

INTRODUCTION

Eighty eight years back, 30th March a group of Satyagraha volunteers dressed neatly in homespun khadi walked towards the police barricade at Vaikom, a provincial town in central Kerala, belonging to the princely state of Tiruvitankur. The barricade was to demarcate the limit of the permissible area where a lower caste man could walk. Beyond the barricade lay the public road leading to Vaikom Mahadeva Temple. The police force of the Princely State of Tiruvitankur was ready for any consequences. Satyagrahis stood just outside the barricade not provoking the police but making their presence felt merely standing outside the barricade.

The non-violent struggles against the oppression of the high caste and the state authorities towards the lower castes have begun. Two entities of medieval barbarity of caste hierarchy, segregation, suppression, modern awareness and inspired struggle for modernity stood there face to face.

To highlight the natural beauty of the region the promotional campaigns of Kerala Tourism call Kerala as “god’s own country”. Another reason may be, though not realized by the strategists of Kerala Tourism campaign, was the sheer number of temples in the state which would make Kerala the “gods’ own country”. Almost all villages, towns in Kerala have temples, with various cultic affiliations and sizes depending on the economic and political importance of the village/town. Even though the informed viewer could discern that many of these temples came into existence in the last few centuries; the local population would be assuring or at times stubbornly insisting that those temples existed since, many *yugas* or at least before Sankaracharya. Legends are in abundance, describing Parasurama the mythical creator of Kerala moving the length and breadth of Kerala establishing temples numbering almost 24000 as the local legend *KERALOLPATTI* would put it. Most of the temples which said to have attributed to Parasurama as the builder are dedicated Siva. Apart from Parasurama there are other usual pot pouri of mythical, legendary and historical figures who established the temples like Pandavas, Sankaracharya, and the Vilvamangalam Swami who seems to have been the main force behind the Krishna/Visnu temples. The locals are not very keen to attribute the temples to any king except in few cases in South Kerala where the concept of kingship was greatly nurtured by the Travancore kings.

Religious structures always played a role in maintaining the social order in all societies and the religious structures become the architectural interpretations of the social fabric. Nold Egenter states thus, “buildings essentially structure human environmental space. This would mean that man – as always- not only perceives, but

integrates the spatial structure defined by buildings and reproduces this structure in other context, thinks with it, works with it”¹. This perpetuation can be the intention and the social function of the architecture. As Paul Frankl observed, “The programme of any building, even those without artistic pretensions, is document of cultural history. There is thus a second, *higher* factor underlying the building programme that approximates what is called the intention. It is the practical and material certainty of purpose that determines the building program and hence the spatial form, but only intention gives to purpose its artistic character”²

The study of the intention of architecture would take the architecture historian to the social sciences like history, economics and sociology. Architecture history has followed different paths in different areas of the world depending on the understanding and development in the pedagogy of the discipline. David Watkin writes in the preface of his book, THE RISE OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY, “It is important at the outset to state the aims of architectural history. These may be summarized under three headings – the practical, the historical and the aesthetic – which ideally should cross-fertilize each other. The first, or practical, task is to establish what was built, when it was built, and the names of the patron and designer. [sic] The second task, the historical, is to discover why the building was built. This may well call for considerable religious, cultural and sociological knowledge, for the precise function of a building may not be as obvious as might at first be imagined. Final task, the aesthetic is to describe and perhaps account for visual or stylistic

¹ Egenter Nold Architectural Anthropology - Research Series, vol. 1, THE PRESENT RELEVANCE OF THE PRIMITIVE IN ARCHITECTURE, (edition in 3 languages: English - French - German). Editions Structura Mundi, Lausanne, 1992

² Paul Frankl, Principles of Architectural History, Gauting, 1913, Translated by James O’Gorman, 1973, 1986, Massachusetts pp. 161

differences between one building and another [sic]”.³ The scholars who worked on Indian architecture predominantly worked on the last task which was aesthetical entering partly into the realm of practical approach. The studies on Kerala architecture were not different from this approach.

Kerala did not appear in the mainstream art history till 1948, when Stella Kramrisch wrote the introductory book on Kerala titled ARTS AND CRAFTS OF TRAVANCORE along with Henri Cousens and R Vasudeva Poduval, the then director of Travancore Archaeology. Historians of Kerala in the pre independence period as William Logan, Padmanabha Menon, Sunkunni Menon and TK Velupilla did not delve into the art and architecture of the region. In the 70's there vigorous scholarly activity in the field of architectural history of Kerala with the reprint and enlarged version of the book by Stella Kramrisch with the renewed title THE ARTS AND CRAFTS OF KERALA [1970]. Kramrisch do not enter much into the understanding Kerala architecture and as a pioneering attempt it is improper to expect too much from it. More over in 1940's she would not have got permission to enter into the Hindu temples of Kerala. The scholars after Kramrisch like KV Soudara Rajan [TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE IN KERALA, 1974], KR Sreenivasan [TEMPLES OF SOUTH INDIA, 1972], H Sarkar [TEMPLES OF KERALA, 1973 and AN ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY OF TEMPLES OF KERALA 1978] and S Jayashanker [TEMPLES OF KERALA, 1997] describes the Kerala temples in detail but never attempt to further reading into the social history. In fact these scholars seldom attempted to read the Kerala architecture in relation with the social structure of Kerala. It may be for the reason that architecture history never entered into the realm of Sociology in India. The social relevance of architecture or

³ David Watkin, The Rise of Architectural History, Architectural Press, London, 1980 pp. vii-viii

the reflection of the social system onto architecture reveals itself, only when one get exposed to the works of the scholars like Thomas Metcalf and Giles Tillotson on their works on Indian architecture.

Kleinbauer spells out the function of art historian thus, “Art historians aspire to analyze and interpret the visual arts by identifying their materials and techniques, makers, time and place of creation, and meaning or function- in short their place in the schema of history”⁴. Though Preziosi would interpret the Schema purely in the lines of Levi-Strauss as chronology⁵ it is not purely the chronology only but the process of history which is the reflection of socio-economical progress of the society. In the case of European art this *schema* was already coherent when the pioneers of art history entered the scene. In the case of India, this *schema* seems still missing, due to the lack of the tradition of ‘rational’ history. However we come across in expressions of architecture as demarcations of the schema. Once we perceive the architecture not merely as the milestones of political upheavals and dominance but also as indicators of economic augmentation and dominance of a class the schema would work in favor of the architecture historian who prefers enter into the realm of architecture anthropology and sociology. Kerala temple architecture presents an ideal example for the study of architecture as a product of social structure. The present thesis intends to contextualize the history of Kerala temple architecture into the frame work of Social history of Art mapping the construction of social structure and its repercussions in the architecture of Hindu Temples.

⁴ As quoted by Donald Preziosi, RETHINKING ART HISTORY, MEDITATIONS ON A COY SCIENCE, Yale University Press, London, 1989,pp. 14

⁵ Donald Preziosi, RETHINKING ART HISTORY, MEDITATIONS ON A COY SCIENCE, Yale University Press, London, 1989,pp. 14

Working for few chapters on Kerala temple architecture for the American Institute of Indian studies I had the opportunity to look at least hundred temples in Kerala, covering Malabar, Kochi and Tiruvitankur regions of the state. What struck me first is the distinction of Kerala temples from its Karnataka and Tamil counterparts regarding the elevation and plan. Though I have been visiting the temples in Kerala since my childhood, I could feel the difference only this time due to my experience of researching and teaching about the architecture of other regions of India. The dissimilarity in elevation like the tiled pyramidal roof of Kerala temples, from that of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu specifically as these states share the Dravida architecture, was justified as the climatic conditions of these states differed drastically.

In the layout of the temple I had noticed one feature which quite unique, that was the *namaskara mandapa*. The Hindu temple in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, though belonging to Dravida tradition as the Kerala temples do not have the feature of *Namaskara mandapa*. Many instances there are *nandi mandapas* on the cardinal axes just in front of the sri koil in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The same space is occupied by the *namaskara mandapa* in Kerala. The absence of *vahana/Nandi mandapa* and the importance given to the namaskara mandapas through high level of decoration urged me to look further on namaskara mandapas as the exclusive feature of architecture in Kerala temples. A query in depth revealed the exclusivity of the usage of namaskara mandapas by Brahmins, or the *nambootiris*.

As any other person from Kerala I was aware of the Vaikom *Satyagraha*, Guruvayoor *Satyagraha* and the ensuing Temple entry Proclamation of 1936 [Travancore] and 1947 [Malabar] which allowed **all** persons of Hindu religion to enter the temple

premise and worship. If one studies the society of Kerala prior to these proclamations, it will reveal the draconian social system existed then. This social system seems to have entered into the canons of architecture and created an elite space for the Brahmins in an already exclusive space of temple premise. This elite space is the *namaskara mandapa*. The scope and relevance of the present study rest in the fact that the scholars on Kerala temple architecture like Stella Kramrisch, KR Srinivasan, Soundara Rajan and H Sarkar do mentions about *Namaskara mandapas* as a special feature of Kerala temples but never probe into the social context of it.

Historians of Kerala as William Logan, Ilam Kulam Kunhan Pilla, Padmanabha Menon, and Sreedhara Menon do mentions about the caste system and the Brahmin dominance in Kerala without referring to the economical factors of this domination and the archeological data of it in the religious space. It was MGS Narayanan who tried to link the Nambutiri domination to the Cola incursion of Kerala and the weakening of Nair community. It does not look merely a coincidence that the *namaskara mandapas* start appearing soon after the Cola incursion. EMS Namboodiripad, PK Balakrishnan and Robin Jeffry are the historians who took note of the economic aspect of the caste domination of the Brahmins. The present study also attempts to contextualize the caste system in Kerala and with the architectural reflection of it as seen in the Kerala temples.

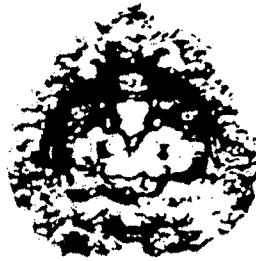
Unlike the untouchables of British India, their Kerala counterparts had, though limited, access to public wells, roads, schools and government jobs. Then why they were protesting and demanding for the entry right to the Hindu temple? The following statement by TK Madhavan, the main force behind the Temple Entry

Movement would answer thus, “I think, it is a common perception that the Temple Entry Right and the movement is solely for the right of *avarnas* to enter into the temple and worship the god. Indeed, earning that would be part of the Temple Entry Right, but that is not the prime and only goal of the Temple Entry Right or the movement. Temple Entry Right is the ethical right which has religious and political facets”⁶. The Temple Entry Movement and the Vaikom Satyagraha was not about the “religious right” but a ‘civil right’ of an individual. It was for the ‘individual dignity’ which is the fundamental right of man.

Religions propagate that all human being are equal in front of the god but in Kerala and all over India, some dominant castes were acting as if they are ‘Rousseueian “more equals”’. When modernity made inroads into India mainly due to the education, the liberal ideas of western politics inspired the oppressed in India. They realized that when the whole nation was fighting for the equality and civil liberty the same national power group was denying the fundamental right of civil equality to the majority of the population living under the caste ridden society. The temples retained the remnants of the ‘old regime’ and the last bastions of orthodoxy maintaining the caste segregation based on purity and hierarchy in the guise of ritual and the sanctity of the temple. To build up a welfare society it was necessary to demolish this bastion of orthodoxy that was the contribution of Temple Entry Movement.

