
Bhakti Beyond the Temple: Locating Kalameluttu in Pre-Modern Kerala

Shibi K.¹

1. Department of History, Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Regional Campus – Thiruvananthapuram, Mathrubhoomi Road, Vanchiyoor, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala – 695 035, India (Email: kshibivallikunnu@gmail.com)

Received: 10 August 2020; Revised: 18 October 2020; Accepted: 05 December 2020

Heritage: Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies in Archaeology 8.1 (2020): 514-543

Abstract: The extant historiographical traditions between the late 16th and 21st centuries in Kerala have viewed the *kalameluttu* as 'devil worship' sorcery and exorcism, dravidian and as manifestations of individual pursuit of art. The *bhakti* beyond the temple is discussed here as a new concept to identify with that wave of *bhakti* which was based on the extant worship of major non-brahmanic deities by the major non-brahmanic social groups in Kerala. The temple centred *bhakti* is primarily a religio-philosophical or ideological phenomenon with a new wave of Aryan-based concept centred on the Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava temples in south India. The following discussion works out the way this tradition was constituted and could safely be characterised as extra-temple *bhakti* outside the premises of the brahmanical temples. The centrality of the widespread worship of the female deities, the prominence attached to female participation in the sacred rites, the centrality of the ferocious and maithuna form of deities, widespread invocation of *bhakti* hymns and the mantras around the non-brahmanic sacred sites of *kāvus* or *koṭṭas*, which are taken up for discussion here. For the purpose of this paper, sources are explored, from the medieval *granthavaris* (palm leaf manuscripts of *kāvus* and land lords), manuscripts of *mantravāda* rites of the "lower castes", British colonial records and contemporary religious occasions.

Keywords: Aryan, Dravidian, *Kalameluttu*, *Bhakti*, *Bhūtam*, *Pulluvar*, *Kaniyanmār*

Introduction

The present study locates *kalameluttu* as a very significant religious symbolism and cult of *bhakti* outside the Brahmanic temples in pre-modern Kerala. The extant anthropological and folkloristic studies seem to imagine and locate the *kalameluttu* as ethnic composition, 'indigenous', 'native', 'Dravidian', sorcery and exorcism, which are deeply rooted in the colonial ideas. The concept of *bhakti* beyond the temple is proposed here as a new category to understand that wave of *bhakti* which was based on the major non-brahmanic deities and was practiced among the major non-brahmanic social groups in Kerala. The non-brahmanic *Nāluvali Svarūpams* and *Sthāni Nāyars* and major non-brahmanic society primarily worshipped and patronized these deities in the major non-brahmanic sacred centres such as *kāvus* or *koṭṭas* in the medieval Kerala. Specific priestly groups with specific ritual tradition were associated with this extra-

temple *bhakti*. The *bhakti* or intense devotion to the deities in *kalameluttu*, in the sacred centres located outside the brahmanical temples or in the sacred sites like *kāvu* or *kōṭṭam* constituted the main theme or contents of this extra-temple *bhakti*. Its characteristic features include the centrality of the widespread worship of the female deities, the prominence attached to female participation in the sacred rites, the centrality of the ferocious form of deities, widespread invocation of *bhakti* hymns and the *mantras* around the non-brahmanic sacred sites of *kāvus* or *kōṭṭas*. For the purpose of this paper, sources are explored, from the medieval *granthavaris* (palm leaf manuscripts of *kāvus* and land lords), manuscripts of *mantravaḍa* rites of the “lower castes”, British colonial records and contemporary cultic occasions.

Received and Reigning Notions on *Kalameluttu*

By the end of the 19th century, the colonial studies locate *kalameluttu* as an ideas generated by the Dravidian conceptualization. The colonial and anthropological surveys developed and propagated the religious world of *kalameluttu* as ethnic compositions, ‘indigenous’, ‘native’, ‘Dravidian’ devil worship, sorcery and exorcism etc. Hermann Gundert, in 1872 (Gundert 1999: 224), William Logan in 1887 (Logan 1995: 176), L. K. Anantha Krishna Iyer (Iyer Vol. I-III, 1981) and of Edgar Thurston and Rangachari (1993: 439) (Figures 1 and 2) defined ‘*kalameluttu*’ as sorcery and exorcism. These colonial surveys described the *kalameluttu* as lower form of worship or as ethnic compositions, devil worship, animism, and exorcism; and signified its priests as different caste/lineage groups, and exorcists with their ethnic identities (Iyer 1981: 230-233). Later on, the folklore studies emerged from the colonial embedded ideas, continued the same colonial attributions on *kalameluttu* such as ethnic compositions, ‘indigenous’, ‘native’, ‘Dravidian’ devil worship, sorcery and exorcism (Vanamali 1981: xii). Furthermore, folklore studies treated *kalameluttu* as manifestations of individual pursuit of art and its priests as individual artists (Choondal 1978: 9-14). They find *kalameluttu* as a contemporary issue and art form without understanding its historical antecedents and roots (Shibi 2016: 25). Thus, the contemporary folklore studies in Kerala contributed the present form of ‘*kalameluttu*’ as an individual art.

This paper identifies *kalameluttu* as an extant tradition of *bhakti* beyond the brahmanical temples in Kerala. The term *kalameluttu*, in the religious traditions of Kerala, also means ritually “making *mandala* (ritual diagram) with chanting of hymns” for worshiping the deities and sacred healing (Mundekkadu 2000: 40-41). The widespread worship of the non-brahmanic deities forms the central characteristic feature of this extra-temple *bhakti* in Kerala. These deities are praised by the *madhyama* and the *adhama* style of worships by the major non-brahmanic society in Kerala (Logan 1995: 176). The non-brahmanic sites such as *kāvus* or *kōṭṭas* (sacred groves) are the sacred place (Panikkar 1909: 146-148) of this *bhakti* of *kalameluttu* in Kerala.

The temple centred *bhakti* is primarily a religio-philosophical or ideological phenomenon with a new wave of Aryan-based concept centred on the Śaiva-Vaisṇava temples in south India. The saints like Nāyanārs and Alvārs propagated and practiced

Śaiva-Vaisnava cults with royal support in medieval period (Subrayalu 2012: 20, 209). The *bhakti* beyond the temple is discussed here as a new concept to identify with that wave of *bhakti* which was based on the extant worship of major non-brahmanic deities by the major non-brahmanic social groups in Kerala. The following discussion works out the way this tradition was constituted and could safely be characterised as extra-temple *bhakti* outside the premises of the brahmanical temples. The non-brahmanic nature of deities, sacred sites, the worship method and the priesthood of the extra-temple *bhakti* of *kalameluttu*, which are taken up for discussion here.



Figure 1: *Pulluvar* with pot drum (Thurston and Rangachari 1909)

The Deity: Lure, Lore and Life

Kerala historical studies have not yet addressed the study of the iconography of *kalameluttu* because of the received notions of the lack of source materials. The colonial historiographical traditions between the late 16th and 20th centuries in Kerala have viewed the non-brahmanic deities in the *kalameluttu* as 'devils' 'demons', 'monsters' and dravidian. The colonial studies argues these non-brahmanic deities are non-puranic and non-sanskritic, which played a major role in the modern lives of 'Dravidian cults' (Gundert 1999: 224, Logan 1995: 176, Thurston and Rangachari 1993: 439) (Figures 1 and 2). Later on the entire academic spectrum on folklore studies built on the 'devils' 'demons', 'monsters' and dravidian as popular deities, from the 1950s onwards, became the corner-stone to the views generated by the 'Dravidian' conceptualization embedded with colonial-orientalist ideas (Vanamali 1981: xii). They viewed the deities in the *kalameluttu* only as a design and craft (Choondal 1981: 9-14). They find it as a contemporary art form without seeing its historical and religious

value. The present form of '*kalameluttu*' as an individual art or as a manifestation of modern art form is a contribution of the contemporary folklore studies in Kerala. All of these historiographical traditions not viewed imageries in the *kalameluttu* as deities or religious symbolisms (Shibi 2016: 25).



Figure 2: *Naagakkalam* as 'Pulluvan casting out Devils (Thurston and Rangachari 1909)

The present study brings out, for the first time, that this 'art form' or 'devils' in the *kalameluttu* as a most prolific religious symbolism beyond the Brahmanical structural temples and these religious symbolisms typically belong to the worshipping deities of the non-brahmanic groups in Kerala. The widespread worship of the non-brahmanic deities such as *Bhagavati*, *Ayyappan*, *Naagam* and so forth, forms the central theme of this extra-temple *bhakti* of *kalameluttu* in Kerala. *Vairajatan*, *Kalaratri*, *Bhairavan*, *Yaksas*, *Gandharvas*, *Bhulam*, *Matangi* and so on are the minor deities in the *kalameluttu* of Kerala (Shibi 2016: 251-257).

Mandala, (Sanskrit: "circle")—which is generally known as *kalam* in Kerala—a symbolic diagram and anthropomorphic figure of the deities of *Bhagavati*, *Ayyappan*, *Naagam* and so forth, are used in the performance of sacred rites and as an instrument of meditation for the cultic tradition of *kalameluttu* in Kerala. For making the religious symbolism or *kalam* of the deities, priests use five colored powders on the ground with specific iconographic prescriptions (Mundekkadu 2000: 57).

The present session proposes to examine the nature of deities such as different forms (aniconic and iconic) and analyses the *maithuna* and ferocious characteristic features in the deities of *kalameluttu*. It further locates the anthropomorphic forms of deities in the *kalameluttu* which represent more *maithuna* and ferocious features rather than pacific imageries.

Maithuna Forms: *Maithuna* is a Sanskrit term referring to sexual union or male-female couples and their union in the physical or sexual sense in a ritual context (Williams 2005: 834). This *maithuna* characteristic of Indian high-reliefs, statues and religious symbolism can be found in temples and other religious symbols of early India (English 2002: 4). *Kalameļuttu* exhibits different forms of *maithuna* characteristics in non-iconic and iconic figures, which reflects the *panča-makāra* traditions in *kalameļuttu*. This characteristic of *maithuna* is found clearly expressed in the iconography of *Bhagavati*, *Naṅgam*, and *Aṣṭadala* of *kalameļuttu* in Kerala.



Figure 3: Ferocious form of Bhadrakali, Central Kerala (© Shibi 2013)

Bhagavati: The widespread worship of *Bhagavati* (*Bhadrakali*) is the most extant tradition of non-brahmanic *bhakti* beyond the medieval temples in Kerala. The *maithuna* characteristics are also found in the iconic figures of *kalameļuttu*, which are very ferocious in appearance (Figure 3). The *maithuna* manifestation of *Bhagavati* is the most prominent *kalam* in Kerala. In medieval period, she is known as *Mahakali*. The worship of *Mahakali* *kalam* is recorded in *Vanñēri granthavari* (Narayanan 1987: 51). She has numerous manifestations and many of them became very popular in Kerala. *Bhagavatiyum Nr̥tagopalanum* and *Vairajatānam Bhagavatiyum, Kalaraṭri* etc. are the important *maithuna* manifestations of *Bhagavati* in *kalameļuttu*. The worship of *Bhagavatiyum Nr̥tagopalanum* in the *kalameļuttu* is recorded in *Vanñēri granthavari* (Narayanan 1987: 51). All these manifestations of *Bhagavati* are found in *maithuna* appearance. The navel part of the body of *Bhagavati* basically appears in *maithuna*

aspect. She is manifested in a half-sitting posture and is depicted as in sexual intercourse with a *lingam* (penis). The characteristic of the *maithuna* concept in the cultic tradition also influenced the concept of divine couple in the *kalameṭṭu*. *Vairajaṭṭanum Bhagavatiyum* constitute a particularly ferocious form of *kalām* that is being worshipped in north Kerala¹.



