CHAPTER V

FAMILY HEADS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Marumakkathayam in Kerala is a matrilineal system. It is not so much a matriarchal one. Usually the head of the marumakkathayam family would be the senior most male member of the tarawad and was generally called the karanavar. Ladies became the ruling heads of the families only in exceptional cases. As the head of the joint family the karanavar had many forms of power and a series of responsibilities. The following accounts highlight the powers and responsibilities of the heads of the two marumakkathayam families undertaken for the present study.

The karanavar of the tarawad has been a trustee or the person in charge of all matters connected with the joint family. He has been considered as the most important person in the family and was held in great esteem. He had both spiritual and temporal rights and responsibilities. This is best evident from the position held by him. All members of the family were expected to obey and respect the karanavar. It was he who supervised and decided all matters connected with the tarawad. Most often his word was considered to be the final. But the karanavar had no right to alienate the immovable property of the family as a permanent transfer. Nor had he the right of executing a partition of the family and its property. The matrilineal nature of the tarawad provided a singular status to all its members in the
social order. Each one of them would be known after the family. The tarawad as an economic unit was under the leadership of the karanavar of the joint family. Under the headship of the karanavar the tarawad ensured a stable life for all its members. There were several customs governing a tarawad. Usually under the headship of the karanavar there existed harmony in the joint family.¹ All these powers and responsibilities are best evident from the case of the Koodali tarawad and the Kavalappara family. The power and functions of the karanavars differ in accordance with the differences in the financial and political status of the tarawad. The head of the Kavalappara family seems to have more functions and power than the head of the Koodali family, even though both were marumakkathayam tarawads. A perusal of the Kavalappara Papers and Koodali Granthavari shows this differentiation.

The term karanavar means a man with responsibility and authority. Usually he will be referred to as the Valiyammavan (grand uncle) of the family. Often he will be a venerable old member of the family. He would be the custodian of all the properties and in charge of the day to day administration of the tarawad. As noted above it is the eldest male member of the tarawad who becomes the karanavar by his legal right. It is the senior most male member of all the branches or tavazhies of the tarawad who becomes the karanavar. The karanavar was almost like an uncrowned king.

Most often even if the karanavar misused his power the subordinate members of the tarawad, especially the ladies, were helpless to talk against him. On his death or when he ceases to be the head, a male member, next in seniority from all the branches of the family taken together would succeed to the office of the karanavar. The karanavars of the Koodali family and Kavalappara family had various rights and responsibilities and privileges as the heads of aristocratic landed families. The heads of such landed families had titles. The karanavar of the Kavalappara family held the title Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar. This is a stanam. At the same time he will have his real name also. In the documents related to the family both the real name and the stanam name of the karanavar would be used. This can be gleaned from many a document of the Kavalppara Papers. In a letter from one A.M. Jadavedan Nambuthiri to the Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar, the latter’s real name of Karakkat Kumaran Raman seems to have been used along with the title Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar.

The installation of the new karanavar in the wealthy feudal families was observed along with certain ceremonies of coronation. The coronation ceremonies or the installation ceremonies were reflective of their power and prestige. They were in accordance with certain customs and practices.

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2 Ranjini D., Nayar Women Today, New Delhi, 2000, pp.81 – 82.
Generally the rituals conducted at the time of a King's accession to power was called *Ariyittuvazhcha* in Kerala. Like the heads of the ruling families persons in charge of the administration of the temples, ritual authority etc., also had installation ceremonies and they were known in different names. In the case of the Kavalappara family the ritual and ceremonies connected with the assumption of office of the *karanavar* was called *Thandetam* or *Ariyittuvazhcha*. The installation ceremony of the *karanavar* of the Koodali *tarawad* was called *Padathilirikkal*.

In 1910 the *Thandetam* ceremony of the Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar, Appukuttan Unni Mooppil Nayar styled as Kumaran Raman was celebrated. During this period the estate was under the Court of Wards and the *Thandetam* ceremony was with the permission and supervision of the British. Among the invitees were seventy three *sthani* Nairs and Nambuthiri Brahmins. Among the *sthanis* were Kanhingat Achan, Kunnakkat Achan, Karanavans of Palat, Kuruppath, Mangatt Thodi, Thekkath, Mattummel etc. The estate Vakil, K. Koru Nayar and representatives from various *manas* like Chunangad, Desamangalam, Ottappalam, Eruppe etc., also attend the function. Among the rituals of the *Thandetam* there was the *Pasu Danam* or