⁶ Speech of TK Madhavan, Ochira, [Kollam District], 1929, quoted by Govinda Pillai P [from PK Madhavan, *TK MADHAVANTE JEEVACHARITHRAM*, [Biography of TK Madhavan] Kottayam, 1986, p.79] *KERALA NAVODHANAM, YUGASANTHATHIKAL YUGASILPIKAL*, [Malayalam], [Kerala Renaissance, Children and Builders of the Era], Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2009, Second Edition, 2010. P.145

A question may arise naturally here, whether the Temple Entry Proclamation of 1936 in Tiruvitankur State and similar declaration in Kochi [1948] and Malabar [1939] subsequently allow **all Hindus** right to access to **all** part of the temple. In fact, the Proclamation did not open the doors to **all** castes to **all** part of the temple but only partial entry into the temples. The fact remain that even after the Temple Entry proclamation the Brahmin caste have reserved a position in the spatial organization of Kerala Temples. The caste hierarchy and exclusivity of the dominant caste was written in fine print as a subtext of the Temple Entry Proclamation which gave Brahmins exclusivity of space, which is *Namaskara Mandapa*. **The *Namaskara Mandapas* remain even today as the vestige of a caste-ridden society and its expression in architecture.**



Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

History

INTRODUCTION

Before investigating into the main concern of the present thesis that is the relationship between the social structure and components of architecture it is imperative to look briefly into the history of Kerala as the region have gone through drastic social changes which are palpable in the history. If one look at Kerala society in the ancient and medieval periods it would appear as belonging to two different regions. No historians could pin point on the factors constituted to these changes. Some suggest that the migration of Brahmins to Kerala has brought in these transformations. Yet another group points towards the Chola wars as reason. Kerala presents a curious political system where the ruling dynasties did not make much of an impact on the social system. Even architecture does not change according to the shift in the power system as was in the case of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, the neighboring regions of Kerala. In Tamil Nadu, one could distinguish between the Pallava, Chola, Vijayanagara and Nayaka monuments, but in Kerala the Cera, Musaka, Ay, Kolattiri, Samutiri, Perumbadappu and Tiruvitakur temples retains more or less the same pattern with minor regional variations. The Kerala kings did not or could not assert their authority over the social structure and culture of the region as the authority was rested with some other section of the society or the society was structured thus that no authority was accepted. In Cankam literature we come across the lower class poets like *Panas* who are openly criticizing the king and in modern period we have instances of Brahmins publically insulting the kings. The Brahmins of Sangam period, who were mere bangle makers climb up the social ladder and reaches top in the medieval period. Except the Cholas, Nayakas and Mysore under Hyder Ali and Tipu no Karnataka and Tamil Nadu powers seem to have retained the province of

Kerala, though some makes the claim but not supported epigraphically within the region.

The charm of Kerala history itself is this vagueness. Kerala historians has to really struggle to come out of the mist of myth and legends associated with the land, right from the myth of its creation ascribed to Parasurama, an incarnation of Vishnu. Even progressive historian like Padmanabha Menon and Marxian historian as EMS Nambootirippadu had to spent pages after page denying the Parasurama myth. Then come the controversy of the Perumal legend and the Second Cera Empire which none of historians have come to conclusive theory. Kerala had trade connections with Egypt, China, Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome but except few gold coins none of the remnants of these civilizations exist in Kerala. Pliny the elder complained about the draining of gold to Kerala through spice trade but where did all those gold go? Kerala had Judaism and Christianity much before probably Brahmanism knocked on its borders but what one see in the medieval period is brahmanical dominance in the society. Present chapter deals with a brief introduction to the history of Kerala to map the background of the arguments in the chapters to follow.

ANCIENT PERIOD

Kerala, a small strip of land compared to its neighbors in South India had made significant entries into the annals of Ancient Indian history whether through its contacts with Egyptian civilization or through the references in the epics or the epigraphic records of Asoka. However, Kerala history hardly becomes an integral part of the Indian history except in the portions discussing about the trade connections with the west especially with the Romans. The political and cultural history of Kerala

prior to the medieval period is shrouded in mystery, due to the lack of epigraphical and archaeological evidences. Most of the historians delved into the Parasurama myth or on the rhetoric descriptions of the *Cankam* literature. The historians who wrote in Malayalam based their arguments heavily on Malabar Manuel by Logan, the first modern history written by the Scottish officer posted in North Kerala in 19th century. EMS Namboodirippadu who wrote the history of Kerala with a Marxian approach had to spend pages after pages refuting the myths associated with Kerala. Kerala again comes back in the focus of Indian history during the discussion on the arrival of colonial powers, but forgotten soon after as the historians were busy tracking the British, who hardly had a major stake in Kerala politics till they got the Malabar region thanks to the Mysore Wars.

The ancient Indian texts provide ample references to Kerala, *Aitereya Aranyaka* being the first, which mentions the land of Kerala; the reference of *Cherapada* in this text may be referring Kerala⁷. This reference is followed by treatises of Katyayana [C. 4C BC] and Patanjali [C. 2C BC]. *Kishkindha kanda* of *RAMAYANA* mentions about Sugriva sending his army in search for Sita to Kerala [mentioned as *Keralan*] along with countries as Andhra, Pundra, Cola and Pandya thus:

“*Nadim godavari chaiva
Sarvamevanu pascata
Tathaivandhram sca Pundram sca
Colan pandam sca **keralan**”- SARGA 41⁸*

⁷ PK Gopalakrishnan, *KERALTHINTE SAMSKARIKA CHARITRAM* [Malayalam] [A CULTURAL HISTORY OF KERALA], State Institute of Languages, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1974, 6th Edition, 2000, pp.65

⁸ PK Gopalakrishnan, *KERALTHINTE SAMSKARIKA CHARITRAM* [Malayalam] [A CULTURAL HISTORY OF KERALA], State Institute of Languages, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1974, 6th Edition, 2000, pp 65

While Mahabharata mentions Sahadeva's visit to Kerala during the *asvamedha* campaign thus:

*tata samudra tirena
vangan pundran sa keralan
tatra tatra cabhuriti
mleccha sainyanukesa-* ASVAMEDHAPARVAM, Chapter 83⁹

Megasthenes, Greek ambassador to Chandragupta Maurya refers to the Pandyan kingdom of the south and the neighboring population of *Chermoe*, probably a polluted version of the word Cera in his book *INDICA*¹⁰. Kautilya mentions about the pearls of the River Churni, the ancient name of the River Periyar. The Second rock cut edict of Asoka at Girnar cites *Keralaputras* as bordering the Mauryan Empire in south. The *Keralaputra* mentioned in the edict definitely refers to the Kerala region. Kalidasa, the celebrated poet of Sanskrit who probably lived in 5th century AD, writes in his *Raghuvamsa Mahakavya* about the pepper plants and the rising smell of cardamom as Raghu's horses trampling through the Kerala forest.

Pepper and other spices played a great deal in the sequence of Kerala History and culture. The religions, new cultures and nations came knocking on the doors of Kerala through the Spice Route. Black peppercorns were found stuffed in the nostrils of Ramses II, placed there as part of the mummification rituals shortly after his death in 1213 BC, however little else is known about the use of pepper in ancient Egypt, nor how it reached the Nile from India. William Logan traces the trade connection

⁹ PK Gopalakrishnan, *KERALATHINTE SAMSKARIKA CHARITRAM* [Malayalam] [A CULTURAL HISTORY OF KERALA], State Institute of Languages, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1974, 6th Edition, 2000, pp64

¹⁰ Arrian "The Indica" in *Anabasis of Alexander*, together with the *Indica*, E. J. Chinnock, tr. (London: Bohn, 1893), ch. 1-16, http://www.shsu.edu/~his_ncp/Indica.html

between Kerala and the west thus, “Perhaps as early as the time of Moses, the great Jewish law-giver, this commerce existed, for cinnamon and *cassia* played a part in the temple services of the Jews [Exodus xxx. 23,24] and at any rate the commerce existed in the time of King Solomon [circa. 1000 BC] for the Bible narrative records that “For the King had at sea navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram; once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold and silver, ivory and apes and peacocks” [I Kings x. 22]. With the exception perhaps of silver, these are all production of the Malabar Coast, and the biblical name for the peacock – *tuki* - is evidently the Tamil/Malayalam – *tokie*, the bird of the tail”¹¹.

The Peryplus of the Eritrean Sea [C.1C BC] describes the ports of Kerala thus, “*Tyndis* is of the Kingdom of *Cerobothra*; it is a village in plain sight by the sea. Musiris, of the same kingdom, abounds in ships sent there with cargoes from Arabia, and by the Greeks; it is located on a river, distant from Tyndis by river and sea five hundred stadia, and up the river from the shore twenty stadia. Nelcynda is distant from Musiris by river and sea about five hundred stadia, and is of another Kingdom, the Pandyan”¹². Apart from Peryplus the other writers who referred to Kerala are Pliny the Elder [C. 1C AD] who states thus “the most advantageous way of sailing to India is to set out from *Cella*; from that port it is a 40 days' voyage, if the *Hippalus* is blowing, to the first trading station in India, Cranganore not a desirable port of call, on account of the neighboring pirates, who occupy a place called *Nitriae*, nor is it specially rich in articles of merchandise; and furthermore the roadstead for shipping is a long way

¹¹ Logan William, MALABAR MANUEL, 2000 edited version Edited by PJ Cheriyan, Kerala Gazetteers Department, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, pp.245

¹² Ancient History Sourcebook: The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea: Travel and Trade in the Indian Ocean by a Merchant of the First Century, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/periplus.html>

from the land, and cargoes have to be brought in and carried out in boats. The king of Musiris, at the date of publication, was *Caelobothras*¹³. Pliny complains about the flow of Roman gold coins to the east in return to the Pepper. He estimated that India took 55,000,000 sesterces [\$800,000] annually spending on spices, ivory and 'woven wind like exposing clothes' [Petronius as quoted by Logan¹⁴]. Ptolemy [C. 2C AD] refers to the ports of Kerala in his *GEOGRAPHY*. He calls the land as *Dimirike* ruled by the *Kerobotros* and *Ays*. These references were made because of the flourishing trade between Kerala and European nations, especially to Rome. Alaric I [circa 370-410 AD] the Visigoth conqueror asked for a huge ransom of Pepper to free Rome from his siege. The hordes of Roman gold coins discovered in Kerala support the fact that the maritime trade with Kerala and the west was active in the Roman period.

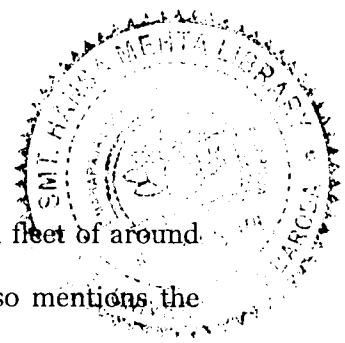
Unfortunately none of these references indicate the political situations of Kerala, except Ptolemy who mentions a ruling dynasty as the *Kerobotros* probably referring to the Ceras ruling from Karoura which Logan identifies as Karur near Coimbatore¹⁵ but later historians like Kesari Balakrishna Pilla consider Karur as Karurpadanna near Kodungallur¹⁶. Kerala had connections with Arabia from the time of Solomon. Arabs traded with Kerala for gold, ivory, monkeys and peacocks. Arab merchants came to Kerala from Egypt long before the Romans. Pre Quran references to black pepper from India and teak in Arab poetry indicate trade connection to Kerala.

¹³ Ancient History Sourcebook: Pliny: Natural History 6.96-111. (On India), <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/pliny-india.html>

¹⁴ Logan, William MALABAR MANUEL, 2000 edited version Edited by PJ Cheriyan, Kerala Gazetteers Department, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, pp.249

¹⁵ Logan, William MALABAR MANUEL, 2000 edited version Edited by PJ Cheriyan, Kerala Gazetteers Department, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, pp.251

¹⁶ This town is mentioned earlier as Cranganore, an English version of the Malayalam name Kodungallur.



According to the Roman geographer Strabo, the early Empire sent a fleet of around 120 ships on an annual one-year trip to India and back. Logan also mentions the Indian embassies received by various Roman emperors starting from Augustus who received them in Spain. The other emperors who received the embassies include Trajan [107 AD] Antonious Pius [138-61 AD] Julian [361 AD] and even Justinian [540 AD]. Cosmas Indicopolous, [C 6C AD] a Byzantine monk refers to the Church at *Kalliena* [Kollam] and the local Bishop getting consecrated in Persia. It is said that Alaric the Visigoth and Attila the Hun each demanded from Rome a ransom of more than a ton of pepper when they besieged the city in 5th century. A riddle authored by Saint Aldhelm, a 7th-century Bishop of Sherborne¹⁷, sheds some light on black pepper's role in England at that time.

