

DOUBLE DESCENT SYSTEM AND SOCIAL ORGANISATION OF *THACHANADAN MOOPPAN* TRIBE OF KERALA

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Abstract

A majority of tribes in the Nilgiri- Wayanad region are matrilineal. The main matrilineal tribes are Kurichiya, Mullukkuruma, Rawla, Kadar, *Thachanadan* Mooppen, Kunduvadiyan, Kadar. This paper analyses the social organization of the *Thachanadan* tribe and its peculiarities. Although the tribe is matrilineal overtly, it became clear in the course of research that it has a social organization of double descent. Aspects such as phraternity, clan, lineage, succession and inheritance are transmitted from the mother's side to the children, and territoriality is transmitted from the paternal side to the offspring, indicating a double descent system. Through the acquisition of the territory named Padi *from* the father, the offspring also follow and inherit the respective territorial tribal deities. In earlier times, Thachanadan Mooppen were subject to slavery or bondage, which was practiced according to the *Padi*. The territory of *Padi* would determine the *Janmi* or landlord having authority over even the children in the *Padi*. There was patrilocal residence among the Thachanadan community. In summary, the community was matrilineal through blood relationship and patrilineal on geographical lines and worship of particular divinities.

Key Words -Unilineal, Double descent, Bilateral, Bilineal, Matrilineal, Patrilineal

Introduction

The tribal belt of Nilgiri-Wayanad plateau is a region where there are innumerable tribes and communities having a variety of social organizations. It is a land with tribes ranging from polyandrous communities such as *Thodar*, polygynous communities such as *Bettakkurubar*, *Kurichiyars* who had avunculocal residences, to communities without a defined social organization but only have geographical divisions such as *Kattunaickan* and *Cholanaickan*. The matrilineal tribes are *Kurichiya*, *Mullukkuruma*, *Rawla*, *Kadar*, *Thachanadan Mooppan*, and *Kunduvadiyan*. Of these, *Thachanadan Mooppan* follows the double descent system. This article tries to study the social organization of *Thachanadan* and analyse its aspects such as phraternity, clan, lineage, and geographical division.

Theoretical background

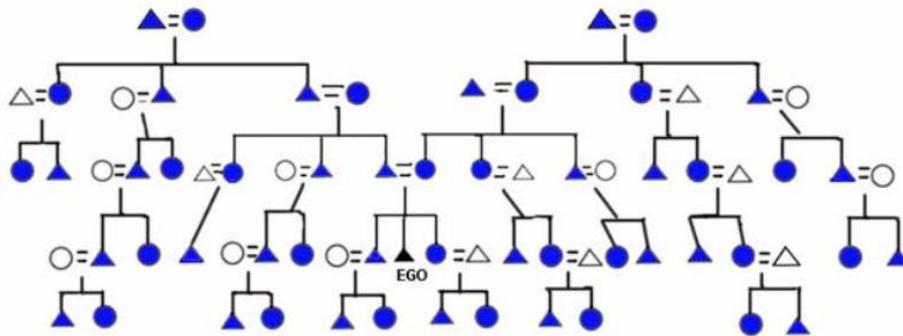
A. Unilineal Descent

In unilineal descent system the descent traces only through one line of ancestors, male or female. Both of them are members of a unilineal family, but descent links are only recognized through relatives of one gender. "Unilineal principles for the affiliation of descent unit members are those in which sex is systematically used as the distinguishing Criterion. So that those kinsmen related through one sex are included and though related through the opposite sex are include" (Schneidr, 1974). The two basic forms are through mothers (matrilineal) and through fathers (patrilineal).

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B. Bilateral Descent

“In bilateral descent, Ego must trace his relationships through both males and females (hence automatically), and he must do so on both sides symmetrically if the category of relative exists on both sides. Below are Ego's relatives in a bilateral descent system (bilateral relatives are in blue).” (<https://laulima.hawaii.edu>)



C. Double Descent

“Double descent is essentially a combination of matrilineal and patrilineal descent; the two modes of affiliation being followed concurrently. It is thus not unilinear but bilinear. It is not, however, bilateral, since it does not treat all possible lines of affiliation equally but emphasizes two lines and disregards others. The distinction between the three modes of descent can be illustrated by considering the affiliation of Ego with his grandparents. Under bilateral descent, Ego is equally affiliated with all four grandparents. Under unilinear descent, Ego is affiliated with only one of them—the maternal grandmothers under matrilineal descent and the paternal grandfather under patrilineal descent. Where double descent prevails, Ego is affiliated with both his maternal grandmother and his paternal grandfather but not with his maternal grandfather or his paternal grandmother.” (Murdock, 1940)

Method

The People: Thachanadan Mooppan

The *Thachanadan Mooppan* was included as a Scheduled tribe through the Constitutional Amendment of 2002. Prior to this, the community was in the Scheduled Caste category list for years. This community, which was forced to live in bondage in the land of the *janmis*, has a belief that they had arrived in Wayanad from *Thachanad* in Nilambur, ascending the pass. *Thachanadan Mooppan* community were historically slaves of *Janmis/* landlords Athikkatt Nairs, *Chettis*, Gounders and Nilambur Raja. Before being enslaved, they had a lifestyle of hunting, gathering and practiced shifting cultivation. With the advent of the British, the landlords gave these persons as 'collateral' to the British, to be taken as labour in their tea plantations. They also had to work in the fields of their 'owners'. The 'ownership' of these families was passed down to the next generations, with the children becoming the property of the landowner.