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5 Interview with K.T. Kunhikrishnan Nambar, the present *karanavar* of Koodali Thazahathu Veedu, dt. 10-6-2008.
the gift of cows to the Nambuthiris. In the *Thandetam* of 1910 twelve Nambuthiries belonging to Kummini Mana, Thiyyannoor Mana, Chittatiyoth Mana, Mannanambutte Mana, Thekkeppattu Mana, Matangath Mana etc., were gifted cows and *Onapudava* or new cloths. An extract from the accounts showing the expenses of the *Thandetam* of 1910 gives details of the purchase of *Thekkan Charakku* (clothing material) meant for the use of and presentation (*Onapudava*) to the *Stani* (holders of places and ranks) *avakasis* (claimants) and to various dignitaries, officers and so on who participated in the function.\(^8\) The ceremony of *Thandetam* starts from Menakathodikkalam. From this place the Mooppil Nayar would go to the Anthimahakalan bhagavathi temple. From there he would go to Aryankavu temple in a decorated palanquin. The Nayar will have all his traditional ornaments like anklet, bangle and chain (*Mala*). Connected with the celebrations of *Ariyittuvazhcha* was the *Kuthirakkettu*. Two wooden horses, one representing the *desam* of Eruppa and other one representing Karakkat, would be brought for the celebrations. This palanquin is kept in the Kavalappara Kottaram now. The right to bear the palanquin was vested with certain families in the area.\(^9\) The journey to Aryankavu would be with retinue and in a procession. Among the retinue there will be the bearers of the sword and shield of the bhagavati. They were called the *Onnu Kurey Ayiram Nayars* (Thousand

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\(^9\) Interview with Sarala Nethiyar, a senior member of Kavalappara family, on 10.10.2008.
This Onnu Kurey Ayirum Nayars reminds one of the Onnu Kurey Ayirum of Kodunngallur which has been the Nizhal of the ruler of Kodungallur. It has been a Nair organization led by a few old aristocratic family of the place. The main ceremony of Thandetam was conducted at the Aryankavu temple, the shrine of the tutelary deity of Kavalappara Nayar. It was presided over by the Kalloor Mana Nambuthiri, a traditional priest. The Kallakkat Mana Nambuthiri the traditional instructor in arms of the Mooppil Nayar attended the function as the kalari gurikkal. The Kavalappara kalari was known as Kallakkat kalari. The last Ariyittuvazhcha was conducted by Neelakantan Nambuthiri of Kallur Mana. It was the Kunhikuttan Unni Mooppil Nayar who was subject to the last Ariyittuvazhcha. It is to be noted that in 1910 the Mooppil Nayar was only a landlord and he was only a titular sovereign. Even in this condition the ceremony was an elaborate and expensive one. So it must have been practiced with elaborate pomp and grandeur during the pre-British period. Ceremonies like this added to the prestige of the karanavar and the tarawad.

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10 Ibid.
11 At present this Onnu Kurey Ayirum Nayar is in partial charge of the affairs of the Kodungallur bhagavathi temple.
12 For details see M.G.S. Narayanan, Perumals of Kerala, Calicut (1972) 1994, pp.122-123.
13 K.K.N. Kurup (ed.), Kavalappara Papers, op.cit, pp.XL-XLI.
14 Interview with Sarala Nethiar, a senior member of the Kavalappara family on 10.10.2008.
15 Ibid.
They are a sort of proclamation or exhibition of the power and status of the *taravād*. The ceremonies like this speak a lot on the close link between land, religion and power. The sacerdotal class of the brahmins has been the supporters of the ruling class. Their support was a sort of legitimisation as far as the rulers were concerned. For their support and blessings the brahmins received material benefits in the form of gifts like *dakshinas* and *danās*. The Nambuthiries who participated in *Thandettam* ceremony of 1910 were outstanding in spiritual matters and their blessings to the chieftain who ascended to power was part of the traditional customs of the land. In the case of prominent rajas of Kerala like the raja of Travancore also the priest had a dominant role in connection with the coronation. This is evident from the rituals like *Hiranyagarbha* and *Tulapurusha dana*.¹⁶ None of the chieftains of Kerala with the exception of the Raja of Cochin had the Kshatriya status. So it was necessary for them to have an entry into Kshatriyahood. This was made possible through priestly assistance and the king of Tiruvitamkur achieved this through the ritual of *Hiranyagarbha*, the practice of passing through the stomach of a cow made of gold.¹⁷ In the *Tulapurusha dana* the king will be weighed against gold and silver. Through this the king would be "converted" into Kshatriyahood. It was the *Alvancheri tamprakkal* who acted as the chief priest in *Hiranyagarbha*. But in the case of less ambitious rulers

there was no *Hiranyagarbha* which was of course expensive and in their case a blessing of the *tamprakkal* would suffice.\(^{18}\) The Mooppil Nair was only a minor chief when compared with these and that was why there was no ceremony like *Hyranyagarbha* and *Tulapurush dana*.

The installation ceremony of the *karanavar* of the Koodali family has been called *Padathilirikkal*. The *karanavar*, *Gurikkalachan* also was the head of the *kalari* of the *tarawad*. In this ceremony also there was the service and presence of Nambuthiries. In this ceremony the *karanavar* will be made sit on his official chair in the family. The members of the family were expected to be present on the occasion.\(^{19}\) There will be grand feasts in connection with the *Padathilirikkal*.

Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar has been an invitee for some of the important installation ceremonies. For example he was to be present in the installation ceremony of the *Thachudayakaimal* the head of the administration of the Koodalmanikyam temple Irinjalakuda.\(^{20}\) This ceremony called *Jatakavarodham* has been unique.

The Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar attended the *Jathakavarodham* of 1918 along with his retinue. This retinue included nineteen persons consisting


\(^{19}\) Interview with K.T. Kunhikrishnan Nambiar, Komath, a senior member of Koodali *tarawad*, on 10.6.2008.

\(^{20}\) K.K.N Kurup (ed.), *Kavalappara Papers, op.cit*, p.XLi.
of learned Nambuthiries, his manager, clerk, couriers, sword and shields men, peons and cook. The Mooppil Nayar spent an amount of Rs.101 fanam as 
dakshina in connection with this Jathakavarodham.\(^{21}\) The fact that Kavalappara Nayar used to be an invitee to ceremonies like Jathakavarodham speaks aloud the power and prestige of the Mooppil Nayar.

The entire property of *tarawad* was kept under the control and management of the *karanavar*. The *karanavar* was legally responsible for its safe keeping. He was also to be responsible for the welfare of all the members of the family. He was to provide for the requirements of all members in an impartial way. The *karanavar* as the trustee of the *tarawad* property was entitled only to maintenance out of the joint property. He was not empowered to alienate the trust property without the consent of all the members of the *tarawad*.\(^{22}\) The unauthorised alienation of the property has been a serious crime which might even lead to the removal of the *karanavar* from his position. Generally the *karanavar* would have no private property of his own. Any property that they happened to possess was generally presumed to have been earned out of the income from the joint property. But if a *karanavar* proved to the satisfaction of a court of law that certain property was his own acquisition, such property was declared to be his private earning. The junior members also had the right to make such acquisition and dispose


the same in the manner they liked during their life time. But the private acquisition of every member who die intestate lapsed to the joint property of the tarawad.\textsuperscript{23} The position of the karanavar has been a highly coveted one. There are instances of becoming the karanavar on false evidences even though they are very rare. This led to many litigations in the courts of law. The history of the Koodali family gives a good example to this. After the period of second Kelappan Nambiar, the karanavar of Koodali family, Kunhambu, the former's son-in-law managed to become the karanavar. Kunhambu had been adopted by the karanavar Kelappan Nambiar II. He later became an agent of the tarawad. He became the adhikari of the amsam also and in that position he was backed by the British authorities and with their backing he captured power, killed many a member of the family through treachery and collected revenue, rent, etc., from the property of the Thazhathu tarawad. At the same time he did not care for the maintenance of the other members of the tarawad. Against this the man to be the legal karanavar, Kelappan Nambiar III filed a suit in the Court of Tellichery. By presenting certain forged documents in the court of law Kunjambu Nambiar could win the case and the entire property of the family came to the hands of Kunjambu Nambiar. Later uncle Kelappan Nambiar managed to have judgement according to which half of the property came into his hands. This struggle had its regressions for a long time. After sixty years of this in 1929 the certain

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, pp. 19-20.
property of the Koodali Thazhathu house was encroached by the descendants of Kunjambu belonging to the Ayyallur family. Then the tenants and labourers of the Koodali family handled them physically and drove them back. This was during the period of Kunhikammaram Nambiar. The joint property was impartible except with the unanimous consent of all members. At the time of partition, the *karanavar* was entitled to a double share.\(^{24}\)

The *karanavar* of a Malabar tarawad can be compared to the father in an ordinary Hindu family. The senior most man gets his authority by birth just like the father acquires the headship of the family. His position is not a post conferred on either by a contract or a faith.\(^{25}\) The position of the *karanavar* resembles that of the manager is a Mithakshara Hindu family. But the property of the Mithakshara family can be partitioned. But law did not allow the partition of marumakkathayam tarawad. The *karanavar* had two kinds of powers and responsibilities. The first one is in his connection with the members and the property of the tarawad. The second one is related to the execution of religious administration. Even if he could neglect the day to day affairs of the tarawad, he could not be free from the religious responsibilities. Through the court verdicts in certain cases the Madras High Court has made its opinion that the *karanavar* could never withdraw from the

\(^{24}\) *Ibid*

religious responsibilities. For example Rayiru Nambiar, a karanavar of the Koodali family, had entrusted the management of the family to the Ayyallur house. At the same time he had not alienated his religious powers. But he retained his religious authority, especially on the Koodalikavu. The karanavar had full right in spending the revenue of tarawad and conduct the day to day affairs of the tarawad. Even though women were enjoying freedom under the marumakkathayam system they were not having any real power with regard to the tarawad property. It was the karanavar who dealt with the revenue of the tarawad and conducted the day to day affairs of the tarawad.

