

ABSTRACT

Koṅku is the name of distinctive geographic and social region in the West Central corner of Madras State in India. The area encompasses much of the present Coimbatore District, plus parts of Salem, Madurai and Tiruchirappalli. It is roughly 8,500 square miles in extent and has a present population of about 5,000,000. Koṅku is comprised of a single, broad upland plain. The area is dry and, in addition, rainfall varies greatly in quantity from year to year. The region is roughly bounded in each of the four directions by high hills, while the plain is cut into sections by three important tributaries of the Cauvery river. The peasant inhabitants can name these distinctive physical features. They further describe the area in terms of its sacred geography. Koṅku has seven sacred hills dedicated to Murukan and seven riverside temples built in the name of Cīva. The region is further identified with a long epic or ballad which recounts the folk history of the area in some detail.

In the past Koṅku also enjoyed a distinctive political geography. It had four great titled Kavut̄ar families, called Paṭṭakkārar, and 24 internal political divisions. Each division had its own series of caste headmen and its own Cīva temple. Within the 24 political divisions or nāṭu were kirāman, units responsible for the payment of taxes to higher authorities. It appears that it was normal for the political and economic power within a kirāman to be controlled by a single lineage, and at times even a single family. This lineage or family undertook to ~~manage~~ organize and to oversee the exploitation of land and labour resources in their area, and also to mediate outside demands. In return they enjoyed considerable local prestige. With Independence the Indian Government has made minor modifications on these kirāman areas to form Panchayats, the basic administrative and electoral unit today. The

pattern of dominance by individual families or groups of families within the kirānān area continues.

Rural Koṅku is dominated by one caste, the KavunṬars. Roughly one out of every two village residents in the region belongs to this community. They own about 90% of the land and they control political power in the area. Brahmans, on the other hand, constitute only about 1% of the general population. These people are poor and they exert little influence outside their specialized ritual sphere. It is the KavunṬars who set the character of life in the region. KavunṬars are emotionally attached to their land and they openly approve of a diet which includes meat and alcohol. KavunṬar dress, KavunṬar speech, and KavunṬar ceremonies set the standard for all the service castes who are dependent on them. In addition to KavunṬars, representatives of about fifteen other important castes, and a dozen minor ones, reside in Koṅku. These castes are ranked by rules of ritual pollution and social precedence into a general hierarchical order.

Leaving the Brahmans to one side, the rest of Koṅku society was traditionally split into two vertical halves. This division largely followed caste lines, but some groups split at a subcaste level. These two groups were like moieties or ritually opposed halves. They were called the "castes of the right-hand" and the "castes of the left-hand", respectively. The first group was composed of the KavunṬars and the various castes which were economically and ritually associated with them. The right-hand castes were tied to the land and (via the KavunṬars) they largely controlled the political and economic resources of the region.

The left-hand, by contrast, was composed largely of the trading, artisan and labouring communities. The left, as the right, had its own body of ritual servants. These castes were more mobile than the right-hand. They controlled many of the liquid assets and skills but not land usage. The

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two groups, it appears, could be overtly distinguished by the inverse directions in which women of the two moieties wrapped their saris and also by the inverse way in which they wore their marriage necklaces. Active rivalry between these two divisions began to fade about a hundred years ago, and nowmost people can not even remember which division their community was identified with. Despite the absence of an overt division in the present, many of the social differences between the castes of these two groups remain. Because of their numbers and their control over the basic resource, land, the right-hand castes continue to relegate members of the left-hand community to an inferior social position in rural areas.

Most kirāman have a Cīva temple where a yearly festival is held. More important, however, in terms of participation by local residents, is the temple dedicated to the kirāman goddess. During the annual festival for this deity, ritual representatives of each of the right-hand castes have a special duty to perform. Women from each settlement of the area, led by the settlement leader, must bring offerings to the goddess on the final day of celebration. The name of this kirāman deity is usually Māriyamman. Her story explains how she was born from a well on the land and how the right-hand castes have sprung from the fire in Cīva's hand to serve her. She is also associated with the control of rain and the well-being of the crops.

None of the left-hand castes have a specific ritual duty to perform during the Māriyamman festival. According to one informant, women of this moiety were actually forbidden, in the past, to enter the festival area with offerings. Instead, the left-hand castes are strongly associated by folklore, and by custom, with a distinct and rival goddess, AṅkāLamman. This latter deity is not associated with the land nor with the kirāman area. She was born in heaven and only came to earth to wander into Koṅku after she was adult. AṅkāLamman's story and festival ceremonies associate her strongly

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with pregnancy and childbirth, not with the crops or a particular kirāman area.

There are also considerable differences between the right and the left-hand castes in the details of kinship custom. The right-hand castes all use one kin terminology and all have a ritualized preference for an actual MBD in marriage. The higher left-hand castes differ slightly in their terminological usage, and a few of these latter communities are distinct by having a ritualized preference for the FZD. Members of the left-hand moiety also place more emphasis on the payment of dowry, on literacy and on the patrilineal joint family. They stress vegetarianism and their life-cycle rituals resemble, in many ways, those of the Brahman community. All castes, however, favour tight intermarriage and look with approval on matches with actual cross cousins and sister's daughters. The percentage of these close marriages is highest among families of average wealth, particularly where there is some distinctive privilege or family tradition to preserve. Both the very wealthy and the very poor tend to marry more distant relations.

The right-hand castes, furthermore, have a strong tradition of male descent clans. These clans are named and exogamous. Each clan has a clan shrine and sub-clan groupings may also have shrines. Considering the very large Kavuntar population, this community is almost devoid of subcastes. Other castes have more subcaste divisions, but fewer and less elaborately differentiated clans. Castes of the left-hand moiety also have fewer stories about their clans, only the rare clan shrine, and no tradition of a serial precedence, by clan, at festivals. At the top of the social hierarchy the clan traditions of the two moieties are distinct. As one descends, the castes of these groups gradually become more similar. The lowest communities of the left-hand, however, have a two moiety system of their own. These lowest castes are nearly excluded from the larger social division, just as

the Brahmans have largely remained above it.

Clan and kirāman temples highlight the importance of a hierarchical order of clan and caste rights within a given geographic area. Local folklore often provides an explanatory story of these traditions of ritualized precedence. Disputes over ritual ranking are common and are the form in which factional feeling within the dominant caste is generally expressed. Thus the Kavuntars of many settlements in the region are split by economic interests into a wealthy group and a poor group, but their rivalry is expressed by disputes over which family or lineage should enjoy precedence at festivals.

Temples and temple ceremonies also highlight other interesting themes. One is the repeated occurrence of primary-secondary or senior-junior pairs. The subjects set in conjunction may be gods, men or objects. The particular association may vary from place to place, but the hierarchical framework used is constant. Temple ritual also focuses on the importance of boundaries separating states, places and objects of greater and lesser purity. Boundaries are frequently crossed by means of blood sacrifice or, alternatively, by the use of a white, red, white sequence in the ritual bath. Red also has other associations with pollution and danger in ritual, but red against a background of white is found to have a favourable association with reproduction, health and prosperity. Green and black are also important ritual colours.

All ceremonies are geared to a detailed knowledge of auspicious and inauspicious times. All adults have a general familiarity with this subject, but for important events a specialist must be consulted. The auspiciousness of a particular moment can be increased by particular ritual actions. The most common and important of these is the boiling of a pot of rice or milk. Indeed, the heating and swelling up of white substances is closely linked to the well-being of the universe at large. Heating and cooling are also

of fundamental importance in the passage of various stages in the life cycle, in medicine and in dietary regulations.

The importance of female as a counterpart to male is clear in social custom as well as in the superhuman realm. The purity of women is stressed in ritual and in the home. Through their ritual cleanliness and sexual abstinence women store up power. This power is often referred to as a kind of heat. Such power may be transferred from women to husbands, brothers, sons, and even to the clan as a whole, if men are properly respectful and responsible. Men must please and protect women or risk their anger and the devastation which the release of stored heat can bring.

Divinity in its most general sense is spoken of by Kōnku peasants as asexual. However, gods are usually worshipped in male/female pairs. The great gods of the region are Cīva and his son Murukan. In this form they are distant and inscrutable. Their female counterpart is represented only by the presence of wives or consorts. In temples dedicated to kirāman goddesses, however, it is the female deity who is prominent, with a husband or lover only in the background. Still more directly identified with individual social groups are the clan deities. Here the prominent pair are a group of seven young girls and their male guardian. As one moves through these lesser manifestations of the divine and into the spirit world the deities worshipped become less inscrutable, but also less just. With the ghosts of people who have died an untimely death, superhuman beings become open to bargaining and finally to direct manipulation by living men.

Although the overt distinction between the right and the left-hand societies has faded to obscurity in Kōnku, as indeed all over South India, many social differences between these two groups remain. This change may have come about due to the increased political integration of the South and to the unprecedented facilities for travel and for supraregional cooperation

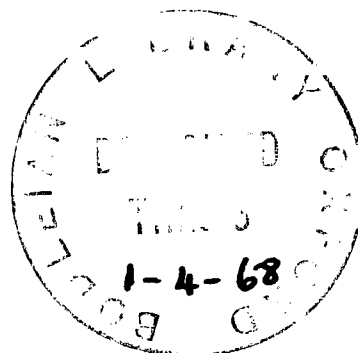
which accompanied British rule. It appears that this traditional alignment of interests by society is no longer relevant as a means of identification and cooperation over large areas. With unrivalled peace and political union the history of new factional alignments has begun. Despite this and many other modern changes, however, certain underlying themes in the society of the region remain. Traditional associations and social customs are being rapidly challenged, but many of the basic themes outlined above are likely to persist.

This study is based on a two-year stay in India, about twenty months of it in the Konku region. Most of the details were collected in one kirānam in the centre of this area, but the major themes were carefully spot-checked elsewhere. The research was financed jointly by The National Science Foundation of America and The American Institute of Indian Studies.

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SOCIAL AND CONCEPTUAL ORDER IN KONKU: A REGION
OF SOUTH INDIA

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PREFACE

This study is about Koṅku, an area of South India located in the West Central corner of Madras State. It is mainly concerned with providing a précis of the order or pattern latent in the everyday activities and social relations of peasants who live in this region. The description, however, is largely derived from observations made around Kāṅkayan, a small central part of Koṅku, and from informants' accounts gathered there. Despite the limited area over which the majority of the present information was collected, however, early observations have been spot-checked for accuracy elsewhere. Any variations in the regional pattern which were discovered have been noted. Since no one has yet made a general sociological or statistical survey of the area there is little other material available which even attempts this wide perspective. In order to avoid emotive words, the terms 'order' and 'conceptual' have been substituted for a more traditional title of this account which might have read: 'Social and Religious Structure in Koṅku Society.'

The decision to conduct a study somewhere in the Koṅku region was made long before reaching India. This resolve, indeed, stemmed from a suggestion made by Professor Louis Dumont to me in Paris as early as May, 1964. The actual selection of a village for intensive study, however, involved a lengthy series of decisions. Although I arrived in India in mid-October, 1964, I spent my first six weeks travelling as a tourist. It was only on December 1st, of that year, that I reached Coimbatore, one of the main cities, and asked for a room at the Y.M.C.A. There I was

tutored for two months in conversational Tamil by a school teacher. My free time was spent in making acquaintances with various families and students to whom I was introduced.

Gradually I began to inquire about Koñku. Soon I learnt that the area around the town of Kāñkayam was one of the important old centres of the region's culture. Kāñkayam was characterized as socially conservative and it was also conveniently near the geographic centre of the area. If I were to concentrate on a study of the traditional and rural side of life in Koñku, it seemed to me that a village linked to this market town might be a good place to begin. Thus I began to collect the names of various people living in Kāñkayam and to prepare to move out of Coimbatore city.

One of the women I met during this period turned out to be of great help in selecting a village, and she acted as my respected female associate during my initial trips into rural areas. This woman was a young widow (of 35) from a conservative merchant family, who had turned to school and then to social work, following her husband's death less than a year after her child marriage at the age of twelve. She and I made the first trip to Kāñkayam together. There we spent about a week, meeting people and asking about villages in the outlying countryside. We were lucky to find a doctor in Kāñkayam who was a distant relative of my companion, and who was familiar with the villages in the area because of his many rural patients. He generously described a number of settlements and drove us about the countryside in his car. In this way we managed to visit anywhere between ten and fifteen villages which might have made a possible base for me.

When it came to the process of final selection, I brought to bear several criteria. Only villages which approximated to most of these

were considered. The points I held uppermost in my mind at that time were the following:

- 1) That the village be at least five or six miles from a town and preferably off a main road.
- 2) That it not be obviously and exclusively dominated by one landlord.
- 3) That it have people from all or almost all the major castes of the area settled, either within its boundaries or nearby.
- 4) That the village be reasonably large, but not so large so as to prevent knowing everyone (thus 100 families at a rough approximation).
- 5) That the village be an old one with an interesting array of temples.
- 6) That my introduction to the settlement be through a local person who was both congenial and apparently respected, but who was neither a large landowner nor a man of low caste.

The availability of a house to live in, and the possibility of employing a respected older woman as a cook were further considerations, but ones which I was determined to leave out of consideration after an initial selection of location had been made.

On the basis of these criteria I originally selected a village some six miles North of Kāṅkayam. My introduction there was through a government midwife, and it was agreed that I would initially live with her and continue to explore the area further on foot, accompanying her on her daily round of the nearby settlements. The details of where I would eventually settle and who would cook for me were left open. After a few days in this village, however, it became apparent that this particular midwife had been a poor choice, that her sexual liaisons with various men were discussed and were disapproved of by local residents, and that she was associated with an unpopular political faction which was about to lose a local panchayat election.

After spending a further few days, by invitation, with a leading

of the opposite political faction, I finally decided that the initial acquaintances I had made in this village did not augur well for intensive fieldwork. I feared that, as the weeks progressed, I might become even further imprisoned in an elaborate mesh of political and social jealousies. Thus, after about ten days in this area I finally decided to extricate myself and to move back to Kānkayam. There I was rejoined by my widowed friend, and together we re-opened the search for a suitable village. On the second attempt we struck upon one some five miles East of the town, where we had had an initial introduction to a roadside cloth merchant, through a social worker from Coimbatore who had once lived there.

This village, Olappālaiyam, met all the criteria noted above, except that it was quite close to a main road. Leaving this one reservation, I finally decided to settle in Olappālaiyam, after my third exploratory visit there. The roadside merchant and his friend, a government agent for agricultural development, helped me find a house and a very congenial housekeeper. My friend from Coimbatore stayed with me until I had actually moved into the house and left only after I had settled on my new cook and companion. Never for a day during the opening weeks was I without the company of an older woman, and thus chaperoned in the eyes of local residents. My reservations about the village being close to a main road, and therefore considerably influenced by contact with townsmen, faded gradually. They were finally overcome when I discovered an important compensatory feature, that the roadside shops could serve as an excellent nerve centre for learning about people and events in neighboring settlements.

My house turned out to be very comfortable. It belonged to a member of the dominant KavunṬar caste, but had been vacant for a number of years

as there had previously been a series of unfortunate deaths associated with it. These had, however, faded sufficiently into the past so that people were no longer very concerned about the matter. The fact, however, that the main entrance to the house was from the West never ceased to slightly trouble my cook and living companion, who always blamed her colds and stomach aches on this unfortunate architectural feature.

My greatest stroke of luck, however, was in finding this companion, herself. Pāppammal was a strong, nimble woman who showed a shrewd intelligence. She was a *navā* *brāhmin*, that is to say, from a caste of local priests and cooks. This community, I soon learned, followed all the ritual customs of the dominant *Navā* *brāhmins*, but were slightly beneath them in wealth and in general social prestige. After a while Pāppammal began to call me her 'daughter', and her youngest son, Sundaram, became my 'brother'. He, too, was intelligent and conscientious. In a few months I decided to formally employ him as a clerk. Thus we formed both a family and a kind of work unit, in which I was both a 'daughter' and an economic mainstay.

Neither Pāppammal nor Sundaram knew any English. Pāppammal was totally illiterate, but he had the advantage of four years of local schooling. In addition, Sundaram was self-educated far beyond his formal training. Gradually he became responsible for recording all my *brāhmin* taxes and for many other jobs as well. Pāppammal and her son served as the most important sources of information throughout my stay. However, about 20 other people in *Clappālaiyam* and in neighbouring settlements are responsible for substantial, if secondary, contributions.

The material on which the following study is based was actually gathered during a period of about twenty months of fieldwork, from February 1965 to September 1966. Most of this time I spent living in

Olappālaiyam, but I did make frequent visits to other settlements within about a ten mile radius. Beyond this area of intimate acquaintance, I also attempted a much briefer survey of the entire region. This survey consisted of a series of short excursions in various directions, including one intensive trip of a week through the villages of the Eastern and Southern portions of the area. Five or six shorter trips of a day or two are the basis of my knowledge of towns and villages in the West, Northwest and North of Koṅku. In addition, I made one visit of several days to a village near Bhavani, in the Northeast corner of the region.

These trips to the various parts of Koṅku, described above, were supplemented by questioning people who had lived elsewhere in the region for considerable periods of time. My familiarity with most of the important towns in Koṅku, and, in particular, with its largest city, Coimbatore, is also important. At various times, I had the opportunity to travel across the boundaries of Koṅku into parts of the neighbouring districts of Salem, Tiruchi, and Madurai. Finally, I made two tours to other regions of Tamilnad during my stay in India, in an attempt to place Koṅku in the perspective of South India as a whole.

The people I found to live with, fortunately, were respected members of the local community. As such my entry into life in Olappālaiyam was made easy. Nonetheless, many people were, during the first few months, understandably unclear about who I was and why I had come. During this initial period I moved about very little. In the main, I simply kept my door open for the curious to come and visit me. Many people did and Pāppammal also shared detailed descriptions of what I was like and what I did with her friends. Also, until the previous place I had been, I found myself associated with one of the few families who were, because of their priestly status, relatively neutral in local disputes and rivalries.

Although there were opposing factions within the community, I discovered that, because of their position, I could soon move with fair ease on both sides.

When people asked me directly why I had come, I used to explain that the American government, which periodically sent food to India, had also sent many students to learn about the people and the way of life in this country that was, to us, far away. After a two year stay, I explained, we were expected to return to America and to teach our people about India. This explanation was, it seemed, always accepted as reasonable by my questioners.

As far as I am aware, there was no period in which my presence in Clappālaiyam was treated with great suspicion or resentment. Many months later I heard that there had been an early speculation amongst some that I might be a possible omen of, or forerunner to, a new period of British rule, and that, if so, prohibition (a much resented policy of the present government) might soon be lifted. It is difficult to know how to assess this story, but, if true, it would indicate, if anything, a bizarre kind of welcome.

Altogether I spent about 23 months in India collecting material for this study. During this period my research was supported jointly by the National Science Foundation of America and the American Institute of Indian Studies. I would like to thank both of these foundations for making the present work possible. In addition, special thanks are due to my supervisor, Dr. R. K. Jain, and to Professor Louis Dumont who has for many years been both an encouraging mentor and a helpful critic. Without the patience, support and enthusiasm of Pārammal and Sundaram this study could not have been written.

A Note on the Transcription of Tamil Words

All proper names are rendered in their current English spelling without diacritical marks where there is a standard form in use. An exception is made for the names of small towns and settlements within a ten mile radius of the village studied. These latter, plus all other Tamil words and proper names, are rendered into English from their written Tamil equivalent according to the following scheme:

Short vowels: a, e, i, o, u

Long vowels: ā, ē, ī, ō, ū

Consonants:

க -- k	ந -- ñ	ய -- y
ச -- c	ள -- n	ர -- r
ட -- ṭ	ண -- Ṇ	ல -- l
த -- t	ள -- ṅ	வ -- v
ற -- ṛ	ற -- ṛ	ள -- L
ப -- p	ம -- m	ர -- R
ஸ -- s		
ஜ -- j		

A Note on the Pronunciation of Tamil Words

Capital T and N represent retroflex sounds, made by curling the tongue back and pressing it against the middle palate. The first is a plosive, the second a nasal. R is pronounced by raising the tongue, curling it far back towards the soft palate and letting air pass around it. L is pronounced in the same way, but with the tip of the tongue pressed against the hard palate. It corresponds to the American rl in girl. There is no significant difference between the pronunciation of n and of ṅ. One is used as an initial letter, the other as a final one. The letter t represents a dental and not a palatal sound.

An initial k is unvoiced and unaspirated. When alone, however, in the centre of a word, k sounds like h. K becomes aspirated when doubled, and is voiced but unaspirated, so as to sound like g, when preceded by the nasals ṅ, ṇ, or N. Thus the name of the region, Koṅku, sounds as if it were spelt 'Kongu'. The caste name KavunTar sounds like 'Gaunda', and the name of the goddess Mākāli, like 'Mahali'. C in an initial position is pronounced as ch, or as s, if it is representing a foreign sound. The caste name Ceṭṭiyār, for example, is pronounced 'Chettiyar', but caṇi, the Sanskrit word for the planet Saturn, is pronounced 'sani'. In Tamil the difference between ch and s is not phonemic.

Plate 1: Everyday Scenes And Activities

- a) A Storekeeper
- b) A Potter
- c) The Olappālaiyam School
- d) A Young Pupil
- e) The House Of A Farmer
- f) A Local Barber
- g) A Woman Preparing Threads For Weaving

PLATE 1



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)



(g)

PART I: TERRITORY, TEMPLE AND CASTE

I A) Koñku: A Region in South India

1) Geography, Agriculture and the People

Koñku is a distinctive and colourful region. Geographically it comprises a single, wide, upland plain, surrounded by a tight ring of mountains. Its pattern of rainfall is distinctive and it has a relatively temperate climate by comparison with other areas of Madras State. The people of the region are often described by other Southerners as spirited and hard-working. As the area is dry, water-borne bacteria and insects pose less of a threat to health than elsewhere in India, and perhaps for this reason, the population is relatively robust and energetic. At the same time, because of the dryness, farming yields meagre returns. The people depend on wells and infrequent rain, and the work of irrigating crops with the precious supply of water is very demanding.

Those who live in Koñku know that their lot is tough and they often tell folktales which compare the Koñku region with the more fertile river delta area to the southeast. The response to this hardship is, generally speaking, a fierce pride. Several well-known stories tell of men who refused to wed an attractive bride from a fertile area until they had, by superhuman efforts, improved irrigation facilities and thus made their own lands blossom. In this sense Koñku might be said to resemble areas of Rajasthan, while contrasting with the neighbouring district of Tanjore.

Koñku, as a whole, is dominated by a powerful non-Brahman caste called KavunTar, who are identified with this region by people all over the South. These KavunTars are said to be quick-tempered, strong-willed, and to place a positive value on meat and alcohol in the diet. They regard hard work in the fields highly and are prepared to exert themselves to make the land produce.

Koñku has, however, suffered an exceptionally variegated political history. It has been conquered and heavily taxed time and time again, and it has often found itself a battleground of the Chola, Chera and Pandiya kings. This does not seem to have uprooted the traditional population and culture. However, it has perhaps made this culture more tenacious and taught generations of peasants that they must be prepared to struggle against adverse circumstances for their existence. In the eyes of one well-known journalist and general observer, 'It is highly probable that given even less facilities, the Coimbatore farmer would show better response and higher achievements in increasing production than the mirasdar of Tanjore.'¹

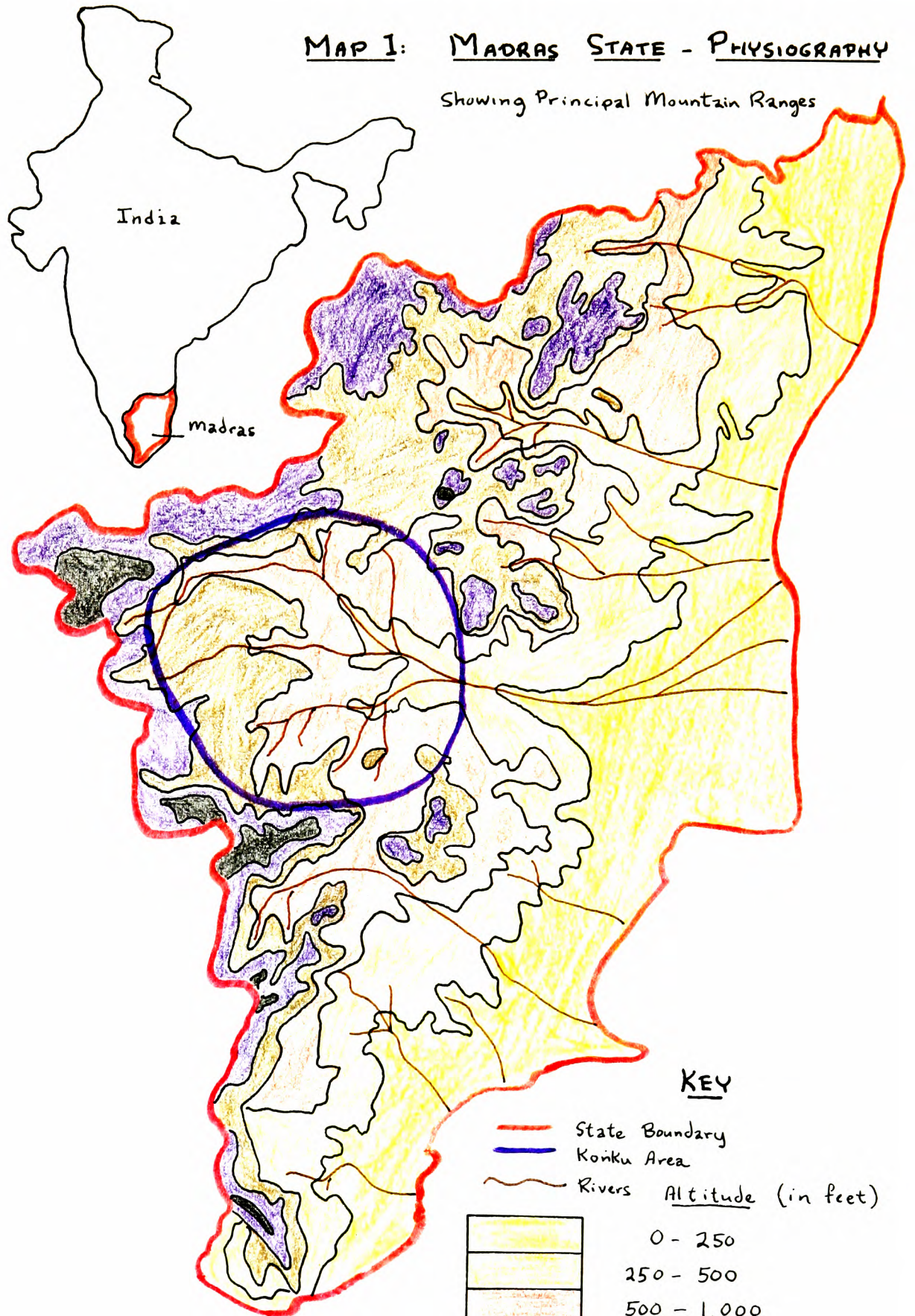
There has been surprisingly little written about the Koñku area, despite its sociological and historical interest. The earliest period of Tamil literature makes several references to Koñku as an independent region.² However, three other great nāṭu or kingdoms, the Chola, Chera and Pandiya, are better known. This is because Koñku never had a famous

¹ Kusun Hair, Blossoms in the Dust (London, Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1962, p. 190.

² See the Sangam poems: Silappadikaram, Vraiperukatturai (2) and Puran (373), referred to by M. Arakiaswami in The Konga Country, (Madras University Press, 1956), p. 20.

MAP I: MADRAS STATE - PHYSIOGRAPHY

Showing Principal Mountain Ranges



Source: Census of India 1961
 Volume IX, Madras
 Part IX, Atlas of Madras
 State
 Adopted from map 4.

Scale: One inch = 42 miles

independent line of kings and because for centuries the area was forested, isolated and poor in relation to other parts of the South. Eight hundred to a thousand years ago, when the Chola was in full bloom, Koṅku was looked on as a pioneer area, a region for expansion and new settlement. Yet, it was considered highly desirable as a territory and was repeatedly held up as the prize to be awarded at the outcome of a battle between great kings.

The Koṅku area has never been studied from a sociological point of view. What histories are available are largely copies of one another, referring back, ultimately, to one Tamil source.³ There are also a half-handful of local poets who, priding themselves on their literacy, have written down scattered bits of the region's oral tradition in high Tamil.⁴ The lack of interest in Koṅku from better trained, academic circles is probably due to its variegated political history and its lack of glory as an independent empire. The existence of distinctive and colourful regional traditions, and of a series of neatly ordered units on the level of local administration have been largely overlooked.

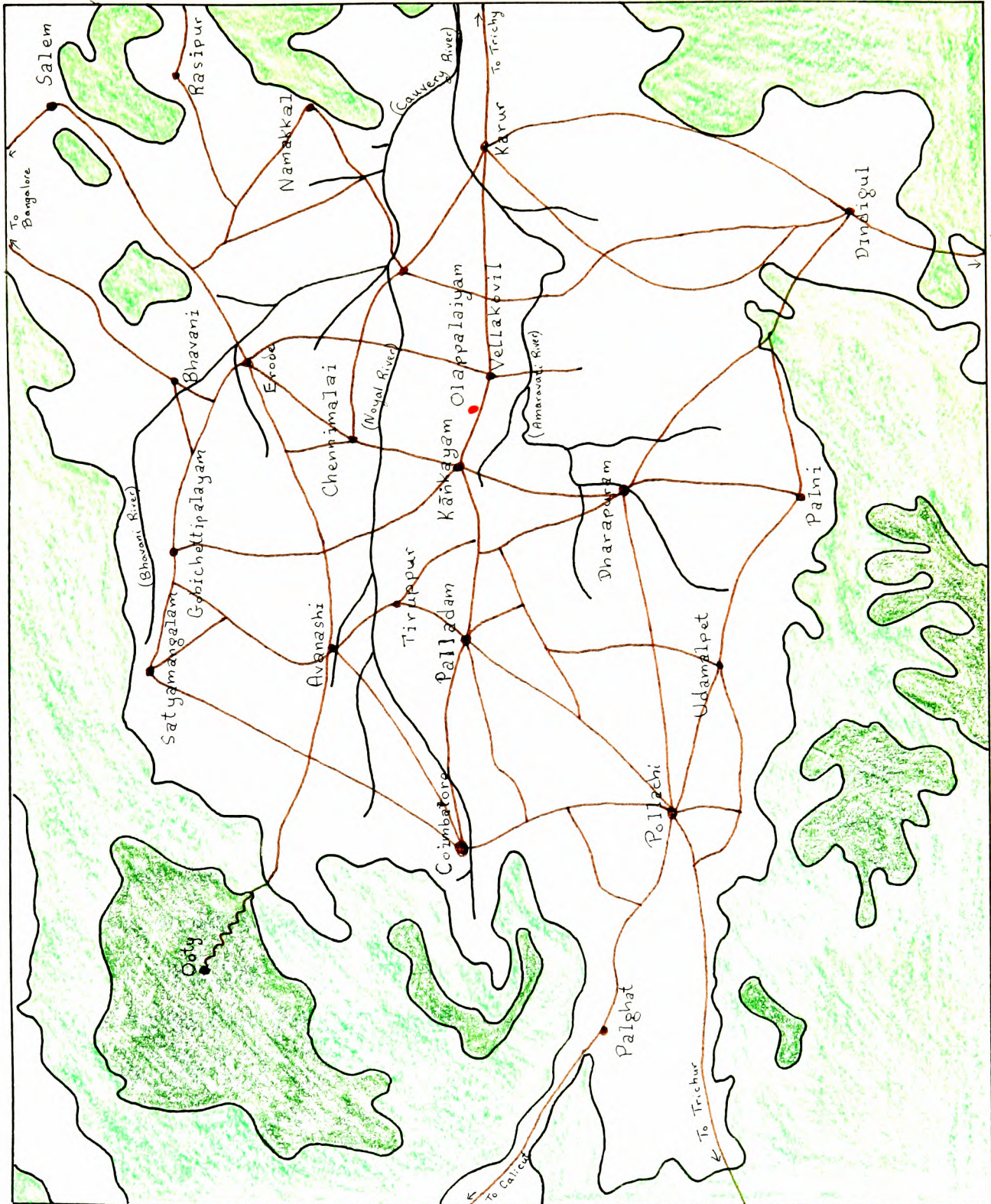
In terms of landscape, Koṅku forms the best defined region in the whole of Madras State. The people of the region are conscious of their identity with a distinct physical area and repeatedly refer to it in poetry and in folklore. There are several verses, remembered by bards, which give as the boundaries of Koṅku the four mountain ranges which surround the area on its four sides. According to this tradition, on

³ C.M. Ramachandra Chettiar, Koṅku Naṭṭu Varalaru (Annamalai, Annamalai Annamalai University Press, 1954).

⁴ Works I came across are: S.A.R. Cinnucami Kavuntar, Koṅku Vēlilar (Erode, Tamirān Accakan, 1963), Paṛaṇicāmi Pūlavan, Koṅku Celvi (Coimbatore, Pudumalar Press, 1948), and Tiruvānan, Māṅkalyan Tanta Makarāci (Madras, Vanati Patippakam, 1960).

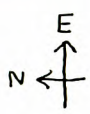
MAP 2: THE KONKU AREA

Showing Principal Roads, Towns, and Elevations



Major Towns •
 Ethnographer's Village ■
 Rivers ~~~~~

Elevation (in feet)
 Under 1,500
 1,500 - 3,000 (Mostly forest)
 Above 3,000 feet



Scale: One inch = 16 miles

the North of Koṅku lies the mountain ridge which separates Coiabatore and Salem from Mysore State, including the hills named Talaimalai and Parūcurnmalai. In the South Koṅku's boundary is delineated by the range of mountains which stretch from the Ānaimalai to the Varākamalai. In the West there is the line of hills which runs north from Vellimalai to the Nīlakiris, including a small gap at Palghat. In the East Koṅku is bounded by a fourth mountain range which includes the Toppūmalai, Cērvārāyanmalai and the Kollimalai. The Southeast is the only direction in which passage is not impeded by high hills, and this is the direction from which many conquerors of Koṅku have come; for instance, the Chola during the first half of the tenth century. This is the direction in which the river Cauvery flows out of the Koṅku plain into the Tanjore delta.

There is, however, a traditional boundary for Koṅku, even on the floor of this river valley. This point of demarcation is at a place called Matukkarai, a famous point on the river about twenty-five miles East of Karur. Here, as Koṅku bards have it, the Chola, Chera and Pandiya kings met to fight over the borders of their respective countries. It is said that once, long ago, a particular KavunṬar landlord suggested that the CellāṅṬiamman temple, located at Matukkarai, be agreed upon as a limit. Thus the area to the West of this temple became known as Chera nāṬu, the area to the East became Chola nāṬu, and that to the South, Pandiaya nāṬu.

The temple was considered common to all and each king built a separate temple to Viṅṅayakar, the first son of Cīva, to mark the edge of their own territory. These three separate Viṅṅayakar temples still stand today. The CellāṅṬiamman shrine has recently been improved and replastered

and inhabitants of the immediate area actively preserve the tradition surrounding the shrine. According to the above demarcation, Konku overlaps somewhat with what is known elsewhere to have belonged to Chera nāṭu. It may be that it was ruled by a Chera king at the time the demarcation was made.⁵

Besides the break in the mountains through which the Cauvery flows, there are three important passes which were used as trade routes. One route leads from Satyamangalam to the Mysore plateau, the pass here being at 2,800 feet.⁶ A second pass, referred to as the Falghat Gap, leads into Kerala and lies to the Southwest of Coimbatore City. The third is situated to the South of Dindigul and leads into Madurai District. The entire Konku plain is watered by one major river, the Cauvery, which has three important feeders: the Bhavani which traverses the northern edge of the area, the Noyal which cuts across its centre, and the Amaravati which flows in meandering fashion through the South. The mountains and rivers described above are exceedingly important in delineating Konku as a nāṭu, country or kingdom, in the minds of the people of the area. These landmarks are repeatedly mentioned by informants in describing journeys and by local folklore. Most villagers, about 60% according to my own survey, have never travelled outside the area in their lifetime.⁷

⁵ C.M. Ramschandra Chettiar, Konku, p.5.

⁶ Government of Madras, Madras District Gazetteer s. Coimbatore (Madras, Government Press, 1966), p. 595.

⁷ Only 40% of villagers over fifteen years of age (out of a sample of 288) had ever travelled outside the Konku area in their lifetime. Of these, about 50% are accounted for by people who have been as far as the city of Tiruchirapalli. Only 6% of the sample had travelled outside the state. Even these figures have been very recently inflated, perhaps doubled, by the rash of 'tours' organized for villagers in the last two to three years by enterprising townsmen. These tours usually last four or five days during which participants share a chartered bus which visits most of the famous shrines in the state. Such sightseeing trips have recently become very popular in rural areas.

CHART I: BASIC STATISTICS ON THE KONKU REGIONA) Area and Population

The Konku area is comprised of the following present-day administrative units:

- a) Coimbatore District
- b) Karur Taluk of Tiruchirappalli District
- c) Palni Taluk of Madurai District
- d) Namakkal)
- e) Trichengode) Taluks of Salem District
- f) Bankarai

N.B.

The portions of Rasipuram, Salem and Omalur Taluks in Salem District which might be included in the above list on the argument of common culture and geography are offset, in the calculations below, by the mountainous regions of Gobichettipalayam, Bhavani, Pollachi and Udumalpet Taluks of Coimbatore District. These latter lie outside the Konku plain area as defined for the purposes of this study.

	<u>Area in sq. miles</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Source: District Census Handbook, Coimbatore</u>
a)	6,024.0	3,557,471	1961, Vol. I, p. 1,9
b)	610.4	345,162	Ibid., Vol. II, p. 94
c)	624.9	288,809	" " p. 991
d)	682.5	480,228	" " p. 87
e)	325.9	246,667	" " p. 87
f)	276.9	242,311	" " p. 87
Konku totals	8,644.6	5,100,648	

B) Population of Coimbatore District by Religious Affiliation

<u>Name of Religious Group</u>	<u>Percentage of Total Population of the District</u>	<u>Area of Population Concentration</u>
a) Hindu	94.5	All areas, rural and urban
b) Moslem	2.8	Small towns
c) Christian	2.5	Rural areas (now migrating to towns)
d) Jain	.2	Large towns

(Source: District Census Handbook, 1961, Vol I, p. 13-15)

CHART I: BASIC STATISTICS ON THE KONKU REGION

(cont.)

C) Area & Population of PaccāpāLaiyan Kirāman

Total Area: 19.35 sq. miles

Total Population: 4,706

<u>Other Population Counts</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Source</u>
House compounds	1,113	Author's survey
Cooking units	1,237	School Headmaster's survey
"Households"	1,185	1961 Census (local tabulation unprinted)

N.B.

- a) House compounds are clearly demarcated living areas, usually surrounded by a wall or hedge. They often contain two cooking units, but rarely un-related families. From the above figures it can be seen that about ten per cent of the house compounds have divided cooking arrangements.
- b) The definition of "household" used by the 1961 census is not clear. It can be seen, however, that it consists of some sort of compromise between the number of house compounds and the number of cooking units.
- c) The 1961 census gives the proportion of "scheduled castes" in the Panchayat at only twelve per cent. This is misleading as the proportion of outcastes is actually around twenty-five per cent. The reason for the census figure being low is because harijans who have been 'converted' to Christianity are no longer counted as members of a scheduled caste by official definition.

