of the Māvilāns, Adiyāns, Kurichiayas and Karimpālans). The dignitaries like the headmen and the functionaries walk at the head of the funeral procession. Among the Mewang Rai of Eastern Nepal, procession is headed by sons-in-law followed by close relatives carrying the corpse, the main mourners (sons, wives, etc.), the wailing women and others.219 Women and children are not allowed to follow the funeral procession except in the case of Ājar, Chōlanāikkans, Kāṭuṇāikkans, Malayālar, Kuṇduvādiyans, Īraḷikuṟumans and Thachanādan Mūppans. Malayālar do not allow the widow and the children of the deceased to accompany the funeral procession. (Usually tribes in other parts of India as well as the world over allow women to follow the funeral procession. The tradition of the tribes in Malabar, as also of the Gōnds and Bhūmia, thus is exceptional). The Kaṟṇavam Kurichiayas’ tradition prescribes only seven persons to accompany the bier.220 While speaking about the funeral procession of the Thachanādan Mūppans, A.A.D. Luiz says: "the widow

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219 Martin Goenzle, op. cit., p. 52.
follows the funeral procession with a pot of rice which she places in the grave". Today tribes allow aged female members to follow the corpse to the graveyard. The main reason for the discouragement of women and children are: 1) In the past the graveyards were situated in thick forests far away from the settlements; unlike men it was not easy for women to reach the graveyards; and 2) all tribes are very much concerned about the problem of menstrual impurity. They fear that if polluted women accompany the corpse the spirit of the dead and other spirits in the graveyard will get infuriated and might unleash calamities. In the past, outsiders were not allowed to accompany the funeral party; even British officials were not able to watch a funeral ceremony. However, changes are slowly taking place today in this respect.

Along with the corpse the relatives carry the entire belongings of the dead and also the special articles needed for the funeral rites to be performed en-route and at the graveyard. The Kāṭṭunāikkans carry with them a bundle of rice, three pieces of pastry prepared from rice powder, a bunch of plantain leaves, one coconut, betel leaves, turmeric, two tree barks, one leaf and a crab (Nelli). "Paddy and Ragi in certain quantities are tied in a cloth and kept on the shoulder of the Mudali, who holds a stick in his hand...while walking the Mudali throws away the grains (danasalladu) from the bundle. Some are thrown on the body too. It is done thrice and each time the Mudali sits on the

221 A.A.D Luiz, op. cit, p.228.
bier with his stick”. Similarly the Hos of Bihar and the Lodagaa of West Africa throw grains on the corpse, which are supposed to be the food for the dead. Same practice exists among the Mudugas, Kuṟumbas and Malamalasar. The headman of Mudugas and Kuṟumbas, walking in front of the funeral procession, carry a cane basket known as *Thekku* containing a knife, an axe, a spade, some cooked rice, water and pastry like Ragi *ada* along with grains like Chama, Kora and *Thuvara*. As he goes on waving the basket, the grains in it start falling down. This practice is known as *Viśippōrath* among the Mudugas, and *Deśai Ürippōkath* among the Kuṟumbas. The Malamalasar throw groundnut, dried rice and mustard all over the way to the graveyard. The Malasar gather stones while walking with the bier. After chanting some magical spells they throw these stones into the forest on their way to the graveyard in order to prevent the attack of evil spirits of the forests. In the same way, the Aherayas of North India throw some pebbles in the direction of the pyre. The popular explanation of this practice, says W. Crook, is, in order that ‘affection for the dead may come to an end’; the real object is to bar the return of the ghost. Among some tribes in Ureparapara (in Malenesia) the ceremony of driving away the ghost is peculiar and remarkable. “Bags of small stones and short pieces of bamboo are provided for the people of the village and are charmed by those who have the

223 K.P. Bahadur, *op. cit.*, (n-18), p. 64.
224 J. Goody, *op. cit.*, p.78.
knowledge of the magic chant appropriate for the purpose. Two men, each with two white stones in his hands, sit in the dead man's house, one on either side. These men begin to clink the stones one against the other, the woman begin to wail, the neighbours - who have all assembled at one end of the village - begin to march through it in a body to the other end, throwing the stones into the houses and all about, and beating the bamboos together. So they pass through till they come to the bush beyond, when they throw down the bamboos and bags.\(^{226}\)

Kuṇḍuvaḍiyans take a Kōdi or new cloth from the corpse before leaving to the graveyard and tie mustard, paddy and ragi on the four corners of the cloth which they carry along with them. Among the Kaṇṭavam Kuṟiĉhiyas, the nephew of the deceased person keeps a few splints in his lap, while moving to the graveyard, which he had collected while cutting the poles for the bier. Other members carry a handful of raw rice with husk, bundle of betel leaves, an arrow/sickle (arrow, if the dead is a male and sickle if it is a woman). Among the Lodagaa of West Africa, along with the body of a man, his bow and quiver are kept and in a woman's lap will be placed her personal basket (tiib pele) or shrine basket and in her hands an unscrapped calabash bowl is kept.\(^{227}\) The Mewang rai of Nepal kept curved knife (Khukuri) for a


\(^{227}\) J. Goody, op. cit., p. 83.
man and a sickle (Khurpa) for a woman. The Kaṇṇavam Kurichiyas sweep the place where the body is laid with a broom and collect the dust in a spathe and carry it along with the corpse. The Lodagaa of West Africa also sweep the place and according to Goody, "to sweep the dust is also to cleanse the house of deceased, for dirt has the generalized significance of 'mystical defilement'. Sweeping is therefore an act of purification". The Wayanādan Kurichiyas carry a bundle of un-boiled rice, an arrowhead (for men), a knife (for women) and also water in a bamboo pole. The Mullakurumans carry an arrow for men and a sickle for women. The Karimpālans carry along with them an arrow, a stick known as Pēnakkōl, a bundle of rice and a new earthen pot. Similarly, among the Ho of Bihar all clothes of the dead person, his ornaments and agricultural implements and also any money he had with him when he died are carried along with the corpse. The Herbert river tribes in South East Australia bury a man with his weapons, his ornaments and everything he had used in his life.

Most of the tribes are very particular that the funeral procession should move in absolute silence for fear that any noise may wake up the spirit of the dead as also other evil spirits of the premises. In contrast to this tradition, the Paṇiyas "believe that the ancestor spirits are eager to gather around the soul.

228 Martin Goenzle, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
230 K.P. Bahadur, *op. cit.*, (n-18), p. 66
Hence, to drive out these spirits people accompanying the corpse make loud noises and cry out”.232 When the corpse reaches the graveyard, tribes like the Paniyas, Mullakurumans, Kaṭṭunäikkans and Koṛagas circumambulate the grave with the bier. The Paniyas circle the grave seven times, while Mullakurumans, Kaṭṭunäikkans and Koṛagas circle it three times. The Muriya Gönds of Busthar233 and the Mewing Rai of East Nepal234 circle the grave with the bier three times in anti-clockwise direction. Tribes, whose burial position is in the north-south direction, place the bier in the graveyard in the same direction while for others it is in the east-west direction. The grave is dug also as per this direction. For the Kaṇṇavam Kurichiyas a Pāla tree is a must in the graveyard because, it is believed that, the dead will suck the milk-like sap of the Pāla tree in order to quench its thirst and also it is believed to be the abode of the spirit of the dead. Only after going round the Pāla tree three times, they put down the bier in the graveyard. Similarly among the Gönds a Mahua tree235 (bassia lattifolia) and for Maflu of British Guyana a kind of fig tree236 is a must. A grown up man among the Gönds is cremated under a Mahua tree, particularly if he had been fond of liquor in his lifetime. Since liquor is distilled from the flowers of the Mahua tree, it is believed that the need of the man’s spirit will be met even after his death. The

232 N. Viswanathan Nair, op. cit, p. 179-180.
234 Martin Goenzle, op. cit., p. 52.
recognition of the tree as an object worthy of worship is a common feature of animism or spirit worship throughout the world. Tribes whose burial position is in the north-south direction place the bier in the graveyard in that direction while for others it is placed in the east-west direction. While digging the grave, the rules regarding the direction in which the corpse has to be laid is strictly adhered to. The Iruḷas, Mudugas, Kuruṃbas, Kādar and Eravāḷans, after putting the bier down in the graveyard, straighten the corpse, which is in sitting posture. Among certain tribes, particular clan members like the Kurunāgar among the Iruḷas and Mattillakkār among the Adiyāns alone have the right to stand in front of the grave to watch the disposal of the dead.

Inhumation as a means of disposal is followed mainly for burying infants, young persons, unmarried young people, pregnant women, the oracles of all tribes (except that of Kuṟichiyas), teyyam dancers of Māvilāns and Karimpālans, those who die of epidemics, and all those who die of unnatural causes (like those who commit suicide, or those who are killed by wild animals). The graves prepared for inhumation by the tribes have certain special features. These features are graphically described by W. Crook and the graves for inhumation prepared by the tribes of Malabar conform to his description: "shelf or niche-burial in which the corpse is deposited in a chamber or cavity excavated in the side of the perpendicular entrance to the grave, seems to be based on the intention of preventing the incumbent earth
from resting upon the corpse and thus incommoding the spirit”. The tribes in Malabar inhume or cremate the dead only in the morning, at noon or in the evening, i.e., never after sunset. The custom of not burying the dead after sunset is a universal practice. Tribes believe that when rays of the sun fall directly on the grave, the souls of the dead may be warm and may rest in peace. But after sunset evil spirits roam about the graveyard and may attack the corpse and the funeral party. The Manansa of South Africa and the Negroes of the Lower Niger bury the dead in the evening, i.e. before the sunset. On the other hand, in the Southern Nicobar islands burial take place at dawn in order to prevent the shadows, that is the souls-of-the attendants, from falling into the grave and being buried with the corpse.

If an infant dies, almost all tribes bury them within the premises of the settlement. The grave of an infant is not like that of an adult: it is a mere ordinary pit. According to Carleton S. Coon, “when a baby dies, the rites are minimal because the child’s personality has not yet become well enough established to affect many persons outside the immediate family”. Tribes like the Üraļikuṟumans, Wayanādan Kuṟičhiyas, Malamutthans and Kādār keep milk in the grave of infants. The Üraļikuṟumans and Kaṇṇavam Kuṟičhiyas bury them under Pāla tree (Alstonia Scholaris) which has milk

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239 Ibid.
240 Carleton. S. Coon, op. cit, p.329.
like sap. It is believed that the child grows by sucking this sap. Ùralikurumans keep milk in a Chamatha leaf (Butea Frondosa) on the grave after burial. No infant is given a normal funeral, and mourning is confined to the parents alone, which is noticed to be a universal phenomenon. When a baby dies among the Gōnd and Bhōmia, its father carries it away in his arms. Only nearest relatives accompany the body. The Gōnd will bury the infant near the root of Mahua tree in belief that the milk of the Mahua flowers will nourish the baby.241 Among the Negroes of West Africa and some of the Bantu and Nilotic people of British New Guyana, rights are denied to children who are indeed, often thrown out into the bush.242 Another tribe in British New Guyana Maflu bury the children of their chief in the fork of a kind of fig tree.243

Among the tribes in Malabar, for those who die of unnatural causes, special areas are allotted in the graveyard for disposal. Among the Birhos, a primitive tribe of Chōtanāgpur, the corpse of a person who succumbed to unnatural death is buried in a place apart from where other corpses are buried.244 Among the Sulkas of Melanesia those who face unnatural death are placed on rocks or on scaffolds in the forest or are buried on the spot where

244 S.C. Roy, The Birhors, Ranchi, 1925, p. 266.
they met their death and are not buried in their houses. If anyone commits
suicide inside a house, the house itself, along with all the belongings of the
deceased, is burnt at the completion of the funeral. Sometimes the inmates
abandon the house to settle in another place. The Kαναβαμ Kurιchiyas cut
the branch of the tree if a person commits suicide by hanging on it right
before the burial. The bodies of those who die in hospitals are sprinkled with
consecrated water before being taken to the hamlet in order to discourage the
return of the spirit to the hamlet along with the corpse. Like the Kurιchiyas,
Ewe tribes of Togo in West Africa cut down the tree on which a man has
hanged himself and it is buried along with his body in the grave. Moreover
all tribes dispose the bodies of all those who die of unnatural cause as quickly
as possible without performing all the funeral rites in detail. Besides, before
filling the graves of such persons or of sorcerers engaged in black magic,
some special magical rites are performed inside the grave by efficient oracles
or sorcerers.