In times of need it was the karanavar who gave land as mortgage in return for money. In the year 1746 Karakkat Kumaran Raman the Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar received 40 new fanams from Vakkade Kumaran Ganapathi in return for mortgaging certain paddy fields and uplands. In 1746 itself the Mooppil Nayar received from the hands of Anappura Erachan Ettiyarappan and his brothers a sum of 200 new fanams. This was in return for giving wetlands of an area of 30 paras of seed paddy for pattom. Apart from this money as ready cash the receiver of the land was to give 65 paras of paddy a year as pattom. In the same manner lands were given to some

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others. It was the karana var who made additions to the family property from the revenues obtained from it. We have numerous instances for this in the history of Koodali tarawad. For example Kunhi Krishnan Nambiar, the karana var of Koodali family made important additions to the family property among which the outstanding were the coconut plantations of Pallipoyil and Kololath Parambu at Mattannur, Kannur district. Kunhi Kelappan Nambiar set up coconut gardens at Kumbam, Poovathur, and Kanhirode for the Koodali family. It is the karana var who sued for the tarawad. As regards the Koodali family the period of certain karana vars were replete with litigations. The karana vars Kunhi Kelappan Nambiar, Chathukutty Nambiar and Kunhikannan Nambiar of Koodali tarawad are good examples for this. For recovering certain paddy fields belonging to the Koodalikavu Kunhikrishnan Nambiar had to file cases against Chandrothidathil Kunhambu and his sisters in the Munsif Court, Kannur. When the case was dismissed the karana var sent an appeal on this before the sub judge Tellicherry who found the case as genuine. A second appeal on this was filed in 1883 before the Madras High Court which also was dismissed. There were other similar cases in which the karana var of Koodali family and Chandrothidathil Kunhambu were involved. All these litigations involved much time and money. Prestige

issue also was there. All these judicial cases are proofs for the powers and responsibilities of persons in the position of *karanavars*. The suit filed against Kelappan Nambiar III or Kunhikelappan against Kunhambu Nambiar has been famous.\(^{31}\) It was the *karanavar* who built or repaired the *tarawad* houses. Kunhi Kelappan Nambiar built a new house, the Keloth house for the Koodali family. A separate house was built for the *karanavar* of the family, the *Pathayapura* and *Padimalika*.

The *Gurikkalachan*, on behalf of the Koodali family performed functions of the trustee of the temple of *Koodali Daivathar uralar*. In this capacity the *karanavar* used to purchase, mortgage or lease lands. Many a document in the *Koodali Granthavari* pertains to the title deeds in connection with such transactions.\(^{32}\) The office of the *Gurikkalachan* consisted of Menokkies, clerks and the like officers for the elaborated functions connected with land transactions, temple festivals, rituals, day to day affairs of the family etc. Every transaction had been in writing. All these were properly witnessed, identified read and approved.\(^{33}\) The trustees of the temple of *Daivathar* acted as a banking institution and invariably the *karanavar* was a banker also. During its later period in the 20\(^{th}\) century when the *tarawad* began to drift from agricultural activities to business sector, a bank was also

\(^{31}\) K.K.N. Kurup (ed.), *Koodali Granthavari*, op.cit, pp. XVII-XVIII.


\(^{33}\) *Ibid.*, p. XI.
started under the auspices of Koodali tarawad. The karanavar was invariably its founder and managing director.\textsuperscript{34}

The Gurikkalachan used to extract rent not only from the lands under his control but also from traders under him. The former was mainly in the form of paddy. But the latter called the melama and kalpana were in cash.\textsuperscript{35} All these payments were paid by the tenants as recorded in the lease agreements before the tira festival in the temple.\textsuperscript{36} The stipulation that payments were to be made before the tira ensured a regular collection. It endowed it with a religious colour so that it would be more obligatory for all the tenants. Among the lease holders there were Muslims also.\textsuperscript{37} The shopkeepers were Muslims.\textsuperscript{38} All these were obliged to the karanavar and paid the rent before the tira festival. Religion always supported the cause of the landowners. The rent in cash collected from the traders who had set up shops in the realm of the Koodali karanavar has been a steady income for the latter. The money thus collected was generally invested on land. A large number documents of the Koodali Granthavari mention the name of traders and the rent given by them.\textsuperscript{39} The very sight of the karanavar collecting rent

\textsuperscript{34} K.T. Kunhi Kammaran Nambiar, \textit{The History of the Koodali Family}, unpublished Document kept in the Koodali tarawad, p. 30
\textsuperscript{35} K.K.N. Kurup (ed.), \textit{Koodali Granthavari}, \textit{op.cit.}, p.XV.
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Ibid.}, Document No. 2, Section D, pp. 109-112.
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Ibid}, Document No. 1 and 2, Section D.
and other dues from the traders added to the power and position of the karanavar.

T. Sanghunni cites the opinions of justice Holloway and Chief justice Morgan of Madras High Court in explaining the powers and responsibilities of the karanavar as follows. The offspring of the tarawad have no right over the property of their father. All their rights are in the family of their karanavar. During the life time of their mother, their legitimate guardian is the karanavar of the tarawad. According to law their father has no right over them as their guardian.\(^{40}\) In reality all the movable and immovable properties of the tarawad are in the hands of the karanavar. He has the right to maintain them by himself. So also he has the right to transact the property as debt kanam, etc. He has also the right to buy property in his own name, to extract the rent from property etc. He could also mortgage the property or give them as kanam.\(^{41}\)

In the Kavalappara Papers there are many instances of the acts of the karanavar who on behalf of the tarawad acted in the purchase, mortgage and lease of lands. He represented his family in the court of law and all esteemed functions.\(^{42}\)

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\(^{40}\) T. Sanghunni, citing the opinion of Justice Forbes of Madras High Court, *Malabar Mahotsavam, op.cit*, p.348.