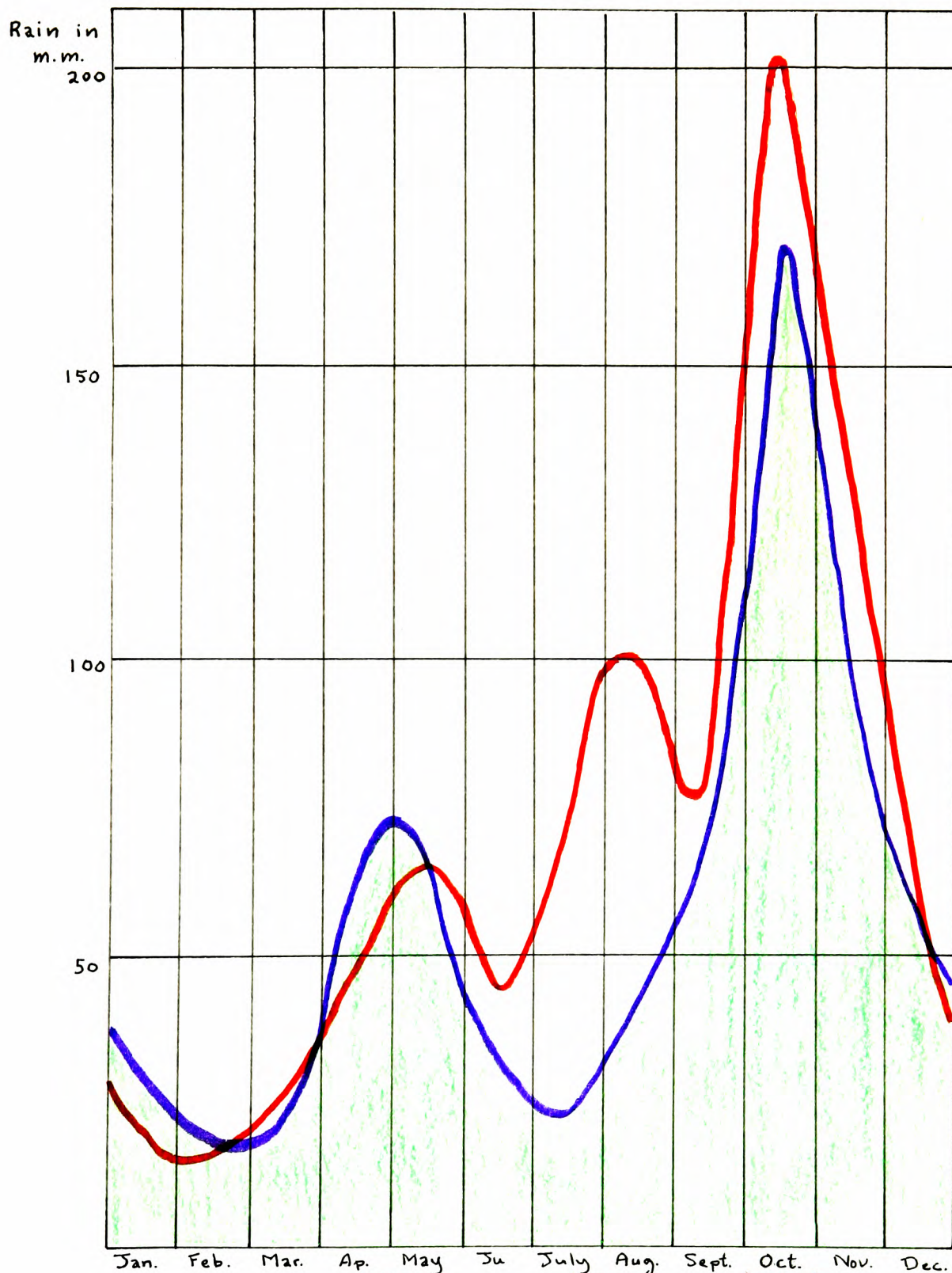
The rainfall in Konku is scanty, and perhaps more important, extremely unreliable. Chart II shows the monthly distribution of rainfall and Map three shows the co-efficient of rainfall variability in Madras state as a whole. It is clear from these diagrams that rainfall is less predictable in Konku than anywhere else in Madras. Indeed, the total varies annually by more than 35%. Average rainfall in such a situation is bound to be misleading. Nonetheless, a mean figure for the Coimbatore district of about 23.23 inches a year serves to illustrate that the total is small.⁸

It is interesting to note that rainfall is by no means spread evenly throughout the year. It comes in three peak periods for the Coimbatore district as a whole, but in only two peak periods for Dharapuram Taluk, with which the following study is largely concerned. The first peak is during the hottest months of the year, April and May, and comes in the form of thunder showers after the heat of the day. The second period of precipitation is linked to the southwest monsoon which strikes the area during June, July and August. This causes some rain in the western and northern areas of the district, but in Dharapuram it takes the form of a very strong wind which blows across the land from West to East. It rushes through the Palghat gap and drops what moisture it brings as soon as it reaches the heights of the Konku plateau. By the time it reaches the eastern half of Konku it is dry and serves more to raise dust and increase aridity than to water the area. Often this wind is so strong that it is impossible to cycle, and even to walk against it.

The ~~third~~ period of rainfall is brief but more reliable than the previous two. It is associated with the northeast monsoon and a somewhat

⁸ Government of Madras, District Gazetteers, Coimbatore, p. 16. Sample figures for a wet and dry year are not readily available.

CHART 2: RAINFALL BY MONTH, COIMBATORE DISTRICT



Coimbatore District ———
 Dharapuram Taluk ———

Source: Census of India 1961, Madras Part X-i, Volume I District Census Handbook Coimbatore p.4-5.

more gentle wind blowing from East to West. This rain comes during October and early November and it can come with such intensity that it floods the land and settlement areas rather than providing suitable moisture for cultivation. Map five shows how the planting and harvest cycles closely follow the rainfall pattern and how village festivals are linked to the first sign of rain in late August, and the harvest ceremony follows in early December when the first grain is reaped.

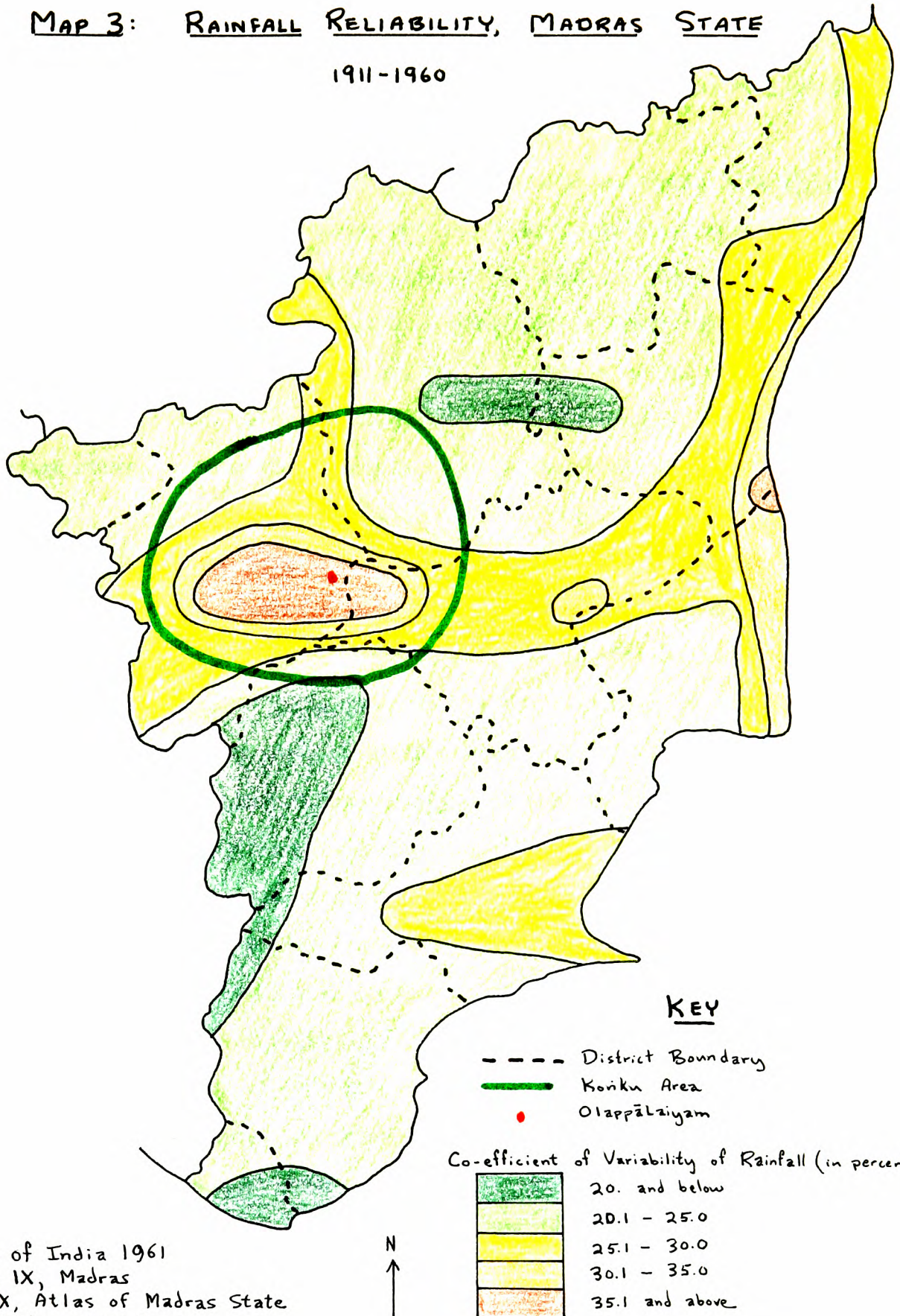
The soil types common in the Konku area are also important if one is to understand the effect of the rain and the nature of the agricultural economy on which social traditions rest. The land of ^{the} Coimbatore District is "rather sandy, stony and of the gravelly type."⁹ It is largely red in colour, due to the diffusion of a trace of iron. In some areas in the centre of the district, there is black cotton soil which is considerably more fertile. Here the cotton is grown which supports a large pinning and handloom industry in the villages. However, more than 67.6% of the soil of the Konku region is red and sandy.¹⁰ This means that when it does rain the soil does not hold the moisture well. The water drains through to the undulating rocky substratum, but can be collected in deep wells.

Pellet and ground nut are the main crops to survive these conditions and these have been the staple diet of the Konku area for centuries. Much of the agricultural wealth lies in good wells and the garden patches which surround them. These patches are called tōṭam, while the drier, more barren common fields are called kāṭu. In the garden lands cotton,

⁹ Government of Madras, _____, _____, Madras _____
_____, _____, _____, 1964, p. 2.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

MAP 3: RAINFALL RELIABILITY, MADRAS STATE
1911-1960



Source: Census of India 1961
Volume IX, Madras
Part IX, Atlas of Madras State
Adopted from map 8.

Scale: One inch = 42 miles

tebacco, vegetables and pulses can be grown. Along the banks of rivers and near extra fine wells, rice can be cultivated. Rice-growing land is referred to as vayal.

If the rain is good, three crops a year can be harvested from tōTTam or vayal and possession of even an acre or two of such land indicates a degree of wealth and status on the part of the owner. The timing of planting and harvesting on such land is indicated by Chart Three. By far the largest portion of land, however, is kāTu, and it is the agricultural cycle associated with these fields which is closely tied to traditional life and ritual. Here there is a reasonable chance of one harvest each year, and a very uncertain chance of a second. (Again see Chart Three). In between seasons the kāTu is left fallow and used for grazing animals.



There are three important staple cereals grown in the Koñku area: Kampu, cōLam and rāki. Kampu grows quickly and is the one crop given ceremonial importance. CōLam grows more slowly but gives the highest yield of both grain and straw. It resembles field maize in look and taste. The third important cereal, rāki, is a small but very nourishing millet. It requires transplanting and more irrigation than the above two. Thus rāki is usually grown on garden land. Kampu and cōLam can be sown mixed with sesamum or castor oil seeds or with wild gram, called kol. Pulses form the major source of protein in the diet, besides milk and occasional goat, lamb or chicken and (for the low castes) pork. There are many varieties of pulses which can be sown in the dry or kāTu fields but do much better under irrigated or garden conditions.

Koñku has repeatedly been a famine area because of the undepe^dndability of the rain. Under famine conditions the population must always fall back on the staple and traditional cereals described above. There is, however, a growing demand for rice, even though it is about twice the

CHART 3: THE AGRICULTURAL CYCLE AND RELATED FESTIVALS

Tamil Month	Thai	Māci	Pāṅkuai	Cittirai	Vaikalai	Āni	Āṭi	Āṇani	Puraṭṭāi	Aippaṭi	Kāṭṭi-kāi	Mārkaṭi
English Month	Jan.-Feb.	Feb.-March	March-April	April-May	May-June	June-July	July-August	August-Sept.	Sept.-Oct.	Oct.-Nov.	Nov.-Dec.	Dec.-Jan.
Festivals	Tai Poṅkal Pūjā for Karuppanācāmi			Māriyammaṅ festival			Planting Ceremony (First Rain) Āṭi: Nōmpu Pūjā for Karuppanācāmi Pūjā for Clan Deity					Harvest Ceremony for Campus Mākāliyammaṅ festival
Wedding Months	●	●	●		●	●		●		●	●	
Strong Sun		●	●	●	●	●						
Possible Rain			●	●			●	●	●	●	●	
Strong Wind					●	●	●	●				
'Cool'	●										●	●
Kāṭu Cycle			Cōlam Campu ĒL ?				?		Campu Cōlam kōl			
Tōṭṭām Cycle			Cōlam, ĒL Kāki Campu		Peanuts		Kāki Pepper Vegetables ĒL Pulses			Cōtton Tobacco Rice		ĒL, Peanuts

KEY

-  Planting Period
-  Harvest Period

price of these other cereals, and everyone would elect a rice diet if they could afford it. Although the taste for rice is probably not recent, the consumption of it in large quantities is. According to older informants, rice used to be eaten only on important ceremonial occasions, say twice or three times a year. The period referred to is as recent as thirty or forty years ago and such eating habits applied to the relatively wealthy landowners as well as to the poor. Now the demand for rice is universal. The author encountered families barely able to subsist on their income (who, for example, could not afford to purchase a glass of milk for their youngest child),¹¹ but who would still spend their last pennies on a rice meal in preference to eating millet.

The demand for rice would seem to be based on the prestige associated with such a diet, coupled with the pleasant "full" feeling which comes over one after eating such a meal. It may also relate to the fact that pure starch is very bland and therefore easily digested by^{an} intestinal tract which is commonly afflicted with parasites and ulcers. Coimbatore is a food deficit area, but it is interesting to note that the deficit is only 19,000 tons per year in millet while it is 113,000 per year in rice.¹² Kōṅku is, of course, a millet and not a rice growing area, and, in addition, the population of Kōṅku has been undergoing rapid increase. Nonetheless, it would seem a reasonable guess that the rice deficit has grown faster than the simple increase in human numbers, linked to a lesser (but nonetheless tangible) increase in irrigated land area, can account for.

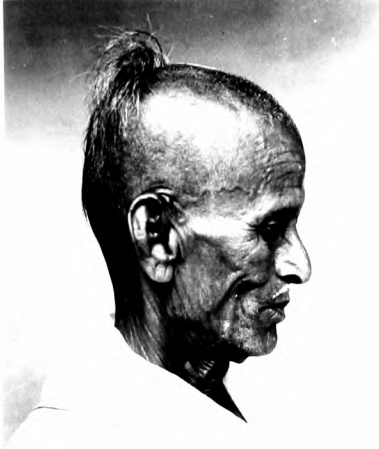
¹¹ Milk is relatively expensive and not easy for the poor to obtain. Those who own cows often prefer to drink the produce themselves than to sell it for cash. Milk is a favoured food and is considered good for one's general health. However, it is not as prestigious as rice.

¹² Government of Madras, Census Handbook, Coimbatore, Vol. I, p. 34.

Plate 2: Portraits Of Men

- a) A Kavun̄Tar Landowner
- b) A Kavun̄Tar Wage-Labourer
- c) Sundaram (A PaN̄Taram)
- d) An Elderly Mutaliȳar
- e) Two NāTars
- f) A Brahman
- g) A MāTari

PLATE 2



(a)



(c)



(b)



(d)



(e)



(f)



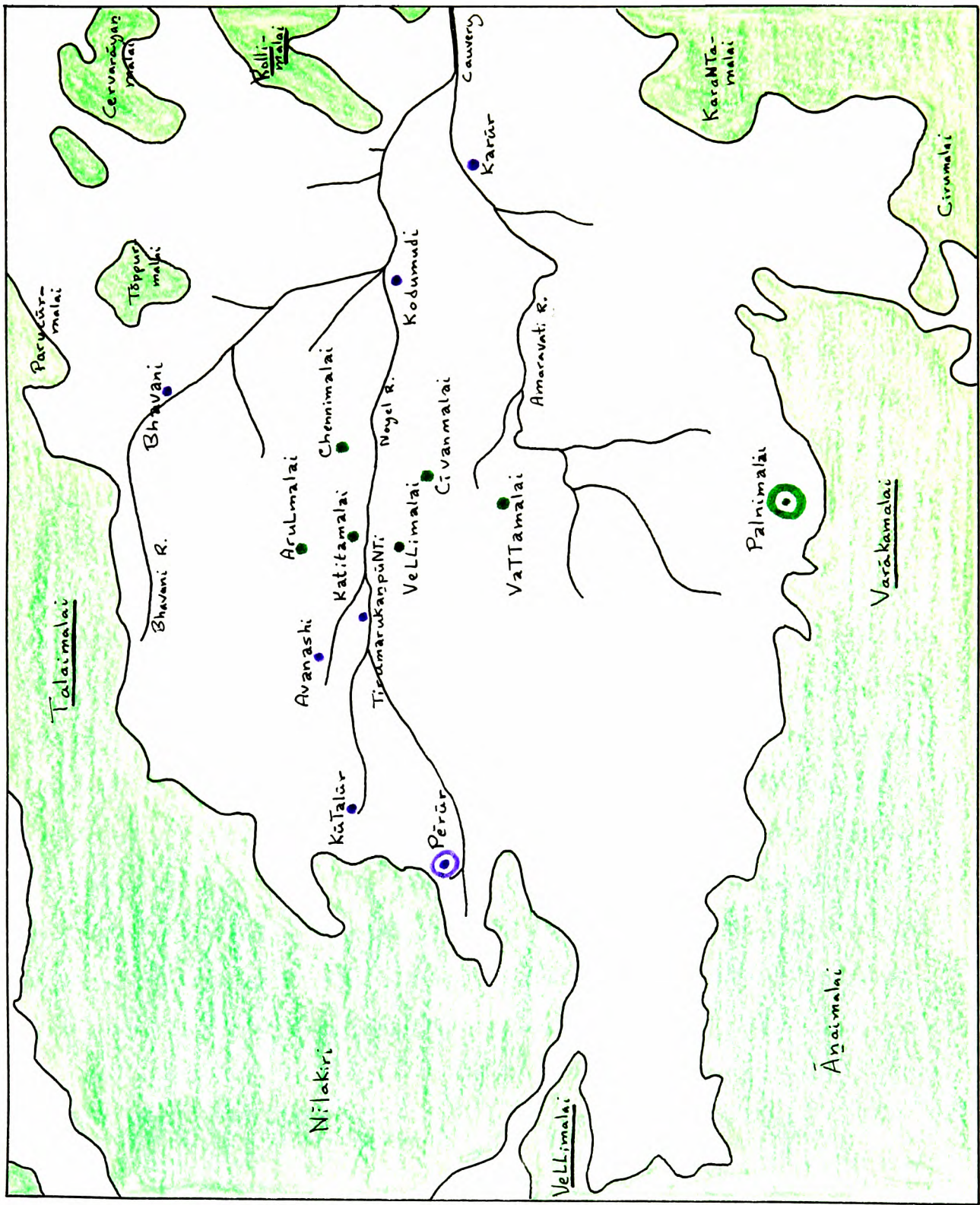
(g)

IA 2) Traditional Secular and Sacred Organisation

Koṅku can be described as a distinct geographic and climatic region. It could be isolated and studied on this basis alone. More important for the purpose of this account, however, is the fact that the people living in Koṅku themselves think of it and describe it as a region. They call it Koṅku nāṭu, or 'The Kingdom of Koṅku', and the verses they cite describe not only the semi-sacred mountain boundaries of Koṅku, but also the great epic events said to have taken place there in the past. (See section I C 2). Thus local folklore is embedded in an elaborate sacred and political geography and these traditions are matched by a distinctive range of castes who live within the Koṅku borders. Indeed, it is the distinctive character of the people, the customs and even of the dialect spoken in the region which make it a sociological and not just a geographical zone.

The sacred geography of Koṅku is an important aspect of its definition as a region by local inhabitants. The outlines of this geography are known to many elderly people, especially those from the rural areas. Koṅku is said to be bounded in each of the four directions by great mountains, and across it flow three sacred tributaries of the river Cauvery. There are seven gīvalayaṅkaḷ or great temples to Śīva on these river banks, and scattered between them are the seven hill temples dedicated to Murukan, Śīva's beloved younger son. Many bards can recite verses giving these details, and from them Map Four has been constructed. The most striking aspect of this sacred geography is the complementarity of the rivers and hills which are found in association with the Śīva and the Murukan temples respectively. In each group of seven, one shrine is considered to be the

MAP 4: TRADITIONAL SACRED GEOGRAPHY OF KONKU



- KEY**
- The Three Rivers
 - Mountains and forested Areas (over 1,500 feet)
 - The Seven Civa Temples
 - The Seven Murukan Temples
 - Indicates most important of the seven (Civa)
 - Indicates most important of the seven (Murukan)
- Talaimalai The four Mountain Ranges
 Nilakiri Other Important Mountain Areas
- Scale: One inch = 16 miles

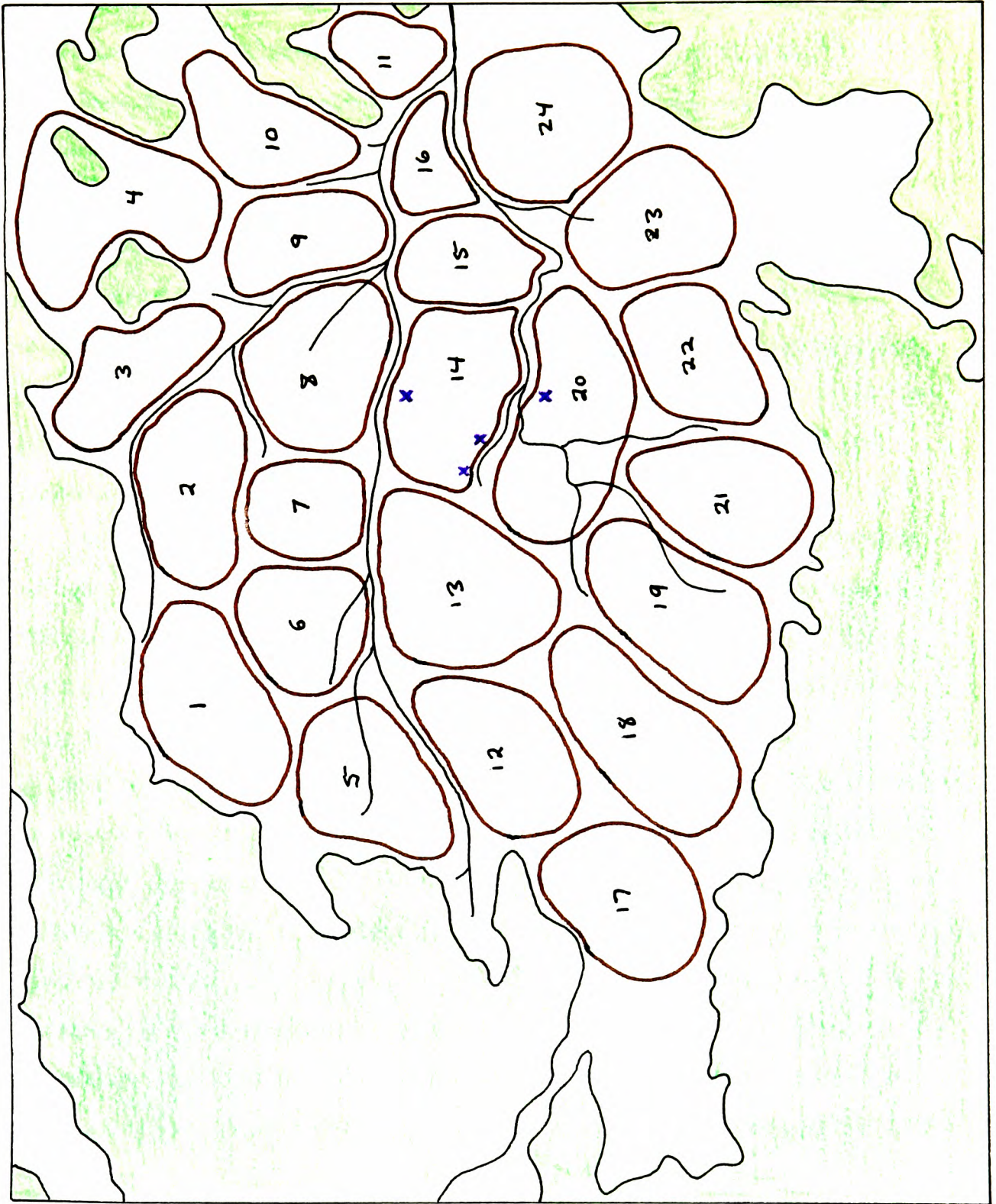
most important or the most senior of all. (See the two shrines indicated by coloured circles on the accompanying map. Both these shrines are famous centres of pilgrimage, to which devotees come, not only from Koṅku, but from all over South India. The best known of the two is undoubtedly Palanimalai, dedicated to Murugaṅ. This shrine would appear to be some 1,500 years old, as it is mentioned in the very earliest collection of Tamil poems.)¹³

Corresponding to the traditional sacred geography of Koṅku is a political geography. This latter is even more important, in terms of social organisation, and most adults are familiar with the phrase (iruppatinālu nāṭukal) which refers to the twenty-four traditional political divisions. The details of these divisions, however, are much less well-known, and it is likely that their boundaries fluctuated over time. Among poets and according to inscriptions, however, there is a fair amount of agreement as to the names of the nāṭu and to their general location. The accompanying map is an attempt to summarise discussion of this matter and to approximate a conclusion by combining many sources. It is intended as an aid to understanding local folk history, which also mentioned nāṭu names, rather than as an accurate political plan. These nāṭu divisions appear in inscriptions about Koṅku as early as the 8th century, or at about the time of Ganga rule in the region, although their present layout, as summarized on the map, may date from a much later period.¹⁴ nāṭu were administrative


¹³ The "Tirumurukārrupatai", one of ten idylls of the Pattuppāṭṭu collection, dated as belonging to the Caṅkam Period, probably written somewhere between 1st and 4th centuries A.D. See Nilakanta Sastri, A History of South India (Madras, Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 115.

¹⁴ Arikiaswami, Koṅku Country, p. 174. Also C.M. Ramachandra Chettiar, Koṅku, p. 109-111.

MAP 5: APPROXIMATE TRADITIONAL POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF KONKU
(Showing NāTu Divisions)



KEY

Approximate NāTu Boundary 

Forested Areas Over 1,500 feet. 

Four Pattakkāra Families 

- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| 1. OTuvaṅkanāTu | 9. KīraṅkunāTu | 17. KāvātikkanāTu |
| 2. KāncikkōyīnāTu | 10. PūvāNīnāTu | 18. ĀṅaimalaināTu |
| 3. VāṭakaraināTu | 11. VāravāntīnāTu | 19. MaṅṅurukkanāTu |
| 4. RācīpuranāTu | 12. VārakkānāTu | 20. TeṅṅkaraināTu |
| 5. ĀraināTu | 13. PōṅkāḷūrṅnāTu | 21. TīrūvāṅṅaṅṅutīnāTu |
| 6. AraiyanāTu | 14. KāṅkāyanāTu | 22. ANṅAnāTu |
| 7. KuruppanāTu | 15. MaṅṅanāTu | 23. TalaiyanāTu |
| 8. PūṅṅturaināTu | 16. VenkālanāTu | 24. TāṅṅaiyanāTu |

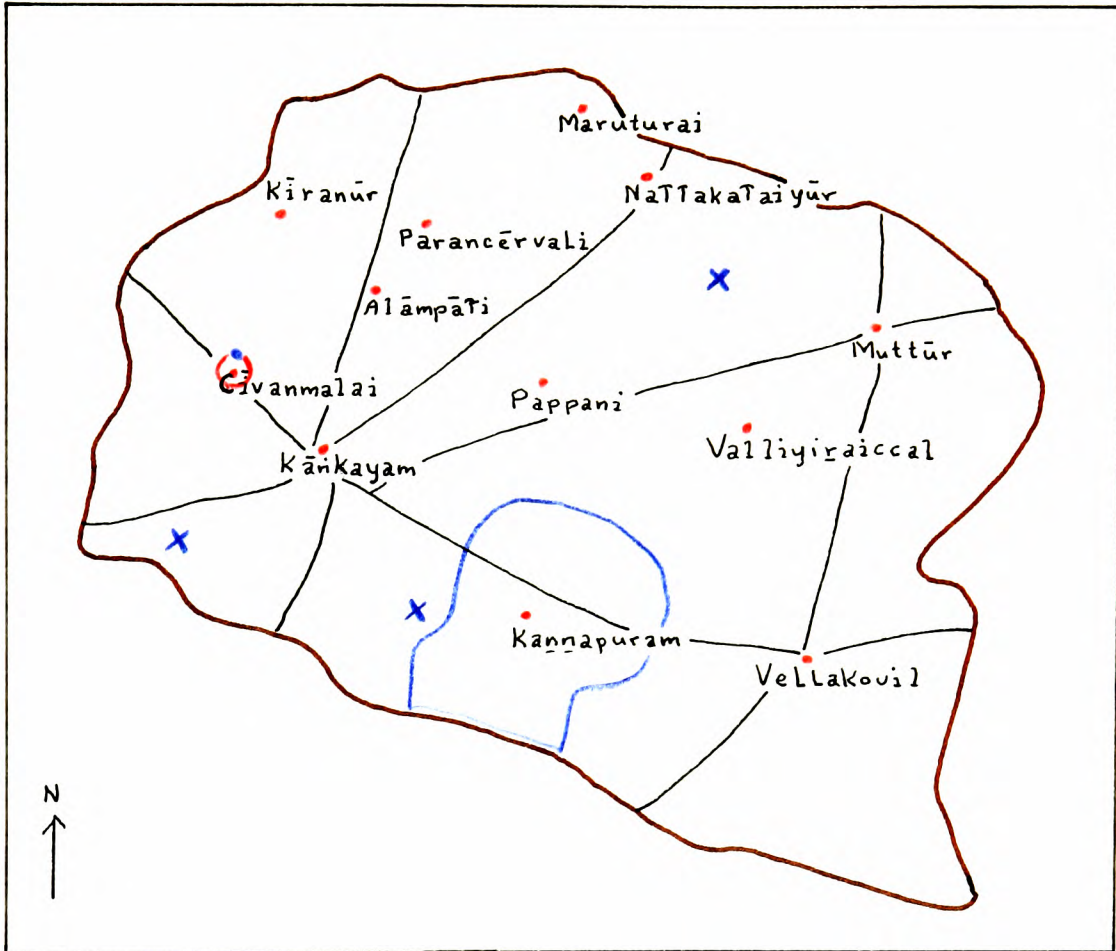
divisions, but they were also based, to some extent, on the location of powerful local families and war leaders. (See section II B 2).¹⁵

Each nāṭu was subdivided into a number of kirāman, twelve being a common total. A kirāman was a revenue unit, but it was also the area which would cooperate on important festive occasions. Generally, it would seem, one big temple festival would be held each year to which every ūr or important settlement in the kirāman was expected to contribute. Ūr could also be called pālaiyam, as in the name of the settlement selected, Olappālaiyam. As twelve was a common number of kirāman contained in one nāṭu, so twenty-four was a common number of ūr or pālaiyam within one kirāman.

As far as can be made out from local traditions and from historical sources available at present, it would appear that a kirāman was roughly the area controlled by one eminent family of one dominant clan. This family or clan was probably responsible for providing land revenue to nāṭu authorities. They may also have supplied mercenaries in time of war. In return, the family received the right to manage land and labour resources in their area and the right to arbitrate in disputes. They also enjoyed a certain legitimisation of their position from nāṭu and regional leaders. Rights and obligations devolved on families and subcastes, not on individuals, and were thought of in terms of the kirāman population as a whole. Land, it seems, was not owned outright by individual families. Instead, rights to produce and to land use were relative to a caste's general social position. Respective privileges and compensatory services were (and to a large extent

¹⁵ The following details concerning Nāṭu are described in the past tense, as these divisions are no longer operative for administrative purposes and are referred to only in folklore, ritual and some aspects of social organisation. The temples corresponding to these nāṭu and their subdivisions, however, are referred to in the present tense, as they not only still stand, but continue to serve as important foci on festive occasions.

MAP 6: POLITICAL AND SACRED GEOGRAPHY OF
KĀNKAYAM NĀTU
 (KĀNKAYANĀTU)



KEY

- Murukan Temple
- The Twelve Civa Temples (⊙ Most important of the twelve)
- ⊙ Kannapuram Kirāmam (Each of the other Civa temples was also associated with a Kirāmam.)
- × Pāttakkārar Families
- Roads
- Approximate Nātu Boundary

Scale: One inch = five miles

still are) mediated through, and defined by, leading families of the dominant caste.¹⁶

Just as there is a general sacred geography for Kodku as a whole, there is also a sacred geography for each individual nāṭu. For a start, each nāṭu is marked by a large Īva temple. Many nāṭu also have a subsidiary Īva temple associated with each of their kirāman sub-divisions. In addition, most kirāman have a temple to Māriyannan (or another, similar, female goddess) around whom the yearly kirāman festival is centred. Many kirāmans also have important temples to PerumāL (Viṣṇu) and to PattirakāLi. Map Five gives a general indication of the kirāman sub-divisions of Kāṅkāyanāṭu and the corresponding pattern of temples.

Within each kirāman there is a still further elaboration of sacred geography, relative to individual settlements. A settlement, however, may consist of only a few houses, particularly as the region is dry and habitation sites tend to be scattered. Between the individual settlement and the kirāman as a whole, then, there is an intermediary unit which I propose to call the 'area of cooperation.' This is the group of settlements (or geographic section of a large town) which most frequently pools skills and

¹⁶ Good historical material on this subject is still very scanty. The above statements are made with reference to several articles on this subject written with respect to research in other regions. Suggestions in these articles have been combined with information supplied by local informants who were well informed about traditional practices.

- a) Eric J. Miller, "Caste and Territory in Malabar", American Anthropologist, No. 56, 1954, p. 410-20.
- b) Bernard S. Cohn, "Political Systems of Eighteenth Century India", Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol. 82, p. 312-20
- c) Louis Dumont, "The Functional Equivalents of the Individual", Contributions to Indian Sociology (Paris, Mouton & Co., 1965), Vol. VIII, p. 94-97.
- d) E.K. Gough, "Caste in a Tanjore Village", in Aspects of Caste, ed. by E.K. Leach (Cambridge, University Press, 1960), p.28.

A description of the actual operation of traditional rights and obligations in a kirāman is given later in the section.

labour resources. As there is a tendency for various castes to live spacially separate from one another, the 'area of cooperation' is the smallest unit in which representatives of all the basic service and skilled communities are available.

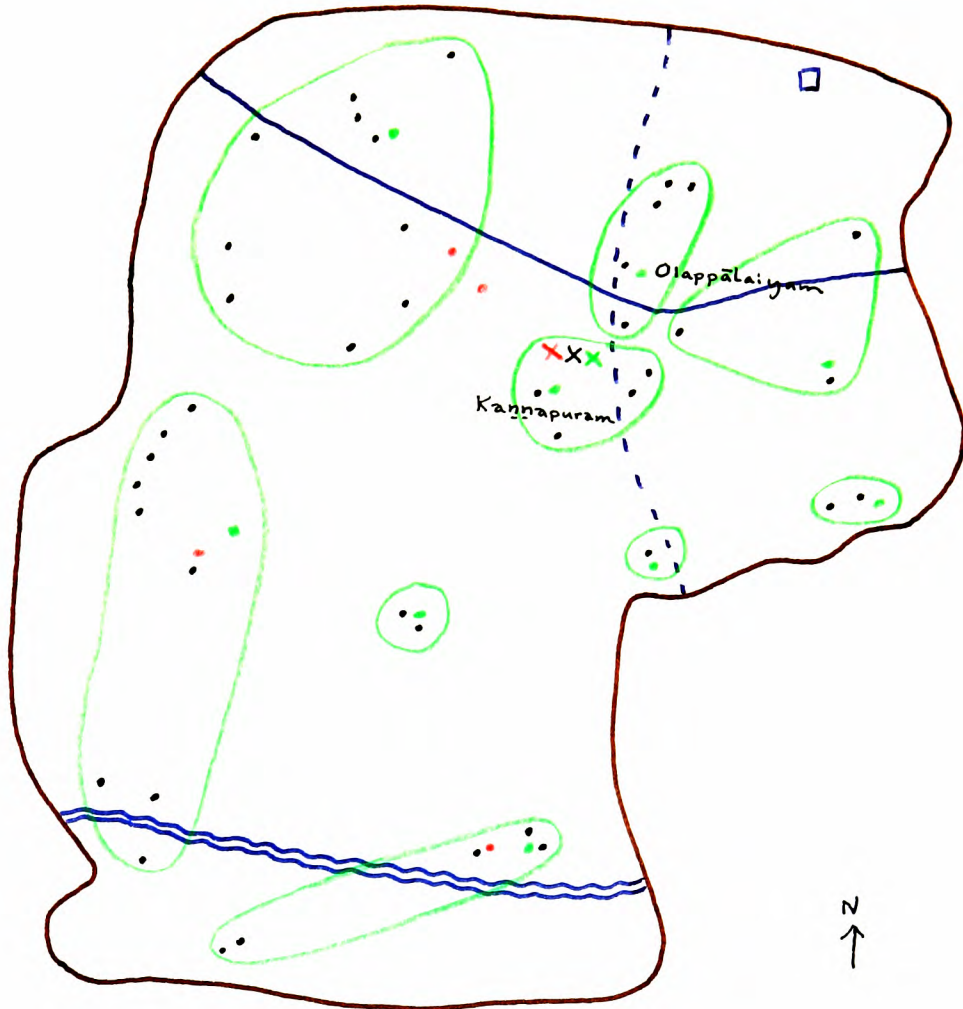
In Tamil there is no terminological distinction made between the people of an individual settlement and a zone or 'area of cooperation'. This is not to say, however, that local residents do not consider the distinction important in many circumstances. It is rather that one term, ūr, is used for both, and that there is a sliding scale of units to which the word may refer, depending on circumstance and context.¹⁷ The individual settlement and the 'area of cooperation' may be identified, not by the term used in speech, but by the pattern of temples and of cooperation between residents at the festivities associated with them. Thus, each settlement site is marked by a Viñāyakar temple.¹⁸ An area of cooperation, on the other hand, is marked by a Mākāliyanman shrine (or by that of a similar female goddess). Only members of one settlement worship at the local Viñāyakar temple, while several settlements often cooperate at a festival for Mākāliyanman. There are traditionally twenty-four settlements or ūr in Kannapuram Kirāman which must be represented at the yearly kirāman festival for Māriyanman. Each of these has its own Viñākar.¹⁹ However, there are only nine 'areas of cooperation', each with its own Mākāliyanman shrine. Settlements, of course, also have individual names, like

¹⁷ Note a similar sliding scale of units of reference in the usage of other terms such as jāti, kulam and kulampan. (See section II A 1).

¹⁸ Viñāyakar, who is also called Kaṇē or Pillaiyār, is the eldest son of Cīva. He is always worshipped at the beginning of any auspicious event to assure that it will proceed without difficulties.

¹⁹ There are now actually about 32 habitation sites in the kirāman and a new Viñāyakar temple has been built with each one. However, the ritual number for festival purposes has remained 24.

MAP 7: SACRED GEOGRAPHY OF KANNAPURAM KIRĀMAM



KEY

- Approximate Boundary of Kirāmam in Recent Years.
(Previously the Southern Boundary was Probably the River Bed)
- ⋯ Dry Bed of Vattamalai Stream
- Vināyakar Temple (One for each settlement)
- Legendary Civa Temples (Now in ruins) X Main Civa Temple at Present
- Nine Mākāliyamma Temples
- Area 'of Cooperation' Associated with one Mākāliyamma Temple
- Karattukumar (Murukan) Temple
- X Pattirakāliyamma Temple
- Main Road
- - - Subsidiary Road
- X Mariyamma Temple

Scale: one inch = one mile

like Olappālaiyam. Areas of cooperation do not.