Figure 4: *Maithuna* form of *Nāgakkālam*, North Kerala (©Vijesh Ariyallur 2013)

The extant tradition of the ferocious form with certain kinds of *maithuna* features of *Bhagavati* (*Bhadrakali*) also worships in the ritual realm of *kalameļuttu* in Kerala. The worship of *Bhadrakaliikkalālam* in the *maṇḍalakala* (month of *Vrścikam*) was reported by Iyer (Iyer II, 1981: 134). The *Bhagavati* (*Bhadrakali*) is worshipped by almost all non-brahmanic communities in Kerala. *Teyyampatiňampiārs*, *Teyyampatiňikkuruppus*, *Kallařrakkuruppus*², *Tiyyaňtunniś*, *Manjaňmar* (Choondal 1979, Choondal, 1975: 12)³ etc. have specific tradition of worshipping the *Bhagavati*. The cultic and ritualistic components of *kalameļuttu* are also found enmeshed in the tradition of *tiyyaňtu*⁴, *mutiyeřru* (Menon 2002: 418-419)⁵ and so on. The worship of various manifestations of *Bhagavati* is the central characteristic features of the *kalameļuttu* in Kerala.

***Nāgam*:** *Nāgam* is another significant and widespread form of *kalameļuttu* in Kerala. All the figures in the *Nāgam* consist of two terrible snakes in sexual union. The sexual imagery of *maithuna* concept forms the basis of the cult of *Nāgam* in Kerala (Figures 4 and 5). A *koleļuttu* document related with Śabharimala, dated to 1668 CE, recorded the religious practices of *pulluvanpaňtu* in the *kilakkeňatā* of the temple (Santhosh 2019: 56). Women had a major role in the cultic world of *Nāgam* in medieval Kerala. *Vanňeri* *granthavari* documented the depiction of *Nāga* deity and women who were sitting and dancing (*tullal*) in the *kalām* (Panikkar 1909: 146-148)⁶. They had to sit and dance in the *Paňpinkalam/Catirakkalam* during the rituality and were bestowed rewards in the form of oil and cloths by the *janmis* (Narayanan 1987: 51-52). *Teyyampatiňampiārs*, *Kallařrakkuruppanmār*, *Pulluvar* and *Kaniyanmār* (Lalithambika 2011: 183) are the priests of this religious practices in contemporary Kerala.

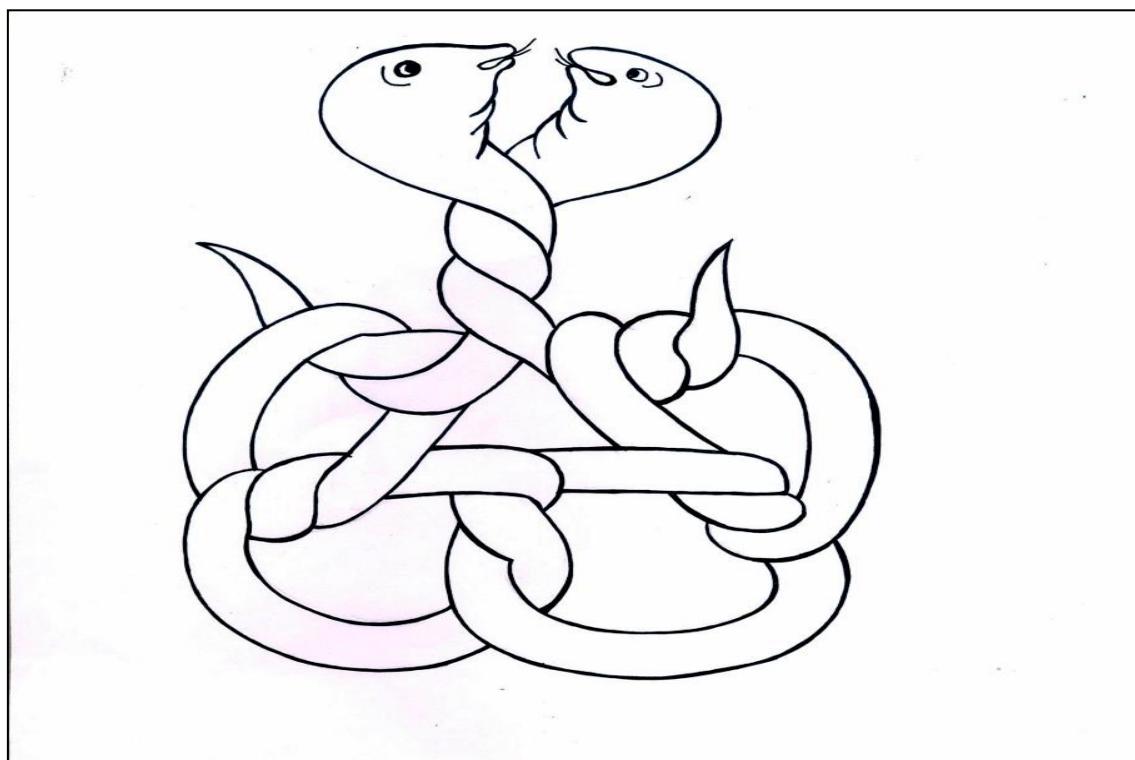


Figure 5: *Maithuna* form of *Nāgam* (Adapted: Kurup 1960)



Figure 6: Ferocious form of Ayyappan, Niramkaitakkotta, Vallikunnu (© Shibi 2013)

Aṣṭadala: Aṣṭadala is one of the most important forms of Tantric *Patmams*. In Aṣṭadala, there is the picture of a white lotus with eight petals. It represents the deity *Bhagavati*. *Vanñēri granthavari* documents the depiction of the ritual of *Aṣṭadala* to *Bhagavati* by *Tantri* in front of the courtyard of the *illam* (Document No: 53 recorded in between 1606 A.D. and 1716 AD). Aṣṭadala was performed with the divine representation of the guardian deity (Narayanan 1987: 28). The Brahmins drew Aṣṭadala figures during tantric *pujas*. Similarly, *Kallārakkuruppanmār*, *Teyyampaṭikkuruppanmār*, *Kaniyanmār*, *Manṇānmār*, *Tīyyar* and other non-Brahmanic groups in Kerala used the religious symbolism of Aṣṭadala as part of various cultic traditions. It is seen that the Aṣṭadala

represents the deity *Bhagavati* and the end part (navel part) of this diagram is illustrated in a *maithuna* form. The diagram is manifested in the frame of *kalām* with a figure of *lingam*, which is depicting as in sexual intercourse with the inner part of the *patmam* around *pithakkal*. The same kind of depiction can be seen in the figure of *Bhagavati* which was discussed above.

Ferocious Forms: Ferocious form of deities is a prominent characteristic of religious symbolism in the Indian sub-continent. Ferocious deity represents the forceful battle, which destroys enemies and helps devotees overcome all kinds of obstacles (Bhattacharya 1958: 246). As stated earlier, almost all of the deities in the *kalameluttu* appear in fierce forms. *Bhagavati*, *Ayyappan*, *Veṭṭakkorumakan*, *Bhuṭam* and others are the chief ferocious forms of *kalameluttu* that are discussed here. It can be seen that the non-brahmanic *Naṭuvāḷi Svarūpams* and *Sṭhaṇi Nāyars* in late medieval Kerala worshipped *Bhagavati*, *Ayyappan*, and *Veṭṭakkorumakan* as war-deities through *kalameluttu* (Shibi 2016: 264-283). It appears that these *Naṭuvāḷi Svarūpams* patronized the priests such as *Teyyampaṭikkuruppanmār*, *Teyyampaṭinampiār*, *Kallāṛrakkuruppanmār*, *Tiyyaṭinampiārmaṛ* and *Tiyyaṭṭunṇiṇkal* to worship *kalameluttu* and to praise their political overlordship in the locale.

Ayyappan: The *Ayyappan* cult is the most widespread of the extra-temple cultic practices in Kerala. *Ayyappan* is manifested in a ferocious form in the *kalameluttu* (Figure 6). The ritualistic components of *kalameluttu* of the deity *Ayyappan* are also found enmeshed in the tradition of *tiyyaṭtu* and so on (Choondal 1975: 11, Aiyer 1990: 212-213)⁷. The priests usually make the *mandala* of *Ayyappan* as a hunting deity or a war deity. Sometimes, he is depicted with a horse. He carries in his right hand an arrow and a bow (Dages 1997: 869)⁸. The *Naṭuvāḷi Svarūpams* such as the *Kolattiris*, the *Koṭṭayam Raja*⁹, and the *Zamorins* (Namboothiri 1987: 167) and some of the landlords such as *Paṭāykkara*, *Elāṅkulām*, *Vaṭakkēṭattu*, *Nāgeri* (Mundekkadu 2000: 75) worshipped *Ayyappankalām* as a war deity in Malabar. *Kolikkōṭan granthavari* records the *Zamorins'* patronage of *Ayyappankalām* (*tiyyaṭtu tullal*) in north Kerala (Namboothiri 1987: 231).

Veṭṭakkorumakan: *Veṭṭakkorumakan* is yet another prominent fierce form of war deity in *kalameluttu*¹⁰. Hermann Gundert defined *Veṭṭakkorumakan* as a hunting deity, chiefly in Kurumpanaṭu (Gundert 1999: 988), and as the deity propitiated by the *Zamorins* at Calicut for granting them victory over the Portuguese (Gundert 1868: 93). The *Veṭṭakkorumakan* is one of the guardian deities of the *Zamorins* of Calicut (Gundert 1868: 93). *Baluśśērikkōṭṭa*, *Bilāṭikkulām*, *Nampumalakkōṭṭa* and *Trikkangoṭṭuru* of the *Zamorins* are important sacred centers of *Veṭṭakkorumakankalām* in north Kerala. The *Zamorins'* patronage of *Veṭṭakkorumakankalām* is mentioned in the *Kolikkōṭan granthavari* (Namboothiri 1987: 222).

Puṭam: *Vanñēri granthavari* recorded the worship of *kalām* of 18 days only once and this consisted of a *kalām* of *Puṭam* which is an archaic form of *Bhutakkalām* in present Kerala.

It may be noted here that the *granthavari* speaks about a hierarchy of the deities represented in the *kalām* i.e., as superior and as subordinate. *Pañpu* appears to be superior to *Puñam*, as referred to in the texts (Narayanan 1987: 51). This hierarchy is still followed in the *kalāms* of *Kallañçakuruppanmār* and *Pulluvar* in Kerala.

Cañtan, *Kṣetrapalan*, *Gulikan*, *Gandharvan*, *Bhairavan*, *Mañangi*, *Yakṣan*, *Yaksi*, *Triśulini* and so forth are the minor forms of deities in *kalameluttu* of Kerala. In examining the deeper nature in visual manifestations, it could be seen that *kalameluttu* is entirely different from the religious culture and ritual practices of the brahmanical structural temples in medieval period. The presence of major deities such as *Bhagavati*, *Ayyappan*, *Veñtakkorumakan*, *Nañgam* and others in *kalameluttu* is absent in the major structural temples of the Brahmins in medieval Kerala. These structural temples of medieval period are dedicated to Śiva or Visñu (Narayanan 1996: 190), except those of Kumāranallūr and Panniyankara, which are dedicated to *Bhagavati* (Narayanan 1996: 190). Obviously, the temple iconographic programme is nearly absent in Kerala when compared to that of the other parts of south India. At the same time, the extant tradition of the various forms of iconography in medieval Kerala existed in *kalameluttu*. It necessarily existed out of the structural temples and was of the ferocious and *maithuna* nature.