The Methodology

The study is qualitative in nature and based on exploratory and descriptive design. Hence no hypothesis has been formulated or tested. Primary data collection has been done using different ethnographic techniques. In the first stage, information was collected from senior community informants through in-depth interviews. All territorial heads viz *kunnumooppan* and *Leppan*, Phraterly heads, lineage heads, magic man and medicine man were interviewed.

Profile Area of the Study; Kalpatta

The paper has been prepared by interviewing members of several Thachanadan members spread across Kalpatta. It is the largest municipality and headquarters of Wayanad district state of Kerala, India. Kalpatta is surrounded by dense coffee and tea plantations and mountains. It lies on the Kozhikode-Mysore National Highway NH 766 at an altitude of about 780 m above sea level. Kalpatta is 72 km from Kozhikode and 142 km from Mysore. It's a tourist place.



Fig. 1 Map of Wayanad District

“Their main habitations are Thavinjal, Ambalavayal, Vythiri, Muttill, Pozhuthana, Meppadi, Muppainad, Poothadi, Kalpatta/Municipality in Wayanad district and Chakkittappara (one family of three members) in Kozhikode district. There are a total of 391 families. The total population is 1649, of which 814 are male and 835 are female. The sex ratio is 1000:1026.”²

Results and discussion

A. The Social Divisions Among the Thachanadan Tribe

a) Social Division on The Basis of Blood Relation

In the beginning of the research, the tribe was identified as matrilineal, which was divided into matri-phrateries called *chali*. Each Phratry were further divided into matrilineal clans such as *kolam/mer'/paddi*. These were further sub-divided into matri-lineages such as *moop'/lepp'*.

a) Social Divisions on the Basis of Territory

The social structure of *Thachanadan Mooppin* is divided geographically or regionally into three strata. The first region is the *kunnu*, known as *Er'/mer'*. The second level is the division

² ST Survey report

of these *kunnu* into several *padis* on patrilineal lines, and the third is the further division of such *padi* into patrilineal exogamous *tharavad*'s called *mada*. These three territorial strata are passed on from father to offspring, meaning that each *Thachanadan* member will have *kunnu*, *padi* and *tharavad* passed on from the male parent. In the early days, before their enslavement, each member would meticulously follow these territorial divisions.

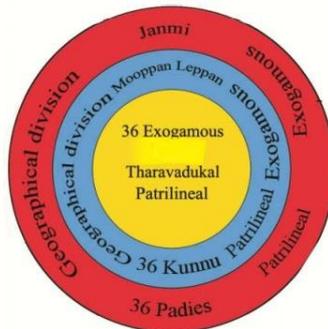


Fig. 2 The Graphical Representation of the geographical divisions and structure

Hunting and gathering of forest produce were permitted only in one's own territory. There were *janmi*'s for each territory, and the children would follow their fathers in continuing this life of bondage. Along with these divisions, each member also inherited tribal divinities and the male ancestral spirits called *Kurikkanmar*, and with their lineages. If someone leaves his original territory with communities' permission and settles down elsewhere, his child will be considered as belonging to the *tharavad* where it was born, and not to his father's original *tharavad*. One can see members of different *tharavad* in the same family because of this peculiarity.

B. Myths Related with the Origin of Social Organization

Thachanadans believe that they have descended from *Kurikkanmar/Kurikkalumar*, their male ancestors. As they believe that the souls of *Kurikkanmar* are with them all the time, they do any small thing after remembering and praising their *Kurikkanmar*. A myth has it that they have descended from a *Muthan* and *Muthi/Muthachi*³. According to the myth, they had 13 children; six girls and 7 boys. The boys were known as *Kurikkannmar*, and the girls *muthachis*. From the girls and *ammamuthachi*⁴, phrateries called *chali* took origin. These turned into matrilineal phrateries based on blood kinships. This *amma* and daughters became the *chali* deities of 101 *chalis*, and came to be known as *Chalimuthyanmar*⁵. From the *Kurikkanmar*, *kunnu/Paditook* origin. The father figure *Muthan* was believed to be beheaded in a battle. The myth is that half his body became *Kurikkan*, and the other half turned into stone. He became known as *Aravayavaran* (half torso) *Muthachan/muthan*.

C. The Territoriality; 36 Division of Kunnu, Padi and Tharavad

The entire tribal territory of *Thachanadan Tribe* is divided into 36 *kunnus* or geographical divisions. This is akin to the *thittuormannu* of *Bettakkuruba*, *Chemmam* concept of *Kattunaickan*, *Malamuthan* and *Cholanaickan*, *Kunnu* concept of *Mullukkuruma* and *Rawla*.