\(^{41}\) Ibid, p.348.

The Kavalappara Nayar has been a *sthani* Nayar (a Nayar of certain high position or occupying *sthanam*) and as such he had a series of privileges. Among these privileges were those in connection with the Nambuthiri community who were at the apex of the caste hierarchy. Usually the Nambuthiries would not let those inferior to them in caste to see them dining. But the Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar had the right of inter dining with the Nambuthiries on certain occasions. This was called *Sakshi Bhojanam*. So also the Mooppil Nayar had the right to dine along with the Nambuthiries in the *Vattela Sadhya*,\(^{43}\) which literally means the feast served on the faded plantain leaves. This *Vattela Sadhya* was the feast conducted in the Nambuthiri *manas*. According to the custom of the *desam* the *sthani* nayars like Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar would be invited for such feast. In this feast any item of food asked for would be served.\(^{44}\) The meals of the Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar was called *Pazheri*. The birthday feast of the members of the Kavalappara family was called *Pirannal Pazheri* and that of marriage as *Kalyana pazheri*.\(^{45}\) The Nambuthiries had no problem of untouchability or unapproachability in the case of the Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar.

The Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar used to finance certain rituals like *Somayagam* in the house of Nambuthiris. In March 1902 Neelakantan

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Attisseripad of Koonathara *amsam*, Mannanoor *desam* of Valluvanad taluk, seems to have written a letter requesting grant of money and the like for the performance of a *Somayagam* to the estate manager's office of Kavalappara.\(^{46}\) The Attisseripad was granted Rs 84/- (Rupees Eighty four) and 401 *Paras* of paddy for conducting the *Yagam*.\(^{47}\) It is clear from documents connected with this that in 1901 also similar contributions were made to the Brahmins.\(^{48}\)

Among other things the Attisseripad had requested for the protections of the sacrifice from the part of Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar.\(^{49}\) The Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar thus had the privilege of being the *Rakshapurusha* of the *Yagas* conducted by the Brahmin.\(^{50}\)

The Kavalappara Nayar had certain customary privileges in connection with the Zamorins of Calicut. When a child was born in the Kavalappara family, the Zamorin would send a piece of silk and ring to the new born baby.\(^{51}\) So also the Mooppil Nayar had certain customary privileges in connection with certain Nambuthiri families. If the Mooppil Nayar dies the head of the Kadambur Mana used to observe pollution.\(^{52}\) On hearing the news the Nambuthiri would take a purificatory bath. So also when the head

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\(^{48}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{49}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{50}\) P. Bhaskaranunni, *op.cit.*, p.192.

\(^{51}\) *Ibid*, p.192.

\(^{52}\) *Ibid*, p.192.
of Nambuthiri family of Kadambur Mana dies the fact will be intimated to the Mooppil Nayar who there upon proceeds to take a purificatory bath. These are traditional customs showing kinship between the two families which are believed to have a common origin. According to tradition the origin of the family of Mooppil Nayar is from Karakkal Mata, one of the twelve children of the Brahmin saint Vararuchi in a Pulaya woman. The eldest of the twelve according to tradition is the Mezhathur Agnihotri, the well known brahmin saint. The Kadambur Mana descended from Mezhathur Aganihotri. Thus the Kavalappara family and Kadambur Mana had a common origin and it is this link that is seen in the observance of certain customs of by the two families.\(^{53}\)

The Mooppil Nayar has been a *naduvazhi* with certain political powers and responsibilities under the *Raja* of Palakkad. As he had received land grants from the *Raja* of Cochin he was to be obliged to that king also. Thus he had to be loyal to both the *Rajas* and in this position he had privileges and responsibilities involving social and religions matters. The Mooppil Nayar held eight dignities or *sthanams* from his overlords of Cochin and Palakkad. In connection with these *sthanams* he held landed property in several villages. Along with the dignities and land grants the Kavalappara family enjoyed traditional *desavazhi* (ruler of a desam) rights in the villages bestowed upon it by his overlords. As the head of the family the Mooppil Nayar has been the

\(^{53}\) K.K.N. Kurup (ed.), *Kavalappara Papers, op.cit*, p. XI.
The eight dignities or *sthanams* held by the Mooppil Nayar have been the following.

1. Kavalappara Nayar or Karakkat Moothar with the *sthanam* name of Karakkat Kumaran Raman. The properties situated round about Kavalappara.

2. Kunhumelpada Nayar with the *sthanam* name of Kumaran Raman. The properties situated in and about Melakode, Palakkad district.

3. Pannithiruthi Kaimal with the *sthanam* of Ittunni Kumaran Raman. The properties were in Thennilappuram, Palakkad district.

4. Chundil Moothar with the *sthanam* name of Kotha Kumaran Raman. The properties were in Kavassery, Palakkad district.

5. Kattusseri Kaimal with the *sthanam* name of Karuthillathu Ittunni Kumaran Raman. The properties were in Kattusseri, Palakkad district.

