

**SOCIAL FABRIC OF ‘KARTHA/KARTHAKKANMAR’: A
STUDY**

*A dissertation submitted
to Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award
of the Degree of Master of Arts in History*

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Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project entitled “**Social Fabric of ‘Karthu/Karthakanmar’: A Study**” is a bonafide record of the project work done by Godvin Abraham, M. A History Semester IV (2019-2021) Pavanatma College, Murickassery, Idukki, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in History from Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam.

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DECLARATION

I Godvin Abraham, do here by declare that the project entitled “**Social Fabric of Kartha/Karthakanmar**”: A Study is a bonafide record of the project work done by me under the supervision of Mr. Jijo Jayaraj, Assistant Professor, Department of History, Pavanatma College, Murickassery, Idukki and that it has not been submitted earlier to any other university/institution for the award of any Degree or Diploma.

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GLOSSARY

Kadambar	: Agriculturist
Kartha	: Lord or Legend
Panar	: Singer
Para	: A Kind of Drum
Thudi	: A Musical Instrument
Uzhavar	: Workers
Valayar	: Fishermen
Vanikar	: Traders

ABBREVIATIONS

W. K. F	:	World Kartha Family
H. U. F	:	Hindu Undivided Family
H. J. F	:	Hindu Joint Family

INTRODUCTION

An Indian Village Community as a rule is comprised of several castes. Its structural elements include caste group that differ in their property. Statuses traditional occupations and Functional role in their places in the caste Hierarchy. In the early stages of the formation of Society men and women are not regarded and treated as individuals but as member of a particular groups. Groups of men and women related by blood relationships Constitute the units of the early Society. India's society continues to be Organized in groups. Individuals are subjected to collective standards. Individuals are subjected to collective standards and are expected to live in harmony with the group. Subordinating their individuals interests Groups are of many Kinds; tribes, village communities' caste, Joint family (ie. owning of property jointly by the group composed of the family and not separated by the individual members). This preminence of the groups is both a weakness because of the caste system that it has engendered and strength because the individuals believes in and endeavors to promote the cohesion of the Groups.

The caste system in kerala different from that found in the rest of India. While the Indian caste system generally moulded the four-fold divisions of society into Brahmins into Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and shudras, in kerala the Nambudiri Brahmins formed the Priestly class and only rarely recognized anyone else as being other than shudras or untouchables the latter being outside the caste system entirely, Thus the kerala caste system was ritualized but it was not the Varma model found elsewhere. In southern India only in kerala there arose warrior lineages approximate to the kshatriya model. These warriors never lost their identity as shudras. Nayar Kshatriyas hood is based on special ecological conditions and its is a case of elevated sudra to kshatriya status.

In this thesis present study based on the "Karthi Community in Southern Kerala". The Historical Records of Oral History report is helpful to known the history of Karthi, The study is mainly concentrated the Formations of Karthi community in kerala. T he first chapter tells us story of Caste system began in kerala-the brahmin migration took place in the seventh and eighth century AD. Brahmins became powerful in the seventh and eighth century. Dr.E J.

Thomas says that there are about 420 castes and sub-castes existed in Kerala, and at least 12 are seen in each village. (Keralathinte Samoohya Ghatanayum Roopantharavum). The medieval kerala divided into two; Kshatriya those became rulers or kings, Sudras who were the pillars of soil and Nair as a emerged through Sambandham. There were 64 classifications in Nair society and a number of sub castes among Nairs. The Nayar class name also encompassed Menon, Panikkar, Kurupu, Pillai, Unni, Unnithan, Kartha, Thampan, Kaimal, Nayanar, Thampi, and Nambiar Kartha is an aristocratic title given to the uppermost subdivisions of Nairs in Kerala, by the Maharajas of Travancore and Cochin.

The second chapter gives a coverage of Various Kartha families and its social life, The title Kartha meant doer and Lord. The term kartha used as a titular named by the rulers of Madurai. (At the Madras census, 1901, Kartakkal was returned by Balijas claiming to be descendants of the Nayak kings of Madura and Tanjore.) They served as Desavazhis or naduvazhis, kshatriyas and Raja. Kartha community used to work as supreme commanders in the Travancore royal army and Meenachil kartha served under Marthanda Varma of Travancore's. Some of the Kartha families were renowned for their expertise in Ayurveda medicine. The karthas followed Sambandham (sambandham was an informal mode of marriage followed by Nairs) and had followed Marumakkattayam (meant by matrilinear system of inheritance which was followed by all nair castes.) The various of kartha clans like, Anakkottil Kartha, Meenachil Kartha (present in Kottayam), Cheranellore Kartha(eranakulam), Ranni Kartha (Pathanamthitta).

The Third chapter is consisted the kerala formation of ancient time and tradition myths, The study is based on Literary works its review, Oral history and Critical evaluation of the works and find out the connection of social-cultural-formations-its power Managements from these works.

Area of Study

A Study Based on Kartha or Karthavu is a Hindu Nair Title name that means lord. It was conferred by the king to powerful Nair families who enjoyed raja or naduvazhis status.

The most important of the kartha clans are Anakkottil kartha and Meenachil kartha. Their independent principality was annexed by Marthandavarma's along with Thekkumkore

and Vadamkkur, Cheranellore kartha and Thazhassary kotta kartha, Ranni kartha, as a kshatriya community, ruled smaller principalities or worked mainly in the Army, Police or tax collectors, there were Troop leaders. The kartha surname is still used although it is less prominent.

It is Significant to study this specific kartha community and the services rendered in Kerala, and the cultural values and religious practices related to this community. The studies are significant to know the details of their Marriage system, Funeral ceremonies, cultural and languages and it is very essential to know their socio-economics status as well as the leadership qualities of this specific community. It is essential to study the different divisions of this community and to know about their behaviour, personality and adjustment among the community.

Objectives

The study has been conducted with the following main objectives.

- To study the formation of different castes in Kerala
- To identify the origin of the Kartha community
- To identify and analyses the various of Karthas
- Assessment of the customs and traditions of Kartha community
- To identify the kartha Community socio-economic, culture status in kerala
- To identify the women's Representation in kartha community.

Review of Sources

The study of Robin Jeffery's "The Decline of Nayar Dominance" the examines status of the Nayar community. Exhibits the status. The writer has presented an in-depth scholarly analysis of the issue using sources ranging from ancient works of literature and periodicals to official documents and pamphlets. Writing the history of a complex society with multiple divisions is not an easy task. But the narrative has the flow of a work of fiction and has managed to present a comprehensive picture. One could differ with the author on certain aspects - relative priority given to missionary activities, limited accounts of the subaltern society and question if the decline of Nayar dominance was as significant a societal change as

the author has presented it to be. But there is no denial that the well-researched book is indeed a brilliant attempt to present the history of Kerala society. And a rare one too.

“Changing Cultures, Nayers Today” by C. J. Fuller deals with the Nayers cultural change habits, customs and conventions. The Nayers of Kerala, south-west India, unusually trace descent through the female line and, in the past, had a marriage system in which women were allowed several husbands simultaneously. This system has brought the Nayers continuing fame in anthropological circles. In this 1976 study, Dr Fuller analyses fieldwork data collected among Nayers in a village in southern Kerala, a region on which there is practically no modern anthropological information. In the final section of the book, Dr Fuller looks at the 'traditional' marriage system of the Nayers and offers some suggestions about its operation. He also discusses the collapse of the old joint-family system and, with the aid of his data from southern Kerala, proposes some arguments about the process of its disintegration. More fully than previous authors, he situates his analysis in its historical context throughout, as befits an account of a rapidly changing society.

“Castes and Tribes of Southern India” By Edgar Thurston". Deals with kartha community initial History of Kartha and their arrival towards Travancore. This is a pre-1923 historical reproduction that was curated for quality. Quality assurance was conducted on each of these books in an attempt to remove books with imperfections introduced by the digitization process. Though we have made best efforts - the books may have occasional errors that do not impede the reading experience. We believe this work is culturally important and have elected to bring the book back into print as part of our continuing commitment to the preservation of printed works worldwide.

T.K. Gangadharan” Kerala History” The book referred to rise of kerala.in this works he mainly deals with the history of kerala. He mentioned the different castes and subcastes in kerala. In this book I take only the caste history for the study of work. He also mentioned the background of kerala, history of castes, their occupation, traditional rituals etc. this is the most important work of Gangadharan.

Hypothesis

Kartha or the doer were an important social group during the early medieval Kerala society. They were akin to the Nair community in Kerala and had many affinities with them

during those times. They had wielded power and prestige and got patronage from the rulers of those times. Apart from these they had followed a peculiar socio-cultural system and maintained a separate entity in the society. Like the other prominent communities in the early medieval Kerala society, the Kartha also rooted in the matrilineal system. But in the onslaught of the modern age the matrilineal system had declined and the Kartha also faced decline. They merged to the Nair society more and lost the original identity. Though there are several Kartha families living in the different parts of Kerala none of them hold their original practices.

Research Questions

In this project, the following questions are attempted to answer.

- To understand the Importance of Kartha community in Kerala society?
- To trace the formation of Kartha community?
- Why the ritual practices of the kartha community important?
- Who were the various Karthas in kerala?
- Is women had any special role in the Kartha community?

Methodology

The study following Descriptive and Analytical Research. The study is based on particular community called kartha and hence it requires Oral history and traditions as in methodological frame work. It also supposes to use Historiography as the methodology through family photographs of the community. It helps to understand the socio-cultural transformation. A part from the oral history and historiography the dissertation will use primary source for the data collection along with available secondary Literature.

Summary of Chapters

The thesis consists three chapters excluding an Introduction and conclusion. The study opens with an introduction. Area of study, objectives, Research questions. The introduction outlines the methodological frame work followed in the thesis.

The first chapter entitled *Caste Formation in Early Medieval Kerala* gives a coverage of Genesis and Growth of Kartha community in Kerala. Explain formation of the karthas as a community in Kerala it also discusses about various community in Kerala

The second chapter entitled *The Formation of Kartha as a social group* Analyze the various kingship groups in the Kartha Commune and Matching the order of kartha (socio-economic, political, religious ceremonies and other of the kartha)

The Third chapter entitled *Social Anthropology of Kartha* Interpret of the Kerala formation of ancient time with special reference to Kartha community

The Conclusion brings out the findings

Scope of the Study

The project Entitled with kartha Community in south Kerala No studies have been conducted on the topic. The topic is relevant and live in the academic sphere. The study helps to identify different Kartha community in Kerala. The first investigation of the research to understand the social background of the Kartha community. This project helps to study about the background of the community

Limitation

The limitations of the present study the scattered sources and the present pandemic situation.

CHAPTER - I

CASTE FORMATION IN EARLY MEDIEVAL KERALA

Kerala wrenched from under the sea, Legend has it that settlers moved into the fertile Indian lands from the north. In the process, they pushed the native people southwards. The southern part of India became excessively crowded and reached a state when there was practically no place to stay. A few families rushed to Lord Parasuraman and narrated to him their woes. He agreed to help and went with them to south India.¹ He saw that the land was indeed very crowded and prayed to Lord Varuna (the God of the sea) to give up some land from under the sea. The arrogant Varuna flatly denied and raged even more ferociously. Lord Parasuraman, known for his quick temper, is said to have thrown his axe into the sea and pulled up a huge chunk of land. Thus, Kerala was born. The people were very happy and moved in to the new land that Parasuraman blessed them with and Parasuraman went back to his abode.

Sometime later, the people came back wailing to Parasuraman yet again. They complained that the land given to them was infested with snakes and had poisoned yellow soil and no crops would grow on it. Even the rivers were heavily poisoned and their cattle died in hundreds every day. Parasuraman² decided to pay a visit to Vasuki, the king of snakes. Vasuki welcomed him to his underworld kingdom with all due honour. Once seated, Parasuraman asked him the reason why his subjects taunted the poor people who lived on the new land. Vasuki replied quite calmly that the piece of land that Parasuraman had ploughed out was a piece of his kingdom and that it was the home of his subjects. How could he, being a righteous ruler, ask them to move out of their homes.³

After a long discussion, they reached a mutual decision. Parasuraman told Vasuki that if he ordered his subjects to remove the poison from the land, he would see to it that he and his subjects were always revered and provided for by the people of the land. Should they fail to do so, Vasuki was free to order his subjects to punish them. However, they should leave the land alone. This proposition was acceptable to Vasuki and orders were immediately given to remove all poison from the land. When Parasuraman went back, he called forth the heads of sixty-five aristocratic families, imparted to them the ritualistic methods of doing Naga puja, and ordered

¹ D. D Kosambi, *Myth and Reality: Studies in the Formation of India Culture*, Popular Prakashan, 1962, p. 12

² Poovundatt Srividya vidya v nair, *Perception Vidya and Perspective*, My Mirror, Kerala, 2019, p. 67

³ <https://en.Parshuraman.org>, accessed on 12/6/2021

them to have a shrine for the Nagas in each of their homes. This was duly done and all poison was withdrawn from the land. Kerala became one of the most fertile areas in the world. Crops thrived and people became very wealthy. The sixty-five families that Parasuraman chose are the sixty-five aristocratic Nair families of today...the so-called Kiriyaathil Nairs. Such snake shrines can be seen in the family homes of these Nairs even today. And the rituals are still performed with all respect. Every temple in Kerala will have a shrine dedicated to the snakes. This is tradition. But the reason for this tradition is what is narrated above. These shrines are kept as natural as possible. They are usually circular bunds made of stone beneath an oak tree. None of the wilderness is ever cleared, save for the treading path. This is to ensure that the snakes feel at home in their natural surroundings. These shrines are usually located a little away from the house so that there is very little disturbance to its slithering inhabitants. A lamp is religiously lit at twilight every evening. Some families even have the custom of offering a saucer of milk every day, though it has been proved by reptile specialists that snakes cannot drink milk.