The Sacred Space: Places of the Secret and the Heal

The nature and material culture of non-brahmanic sacred place of *kāvus* or *koñtas* in pre-modern Kerala constitute an almost unexplored field of historical research. The entire colonial, anthropological and folkloristic studies developed and propagated the non-brahmanic sacred place of *kāvus* or *koñtas* as the centre for devil worship, sorcery, exorcism and animism. The present study locates *kāvus* or *koñtas* as the most prolific sacred centres for the cult of non-brahmanic *bhakti* in pre-modern Kerala. The non-brahmanic deities in the *kalameluttu* are usually worshipped outside the structural temple which is known as *kāvus* or *koñtas*. The deity *Bhagavati*, *Ayyappan*, *Nañga*, *veñtakkorumakan* and so on in the *kalameluttu* is usually worshipped in the *Bhagavati-kāvus*, *Ayyappan-koñtas*, *Nañga-kavus*, *veñtakkorumakan-koñtas* as respectively.

The sacred sites of the *kāvus* or *koñtas* is usually situated in the isolated places and the *kalām* usually worshipped as a secret practices. The *maithuna* forms of *Bhagavati*, *Nañga*, *Yaksi* and so on worships at secret and isolated places in the *kāvus* or *koñtas*. The cultic practices of *kalampalṭu* and *mantravañdakkalām* of lower *jātis* indicate that traditional healing practices were basically systems of healing through mystic practices. These mystic practices constitute an attempt at winning the favour of deities by prayers and sacrifices.

In the early medieval period the sacred site of *koñtas* is known as *koñtham* or *koñtam*. The *Cilapatikāram* and *Manjimekhala* describe *koñtam* as located at an isolated place, situated at the end of the city and as the sacred centre of the magical and esoteric practices in medieval Tamilakam. *Cañtanār* in *Cilapatikāram* represents the *koñtam* as of

philosophical import (Hikosaka 1989: 114). He explained a *cutukaṇṭukoṭṭam* and a *cakkravalakkoṭṭam*. *Cutukaṇṭukoṭṭam* is located at an isolated place, situated at the end of the city. There are practices of the ferocious dance of the ghost in the *koṭṭam* (Hikosaka 1989: 114). These are the indicators of esoteric practices. The Goddess *Campāvati* appears in *cakkravalakkoṭṭam* (Hikosaka 1989: 114). The text describes all *devas*, *devaganas* and *asuras* staying in that *koṭṭam* (Hikosaka 1989: 114). The *Cilappatikāram* and *Manimekhalai* also describe *vajrakōṣṭam* as the sacred centre of the magical and esoteric practices in medieval Tamilakam (Nair 1989: 119). Thus *mandala* practices in the *koṭṭam* are found in the early medieval society of Tamilakam.

The secret worship of *Yakṣinīs* in the isolated sacred places can be seen in early medieval Tamilakam as well as in the *Kalameṭuttu* of Kerala. *Cilappatikāram* describes the presence of *Yakṣini* in an isolated place. She approached Kovalan with great *trṣṇā*. She is described as a non-human being and as a female deity (Nair 1992: 192). All the legends related to *Yakṣinīs* in south India share the manifestation of *trṣṇā* and we can find a lot of references about the sacred sexual union of *Yakṣinīs* at isolated places in literary works of Tamilakam. In *Yaksikkalam*, which is practiced only for men as secret worship, the presence of *Yakṣinī* was visualized as having entered in a male body (Sankunni 2012: 140-144, 355). Here the worship of deities in the *kāvus* or *koṭṭas* in the isolated and secret places is indicates the *maithuna* worship in the *Kalameṭuttu*.

The secret worship in the isolated places also mentions the blood offerings and animal sacrifices in the *Kalameṭuttu*. The healer offered sacrificial flesh of animals and toddy to the deities in the *mantravādakkalam* (Logan 1995: 176). *Kolikoṭṭan Granthavari* recorded the goat sacrifice (*aluvettum paṭṭum*) in the *Kalameṭuttu* of Valayanaṭukāvū (Haridas 2008: 57). *Cilappatikāram* describes the *indiravīṭa* conducted on the day of ‘*cittirai cittirai tinkal*’ (full-moon day of month *cittirai*) and the offering of *niṇaiccōru* (rice mixed with blood) and *ponkal* (toddy) into the *balipīṭha* in front of the guardian deity Bhūṭam (Nair 1989: 110). We have enough evidence for the blood offerings and animal sacrifices of the secret worship in the isolated sacred sites in south India.

The Way to Praise and Worship

We have seen *kalameṭuttu* is understood as *mandalas* of the deities such as *Bhagavati*, *Ayyappan*, *Naṭgam* etc. worshipped in the non-brahmanic sacred centres of *kāvus* or *koṭṭas* of pre-modern Kerala. Now, we are going to examine the nature of worship in the religious culture of *kalameṭuttu*.

Kalameṭuttu, which literally means writing or making a *kalam* (*mandalam* in Sanskrit meaning ritual diagram) with chanting of hymns, is a non-brahmanic religious or cultic practice in pre-modern Kerala, integrating body, speech, and mind. Priests engage in visualizations, recitations of *mantras*, sacred hand gestures, and foot movements, and wear themselves with the crown and ornaments of a deity. In this religious practice, non-brahmanic priests offer devotional hymns, *dhaaraniś* (mantras) and sacred dance as ritual ceremonies, meditation, and gestures. To the priest-followers of the Tantra,

chanting hymns and ritually dancing are prerequisites to enlightenment. The priest—male as well as female—therefore performs *tullal* (ritual dance) as a path of enlightenment in the *kalameluttu*. It is held that while the priest enters the *kalam* (*mandala*), he/she is transformed mentally and physically as deity. Thenceforth, they are regarded as deity itself, and begin to speak the will of the deity. This extra-temple religious tradition in Kerala is identified and recognized, for the first time, in the late medieval records such as the *Kolikkolān granthavari* (1674 CE), the *Vanñēri granthavari* (recorded in the years of 1606 1657 and 1687), the *Kuñali granthavari* (16th CE), the *Kēralolpatti granthavari*, and a Śabharimala epigraph (1668 CE), and is traced back to its medieval religio-cultic roots.

We have enough evidence for the religious context of the *kalameluttu* such as sacred dances in south India. *Cilappatikāram* describes the sacred dances like *kuravai kūltu* and *tunankai kūltu* are performed in front of the deity. There is also mention about the dancer who becomes the deity and removes *paci* (poverty), *piñi* (diseases) and *pakai* (wrath) from the *pattinam* of Pukar (Nair 1992: 110-111). We have some more evidence on *mandala* worship from the accounts of *Cilappatikāram*. Madhavi is said to dance (*kūltu*) in the *mandala* of *Bhuṭas* with accompanying music of *panča-tāla* and *stutis* of *dēvatas* (Nair 1992: 80-85). The text describes the *mandala* ground is selected according to the experts of *mandala* constructors (Nair 1992: 80). The ground could have seven *kol* for width, eight *kol* for length and one *kol* for height (Nair 1992: 81). Then the figures of *Bhuṭas* will be make on the floor to be followed by chanting *dēvata stutis* set to musical tunes of *panča-tāla* and sacred dances of *kūltu*. This *mandala* is adorned with garlands and beads (Nair 1992: 85).

The religious culture of *kalameluttu* was based on *madhyama* and *adhama* practices (Logan 1995: 176), which represented *panča-makaṛa* (i.e. *madya*, *mānsa*, *matsya*, *mudra*, and *maithuna*) (Sharma 2012: 441), concepts of Tantric practices. It is recorded in the *Kolikkolān granthavari*¹¹, *Kuñali granthavari* (Kurup 1989: 41) and Śabharimala record (Santhosh 2019: 59)¹² in medieval Kerala. We have already discussed that *Cilappatikāram* describes the offering of *nināiccoṛu* (rice mixed with blood) and *ponkal* (toddy) into the *balipīṭha* in front of the guardian deity *Bhuṭam* during the *indiravīla* (Nair 1989: 110).

Kalameluttu is worshipped in the month of *Meṭam* (Narayanan 1987: 51), that is, from mid-April to mid-May. The *kalameluttu* of *Bhagavati* and *Ayyappan* is conducted during the *mandala* period, which consists of 41 days starting from the month *Vṛścika*(Narayanan 1987: 51) (mid-November to mid-December). It is very significant that this *mandala* worship is conducted in *kāvus* or *koṭṭas* and not in brahmanical temples. These extra-temple ritual occasions are also attested to in the *Kolikkolān granthavari*, *Kuñali granthavari* and *Vanñēri granthavari*.

The above examination of the religious culture of *kalameluttu* brings out the contrast in the *bhakti* of *kalameluttu* with that of the culture and ritual milieu of the structural temples in Kerala. Scholars have already suggested that the organization and culture of

the structural temples were revived from the oligarchy of Brahmins such as *kanam*, *cattirarasankam*, *sanketam* and so forth. The temple routines like *śānti* (daily worship), *tiruvamṛtu* (sacred food), *nandāvīlakku* (permanent lamp), *nīraṭṭupalli*, (sacred bath) (Narayanan 1996: 190-195) and so forth are not seen in the context of the cultic nature of *kalameluttu*. The *kalameluttu* primarily focuses on the concept of *panča-makāra*, which is different from the Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava temple routines in Kerala. The cultic and religious symbolism of *kalameluttu* is typically found outside these structural temples and practiced by making the *mandala* of various deities on the purified floor using *pančavarna* powders with the accompaniment of *bhakti* hymns and sacred dances.

The Realm of Sanskrit *Mantras* and *Bhakti* in the Hymns of *Kalameluttu*

We have seen in the previous session the religious tradition of *kalameluttu*. Chanting of *mantras* or ritual songs is an essential element in the religious world of *kalameluttu* which we will discuss in this session. It is historically significant that the *mantras* or *bhakti* hymns of *kalameluttu* are usually performed outside the temple complex. When the making of *mandalam* or *kalam* is completed, *mantras* or hymns for the deity will be sung. *Teyyampatjikkuruppanmār*, *Teyyampatjinpampiār*, *Kallārakkuruppanmār*, *Tiyyatīnampiārmaṛ* and *Tiyyaṭṭunīkal*, *Maṇṇāñmaṛ*, *Vanṇāñmaṛ*, *Tīyyar*, *Kanīyar*, *Pulluvar* etc. chanting various kinds of *mantras* of *kalameluttu* in Kerala. Sometimes, most of the *mantras* and hymns are found in written form, preserved in manuscript tradition in pre-modern Kerala. These *mantras* and hymns had their origins from the astrological, healing and Tantric traditions. The *mantras* are chanted in the ritual performance of the symbolic diagrams, these are brief forms of praises or syllables of the deity. At the same time, making of anthropomorphic *mandalas* of *kalameluttu* is accompanied by the rich tradition of *bhakti* hymns. The above mentioned non-brahmanic groups have specific traditions in practicing the extant hymns of *kalameluttu* in Kerala. The iconic representations of the *kalameluttu* necessitates detailed description in the *bhakti* hymns of the features of the iconography of the deity such as weapons, ornaments, garments, poses, facial and body expressions etc. Obviously, the *mantra* system constitutes the centre ingredient of symbolic deities, and the hymns constitute the vocal manifestations of iconic figures of the deity.