Sporadic literary sources from the region are available, referring to the ancient period of Kerala like the *CANKAM/SANGAM* poems and medieval period compilations as the *MUSAKA CARITAM*, *UNNUNEELI SANDESHAM* and *KUVALAYAMALA*. The collection of legends as *KERALA MAHATMYAM* and *KERALOLPATTI* and *EITIHYAMALA*, talk about the origin and development of the region of Kerala, however none of these texts can be referred to as providing credible historical data.

Among these texts, *SANGAM/ CANKAM* texts illustrate the geography, economic and political structure and culture of Tamilakam [inclusive of presentday states of

¹⁷ *I am black on the outside, clad in a wrinkled cover.
Yet within I bear a burning marrow.
I season delicacies, the banquets of kings, and the luxuries of the table,
both the sauces and the tenderized meats of the kitchen.
But you will find in me no quality of any worth,
unless your bowels have been rattled by my gleaming marrow.*

Tamilnadu and Kerala]. The date ascribed to the Cankam literature is 2nd century of the Christian Era, continuing for almost 150 years. Nilakanta Sastri writes thus about the historical authenticity of CANKAM thus, “Archaeology confirms the evidence of literature. The numerous discoveries throughout south india of gold and silver coins of roman emperors of the first two centuries AD and the evidence recently unearthed of the presence of a ‘Roman factory’ at Arikamedu in the neighbourhood of Pondicherry in the first century go far to confirm the correctness of the date suggested for Sangam age¹⁸.

KERALA DURING TO CANKAM PERIOD

The obvious question whether one should bring in the *Cankam* references should be brought to illustrate the early history of Kerala naturally arises as *Cankam* centers all belong to present day Tamil Nadu. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai put end to these doubts by referring *AKAM* literature where Venkatam, Erumayoor, and Tulu land is considered as the northern boundary of the Tamil land. Among this Venkatam is the present Venkatachalam or Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh and Erumayoor is Mysore [Eruma [*Tam.*] = Mahisha [*Skt.*] = Ur [*Tam.*] = village [Eng.]. Subramanian defines the Tamil country as described in the *Cankam* literature thus; “From ancient times Tamil region only knew three rulers as Ceras, Colas and Pandyas. South west portion of the country was under the Ceras, while north east was controlled by the Colas and Pandyas ruled over the south and south east. The region which was under the Colas included the present Chitoor district of Andhra Pradesh and Arcot, Chennai,

¹⁸ Nilakanta Sastri K A, THE ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF SOUTH INDIA – From Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2009, Third Impression 2011. p.41

Chengalpet which is known as *Tondaimandalam*. The land south of Kaveri River and east of Anamalai [in Sahya ranges] all the way to the eastern and southern coast was under Pandyas. The present Kerala state comprised the old Cera kingdom”¹⁹. Interestingly this the political geography which was provided by the non Tamil texts like *MAHABHARATA*, *RAMAYANA* and *ARTHASASTRA* and mentioned by ancient Indian authors as Katyayana, and foreign authors and Strabo and writer of the *Peryplus of Eritrean Sea*. The same authors and *Cankam* poetry mention Vanchi, Kanchi and Madurai as the main cities of Tamilakam. Kanchi and Madurai doubtlessly are the present Kanchipuram and Madurai in the state of Tamil Nadu. Though there is no place in Kerala with the name Vanchi, except Tiruvancikulam near Kodungallur. Most of the scholars identify Kodungallur a port town in central Kerala or the some of its surrounding villages with Vanci. Recent excavations lead by Kerala Centre for Historical Research [KCHR] in a site known as Pattanam near Kodungallur has brought out a port city settlement which can point towards the existence Vanchi in Kerala.

Cankam or at times mentioned as the *Tamil Cankam* is the collection of literature from South India. AK Ramanujan writes about *Cankam* literature thus, "In their antiquity and in their contemporaneity, there is not much else in any Indian literature equal to these quite and dramatic Tamil poems. In their values and stances, they represent a mature classical poetry: passion is balanced by courtesy, transparency by ironies and nuances of design, impersonality by vivid detail, austerity of line by richness of implication. These poems are not just the earliest evidence of the Tamil

¹⁹ N Subramaniam, *Cankam Polity: THE ADMINISTRATION AND SOCIAL LIFE OF THE CANKAM TAMILS*, Malayalam translation: *SANGHAKALA BHARANA SAMVIDHANAM: SANGHAM TAMIZHARUDE BHARANAVUM SAMOOHIKA JEEVITAVUM*. Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi, DC Books, Kottayam, 2003, P. 45

genius who were part of proto-Dravidian Jain culture. The Tamil in all their 2,000 years of literary effort wrote nothing better"²⁰. The Tamil *Cankams* were legendary assemblies of Tamil scholars and poets that, according to traditional Tamil accounts, occurred in the remote past. "That collage [*Cankam*] of Tamil poets flourished for a time under royal patronage in Madura [Madurai] may well be a fact", writes Nilakantha Sastri, "But, the earliest account of it, which occurs in the introduction to the commentary on the *IRAIYANAR AGAPPORUL* (C. 750 AD), is enveloped in legend"²¹.

Ramanujan states about the reasons for the amnesia about *Cankam* poems for centuries and their discovery in 19th century thus, "these classics were not always known to the Tamils themselves. They were dramatically rediscovered in the later decades of the 19th century, a period of transition, when both paper and palm leaf were used as writing materials. The great texts of classical Tamil literature, including the eight anthologies and twin epics [*CILAPATKARAM* and *MANIMEKALAI*] were inaccessible to most scholars all through the early 19th century, though they were known and had been commented on a commentary earlier. 18th century Hindu scholars, devout worshipers of Siva and Vishnu, had tabooed as irreligious all secular and non-Hindu texts, which included the classical Tamil anthologies. They also disallowed the study of Jain and Buddhist texts, which included the Twin Epics"²². Ramanujan does acknowledge the efforts of Caminata Aiyar [1855-1942] in bringing light on to these fabulous collections of poems.

²⁰ Ramanujan, A.K., *INTERIOR LANDSCAPE*, 1967, Afterword, p115.

²¹ Nilakantha Sastri, *A HISTORY OF SOUTH INDIA, FROM PRE HISTORIC TIMES TO THE FALL OF VIJAYANAGAR*, p. 116, Oxford University Press, Madras, 1955, 1976 [fourth Edition]

²² Ramanujan AK, *POEMS OF LOVE AND WAR*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1985, pp[xi]

Three assemblies are described, the first *Cankam* (*mutal cankam*) is described as having been held at "the Madurai which was submerged by the sea", lasted a total of 4440 years, and had 549 members, which supposedly included some gods of the Hindu pantheon such as Siva, Kubera and Murugan. A total of 4449 poets are described as having composed songs for this *Cankam*. The second *Cankam* (*idai cankam*) was convened in Kapatapuram. This *Cankam* lasted for 3700 years and had fifty-nine members, with 3700 poets participating. This city was also submerged in sea. The third *Cankam* (*katai cankam*) was purportedly located in the current city of Madurai and lasted for 1850 years under 49 kings. The academy had 49 members, and 449 poets are described as having participated in the *Cankam*²³. Gopalakrishnan also informs us that all the poems of first and second *Cankam* except *TOLKAPIAUM* of the second *Cankam* are lost. An accurate chronological assessment of literary works has been rendered difficult due to lack of concrete scientific evidence to support conflicting claims. Undue reliance on the *Cankam* legends has thus culminated in controversial opinions or interpretations among scholars, confusion in the dates, names of authors, and doubts of even their existence in some cases. The earliest archaeological evidence connecting Madurai and the *Cankams* is the 10th century Cinnamanur inscription of the Pandyas²⁴.

Cankam poems include two collections called *PATHINENMĒLKANAKKU* and *PATHINENKILKANAKKU*. *PATHINENMĒLKANAKKU* is the collection of the oldest surviving Tamil Poetry. This Anthology Series contains *ETTUTHOKAI* - the Eight

²³ Zvelebil, Kamil, THE SMILE OF MURUGAN: ON TAMIL LITERATURE OF SOUTH INDIA, Leiden: Brill, 1973, p. 47

²⁴ An inscription of the early tenth century CE mentions the achievements of the early Pandya kings of establishing a *Cankam* in Madurai. See K.A. Nilakantha Sastry, A HISTORY OF SOUTH INDIA, Oxford University Press, Madras, 1955, 1976 (Forth Edition), pp 116

Anthologies and *PATTUPATTU* - the Ten short poems. This anthology contains 2,381 poems including the ten larger works belonging to the *PATTUPATTU* collection. Sixteen of the 473 poets are responsible for 1,177 of the 2,279 poems for which the name of the author is known. This collection also included the famous anthologies namely, *AKANANNURU* [*Akam*] and *PURANANNURU* [*Puram*]. The word *Akam* and *Puram* denotes interior and exterior respectively. *AKANANNURU* is a collection of four hundred poems written by 142 poets dealing with the love life of people, usually the prince and princesses while *Puram* poems, comprising of 399 poems describes the great wars fought by the kings. *PATHINENKILKANAKKU* is a collection of eighteen poetic works. The poems of this collection differ from the earlier works under the *PATHINENMAELKANAKKU* collection, which are the oldest surviving Tamil Poetry. This anthology also includes *THIRUKKURAL* also known as *KURAL* a classic of couplets or *KURALS* (1330 rhyming Tamil couplets) or aphorisms. It was authored by Thiruvalluvar, and is considered to be the first work to focus on ethics, in *Shramana* literature of India. *Kural* is also venerated as *tamilmarai* (Tamil Veda); *poyyamozhi* (speech that does not become false); and *teyva nul* or *dheiva nool* (divine text). *Cankam* literature also includes the epic Tamil poems like the *MANIMEKALAI* and *SILAPATIKARAM*.

Though it is a daunting task to date the period and the area of origin of the *Cankam* literature as the authors hardly left any chronological or geographical specificities in their creation, most of the scholars agree on the date of 300 BC to 300 AD as the date of this collection. N Subramanian discusses the reason behind tracing the *Cankam* period to the early Christian era thus "The society described in the *Cankam* poetry, along with epic poems like *SILAPATIKARAM* and *MANIMEKALAI* is very close to the

description of the authors [all belonging to the pre or early Christian Era] like Pliny the elder, Ptolemy, Strabo and the author of Peryplus of the Eritrean Sea”²⁵. The reference of the Sri Lankan king Gajabahu participating in the worship of Kannaki along with Sengutavan the Cera king can also be taken as a pointer towards the date of Silapatikaram. There are only two Gajabahus mentioned in the Sri Lankan history one lived in the 2nd century AD and the other in the 12th century, if one has to connect Gajabahu and Sengutavan it has to be the one who lived in the 2nd century and thus placing the text to the same period.