In the event of several deaths together due to epidemics such as small
pox or cholera the dead bodies are buried in separate graves without any
rituals. In the past, most of the tribes had left the corpses in their houses and
had burnt the houses along with their bodies and had abandoned the whole
settlement. The Mudugas used to bury those who die of epidemics in

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245 J.G. Frazer, *op. cit.*, (n-7), pp. 399-400.
Annakkuzhi or at the place used for keeping grains. Among the Māvilāns and Karimpālans, the burial of a dead Kōmaram or of a dead teyyam dancer and the burial of those who die of small pox are commonly known as Bhandāram Thāzhthal. According to their belief, the germs of small pox are sowed by Chirumba Bhagavathi, the goddess of small pox. This goddess is also known by the name Vasūrimāla Thampurāṭṭi (Vasūri means small pox and māla means garland; together means the goddess who wears the garland of small pox germs). Therefore they consider small pox as a divine disease and those who die of it are treated as blessed. In addition, the Kōmaram and teyyam dancers are taken as divine personalities so that even if they die without any disease, symptoms of small pox are believed to be found on their body and they are disposed of only with an offering of turmeric powder and money to Chirumba Bhagavathi through its functionary known as Āyathanmār (who are Tiyyas by caste). For the Gōnds, small pox is believed to be caused by Gurhimātha or Singār Mātha. She applies tattoo marks on the body of the patient (scars of small pox are like the tattoo marks). They believe that application of medicine in small pox is believed to be offensive to the goddesses and consequently avoided. Sometimes a goat is sacrificed to the goddess. Regarding the old practice of the Irulas, A. A. D. Luiz observes that “there is evidence that in their early society those who suffered from

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247 They believe that patients of small pox, too, are cured by the goddess after accepting the offerings and by throwing turmeric powder on him/her.

malignant diseases were buried under a heap of stones (Kallusāvu) or were exposed to be eaten by animals".249

In the event of the death of a pregnant woman, some tribes of Malabar follow certain strange practices. In the case of the Kurumbas the corpse of a pregnant woman is never carried to the grave by old men but only by young men. In the case of tribes like the Mullakuṟumans, Uralikutumans, Wayanādan Pathiyans, Kādar and Eravāḷans, the foetus of the pregnant woman should be dissected before burial: just after the corpse is lowered into the grave a person from another tribe performs the act. The Uralikutumans believe that child delivery will be easier if the traditional rite called Daivam Kāñal is performed. The Thachanādan Mūppans place a betel leaf over the belly of the dead pregnant woman and cut it into equal halves. It is a symbolic dissection of the belly; the parts of the betel leaf will be removed before filling the grave. The Paṇiyas make a cross mark on the belly of the dead pregnant woman with a knife which, too, symbolically, serves the same purpose. Among the Wayanādan Kūṟichiyas, when a pregnant woman die, a miniature Ittupura or apartment or confinement room, with a small cradle and a vessel containing milk for the baby, is constructed after burial. Malasar dissect the stomach but do not remove the foetus. The Kulduvādiyans place a wet cloth on the belly of the pregnant woman with the objective that the infant may not get fresh air; unlike others, they want the infant to die along with the

249 A.A.D. Luiz, op. cit., p. 58.
mother. Among the Lodagaa of West Africa, if a woman dies in childbirth, she cannot be buried without the child first having been removed from her belly. Consequently if the mother was interred with the infant in her belly, the anger of the Earth Shrine would be aroused against the survivors. A postmortem operation has therefore to be performed, and this can be done only by a homicide whose medicine protects him against the mystical consequences of dissecting corpses.\textsuperscript{250} Among the Gönd and Bhümia if a woman dies in advanced pregnancy, her body is sometimes cut open, the child extracted and, if dead, buried in the arms of its mother. This was done in a village in the southern part of eastern Mandala in Jabalpur. At other places the child is buried separately.\textsuperscript{251}

The death of an unmarried man/woman entails certain special rites. The corpse is decorated just like a bride or bridegroom. The body of the unmarried girl is dressed up with new colourful costumes, earrings, nose-studs, bangles, anklets and necklaces and with stickers on her forehead. Her hair is bedecked with flowers and floral garlands are put on her body. The male youth also is decorated in good manner before burial. Unlike the tribes in Malabar, in the funeral of an unmarried Toda girl, the corpse was made to go through a form of marriage ceremony. An unmarried boy was selected from among the relatives of the deceased girl and a marriage ceremony was

\textsuperscript{250} J. Goody, \textit{op. cit.}, p.63.
\textsuperscript{251} Stephen Fuchs, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 259.
conducted between the deceased girl and the boy. Among the Wayagga of Mount Kilimanjaro in East Africa, when an unmarried young man dies his family looks out for a woman whom they may marry to his ghost in the spirit land.

Before lowering the corpse into the grave, the tribes clean the grave as well as the side chamber and spread mat or leaves or bamboo screen or sticks or bricks at the bottom. Tribes do not allow direct contact between the corpse and earth. The Paṇiyas spread seven leaves of a plant called kulākki; the Thachanādan Mūppans lay seven sticks; the Muḷakūrumans place three sticks of thānni tree, Aṟaṇādans, Malamutthans of Viḻittikkunu and Āḷar first spread a bamboo screen followed by clothes over it; Malappaṇikkans and Malamutthans of Chōkkād use bamboo screen or bricks; and all the remaining tribes use mat inside the cavity before placing the corpse. The knots that tie the thumbs and toes are cut before lowering the corpse into the grave by either the eldest son or the nephew. About the Paṇiyas, Aiyappan says: “The knots tying the thumbs and big toes are cut by an affine who looks towards the East while doing so. He is believed to be looking at the sun-god”.

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254 A. Aiyappan, op. cit, p.141.
Miippan, before the disposal of his body, they have to utter his name, the name of his father and that of his grandfather. At the grave a close affine, may be his son, with the consent of the new headman, stand at the head of the corpse and another son at the feet (for the Adiyâns, the Kaṟmi) and both together slowly lower the corpse into the grave by slightly bending its head. Two persons standing at the bottom of the grave receive the corpse and push it into the special cavity made inside the grave for keeping it (For Iruḷas, Kādar and Aṟaṇādans, the head only is pushed into the cavity). Thereafter the cavity is covered with the same article used for placing the corpse in the grave. Belongings of the deceased are lowered inside the grave along with the corpse and are kept inside it. Those who use coffins lower the corpse with it with the help of a rope; there is no relevance for cavity in this case. All the belongings of the dead are put inside the coffin and the coffin is closed with bamboo or wooden leaves.

There are certain rites to be performed at the grave just before burial. The Koṟagas, after lowering the corpse in the grave, remove the cloth from the face of the dead, address the dead person by his/her name thrice and serve porridge and betel leaves into the mouth. The grave diggers of the Koṟagas, “stand at the edge of the grave in opposite direction, facing each other, and exchange the bill hooks used for digging the grave three or five times. It is believed that by doing so the spirit of the deceased becomes confused and
fails to recognize them and, therefore, does not harm or haunt them.\textsuperscript{255} Just like the Koragas, among the Gōnd and Bhūmia two men stand in opposite direction of the grave, one at the head and the other at the foot. One throws his axe over the pyre at the other man standing on the other side of the pyre. The latter throws the axe back. This ceremony is repeated thrice.\textsuperscript{256} The Kāṭṭunāikkans pour coconut water after putting betel leaves, areca nut and a small quantity of food items into the mouth of the corpse. Two pieces of bamboo taken from the bier will be kept at the head of the corpse. Tribes like the Māvilāns, Kaḷanādis, Kāṭṭunāikkans, Thachanādan Mūppans, Mudugas and the Üraḷikuṟumans cut off a piece of cloth that covers the body of the corpse. Among the Mudugas the son of the deceased person cuts off three pieces from the cloth that covers the body and places one piece at the waist of the corpse and the other two at the head and the feet respectively. The Üraḷikuṟumans tears the four corners of all the clothes that are put on the corpse. The Kāṭṭunāikkans tear only those parts of the clothes that stands over the mouth and the eyes. The Māvilāns tear the part of clothes at the eyes, ears, mouth, and at the anal and urinary parts of the corpse. Tearing of the cloth is meant for the free movement of the spirit.

At the grave, tribes like the Chōlanāikkans wave a bronze or iron ring of the deceased, three times, over the corpse. It is believed that the spirit of

\textsuperscript{255} S.T. Das, \textit{op. cit.}, p.176
\textsuperscript{256} Stephen Fuchs, \textit{op. cit.}, p 338.
the dead man enters into this ring, known as Daivamōtiram, and it is kept in the Daivakotta later. The Wayanādan Kādar throw rice into the grave and sprinkle rose water after circling the grave thrice. The Mudugas spread kora over and under the corpse. Among the Karimpālans, the son or the nephew of the deceased carry a stick known as Pēnakkōl and stand in front of the grave along with seven others who may not be the relatives of the dead. All of them together circle the grave thrice and throw rice into the grave. Then the four persons standing at the head of the grave and the other three at the feet ask thrice: ‘Pēna Ēttō?’ and one among them reply ‘Ēttu’. After the funeral this Pēnakkōl is stuck on the grave in order to keep the spirit away and to prevent its return. Similarly, the Kukata, an Australian tribe, place digging sticks at the grave to keep the spirits away. Among the Wayanādan Kuričhiyas the person who starts digging the grave sits at the head of it intertwining his legs, takes water in his folded hands and throws it into the grave with his right hand. Then he intertwines his palms and later straightens them. He then clenches his fist and stands up with legs in the intertwined position. He repeats the whole action three times which the other grave diggers repeat subsequently.

Giving food to the dead after lowering the corpse within or outside the grave is a universal practice. The Mewang Rai of East Nepal kept a bamboo container with beer and six small parcels of cooked rice, etc. at the head of the grave.

dead. The Gõnd and Bhûmia pour half a pound of purified butter and an
equal quantity of ramtila oil on the chest of the corpse. For a wealthy man
even more butter and oil are used. The Rajbanis of Bihar offer milk, ghee
and rice to the dead at the burial place. The Ojibwas who deposit their dead
on the ground and cover them with a light roofing of poles and mat, as soon
as this is finished, they sit in a circle at the head of the grave and present an
offering to the dead of meat, soup or fire water. Almost all the Malabar
tribes serve food to the dead at the grave, either placed along with the corpse
inside the pit or laid over the mound of the grave.

Throwing handful of earth on the corpse by the funeral party after
lowering the corpse into the grave is a universal tradition. As regards the
tribes of Malabar, it is the headman of the dead person’s settlement who
throws the first handful of earth into the grave and then it is followed by other
close relatives. But some tribes have special traditions in this regard. It is
compulsory for the Chõlanâikkans to keep apart a handful of the first dug
earth which has to be thrown into the grave first. Tribes like the
Mullâkurumans, Iruḷas, Koṟagas, Māvilâns and Ėṟavâḷans insist that earth
should be thrown three times on the corpse. The Māvilâns throw earth only
after circling the grave thrice. Tribes like the Kâdar and Malamalasar throw

258 Martin Goenzle, op. cit., p. 52.
earth by sitting at the feet of the grave and with one’s back facing it. In the case of the Üralikuṟumans and Kurichiyas all members of the funeral party throw earth into the grave. Among the Malamutthans, the eldest person, after going round the grave seven times, throw earth on the corpse. Among the Malappāṇikkans, in the event of the death of a father, his eldest son has to sprinkle earth first. As regards the Malayāḷar, the headman throws earth first, he is followed by women and lastly by men. Among the Paṇiyas, the Āṭṭāḷi circles the grave loudly calling out the names of the dead ancestors and in the meanwhile throws earth into the grave. It is a tradition among the Paṇiyas to invite the Āṭṭāḷi formally and make payments for his services. Among the Mudugas the son of the deceased person throws three handful of soil along with three handfuls of grains. The Todas also have the earth throwing ceremony which is known as Puzhuptmi but it is confined only to the funeral of a male.262 Among the Mewang Rai of East Nepal, after lowering the corpse, everybody throws some earth into the grave.263

In the matter of filling the graves, tribes follow certain ancestral traditions. All the earth that is kept at the sides of the grave while digging should be used to fill the grave. The Thachanādan Mūppans and Āḷar use, leaves along with earth, to fill the grave. The Malamutthans, Adiyāṇs, Chōlanāikkans and Aṟaṇādans make earth mounds after filling the grave. For

262 For details see W.H.R. Rivers, op. cit, pp. 344-46.
263 Martin Goenzle, op. cit., p. 53.
the Kalandis, the grave should be dug, and be filled, by the Paṇiyas who are their customary grave-diggers. The Koṛagas and Paṇiyas use thorns along with earth to fill the grave. For filling the grave, Paṇiyas use thorny creepers known as Koṭṭamuḷḷu. Koṭṭamuḷḷu alternates with layers of earth seven times. (Ēzhupoli Māṇnum Ēzhupoli Mullaṁ). An interesting song of the Paṇiyas describes their method of filling the grave.

*Kālukku Bōṭṭutha Maṇṇu, Thilēkku bechum;*

*Thilēkku Bōṭṭutha Maṇṇu, Kālukku Bechum;*

*Idabari Bōṭṭutha Maṇṇu, Balabari Bechum;*

*Balabari Bōṭṭutha Maṇṇu, Idabari Bechum;*

*Bāyo...Bāyo...Bāyo.

(The earth at the feet be placed at the head; The earth at the head be placed at the feet; The earth of the right be placed at the left; And the earth of the left be placed on the right; Come...Come...Come.)

All tribes in Malabar, except the Malasar, dispose of the dead in an extended or lying position facing upward. But there are reported cases of exceptions as well. Edgar Thurston observes: “among the Malasar, the dead are sometimes buried in the sitting posture in a hollow scooped out in one side
of the grave". An instance of burial in a sitting posture in a circular grave at Sarkārpathi is reported by Jakka Parthasarathy who says that the body of Malasar is usually buried in a prone position. The Gonds of Jabalpur, the Wichita of North America and the Brignans of Ivory Coast, all bury their dead in extended position. The orientation of the dead, in most cases, is in the north-south direction but for a few it is in the east-west direction.

Among the Māvilāns, after filling the grave, the Karmi recalls the name of the deceased and the name of the father of the deceased and then beats on the grave with a stick of the Maruthu tree (Terminalia Alata). This practice is known as Thacthezhunnēlpikkal and which denotes the waking up of the spirit of the dead and expelling it from the grave. In Hood peninsula of British New Guyana, tribes take special measures like beating of the floor as among the Māvilāns. Among the Lepcha of Tibet, the priestess goes to the grave and beat against the tomb stone several times. The Kādar fix incense sticks on the grave. The Kuṇduvādiyans spread mustard, paddy and ragi over the grave. Araṇādans fix a hollow stalk of papaya leaf (carica) at the mouth of the corpse right through the grave to enable it to breath, drink and consume food. The Kuṟumbas and Mudugas throw grains over the grave.

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from the head to the feet. In the case of the Malappaṇıkkanś, the eldest son of
the dead takes a vessel containing Ponnum Nirum given to the deceased
earlier and encircles the grave seven times followed by others. After filling
the grave the Kaṇṇavam Kurichiyaś place the bier over the grave along with
the splint kept in his lap by the nephew. An arrow is then stuck on the splint if
the dead is a male or a sickle if it is a female. Afterwards all the members of
the funeral party chew betel leaves and areca nut and spit it on the grave.270 In
North Eastern Rhodesia, all spit on the grave when it is filled up; and return to
the village without looking back.271

Addressing the ancestors at the grave after internment is a universal
practice through which the addressees compel the ghost to leave the place of
burial. Among the Paṇiyaś the Chemmi or the headman standing at the feet of
the grave with a pot of water mixed with cow dung and ash of hay tosses it
towards the head. Then he scatters rice over the grave and addresses the dead
ancestors saying “you have been separated now (from us by the soil). I leave
you through water (by having a bath). With the six by quarter three leaves,
you go and rest in the tēru mana (the chariot house) of the Fathers,
Grandfathers and Grandmothers of yesterday”.272 Similarly, the
Chōlanāikkans spread rice over the grave and addresses the ancestors:
“She/he has left us and is now with you; you should look after him/her and

272 A. Aiyappan, op.cit, p.142.
each should adjust with the other.”

The Kurichiyas of Wynād throw raw rice carried by them three times over the grave while circling the grave thrice. The remaining portion of the rice is kept in a plantain leaf and is placed at the feet of the grave. Then they return telling their ancestors “we lived together; now you are left for yourselves and we are left for ourselves”. After filling the grave, the Õralikurumans addresses their ancestors by saying: “We have handed over our beloved to your care; you may look after him well”.