Nair (Also known as Nayar or Malayala Kshatriya), is the name of a Hindu Nagavanshi Kshatriya forward caste from the Southern Indian state of Kerala. Nairs are a warrior class (a martial nobility). (They are similar to the samurai of Japan.) Brahmins call them 'Samantha kshatriyas'. These Samantha kshatriya's was emerged after '*Karthakanmar*'.⁴ But there is a hypothesis on the basis of mythology that the Nairs are kshatriya's who removed their sacred thread and migrated to south to escape the wrath of a vengeful Parasurama. Many folk songs in Malayalam sung by the backward classes say the Aryan ancestry of Nairs who ruled them. Other stories about their origin say that they were the warriors who came to south India accompanying Pandavas and they were the kshatriya's who migrated to south for the protection of north Indian Brahmins who preceded them. Some believe that these Brahmins came to Kerala according to the commandment of Parasurama. in another story it is said that a group of kshatriyas went to Parasurama and begged for their land that he had captured. Feeling sympathy, he asked them to travel south to Kerala. Those people who headed to south came to be known as Nairs as they became the 'Nayakas' (leaders). Thus, there is a belief that Parasurama created Kerala.⁵

But it is a fact that purposely ignoring Nagavanshi kshatriya status, Nairs either willingly or unknowingly were assigned shudras status initially / they were perceived by society as if they are Shudras in the Chatuvarnya system considering and projecting their duty of dedicated service towards Brahmins (the highest category in Chatuvarnya system) for which they came to south India. Still, it was the most important non-Brahmin upper-caste in Kerala.⁶ Its

⁴ D. D Kosambi, *Myth and Reality: Studies in the Formation of India Culture*, op. cit., p. 27

⁵ F Fawcett, *Nayars of Malabar*, Asian Educational, Madras Government Museum, p. 185

⁶ <https://en.Chatuvanya.org> System.org, accessed on 13/7/2021

members, however, did not wear the sacred Brahminical thread and were, therefore, a rank below the Maharajahs of Travancore who had acquired the thread and a social upgrade in the eighteenth century. The wife (even if they are from royal family) of the Maharajah, in particular, was never his social equal due to both on account of matrilineal conventions as well as due to reasons of caste. The wife of kings chosen from the Nair community are called Ammachies. Nairs / Nayars are the Surya vanishi Naga Kshatriya forward class matrilineal Hindus. Settled mainly in the state of Kerala, Kanyakumari, Coimbatore and Chennai districts in Tamilnadu, Mangalore, Bangalore, Mumbai, Delhi and around the world. Nairs are estimated to be 10 million altogether. Kartha are well involved in Socio Cultural, Political, Administrative, Mercantile, Scientific, Judicial, Military, Educational, Art, Music, Literature, Spiritual, Overseas business and all walks of life including Sports and Films.⁷

The Kula devata was Bhavani Mata (Bhubaneshwar), Bhadra Kalli, Naga Raja, Naga Amba Nairs are Nagavanshi kshatriyas. Based on DNA tests, they are related to Rajput's as well as Jats. Nagavanshi Kshatriyas are descended from Scythians who mixed with the native South Asian population. Nairs are a martial class comprising the Nair regiment. The kings of Kerala have Nair lineages. The kings of Travancore were called Venad Nair. King of Cochin was called Moopil Nair and the Zamorine of Calicut was a Samantha Nair. the Nairs are otherwise called Malayala Kshatriyas. Nair clan consists of mainly Nagavanshi Kshatriyas, Rajaputras (Kartha), Yaduvanshi Kshatriyas and a minimum number of Malayala Shudras. Nair clan has more than 3 dozen of sub castes which includes Kshatriyas, Brahmin ambalavasis, Vyshya oil traders and Malayala shudras. Of these Vyshya traders and Malayala shudras are not included as forward castes. Nairs are famous Malayalam speaking caste originated from Ancient Naagas (Nagavanshi), Similarity Bunts of Karnataka also belongs to the same group ,Both have Similarities. Both castes have been warriors and feudal lords in the past and turned to agriculture in the later years. Bunts and Nairs share many common customs in social life.⁸

The form of Hinduism followed by both communities traditionally involves worship of Serpent (Naga) Gods at Sacred Groves (Sarpa Kavu) in Tharavads. Both worshipped mother goddess traditionally (Devi). The languages of Malayalam spoken by Nairs and Tulu spoken by Bunts have many similarities and number of common words in both the languages is very high. It is said that in the past both Ancient Malayalam and Tulu were written using same script. In business both Nairs and Bunts are especially successful in hotel industry. Both community members share similar physical features too.⁹ Nairs were warriors and swordsman, the other

⁷ Author Nil, *Hinduism*, Pedia Press, India, 1987, p. 64

⁸ Reeta David, *Frank Environmental Education Class XI*, Frank Brothers, 1998, p. 42

⁹ Ayyappanikar, *A Short History of Malayalam Literature*, Department of Public Relations, Government of Kerala, 1977, p. 23

surnames used within caste were titles given to Nairs. The Nair community as of 19th century was divided in to close to 200 subcastes.

Based on profession and status in society, Nairs were classified into 18 castes, according to the historians.¹⁰

Based on the Professions: Kiriya Nair - Family man. Those who attends the affairs of his Kiriya (House). Illathu Nair - Dependent of a Brahmin Illam (house). Swaroopathil Nair - Dependent of a swaroopam (Kshatriyas Home). Also known as Chartha Nair. Menokki - Those who supervises. Pattola Nair - An accountant. One who writes kingly orders and keep accounts. Marar Marayan - One who beats drums in temple. Padamangalam Nair - Servants of temples. Pallichan Nair - Those who carries Pallichumadu or Manchal Chembotti Nair - Copper worker, Edachery Nair - Itasseri Nair. Odathu Nair - Bronze worker. Vattakkathu Nair - One who extracts oil. Anthur Nair - Maker of bells. Asthikurrissi (Athikurichi) - One who performs rituals in the funeral of Nairs. Also known as Seethikan. Vyapari Nair - Merchant Vilakkithala Nair - Barber Veluthedathu Nair - Dhobi.

Social Status

Kiriya Nair - Lords and warriors of the King, Pannikodan Nair - Below Kiriya Nair, Sudran - One who serves Brahmins, Charna Nair - One who serves Kings, Urali Nair - One who came from Tulunadu, Muthaan - People of Palakkad who took trading as profession, Tharavar - Merchants, Mannadi - Mannadiyar, Akathethara Nair - Ullakathu Nair, Kaduppattan - Ezhuthachan. Chaliyan - One who makes chela (cloth)¹¹

Historians and their Perspectives

In 1510, "The first class of Pagans in Calicut is called Brahmins. The second are Nair, who are the same as the gentle folk amongst us; and these are obliged to bear sword and shield or bows and lances." Var Thema. In 1563. "The Nairs who are the Knights." to Garcia, 1775 "The king has disciplined a body of 10,000 Nairs; the people of this denomination are by birth the Military tribe of the Malabar Coast." Orme, 1661 it is strange how ready the soldier of this country is at his weapon...they are all gentlemen and are termed Nayars ... they send their children to (Kalaris) when seven years old and their body becomes so nimble and bends as if they had no bones" - Logan. 1603. "The men of war which the King of Calicut and all other kings have is Nair each being a gentleman their women be of great beauty and rare to catch sight of possessing fine neat feature befitting the noble class" - John Kan ding "I like to see these Nairs who never

¹⁰ <https://en.NairCommunity.org>, accessed on 15/7/2021

¹¹ Ayyappanikar, *A Short History of Malayalam Literature*, op. cit., p.65

care their lives who lead an army of similar people even against mighty ocean of enemies and fight to win like a hell-fire " - Lord Wellington

For Nairs British were untouchables and serving them was below their dignity-Valerie Legrand (French Historian). According to Melchior Bradney, lived in Kerala, India (2000-2010)

"Nair (Also known as Nayar or Malayala Kshatriya), is the name of a Hindu Nagavanshi Kshatriya forward caste from the Southern Indian state of Kerala. The Nair community as of 19th century was divided in to close to 200 subcastes. Until a few decades ago, the Nairs were divided into several sub-castes and inter-dining and inter-marriages were practically non-existent amongst them. The 1891 Census of India, undertaken by the British listed a total of 138 Nair subcastes in the Malabar region, 44 in the Travancore region and a total of 55 of them in the Cochin region. Nairs belongs on Kashyapa Gotra Hierarchy.¹²

Hierarchy

The caste hierarchy within the 20 major divisions among the Nairs is as following (From the highest ranked subcaste to the lowest ranked one): Royal Subcastes (Samantan Kshatriya) Koil Thampuran or Perumal (Rajah, Thampans, Thirumulpad.etc) Samantha Nair (Nambiar, Thampi, Thampurans, Thirumulpad.etc, Adiyodi, Nedungadi.etc) Other Kshatriya Subcastes (Malayala Kshatriya) Kīryathil Nāyar & Vellāyima Nāyar (Nambiār, Kaimal, Kurup.etc) Illathu Nair (Kārtha, Thirumukom, Pillai etc) Swaroopathil Nair, Menokki & Charna Nair (Menon, Menoky.etc) Padamangalam Nair Tamil Padam Nair Pallichan Nair Lower ranking Subcastes (Malayala Shudra) Maaran Ambalavasi Brahmin Vātti (Vātti Kuruppu, Pattu Kuruppu & Nantunni Kuruppu), Daivampāti (Brahmani), Pulikkal Nāyar & Payyampāti - Ambalavasi Brahmin) Chempukotti Nair Otattu Nair Puliyath Nair & Matavan Nair Kalamkotti Nair & Anduran Nair - Chakkala Nair & Vattakkatan Nair Asthikkuracchi Mārār & Chitikan Nair Chretty Nair, Mūtta, Taraka, Vaniya Nāyar & Ravāri Nāyar Itasseri Nair Chaliyan Nair Maniyāni Nair Veluthedathu Nair Vilakkithala Nair

Royal Subdivisions

According to Fuller,¹³ most unbiased observers have concluded that the Samanta Kshatriya and SamanthanSamanta Kshatriyas were divided into two principal subdivisions: Thampans (or Tampurans) and Thirumulpads. Included among the former are the Cochin royal family and the Canganore chiefly family. In Travancore, the division was different. Thampurans were divided into three categories of which only the highest-ranking grouping made up of ten chiefly families and known as Koil Tampurans were regarded as Samanta Kshatriyas. The second division, known as Rajas, comprised nine chiefly families (including the Travancore royal family)

¹²T.K Gangadharan, *History of Kerala*, Premier Printers, Calicut, 1998, p. 45

¹³ C. J. Fuller, *The Nayars Today*, Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1976, p.78

who were Samantha's, like the third grouping of ordinary Thampurans. In Malabar, there were seven major Samanthan Eradi, Nedungadi, Vellodi, Unniathiri, Adiyodi, Thirumulpad, and Nambiyar. Eradi is the subdivision to which the Zamorin of Calicut belongs. The Raja of Valluvanad was a member of Vallodi. The Raja of Chirakkal was an Unniathiri.

The Raja of Travancore, however used to perform an extraordinary ceremony known as Hiranyagarbha. The essential feature of this ceremony was the casting of a hollow golden vessel through which the Raja passed. On emerging from the vessel, the Raja's caste status rose from Samantha Nair to Samanta Kshatriya. Unfortunately for the royal family, the Samanta Kshatriya status so acquired was not hereditary, and thus the ceremony had to be performed for each new Raja.

The Samanta Kshatriya and Samantha Nair subdivision were minute.¹⁴ For example, In Travancore in 1931, the Samanta Kshatriya population was 3,673 (0.07% of the total population), and the Samantha Nair Samanta Kshatriya population was recorded as less than 0.1% of the total population; for 1921, the Samanthan Nair population was given as 4,663 (0.15%). [3] population was 97. In Cochin in 1931, the populations were, respectively, 2,128 (0.18%) and 571 (0.05%). In Malabar in 1931, the The Raja of Vadakara (Polanad), popularly known as Polarthiri was of Nambiar (Nair Nobility) origin. They were also known as Vadakara Vaazhunnor and consisted of 30 sub divisions known as Koottams, such as Chelkkattan Kurup (Thacholi Koottam), Vennappalur Koottam, Moodaadi Koottam.etc

Changes in subdivision¹⁵

According to Pocock, the significance of the Samanta Kshatriya and Samantha Nair subdivisions lay not in their numbers, but in the model they provided for other Nairs involved in the status game. A Nair tharavads, especially if it were wealthy or powerful, could attempt to transform itself into a new, different subdivision. The methods used vary. Most common were the severance of all connections with any demeaning occupation, the Sanskritization of various customs and the taking of a new name. But most crucial of all was alteration of the tharavads marital connections, by finding men of higher status to perform the tally-tying ceremony for the girls in the tharavads, and by beginning to accept only men of higher status as sambandham partners for the women.

A number of comparatively low-status groups were absorbed into the Nair community. Among other features, the taking of the prestigious title "Nair" may itself serve this end (Dumont 1964:98). According to the British reports, the process is perhaps most apparent in the cases of the Chakkala Nair, Veluthedathu Nair and Vilakkithala Nair. These two subdivisions well illustrate the ambiguity attached to upward mobility. Even as early as the beginning of the 20th century,

¹⁴ <https://en.SamantaKshatriya.org>, accessed on 12/7/2021

¹⁵ Reddy, *Indian History*, Mc Graw-Hill Education, Delhi, 2006, p. 414

these castes were commonly referred to as "Veluthedathu Nair" and "Vilakkithala Nair"-at least in Central Travancore, and in official publications.¹⁶ Although the Jati nirnayam included them as Nairs, in the early census reports they were often enumerated as separate, non-Nair castes. It is still the case, despite their names, that many Nairs belonging to higher-ranking subdivisions do not acknowledge the Veluthedathu and Vilakkithala Nairs as "real" Nairs, and they never intermarry with them."

One more point is that if u check the records prior to the 1500s all of them mention that Nairs begin with the King and ends with menial servants who work in Brahmin and Nair houses. Nair caste includes the Varma (pure Kshatriyas), the Samantha Kshatriyas (Thampi, Nambiar, Unnithan and Valiyathan), title holding nobles (Kaimal, Kartha, Menon, Pillai), Martial arts teachers (Panikkar, Kurupu), Illathu Nair (landlords), Swaroop Nairs (soldiers), Vattakkadan Nairs (guards of individual houses), Pallichan Nairs (armed palanquin bearers) and it ends at Semi Nair semi Sudran castes like Vilakkithala, Chakkalala etc.¹⁷

The Nairs were the aristocracy of the land. Brahmins married Nair ladies. Nair ladies were known for their beauty in the past. Most of the higher caste Nairs were fairer than the Brahmins themselves. The only point i wish to make here is that in south India and north India the caste holding is extremely different. North India there are Brahmins, Kshatriyas , Vaisyas and Sudras. In Kerala there are Namboodiri's (who were higher than other Brahmins) and remaining all were Sudras (the Namboodiri's didn't eat even with Royals).¹⁸ It may know that only a warrior who wears a sacred thread can be called a Kshatriya. Other warriors are all considered, in spite of their vocation and status as Sudras. This is seen in Kerala (Nair), Karnataka (Naidu's), Andhra (Reddy's) and Maharashtra (Marathas). The Brahmins of these lands never accepted the warrior clans as Kshatriyas. Famous is an example where Marathi Brahmins refused to accept Shivaji's coronation saying he was a Maratha Sudra.¹⁹

In Kerala, the indigenous Dravidian warriors were Naga migrants and were known as Chera (Naga Chera in Tamil). With the coming of the Brahmins, they became the topmost people in the ladder followed by the Nagar's (Later derived to Nair). However when it came to making a powerful Nair rule as king it was essential to make him wear a sacred thread as only threaded Kshatriyas may rule as kings. Hence the most powerful Nair families were taken and through Hiranyagarbha at every coronation they were made Kshatriyas. Meanwhile the remaining warriors

¹⁶ Author Nil, *Indian Anthropologist*, I A A, University of Michigan, 1977, p. 97

¹⁷ Sathupati Prasanna Sree, *Woman, Who owns You?*, Sarup & Sons, Place Nil, p. 21

¹⁸ Telephonic Interview with Manu Kartha, Aged 38, Karthamadam, Ranni on 22/6/2021

¹⁹ <https://en.MarthaSudra.org>, accessed on 3/8/2021

didn't get the thread and hence they were merely called Nairs while the kings became Kshatriyas. One has to note that among the Royal families (Kshatriyas) and other Nairs, all customs and ceremonies, all practices etc are the same. Even polyandry was present among the Royals. The Rani of Attingal Gowri Parvati Bhai had three husbands.