The boundaries of individual settlements are important ritually, as they mark the limits of a social space into which evil spirits, epidemics and other malign influences must not intrude. (See section I D 2) Despite the importance of boundaries, however, there is a sense in which the one to one correspondence of Viñāyakar temples and individual habitation sites is merely one of convenience.²⁰ No special festivals are performed for Viñāyakar where attendance is based on the principle of common territorial residence. Kañēs is only worshipped in connection with the life-cycle rituals of a particular family, or as a prelude to a festival for another deity. Thus it would appear that the bonds of cooperation and mutual obligation between people, rather than a principle of territorial identification based on the place of residence, is the factor which determines the significant group for festival purposes.

The bonds of cooperation between people are often stressed in the ritual itself, as Srinivas has made the theme of his classic monograph Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India.²¹ In this study a similar situation is readily observed at festivals for the female goddesses Māriyamma and Mākāliyamma, whose temples correspond to the area of a kirāma (zone of shared responsibility for production, land revenue, and military conscription) and the 'area of cooperation' (zone of frequent interaction and exchange of services), respectively. (See section I D 1 & 2). However, in the same manner, family and clan festivals could be

²⁰ A Viñāyakar temple must be close at hand, as this god is worshipped at all life-cycle ceremonies. If a village is large, it may well have two or three such temples, used by the population of different sub-divisions.

²¹ M.N. Srinivas, Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India (London, Oxford University Press, 1952).

spoken of as ritual occasions which emphasize the importance of cooperation and of shared responsibility in kin-centred social units.

It has already been shown how the temple sequence corresponds with the traditional nāTu divisions, providing a sacred counterpart to the region's political geography. Equally important is the organization of local caste leadership along similar lines. For each administrative level there were, until roughly twenty-five years ago, at least some corresponding political offices, hereditary in the male line and entailing ritual as well as secular responsibilities. Each caste in the region (with the exception of the four essential ritual service communities) appear to have had its own independent organization at the ūr, kirāman and nāTu levels.

At the village level (roughly one ūr) the caste leader was called Ūr Talaivar (ūr headman) or Kottukāran (one who receives first prestations at temple festivals). At the next level above this, often dominated by one clan or large family (roughly one kirāman) the caste official was called a Mupattakāran (elder or respected leader) or Nāttumskāran (the leader of the nāTu). NāTu here referred to one or a few kirāmans, a smaller unit than that encompassed by nāTu in an administrative sense. Thus ūr was not the only term which had multiple references according to context.²² A Nāttumakāran was entitled to the first prestations at temple festivals for kirāman deities and his rank took precedence over the nāTumakāran of an ūr. Finally, at the highest level of political division, (roughly one nāTu), there was a PeriyanaTTannai or Periyatanakāran (big nāTu chief or most important leader). The term Nāttumakāran could also refer to this

²² NāTu can refer to an entire kingdom (vōḍḍu NāTu), to a political sub-division of a region (Kaṅkaya NāTu) as well as to sub-divisions of the latter. The T in nāTu is doubled in the adjectival form.

position, it seems, if a man of lesser precedence did not bear the same title.

This range of caste leaders may not have always corresponded directly to administrative divisions, but it would appear from informants that it did so in a general way. Sometimes the name of the caste concerned was incorporated into the title. For the Mutaliyār caste, for example, there were two positions called respectively Ūr Mutaliyār and Kānū Mutaliyār. This hierarchy of caste leaders was responsible for calling caste meetings, planning festivals and mediating disputes. As in any administrative system, the man holding the lesser position would defer to the one holding the more inclusive title and would refer to him any difficulties which he did not have the influence or jurisdiction to handle alone.

All of these leaders had rights to first prestations on ceremonial occasions (in the order of their precedence) and also to certain ritual duties at temple festivals. Older men remember something of the working of this system of caste government before Independence (a date many informants referred to as a time of great change, but even before 1947 it would appear that the traditions of caste self-government had begun to weaken. A few informants can describe caste meetings which took place years ago, but I never heard of, much less saw one during my two-year stay.

From what informants can remember on the subject of local leadership, there appears to have been a considerable variation in the strength of self-government among the various castes in the past. In general, it would seem that the lower the caste in the social hierarchy, the stronger and more

influential its tradition of hereditary leadership.²³ Men of many castes retain their hereditary caste titles for ritual purposes and it is still possible to interview men who hold them. Among Kavuntars, however, the dominant caste of the region, the picture is particularly unclear. In the kirāman studied, the positions of KoTTukāraṅ and MupāTTukāraṅ existed and were still functional for ritual purposes, but these men were never deferred to in the case of disputes. Informants claim that because of the intense rivalry among individual Kavuntar families for local and regional leadership, caste councils and accepted hereditary positions in the community were uncommon among them, even in the past. No one I spoke to had heard of the position of NāTTukavuntar, although Thurston has mentioned it in his ethnographic dictionary.²⁴

A slightly different situation appears to have existed for the Brahmans and the more prestigious castes of the left-hand faction. (For a fuller description of this factional split see section I B 1). For the Brahman community the only important hereditary positions, according to informants, were those conferring rights at large Cīva and PerumāL (Viṣṇu) temples in the region. These men were and are respected, but they did not call together caste councils nor mediate in disputes. The Kōāris, or artisan community, appear to have had no local organisation at the village or kirāman level, either, except for the ceremonial position

²³ This observation is in agreement with what F.A. Blunt has written about for North India. See The Caste System of Northern India, (Oxford University Press, 1931), p. 106 and 125-29. See also O'Malley, Popular Hinduism (Cambridge University Press, 1935), p. 74; and Dumont, Homo Hierarchicus (Paris, Gallimard, 1966), p. 230.

²⁴ Edgar Thurston, Castes and Tribes of Southern India (Madras, Government Press, 1909), Vol. III, p. 418.

of Purōkitār (ritual specialist who officiates at life-cycle ceremonies). At the regional level they did have men bearing the title Periyatanakāran or NāTTunakāran.²⁵ However, the highest level of Ācāri leadership transcended the region and referred to South India as a whole. On this level the Ācāris had five Kurukal (spiritual leaders). These men (at least two or three of them) still retain their titles. They are supposed to lead the life of a Piramacāri (unmarried, ascetic, spiritual leader) and to wander from village to village, collecting a ritual sum of 4 annas from each Ācāri family and providing ritual and spiritual guidance in return.²⁶

It would appear that the Mutaliyār and CeTTiyār castes (also prestigious castes of the left-hand faction) had a similar inter-regional organization that approached something like the all-South India leadership for Ācāris. Not much was known about this by informants in the kirāman studied, but informants from Northeast Koḱku mentioned it and Thurston's ethnographic volumes also include such references.²⁷

By contrast, the four important ritual service castes attached to the KavunTar community (PaṅTarams, Nāvitaṅs, VaṅNans, and Paṅaiyaṅs) claim to have had no internal caste organization of their own. Informants say that they have always taken their disputes and difficulties directly to KavunTar leaders. This fits with their close ties to the KavunTar community in other respects. (See section I B 1). However, they do have local ritual specialists called Arunaikāran, just as the KavunTars do,

²⁵ This latter title is from Thurston, Castes, Vol. III, p. 108 and not from an informant.

²⁶ One such Kurukal actually visited OlappāLaiyam in 1966. Informants claim that the fact that there are five Kurukal is unrelated to the fact that there are five traditional trade divisions of their caste.

²⁷ Thurston, Castes, Vol. II, p. 121-23, Vol. III, p. 33 and Vol. VI, p. 91

for conducting life-cycle ceremonies. This position of Arumalkāran is attained by performing certain special rituals and is not hereditary. (See section II C 1).

In sum, then, what can be gathered from the memories of older informants indicates that internal caste organization was prevalent in the past and that it was organized along the same general lines as the administrative divisions of the region and the serial order of shrines or temples which corresponded to it. However, it would appear that the extent and the strength of hereditary positions of leadership were the most highly elaborated at the lower levels of the caste hierarchy. At the upper end of the social spectrum, on the other hand, there appears to have been a differentiation in the traditions between those castes which belonged to the left and to the right-hand factions. Those of the right-hand, the KavunTars and the NaTars, had an organization linked directly to local ūr and kirāmaa, but which terminated at the regional or nāṭu level. The Brahmins and the upper castes of the left-hand faction, on the other hand, appear to have had a rather weaker tradition of hereditary caste leadership at the local level, but at the same time an all South-India orientation which at its highest levels of organization superseded the region. The ritual service castes were linked directly to the dominant community whom they served and appear to have had no independent caste leaders or councils.

Most important in considering this question of traditional caste leadership is the role of the four paṇḍita of Koṅku.²⁸ These KavunTar families claim to have received their titles (paṇḍita) from famous South

²⁸ See also Thurston, Castes and Tribes, Vol. III, p. 418.

Indian kings in return for services (usually military) rendered to them in the distant past. (See section I C 2). They superseded the nāTTukavāNTar leaders where they existed and acted as a final court of appeal for disputes. Members of other castes would also come to them for counsel, particularly in the case of inter-caste disputes. The PaTTakkārar were extremely wealthy and influential. They controlled large areas of land and were much respected. PaTTan titles were also hereditary in the male line.

Three of these PaTTakkārar families trace their descent via these titles from about the 12th or 13th century. The fourth family, that living at CaṅkaraNTāmpāLaiyam, claim a title awarded to them by the Vijayanagar kings in perhaps the 16th century. All four families were greatly feared and respected throughout Koṅku and were able to command leadership and feudal service over wide areas. Two of them, those living at Putūr and at Kāḍaiyūr, are now on the decline in terms of wealth and influence, but the descendants of the PaTTakkārar at CaṅkaraNTāmpāLaiyam retain a position of some importance and the well-known family at PaḍaiyakōTTai are, today, exceedingly powerful indeed.

To summarize, then, the political geography of Koṅku consisted of 24 nāTu. Each nāTu was divided into kirāman and each kirāman into ūr. A series of temples corresponded to and marked these sub-divisions. Running parallel to these territorial sub-divisions were a series of hereditary offices within each caste. And, most interesting of all, just as there were 7 Cīva and 7 Murukan temples which belonged to the sacred geography of the region as a whole, so were there four PaTTakkārar or leading families who were considered to be the titled families of Koṅku as a whole. These four families served as the ultimate court for disputes which could

not be settled at the nāṭu level. As neat and tidy as this picture may appear, it was by no means unique to Koṅku, but rather a typical pattern which appears to have been prevalent throughout South India in the past. Although no good general study exists on this question, there are many works in print which indicate an unmistakable similarity to the Koṅku political pattern elsewhere. A few examples of the titbits of information available from other areas which parallel our summary are given in the following chart.

When India obtained independence and set up her current democratic state based on panchayati-raj or 'village self-rule', panchayat areas in Koṅku were mapped out, it would appear, so as to follow in a rough way the old kirāman boundaries.²⁹ In the case of Kannapuram kirāman, where Olappālaiyam is situated, there appears to have been little more than a change of name. Originally the territory was called Kannapuram, after the village in the kirāman where the big Cīva temple is located. It was renamed the Paṅcōpālaiyam Panchayat, after another village nearby, where the family holding the position of Munsif (Revenue Official) happens to live. The present Munsif belongs to a KavunṬar clan which has had a dominant hold on the kirāman during the last hundred years.³⁰ A similar association of the village Munsif with the dominant KavunṬar clan is repeated elsewhere. In general, it seems, the British, as their predecessors, largely employed Brahmans and Kaṅaku Pillais (a caste resembling

²⁹ The area covered by the old Kaṅkayanāṭu now has 22 panchayats, where it used to have 12 kirāman. In several cases this is the result of splitting the old kirāman area into two panchayat units.

³⁰ His clan, the ŌṭāLa, has only second ritual precedence, but, nonetheless, it has enjoyed a position of great power and prestige in Kannapuram during the last century. The clan with first ritual precedence, Ceṅkāṅṅan, shows few traces of influence now. However, the clan with third ritual precedence, the KaṅavāLa, has now begun to challenge the leadership of the ŌṭāLa. (See section I C 2).

Chart 4: EXAMPLES OF TRADITIONAL POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION IN SOUTH INDIA

Author & Source	Region	Order of Polit. Div.	No. of Polit. Div.	Corresponding Offices
Miller, Eric "Caste and Territory.." p. 414-15	Malabar	a) - b) Dēsam (land rev. unit) c) Nād d) -	- - - 3	- - Chieftain Important chief- tain families
Mahalingam, T.V. <u>South Indian Polity</u> p. 304	Tanjore, S. Arcot	a) - b) - c) NāTu d) ValanāTu	- - 78 9	- - - -
Thurston, Edgar <u>Castes and Tribes</u> Vol. IV, p. 428	N. Arcot	a) Ūr b) - c) NāTu d) -	- - 18 -	Ūran - NāTTan -
Thurston, Edgar <u>Castes and Tribes</u> Vol. IV, p. 430-31	Trichinopoly	a) Ūr b) - c) NāTu d) -	- - - -	Nūpan or Ūr Kavuntar Periya Kavuntan PATTakkārar
Srinivas, M.N. <u>Religion and Society in Coorg</u> p. 13, 57-60	Coorg	a) - b) - c) NāTu (A Kosbu) d) -	- - 28 or 32 4	- - - PATTi
Govt. of Madras 1961 Census: <u>Village Survey No. 18</u> , p. 53	Salem	a) Ūr b) - c) NāTu d) -	- - - -	Koiskaran - NāTTan Mārtiri
Dumont, Louis <u>Une Sous Caste</u> p. 141-52, 288	Madurai	a) - b) Kirāman c) NāTu d) -	- 24 (12) 8 (4) 4 (2)	- - - Tavar

Brahmans in their life style and degree of literacy) as clerks, book-keepers and accountants. At the same time, they held a member of the most powerful local clan responsible for the actual collection and payment of revenue.³¹

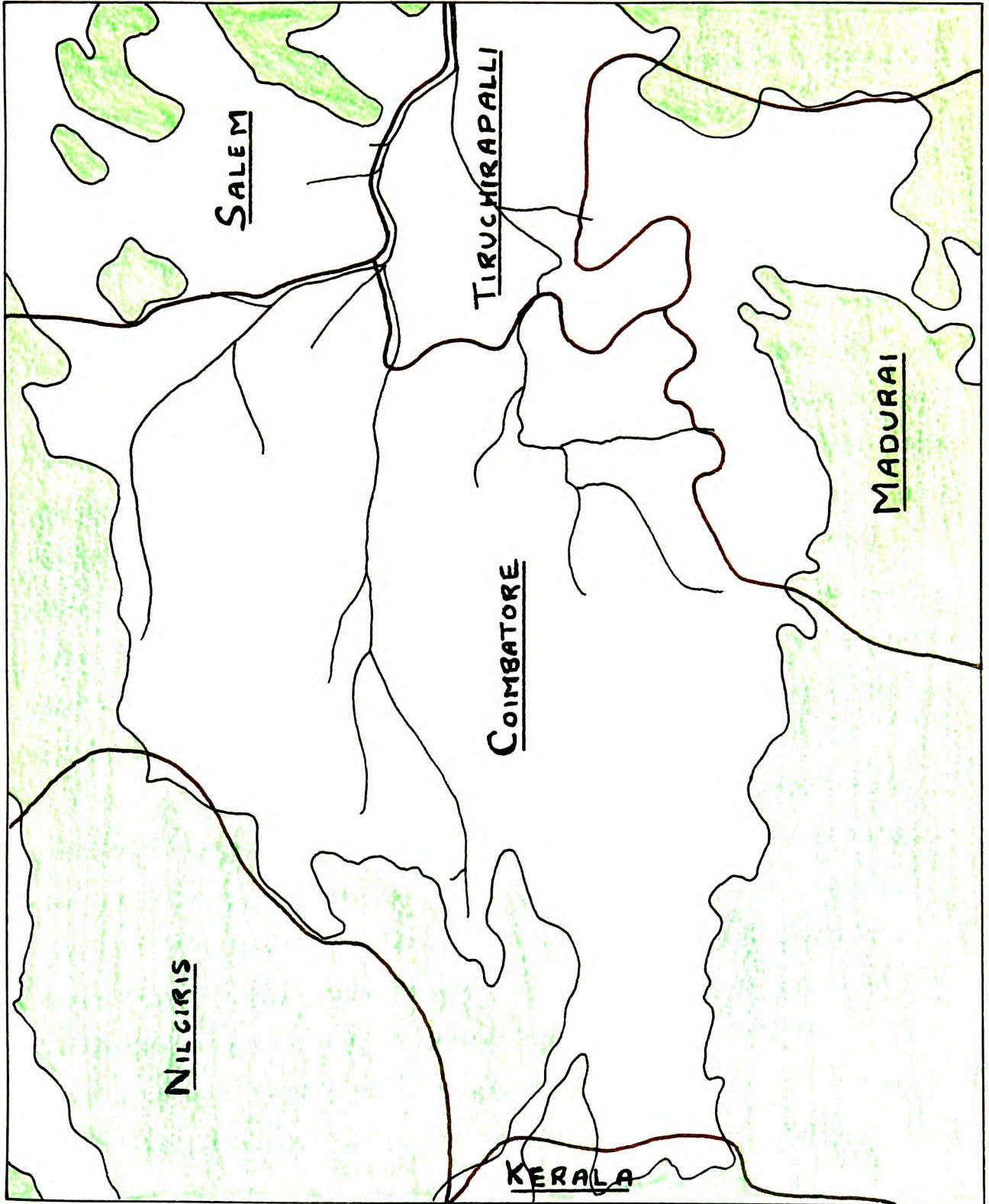
The panchayat is now thought of as the basic unit of local government. It consists of a group of elected representatives who together select a President. In the Kāṅkayam and VeLLakōvil area these presidents all come from wealthy and influential families of the dominant KavunTar caste. In this respect the panchayat presidents do not represent any major break with the traditional local dominance of particular families or clans.

At the present time panchayats are grouped together into units of ten to fifteen to form panchayat unions. The panchayat presidents of a panchayat union area meet to discuss local affairs and their self-elected leader is called the Panchayat Union Chairman. Parallel to this locally elected hierarchy of representatives are government directed and appointed officials who are responsible for the rural development programme. Equal to the Panchayat Union Chairman in administrative level, but under the Chairman's control in certain respects, is the local Block Development Officer (BDO). Directed by the BDO is a staff of village-level agricultural agents or development officers called Grama Sevaks.³² In general, there is one Grama Sevak for each panchayat zone. Also under BDO's direction are a certain number of midwives, poultry and husbandry officials, and other government employed specialists.

³¹ F.A. Nicholson, Manual of the Coimbatore District (Madras, Government Press, 1887), p. 55.

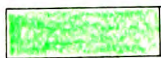
³² Grama is an English spelling of the traditional term kirāman (a term of Sanskrit origin). From the name given to these officials alone, one can see that their association with these traditional village groupings persists.

MAP 8: MAP OF TRADITIONAL KONKU AREA SHOWING PRESENT ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS



Key

~ Present-day District Boundaries

 Areas over 1,500 feet (Mostly forest)

The grouping of panchayats into panchayat union areas is similar to the traditional grouping of kirāman into nāṭu. There are now, however, some fifty panchayat unions in the area traditionally covered by 24 nāṭu. Here, as on the kirāman level, many old nāṭu have been split into two. Kāṅkayanāṭu, for example, is now roughly broken into two panchayat blocks which are called the Kāṅkayan and Vellakōvil Panchayat Unions, respectively.

The panchayat union areas of modern Madras State constitute the highest level on which any relation or association with traditional administrative divisions can be traced. Above the Panchayat Union now is the Taluk, and above that the District Administration. Coimbatore District has nine taluks, but the modern district borders hardly approximate the traditional boundaries of the Koṅku region. (See Map Eight). Thus modern Coimbatore District includes several mountainous regions which lie outside the old Koṅku nāṭu, while quite large areas of plain in the Northwest and Southwest have now been allocated to other districts. (See calculation of the total area of Koṅku nāṭu on Chart One).

While there is some degree of correspondence on the lowest levels of administration between kirāman and panchayat, nāṭu and panchayat union, the picture becomes distorted still further on the taluk and district levels. Thus Koṅku, as referred in this study, no longer remains an identifiable administrative region. To trace changes in administrative boundaries through time would require a detailed historical study. Taluk outlines, however, would appear to date from the British period, if not earlier. Changes in shape at the regional level have probably fluctuated with wars of acquisition or rebellion for centuries. What is important is that, despite these many changes, the traditional geography of Koṅku, with its pattern of temple centres and administrative levels,

has been persistently retained in local tradition. This traditional geography, though largely unrelated to modern administration, is still functional, as we shall see, in ritual, in the regulation of marriage, and in determining patterns of local leadership.

I B) Caste, Community and Social Hierarchy

1) The Castes of Konku and the Right/Left Division

The Konku region is geographically distinct. It can also be identified as an area on social and cultural grounds. The previous section began with an outline of Konku's physical characteristics. It was followed by a discussion of the pattern of traditional political divisions, of caste offices and of temples in Konku. The focus of this section will be on the people of the region, the social hierarchy of their caste communities, and the nature of their local settlements. General observation suggests that maps of dialect differences, of local custom, and even of caste names would all indicate a regional similarity, while distinguishing the Konku plain from surrounding areas. No one, however, has yet made detailed maps of this kind. Such material, if properly collected, would make a most interesting counterpart to the intensive but more localized material on which much of the present study is based.

In describing the people who live in Konku it is important to introduce the reader to the facts of relative caste size and of caste distribution, by settlement. Fortunately the census returns up to 1921 give a description of the region's population by caste. These returns fit the general impressions of the ethnographer about the population of the region today, although there is no recent publication against which the 1921 picture can be checked. The following chart gives the relative population of the most important castes of the region at that time and compares it with the relative caste populations in Kannapuram

Chart 5: RELATIVE CASTE POPULATION OF
THE KONKU REGION

<u>Caste Name Currently</u> (Name used in ¹⁹²¹ Census)	<u>Coimbatore</u> <u>District</u>	<u>Kannapuram</u> <u>Kiraman</u>	<u>Olappālaiyan</u> <u>Village</u>
Brahman	.01	.005	.02
KavuNTar (Velalar)	.31	.53	.42
Īcāri (Kammala)	.01	.02	.07
CeTTiyār (Chetti)	.02	.004	.01
Mutaliyār +(Kaikolan)	.03	.02	.06
UTaiyar +(Kusuvan)	.01	.02	.02
NāTār +(Shennan)	.03	.07	.07
Nāyakkan +(Tottīyan)	.01	.02	.05
PaNTāram +(Andi)	.02	.01	.02
Nāvitan (AmBattan)	.01	.02	.01
VaNNan (Vānnan)	.01	.02	.01
Paraiyan (Parāiyan)	.03	.05	.00
Mātāri +(Chakkiliyan)	.09	.21	.00
Kuravan (Korāva)	.004	.005	.00
Totals:	.63	1.00	1.00

(+)
N.B. A starring indicates that the 1921 term is now considered to be mildly impolite.

District figures are taken from The Government of India, Census 1921, Vol. XIII, Madras, Part II, Imperial and Provincial Tables, (Madras Government Press, 1922).

kirāman and in Olappālaiyam village today.¹

The chart illustrates the heavy numerical dominance of the KavunTar community in the Konku region. The heavy proportional representation of this caste in Kannapuram merely indicates the preponderance of the KavunTar caste in rural areas generally. It does not mean that the caste is particularly concentrated in one part of the total area. Other castes directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture, NāTār (toddy tappers), Nāyakkan (well diggers), and Mātāri (field labourers), are also heavily represented in Kannapuram, as they are generally in rural areas. The concentration of Ācāris (artisans) and Mataliyārs (weavers) in Olappālaiyam village is more unusual. It adds to the interest of choosing this particular location for study. These latter two castes are very important in rural areas, but they tend to cluster in particular well-established settlements, rather than to scatter themselves evenly over the region.

KavunTars are to be found in nearly every touchable caste settlement, while the CeTTiyār (traders) concentrate largely in towns and market centres. UTaiyārs (potters) and Paraiyans (drummers) tend to cluster in one or two villages, only, of an area. This is because their services, though important, are not required on a daily basis. PaNTārams, though similar, are perhaps slightly more scattered than the former. Barbers and washermen are widely and thinly spread. They can be found in nearly all settlements of more than a few families.

¹ Note that the area the chart refers to is Coimbatore District only, as it is very difficult to calculate proportions for the Konku region as a whole. However, the fact that Konku includes parts of other districts as well does not, to my knowledge, present a different general picture. Castes mentioned by the census but not listed in the chart either have very small populations or they are concentrated in mountainous or urban areas of the district where they do not bear much relevance to the present study. (For more details see Appendix 3).

Another important observation to be made, concerning the material presented in Chart 5, is the marked difference between caste names chosen by the 1921 census authorities and those in polite usage today. (See starred entries). Partly this points to the difficult problem of identifying a caste by a particular name, but it would seem also to indicate a change in the nature of favoured caste titles over this period. Almost all the castes in the region have alternate names. Generally there is a polite title, used for addressing someone of a particular caste directly, and a less polite title which may be used to refer to the same community when none of its representatives are present. In the body of this study we have chosen the current polite title in each case. However, other terms are listed in brackets, along with a brief description of each caste, in Appendix Two. In some cases an alternative title may be treated as polite.

It would seem reasonable to assume that the British, when publishing the census returns, selected what were generally considered to be polite caste titles at that time. It is most interesting to note, therefore, that nearly half of the castes on the list would now consider the term used to refer to them in 1921 as slightly demeaning. In each case, it would seem, they have successfully introduced into general usage a new and more prestigious term. If there were original, non-caste meanings for these older caste titles, their nature is now unclear. Dictionaries listing them provide only a specific definition in terms of a hereditary caste occupation. The new terms, however, all have original meanings which make little or no reference to caste occupation. (See Chart 6 below).

Although changing caste names is undoubtedly not a new phenomenon, it would appear that a great number of castes have attempted to introduce new names for themselves in recent years. These terms, without exception, serve as general and prestigious titles, and at the same time let members

Chart 6: OLD AND NEW CASTE TITLES IN KOŪKU

<u>Old Term</u> (1921 Census Spelling)	<u>Dictionary</u> <u>Definition</u>	<u>New Term</u>	<u>Dictionary</u> <u>Definition</u>
Kaikolan	Watchman or guard (as the person who holds a stick)	Mataliyār	Chief, person who ranks first in a series
Kusuvan	Caste of potters	Ūtaiyār	Possessor of wealth, master, lord
Shannan	Caste of toddy drawers	Nāṭar	Ruler, lord of a country
Tōṭṭiyam	Watchman, guard or menial servant	Nāyakkan	Captain, soldier, head- man
Andi	Religious mendicant	Paṅṭāraṁ	Treasurer of a large storehouse (of temple jewels etc.)
Chakkiliyam	Leatherworker	Mātari	Beautiful, as the goddess Lakṣmi

N.B. The definitions are taken from C.J. Dasan, Tamil Lexicon (Madras, University Press, 1936), and J.P. Fabricius, Tamil-English Dictionary (Tranquebar, Mission Press, 1933).

of the community escape from the more derogatory implications of a term which refers directly to their traditional occupations. Many caste names now in use refer to a group of people in a complimentary way without really saying very much about them. However, the attempt at change is only partially successful as new terms have quickly become associated with occupations anyway. People living in Koŷku treat the terms as euphemisms and can readily describe what the associated traditional caste work is.²

The terminology which is used to denote subcaste is somewhat different.

² The alternate term for Kavunṭar is Vēlālar, but this is not commonly used. The satisfaction of caste members with the term Kavunṭar indicates both the prestige this title carries and the regional (rather than pan-South Indian) orientation of this dominant agricultural community. The term Kavunṭar is related to the Sanskrit grāma-Kūṭa, meaning 'a village chief of Sūdra origin'.

It is unusual for a subcaste term to say anything more specific about occupation than the caste title itself did.³ However, these terms usually do have a geographic or linguistic referent. They may also denote something special about the ritual customs of a particular subcaste, such as the fact that they tie a large or a small wedding necklace. Subcaste communities are, generally, endogamous units. Caste is a much vaguer matter which refers to one's hereditary social and occupational group and not necessarily to one's kin.

It is interesting to note one further point about the caste composition of the Konku region. All of the castes listed in Chart 5 have at least two, but in many cases more, subcastes. There is only one important exception, the Kavuntar community. Although there are, at a very rough guess, ^{300,000} some ~~150,000~~ Kavuntars in the Konku area today, there is hardly a single significant subcaste division among them. Apart from clan exogamy (there are probably more than a hundred extant Kavuntar clans), a man may, in theory, marry any previously unmarried woman in his caste. The fact that most Kavuntar marriages actually take place within a five to ten mile radius of the groom's village is no bar to the general breadth of possibilities which informants, themselves, consider exist. The basic criterion for marriage among Kavuntars are wealth, land, and local social position. This emphasis plus the strength of their clan system, perhaps, provide a key to the absence of sub-caste proliferation.⁴

Rural Konku is controlled, in most areas, by Kavuntars. Chart 5

³ There are exceptions to the rule, such as Molakāran Mutaliyār, denoting a subcaste of dancers and musicians. Mola is the name of a drum.

⁴ There are two distinct castes (Paṭiyacci and Vēṭṭuva) who own land in some areas and who have adopted the Kavuntar title. There are also a few small subcastes of non-Konku Kavuntars living on the fringes of the region.

indicates that the KavunTars constitute about 31% of the general population of the region, but that their numbers rise to nearly half the total population in rural areas. KavunTar was probably originally a royal title, which has now passed into much more general usage. There are references, in fact, to the term being used in the area as early as the 7th or 8th century, when it was ruled over by the Ganga dynasty from Mysore. Probably at that time it was employed only to designate men of very high office. Now it is a highly general caste name.⁵

The hold of the KavunTar caste on the region, however, is not just a numerical one. It is also economic and cultural. Members of this community consider themselves to be a branch of the influential VēLālar, found further to the South and East. (See Section I C 2). They are marked off from the VēLāLars of other areas, however, by their characteristic life-cycle ceremonies as well as by what could be called their distinctive 'living style'. KavunTar ceremonies, diet, dress, and behaviour are all associated with the Koṅku region generally, both by members of other castes, and by travellers or visitors from other regions. Some KavunTars refer to themselves interchangeably as Koṅku VēLāLars or as KavunTars, emphasizing their simultaneous association with a distinct region and with all the all-South India VēLāLar community.

KavunTar rituals are explicitly called Koṅku rituals or ceremonies by those familiar with them. For these ceremonies five non-KavunTar service communities are necessary. These are (1) the non-Brahman priests of Koṅku, called PaNTārams, (2) the potters or UTaiyār, (3) the barbers or Nāvitan, (4) the washermen or VaNṅan, and (5) the outcaste drummers or

⁵ Arokiaswami, Koṅku Country, p. 175

Plate 3: Portraits Of Women And Children

- a) A NāTār Woman (Possessed By A Clan Deity)
- b) A Young Nāyakkan Girl
- c) An Elderly Nāyakkan Woman
- d) Pappanna (A PaNTāram)
- e) A KavunTār Couple, Their Daughter, And Her Son
- f) A Young KavunTār Wife and Her Week-Old Son
- g) A CeTTiyar Woman Bathing Her Daughter

PLATE 3



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)



(g)

Paraiyans. All five of these caste titles are general terms which are used throughout the Tamil-speaking area. The subcastes of these communities who are represented in Koṅku and who perform the KavunTar ceremonies are also identified by the qualifying term Koṅku to distinguish them from other subcastes.⁶ Thus the potter who serves KavunTars is called a Koṅku UTaiyār, and the washermen who serves them a Koṅku Vaṅṅan. In general, only Koṅku subcastes are both willing and allowed to serve the KavunTar community.⁷ These five service groups not only aid the KavunTars in performing their ceremonies, but follow the details of KavunTar ritual within their own communities.⁸ The same five also follow KavunTar custom in other respects. For example, they all eat meat and condone alcohol, but ban widow remarriage.⁹

There are two further communities in Koṅku who are closely tied to the KavunTars, but who are not strictly associated with any ritual service occupation. The first is a subcaste of Ceṭṭiyār (merchants) who claim direct descent from KavunTars in the past. (See section II B 1). The businesses controlled by this caste are, in general, closely allied with KavunTar interests. As the service communities above, the Koṅku Ceṭṭiyārs

⁶ The one exception are the Paṅṅārams, who in the area I am most familiar with, use the subcaste title Ōkeccāṅṅi more readily than the regional term Koṅku. However, they would always consider the use of the adjective Koṅku to refer to them as complimentary.

⁷ This is the formal rule which informants refer to in verbal explanation. However, in a pinch, some KavunTars will accept service from a non-Koṅku subcaste. This would be more readily done in the case of everyday services such as shaving or washing, but with great reluctance on ceremonial occasions.

⁸ The one exception to this are the UTaiyār, who have somewhat distinctive life-cycle ceremonies. Also those portions of the Paraiyan community who have been converted to Christianity have, in consequence, abandoned many of their traditional ceremonies for ones considered to be 'more Christian'.

⁹ A few KavunTars claim not to allow drink and (a very few) do not eat meat. However, these attitudes are not characteristic of the caste as a whole.

follow Koṅku KavunTar ritual in every detail. A second and more numerous group are the NāTār. These are the people who tap the palayra palm trees for their sap. The NāTār must live in close symbiosis with the KavunTar community, because they tap trees which grow on KavunTar controlled land. Although the NāTār life-cycle ceremonies are somewhat distinctive (resembling those of the UTaiyār), they enjoy membership in the general Koṅku ritual community.

The groups described above, taken together, are called the valaṅkai jāti or 'right-hand castes'. They all tie a similar style of wedding necklace or tāli on their wives at marriage, and they alone enjoy special ceremonial privileges at the Māriyamma festival of the kirāṁam which takes place once a year. They claim a special relation to this goddess by saying that they were born out of a pot of fire which Cīva presented to her as a gift. The right-hand castes, as a group, speak of themselves as Māriyamma's servants.

The castes called iṭaṅkai or 'left-hand' are, for the most part, those who are excluded from membership in the right-hand faction. Thus it is more difficult to speak of the common customs or traditions of the left-hand communities. They form a somewhat hodge-podge selection, although later, ^{chapters} we will note a number of things which they do share. Brahmans consider themselves to be above this division and neutral in the dispute. All other castes of importance in Koṅku, however, are included, with the possible exception of the lowest caste of all, the Kuravan. These people are considered so inferior that they are really 'beyond the pale' in their position at the foot of the social scale.

In the past the left and the right-hand factions in Koṅku have been bitter rivals, as it would appear that they also were in other areas of the South. Women of the left-hand communities, for example, were once

forbidden to bring offerings to the temple of the goddess Māriyamman during her festival. Instead they were required to remain at a considerable distance from the shrine. By contrast, the left-hand castes bore a strong association with a goddess of their own, called Ankālamma. (See section I D 2). The difficulty in describing the castes as right and left-hand in Koṅku is that this factional division is now so attenuated that people no longer discuss their differences in these terms. Only a few old men still remember details about the division and can discuss it intelligently. However, the fact remains that variations in caste custom and tradition which are clearly observable today pattern or correlate persistently with the outline of this traditional factional division. It is as if the factional division were the wooden frame of a house having metal furniture. The frame has been eaten away by termites over the years, but the metal furniture remains in place, indicating the floor plan which the house once had. One of the main burdens of ensuing chapters will be to illustrate how the left/right division is a useful tool in understanding Koṅku society to this day, even though the traditional terminology describing this division is now obsolete.

The more prestigious left-hand castes, in outline, consist of the artisan, weaving and merchant communities, (Ācāri, Mutaliyār, and non-Koṅku Caṭṭiyār respectively). Associated with their ranks is another much respected caste, the accountants or Kaṅaku Pillai. In addition to these there are many non-Koṅku subcastes of the service communities, and a few low-ranking left-hand communities who supply unskilled labour. Most of these less respected castes of the left-hand are, in fact, immigrant groups who have made their way to Koṅku from Mysore or Andhra at some time in the past. Several of these castes still retain Kannada or Telugu as their mother tongue, although all members bilingual as adults.

The left-hand castes are far more diverse in their ritual and in their general life-style than the castes of the right. However, those communities classed as left-hand do share certain recognizable characteristics which will be treated in some detail in ensuing chapters. Suffice it to say here that they are, as a group, relatively more mobile than the castes of the right. They are less attached to the land and to the dominant Kavuntar caste than the right-hand communities. In many ways, in fact, the members of the left-hand faction emphasize their separateness. These communities who speak Kannada or Telugu persist in using these languages in the home, even when surrounded by Tamil-speakers in every other respect. The more prestigious castes of the left add to this their great interest in the ritual and sacred traditions of an all-South India literate culture. Their rituals, their life-style and their folklore all make conscious reference to the mythology and ritual recorded in learned texts. Of course, one can not say that the Kavuntars are not heavily influenced by these larger currents. It is only the high ranking castes of the left, however, who deliberately dissociate themselves from regional custom and, instead, explicitly transcend it in an attempt to identify themselves with all-South India traditions. (See section II B 1).

The cultural hold which the right-hand castes have had on the region has its roots in the traditional organization of the economy. This economic order was characterized by kirāṁam or groups of settlements which appear, in general, to have been dominated by a single Kavuntar clan or family. The size of the area they controlled was relative to the degree of influence they could exert and the extent of their leadership in the region more generally. In addition to large numbers of relatively minor feudal families, there were four famous ones. These were the Paṭṭakkārar who held large tracts of land and were famous throughout Koṅku. It was

they who served as the ultimate courts of appeal in time of dispute.

One of these four Pattakkārar lives at PaRaiyakōTTai, only ten miles from Olappālaiyam, and most of the feudal services this family can command are still operative. The details of these will help to illustrate how the traditional system of rights and services probably operated over much larger areas in the past. The PaRaiyakōTTai PaTTakkārar currently enjoys a position of hegemony over three kirāman. The actual services which he commands from the castes who live in this area, and the returns he makes, are listed in the chart below.¹⁰

It is possible to generalize from the chart by saying that the system is one of multiple rights to land and to produce which are shared by the PaTTakkārar's family and are related both to the service contributed and to the general status of the caste in the social hierarchy. Only two castes, it would appear, have direct rights to work the land and to reap its produce directly. One of these is the KavunTār community, the PaTTakkārar's own caste. This community is obliged to pay the PaTTakkārar a rent, either in money, labour or in kind, in exchange for the right to cultivate lands allocated to them.¹¹ The second are the KāTārs who enjoy the right to tap the palmyra palms of the area, also in exchange for a rent. All the other castes provide some service and receive agricultural produce

¹⁰ The information in the chart was supplied by a PaNTāram priest living in one of the three kirāman who, himself, is obliged to perform several days of service in the year, as part of a rotating arrangement within his own caste.

¹¹ In addition, the PaTTakkārar used to enjoy a right to one bull calf of each household born during the year. This right may be related to a very old custom of taxing cattle, probably as a compensation for grazing rights. There is a reference to such a tax in T.V. Mahalingam, South Indian Polity, p. 189.

**Chart 7: TRADITIONAL RIGHTS AND SERVICES
THE PATTAKKARAR'S FAMILY AT PARAYAN**

Faction	Caste (Subcaste in brackets)	General Occupation	Special Rights in the kiraman
Right	Pavuntar	Skilled	Tenants on large tracts of land and rights to harvest therefrom.
Right	Nūṭar	Tappers of the palayra palm. Also skilled field labourers.	Rights to tap the palayra palm trees and to distill sugar and toddy from the sap.
Right	Paṅṭaram	Priests at local temples. Also cooks, suppliers of eating leaves and makers of flower garlands.	Rights to festival proceeds at kiraman temples (Division of temples into two groups).
Right	ṬṬaiyār	Potters. Also skilled in finer points of building construction.	Rights to supply potters' services to inhabitants of the kiraman and to reimbursement therefore. Also rights at temple and life-cycle ceremonies where their services are required.
Right	Nāvitan	Barbers and country physicians	Rights to shave and to practice the arts of curing and of spirit exorcism in the kiraman for remuneration. Also rights at temple and life-cycle ceremonies where their services are required.
Right	Vaṅṅan	Washermen	Rights to wash the clothes of people in the kiraman. Also rights at temple and life-cycle ceremonies.