³Ancestor spirits

⁴ The high mother ancestor

⁵ Phrateries female ancestors

There would be one *Paditoakunnu*. Many families stayed in different *peras*⁶ within the *Padi*. *Eachkunnu/Eru/Meru* will have a *Padi*, within which there is *atharavad/mada*. The names of 36 *mada* have not been discovered, even after the efforts of several researchers during many periods. Many have wrongly written the *chali* along with the *madas*. Some *mada, Padi, meru* are considered siblings. Members of *tharavads* from sibling *kunnus* must compulsorily participate in the important ceremonies of the community.

For each *tharavad*, there will be a *Janmi*, a God, a *Mooppan*⁷ and a *Leppan*⁸. There will be male ancestor spirits *Kurikkalmar*, the *Karanavars*, and the abode of *Manjalpoothi* and *MalaKariyathan* (Territorial Gods) who was escorted by that particular *Karanavar*. Most important are the territorial boundaries which define each *Kunnu*. Although there are *madas* in *Padi s* which are in 36 *kunnus*, complete details are no longer available. Some *Padis* have been completely destroyed. These may be because many people had to relocate from their *Padi s* because the *Janmis* sold the lands, or government allotted new areas of land. Because of this change of *Padi*, children adopted the *tharavad* of their birth.

The mythical *Manjalpoothiyamma* and *Malamkariyathan*, upon arriving at *Wayanad*, rested on a rock, under a tree periodically to overcome fatigue. It is believed that these places later became *Kariyathankavus*. There is an ‘*Aaroodam*’⁹ of *Kariyathan* in each *kunnu*. The residents of each *kunnu* have an obligation to protect these *kavus*. Although the division into *kunnu* may be regarded as a social segregation, this must be seen as more of an administrative division. Each *kunnu* had its ruler to exert social control. These heads had helpers and female assistants (*sthanakkari*). The *Mooppan* or *Muthali* is the head authority of a *kunnu*. The *Leppan* looks after matters in his absence and helps the *Mooppan*. The wife of *Mooppan* is the *Mooppathy* and that of *Leppan* is known as *Leppathy*. The other two authorities are *Manakka* and *Karimi*.¹⁰

The area of authority or *Edanja* is within the four territorial boundaries of the *kunnu*, and is called *Malaveethi*. All 36 *Padikkar*¹¹ have this *Malaveethi*. The custom is that *Malaveethi* cannot be broken without due cause or illegally. The *Mooppans* maintain an accurate account or *Malaveethikanakku* in order to prevent territorial disputes and enmity between *kunnus*. It is said that those who go beyond the *Malaveethi* would be put to death (*odimaranjukolluka*)¹². Therefore, the *Thachanadans* were afraid of breaching the *Malaveethi*, during hunting, at the time of NTFP collection and shifting cultivation. Each *Kunnu* will have a *Kanayam*, which is the abode of ancestors, hill gods and clan gods. This is stored in the house of the *Kunnumooppan*. Each *kunnu* has a *kurikkanthara* or *thara*. A place with five or seven *tharas* is known as *maddapomorkurikkamandapam*. The *gurus* and *karanavars* who are the ancestors of *Thachanadans* reside in the *kurikkanthara*. Each *kunnu* has a *Kurikkanmar*, also known as *kurukkanmar*, *kurikkal*, or *kurikkalmar*.

⁶Traditional huts

⁷ The head man of higher lineage

⁸ The head man of lower lineage

⁹ Divine abode

¹⁰ Magician, sorcerer

¹¹ Members of *padi*

¹² *Odiyan* is a magician of black magic. *Odi* is a kind of witchcraft referred to the use of supernatural powers or magic for evil purposes. *Odiyan* had the power to turn into an animal (ox, buffalo, fox, dog, tiger etc)

D. Main Tharavads, Padis, Kunnus

Miriyammada: The *kunnu* of *Miriyammadatharavad* is known as *Miriyammer'*. The name of the *PadiisBalathoor / ValathoorPadi*. The members of the *Miriyammadatharavad* occupy the highest position. The *Valiyakaranavar*¹³ of *ThachanadanMooppans* is selected from this *tharavad*. The area of *Miriyammada* extends from *Chayathottampathinalu* to *Aramangalamchal*. The *Athikodanmar*, who are the *MaruveettuNayanmar*, are their *Janmis*. They have *avakasam* (rights) on three places – the abode of *KariyathanVolathoorkavu*, *Thonavaramkavu*, *Peradikavu*. It is the duty of the *Janmi* and the *Thachandan* to provide everything for the *Kariyathanmar* there. When the *MaruveettuNayanmar* sold their lands in *Rippane* and left, they passed on the three *Kariyathan* abodes to their slaves the *Thachanadans*. It has become the responsibility of the *Miriyammadakkarto* to hold the festival and *thira*. The *mooppa* is known as *Mireppanmooppa*. The *Leppan* is called *Mirilyappa*.