Since Hindu philosophy doesn't allow any non-threaded warrior to call himself a Kshatriya, and asserts that without a thread he is a Soodra, Nairs were also called Sudra and they didn't mind at all. They had power, land and prestige. They owned temples and lived in massive mansions. One more point is that if u check the records prior to the 1500s all of them mention that Nairs begin with the King and ends with menial servants who work in Brahmin and Nair houses. Nair caste includes the Varma (pure Kshatriyas), the Samantha Kshatriyas (Thampi, Nambiar, Unnithan and Valiyathan), title holding nobles (Kaimal, Kartha, Menon, Pillai), Martial arts teachers (Panikkar, Kurupu), Illathu Nair (landlords), Swaroop Nairs (soldiers), Vattakkadan Nairs (guards of individual houses), Pallichan Nairs (armed palanquin bearers) and it ends at semi-Nair semi Sudran castes like Vilakkithala, Chakkala etc. The Nairs were the aristocracy of the land.

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²⁰ Sathupati Prasanna Sree, *Woman, Who owns You?*, op. cite., p. 34

²¹ <https://en.Manu Smritis.org>, accessed on 12/7/2021

Savarna means non sudra and Nairs are savarna. at the same time Brahmins insist they are sudra too. what sense does it make? similarly there was unapproachability in Kerala. Nair was the only caste that could approach a Namboodiri Brahmin but not touch him. There were low subcastes like Chakalla and Vilakithala which were Savarna but not pure Nairs who had to maintain a distance of 6 feet from other Nairs and 12 feet from a Namboodiri. As said before Samantha's like Unnithan and nobles like Karthas ruled as governors and district chiefs. I am an Unnithan and we claim our paternal descent from Kayamkulam Royal Family. Our main family Kaduvinal Unnithan ruled over 14 Villages in Cheriyanadu. Such was the power wielded by Nairs and specially the aristocracy. I am not sure about Karthas though. But i have read that they are nobles who receive the said title with a fiefdom to rule after special services to the Kings. Panikkar was received as an ambiguous title to all Nairs, Ezhavan sc (Averna) and also Christians who commanded imperial armies. But my grandmother says kartha came from 'Karthā' which, like Aachen, means Lord.

Parappadam Bhagavat Temple, Parappadam devi (goddess) temple is situated at Velour in the western suburb of Kottayam town near Meenachil river). The temple is believed to be 400 years old, installed during the reign of Thekkamkoor dynasty.²²

The myth behind the origin of the temple, Thumbayil Pillai, a great devotee of Kodungalloor devi, who in his late years became so frustrated that he could not go to Kodungalloor temple due to his old age weaknesses, once had a dream: Kodungalloor devi appeared before him and said: "Don't be sad my son for being not able to visit me at Kodungalloor. Soon you will see my presence in your place too. You will come to see me there." Few days later, Thumbayil Pillai found a devi idol in the bushes that, according to the tradition, near the present-day temple premises. Thekkamkoor king along with Munjanatt Panikkar (the army chief) came over to the place to know the whole story. Karappuzha Kaniyar was summoned to perform the 'prasnam vaippu (astrological prediction) and the presence of Kodungalloor devi was revealed. The king ordered to perform the necessary pujas and bestowed the responsibility of the construction of the temple in the hands of Thekkedath and Vadakkedathu Asaries the royal architects. They were great devotees of Kodungalloor devi.

Until the construction the pujas were held in malalayam, a temporary shrine where the idol was first found. Pilgrims and devotees began to flow to witness the greatness of devi. Thampuran (that was how the kings were addressed) appointed Vazhakkootathil Mammali to safe guard the Devi idol, till the temple was constructed. Mammali was the commander of the Thekkamkoor Naval Force. It was called 'Moosambippada' and it was good at chasing away enemies with guns mounted on boats. Only they were allowed to use guns. And they did their job

²² <https://en.ParappadamDeviTemple.org>, accessed on 14/7/2021

pretty well. Under the supervision of Thekkedath and Vadakkedath asaries, in a splendid architectural symphony the temple was finally constructed, and the idol was fixed. Devotees began worship Devi as the kavaldeveda of Veloor, of Thekkumkore and found refuge in Her protection.²³

Idol Worship

The idol here is of Devi right after the execution of the demon king, Darika same as we see at the Kodungallor temple. The myth says: after killing darika , Devi could not put off her destructive anger. If not checked her anger would burn the whole world down. Parvathi and Shiva knew this and created a baby (kshethrapala) out of illusion and lied it on Her way. Devi found the baby and at once its plays and joyfulness delighted Her and it extinguished the pyre of her anger. She took the child in her arms and returned to tranquillity.

One day, legend says, the idol of kshethrapala at Kodungalloor temple began to grow. It became so big that it touched the roof of the temple. It was taken as a bad omen. At that time there came a saintly man. He recited certain mantras and knocked at the head of the idol with a log of sandal. Miraculous to say, it stopped growing. Later it was decided to remove the roof over the kshethrapala idol and to keep it roofless forever. We would find the same at the Parappadam temple too. Even now kshethrapala is worshipped in this roofless small by-standing temple (Upadevalaya). Apart from the Devi and kshethrapala, Ganesha, Siva, Sastha and Nagadevathas are also being worshipped in separate Upadevalaya. The thantric responsibility in the temple falls traditionally in the hands of Bhadrakaali Mattappally Mana Brahmins.²⁴

Feast of the temple

Eight days long Meenabharani Utsav(festival) is the main festival of the temple. It comes usually in the month of April. As the Mattappally Mana Brahmins perform the kodi yettu (the customary flag rise ceremony) eight days long feasted celebrations begin. There is another interesting custom which is followed even today- ‘gun firing ceremony’. At the time of Kodi yettu, a chosen member from the Vazhakootam family, who are Muslims, fires the gun. This custom has been in practice for centuries. Historians opine that this is a privilege given to the Vazhakootam family by the then ruler of Thekkumkore as a token of thanks giving for protecting

²³ Biju Mathew, *Pilgrimage to Temple Heritage*, Thiruvananthapuram, 2015, p. 178

²⁴ <https://en.Bhadrakaali> Goddess in kerala.org, accessed on 3/6/2021

the temple and the idol during the time of construction. Moreover Unichiral, a Christian family, once had the privilege to provide the rope that used to rise the flag.²⁵

A place of communal harmony was Muslim families were given the responsibility to take care the women devotees who came from different places to attend Nirmala Darshan (the early morning ²⁶worship). As we find today it was a time of untouchability, a red mark in the history of this south western region of India. But something quite interesting could be read out. The oil which was supposed to be used in the temple was made by lower caste people, who were untouchables. Therefore the oil had to be purified before the use. People believed that this would be possible if a Nasrani(Christians) touch the oil. Christians had rather enjoyed good positions in the society. And of course, the oil trade was mainly in the hands of the Christians. That too would be another reason behind this age old custom.²⁷

Perakathu Thanda was the responsible man to collect tax for Thekkumkore across the Velloor region. Tax was mainly in the form of agri-products. Due to some misconstruction Thandan happened to be killed by the kings servants. But when the truth came out King felt guilty. As matter of his heartfelt penance he built a palace in his memory and a temple at kallupurackal for the use of his family where both Shiva and Devi were installed. It is said that during rainy seasons they were unable to come to see their symbols of adorations (i.e., the Shiva at thali kshethra and the Devi at Parappadam). During the festival they arrived on the back of the elephants to pay homage to their deity.²⁸

²⁵ D. K Eyewitness, *D K Eyewitness India*, Dorling Kindersly Limited, London, 2019, p. 323

²⁷ <https://en.Shiva and Devi.org>, accessed on 14/7/2021

²⁸ D. K Eyewitness, *D K Eyewitness India*, op. cite., p. 335

CHAPTER-II

FORMATION OF KARTHA AS A SOCIAL GROUP

The first chapter of this project deals with Kartha Community South Kerala. The land of Kerala which comprises the picturesque territorial belt lying between the Western Ghats on the east and the Arabian sea on the west has a long and Spacious History. The Modern state of Kerala was formed in 1956. Prior to its formation, Kerala was divided into three separate political units called Malabar, Cochin, Travancore. So, in a way, reconstruction of the history of the integrate state of kerala as whole could only be started since its modern formation. Separate studies on the history of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore with occasional overlappings were undertaken by a Few scholars towards the end of the nineteenth century. This could be considered as a part of history during the 19th Century.

In the ancient period Kerala did not exist as a separate political entity, instead it was a part of the ancient Thamizhakam. So, the ancient history of Kerala is reconstructed mainly on the basis of ancient Tamil Classics and the form the relevant archeological findings. The works produced during the medieval and early modern periods in kerala were based the mainly on oral traditions, legends, and traditional written records. Till recent years, the historians on Kerala did not make any serious attempt to come out of the hard grip of the traditional and legendary sources for reconstructing the ancient and medieval periods of kerala.¹ In fact, most of these works gave Importance to non-historical details than to historical. The early historical consciousness of the people of kerala was moulded by the oral traditions, legends and traditional, records.² The work of ‘Mushakavamsa’ belongs to the Kavya tradition’ of Indian historical studies. It was prepared by Atula in the Eleventh Century C.E. and is generally considered as the first historical chronicle of kerala. it is a unique work in the sense that no other works of this type belonging to the earlier periods has been discovered so far. Its historical significance lies in the fact that it was written century before Kalhana’s, Rajatarangini’s the commonly

¹ V. Mathew Kurian, *The Caste-Class Formations*, B.R Publishers, Delhi, 1986, p. 15

² T.K Gangadharan, *History of Kerala*, Premier Printers, Calicut, 1992, p. 7

recognized first historical chronicle of India.³ Another historical writer by the sheik Zainuddin written by the Tuhfat-ul-Mujahiddin in the 16th century marks a new stage in the tradition of historical writing in kerala. The book mentions about, depicts the Portuguese atrocities on the Natives of the Malabar, especially on the Muslims.⁴ The history of the ancient kerala was written and accepted on the basis of traditional sources made up of legends and fables, with occasional peeps into its early history, these sources constructed by the blending of oral traditions and a written information took shape in the 17th and 18th centuries. The most popular traditional sources on kerala History is the 'Keralolpathy' the tradition of the Namboodiri Brahmins of kerala, compiled in different versions. Another source is Ballads are narrative poems, commonly known as the 'Pattu Literature' in kerala history which manifest the historical consciousness of the different sections of the society of a period which had not produced any pure historical literature. Then the Granthavaris depict a shift from traditional oral sources to that of written records.

Archaeological sources constitute the main sources materials for the reconstruction of the ancient period in kerala History. The relics of tools, weapons, burial sites, monuments, buildings, arts, crafts and coins etc, are studied by the reconstruction of the ancient history. The Archaeological survey and excavations were started in kerala by Ward and Conor during 1819 and 1820 followed by the Babington in 1823. The excavations conducted at Wynad by Faucett in 1896 advanced the archaeological studies in kerala to great extent.⁵ Geography is the background prepared by the nature for the progress of History. Though the Path of progress is made by the human beings themselves, the relevance of this Background never fails. Hence the study of the geographical conditions of a particular territory is a must for the study of its history. ⁶Kerala is a Narrow strip of land lying between the Arabian sea and the western Ghats in the southern -most part of the Indian sub-continent. Though Kerala existed as an integral part of the India from the early period onwards, the geographical divisions had given it a separate existence. This geographical peculiarity has helped kerala to develop an independent political and cultural traditions from the other parts of India, The Western Ghats of on the eastern side of kerala is almost continuous and stand like a natural fort from south to north, sloping to the east.

³ <https://en.Caste formation in kerala.org>, accessed on 2/6/2021

⁴ Ibid., p. 10

⁵ Ibid., p. 12

⁶ G. Kurian, *Regional Geography in Kerala*, University of London, London, 1946, p. 16

The western ghats from Calicut of the vavul mountains in the east lies parallel to the sea for a length of forty kilometers. The land of kerala is being cut across but about forty-four rivers and thus it is rich in the case of water resources. Geographical kerala has been divided into three separate parts, namely, sea coast, plains and the high ranges.

The folk's songs and oral traditions of ancient Tamizhakam were transmitted from one generation to the other and in the course of this transmission several additions were made to them. These tamil songs altogether are commonly called as the Sangam literature. It is assumed that sangam was an assembly of scholars or a literary academy of tamil poets held probably in the patronage of the ruling class. Sangam literature gives a valuable information about the Pandian rulers and others. According to the Sangam's were five tinai in tamizhakam.⁷ K. P Padmanabhan Menon is the opinion that the Brahmins had Migrated to kerala during the third century B.C. ⁸According to William Logan, Brahmin migration to kerala took place during the eighth century A.D. The available inscriptions evidences do not accept both these views According to one interpretation, the brahmins were brought to kerala by mayuravaraman, the kadamba king of the 4th century A.D. The available inscriptional and literary evidences helped one to formulated certain reasonable assumptions regarding the early settlements of the Brahmins in Kerala. The Centralised administration of the Perumals of Mahodayapuram came to an end by the beginning of the twelfth century. Thereafter political fragmentation took place in kerala which paved way for the emergence of several 'Swaroopams' and 'Naduvazhis'. since then, kerala could never become a unified political zone, till the formation of the modern kerala state in the second half of the twentieth century. though the nadus and naduvazhis had existed during the period of Perumals,⁹ they became autonomous territories, only during the post perumals period.