6. Pazhampalakode Moothar with the *sthanam* name of Kumaran Raman alias Pazhampalakode Moothar. The properties situated in Pazhampalakode, Palakkad district.

7. Ayyazhipada Nayar alias Ayyazhi Chathan Raman.


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54 *Ibid*, p. XV.
The first six of these were held by the Mooppil Nayar in his capacity as a feudatory of Palaghat Raja. The last two were as the subordinate power of the Cochin Raja. These two areas were in the territory of Cochin Raja. Apart from the holding of land each dignity involved certain rights and privileges. Invariably they included responsibilities like payment on special occasion to the overlord, supply of troops etc. This was more or less like the obligations of a medieval European feudal lord to his overlord.

The rights of a desavahzhi in Kerala is expressed through the words "ambalam, ambalapadi, desam and desadipatyam." Ambalam means temple, ambalalpadi means the trusteeship of temple, desam refers to a unit of settlement and desadhipatyam involves hegemony over such lands. Ambalappadi also refers to the maintenance and the conducting of ceremonies in the village temple. It involved the uraima or the administration of temple lands and temple servants. Desam and desadipatyam involved the guidance and leadership of all matters pertaining to the village and the responsibility of keeping law and order and the like in the village. The desavazhi was empowered to direct all civil, religious and military affairs of the desam. The Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar was such a desavazhi. If only a landlord had all

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56 For details of the obligation of a feudal lord to his overlord see Will Durant, The Age of faith, New York, 1950, p.569.
57 P. Bhaskaranunni, op.cit, pp. 904-05.
these rights he was called a desavazhi. If he had no ambalapadi or uraima he will be only a mere janmi.

As noted above the Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar was the feudatory of Cochin Raja on one hand and that of the Palghat Raja on the other. In these positions he had a series of obligations and privileges. These included attending functions and ceremonies at the royal families of Cochin and Palghat. These ceremonies included the installation ceremony of the king, Sanchayanam or the rite of collecting specific bones after funeral of the king etc. It also included the customary monetary payments to the overlord. The Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar made such payments on occasions like the installation ceremony, Sanchayanam etc. In August 1897 when the Palghat Raja passed away, the Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar was invited for attending the Sanchayanam and the subsequent installation ceremony of the next raja in his position of having the five sthanams mentioned above. The Nayar was to send a contribution of 96 fanams. It was 16, 32, 16, 16 and 16 respectively in the sthanams of Karakkat Moothar, Kavachery Chundil Nair, Kattusseri Kaimal and Pzhampalakode Moothar respectively. In 1897 Kavalappara Estate was under Court of Wards. Even then the Nayar was to attend such ceremonies and make payments. The Collector of Madras who was the agent to the Court of Wards was sent a petition by Ittunni Rama Tharavanar

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58 Report of the Manager of Kavalappara, Ittunni Rama Tharavanar to the Collector of Malabar, dt 23-8-1897.
manager of the Kavalappara Estate in this connection requesting for a cash order for the above said 96 *fanams* and the four *fanams* to be paid to the bearer of the letter.

As the Mooppil Nayar was under the control of the Court of Wards he was to get concurrence from the former for money payments. In the letter cited above it is stated that the last occurrence of such sanction for money was as per order No. 394 dt. 29-5-1890.\(^{59}\) The money was sanctioned.\(^ {60}\) In September 1902 when the then Raja of Palaghat passed away similar invitation was sent to the Mooppil Nayar. Then the manager of Kavalappara family Madhava Menon sent a request for sanctioning the amount needed\(^ {61}\) and the same also was sanctioned.\(^ {62}\)

As the feudatory of Cochin Raja the Mooppil Nayar had rights, privileges and responsibilities in the capacity of the *stanam* occupied by him under the latter. One of the privileges had been the right to participate in the installation ceremony of *Thachudaya Kaimal* at the Koodal Manikkam temple Irinjalakkuda in the territory of Cochin Raja. The installation ceremony was called *Jatakavarodham*. In 1918 the Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar attended

\(^{59}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{60}\) As per order of the Court of Wards dt 2\(^{nd}\) September 1897.

\(^{61}\) Petition written by Madhava Menon Manager of Kavalappara Estate to the Collector of Malabar and agent to the Court of Wards dt 15\(^{th}\) September 1902.

\(^{62}\) As per order of the Court of Wards dt 15\(^{th}\) September 1902.
the *Jatakavarodham* of *Thachudaya Kaimal* along with three nambudiries, (A-Narayanan Bhattadiripad, K. Vasudevan Nambuthiripad and N. Krishnan Nambudiri) manager P. Sangunni Nayar, Clerk K. Krishna Pisharadi, Couriers, Sword and Shields men, sepoys, a brahmin cook, *Chottayakkars* (small swords men) and attenders. Altogether there were 19 persons in the group. The Mooppil Nayar made a payment of 101 *fanams* (equivalent to 28 Rupees, 13 annas and a paisa) as *dakshina* in connection with the *Jatakavarodham* celebrated on 15th February 1918.