SERVICES OF THE VARIOUS CASTES VIS A VISNETAI (STILL OPERATIVE)

Services due to PaTTakkārar personally without direct remuneration

Indirect Remuneration from the PaTTakkārar

Free field labour supplied, by family, in proportion to land occupied or equivalent rent in cash or kind.

One adult man from each household to help PaTTakkārar with harvest during peak periods.

One noon meal supplied to men helping with the harvest.

Rights ceded to PaTTakkārar over any young bull calves born during the year (not now operative. The PaTTakkārar apparently selected only a portion of these for his own use and may also have made some reciprocatory payment)

One adult man from each household to supply field labour for PaTTakkārar during the six months of the year when tree tapping is not done.

One noon meal supplied to each man while he is supplying field help.

Two men a day (one from each temple group) to supply 60 eating leaves for PaTTakkārar's family. Also expected to heat water for bathing and to help with the cooking. On call for other household tasks as well.

96 measures of grain a year given to the men of each of the two temple groups.

Obligation to supply all earthen pots required by the PaTTakkārar's family and also to supply skilled labour for plastering and building when needed.

96 measures of grain a year.

One man a day to shave the PaTTakkārar and his family. Also required to sweep and perform other menial household tasks.

One noon meal supplied to men providing service. Also 96 measures of grain a year.

One man a day to wash the clothes of the PaTTakkārar's family and the men providing services for him

One noon meal supplied to man providing services. Also 96 measures of grain a year.

Chart 7 cont.

Faction	Caste (Subcaste in brackets)	General Occupation	Special Rights in the kirāman
Neutral	Piramaṁ or Brahman	Astrologers and temple priests	Rights to proceeds at Cīva and Viṣṇu temples.
Left	Mutaliyār	Weavers	No particular rights. (Temple dancers & musicians excepted).
Left	Ceṭṭiyār (Kōmatti)	Merchants	No particular rights.
Left	Īcāri	Artisans in precious metals, brass, iron, wood and stone.	No particular rights.
Left	Nāyakkaṅ	Well diggers and builders	No particular rights.
Left	Mātāri	Leatherworkers and field labourers	Rights to carry off dead cattle and to provide leather for people of kirāman for remuneration.
Left	Kuravaṅ	Watchmen, basket- makers and fortune tellers.	Rights to act as guards for the kirāman, to tell fortunes and to supply woven baskets for remuneration.

Services due to PaTTakkārar personally without direct remuneration	Indirect Remuneration from the PaTTakkārar
No special obligation. Would come when called.	None
No special obligation. Would come when called.	None
No special obligation. Would come if called.	None
No special obligation. Would come if called	None
No special obligation. Would come if called.	None
One man from each household required, on call, to do fieldwork for the PaTTakkārar.	One noon meal supplied to men working on any particular day.
One man each day (or more?) to act as general messenger and as errand boy. Also required to guard the PaTTakkārar's house at night.	One hundred measures of grain a year

in payment, that is indirectly.¹²

Five castes (PaNTāram, UTaiyār, Nāvitān, VaNNān and Paraiyan) contribute vital non-agricultural services of ritual importance. The obligations of service devolve on the group as a whole and rotate among families, not individuals. These five castes are compensated by ninety-six measures of grain each, a year. The grain is then divided within the caste, by family.¹³ It is interesting that the highest ranking of the service communities, the PaNTārams, divide the work required according to a further internal division among themselves. This is defined in terms of rights at one or the other of two major temples, a Māriyāman temple at NaTTkātaiyūr and the PaTTakkārar's own clan temple, dedicated to Annūraman, at PaRaiyakōTTai. They supply two men to the PaTTakkārar's house each day, one from each internal division, but are also compensated for this by the fact that ninety-six measures of grain are presented yearly to each division. Each of these castes are also compensated in smaller measure by KavuNTar tenant families who make a similar use of their services.¹⁴

These seven castes above constitute the major communities of the right-hand faction. From the chart alone, it can be seen that it is the members of this faction, only, who enjoy specific territorial rights (or are tied, by bonds of ritual service, to those who do enjoy these rights). The other communities, those who belong to the left-hand faction, are not tied to leading families of the region and thus to specific kirāman by the same

¹² Of course now (and in theory for some 150 years since the earliest British Land Settlement in the area) anyone may own land outright. In practice it is still only the KavuNTar community who own land to any great extent (see Section I B 2). Of course, those who do own land are no longer obliged to pay rent as tenants of the PaTTakkārar's family.

¹³ For the details of how the inheritance of these kinds of rights evolve on individual families, see Section II A 1.

¹⁴ For details of compensation for ritual services by other families in the kirāman, see Section I B 2.

nexus of rights and obligations.

The chart lists these seven important castes of the right-hand faction first, presenting them in their decreasing order of social prestige. It then lists the castes of the left in a similar graded order, leaving in the middle the Brahmans, who are, in general, considered to be above the division. It will be quickly noted that none of the more prestigious castes of the left have any specific rights to land nor obligations of service to the Pattakkāra's family. Only the lowest two castes of the left, the untouchable Mātaris and Kuravans, are mentioned as having any obligation to the Pattakkāra to provide labour or services. Of these only the very lowest, the Kuravan, who are really outside the pale of this division, provide labour on a daily basis.

If the chart can be taken as indicative of a much more widely practiced system of feudal rights in the past, then it would appear that the left-hand communities do not have now, and probably never have had, the same degree of attachment to land and to landed families as did those of the right. However, it must be noted simultaneously that there is not the same extent of differentiation between the castes of the left and the castes of the right at the bottom of the social hierarchy as there is at its summit. These two largely parallel faction groups and the social traditions which differentiate them are something which is discussed again in later sections. The main lines of the argument, however, can already be grasped. The right-hand group of castes are far more closely tied to land and to territory than those of the left, but the divergence of the two groups is much clearer at the top of the social hierarchy than at the bottom. The two factions can be represented as two vertical and nearly parallel lines which can be seen to diverge at their summit, but which begin to converge as they descend.

The ranking of castes in hierarchical terms in accordance with differential rules of seating and graded states of polluting ability is a general feature of Indian society. The problem has been discussed elsewhere by many authors.¹⁵ As in other parts of India, a concern with marking differential status in common social situations by the use of specific and overt signs is a pervasive aspect of life in rural Koṅku. It is the general impression of people who have lived in other areas of South India, as well, that overt signs of hierarchical status are used frequently in Koṅku, and without embarrassment. In this sense one might describe Koṅku society as conservative and tradition-oriented, relative to other regions. This conservatism is particularly noticeable in the central parts of the region, where research for the present study was conducted.

In the Koṅku region, people talk about caste rank easily and without excuse, even when it is a case of stating openly in front of a friend from a low status community that "of course he would not be allowed the privilege of this and so" because of his inferior caste status.¹⁶ This relatively emphatic concern with formal rank can also be seen in the dialect of the region which makes regular use of ika on the ends of phrases, a form of differential respect considered to be extreme and archaic elsewhere.

The data collected on ranking are summarized here as it not only serves to fill out a general introduction to the castes of Koṅku, but also illus-

¹⁵ Ranking, of course, pervades subcaste, clan and family relationships as well. For an excellent summary of work on this subject see L. Dumont's Homo Hierarchicus.

¹⁶ A strong, generalized statement has been put forth on purpose, in order to bring out the relative contrast with other areas of the South. Of course, any fieldworker would find exceptions and some ambivalence in specific situations. Informants also point to the beginnings of many changes in recent years, but these are details relative to the strength of general feeling on the subject.

trates in its own fashion the important separation between the right and the left-hand factions. The general approach followed in collecting and tabulating material on the question of ranking was first suggested to me by Pauline Mahar (Kolenda) in an article of hers about North India.¹⁷ Her method accords with my own experience, that when villagers are asked to think about the rank of other castes, relative to themselves, they use ritual distance as the major criterion.¹⁸ Certain of the questions asked in her study, however, such as that about the communal smoking of a pipe, were not relevant in a South Indian context. Two questions about seating, therefore, were substituted. The responses to these queries were analysed separately. (For details of this ranking analysis see Appendix 4).

It was found that these seating conventions produce a significantly different ranking of castes from that which can be arrived at from considering the rules of eating and of physical contact alone. This is because the seating of a person, although not devoid of a pollution aspect as it involves entering and touching certain areas and furnishings of the house, can be influenced by independent criteria such as wealth, and general prestige.

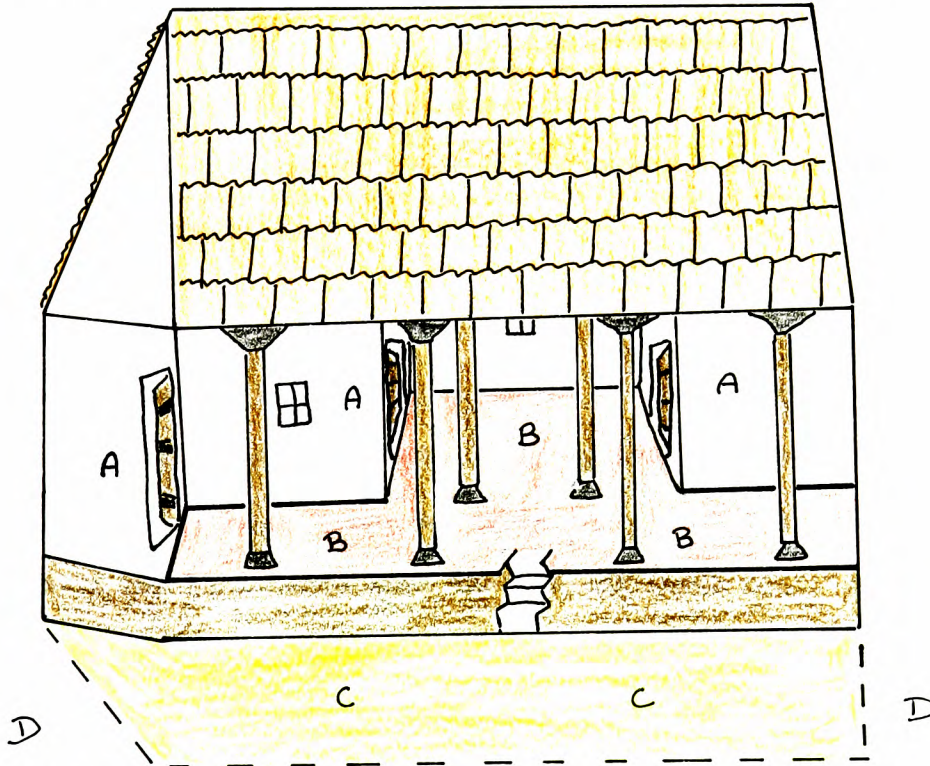
A house in Konku is usually divided into four areas of decreasing ritual significance into which guests may be invited. (See Diagram 1). These areas are ranked in the following chart.

¹⁷ Pauline Mahar, "A Multiple Scaling Technique for Caste Ranking," Man in India, June, 1959, Vol. 39, 2, pp. 128-47

¹⁸ The use of polite vrs. impolite terms of address correlates with ritual distance customs, but is less detailed for diagnostic purposes.

Chart 8: AREAS OF RITUAL SIGNIFICANCE IN A KONKU HOUSE

Classification	Space	Tamil Term	Seating Possibilities
A)	Kitchen (& inner rooms)	(<u>Canaiyal</u>) <u>vīTu</u>	Normally none
B)	Reception hall & porch	<u>CāvaTi</u> or <u>tiNNai</u>	Chair, cot, straw mat & bare floor
C)	Inner courtyard	<u>UL vācil</u>	Plain floor
D)	Exterior space (beyond entrance)	<u>Veli Vācil</u>	Plain floor

DIAGRAM 1: PLAN OF A KONKU HOUSE

These spaces in a house correspond roughly to a series of graded levels in the caste hierarchy. These levels are given in Chart 9 below.

Chart 9: CASTE RANKING IN TERMS OF HOUSE ENTRY
AND SEATING

Group	Right Hand	Caste Name	Left Hand	Score in Ranking Analysis
One		Piraman (Brahman)		23
Two	KavuNTar Keñku CeTTiyār		KaÑakku PILLai Mutaliyār Ācāri KomaTTi CeTTiyār	19/18 16 15 14 14
Three				
(a)	PañTāram UTaiyar			11 11
(b)	NāTār		NāyaKKan	8 5
(c)		Nāvitan Vaññan (subcastes not distinguished)		3 3
Four	Paṛaiyan		Mātāri Kuravan	0 0 0

According to tradition the scheme of correspondence between the castes above and the areas of a house is as follows; (The description is for entry into a house of a man of group two). Only a Brahman or a man of one's own caste may be allowed into the kitchen (area A). Any other man of a caste in group two is welcome in the reception hall (area B). A man of group three is expected to enter and sit in the inner courtyard (area C). A man of group four must remain outside the main entrance and speak through the doorway (area D).

This pattern is repeated in the case of invitations from castes in any other category. The general rule is that any person from a category above one's own may enter the kitchen (A), anyone from the same category may enter the reception hall (B) and anyone from a lower category may enter

the inner court (C). The untouchables are the one exception. They must always remain outside the home (D) of a man of any touchable caste. No one but a Brahman may thus enter a Brahman kitchen. If a person's house is small, all inner rooms may be treated as equal to the kitchen. In such a case the outer porch becomes the reception hall.

In simplified terms the same pattern will work in reverse. Thus anyone of a category higher than that of the host would be sensitive about accepting his hospitality at all for fear that it might demean him. Many people never enter the house of a category of castes lower than their own, and even rarer would be a case of someone entering the house of a category two levels below his own. No one in the highest three categories would consider entering the house of an untouchable and, in general, he will even avoid the habitation site where these people reside. Similarly, Brahmans (particularly women) hesitate to enter the houses of any other caste, although they might do so on specific errands.

This neat picture, however, requires several modifying comments. For a start, PaNTārams (group three) are cooks and priests for the right-hand castes of group two. Therefore, PaNTārams may, of course, enter their kitchens. However, traditionally PaNTārams do not eat at the same time as, or sit at the same level with, men of category two. A PaNTāram or an UTaiyār could, on a festival occasion, sit in area B of the house of a man of group two. In this sense they are accorded a higher position than other castes of group three. However, at a festival they would normally be present in the role of ritual servants. In such a case they would eat on area B, but after members of group two had finished. PaNTārams and UTaiyārs would not enter the kitchen of a person belonging to the left-hand section of group two. Similarly, a man of a right-hand caste of group three

would not be happy to have a man of a left-hand caste of group two enter his kitchen.¹⁹

The second important modification of the picture given above is in the direction of general flexibility. Informants say that the situation approximated that described above some twenty years ago, but that increased mobility, unsegregated public transportation and restaurant facilities, and the general policies of the Congress party have increased the number of liberties now taken with traditional rules. Flexibility does seem to be increasing, but the situation may always have been somewhat more fluid than these verbally stated rules would suggest.

The division of group three into (a), (b) and (c) categories is important. When castes of group 3 (a) or (b) are playing host, they separate themselves from 3 (c) and expect the latter to enter only as far as the inner courtyard. The feeling that group (c), the barbers and washermen, are somehow different from other members of this third category is very general. Nowadays there is a widespread tendency for the castes of three (a) to be assimilated to category two. Thus one often sees such people seat themselves in the reception hall of a Kavuntar house. Since Paṅṭārams and Uṭaiyārs have traditionally been high class servants in Kavuntar homes, they slip across this boundary easily. Now, however, the Nāṭārs are beginning to follow them. Nāyakkans, on the other hand, are being separated off, and on the whole are joined with group three (c).²⁰

¹⁹ Nāvītans and Vaṅṅans divide into right and left-hand subcastes, but differences in ranking according to subcaste were not recorded.

²⁰ The situation described pertains to the rural and very tradition-oriented area around Kaṅkayam. The customs described are much vaguer in towns. In a more fluid situation, education, wealth or influential position can be used as criteria for treating a man as a member of group two, when, by birth, he belongs to a lower category. Also, boys and young adults take more liberties with the rules when they play host, than older people.

Thus group three (b) is gradually dissolving, some members joining three (a), while others are relegated to three (c).

The ranked categories of castes described above have been presented in a logically clearer and neater fashion than informants would themselves use to describe the situation. For informants it is the distinction between category two and categories three (a) and (b) which is the most difficult to pin down. A Brahman's ritual superiority is unquestioned and informants would give them a category by themselves. Similarly, the untouchables are distinguished by all and classed under a single term as tēṭṭilāṭa janakkaḷ or 'people one must not touch'. Washermen and barbers, also, are classed together. They are always treated as inferior to the other touchable non-Brahman castes. Informants explicitly relate the status of these two communities to the fact that they perform polluting services. Other members of group three are also considered to be slightly less clean than the members of group two, but here the pollution is not so personalised. For groups three (a) and (b) the pollution criterion tends to be overshadowed by their general social subservience. Nāyakkans and Ṭṭaiyārs are both mildly polluted by the fact that they work with earth, though the Ṭṭaiyārs less so, presumably because the earth is of high quality (caly) and because they are highly skilled. The Nāṭārs are considered to be slightly polluted because traditionally they distilled and sold palmyra palm toddy, though this occupation is no longer legal in Madras State. In the case of Paṅṭāras, however, it is difficult to detect a taint of pollution unless it be that they handle eating leaves. Clearly they are pure or clean enough to cook and to perform temple rituals for the Kavṅṭar community. It would appear that their position in group three is based almost entirely on the fact that they are a service community.

Clearly the PaNTārams occupy an ambivalent position.

Within each of the groups outlined, seating is in terms of general wealth and prestige rather than in terms of caste. In all homes it is the reception hall where guests of importance are entertained. Even the poorest of the poor will possess straw mats for seating people and most homes have at least one rope cot as well. Wealthy families may also possess a few chairs. When guests arrive these seats are distributed according to the authority and importance of those present. Chairs rank before cots, which in turn rank above mats. No honoured guest would be seated on the bare floor although someone of little importance might find himself on the bare floor if his presence were overshadowed by that of other visitors. A host will sit at the same level as his most important guests, except in circumstances where he feels greatly honoured by their presence and wants to indicate his own inferiority. On the otherhand, a host will sit above his most important caller when the latter is a person to whom he gives orders or whose affairs he otherwise directs.²¹

In addition to house entry and seating, however, there are other less malleable rules concerning the prevention of ritual pollution. More serious than general pollution of the house is the pollution by bodily contact by touching food vessels, or most serious of all, by directly touching food.²² These rules are much less subject to modification by reference to wealth or position and they indicate more clearly than the former, the

²¹ There are numerous other small ways in which one can indicate a superior/inferior relationship. Men, for example, will fold up their vesti (lower cloth) to their knees in the presence of a superior and sometimes remove their tūtu (upper cloth) as well. In addition, all second person pronouns, in Tamil as well as their corresponding verb endings, indicate relative status.

²² Pollution as a result of house entry and pollution by touch are of about equal severity.

division between the right and the left-hand factions. The general ranking of the castes of Koṅku in these terms is given in Chart 10 below. (For details see Appendix 4).

Chart 10: CASTE RANKING IN TERMS OF RULES OF INTIMATE CONTACT

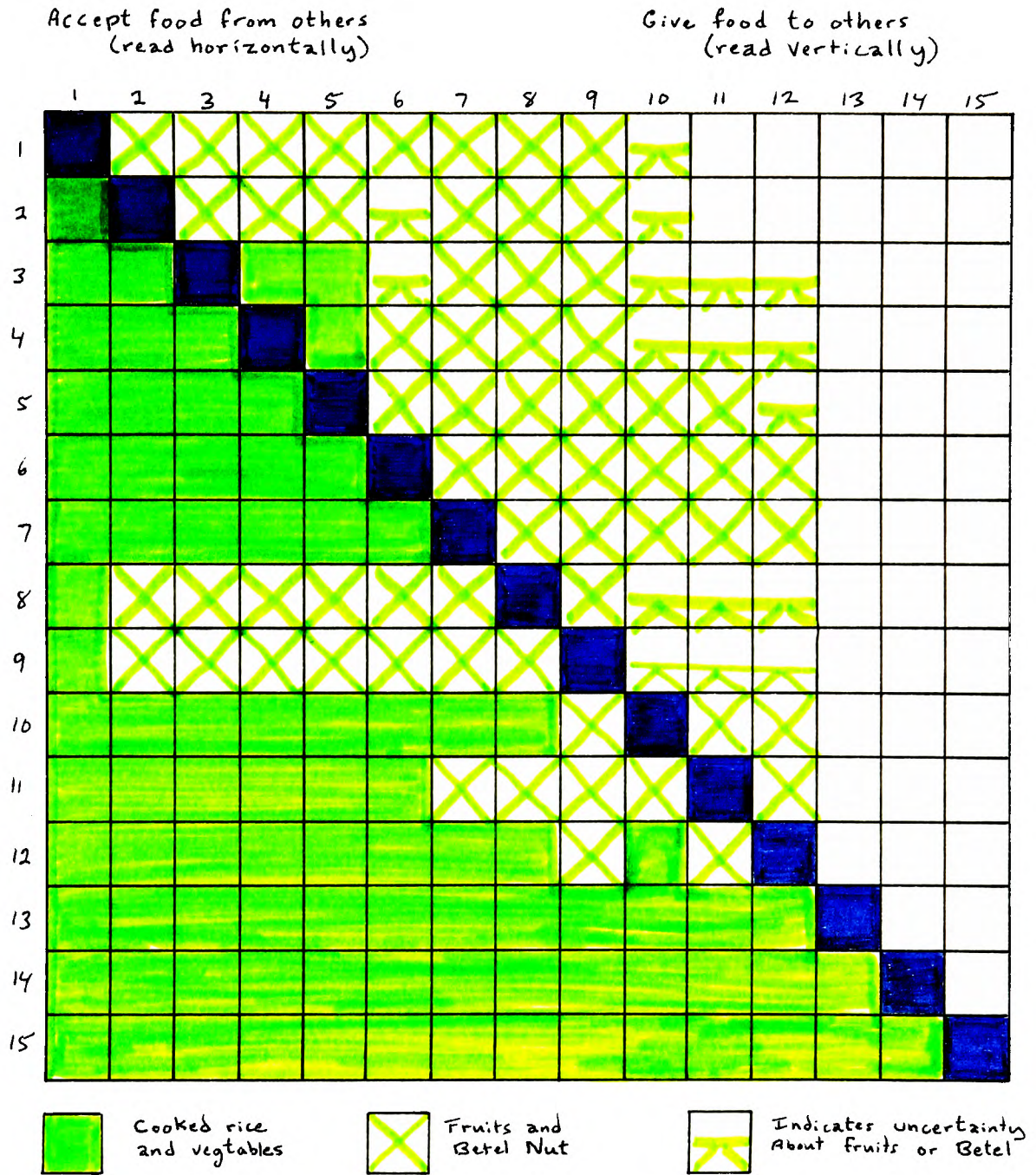
° Indicates Vegetarian

Score in Ranking Analysis	Right Hand	Caste Name	Left Hand
115		Ṣiṅṅar (Brahman)	
100			° Kaṅṅaku PILLai
93	Kavunṅar		
(92)	(Koṅku Ceṅṅiyār) (2)		
92	Faṅṅara		Maṅṅiyār
73	UTaiyār		
76			° komuṅṅi Ceṅṅiyār
71	Nāṅar		
67			° Acāri
57			Maṅṅakkar
50		(4) Nāvitan	
48		VAṅṅan	
2	Paraiyan		
2			(5) ṅiri
2		Kurā	

The score used to order the various castes for the purpose of charts 9 and 10 has been derived by compiling the answers to a questionnaire. The inquiry included ten basic questions which were administered uniformly to members of all the castes concerned. These questions are listed below. There are dotted blanks where the names of castes other than the informant's own were filled in. Each question was repeated for all the castes in question (using a random order of caste names) before the next question in the list was begun.

Questions	Order of question in actual inquiry
1. Can a ... touch your children?	10
2. Can a ... touch you?	1
3. Can you accept fruits and betel leaves from the hand of a ...?	7
4. Can a ... touch your brass vessels without your having to wash them?	4
5. Can a ... touch your earthen vessels without your having to throw them away?	5
6. Can a ... enter your kitchen?	3
7. Can you accept water from the hand of a ...?	8
8. Can you accept cooked rice from the hand of a ...?	6
9. May a ... seat himself in your reception hall?	9
10. May a ... seat himself on your sleeping mat?	2

CHART 11 RULES OF FOOD EXCHANGE, BY CASTE



→ (Reading Across) Caste's estimate of itself. Lack of colour indicates self estimation is high, as food is not accepted from others

↓ (Reading Down) Estimate of a caste by others. Heavy colouring indicates the estimation by others is high, as food will be accepted from the community in question.

Castes

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|--|
| 1. Brahman | 6. UTaiyār | 11. Nāvitan (Koiku) |
| 2. KaNakku Pillai | 7. Nātār | 12. VāNnan (Non-Koiku, but non-the-less serve KavunTars) |
| 3. KavunTār | 8. Kōmutti Cettiayār | 13. Pzaiyan |
| 4. Mutaliyār | 9. Ācāri | 14. Mātāri |
| 5. PaNTāram | 10. Nāyakkān | 15. Kuravan |

The scores for chart 10 are derived from a study of the answers to questions one to eight, while a score for chart 9 were derived from a study to the answers to questions nine and ten. The ordering of castes for chart 9 is the same for that of chart 10. Information provided in chart 11 only makes use of replies to questions three and eight.

These charts illustrate several points. The first is that the rules of intimate contact (questions one to eight) are more conservative or 'harder' than the rules for house entry and seating (questions nine and ten), in the sense that they are less easily altered when consideration of the wealth or position of particular people are brought to bear. The harder rules also separate the members of the right and left-hand factions more clearly. From chart 10 it will be seen that the membership of the left-hand group has been broken into two. The KaNakku Pillai have the position of greatest purity. Next, however, are a block of powerful right-hand castes, the Kavuntar landholders and their close associates. The artisan and merchant communities of the left have been relegated to third position, whereas in terms of house entry and seating they can not be distinguished as a group at all.²³ Only the barbers and washermen score below the left-hand faction as a whole but above the untouchables. The Paraiyans have been put in category four because of their rights of ritual service to the high right-hand castes. This gives them considerable status not indicated by the rules.

Chart 11, concerned solely with food exchange, makes the same general point about a separation between the castes of the right and the castes of the left-hand faction. The horizontal pattern indicates a caste's estimate

²³ The Mutaliyars are the one exception to this block or group picture. The situation points to their ambivalent status in other respects as well. Some Mutaliyars own land, most are not vegetarian and (in the Konku area) this caste has life-cycle ceremonies not very different from those of the Kavuntars. This interesting position of the Mutaliyar is further discussed in sections I D 2 and II B 1.

of itself, in terms of what other castes it will consent to accept food from. The position of the left-hand Ācāris and Kōmāṭṭi Ceṭṭiyāra is immediately visible. Not only are they vegetarians (in contrast to castes 3 to 7), but they refuse boiled rice even from the Kaṇakku Piḷḷai (caste 2), claiming that only food cooked by Brahman hands is pure enough for them. At the same time, however, these claims are refuted by the block of right-hand castes who are interposed by the larger population between them and the Brahman community.

Reading vertically, this distinction between the Brahman community, from whom all will accept food, and the others is clearer. The separation off of barbers and washermen by the Brahmans from the other touchable castes is also clear. Finally, by reading down, a more subtle distinction between castes 3 to 5 and those below them can be noticed. While the UTaiyāra and Kāṭāra would like to interdine with Kavūṭṭara, (Mutaiyāra), and Paṅṭāra, these latter three communities are not willing to recognize the former's claim of equal status. The same is true of the Nāakkaṅ community whom many people attempt to group with the barbers and washermen. These bickerings indicate a certain potential mobility for members of group three (a) and (b) in Chart 9. Some are attempting to join group two, while others have been relegated to a position similar to those in group three (c).

These, however, are details. The main point which this information on ranking illustrates is a claim by the artisan and merchant communities of the left to an extreme degree of purity. To preserve their superior purity they claim that they can not move intimately with the Kavūṭṭara and their associates. The Kavūṭṭara, however, laugh at these claims and succeed in interposing themselves between the Brahmans and the left-hand (largely vegetarian) castes. They do this, not by virtue of a superior diet or

even by more general standards of purity, but by virtue of their powerful and, indeed, dominant position in the region. The Kavuntars and their followers are able to influence regional opinion sufficiently not only to separate off the artisan and merchant communities, but to succeed in relegating them, in terms of pollution and contact rules, to a demonstrably lower position. It is ironic, therefore, that the Kavuntars' own pre-eminence or high position is not, itself, founded on superior standards of purity, as a mere reading of the rules might imply. The Kavuntar's status, and the status of the castes allied to them, are the result of their position of political and economic power in the region. In Professor Dumont's terms, they enjoy "le monopole de la force légitime sur un territoire déterminé."²⁴

This conclusion matches in a most suggestive fashion Adrian Mayer's material on a village in Malwa, recently reanalysed by Louis Dumont in his book, Homo Hierarchicus.²⁵ Chart II has been constructed on precisely the same criteria as Dumont and Mayer have used, so as to enable direct comparison. Here, in an area of India geographically and culturally very distant from Konkū, we find a similar pattern. In fact, the existence of a group of territorially dominant, interdining or 'allied' castes in Malwa, and their position vis-à-vis the artisan community is even clearer than in the present study.²⁶ This raises the question of whether the

²⁴ Dumont, Homo Hierarchicus, p. 195

²⁵ Ibid., p. 116-119.

²⁶ Dumont has separated in his chart several categories of artisans who are grouped under the single term Ācāri in the South. If we had similarly separated out these sub-divisions (the rules apply in exactly the same fashion to all) the pattern of chart eight would even more closely resemble his.

underlying pattern discovered is not, perhaps, a very widespread one in India, indeed.

Dumont has discussed this situation incisively in his recent book, None Hierarchical. As he has said:

La théorie des castes a recours implicitement ou subrepticement aux varnas pour la compléter dans le traitement du pouvoir. En effet, dans la théorie de la pureté un marchand végétarien devrait logiquement prendre pas sur un roi mangeur de viande!... Faut-il ... reconnaître qu'un facteur étranger à l'idéologie vient ici la contrebalancer, une fois les extrêmes mis en place?

En face des "castes alliées" autour du pouvoir, qui témoignent ici d'une insouciance et d'une solidarité exceptionnelles, les C semblent exagérer la réserve et le rempliment sur soi des végétariens.... Nous avons vu le pouvoir contrebalancer en fait victorieusement la pureté...²⁹ Cette possibilité était ouverte par la théorie des varnas... Voit dans les deux premiers varnas "les deux forces" qui, unies, à leur manière singulière, doivent régner sur le monde; elle permet de la sorte au prince de participer à quelque degré de la dignité absolue dont il est le serviteur.³⁰

Scholars have argued that, in general, the varna classification has had little significance in South India. Indeed, the Sanskrit terms for the varna categories were unknown to Konku peasants. Nonetheless, it would appear that the right/left factional division has operated hitherto, in a suggestively similar manner. It illustrates, in slightly different terms, a similar pattern of hierarchical separation.

This pattern of varna classification fits neatly with the present study, where the material presented illustrates the importance of the separation between the right-hand castes and the left-hand castes in current social

28 Ibid., p. 106

27 Dumont, H.H., p. 103

29 Dumont, H.H., p. 118-9.

30 Ibid., p. 107.

(N.B. Footnotes 31 and 32 are missing)

custom. The first group (the right) is allied to or clustered around the KavunTar caste, the community which enjoys a near monopoly of "legitimate force" in the region. The second, (the left) is excluded from this alliance. The latter group is comprised of the artisan and merchant communities, coupled with a few low-caste immigrant groups. The higher ranks of the left-hand faction appear to have responded to exclusion by the right by partially overriding regional ties and traditions. Instead, they have turned to an all-South India literate and textual tradition for their ritual and dietary customs and their consequent claims of superior purity.

13

2) Local Settlements and the Village Studied

The average size of settlements in Konku is very small, if compared with other parts of the South. This is at least partly explained by the fact that the region is dry and the produce of the land is sparse. Thus conditions do not favour heavy concentrations of population. The fact of small settlement size, on average, makes villages like Olappālaiyan, which support a large range of castes, somewhat unusual. Comparing average settlement size in various regions is a difficult task. However, McKim Marriott has made an attempt at this by speaking, not of actual settlement size, but of the size of "effective communities." By this phrase it is assumed that he means 'that unit of population which regularly interchanges services, labour and payments within itself.'³³

As a key to comparable 'effective community size' in the region under study here, it seems reasonable to trace the pattern of Mākāliyanman temples in an area, and of the settlements from which they recruit on festival occasions. (See section 1 A 2) There are nine Mākāliyanman temples in Kannapuram Kirāman. If it is assumed that this is a rough average of the number of such temples to be found in other kirāman or census villages in the region, then a rough size of the 'effective community' can be calculated. Using the census figures for 1961,³⁴ the calculation gives an 'effective community' of 313 for the District of Coimbatore, or of 406 for the Dharapuram sub-division in which Kannapuram falls. The contrast this

³³ McKim Marriott, Caste Ranking and Community Structure in Five Regions of India and Pakistan (Poona, Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute, 1965) p. 36-38.

³⁴ Govt. of Madras, Census Handbook, Coimbatore, Vol. I, p. 89

figure makes with Marriott's estimate of 813 for the rice-growing Coromandel Coast is striking.³⁵ In 1965 the population of the Mākāliyam temple area into which Olappālaiyam fell was about 525, a little above the general average calculated for the region.

Olappālaiyam is the largest village in the Kannayuran kirāman (Paocāpālaiyam Panchayat) and resident in it are families of all the twelve important touchable castes of the region. In addition, there are three major untouchable communities in the area. These castes live in their own separate hamlets which are scattered through the panchayat, but^{are} carefully placed at a distance from the settlements of higher castes. These three untouchable communities do not care to mix with each other any more than the higher castes care to mix with them.

The village of Olappālaiyam itself shows a certain rationale in its internal pattern of settlement, indicating that a degree of separation exists even within it between the members of the various castes resident there. This separation is not nearly so marked, however, as that between Olappālaiyam as a whole and the untouchable communities around it. Map Nine shows the distribution of household compounds in Olappālaiyam, by caste, in 1965. Sometimes two or more cooking units are found within the compound of one house, but very rarely families of more than one caste. When such mixing within a compound occurs, it is on a temporary, rental basis. It occurs because one family is pressed for money and another for space to live. (See Chart 1 and Section II A 1).

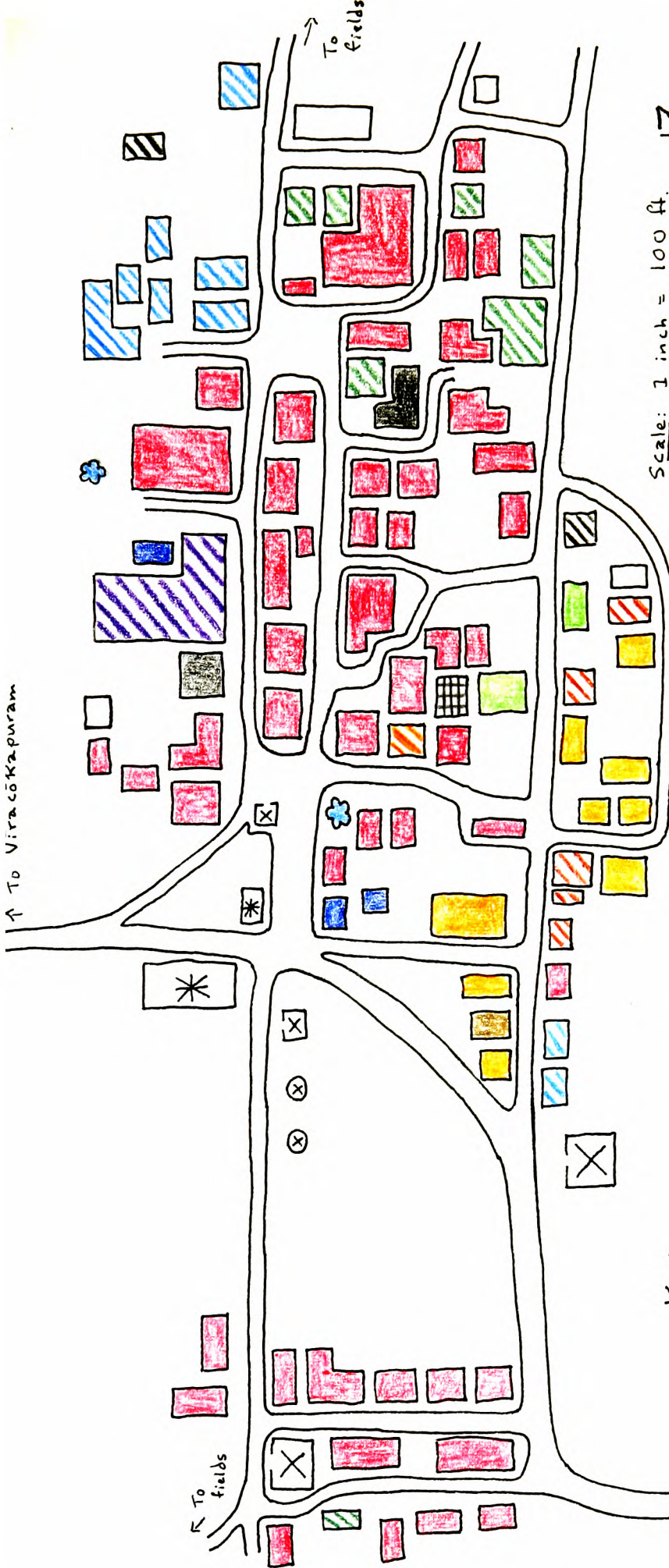
There are several things to note about the settlement pattern in Olappālaiyam village. There are, to begin with, three main streets. These run through the village from West to East and are referred to as

³⁵ Marriott, Caste Ranking, p. 36

MAP 9: OLAPPĀLAIYAM
VILLAGE 1965


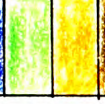


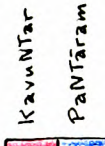
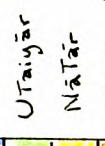
(Showing House Compounds)

Scale: 1 inch = 100 ft.