Among the Oraons, when a corpse has been carried to the cremation ground to be burnt, women put rice into the dead man’s mouth saying “Take it, now you have given us up. Now you have seen your way. Go, taking with you all your sicknesses, and sins”.

Among the Southern Amis, a tribe of Formosa, at a burial it is customary for one of the family to throw a handful of earth on the grave and, address the deceased: “You shall not return”.

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Before starting the funeral procession, the Karimpālans cook rice in a new earthen pot, carry it along with them, serve it to the dead in a plantain leaf and keep it at the head of the grave. Then the earthen pot is put upside down, over the grave, with a hole being pierced in it. This rite is known as ᪅ᒃUIKitāl Kamizhthal which is evidently meant to prevent the waking up of the spirit till the completion of the last rite or Kūliyākkal and the small hole on the pot is for the spirit to breath. Subsequently, they draw a picture of Kālan at the head and of Kūliyan (ancestor spirit) at the feet of the grave with turmeric powder, rice powder and charcoal. It is to please the god of death Kālan (the Hindu god) and the spirit of the dead Kūli. A similar custom prevalent among the Kāṭṭunāikkans is noted by Anandabhanu: “In a piece of cloth, taken out from savuchela, a crab is crushed along with turmeric with a stone kept at the side of the head. The juice is then smeared on everybody’s hands except women. The crushed crab is then kept on the burial ground. The cloth piece is kept inside the hole of a tree”. The juice of crab, according to their concept, is a purificatory agent and the cloth is kept away because it is polluted.

The Adiyāns have a special rite to ward off the grave-spirit called Chudalappēyi before disposing of the dead. The gravediggers place some cooked rice mixed with turmeric powder over the grave. The Kārmī standing at the head of the grave takes a piece of grass and, holding it, sprinkles water from a bamboo pot on the dignitaries present there such as the Kunnukkāran

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and Chemmakākran of the hamlet of the deceased, the Chemmakākran of three mants (clans of highest status such as Badakku Mant, Pothuru Mant and Thirunelli Mant), and also on the parents of the deceased (if they are alive). Later on the Kaṟmi cuts the bamboo bier into pieces, fixes one of the pieces vertically at the centre of the grave with a thappubala tied on it and the remaining pieces are spread all over the grave. Holding some paddy in his right palm and an axe in his left hand, he circles round the grave. To conclude the rite, “one of the Kaṟmis stands on the eastern side of the grave holding a knife and another on the western side holding an axe. One who holds the axe hands it over to the other Kaṟmi across the grave. The second Kaṟmi removes the blade from the handle”.277 Similar practices exist among certain other tribes as well. The spirit that haunts the burial ground of the Gōnd and Bhūmia of Jabalpur278 is known as Marjekol and of the Lepchas279 as Mazom mung (in the form of black dog)

Among the Koṟagas, after filling the grave, two headmen, one belonging to the settlement of the deceased and the other of another settlement, sit in opposite directions at the grave, one at the feet and the other at the head. A white pebble tied with the vine of pāṭhāḷa pūvallī is exchanged between the two headmen thrice. The headman of the local hamlet repeats the words ‘sargathari keṭṭaṇam’. The second headman while receiving the stone

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277 Seetha Kakkoth, op. cit., pp.54-55.
279 R. Nebesky de Vojkowitz, op. cit., p.33.
replies thrice: 'keṭṭanām'. The stone tied with the vine is then hidden somewhere on the grave. It will remain there unless the vine is eaten by cattle. The loss of the vine is supposed to cause harm to the family of the deceased. It is the spirit of the newly dead that is tied to the stone and it is meant to avoid its return. The Thachanādan Mūppans, after filling the grave, make a miniature hut known as pallippura at the head of the grave with mud. Two persons, one standing at the feet and the other at the head of the grave, with long thorny creepers, known as Ingamulḷu, in their hands then demolish the miniature hut using these thorny creepers. The Papuan tribes of New Guyana, likewise, erect a hut on the grave. Among the Lepchas of Tibet if a man was buried, a "wild boar's nest" - a small shelter in the form of a nest - was erected with the help of some twigs and dry leaves, the idea probably being that the nest should provide a temporary shelter for the Muk-nyam (the spirit of the dead) who according to the belief of some Lepcha clans stays for seven days on the burial ground.

Tribes used to keep thorny plants on the graves to protect the corpse from being carried away by wild animals. This is no longer necessary today, but the practice still continues. Almost all tribes use thorny plants like either kottamulḷu or īngamulḷu for the purpose. Tribes never use these thorny plants as fuel. The Īralikurūmans place the thorns in a special manner. Two persons

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281 R. Nebesky de Vojkowitz, op. cit, p.33.
standing, one at the head and the other at the feet, in opposite directions at the
grave holding pieces of thorny plant known as ḩingamuḷḷu, walk clockwise and
place it over the grave. The Paṇiyas use the vine of the thorny creeper called
Kāyavallī or Chikulavallī on the grave. The Kāyavallī is supported by the four
cloths kept at the four corners by the Chemmi while digging the grave. The
Chemmi, takes a spade, and keeps a knife on his waist. He throws the cloths
from the feet towards the head. He also fixes a stick known as Sankakkōl at
the head. After filling the grave the Gönd and Bhūmia place thorns on the
grave to protect it against jackals and other carrion-eating animals.²⁸²² Among
the Sea Dyaks of Borneo the last persons who leave the grave plant sharpened
stakes in the ground, so that the spirit of the dead may not follow them to the
house, the stakes planted in the ground are meant to prevent its return.²⁸³

As a burial mark most of the tribes place stones, sometimes one,
normally two, or at times three, over the mound of the grave. The stones are
laid at the head; head and feet; or at the head, waist and feet. Tribes like the
Koṛagas, Thachanādan Mūppans, Malayālar, Ûralikuṟumans, Karimpālans,
Mullakuruṁans, Aṟaṇādans, Malappaṇikkans and Māvilāns put three stones.
If no stones are found to mark the grave, the Ûralikuṟumans ‘borrow’ them
from nearby graves after seeking permission from the ‘owner’ of that grave.
Tribes like the Wayanādan Pathiyans, Kaḷanādis, Āḷar, Mudugas, Kādar and

the Kuṇḍuvādiyans use two stones to be laid over the grave. Anthropologists like Edgar Thurston, L.K.A.K. Iyer and A.A.D.Luiz all have opined that Kādar has no burial marks.284 A.A.D.Luiz says: "They erect nothing to mark the location of the grave, and the absence of graveyards and edifices popularized the incorrect presumption that the Kādars eat the dead".285 The Kādar graves found at Erumappa in the Paṟambikulam area proves that the above opinion is unfounded. A few tribes like the Kuṟumbas, Iruḷas, and Ėṟavāḷans use only a single stone as burial marker. The Malamalasar and Malamuththans of Viṭṭikkunnu, on the other hand, do not put stones at all on the graves since they believe that, by doing so; the corpse will have to suffer the weight of the stone, which will only invite the wrath of the spirit of the dead. Similarly the Adiyāns, Paṇiyas, Malamuththans, Kuṟichiyaśas and Chōlānāikkans have no grave marks. Edgar Thurston gives an interesting description of the grave marks of the Mudugas: "the Muduga grave has a little thatched roof about six feet by two, put over it. A stone weighing twenty or thirty pounds is put at the head, and a similar stone at the feet. These serve to mark the spot when the roof perishes or is burnt during the next grass fire".286 Rangi, a Muduga woman of Aṭṭappādi, revealed that the rich among them used to make thatched roofs over the grave, but the practice as such do not exist today. The Malayāḷar, Wayanādan Pathiyans, Kaḻanādis, Māvilāns and

285 A.A.D. Luiz, op. cit, pp.63-64.
286 E. Thurston, op. cit., (n-122), p.95.
Kurichiya (who have started living in nuclear families) construct stone platforms over the grave, later. The stone platform of teyyam dancers of Kalanadis and Mavilans are known as Bhandaratharaya. Marking the grave is a universal practice. In the case of the Gond and Bhumiya, after burial, a mound of big boulders is piled over the grave. The tribes in New South Wales use one kind of stone to mark the grave of a man, and another to designate that of a woman.

After burial, all tribes cut the bier into pieces and put it on the two sides of the grave. The Gonds of Jabalpur and the Akoa Pigmy, too, follow this practice. The stones and roots removed from the grave while digging are also placed around the grave in a circle. Tribes plant flowering plants like shoe flower (hibiscus rosa sinensis), arali (nirium) and sacred basil (osmium sanctum) on the grave mound. Tribes like the Wayanadan Kadars plant flowering plants at the four corners of the grave. But those like the Malamutthans, Malamalasar and Kalanadis do not plant anything on the grave at all because, they believe that the plants will grow by eating up the flesh of the deceased and also will cause hindrance to the soul in coming out of the grave. Planting trees over the grave is not popular among tribes outside India. The Kooch or Rajbansis of Bihar plant a twig of tulasi (basil) over the

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The Malayāḷar never allow grass to grow over the grave; they clear off the grass over it periodically. Tribes believe that if the plants sprout over the grave, the deceased was virtuous, who had performed good deeds in his/her life, and if there are no sprouts, the deceased was vicious. Tribes like the Iruḷas, Koṟagas and Kāṭṭunāikkans place flowers and leaves over the grave after filling it.

The tribes in Malabar generally believe that if the deceased was a good person it will not rain till at the end of the burial even if it is the rainy season. The arrival of the rain after disposal is an index to the virtues of the dead. At the completion of the burial, among the Araṇāḍans, the Mūppan with a chain of bells in his waist, along with other elder members of the settlement, dance around the grave. Meanwhile the Mūppan, in a state of trance, pronounces the needs of the ancestors of the deceased.

Paul Barber points at the following demerits of the disposal of corpse through inhumation:- 1) disposal by burial is slow because of the need to dig a grave, with considerable labour, especially in rocky soil; 2) burial renders the body inert slowly; 3) with burial, the handling of the body may be minimal. Usually the corpse is washed, often by a person who specializes in this function and the water, washed cloth, and soap are disposed off as potentially dangerous; 4) it is fairly labour intensive; and 5) it may prove impractical

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during epidemic.\textsuperscript{290} Despite all these drawbacks, the tribes of Malabar prefer to continue with inhumation; cremation as a general practice is still unpopular to them. But unlike the tribes in Malabar, majority of tribes in other parts of India prefers cremation to that of inhumation except for deaths caused by unnatural reasons. However, cremation is not much popular among tribes of other parts of the world. Cremation as a method of disposal is opted by the tribes in Malabar mainly for selected individuals like the aged males and females (irrespective of any status differentiation), for headmen and others who are efficient (although they are not aged), for the oracles of the Kuṟichiyas and for the \textit{teyyam} dancers of Kaḻanādis. But certain tribes have recently started accepting cremation on a large scale. The increasing contact with the Hindu population has induced them to accept cremation. Tribes like the Kuṟichiyas, Mullakurumans, Wayanādan Pathiyans, Malayālar, Karimpālans and Māvilāns, who have by now recognized cremation as the normal form of disposal, have long been in contact with the Caste Hindus. The faith behind the adoption of cremation as a way of disposal has been pointed out by many anthropologists. Albert Muntsch S.J.A.M. argues that “cremation was probably associated with the idea that smoke and fire would bear the deceased aloft to a spirit home”.\textsuperscript{291} According to E.O. James, “Cremation is associated with belief in an after world in the sky; burning the physical remains releases the soul which is then transported to the celestial

\textsuperscript{291} Albert Muntsch S.J.A.M., \textit{op. cit}, p. 103.
afterworld via the ascending smoke”. While J.P. Parry remarks: “those who die a ‘good death’ are cremated, cremation ... is a sacrificial ritual which not only results in the rebirth of the sacrificer but is also a more generalized source of life and fertility, even of cosmic renewal”.

Compared to pit burial, cremation is very simple. Firstly, a very small ditch is dug according to the length of the corpse and coconut shells, wood etc., are spread in it. The corpse is laid over it in the east-west direction and firewood (of mango tree) is heaped over the corpse; the eldest son or nephew lights the pyre. Among the Mulākūrumans, cremation is not compulsory for the aged persons. But if any Kārāṇavar put it as a death-wish his body should accordingly be cremated. The Kālanādis, before cremating the body of the teyyam dancers remove all their costumes and ornaments. For the Wayanādan Pathiyans, logs of the mango tree, pieces of sandalwood and a piece of gold are must for cremation. An observation indicating retreat from cremation comes from the Chōlānāikkans. Chellan of Mānchēry Chōlānāikkans settlement informs that cremation had once existed among them; brushing up his memory he recalled that his great grandfather, who died in his late eighties, was cremated by using chōlamāvu or logs of the mango tree from the forest. Excepting this, there is no further evidence to prove the existence of the practice of cremation among the Chōlānāikkans in the past nor do we

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notice a continuation of the practice today. They are strict followers of pit burial now. In cremation, it is evident that, the Malabar tribes follow the same methods and principles that other tribes follow elsewhere. Among the Ollar Gadaba of Orissa the pyre is made of boughs of mango trees. Rice is thrown over the body and the son or the brother lights the pyre.294 The funeral pyre of the Tasmanians of Australia is made of logs piled in a square each ties at right angles to the one below it, until the pyre was three feet high. Then they filled the interstices with dry grass and fern, and set pieces of brushwood on end all around it, to a height of about ten feet, leaving an opening for the body. Then everyone among them set the fire.295

Among the Māvilāns, clans like Pokkili, Etchipuram and Badichiyan have been practicing cremation for a long time. They fill the grave with earth on the seventh day after cremation by chanting magical spells. They also offer bali to the deceased. Clans other than these three have not accepted cremation yet. Any Mavilan from outside the aforesaid three clans can marry a person from any of these clans. If the person who marries into any of these clans is a female she and her children follow the practices of their clan burial. They plant basil on the head and feet of the cremated area. For the dead Kārāṇavar of the Wayanādan Kuṟichiyas of Palliyara, Moothedath and Pilavukāvu settlements, the Kuṟichiyas follow a special custom. All the kinsmen of the

deceased assemble at the *tāraṇāda*. The headmen and the oracles of other *tāraṇāda*s also will be present there. On this occasion, the clan deity of the *tāraṇāda*, for instance *Palliyara Bhagavathi*, enters the body of one of the close affines of the deceased and he gets possessed. He is then entitled to become the next *Kāraṇavār* or *Kōmaram* of that *tāraṇāda*. This practice is known as *Kōram Vāhzcha*. The Wayanādan Kuṟichiyas cremate the *Kōmarams* of Mattal and Palliyara and also of the Kuṟichiya settlements beyond Valliyūr-kāvu. Cremation among Karimpālans is known as *Naśippikkal* or destruction. In former days they used to cremate the dead with the logs of jackfruit tree and *Kumbil* tree; but coconut shells are increasingly used today. Seven persons stand at the head and another seven at the feet. The nephew who stands at the head, lights the pyre first, followed by others. On the seventh day of the burial, they raise a mound over the grave and perform *Oṭṭālam Kamizhthal* and draw pictures of *Kālan* and *Kūḷi* if disposal is by inhumation.