While the entire spectrum of the academic discourse on *kalameluttu*, from the 1950s onwards, became an appendix to the ideas generated by a pure Dravidian, 'indigenous', and 'south Indian' conceptualization in contrast to the 'Aryan', 'Brahmin' and 'north Indian' (Shibi 2016), the historical dimensions of most of these *mantras* which are in Sanskrit, and the hymns of *kalameluttu*, with huge mix of Sanskrit terms, has never been realised. The *mantras* of *Kurupus*, *Maṇṇāñmaṛ*, *Vanṇāñmaṛ*, *Tīyyar*, *Kanīyar*, *Pulluvar* etc. behind the symbolic diagrams typically belong to Sanskrit¹³. The *mantras* of *uccaṭana*, *vidveṣaṇa*, *akarsana*, *maṛana* and *vaśikarana* are also found in the context of *mantravaḍakkalam* of *Kanīyar*, *Maṇṇāñmar*, *Tīyyar* and so on¹⁴. There are so many manuscripts of the healing and astrological practices of *Kanīyar* groups in north

Kerala describing the chanting *mantras* of *yantra* traditions (Lalithambika 2011:115, 119, 130, 132, 135, 138)¹⁵. All of the texts of hymns belong to Malayalam and Sanskrit terms very frequently occur (Chanduppanikkar 1936: 28-29, Chanduppanikkar 1936: 7-8.)¹⁶. A few Tamil words are also seen. All the forms of *kalameluttu* are always in Sanskrit.

This discussion of the nature of *mantras* in the *kalameluttu* in Kerala can lead to some observations on the non-brahmanic religion outside the temple complex as well. The evidence on the *mantravaāda* manuscripts shows that there are strong traditions of Sanskrit *mantras* in the context of *mantravaādakkalam* of non-brahmanic groups in Kerala.

Now, we are going to examine the nature of *bhakti* hymns in the religious world of *kalameluttu*. The huge volume of historical scholarship on *bhakti* in medieval south India is based entirely on the concept of devotion to a single deity either either Śiva or Viṣṇu. The whole imageries and visualization of devotion are reconstructed fully on a few hymns composed by Śaiva Naīyanārs and Vaiśnava Alvārs, centred at a few temples of medieval Kerala. It was based on these *bhakti* hymns that the nature of religious praxis and social ethos in medieval Kerala was reconstructed by historians. The discourse on these practically missed out the big world of the living tradition of *bhakti* of the late medieval Malayalam *bhakti* songs centred outside the wall of temple. The following discussion works out the way this tradition which could safely be characterised as extra-temple *bhakti* outside the premises of the brahmanical temples, was constituted.

The structure of the *bhakti* hymns of *kalameluttu* (*kalameluttupāṭṭu*) which starts with the praises of deities such as *vandanam*, *stuti* and so forth. The structure of *niram*, *ammanāchaya*, *keśādipādām* and *pādādikeśam* described the iconography of *deवata* in the ritual songs and how these structural forms purposefully attributed the *bhakti* to the deity is taken up here.

The varied ritual songs of *kalameluttu* such as *Bhadrakalippaṭṭu*, *Dārikavadha-tōr̥ram*, *Ayyappan-paṭṭu*, *Veṭṭakkorumakan-paṭṭu*, *Kṣeṭrapalan-paṭṭu*, *Manjimanka-tōr̥ram*, *Vairajaṭan-paṭṭu*, *Naṅgappaṭṭu*, *Caṭṭan-paṭṭu* etc. show the *bhakti* outside the temple world of brahmanical society, and the entire non-brahmanic social milieu of late medieval Kerala take part in it. The terms like *antikkappaṭṭu* *uccappaṭṭu* (Kurup 1989: 127)¹⁷, *Veṭṭakkorumakan-paṭṭu* (Nampoothiri 1987: 222, 225, 236), *brahmanippaṭṭu*¹⁸, and *aluvettum paṭṭum*¹⁹ etc. are indicative of the *bhakti* in the rituals associated with the *kalameluttu* in late medieval Kerala. These *bhakti* hymns do not denote the Śaiva-Vaisnava cults of brahmanical temples. But sometimes, these *bhakti* hymns share the ideologies of Śaiva concepts and elements. In these *bhakti* hymns, deities such as *Bhagavati* (*Kali*), *Ayyappa*, *Veṭṭakkorumakan*, *Kṣeṭrapalan*, *Vairajaṭan*, *Naṅgam*, *Caṭṭan* and so on, who possess extra-human powers, are placed at the centre, in the tradition of the cult of *bhakti*. These *bhakti* songs describe the deities who were worshipped and adorned by the devotees to satisfy their needs. Devotes glorify the deities as super-men and who possessed bliss and power.

Bhagavati (Kali) is considered as an object of devotion in the cult of *kalameluttu* in Kerala in the popular imagination. *Teyyampaṭinampiārs*, *Teyyampaṭikkuruppus*, *Kallaṭrakkuruppus*, *Tiyyaṭunṇikal*, and the lower castes such as *Maṇṇāñmar*, *Tīyyar*, *Pulayar* etc. worshiped her as mother goddess in medieval period. Thus she is chosen for worship and adoration in order to satisfy the needs of the devout. The hymns of *Daṛikavadham* and *Bhadrakalippaṭtu* refer to *Bhagavati (Kali)*, who is mentioned as hereon and also as a divine incarnation in the *Deviṁahatmyam* of *Mārkandēya-puraṇam*.

The *Naṭuvalis* and land owning families praise and glorify *Bhagavati (Kali)*. They evinced their *bhakti*. They glorified *Bhagavati (Kali)* as an extraordinary woman. Her greatness of mighty power of war had given rise to the cult of *bhakti* for her. They praised her heroic activity of killing Daṛika. She is well known in the four Vedas, she rules over the four *pīṭhas* in the earth and so on. They worship her with performance of *paṭṭu*, *vilakku*, *āraṭṭu* and so forth. Devotional songs of *Bhagavati (Kali)* as the universal mother, protected the devotees. They also glorify her greatness in the power of war and her body is described as being adorned by *Bhuṭam*, her hands hold a *pallival* (sword) and head of Daṛika; she sits on a *veṭala* (who is a ghost inhabiting in charnel ground) and mingles with tigers and other wild animals. They further explain her extra-human powers as she swims in the blood, and plays with elephants. They praise her black coloured body and beauty. They praise her image from head to leg and her weapons. *Kali* is considered as daughter of Śiva and there is a process—of convergence with the mainstream Śiva *bhakti* of medieval Kerala.

Bhakti as a concept is also drawn largely upon the *Ayyappan-paṭṭu* of *Ayyappankalam* and *tīyaṭṭu* in Kerala. It also speaks the specific association of the sacred places and worship of Ayyappa in Kerala. It is also systematically developed by *Naṭuvalis*, *Naṭyars* and subsequently by the *Teyyampaṭinampiārs*, *Teyyampaṭikkuruppus* and *Kallaṭrakkuruppus*. The *Ayyappan-paṭṭu* also seems to represent a transition from the worship of mountain deity to a crystallized Puraṇic Śiva. *Ayyappa* is converged with *Bhutanathan* as a form of Śiva during late medieval Kerala. It remains as a major component of Puraṇic pantheon. The hymns describe the worship of *Ayyappa* with the offerings of rice, lamp, flowers of coconut tree, betel leaf, arecanut, *grantha*, *kaṇṇaṭi*, *pīṭha*, *kotikkūra* (flag), perfumes, feast, song, dance and so on. They also praise the heroic activity of *Ayyappa* as a mountain deity, who moves upon elephant and horse. They glorify his weapon of daggers, sword and *vajra*. They glorify his weapon of daggers, bow and arrow. *Ayyappa* is considered as the father of all creatures and protector of the mountains.

Bhakti as a concept is also recognized in another late medieval *bhakti* hymns of *kalameluttu* as *Naṅappaṭṭu*, which speaks about the worship of *Naṅgas* in Kerala. It praises the *Naṅarāja* and *Naṅarājni* for progeny (Panikkar 1909: 146-148). They worship *Naṅgas* in the *pīṭhas* and consider them as the highest on earth and heaven. The *Naṅga bhakti* can be seen in the land owning families of *Naṭyars*, *Tiyyar*, and *Maṇṇāñnar*, which are sung by the *Naṭyars* (Panikkar 1909: 146-148) and *Pulluvar* (Menon 1995: 479) in Kerala.

Bhakti to *Veṭṭakkorumakan* is another prominent extra-temple *bhakti* movement in the late medieval Kerala. The *bhakti* hymns of *Veṭṭakkorumakan* are in wide circulation in the locale of the Kolattiris and the Zamorins in Malabar. They worship and adoration of *Veṭṭakkorumakan* for protection from war. The *Nāṭuvali* and *Svarūpams* worship *Veṭṭakkorumakan* in the *kaṭus* in Malabar. They worship the *Veṭṭakkorumakan* as a war hero and glorify his might as mountain deity.

The *bhakti* can also be seen in the hymns of other minor deities such as *Vairajaṭan*, *Daivattāṭ*, *Kṣeṭrapalan* and so forth. These *bhakti* songs describe the worship and adoration of the deities by the devotees to satisfy their needs. The devotees glorify the bliss and power of the deities.



Figure 7: Teyyampalikkurupu Drawing the *Aṣṭadalapatmam*, Valliyurkavu, Wayanadu
 (© Shibi 2008)

The *bhakti* outside the structural temples strongly exists in the hymns dedicated to *Cāltan*, which are systematically developed by the *Maṇṇāñmar* and subsequently by *Tīyyar* in south Malabar. It was a very powerful engagement of *bhakti* in the extra-purāṇic and extra-temple religious premises of Malabar. The *Cāltan-paṭṭu* is very much akin to the *bhakti* hymns of *Bhagavati* (*Kāli*), such as *Bhadrolpattikilippaṭṭu*, *Daṛikavadham-paṭṭu* and so forth. The *bhakti* to *Cāltan* is identical with the *bhakti* to *Bhagavati* (*Kāli*) in the *Daṛikavadham*. *Cāltan* is described as a great hero and war deity. He kills *Brṅgāsura*,

which lies parallel to the killing of Dārika by *Bhagavati* (*Kali*). He leads a mighty war to kill the *asuras*, which is also identical with *Bhagavati* (*Kali*)'s war procession against *asuras*. The lower castes actively take part in the *bhakti* of *Caṭṭan* by praising the deity with the *Caṭṭan-paṭṭu* in Malabar.