MalammadaTharavad: The *Malammadatharavad* has the next position among *ThachanadanMooppans*. Their *kunnu* is *malammer'* and the *PadiisMalambaram*. They were also slaves of *MaruveettuNayanmar*. Their *malaveethi* extended from *Rippon 14* to *Adachikkunnuchal*. The three *kavus* of *Miriyammadakkar* are their *kavus* also. *Malamboormooppa* and *Vetlappa* administer the *kunnu*.

KannaggudhaMada: *Kannangoodamada / Kannaggudhamada* is situated in *Kannakkoodamer'* and *KannangoodaPadi*. Their area extends from *Aramangalamchal* to *Thenavaramratta*. *Miriyammada*, *Malammada*, *Kannanguttamada* are fraternal *Padis*. Their *Janmi*, *Kariyathan* and clan rights are the same. *Kannanguttamooppa* and *kannanguttalappa* administer the *kunnu*.

Puldroomada: *Puldroomada* is situated on a single *kunnu*, *Pulloorkunnu*. Their *Padiis* known as *PulloorPadi*. *Puldrumeru/pultrumeru* is the name of the *kunnu* situated in *Chayathottam* (tea garden) number nine of *Rippon* estate. The myth is believed that *Kariyathan* walked over to this *kunnu* and rested there, and made one of the *Kurikkanmar* the *Puldrumadakkaran* as the *avakasi*¹⁴ of this area. The *mooppans* *Pulloorppa*, and *Pulrlappa* the *leppa*. There is no one left in this *tharavad*, the survivors having married aliens and destroyed the *tharavad*. Today, this *Padi* has been added to *Miriyammada*, *Malammada*, *KannangudaPadi*.

Nechilmada: *Nechilmada/ Nechimer',/ NallannoorPadi* ;The *kunnu* of *NechilmadakkarisNechilmer'*, and the *PadiisNallannoor*. Extending from *PulloorkunnuChayathottam* upto *Arippattathodu* is the *malaveethi*. The *nech'kkoodanmooppa* exerts authority. This territoriality has single lineage. So, there is no *leppa*. The *Padikkar* who were slaves of *Chettis* have their gods in *Nallannoorthannanguthukavu*, the deities of *Chettis*.

The *daivam*¹⁵ of *Nechilmer* is peculiar. The *daivam*, when possessed in a human body, can be identified easily. The *velichapadu*, who was walking properly till then, will now walk upside down. There is a myth behind this. The *daivam* was returning from a bath when he was upturned by a huge boar. The accursed boar turned into a rock. Under the unexpected attack, the *daivam* became upside down, and it is believed that he has still not recovered from the

¹³Thevkaarnan or the whole tribal head

¹⁴The one who own the rights

¹⁵God

shock, and appears to walk with his head below, still affected by the boar's blow. To appease the *daivam*, a hat like floral arrangement is made using the flowers of *thonna*, *Ezhashembakam*¹⁶ and coconut, and adorns the *velichapadu*¹⁷.

Melkkarmada: The *kunnu* of *Melkkarmada/MelakramadhatharavadisMelkkamer' / Melakramer'*. The *mooppan* is *MelakkuruppanandleppanisMelkkaraleppan*. The *malaveethi* extends from *arippattaratta* to *onnam* mile. They were the slaves of *MaruveettukarofAthikodans*. Their *Kariyathankavu* is the same *kavu* as the *Maruveettukar*, the *Peradikavu*.

Kandr'mada: *Kandr'madatharavadhasKandr'merandKaringandamPadiaskunnuandPadi*. Its *Malaveethi* boundaries start from near the *Meenmudi* waterfall, extending upto *Nedungarana*. The *Padimembers* were slaves of *Kandoorthampuran*. *KandruruppanmooppanandKandr'leppanarethemooppanandLeppan*. *Koottakkavu*, the abode of *Kariyathanistheiraroodham*. They have rights over the *kavu* similar to their *Janmi*, and do their responsibilities towards it. They are small in number. There is a myth regarding this. *Kandoorthampuran*, the *Janmi*, once unethically tricked his slaves the *Thachanadans*. They used to have food at the *Janmi's* residence after work. The *Kandramada* people used to eat there. Once, for fun, a rat snake was stripped and cut into pieces and made into a curry. This was served to the slaves. Trusting the *thampuran*¹⁸, they ate the curry with the rice. In the afternoon, the *thampuran* came to the *padam* to talk to the *Thachanadans*, and enquired about the taste of the curry. They informed that the curry was very tasty. Do you normally eat rat snake, he asked? When they said that they do not, the *thampuran* laughed aloud, making fun of them. Angered at the insult of the *thampuran* by making a noble race like them to eat rat snake meat, the *Thachanadans* bided their time for revenge. That evening, taking advantage of the time that the *thampuran* was resting near the forest, they cleared the forest nearby and rolled the undergrowth into rolls, which were kept around the sleeping *thampuran*. They set fire to the rolls, and the *thampuran* was burnt to death. Although they committed murder, they were clear of the punishment they were about to receive. They were afraid to go to receive their *balli* or wages as grain, and ran away to *Thariyot*¹⁹. Later, there were very few people who remained in this *Padi*. The *Mooppansandthevkkarnan* revived the *tharavad* by protecting the remaining family members, and those adopted from the neighborhood into the *tharavad*.