The age of Swaroopams and naduvazhis remained the for a longer period in kerala and they brought about fundamental changes in the socio-economic and cultural realms of kerala. The Naduvazhis were known, during their early stages of development, by the locality where their joint family originally situated. The original location of the family was generally known as the swaroopams situated was under its autonomous control. These

⁷ Prince Ilango Adigal, *Shilappadikaram*, New Direction Books, Place Nil, 1965, p. 65

⁸ Susan Lewandowski, *Migration and Ethnicity in Urban India*, Manohar, India, 1980, p. 6

⁹ <https://en.perumals of mahodhayapuram.org>, accessed on 2/8/2020

types of numerous swaroopams emerged throughout kerala during the medieval period. Some of them in the later stages developed as the Naduvazhis. The Zamorin of the Calicut was earlier known as the 'Nediyiruppu Swaroopams'. The Perumpadappu (Kochi), Kolathiri (Chirakkal), Porlathiri (Kadathanad), Tarur (Palakkad), Arangode, Trippapur, Puranttukar, etc. were some of the others Swaroopams of the medieval period. The Swaroopams had joint families and they had followed the matrilineal system of inheritance. 'Kuruvazhacha' existed in these joint families, in this system, the 'Muthakur' or the senior most Persons of the joint family becomes the ruler of the Swaroopams. The other a was known as the 'illamkur' or the junior members. The senior most person among the illamkur would become the ruler of the swaroopams, when the existing ruler deceased. Among the illamkur there existed gradations and they had their own the rights and privileges in the power structure of the Swaroopams.¹⁰

Historical Background

The Kerala caste institutions differed from that found in the rest of India. While Indian caste system generally modelled the four-fold division of society into brahmins, ¹¹kshatriya's, Vaishya's and shudras, in Kerala the Nambudiri's Brahmins formed the priestly class and only rarely recognized anyone else as being other than Shudra or untouchables the latter being outside the caste system entirely. ¹²Thus, the Kerala caste system was ritualized but it was not the varna model found elsewhere. In Southern India, only in Kerala did there appear warrior lineages approximate to the Kshatriya model. These warriors never lost their identity as Sudras. Nair Kshatriya hood is based on special ecological conditions and it is a case of elevated shudras to Kshatriya status.¹³ Caste system was not prevalent in kerala during initial of history. Sri.Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai had recorded that in olden times when people lived in the Western Ghats, categorization on the basis of work done by them was in practice. There were seven such categories. Thudiyar (one who beats "thudi", a musical instrument), Parayan (one who beats "para", a kind of drum).

¹⁰ A. Sreedhar Menon, *Kerala History and its Makers*, D. C Books, Kottayam, 2008, p. 23

¹¹ R. K. Pruthi, *Indian Caste System*, D. P. H, New Delhi, 2004, p. 5

¹² Ibid., p. 24

¹³ David Murray Schneider and Kathleen Gough, *Matrilineal Kinship*, University of California Press, California, 1973, p. 655

Panar (singer), Kadambar (agriculturist), Valayar (fishermen), Vanikar (traders) and Uzhavar (workers) are these seven categories.¹⁴

Though Brahmin migration to Kerala took place during three or four centuries B.C. they became powerful only during eighth century. Caste system began in Kerala only after this period. (E.M.S. Namboodiripad - Caste, Clan and Parties in Modern Political Development to Kerala). Sabdatharavali (1923) names the caste as Brahmins eight, Newna Var gam (minorities) two, Antharala Jathi (temple dwellers) twelve, Sudras eighteen, Shilpi six, Pathithar (untouchables) ten, Thana Jathi (lower caste) eight and 64 numbers of sub-castes. Dr. E.J. Thomas says that there are about 420 castes and sub-castes in Kerala, and at least 12 are seen in each village. Dr. P. K. Gopalakrishnan ascertains that there was no caste system in Kerala till the end of Buddhist renaissance period. People were known by their profession like Panan, Parayan, Villavan, Ushavan, Paravathan, Aiyar etc. Brahmins also migrated to this area and there was no caste among them. By about the second half of the 8th century, Brahmins become more influential and powerful in the society. This marked the beginning of the caste system. Kerala society divided into two. Those who recognized Brahmin supremacy stood on the one side and others who opposed them. The first was within the fold of Hinduism and latter was out of it. Those who embraced Hinduism were grouped into several races. Rulers or Kings became Kshatriyas. The trader group known Vaisiyas was not there. All others who followed Brahmanical faith later came to be known as Sudras.¹⁵ Dr. E.J. Thomas points out that in the absence of Vaisiyas in Kerala Sudras were just one step above in the society. Nairs were considered as dwijas without holy string (poonool).¹⁶ There is considerable controversy regarding the actual place of Nairs in the caste system. It is understandably, a very touchy subject. One of the main reasons is that the caste system in Kerala is very different from the caste system elsewhere in India. According to the caste system followed in the rest of India, only the lowest class, the shudras, were considered to be "untouchables". However, in the case of Kerala, anyone who was not a Namboothiri, was treated by the Namboothiri's as an untouchable. The Namboothiri's had different rules regarding the degrees of pollution for the different classes. A Namboothiri could only be "polluted" by the touch of a Nair, whereas the other classes had different distances after

¹⁴ <https://en.brahminsubcastes.org>, accessed on 17/7/2021

¹⁵ Shashi Tharoor, *Why I Am a Hindu*, Churst, London, 2018, p. 35

¹⁶ <https://en.upanayana.org>. accessed on 14/7/2021

which they could be considered polluting. However, the shudras in the rest of India were never a martial class, since warfare was the profession of the Kshatriyas. According to this interpretation, Nairs would seem to be more like Kshatriyas since they were a martial class as well. Similar to Kshatriyas, they were second to the Brahmins (Namboothiri's). Furthermore, many Nair families were aristocratic. They owned large feudal estates and, in some cases, even took part in the ruling of Kerala. It is believed that there were 64 classifications in Nair society.¹⁷

Sri. K. P. Padmanabhan Menon who wrote *Kerala Charithram* (History of Kerala) has recorded that Nairs who were grouped as Sudras were turned into three main groups called Illam, Swaroopams and Pada Mangalam. According to him, the first group were servants of Brahmin houses, second were servants in Kshatriya homes and the third were servants of temples. Besides, there were a number of sub castes among Nairs like Ida Chery Nairs, Maranmar, Athikurichikal, Chembukottikal, Odat nair, Chalia Nairs, Kalamkotti Nair, Pallichal Nairs, Veluthedathu Nairs, Vilakkithala Nairs etc.¹⁸ "The Nairs may be considered as constituting the soul of the (Travancore – Cochin) population. They are split into various classes. The Velloyma hold the first rank, seen in the more northern parts. Illamkur and the three succeeding ranks predominate throughout Travancore, the term denotes one belonging to the house of the Namburi. There are different communities of Nairs like Shroobacurre (vassals of chiefs), Shacoular (oil mongers), Vellakathura (washermen who only do the job for Brahmins and Nairs) Yedacherry (cowherds), Oodatu nair (boatmen) Attychorchy (who perform the necessary offices of the dead). The higher order of the Nairs is known under the collective term of Maudumby, or Prubhookanmar. Designations are comprised various others. The most common are Elluidam, Kaimal, Kurupu, Mainewen, Pulle etc. Based on profession and status in society, Nairs were classified into 18 castes, according to the historians.

Caste Norms and Creation of Hindu as an Ism

Kerala, the south westernmost state in peninsular India, is situated between the mountain ranges of the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea, occupying a total area of 24,148 square miles, with a coastline of 360 miles. Kerala's socioreligious and cultural

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 29

¹⁸ <https://en.Naircommunityclassification.org>, accessed on 2/6/2021

matrix, an amalgam of native and foreign cultures and creeds, shapes its distinctive culture.¹⁹ Today, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam remain the major religious traditions of Kerala.²⁰ This bibliographic essay offers sources that discuss Hindu traditions of Kerala, emphasizing the historical continuities of Hindu traditions based on local gods and goddesses, places, pilgrimages, temples, and rituals and performances, all of which express myriad aspects of the diversity and complexity of the tradition called Hinduism. Hinduism is an Indian religion and Dharma, or way of Life. It is the world's third-largest religion, with over 1.2 billion followers, 15-16% of the global population, known as Hindu.²¹

The word Hindu is an exonym, and while Hinduism has been called the oldest in the world, many practitioners refer to their religion as Sanatana Dharma which refers to the idea that its origins lie Beyond human history as revealed in the Hindu texts. Studies on Hinduism in Kerala include beliefs and practices transmitted down from Vedic Brahmanism and ancient Dravidian beliefs, as well as devotional traditions of the medieval period. Bayi 2010 offers a remarkable introduction to Kerala culture from antiquity. Menon 2000-2002 covers topics of history of religion and economy, providing much recent bibliography, and Menon 1996 provides a comprehensive elucidation of life and culture of the people of Kerala. Pati 2009 considers various aspects of Hinduism as represented in Kerala.²² During the Early Medieval period. Kerala Society had Three main divisions-the Brahmins, non-brahmins and Paniyalar. The caste system did not develop from the Chatuvarnya system. like that happened in north India. Though there existed social divisions like Pannan, Parayan, Thudiyan, Kitamban etc, in the Pre-Brahmin period, they were not on the basis of the Caste system. They were called thus according to their settlements. With the emergence of the Brahmins supremacy, agriculture was expanded and scattered villages were formed. For the life in these villages. It was necessary for the Villagers to have groups of Separate profession. Those who were involed in Various types of Profession accepted the established tradition and in the course of time these separate professional Groups became separate caste and subcastes. We get inscriptional references about various sub-castes during the Medieval period like Thachan, Vannan, Ezhavan,

¹⁹ Wendy Doniger, *On Hinduism*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2014, p. 18

²⁰ <https://en.hinduism.org>, accessed on 22/6/2021

²¹ <https://en.m.hinduism.org>, accessed on 9/7/2021

²² Ibid., p. 11

Tiyyan, Veluthedan, Velan, Chakkalan, Vaniyan, Kanakkan, Parayan, Pulayan, etc. However, the Numerous Castes and Sub-castes formed the Hierarchical social Structure and new caste was attached to this hierarchy which Determined the social position of the New caste.²³

Nayar System

“The Nayars”, Mr. H. A Stuart writes, are a Dravidian caste, or rather a community, for we find several distinct elements with totally different occupations among the people who call themselves by this title. The original Nayars were undoubtedly a military body, holding lands and serving as a militia, but the present Nayar caste persons who, by hereditary occupation, traders, artisans, oil mongers, palanguin-bears, and even barbers and washermen.²⁴ The facts seem to be that successive waves of immigration brought from the Canarese and tamil countries different castes and different tribes; and these, settling down in the country, adopted the customs and manners, and assumed the caste names of the more respectable of the community that surrounded them. This process of assimilation is going on event yet. Chetty’s of Coimbatore.²⁵ According to the Brahman traditions, the Nayar caste is the result of union between the Nambudiri’s with Deva, Gandharava, and Rakshasa women introduced by Parasurama; and this traditions embodies the undoubted fact the caste by its practices of hypergamy has had a very large infusion of Aryan blood. In origins the Nayars were probably a race of the Dravidian immigrants, who were amongst the first invaders of Malabar and as conquerors assumed the position of the governing and land owning class. In connections with the former position of the Nayars as protectors of the state. it is noted by Mr. Logan that ‘Johnson’. Relations of the most famous Kingdom in the world there occurs the following quaintly written account of this protector guild. The following description of the Nayars at the beginning of the sixteenth century is given by Duarete Barbosa.” The Nairs are the gentry and have no other duty than to carry on war and they continually carry their arms with them. which are swords, bows, arrows, bucklers and lances. Dr. A.C Burnell tell us that the kings who ruled the Vijayanagar during the latter half of the fourteenth century belonged to a low non arians caste, namely that of cannore cow herds, They were closely

²³ <https://en.brahminscaste.org>, accessed on 6/4/2021

²⁴ Robin Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nair Dominance*, Manohar, Vikas, 1994, p. 23

²⁵ F. Fawcett, *Nayars of Malabar*, Asian Educational, New Delhi, 2004, p. 185

to the king to Nayars one of the leading rajas among them at the presents time although officially describe as a Samantha.²⁶ Some Mr. N. Subramani Aiyar writes in a note on the Nayars of Travancore believe that Nayars is derived from Naga as the Aryans so termed the earlier settlers of Malabar on account of the special adoration which they paid to snakes. The Travancore Nayars are popularly known as Malayala Sudras a term which contrasts them sharply with the Pandi or foreign Sudras. of whom a large number immigrated into Travancore in later times. Another name by which Nayars are sometimes known is Malayali, but other castes which have long inhabited the Malayalam country, can lay claim to this designation with equal propriety.

The most general title of the Nayars is Pillai[child] which was once added to the names of the Brahman dwellers in the south. The Title of Pillai and kanakku ramman Krishna, Raman being the name of the Karanavan or the Maternal uncle, A higher title Chempakaraman, corresponds to the knighthood of medieval times, and was first institute by Maharajas Marathanda Varma in memory it is said of his great Prime minister Rama Ayan Dalawa.²⁷ The individual whom it was the kings pleasure to honour ,was taken in procession on the back of an elephant through the four main streets of the fort, and received by the Prime Minister,²⁸ seated by his side and presented with pan supari. Rare as this investiture is in modern times there are many ancient houses to which this title of distinction is attached in perpetuity. The Title Kanakku is often enjoyed with it the maternal uncle's name being dropped. Tambis alone proceed in Palanquins and the appear before the Maharaja without a head-dress. The consorts of Maharajas are selected from these families. If a lady from outside is to be accepted as consort, she is generally adopted into one of these families.²⁹

The Title Kartha, or doer, appears also to have been used a titular name by some of the rulers of Madura. At the Madras Census 1901, 'Kartakkal' was returned by Balaji's claiming to be descendants of the Nayak kings of Madura and Tanjore, The Tekkumkur and Vadamkkur Rajas in Malabar are said to have first conferred the title Kartha on certain influential Nayar Families. In social matters the authority of the Kartha was supreme, and

²⁶ <https://en.samantasystem.org>. accessed on 23/6/2021

²⁷ C. V. Raman Pillai and C. V Ramanpilla, *Marthanda Varma*, Sahitya Akademie, Kerala, 1986, p. 34

²⁸ Ibid., p. 36

²⁹ Ibid., p. 198

it was only on important points that higher authorities were called on to intercede. All the Kartha belong to the Illam sub-division of the Nayar caste.³⁰ The Title Kurupu, though assumed by other castes than Nayars, really denotes an ancient section of the Nayars, charged with various functions.