KEY

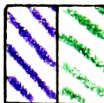
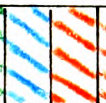


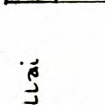
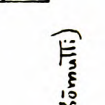
Right-Hand Castes

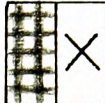
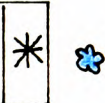
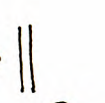

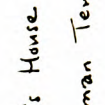
-  Kavuntar
-  Pantaram
-  Utaiyar
-  Natar
-  Navitan (Kanku)
-  Locked Houses

Brahman



Left-Hand Castes

-  Kanakku Pillai
-  Mutaiyar
-  Acari
-  Cettiyar (Komatli)
-  Nayakkan
-  VanNan (non-Kanku)

-  Ethnographer's House
-  Makaliyaman Temple
-  School and Radio Room
-  Well
-  Road or Path



To Main Road

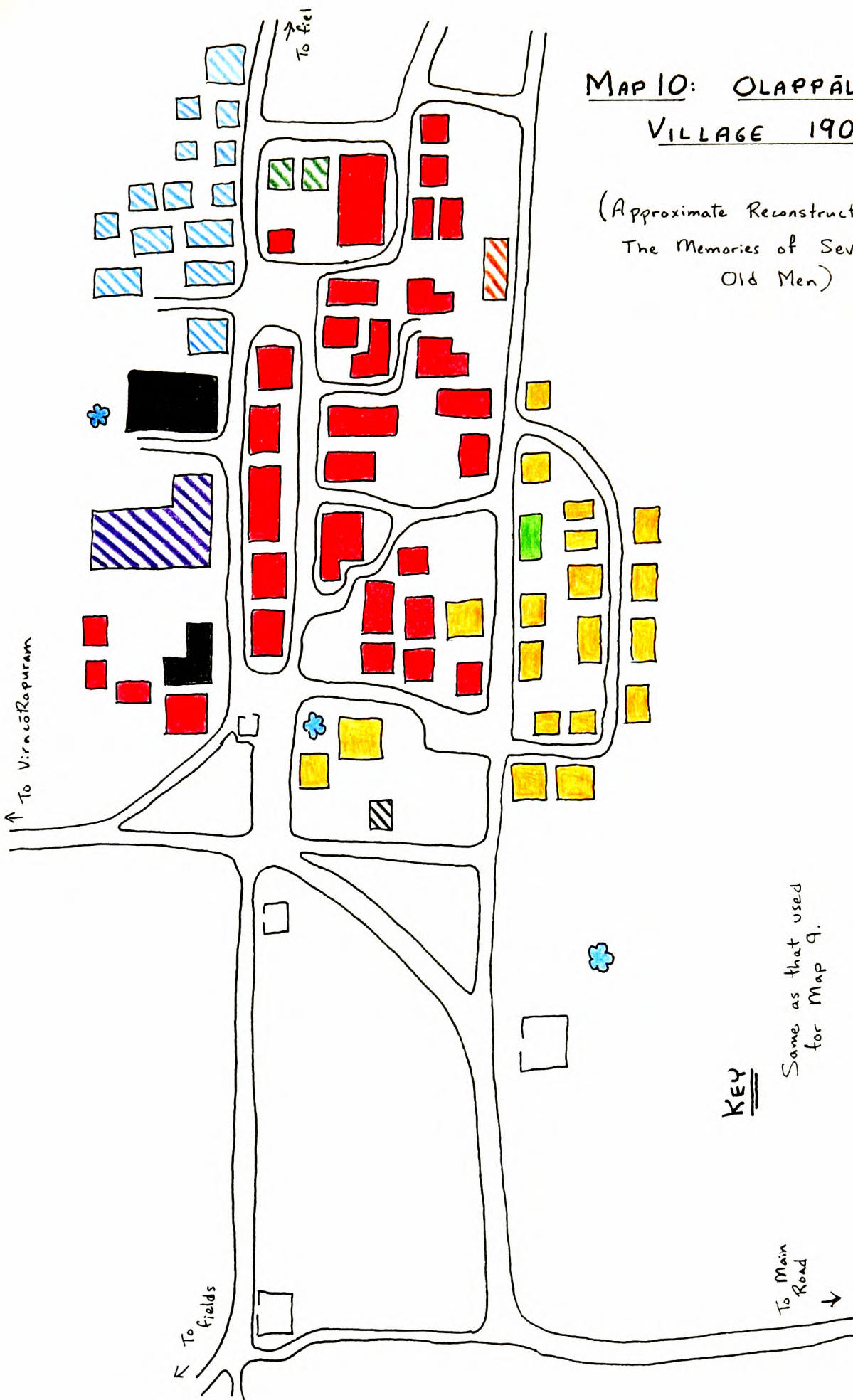
North Street (YaTakku vīti), Middle Street (NaTu vīti) and South Street (tēn vīti) by residents. Even though none are named after particular people, families or castes, each street has a certain general and identifiable social character. All of the vegetarian families save two live on the north side of North Street. This is, in general, a wealthy and respectable area. The Ācāris, who live at the far northeastern end of North Street, inhabit a rather isolated quarter by themselves. Their houses face inward on each other, rather than outward onto the street. The residential pattern correlates with their ambiguous status in other respects. Ācāris claim to be higher in the social hierarchy than they are admitted to be by the rest of the village. (See Section I B 1).

The main landowning caste, KavunTars, live on both sides of Central Street, but the entrances to almost all their houses face north. Those houses which are entered from North Street are generally those of wealthier families, those entered from Middle Street, poorer. However, there is no hard and fast rule in this regard. The wealthiest family of all lives at the eastern extreme of the village. Their house actually blocks Middle Street entirely, so that people are obliged to detour around it. The Mutaliyārs, a caste of weavers, also live at the eastern end of the village.

In general, as one moves to the western and southern extremities of OlappāLaiyam one encounters more and more low caste dwellings. This is in keeping with the fact that the north and east are considered the most auspicious and desirable directions. South Street, in fact, used to draw a fairly clear boundary between the landholding KavunTars and the lower, service communities. However, this boundary is gradually being transgressed, particularly at the west end of the village, at the present day. The two Ācāri families which live at the southwest extremity of

MAP 10: OLAPPĀLAIYAM
VILLAGE 1900

(Approximate Reconstruction from
The Memories of Several
Old Men)



KEY

Same as that used
for Map 9.

the village are meat-eating and of a different subcaste from the community on the northeast periphery. They live on land recently purchased from the government at a low price. In fact, most of the houses in this area, and all the houses in the cluster further to the west, have been built in the same manner, on government allocated land, within the last forty years.

While the houses on the Southwestern extremity of the old village site represent mostly newcomers to the settlement, the 'Western Village', as it is called, is largely a spill-over of landowning families from the main site. Land for building has become very scarce in the old living area, and thus a new settlement has sprung up on what was previously public land. A comparison with an approximate map of the village in 1900 will show that the settlement was smaller, more homogeneous and more clearly divided, eastwise, sixty-five years ago. It would seem that the village at that time was more clearly dominated by three large castes: Kavuntar, Ācāri and Mātār, although there is the possibility of selective recall on the part of informants on this matter. Still, the map can be said to represent the villagers' own view of their past. At least, it seems clear that the second and third castes named above were numerically more predominant then than now. Both groups have suffered decimation through famine, poverty and by emigration to more promising areas. The Kavuntar community, on the other hand, has managed to retain its tenacious hold on the settlement.

At the same time as two previously numerically dominant groups have lost ground, several other castes have recently moved in. Most of the newcomers, however, are immigrants from the immediate kirāṅ area. They represent trade and service communities who were previously settled

in other villages nearby. They have moved to Olappālaiyam as a result of disputes with others in their original settlement, or because demand for their skills has been growing faster in Olappālaiyam than elsewhere.

Not shown on the map is a lively cluster of stores, referred to as Kātai Vīti, about two furlongs to the South along the main road. The core of this little shopping centre is very old, but it has probably tripl^{ed} in size in the last fifty years as the population has grown and as demand for outside goods has expanded. Olappālaiyam is the nearest village to this row of stores and thus a number of the families from the trade and service communities have moved to Olappālaiyam and have settled here in hopes of a share in the growing roadside business. While in 1900 the temple centre, Kannapuram, may have been a major hub around which the kirānam revolved, today the centre of activity is to be found in Olappālaiyam and at the stores nearby. (See also Section I D 1).

The people resident in Olappālaiyam village together own about 630 acres of cultivable land, or 5% of the cultivable land of the entire kirānam.³⁶ The fact that they account for nearly 9% of the total population (excluding untouchables) means that the residents of Olappālaiyam own slightly less land, on the average, than people of other settlements. There are two reasons for this: (1) Several of the kirānam's wealthiest landlords live in other settlements, and (2) A large cluster of artisan and weaving communities (generally landless castes) are found in Olappālaiyam, as they are not in other settlements of the kirānam.

These 630 acres, however, are by no means evenly distributed among Olappālaiyam's many residents. The information collected on landholding shows that less than one per cent of the male heads-of-households currently

³⁶ One man also owns some land in another kirānam.

control about 35% of the total acreage. Another 7% account for the ownership of an additional 40 of the land. Grouping these together, the information indicates that 8% of household-heads control about 75% of the village-owned acreage. A further 28% of Olappālaiyam's households enjoy a bare subsistence holding, or less. This leaves 64% of the households in Olappālaiyam landless. The lion's share of the land, therefore, is effectively controlled by a few, dominant, wealthy families. Olappālaiyam is not an exception in this matter, nor is it, by any means an extreme example. Others have already published similar figures for elsewhere in India.

The distribution of landholdings by caste is also significant. Nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the landholding households, above, are Kavuntar. Together they own 89% of the land. The other 11% of the acreage was, at the time of the survey, held by other castes in the following proportions:

Chart 12: LAND HOLDING IN OLAPPALAIYAM, BY CASTE

Caste	Acreage	Households ⁺
Kavuntar	89%	28
Brahman	5%	2
Kanakkupillai	4%	1
Mutaliyar	1%	2
Nātar	1%	3
	100%	26

+ Household is used in the sense of cooking unit (see section 2 A 1) except where land was still registered as officially undivided, even though cooking was separate. In one case the property of an absent son has been combined with that of his father.

The All India Rural Household Survey, Vol. II, New Delhi, National Council of Applied Economic Research, reports that in 1963 1% of all rural households owned 18% of the total rural wealth and that 2.8% of all rural households together enjoyed a little more than 50% of the total rural income. The figures of the present study would be even more striking if the landless untouchables, who constitute nearly 25% of the total rural population, but who live in separate settlements, were included.

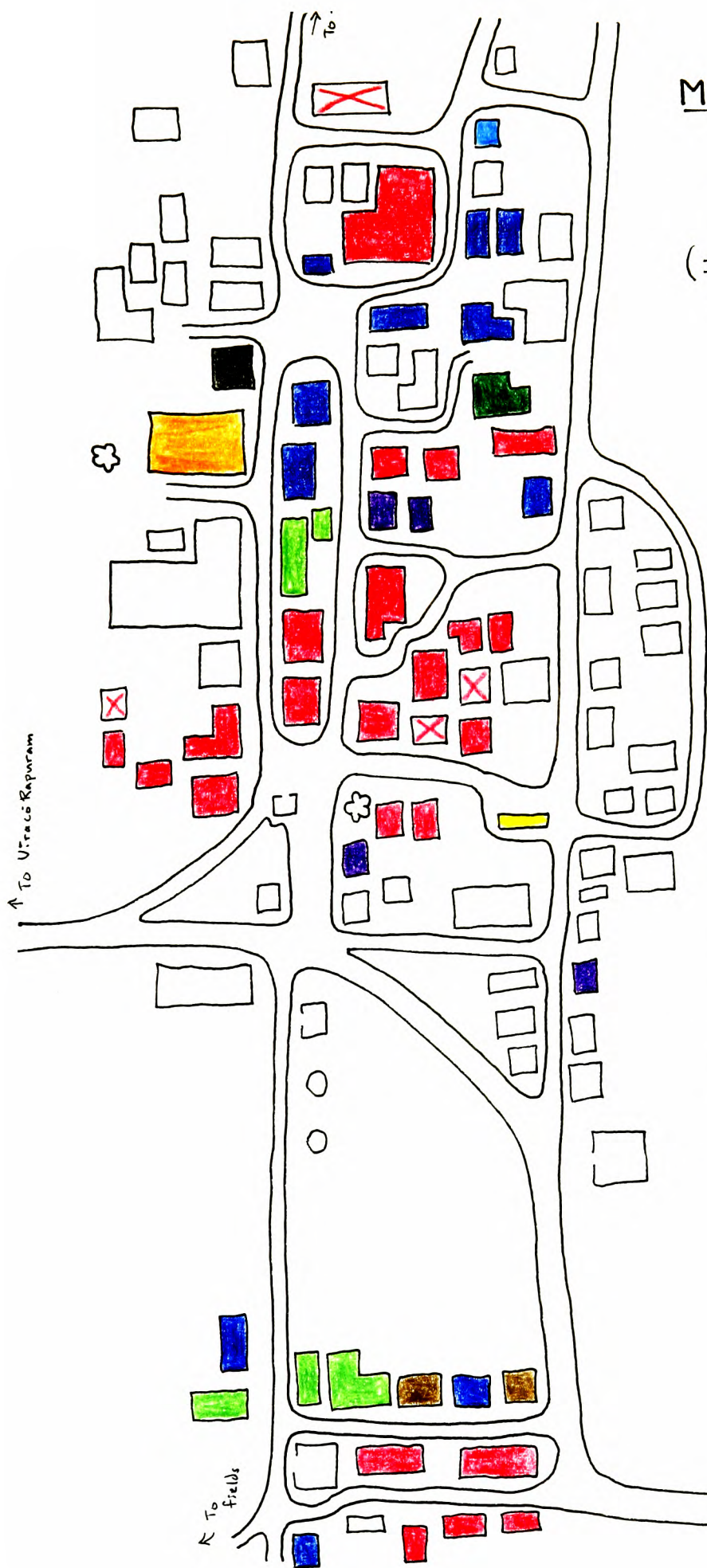
In 1965 there were members of nine KavunTar clans resident in Olappālaiyam. According to local tradition one of these clans, the KaNavālan, represent the original settlers of the village. (See Section I C 2). However, the KaNavālan were only the third clan to settle in the kirāman, having been preceded by the CeṅkaNnan and the Otālan. These latter two clans are said to have given the land around the present settlement to the KaNavālan in exchange for some badly needed milk and butter during a festival, long ago.

In fact the KaNavālan do occupy what appear to be the oldest habitation sites in the village. They also have owned and continue to own the major share of four great kātu, or open fields, which are closely tied to the traditional village geography. Thus the story about their having been the first settlers on the site could well be true. With the exception of the CeṅkaNnan and Otālan, above, all the resident clans are said to have come to the village as matrilocal in-laws in the more recent past.


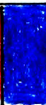

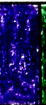

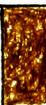




The accompanying map shows the residence pattern of the various KavunTar clans in Olappālaiyam in 1965. All those families which have moved into the settlement as matrilocal in-laws within living memory are marked with an X. From the map it can readily be seen that the clans tend to cluster into residential groups within the village, just as, on a larger scale, do castes. It is probable that this pattern of clan clustering was even clearer in the past, as the village residence pattern has been considerably disturbed in recent years by expanding population and the arrival of new caste communities.

MAP II: OLAPPĀLAIYAM
VILLAGE SHOWING
KAVUNTAR CLANS

(Indicates House Ownership —
 Not Necessarily Residence)



OLAPPĀLAIYAM
KONKU KAVUNTAR CLANS

					KaNavālan	CaikaNnan	Āntai	TōTai	MuRukātan
					KāTai	KaNNantai	Varaku Tinkāta Perinkuti	Ōtālan	
									Molapanti (A different subcaste)

A coloured X indicates the house is owned but not occupied by a particular clan.

Chart 13: SOME COMMON KAVUNTAR CLANS, THE TP NA TGI
AND LOCAL LAND-HOLDINGS

Clan Name	Possible or Probable Meaning	Accompanying Restrictions	No. of Land-Holding Households
KaNavālan	*KaNavam, the pipal tree? (Ficus religiosa)	None	1
Caṅkaṅṅan	Descendants of a red-eyed ancestor (or one who had jaundice?)	None	3
Ātālan	Descendants of an ancestor who recited verses (to inaugurate a function) or otherwise spoke out?	None	1
MuRukātan	*Descendants of an ancestor who remained unsubmerged or undefeated?	None	1 (X)
KeNNantai	Descendants of Lord Krishna	None	1 (X)
Āntai	*Descendants of a great landlord?	None	1
Varaku tinkāta <small>perakati</small>	Great clan which does not eat <u>varaku</u> , a kind of millet? (See section 1 C 2 for their story).	Will not eat <u>varaku</u>	0
KāTai	quail clan	Will not eat quail	0
TōTai	*Citrus fruit clan	Unknown	0
Narai	Stork clan	Will not eat stork	Non-resident
PaNNai	PaNNai grass clan (Cenosis argentea)	Will not plant or use this grass	Non-resident
CattaiTai	Descendants of the Lord Aiyanar	Unknown	Non-resident

N.B. The definition of household is as in Chart 12.

Key is given in the text. See page 85.

Chart 13 above, lists the names of the nine resident clans and their most probable meaning. Some names indicate a totemic relationship with a particular plant or animal, while others designate something about the ancestry of the particular group. Starred meanings indicate a dictionary source. The other interpretations were supplied by informants. Three non-resident clans are included in the chart because informants suggested meanings for these names as well. The same chart shows the pattern of land-holding by clan. The heavy predominance of the KaNavālan can easily be noted. An X indicates those families who, in all probability, (one case is certain) inherited their land from the KaNavālan by matrilineal residence in the past.

The Madras Government is one of the few State Governments in India to have enacted land-ceiling legislation. This has had some effect, according to local informants, in frightening large landholders into reducing the size of their holdings. In general, however, the government has not actually taken any legal action against those who have not cut their holdings to below the prescribed limit. This limit is defined as 100 acres of dry land, per adult, and less if the land is 'wet'. (All land in the Paccāpālaiyam panchayat is defined as 'dry'). The land-ceiling legislation is widely circumvented, in practice, by registering land in the names of wives, children (over sixteen) and even in the names of distant relatives. However, in practice, it is usually the leading male of the household who retains active control of its management. The above calculation, therefore, is made on the basis of household information (see Section II A 1) and personal inquiry, not solely on the basis of what has been registered in the books of the village accountant.

In recent years a few sandy patches along dry river beds, and rocky patches on the tops of hills, which were formerly no man's land, have been

registered in the names of selected harijan (outcaste) families as a token of land redistribution. This land has some use as grazing acreage after rains, but can not normally be cultivated. My travels in other parts of the region lend weight to this same general picture of landholding over the whole of Konku. However, it is true that two other castes, the Konku CoTTiyārs and Mutaliyārs, do hold large acreages of land (for example in Uttampālaiyan and along the Bhavani river banks) and thus contest the KavuṅTars' position in some areas.

It would seem reasonable that, in Kannapuram Kirāman, the CoṅkanNan clan once held large holdings. This would be in accordance with the ritual priority they can claim at temple festivals, and with local tradition. In the last fifty years or so, however, these peoples seem to have been gradually losing their position of dominance. Many have migrated to a new and underdeveloped area on the western edge of Konku. In their place the ṪāLan (the clan who, by tradition, settled second in the area) have begun to gain in both land-holdings and in general prestige. They now represent the best established, and ^{most} so-to-speak aristocratic descent group in the kirāman.

There are a number of wealthy ṪāLan families, but two are particularly well known for their land-holdings and their role in kirāman politics. More recently, however, these ṪāLan families have had to share their position to some extent with the KaṅavāLan (the clan which local tradition says arrived third in the area). There are now two powerful KaṅavāLan families. Their wealth and position, it would appear, have been achieved more recently than that of the ṪāLan above. The KaṅavāLan are said to have amassed their wealth by money lending, especially during times of famine, and then to have foreclosed in court on land that was used as collateral. Inquiry shows that much of their land has, in fact, been acquired during the last

fifty years. Both Kaṇavaḷaṅ families, however, have also benefited from a string of only sons, enabling them to keep their newly acquired wealth undivided.

It is interesting to observe how the current leading families of the kirāman (two Ūtāḷaṅ and two Kaṇavaḷaṅ) have managed their respective wealth. There are many stories of rivalry between these families, but despite this bitterness, their attitudes towards their wealth are quite various. One of the old, established Ūtāḷaṅ families has sent a son to college and can now boast to have the only B.A. in the kirāman. This son, however, has since moved to a town to practice law, returning only on weekends to look after family land. Many acres of this family's former holdings have recently been sold in order to avoid the land-ceiling legislation. Nonetheless, they are confident of ^{their} traditional position of importance and are unassuming in their manner. On the whole they are interested in maintaining their position of respect, but not in increasing their local investments. Others in the kirāman refer to them as relatively kind and unpretentious.

The second long-established Ūtāḷaṅ family have also educated their sons, although not quite to the same level. These two young men both have an informed technical interest in agriculture and are looking for ways to hold on to their ancestral land and to farm it by modern and efficient methods. They have recently built a new, urban style house, and are continuing to make further local investments where possible. One son is the present Maniyam or Government Tax Official, an inherited position.³⁸ The family neither conceal nor exhibit their wealth. They are interested rather in using it to wield influence in government circles and to improve

³⁸ This position has recently been thrown open to aspirants by competitive examination, although, as yet, no one has challenged the traditional incumbent.

their local standing.

The third family of the Kaṇavālan̄ clan maintain extensive feudal style relations with the numerous families in the kirāman who serve them. On the whole they prefer to supervise cultivation directly, as they are aware that the rights of cash-paying tenants are gradually receiving greater recognition from the government. They normally pay for services in produce, at fixed times of year, rather than giving cash wages. Men who would in other circumstances be outright tenants are, instead, treated as labourers who are paid in cultivation rights to certain plots, rather than in cash or kind. This family has not been much frightened by the land-ceiling legislation and has managed to hold on to much of its land by a clever distribution of it among submissive relations. They participate in all kirāman festivals, emphasizing the ritual aspect of their feudal position. They are feared for their tyranny and are characterized as unscrupulous and proud.

The fourth family are the most recent of the four to acquire wealth. They are also the most scrupulous about its concealment. They are simple and considered rather old-fashion in their living style, and are laughed at for the lengths they go to in this regard. They have many tenants who pay for their rights to cultivation in cash, and, in general, they are more interested in the acquisition of hard currency than in a feudalistic dominance over large numbers of people. They do not take an interest in temples or in claiming ritual precedence at important festivals. They are known for their extensive money-lending, but profit on investments is now channelled largely into the industry of nearby towns, rather than funnelled back into agricultural improvements. They are resented for their fanatic concern with cash and are characterized mainly as miserly and hard-hearted.

The summary of the varied approach to wealth and prestige taken by these four families illustrates the variety of choices available to well-to-do peasant families, and the diversity of characters and dispositions with which government agents, interested in rural agriculture, have to deal. However, if some Kavuntars in the region are wealthy, there are many, many more who are poor. 50% of the Kavuntar community in Olappālaiyam, in fact, are landless. It is most interesting, however, to discover that even under such conditions Kavuntars have clung to agriculture-related pursuits. Community consensus supports this by assuming that Kavuntars are not skillful in business and trade. The following table gives a detailed breakdown of the actual occupations of members of the Kavuntar community. From it it is clear that only about 20% of the Kavuntar community in Olappālaiyam is, by rural standards, well-to-do. Subsistence farmers and coolies, on the otherhand, constitute a good 55% of the caste's membership. Most of these people are barely able to support their families, let alone save. About 90% of those classified in the subsistence group, in fact, are in debt of one kind or another. Nonetheless, despite this situation, the strong agricultural bias of the Kavuntar community is clear. Only a very few landless households have turned to non-agricultural pursuits.

The majority of those forced into other employment turn to weaving, a respectable but bare subsistence occupation which does not require business acumen. Only 5% of the Kavuntar community of Olappālaiyam are in some form of trade. Normally these endeavours are no more ambitious than a small tea stall or cycle repair shop. Granted that a few wealthy and established Kavuntar businessmen do exist in the towns, as a percentage of their caste membership as a whole, such men are rare.

Chart 14: KAVUNTAR OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE, OJAPPALAIYAM

General Category	Percentage	Specific Category	Percentage
Wealthy Landlord	1.0	Family controlling a large group of tenants and workers.	1.0
Established	19.0	Family employing at least one other Kavuntar as well as regular <u>harijan</u> labour.	6.0
		Family which hires <u>harijan</u> labour only, on a regular basis.	13.0
Subsistence Farmer	42.0	Family eking out a living on its own holding	20.0
		Family who are tenants on another's land	7.0
		Family doing animal or cart business	15.0
Coolies	13.0	Family supporting itself by doing agricultural labour on a daily or monthly basis.	11.0
		Family supporting itself by doing coolie labour on the roads.	2.0
Non-Agriculturalists	25.0	Weaver	18.0
		Storekeeper	5.0
		Labourers in a town	2.0
	100.0		100.0

The position of the other castes with regard to their traditional occupations is also summarized briefly below. Brahmans, it would appear, have gradually been squeezed from their traditional dominance of the Civil Service. This has been done by a rapid increase of education for other castes and by the reserving of many scholarships and government posts exclusively for non-Brahmans. In rural areas the Brahman population is minute (see Chart 5) and most families in these circumstances serve as priests in the local Śiva and Viṣṇu temples. Income from this source is meagre, except at festival time, but Brahmans manage to supplement their earnings from ināṃ or temple lands (which they lease to KavunṬar tenants) and by the practice of astrology. Some run vegetarian restaurants, in small towns. Brahmans in larger centres are often found in the professions, though some have turned to business. The Kaṇakku Pillai cling almost entirely to their traditional occupation of accountancy, at least in rural areas.

Weaving, traditionally, was a skill largely confined to the Mutaliyār (Faikolan) caste. Apart from the area of Koṅku around Bhavani, however, my impression is that many Mutaliyārs are now turning to business. In Olappālaiyan, only 20% of the Mutaliyārs are actually weaving while 80% have turned their acumen to trade. At the latter pursuit they are considered to be, generally, more successful than their KavunṬar counterparts. Ceṭṭiyārs, the traditional businessmen of Koṅku, now gravitate to the towns. The few to be found scattered in rural areas practice the same profession, but are rather looked down upon as 'poor cousins' by the urban members of their community.

Hand-spinning and weaving have long played an important part in the rural economy of Koṅku. Cotton is grown on the better, black soil, and income from this provides a supplement to the local population in an area

where agricultural conditions are inhospitable and the harvest unreliable. At present about 25% of the women of all castes spin in an attempt to supplement family income. In recent years the state government has been attempting to support and encourage the local hand spinning and weaving industry by subsidising it. This has encouraged many Kavuntars to turn to weaving at the same time that Mutaliyars have been switching from this to business.

Parallel with government support of hand spinning and weaving, however, has been a mushrooming of the cotton industry in Coimbatore city. It is now a modern textile centre comparable with Ahmedabad and Bombay.³⁹ In 1961 there were 36 textile mills concentrated in the Coimbatore area and another 10 weaving and spinning factories in the nearby towns.⁴⁰ The competition with the handloom industry, therefore, has become severe and it is only through large scale support that the latter continues to exist in rural areas. Even with government aid, hand spinning and weaving provide a mere subsistence income for those who pursue it.

Other castes in the rural areas have stuck much more closely to their traditional occupations than the communities described above. The Ācāris in Olappālaiyam, for example, have all continued with their hereditary and relatively profitable metal and woodworking trades. In this, the blacksmiths and carpenters manage to earn a dependable living, while goldsmiths are in somewhat harsher straits. Not enough people in the rural areas can afford to buy gold to keep these men employed, and they now subsist largely as workmen for wealthy jewelers (usually Ceṭṭiyārs) in nearby towns. Another traditional artisan, the potter, regularly supplements his income with plastering and skilled housebuilding work. To date most men of this

³⁹ Govt. of Madras, District Gazetteer, p. 322

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 323

caste retain their traditional skill, but they practice it only occasionally during festival seasons, for example, when earthenware is in high demand. With current competition from tin pots made in towns, there has been a clear shift of potters' interest towards skilled masonry. The number of able young potters is rapidly decreasing,

The potters enjoy a sort of peripheral importance as a ritual service community. More important in this respect are the priests, the barbers and the washermen. Brahmans have been discussed above. Paṅṭāraṃs, the non-Brahman priests, also subsist off their temple services, in addition to hiring themselves out as cooks, especially on festive occasions. Their other traditional sources of income, those of supplying eating leaves to the Kavāṅṭar community and of tying flower garlands, are no longer much in demand. Paṅṭāraṃs, like many others, are beginning to look to education and to the towns to supplement these meagre means of livelihood.

Both Uṭaiyāra and Paṅṭāraṃs still receive a certain number of tradition-fixed payments in kind on ritual occasions. Two castes, however, continue to exist almost entirely in this way. These are the Nāvitaṅ or barbers, and the Vaṅṅaṅ or washermen. The demand for both shaving and washing is fairly constant and the relationship between these communities and those they serve is relatively intimate. This is perhaps the reason why payments in kind to these people persist. Despite certain disadvantages, such an arrangement does assure a basic minimum of food and clothing, even in times of general famine. An example of the payments received by two Vaṅṅaṅ families in Olappālaiyaṃ during the year 1965-66, in return for daily washing services, is given below. (See Appendix One for weights and measures and their metric equivalents.)

Chart 15: PAYMENTS MADE TO A WASHERMAN, YEARLY BASIS (1965-66)

Caste	No. of Households	Payment in Rs.	Payment in kind
KavuNTar	1	5.00	} occasional noon meals?
	2	6.00	
	3	8.00	
	1	10.00	
	1	12.00	
	4	-	12 <u>vellam</u> grain
Mutaliyar	6	-	16 <u>vellam</u> grain
	1	9.00	-
Ācāri	1	12.00	-
	1	10.00	-
Nāyakkan	1	5.00	-
	1	9.00	-
NāTār	1	12.00	-
	2	-	1 manāṅku sugar
UTaiyar	1	-	Any required pots.
PaNTaram	1	-	Any required eating leaves or temple ritual
Total: 28		120.00 Rs.	144 <u>vellam</u> grain plus occasional noon meals sugar, pots & eating leaves
Total for a second, washerman 26		145.00 Rs.	135 <u>vellam</u> grain (plus sugar, rent & midday meal

Washermen, as barbers, potters and PaNTārams, also have the right to extra gifts at the time of life-cycle ceremonies in the community. The expected gifts to a washerman on these occasions are listed below. Regular yearly payments, above, are received at the time of the kirāṇam Māriyannan festival in April-May.

Chart 16: SPECIAL GIFTS EXPECTED BY WASHERMEN ON THE
OCCASION OF LIFE-CYCLE CEREMONIES

Marriage:	Rs. 2½ and 4½ <u>vellam</u> of rice at a marriage within the village. Rs. 10 and 1 <u>vellam</u> of rice at a marriage elsewhere. The gift of a man's upper cloth and lower cloth and a woman's sari are also expected.
Death:	Rs. ½ if no work is required. Rs. 3 if the washerman is asked to help construct the funeral bier. Larger rupee payments and also cloth are sometimes given.
Birth:	Rs. 5 and 8 <u>vellam</u> of rice.
Girl's first Menstruation:	Rs. 2 and 4 <u>vellam</u> of rice.

N.B. Payments in kind are reduced in favour of cash for weddings outside the village.

If income from yearly and festival payments are added together one arrives at an estimate of roughly 200 vellam of grain and 200 Rs. in cash, per year. This income from traditional payments will just support a small family on the subsistence level, but without 'undue' hardship. (See Appendix One) Since barbers and washermen are intimate servants attached to particular families, they also receive gifts of cloth from time to time (especially at the two nēpu or big festivals of the year) and sometimes are given rent-free housing and/or grazing rights on certain fields as well.

The standard traditional payment by a large, landowning KavunTar family to a service caste is 16 vellam or one muṭa of grain a year. Many families, however, are too poor to make this full payment and, therefore, the principle that poor KavunTar families pay less for services (but also receive services less regularly) has been generally adopted. Many KavunTars now substitute small amounts of cash for grain.

The service communities also exchange services without payment among themselves. Thus a barber will shave a Paṅṭāram and a Paṅṭāram in turn will provide him with eating leaves for his guests, on occasion. In general

payment in kind is considered to be the best insurance against famine or inflation. On the other hand, cash is highly desired in order to make purchases in the market economy.

As can be seen from Chart 15, washermen are generally better off where they are paid in kind, by a fixed number of measures of grain, than where a cash agreement is made.

The Nāyakkans, the caste of well-diggers and earth-movers, are in a similar position. Their services are needed and they have a certain amount of specialized skill. However, the work they do is considered both demeaning and polluting and thus no one from the other castes offers them competition. In the sample from our study, all have continued with their traditional skill, supplementing it with odd jobs when drumming is not in demand. However, Paraiyans, as Paṅṭārams, are increasingly turning towards education and towards the towns.

The bulk of the harijan or outcaste population consists of the Mātāris. These people are, as a group, in a bare subsistence position. Their traditional skills in making sandals and large leather bags for drawing water now face modern, industrial competition, and, at present, most Mātāris depend entirely on unskilled agricultural labour. This work is to somewhat seasonal and it is not well paid. (See Appendix One) The Mātāris as a whole are so numerous, so despised and so near the subsistence minimum that they have not been able to force up the price of labour faster, if indeed as fast, as the general rise in prices. The Kuravans, though still lower in the general hierarchy, are in a better position because of their specialized basket-making skills and their willingness to migrate when local opportunities diminish.

The Kannapuram Kirāman area is served by a large cluster of stores along

the main road. These stores form an important gathering place for gossip, particularly among men. KaTai vīti, or this 'street of stores', serves as a sort of nerve centre. By listening to the talk there one readily gains an idea of what is going on in the kirāman as a whole. Buses to the towns stop at KaTai vīti and the local post office, library and Panchayat Office are all found there. Radios play continually at KaTai vīti (although individual settlements have receiving sets) and cinema posters are prominently displayed. News from the outside world usually filters through KaTai vīti before travelling to surrounding villages. This is the only place in the kirāman where there is an interest in politics and where men can identify the names and platforms of the various regional parties.⁴¹

The people who run these roadside shops are more worldly and better informed than other villagers. At the same time, however, KaTai vīti shopkeepers were somewhat mistrusted. They did not, as a whole, serve as opinion leaders for the surrounding area. Rivalries between the various shops were common but these did not affect in any clear way the rivalries within the kirāman or its various settlements. People from Clappālaiyan tended to patronize some shops more than others but this was because shopkeepers were better known, through patronage in the past and through residence in the same settlement, rather than because rivals in other contexts would not bring themselves to patronize the same merchant.⁴² Shopkeepers did sell a certain amount of goods on credit, but were not in a position to compete with the influential landed money-lenders of nearby settlements.

⁴¹ This was in 1965-66. However, there were signs that political interest was increasing and that others besides shopkeepers would soon become involved. The 1967 national elections were, at this time, already beginning to draw interest as a topic of conversation.

⁴² A detailed survey was carried out to confirm these statements.

The shopkeepers had acquired next to no land as a result of investments of the profits of their businesses. They were by no means the wealthy of the area.⁴³

Of the twenty-five roadside shops at KaTai vīti in 1965, a third were financed by KavāNTars and a third by Mutaliyārs. On the whole the Mutaliyārs were the more successful. The other third were financed variously, mostly by people offering the services of their traditional caste occupation. CeTTiyārs play no significant role in the local business community. Two-thirds of the shop owners were born in the kirāman, while four others have established themselves via matrilineal kinsmen. Only seven have no direct kin connections in the kirāman, but even in these latter cases the owner or his father was born no more than four miles from the shopping centre. Thus there are no real 'outsiders' attempting to practice business at KaTai vīti.

Just as the picture of the business community differs from that described by Yalman for highland Ceylon, so does the picture of the position of school teachers. There are ten schools in Paṇṇāpālaiyam Manohayat. Nine of them teach only to the fifth standard and have only one or two teachers. The tenth, at Olappālaiyam, has five teachers and offers an education up to the eighth standard. For high school instruction students must travel to Kaikayam or Vēllakōvil, a bus ride of five to six miles. The position of the teachers is a delicate one, as many are members of lower castes who have struggled for an education themselves. Often afterwards they have found that elementary school teaching is the only path open to them. A third have been raised as children in the same kirāman as that

⁴³ The above picture forms an interesting contrast with the picture of shopkeepers in Teretunne described by Yalman in Under the Bo Tree, pp. 51 & 196.

Chart 17: THE ROADSIDE SHOPS OF KANNAPURAM KIRĀMAN

Kind of Shop	Total	Caste of Owner	Close Kin Connections In Kiraman	Length of Shop's History
Coffee & Tea	5	Mutaliyār	Yes (F)	17 yrs.
		Mutaliyār	No	4 mo.
		KavuNTar	Yes (F)	15 yrs.
		KavuNTar	No	1 yr.
		KavuNTar	Yes (W)	3 yrs.
Cycle, Rental & Repair	7	Mutaliyār	Yes (F)	20 yrs.
		CeTTiyar	Yes (F)	10 yrs.
		KavuNTar	No	10 yrs.
		KavuNTar	Yes (F)	10 yrs.
		KavuNTar	Yes (F)	2 yrs.
		KavuNTar	No	12 yrs.
		KavuNTar	Yes (F)	15 yrs.
Food & Other Household Provisions	4	Mutaliyār	Yes (F)	30 yrs.
		Mutaliyār	Yes (F)	23 yrs.
		Mutaliyār	Yes (F)	25 yrs.
		Mutaliyār	Yes (DR)	25 yrs.
Tailor	7	Mutaliyār	Yes (F)	20 yrs.
		Mutaliyār	Yes (F)	1 mo.
		CeTTiyar	No	5 yrs.
		KavuNTar	No	3 yrs.
		KavuNTar	No	4 yrs.
		KavuNTar	Yes (F)	10 yrs.
		KavuNTar	Yes (F)	15 yrs.
Carpenter	2	Īcari	Yes (F)	10 yrs.
		Īcari	Yes (F)	22 yrs.
Barber	2	Nāvitan	Yes (F)	20 yrs.
		Nāvitan	Yes (F)	12 yrs.
Cobler	1	Ītāri	Yes (F)	12 yrs.
Total Shops:	25	('Store' consists of an elementary learn-to)		

KEY: @) Indicate that the shop is listed
 -) twice as it carries on two businesses simultaneously.
 (F) Father born in kirāman
 (M) Wife born in kirāman
 (DR) Daughter's husband born in kirāman
 'No' Father born outside the kirāman but within a four mile radius of the shopping centre

in which they are now teaching.

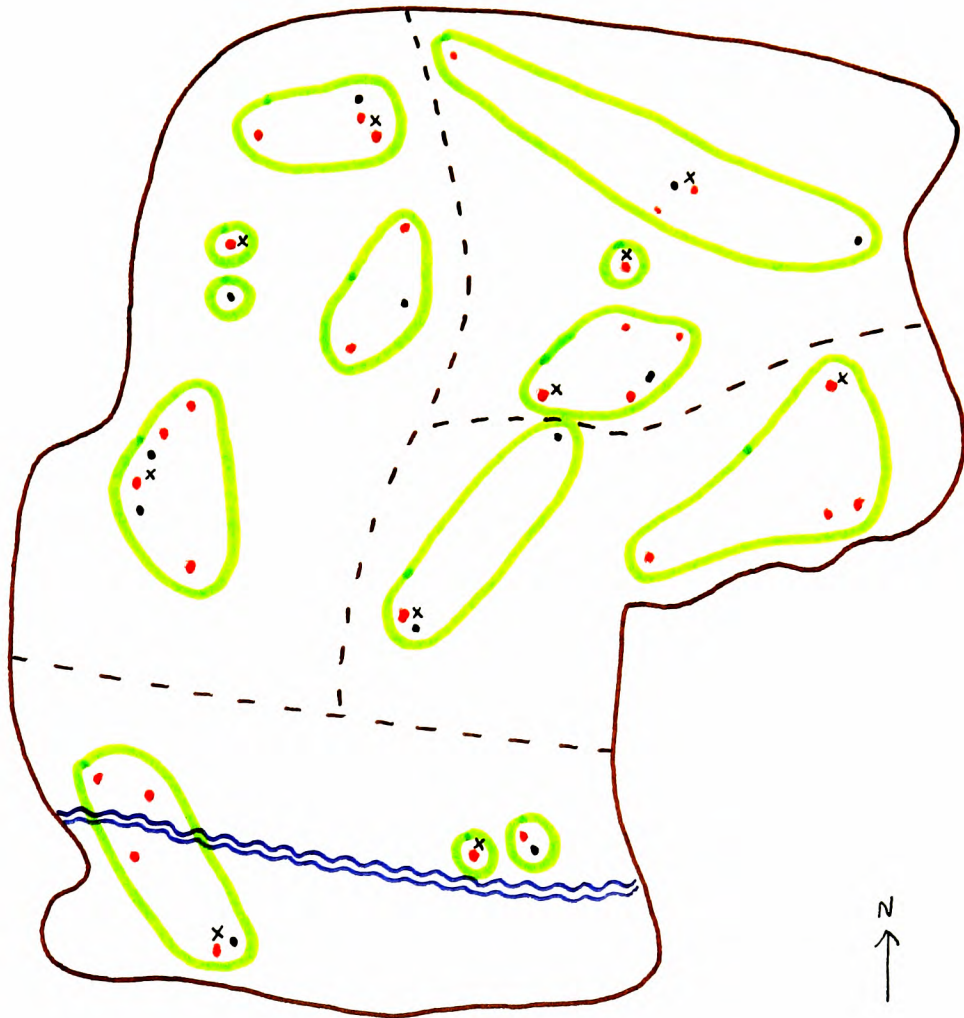
Although education and general knowledge are respected, teaching in village schools does not carry much prestige. Salaries are very low and teaching has a reputation as a second class occupation, to be chosen if nothing better can be secured.⁴⁴ In addition to poverty and disappointment in other opportunities, however, there was a distinct problem of caste. Eighty-eight per cent of the local teachers were non-KavuNTar, and a full thirty-eight per cent came from untouchable backgrounds. There was repeated friction with the KavuNTar community over this matter. Wealthy KavuNTar landlords demanded submissiveness from the school teachers on the basis of their social background, even though the latter were often the better read and educated of the two. Teachers could be transferred by the KavuNTar dominated panchayat. They frequently complained that they did not have the independence to make what they felt to be important professional decisions. No teacher was ever named in the survey conducted as an opinion leader. They were so poor as to be barely able to feed and to educate their own children. No teacher had sufficient savings to consider the purchase of land.⁴⁵

The local panchayat was influential in the matter of schools, just as it was in regulating all other types of government policy which reached the village level. All over rural Konku, in fact, the panchayats are dominated by the wealthy, land-owning community. What government policy is allowed to filter to the local level is always screened by these elected leaders and handled in a way calculated to please the local landlords. This is as true

⁴⁴ This is not to overlook dedicated individuals who are very seriously concerned about education and among whom the headmaster of the Olappalaiyam school was one.