Malankara Mada: The *kunnu* of the *Malankara madakkaris Malankara mer'*, and their *Padiis* called *ErumakkolliPadi*. They are normally known as *malankarakkar*. Their *malaveethi* extends from *MeppaditoChembra*. The *mooppan* is *Malankarooppan*, and *Malankaraleppan* is the *leppan*. The *Thachanadans* of this *kunnu* do not have *Janmis*. Their rights are at *Meppaditemple*. The *kunnukarare* also believers of *mariyamma*. Their ancestor and clan god *kurikkalisIllanjerikurikkal*.

KonaichamMada: The *kunnu* of the *Konaichammada* people is *Konaichemmmmer* and the *Padi* is *KonnambattaPadi*. The Jain Gownders, known as *Kowndanmarare* their *Janmis*. They do not have *KariyathanorKarivillikavus*. Naturally, the *Adiyankonaichammer* also did not have any *kavu*. The *mooppan* is *konaitooppan / konaichooppan* and *konaitelappan* are the *mothaliandeleri*. The ancestor god is *Vengattukurikkal*.

¹⁶ Plumeria

¹⁷ Oracle

¹⁸ The titular name of landlord

¹⁹Thariyode , a village in Wayanad district 15 km away from Vyththiri

PerinthattuMada: *Perinthattumada* or *perinduddumada* have *Perunthattppadi* as *Padi*. They are the slaves of *NayanmarJanmis*. Their *malaveethi* extends from *vellarankunnu* to *Kalpettathodu*, and the other boundary extends to the coffee estate of *Morarji desai*. Their deities are the hill gods of *Karivilli* and *Kariyathan* of *Perunthattu* temple. The *kunnu* authority is exercised by *Perinthattumooppan* and *Perinthattuleppan*. The ancestor god is *Pekkankurikkal*.

Peymudimada: *Peymudimada* and *Perinthattumada* used to do farm work under the same *Janmi*. Their *Padi s* are connected to each other. The *Padi* name is *Pengirippaadi*. Naturally, *Perinthattu* temple of their *NairJanmi* became under the rights of their *kunnu*. *Peymadooppan* and *Peymadeleppan* controls the *kunnu*, which extends from the *Kalpettathodu* upto *Penangode*, what is today *Kalpetta* hospital.

KappiluMada: *KappunkolliPadiis* the *Padi* of *Kappilumadatharavad*. They lived under *Kottathampuran*, the *Janmi* who controls *Manikkunnu* temple, which became their temple. One boundary is *Kalpettathodu*, and the area extends from *Kottathara* which is near the *Muppainad* tea estate to *Manuvel*. *Kappilappan* or *Kapilooppan* and *Kappileppan* are the authorities of the *kunnu*.

KotturMada: The *Padi* of *Kotturmada* is *KottapPadi/ KottapPadi*. *KappunkolliPadiis* situated on one *kara* in *thrikkapatta*, and *kotturPadiis* on the other *kara*. *Kottooppan* and *Kottelappan* are the authorities to control the *Padi* under *Kotta thampuran*, the *Janmi*. The *Padi* god is *thrikkapattakundi Bhagavathi*, but they have some rights in *Manikkunnu* temple. The ancestor god is *Mattuthoorkurikkal*, but they also worship *Manikkunappankurikkal*.

ChangaraMada: The *Changaramadatharavad* has *Changaramer* as its *kunnu*. The boundaries extend from today's *Mukkilpeedika* to the boundary of *Kappilkollikkar*. *Kottakunnu* temple is the temple of the *Padi* and they have rights over the nearby *Shiva* temple and *Kali* temple. The authorities are *Changarooppan* and *Changarlappan* and the ancestor god is *Changarakurikkal*.

MoothraMada: There is no *Janmi* for the *Moothrammada/Mooththrammarkunnu* and *tharavad*. All matters are controlled by *Moothrooppan* and *Moothralappan*. The ancestral god is *Changarakurikkal* and *kunnu* gods are *kali* and *sivan*.

MeljiMada: The *tharavad* and *Padi* of *Meljimada/Meljimer/Malinjimer* share the same boundaries as *changaramer* and *moothrammar*. The authorities are *Meljjooppan* and *Meljjyalappan*.

Karammada: The *kunnu* of *Karammadatharavad* is known as *Karanammeru/Karanammeru*. They are controlled by *Katooppan* and *Kattelappan*. The boundary of this *kunnu* is *Pukattu*. They used to be *adiyans*²⁰ of *VadakkaraChettis*. Naturally, they have rights at *Vadakkara* temple and *Vazhavatta* temple.

²⁰slaves

Chorammeda: The *Chorammedatharavad* is situated on the *Chorammerkunnu*. They are serfs of *Chettis*, and have *Choruppan* and *Choraleppan* as authorities. Their temples are *Madakkaratemple* and the one below it.