Some were, for instance, instructors in the use of arms, while others were superintendents of maid-servants in the royal households. Writing concerning the zamorin of Calicut about 1500 A.D., Barbosa states that “the king has a thousand waiting women to whom he gives regular pay, and they are always at the court to sweep the palaces and houses of the king and he does this for the state. because fifty would be enough to sweep”. The Malayala Kshatriyas (aristocratic warriors of upper class) are divided in to more than 200 subdivisions. But in general, they can be categorized in to four main divisions – Nair Superior, Nair Proper, nair auxiliary and Nair Inferior. Nair Superior: Nair Superior clans composed the Royal or ruling dynasties of Kerala. Out of the 161 Royal houses of Kerala, 157 were Nair, 3 were Nambudiri and One was Muslim.

Broadly, the ruling clans can be divided in to two – koil thampurans and Samantha Nairs. Koil thampurans are very few in number, and major clans among them include the royal families of cochin and bey pore. Current population is somewhere around 5,000. Koil thampurans clans: Perumpadappu Swaroopams (Royal Family of Cochin), Koil Thampurans of Travancore (a total of 10 clans – Kilimanoor, Keerthipuram, Palam, Paliyakkara, Nirazhi, Anantapuram, Chemprol, Cherukol, Karamma & Vatakkematham) Puranatt Swaroopams (Royal Family of Kottayam), Royal Family of Bey pore, Royal Family of Kondungalloor, Royal Family of Vettatnad (Extinct)³¹ Samantha Nairs is slightly more numerous. Royal families of Travancore, chirakkal, Calicut. Etc are Samantha Nairs. Currently they number more than 50,000 individuals, divided in to more than 150 clans. Major Samantha nair clans: ³² Nediyruppu Swaroopams (Royal Family of Calicut or Zamorins), Venad Swaroopams (Royal Family of Travancore), Kola Swaroopams (Royal Family of Kolathunad / Chirakkal), Thirumu khom (Most notably Pillai's of Ettuveedu and Naluveedu), Thampi (Clans in Aramana, Puthumana, Kallada, Mupidakka, Chavara, Pulimoodu, Vadasseri, Thiruvattar &

³⁰ C. J. Fuller, *The Nayars Today*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1976, p. 25

³¹ Ibid., p.213

³² S. N. Sadasivan, *A Social History of India*, A.P.H, New Delhi, 2000, p.74

Nagercoil), Valiyathan (Clans in Vattaparambil, Thottathil, Medayil.etc), Unnithan (Clans in Edasseri, Kunnath, Manthiyath, Marangatt, Munjanatt, Pullelil, Manappallil.etc), Kartha / Kartha (Royal Family of Meenachil, Clans in Ranni, Karimattath, Cheranllore, Mannamparambath, Alangad.etc), Kaimal (Raja of Anjikaimalnadu, Clans in Vaikattillam, Niranampetti, Thachudaya.etc), Samantan Menon (Royal Family of Palghat), Samantan Nambiar (Royal Family of Kadathanad, Clans in Randuthara, Randillom, Mavila, Koodali, Kalliat.etc), Kavala Para Swaroopam, Pulavayi Swaroopam, Arangottu Swaroopam (Royal Family of Valluvanad), Nedunganad Swaroopam, Nayanar (Clans in Edathil, Erambala, Varikara & Vengayil), Adiyodi (Clans in Tekkadi & Vadakkadi), Kurangott Swaroopam, Kuthiravattath Swaroopam, Vyakhralayeshwara swaroopam of Vaikom. One of the oldest swaroopam s of which very less is known nowadays. They were overthrown around 1100 years ago by another clan Vembanadu. which in turn later split into Vadakkumkoor and Thekkamkoor.³³

Marthanda Thampi Valiyathan of this swaroopam was a close aide of Marthanda Varma Maharaja and helped him to annexe both Thekkamkoor and Vadakkumkoor. Their official residence was a 16 kettu building known as Vadayar kottaram. but was demolished and rebuilt in 1950 due to age. The compound consists of five 'Sarpa Kavu' and in numerous numbers of deity's including an altar of Marthanda Thampi Valiyathan. The idols of the serpents in the Grove are 2000 years old.³⁴ Thiru Vaikkathappan is the kuladaivam (family deity) of the family. Nair Proper: Nair Proper is the aristocratic and soldier class of Kerala. There are four subdivisions among them. Altogether the nair proper number somewhere around 4,000,000 to 5,000,000 people, concentrated in Kerala and neighbouring states. The four nair subdivisions are: Kiriyathil Nair, Illathu Nair, Swaroopathil Nair,³⁵

Chara Nair Kiriyathil Nairs are the highest-ranking class among the nair proper. A few of them were rajas, but most of them were landlords (jemmies) or aristocrats. However, a large number of them also served in the armies. Many of the folk heroes mentioned in vadakkan pattukal were kiriyathil (like thacholi othenan & kadathanadan

³³ Ibid., p.78

³⁴ <https://en.Marthandan> Thampi vallychan, org. accessed on 12/6/2021

³⁵ Joseph Puthenkalam, *Marriage and the Family in Kerala*, University of Calgary, Calgary, 1977, p. 110

ambadi). Till the 18th century, Kiriyaathil formed the majority of all Nairs, but after the genocide they suffered when tipu sultan invaded Malabar, their numbers declined steeply. Currently they comprise only about 1/6th to 1/5th of the nair population. They compose of a large number of subdivisions. Kiriyaathils are mostly found in extreme north kerala (north Malabar region – especially Kannur, Kasaragod and Wynad districts) as well as in Palghat district. Illathu Nairs are the highest ranking Nairs in the Travancore region.³⁶

There were a few royal families among them until the 18th century (Meenachil, ettuveetil.etc), but all of them lost power after marthandavarma's conquests. Most of them were landlords and aristocrats, but a considerable number served as soldiers (Iravikutty Pillai, Velu Thampi, Padmanabhapillai, Keshava Pillai. Etc) or as ministers. Illakkar are pure vegetarian and this distinguishes them from other divisions. The population of Illathu Nairs has been rising since the last 2 centuries, at the expense of other divisions, through intermarriage and lower death rates. Right now, they constitute around 50% of all Nairs. Major concentrations are found in south Travancore (Trivandrum, Quilon and cape comorin districts). Illakkar used the surname "Pillai" until the mid20th century, but currently they use the surname "nair" (Except those in Quilon district).³⁷ Swaroopathil and Charna Nairs were the major military castes of kerala. They had no other occupation other than that in the army. Charna Nairs are found only in north kerala, while Swaroopathil are found only in the south kerala region. They constitute more than 1/4th of the total nair population.

All Menon's (other than menon-panicker) are Charna Nairs. Nair Auxiliary: Nair auxiliary consists of a very large number of Brahmin, Vaishya and kshatriya castes which were assimilated in to the Malayala kshatriya community. They include: Maarar, Tamil Padam Nayar (thevar), Payyampati, Daivampati, Asthikkurachi Maarar & Chitikan Nair, Vaniya Nair – Including Chetty Nair, Mutta, Taraka & Ravari, Pallichan Nair, Pada Mangalam Nair, Itasseri Nair. Nair Inferior: Nair inferior refers to a large grouping of servile castes which work for the Nairs. Nair proper don't engage in intermarriage with these castes. Major subdivisions are Chembukottikal Nair, Otattu Nair, Puliyath & Matavan Nair, Kalamkotti & Anthoor Nair, Chakkala & Vattakkadan Nair, Chalayan Nair, Maniyani Nair, Veluthedathu Nair, Vilakkithala Nair.

³⁶ T. K. Gopal Panikkar, *Malabar and Its Folk*, Asian educational, Malabar, 1983, p. 243

³⁷ <https://en.Pillai.org>, accessed on 14/7/2021

Kartha: Divisions

Kartha or Kartha is a Hindu Nair title name that means ‘Lord’. It was conferred by the king to powerful Nair families who enjoyed Raja or Naduvazhi Status. The most important of the Kartha clans are Anakkottil Kartha and Meenachil Kartha. Their independent principality was annexed by Marthandavarma’s along with Tekkumkur and Vadamkkur Meenachil near Palai (Cheranllore Kartha/kattu kaimal, cheranllore near eranakulam), Thazhassary kotta Kartha.³⁸

The family deity Kottekkavilamma is Seated in the Pazhayakatta,³⁹ The remains of the masonry basement of the fort and some portions of the 16th -foot(width)fort walls with gun holes are believed to have been built overnight during the Hyder Ali’s invasion (1767) remains. The fort enjoyed four names as in evident from land revenue records Udayakumaran,Eravi, Kuruvikkat, Kaimal and Kartha.⁴⁰ Until the recent past Kartha controlled the cholamala near Thattekkad were the summer retreat of chera dynasty existed (Kottappady near Thrikkariyour),Karimattath Kartha (Pulluvazhy near Perumbavoor),Kalathil Kartha (Akoya -family Deity-Vettakorumagan), chiral Kartha (Kadayirippu, Kole cherry, Ambazhathumkal (Nattukariathil)Kartha controlled Vennimala near pampady the capital of Thekkumkur,Anikkad Kartha, Ranni Kartha,Mannamparumbath Kartha.(Chazur ,Thrissur) Kartha,(alwaye,Tholalil Kartha) (Okkal,Vadakkumcheri Akathottu kartha and Madathethu Puthemadom Kartha ,Pulumthanath Kartha,Panavally,Kartha,(Mudavoor-Muvattapuzha) Ettu vittil Kartha. They belong to the Samantha Kshatriya Group.⁴¹

Kartha as ‘Karthakanmar’

Kartha as a kshatriya community, Ruled and smaller principalities or worked mainly in the Army, Police or as tax collectors. They were troop Leaders. The kartha Surname is still used, although it is less prominent. The Title Kartha, (Doer), appears to have been used as a titular name by some of the rulers of Madura, During the Madras census of 1901, the title Kartha was returned by Balijas claiming to be descendants of the

³⁸ Telephonic interview with Gopalakrishnan Kartha, aged 67, Cheganoor, on 16/5/2021

³⁹ <https://en.WorldKarthacommunity.org>, accessed on 17/7/2021

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 4

⁴¹ B.S Balinga, *Madras District Gazetteers*, University of California, Madras, 1988, p. 11

Nayaka Kings of Madura and Tanjore. Thekkumkur and Vadakkumkoor Rajas are said to have first conferred the title Kartha on certain influential Nayar Families who were related by blood to the Rajas. In social matters the authorities of the Kartha were supreme. Only on important points were higher authorities called on to intercede. Kartha belong to the Illam sub-division of the Nayar Caste.⁴²

Ranni Kartha

Ranni is a small village in the Pathanamthitta district of Kerala, in India. The taluk headquarters is a small township on both sides of the Pampa River. Ranni is also one of the largest taluks in Kerala. The renowned Hindu temple of Sabarimala is in this taluk, situated approximately 66 km from the main town, Ittiyappara. Ranni is known for its natural environment, forests, hills, river and good climate.⁴³ The former rulers of Ranni were known as Ranni Kartha or 'Kartakkal' of Ranni they were the "Samantha's" and blood related family of Thekkamkoor Raja. ⁴⁴18th Century Anizham Thirunal Marthandavarma's of Vennad annexed Thekkamkoor kingdom and confiscated all the lands belongs to the former rulers. Ranni Kartha Koyikal (Palace) were stand at a place called Areekkal. Ranni karthas build Ranni Manjor Ramapuram temple.

The temple is same as the construction of Aranmula Sreeparthasaradhy temple but the darshan is towards southern direction. The Famous Devi Temple Thottamon Kavu Devi temple is its famous landmark. Thottamon kavu Devi is believed the daughter of Paramashiva so the song "Mukkannan Thirumakale is famous" where Mukkannan is Sivan. It is a part of Ranni Taluk which lies in the valley of the Western Ghats. Thottamon kavu Devi Temple is a resting place for pilgrims to Shabarimala. The temple belongs to some nair families in Ranni. The family who administrated the temple were known as naaluveedanmaar, the four nobles. The four Panikkar families are who held the title were Meempallil, kerukattu (Padiyarakkalayil), Pangattu and cheruthalayathu.⁴⁵

Meenachil Kartha

⁴² <https://en.Kartha.org>. accessed on 23/4/2021

⁴³ <https://en.Ranni.org>. accessed on 13/7/2021

⁴⁴ Telephonic interview with Ashoka S Kartha, aged 45, Karthamadam, Vadesserikara, accessed on 12/5/2021

⁴⁵ Telephonic interview with Sajeev Kartha, aged 73, Mevada Keezhakedathu Madam, Meenachil, on 12/5/2021

The Meenachil River, also known as Kavanar, originates at vagamon in the Western Ghats of Kerala, flows westward through Erattupetta, Palai, Kidangoor, Ettumanoor and Kottayam. Its length is about 87 kilometres. Near Kottayam it splits into a number of distributaries before emptying into the Vembanad Lake. Kumarakom, the bird sanctuary and tourist resort are on one such branch. Meenachil is the north-eastern region of Kottayam district in Kerala, south India. The name originates from Meenakshi, the Dravidian goddess. Pala is the main city in Meenachil. The arterial river of the district is also named Meenachil. Meenachil Karthas (also known as Njavakkatt Karthas and medackal karthas) were members of an Illathu Nair aristocratic clan, which ruled the small kingdom of Meenachil from 15th century AD until 1754. Unlike the other aristocratic Nair factions of North and Central Travancore who are descended from the Nagas, the Meenachil Karthas were of Rajput origin.⁴⁶

The Rajput Royalty of Kerala, Meenachil Karthas, who were originally from Mewar, house of Maharana Pratap. They're known as Mevada Thampanas (Lords of Mewar).⁴⁷ They settled in Kottayam, Kerala where they assimilated as local Nair ruling clan. Meenachil Karthas were members of an Illathu Nair aristocratic clan, which ruled the small kingdom of Meenachil from 15th century AD until 1754. Unlike the other aristocratic Nair factions of North and Central Travancore who are descended from the Nagas, the Meenachil Karthas were of Rajput origin.⁴⁸ In Karthas has Meenachil was originally a Rajput belonging to the Royal blood who migrated to Madurai in the 14th century the reason for their Exodus or their roots in Rajasthan is given as some family disputes, inter family quarrels. They settled in Madurai, which was at that time a great cultural centre and capital. Later they migrated to Kerala the reason for which is stated as outbreak of an epidemic in the city and settled in this place "Meenachil", which was named after "Meenakshi" of Madurai.⁴⁹ Their capital was named after Mevada Mewar. The current Meenachil taluk was a principality under the local chieftains, the

⁴⁶ George Abraham Pottamkualam, *Kerala a Journey in Time*, Notion Press Media, Place Nil, 2021, p. 65

⁴⁷ <https://en.meenachil.org>, accessed on 16/7/2021

⁴⁸ <https://en.meenachilkartha.org>, accessed on 14/6/2021

⁴⁹ Madan Prasad Bezharuah and Krishna Gopal (et. al.) *Fair and Festivals of India*, Gyan Publishing House, Place Nil, 2003, p. 201

Meenachil Karthas also known as Njavakkatt Karthas before Marthanda Meenakshi of Madurai, the deity of the ruling Karthas of Meenachil Meenakshi became Meena chi and later Meenachil. According to legends this river starts from seek the permission to build a church at Pala. But the local ruler Meenachil kartha s kartha asked them to bring two more families. Erakonni family Kozhikode zamoothiri Thekkum koor Vadamkkur koor Ranni Kartha Meenachil Kartha Madathumkoor Velluva.