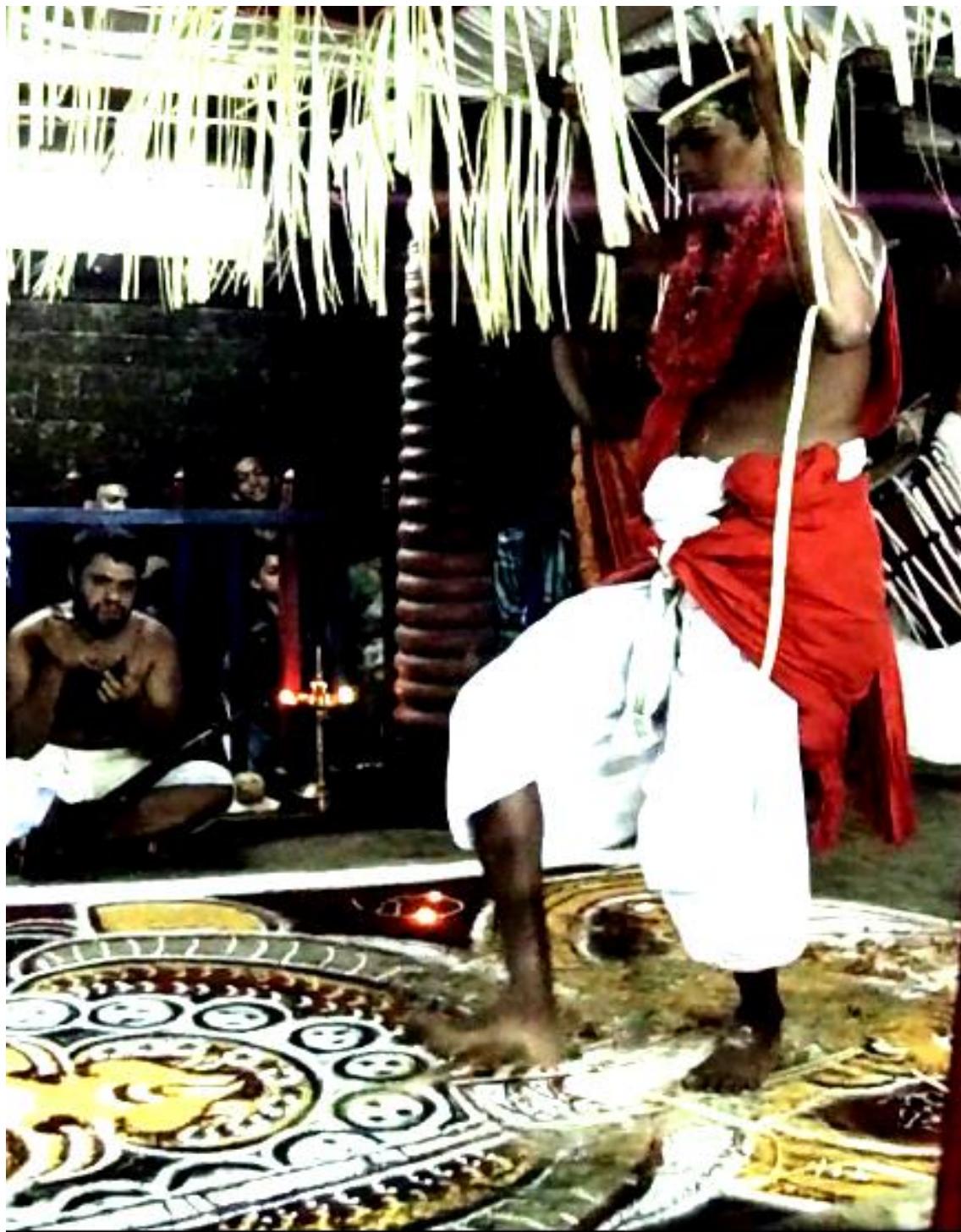


Figure 8: *Teyyampalāṭinampiārs* singing and dancing in the *Kalam*, Putiyakavu, Kannur
(© Shibi 2013)

The Ideal of the Priest and the Devotee

The entire colonial historiographical traditions in Kerala have viewed the non-brahmanic priests in the *kalameluttu* as 'devil dancers' exorcists, ethnic performers and dravidians. Later on the folklore studies viewed the priest of the *kalameluttu* only as an ethnic performers. We have already discussed folklore find *kalameluttu* as a contemporary art form and considered the priests as independent individual artists. The present study brings out, for the first time, that this 'independent artists', 'ethnic performers' or 'exorcists' in the *kalameluttu* as a major social group of non-brahmanic priests beyond the Brahmanical structural temples in Kerala. *Teyyampatikkurupus*, *Kallarakkuruppus*, *Teyyampatinampiārs*, *Tiyyatīnampiārs*, *Tiyyatīnampiārs*, *Manṇānmar*, *Vanṇānmar*, *Tiyyar*, *Kaniyar*, *Pulluvar*, *Parayar* and others have specific traditions as priest of the religious world of *kalameluttu* in Kerala. We have already discussed the priest making a *kalam* (*mandalam* in Sanskrit meaning ritual diagram) with chanting of hymns, *dhāranīs* (mantras) and sacred dance as sacred rites, meditation, and gestures. For making the religious symbolism or *kalam* of the deities, priests use five colored powders on the ground with specific iconographic prescriptions. The priest—male as well as female—therefore performs *tullal* (sacred dance) as a path of enlightenment in the *Kalameluttu*. It is held that while the priest enters the *kalam* (*mandala*), he/she is transformed mentally and physically as deity. They are regarded as deity itself (Figures 7-9).

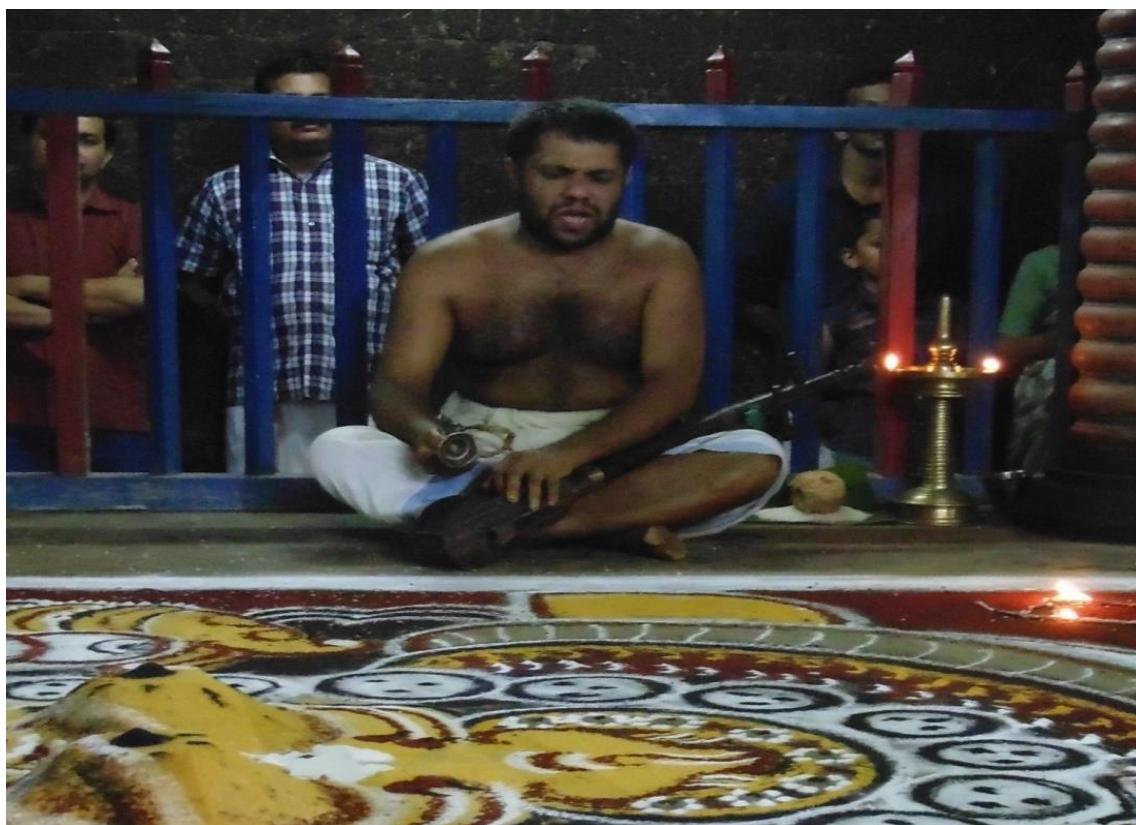


Figure 9: *Teyyampatinampiār* singing Ritual Song in the *Kalam*, Putiyakavu, Kannur
 (© Shibi 2013)

Women have prominent role in the priesthood of *kalameluttu* in contrast to the context of the brahmanical temple culture in Kerala. *Naṅga-maṇḍala* is the most significant religious practices of women in Kerala (Figures 10- 12). Priestesses are made to sit in the *Naṅga-maṇḍala*, which is made in the *maithuna* form and these women are to preserve sanctity. As the priest sings, the young priestesses appear to be influenced by the *Naṅga* deity. They are generally called *Naṅgayaksi*, *yaksiyammamar*, *Naṅgakanyaka*, *Naṅgarajñi*, *Yaksikanyaka*, *Kanyaka* and so forth. Their bodies gradually develop into a ceaseless ecstatic shaking, and they begin to speak the will of deity and they are regarded as deity themselves. Women had a major role in the sacred rites of *Naṅgam* in medieval Kerala. We have already seen the worship of *Naṅga* deity and women who were sitting and dancing (*tullal*) in the *kalām* of the documents of *Vanñēri granthavari* (Panikkar 1909: 146-148)²⁰. They had to sit and dance in the *Pañpinkalām/Catirakkalām* during the rituality and were bestowed rewards in the form of oil and cloths by the *janmis* (Narayanan 1987: 51-52).



Figure 10: The priestess making the *Naṅga* deity, North Kerala (© Shibi 2013)

Keralolpatti mentioned to the priests of *kalameluttu* such as *Teyyampati*, *Tiyyatīnampi* and so on who are included within the Brahmanic religion based on four *varṇas*. They are known as *antāraḷas* or *ampalavaśis*, whose are upgraded from *śūdras* but degraded from Brahmanas (Gundert 1868: 56-58). It is well-known that they were acting as priests in the *kāvus* or *koṭṭas*—non-brahmanical sacred sites—in medieval Kerala. At the same time, they act as *ampalavaśis* or *antāraḷas* in the brahmanical temples of Kerala. The Brahmins (sometimes low-grade Brahmins such as *Muśats*, *Emperumāñ*, *Pisārās*, *Nampiśans*, *Ilāyats* and so forth) are the priests in the brahmanical temples and not considered as *ampalavaśis* or *antāraḷas* as priests, whose compelled there as temple employees (Gundert 1868: 56-58, Narayanan, 1996: 150)²¹.



Figure 11: *Nāgakanyas* Sitting in the *Kalam* (Mathrubhumi Weekly, Book 30, Sep. 7, 1952)

Keralolpatti mentions the non-brahmanic priests of *Man̄ṇāñmar*, *Kan̄iyar*, *Tīyyar*, *Pulluvar* and so forth as lower *jātis* in the *brahmanañdivarnas* (i.e., the four *varṇas* in the brahmanical social composition). Further, it says about the non-brahmanic religious practices such as *kalam-maniyal*, *mantravañdam* of these lower castes (Gundert 1868: 64). It is very significant that the non-brahmanic priests of *Man̄ṇāñmar*, *Kan̄iyar*, *Tīyyar*, *Pulluvar* and so forth re-configured lower *jātis* by the brahmanical religion in medieval Kerala.