⁴⁵ Contrast with Yalman's description, Under The Bo Tree, pp. 54-55

MAP 12: POLITICAL MAP OF PACCAPĀLAIYAM PANCHAYAT
(KANNAPURAM KIRĀMAM)



KEY

- Panchayat Boundary
- ⋯ Dry River Bed
- Settlement of Touchable Castes
- Settlement of Untouchable Castes
- Area Which Elects One Panchayat Member
- - - - Ward Area
- x Schools Through The 5th Standard. (The School in Olappālaiyam is the only one which provides instruction through the 8th Standard.)

of cattle insemination programmes as it is of seed procurement, of loans for wells and of other kinds of government 'development' projects. It is the same case on the panchayat union level where the union Chairman (a very wealthy Kavuntar) is responsible for writing the personal reference for the file of the government Block Development Officer. The latter is obliged to tread very lightly indeed on the territory of locally powerful landowners.

The panchayat area selected for this study had a council composed of thirteen members, in 1966. Eleven of these were wealthy, landowning Kavuntars, including a representative of nearly all the really powerful families in the kirāman. The remaining two were untouchables, as this proportion is required by law. As no might surmise, the untouchables were utterly ineffective as far as influencing the policies put forward by the eleven Kavuntar members was concerned. Seven of these eleven Kavuntars came from the leading two clans of the area (Ītānan and KaNavālan) while the other four were distributed evenly among influential families of four other descent groups.

The area which elects one panchayat representative is often larger than one settlement. It corresponds roughly in population to a Mākāliyaman temple area (some 350 to 500 people). However, the boundaries which have been drawn for election purposes do not correspond, except in the roughest way, with these temple groups.⁴⁶ Areas electing panchayat members are further grouped into wards for administrative purposes. For the relation of these boundaries to the Mākāliyaman temples, see Map Twelve.

No one has yet tried to challenge the Kavuntars' dominance of the panchayat. In fact, with the Kavuntars comprising nearly 50% of the local

⁴⁶ It was unclear from the material gathered whether and to what extent the local Kavuntar community have influenced the drawing of these boundaries in order to control local election results.

population, and controlling the local economy, it is difficult to see how this could be done. However, a split within the KavunTar community itself could create a more complicated electoral picture in coming years. Factional division within the dominant community, in fact, appears to be a very common aspect of village life in India.⁴⁷ Such a split existed among the KavunTars of Olappālaiyam at the time of this study. The history of the division is of considerable interest:

About twenty years ago, the ritual position of Kottukāran at the Mākāliyamman temple was held by a KaNavālan family, (A). They were considered to have inherited this post in the male line from time immemorial. The KaNavālan enjoyed this right because they were considered to be the first clan to have settled at this particular site, even though the Ceṅkaṅṅan and Ūtālan clans had preceded them in the kirānam as a whole. However, also living in Olappālaiyam at the time were a powerful family of Ūtālan, (B). Their eldest male member was greatly respected.

One day the Ūtālan suggested that the caste mīras (order in which offerings to the deity are distributed to participants) be changed. He thought that the Autaliyār (who were friends of his) ought to come before the NaTar, the caste which had traditionally enjoyed precedence. The Kottukāran's family objected and there was a big dispute. A second argument developed over whether the Kottukāran or the Ūtālan ought to present the first animal for sacrifice. People gathered to support both sides. Finally government officials stepped in and locked the temple. As a result of the locking there was no festival held for several years. Then some of the wealthier KavunTars of the village got together and built a little thatched-roofed temple for the goddess, just next to the old stone one. The earlier temple, however, remained locked. The festivals began again and for a while they proceeded along traditional lines. By this time the powerful Ūtālan family had left the vicinity.

Soon, however, more difficulties arose. For many years there had been a rivalry between two brothers of a second KaNavālan family, (C), over the question of inheriting family land. One year, as the time for the

⁴⁷ For comparative data from other areas of India see Dumont, Homo Hierarchicus, pp. 208-9.

Mākāliyammaṅ festival drew near, C₁ (who was in charge of temple funds) began to collect contributions to finance the event. He tried to prevent C₂ from making a donation. C₂, however, wanted to contribute. He tried several times to give his money to a middle man, the barber. Each time, however, C₁ detected the source of the money and refused it. On the day of the festival all the village residents gathered to boil their pots of ponkal rice. When the priest came to collect a spoonful from each pot for an offering to the deity, C₁ ordered that rice be not taken from C₂'s pot. At this C₂ became very angry and started a quarrel. Several friends supported him. Most of these friends were from the poorer Kavuntar families of the settlement. C₁ had several of the wealthier families supporting him. C₂ and his friends grew angrier and angrier. Finally they walked off in a huff, threatening to build their own Mākāliyammaṅ shrine next to the two (one in stone and one in thatch) already standing.

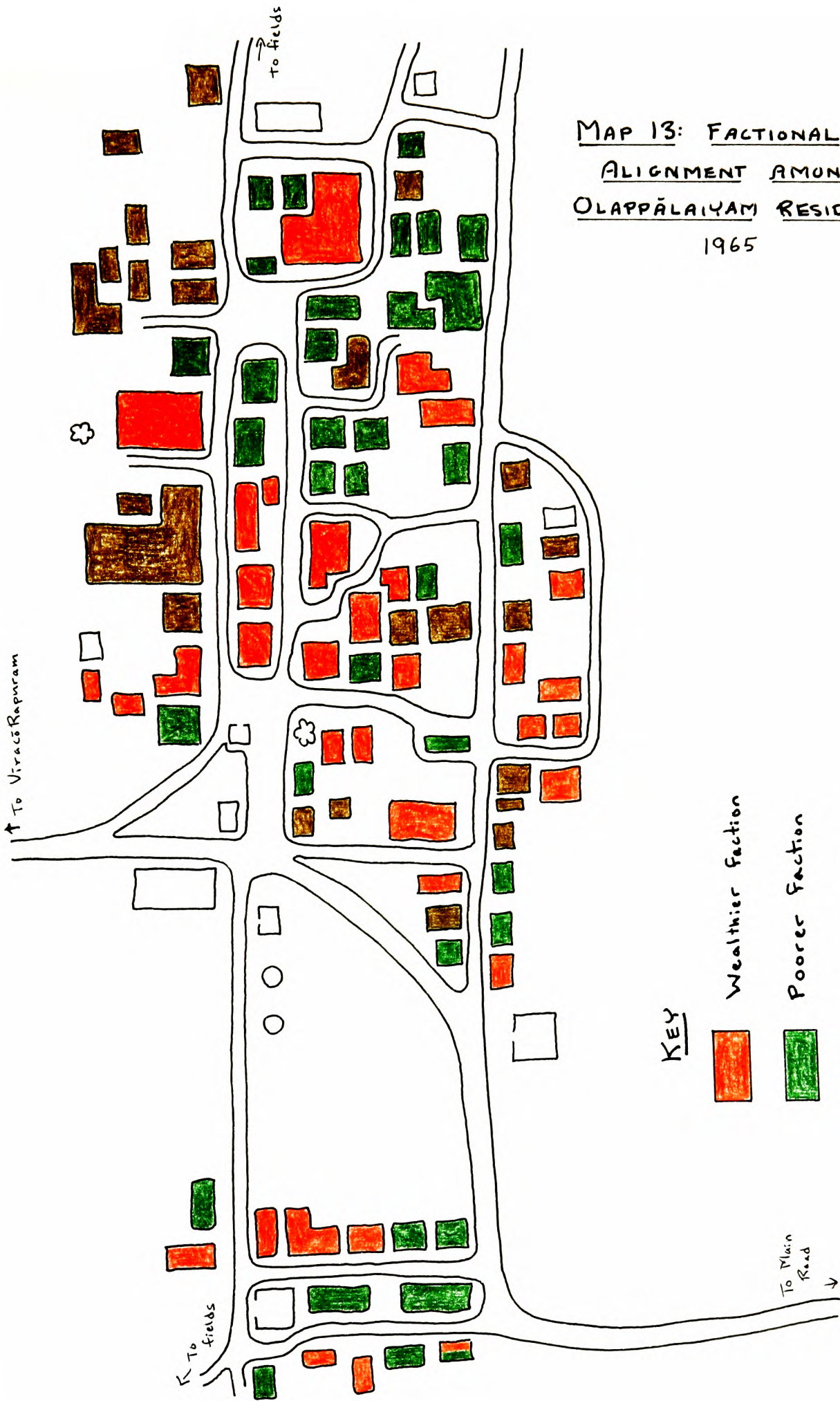
The friends of C₂ began collecting donations and about ten families helped to build this newest temple addition. One man who helped in the construction was the younger son of the Koṭṭukāraṅ family (A). He associated himself with this new shrine and thus broke with his elder brother who had inherited the position of Koṭṭukāraṅ at the former. There are now three temples: a locked stone one, an 'eastern' thatched one and a 'western' thatched one. The residents of the village have gradually aligned themselves on the two sides, and the two thatched temples have been rivals now for about ten years. They each have a separate temple organization, a separate temple fund and a separate (but usually simultaneous) festival each year.

These two rival factions split the Kavuntar community of Olappālaiyaṅ almost exactly in half. (See Maps 13 and 14 for details). The eastern temple represents, in general, the faction of the wealthier landowners of the village. It has members from about 35 households and members of all nine local (Kavuntar) clans. Residents from several smaller settlements near Olappālaiyaṅ (who belong to the same Mākāliyammaṅ temple area) tend to support the western temple faction.




Thus all the clans in the settlement are split (save the Ūṭāṭaṅ who are represented now by only one household) in their factional allegiance.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ As far as I am aware carriage ties or 'alliances' between families were not a significant factor in these splits.

MAP 13: FACIONAL
ALIGNMENT AMONG
OLAPPALAYAM RESIDENTS
1965



KEY

-  Wealthier Faction
-  Poorer Faction
-  Neutral Households

Splits are most frequent between fairly distant relations. However, there are four examples of a KavunTar family where full brothers belong to opposite factions. In each and every one of these cases the brothers are KaNavālan, e.g. members of the numerically and economically dominant clan. All the NāTārs in Olappālaiyam support the wealthier faction with the exception of one unrelated newcomer. It is said that they lend their support to these wealthier landowners not so much out of genuine sympathy as out of dependence on their good will. Members of the poorer faction do not, on the whole, own fine palmyra trees. All the other castes in the village (with the exception of a few ritual service families who have remained professionally neutral) support the western or poorer faction.⁴⁹

The two factions differ not only in membership, but also in character. In the eastern or wealthier faction there have been several disputes between rival leaders and threats of succession to the opposite party. This faction maintains the traditional miras or ritual order in which offerings are distributed at the time of the festival. They also maintain the post of KoTTukaran and the tradition that the NāTārs must finance the offerings presented during the first seven days of the festival. The western temple members have given up miras. They distribute the offerings first to whoever happens to be nearest the priest at the correct moment. Contributions are collected from all to provide offerings for the first seven days. There is no KoTTukaran and, in general, the proceedings are less formal. There is an air of camaraderie and there have been no bitter disputes over leadership.

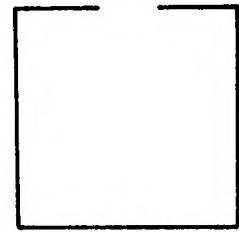
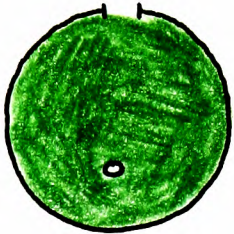
⁴⁹ Two families are excepted from this generalization. One is an unrelated Mutaliyār of considerable wealth, the other an Icāri who has had continual disputes with his ZH and does not wish to remain in the same faction with him.

MAP 14: OLAPPĀLAIYAM MĀKĀLIYAMMAN
TEMPLES

To
ViracōRapuram

○
KaruppaNacāmi

○
KaruppaNacāmi



Western Mākāliyammaṅ
Temple
(Poorer Faction)

Eastern Mākāliyammaṅ
Temple
(Wealthier Faction)

Original Mākāliyammaṅ
Temple
(Now Locked)



Muni
○

Main Road

However, despite the Eastern temple's considerable formality in ritual matters, its members are actually less interested in the temple and its festivals, in a general sense, than those of the poorer faction. It is the western temple whose monthly meetings are the most regular, enthusiastic and well attended. Money from the temple fund is lent out at higher rates of interest to temple members than is the case for the eastern temple faction. Western temple funds can be borrowed in ten rupee lumps at an interest rate which varies from $1\frac{1}{2}$ to $1\frac{1}{4}$ Rs. a month. The wealthier eastern faction lends its funds in 20 rupee lumps and demands an interest rate which varies from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to $2\frac{1}{4}$ Rs. a month. Accumulated interest is used to finance the festivals. In general, it is the eastern temple members who are the least enthusiastic about these events. They are prepared to spend little money on festivals or even to cancel them entirely, an attitude of which members of the poorer, western faction strongly disapprove.

Out of the nine Mākāliyamman temples in Kannapuram Kirāman, five have cancelled their festivals completely as a result of severe factional difficulties. Two others (including Olappālaiyam) have worked out an arrangement whereby rival groups either celebrate the festival independently, or on alternate years. Only two of the nine temples are, for the moment, relatively untroubled by these paralytic disputes. In all cases the confrontation has taken the form of an argument about which family or clan should take precedence in a particular ritual. Underneath this stereotyped formal issue, however, there are always economic jealousies and personal rivalries.

At the moment these factional disputes do not have wide ramifications. They do not seem to affect day to day activity to any extent. Members of both factions in Olappālaiyam will attend the same festival where other deities are concerned. They will shop at the same stores and attend each other's

life-cycle rituals. However, the situation could easily become more serious. At the moment the two elected panchayat members in Olappālaiyam's factions could develop a powerful political aspect in coming years. However, it appears that for some time to come the main contenders for position will remain Kavuntars, and perhaps even Kavuntars of the locally dominant clan(s).

The figures for literacy in Paocapālaiyam Panchayat compare favourably with the figures on literacy for the region as a whole. This is despite the fact that Kannapuram Kirāman represents a rural community 50 miles from the nearest city and 18 miles from a large town.⁵⁰ Reasons for this relatively high literacy rate are two-fold. For the kirāman or panchayat area as a whole, the rate can be explained by the fact that Kannapuram is a long established centre with important temples. There was at least one school in the area in the pre-Independence period. The literacy rate in Olappālaiyam itself is higher than elsewhere in the kirāman. This is a result of the current proximity of a higher elementary school and of a good road. The percentage of literates in Olappālaiyam is also raised by the fact that its population does not include untouchables.

It is not entirely clear what definition of literacy the 1961 Census enumerators used, but it would appear to be something like "Any person who can read and write."⁵¹ In general, the census figures are stated in terms of adult population, that is in terms of people over fifteen years old. These calculations and the results of an independent survey are summarized in the table below. For the village of Olappālaiyam the figure of 31.

⁵⁰ Of course Olappālaiyam is only 5 miles from the important market centre of Kāakayam.

⁵¹ Op.cit., Madras, District Handbook, I, p. 335.

represents the percentage of adults educated through the 5th grade, with the addition of a few unusual cases where a person has 'educated himself' to this level. In one were to include all adults who have completed the 3rd grade as 'literate' the percentage for Olappālaiyan would be .2 .

Chart 10: LITERACY IN THE KONKU REGION

<u>Area</u>	<u>Percentage of Literates</u>	<u>Source</u>
Coimbatore St.	30.0	<u>1961 Census, Madras Cultural Tables II-C (1)</u>
Dharapuram Taluk	25.0	<u>Coimbatore District Census Handbook I p. 12</u>
Paccāpālaiyan Panchayat	28.0	" " II p. 614
Olappālaiyan Village	31.0	Author's independent census material.

It is very interesting, however, to break these literacy figures down by caste. By doing this an interesting general difference between the castes of the left hand faction and those of the right on the question of literacy can be observed. There is a marked rate of high literacy at the summit of the social hierarchy among members of the left-hand faction but of low literacy among members of the right. These differences, however, are greatly reduced for the less prestigious castes and the trend may even be reversed among untouchables.⁵² The breakdown of the census figures, in Olappālaiyan by caste community, is given below.

⁵² We do not have actual figures for the untouchable communities, but from general observation and from discussions with the School Headmaster, it would appear that the Paraiyans (right hand) have a considerably greater interest in schooling than the Kotaris (left hand). Most Paraiyans are converts to Christianity.

Chart 19: EDUCATIONAL CENTER IN OLAPPALAIYAM

Left Hand Castes	Right Hand Castes	Percentage Of Literates
	Irāṣan (Brahman)	1.00
Kaṅakku Pillai		1.00
Coṭṭiyār (Kōmaṭṭi) (A)		1.00
Ṭotaliyār	(B) UTaiyār	.58
Ācāri	Nāvitan	.55
	KavuṅṬār	.43
	PaṅṬāram	.25
Vanṅaṅ (V.Ṭahu)		.24
	NāṬār	.22
Nāyakkaṅ		.20
		.14
		.05

The representatives of these two castes in Olappalāiyam were particularly intelligent and ambitious. The figures indicate self-education and are probably too high for the purpose of generalization.

* This figure is, it would seem a bit low for the purpose of generalization.

N.B. The sample size for this chart is the same as that for charts 5 and 18.

One cannot readily generalize from this tiny settlement to caste populations as a whole. Nonetheless, the difference between the castes of the right and the castes of the left in the matter of literacy is striking. The more prestigious castes of the left (A) far outrank the leading castes of the right (B) in their interest in and pursuit of formal education. This is consistent with their interest in trades or crafts, and in business, rather than in agriculture and in land. As Section II B will illustrate at much greater length, the high ranking castes of the left look to an all-South India literate tradition to a far greater extent than the leading KavuṅṬars and their associates.

The above description introducing the major castes of the region and including an outline of each caste's occupational and economic position

completes this introductory section on the people of Kōfuku. Included was a discussion of settlement and population distribution and of the general land-holding pattern in a kirāman area. The division of the castes of Kōfuku into a right and left-hand faction, and of the pollution rules and implied caste ranking which accompanies this split, were also covered. The next section summarizes for the reader what is known about the history of the region, making use of both written sources and of oral tradition.

10) Koñku: History and Tradition

101) Brief Political History

The history of the Koñku region is not well documented, nor have scholars thus far made particularly interesting use of what information is available. There is, for example, a certain amount of inscriptional evidence, the earliest traces of which date back roughly 2,000 years. There are also archeological finds covering an earlier period. To supplement these sources there are some classical literary works, a few medieval manuscripts, and local folk traditions. Based on this evidence and weighing the several sources to varying degrees, is a small but growing series of secondary studies. I know of three in Tamil and one (drawing to some extent on its Tamil predecessors) in English. Various editions of the Manuals and Gazetteers published on the area also include a summary historical section.¹

The intention of this section is merely to give the reader a very brief outline of important turning points in the area's political history. In fact, none of the secondary sources outlined above, although bulky in form, do much more. Research on Koñku history to date has been focussed almost entirely on the chronology of kings, or, at the other extreme, on poetic mythology. No one as yet has attempted a serious study of changes over time of the sociological or economic picture in Koñku. Even relatively obvious research problems such as the importance of trade routes, the role of population immigration and emigration, and the significance of village

¹ A short bibliography of secondary sources on Koñku is given with other bibliography, at the end.

settlement patterns have not yet been tackled.² Neither has anyone made a study of Koṅku during the British period. There is obviously great scope here (and in the archeological field as well) for significant inquiry.

Important Dates in Koṅku History

Before
400 A.D.

In the second and thirteenth rock edicts of Asoka the kingdoms of South India and Ceylon are mentioned as lying outside the Asokan Empire. Besides the Chola, Pandya, Karaluputa (Kerala) and Tambapanni (Ceylon) areas, a region called Satiyaputa is mentioned. Identification of this last place is not easy but scholars tentatively take it to be a Sanskritized version of a Tamil term meaning 'home of the Kōcar.' The Kōcar are a tribe famous for their heroism in war and their name is mentioned repeatedly in the Sangam or the earliest classical literature which refers to this period. The home of the Kōcar is said to have been Koṅku.³ Some historians identify the Kōcar and a second group, the Koṅkār, also mentioned by the early literature. Others note that the Koṅkār were pastoralists and thus speak of two separate groups living in Koṅku at this time.⁴ In addition to the Kōcar and the Koṅkār there are references to other tribes living in the area such as the Maṛavār, the Vēḍan (or Irula) and the Vēṭṭuva. These were hunting groups who often raided the settled areas.⁵

At the beginning of the Christian era there is an inscription which mentions an Irumporai family (of Irula descent) who made substantial inroads in the Koṅku region. Their leader's name was Kōvan and his family is said to have formed a collateral branch of the Chera royalty of the period. Some authors suggest that the place Kōvan ruled, called Kovanputtur,⁶ can be identified with the modern city of Coimbatore. The Brahman pundits who

² Professor Burton Stein of the University of Minnesota has recently begun to ask questions such as these for other areas of Madras State.

³ Nilakanta Sastri, A History of South India, Third Edition, (Madras, Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 85.

⁴ M. Arokiaswami, The Kongu Country, (Madras, University Press, 1956), p. 51.

⁵ M. Arokiaswami, pp. 36, 42.

⁶ C.M. Ramachandra Chettiar, Koṅku, p. 81

oppose this view suggest that the city's name came originally from the Kōcar tribe and was originally called Kōcanputtūr.

Local tradition has it that a line of Vēlir chiefs became prominent in Kōṅku during the third and fourth centuries. They are said to have led battles against the Chola and the Pandya further south and to have played a role in keeping Kōṅku independent during this time. Some of the present day Kavuttar clans are reputed to be descended from these people.⁷ There is also evidence of a thriving trade between Kōṅku and the Roman Empire, presumably through the Palghat gap to the Kerala coast, during the early period of the Christian era. Many finds of Roman coins support this surmise. Kōṅku's main export during the period appears to have been a sea-green gem called beryl.⁸ Roman trade is thought to have continued in some volume until about the 6th century.

There is also considerable evidence of the influence of the Jain religion in Kōṅku during this early period. There are some cave inscriptions near Karur which contain Jain inscriptions dating to the period of Roman trade or before, which not only refer to this town by name, but indicate the presence of Buddhist or Jain monks there.⁹ Later, during the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D., there is evidence that even the rulers of the area were Jain. In particular, there is mention in one historical manuscript of a whole line of Jain kings in the area. They were Kēttiyar by caste and seem to have had some connection with the waning Kāshtrakūtā empire further north.¹⁰ The last of the line was a convert to Civism.¹⁰

The capital of this line of Jain kings is said to have been at Seandapurā, probably a Sanskritized form of a Tamil place name. One guess identifies it with the modern town of Kāṅkayan (six miles from Olappālaiyam)¹¹ To add to the arguments given in the literature is the fact that one of the oldest settlements in Yannapuram Kirāman is called Reṭṭivalacu. It lies just near the main road running east from Kāṅkayan to Karūr and local

7 JaRanicami Pulavar, *Kōṅku Celvi*, (Coimbatore Pudumalar Press, 1948), p. 45 and Arokiaswami, p. 71-72.

8. Arokiaswami, p. 72-79

9 C.V. Ramachandra Chettiar, 'Jainism in Kongu Nadu,' *Quarterly Journal of The Mythic Society*, Bangalore, Vol. XXV, Nos. 2,2,3, p. 67

10 C.V. Ramachandra Chettiar, *Kōṅku*, p. 15, Arokiaswami, pp. 81-101, and Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of South India*, (Madras Govt. Press, 1909), Vol. III, p. 224.

11 Arokiaswami, p. 100.

folklore says this village was named after some people of the ReTTiyār caste who once lived there. An old stone image lying at the back of the main Śiva temple in Kannapuram looks as if it may have once served as an image in a previous Jain temple near the same site.¹² Around the 3rd century A.D. three famous Śiva saints visited Koṅku as pilgrims and zealous preachers. It would appear that Jainism began to wane about this time.¹³

400-900 A.D.

This is the period of Ganga rule in Koṅku. There are unfortunately no important inscriptions dealing with this era but a certain amount of information can be gleaned from a well-known historical manuscript called Koṅkudēsaraṅkkaḷ, available in the Madras Govt. Oriental Manuscript Library. During this period the area was ruled over by a line of Ganga kings from Mysore. Koṅku itself was probably ruled by a collateral branch of this family and/or by local chieftains. These men allied themselves with the Pallavas, the Pādambas and the Western Chalukyas in turn, both of whom ruled various other parts of South India at about the same time.¹⁴ From about 725 A.D. onwards the Koṅku branch of Gangas grew more and more independent. Simultaneously, however, they began to feel pressure from the Pandyas and Pallava kingdoms to the east and south. Apparently the ruling family was threatened by internal disputes as well. Finally the Gangas were conquered by the Cholas who entered Koṅku from the southeast just before the turn of the 10th century.¹⁵

During the Ganga period the worship of Śiva was re-established. More important, perhaps, is that it was during the period that Koṅku seems to have acquired the basic political structure of which traces can still be seen today. During this time the region appears to have been split into a number of vice-royalties. Under each such unit were several nāṭu or administrative divisions. The nāṭu were further divided into groups of villages called kirāman, which even then had headmen titled 'Kramani' or 'Kavanṭar'. War and revenue appear to have formed a major preoccupation of these viceroys.¹⁶

¹² See Section I D 1. Of course, RiTTivṣaḷu could, as well, date from the period of ReTTiyār administration under the Vijayanagar empire, nearly a thousand years later.

¹³ C. N. Ramachandra Chettiar, Koṅku, p. 116-7.

¹⁴ Arokiaswami, p. 127-8.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 154-173.

¹⁶ Govt. of Madras, District Gazetteer, pp. 31-33

900-1200 A.D.

The Koṅku country was finally wrested from the hands of the Gangas by the Chola king Aditya I about the beginning of the 10th century. His successors managed to hold on to Koṅku as a part of the Chola empire until almost the beginning of the 13th century. During much of this time there was peace and the empire prospered. From 985, or the reign of Rājarājā I, the centralized power of the Cholas began to decline. Concurrently, it seems, a collateral branch (the Vijayalaya line) who used the same names as the famous Chola kings who preceded them, began to set up a semi-independent dynasty in Koṅku.¹⁷ The last ruler of this line was called Vikrama Chola who held power until 1303. After this, Chola suzerainty over Koṅku was ceded to the powerful Hoysālā conqueror from Mysore, Ballālā III.

At this time Koṅku was still a relatively backward area with large tracts of forests and many hunters. As the power of the Cholas grew it would seem that these kings consciously encouraged settlement. The Chola kings, for example, encouraged a series of marriages with local chieftains, offering them Chola princesses and sending with them large retinues of soldiers and retainers. These were used to enhance the power of these local leaders who gradually pushed back the borders of the hunting areas in Koṅku and enlarged the nucleated agricultural settlements.¹⁸ At the end of the Chola period in Koṅku there is evidence of large building schemes, the expansion of road networks and, in particular, an emphasis on Śiva temple construction. With the increase of large temples dedicated to great gods of Hinduism, the demand for Brahmans rose. Apparently many families of these priests were granted lands by kings and encouraged to settle in Koṅku, about this time.¹⁹

1200-1370

After the decline of the Chola power, the Hoysālās of Mysore, the Pandiyas, and to a lesser extent the Cheras, all fought over the Koṅku region. During this period Koṅku changed hands several times between ambitious kings and their claims see-sawed back and forth across the area in accordance with their fortunes.

¹⁷ C.M. Ramachandra Chettiar, 'A Chapter in the History of Kongu Nadu', Journal of the Mythic Society, Bangalore, Vol. XXI, No. 1, pp. 39-49.

¹⁸ Burton Stein, "The Integration of the Agrarian Order of South India to the Nineteenth Century." University of Minnesota: Unpublished paper, 1965, p. 17, and Alakumalai Kuravanci, (author unknown) presently being edited for publication by Paṛanicami Puluvar, Nancappa High School, Tiruppur, Madras State.

¹⁹ Arokiaswami, Kongu Country, p. 196, 204.

1200-1370 cont.

The famous Hoysālā, Ballālā III was involved in some of the latter battles. Later the Muslim Sultanate, then ruling in Delhi, made tremendous expansion southward, pushing right through Koṅku to the famous city of Madurai beyond. Afterwards, one of the officers installed in Madurai revolted and proclaimed an independent Sultanate. This Sultanate finally collapsed about 1368 and its territories were ceded to the newly powerful kingdom of Vijayanagar to the northeast.²⁰

During this period there was certainly unrest in Koṅku and probably there were migrations into the area of people who were being persecuted by the wars further north. In particular, it appears likely that Telugu-speaking refugees streamed into the South, and into Koṅku during this period.²¹ Many Muslims in Koṅku also date from the time of the Sultanate of Madurai. A few are thought to be descendants of groups of Arab traders who reached the Kerala coast in the early centuries of the Christian era. The remainder date from a later period when they were forcibly enlisted as believers under pressure from the armies of Tipu Sultan.²²

Koṅku was conquered by the newly expanding Vijayanagar empire about 1370. The region remained under the nominal control of this dynasty for nearly 350 years. Events in Koṅku during this time can roughly be divided into two periods. During the first 150 years it would seem that the control which extended from the centre of Vijayanagar, was minimal, and that there was a semi-independent chieftainship at Ummattūr, near the Mysore border. Although nominally under Vijayanagar suzerainty, it appears that Ummattūr even refused to pay tribute to the centre at times.²³ The second period in Vijayanagar control of Koṅku dates from about 1529 when Krishnadevaraya, a famous Vijayanagar king, conquered Madurai and founded the Nāyakka kingdom there. Administration of Koṅku was soon handed over to the Madurai governors. It appears to have been less independent after this transfer of suzerainty to the South.

The Vijayanagar kingdom is usually spoken of by historians as having formed a 'bulwark' of Hindu power which resisted the Muslim pressures to the North, while encouraging a revival of Hindu learning. Under these

20 Govt. of Madras, District Gazetteer, pp. 55-61.

21 Robert Eckenburg, "Elite Formation in Nineteenth Century South India: An Interpretive Analysis," Unpublished paper read at the First International Conference of Tamil Studies, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, April, 1966, p. 3.

22 Govt. of Madras, District Gazetteer, p. 221.

23 Arokiaswami, p. 319-24

1370-1730 cont.

leaders an administrative elite formed which consisted largely of ReTTi warriors, Niyogi Brahmans and other Telugu groups.²⁴ The ReTTis, in particular, seem to have been a very widespread and mobile group. They reappear at points as various and distant as the Deccan and Koṅku. It will be recalled that a presumed branch of this community had already had a hand in ruling Koṅku in the early centuries of the Christian era under the name Ratta.²⁵ The period of Nāyakka rule was marked by the building of great temples.

In this connection many skilled castes from the Telugu speaking areas were invited to settle in the South.²⁶ At the beginning of the 17th century the Portuguese missionary Robert de Nobili came to Madurai. He befriended various tributaries of the Nāyakkas in Koṅku and even converted four Nāyakka sons to the new faith. The history of Christian conversion in Koṅku dates from this era.²⁷

1730-1899

At the end of the Nāyakka period in Madurai a new line of kings in Mysore began to gather power. They finally succeeded in recapturing Koṅku in about 1730. Except for short intervals, the region remained under Mysore again until British victories finally annexed it in 1899. There was much fighting during this period, and probably a large movement of Kannada-speaking people from the Mysore plateau moved down onto the Koṅku plains. Many Brahmans from Mysore were given grants of land in Koṅku and Kannada appears to have been the language of administration.²⁸

1800-1947

In the third Mysore war the British captured Bangalore and Tippu Sultan was forced to sign a treaty ceding Malabar, Coorg and Mirdipal. However, Tippu continued to fight for his kingdom in Mysore until he finally died on the battlefield at Seringapatnam in 1799 in the fourth Mysore war. At the end of this war the British restored a Hindu Raja to the Mysore throne, but as a price for this they demanded the transfer of Coimbatore, Dharapuram, parts of Salem and other districts to their dominions. Thus Koṅku fell under British rule and remained under it until independence in 1947.²⁹

24 Frykenburg, p.3.

25 Thurston, Castes and Tribes, Vol. III, p. 224.

26 Govt. of Madras, District Gazetteer, p. 75.

27 Ibid., p.66

28 Arokiaswami, p. 385.

29 Govt. of Madras, District Handbook, Vol. I., p. 3-4.

1800-1947 cont.

No one has yet attempted a historical study of the Konku area during the British period and it is difficult to say what effects their rule had on the region apart from obvious changes such as improvement of the educational facilities, the building of a railway, the improvement of roads and the conducting of land settlement surveys. Clearly they enforced peace and set in movement an unparalleled political integration of the South. A new elite of business and administrative communities probably arose. The British also introduced certain social reforms concerning infanticide, marriage, widowhood and inheritance and they imposed an elaborate legal superstructure on local caste councils. Missionary activity also greatly increased in Konku during the British period.

From this outline of Konku's political history there are certain tentative, but important, generalizations to be drawn. Relative to the heavily populated river delta lands further east and south, the Konku region was a remote, forested, upland area. It was inhabited largely by pastoralists, hunters and raiding groups. Nonetheless, there were probably several important trade routes through the area. One route must have led over the Palghat gap from Kerala to Coimbatore and then east, via Mankayam, to Harūr and the Cauvery delta. Very likely, between Coimbatore and Mankayam it passed through Tināpūr and the beryl mines at Padijūr. In addition, there seems to have been a track along the edge of the southern mountain range which passed near the famous Minukan shrine at Alni. A third route may have led north into Salem, towards Harmaṣuri. Along these trade routes there were, it seems, some agricultural settlements.

According to Burton Steā there was a gradual development on this situation which he describes as follows:

The inscriptions of the trading communities boast of military success in protecting caravans of asses and bullocks moving through the forbidding forests which separated the more densely settled "nuclear areas". Over the long run, while forest and settled peoples continually resisted the encroachments of each other, a gradual reduction of forest and an expansion of regularly cultivated land occurred. As forest lands were cleared and absorbed, jungle peoples came increasingly under the control

Of Periyānāṭu villages (e.g. the nāṭu administrative system) and were absorbed as servile classes in the caste hierarchy.³⁰

This process, it appears, was accelerated during the period of Chola hegemony in Koṅku by a positive policy of bringing in groups of families as settlers from the delta areas.

The local folk tradition supports this picture. There are many references in it, for example, to a Chera prince who married a Chola princess. He brought her to the region with a protective entourage of several thousand men. These men were intended to protect the family in times of war and^{t.} settle in the vicinity as agriculturists during times of peace. Some of these stories indicate that the Chera kings were not too popular in the area and that local groups rose against them. The Vēlir, however, came to the aid of the princess and her husband and fought these raiders off. Certain of the Vēlir clans, namely the Poṅṅan, Ōtālan, Sattantai and Kuraiyār, are expressly mentioned in the folk tradition as having helped in these battles and having been rewarded land by the king as a result.³¹

There are other stories which describe in great detail the entourage which came with the princess. The tradition says this entourage included 8,000 Vēlālars from the South as well as a few merchants and some Brahmins. A number of clan names are given.³² It is possible that there were actually several waves of such settlers entering Koṅku from the Southeast, making the actual events less rapid and neat than folklore would have them.

³⁰ Op. cit. Burton Stein, p. 17.

³¹ Tiruvāṅan, Māṅkalyam Tanta Makarāci, Vānati Patippakam, Madras, 1960 pp. 130-35 and Op. cit., Paṅniccāmi Puluvar, Koṅku, pp. 132-33

³² Paṅniccāmi Puluvar, Alakumalai Kuravanji, Tiruvāṅan, Māṅkalyam Tanta Makarāci, pp. 143-46, Govt. of Madras, District Gazetteer, p. 590, and Arukiaswami, Koṅku, p. 55 (footnote).

Nonetheless, the general principle of growing agricultural settlements is probably correct.

During the period of Ganga rule there was probably some immigration of Kannada-speaking peoples into Koṅku. Brahmans also came as priests for the temple centres.³³ At the end of the Chola period there was fresh unrest and much fighting. The Mutaliyār caste are mentioned in inscriptions as having been employed as mercenaries to fight in the Chola armies at this time. Later, it seems, many Mutaliyār settled in Koṅku with their spoils and took to weaving and to business. Carpenters, blacksmiths, stone masons and builders from other more developed regions must also have been in demand.³⁴

Whatever the evidence on population movements during this early period, the tendency for non-agricultural castes to immigrate into Koṅku appears to have accelerated in later epochs. In the 14th and 15th centuries there was probably an influx of Kannada-speaking people, largely business men and weavers from Mysore. Following them, with the establishment of the Vijayanagar Empire, it seems that there were new waves of Telugu-speaking warriors and administrators.³⁵ The first references to the right/left hand distinction, the great social division which was to split South Indian society for centuries to come, also began to appear in the historical records about Koṅku in about the 13th century.³⁶

Because of its long history of wars and of repeated subjugation to neighbouring kingdoms, it could be imagined that Koṅku has suffered great

³³ C.M. Ramachandra Chettiar, Koṅku, p. 114.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 219-22.

³⁵ C.M. Ramachandra Chettiar, Koṅku, pp. 339-45 and Frykenburg, p. 3.

³⁶ Arokiaswami, p. 272.

political and social instability over the centuries. At a closer look, however, it appears that many conquerors of the area were content with the prestige of victory and the proceeds of taxation. They were not much worried over the day-to-day government of the local populace, and thus the internal structure of Kōnku was probably left by these conquerors much as they had found it. Within nāṭu, and even at the level of relations between these administrative units, the folk history of Kōnku emphasises a surprising continuity of tradition. It could well be that this now rapidly fading nāṭu and kirānam organisation has, in fact, played a central role in knitting together and defining the social, political and ritual order of Kōnku, at the local level, in past centuries.

Plate 4: The Agricultural Cycle

- a) A KavunTar Plowing His Land
- b) Close-Up Of A Plow In Use
- c) Women Transplanting Raki
- d) Typical Bucket Used In Well Irrigation
- e) Two Buckets As They Empty Their Contents Into
An Irrigation Channel
- f) Women Harvesting COLam
- g) A Woman Giving Her Harvesting Basket A Good Scrub

PLATE 4



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(g)



(f)

IC) 2) History According to Oral Tradition

Koṅku is a distinct social and cultural region. This fact is evident, not only on the political level, but also from details of the temple architecture and of local custom. This same unity is apparent on the level of folk tradition. There are, for example, a number of stories, poems, and even one full-length epic, which are known all over rural Koṅku, but not, to any significant extent, beyond its boundaries. This body of folk tradition is largely oral. There are families of singers, drummers, and poets who specialize in its performance and transmission. These stories and poems have a definite regional character. They are distinct from, say, the folk history of a particular temple, on the one hand, and from stories known all over South India, such as Silappatikāram on the other.