Cheranellore Kartha

Cheranellore or Cheranellore or Cheranellore is a suburb of Kochi city in the state of Kerala, India and lies on the banks of the Periyar River.⁵⁰ According to tradition, the area was named by its earlier inhabitants who found this place very fertile and beautiful. The name in its local language Malayalam means "Good Village of Chera". The National Highway 66, which connects Cochin with Mumbai-Panvel, goes through Cheranellore crossing the Vallarpadam International Container National Highway National Highway 47C (India) (the only junction between the two Highways). Cheranellore is a place surrounded by backwaters, and brackish lagoons which are commonplace in Kerala. The former ruler of these area was known as "Cheranellore Kartha" - he was one of the influential lords around Cochin area before the Sakthan Thampuran of Cochin. Cheranellore is a village in Kanayannur Taluk. Kartha Family of Cheranellore was known as Cheranellore Swaroopams. Early the Theravada of Kartha was actually in varapuzha, later due to the advent of Christianity they migrated to Cheranellore and settled there and started controlling Cheranellore, Chittoor, Vaduthala, Kothad regions. These areas belonged to cochin Kingdom and Cheranellore karthas were given the right to collect tax from these areas.⁵¹ The head of the kartha Family who hold the title "Moopil" was the Naduvazhi. At present Raman Kartha holds the Moopil title.⁵² Cheranellore Kartha Family of South Chittoor was the founder of Ernakulam Siva Temple. As per the devaprasna this temple has a connection with Vaishnava. Jayadevan Namboothiri was the swamiyar of

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 210

⁵¹ Telephonic interview with Divya Thulasi, aged 41, Krishna Mangalam, Kochi, on 11/5/2021

⁵² <https://en.CheranelloreKartha.org>, accessed on 22-4-2021

Ernakulam Siva Temple and Thiruvananthapuram Shri Padmanabhaswamy Temple.⁵³ He was a member of Cheranellore Kartha Family of South Chittoor.⁵⁴

Myths of Karthakanmar

The temple's legend is deeply associated with Hindu epic Mahabharata. Arjuna, the 3rd Pandava made a severe penance to propitiate Lord Shiva. Pleased with Arjuna's devotion Shiva accompanied with his consort Sri Parvathi set out from their abode at Mount Kailash to meet Arjuna.⁵⁵ Shiva intends to impress Parvathi with the devotion Arjuna has towards him. Shiva disguises himself as "Kiratha" a tribal hunter before appearing before Arjuna. Just as Shiva appears before Arjuna he sees a wild boar charging towards Arjuna and shoots an arrow at the boar. Arjuna, who is an accomplished archer, also shoots an arrow at the boar. The boar who was in fact a demon named Mookasura in disguise is killed and its original form is revealed.

However, dispute arises between Arjuna and Kiratha as to who is the real killer of the animal. A battle ensues between the two, lasting a long time, ultimately resulting in Kiratha's victory over Arjuna. The vanquished Arjuna, unable to even stand up makes a Shiva Linga out of mud and performs a pooja offering flowers. To his surprise, he sees that the flower he offers over the Shiva Linga is falling over the head of Kiratha. Arjuna then realises that Kiratha is none other than his Lord Shiva. Pleased with his devotion and sincerity, Lord Shiva granted Pashupatha Arrow to Arjuna. Arjuna left this place and soon this area was covered with dense forest, uninhabited for long time. The existence of the Shiva Linga made by Arjuna also disappeared from memories of all.

Centuries later, a boy named Devala who has been cursed by a sage, now has a body of a snake, crawled into this forest and saw this lingam completely submerged into mud. He worshiped this lingam as part a deep penance in hope for redeeming from the curse. Soon a few people spotted this mysterious man with body of snake and called him as Rishi Nagam (Saint Serpent) and feared even to come near to him. Some even tried to thwart him with sticks etc. Unmoved by all these action, Rishi Nagam continued his severe

⁵³Telephonic interview with Sankunni, Aged 56, Kottarathil, Aithiyamala, on 17/5/2021

⁵⁴ K. P. Padmanabhan Menon, *History of Kerala Vol.2*, Cochin Government Press, Ernakulam, 1924, p. 199

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 234

penance.⁵⁶ Finally Lord Shiva and Parvathi appeared in their original form and asked the sage to take a dip in the nearby pond. As soon as he immersed, he was redeemed from the curse. Soon a new idol appeared just near to the original lingam. Based on this legend, the place got its new name, Rishnagakulam (The pond of Rishi Nagam) and the temple was constructed by the public.

In this first chapter from the beginning to end of the chapter deals with Kartha community in Kerala. From the beginning part of this chapter discussed about caste formation and historical background of the Kartha community. The middle part of this chapter I mentioned different communities and characterises. The end of this chapter discussed myths of Kartha community. Kartha or Kartha is a Hindu Nair title name that means 'Lord'. It was conferred by the king to powerful Nair families who enjoyed Raja or Naduvazhis Status. The most important of the Kartha clans are Anakkottil Kartha and Meenachil Kartha. Their independent principality was annexed by Marthanda Varma along with Tekkamaki and Vadamkkur (Meenachil near Palai (Cheranllore Kartha/kattu kaimal (cheranllore near Ernakulam), Thazhassary kotta Kartha. This chapter we can understand the role of Kartha community in our society.

⁵⁶ Telephonic interview with Rajeev Menon, aged 48, Njavakattumadam, Cheganoor, on 19/5/2021

CHAPTER III

SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF KARTHA

Kartha or 'Karthavu' means Lord or Legend and this Hindu Nair title name specifically means ("doer"). It was conferred by the king to powerful Nair families. They enjoyed Raja or Naduvazhi Status. Kartha chieftains were bestowed with extraordinary rights and authorities by the erstwhile kings and they always had a special status in the royal court. The concept of Kartha is a continuous ancient concept. It has been from generations to generations since the origin of Hindu Law. The most senior male in the Hindi Joint Family holds the position of 'Kartha'.¹ However, it is important to understand that Karta also acts as a manager of joint family and its properties. He enjoys a wide power including to be the representative of the family, welfare for the minors and females in the family, working as a manager, administrator, and other important affairs and liabilities of the family. Therefore, it can be seen that Kartha enjoys a unique position.

Social Background

In other words, the male head of the family is considered to be 'Kartha' or 'Manager'. Provided he must not be suffering from any mental or physical deficiency. Mere health issues such as old age, handicapped, weakness or illness of a person cannot remove him from the position and continues as long as he lives unless he resigns with his own consent.² He looks after the family and the property as a guardian/manager (not as agent or trustee). He does all the activities in favour of the family and its interest. If the Kartha, wishes to resign the position then he can freely leave it. After consent of family, it is not necessary that the oldest person from succeeding generation shall hold the particular position. It is assumed that the most senior person of the family is recognized as the 'Kartha' of the family. Any person from succeeding generation cannot be kartha of the family till the most senior male of the family is alive. However, this is possible if the previous kartha leaves his right due to health issues or any such reason.³

¹ <https://en.Karthacommunity.org>, accessed on 12-5-2021

² Ankita Gupta, *Karta/Manager and his Legal Position*, Manu Putra, Place Nil, 2004, p. 2

³ Telephonic interview with Ashoka Kartha, Aged 45, Karthamadam, Vadaserikara, on 12/7/2021

Legal Position

The Kartha basically represents or acts as guardian and more of it as a manager to the members of the joint family. He can create a partnership with the other family members where he invests his capital and others invest their labour and skill but he does not create a principal-agent relationship with the family members which states that his position is 'sui generis'. The kartha though has a wide management power but this sovereignty and fiduciary relationship does not create him to be trustee.⁴ This means that no person can ask him about what he spent unless there occur the charges of misappropriation. If any person lies on the charges of misappropriation on kartha then, the burden of proof lies on that person. He has to then prove that the act of kartha was malafide in nature. The kartha can also file the law suits in order to safeguard the interest of family members. Besides this, he can also represent the family in any legal proceeding even if he is not named. He can even make a compromise provided to be in good faith for the benefit of the family, including minors.⁵

Thus, it can be seen that the powers and position of the kartha is vast and more than just a manager. Kartha, as a community, ruled smaller principalities or worked mainly in the Army, Police or as tax collectors. They were troop leaders. The Kartha surname is still used, although it is less prominent. The title Kartha, ("doer"), appears to have been used as a titular name by some of the rulers of Madura. During the Madras census of 1901, the title Kartha was returned by Baliyas claiming to be descendants of the Nayak kings of Madura and Tanjore. The Tekkumkur and Vadakkumkoor Rajas are said to have first conferred the title Kartha on certain influential Nayar families who were related by blood to the Rajas. In social matters the authority of the Kartha was supreme. Only on important points were higher authorities called on to intercede.⁶

⁴ Chandrakant, *Hindu Law*, C.T.R Air, Place Nil, 1992, p. 66

⁵ Ankita Gupta, *Karta/Manager and his Legal Position*, op. cite., p. 4

⁶ Edgar Thurston, K. Rangachari, *Caste and Tribes of Southern India*, Government Press, Madras, 1909, p. 267

Acts for this Community

A major breakthrough towards eradicating gender inequality and discrimination and to prevent the gender-bias that has been prevalent in families in India and to improve the adverse condition of women in the society has been ensured with the enactment of the Hindu Succession Amendment Act, 2005. This amendment has conferred equal property rights on daughters of a whole Hindu Joint Family. Now, a daughter can be a coparcener in a Hindu Joint Family in the same way as the sons.⁷ After her marriage, she becomes a part of her Husband's Hindu Joint Family but does not cease to be a coparcener in the Hindu Joint Family of her father. She can exercise all the rights given to any coparcener before and even after marriage. She can have a right over the property of the Hindu Joint Family and also can alienate that property either by way of sale or will. Daughter will also get the property if any coparcener dies just like the way sons get the property.⁸ In a situation when a female coparcener dies before partition, then children of such coparcener would be eligible for claiming that property as they would have been entitled to such property in the future.

A widow of a pre-deceased son is eligible for a share in the property as a legal heir of that pre-deceased son of the Hindu Joint Family. Even if she remarries, she will have this interest in that Hindu Joint Family property. According to the Section 6 of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, and daughter, mother, widow, predeceased son's daughter and his widow, predeceased son's widow, daughter's daughter are entitled to their respective shares as per the provision. Earlier, a female was not given the chance to be a coparcener, she was not empowered to act as Kartha prior to the amendment in the Hindu Succession Act. However, after the amendment of 2005 in Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, was done keeping in mind and respecting the position of a female member, the daughter of a coparcener shall by birth become a coparcener in the same way as the son. This was upheld in the case of *Shreya Vidyarthi vs Ashok Vidyarthi & Or's*.⁹

Father's wife, mother and grandmother is entitled to share as per Hindu women's Right to property Act 1987 when Mitakshara dies leaving behind widow, she took hus

⁷ Shruti Gulati, *Our Legal World*, 2012, accessed on 14/6/2021

⁸ A.G Gupta, *Hindu Law 1408*, Premier Publishing Company, Delhi, 2003, p. 46

⁹ Acharya Shuklendra, *Hindu Law 631*, Modern Law House, Madras, 2002, p. 632

share at the time of partition she entitled to take the extent of her husband share. Hindu women's Right to property Act 1987 when Mitakshara Coparcener dies leaving behind widow, she took his share at the time of partition she is entitled to take the extent of her husband share. Under Hindu Succession Act. 1956 U/S 6 widow, daughter, mother, predeceased son's daughter and his widow, predeceased son's predeceased son's widow. daughter's daughter is entitled to their respective share as per the rules laid down.¹⁰

Power Relations and Management

The power of Kartha is vast as it can be seen through the previous descriptions as well. Thereby, here we will discuss the powers of kartha in brief along with some case laws.¹¹ The kartha, being the head of the family has power to manage and run the Hindu Undivided Family. It was held that the power of kartha with respect to management is absolute. The powers of kartha are inherent and so no interference can be done even if he shows biasness or favouritism towards a family member. The acts done by him cannot be questioned until and unless found to be illegal or immoral. The most important of all is to gain the faith and confidence of the family members in order to maintain all the acts properly.