Karikkaramada: The *kunnu* of *Karikkaramada/ Karikkadamada* is known as *Karikkaramer*. They are the fraternal *Padi* of *Karranammeru* and *Chorammer*, and share the same temple and *Janmi*. *Karikkarooppan* and *Karikkarleppan* control the *kunnu*.

Pichattumada: The *kunnu* of *pichattu mar* is known as *Pichattumada*, controlled by *Pichoottooppan* and *Pichoottelappan*. The boundaries of the *kunnu* are from *Kadamittu* to *Karakkolli*. *Chettis* are their *Janmis*, and their *Athimattam – Kariyathankavus* are their *kunnukavus*.

Kadamittumada: The *kunnu* of *Kadamittumada* is *Kadamittumer*. *Chettis* are their *Janmis*, and their authorities are *Kadamittumooppan* and *Kadamittuelappan*. The area of the *kunnu* is from *PerumPadikunnu* to *Cheenappallu*. The god is *Kariyathan* of the *Kadalumada* temple.

Ulukkattumada: The *kunnu* of *Ulukkaattumada/ Ulukkattumada/ Olukkattumadatharavad* is *Ulukkattumar*. Under the *Chettis*, *Ulukkattooppan* and *Ulukkattelleppan* control the *tharavad*. Their deity and rights are at *ChellangodKariyathankavu*.

Maldamada: The fraternal *tharavad* of *Pichattumada* and *Kadamittumada* is *Maldamada*. *Maldammer* is the *kunnu* and lineage is *Maldooppan* and *Maldeleppan*. The deities are *CheruvayalKariyathankavu* and *Pingaleri* temple.

Muttillumada: The *kunnu* of *Muttillumada* is *Muttillumer*. *Muttilooppan* and *muttilappan* control the *tharavad*, which extends upto *Kottathara* hill.

Choorumada: *Choorooppan* is the *mooppan* of *Choorumada*, and the *leppan* is *Choorleppan*. They are the slaves of *Nilambur KovilakamJanmis*. The god of the *kunnu* is *ManalathuKariyathan*.

Kurjadamada: *Kurjada/ Kurjjer' /Kurumcher'* are from *CheengeriPadi*. Their boundaries are from *Cheengeri* temple to *Cheengavallam*. The other extent is till *Marthattu* hill. Their *Janmis* are *Chettis*, and *Kurjerooppan/ (Kurjettooppan/ Kurumchoothappan)* and *Kurjereleppan (Kurjetteleppan)* are the authorities. The mighty hill goddess *Cheengerithambrattiamma* is their deity, and everyone is afraid of her. The mother goddess had ordered that a dam should not be built at *Cheengeri*, but the government went ahead and built a dam angering the goddess. The myth is that around 100 people have lost their lives, drowning in the water, and *Thachanadans* believe that this was due to the anger of the goddess.

Marthattumada: The *malaveethi* of the *kunnu* of *Marthattumadatharavad* is from *Cheengollam* to *Marthattu*. The *kunnu* deity is *MarthattuKariyathan*. Although they do not have *Janmis*, they consider the *Kowndans* of the estates in which they work, like their *Janmis*. *Marthoottooppan* and *Marthattelleppan* look after the affairs as *muthali* and *eleri*.

NerjjerMada: The *PadiofNerjjerMada* is known as *CheengollamPadi*. *Nerthooppa*/*Nerjooppa* and *Nerjeleppa* are the authorities. The deity is andoor temple *Kariyathan*.

PengiriMada: The *kunnu* of *Pengirikkar* is in *Muttill*. *Kowndans* are the *Janmis*, and *Pengirooppa* and *Pengireleppa* are the headmen of the community. The temple is *Thrikkapetta* temple, where they have rights.

MethilMada: The *mooppa* of *Methilkar* is *Methilooppa* and *Methileleppa* is the *eleppa*. The *Kowndars* are the *Janmis*.

E. The Matri- Phratries and Marti-Clans of Thachanadan Mooppa

The divisions of phratry and clan are clear in the *Thachanadan* community. Phratries are known as *chali*. Within the phratry, the community is divided into clans. *Kulam/kolam/mer'/paddi*²¹ are the terms for clans, and there are 101 in number, which have not been documented completely. Their belief is that members of a clan are fraternal in relationship, thus exogamous and members should follow *pettupela*²², *chavupela*²³ and other taboos.



Fig.2 Showing different Phratries

As it is passed from mother to child, it is a matrilineal phratry and matrilineal clan. Many *chalis* and *kulams* have been completely obliterated in the absence of women. The important *chalis* are as follows:

- *Ettuchali/ettoorchali*
- *Naluchali*
- *Moonnuchali/Muthachali*
- *Randuchali*

There are many phratries with the same name – *randuchali*, *naluchali*.