The most important single piece of folk history in Koṅku is referred to as the ANṆamāṅ Katai or the 'Story of the Brothers'.³⁷ This story is really an epic, but it is also a ballad in the sense that it is sung to the accompaniment of a hand drum. It is usually sung by barbers or washermen although priests (Jaṅṭarāṅ) and potters sometimes specialize in the art as well.³⁸ In recitals, the main singer is usually accompanied by a second man, a sort of assistant, who joins in on chorus lines and at

³⁷ There are also other important names for this epic story and no one title is agreed upon throughout the Koṅku region. Some other common names are: The Kunruṭaiya Kavunṭar Katai and Ponnar, Caṅkar Katai. There is one recent attempt to abridge the story and render it in print in high Tamil prose. It has been printed as a cheap paperback in Madras under the title Ponnaṭake Rennum Kaḷḷaraker Ammanai, (two editions extant). This version is very abbreviated and as the title suggests, it may have been collected in the area of the Kaḷḷar caste, near Madurai. The history of the epic in this area to the south of Koṅku is not clear. My own brief inquiries about it drew ~~at~~ a blank.

³⁸ Note that these four are all ritual service castes in other contexts.

certain other dramatic moments. Sometimes it is the assistant who plays the drum and the main singer keeps the rhythm with a tiny pair of brass cymbals held by the fingers of both hands. The basic outline of the story is fixed, but individual singers are entitled to a certain amount of free poetic elaboration.

The story of the Annamār is greatly loved in rural areas, and informants say that listening to it was a major source of entertainment before the advent of the cinema. The story is far too long to sing at one sitting. Usually the entire cycle takes about two weeks to recite, the singers performing two to three hours each evening.³⁹ In a recent attempt to put the story into print (in high Tamil) the colourful episodes have been greatly reduced and little but a description of successive battles remains. In its oral, folk form, however, the story contains a great deal of interesting social comment. Because of its length, however, only a few of the important points in the story are summarized below. This epic is also dramatized at temples in the region on festival occasions. The countryside is dotted with shrines commemorating the main characters.

The ANNAMār story is, really, a folk account of the early history of the Pōṅku area. This history is traced in a heroic and semi-mythological form, by recounting the story of one KavunTār clan. The adventures of clan members are traced through four generations. Although the story is clearly regional in much of its content, there are certain ways in which it is linked to better known Indian epics. For example, the first four lines of the story have been taken from the initial poem of the Mahabharata, as it was rendered into Tamil by the poet Villiputtūrār. These lines form a poem in praise of the god Viṅāyakar.

³⁹ The version I taped requires a total of 38 hours to play.

The second four lines of the Annamāṅkai are also in praise of a divine figure, the goddess of learning, Saraswati. These second four lines have been borrowed from a popular poem attributed to Kamben, the author of the Tamil version of the Ramāyaṇa. Similarly, the ~~first~~ song of the epic is well known. It has no parallel in classical Tamil literature but is a popular devotional verse which is often sung in temples. In keeping with this semi-sacred context in which the events of the epic are placed, the singers usually conduct a small pūja to the gods on the final night of its performance. This ritual is unnecessary unless the story has been sung through in its entirety.

More interesting still are the 'internal links' between this epic and more classical Tamil literature. For example, all the main characters in the 'Story of the Brothers' have a supernatural birth. Each birth is linked, in some way or other, to the birth of another famous hero or god. Thus, for example, the two brothers are supposed to be reincarnations of the spirits of Arjuna and his brother Birma (heroes of the Mahabharata). Each has the strength of twelve elephants.⁴⁰ Their sister's daughter is also a gift of the gods. She is described as a reincarnation of one of the seven Paṇḍimār, or virgins, and has, therefore, a special gift of clairvoyance. Finally, the Paraiyan who acts as a leader of the palace guards is described as a reincarnation of Asvattāma, son of Turo⁴¹accāri, Arjuna's guru. This Paraiyan, Cāmpukan is granted the strength of sixteen elephants.

There is also a very striking parallel between the opening events of the 'Story of the Brothers' and the traditional account of the origin of Vēlālar caste. Edgar Thurston recounts this myth as follows:

⁴⁰ The strength of several elephants is also an epithet used to describe heroes of the Mahabharata.

when the inhabitants of the world were rude and ignorant of agriculture, a severe draught fell upon the land, and the people prayed to Bhudevi, the goddess of the earth, for aid. She pitied them, and produced from her belly a man carrying a plough, who showed them how to till the soil and support themselves. His offspring are the Velalars.⁴¹

In the Annanar version, the Perunkuṭi clan of Vēlālar KavulṬars are created in the same manner. There is mention of a drought, as well. After the birth of the Vēlālar, Thurston continues their story as follows:

In ancient days, when the God Paramesvara and his consort the goddess Parvati Devi resided on the top of Kailasa or mount of paradise, they one day retired to amuse themselves in private, and by chance Visvakarma, the architect of the Devatas or gods, intruded on their privacy, which enraged them, and they said to him that, since he had the audacity to intrude on their retirement, they would cause an enemy of his to be born in the Bhuloka or earthly world, who should punish him for his temerity. Visvakarma requested they would inform him in what part of the Bhuloka or earthly world he would be born, and he would annihilate him with a single blow. The divine pair replied that the person would spring up into existence from the bowels of the earth on the banks of the Ganga river. On this, Visvakarma took his sword, mounted his aerial car, and flew through the regions of ether to the banks of the Ganga river, where he anxiously waited the birth of his enemy. One day Visvakarma observed the ground to crack near him, and a kiritaṁ or royal diadem appeared issuing out of the bowels of the earth, which Visvakarma mistook for the head of his adversary, and made a cut at it with his sword, but only to cut off the kiritaṁ. In the meantime, the person came completely out of the earth, with a bald pate, holding in his hand a golden plough-share, and his neck encircled with garlands of flowers. The angry Visvakarma instantly laid hands on him, when the gods Brahma, Vishnu and Īva... interceded... (saying), 'Since thou didst not succeed in thy first attempt, it is but equitable that thou shouldst now spare him.' At the intercession and remonstrance of the gods, Visvakarma quitted his hold, and a peace was concluded between him and his enemy on the following stipulation, viz., that the pancha jātei, or five castes of silver-smiths, carpenters, ironsmiths, stone cutters, and braziers, who were the sons of Visvakarma, should be subservient to the earth-born person.⁴²

⁴¹ Edgar Thurston, Castes and Tribes, Vol VII, p. 362

⁴² Ibid., Vol VII, pp. 362-63, as quoted from the Baramahal Records, Section III, 'Inhabitants', Govt. Press, Madras, 1907.

This story which Thurston gives about the origin of the Vēlālar matches very closely, indeed, with the opening events of the ANNamār epic. Just as above, there is an account of a contest judged by the gods. A Vēlālar (KavuNTar) is made to rise supernaturally from the middle of the earth, but an Ācāri tries to cut off his head with a knife before he can fully emerge. In both accounts it is the Vēlālar who wins by emerging without losing his head. The KavuNTars' right to the land is thus vindicated. The story is important in understanding the general division between the right and the left-hand castes in Koṅku, and more specifically, the long standing friction between the KavuNTar and Ācāri communities. (See Section I D and the conclusion for a more detailed discussion).

The action of the ANNamār Katali now becomes localized, and proceeds as follows:

KōlattākkavuNTar is the eldest of nine sons, all of whom were created by Īswari to plow the land. However, a famine casts its shadow over the earth and Kōlattā is forced to go to the reigning Chola king and beg work from him. Happily, from the time he finds the king and takes employment, good rains bless an area of the king's domain called Ḥonniṅelanaṅṅu and make it fertile. The king is pleased with Kōlattā's work, and after some time decides to give him title to this land as a reward. The king manoeuvres to have the Ācaris, who previously occupied this territory, quit it in the manner outlined in the myth above, by calling upon the gods. He also rewards Kōlattā's eight younger brothers by giving them an adjoining territory called Taṅkavelanaṅṅu.

The only disappointment in Kōlattā's life is that his wife has not born a son to inherit his fertile lands. He is, it seems, under the effects of a curse of Śiva for having once unwittingly played a hand in the killing of a sacred cow. Krishna hears Kōlattā's wife crying and finally persuades Śiva to relent. Śiva hides a beautiful baby son in a rock where it is miraculously fed by a cow and finally the couple find it. Kōlattā and his wife raise the child tenderly, taking it to their clan temple on the day it is named. At the age of five, however, the child loses its devoted parents. Just before they are carried to heaven they make the other child look after the land for him, and to arrange his marriage.

Soon after this Kōlatta's brothers and their male descendents arrive from the neighbouring territory and claim the land, saying that it is their due as the child, named Kunruṭaiyā, was really an adopted child and not a true son of their eldest brother. The neighbours object but their arguments fall on deaf ears and soon the agnatic uncles and cousins of Kunruṭaiyā take over. They mistreat the child and also raise his father's home to the ground so that he will never know what he should have inherited. Finally Kunruṭaiyā runs away. He wanders for a time and comes to a third region called Valavaṅṅināṭu. There he unknowingly stops at his MB's house where he at last receives kindhearted treatment. They take this strange boy in and give him work as a shepherd. After many years Krishna reveals his true relationship to the household where he is sheltered and it is arranged for him to marry his MB's daughter.

The marriage takes place but the girl's family are most annoyed to discover the true status of the boy they had treated as a shepherd. They refuse to attend the wedding and curse the couple never to return to Valavaṅṅināṭu. The young couple leave and make their way back to Ponnivelanāṭu where they find the old lineage temple in ruins. They restore it and conduct a big puja. From the moment Kunruṭaiyā begins to plow and his wife to sow the first crop there is trouble. His agnatic relations arrive and attempt numerous tricks to prevent Kunruṭaiyā from succeeding. The lineage deity is pleased with the attention she has received, however, and she and Krishna together help the young couple over many hardships. Soon they become wealthy, but still they have no children.

In her sadness, the wife (Tamarai) decides to return to her brother's house to visit her brother's children. She sets off against her husband's will. When she arrives, however, the wives of her brothers remember their curse and bolt the door against her. Tamarai calls on Krishna and with his help she supernaturally destroys the entire household of women and children in her anger. Tamarai's brothers, alone, survive the holocaust. They search for their sister and beg her to restore their children to life. She agrees on condition that two of her brothers' daughters be turned to stone and preserved until such time as she should bear two sons to claim them in marriage. After this is done, Tamarai and her husband begin a long period of penance which finally softens the hearts of the gods and brings them children. There are more tricks performed by Kunruṭaiyā's agnates in their attempt to seize the land while the couple concentrate on their religious vows.

After many years of superhuman asceticism Śiva grants Tamarai two sons and a daughter and places the seed in her womb. They are to be incarnations of Birma, Arjuna and the Kannimar, respectively. They are to be so god-like that it is feared that they will endanger the existing order on earth if they remain too long. Therefore her children are given a predetermined life-span of only sixteen years. The couple return to PonnivelanāTu and again the agnates plan a trick. They learn of Tamarai's pregnancy and bribe a dishonest midwife to secretly kill and bury any sons that may be born. Things proceed according to plan except that the god Kinnama learns of the scheme and he and the lineage goddess together hoodwink the midwife at the time of birth and carry the two sons off, unknown, to a special underground tunnel where they are raised. The daughter is allowed to be born naturally, however. Tamarai is, of course, disappointed to learn that she has only begotten a daughter, even after all her years of penance. The agnates, seeing that there is no male offspring, claim the land, and drive KunruTaiyā and Tamarai out to wander as refugees.

Meanwhile the two sons, named Ponnar and Caṅkar, have promised their parents not to aggravate the long-standing feud with their agnates. The younger brother, Caṅkar, however, has a fiery temper and soon he cannot restrain his anger. He persuades his elder brother to accompany him and together they set off for TaṅkavelanāTu. A long series of intrigues ensues in which a Chola raja is involved. Finally the two brothers win PonnivelanāTu for themselves. By this time their younger sister, Taṅkai, has grown of age and she dreams of a lovely parrot which she asks her brothers to capture for her from the neighbouring VēTTuvanāTu, a region inhabited by the fierce VēTTuva tribe. Ponnar and Caṅkar succeed, after many difficulties, in this attempt, but only because the virgin sister of a large clan of VēTTuvas has unwittingly given them aid.

When the VēTTuvas learn that a female parrot has been stolen from their forest they are very angry indeed. Their sister learns of her mistake and encourages them to retaliate, pointing out that they have yet to conduct courageous feats on her account, similar to what Ponnar and Caṅkar have done for their sister Taṅkai. At first the VēTTuvas find an Ācāri who promises to trick the two brothers and kill them on the VēTTuvas' behalf. Ponnar and Caṅkar are not deceived, however, and soon the Ācāri himself is destroyed. Hearing this the VēTTuvas send a huge wild boar which destroys the crops in PonnivelanāTu on three successive nights. On the third day the pig writes a message to the two brothers challenging them to come and fight the VēTTuvas in the hills and threatening to gore them with his tusks and to carry off their sister, Taṅkai and to make her a servant girl in the VēTTuvas' palace.

Ponnar and Caṅkar, after much preparation, go to battle with knives that have been blessed by their virgin sister. There is a fierce battle in which the clan goddess and Krishna both play a part. At last the VēTTuvas are defeated and the wild bear is killed. The two victorious brother, however, unwittingly give the head of the slaughtered pig to Krishna. This is the gesture which signifies that the heroes' own death is drawing near. Krishna hides behind a tree and shoots an arrow which carries away a thread of Caṅkar's clothing. Caṅkar understands and quickly takes his own life by falling face forward onto his fighting knife. His elder brother, Ponnar, follows suit. Their sister learns of the tragedy and arranges for her brothers' wives to die in a fire. She performs the last rites for these women and then arranges for herself and her brothers all to be carried to heaven on a lovely palanquin.

The story outlined above is well-known in the rural areas on Koṅku. It serves as a poetic expression of informants' own view of their past. The structure of the story is formed by a semi-mythological account of the history of four generations of men who belong to a single KavunTar clan. Because of the super-human lives that these men lead, however, the span of time covered in the story is far greater than what would be covered by four generations in an ordinary family. It may be noted that telescoping the past into a set four-generation depth is also used as a framework for remembering the history of landholding in a single village. (See Section II A 1).

The general progression of events in the story, however, forms a sequence of historical situations which agrees, in outline, with what can be surmised about the early history of Koṅku from written sources. The epic begins, for example, with a description of a Chola king who is encouraging people to settle in some upland part of his kingdom. After a time, he awards land in this area to members of a particular KavunTar clan, in return for favours performed. These settlers, on whom the story will focus, soon find themselves at war with the VēTTuva. These men are hunters who raid the settled areas.

The epic describes them as informal allies of the Pandiya kings who repeatedly annoy the Chola monarch and molest his settlers. The point is confirmed by independent inscriptional evidence. Finally the settlers win out in the struggle and the agricultural settlements expand.

Ponnivalanāṭu, the main area referred to in the story, means 'the fertile country of the Ponnī or Cauvery river.' The provinces of the Chola kingdom were, indeed, sometimes referred to as Valanāṭu. Ponnivalanāṭu refers to that valanāṭu which lies along the Cauvery or Ponnī river. There is to this day a village called Valanāṭu located in the Cauvery basin area. It lies slightly off the Melur to Tiruchi main road in the Maruṅkāpur Jamīntār, about eight miles northeast of Tovarākuricci. This would place it in the southeast corner of Koṅku, probably in the old Taṭayanāṭu division. Taṭayanāṭu is, indeed, even used as an alternative name for Ponnivalanāṭu in some versions of the Annamāṅkar epic. The local tradition of this village makes the claim (unchallenged by other settlements of the area) that the story did occur nearby. The residents, to support their story, point to the remains of a rock foundation in the nearby fields which looks as if it could well have supported the walls of a very large palace in the past.

This location fits well with other specific places mentioned in the ballad. For example, the Vīramalai hills lie just sixteen miles to the northwest of Valanāṭu. These hills constitute one of the most important geographic points in the epic. Directly to the west, at a distance of only ten miles, are the Karantāmalai and Cīṟumalai hills, which formed a part of the old Talaināṭu. These are areas known to have been inhabited largely by Vēṭṭavas in the past. There are also some important temples to the Abṅaṅgar in this area, particularly in a small town named Virappūr. A festival is held here in the month of Māci (February-March) and a drama performed which re-enacts the highlights of the 'brothers' last days. The town of Virappūr also occurs

in the epic.

Beyond these specific references, the geography of the story is structured in terms of five nāTu divisions: 1) PennivalanāTu which belongs to the heroes, 2) PaṅkavalanāTu which belongs to their parallel relatives or paṅkali, 3) VelavaNTināTu which belongs to their cross-relatives or māman/maccan, 4) CeṛanāTu which is the residential area of the reigning king, and 5) VēTTuvanāTu, the region belonging to the enemy. This geography fits with the general importance which nāTu divisions appear to have had in the traditional social and political organisation of the Keṅku region.⁴³

Much of the story is concerned with a bitter rivalry between clan members over the possession of the land. Clan shrines are also prominent in the epic and are clearly associated with rights to land. The two heroes themselves were raised deep in the earth by their clan goddess and they only emerge from it when the time comes to fight. Pūā or worship at these shrines is repeatedly used to enlist the sympathy of the gods, who are ultimately in control of the outcome of all the battles. Women are also important in the epic. Their purity as mothers and as sisters allows them to give their sons and brothers a supernatural blessing in battle. Women, however, are also responsible for initiating some of the quarrels.

In the ANNanmār epic, ^{which} presents a general picture of the history of the Keṅku region, expressed in terms of four generations of struggle to settle the land by one KavNTar clan, there are similar, smaller stories regarding individual areas and families within the region. A whole chain of smaller folk tales link up these big events of the epic with various details of the social and political situation as it exists in rural areas today. There are, for example, stories about the four PaTTakkērar, or titled families

⁴³ Not all of the nāTu names, however, fit with those given in section I A 2).

of the region, as follows:

a) PaRaiyakōTTai PaTTakkārar (Firiya clan)

Family tradition traces their genealogy back to the 13th century. At about this time one of their ancestors in the male line is said to have been a general under Jatavarman Sundara Pandiya. He distinguished himself in battle and was given land and the title Nalla Senapathi Chakkara Mandradiyar as a reward.⁴⁴ The present family claim to be the 30th generation descendants of this man.

b) PaTaiyūr PaTTakkārar (Porulantai clan)

Local poets and priests say that long ago the village where this family live was inhabited by men of the CēTa clan. A CēTa man, one day, begot an albino daughter. As the years passed by he found great difficulty in persuading an appropriate suitor to marry this girl. Finally a very poor man of the Porulantai clan came forward and promised to marry her in return for a gift of land. The father, in desperation, made the promise. After the marriage, however, the brothers of the girl tried to prevent the transfer of land to her husband. A contest of strength was held and the man of the Porulantai clan won. Later he gave birth to two sons. One of them succeeded in capturing and controlling an elephant which had gone amok. The reigning Pandiya king was pleased with the son's prowess and awarded him the title of PaTTakkārar.⁴⁵

c) Kutūr PaTTakkārar (Ceṅkaṅṅan clan)

According to local tradition, a Chola king was once at war with a Pallava king when a man of the Ceṅkaṅṅan clan came to the former's aid. When the Chola king won he was grateful for the help of this man in leading his army. The king rewarded him with the title Pallavaraiyan PaTTakkārar and a generous stretch of land near the town of Kāṅkayam. Another story says that a man of this clan was awarded this title by a Chola king named Pallava Cholan. In this version, the king is said to have been pleased by the sight of the man's young son giving away a toy chariot made of gold to the poor.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ S.A.R. Cinnucāmi KavunTar, Koṅku VēLālar, (Drode, TamilNā Accakan, 1963), p. 326-28. Also in a personal communication from PaRaniccāmi Puluvar of Tiruppūr.

⁴⁵ PaRaniccāmi Puluvar, Tiruppūr, in conversation. Also from the priest of the PaTTakkārar's family temple in KaTaiyūr. See as well S.A.R. Cinnucāmi KavunTar, p. 181-82.

⁴⁶ S.A.R. Cinnucāmi KavunTar, p. 328 and Paṅapathi PaTTāram in conversation.

d) CaṅkaraṅTāmpālaiya Paṭṭakāraṅ (Periya clan)

One version of the story about this family claims that a male ancestor named Venatan was a general under a Chola ruler named Karikala. In this position he helped defeat a Paṅḍiya king. It is said that he was awarded the title of Paṭṭakāraṅ for his heroism in this battle. Another version argues that the title was obtained much later, during the Vijayanagar period as a reward for having sacrificed his only son to a goddess riding in a temple chariot during an important festival.⁴⁷

The historical accuracy of the above stories is uncertain. However, general tradition, that the Paṭṭakāraṅ titles were all obtained from ruling kings in exchange for favours done, is probably accurate. These stories show how old the people of the region believe the titles to be and the mode in which they intertwine local history with the campaigns of the great kings. At the level of this history of an individual nāṭu within Koṅku, local folk tradition is usually linked to the history of rights at the major temples of that nāṭu, as well as to the history of the nearest Paṭṭakāraṅ family. Although disputes over the order of clan rights arise fairly often at small, village temples, their order seems more or less permanently fixed and greatly venerated at larger shrines. One can, to some extent, then, trace the history of Kavunṭar clans in Koṅku by locating the shrines at which they claim first rights, and thus, presumably the areas from which they have originally spread.

Unfortunately no clear information was obtained on the traditional order of Kavunṭar clan rights at Cīvaṅsalai, the leading temple of Paṅkayan nāṭu.⁴⁸ There is, however, one very old, now almost disused temple to

⁴⁷ Govt. of Madras, District Gazetteer, p. 589-90 and S.A.R. Cinnuccāmi Kavunṭar, p. 324-25.

⁴⁸ It was never clear whether this confusion was due to actual lack of knowledge on the part of the priest, or rather to his fear of rival claimants in a concealed dispute.

serve our purpose which is not far from the former. It is located on the main road, midway between OlappāLaiyam and Kānkayam and is dedicated to a goddess named Aiyammaṅ (father's mother?). Here the traditional order of clan rights is fairly clear.⁴⁹ First on the list are the Perin̄kuti, the clan of the epic ANNaṅmār story described above. The second right at the Aiyammaṅ temple belongs to the Ceṅkaṅṅan clan, to which the Putūr PaTTakārar (just two miles away) belongs. The Ceṅkaṅṅan have similar second rights at their own clan temple in a village called Ailāntapuram, nearby.

The Aiyammaṅ temple above is associated with the nāṭu as a whole. Moving to the kirāmaṅ level, Ceṅkaṅṅan are found to also hold the first miras or right at the Cīva temple in Kannapuram as well. No villager in the area disputes their traditional seniority, even though they are not a large or wealthy clan in the area now. The second miras in Kannapuram belongs to the Ōtālan clan, now an abundant and well-to-do descent group in the area. They also have ancestral claims to the North, in Perundurāi, and to the South in Kundadam.⁵⁰ Several local stories tell of how they came to the area from Parancērvāri, north of Kānkayam, and settled matrilocally after a disinherited son of a wealthy man married a daughter of the Putūr PaTTakārar's family. The story is as follows:

The disinherited Ōtālan (referred to above) was a rather irascible man. After his marriage to the Putūr PaTTakārar's daughter, her father settled them on some land in a village called CukkuṭipāLaiyam, about a mile from Kannapuram. However, the son-in-law soon decided to move off this property into an old and unoccupied house in Kannapuram itself. He refused to give an accounting of financial matters to the PaTTakārar, sent him some second-rate horses (which insulted the latter) and finally had the audacity to beat his father-in-law.

49 See also the lengthy discussion in Section II B 2.

50 PaRaniccāmi Puluvaṅar, Koṅku, p. 129-30.

for complaining. At this treatment the PaTTakkārar became furious and ordered his men to kill the son-in-law. They succeeded in this, but soon the PaTTakkārar learnt that his daughter was pregnant by her deceased husband. When she gave birth to a son, her father relented and turned over to her and the child the gifts of property he had made at the wedding, but reclaimed at the height of the dispute. After some years the young boy grew up and came to learn the story of how his father had been killed. The young man became angry and (as the old PaTTakkārar was by this time deceased) killed his own mother's brother, the PaTTakkārar's son. But the wife of this man was also pregnant and thus a son of his survived. After a time a feud developed between the families which lasted for seven generations. At the end of this period a descendant of the PaTTakkārar came to Kannapuram and killed a man he thought to be the last surviving male of the unhappy line generated by the irascible Ōtālan son-in-law, above. He then declared the blood feud to be at an end. At this moment the goddess of Kannapuram spoke, saying that there yet remained a man of the Ōtālan clan amongst them. A search was conducted, but to no avail as no one realized that the goddess was referring to an unborn child. Thus the final descendant escaped notice and when he became adult he gave birth, in turn, to three sons. (From here the informant is able to give an actual genealogy of the Ōtālan families in Kannapuram kirānam, coming to himself, now an old man, in the seventh generation. There are more stories as the genealogy approaches the modern period. The first incident connected with this elaborate clan genealogy, however, refers to the coming of the British to the area. Calculating back seven generations from the informant one arrives at precisely this period, e.g. about 1800. (Earlier, in other stories, there are references to Muslim rule).

The third Kavuttar clan with a hereditary right to a part of the consecrated offerings at the Cīva temple in Kannapuram kirānam are the KaNavālan.

They are the third important clan in the area today, and the most important descent group in Olappālaiya itself. The frequently repeated story of how the KaNavālan clan came to settle in the area is given below:

At one time there was a severe famine in Koṅku. During this period some members of the KaNavālan clan were wandering in the area with their herd of cattle. They found a damp river bed nearby and settled there to graze their herd, building only a few rough shacks. One week the villagers of Kannapuram decided to perform

a drama to be held on consecutive nights. On the third night they suddenly discovered that they had no more clarified butter which was used to light the big torches, or pantam, for the stage. They went to the group of men along the river bed to ask for some butter but the latter refused saying that they would only supply the butter if they were given the rights to some land in return. The villagers finally agreed to this condition and thus members of the KaNavālan clan were able to settle permanently in the region.

These stories both explain and lend support to the accepted traditional order of clan rights at the most important temple of the kirāman. It is not surprising that they emphasize the importance of the KavunTar community.⁵¹ From these folk histories the process of narrowing down, a sort of particularization of a broad theme of settlement to apply to individual areas within the region, can be seen. There is a general continuity in the stories which refer to Konku as a whole, to its various nāTu and to the creation of the great PaTTakkārar families. There is also a continuity between these and stories which explain the order of clan rights in particular temples by reference to the order of their settlement in a particular area.

The Kannapuram temple inscriptions indicate that this settlement was probably once called Vicramacōkapuram, after a Chola king by this name. It would appear that the temple was built on his donations, and the style of Tamil used in the inscriptions is consistent with the language of that period.⁵² The inscriptions say that Vikramacōkan's mother provided an endowment for the shrine, to be spent on a lighted lamp and an offering of rice to the deity each day.

It is interesting that the inscriptions on the temple (illegible to

⁵¹ See Section II B 1 for a few stories about the non-KavunTar castes.

⁵² Translations of the temple inscriptions and a commentary on them were very kindly made by Dr. A. Vēluppillai of the University of Ceylon, an expert on the inscriptions of the Chola period.

a non-specialist) fit with a local tradition about the shrine. This tradition says that it was one of 1,008 lingams which the Chola king undertook a vow to build, in order to relieve a curse. This corroborates evidence that the Chola period was one in which a great deal of temple construction was undertaken in the Koṅku region. The same story also maintains that the Kannapuram temple was rebuilt at a later period. This can also be backed by tangible evidence. The inscriptions found on the temple today are badly scrambled, as they could only be if the stone blocks had, during a period after its initial construction, been rearranged.

How the settlement name changed from Vicramacōrapuram to Kannapuram is unclear. One story associates the more recent name with Kanna, a common name for the god Krishna. The name of Olappālaiyam, however, is most likely derived from the noun olai meaning 'a leaf of the palmyra palm.' These trees are plentiful in the area and their leaves are used by scribes as writing paper. Another local etymology, however, connects the name Olappālaiyam with various stories about a great olan, a word meaning 'sound' or 'noise'.

In addition to the great temple to Cīva at Kannapuram, there is a smaller and still older temple dedicated to the same god under the name Sāntiswaran, which now lies unused. There are many stones and stone carvings associated with the latter which can be found scattered about and unsheltered, but which testify to the temple's former importance. Near the shrine are discarded stone carvings of Bhairava and Sāsta (a form of aiyanār). Other images of Sāsta and even one of Ālakṣmi can be found in the nearby fields.⁵³

⁵³ Another stone carving, which has been identified as a Buddhist style carving of Kubera by the Institute of Indology at Pondichery, is now set against the outer wall of the current Cīva temple and is not worshipped. The priest says it was an image in an older temple which people were hesitant to abandon entirely.

None of these are worshipped at present nor are their names remembered. This is an unusual situation as usually any handsome carvings found in the fields or elsewhere receive deferential treatment of some kind.

The curious disregard for these carvings, certain oddities of style, plus the name of the old temple, suggest that this shrine and the abandoned carvings could have Jain associations.⁵⁴ The timing would be correct, for they could have easily have been thrown into the fields during the upsurge of anti-Jain feeling in the South about the 8th and 9th century A.D. The strength of this sentiment would account for their being literally thrown out, quite possibly into areas at that time uncultivated. Perhaps it was later that Vikramacōṅṅā granted the money for a large Cīva temple to be built in its place. Temples to Sāsta or Aiyanār are now practically non-existent in the Koṅku area, while they are common further south. This could be related to the particular strength of anti-Jain feeling in the Koṅkstone area, at that time. Such speculation is clearly in the realm of conjectural history. Nonetheless, it is important to note that Aiyanār has none of the importance in Koṅku which he has in the Madurai area and elsewhere.⁵⁵

Oral tradition, as outlined above, points to Paṅkayan and the area around it as having been a very old political and cultural centre. Based, this tradition would make it seem that Paṅkayan was one of the earlier areas

⁵⁴ The temple's name, Māntiswarār, fits with the fact that the stamba of Jain temples is called a *śaṅ* stamba. This stone pillar which stands in a direct line with the temple entrance is also in a style which reminds one of Jain stambas. This idea of possible Jain associations was first suggested by Dr. A. Velupillai of the University of Ceylon in a personal communication.

⁵⁵ See Dumont, *Contributions*, No. III, pp. 75-87. There is one large Naturaiyan temple about two miles north of Veṅṅakōvil which is a pilgrimage point for much of the region. However, this temple is the only one of its kind for many miles. Its history may be unusual and this deity certainly does not complement the role of a village goddess in the way Dumont describes it for the Madurai area.

in Keñku to come under extensive agricultural settlement. These folk histories do not in any way contradict inscriptional evidence or what the observer can glean from a study of local temple and settlement patterns. The Kāñkayam area, as a whole, is dotted with temples which date from the Chola period. The town, itself, lies on a fairly direct line between the beryl mines near Tiruppur and the old city of Karur. Kāñkayam and Kannapuram could easily have been located on a trade route between these two places.

In summary, the main outlines of local tradition appear to be quite plausible. Read together, however, these stories do more than match other kinds of historical evidence. They provide^{an} ~~also~~ essential connecting link between all-South India traditions and regional or local custom. This linkage will become clearer in the next section, where kirāman society and temple ritual are described in more detail.

Plate 5: The Māriyamma Temple

- a) The Main Image Of Māriyamma Dressed Up For The Festival
- b) A Brahman Priest Tying The Protective Kāppu Or Thread On The Left Wrist Of The Goddess At The Beginning Of The Festival
- c) The Older Image Of Māriyamma In The Same Temple. This Image Has Ritual Precedence Over The Newer One, Above.
- d) Tying A Similar Kāppu On The Older Image
- e) A Paṅṭaram Priest Possessed By The Goddess While Holding The Pūvoṭu During The Māriyamma Festival.
- f) The Same Priest Placing The Kuṅṭam On the Kampan Outside The Temple
- g) The Same Priest Possessed While Carrying The Kampan From The Well To The Temple

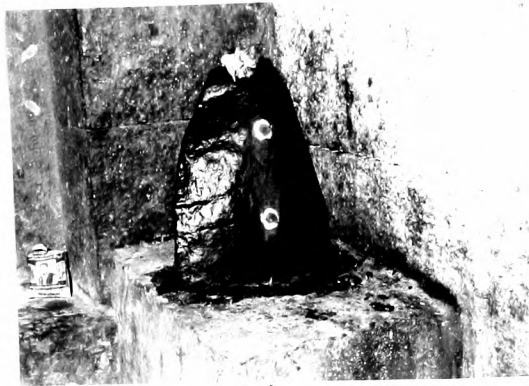
PLATE 5



(a)



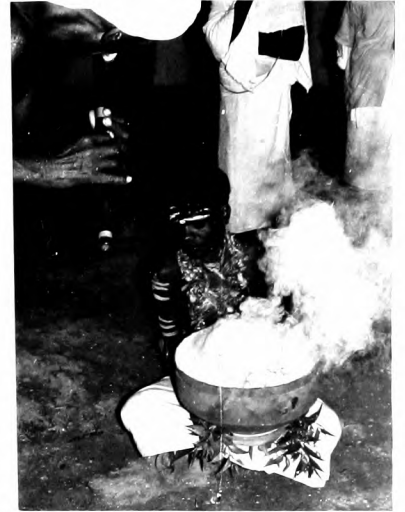
(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)



(g)

ID) Territory, Factionalism and Rival Deities

1) The kirāman and Māriyaman

Each year there are two important events where the kirāman is the significant unit of participation. One is the annual hare hunt, the other is the Māriyaman festival. The hunt is the lesser of the two events. It lasts three days and takes place late in June (first half of the month of Ānni). This hunt or annual vēTTai is the one occasion of the year when all the men of the kirāman join together in an undertaking that requires both endurance and skill. The hunt is an event for men only, but beyond this an able body and good health are the only requirements. The ages of those who participate vary from 15 to over 60. Those who join in are proud, while those who have been ill or otherwise preoccupied feel that they have missed something.

The hunt is not restricted by caste. Indeed, every household in the kirāman is expected to send a man for at least one of the three days. These men gather at kaTai vīti early in the morning to form an excited group of several hundred. They make the start of the hunt together, but soon begin to fan out in twos or threes to flush the hare. The initial weapon is a big stick with which the hare is stunned on the run. Most participants will succeed in stunning only one hare during the day but some will collect two or three. After the stunning, the hare is killed neatly by cutting its throat with a knife. The men return to kaTai vīti in groups at sundown. They stand around discussing the day briefly, before returning, each with his own catch, to his own home. Most have walked or run more than 20 miles

during the day.¹

The other big kirāman event each year is the Māriyaman festival. This is held during Cittirai (April-May) in Kannapuram, but any month may be a festival month for this goddess. In general, the months during the rains are the most popular.² This festival is intimately associated with the kirāman population as a whole, and indeed, people quite informally refer to Māriyaman as a kirāmadevi or the 'kirāman goddess.' For the Māriyaman festival a woman from each household is sent to the temple with offerings. Men participate in the ceremonies as well. However, there is no male representation by household here, as there is for the hunt.

In Kannapuram a big cattle fair is now held simultaneously with the Māriyaman festival. It is one of the four or five big cattle fairs held in Madras State each year, and people come from hundreds of miles to attend it. This cattle fair is a big event in the kirāman, and the fields surrounding kaṭai vīti are inundated for a week with campers who have brought their wares and their cattle for sale. However, this fair is unconnected with the ritual events at the temple and nothing similar takes place during Māriyaman festivals elsewhere. Probably the fair is only about sixty years old,³ while the temple has certainly been there far longer.

¹ Informants speak of this hunt as a very, very old custom. References to a similar phenomena elsewhere would seem to indicate that communal kirāman hunts could well have been a widespread tradition in the South at one time. See Srinivas, Coorg, p. 203 and 240. The above description from my own observations at kaṭai vīti. I never actually participated in a hunt myself.

² Other months during which a Māriyaman festival was held in a nearby kirāman were Paṅkani (March-April), Aipaṅci (October-November) and Kartikai (November-December).

³ According to one knowledgeable informant, the Kannapuram fair was only started about 1900, and was instigated at the suggestion of the Paṅiyakoṭṭai Paṭṭakkārar, who wanted to interest businessmen from a wide area in his superior breed of cattle. His exhibition of livestock is, to this day, the most impressive one at the fair.

Less obvious to the casual observer, perhaps, is the fact that the Māriyamma festival also takes place simultaneously with big celebrations for Cīva and Pattirakāli in adjacent shrines. (See map 15). From the point of view of effective interest and involvement, however, events at the Māriyamma temple clearly constitute the most important festival of the three. For one thing, the ritual at the Māriyamma shrine requires the ritual participation of a male leader from each and every right-hand caste in the kirāma. In every case this man will be the ritual representative of his caste at the kirāma level. No men from any of the left-hand castes are required to complete the ceremonies associated with the festival of this kirāma-devi. Women representing each household of both factions, and preferably unmarried, are expected to bring offerings of nā vilakku (little lamps made of moistened rice flour and oil) to the temple.⁴ Men who want to express their devotion will make a barefoot expedition to the river Cauvery and return bringing kavati or pots of sacred water for the goddess.

During many^{of the} nights of the Māriyamma festival, other rituals are being performed, simultaneously, at the Cīva and Pattirakāli temples nearby. These latter ceremonies, however, are familiar only to the Brahman priests and, except for one climatic night when the temple cart carrying Cīva and his newly-wed bride is pulled once around the entire temple complex, there is hardly any participation in the events of these other two festivals by kirāma residents. From the point of view of excitement and activity, therefore, the events of the Māriyamma temple both begin and end the ritual cycle. Preparations for the Māriyamma festival formally begin on the

⁴ Some informants claim that women of the left-hand castes were once excluded from making these offerings, just as no male representatives of these castes are given ritual duties. The point is interesting but uncertain. See following.

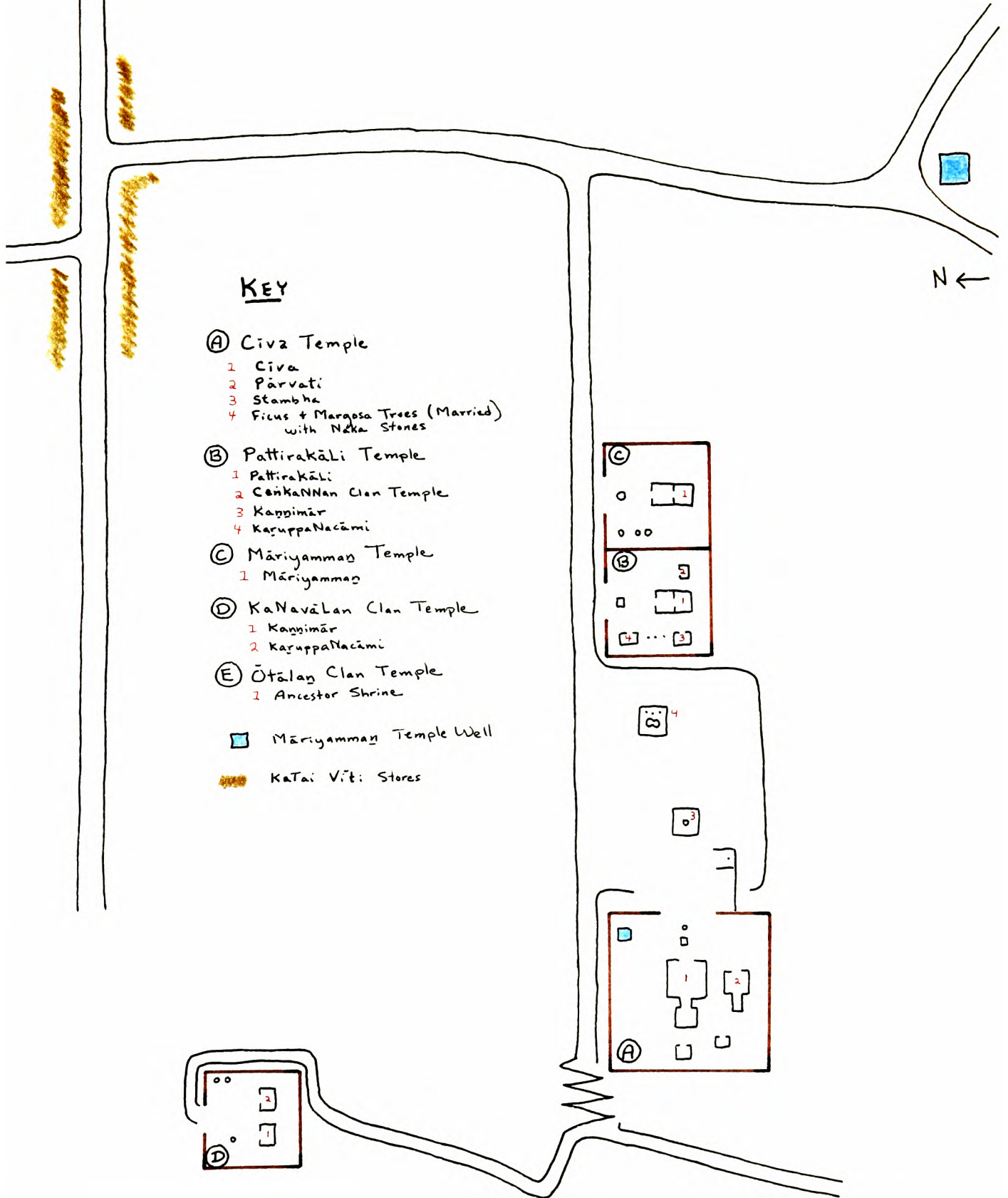
MAP 15: THE MAJOR TEMPLE COMPLEX OF KANNAPURAM KIRĀMAM



KEY

- Ⓐ Civa Temple
 - 1 Civa
 - 2 Pārvati
 - 3 Stambha
 - 4 Ficus + Margosa Trees (Married) with Nēka Stones
- Ⓑ Pattirakāli Temple
 - 1 Pattirakāli
 - 2 CēnkāNNan Clan Temple
 - 3 Kappimār
 - 4 KaruppaNacāmi
- Ⓒ Māriyamman Temple
 - 1 Māriyamman
- Ⓓ KaNavālan Clan Temple
 - 1 Kappimār
 - 2 KaruppaNacāmi
- Ⓔ Ōtalan Clan Temple
 - 1 Ancestor Shrine
- Māriyamman Temple Well
- KāTai Viṭ: Stores

N ←



Wednesday of the following week when the moon is in its first quarter. The festival at the Pattirakāli temple begins (and ends) the Friday following this second Wednesday. The ritual cycle at the Cīva temple is initiated on the Saturday following that Friday. On the third Wednesday of this lunar cycle, or just about the time of the full moon, the Cīva temple festival comes to a climax with the dragging of a heavy temple chariot around the entire shrine complex.