Scholars like Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai strongly believe that the Ceras mentioned in the Cankam literature definitely refer to the dynasty who ruled over Kerala probably due to the reference of Ptolemy who call the rulers of Kerala as Cherabotros and of Pliny who called them as *Caelobothras*. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai considers that, “Among the Colas and Pandyas only few like Karikala and Netumceliyan have been mentioned in the *Cankam* literature. It will be difficult to trace the history of these dynasties solely through *Cankam* sources. However the Cera genealogy can more or less satisfactorily be understood using the *Cankam* literature, especially *PATITTUPATTU*”²⁶. He also states elsewhere that, “*Patittupattu* [Ten chapters of ten poems each] do describe the kings who ruled from Kerala in the 5th Century. The first

²⁵ N Subramaniam, *Cankam Polity: The Administration and Social life of the Cankam Tamils*, Malayalam translation : *SANGHAKALA BHARANA SAMVIDHANAM : SANGHAM TAMIZHARUDE BHARANAVUM SAMOOHIKA JEEVITAVUM*. Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi, DC Books, Kottayam, 2003, Pp 37

²⁶ Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, *ELAMKULAM KUNJANPILLAYUDE THIRENJEDUTHA KRITHIKAL – Part I*, [Malayalam] Ed. N Sam, International Centre for Kerala Studies, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2005, pp 41

and second Pattus are missing; the rest eulogizes nine Cera kings”²⁷. Elamkulam argues that Karurpadanna [Karuvapadna] on the river Periyar north east of Kodungallur was the famous Vanci of *Cankam* literature, as writers like Strabo talk about the capital of the *Cerabotras* in the inner land away from Muchiri, the port city. Muchiri/Muziris is no doubt refers to Kodungallur. Elamkulam referring *PATITTUPATTU* provides the ruling years of the Cera kings thus:

Anthology Number	Name of the Cera King Mentioned	Reign mentioned
First <i>Pattu</i>	Missing	
Second <i>Pattu</i>	Imaya Varamban Netumceralatan	58 yrs
Third <i>Pattu</i>	Palyaneecelkezhukuttuvan	25 yrs
Fourth <i>Pattu</i>	Kalamkaykanni Narmudiceral	25 yrs
Fifth <i>Pattu</i>	Velkelukuttuvan	50 yrs
Sixth <i>Pattu</i>	Atukotu Pattuceralatan	38 yrs
Seventh <i>Pattu</i>	Celvakutunko Valiyatan	20 yrs
Eighth <i>Pattu</i>	Perumceral Irumburai	17 yrs
Ninth <i>Pattu</i>	Ilamceral Irumburai	16 yrs
Tenth <i>Pattu</i>	Missing	

CERAS OF VANCI

Entering the debate regarding the Ceras, Sreedhara Menon argues that the list provided by Elamkulam may not be authentic as many of the rulers mentioned in the texts were in fact crown princes who never ruled. The well known Cera king Utiyan Ceral was probably the hero of the first *Pattu*. Utiyan Ceral’s son Palyane Cel Kezhu Kuttuvan who ruled along with his brother Netumceralatan becomes the protagonist of the third *Pattu*. The son of Netumceralatan, namely Kalamkaykanni Narmudiceral

²⁷ Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, *ELAMKULAM KUNJANPILLAYUDE THIRENJEDUTHA KRITHIKAL – Part I*, [Malayalam] Ed. N Sam, International Centre for Kerala Studies, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2005. Pp 40

who never ruled as king is the hero of the fourth *Pattu*, where the reason behind his epithet Kalamkaykanni Narmudi is explained. Unfortunately apart from the scanty reference in the *PATITTUPATTU* we do not have many references specifically about the Ceras and their administrative system except the eulogies of their valor and kindness. Ceras most probably ruled over the central part of Kerala expanding slowly towards the north and southern regions. Netumceralatan seems to have conquered many kings and became the *adhiraja* [Supreme King]. He also known to have fought with *Yavanas* [a word commonly used for western powers specifically to Greeks]²⁸ Narmudiceral defeated and killed the Nannan of Ezhimala in the battle of Vakaiperumturai and extended the Cera rule to north Kerala. Pushing of the sea back by Vel Kezhu Kuttuvan though sounds like Parasurama myth but may be referring to a naval victory by the Ceras.

The Cera power seems to have waned during 7th century thanks to the series of wars with Colas and Pandians and the newly emerging powers like the Calukyans and Pallavas, both claiming that they have defeated the Kerala kings. However one cannot pin point the influence of these dynasties in the Kerala culture. The Brahmanical dominance is one of the possible influences which these dynasties could have forced upon Kerala, which would be dealt in detail in the later chapter of this thesis.

MUSAKAS OF KOLAM

Musakas of Kolam is another dynasty belonging to the ancient period who ruled from Ezhimala, controlling northern part of Kerala. Nannan of Ezhimala, appearing in

²⁸ A Sreedhara Menon, *KERALA CHARITHRAM* [Malayalam][HISTORY OF KERALA], S. Visvanathan Pvt.Ltd, Madras, 1967, Revised Edition 1995, Reprint 2001, pp. 90

Cankam literature probably belonged to this dynasty. The mystery over the Musakas initiates from the name of the dynasty itself. Sarkar and many historians consider it as *Musika*, the Sanskrit word for rat and their abode as *Eli mala*, a Malayalam equivalent for “the mountain of the rats”. Chirakkal T Balakrishnan Nair, a descendant of the Kolattiri dynasty and a local historian, explains that the name of the dynasty is derived from the Sanskrit word *Musaka*, denoting a kind of *Sirisa* Tree [*Mimosa Sirisa*]. The hill, according to Balakrishnan Nair, should be pronounced as *Ezhimala*, meaning seven hills. He again suggests that the Kolattiris, the later rulers of the region, must have appropriated the insignia of the Musakas depicting a boat, a bunch of *Musaka* flowers and a sword²⁹. Sarkar agrees with KV Subrahmanya Ayer suggesting that the capital of Musakas be at Kolam, which Ayer identifies as Kollam or Pantalayini Kollam, 30 KM north of Kozhikkode, the port city. Ayer however could not comprehend the absence of epigraphic references to Musakas in this region and the existence of the same in Kannur district around the Ezhimala. This confusion is congenital, as the Musakas never held sway over the geographical area suggested by Ayer.

The artists of the folk performance of the region called *Teyyam* refers in their incantations about *Kolaswarupam* the landmass, which would encompass the present day Kannur District. Balakrishnan Nair argues that the Kolam should be considered as the name of the kingdom and not of the capital of Musakas. There are many towns in Kannur District, which can claim the position of erstwhile capital of the Musakas. The word *tali* in north Kerala denote a capital city. We have the example of Tali from Kozhikkode, which was the capital of the Samutiris. A small suburb of

²⁹ Chirakkal T Balakrishnan Nair, *THIRANJEDUTHA PRABANDHANGAL* [Malayalam] [COLLECTED ESSAYS], Kerala Sahitya Akademi, Trissur, 1981, Reprint, 1996, pp.42

Payyanur town called Ramantali [Raman + *Tali*, meaning the capital of Rama] was probably the first capital of Musakas under Ramakuda Musaka [Ramakuda Muvar], the founder of the dynasty according to the legend.

The myth behind the Teyyam performance of a deity called *Kolaswarupantingal Tayi* [the mother of Kolaswarupam] narrates the story of the establishment of Musaka dynasty. According to this myth, after the destruction of Dwaraka and the death of Krishna, one of his wives escaped on a boat [*Kolam* in old Malayalam according to Balakrishnan Nair] and was floated down to Ezhi Mala, the hillock near the village of Ramantali. Her son was Ramakhata Musaka alias Iramakuda Muvar the founder of the dynasty. Through this myth Musakas positioned themselves as the Vrsnis / Yadavas as claimed by Ays, their contemporaries in South Kerala.

Sarkar identifies a reference in Mahakuta inscription [602 AD] of Calukyan Mangalesa to the Musakas and identified it with the Musakas of Kolam. The Musika of Mahakuta inscription can be same as the Musika Nagari of Eastern Maharashtra neighboring Kalinga and Cedi regions as referred in the *Hala Gaha Sapta Sai*³⁰ a Satavahana period text. Interestingly *gaha Saptasai* and the Mahakuta pillar inscription refer to the same Musika nagari of Eastern Maharashtra and not the Musaka Nagara of Kerala. However there are some historians who believe that that the Calukyans did rule over Kerala, especially northern Kerala for a significant period.

³⁰ SA Jogalekar, *HALA GATHA SAPTA SAHI*, Pune 1956

Cankam poets like Poikaiyar and Perumtalai Cathanar and many *Akam* and *Puram* poets refer to a ruler called Nannan of Elimala. He is characterized as the master of Konkanam too. Besides Nannan, *Cankam* works refers to *Muvan*, probably a corrupted version of *Muvar*, the epithet most of the Musaka kings used as a suffix to their names. Extensive reference on the Musika or Musakas derived from the Sanskrit poem by Atula titled *MUSAKA VAMSAM*, which Gopinatha Rao inferred as written in 11th century because of the reference of Vallabha, a Musaka king joining the Cera king in his battle against the Colas. The *kavya* also mentions the Musakas as the descendants of Musakas of Haihayadesa on the foothills of Vindhya region. King Nandan of Musaka *vamsa* might be the same person as Nannan of *Cankam* period³¹. Apart from Nannan the poem provides the names of few kings of the dynasty as Isana II and his sons Nrparama and Palaka. Palakas's nephew and successor was Validhara followed by Vikrama Rama. The inscription, datable to 928 AD from the Narasimha temple at Narayan Kannur on the western phase of Elimala, mentions Vikrama Rama as the *koil Adhikari* [crown Prince]³². *Sarga XIV* of Musaka Vamsa mentions about Ramakhata Jayamani of the Musaka dynasty as deputing his nephew to assist the Kerala king on his war against the Colas. Rajadhiraja in his inscription mentions the defeat of one Iramaguda. The place name Eramam where one of the inscriptions refers to Kandan Karivarman alias Ramakuta Muvar Tiruvadi also must have originated from Iramam denoting the common title of the Musaka kings.

Ibn Batuta, an Arabian traveler, who visited the region in 14th Century, mentions to Badphatan, a port town. This town is presently known as Valapattanam [in Kannur

³¹ MGS Narayanan RE-INTERPRETATIONS IN SOUTH INDIAN HISTORY, Trivandrum, 1977 pp.62

³² MGS Narayanan RE-INTERPRETATIONS IN SOUTH INDIAN HISTORY, Trivandrum, 1977 pp.

District] derived from the Sanskrit word Vallabha Pattanam, the city of Vallabha the king who has been appearing in many references of his visits to Triccambaram and Talipparambu [both in Kannur District] temples. Srikanthapuram on the east of Talipparambu was probably named after Srikantha, the patron of the author of poem *MUSAKA VAMSA*. Lack of epigraphic records and other source materials create difficulties in reconstructing the genealogy of this dynasty, however it may be reemphasized here that the Kolattiris, later rulers of this area claimed the heredity from the Musakas.

AYS OF VIZHINJAM

Ays are the only ruling dynasty from Kerala mentioned in the western travelogues. Ptolemy refers to the *Aioi* who are probably the same *Ay-Vels* of the *Cankam* literature. The *Cankam* poet Mudamociar refers to Aykkudi as the stronghold of Ays of Potiyil Malai. Poet Parinar in *AKANANNURU* praises Titiyan, a king of the Ay dynasty. Being absent in the historical records for almost four centuries, the Ays make a comeback around 9th Century AD as evident from the inscriptions found at Southern part of Kerala. This time their capital city was shifted from Potiyil Malai to the port city of Vizhinjam, evident from the reference of Ay king Vikramaditya Varaguna as *Vilinjabhartra* in the copper plate from Paliyam datable to 9th Century³³. Kalugumalai inscription of Pandyan ruler Maranjadiyan alias Jatila Parantaka Nedunjadiyan [765-815] refers to the marching of the Pandyan army against the Ay chief, Sadaiyan Karunandan and the destruction of Ariviyurkottai. The Grant of the same ruler now at

³³ MGS Narayanan RE-INTERPRETATIONS IN SOUTH INDIAN HISTORY, Trivandrum, 1977 pp.35

Chennai Museum describes the attack of Vizhinjam. These attacks must have been a reply to the Kerala king for joining hands with the Kongus and Pallavas under Nandivarman II against the Pandys³⁴. In the battle to stop the incursion of Pandys, the Cera kings aided the Ays with a battalion of soldiers referred as *Ceraman Padai*. The successor to the Pandyan throne Srirama Srivallabha [815-62] also continued the imperialist policy of Nedunjadiyan by attacking Vizhinjam as described in the Sinnamanur copper plates³⁵.