F. Myths and Phratry Division

There are several myths about the separation of *chalis*. One of them is as follows:

²¹Its Paddy(പദ്ദി) not Padi (പടടി)

²² Birth taboos

²³ Death taboos

There will be *karanavars*²⁴ in the clans of *ThachanadanMooppans*. Once, in an ancient time, there were no *karanavars* in the clan. At that time there was an old lady of a great family and position. All eight clans without any *karanavar* came to be done under the old woman. She was wise and brave, and ruled all eight clans without any problem. She brought all eight clans under a single phraternity. In short, *ettoorchali* came into being, and the *karanavar* position came to the old woman.

a) Clans of *Ettuchali/Edoorchali/Ettoorchali*

- *Mavummer*
- *Mangadammer*
- *Kottammer*
- *Pommilammer*
- *Lerkammer*
- *Kolukkpaddi*
- *Vellakkandanpaddi*
- *Miriyakkammer*

b) Emergence of *NaluChali*

As time passed, the old woman aged, and the two youngsters of the clans grew into fine men. From each *kulam*, the leaders separated from the *ettuchali* and established clans of four *chalis* – *naluchali* – each.

Naluchali 1

- *Mavummer*
- *Kottammer*
- *Mangadammer*
- *Lerkammer*

Naluchali 2

- *Pommilamer*
- *Kolukkapaddi*
- *Vellakkandanpaddi*
- *Miriyakkamer*

c) Emergence of *Moonnuchali*

Later, within the *naluchali*, when each *kulam* got a *karanavar*, they separated from the *kulam*. When one of the four left, *moonnuchali* or *muthachali* came into being, which were phratries of three *kulams* each.

Moonnuchali1

- *Mavummer*
- *Kottamar*
- *Mangadamar*

Moonnuchali2

- *Pommilamer*
- *Lerkamer*
- *Miriyakkapaddi*

***Randuchali1*²⁵**

- *Kolukkapaddi*
- *Vellakkandanpaddi*

Most of these phratries have disappeared. Only the elders of the community remember these divisions and have some knowledge about them. Again, the Phratries divided and clans joined to form new phratries. They are phratries of three clan number 3 and phratries of two clan number 2 & 3.

Moonnuchali3/munichikkar'

Randuchali 2

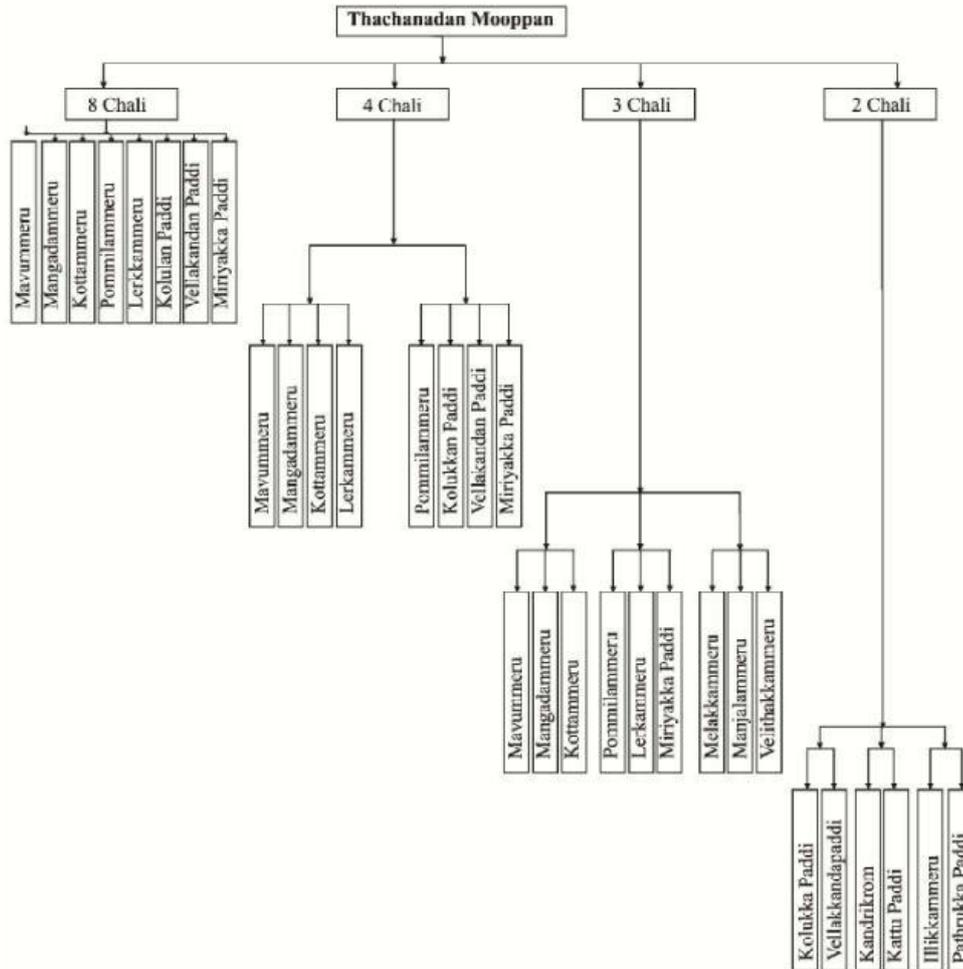
Randuchali3

²⁴Male head man of the family

²⁵ The remaining clans joined into phratries of two *kulams* each, known as *randuchali*.