Figure 12: *Nāgakanyas* Dancing in *Kalam*, Malappuram Kerala (©Vijesh Ariyallur 2013)

Now, we are going to examine the nature of devotees in the religious world of *kalameluttu*. It is significant that the *kāvus* or *koṭṭas* were owned and the *kalameluttu* was patronised by the non-brahmanic (Veluthat 2012: 181)²² *Nāluvali* (Varier 2002: 121-123)²³ *Svarūpams* (Ganesh 2000: 222-227)²⁴, *Sthāni Nāyars* and warriors in pre-modern Kerala (Frenz 2003: 80 -81)²⁵. Our attempt below is an examination of the nature of the worship and patronage of the non-brahmanic power structure of the *kalameluttu*, outside the brahmanical temples. These non-brahmanic royal lineages worshipped the deities such as *Śāsta* (*Ayyappan*), *Bhadrakalī* and *Nāgam* in the *kāvus* and *koṭṭas*, which has been described in *Keralolpatti*, to protect wealth and power of the *Svarūpam* (Varier 1984: 4). It was from the ferocious and warrior nature of *Ayyappan*, *Bhadrakalī*, *Veṭṭakkorumakan* and so on of the *kāvu* that the *Nāluvali Svarūpams*, *Sthāni Nāyars* and warriors in Kerala were held to derive their power and especially their success in battle. Their power, of course, confirmed the power of their deity (Varier 1984: 33). These non-brahmanic *Nāluvali Svarūpams*, *Sthāni Nāyars* and warriors possessed martial training centres of *kalari* and served as a temple where the guardian deity was a form of *Bhadrakalī* (*Bhagavati*) or else *Ayyappan*, *Veṭṭakkorumakan* and so on (Zarrilli 2002: 26)²⁶. When they go to war they salute and worship the *kalari-devata* in this *kalari* (Gurukkal 2000: 20). It appears that these *Nāluvali Svarūpams* patronized the priests such as *Teyyampatiñampiārs*, *Teyyampatiñikkuruppus*, *Kallar̄rakkuruppus*, *Tiyyaṭṭunniś*, *Tiyyaṭṭinampiārs* to worship *kalameluttu* to praise their political overlordship in the locale. Non-brahmanic priests such as *Teyyampatiñampiār*, *Teyyampatiñikkuruppu* (Zacharia 1996: 338-417, Gundert 1999: 273, 480, Thurston and Rangachari 1993: 181) and *Kallar̄rakkuruppu* (Hundert 1999: 480, 273, Thurston and Rangachari 1993: 92, Iyer

1981: 288, Mundekkadu 2000: 35, Shibi 2016) are patronized by the above two ruling lineages and they worship the deity in the *kalameluttu* for blessings.

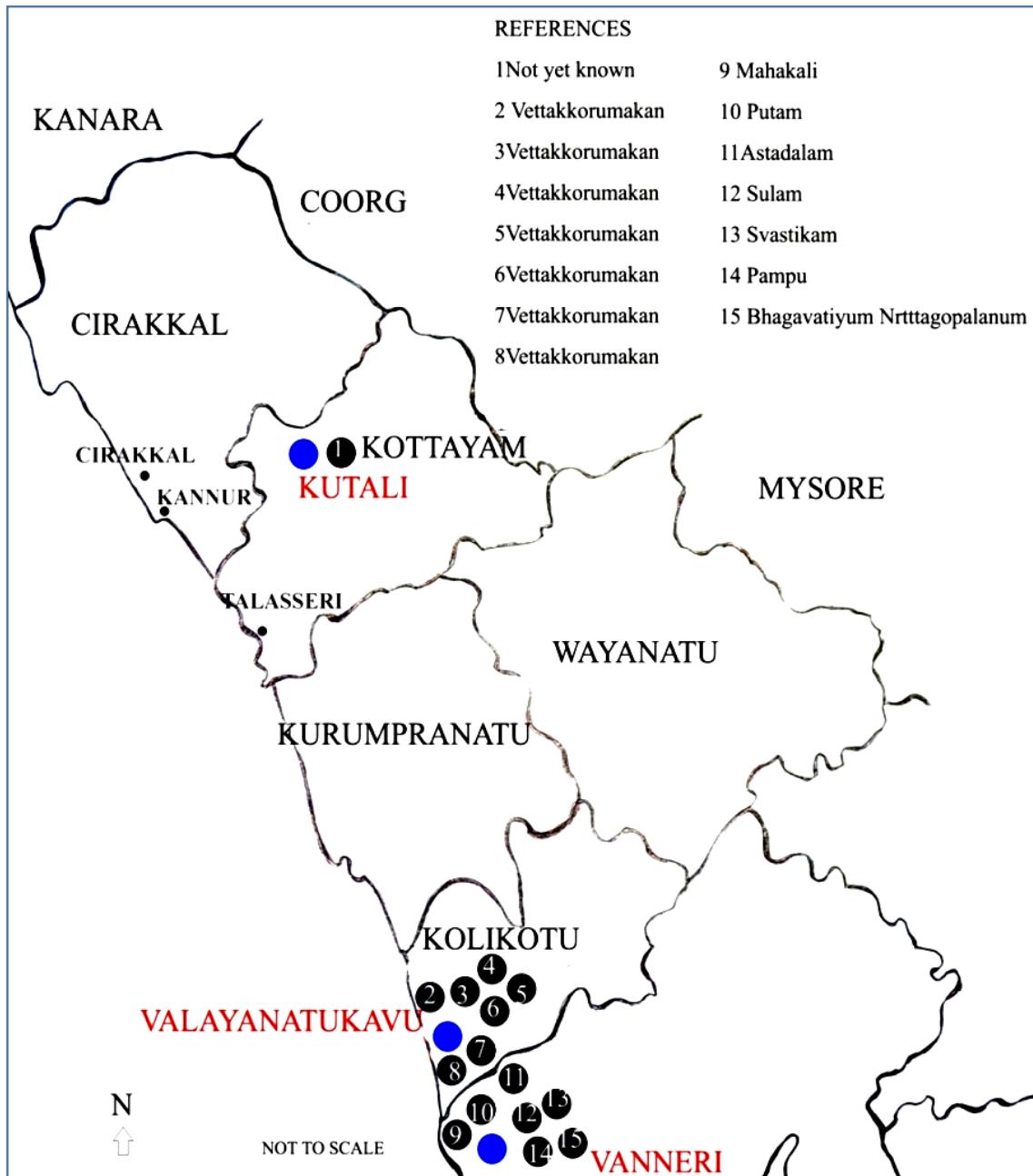


Figure 13: Sacred Sites of *Kalameluttu* in Late Medieval Malabar based on *Granthavaris*

The Zamorins worships *Veṭṭakkorumakan* as an important war deity, who is one of the guardian deities of them. The *Kolikkotan Granthavaris* have so many references to the patronage of *kalameluttu* of *Veṭṭakkorumakan* (Figure 13). As per the legend, *Veṭṭakkorumakan* protected the Zamorins from the attack of the Portuguese (Gundert 1999: 480). So many references to the *Veṭṭakkorumakan-paṭṭu* in the *granthavaris* belong to the period of the war between the Zamorins and the Portuguese. The *Nayar* military

chieftain Kuṭali family patronized the *kalameluttu* in 16th century onwards. They are one among the localities in the Kalliaṭṭusvarūpam, a territorial division of Puravalināṭu (Kurup 1989: ix). They have a *kalari* and worships *Bhadrakali* as guardian deity.

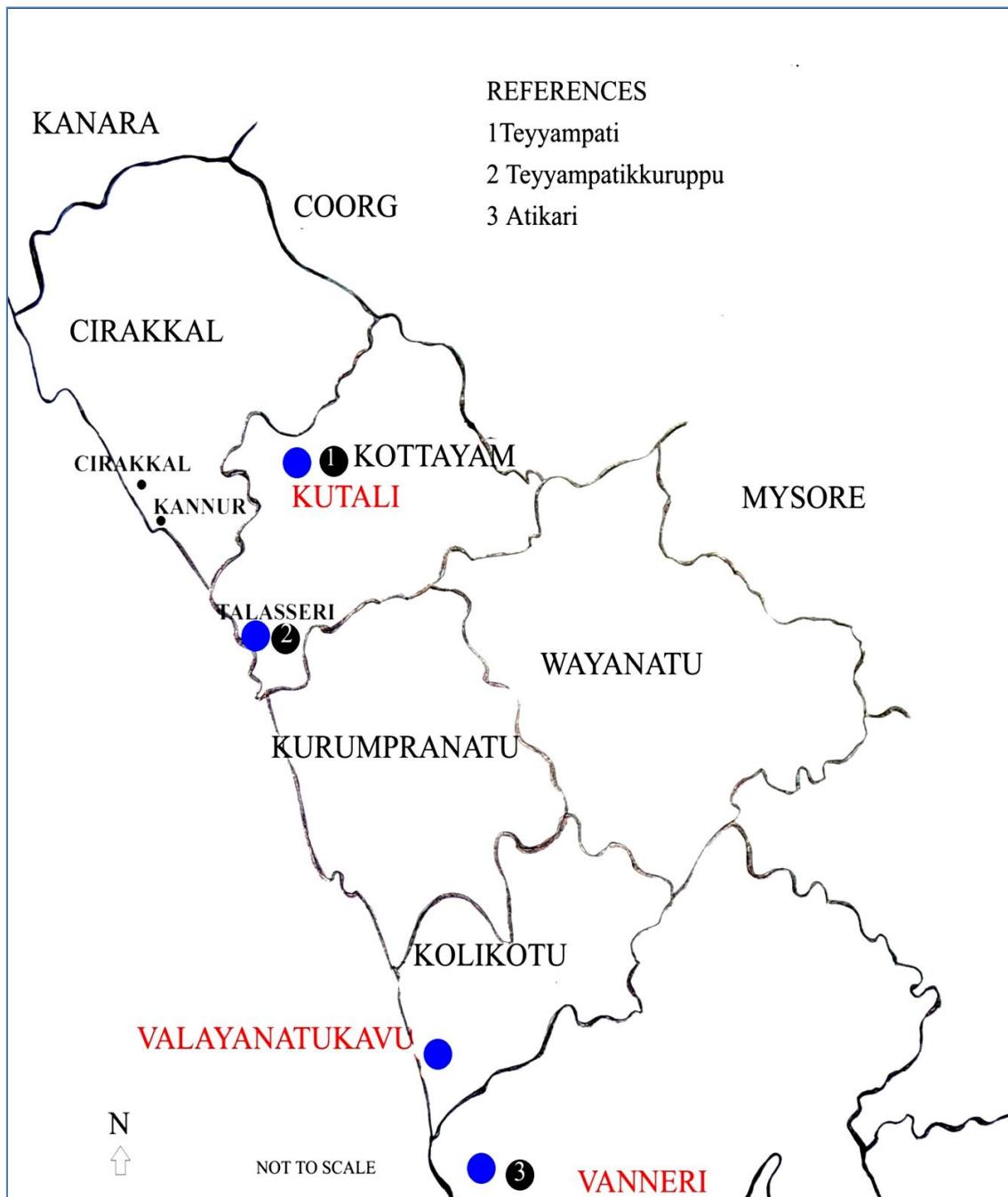


Figure 14: Location of Priests of *Kalameluttu* in Late Medieval Malabar

Kuṭali *granthavaris* documented the patronage of *Teyyampatis* to worship *kalameluttu* in the Kuṭalikkāvū. They granted payments of rice given to *Teyyampati* and carried the expenditure of rice for *antikkappaṭṭu*, *uccappaṭṭu*, *kalattilari* etc. which are the important forms of rites in *kalameluttu* (Kurup 1989: 127-128). We have seen the worship of

Naṅgakkalam by *deśams* or *amsams* is described in the medieval document of Vanñēri *Granthavaris* (Narayanan 1987: 51-52). The *deśams* such as Mēcheři, Annakare, Kumāramangalam, Tirur, Mullappallī, Tekkummuri and so forth worshipped *Pāmpinkalam* in late medieval Malabar. They worshipped the *kalameluttu* of *Pāmpu*, *Mahākāli*, *Puṭam*, *Bhagavatiyum nr̄ttagopalanum* etc. which mentioned that the *Naẏar* ladies sat on the *pāmpinkalam* and the payments of money, rice, oil, cloth were given to them. The documents also recorded the grant of money and rice to the *tantri*, *atikāris* and so on (Narayanan 1987: 51-52). The document suggested that the *kalameluttu* was practiced under the leadership of *atikāris*²⁷. The above mentioned *deśams* are under the rule of Vanñēri *Nampuṭiri* family in the locale of Vettam Rajas (Narayanan 1987: xiii).