Two more kings of this line, known through inscriptions, are Karunandadakkan and Vikramaditya Varaguna. Karunandadakkan is mentioned in numerous copper plates and stone inscriptions from the Ay region, in which he assumes the epithet Sri Vallabha. According to Gopinatha Rao, this demonstrates vassal-king relation between the Ays and Pandys. "Karunandadakkan", observes Gopinatha Rao, "evidently became the vassal of the Pandys and as is usual with vassals, he assumed the name Sri Vallabha of his overlord for himself and gave the name Varaguna to his son".³⁶ Sri Vallabha started his rule around 855 AD as can be inferred from Huzur Office copper plate [855-8]. This copper plate inscription refers to Karunandadakkan of the Yadava purchasing a land from *Micirai sabha* and building a temple for Vishnu. The village around the temple was named as Parthivasekharapuram. Sri Vallabha also appears in two rock cut inscription from Tiruvaidaikkodu [Kanyakumari District in Tamil Nadu] issued in the 14th and 22nd years of his reign. The stone inscription at the ruined Vishnu Temple at Perumpaladur

³⁴ KA Neelakantha Sashtri, A HISTORY OF SOUTH INDIA, Madras, 1976 pp.156

³⁵ MGS Narayanan RE-INTERPRETATIONS IN SOUTH INDIAN HISTORY, Trivandrum, 1977 pp. 29

³⁶ As quoted by MGS Narayanan RE-INTERPRETATIONS IN SOUTH INDIAN HISTORY, Trivandrum, 1977 pp. 29

and copper plate from Tirupparappu, both in Thiruvananthapuram District, mentions Sri Vallabha as the reigning king. The Vaishnava affiliation of the Ays can be fathomed from their claim to the Vrsni/Yadava family and the establishment of Vishnu temples at Parthivasekharapuram and Perumpaladur. Historians including Sarkar suggest that the nucleus of Sri Padmanabha Temple at Thiruvananthapuram might have been an Ay activity.

Vikramaditya Varaguna, son of Sri Vallabha is the last known king from Ay dynasty. As stated above he is mentioned as *Vilinjabhartra* in the Paliyum copperplate. Sarkar suggests that Varaguna ruled for forty-five years from 880 to 925 AD. Paliyum plate refers to the donation of Varaguna to the Buddhist monastery at Sri Mulavasam in the Cera country and appointment of Vira-Kota as the protector of the monument. MGS Narayanan considers this as an expression of the normalization of Ay-Cera relations or the acceptance of the suzerainty of Pandyan and their matrimonial kin, the Ceras, through the marriage of Cera princess Vanavan Mahadevi to Pandya ruler Parantaka Viranarayana [885-905].

CERAS OF MAHODAYAPURAM

The medieval period history of Kerala is dominated by the controversial topics like the Ceras of Mahadayapuram [*Makaotai*], Cola incursions into Kerala and the legend of the Perumal rule. When historians like Elamkulam Kujan Pilla, Sreedhara Menon and MGS Narayanan suggest the existence of Second Cera Empire, K Balakrishana considers it as a complete fabrication of the facts by the “Elamkulam School of scholars”. The epigraphical evidences however support “Elamkulam School”.

Second Cera Empire was established by Kulasekhara Varman, also revered as Kulasekhara Alwar the Vaisnavite saint. Kulasekhara ruled central Kerala from 800 to 820 AD with Mahodayapuram as his capital. This Mahodayapuram, according to historians, situated on River Periyar, near the Port town of Musiris, identified with present day Kodungallur in Trissur District. His successor Rajasekhara Varman [AD.820-844] *alias* Ceraman Perumal was a Saiva saint known as Ceraman Perumal Nayanar. He was a contemporary of celebrated Saiva saints Sundaramurti Nayanar and Viralminda Nayanar. The most famous contemporary of Rajasekhara was Sankaracharya, the *advaita* philosopher. Rajasekhara has authored few Sanskrit plays and probably is the originator of the Sanskrit theatre form called *Koodiyattam*. Rajasekhara is responsible for the inscription at Vazhapalli [Kottayam District], the first by a Cera king, which curiously starts with invocation “*namasivaya*” instead of the usual “*Svastisri*” revealing the Saivite preferences of the King. In the inscription the king bears the titles like *Sri Raja*, *Rajadhiraja*, *Paramesvara* and *Bhattaraka*. Issued on the twelfth reigning year of the king, it refers to *dinara* as an existing coinage. Many historians consider this as derived from the flourishing trade with west or as denoting the connection with the Arabian world. Once realized that it was the same Ceraman Perumal who allocated the land to build a mosque to the Muslims next to his capital at Tiruvancikkulam, which till date is called as the Ceraman palli, the reference to *Dinar* will not come as a surprise.

The Cera kings after Ceraman Perumal continued this religious tolerance. This is evident from the Tarisa Palli copper plate grant of Ravivarma Kulasekhara *alias* Stanu Ravi Kulasekhara Varman [AD.844-885] who succeeded Ceraman Perumal. In the grant Stanu Ravi Varman gifted land properties to the Church [*palli*] of Teresa

[Tarisa] at Kollam through his Venatu governor Ayyanadigal Tiruvadi. This Cera monarch has been mentioned in the inscriptions at Irinjalakkuda [Trissur District], Tiruvalla [Pattanamtitta District] and Kottayam. The found spots of these records would illustrate the political suzerainty of the Ceras, which covered the lion share of the present day Kerala State. The later Cera kings like Ramavarma Kulasekhara [885-917] and Kodai Ravivarman [917-944] expanded the empire to the shores of River Bharatappuzha in north Kerala as it is evident from the inscription of Kodai Varman from Trippangod in present day Malappuram district.

Ravivarman's rule followed by Indu Kotai Varman [944-962], whose records are found from sites as Trikkakara [Ernakulum District], Moozhikkulam [Trissur District], Tali and Tiruvanmundur [Kottayam District] all in central Kerala. Indu Kotai was succeeded by Bhaskara Ravi Varman [961-1021] who issued the famous Copper plate from Tirunelli [Wynad District] in the year 1021. His reign witnessed significant political turmoil due to the Cola incursions. Though the Cera dynasty continued to rule over Kerala and issue grants, evident through many copper plates and stone inscriptions, most of the historians are of the opinion that the Ceras were ruling as the vassals of Colas. The inscription from Tirumittakkode refers to Rajendra Cola and Cera ruler Iravi Kota [Ravi Varman 1025-1035] along with one Cekkila Saktimjayan the Cola Muttariyan, the local official of the Colas³⁷. MGS Narayanan states thus, "It is evident [from the Tirumittakkode inscription] that following his conquest of Kerala, Rajendra Cola permitted the Cera king Bhaskara Ravi and then his successor Ravi Kota to continue as rulers of Kerala on condition that they

³⁷ MGS Narayanan RE-INTERPRETATIONS IN SOUTH INDIAN HISTORY, Trivandrum, 1977 pp. 44

acknowledge Cola supremacy and pay tribute. They continued to use their own ruling years also in their inscriptions”³⁸. The stone inscription from Pullur [Kasargode district] by Bhaskara Ravi Varman II [1035-90] is the northern extend of Cera inscriptions. His successor Ramavarma Kulasekhara [1090-1103] mentioned in the inscription dated to 1103 AD at Ramesvaram Temple [Kollam District] as *Raman Tiruvadi Kulasekhara Koyiladhikari*. Sarkar suggest that Ramavarma could restore the prestige of the Cera lineage and ruled almost independently. Sreedhara Menon gives Ramavarma the credit of shifting the Cera capital from Mahodayapuram to Kollam. The weakening of Cola power during the time of Kulottunga I can be another reason for the confidence of Ramavarma. However, after Ramavarma, the Cera dynasty did not seem to be control of the Kerala affaires. Weakening of Cera and Cola power gave the Pandyans a chance to accede the southern regions of Kerala to their empire. By 13th century the dynasties as Tiruvitankur or Sri Pada Swarupam who claimed their ancestry to Ceras took over the Venatu region.

Different historian provides the date and even name of the Cera rulers of Mahodayapuram differently. The below table illustrates the genealogy of Ceras of Mahodayapuram provided by Elamkulam Kunjan Pilla³⁹, Sreedhara Menon⁴⁰ and MGS Narayanan⁴¹. Sreedhara Menon follows the chronology prescribed by

³⁸ MGS Narayanan RE-INTERPRETATIONS IN SOUTH INDIAN HISTORY, Trivandrum, 1977 pp. 44

³⁹ Elamkulam Kunjan Pilla, *ELAMKULAM KUNJANPILLAYUDE THIRENJEDUTHA KRITHIKAL* – Part I, [Malayalam] [COLLECTED ESSAYS OF ELAMKULAM KUNJAN PILLA] Ed. N Sam, International Centre for Kerala Studies, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2005. pp 443-444

⁴⁰ A Sreedhara Menon, *KERALA CHARITHRAM* [Malayalam], [HISTORY OF KERALA] S.Visvanathan Pvt.Ltd, Madras, 1967, Revised Edition 1995, Reprint 2001, pp. 161-172

⁴¹ A Sreedhara Menon, *KERALA CHARITHRAM* [Malayalam], [HISTORY OF KERALA] S.Visvanathan Pvt.Ltd, Madras, 1967, Revised Edition 1995, Reprint 2001, pp. 180

Elamkulam with minor details while MGS Narayanan based his arguments on the recent researches.

Different views on the Genealogy of the Ceras of Mahodayapuram

[Areas of agreement between the historian shown in bold]

Name	Date Elamkulam Kunjan Pilla	Date Sreedhara Menon	Name	Date MGS Narayanan
Kulasekhara Varma	800-820	800-820	Rama Rajasekhara	800-844
Rajasekhara	820-844	820-844		
Sthanu Ravi	844-885	844-885	Sthanu Ravi Kulasekhara	844-883
Rama Varma	885-917	885-917	Kodai Ravi Vijayaraga	883-913
Kodai Ravi	917-947	917-944	Kodai Kodai Kerala Kesari	913-943
Indu Kodai	944-962	944-962	Indu Kodai	943-962
Bhaskara Ravi I	962-1019	962-1019	Bhaskara Ravi	962-1021
Bhaskara Ravi II	979-1021	979-1021		
Vira Kerala	1021-1028	1021-1028		
Rajasimha	1028-1046	1028-1046	Ravi Kodai Rajasimha	1021-1036
Bhaskara Ravi III	1043-1082	1043-1082	Raja Raja	1036-1089
			Ravi Rama Rajaditya	1036-1089
			Aditya Kodai Ranaditya	1036-1089
Ravi Rama Varma	1082-1090	1082-1090		
Rama Varma Kulasekhara	1089-1102	1090-1102	Rama Kulasekhara	1089-1122

THE COLA CONQUESTS

Though there are few references in the Pallava and Calukyan records about their conquests of Kerala no inscriptional evidence found of their ascendancy over Kerala. As stated elsewhere in the present thesis the Musaka Nagaram which Mangalesa captured probably belonged to Deccan region rather than Kerala. Come to think of it, Calukyan inscriptions are seldom found even in the coastal regions of Karnataka let alone any temple building activity. Probably Calukyans and Pallavas were busy in their constant feuds they never had the time to look at Kerala. Another reason may be the Western Ghats which discouraged the external powers from entering Kerala. Closeness of the Western Ghats to the sea without a pass made it really impenetrable in the northern part of Kerala. Southern portion of the Ghats in the present day Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu was much open and ideal for military movements. This evident from the historical fact that the only non Kerala political powers which entered Kerala through Mangalore and Wynad respectively were the Baidnur Nayakas and Hyder Ali in 17th and 18th century respectively. Hyder's son and successor Tipu Sultan preferred to enter through Palakkad. On the other hand, Pandiyans of Madurai had few incursions through the southern route. Even the Vijayanagara forces preferred the Tamil Nadu route to enter Kerala.