Since, the members live as a part of joint family and it is the responsibility of kartha to manage everything thus, any member who earns from outside the family business is liable to pay his income to the kartha.¹² Till the time, family lives together as a joint family, no person can individually ask for his share in the income. Therefore, due to this power of kartha he is liable to all the funds, revenues and expenditures of the members. This automatically grants him the power to manage accounts and have a control over them. The social control side of the Kartha mandates the Kartha, the side of dominant his financial gain and expenditure and if there exists any surplus within the family accounts, he has management over those accounts too. If the Kartha has expenses that the opposite relations don't comply with, then these members have the choice of tightened a partition and also the Kartha needs to acceptable their share together with the quantity they thought of two own been unsuitably spent. It absolutely was noted in Tara

¹⁰ <https://en.KartaPowerDuties.org>, accessed on 22/5/2021

¹¹ Diganth Raj Sehgal, All About Kartha, I pleaders, 2020, accessed on 15/5/2021

¹² Kameswara Shastri, *Principles of Hindu Law*, Madras Government Press, Madras, 1911, p. 422

chand v. Reeb Ram that whereas taking accounts throughout the division of property, no coparcener should have a charge against him with the explanation that because of his larger family necessities, a larger share of the joint family quantity was spent on his family.¹³

Power of Representation

The kartha has right to represent in all legal, religious or social matters in the family. In general, all the acts of the family are represented by the kartha be, it for the contracts, business purposes or any other purpose and does not have a corporate existence. Even if a case is filed against the whole family or business suit, then the kartha can represent himself instead of other members. The act of kartha is bound among all the members of the family, including the minors.¹⁴ Karta can enter into any compromise for the issues related to the joint family. The compromise made may be in regard to family debts and other related transactions. Such compromise must not be malafide else can be challenged during partition. A kartha can even compromise a suit pending in court for which the members of the family shall be bound. However, a minor in such a case can take the advantage to file a suit in the court, under Order 32, Rule 7 of Civil Procedure Code.¹⁵ The kartha explicitly has power to enter into the contract on behalf of the family members for which all of them shall be equally bound. However, if the kartha enters into a family contract then it is specifically enforceable against the other members as well.¹⁶

Since all the actions are binding over other family members, similarly any debt taken by kartha is binding upon all the members of the family. They cannot escape the liability to pay off the debt even by the act of partition. It is to be noted that kartha cannot treat the estate of minor as a security for some loan, not even to start a business of ancestral nature.¹⁷ The debts are binding on the family only if following conditions are fulfilled. Debt is taken for some family purpose such as legal necessity, benefit of estate

¹³ Akash Mishra, *Karta and his Powers: An Overview*, Gujarat, Académie, 2015, p. 2

¹⁴ <https://en.KartaPositionDutiesourLegalWorld.org>, accessed on 16/7/2021

¹⁵ Ca Jatin Minocha, *Business Run to Karta of HUF Cannot be presumed to the Joint family Business:SC*, 2015, p. 3, accessed on 12/7/2021

¹⁶ Diganth Raj Sehgal, *All about Karta*, op. cite., p. 3

¹⁷ Mudit Goswami, *Powers and Duties of Karta Under Hindu Law*, 2020, p. 2, accessed on 2/7/2021

and other purposes¹⁸The Kartha has right to refer to arbitration for the interest of the family, including minors who are bound by the award provided over it. The Kartha has power to alienate the property provide it must be done by-Consent of all co-parceners, For legal reason, For benefit of reasons, If the property is alienated for the benefit of estate then the consent of other coparceners is not necessary. The kartha can even mortgage the property for the benefit of the members. Provided that such as act must be done as a prudent owner. This sale of mortgage can even be used to pay debts that were taken for the personal gains. During such sale, no third party has right to restrain the kartha by injunction. The kartha is liable to show that no malafide or immoral behaviour has been shown by him. However, a kartha cannot be prevented to alienate the common property.¹⁹

Social Relations

The Kartha also known as '*Karthakanmar*', are a group of Indian Hindu caste. These people lived, and continue to live, in the area which is now the Indian state of Kerala. Their internal caste behaviours and systems are markedly different between the people in the northern and southern sections of the area. Historically, Karthas lived in large family units called tharavads that housed descendants of one common female ancestor. These family units along with their unusual marriage customs, which are no longer practiced, have been much studied.²⁰ Although the detail varied from one region to the next, the main points of interest to researchers of Kartha marriage customs were the existence of two particular rituals—the pre-pubertal thalikettu kalyanam. and the later Sambandham and the practice of polygamy in some areas. Some women also practiced hypergamy with Nambudiri Brahmins from the Malabar Region. The Kartha were historically involved in military conflicts in the region. some Kartha families were also quite renowned for their expertise in traditional Ayurveda medicine. Most Kartha families have their ancestral tutelary deity as Hindu Goddess Bhadra Kalli or Goddess Durga.²¹ A few families also consider their ancestral deity Vettakorumagan, a

¹⁸ Diganth Raj Sehgal, *All about Karta*, op. cite., p. 5

¹⁹ Mudit Goswami, *Powers and Duties of Karta under Hindu Law*, Ibid., p. 3

²⁰ Telephonic interview with Ashoka Kartha, aged 45, Karthamadam, Ranni, on 12/7/2021

²¹ <https://en.Karthakerala.org>, accessed on 12/6/2021

Hindu deity worshiped in parts of North Kerala. The number of Kartha families are a few in Kerala now.

Education System

The Education System is mainly for the higher part of the society. The Sanskrit study was also for the Higher families of the Society. In later times schools were emerged. Among the Muslims the othupallil were emerged. The religious study and basic education were under this Othupalli's. Among the Christians the Sunday school were emerged. The religious study and basic education were under these church schools. The first schools of the Panchayath are in the ancient Kerala's Cultural Antiquity. The feudal structure of the then society, embedded mainly in caste system.²²

Cultural Formation: Marriage

For the unmarried members of the family, the kartha is liable for their marriage especially the daughters. The funds required for the marriage are taken from the joint family ownership and these expenses can be incurred by joint family funds. Fuller has commented that "The Nayers' marriage system has made them one of the most famous of all communities in anthropological circles", and Amitav Ghosh says that, although matrilineal systems are not uncommon in communities of the south Indian coast, the Nairs "have achieved an unparalleled eminence in the anthropological literature on matrilineality". None of the rituals survive in any significant way today. Two forms of ritual marriage were traditional: the pre-puberty rite for girls known as thalikettu kalyanam, which was usually followed by sambandham when they became sexually mature.

The sambandham was the point at which the woman might take one or more partners and bear children by them, giving rise to the theories of them engaging in polyandrous practices.²³ A ritual called the tirandukuli marked the first menstruation and usually took place between these two events. a form of hypergamy, whereby high-ranked Nairs married Samantan, Kshatriyas and Brahmins. There is much debate about whether the traditional Nair rituals fitted the traditional definition of marriage and which

²² Bharti Raina, *Kartha*, 2019, accessed on 23/6/2021

²³ Telephonic Interview with Madhusoodanan Kartha, Aged 48, Kuruppampady, Kottayam, on 13/3/2021

of thalikettu kalyanam or sambandham could lay claim to it. Thomas Nossiter has commented that the system "was so loosely arranged as to raise doubts as to whether 'marriage' existed at all."²⁴

Funeral Customs Practised

Generally, Hindus believe that life and death are part of the concept of samsara, or rebirth.²⁵ The ultimate goal for many Hindus is to become free from desire, thereby escaping samsara and attaining moksha, the transcendent state of salvation. Once moksha is attained, the soul will be absorbed into Brahman, the divine force and ultimate reality.²⁶ When a Kartha is approaching death, a priest should be contacted and the priest and the family should gather to be with the dying person. Those present should chant mantras or play a recording of mantras being chanted. When death seems imminent, the body should, if possible, be transferred to a grass mat on the floor. A small amount of water from the Ganges River should be placed in the dying person's mouth. If this is not possible before death, then these actions should take place immediately following the death. Traditionally, the body is washed by family members and close friends. Many Hindu funeral homes recognize the importance of the family washing the body and will allow the family to prepare the body.

If this is not possible, the funeral home may wash and dress the body. For the ritual washing, the deceased's head should be facing southward. A lighted oil lamp as well as a picture of the deceased's favourite deity should be kept by the deceased's head. Traditionally, for the '*abhisegam*' (holy bath), the body is washed in a mixture of milk, yogurt, ghee (clarified butter), and honey. The body may also be washed in purified water. While the body is being washed, those washing should recite mantras. Once the body is sufficiently cleaned, the big toes should be tied together, the hands should be placed palm-to-palm in a position of prayer, and the body should be shrouded in a plain white sheet. If the person who died was a married woman who died before her husband, she should be dressed in red.²⁷

²⁴ Edgour Thurston and Rangachari. K, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Madras Government Press, Madras, 1909, p. 344

²⁵ Telephonic Interview with Madhusoodanan Kartha, aged 48, Kuruppampady, on 13/3/2021

²⁶ K. V Singh, *Hindu Rites and Rituals*, Penguin Books, Delhi, 2015, p. 25

²⁷ Ashoka Mishra, *Hinduism*, Story Mirror and Infotech Pvt Limited, India, 2019, p. 235

Generally, hold a brief wake before cremation. The body should be displayed in a simple, inexpensive casket. ‘*Vibuti*’ (ash) or ‘*Chandanam*’ (sandalwood) should be applied to the forehead of a man, and turmeric should be applied to the forehead of a woman. A garland of flowers should be placed around the neck, and holy basil should be placed in the casket. During the wake, family and friends gather around the casket and may recite hymns or mantras. At the end of the wake, before the body is removed for cremation, many Hindus place “Pinda” (rice balls) near the casket. At the end of the wake, the casket is removed feet-first and brought to the place of cremation. Historically, Hindu cremations take place on the Ganges River in India.²⁸ The family builds a pyre and places the body on the pyre. Traditionally, the casket is carried on a stretcher and walked to the cremation site, though it is acceptable to transport the body in a vehicle. If a vehicle, such as a hearse, is used for transportation, the eldest male relative (known as “Karthi Raja”) and another male family elder should accompany the casket. It is customary that only men attend the cremation.

Then kartha will circle the body three times, walking counter-clockwise so that the body stays on his left, and sprinkling holy water on the pyre. Then the kartha will set the pyre on fire and those gathered will stay until the body is entirely burned. For Hindus living outside of India, there are companies that will arrange for the shipment of the body to India and hold a traditional cremation with a proxy kartha.²⁹ The day after the cremation, the Kartha will return to the crematory and collect the ashes. Traditionally, the ashes should be immersed in the Ganges River, though more and more other rivers are becoming acceptable substitutes. For Hindus living outside of India, there are companies that will arrange for the shipment of the cremated remains to India and will submerge the ashes in the Ganges.

The cremation of the deceased marks the beginning of the mourning period, which lasts for 13 days. During this time, the family of the deceased will stay at home and receive visitors, though mourning rituals may differ depending on the community.³⁰ A photograph of the deceased may be prominently displayed, and a garland of flowers may be placed on the photograph. Throughout the mourning period, the rite of “preta-karma” will be performed, which assists the disembodied spirit of the deceased to obtain a new

²⁸ <https://en.Antyesti.org>. accessed on 21/6/2021

²⁹ Rajbali Pandey, *Hindu samskaras*, Motilal Banarsidas Publication, Delhi, 1969, p. 56

³⁰ K. V Singh, *Hindu Rites and Rituals*, op cite., p. 32

body for reincarnation. One year after the death, the family will observe a memorial event called “sradha,” which pays homage to the deceased. The kartha will invite Brahmins, members of the highest caste, to the home and provide them with an elaborate meal, treating them as he would his own parents.

Property and its Management

It is stated in the statutes that once; a partition is done it is difficult to unite them. However, if the partition occurs in a family, then it is considered that the joint family status comes to an end. Under Mitakshara Law it means severance of interest and status which means that if members wish to separate from joint family, then he has such right. After the severance, the kartha will render the accounts in a manner as that of trustee or agent.³¹ The power of kartha to be representation of the family is discussed above. Apart from having power of such representation, it is also his responsibility to represent the family in the government activities or in front of other outsiders.³² He is liable to pay all the taxes and can even sue or be sued on behalf of other family members.

Liabilities of Kartha

The Karta of the Hindu Joint Family is liable to maintain all the members of the joint family. All the members of the Joint Hindu Family have a right to maintenance and residence. If the Karta is unable to maintain them, he can be sued for the same and the member can claim their arrears of maintenance.³³ The Karta also has the power to spend funds from the joint family account. But such power is limited to some restrictions such as the Karta cannot use the funds for unlawful purposes and also, he should spend it wisely. If any of the coparceners is not satisfied with the spending made by the Karta, he/she can file a suit against the Karta and discover the truth.³⁴ The Karta is allowed to alienate the Joint Hindu Family Property only in certain cases such as legal necessity, the benefit of the estate, in case of indispensable duties. Other than this the Karta is not allowed to alienate the Joint Family Property. If he wrongfully alienates the property then

³¹ Sumit Mishra, *Role of Karta in North India*, 2018, accessed on 23/6/2021

³² Sumit Mishra, *Role of Karta in North India*, Ibid., p. 12

³³ Telephonic Interview with Gopalakrishnan Kartha, Aged 67, Karthamadam, Cheganoor, on 23/7/2021

³⁴ <https://en.KartaLaibilities.org>, accessed on 27/7/2021

the coparceners have a right to challenge the alienation. The Karta of the family is under the obligation not to start a new business without the prior consent/permission of coparceners of the Joint Hindu Family. Once the coparceners expressly or impliedly have given their consent, the Karta can start a new business.³⁵ Liability to render accounts Until the family remains joint, the Karta has no obligation to maintain the accounts. But as soon as the partition takes place the Karta is under an obligation to render the accounts of Joint Family Property.³⁶

Power of the Kartha to Gift Property

It is a usually identified indisputable fact that a Kartha could have a superior social control authority however he cannot gift away family property unless there's a legal compulsion concerned or for spiritual functions etc. Movable Property as gifts the father or the Kartha has the authority to gift ancestral joint family property to sons, daughters etc. as a matter of affectionateness whereby the gift is in furtherance of "indispensable acts of duty, and family, relief from distress then forth". Such gifts do have limitation sort of a gift cannot entail the full property to lean to 1 explicit member because it can't be then upheld as "gift of affection".³⁷

Immovable Property as gifts The Kartha will possess the capability to gift a private, as a result of few restrictions, for pious functions. it had been set down in *Guramma v. Mallapa* that a father will gift his girl a little of associate stabile property if it conforms to the reasonability criteria, viewing the properties that square measure owned by the family. Though, it's not acceptable for a husband to gift any such property to his mate underneath the clause of "Pious Purposes". Gift to Strangers the Kartha solely holds the proper to gift properties to relations underneath some conditions and strangers can't be a recipient of such a present underneath no circumstances. Such a present, if made, shall be deemed to be void ab initio.³⁸

³⁵ Shruti Gulati, *Hindu law*, Gangotri, Delhi, 2018, p. 2

³⁶ <https://en.KartaLiability.org>, accessed on 19/6/2021

³⁷ <https://en.wikipedia.MeenachilKantha.org>, accessed on 12/6/2021

³⁸ Ankita Gupta, *Karta/Manager and his Legal Position: A Social Study*, Manu Patra, accessed on 22/7/2021

Position of Women

Generally female member cannot become Kartha but in exceptional circumstances female also can act as Kartha. Kartha is the senior most male member of the Hindu Joint Family and is the person who is the manager of all the properties of the Hindu Joint Family and takes care of all the other members. He has the maximum power in a Hindu joint Family and no one else has that authority.³⁹ Power to manage a family business: Kartha heads the family business and takes all the necessary decisions to ensure the growth of profits. Power to control all income and expenditure: Kartha receives all the income earned by the members of the Hindu Joint Family and he allows the funds to all the members as per their need and takes the decision as to when the Hindu Joint Family needs to spend the money. Power to take all decisions for Hindu Joint Family: Kartha has the most power in the Hindu Joint Family, hence takes care of all family affairs and takes decisions regarding the same. Power to represent the Hindu Joint Family in suits: Any suit in which this system is a party, Kartha will represent the Hindu Joint Family.⁴⁰

It cannot be a party itself as it is not a legal entity as held in the case of *Chotelal v. Jhandelal*. Power to refer any matter to arbitration: Any conflict or dispute involving a member of Hindu Joint Family or the Hindu Joint Family as a whole, Kartha has the power to refer that matter to arbitration and it is binding on all the members. Power to compromise: Kartha has the power to settle any matter of property, any family debts or etc. if it is done with bona fide intention. Power to acknowledge and contract debts: Kartha has the power to take loans and pay off loans of a debt of a particular member of the Hindu Joint Family.⁴¹

However, if he takes a loan for the benefit of the family business, the duty to repay the loan comes on all the members of the Hindu Joint Family. Power to enter into a contract: Kartha has the power to enter into a contract in which the Hindu Joint Family is involved. He will represent the Hindu Joint Family in the contract. Power to alienate: Kartha has the power to alienate any of the Hindu Joint Family property if he has done in a legal necessity, for the benefit of the estate or an emergency.⁴² Certain females are

³⁹ Krishna Kumari, *Position of Women in Hindu Civilization*, Motilal Nanarsideass, Delhi, 1959, p. 34

⁴⁰ Ankita Gupta, op. cit., p. 38

⁴¹ S. K Pandit, *Women in Society*, Rajar Publication, India, 1998, p. 123

⁴² Ibid., p. 128

entitled to shares if the partition is done. Father's wife, mother and grandmother are entitled to share as per Hindu women's Right to Property Act 1987 when a coparcener dies and leaves behind a widow. She will be entitled to take the property to the extent of her husband's share. The norm in earlier times was that the Kartha of the Hindu Joint Family is the senior most male member and hence, a female was never given the recognition. Kartha is always one of the coparceners and because of this, females were never a part of the coparceners. Widow is not a coparcener and every Kartha is appointed from one of the coparceners.