Paul Barber points out certain merits of cremation: 1) it fulfills quick disposal; 2) it is most successful, for it may render the body completely inert and even reduce it to inorganic ash, so that it no longer 'does' anything at all.296 But cremation is found to have two main drawbacks. Firstly, it leads to the total destruction of the material culture of a vast human group. Secondly, it is not affordable to the poor and the needy tribes.

296 Paul Barber, *op. cit.*, p. 168.
Orientation of the Dead

Tribes all over the world lay particular emphasis on the orientation of the dead while disposing the dead. Universally there are four types of directions according to the position of the head — North-South, South-North, East-west and West-East. There are various studies regarding the orientation of the body with respect to cardinal directions. In one of the earlier studies on the topic, E. B. Taylor remarked: “Orientation of the body in death with respect to cardinal directions seems to be the working out of the solar analogy, on the one hand is death at sunset ... a new life at sunrise”.

Rose, who studied celestial and terrestrial Orientation of burial, says that celestial orientation is related to a belief in a continued life of the dead man at a celestial land of the dead, orientation being in the direction the deceased must travel in their journey to the land of the dead. The terrestrial orientation is related to a belief in reincarnation since the body is aligned toward the location where the soul must reside before being reborn.

W. J. Perry, who studied the orientation of the dead in Indonesia, says that the direction of orientation of the body at death is toward the original home of the forefathers. Johannes Maringer, in his studies about the religion of the prehistoric man, reported that in Western Europe, there is a custom of placing

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of the dead in the direction of the setting sun, possibly the west, believed to be the land of the dead.\textsuperscript{300} Susan Elizabeth Ramirez, in a comment to the article “An Integrated Analysis of Pre-Hispanic Mortuary Practices: a Middle Sican’ Case Study” of Iszumi Shimada, et al, says that the orientation of the face of the principal personage in burial at Sican is looking west which may indicate his watchful awaiting of a successor God or Lord coming from that direction.\textsuperscript{301}

In the case of the tribes of Malabar, we find only two directions: South-North and West-East. Almost all tribes of Malabar place their deceased in the grave facing the north, the body oriented in the North-South direction with the head towards the south. It probably matches with W.J. Perry’s observation: “The Kei islanders intern their dead toward the north. The body is placed with the head to the south and the feet toward the north so that when rising, the deceased will face the land of the dead”.\textsuperscript{302} Gurdon says that the Khāsis place their deceased on the pyre with the head to the west and the feet to the east. Tradition represents them as coming from the east.\textsuperscript{303} A few of them like the Chōlanāikkans, Ūraḷikuṟumans, Mullukurumans and Kāṭṭunāikkans place their dead in the East-west direction. The Karo-batak, before burial, places the corpse on a stool facing toward the west and they

\textsuperscript{300} Johannes Maringer, \textit{The Gods of Prehistoric Man}, London, 1956, p. 18
\textsuperscript{302} W.J. Perry, \textit{op. cit.}, p.283.
\textsuperscript{303} P.T. Gurdon, \textit{op. cit.}, p.113.
also look upon the land of their origin in the land of the west. In the universal tribal context, the orientation of the dead for all headman and dignitaries are normally different from those of commoners while in Malabar no such distinctions are applicable to headmen. But those who are cremated like the great dignitaries including oracles and teyyam dancers and those who die of divine epidemics like small pox are oriented toward the west. We are told that those who bury the dead in the north-south direction believe that their original homeland is the South and that the spirit of the departed in order to reach the abode in the other world will have to travel southward and pass through the land of their origin. The ritual songs of the Adiyāns called Śātras, chanted during the occasions of marriage and death, mention various places of the southern region, which may denote their original habitat. The East-west direction implies that the dead man would be availed of fresh light and heat of the sun even after reaching the land of the dead.

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305 In Tenimber and Timor-laut we find two directions of orientation—eastward for chiefs and other celebrated members of the community and westward for commoners. See W.J. Perry, *op. cit.*, p. 284.
306 Oracle of all tribal communities.
307 *Teyyam* Dancers of Karimpālans and Māvilāns.
308 It is a commonly held belief that small pox, the divine decease, is caused by the wrath of the Goddess of Small Pox called *Vasūrimāl Thampurātī*.
309 *Sastra* songs are transmitted through oral tradition.
Feeding the dead before and after burial

Offering food and drink to the dead before and after burial is a universally followed tribal practice. It is aimed at: 1) preventing the spirits of the dead from returning their homes for food, and 2) alleviating their hunger, thirst, etc. The spirit of the dead, it is held, has the same food habits of the living beings. In Malabar, tribes like the Kādar, Aṟaṇāḍans, Chōlanāikkans, Malamutthans, Malappāṇikkans, Thachanādan Mūppans, Wayanādan Pathiyans, Malasar, Malamalasar, Māvīlāns, Kāṭṭunāikkans and Āḷar follow the tradition of offering food to the departed souls before burial. In the case of the Kādar, “after death and seven days following the burial, a vīḍhu (portion) of the daily food will be placed in a three-stringed pending fibre vessel-holder for the deceased person. The food will be consumed by elderly family members only, after it has been kept for sometime in the container”.310 This practice continues even today. Similarly, the chief mourner among the Baiswar, a hill tribe in Mirzapur, lays out food for the ghost everyday along the road to the cremation ground.311 Some of the Papuan tribes plant taro beside the grave for getting fruits to the dead till he reaches the land of the

310 U.R. Ehrenfels, op. cit., p. 168
The AраУdans also follow the practice of offering food to the spirits of the dead. The Kadamente place food, for seven days, on the way to the graveyard. The Cholanikkans place a vase full of porridge, curry, favourite pastry and roasted fish for seven days at the spot where the body was allowed to rest inside the house. At the death of an Ainu, a tribe in Japan, a large cup of food or a cake of millet and water are placed by the head of the corpse. The dead man is invited to partake of this offering with words: “this is a good bye feast made especially for you”. The Oraons place boiled rice and milk in the mouth of the body after washing the corpse.

When a breast-fed child of the Vittikkunu Malamuthans dies, the mother’s milk collected in a vessel is placed inside the house where the body is laid. It is believed that otherwise, the spirit of the child will suckle the mother’s breast causing it to dry up. It is a commonplace knowledge that if the breast of a mother is not suckled by the child, it will naturally dry up but this is interpreted as being caused by the spirit of the deceased child. They believe that if the mother’s milk is offered daily to the spirit, the process of the drying up of the milk can be delayed. In Tanembar and Timorlaut, when children under two years of age die, the mother milks her breast into their

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mou[[ts before burial. It is compulsory for the daughter-in-law to give water to her mother-in-law after the purificatory rites. This custom prevails among the Malappaŋikkans as well. Among the Baheliya of Mirzapur, when a man is dying, he is taken into the open air and gold, Ganges water, and leaves of the Thulasi (Osimum Sanctum) put into his mouth.317

The Malamalasar serve cooked rice and fried rice to their dead before taking to the graveyard. The Kāṭṭunāikkans keep cooked rice, curry and water for their deceased on the grave. The Āḷar, after burial, keep gruel in a folded plantain leaf at the head of the grave. The Mudugas who goes before the funeral procession takes a basket containing Chama, Kora, etc with him. He sways the basket to and fro so that grains from it are thrown off on either side of the path to the graveyard. This basket is known as Thekku. The grains that

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316 E.H. Mann, op. cit., p.74.
remain in the basket emptied on the grave after the completion of the burial. This practice is prevalent among the Kurumbas also. The throwing of grains on the grave among the Kurumbas is known as Dēsē Ürippōkath. After lowering the corpse in the grave, the Koragas remove his/her face-cloth and give gruel and crushed areca nut, betel leaf calling his/her name thrice. Thachananadan Mūppans break a coconut into two halves and place one-half at the feet and the other at the head of the deceased before filling the grave. They also throw rice on the corpse after circling the grave seven times. The Māvilâns throw rice thrice on the corpse before placing it on the bier. The Malasar throw ground nut, fried rice and mustard on their way to the grave.

The Kurichiyas of Wynäd take some raw rice on a plantain leaf and throw it on the grave thrice and keep the remaining portion of it near the feet of the corpse. The Kannavam Kurichiyas keep water in a coconut shell on the grave after burial. Karimpâlans after burial cook rice in a new pot and a portion of it is kept in a plantain leaf at the head of the grave. The pot used for cooking is placed upside down along with the remaining cooked rice, on the grave and a hole is made on this pot. This is known as OTTOMalam Kamizthal. After bathing, they keep water in a folded leaf near a flowing stream for the spirit of the dead to alleviate his/her thirst.

The Adiyan gravediggers carry cooked rice mixed with turmeric powder in a plantain leaf while going to the graveyard for digging the grave.
After filling the grave they place one portion of it on the grave to please *Chudala-pēyi*, who is the owner of the grave according to their tradition. The remaining portion is consumed by the grave-diggers. The Paṇiyas place a pot of gruel inside the grave before filling it. The chief mourner (nephew) of the Kaṇṇavam Kurichiyas put a few grains of rice into the mouth of the corpse. The eldest son of the Mudugas throws three handfuls of grains into the burial-pit and then only the corpse is placed in it. Thachanādan Mūppans throw mustard, paddy and ragi on the grave after filling it.

**Grave goods**

The practice of depositing all the belongings of the deceased, either in the grave or upon it, is worldwide. Disposing of the personal possessions of the dead points to a belief in life after death. Shereen Ratnagar explains: “There is no simple formula which explains the occurrence of objects in graves: in some societies grave goods reveal the perception of the afterlife, in others they have to do with the social persona of the dead, in at another context they have to do with ritual contamination associated with death”.318 Both fear of the dead and affection for him/her is the basic reasons behind this tradition. The food, water, clothes, ornaments, utensils and implements of men/women are deposited in the grave. The dead must be gratified with food and with all his/her most cherished worldly possessions. Moreover, right from

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the beginnings of civilization, when a man died, his entire movable property was left with his body to escape from the fear of the dead and death pollution, which would attach to everything closely associated with the deceased. According to Bendann, men had deposited goods in the graves to provide for the wants and comforts of the deceased and thus to prevent 'walking'.\textsuperscript{319} Today poverty prevents most tribesmen from depositing all the belongings of the deceased in the grave.

The archaeological importance of the grave deposits is pointed out by V. A. Alekshin in an article "Burial Customs as an Archaeological Source".\textsuperscript{320} Some of his observations related to the study of burial goods in ancient agricultural societies of the Near East and Central Asia are applicable to Malabar tribes as well. The major points of Alekshin can be summarized as: 1) the burial customs record differences in productive activities between men and women; 2) burial deposits in the case of women appear to be richer than those of men owing to the large quantity of ornaments placed in their graves; 3) the burials of infants are practically devoid of grave goods; and 4) the special respect enjoyed by persons of very advanced age is also reflected in burial customs.

The Wogal tribes in Australia are very particular in burying everything of a dead man with him. Even valuable articles such as spears and nets are

\textsuperscript{319} E. Bendann, \textit{op. cit}, p.120.
\textsuperscript{320} V.A. Alekshin, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.137-138.
included, indeed, a canoe, too has been sacrificed in this manner and pieces of it placed in the grave. ‘Everything belonging to a dead man was put out of sight’.\textsuperscript{321} The Savara of Southern India burn their dead, and with the body they burn everything that the dead man had; his bows and arrows, his dagger, his necklaces, his reaping hook for cutting paddy, his axe, some paddy and rice and so forth.\textsuperscript{322} As regards the tribes in Malabar, besides clothes and ornaments made of precious and semi-precious stones, they deposit their daily utensils and implements. Along with the Kādar corpse, there will always be a rice-pot, a curry-pot and a coconut-shell-spoon for a woman and a knife and a \textit{Parakköl} or digging rod for a man. Now-a-days they also deposit a small tin pot for drinking tea. All these are put inside a cloth bag and are buried beneath the feet of the corpse. The Malasar deposit the favourite dishes of the deceased along with a \textit{Koth} (a small spade) for women and a knife for men; depositing ornaments are against their established tradition. They also deposit a coin, cooked or fried rice, areca nuts and a few betel leaves. The Ėṟavāḷans bury beedi, betel, arecanut and tobacco for their headman/elders. The Kuṇḍuvādiyans deposit a small \textit{Ural} (Stone mortar for pounding grain) and \textit{Ulakka} (metal or wooden pestle) for men and a broomstick for women. The Malamuththans never deposit iron weapons or vessels because, they believe

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  \item \textsuperscript{321} Alfred. W. Howitt, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 461-462.
  \item \textsuperscript{322} F. Fawcett, “An Aboriginal Hill People of the Eastern Ghats of the Madras Presidency”, \textit{Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay}, 1, 1886, p.249.
\end{itemize}
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that, the spirit of the dead may use them against their enemies. They put rice, salt and chilly inside the grave for the dead to prepare the food for themselves. The Thachanādan Mūppans throw rice into the grave for the spirit of the dead. In former days the Malappaṅikkans had buried boxes, betel leaves and arecanut; today they have stopped this custom of depositing these belongings of the deceased in the grave.

The Koṟagas place a porridge pot and a knife outside the grave after filling it, whereas the Āḷar put cooked rice in a leaf-bowl and place it near the head of the corpse inside the grave. As the Paṇiya tradition does not permit them to deposit old clothes of the deceased along with the dead, they are burnt. It is compulsory among them to deposit sandals, walking-sticks, a sickle, a piece of iron, a pot of porridge, betel leaves, areca nuts, tobacco and lime in the grave of the deceased. Today they have avoided the practice of burying their implements, vessels or ornaments. The Kuṟichiyas of Wynād keep a small knife for their women and an arrowhead for their men tucked in the right side of the mat in which they cover the corpse. The Kuṟichiyas of Kaṇṭavam bury arrowheads for men and a sickle for women. K. Panoor writes that if they don’t do so, souls of the deceased lament that they have been unjustly denied their essential tools and weapons.³²³ The Kuṟichiyas of both the areas also place a wick-lamp, a broken coconut and a goblet of water

near the feet inside the grave. This lamp is meant to be used for the journey to
the dark world of the land of the dead. Like the Kuṟichiyas, the
Mulḻakurūmans also deposit bows and arrows and knives with men and
sickles with women while burying. Kaṭṭunāikkans place betel and tobacco for
the headmen near the head of the corpse inside the grave. Wayanādan
Pathiyans throw one or two small pieces of gold inside the grave.