Coming back to the political powers entering Kerala it was the Colas who were successful in achieving some kind of control over Kerala. Parantaka II [Sundara Cola] [957-73], when he humbled the Pandiyans and entered the southwestern part of Tamil Nadu, initiated the Cola incursion into Kerala. The Suchindram temple inscription of

Parantaka mentions the Cola extension to Ay country. Parantaka's successor Uttama Cola [970-85] assumed the title of *Madhurantaka* probably referring to his conquest of Madurai, the capital city of Pandians. Uttama's successors Raja Raja [985-1012] and Rajendra I [1012-44] followed the expansionist policy of Parantaka and included Kerala in their itinerary of conquests. Raja Raja captured Vizhinjam and Kandalur Salai in the Ay country. He changed the names of the cities and the region attaching the names of his kith and kin. TK Velu Pilla writes in Travancore State Manual thus, "The Colas delighted in changing the names of places which came under their sway quite as much as they recorded their conquests in inscriptions set up in tracts which came to their possession. We find Kanyakumari being named as Rajarajeswaram, Suchidram as Sundaracola Chaturvedimangalam, and Kottar as Mammudicolanallur and Vizhinjam as Rajendra Cola Pattanam"⁴². Except Vizhinjam which is around 9 KM from Thiruvananthapuram all the other cities belongs to Tamil Nadu presently.

Raja Raja, named this southernmost extension of his empire as *Raja Raja Pandinad*⁴³ however, he did not appoint a governor to look after the affairs of Kerala, which lead to a revolt in the region during the reign of Rajendra I. Rajendra I successfully, suppressed the revolt in his 6th year of his accession to the throne. Tirumittakkode [Palakkad District] inscription mentions the name of *Colan Parakesari Varman*, which MGS Narayanan has identified as Rajendra I. References to Rajendra I do appear in few inscriptions from Muncirai Tirumalai and Valiya Salai

⁴² TK Velu Pilla, TRAVANCORE STATE MANUAL, Kerala Gazetteers Department, Govt. of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1940, Reprint 1996, pp.65

⁴³ A Sreedhara Menon, *KERALA CHARITHRAM* [Malayalam], [HISTORY OF KERALA] S.Visvanathan Pvt.Ltd, Madras, 1967, Revised Edition 1995, Reprint 2001, pp. 168

[Thiruvananthapuram District].⁴⁴ Rajadhiraja [1018/44- 54] provide a list of three kings from Kerala, excluding the Ays, clearly demonstrating the decline of the dynasty under Cola conquests. This inscription however, talks about the *Villavan* who is identified as Cera ruler Bhaskara Ravi Varman II. The same inscription gives credit to the Musaka ruler as one of the three major rulers of Kerala. Vira Rajendra's [1063-1069] conquest had forced the Cera ruler Bhaskara Ravi Varman III to retreat to north a probability suggested by the historians due to the occurrence of his inscription at Pullur in Kasargode District. The same Bhaskara Ravi Varman has been mentioned in an inscription at Moozhikkulam in Trissur District. It however, seems highly disputable, as it would illustrate that the Ceras under Bhaskara Ravi Varman III held sway over the lion share of the present Kerala State.

The Cola and the Cera conflicts actually paved the way for the breaking of Cera rule in Kerala. As mentioned elsewhere the Cola rulers from the time of Parantaka Cola to later rulers as Virarajendra had been perpetually attacking the borders of Kerala probably through Palakkad, Sengotai passes of western Ghats and the passage through Tirunelveli and Nagarkoil. The contact with the Tamil region, through Pandyan and Cola connection becomes a crucial point in understanding the *Dravida* elements in Kerala temple architecture. More than the Colas the Pandyan connection must have nurtured temple architecture of Kerala as the Vizhinjam rock cut caves are considered to be the pioneering structures of temple architecture in Kerala. More than architecture Cola incursion changed the social scenario of Kerala. The dominance brahmanical religion brought in by the Colas might have resulted in the waning of Buddhism and Jainism in Kerala. Prolonged conflict with the Colas, which some

⁴⁴ H Sarkar, ARCHITECTURE SURVEY OF KERALA TEMPLES, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1978 pp. 18

historians like Elamkulam prefers to call as 'Hundred Year War', resulted in the reduction of Nair dominance in Kerala and the resulted rise of Nambutiri Brahmins.

Beginning of the 14th century saw another group of rulers controlling the Kerala affairs, namely Kolattiris of Kannur, Samutiris of Kozhikkode, Perumbadappus of Kochi and Tiruvitankurs of Venatu. All these rulers except Kolattiris claimed their territorial legitimacy to a legendary Perumal who abdicated the throne and divided the empire equally amongst them and left for Mecca. The existence of Perumals, the non *malayali* [non Keralite] ruler invited by the Brahmins to rule over Kerala for 12 year each, is not proved by historical data. Descriptions of the Perumal rule almost sounds too good to be true as the Maveli [Mahabali] myth associated with Onam festival. Probably the rulers of Second Cera Empire were given honorary title as Perumals. Padmanabha Menon refutes the theory that the last Perumal converted to Islam thus, "the conversion story is the mixed version of two conversions which happened in history. First, about the Bana Perumal, who converted into Buddhism and the other regarding one of the Samutiris who converted to Islam"⁴⁵. Local chieftens of Kerala, who came to power in the medieval period, except Kolattiris of Kannur, used the portion of distribution of land by the converted Perumal to claim legitimacy to their rule on the land.

⁴⁵ As quoted by EMS Namboodirippadu, *KERALAM MALYALIKALUDE MATHRUBHOOMI* [Malayalam], from P Govinda Pillai [Ed], *EMSINTE SAMPOORNA KRITIKAL* [COLLECTED WORKS OF EMS NAMBOODIRIPAD Vol. 9- 1948] [Malayalam] Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2000, p.105

KOLATTIRIS OF KANNUR

The Kolattiris of Kannur (Cannanore), held sway over the northern extremity of Kerala; from Kasargode on the north to the Korappuzha River on the south, and east into the mountainous hinterland of Kodagu (Coorg). These territories incorporated the vassal principalities of Allada, Arakkal, and Kottayam. The Kolattiris claimed their lineage back to the Musaka dynasty which ruled as the Ezhi [also Ezhil] Kovilakam in the 13th century, as noted by the Italian traveler Marco Polo. The dynasty later split into two parts, the Udayamangalam branch settling in Aduttila, and the Palli branch at various residences, including Chirakkal, where the present descendants live. A few of the Palli branches, such as the Mavelikkara and Putupalli, enjoyed connections with rulers in Venatu, in the extreme south of Kerala.

Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, the Kolattiris had to contend with Vijayanagara viceroys of Mangalore. After the fall of Vijayanagara, the Nayakas of Baidnur claimed legitimate rights over Mangalore, subduing the area north of Allada, and establishing a fortified coastal outpost at Bekal also known as Hosadurg. An offshoot of the Kolattiris, the Arakkals, joined with the Mysore forces in their conquest of the region. But the Kolattiris entered this dispute as collaborators with the British to whom the territory was ceded by Tipu in 1792.

Apart from the above mentioned, several other ruling families exercised influence in northern Kerala during this period. They include the Vazhunnore of Kuttyadi, and the lesser kings of Palakkad, Kottayam [region on the east of Tallassery comprising present day Kannur and Wynad Districts], and Mangalapadi. Claimed both by the

Samutiris and the Kolattiris, these principalities were finally merged into the Madras Presidency of the British Empire.

SAMUTIRIS OF KOZHICKODE

The ancestors of the Samutiris, principal rulers of northern Kerala from the 14th century onwards, were the Eratis of Nediyruppu. The *KERALOLPATTI* relates that after the Eratis received a gift of land from Ceraman Perumal, they moved north to Kozhikkode from where they set about subduing their rivals, the Porlatiris of Polanad in the fertile hinterland to the east. Soon the Eratis could boast of a kingdom extending from the Arabian Sea to the foothills of the Western Ghats, thereby earning the epithet *Kunnalakonatiri*, Lord of the Hills and Waves. (It was the Sanskrit version of this title, *Samutiri*, which was corrupted into Zamorin by the Portuguese.)

The Samutiris established their headquarters at Kozhikkode (Kozhikode or Calicut), which they developed into the greatest emporium of international trade on the Malabar Coast. The growing material progress of their capital enabled the Samutiris to embark upon a career of aggressive conquests and expansion during which the neighboring rajas of Caliyam, Beypur, Parappanad and Vettat, as well as the other chieftains of northern Kerala, were reduced to vassals. The Samutiris then turned their attention to Tirunavaya where the prestigious *Mamankam*⁴⁶ took place every twelve years. A war ensued over the control of the town and its festival, ending in a victory for Kozhikkode. The Samutiris then assumed the privileged position of

⁴⁶ *Maha Magha* festival; last performed in late 18th century. Just before the conquest of Mysore under Hyder Ali and Tipu.

Mahapurusa, or Protector, of the Mamankam, and exercised their right to wear crowns, mint money, and hold ceremonial umbrellas. In spite of the hegemony that the Samutiris exerted over much of northern Kerala, power remained in the hands of the Nair nobles who maintained armies of their own, providing the Samutiris and other rulers with soldiers in times of war.

Kozhikkode was preeminent among the numerous and active ports of northern Kerala, which, enabled the Samutiris to develop lucrative mercantile connections with the Red Sea, Persia, and Surat. The international reputation of the Samutiris was such that in 1442 a Persian envoy, Abdul Razzaq, arrived in Kozhikkode. His chronicle forms one of the earliest historical records for the era. Cordial and profitable connections with the Middle East were disrupted in 1498 by the arrival of Vasco Da Gama, who landed at Kapat, 30 KM north of Kozhikkode. The history of the Samutiris thereafter was blighted by clashes with the Portuguese, and later with the Dutch, for supremacy of the Arabian Sea trade. The Kolattiris of Kannur and Perumbadappus of Kochi, traditional enemies of the Samutiris, also participated in these conflicts, allying themselves with the Europeans. In spite of the struggles with the Portuguese and Dutch, trading activities continued, and the Samutiri kingdom experienced sustained prosperity. The military ambitions of the Samutiris continued throughout the era, but ended with the attack on Palakkad in 1757. This led to a series of invasions by the Mysore forces, at first under Haidar Ali in 1766, later by his successor, Tipu Sultan. Consequently, the region became an arena of war between the British and Mysore. Malabar region with the lion share of Samutiri controlled area was ceded to the British in the Treaty of Seringapatnam in 1792 and eventually absorbed into the Madras Presidency.

PERUMBADAPPUS OF KOCHI

While the Perumbadappus were indisputably the foremost rulers of central Kerala at the turn of the 14th century, no clear list of rulers or their ruling dates is available until the period of European domination. According to tradition, the Perumbadappu *Swarupam* came into existence on the division of Kerala by Ceraman Perumal. The first ruler of this dynasty was the eldest son of Perumbadappu Nambutiri [The family name, Perumbadappu, honors this royal ancestor], and a sister of the last Perumal, therefore, direct heir to the country according to the traditional law of succession. For this reason the Perumbadappus considered themselves as the noblest kings in the whole of Kerala. The name of the first of their line is supposedly Vira Kerala Varma, a name that was to be repeated with only minor variations over more than 300 years.

In spite of their prestigious lineage, the Perumbadappus in the 14th and 15th centuries occupied a position subordinate to their neighbor to the north, the Samutiris of Kozhikkode. Perumbadappu territories extended from Purakkad in the south to Cetuva in the north, but not all dominions within this region accepted the authority of these kings. Nor is it clear where the Perumbadappus had their headquarters, though they seem to have resided for some years at Mahodayapuram and Tiruvancikulam. However, by 1409, when Mahuan, a Chinese Muslim traveler was in Kerala, the Perumbadappus had already settled in Kochi, at the ocean mouth of Vembanad Lake, the great inland waterway of central Kerala. It was at this capital that these kings were established when the Portuguese arrived.