The *Thachudaya Kaimal* has been the non-brahmin trustee of the Koodal Manikkam temple Irinjalakuda. He had been the head of a Nayar noble family in Tiruvitamkur. The Tiruvitamkur Raja made him the *Tachudayon* or the trustee of the Koodal Manikkam temple. There are many a ritual in connection with the installation ceremony of the *Tachudaya Kaimal*. The *Jatakavarodham* is among the first one. It is the *Azhvancheri Thambrakkal* who is considered as the noblest among the malayali brahmins who conducted the ritual of *Jathakavarodham*. The function was attended by all the nobles in the near by areas. The installed *Kaimal* would be led to Irinjalakkuda. When he reached Trippaya temple near Irinjalakkuda he would

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65 Letter No. 154 of 1918, Koodal Manikkam, Devaswam Office, Irinjalakuda dt. 18.2.1918, to the Manager, Kavalappara Estate.
be welcomed by the Cochin Raja and his nobles and brought to Irinjalakkuda. There would be a series of rituals in the Koodal Manikkam temple in connection with this. All these rituals are for endowing the qualities of a brahmin to the *Kaimal* who was a *Sudra*. Thus this is a process for leading to divinity, as a temple authority. Here after he would have many a right and privilege of a brahmin in connection with the temple. *Jatakavarodham* is a unique process in the temple of Koodal Manikkam. The Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar had the right to attend the *Jatakavarodham* as a *stani* and *janmi* and documents No 110 and 111 of *Kavalappara Papers* deal with the participation of Kavalappara Nayar in the *Jatakavarodham* of February 1918. The invitation for the same was sent to him by the *Tahasildar* of Paravoor in the present Ernakulam district.

As a *naduvazhi* and *desavazhi* the sanction of Mooppil Nayar was indispensable for conducting caste tribunals. One such was the caste tribunal of the Nambuthiries called the *Smarthavicharam*. It has been the trial of a nambuthiri woman suspected of immorality and loss of chastity, under the leadership of a *Smarthan* or learned Nambuthiri.

The representative of the *naduvazhi* was to be present at the trial. In 1920 Karakkat Kumaran Raman, the Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar, was asked

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to give sanction for the *Samrthavicharam* of the daughter of Patinhattukara Nambuthiri of Cherukattupulam *amsam* in the Tharagali *desam*.\(^{69}\)

The above mentioned rights and privileges were enjoyed by the Nayar in the capacity of the *desavazhi*, *naduvazhi* and feudatory. Apart from these he had all the rights and privileges of the *karanavar* of the *marumakkathayam tarawad*.

The Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar established independence from the Cochin Royal family with the help of Travancore. Following this a new palace was built for the Kavalappara family. It was called *Kottaram* after the model of Travancore family. This term *Kottaram* used for the residence of a subordinate landlord was less irritating to the ruling powers of Cochin and Calicut as the residence of kings in Malabar and Cochin were called in *Kovilakkam*. If the Mooppil Nayar called his residence as *Kovilakam* it would have been resented to by the royal ruling families of Cochin and Malabar. In a political system of kingship and aristocracy even the title of residence was significant as it revealed the nature of power and authority. As an ally of Travancore the Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar had certain privileges. Ceremonial occasions of Kavalappara and Travancore Royal family were mutually intimated. Formal representatives would be sent by the Mooppil Nayar to Travancore royal family on such occasions. Travancore royal family

\(^{69}\) K.K.N.Kurup, (ed.), *Kavalappara Papers, op.cit*, Doc.No.112 to 117, pp.136 to 139.
also used to intimate ceremonial occasions in the family to Kavalappara.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p.Xiii.} Both families used to exchange presents. When the Kavalappara family and its property came under the Court of Wards the British also respected the friendly relation between the two. The Court of Wards informed the news of the demise of Kavalapara Parvathy Nethiyar to the British Resident at Cochin and Travancore.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}} In 1910 when Appukuttan Unni Mooppil Nayar took over the charge of the Kavalappara Estate from the Court of Wards, as an act of recognising him and welcoming him Sreemulam Tirunal the Maharaja of Travancore sent an invitation to Mooppil Nayar to visit Thiruvananthapuram along with his family. Mooppil Nayar was treated as a state guest.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}}

Following the Mysorean Wars the Kavalappara family also had made an agreement with the British government.\footnote{Agreement dt. 12.7.1792 entered into between the English East India Company, on the one hand and the Kavalappara Nayar on the other. For details see William Logan, \textit{A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Other Papers of Importance} (1879), Thiruvananthapuram, 1998, p.155.} According to this agreement the territory of Kavalappara was assessed at an amount of Rs 18,285 (Rupees Eighteen Thousand two hundred and Eighty Five Only). Out of this amount Rs 1000 (Rupees thousand only) was allowed for the Nayar himself and 2,285 for the collection charges. The agreement was entered into between William

\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}}
Gamul Farmer and Major Alexander Dow on the part of East India Company on one hand and Kavalappara family on the other hand. Like other ruling powers of Malabar the Kavalappara family also acknowledged the sovereignty of the British. This agreement reveals the position of the Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar as a ruling chief. The Mooppil Nayar agreed to submit to the inspection of the revenues to the officers of the company.\footnote{Ibid}

With this agreement the official ties of the Mooppil Nayar with Palghat Raja, Cochin Raja and Zamorin were broken forever.