The Chōlanāikkans place axes, digging rods, knives, pots, cooking
vessels and rings made of copper or brass inside the graves. Karimpalr put a
porridge pot on the grave in an upside down position (Oṭṭālam Kamizhthal).
In earlier days Adiyāns kept a tappubala under the head of the corpse inside
the grave, and on the grave was kept rice cooked in turmeric water in a
plantain leaf. This was meant as food for the spirit of the grave called
Chudalapēyi. The Kaḷanādis place a new earthen pot with holes containing
millet, ragi and rice, in an inverted position, at the head of the grave. The
Iruḷas keep a lamp near the head of the corpse inside the grave supposedly for
the journey of the dead to the other world and to cook food. Like the Iruḷas,
the Kondakammara of Andhra Pradesh place on the head a traditional oil
lamp and then the lamp is closed with a rock. Among the Mewang Rai of
Eastern Nepal the main mourners and the elders light wicks and throw them
on to the coffin: dagbatti (sign lights): one onto the head end of the coffin,
one in the middle, one on to the foot end. The dead relative is asked to use it

for cooking food. “O mother, light a fire and cook yourself rice.” The Mudugas deposit grains like Kora and Ragi inside the grave. They place cooked millet and Ragi ada for boys/girls, which have to be prepared by their aunts. For men they deposit knife, koth or a small spade, an axe, money and a sickle and koth for women. They also place a cane basket known as thekku on the grave which contains grains like millet (andropogon sorghum), kora and a small spade. (A Muduga, who was employed as a forest guard, is said to have thrown fifteen-sovereign-gold-chain of his deceased wife into the grave before filling it). If their grave goods are found stolen, they believe that they are taken away by the evil spirits. The Kuṟumbas also follow the same tradition of grave good deposition. The Kätṭunäikkans deposit their belongings such as vessels and implements, along with a walking stick, at the head of the grave; the ornaments of a deceased woman will be placed over the mud heap.

Rituals on the return from the Burial ground

At the end of the funeral, all those who have taken part in it should return to the hamlet of the dead, after taking bath in either a river or a stream and with wet clothes, without turning or looking back. This, too, is a universally recognized tradition. After the funeral of a Waga Waga of British New guinea, the relatives who have participated in the funeral ceremonies and

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325 Martin Goenzle, op. cit, p. 53.
also the women and children of the deceased, go to the sea and bathe.326 The burial ground of the Oraon is always near a river, stream or tank. After the burial, all must bathe and return to the village.327 The Akoa Pigmy after burying the dead returns without looking behind them, and wash their hands and feet.328 Among the Todas of the Nilgiris, when the cremation is over, the chief mourner bows, touching his forehead to the stone, kept in the foot of the pyre and turns to leave the cremation place without looking back. Each person who has attended the ceremony follows, bowing to the stone and departing without a backward glance.329 Tribes the world over believe that even after the purification of their body and clothes, the spirit of the dead may accompany them to his/her home. Before the return of all those who have attended the funeral, kin-women take bath, and subsequently, they clean the house of the dead as well as its premises, all utensils and clothes, and then sprinkle water mixed with cow dung all over the house. Keer/Kir, a tribe in Madhya Pradesh after the burial return to their houses, break their earthen pots and purify their houses by washing them with cow dung and water.330 After a death the winter house of a Thompson River Indian of British Columbia was purified with water in which tobacco and Juniper had been

328 Carleton. S. Coon, *op. cit*, p.333.
soaked and fresh fir boughs were spread on the floor each morning.  

Certain tribes, all over the world, have some special rites to be performed after burial and the attendant purification. The Baheliya mourners of Mirzapur chew the leaves of the bitter neem tree and pass their feet through the smoke of burning oil. Among the Kakhyen of Upper Burma mourners returning from the grave strew ground rice along the path and clean their legs and arms with fresh leaves. Before re-entering the house they are purified with water by the medicine man with a sprinkle of glass. There is a strange custom among the Mudugas and the Kuṟumbas of Attappady that while returning from the graveyard, the son of the deceased person should collect a few pieces of dry and green high-growing grass known as tharuvappullu. The womenfolk, after bathing, bring water in a Padi or litre-jar (measuring jar), and it is placed at the spot where the funeral car was placed earlier. Then the headman makes arrangements for a ritual known as nikal nūr kuthu, which is called nikal edukkāvu and nikal kuthrath among the Kuṟumbas and Mudugas respectively. This rite has to be performed by all the close relatives of the deceased. The green grass piece symbolizes the newly deceased person’s soul whereas the dry ones, the ancestors’ souls. At first the green piece of grass is dropped into the water in the litre-jar followed by the dry pieces invoking the

names of the ancestor souls of the deceased like, say, father, mother, maternal and paternal uncles, brothers, sisters etc. If the two grass pieces immediately join together, it is believed that the particular ancestral soul, whose name has been invoked, has taken up the newly deceased soul. It means that the dead is the beloved relative of that ancestor. If the two pieces remain separate, the process is continued till the merging of the two grass pieces take place. This is a simple method to find out which one of the ancestral souls accepts the guardianship of the newly deceased soul. But the ceremony presupposes that it is just a parental acceptance of the soul by his/her kin-souls and that they continue to roam about among the people; his/her soul gets salvation and reaches the land of the dead only with the completion of the Čhīru or the second and final funeral ceremony. Those who face unnatural death will have no Nikalkuth performed on the day of the burial, which will be done on the day of Pachachāvu. Afterwards the water in the litre-jar is poured out and it is put upside down till it is used again for another nikal nīr kuthu. The two tribes also use oil (gingelly oil in the past and coconut oil today) at times when tharuvapullu is not available. While using oil, the two drops, one indicating the dead and the other an ancestor should merge together just like the grass pieces.

For the Chōlanāikkans, when they return from the graveyard after burial, a person from the house of the dead sprinkles water on them from an
earthen pot and makes a cut on the floor with a knife. Before burial, the headman waves a ring, which symbolizes the dead soul, over the corpse and then drops it into a vessel of water. If the ring stands erect at the bottom of the vessel, the soul of the dead is supposed to be happy and if it falls flat, it is not so. To make the soul happy, offerings like tobacco and coins are given. After this ceremony, the ring is kept in a basket known as *daivakkoṭta* or divine basket for three years. After this period it is handed over to the headman and his wife and they keep it forever at the *daivappura*. In the case of the Adiyāns, after the funeral rites, the *Naṭṭu-mūppan* distributes the fees paid to him by the relatives of the dead. Then the *Karṭmi* has a bath and he is followed by others. Among the Karimpālans, an arrow, which is carried by one among them during the time of the burial, is brought back on the completion of the burial, and the subsequent bath, and is fixed on the ground near the house in an erect position. It is not compulsory for the Koṛagas to have bath after burial; they just wash their hands, legs and face. When they return to the hamlet of the dead, a special purificatory rite known as *Maryādi* is performed. A woman relative of the dead takes water mixed with cow dung in an earthen pot and sprinkles it on the members of the funeral party with the help of the leaf of a jackfruit tree. S.T. Das observes that the device used to sprinkle cowdung water differs from one locality to the other: Koṛagas of Karkal town in Mangalore use mango leaf for sprinkling purposes. Then they bring some
burning coal and keep it on the spot where the corpse was laid. This ceremony was repeated three times: first after the burial, then on the next day morning and finally in the evening of the same day.\textsuperscript{334}

In the past, the kin-women of the Malayăjar discarded the mat, pillow and the bed used by the deceased in the wilderness; but the practice no longer exist today—now all the materials are cleaned and reused. The Ürajikuṟumans, after the funeral, smear cow dung on their body, plunge into a river and return home with wet clothes. Those who do not bathe or get their clothes wet remove their clothes and wear new ones on return. The relatives of the deceased immerse the funeral party in clouds of smoke emitted from a vessel containing burning dammer. They also smear ashes from the hearth in order to prevent the attack of the spirit of the dead. The Kuṉduvādiyans rub the members of the funeral party three times with burning incense stick. The Irulas, just after the return of the funeral party, clean all the domestic utensils. They also clean the floor of their houses by washing them with cow dung, and then all of them pray before a \textit{Nilavilakku}. Before the introduction of \textit{Nilavilakku}, they used to pray at the place where the corpse was laid. Nevertheless, the house where death occurred should not be cleaned nor should the relatives have bath for three days. Among the Kādar, the funeral attendants pray before the \textit{Nilavilakku} with folded hands. The last person,

\textsuperscript{334} S.T. Das, \textit{op. cit.}, p.178.
who reaches the house, after the funeral, should kick down the live coal that is kept in a coconut shell; this rite is intended to avoid a second death in the hamlet. The Malasar return home from the graveyard one after another in a row; the first person in the row has to take a stone from the graveyard which is handed over to the second person en-route and the process is continued till the stone reaches the hands of the last person. The last person in the row, finally, makes a hole in a tree in the graveyard with the help of a chopper and keeps the stone inside the hole. By doing so, it is held that the spirit of the deceased loses all contact with his/her relatives and would never enquire about them thereafter. Then all of them wash themselves and return to the hamlet. When they enter the courtyard a burning stick is thrown from inside the house of the deceased. The last person turns round and kicks away the burning coal kept in a coconut shell. Like the Malasar, Among the Gōnd and Bhūmia of Jabalpur, at a few yards from the house of mourning, the master of ceremonies stops and with the toes of his left foot picks up a pebble. Without bending down, he lifts his foot till his hand can reach the pebble. Then, without turning round he hands it to the next man following him, who in the same manner gives the pebble to the man walking behind. Thus the pebble passes from one man to the other till the last man throws it over his shoulder backwards.335 As far as the Malamalasar are concerned, while returning from the grave, all the attendants have bath and move in wet clothes and the

335 Stephen Fuchs, op. cit., p. 341.
women relatives at home rub their heads and legs with burning incense sticks. All these rites have to be performed by the last person of the funeral party; in addition, on entering the courtyard, he has to turn round and kick with his toe the live coal kept there in a coconut shell. The funeral party of the Wayanadan Kādar circumambulate a set of materials kept inside the house of the dead such as a nāzhi heaped with rice, a Nilavilakku and a pot of bhasam or ash; and after taking a little ash they get out of the house.

On the day of the funeral, universally, the food for the funeral party is prepared by the neighbours. In Samoa (Malenesia) those who touched the dead were most careful not to handle food for days, they were fed by others.\(^{336}\) Among the Agariya, a small tribe in Mirzapur, on the day of funeral “no fire is lit and no cooking done in the house that day. The food is cooked at the house of the brother-in-law (Bahnoi) of the dead man”.\(^{337}\) The food served during the day is generally known among the tribes of Malabar as paṭṭinikkkanji. In the case of the Adiyāns, the Kārmi is given some gruel first and later on he serves food to others. Unlike other tribes, the Kādar, after the burial, conduct a feast in one of the houses of the settlement, other than that of the deceased; the curry that is served should not contain turmeric powder. The practice still survives. Like the Kādar the Gōnd and Bhūmia the nat relatives

\(^{336}\) Turner, Samoa, p. 145 cited by Bendann, op. cit., p.106.
prepare a dinner for all funeral guests.\footnote{Stephen Fuchs, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 342.} Among the Koita on the first or second day following a death a burial feast (\textit{Bowa}) is held.\footnote{Charles G. Seligman, \textit{Malenesians}, pp.162-166, cited in Bendann, \textit{op. cit.} pp. 147-148.} Tribes all over the world believe that the souls of all deceased ancestors and of the newly dead come back for such a feast.

\textbf{Funeral Expenditure}

To meet the funeral expenditure, an amount is collected, during the course of the ceremony, from those attending it and the relatives of the deceased person have to make a special contribution towards it. In most cases, the family members of the deceased take up the expenditure for the funeral. In the case of a widow/widower, his/her relatives meet the expenditure. The heads of expenditure consist of payments to the headmen, to the bier makers, to the grave diggers and to the suppliers of food, and also for sending the widow and children to their natal home. In former days, in Malabar, the Janmi of each settlement had made a contribution including money, new clothes and grain for the purpose. A noted instance is that of the Mooppil Nair, the Janmi of the Iruḷas, who made a contribution of 200 to 300 rupees, six bundles of rice, etc. White cloth of six meters was used to make the six bundles which was called ‘Āru \textit{Mulumi Khandāvu’}. Even today the relatives of the former \textit{Janmi} of Karimpālans called Kallyāṭ Nambiar extend helps to them in the event of the death of the person who acts as the oracle. The Janmi of
Wayanadan Kadar contributes sixteen panam, a new mundu (white cloth) and a mat. After bathing, the corpse is laid in the mat given by the Janmi. In the case of Wayanadan Papiyas, their Janmi contribute one bundle of betel leaves, 25 areca nuts, a mundu and coconuts to meet the expenditure of funeral. The contribution for funeral is compulsory among many tribes as a matter of tradition.

In the case of Adiyâns, a metal plate is put near the head of the corpse and those who attend the funeral put some money in it according to their financial capacity. This money is used for meeting the needs of their ancestral ceremony called Kâkkappula, for payment to the Karumi, the gravediggers, bier makers and for other expenses. The payment to gravediggers is Rs.200 and nominal amounts are paid to all others by those who participate in the funeral ceremonies. This is known as Dharmam Kodukkal. If the husband dies, relatives of the widow had to prepare food for the members of the whole family for which they had to pay a nominal sum, say Rs.5 or 10, the relatives give Rs.100 to the headman. He takes Rs.20 from it and gives Rs.10 each to the Karmi and to the Kanalâdi and the remaining part is divided among the Kunnukkár and Chemmakkár. The relative must altogether pay 27 tappubala (bangles made of copper for the following purposes: 8 for the cot; 10 for the grave; 1 for applying sandal paste and 8 for other ceremonies),340 a practice, which has now been almost abandoned. As in the case of the Adiyâns, the

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340 Seetha Kakkoth, op. cit., p. 56. (one Thappubala equals 20 Rupees)
Kuṇḍuvādiyan custom insists that each participant of the funeral ceremony should pay 25 paise, which is known among them as Marippupanām. The contributions are immediately recorded and the defaulters have to pay it within a period of 16 days. This amount is set apart for the expenses of the Adiyanthiram or the pollution ending ceremony.