Bhakti found enmeshed in the hymns of *kalameluttu*, is very deferent from the temple centred *bhakti* of the brahmanical world in many respects. It is a religious and cultic world outside the ritual milieu of the temple and the Brahmins. The *Naẏars* including *Naṭuvali Svarūpams*, *antaralas* and the lower castes also actively took part in this process of extra-temple *bhakti* in the late medieval Kerala. The priests such as *Teyyampaṭinampiārs*, *Teyyampaṭikkuruppus* and *Kallārṛakkuruppus* claim to be the devotees of true *bhaktas*. With the patronage of the *bhakti*, the *Naṭuvalis* and land owning families of *Naẏars* too attain the position of true *bhaktas*. The practice of temple service as hereditary profession recurs in the Śaiva-Vaisṇava *bhakti* hymns (Champakalakshmi 2012: 56-57). The same practice can be getting crystallized in the *bhakti* hymns of *Kalameluttu* in Kerala. The priests such as *Teyyampaṭinampiārs*, *Teyyampaṭikkuruppus*, *Kallārṛakkuruppus*, *Tiyyaṭṭunniś*, *Tiyyaṭṭinampiārs* and so on serve as hereditary professionals and their concept of service is dedicated to the deity and also to the non-brahmanic temples or *kāvus* in Kerala²⁸. The idea of the temple as the focus of this devotional cults emerges in the *bhakti* hymns of medieval south India (Champakalakshmi 2012: 55). At the same time, the sacred sites of *kāvus*—which are especially outside the structural temples—are the centres of the *bhakti* hymns of *kalameluttu* in Kerala.

The foregoing examination of the religious traditions of *kalameluttu*, as taken up above, has very interesting implications which are in contrast to the temple culture, architecture, sculpture, routines and organization of medieval Kerala. The iconographic and sculptural traditions of the Śaiva-Vaisṇava cult of the structural temples in Kerala are quite different from the ferocious and *maithuna* forms of the *mandalas* of *Bhagavati*, *Ayyappan*, *Naṅgam* and so forth, in the *kalameluttu*. The secret worship of *maithuna* deities in the *kāvus* or *koṭṭas* in the isolated places is also contrast to the brahmanical temple culture in Kerala. In this religious practice, non-brahmanic priests offer devotional hymns, *dhāraniś* (*mantras*) and sacred dance as ritual ceremonies, meditation, and gestures. It is also seen that the non-brahmanic cultic practices such as *panča-makaṛas* in the *kalameluttu* are distinct from the Brahmanic routines in the structural temples. The varied hymns in the *kalameluttu* show the *bhakti* outside the temple world of brahmanical society, and the entire non-brahmanic social milieu of late medieval Kerala took part in it (Figure 14). These *bhakti* hymns do not

denote the Śaiva-Vaisna cults of brahmanical temples. In these *bhakti* hymns, deities such as *Bhagavati* (*Kali*), *Ayyappa*, *Veṭṭakkorumakan*, *Naṭgam*, *Caṭtan* and so on, who possess extra-human powers, are placed at the centre, in the tradition of the cult of *bhakti*. Similarly, the social involvement and priesthood of the nature of *kalameluttu* also stand in contrast to the Brahmanic organization and priesthood of temple culture in Kerala. Women have prominent role in the priesthood of *kalameluttu* in contrast to the brahmanical temple culture in medieval Kerala. Obviously, the entire world of *kalameluttu* revolves outside the brahmanic traditions of the structural temples in Kerala. *Bhakti* found enmeshed in the *kalameluttupāṭṭu*, is very deferent from the temple centred *bhakti* of the brahmanical world in many respects. The *Naṭyars* including *Naṭuvāṭi* *Svarūpams*, *antarālas* and the lowers castes also actively took part in this process of extra-temple *bhakti* in the late medieval Kerala. The idea of the temple as the focus of this devotional cults emerges in the *bhakti* hymns of medieval south India. At the same time, the sacred sites of *kāvus*—which are especially outside the structural temples—are the centres of the *bhakti* of *kalameluttu* in Kerala.

Notes

- ¹ *Vairajāṭan* carries in his hands the *vattapparica* and a sword. He is in white colour. His consort *Bhagavati* is drawn beside him, and she is in yellow colour. She carries with her left hands the *paṭra* and human head; and with her right hands she holds the sword and *śulam*. Data collected from *Satisan*, *Teyyampāṭinampiāṭ*, (priest of *kalameluttu* in north Kerala), Mattannur, Kannur on 13/07/2012.
- ² The figure of *Bhagavati* (*Bhadrakāli*) in the form of four and eight arms, are traditionally drawn by *Teyyampāṭikkuruppus* and *Kallāṭrakkuruppus*. Her eyes are distended and have dramstra (tusks) from her mouth. In her form with eight arms, her eight hands carry the sword, *śulam*, *vattaka*, *khatvankam*, *manī*, head of *Dārīka*, *paraśu* and *kapala*. She is green in colour, and wears red garments called *vīralippatṭu*. Her four arms carry sword, *śulam*, *kapala* and the head of *Dārīka*. She sits on a *pīṭha* and her body is decorated with ornaments. The figure of *Bhadrakāli* is also decorated with *lata* and *prabhāmandalam*. Data collected from the field work, Palakurumbakkavu, Kozhikode on 08/04/2014.
- ³ *Bhadrakālikalām* of *Maṇṇāns* is influenced by the concept of *Bhagavati* and *Kali*. The eyes of *Bhadrakāli* in this *kalameluttu* are depicted in a widened manner. She has two arms with the right hand, she holds the *pallival* (sword) and with the left hand the *cilampu* (anklet). She wears a garment on her body and two *taṭa* (anklets). She is adorned with ornaments on her neck, and a *tilaka* on her forehead. She has long hair. See *Chummar Choondal*, *Mannan*, figure 3. The figure of the *Bhagavati* in the *Bhagavatikkalām* of *Maṇṇāns* is very similar to the figure of female *kōmaram* of *Kotungallur Bhagavati*. The *Maṇṇāns* draw the pictures of *Bhadrakāli* in different forms such as *Viṣṇumāṭya* (*Caṭtan*), *Orrāmūlacci* etc. in the sacred sites and the collective ritual occasions of the *Ilāvas*. *Maṇṇāns* sing *toṭram-paṭṭu* of *Bhagavati* after drawing the figure, during the 41 days commencing from the first of *Vrścikam* according to the Malayalam calendar (November to December) which is known as *mandalakala*.

⁴ *Tīyyaṭṭu* and *kalameṭṭu* are similar in many respects. In the Bhadrakali-*tīyyaṭṭu*, dancer's (*Tīyyaṭṭunṇiṣ*) face is painted black with simulated pustules of smallpox. He wears a crown on which is a figure of Kāli in front, with long flowing hair.

⁵ There is yet another ritualistic performing art known as *mutiyeṭṭru*, which needs basic requirements of the figure of *kalām* for its performance.

⁶ A particular plot of ground in the house-yard is cleansed with cow dung and certain geometrical figures are drawn with five coloured powders. The priest recites mantras, and some ritual songs in praise of deities Nāgas. A number of Nāyar women are made to sit in the figure. As the priests sing, the young women appear shaking their heads in a circle appear to be influenced by the Nāga deity. They then go into an unconscious state and wipe off the figure of snake in the sitting posture and they begin to speak the will of deity as deity themselves.

⁷ In Ayyappan-*tīyyaṭṭu*, the *kalām* is devoted to the deity Ayyappa or Śāṣṭa. At the same time, *tīyyaṭṭu* is dissimilar in many respects that, after the *kalām* is finished *Tīyyaṭṭinampiars* seated adjacent to the *kalām*, well-versed in fire dance, commence singing religious ballads to the accompaniment of *Para*, a kind of drum, for rhythm.

⁸ In his left hand, there is a curika. He has a long beard. His body is coloured with yellow. On some occasions, Kallāṭrakkuruppus depict a female figure holding a pot of *kallu* (madhu) in the Ayyappankalām. It is significant for us here to understand that the same iconography is described in *Mayamatam*, a medieval chronicle of deities in south India.

⁹ Data collected from the field work, Mattannur, Kannur on 13/07/2012.

¹⁰ It is a standing figure and his body is green in colour and he wears *vīralippattu*. He has two arms and with the right hand he holds an arrow and bow. In the left hand, there is a curika. He has a beard. He is seen adorned with all ornaments such as *kundalas*, *hara* and a broad belt round the waist. Data collected from the field work, Korattimala, Nilamboor on 12/03/2013.

¹¹ In 1752, *Sāmutiri Kōvilakam Granthavari* describes the performance of *āṭuvettum paṭṭum* in *Valayanaṭṭukāvū*.

¹² In 1793, a copper plate from *Sabharimala* describes sheep offerings in the temple.

¹³ The manuscripts of *Tīyyar* and *Maṇṇāñmār* describe the mantra for *Unmattakutṭiccaṭṭan* as 'ōm hrīm lam lam unmatta kutṭiccaṭṭaya ānantha ruṭṭayasa santoṣanī vaśika śrī parameśvaranañē cuvanama śrīm'. This is a mantra that is helpful in healing mental disorders. The mantra for suppressing one's speech is 'ōm mantramuttimāre ausadha śakti mahāśakti svāha', 'ōm śakti śakti eva vaśāssu muttīyāmāvambhavaya vaśam kuru kuru svāha'. The mantra to practice truth is: oṁ namo bhagavato oṁ namo bhagavato narakamalataye vasisra rṣidevimalasike svāha oṁ hrīye svāha. The mantra for suppressing

enemy: 'ōṁ atikallukanta anam karam ayi vingikkantu villum pilayum mutṭi varanṭa kitakka svāmiyāñu guruvinañā svāha'. The mantra for killing enemy: 'yūṁ dīrkhañā bhūtāya yūṁ'. The mantra for sthambhana: 'yūṁ galagandā kurunkutṭiccañta mama ripu sthambhañā svāha'. See Manuscripts dealing with mantravañā collected from south Malabar.

¹⁴ The mantra 'yūṁ galagandāruñā kurunkutṭiccañta ripuccañanāya svāha' is used for uccāñana. The mantra 'yūṁ galagandāruñā kurunkutṭiccañta ripudveśanāya svāha' is used for vidveśanā. The mantra 'yūṁ galagandāruñā kurunkutṭiccañta ripuakarsaya svāha' is used for akarsana. The mantra 'yūṁ galagandāruñā kurunkutṭiccañta ripu mārāya mārāya svāha' is used for mārana. The mantra 'yūṁ galagandāruñā hasamprāñā kurunkutṭiccañta sarva strīpurusa akarsanāya svāha' is used for vaśikaranā. The mantra for jvara is 'ōṁ namo bhagavate ōṁ kali koṭunkali bhairavakali hrīm nandikeśvarakaliye svāha'. See Manuscripts dealing with mantravañā collected from south Malabar.