Like many other heads of marumakkathayam tarawad the Mooppil Nayar used to make transactions of land and other property as the trustee of tarawad. For example the Mooppil Nayar had to mortgage land in times of need. The Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar Pannikkot Itttunni Kumaran received 12000 and 700 \textit{fanams} from one Abhisheka Ramapattar of Palghat in return for mortgaging low lands with the seed capacity of 450 \textit{paras} and a few pieces of uplands. Abhisheka Rama Pattar has been a brahmin cloth merchant from Palghat. The land given to him was on \textit{kanam} tenure and was redeemable. The \textit{Pattar} was entitled to receive 1270 \textit{paras} of paddy every year for interest on the amount advanced.\footnote{K.K.N.Kurup., (ed.),\textit{Kavalappara Papers, op.cit, Document No.9, p.5.}} Earlier in 1756 and 1763 the Mooppil Nayar had made such transactions. It was the \textit{karanavar} who would file cases and the like on behalf of the \textit{tarawad} in the court of law.
Litigations were common in the landowning families of Malabar in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. There were prolonged litigations between the Mooppil Nayar and his family members for their maintenance and grant of funds.\textsuperscript{76} The history of the Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar is brilliant proof to the fact that feudalism has been a \textit{jati, janmi, naduvazhi vyavasthithi} (Caste, landlord, ruler system) in Kerala.

The powers and responsibilities of the \textit{Gurikkalachan} of Koodali Tazhathu family also have been deeply involved with the social, economic, religious, cultural and political aspects of North Malabar. As noted before the \textit{Gurikkalachan} as the \textit{karanavar} of Koodali family has been the trustee of Koodalikavu. Koodalikavu has been a landlord and its properties were under the control of \textit{Gurikkalachan}. Besides this the \textit{tarawad} also owned land both on \textit{janmam} and \textit{kanam} right. Originally the Koodali temple has been a \textit{kavu} belonging to the teyyam cult. Later it was transformed into a brahmanical temple with daily rituals by the brahmins. There are documentary evidences relating to the mortgage of property in favour of \textit{Daivathar} shrine or the Koodalikavu.\textsuperscript{77} Thazhathu family has been the sole custodian of the temple and this enhanced the prestige of the family. The combination of temple management and control of land resources made the family very powerful. The temple has been a financial institution and an administrator of justice. It's

\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Ibid}, p.XXXIX
\textsuperscript{77} K.K.N. Kurup, (ed.), \textit{Koodali Granthavari, op. cit.}, p. XI.
trustee the *Gurikkulachan* has been in charge of both. The bulk of the land owned by the temple was paddy fields. As rice was the staple food of the people the paddy cultivating fields were a valuable asset. The *karanavar* as the trustee used to receive land on mortgage. He used to receive land on *kanam* tenure also.\(^7^8\) Sometimes the land received as *panayam* or mortgage would not be redeemed even after.

*Gurikkulachan* enjoyed the monopoly of large landholdings. Some of the feudal families held land as part of fief granted by the political elite for their military and administrative responsibilities. This has been all the more so in the case of Kavalappara family. But in the case of Koodali family most of the land holdings were enjoyed by them as mortgages, *kanams* and *attiper* transfer on money payments.\(^7^9\) Like the other feudal families the *Gurikkalachan* also had maintained a *kalari*.\(^8^0\) This points to the fact that he held land as a fief from an overlord. The management of the temple and the local *kalari* gave the *karanavar* a prestigious position in the socio economic relations in the locality. The Koodali family had efficient and eminent *karanavans* and through the purchase of property and the efficient land management the *tarawad* became more prosperous.

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\(^7^8\) *Ibid.*

\(^7^9\) *Ibid, Document No. p.XIV.*

\(^8^0\) *Ibid., p. X.*
The Koodali family held land from the Kottayam Raja. In that capacity he maintained a *kalari* trained the Nayar soldiers and administered law and order in this area under his control. The title of *Gurikkalachen* was awarded by the Raja of Kottayam, to the head of the family. Among eminent *Gurikkalachen* were Chathu Nambiar, Valiya Kelappan Nambiar, Rayiru Nambiar, Kunhikrishnan Nambiar, Kunhamman *Gurikkalachen* Kelappan Nambiar II and the like.\(^{81}\)

The above narrated facts reveal the powers and functions of the *karanavars* of the two feudal families under study. Even though their powers and functions had variations their basic powers were similar as feudal landlords. They were managers of their family, local people and their customs. In a limited way both the family heads enjoyed ritual status. Temples were instruments to project their authority over the locality. Even under the British these powers were enjoyed by them as landlords. A landlord was not only the holder of economic institutions, but also of religious institutions. These institutions strengthened their positions in a rural agrarian system of production and distribution of resources.

\(^{81}\) *Ibid*, p. XVI, For details see Chapter IIIrd on the family history.