- *Melakkamer*
- *Manjakkoomer*
- *Vekkuttathakkamer*
- *Kandikrom/kantrukrom*
- *Kattupaddi*
- *Illikkamer*
- *Patrukkapaddi*

Figure 3 Showing the matri- Phratries and Clans of Thachanadan.



Other than these, there are some others which are known by community members:

- *Chennammer*
- *Mattupaddi/matupaddi*
- *Mungammer/musdammer*
- *Veluthakandanmer*
- *Mothrkkandanpaddi*
- *Madammer*
- *Mammer*
- *Karuppaddi*

There would be *chalimuthassi*'s/ *muthaachee*'s²⁶ to protect and punish members of each *chali*. They believe that these *muthassis* have special powers and authority over them, as the lineage is through women.

²⁶The female ancestor spirit.

There are no special *poojas* for these *muthassis*, which are regarded as the souls of ancestors. Each *chali* will have a *karanavar*²⁷ known as *thevkkarnan/ chalithevkkarnanan*. Besides these *thevkkarnans*, there would be the biggest /highest *thevkkarnan* who is the authority over all 101 *chalis*. He takes the final decision on matters relating to *chali, kolam* and *kunnu*. There will be a *kanayam* in the hand of *valiyathevkkarnan*, which is a *kanayam* of *chalis*. The *valiyathevkkarnan* will also have another *kanayam*. When the *thevkkarnan* dies, the *velichapad/oracle* will discover the new *thevkkarnan*, and the *kanayam* will be given to the new *thevkkarnan*.

G. Kanayam and Social Divisions

Kanayam is a very sacred object in which the ancestors reside. "It is an object of worship bearing the legacy of generations and a tangible concept of ancestral worship" (ChummarChoondal, 2011, 79). It is also an object denoting authority, right and position and place. There are *kanayams* for each of the four authorities - *Thachanadan* community as a whole, Phratry, clan, and *Padi/kunnu* (geographical division).

The *Kanayam* in the possession of the main *KaranavarThevkkarnan*, who is the authority over the entire *Thachanadan* community spanning all *chalis* and *kunnus*, is the main *Kanayam*. This single *Kanayam* is handed over to the new *Thevkkarnan* by the *Velichapad*²⁸ upon the death of the tribe leader *thevkkarnan*. The Clan *kanayamkulakanayam* is the second. The *Mooppa*, the oldest person of the *chali*, is considered the *chalithevkkarnan* and keeps the *kanayam* with him. The *Mooppans* of *kunnus* and *Padi s* have a *kanayam* as a symbol of authority, called *kunnukanayam*. This is handed over through families.

In the olden days there would be a *kanayappera*, a house meant to keep the *kanayam*. Its door opened to the outside. The *kanayam* is hung from the roof at a prominent position denoting its importance as an abode of *karanavars*. Spirits such as *Kurikkanmar, chalimuthachis, thambayi (kuliyan)*, all are in the *kanayam*. *Bhagavathi* is not found in the *kanayappera*.

a) The Structure of *Kanayam*

The important things in the *kanayam* are:

1. *Tharmayam*
2. Peacock feathers
3. *Koyilathalayan*
4. *Cholam*
5. *Alak* (to make baskets)
6. *Poddi*
7. Swords
8. Baskets
9. Canes
10. Red silk *chuvannapattu*
11. Spears
12. Deer antlers

²⁷Current head of the phratry also called *Karanavar*

²⁸ oracle

Each object signifies an important matter. These days, *kanayam* is kept in a prominent place in houses, and not in a particular building. A space is arranged as a *thara*, and named the *karanasthanam*²⁹. The *kanayam* is kept secure on the wall close to this *thara*. When the *mooppa*n changes, the *karanavasthanam* also changes to the house of the new *mooppa*n. The *karanavasthanam* of *kunnudo* do not change like this, as it is traditional. The elders of the *chali* get the *kanayam* of the *chali*.

Conclusion

The *Thachanadan Mooppans* live in *Padi s* consisting of many *peras*. A nuclear family life in a *pera*. When the children get married, they build a *pera* in the *Padi* and shift residence. The nuclear family arrangement was in vogue from early days. But when the *Padi* system consisting of groups of houses was ruined, the *Thachanadans* moved into houses provided by government or other houses. These days, young and old live together in these houses.

They used to follow *Marumakkathayam*. Descent, inheritance and succession were all through the maternal line. Earlier, when someone died, his succession right was for his nephews alone. Even if there were no nephews or nieces, the inheritance could not be transferred to the children. It was in the seventies, that when a man with right over 12 *kommas* (*huge storing vessel*) of paddy died without any successors, the grain was poured into the mud of the paddy field and buried, while his children looked on. Nowadays, children receive inheritance, but the *chali* (phraternity) and *kolam* (clan) are matrilineal and *kunnu, Padi, tharavad* geographical divisions are patrilineal.

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²⁹The divine place or abode of ancestor spirit

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