¹⁵ The mantra of Uccittamāñangi is 'ōṁ uccittamāñangi māñangi mahārūpi mahakali ōṁ uccitta toñnippoka svāha'. The mantra for vaśikaranā is 'ōṁ namo bhagavato kalluruki ulluruki taluti potṭi turannuvannu ennuṭe kitappil vaśamaka svāha'. The mantra for protection from preṭa is "ōṁ śrī durdaśanāya nama: vinaśanāyana ōṁ mahāprakārāya sarvabhūta bhayankarāya sarva duṣṭa preṭa pisāca vinaśanāya svāha". The mantra for vyādhi is 'ōṁ śūlini śūlini ōṁ brahma śūlinim śūlinim ōṁ kapala śūlinim ōṁ karimurikkintanḍu vettikkāññārepole sarva vyādhiharam varika svāha'. The mantra for preṭa is 'ōṁ mr̄tyu mr̄tyu kalagulika svāha'. The mantra for suppressing one's mental disorder is 'ōṁ hrīm śavikam hrīm ōṁ hrīm klaśavaya svāha'.

¹⁶ The kālampañṭu of Kan̄iyar like Balivadham, Kamsavadham, Kalyāñasaugandhikam, Santhañagopañam and so on belongs to Sanskrit Purañic stories.

¹⁷ Kuṭali Granthavari recorded kālameļuttu as a part of the expenses of the festive occasions. The last portion (section E) of the Granthavari is not dated, which records the cost of the cultic tradition of aṛāñtu (festival), ritual songs and so on. Document No: 25 lists the expense of the payments of rice given for uccappañṭu, antippañṭu, kālattilari etc. and also records the amount of rice given to Teyyampañṭi, Tantri, Maṛār, Vanñāñ and so on. Document No: 26 also lists the expenditure of rice given to Teyyampañṭi. In the case of the nature of priesthood of the cultic practices of kālameļuttu, those social groups have a vital role.

¹⁸ In the documents of 1675 Grantham 7, palm-leaf 6-54 of Kolikkoṭan Granthavari explains the expenditure for the performance of brahmañippañṭu, which is a particular kind of ritual dance in Kerala. As a part of the performance of Brahmañippañṭu kālam should be drawn.) But we have no further evidence for the performance of kālam in the practice of tiyyañṭutullal or brahmañippañṭu as well as the present condition.

¹⁹ In 1752, Kolikkoṭan Granthavari documented the expenses of the performance of aṭuvettum pañṭum in Valayanañukāvū.

²⁰ A particular plot of ground in the house-yard is cleansed with cow dung and certain geometrical figures are drawn with five coloured powders. The priest recites mantras, and some ritual songs in praise of deities *Nāgas*. A number of *Nāyar* women are made to sit in the figure. As the priests sing, the young women appear shaking their heads in a circle appear to be influenced by the *Nāga* deity. They then go into an unconscious state and wipe off the figure of snake in the sitting posture and they begin to speak the will of deity as deity themselves.

²¹ The epigraphical sources of Kerala refer to a large number of temple servants, who were employed in the temple service, like the *Potuval*, *Vāriyar*, *Nampiār*, *Cañtiatīkal*, *Cañkyār*, *Nangayaār*, or *Koṭṭikal* and so on. The *Keralolpatti* calls them as *antārala* castes and says that they are either Brahmins who were degraded or *Śūdras* who were upgraded on account of their service as we have already discussed. They are a class of dancers, musicians, drummers, painters and so on. It is significant that they are associated with the Jain and Buddhist temples as well as Brahmanic temples. The *Keralolpatti* says those who were employed under Brahmanic temples and transformed them as *antāralas* into brahmanical *jāti* lineages. The process of evolution and consolidation of the *jāti* system that we come across in Kerala during this period was directed by the Brahmins.

²² Usually there are no Brahmins in the power structure of *nāṭus*. The *Svarūpam* represents its power in the basic local units.

²³ The *nāṭus* are the original seats of the *Svarūpams* in medieval Kerala. 'nāṭu utaiyavar' or 'nāṭu valumavar' are usually the governors of the *nāṭus*. The *nāṭus* were the agrarian settlements in territorial units which grouped together for various socio-economic needs.

²⁴ The *Svarūpam* is a political authority of a large number of small territorial units based on a powerful matrilineal joint family which exercise their political and judicial authority in late medieval Kerala.

²⁵ The political disintegration of the Cera empire after 12th c AD led to the emergence of a Brahmanic oriented temple world, and the emergence of *Nāṭuvali* *Svarūpams* in medieval period, causing drastic changes in the religious world of Kerala. *Nāṭuvali* *Svarūpams* appropriated ferocious deities and fertility deities for their ritual justification. The network of temples was of utmost importance to the rule of an Indian Raja, because temples and their respective festivals are instrumental in the religious legitimization of the ruler.

²⁶ The *kalari* was a centre for training and healing tradition of the *Nāyar* land lords or military chiefs. In all *kalaris*, the most important deity is *Bhadrakalī* who was the guardian deity. Other deities sometimes include *Ayyappan*, *Veṭṭakkorumakan*, *Kalabhairavan* and *Kalabhairavi*, *Naṅgabhagavati*, ancestors and heroes.

²⁷ *Atikāris* had played an important role in the performance of *Kaḷam* at *Vanneri illam*. We have practically very little data about the role of *Atikāris* as the performers of *Kaḷam* in

present Malabar except in the case of Vanñēri. Atikāri Rañmankulangara Kurupu of Niramkaitakkotta near Vallikunnu is the only available reference to their association with the present day performance of kalameļuttu. See MGS. Vanneri... Interview with Karunakara Kuruppu (late), Atikari Rañmankulangara Kuruppu, Niramkaitakkotta, Vallikkunnu, Malappuram: 26/03/2011.

²⁸ Putiyakañvū, Lokanañkāvū, Valliyuñkāvū, Valayanañukañvū, Kalikañvū and Tirumañthañmkunnu, Utinuñkulom and Matiyuñkulom, Kuñalikkañvū, Aryankāvū and so forth are the non-Brahmanic temples or kavus, which are the centres of the bhakti hymns of Teyyampalīnampiars, Teyyampalīkkuruppus, and Kalluñrakkuruppus in Malabar.

References

Aiyer, U. S. P. 1990. *Keralasahityacharitram*, Vol. I. University of Kerala Thiruvananthapuram.

Bhattacharya, B. 1958. *Indian Buddhist Iconography*, K. L. Mukhopadyaya, Calcutta.

Champakalakshmi, R. 2012. *Religion, Tradition, and Ideology: Pre-colonial South India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

Choondal, C. 1975. *Studies in Folklore of Kerala*, College Book House, Thiruvananthapuram.

Choondal, C. 1979. *Mannan*, Poorna Publications, Kozhikode.

Choondal, C. 1981. *Mudiyettu (Nadodi Nadaka Padanam)* (Mal.), Kerala Folklore Academy, Thrissur.

Dages, B. (Ed.). 1997. *Mayamatam*, Vol. II, Kalamulasutra Series-14, Motilal Banarsi Dass, Delhi.

English, E. 2002. *Vajrayogini in Her Visualizations, Rituals and Forms: A Study of the Cult of Vajrayogini in India*, Wisdom Publication, Boston.

Frenz, M. 2003. *From Contact to Conquest: Transition to British Rule in Malabar*, New Delhi.

Ganesh, K. N. 2000. 'Structure of Political Authority in Medieval Kerala', P. J. Cherian (Ed.), *Perspectives on Kerala History*, Gazetteer Department, Kerala Government, Thiruvananthapuram.

Gundert, H. 1868. *Keralolpatti*, Basel Mission Press, Mangalore.

Gundert, H. 1999. *Malayalam-English Dictionary*, Asian Educational Series, New Delhi.

Gurukkal, E. P. 2000. *Vasudeva, Kalaripayattu; Keralathinte Tanañu Ayodhanakala*, DC Books, Kottayam.

Haridas, V. V. 2008. *Kshetram Utsavam Rakstriyam*, Purna Publications, Kozhikode.

Hikosaka, S. 1989. *Buddhism in Tamilnadu*, Institute of Asian Studies, Madras.

Iyer, L. K. A. K. 1981.. *The Tribes and Castes of Cochin*, Vols. I II and III, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi.

Kurup K. K. N. (Ed.). 1989. *Kuñali Granthavari*, Calicut University Historical Series No. 4, Department of History, University of Calicut.

Lalithambika, M. V. 2011). *Kaniyanmarude Jeevithavum Samskaravaum*, Kerala Bhasha Institute, Thruvananthapuram.

Logan, W. 1995. *Malabar*, Vol. I, Asian Educational Series, New Delhi.

Menon, K. P. P. 1995. *History of Kerala*, Vol. IV, Asian Education Series, New Delhi.

Menon, T. M. 2002. *A Handbook of Kerala*, Vol. II, The International School of Dravidian Linguistics, Thiruvananthapuram.

Mundekkadu, B. 2000. *Kallattakkuruppanmarude Kalamezhuthupattu* (Mal.), DC Books, Kottayam.

Nair, N. P. Viswanathan. 1989. (Tr.), *Cilappatikaram*. Thrissur, Kerala Sahitya Academy. p. 119

Nair, S. R. 1992. (Tr.). *Iango Adikal Cilapatikaram* (Mal) (Thiruvananthapuram: D.C. Books. p. 192.

Namboothiri, N. M. 1987. *Samoothiri Charithrathile Kanappurangal*, Vallathol Vidyapitam, Sukapuram.

Narayanan, M. G. S. 1996. *Perumals of Kerala: Political and Social Conditions of Kerala Under the Cera Perumals of Makotai* (c. 800 AD - 1124 AD), Xavier Press: Calicut. p.190

Narayanan, M.G.S. (Ed.). 1987. *Vanñeri Granthavari*, Document No.53A, Calicut University Historical Series No.1 Department of History, University of Calicut.

Panikkar, T. K. G. 1909. *Malabar and Its Folk*. Kessinger Publishing. Montana.

Sankunni, K. 2012. *Eithihyamala* (Mal), Vol. 1. Kottayam. DC Books. pp. 140-144, 355.

Santhosh E. 2019. 'Cheppetukalile Sabharimala: Padhanam, Vyakhyanam, Carithram', Ezhuthu, Monthly, February.

Sharma, R. S. 2012. 'Material Milieu of Tantricism', in D. N. Jha (Ed.), *The Feudal Order: State, Society and Ideology in Early Medieval India*. New Delhi: Manohar. p. 441.

Shibi, K. 2016. 'Transactions and Transformations of *Kalameluttu* in Malabar', Unpublished PhD thesis, Department of History, Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kerala.

Subrayalu, Y. 2012. *South India Under the Cholas*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

Thurston, E. and K. Rangachari. 1993. *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol. IV, Asian Educational Series, New Delhi.

Varier, M. R. R. 2002. 'State as *Svaruþam*: An Introductory Essay', in R. Champakalakshmi, Kesavan Veluthat and T. R. Venugopalan (Eds), *State and Society in Pre-modern South India*, Cosmo Books, Thrissur.

Veluthat, K. 2012. *The Political Structure of Early Medieval South India*, Oriental Blackswan, New Delhi.

Williams, Sir M. M. 2005. *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Sharada Publishing House, Delhi.

Zacharia, S. (Ed.). 1996. *Talasseri Rekhakal*, Vol. 5, Centre for Kerala Studies, Kottayam.

Zarrilli, P. B. 2002. *When the Body Becomes All Eyes: Paradigms, Discourses and Practices of Power in Kalarippayattu, A South Indian Martial Art*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.