The landing of Pedro Alvarez Cabral, admiral of the Portuguese fleet, at Kochi in December 1500 signaled the beginning of a new era in the fortunes of the Perumbadappus. Over the next two hundred years, the alliance of the Kochi rulers with the Portuguese and later with the Dutch proved a means of achieving economic stability and expanding their political influence. An indication of the increased status of the Perumbadappus at this time was their ability to persuade lesser chiefs of central Kerala, such as the Kaimals of Cheranallur, to repudiate their allegiance to the Samutiris and to accept the suzerainty of Kochi. In an attempt to check the growing powers of the Perumbadappus, the Samutiris invaded central Kerala in 1503. However, the Portuguese came to the rescue, and the Samutiri forces were expelled.

With Kochi as their base, the Portuguese rapidly assumed supremacy of the Arabian Sea trade, bringing prosperity to the Kochi region through direct export of spices, coir, and other products. The economic solvency of the period had its tangible expression in the building and renovation of temples, as the Hindu community pursued its religious affairs relatively unhindered by the European presence. The Kochi court flourished, as did the careers of local nobles and merchants, resulting in a marked efflorescence in cultural affairs, particularly literature and the arts. None of this would have been possible without the friendship and support of the Portuguese. In return, however, the Perumbadappus had to endure external meddling in state affairs.

The Dutch gradually displaced the Portuguese as the most influential European power on the Malabar Coast, capturing Kochi in January 1663, which then became their headquarters in Kerala. This situation meant little substantial change for the

Perumbadappus, who continued to benefit from European protection in return for occasional interference in local affairs. The Kochi Prime Ministers, for instance, were often nominees of the Dutch Company. By the beginning of the 18th century, Dutch influence was on the wane, and the Kochi kingdom once again came under attack from its neighbors. The Samutiris invaded the northern part of the kingdom on several occasions, occupying Trissur (Trichur) and adjoining areas in 1755-57. Martanda Varma of Venatu occupied the lands to the south, his army reaching Kochi in 1750, and then only partly retreating. These conflicts between the different polities of Kerala were brought to an end with the invasion of Kerala by Haidar Ali in 1774. After the departure of Tipu Sultan, Haidar's son and successor, the Kochi rulers were reduced to tributaries of the East India Company which had by this time established itself as the supreme power in South India.

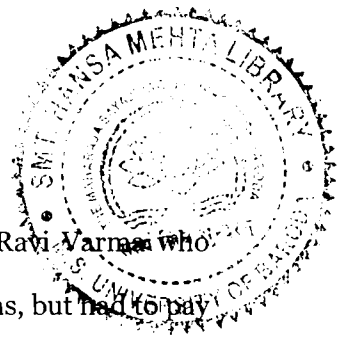
TIRUVITANKURS OF VENADU

Prior to the conquests of Martanda Varma, whose reign lasted from 1729 to 1758, in the middle of the 18th century, the territories of south Kerala, known collectively as Venatu, were under the control of a number of lesser rulers. The most prominent among these were the Tiruvitankur (Travancore) rajas based at Kalkkulam, later known as Padmanabhapuram, in the southern extremity of this zone. The Attingal dynasty, considered the maternal house of the Tiruvitankur rajas, was based at Kollam, while the Tekkunkur family commanded the realms of Kottayam and Pattanamtitta. Among the other chieftains were the rajas of Ambalappuzha and Vanhippuzha. However, with the exception of the Tiruvitankur kings, the early history of these dynasties is shrouded in mystery. Portuguese and Dutch chronicles mention

these kingdoms, but give few historical details. Temple legends and documents refer to these kings as *Koil adhikaris*, patrons of shrines, but offer little additional data other than sporadic names.

The arrival of Albuquerque at Kollam in 1503, and the subsequent establishment of a European commercial factory there, signifies the beginning of a new era in Venatu history. In spite of conflicts between Portuguese and local commercial power groups, leading to the siege of Kollam fort in 1519, trade flourished in the region, much to the benefit of the Venatu rajas and their subjects. Sri Vira Ravi Varma, chief king of Venatu at this time, made successful raids into the Tamil country, occupying substantial tracts of the Pandyan territories. These campaigns brought the Venatu forces into direct conflict with Vijayanagara emperors, against whom the Venatu rajas were pitted from 1530 onwards. Among the successors of Sri Vira Ravi Varma was Aditya Varma, who ruled from 1553 to 1567. His inscription of 1565 appears on the eastern *gopuram* of the Padmanabhasvami temple at Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum), which housed the preferred tutelary divinity of the Venatu rajas.

The history of Venatu in the 17th century is much bound up with that of the Nayakas of Madurai. Venatu was under the joint sovereignty of Ravi Varma and Unni Kerala Varma in 1634 when Tirumala Nayaka made his first incursion into Venatu, after which war-like conditions prevailed between the two powers. The arrival of the Dutch proved a further obstacle to peace. The Dutch attacked Kollam in 1661, but later settlements guaranteed the sovereignty of queen Umayamma Rani. This agreement however did not guarantee the Dutch a trade monopoly and in 1697, under pressure from the English who had established themselves firmly at Anjengo and Vizhinjam,



the Dutch withdrew from their forts at Kodungallur and Kollam. Ravi Varma who reigned from 1684 to 1728, negotiated successfully with the Europeans, but had to pay tribute to Madurai after the invasion of the Nayaka forces in 1694.

The next ruler of consequence, Martanda Varma, was responsible for unifying Venatu which he achieved by subduing subordinate rajas of Kayankulam and Elayedattu, annexing the minor principalities of Kollam and Ambalappuzha, and expelling the Dutch after defeating them at the Battle of Colachel in 1741. The other political decision of Matanda Varma firmly placed Tiruvitankur dynasty as the suzerain rulers of Venatu region even changing the name of the region from Venatu to Tiruvitankur. This was the process of *Truppadi Danam* where Martanda Varma ceded the state of Tiruvitankur to Lord Padmanabha, the deity of Sri Padmanabha Temple at Thiruvananthapuram. The kings of Tiruvitankur since that day continued to rule as the mortal representative of the god Padmanabha assuming the title of '*Sri Padmanabha-dasa*'. It was a shrewed political strategy of accepting the god himself as the titular sovereign and continuing to enjoy the defacto powers as the king, through which he culled out any possibility of rebellion against the god fearing society of Tiruvitankur against the defacto rulers. The greatest of the many projects undertaken by Martanda Varma was the rebuilding of the Padmanabhasvami temple.

Martanda Varma's policies of expansion were continued by his successor, Rama Varma [also known as Dharma Raja], under whose reign [1758 - 1798], Tiruvitankur emerged as the largest and the most prosperous Kerala kingdom, surviving the British Period. The greatest crisis Rama Varma had to go through was the Mysore incursion under Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan. Tiruvitankur accepted the British control after they

aided the kingdom defeating the Mysore incursion and maintained cordial relationship with them till 1947. Tiruvitankur and Kochi joined the Indian Union in 1947 but retained constitutional monarchy till the formation of Kerala state in 1956.

COLONIAL POWERS IN KERALA

Kerala had direct connections with west in the ancient times and was on the trade maps of the world through the history. In the medieval period this trade continued through the Arabs. After the disintegration of the Cera Kingdom of Mahodayapuram and the destruction of Muziris due to the flood in 14th century, the commercial strategic position of Muziris was taken over by Kozhikkode [Calicut] under the patronage of the Samutiris. The local Muslim traders in partnership with the Arab Muslims controlled the spice trade at Kozhikkode. There were other communities too; who participated in the trade like the *vaniyas* [baniyas], Parsis and Borah Muslims of Gujarat, Tamil and Telugu Chettis, Syrian Christians. Chinese too traded with these communities. However, the West bound trade was dominated by the *Mappilas* [Kerala Muslims] along with the Muslim traders of Hurmuz, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The sea route from Kerala in the pre *Carreira da India*⁴⁷ [Cape route] was laborious and expensive as it had to pass through ports and toll points as Hurmuz, Jeddah, Cairo, Alexandria and Venice, as the local informant Gasper Da Gama would explain to Vasco Da Gama⁴⁸. The intention of the Portuguese endeavour was precisely against this Moor-Egyptian and Venetian network.

⁴⁷ Sanjay Subrahmanyam. THE CAREER AND LEGEND OF VASCO DA GAMA, New Delhi, 1998.

⁴⁸ Sanjay Subrahmanyam. THE CAREER AND LEGEND OF VASCO DA GAMA, New Delhi, 1998

As Adam Smith establishes, "The discovery of America and that of a Passage to the East Indies by the Cape of Good Hope are the two greatest and most important events recorded in the History of mankind"⁴⁹. Both Gama and Columbus discovered the Indies, one the West and the other the East. If Gama's discovery was significant then, the journey of Columbus was pivotal to the development of the Western World. Both these sailors wished to reach one land; one believed that he did and the other really did land. This was the land as Gasper da Gama⁵⁰ would state as the "land from which there originates the spice that is eaten in the west, and in the Levant, and in Portugal and equally so in all provinces of the world". The land where "*the half naked monarchs*" held the monopoly over the "Black Gold" assisted by the Moorish traders who exclaimed to the first Portuguese sailors in Calicut [Kozhikkode], "*Devil take you, what the hell are you doing here*"⁵¹?

The early European travellers to the Pepper land include Marco Polo [13th century], John of Monti Corvino [13th century], Friar Jordanus [14th century], and Nicolo Conti [15th century]. MN Pearson summarise the pre-Gama or endeavour of the Europeans to east thus, "For centuries European traders and travellers had adventured through the middle East to the Indian Ocean. We know of several European Visitors to India in the fifteenth century. One of them was Pero de Covilham, sent out by the Portuguese sovereign D. Joao II in 1487 to investigate the

⁴⁹ Field House. COLONIAL EMPIRES. Though Field House would not completely agree with Adam Smith. "Smith was of course, taking a narrowly Eurocentric view. Europe had no monopoly of distant trading or overseas empire. ...[sic].. Hence the importance of the first expansion of Europe lay in its effects on Europe rather than its uniqueness as a world phenomenon.

⁵⁰ Sanjay Subrahmanyam. THE CAREER AND LEGEND OF VASCO DA GAMA, New Delhi, 1998

⁵¹ Livermore, HV. PORTUGAL, A SHORT HISTORY, Edinburgh, 1973

conditions in the Indian Ocean. He visited Cannanore [Kannur], Calicut [Kozhikkode], Goa, Hurmuz and also East African ports as far south as Sofala"⁵².

The intentions of the first voyage by the Portuguese were quite simple, find a sea route to east and establish commercial links to the East. Vasco Da Gama was not happy with the receptions he got in Kozhikkode as the pressure from the Arab merchants forced the Samutiri of Kozhikkode to act hostile to the Portuguese. The Moorish/Arabian traders did not want any of the European powers enter directly into the spice trade, which in fact was exactly the intention of the Portuguese. The Egyptian rulers who benefited from the spice trade to West even tried to pressurise the Portuguese through Pope himself. The Papal authority at this juncture supported the Portuguese may be reasoning on the religious fervour shared by them. The treatment Gama received from these traders at Kozhikkode was enough to unveil their intentions. "The anonymous account assures us when any Portuguese went ashore, the Muslim merchants would spit on the ground near them, and say "*Portugali, Portugali*" in an insulting fashion; besides, we are told that `from the beginning they sought means to capture us and kill us"⁵³. The sole European trading community trusted by the Muslim merchants at Kozhikkode was that of the Venetian and the only language interpreter whom Gama trusted was a non-Muslim. Gama landing on 27th of May 1498, lingered in Kozhikkode port without making much progress on the trade agreement. He was growing nervous and annoyed with the treatment of Samutiri and took some drastic steps as capturing few Kozhikkode merchants as hostages to retrieve his people ashore. At last some agreement and a letter of acceptance were

⁵² M.N.Pearson: The Portuguese in India, THE NEW CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA, Gen.Ed.Gordon Johnson 1987. Cambridge. pp.11

⁵³ Sanjay Subrahmanyam. THE CAREER AND LEGEND OF VASCO DA GAMA, New Delhi, 1998

received and without much delay they decided to leave. Portuguese were unhappy that they “could not manage to leave the land in peace and as friends of the people”⁵⁴. These developments at Kozhikkode would bear its impact on the relation of the Portuguese with Kozhikkode all through the history of *Estado da India*⁵⁵.