In the case of the Paṇiyas, the relatives of the deceased male contribute Rs.125 to the widow and those of the female Rs.300 to the husband’s family. “The Chemmi is believed to be the owner of the burial ground and is paid 7 paṇams (Rs.1.75) for the 7ft into 3ft spot for the grave”. Moreover, if a father or mother dies, their children have to distribute betel leaves to those who attend the funeral. The Paṇiyas, who serve as gravediggers for the Kaḷanādis are paid in money, cloth, rice and paddy. The Irulas, Kuṟumbas and the Mudugas pay their musicians. The Chōlanāikkans, Ėṟavāḷans and the Aṟaṇādans appoint paid gravediggers of whom the last group pays Rs.1500 for the gravediggers. Among the Ėṟavāḷans if a father or mother dies his/her brothers and sisters should contribute for buying the oil, clothes, soap and flowers required for the ceremonies. Just like the Paṇiyas, the Chōlanāikkans pay Rs.10 to the Chemmakākran or headman who finds out the spot for the burial. Among the Karimpālans, nephews and nieces had spent money to meet the financial expenditure earlier, now this is the responsibility of the sons and daughters. Among the Kāṭṭunāikkans, their clansmen help them to buy new

341 A. Aiyappan, op. cit., p. 141.
clothes, betel leaves and arecanut for the funeral purposes. In the Kurichiya tradition, deceased male’s relatives bring along with them 500gm. of oil, tender coconut, a bundle of betel leaves and 30 seers of rice (Chāvari). This is collectively known as Chāvu paṇam. Among the Kaṇṇavam Kurichiyas, all relatives of the deceased bring with them paddy. This is known as Machunan Paṇam. The Malasar place a towel near the grave and attenders of the funeral throw money in it. The Malasar and Kāṭṭunāikkans are helped by their close relatives and clansmen to meet the funeral expenditure. In the case of Malamalasar the married elder daughter should contribute money for funeral. In former days the Malamutthans considered it sinful to collect money from relatives and clansmen to meet funeral expenditure. Today collecting money from relatives and clansmen has become a custom with them also. Moreover even if a person happened to be disposed of in another settlement, the funeral expenditure should be borne by the kinsmen of his/her native hamlet. This expenditure among the Ėjavāḷans is known as Moyippaṇam. To meet the funeral expenditure most of the tribesmen are helped financially by their present employers today.

We get similar examples from the practices of other tribes. The Oraons keep a basket and an earthen jar by the side of the dead body for the visiting friends and relatives to drop paddy into these.342 Among the Todas funeral contributions in money may be made by any relative, and all those who have

342 K.P. Bahadur, op. cit., (n-18), p. 64.
married into the family of the deceased. The buffaloes for funeral are given by the husbands of the daughters of a man. Contributions of food are received from various relatives, who also contribute certain of the object used for the adornment of the body. Each relative gives a waist-string called pennār, made of black and white thread, which is put round the body of the corpse.\textsuperscript{343} The Lodagaa of West Africa place baskets at the foot of the funeral stand and grain is put in this basket by each member of the clan sector who is head of a compound.\textsuperscript{344} “Contribution to the funeral expenses include Funeral Water (Kuur Kwo), money that is offered to the senior mourner by his friends so that he can buy beer for himself and his guests, individual contributions to the grave diggers, which are thrown... at the funeral stand, and to the musicians, which are cast upon the xylophones...gifts offered to the deceased by friends, lovers and others in the course of their speech...and major contributions to funeral expenses consists of the twenty cowries collected from persons standing in certain specific relationships to the deceased”.\textsuperscript{345}

Pollution and Associated Ceremonies

Right from the time of death, the family of the bereaved, along with other close relatives is plunged into a state of death pollution called Pula. All over the tribal world, death entails a condition for the adequate expression of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item For details see W.H.R. Rivers, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.395-97.
\item J. Goody, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 83.
\item For details see \textit{Ibid.}, pp.157-159.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
which we must have recourse to the Polynesian word ‘Tapu’. In English the word Taboo is usually employed to mean pollution or defilement. Tradition has enforced many prohibitions upon the mourners after the death of a person. In the past the tribes in Malabar were strict followers of taboos, associated with death, but recently drastic changes have been taking place in matters like the period of pollution, its strictness etc. Earlier, the period of pollution was normally 41 days and in the case of a widow/widower, normally one year. If anyone had dared to break this law, the defaulters were punished by tribal councils. He/she may have to pay for the guilt and had to re-observe the penance for a further period. (For instance, the practice of Tappubala, among the Adiyâns). Today conditions of poverty have forced the tribes to reduce the period of pollution; most of the tribesmen are not able to abstain from work for more than one or two weeks. Tribes of other parts of the world follow a similar practice of mourning, instead of pollution. But the taboos among the tribes in Malabar are drastically different from those followed by the mourners elsewhere in the world. For instance, cutting of the hair or shaving, during the period of pollution, are strictly prohibited or are taboo among the tribes in Malabar (as also among many tribes in India); but it is not so among tribes outside India. But all of them strictly follow dietary restrictions; widow/widower has certain special pollution rites; and just like the wearing of white clothes among the Malabar tribes, they too have pollution marks like shaving of the head or blackening of the body. In the Tonga islands the entire
population shaves their heads as a sign of mourning. If a widow/widower or other near relative of a deceased native of Mafulu prefers, he/she may abstain from eating the favourite food of his group. The Mundas observe three to nine days' mourning. Two days' mourning is observed by the Khariar. The mourning period for the Birhösrs and for Juangs is seven and twelve days respectively. During this period men do not shave. They abstain from oiling the hair and observe certain restrictions of diet and work. A great number of net collars and armlets, and a long petticoat are worn by Warma widows (Melanesia) when in mourning. The widower in addition wears the leg-lets and a special belt. A Koita widow and other relatives of the dead man must abstain from such articles of food as the deceased was especially fond of until after the funeral feast six months later.

Death pollution affects entire kinsmen along with all those who have been brought into contact with the corpse. The period of mourning varies among different tribes; it depends upon the relationship of the mourners to the dead, or upon his rank, and ranges from a few days to many months or even years. Death of a member in a community inflicts a wound not only on the relatives but also on clansmen as a whole. The tribes use the period of pollution to fill the absence of the dead and to heal the wound created by the

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349 Seligman, Melanesians, pp.276-77, cited in Bendann, op. cit, p. 100.
350 Ibid., pp. 104-105.
departed. It is a universal norm that a male is the chief mourner in death but as per the Malabar tribal tradition, the eldest son is the chief mourner and he, along with other close relatives, perform all the obsequies; in the absence of the eldest son the younger sons may perform the funeral rites and if the deceased has no male issues, nephews (brothers' or sister's' sons) will have to perform the rite. If an unmarried boy or girl dies, the chief mourner is the cross-cousin of the opposite sex, i.e., the *Maithunan* or *Maithuni*. Among the Kolgha tribe in Gujarat, the chief mourner is the eldest son, brother, or the husband of the deceased.³⁵¹ Among the Lodagaa of West Africa, the close male kin act as a chief mourner. But in the case of a married male his wife is the chief mourner and vice versa. The close mourners of the Lodagaa tied a hide in their hands or neck. Those tied with hide include not only parents, but husbands and wives. The use of hide is limited to the persons who are presumed to lose most by death, and of these a husband suffers hardest of all.³⁵² In the past almost all tribes in Malabar had followed matriliny except the Malasar, Māvilāns and the Wayanādan Pathiyans. Among the followers of matriliny, the chief mourner was the nephew of the deceased; even today, the nephews perform the funeral rites among the Kuṟichiyas and Koṟagas, though they don't have any right over the property of their uncles. It is also compulsory that all the sons and daughters of the deceased person observe

³⁵² See Goody, J., *op. cit.*, pp.86-121.
The importance of the son as the chief mourner is reflected in an Ėṟavaḷan proverb, "Thaḥappinu Thalai Makan; Thāyikkum Ilai makan" (Eldest son for the father and youngest son for the mother). Among the Mewang Rai of East Nepal, the chief mourner for the dead father is the eldest son and for the mother it is the youngest son. If the eldest Kāraṇavaṭ dies among the Thachanādan Mūppans, either his sons or his brothers act as mourners.

The normal period of pollution among the tribes in Malabar is 1, 3, 7, 9, 11, 13 or 15 days. This is only a general statement for exceptions occur in the case of certain tribes. Chōlanāikkans have a three-day pollution period. Tribes like the Aṟaṇādans, Kalanādis, Paṃiyas, Muḷḷakurumans and Wayanādan Pathiyans observe a seven-day pollution period. Malayāḷar, Urālikurumans and Koragas have nine days' pollution. Malamutthans and Adiyāns generally observe pollution for 13 days. In the case of the Adiyāns, they have to obtain the consent of their Mūppan (headman) to observe Pula. For this they have to pay five hundred rupees and a full para (measuring vessel) of rice besides oil, soap, betel leaves, areca nuts and a bundle of firewood. This practice is called Kölum Valliyum Kettal. The period of pollution for Ąḷar, Kādar, Kāṭṭunāikkans, Thachanādan Mūppans and

353 C.A. Innes, Malabar Gazateer, Vol. I, F.E. Evans ed., reprint, 1997, p. 136 points out that the Uralikurumans do not have any pollution. A similar opinion is presented in C. Gopalan Nair, Wynad: its People and Traditions, Madras, 1911, p.73. But today's case is of course different. This may be a clear instance of acculturation.

354 Stephen Fuchs, The Aboriginal Tribes of India, New Delhi, 1973, p. 272 and J.H. Hutton, Census of India, 1931, Vol. III, Ethnographical, p.214, have described Kadar as having no pollution. But field studies have revealed that they, like any other tribe, practice strict pollution rules.
Kunduvādiyāns is fifteen days. Differing from the general pattern, Māvilāns and Wayanādan Kādar have sixteen days’ pollution. Malappaṇikkans have 12 days’ pollution and for the Malasar and Malamalasar the pollution period is eight days.

Longer periods of pollution were prevalent in the past and at times it extended upto six years or more. In former days the Irulas had a pollution period of three or four years; but at present it has been reduced to six months’. Likewise, in former days the Mudugas and Kuṟumbas had a pollution period of six years. Their pollution period which commenced on the day of death, extended upto the final funeral ceremony of the Chīṟu—which took place only after six years. Now-a-days, the pollution period has been reduced to a year. Because of the stringent dietary restrictions to be observed for a very long period, the mourners naturally become vegetarians by the end of the pollution period.

But these periods of pollution are applicable only in the case of the death of a matured person, while the death of an infant causes no general pollution and impurity is confined to his/her parents only and it lasts for the day of the death only. In the event of a death in the course of a death pollution, the pollution of the second death has to be observed separately and only after the expiry of the first, though the Adiyanthiram (second funeral) may be common. The making of the earth mound over the ash remains for
those cremated are done at the third or the seventh day. The period of
pollution for dignitaries like Kōmaram or teyyam dancers is normally ninety
days. The observation made by A.A.D. Luiz about a practice among tribes
like the Malappanikkans, Malayālar and Māvilāns that the women who have
“died while in pollution have to be buried by women and men keep away for
fear of evil” has not been substantiated by my field work among the
respective tribes.

Following are the vows to be taken by the mourners during the period
of pollution:

1. Do not bathe till the close of the pollution period. (This taboo now no
   longer exists, but among tribes like the Kūrichiyas, the widow/widower
   are not allowed to use oil or soap for bathing)
2. Do not chew betel, areca nut or tobacco.
3. Do not change clothes (Today changing of clothes is permitted)
4. Avoid delicious food.(meat, fish and oil are to be avoided)
5. Refrain from work
6. Abstain from sexual intercourse
7. Do not visit temples or houses of other people

8. Keep indoors

9. Avoid all entertainments (participation in marriages or festivals)

10. Do not conduct marriages within the family of the dead.

11. Maintain silence as far as possible

12. Refrain from shaving, oiling and cutting off hair and nails because the remnants of these are likely to contaminate the food that is offered to the spirit of the dead person.

13. Refrain from touching others

14. Prepare food by oneself and to restrict the consumption of food to one or two times a day.

15. Do not remarry during this period.

16. Widow/widower should refrain from wearing any ornament or coloured dresses; wearing of white clothes is compulsory for the mourners.