Dharma shastra proved to be a source which gave females a right that they can be the Kartha of the Hindu Joint family and do all acts that are necessary and which may result in the benefit of the Hindu Joint Family. Dharma shastra has provided that female can act as a manager of the Hindu Joint Family. Earlier, a female was not given the chance to be a coparcener, she was not empowered to act as Karta prior to the amendment in the Hindu Succession Act.⁴³ However, after the amendment of 2005 in Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, was done keeping in mind and respecting the position of a female member, the daughter of a coparcener shall by birth become a coparcener in the same way as the son. This was upheld in the case of Shreya Vidyarthi vs Ashok Vidyarthi & Or's⁴⁴.

Marumakkattayam Tradition

In the Marumakkattayam law, which prevailed in Kerala where in the families were joint families, a household consisted of the mother and her children with joint rights in property.⁴⁵ The lineage was traced through the female line. Daughters and their children were thus an integral part of the household and of the property ownership as the family were matrilineal. It is applicable to a considerable section of people in Travancore-Cochin and Districts of Malabar and south Kanara. It is followed by non-brahmins caste, Nairs and Thayas, other cognate caste and Payyannur Graman of North Malabar.⁴⁶

⁴³ Shaik Abdul Kader, *The Hindu Succession Act 1956*, Eastern Law House, India, 2004, p. 345

⁴⁴ <https://en.HinduwomenRights.org>, accessed on 10/5/2021

⁴⁵ <https://en.Marumakkathayam.org>, accessed on 12/5/2021

⁴⁶ Robin Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nayar Dominance*, Holmes and Meler Publishers, Michigan, 1976, p. 313

As Per Wikipedia Encyclopaedia, it was a system of Matrilineal inheritance prevalent in Malabar which is the northern part of the present Kerala State in India. Under the Marumakkattayam system of inheritance, descent and succession to the property was traced through females and not through males. The joint family under matrilineal system is known as *Taravads* and it formed the nuclei of the society in Malabar. In the Marumakkattayam system, the family lived together in a *Tharavads* which comprised of a mother, her brothers and younger sisters, and her children. The oldest brother was brother was known as the '*Karanavar*' and was the head of the household and managed the family estate.

Aliyasanthana Tradition

Lineage was traced through the mother's family. All family property was jointly owned. Aliyasanthana Tradition system in South Kanara. The Bunts, the Billawas and the non-priestly class among the Jains in Kanara are governed by this system.⁴⁷ This tradition came into practice and was followed by everyone in the Bunts community with belief that it was an ancient practice. Bunts still believe that tradition was inherited from a king Bhutala Pandya who ruled Tulu Naadu and introduced this system 77 A.D. As Per section 3(b) of Hindu Succession Act "Aliyasanthana Law" means the system of law applicable to persons who, If this Act had not been passed, would have been governed by the Madras Aliyasanthana Act, 1949, this act provides the property rights to Kartha females.⁴⁸

Decline of the Systems

This empowering system disintegrated with time; The period of wars was over. Land ceiling laws reduced the extent of Possession under the *tharavads* and they gradually dwindled in size and Wealth. Economic changes in society and ideological and culture perspectives acquired by the educated middle class and the changes in the value system affected the joint family *Tharavads*. The unitary nuclear family suited people better.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Werner Mensky, *Modern Indian Family Law*, Curzon Press, London, 2001, p. 313

⁴⁸ Manita Doshi, *Legal Service India*, 2021, accessed on 12/7/2021

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7

The structure of the Matrilineal tharavads changed between the 18th century and the 20th century, which concurrently affected the rights of women within the household. The very structure of the matrilineal kinship also underwent tremendous change. The real reason for the Disappearance of the tharavads was the selfishness and the untold greed for money in siblings in matrilineal families. The new laws and legal procedures that were introduced in Malabar and also in Travancore and Cochin from the 19th Century onwards had an adverse impact on the rights of women in Nair tharavads.⁵⁰ Nair reform movements challenged the unmitigated powers of the '*Karanavar*'.

Patriarchal values influenced men and women alike. Women supported the partition of the joint family systems and in the 1930's women took the initiative in the partition of many Tharavads. In, Travancore, within five years of the Marumakkattayam Law of 1933, which sanctioned the dismantling of the tharavads and the partition of property, 32,900 families were partitioned. Rules of matrilineal kinship were twisted and interpreted and adapted to political, economic and legal exigencies. The Kerala Legislature's abolition of matrilineal kinship, which varied enormously across time and regions was the culmination and a predictable consequence of two centuries of legal change and social reforms. Presently, Matrilineal kinship occupies merely a shadowy and at times nostalgic part of collective Keralite memory.⁵¹

It is so concluded that the kartha holds the position of the manager or guardian in the Hindu Undivided Family. He does not act as a trustee or agent. He not only holds the power of management but also to manage accounts, provide maintenance, enter into contracts, take loans or pay debts for which he has a wider power. However, the power vested in kartha must not be used in a malafide intention. Since all the coparceners vest their trust in him. If the kartha performs any such activity that is against the interest of family members then for such a case the law has provided them several remedies.⁵² The remedies are to prevent themselves from such illicit and immoral behaviour of the Karta.

⁵⁰ Reethu Nair, *Kerala's Matrilineal Society*, 2021, accessed on 29/6/2021

⁵¹ George Kurian, *The Family in India*, Mouton and Co.V, Netherlands, 1974, p. 1

⁵² Ibid., p. 5

CONCLUSION

The entitle of this project is social fabric of Kartha/ Karthakanmar: A study is deals with the Karthas. There are three core chapters in this project. once had a prominent role in the society. Even though their power had declined once they enjoyed the status of Naduvazhi, who engaged in the duties of tax collection and administration of Ranni, Meenachil, Cheranellore karthas Region. As the time passed the family is still following their customs and practices mainly the rituals associated with their temples. Kartha or Karthavu is a Hindu nair title means lord kartha as a community ruled smaller principality or worked mainly in the army, police or tax collectors.

They were troop leaders the kartha the surname still used although it is less prominent the head of kartha family were main member but they practiced the Marumakkattayam, the kartha are also key figures in the history of cochin or southern kerala. Server land marks in the land parts of the city were setup with the consent of kartha. Karthas mainly enjoyed a great prominence during that time. They supported religious unity thus they gave lands to other communities even today they karthas signature is required some lands sale, documents in the area to show that the family has no objection to transfer the ownership of lands.

The first is the caste formation in early medieval Kerala. In this chapter deals with the formation of early medieval kerala. The works produced during the medieval and early modern periods in kerala were based the mainly on oral traditions, legends, traditional written records, geographical, and relevant archeological findings. The emergence of a new social order in India due to the influence of social, economic and cultural influences. Analysis presented in the preceding chapters will aid us to formulate some broad conclusions regarding the formation of Hindu Religious Identity in Kerala Origin of the Nair community and special reference to Kartha community. Origin and Divisions of Kartha Community in kerala. the myths of kartha community we can understand the role of kartha community in our society Formation of Brahmins and their Migration into the kerala Geographical feature of Kerala. In the ancient period Kerala did not exist as a separate political entity, instead it was a part of the ancient Thamizhakam. So, the ancient history of Kerala is reconstructed mainly on the basis of ancient Tamil Classics and the form the relevant archeological findings. The works produced during the

medieval and early modern periods in Kerala were based mainly on oral traditions, legends, and traditional written records. Till recent years, the historians on Kerala did not make any serious attempt to come out of the hard grip of the traditional and legendary sources for reconstructing the ancient and medieval periods of Kerala. The Kerala caste institutions differed from that found in the rest of India. While Indian caste system generally modelled the four-fold division of society into Brahmins. Thus, the Kerala caste system was ritualized but it was not the varna model found elsewhere. In Southern India, only in Kerala did there appear warrior lineages approximate to the Kshatriya model. These warriors never lost their identity as Sudras. Nair Kshatriya hood is based on special ecological conditions and it is a case of elevated shudras to Kshatriya status. Caste system was not prevalent in Kerala during initial of history. Sri. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai had recorded that in olden times when people lived in the Western Ghats, categorization on the basis of work done by them was in practice.

There were seven such categories. Kartha as a kshatriya community, Ruled and smaller principalities or worked mainly in the Army, Police or as tax collectors. They were troop Leaders. The kartha Surname is still used, although it is less prominent. The current Meenachil taluk was a principality under the local chieftains, the Meenachil Karthas also known as Njavakkatt Karthas before Marthanda Meenakshi of Madurai, the deity of the ruling Karthas of Meenachil Meenakshi became Meena chi and later Meenachil. According to legends this river starts from seek the permission to build a church at Pala. But the local ruler Meenachil kartha s kartha asked them to bring two more families. Erakonni family Kozhikode zamoothiri Thekkum koor Vadamkkur koor Ranni Kartha Meenachil Kartha Madathumkoor Velluva. All the formation of kartha community were detailly discussed.

The second chapter of this project is Formation of Kartha as a social group. In this chapter deals with the present study researchers the origin and development of the kartha community in Kerala. It explaining the Divisions of the kartha community in Kerala and also the Kartha Family followed various customs and practices. They gave much importance to these customs and practices even through some customs like ayitham are not be followed. The Kartha basically represents or acts as guardian and more of it as a manager to the members of the joint family. He can create a partnership with the other family members where he invests his capital and others invest their labour and skill but he does not create a principal-agent relationship with the family members which states that

his position is 'sui generis'. The kartha though has a wide management power but this sovereignty and fiduciary relationship does not create him to be trustee. The kartha, being the head of the family has power to manage and run the Hindu Undivided Family. It was held that the power of kartha with respect to management is absolute. The powers of kartha are inherent and so no interference can be done even if he shows biasness or favouritism towards a family member. The acts done by him cannot be questioned until and unless found to be illegal or immoral. The most important of all is to gain the faith and confidence of the family members in order to maintain all the acts properly. They cannot escape the liability to pay off the debt even by the act of partition. It is to be noted that kartha cannot treat the estate of minor as a security for some loan, not even to start a business of ancestral nature. For the unmarried members of the family, the kartha is liable for their marriage especially the daughters.

The funds required for the marriage are taken from the joint family ownership and these expenses can be incurred by joint family funds. Fuller has commented that "The Nayers' marriage system has made them one of the most famous of all communities in anthropological circles", and Amitav Ghosh says that, although matrilineal systems are not uncommon in communities of the south Indian coast, the Nairs "have achieved an unparalleled eminence in the anthropological literature on matrilineality". None of the rituals survive in any significant way today. Two forms of ritual marriage were traditional: the pre-puberty rite for girls known as thalikettu kalyanam, which was usually followed by sambandham when they became sexually mature.

The last chapter of this project is social Anthropology of Kartha. In this chapter deals with divisions of kartha family. In kerala there are more and more kartha families were lived. Today this communities gave lack of opportunities an positions in kerala. Moopil Narayana kartha is a prominent status of kartha family. He started his journey to back to cheranllore village when he reached present temple of Chittoor. Then kartha will circle the body three times, walking counter-clockwise so that the body stays on his left, and sprinkling holy water on the pyre. Then the kartha will set the pyre on fire and those gathered will stay until the body is entirely burned. For Hindus living outside of India, there are companies that will arrange for the shipment of the body to India and hold a traditional cremation with a proxy kartha. The day after the cremation, the Kartha will return to the crematory and collect the ashes. Traditionally, the ashes should be immersed

in the Ganges River, though more and more other rivers are becoming acceptable substitutes. For Hindus living outside of India, there are companies that will arrange for the shipment of the cremated remains to India and will submerge the ashes in the Ganges. The cremation of the deceased marks the beginning of the mourning period, which lasts for 13 days. During this time, the family of the deceased will stay at home and receive visitors, though mourning rituals may differ depending on the community.

In this project the first attempt to study about kartha community in southern kerala. The present study inquires the different aspects of kartha community such as their leadership an culture, social structure and community.

APPENDIX-1

PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 1: Akathoot Madappad, From the collections of Divya Thulasi, Assistant Professor, Dept. of History, Maharajas College, Eranakulam



Photo 2: Guest House, From the collections of Divya Thulasi, Assistant Professor, Dept. of History, Maharajas College, Eranakulam



Photo 3 and 4: Labour Room and Toilet, From the collections of Jissa, Research Scholar, Dept. of History, Maharajas College, Eranakulam



Photo 5 and 6: Pooja Room and Bathing place, From the collections of Divya Thulasi, Assistant Professor, Dept. of History, Maharajas College, Eranakulam



Photo 7: Akathoot Madappad, From the collections of Jissa, Research Scholar, Dept. of History, Maharajas College, Eranakulam



Photo 8: Akathoot Madappad, From the collections of Jissa, Research Scholar, Dept. of History, Maharajas College, Eranakulam



Photo 9: Bhadrakali Temple, taken from website



Photo 10: Poonjar Temple, taken from the website

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Telephonic interview with Rajeev Menon, aged 48, Njavakattumadam, Cheganoor, on 19/5/2021

Telephonic Interview with Madhusoodanan Kartha, Aged 48, Kuruppampady, Kottayam, on 13/3/2021

Telephonic Interview with Manu Kartha, Aged 38, Karthamadam, Ranni on 22/6/2021

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