It may be an amusing fact of history that the discoverer of Brazil [in 1500] was the first Portuguese to reach Kochi. It was Pedro Alvarez de Gouveia, later known as Cabral. Starting his journey from Lisbon he reached Brazil and then travelled on to Malabar Coast through Carreira da India. Cabral was well received at Kozhikkode [Calicut], may be because of the new Samutiri at the helm. The Portuguese did establish a factory at Kozhikkode [Calicut] this time under the factor Aires Correia. Samutiri even asked the help of Cabral to capture a ship from Kochi which allegedly was carrying an elephant, which belonged to Samutiri. But matters turned for worse after the Portuguese captured a Muslim ship leaving for Jeddah. The Muslim merchants retaliated violently and killed around 40 Portuguese including the factor Aires Correia. Cabral retaliated by bombarding Kozhikkode [Calicut] and Pantalayani. To avoid further skirmishes he left for Kochi following the advice of Gaspar da Gama and landed at Kochi on 24th December 1500.

Kochi and Cannanore who were the adversaries of the Calicut-Moorish trade in Indian Ocean supported the Portuguese. Portuguese also got the aid of trading communities like the Baniyas of Gujarat, Konkanis and Syrian Christians of Kerala in this tussle. The Syrian Christians who dominated the production and trade of Spices in South Kerala found the shifting of Portuguese to Kochi quite befitting their trade

⁵⁴ Sanjay Subrahmanyam. THE CAREER AND LEGEND OF VASCO DA GAMA, New Delhi, 1998

⁵⁵ Sanjay Subrahmanyam. THE CAREER AND LEGEND OF VASCO DA GAMA, New Delhi, 1998

interests. Sanjay Subrahmanyam notes thus about the stand of Kochi King thus, “the Kochi ruler, Unni Goda Varma, appears to have grasped directly the political advantages that would accrue to him by diverting the Portuguese away from Kozhikkode”⁵⁶. Cabral established a factory at Kochi under the factor Goncalo Gil Barbosa, which would remain in the Portuguese hands, despite some interruptions, till 1663.

After Cabral, it was the turn of Joao da Nova to reach Kochi who found the factory at Kochi in bad shape. Vasco da Gama, now elevated in his political and social position returned to Malabar after Nova. The second voyage of Gama was crucial in forging an alliance between the Portuguese and the Kerala Christians. In November 1502 some of the community members of Syrian Christians met Gama and offered an alliance and even presented a ceremonial offering of a red staff with silver bells on it. This network helped the Portuguese to have an access to the Spice trade in South Kerala. But soon after Gama returned Samutiri put pressure on Raja of Kochi to hand over the Portuguese factor at Kochi. The refusal to which ensued in a war between the Kingdoms. In this war of 1503 the King of Kochi Unni Goda Varma had lost his life. The arrival of Alfonso de Albuquerque eased the tension mounting on the Arabian Sea not because of Albuquerque’s diplomatic abilities but his reputation as ruthless conqueror. In 1503 Albuquerque obtained permission to build fortification to the factory. The building materials for the fortifications were mainly stems of Coconut trees bound with iron bands. Within the fort, which was named as *Manuel Kotta* [Fort of Manuel, after the King of Portugal], they also built a Church dedicated St. Bartholomew, another patron saint of India along with St. Thomas. Raja of Cochin

⁵⁶ Sanjay Subrahmanyam. THE CAREER AND LEGEND OF VASCO DA GAMA, New Delhi, 1998

Unnirama Koyikkal II pleased by the Golden crown presented by Dom Francisco Almeida in 1506 permitted the Portuguese to build a new city of mortar and stone. Apart from the fortifications, a new church was built in 1516 and dedicated to St. Anthony. The fortification and the settlement would remain with the Portuguese for all most 150 years, though from the time of Albuquerque itself the focus of *Estado da India*⁵⁷ was gradually shifting from Kochi to Goa. It also marked the shift from trade to that of territorial interest.

As the Portuguese were shifting their trade and territorial interests to Goa and Sri Lanka, Dutch East India Company [Estd.1592] filled in the gap by entering into a commercial treaty with Samutiri in 1604. The renewal of the treaty in 1608 allowed the Dutch to start a factory at Kozhikkode. Apart from Samutiri, Dutch East India Company targeted the lesser rulers of Kerala like Purakkad and Kayamkulam who allowed them to start factories in their respective domains by 1643. In 1658 the Dutch captured the Kollam fort from the Portuguese. The major success for the Dutch came in 1663 when they conquered the Portuguese bastion at Kochi which resulted in the gradual waning of Portuguese power in Kerala. When the Dutch entered into a treaty with the Ali Raja of Kannur in 1664, the whole western coast of Kerala came under the control of Dutch, though there were European powers like the French and British keeping minor areas. The second quarter of 18th century saw the fortunes of Dutch failing drastically in Kerala. The rise of Tiruvitankur under Martanda Varma [1729-58] and his successor Rama Varma [Dharma Raja] [1758-98], the invasion of Mysore powers under Hyder Ali, emergence of British as a powerful entity in India and the fatal alliance with the French in the Napoleonic Wars lead to their decline in the

⁵⁷ Sanjay Subrahmanyam. THE CAREER AND LEGEND OF VASCO DA GAMA, New Delhi, 1998

Kerala region. Tiruvitankur forces under Martanda Varma comprehensively defeated the Dutch at the Battle of Colachel in 1741. Soon Marthanda Varma took over Purakkad and Kayamkulam, allies of Dutch in South Kerala. Samutiris of Kozhikkode also were successful in recapturing the bastions of Dutch power in Malabar. By the capture of Kochi by the British as part of the Napoleonic wars in 1795, the Dutch in Kerala became a non-entity.

The French story in Kerala history is not as significant as the other colonial powers. They had control of Mahe in north Kerala which they retained till 1947. French as colonial power was concentrating mainly on the Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh coastline where they had control over Pondicherry, Nagapatinam, Madras and Chandan Nagore. The French entity in Kerala is intertwined with that of the fortunes of Mysore, their chief ally in the region. Right from the time of Hyder who attacked Kerala in 1757, French retained their cordial relationship with Mysore.

When Samutiri of Kozhikkode attacked the Palakkad fort as part of his territorial expansion in 1757, Komu Acchan, the Palakkad Raja requested the Mysore forces at Dindigal, under Hyder Ali for military aid which initiated the Mysore incursions into Kerala. Samutiri who was comprehensively defeated in the battle had to pay heavy tax to Mysore. Encouraged by this victory, Hyder Ali, added Kerala in the itinerary of his conquests as soon as he took over the power in Mysore in 1761. Capturing the territories of Baidnur Nayakas Hyder could reach the northern region of Kerala. Making the Ali Raja of Kannur [Arakkal] as his ally, Hyder entered Kerala through north Malabar advancing to Calicut after defeating, Kolattiris, Kottayam Raja and the Kadattanatu Raja. Samutiri, who could not defeat or arrive at any truce with Hyder,

committed suicide, burning down his palace. When Hyder left for Mysore due to the trouble on the northern areas of his empire, the Nair landlords revolted in Kozhikkode region which was successfully suppressed by Hyder's governor Maddanna. Hyder revisited Kerala in 1773, this time through Coorg, targeting Kochi. The colonial powers in Kerala like the French and British did not do much to stop the Mysore forces thanks to the diplomatic endeavors of Hyder. After the death of Hyder in 1782, his son and successor, Tipu Sultan continued his engagements with Kerala, keeping southern Kerala under the Tiruvitankur kings. Tipu also entered into a marital alliance with Ali Raja, when Tipu's son got married to the daughter of Ali Raja. In 1789, Tipu reached Aluva and camped there. Legend says that there was a flash flood in Periyar River which destroyed much of the ammunitions of Tipu which forced him to withdraw, however the real reason is the beginning of Third Anglo-Mysore war. The war ended in Tipu losing to British and the resultant Treaty of Seringapatnam of 1792 by which Malabar was ceded to British.

Captain Ralph Fitch, who visited Kochi in 1583, was the first British to visit Kerala as part of the search for establishing trade connection with India. It should be noted that it was almost 30 years before Sir Thomas Roe met Mughal emperor Jahangir to get the permission for factory at Surat. In 1615 Captain Keeling reached Kozhikkode and entered into treaty with Samutiri to start a factory at Ponnani [Malappuram District]. Cordial relation with Portuguese in 1630's gave the British access to the ports under the Portuguese control in Kerala. The first British ship laden with pepper left Kochi in 1636. They got the permission of starting a factory at Vizhinjam [1644] and Kozhikkode [1664] from the Tiruvitankur king and Samutiri respectively. Their major center in south Kerala remained at Anchutengu [Anjengo] [Thiruvananthapuram

District] which they got from the Rani of Attingal. Though the revolt of the local people in 1721, when almost 140 British soldiers were killed, created a minor setback, British stayed on in Anjengo till 1947. The treaty with Tiruvitankur in 1723 provided the British a fort at Colachel [Kanyakumari District, Tamil Nadu], 40 KM south of Thiruvananthapuram. The clashes between Tiruvitankur and Dutch and their retrieval from Kerala coast gave British the advantage. Establishment of Tallassery [Telecherry, Kannur District] as a major bastion in north Kerala gave the British total control over the Kerala except minor centre controlled by the French at Mayyazhi [Mahe]. Major part of 18th century witnessed some skirmishes between the French and the British depending on the political situation in Europe and the Carnatic Wars in the east coast of India.

The British becomes a major power to reckon in Kerala due to their active involvement in the Mysore Wars. Second Mysore war and the treaty of Seringapatnam literally made the British the sovereigns of Malabar which was incorporated into a province under the Bombay Presidency, while the kingdoms of Kochi and Tiruvitankur were partially controlled by them. Kochi ceded its sovereignty to British through the treaty of 1800. Soon the treaty with Tiruvitankur in 1805 saw that kingdom coming under the “protection” of British. Velu Thampi who was instrumental in the treaty soon revolted against the British. After the suppression of Revolt, the British power demanded the suspension of Tiruvitankur army. So by 1810 all the regions of Kerala came under the direct and indirect control of British. They successfully suppressed any resistance to their authority like that of Velu Thampi Dalawa in Venatu region, Paliyatt Acchan in Kochi and Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja in North Malabar. The next major resistance to the British power in Kerala happened

only in early 20th century when the Indian National Congress organized political struggle as part of the Indian Independence Movement.

British who controlled the Kerala affair for almost a century and half brought in many social and economic changes in Kerala for example the abolition of slavery in Malabar region as soon as they got control over Malabar in 1792. The advancement of education of the lower classes especially in Malabar prompted the lower classes to come forward to demand the same in South Kerala. Though British authorities put pressure on the Maharajas to abolish slavery they preferred not to interfere in the existing social system which was predominantly caste oriented and maintained silence regarding the temple entry issue. The missionaries and other agencies had free hand in establishing schools and introducing western education system. The contribution of London Missionary Society [LMS], Church Missionary Society [CMS] and the Catholic Jesuit Missionaries in the field education had far reaching results paving the way for an educated and empowered society. The establishment of infrastructure facilities like the transport and communication by the British gave the impetus to the interaction between regions.

The life story of Dr. T Palpu [1863-1950] is a good example to understand the impact of British in the development of the social sector. Dr.Palpu even after clearing the entrance exam for medicine was not admitted into the Trivandrum Medical collage because he belonged to a lower caste. Palpu then went to Madras Medical Collage which was under the British to study medicine. Though Dr.Palpu became a well known physician in Mysore his native state of Tiruvitankur never invited him to join

the services. The impact of British rule in Kerala is dealt separately in detail elsewhere in the present thesis.