There are certain specific aims in taking such vows. First of all, they are aimed at strengthening and purifying the soul of the dead. Secondly, they are offerings to the deceased. Thirdly, they express a touch of affection by the close relatives towards the deceased. Finally, they aim at sending the deceased to the world of the dead without any hindrance.
Silence is a general norm to be followed during the time of pollution and is also a symbol of mourning. Maintaining silence, after a death in the hope of avoiding the attention of the spirits, is a universal practice. "In Indonesia, during the first few days after death", writes J.G. Frazer, "the inhabitants must keep perfectly quiet. No noise must be made, dancing or singing is forbidden, music must not be heard, rice must not be pounded, nor coconuts thrown down from the trees. The intention is that no sound should meet the ear of the soul to indicate the way to its home". Similarly, among the Lhota Nāgas of Assam, in the event of an unnatural death, the mourners should keep silence for six days. Besides all these restrictions, certain other vows are also taken by the tribes in Malabar. The Wayanādan Kādar place a lighted Nilațilakku in the room of the deceased till the end of pollution and perform bali, i.e., offering of food to the crow, from the seventh to the sixteenth day. Among the Gōnd and Bhūmia of Estern Mandala, during the course of the purificatory ceremony of those who attend the funeral in the graveyard a woman stands by with a light (Diya) in her hand in front of the house. As soon as the anointing with oil is over, she carries the light inside and places it on a shelf in the wall. The light is kept burning. Among the Ewe of Togoland, who bury the dead under the hut, a fire is maintained during the whole period of mourning, and strongly smelling herbs

357 William Crook, op. cit., (n-332), p.239.
are burnt in it to keep the ghost at a distance. There appears to be two contradictory reasons for keeping the lamp in the room of the dead till the end of pollution: 1) to warm up the spirit and 2) to keep away the spirits. The Wayanādan Pathiyans perform bali from the very next day of the death up to the sixteenth day. If the crow refuses to eat it, they throw the food in a stream. A similar practice exists among the Aheria, a small tribe in Central Daub, who throw cakes to the crows who represent the souls of the dead. The Nounoumaus of the western Sudan believe that the soul of every human being is at once in the man and in the crocodile. When the crocodile dies, the man dies the day after. If the crocodile loses an eye the man loses an eye, and vice versa...When a crocodile is about to die, it comes into the village of the person whose soul is lodged in it. When it dies they wrap the carcass in white clothing and bury it, and sacrifice fowls to it. Then the man whose soul was in the crocodile dies in turn. "The custom of offering rice to the crows occur in all parts of southern India", opines Clement Meighan, "among all grades of castes and even among some of the hill tribes. In parts of India, the belief behind this custom is that the soul of the dead person will return in the form of a crow and partake of the offering, so that the rice actually constitutes an offering to the spirit of the deceased.....The universal traits of this custom are one, the rice is offered only to crows; other animals and birds

are driven away if they attempt to eat the rice; second, it is considered an unfavourable omen if no crows come along to eat the rice”.362

In former days after burial, the Thachănādan Mūppans demolished the house of the deceased and all the settlers of that Pādi or settlement abandoned that place to settle in another Pādi. But the scarcity of land compelled them to give up this practice. Among the Korwas, a tribe of Central India, when a man dies, his hut is broken down and the family does not inhabit it again.363 Among Makonde, a South African tribe, when anyone died in a village, the whole population deserted it, saying that it was a bad spot.364 E.C. Parsons holds that “funerary destruction of property is partly prompted by the desire to prelude ghost walking, to keep the ghost from coming after his own, after what has been and still is a part of himself”.365 After the funeral, they place a lighted lamp in the room of the deceased along with the mat on which the dead body was laid. On the third day, a woman relative of the deceased after cleaning an earthen pot cooks half-a seer of rice in it and empties it on a plantain leaf and places it on the mat along with a glass of water. Sitting on a new mat, spread near the old one, the headman along with other kinsmen of the dead partake of the cooked rice. As leader of the group, the first person to take this rice is the headman and he is followed by the others. Thereafter the

365 Cited in Albert Muntsch S.J.A.M, op. cit, p. 105.
headman sitting on the mat throws the plantain leaf over the mat of the dead person in the eastern direction. The belief is that the land of the dead is in the east and the departed soul residing there would partake of this offering. Later, the headman, after putting betel leaves on the mat of the deceased, rolls it and ties it on the beam of the room of the dead. This is known as *Pula Keṭṭuka* or *Āvath Keṭṭuka*. Among Thachanādan Müppans if a husband dies, the chief mourner is his wife or vice versa. A shed known as *balipandal* is made outside the house; from the fourth day onwards the widow/widower and their relatives, after having bath in the early morning, stay there till the end of the pollution. In the past, the practice of making balipandals did not exist, the mourners sat in the courtyard braving extreme weather conditions and darkness of night. The women mourners wear the traditional dress of Thachanādan Müppans even today till the end of pollution. Among the Lhota Nāgas, a tribe of Assam, when a death by accident has taken place, the friends of the dead man build a little shed and put some clothes and food in it. On the day after the death, an old man lights a fire in front of the house and sacrifices a cock. All the members of the family come out of the house stark naked and, after stepping over the fire, enter the shed, where they remain six days without speaking to anyone, their food being provided by friends. The widows and widowers of the Shuswap of British Columbia are forbidden to touch their own head and body. They must sweat all night in the lodges which

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366 William Crook, *op. cit.*, (n-332), p.239.
they construct for the purpose and bathe regularly, after which they rub their bodies with spruce.367

The Kuṇduvādiyans, before lowering the corpse into the grave, take away one of the Kōdis put on the corpse. After burial the chief mourner covers his body with this cloth and sits in the room of the dead till the end of pollution. At nighttime the mourner must sleep on a plain mat with a long white cloth spread adjacent to the floor. A (spouted) vessel filled with water and in which some betel leaves are put is placed nearby. The vessel is covered by a plantain leaf which has been gently heated in order to make it supple. In the morning the mourner examines the changes that have occurred; 1) in the cloth spread on the floor, 2) in the betel leaves immersed in the vessel, and 3) in the level of water inside it. If any change is noted the mourner comes to the conclusion that the spirit of the dead has visited the room on that night. (It is quite likely that the cloth may get crumbled, betel leaves may lose their colour and the water level in the vessel may fall due to evaporation). The Ūrālikurumans during pollution avoid vegetables that stain clothes like the bitter gourd, green banana, etc.

As matriliny is still dominant among the Kuṟichiyas of Wynād and as the tarawād or joint family system is still powerful, on the event of a death, either in the tarawād or in the independent houses outside, the dead body is laid at the tarawād and is buried in the common graveyard and all the funeral

ceremonies including the rituals of pollution, are observed there. Death pollution affects all the members (normally not less than thirty) of the Kurichiya \textit{ta}r\textit{aw}ād. The most important rite to be observed by all the members of the \textit{ta}r\textit{aw}ād is the daily bath. A group of mourners sit in the room of the dead for the first three days after the death without sleeping. They chant songs continuously and this is believed to prevent the entry of evil spirits into the \textit{ta}r\textit{aw}ād. They also place water in a goblet about which reference has been made earlier. Before the burial, Kurichiyas take the waist-thread, a knife, a coin and a lime-box all of which are put in the courtyard to fix the date of the \textit{Adiyanthiram} or the closing ceremony of the pollution period. The \textit{Kāraṇavar} of the \textit{ta}r\textit{aw}ād, the \textit{Nāṭṭupūppan} or the head of the clan and the family members fix the date of the last rite avoiding Tuesdays and Fridays which are considered inauspicious. The body of those who die of unnatural reasons will not be allowed to be taken into the \textit{ta}r\textit{aw}ād, but pollution is observed by the family members. The Kurichiyas of Kaṇṇavam during the period of pollution wash their body with \textit{tā}l\textit{i}, a kind of shampoo made from the vine called \textit{paratālī}; they also use the bark of the rosewood tree for washing. This bark has to be taken only with the help of a sharp-edged stone and by a non-kinsman. The mourners, at intervals, remind the persons standing outside the house about pollution so that they may not enter the house. On the second day of the burial the person who cuts poles for making the bier pounds the paddy and cooks the rice in the courtyard of the dead
person's house. The relatives of the dead in the house go for bath in streams or river and return to the house. They consume gruel with the help of a folded jack leaf and again go for bath. This gruel is known as *Paṭṭinikanji*.

On the seventh day of pollution the chief mourner and relatives of the Wayanādan Pathiyans go to the cremation ground and collect the bones and ashes in a heap. They offer cooked rice to crows on plantain leaves in three directions and return to their house. Among the Mullakurumans the ashes of those who are cremated are floated in a small stream by the daughters of the deceased in the special area allotted for that purpose. The daughter-in-law of the deceased, after bathing, wear wet clothes, prepare food and place it where the body has been cremated to be taken by the crow. This rite is performed for three consecutive days, starting from the day of death. On the day of death a son or a close relative spreads a mat on the floor of *Daiyappura* and invites the deceased person's spirit to lie there. According to tradition, if they do not formally invite him he will not come. Like the Mullakurumans, the corpse among the Santhals is cremated near a stream and the remnants of bones are in due course carried in a basket and placed in the current of the Damodar River.\(^\text{368}\) The Akoa Pigmies, after cremation, collect the ashes on pieces of bark and throw them into a stream or marsh.\(^\text{369}\) For a whole year, the widow/widower of the Adiyãns is not supposed to laugh, have bath, change


clothes, shave, cut hair, eat delicious food (he/she should eat only cooked rice with green chillies), use ornaments or wear coloured dresses, take medicine in illness or pray. They should use only plantain leaf, instead of plates for taking food. He/she also has to refrain from remarrying during this period. If any one violates these taboos, they will be punished with a *thappu* and boycotted by others. But today they are allowed to bathe without using oil and soap, to change clothes and to go for work; the restrictions imposed upon shaving, cutting of the hair and eating delicious food still persist. It is not possible now to refrain from work for long: earlier kinsmen, clansmen and the *janmi* had supplied grains and vegetables for a full year, which was enough for their sustenance. Decline of agriculture and the *janmi* system led to the adoption of work based on daily wages, and with the break-up of the traditional feudal bondages the customary practices too have disappeared.

Death entails certain strict restrictions upon the widow/widower. For instance, in the Kutu tribe of Congo, widows observe mourning for three lunar months. They shave their heads, strip themselves almost naked, daub their bodies all over with white clay, and pass the whole of the three months in the house without speaking.\(^{370}\) In the Mekeo of British New Guyana a widower forfeits all civil rights. He is an outcast in the true sense of the term. He is not allowed to go in public, he cannot cultivate his garden and is

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\(^{370}\) Frazer, *op. cit.*, (n-95), p. 41.
forbidden to fish or hunt except at night.\textsuperscript{371} We find that the Adiyān widow is allowed to take bath only at the night-time. After the death of the spouse, a Toda widow/widower wears the cloak in a particular way: “The cloak of the surviving spouse is pulled over his or her head during the funeral and worn like this until the end of the ceremony. The spouse uncovers his or her head just before bowing to the stone after the pot-breaking rite. In times past, when a second funeral was held, the widow’s head had to stay covered until the pot-breaking at the end of the second ceremony, perhaps more than a year later....A woman suffering from funeral pollution cannot receive butter from the diary. A man in this state may, however continue to milk domestic buffaloes”\textsuperscript{372} The widow/widower of the Araṇādāns should sit in a corner of the house after preparing food for his/her wife/husband and he/she ought to eat only the food prepared and served to his/her deceased spouse. After a central Eskimo is buried the mourners shut themselves for three days in the hut in which he died.\textsuperscript{373} Among the Mewang Rai of East Nepal, the Kiriya Putra (i.e., the main mourner) even abstains from eating rice altogether and sits in the most sacred corner of the house not being allowed to speak.\textsuperscript{374} A widow of the Malamutthans has to put a wet cloth over her head till the end of the funeral pollution.

\textsuperscript{372} Anthony. R. Walker, \textit{op. cit.}, P.234.  
\textsuperscript{374} Martin Goenzle, \textit{op. cit}, p. 54.
The Aranādan mourner takes an anklet in his hands till the end of the pollution; he puts it down only while washing or eating. The mourners and the family members take food only twice during the mourning period. Among the Koṟagas, other families do not accept food or water from the deceased’s family in mourning for nine days in case the deceased happens to be a child and fifteen days in case of an adult.\(^{375}\) The Chōlanāikkans and the Malamutthans of Chōkkād prefer to fast during the day of the death; but the Chōlanāikkans serve black tea and food to all those who attend the funeral ceremony. Among the Malamutthans of Vīṭikkunnu, on the third day of death pollution, a Vannan (a man belonging to washerman caste) arrives to purify the house of the deceased by sprinkling water mixed with cow dung and he is given a feast in recognition of his service. This purification ceremony is called Mūnnāntali or Muntali. The custom is that the remaining portion of the food of the feast should be distributed among all the Vannāns of that locality. The tribesmen are to suspend work till the completion of this ceremony; otherwise the knife they use for clearing the forest would cut their own body. Similarly among the Rajpur of Orissa, only on the tenth day all used clothes are washed by the washermen and males get their hair cut and females get their nails cut by the barber. Thereafter all take purificatory bath.\(^{376}\) The Malappaṇāikkans on the seventh day of pollution perform a rite known as

\(^{375}\) S.T. Das, op. cit., p.178.
Kaññök, one similar to that of the Parayar. The ceremony is related to the body purification of the relatives who gather and wail together at the spot where the death took place. Before the commencement of wailing the bodies of the relatives are purified by sprinkling water mixed with basil leaves by the headman.

Among the Māvilāns the Kaṟmi tears out a small piece of cloth from the dress of the deceased at the time of the burial. The nephew of the deceased wraps his knife\textsuperscript{377} with this cloth and puts it inside his waist belt. For three days he has to take bath by plunging in a stream with the knife there and the cloth is eventually floated in the running water on the third day. The cloth floated away symbolizes the body of the deceased. On the second day of pollution the nephews prepare at the back part of the house a kind of porridge which would be consumed by three persons-this is called Pattinikkanzhi. As in the case of the Māvilāns, the chief mourner of the Wayanādan Kādar takes away a piece of cloth from the many ones put on the corpse. After bathing in a Kēni (temporary well on the river bed), he soaks it in water, squeezes it and then covers his head with it. Then, he covers a wooden stool inside the house with a new cloth and puts a brass pot on it, filled with water drawn from the well by himself- which has to stay there till the end of pollution. He himself prepares food, places the cooked rice along with pāpad in the courtyard with his left hand, and then taking a spouted vessel filled with water with both his

\textsuperscript{377} The belief behind which is that the spirits are scared of metals like iron.
hands prays to his ancestors as well as to the spirit of the newly dead person and then offers food to the crows. Likewise, the Úraljikuṟumans offer water and cooked hand-pound rice to the deceased inside the house. They believe that till the end of the pollution period the spirit of the dead visits the house everyday.

Among the Karimpālans, apart from the close relatives, a long chain of people outside the family circle, including the grave-diggers and the carriers of the corpse, too get polluted and they have to abstain from work during the pollution period. These results in severe economic strain for the people under pollution so the Karimpālans are very particular that the period of pollution should be strictly observed and successfully completed. This is because any evidences to the contrary may end up in a punitive extension of pollution for a further period of 3 months. In the same way, the Toda clansmen who participate in the earth-throwing or Puzhutpimi ceremony, diggers, bier-carryers, dairyman etc are polluted along with family members. A person who has incurred ichchil or pollution remains so till the next new moon. The grave digger of Huppa Indians sits in silence near firewood away from the rest and each night goes to the grave carrying over his head a bough of Douglas Spruce so as not to glance at the sky or at anyone, thereby contaminating them. After various other ceremonies, his clothes and dishes are hid on the fourth day and then are thrown into the river. Finally all those

who have been under taboo are washed again with medicine and again they bathe.\textsuperscript{379} The Karimpālans keep water in a leaf bowl and food in a plate inside as well as outside the house till the end of the pollution. As regards the Paṇiyas, the headman, after putting cooked rice on the grave, offers it to the crow for seven days after a death. A. A. D. Luiz points out that “when a death occurs, during the busy week of agricultural operation, when refraining from which would affect their earnings considerably, they have a ceremony by which the spirit of the deceased is preserved in a pot and the ceremonies are conducted when they are free”.\textsuperscript{380} The chief mourner among the Paṇiyas ties holy threads round his arms, his waist and his legs till the end of pollution so that he may not be harmed by the spirit of the dead. The chief mourner and two others among the Malamalasar take food only once in a day till the end of pollution. The mourners among the Irulas eat only porridge without salt or fried Chama. The Mudugas on the night of the burial day draw a circle with ash in the courtyard of every house in the settlement where death has occurred. They believe that otherwise the spirit would deposit the pieces of the body of the dead in the pots of the clansmen and the ash circle is intended to prevent this calamity. They offer cooked rice to crows till the end of pollution placing it in a plantain leaf on the winnowing basket somewhere inside the house. It is customary among the Paṇiyas to appoint the deceased person’s sister’s or brother’s daughters, who are known as Melikkārathi or

\textsuperscript{380} A. A. D. Luiz, \textit{op. cit}, p. 221.
Balikkārathi, to perform certain special rites. She bathes and fasts daily and prepares food for the mourners. She also offers cooked rice to the spirit three times daily for three days till the end of the last rite. Among the Adiyāns, on the second day of the death of a husband/wife, the Chemmi of the settlement tonsures his head as part of pollution. According to Bendann, the belief associated with hair-cutting is that the spirits attach themselves to the hair.  

After the funeral of a Toroas, a sub-caste in Toda clan, close male relatives shave their heads completely while close female relatives cut their ringlets to chin level. The widow and widowers of a departed native of the Hood peninsula in British Guyana also shave their heads and blacken their bodies.

The Kāṭṭunāikkans, Malappānāikkans, Malasar, Malamalasar, Iruḷas, Mudugas, Kuṟumbas, Ėṟavāḷans, Adiyāns, Koṟagas and the Paṟiyas have the custom of revisiting the grave after the burial. The Kāṭṭunāikkans do it on the day the pollution ends; the Malasar on the next day of the termination of pollution. They also pour milk into the hole left on the grave on the removal of the green stick stuck there at the time of burial. The Iruḷas call their grave-visit Maruthadi Pākku. Mudugas and Kuṟumbas call it Marusāvu and Maruthadi respectively. To the Malamasar it is Marunāḷu Nōkkal, and is on

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381 E. Bendann, *op. cit.*, p. 95.
the next day of the burial. On the seventh day also a group of ten or twenty members, consisting of both men and women, once again visit the grave. The Iruḷas, Mudugas, Kuruṃbas, Adiyāns (3 persons) and in the case of Ėṟavāḷans a group consisting of the Mūppan and five others visit the grave on the second day after the funeral. The grave-visit of the Paṇiyas is really interesting: on the first day three persons visit the grave, on the second day two persons and on the third day the Chemmi or the headman alone visits the grave. The Koṟagas visit their grave only at the time of Adiyanthiram or last rite. The tribes in Malabar believe that the visit to the grave is a must for they have to ascertain whether the dead has come out of the grave or the body of the deceased has been carried away by the sorcerers. In the past, due to the fear of the dead, they had buried the dead in a hurry in shallow pits, which might most probably have led the corpse to be carried away by wild beasts; the visit was intended to inspect this state of exigency and to rebury the corpse if necessary; but despite careful and scientific burial in recent years, the old practice continues in a ritualistic manner. Like the tribes in Malabar, those of the other parts of India and the world over follow the practice of grave revisit. Among the Warramunga of Australia a mound of earth is raised on the exact spot where a man died. A few days after the death a visit is paid to this spot to see if the tracks of any individual or living creature can be found. By such
marks the totem of the culprit is found. Among the Todas of the Nilgiris, “on the following morning after burial, a close male relative (father, son or husband) returns to the cremation site. If any part of the corpse has survived the flames, he will re-burn it and then sweep up the ashes into a pile”. Through the pollution period the tone of death changes from grief to resignation and finally to acceptance. Pollution ends in most cases with the bathing of the mourners and kinsmen, cutting of the hair and moustache by the male and taking of non-vegetarian food. Besides this, for tribes such as Karimpālans and Kuṇḍuvādiyans, _Pula_ is removed by sprinkling consecrated water from the temple. In the past, the _Changāthi_ of the Karimpālans after bathing from the temple pond and taking sacred water from the temple return to the house without speaking to or touching anybody to avoid the water being polluted. The pollution of the deceased _teyyam_ dancers of Māvilāns, Karimpalrar and Kanaladis end only after the sacred rites are performed by the Nambūthiris on the day of _Adiyanthiram_. Likewise the relatives of a deceased Kondayam Kottai Maravas bathe on the sixteenth day after a death and on the seventeenth the _Punyagavachanam_, or purification, takes place, followed by an oil bath taken by the _karmakarta_ or funeral

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385 Anthony. R. Walker, _op. cit_, p.228.
official. In Samoa (Melanesia), the fifth day of mourning is a day of purification. The inhabitants bathe the face and hands with hot water, and then they are regarded as ‘clean’ and resume the usual time and method of eating.

On the day of the abolition of Pula, the mourners of the tribes like Wayanādan Kādar, Mullukurumar and Kuṇḍuvādiyans follow special modes of bathing. In the case of the Wayanādan Pathiyans, on the final day of the Pula, the Munṇūttan (a Caste man) sprinkles oil over the mourners and on those who had touched the corpse. A cloth is spread on the courtyard and all the mourners keep their foot on it before going for bathing. In the past Kuṇḍuvādiyans bathed either in streams or rivers, then they wore clothes washed by Vasɡāthi (woman from washermen caste). These clothes had been taken from the house of the dead on the day of the death. The washed clothes are known as Vasɡāthi Māṭtu. All mourners and relatives of the dead Mullakuruman gather before the Daivappura on the day of the end of the pollution. They are supplied with gingelli oil for bathing. The uncle of the deceased supplies oil to men and the sisters of the deceased to women. In the past the person who brought this oil was an oil monger known as Kandāmala Nair who was called Eṇḍa-Nair or Pola-Nair by the Mullakurumans. As a

reward for his service, he was presented with dried meat. He poured the oil with a folded leaf of the jack tree with his right hand. But this practice has disappeared from their funeral rites today. It is compulsory even today to receive oil in the right hand and after smearing it on the body, nobody is supposed to enter his/her house without bathing.

In former days Adiyanthiram of the deceased was fixed after the disposal of the dead, by the headman and the close relatives of the departed. At that time it was a tradition among the tribes that all those who attended the funeral should definitely participate in it. There was no need of formal invitation. Today the headman and the close affines formally invite all those who attend the funeral rites. Recently tribal relations too are becoming formal. In this respect the Wayanadan and Kaṇṇavam Kuṟichiyas and Koṟagas follow certain peculiar customs. The day is fixed by the Kāraṇavar and the close relatives after bringing the waist thread, coin, and lime box of the dead (all these have been removed from the corpse and kept carefully) to the verandah. The Kaṇṇavam Kuṟichiyas on the day of the abolition of pollution grind the barks of Vāka tree (Acacia Adoratissima) and soak it in a mixture of cow dung and tender coconut water and sprinkle it over all parts of the house of the deceased to remove pollution. All mourners bathe after smearing Vāka paste on their body. Among the Koṟagas, the three Nāṭṭu Mūthavar who get possessed on the occurrence of death, announce the day of the Adiyanthiram. Among the Gōnd and Bhūmia of Eastern Mandala on the
third day after the funeral (*Tijra*, the third day), relatives and fellow villagers again assemble at the house of mourning and ask the head of the family on what date he will be able to perform the great funeral feast. If at the moment the deceased person’s family cannot afford the heavy expenses of such a feast, it may be postponed to a more convenient time. If the funeral feast is to be postponed, the head of the mourning family informs the caste elders of his decision and gives them a rupee for liquor. He also invites all the men who attended the funeral for a dinner. On the fifth day after the funeral of Santa Cruz islanders (in Malenesia) a feast commemorates the end of the burial ceremonies.

The worship of the newly departed begins from the day of the *Adiyanthiram*, and thereafter the deceased becomes a member of the land of the dead.

### Sending of the Widow and Property Distribution

Death not only represents loss, grief and rituals but it entails certain social and legal responsibilities too. In former days, in the case of the death of a married male, after the deceased had been buried and the necessary rites performed, the family of the deceased had the duty of disposing of the deceased person’s property and sending of his wife to her natal home. Almost all tribes of Malabar, in the past, had followed matrilineal system of

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inheritance and the head of the family according to this system was the 
*Kāraṇavaṇa* or eldest maternal uncle. He had the right to look after his
nephews, nieces and sisters. If a niece became a widow, it was the duty of the
*Kāraṇavaṇa* to look after her and her children. Moreover, many tribes in
Malabar didn’t permit widow marriage even though the widow was young or
childless. That was why it became compulsory to send a widow to her natal
home. Besides, the system of bride price had been in prevalence and that
provided her a share in her husband’s property.

Today, the customs associated with widowhood has lost their rigidity;
widows are sent off just symbolically to their natal homes, and they return
after the end of funeral rites. In the case of tribes like the Māvilāns, the widow
keeps herself away in a neighbouring house and returns after a few hours.
Widow marriage is permitted now in the case of young women and they can
inherit her dead husband’s property too. The childless and aged widows after
the funeral rites return to their natal homes. Earlier the family of the dead
male had no right over their children but now with the development of
patriarchal norms children are being treated as the members of the family of
the deceased male. The Kādar, Malasar, Ėṟavāḷans, Kāṭṭunāikkans, Koṟagas,
Malayāḷar, Wayanādan Pathiyans, Kaḷanādi, Paṟiyas, Iruḷas, Muḍugas,
Kuṟumbas, Āṟaṇādans, Chōlanāikkans, Malamuthans, Malappanikkans, Āḷar,
Thachanādan Mūppans and the Kuṇḍuvādiyans today send their widows,
symbolically, to their natal homes. Among the Malamalasar, even today, widows are not allowed to remarry even if they are young or childless.

In widow marriage, the tribes in Malabar follow certain peculiar traditions. Among the Malayālar, a widow is not allowed to remarry her brothers-in-law and the widower his sisters-in-law. Similarly the Chōlanāikkans do not allow men to remarry their elder sisters-in-law. The Iruḷas do not allow widowers to remarry their sisters-in-law. On the contrary the Kuṟumbas allow the widow to remarry the husband’s elder or younger brothers or any clansmen of her deceased husband’s settlement, but with the consent of her own parents. If she dies in her second marital life, her dead body has to be taken to her natal home by her parents. If a young Thachanadan Mūppan -widow engages in a second marriage, she has to pay a Kāṇappāṇam of 25 paise to her husband’s Pādi Mūppan. Her marriage is conducted in a simple manner without any rituals at her husband’s Pādi. The Mullakurūmans also allow the widower to marry their sisters-in-law.

The widows in the past were sent off from the deceased husband’s house almost empty-handed. Among the Wayanādan Pathiyans, a widow was given just a piece of cloth by the Kāraṇavar of the deceased husband and she was not supposed to have any right to take anything else from her husband’s house. If she had male children, they were given the father’s knife and vessels. The Wayanādan Kādar, on the other hand, sends the widow with new
clothes and the utensils that she had used like the spouted vessels and bronze plates. The Mavilan widow was given new clothes, money, and a piece of *Pudava* (the new piece of cloth handed over by the husband to the wife) and her children were entrusted to the care of the widow’s *Kāraṇavaṭ* at the time of marriage by her dead husband’s *Kāraṇavaṭ*. If a woman died in her husband’s hamlet, her utensils and clothes were brought back by her *Kāraṇavaṭ* to her natal home.

Among the Mullakupmans, there is a strange ritual associated with widowhood after the husband’s death. On the completion of pollution the brothers of the widow try to take her and her children to her natal home forcibly but, the oracle, who gets possessed by the spirit of the deceased husband, in a frenzy puts her forcibly into the *Daivappura*. If she is childless, this rite is not performed. Among the Karimpālans, a widow is taken by her *Kāraṇavaṭ* to her natal home after receiving her utensils, her husbands’ implements and new clothes. If a widow dies, after her *Adiyanthiram* her brothers return her children to her husband’s *Kāraṇavaṭ* with an offering of toddy and money to her clan deity and with the consent of the *Changāthi*. This custom is known as *Pathum Muthalum Kodukkal*. Among the Kanñavam Kurichiyas, after an ancestral ritual known as *Pōthiyāttam*, a widow is given 16 rupees as *Kāṇam* along with her husband’s movable properties by her father-in-law and the younger brother-in-law. Among the Wayanādan Kurichiyas, two or three years after the last funeral rites, the
widow is sent to her natal home. She is given a *Nilaviļakku*, a vessel, a sickle and an amount of money as expense for one year. Among the Adiyāns, at the end of one year, i.e. at the time of *Kākkappula*, the widow is given a *Kinnam* or brass vessel, a new sari and some ornaments by her deceased husband’s family. Likewise the deceased wife’s family gives a new shirt, a *mundu* and three hundred rupees to her husband by his deceased wife’s family. If the widow of an Ūralikuruman has grown up children, she either stays at her husband’s house, or returns to her natal home after receiving new clothes from her father-in-law or mother-in-law. Among the Kuṟumbas, the widow asks her parents to give her a share from their cattle. It is known as *Śīta*. Among the Thachanādan Mūppans, when a widow leaves after her husband’s death, “his relations give her one *pothi* (50 seers) of paddy, an earthen pot, a scythe, a spade, a cloth and a bottle of oil”. In the past, among all tribes, on the death of the headman, his property was inherited only by the male issues since both the office of the head and his property, was strictly patriarchal and patrilineal. This tradition is slowly changing today.

The nature of property distribution among widows has certain universal characteristics. “In the case of a West African tribe known as Lo Wiilli, the widows are inherited with deceased person’s patrilineage. Only members of the same or alternate generation can marry her without repayment of bride wealth, and a further restriction prevents elder ‘brothers’ from

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390 C. Gopalan Nair, *op. cit.*, p. 94.
marrying the widows of junior siblings. If a Lo Wiilli widow marries anyone other than a member of the dead man's patrilineage, then this group are entitled to demand the return of the whole of the bride wealth so far paid.\textsuperscript{391} Among the Gõnd and Bhûmia, a widow may return to her own parents the expenses which the family of her late husband incurred at her remarriage. If a widow has no children, she often prefers to return to her parents. After her husband's death, a woman should remarry one of her kinsmen. As a matter of fact, her husband's younger brother (Dewar) has the first right to marry her whether he already has a wife or not. If the younger brother of the deceased husband surrenders his right over the widow, another man may marry her if she consents.\textsuperscript{392}

\textsuperscript{391} J. Goody, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 333-334.
\textsuperscript{392} Stephen Fuchs, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 303-305.