The next evening, Thursday, serves as the climax of the Māriyamman festival as well. Ritual events continue at the Cīva temple until the following Sunday, but for kirānam residents Thursday marks the climax of the entire cycle, just as the Wednesday, eight days before, began it. Thus the Pattirākāli and Cīva rituals are sandwiched in between the two highlighted days of the Māriyamman festival. The Cīva temple rituals formally end last, but this 'coda' on the events of the preceding days goes almost unnoticed. (See Chart 20). A similar importance given to Māriyamman in festival cycles involving other deities has already been mentioned by other writers for other parts of South India.⁵

Māriyamman is linked by folk tradition with fire, anger, blindness and disease. According to one well-known story, Cīva once gave this goddess a large, hot pot of fire. The above-mentioned characteristics of Māriyamman are associated with this gift. The right-hand castes of the Koṅku region claim that they were born from Cīva's hand simultaneously with the fire he presented to this goddess and that they were created specially, in order that they might act as her particular servants and handmaidens.⁶

⁵ See Louis Dumont, "A Structural Definition of a Folk-Deity", in Contributions to Indian Sociology, No. III, 1959, pp. 80, 86 and also H. Whitehead, Village Gods of South India (Oxford, University Press, 1916) pp.92-93, 101, 107.

⁶ Arokiaswami, Kongu, p. 272 and local oral tradition.

Chart 20: THE KANNAPURAM FESTIVAL CYCLE (Month of Sittirai)

(Xs on the far left indicate climatic moments for participants)

Phase of Moon	• Mariyannan Temple	
Wednesday on or just after the dark moon	<u>Poṅkal</u> offering by three wealthy KavunTar families. <u>Pūiā</u> to the seven ponds or Kuttai.	
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday X	<u>Kampam</u> out in morning, soaked in well and brought to the temple and erected in evening.	
Thursday	Women come to pour water on <u>kampam</u> and around the temple. <u>KuNTam</u> or pot filled with water and margosa branches during day. <u>Puvotu</u> or pot of fire in the evening. PaNTaram priest fasts and is possessed daily.	
Friday X		
Saturday		
Sunday		
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday X		
Thursday on or just after the full moon X		<u>Mā vilakku</u> , <u>kāvaTi</u> , and offerings of <u>poṅkal</u> rice. <u>Kampam</u> removed in the evening.
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

N.B. This chart has been constructed from personal observation, combined with confirmation of details with individual temple priests.

● Pattinakāli Temple

● Cīva Temple

Tying of white flag, procession in temple cart and ritual 'cooling' of the kirāman.	
	Tying of white flag. Cīva and Pārvati circle temple in a palanquin.
	Cīva and Pārvati circle temple on a large wooden bull
	Cīva and Pārvati circle temple on a wooden horse and a wooden elephant.
	Marriage of Cīva and Pārvati.
	Cīva and Pārvati circle temple in the great charriot.
	Cīva and Pārvati circle temple on a wooden bull.
	Cīva and Pārvati circle temple on a horse and elephant. <u>MaNTai kaTTala pūjā.</u>
	Cīva and Pārvati circle temple on horse and elephant. Poet reads. Joking about thief of temple jewels. Teppu Tār.
	Cīva and Pārvati and ViNāyaker circle <u>stambha</u> Mock fight between Cīva and Pārvati. Poet reads Flag lowered. Seedlings placed in temple well.

The Māriyamman shrine in Kannapuram is particularly old and well-known. The goddess in this village is mentioned by name in traditional poems and her temple is said by all (even the Brahman priest) to pre-date the great temple to Cīva nearby. She is said to be the younger sister of the Māriyamman at Kannapatipālaiyam (four miles to the North) and related to the famous Māriyamman of Cāmiyapuram, near Tiruchirapalli.⁷

The story of the founding of the Māriyamman temple in Kannapuram itself is interesting. One version of this story told by a priest of the temple, is recorded below:

Once, long ago, there was a holy man from Madras who went on a wandering pilgrimage. With him he carried a box filled with articles which he used for conducting pūjas in the places he stopped. One day, on opening the box, he found an unexpected stone in it. He threw the stone away only to find that it reappeared the next time he opened the box. Again he threw it away but it reappeared a third time when he had reached the village called Kannapuram. Thus he decided that the stone was the sign of a god. On that spot he built a temple and dedicated it to Māriyamman. People say that where he built the temple the ground had been covered with kalli or milk hedge plants. In fact, there used to be some kalli growing just beside the spot where the stone dedicated to the goddess stood. Some people even say that Māriyamman was first worshipped in the very middle of this bush.

In the story Māriyamman is strongly associated with euphorbia or kalli, a plant called the milk hedge in English, because it has a milky white sap. This association Māriyamman has with white and milk can be carried further. During the festival for this goddess a large wooden trunk, called a kampam, is planted in front of her temple. This trunk must be cut from a pāla maran or a tree which has a white, milky sap. In addition, the bark of this tree is peeled off so as to make the trunk look white. Smallpox, a

⁷ The ceremonies at Cāmiyapuram are now highly Sanskritized, all ritual being performed by Brahman priests. Few, if any, associations remain which might once have linked it with its village counterparts.

disease which Māriyammaṅ is responsible both for causing and curing, is a malady in which white pustules form on the body. The fluid in these pustules is called pāi, the same word which is used for milk. These pustules themselves are muttu, the word used for 'pearl' and also for 'kiss'. They are figuratively the 'kisses' of the goddess and are thought of as marks left where she has danced on a person's body.

In addition to milk and whiteness, however, Māriyammaṅ is also associated with coolness, with verdure and with rain. It has already been noted that the most common months for her festival are the ones when rain is expected. Māriyammaṅ is also thought to possess her Paṅṭāram priest at regular intervals during the festival and one of the most important topics on which the priest will comment, during the period of possession, is rain. Devotees say further that Māriyammaṅ will bring rain to the kirāman as a blessing in years when she has been pleased with her festival.

It is curious that this association of Māriyammaṅ with rain has rarely been noted by previous writers.⁸ The name of the goddess itself gives a clear indication of a connection. Māri can mean 'death' or 'smallpox' in Tamil, but it also means 'rain', 'water' and 'cloud'. Indeed, it is these latter meanings which the Tamil Lexicon lists first.⁹ The word is borrowed from Sanskrit where it originally meant 'death' or 'pestilence'. ammaṅ is simply a respectful female ending, which modifies this basic noun. It does not mean 'mother' in the sense of a woman who has borne children.¹⁰

⁸ The one mention of this point I have discovered is in an article by M. Arikiaswami, entitled "The Cult of Māriyammaṅ or The Goddess of Rain", Tamil Culture, 1953, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 153-157.

⁹ Contrary to Dumont, māri can mean rain in colloquial Tamil, at least in the dialect of the Kōṅku region. See Contributions III, p. 79.

¹⁰

Ibid., p. 79.

The association of Māriyamman with rain is, of course, linked to her 'cool' or 'greenish' aspect. Green leafy branches of the margosa (*Asdirachira indica*) tree are repeatedly used in her festival. These branches are said to be 'cooling'. They not only represent the goddess herself as will be seen in the following description, but devotees may use them to 'cool' her by fanning her image. The same branches are used to 'cool' and to cure someone who is ill with smallpox. The village goddess is herself called the 'Green goddess' or Paccaiyamman in some places.

Thus Māriyamman is associated with heat, fire and disease, but also with milky whiteness, with green and with cool rain. Local informants express this dual aspect of her character vividly by giving an etymology of her name, māri, as derived from maru, a verb meaning 'to change'. They say that she is changeable, that Cīva gave her a pot of fire, but also asked her to change her character and become a kind and beneficent goddess. He gave margosa leaves to her devotees in order to 'cool' her. In the ritual of her festival, described below, there is a constant alternation between a pot of hot fire and a pot of cool water and green margosa leaves. Both pots represent the goddess and they are placed, one after the other, on the forked branches of the white tree trunk or kampan which has a milky sap.

The third important association of the goddess Māriyamman is with eyes and eye diseases. She is said to have a thousand eyes herself, and to be responsible for blindness in others. There is a small story which her devotees tell in this regard:

Once long ago a village was beset with a smallpox plague. In one home were a mother and her only son. Fearing for the safety of her child, the mother decided to leave with him for another area. They left quietly, but while walking along the road they saw an old woman sitting under a tree. The sun was very hot and the mother and child decided that they would rest for a

while. They began to talk with the old woman under the tree and she asked the mother where she was going. The latter replied that she was leaving with her young son for a distant place because of a smallpox epidemic in her village. The old woman then asked the mother if she would be so kind as to pick some troublesome lice out of her hair. The mother obliged but on pulling aside the matted strands she discovered that the old woman's head was covered with 1,000 eyes. The old woman smiled at her surprise and said, "with 1,000 eyes, who can leave a village without my noticing it." The old woman then told the mother and son to return to the village from whence they came, and that if they did she would protect them from the epidemic. The mother realized that she was talking to the goddess Māriyamman herself, fell at her feet in worship, and then returned home to her village with her son.

This story is interesting in several ways. However, the point it is intended to illustrate here is the association of Māriyamman with 1,000 eyes.¹¹ These eyes rather resemble open sores, and it may be that there is an implicit identification here between pustules, 1,000 eyes and rain drops. Perhaps in this identification lies the explanation of why the three seemingly unconnected characteristics of rain, virulent disease and powerful eyesight have been brought together and associated with one single goddess.

Rain, disease and powerful eyesight, however, all have an important territorial aspect as well. Māriyamman is the kirāma-deva or kirāman goddess par excellence. She protects the kirāman from disease, but may also bring a plague upon it when angered. Devotees would say that her eyesight is so powerful as to reach to every corner of the kirāman simultaneously. When pleased and propitiated, however, she will bring rain to the area to cool it. This association of Māriyamman with a particular territory will be contrasted with the character of another goddess, Ankālamman, later in this section.

Before contrasting her with a second goddess, however, it is important to give an account of the mythology associated with Māriyamman in more detail. A Paṇṭāraṃ poet told the story of her life as follows:

Long ago in TiruNnaiyūr there lived a Brahman couple who had no children. For some months they did penance to Cīva and Pārvati in order to obtain a boon. In the end the divine couple decided to give the earthly couple a child. They came in a dream to the husband and told him that he would find a baby girl in the centre of a lotus leaf in the pond or lake where he usually bathed. Cīva and Pārvati told him to lift the child from the leaf where he found it, and to raise it as if it were his own.

The earthly couple took the child and raised it lovingly. At the age of five the girl took her playmates to the pond to play. At the age of twelve, however, people became frightened of her because of her temper and her fearlessness in punishing wrong doers. Dēvintiran, or king of the dēvas, saw her one day and was jealous of her great powers. He came to her with the intention of starting an argument, but found that he could not win. He conceded the battle and presented Māriyamman with an elephant.

Then Agni Bhagavan (king of the fire) came and started an argument with the young Māriyamman. She, however, quickly beheaded one of his vehicles, a goat, and he ran away in fright. Then Varuna Bhagavan (king of the rain) came but could not win in battle either. He gave her his vehicle, the lion, and promised to bring her rain and coolness whenever she requested it. After this came Yama (the god who takes human lives at their predestined time), but he succeeded no better in battle with the young girl than those before him. Finally he gave her an āruran, or giant, named Neitācuran as a token of his defeat. Māriyamman killed the giant, too, in her anger. Finally Yama left with a promise that when Māriyamman was killing demons and righting justice he would not interfere. In the same way several other gods came to try their hand in battle with Māriyamman but none of them could succeed. Last of all to pick a fight was Arakan. She also seized the various evil spirits who accompanied him, crushed them to death and tossed their blood in the air.

During these challenges to Māriyamman's strength there was a terrible Ācūra named Perantāvanam who watched the struggles from a nearby field. This Ācūra would eat raw human flesh and particularly liked small children as a delicacy. He would eat even his own children the moment his wife gave birth to them. Hiding in the same field was a giant girl named Pēcki who was with a young child. She knew about Perantāvanam and was frightened of him. Thus she decided to approach Māriyamman for protection. The Ācūra followed her, thinking that he would devour not only the woman and child but the young goddess as well. When he drew near, however, he noticed her great beauty and began to swoon. Māriyamman quickly

noticed and became angry at the amorous gestures of this evil Ācūra. Her body began to burn and she threw some of her fire at him. Some of her fire fell on his head, and with the fire still burning Māriyammaṅ ordered the Ācūra to stand respectfully outside her temple.

Śiva noticed these events and was very pleased with the young Māriyammaṅ, her good works and her power or cakṭi. He then asked her to change, māri, from her present state as a frightening killer of demons, into a lovely and beneficent woman. He asked her to protect the people of the area and to help them. Śiva then took some fire from his own right hand and gave it to Māriyammaṅ and from this fire were born the priestly caste, ANṬi (or PaṅṬāraṅ) who were to act as her helpers or servants and who were to "cool" her by caring for her fiery character.

Then people from the surrounding villages heard about this. They came to Māriyammaṅ and asked her to reduce her anger and to protect and help them. To counter her heat they fanned her with branches of the margosa tree. They also poured water over her from large pots. They made rice flour, mixed it with honey and made little flour lamps for her. They carried her in a jewelled chariot or palanquin around the village called Kannapuram and returned her to her temple.

When the Brahman parents of Māriyammaṅ learned of all this they were very pleased and they caaē and threw their arms around her. At this Māriyammaṅ magically transformed herself into a child again and her parents carried her back to the pond where she was originally found. There the child fell in by mistake and was thought to be drowned. The parents began to cry and they called out to Śiva. Just at that moment, however, they heard Māriyammaṅ speaking from the pond. She explained that her work of killing demons had been completed and that therefore she was going to disappear. Her last words were that they should call her when she was needed and that she would come to help them.

The informant concludes the story by explaining that this is why the goddess is brought from the well once a year for her festival. He says that the tree planted in front of the temple and the fire pot placed on top of it are intended to re-enact these scenes. During the festival the villagers come to the goddess and describe their difficulties. She, in turn, blesses them with pracātaṅ or food offerings of which she has partaken. For eight days the priest of the temple must tie a special protective thread, called

a kāppu, around his wrist. He will become possessed by the goddess while carrying her firepot and speak for her. The margosa leaves placed on the tree in alternation with the firepot, according to the informant, are intended for "coolness".

Another version of the story, however, told by a drummer, makes the relationship between the Ācuran above, and Māriyamman more explicit:

Long ago, Pārvate implanted herself in the womb of a Brahman woman and was born as a baby girl. When the girl was five years old she was sent to school. In the same school an outcaste Paraiyan boy was studying. The boy fell in love with her and when she was ten he went to her parents, concealing his caste, and asked for her hand. The parents, not suspecting, consented. Then the boy took the girl to his home. She was accompanied by her parents who were horrified to discover a large assortment of ceremonial drums hanging on the walls. They immediately understood that their son-in-law was a drummer by birth and they became very angry at the thought that they had given their daughter to such a man. However, they quickly realized that nothing could be done as the wedding had already taken place. So, with sadness, the parents gave the girl their blessings and left for home.

Later Māriyamman herself, contemplating the discovery of her marriage to a man of such inferior status, became angry. Looking at her husband with rage, she engulfed his body with fire. He pleaded with her to stop the burning but she replied that even though he was her husband, he must never again enter her house. Instead she ordered him to stand outside for ever. His body was reduced to ashes by the heat and where the ashes fell a margosa tree grew.¹²

There is a third, very short story which also emphasizes the relationship between Māriyamman and her husband or lover. It was told by a female devotee:

Māriyamman was eight months pregnant. She asked her husband for "something that would fill the entire house".

¹² This story shows a remarkable resemblance to one collected by Bishop Whitehead about the goddess Makalakami and her festival in the Godāvāri district. See Thurston, Castes and Tribes IV, p 334 and pp. 340-42. The description is about the Main caste who are the Telugu-speaking equivalent of the Paraiyans.

Her husband, however, was puzzled by this very elliptical reference to a match to light the fire. He looked around in vain for something of this description. Mariyamman was angry when he came back empty-handed. She was working at her stove with firewood when he appeared. In her anger she threw some of the fire on his head. He died as a result and she became a widow.

The first story emphasizes Mariyamman's association with a pond.

It also makes clear that both the god of fire and the god of rain are subservient to her and will do her bidding. The initial story also shows that she can replace Yeman, the god of death, and that she has the power to take lives when she pleases. Finally, this story highlights her dual aspect as hot and cool and shows her as vacillating between these two poles. The second and third stories concentrate on her relationship with her lover or husband. Together, they make the association of the tree planted outside her temple during her festival with him, and the firepot which rests on top of it with her unmistakable. Before proceeding further, however, it is important to describe in detail what ceremonies are actually performed during the festival. The account below is a composite one. It compiles personal observation of all the main events with various details of individual rituals obtained from the temple priests.

The festival begins on the Wednesday closest to the dark moon night in the month of Cittirai. On this day a special offering of rice flour mixed with water and sugar is presented to the goddess by the three leading families of the kiraman. Other people can attend if they wish. After this mixture is presented to the goddess it is also offered to seven ponds of the area (the erRu kuTTai) which are associated with the temple. Usually the priest does not trouble to go to the ponds in person. He merely sets up seven small stones to represent these watery hollows and makes the rice flour offerings to them. Seven days later, on a Tuesday evening, the main priest, a PaNTaram, will eat his last meal of boiled rice. He will clean his house and his wife will spread a fresh layer of cow dung on the floor. From the next morning until the following Thursday, nine days later, he may not eat cooked grains, vegetable curries or meat. He will live on raw rice flour soaked in water, taken with coconut, sugar, fruit and milk. This diet is called paccal which means "raw", "green" or "uncooked".

Also fasting during this period is the leader of the Paraiyan drummers, called a MupāTTakkārar. Both these men must sleep inside the temple premises for the entire nine days. They must sleep on the ground and avoid their wives. Their spouses also sleep in the temple, but at a distance, on a porch of a room in the outer compound. These women, and any other relatives who are helping, need not fast. They must, however, sleep on the floor and use only the end of their sari as a pillow. The two men will have their chest, armpits, hands and feet shaved in the afternoon before tying the kāppu or protective threads on their wrists. The kāppu are an indication of their ceremonially pure condition. A third man, a KavunTar by caste, who is also referred to as a MupāTTakkārar, must wear a similar thread on his wrist as well, during this festival period. He need not fast, however, and may leave the temple premises when he is not needed, as long as he ties his thread to the tree trunk planted in front of the temple before departing.

On the following Wednesday morning the three men who have tied kāppu set off together to find a pāoca or milk hedge tree with a large trunk and three well-formed branches diverging from a central point. The KavunTar will make the first cut and then the Paraiyan will complete the work of felling it. The tree has an acrid, milky juice which bleeds when it is cut. It is also peeled of its bark, leaving the trunk with a smooth white appearance. The PaNTāram priest will then return with the tree trunk on his shoulders and place it in a special temple well (see Map 15) where it is left to soak until evening. This well should be the oldest and most reliable well of the area, one which would be resorted to in time of drought. It should not be too far from the temple nor should it lie in the direction of the burning ground.

In the evening of the same day a Brahman priest is called to do a special festival oblation at the temple, called a punyāccanai or sacred utterance. The Brahman will tie a kāppu to the image of the goddess and the PaNTāram priest will then make an offering of paṅgai foods to her. Then everyone proceeds to the well where the PaNTāram priest will first bathe and then lift out the soaked tree trunk. It is laid near the well and the Brahman performs a second punyāccanai. He will tie a similar thread to the tree trunk and to the wrist of the PaNTāram priest. A sheep or goat is sacrificed by a ritual representative of the NāTār caste with a single blow of a knife. At this moment Māriyammaṅ is said to possess both the tree and the priest. The priest begins to dance with the trunk, kampan, on his shoulders in such a way that it appears that the trunk has sprung to life. The word kampan is, itself, descriptive as it can mean variously 'post', 'pillar', 'lamp-stand' or a 'vibrant, shaking motion'.

At the same time as the tree trunk is lifted out of the well a large baked clay pot is filled with well water by a second PaNTāram. In the neck of the pot are placed branches cut from a margosa tree. The entire pot is then garlanded with flowers and is referred to as a KuNTam. This pot is carried in the procession to the temple along with the tree trunk by an assistant priest.

There is loud drumming and shouting (no particular phrases) along the way. The tree trunk and possessed priest oscillate wildly back and forth. Small chicks are sacrificed along the route at frequent intervals. The possessed priest bites their necks and drinks the blood, throwing the dead chicks to one side. Now and then the priest falls to his knees and speaks for the goddess. If there are not enough chicks, lemons may be used or at times the priest may bite his own arm to make the blood flow.

When they reach the temple the trunk is planted upright before the temple in a hole prepared for it earlier in the day. The pot of water with the margosa leaves is placed inside the temple next to the goddess. The Paraiyan MupaTTakkārar will tie his kāppu or wrist thread at this point. At the same time the Kavuntar MupaTTukkārar will tie his kāppu to the kampam. Having done this he will not be obliged to remain steadily inside the temple during the next eight days. A representation of the potters will then bring another pot with a wide mouth and present it to the priest. The priest will do a short pūja or series of oblations to the pot (no chanting is necessary) and then build a fire in it with dried palmyra leaves and large hunks of wood. This pot of fire is called a pūvōtu or 'an earthen vessel which throws out sparks which resemble flowers'. The priest then carries the pot once around the temple, clockwise, and places it on top of the three forked branches of the newly planted tree trunk.

The next morning, just after sunrise, the priest will lift the pot of fire off the tree and carry it around the temple, again clockwise, and place it inside. He will become briefly possessed by the goddess as he does so. Then he will pick up the kuNTam or pot filled with well water and margosa leaves which had been left inside, carry that once around the temple and place it on the forked branches of the same tree trunk in front of the shrine. The kuNTam will remain until evening, when the pūvōtu is once again brought out to replace it.

This alternation between the pūvōtu and kuNTam, one resting on the tree trunk by night and the other by day, will continue for more than a week. Each time the priest exchanges the pots he will become briefly possessed by the goddess and will speak for her. Usually he will speak of the forthcoming agricultural season, rain, and about disease. The priest will also answer questions put to him by observers about personal illnesses and misfortunes.

For eight days the kampam stands in front of the temple with a pot of fire and a pot of water and green, leafy branches placed, in alternation, on top of it. During this period women from all the villages of the kirāmm come to pay homage to the goddess. They worship at the temple in a special manner during this period. First they pour half the contents of a large pot of water over the kampam, and then they circle the temple clockwise, pouring the remainder in a circle on the ground around the outside of the main shrine. In general a woman makes three visits to the temple (it must be an odd number) during this period. On each visit she will draw water from a nearby well three times, and empty it three times, first on the kampam and then around the

temple. During the entire eight days the priest and the two men who are wearing kappu will fast, living on a diet of paccai or uncooked foods, fruits and milk.

On the final Thursday women from each household in the kirāman come in groups to the temple, carrying mā vilakku or little oil lamps made of moist rice flour and brown sugar. The women of each settlement come as a group, accompanied by the koṭṭukkāram or leading KavuNTar of their village. They enter the temple as a group, passing under a special ceremonial arch called a toraNam, which has been erected on the main path. (Informants say that in the past only women of the right-hand faction were allowed to enter under this archway and make offerings). The women enter the shrine proper and place their offerings before the goddess, while the priest performs a pūja. Again oblations are sufficient and no chants are necessary.

That night a large group of men recruited from the several villages of the kirāman (each settlement may form an individual group if they like) arrive with kāvati or pots of water which have been ceremonially carried, barefoot, from the river Cauvery on the ends of long poles. The men have set out the previous day and camped on the river bank for the night. At dawn they fill their pots with the sacred water and begin the procession home. They are accompanied by drummers and dancers who amuse them and often they will sing devotional songs as they walk. The party will arrive at the temple in the evening and after a certain amount of possessed dancing the men will present their offerings to the goddess. A final and elaborate pūja is performed by the priest. He then lifts the firepot off the kampam and dances with it for the last time.

Activity quickens and events now follow in rapid succession. While the priest is dancing clockwise around the temple, several assistant priests loosen the tree trunk in its hole. A goat is sacrificed and the head is thrown into the open hole just as the trunk is removed. By this time the main priest has placed the firepot inside the temple. He helps to cover the goat's head with dirt to fill the hole and then, still possessed, runs swiftly back to the well where the tree was originally soaked, carrying the heavy trunk on his shoulders. There it is immersed permanently in the water. A small light is floated on a betel leaf on top of the water as the ripples subside.

Meanwhile an assistant priest has changed the dress of the goddess in the temple to white and has removed all her jewels to indicate widowhood. At the well the priest who has brought the kampam now bathes and removes his kāppu, letting it float away. With this the evening's excitement is over. The next morning the same priest will boil a pot of poṅkaḷ rice. A chicken or goat is sacrificed and its meat cooked. It is placed alongside the boiled rice when offerings are made to the secondary, meat-eating gods of the temple. Mariyamman, herself, is offered boiled rice and fruits. Other women of the village cook poṅkaḷ rice in their homes. They bring trays of this rice, with fruits and other offerings, to the temple to be added to the rice which the priest has cooked. The three men who have fasted and tied kappu will

feast after the offerings to the goddess have been completed. Representatives of all the right-hand castes of the kirānam will feast with them. The families of the kirānam enjoy the poṅkaḷ rice in their own homes. The festival is over.

The ritual described above contains certain striking elements which deserve further comment. Take, for example, the kampam or milky trunk of the euphorbia plant. The term used for this ritual is related to the Prakrit khambha and the Sanskrit skambha, both of which have the general meaning of a 'post, pillar or column'. Informants, however, explicitly associate the kampam with Māriyamman's nameless husband, while the goddess herself, is said to be manifest equally and alternately in the cool green pot, kuntam, and the hot red one, pūvōṭu, which are placed on top of the kampam's forked branches.¹³

There is a certain parallel to be drawn here between the kampam and the mukūrtakkāl or 'auspicious post', which is erected at all the important life-cycle ceremonies (with the exception of death). This post is cut from a forked branch of the same euphorbia plant and can also be referred to as a pālakkāl or 'milky post'. Erecting this post is always the initial ritual, to be followed by long, elaborate rituals of other sorts. It is usually tied to a pillar supporting the roof of the house. In all cases there is, perhaps, a mild association with maleness and the male clan or lineage.

However, the explicit and more general explanation which informants give links the mukūrtakkāl with abundance and prosperity. They speak of it in connection with paṇṇai, the boiling of white rice. (See Section II C 2). Thurston reports that in some districts of Andhra the term kampam

¹³ See Govt of Madras, Village Survey, No. 18, p. 69 and Village Survey No. 6, p. 98, for other references to a kampam in relation to a Māriyamman festival.

is actually used to refer not to a post but directly to great heaps of boiled white rice which are offered to the goddess outside her temple.¹⁴ The branch or tree trunk appear to be a kind of initial step, a support or foundation, through which a life-giving, milky-white sap flows. In each case it would appear to be a kind of background against which other things happen. It is not in itself a focus, but without it other, vital things cannot flourish.

To return to the Māriyamman festival, the fact that a husband is represented by a trunk or post and the wife-goddess as a pot set on top of it is not surprising. What is more interesting is the fact that Māriyamman has a husband at all, and that, having one, the stories concerning him should accord him such a low ritual rank. Indeed, the unimportance or even complete absence of a husband is characteristic of village goddesses all over South India. It is Māriyamman and not her husband who has the gakti or power with which devotees are empowered. Indeed, Māriyamman is married only for the eight nights of the festival. When the kampan is removed she lapses back into a white, widowed state. It is reasonable, then, to link the kampan with the use of a milky post on other ceremonial occasions and say that its explicit male symbolism is secondary to its more general association with the whiteness of family prosperity and of universal abundance. The white trunk simply serves to indicate Māriyamman's status as a mature, married woman, during the days of the festival. Without it, the goddess lapses back into her non-festive, less powerful state. At other times of the year she is less intimate, less propitious to the human world and its everyday concerns.

¹⁴ Thurston, *Castes and Tribes*, Vol. IV, pp. 338-9.

On top of the white trunk rest the alternating green and red pots representing the goddess. During the eight days of the festival the intense proximity of the goddess is emphasized by this visual representation of her dramatic and changeable character. The case of the fire, its redness and heat, directly parallel the anger which the goddess is said to possess. Once a temple priest told me that while he was carrying the firepot around the temple a piece of burning coal leaped out and burnt his arm, for which there is still a scar to show. He explained that he had not had his mind fully concentrated on the goddess at the time and that this was her way of expressing her anger. More generally this fire represents Māriyamma in her aspect of killing demons and evil spirits. Finally, fire is associated with this goddess in her disease-bearing form.

The green leafy pot of kannam, on the otherhand, emphasizes Māriyamma's association with water and with rain. Other indications of this are the puja to the seven ponds,¹⁵ at the beginning of the festival, and the fact that Māriyamma is expected to discuss the prospects of rain through the priest she possesses. The local mythology, of course, also says that this goddess was born in a pond and her festival re-enacts her emergence from and return to a similar body of water. If this be a well, it must be a reliable one which the local population would resort to in time of drought. Women also pay homage to her during the festival by pouring pots of water on the kannam and around her temple.

It is precisely this alternation between red and green, between hot and cool, which is the most vivid aspect of the festival for its participants. The oscillation is entirely in keeping with devotees' own description of

¹⁵ Dr. P.K. Jain, in a personal communication, has suggested a possible association between these seven ponds and the seven kannimar or unmarried girls (see Section II B 2). Informants themselves, however, had no explanation to offer.

Māriyammaṅ. At times she is 'hot' and must be 'cooled', while at other times she herself may bring cooling rains and prosperity. Thus the association of this goddess with the verb māru, 'to change'. She has an unpredictable and highly variable temperament - a deity which can both cause and relieve human suffering.

Each of the castes of the right-hand faction has a distinctive ritual duty to perform in connection with the yearly Māriyammaṅ festival. The Kavuṅṅṅ, belonging to the clan with ritual seniority in the kirāṅṅ, assumes the position of Mupaṅṅṅ. He must tie a ritual thread called a kāppu around his wrist and fast during the days of the festival. He also receives the first blessings of the god when the ceremonies are over.

In the same way, each of the other castes of the right-hand has a ritual duty to perform. A Nāṅṅ must sacrifice the goats and sheep required for the festival and must also contribute ten rupees to cover (in theory) the expenses of the first seven days of the festival.¹⁶ A Paṅṅṅ is responsible for performing all of the ritual obligations or pūjas required and also for speaking for the goddess, when possessed by her, as he carries the fire pot around the temple each morning and even . The ṅṅṅ is responsible for supplying the important ritual pots for the well water and the fire, and a Paṅṅṅ must do the drumming. The Koṅṅ Nāṅṅ is responsible for shaving those men who must tie a kāppu and the Koṅṅ Vaṅṅṅ must carry the pantam or traditional torchlight each night.¹⁷

¹⁶ This role of the Nāṅṅ as sacrificer is similar to that of the maṅṅṅ or cross-cousin in other contexts. It indicates the close alliance and symbiotic relationship between Kavuṅṅṅs and Nāṅṅs in agricultural matters. See Dumont, Une Sous-Caste, p. 15. In the past informants say there used to be a buffalo sacrifice as well.

¹⁷ If the correct, traditional representative of the caste does not show up another lineally related kinsman may be substituted in his place. If one caste refuses to participate altogether, however, the festival can well come to a standstill.

Before the ceremonies begin, a Paraiyan will tie a tōraṅam or ceremonial arch made of margosa (*Azadirachta Indica*) at the entrance to the village where the temple stands. The tōraṅam is tied in such a way that everyone who comes to the festival must pass under it. According to the man who has inherited the right to construct this arch, the tōraṅam used to mark the boundary beyond which no woman of the left-hand faction could bring the traditional offering of mā vilakku (little lights made of raw rice flour, water, sugar and ghee) to the deity. This informant, a knowledgeable man on other aspects of kirāṅam history, claims that this exclusion of the women of the left-hand faction was enforced until about 60 years ago. Now, however, anyone may bring offerings to the goddess, although it is still only the right-hand castes which have specific ritual duties at the time of the festival.

It is significant that it was explicitly women of the left-hand faction who the informant says were prevented from entering into the festival area beyond the archway point. There is also some evidence of ritual prescriptions of other kinds on women of the left-hand communities. For example, it appears that women of some castes of the left may not have been allowed to couple sexually with their husbands while the latter were serving as mercenaries in the armies of the right.¹⁸ This may be another indication of the special danger connected with women crossing the right/left boundary while men could, in the conduct of secular matters, move back and forth more freely.

¹⁸ See Thurston, Castes and Tribes, Vol. VI, p. 15, and Vol. II, p. 4, for brief notes about Pallis (Vanniyans) and Chakkilis (Mātāris) in this regard. Other references to a distinction between men and women of one caste in their factional alliance occur in Hutton, Caste in India (Cambridge, University Press, 1946), pp. 60-61 and in Oppert, On the Original Inhabitants of Bharatavarsa or India (London, Westminster, 1894), pp. 65-66.

In general, it may be said that the purity of women is more important than the purity of men in South India and the danger of defilement by incautious association with impure women is greater than the danger of defilement by contact with an impure man.¹⁹

Apart from this differentiation of the castes of the left and of the right, there is a clear sense of community cooperation about the Māriyamman festival. On the one hand Māriyamman is the goddess responsible for the kirānam as a whole. She is associated with its prosperity because of her connection with rain and the harvest, and for its protection from pestilence and disease.²⁰ At the same time, in order to obtain these boons, her festival must be properly performed by the population of the kirānam as a whole. Each settlement, and even each individual household, is expected to bring offerings to her. In some areas it is reported that outsiders are excluded altogether from such festivals and that great care is taken that no one in this category attempts to lay hands on offerings that have been made to the goddess. Thurston, for example, reports such an occurrence in the Kurnool District of Andhra:

This is followed by the slaughter of many more buffaloes and sheep by the individuals of the community, who might have taken vows to offer sacrifices to the goddess on this occasion. While the carnage is going on, a strict watch is kept on all sides, to see that no outsider enters the village, or steals away any portion of the

¹⁹ See Nur Yalman, "On The Purity of Women in the Castes of Ceylon and Malabar", Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, Vol. 93, Part I, pp. 25-58.

²⁰ In this sense Māriyamman combines the functions which Dumont describes as performed in a complementary fashion by a village goddess and a male god, Aiyānār, further to the South. See Contributions Vol. III, pp. 75-87. The god who most resembles Aiyānār in Konku is KaruppaNacāmi. He is guardian of the clan fields (see Section II B 2), but his role, rather than complementary is definitely subservient to that of Māriyamman. No festival for Karuppa-Nacāmi is celebrated simultaneously with that for Māriyamman.

blood of the slaughtered animals, as it is believed the performance of the jātra will be lost to them if an outsider should succeed in taking away a little of the blood to his village.²¹

Similar festivals to village or kirāman goddesses were probably once common all over the South. Other writers have already stressed the importance of a community of people belonging to different castes, but inhabiting a common area, who must explicitly cooperate in order to celebrate the festival of a village goddess.²² What is not clear from the ethnographic literature is whether a similar exclusion of the left-hand castes from participation in these ritual responsibilities was also common elsewhere.

²¹ Thruston, Castes and Tribes, Vol. IV, pp. 339-40. See also Govt. of Madras, Village Survey No. 6, p. 98.

²² See M.N. Srinivas, Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India (Oxford University Press, 1952).

Plate 6: The AṅkāLamman Temple

- a) Women Bringing Offerings of Mā Vilakku During A Local Festival
- b) Mā Vilakku Set Before The Deity
- c) Man Carrying Kāvati From The Cauvery River
- d) Kāvati Offerings Just Before Presentation To The Deity
- e) The AṅkāLamman Temple Drummer While Singing The Story Of The Goddess
- f) A Woman Walking On The Trench Of Burning Coals Outside The AṅkāLamman Temple During The Festival.
- g) A Man Walking On The Hot Coals

PLATE 6



(a)



(b)



(e)



(c)



(f)



(d)



(g)

ID

2) Nāṭu, Faction and AṅkāLamman

The goddess AṅkāLamman is primarily associated with the left-hand castes of Koṅku, just as Māriyamman can, in general, be identified with the right. If, in sociological terms, there is a traditional rivalry between the castes of these two factions, so in the mythology there is a certain rivalry between these two goddesses. Their temples never stand near one another and priests say that these two deities, who enjoy relatively equal amounts of cakti or female energy, never intrude on each other's territory. All the castes listed as left-hand in Section I B 1 have a special relation with AṅkāLamman, either borne out by the mythology which surrounds this deity, or in the sense that the caste itself claims her as one of their special clan deities.²³

One of the major differences between these two goddesses, however, lies in the nature of the association between her and the caste in question. Māriyamman is the goddess of a kirāman and everyone living within this clearly bounded area enjoys her protection. Residents, in turn, are obliged to bring offerings to her during her festival. People who move into the area develop an attachment to the goddess, those who move away generally become the devotees of the goddess of a new area. It is true that the right-hand castes living in a particular kirāman have a closer association with the local Māriyamman than do those of the left, but nowadays at any rate, all the residents of an area will worship her.

AṅkāLamman, on the other hand, has little association with ^{the} territory

²³ Other clan deities form a pattern of association with AṅkāLamman. Gods which appear as direct alternates or substitutes are Kāmācciyamman, Mīnācciyamman and Paṭṭattalācci. Related deities which occur commonly within the same temple complex are Viramātti, Maturaivīran, Cantana Karuppanan, Vēṭṭuva Karuppanan and, perhaps, Muppucai Karuppanan.

that ~~immediate~~ surrounds where her temple is located. Her devotees come from far and wide, as far, indeed, as the name of the particular temple has spread.²⁴ Her devotees attach themselves to her temple of their own accord and they maintain their links to it directly, rather than via their association with a given geographic settlement.²⁵ A brief survey of residence sites around AṅkāLamman temples shows that the proportion of left-hand castes is high. It is possible that such a pattern was even more marked in the past, just as the left-hand castes have tended to inhabit a physically distinct area when living within a predominantly right-hand settlement.²⁶

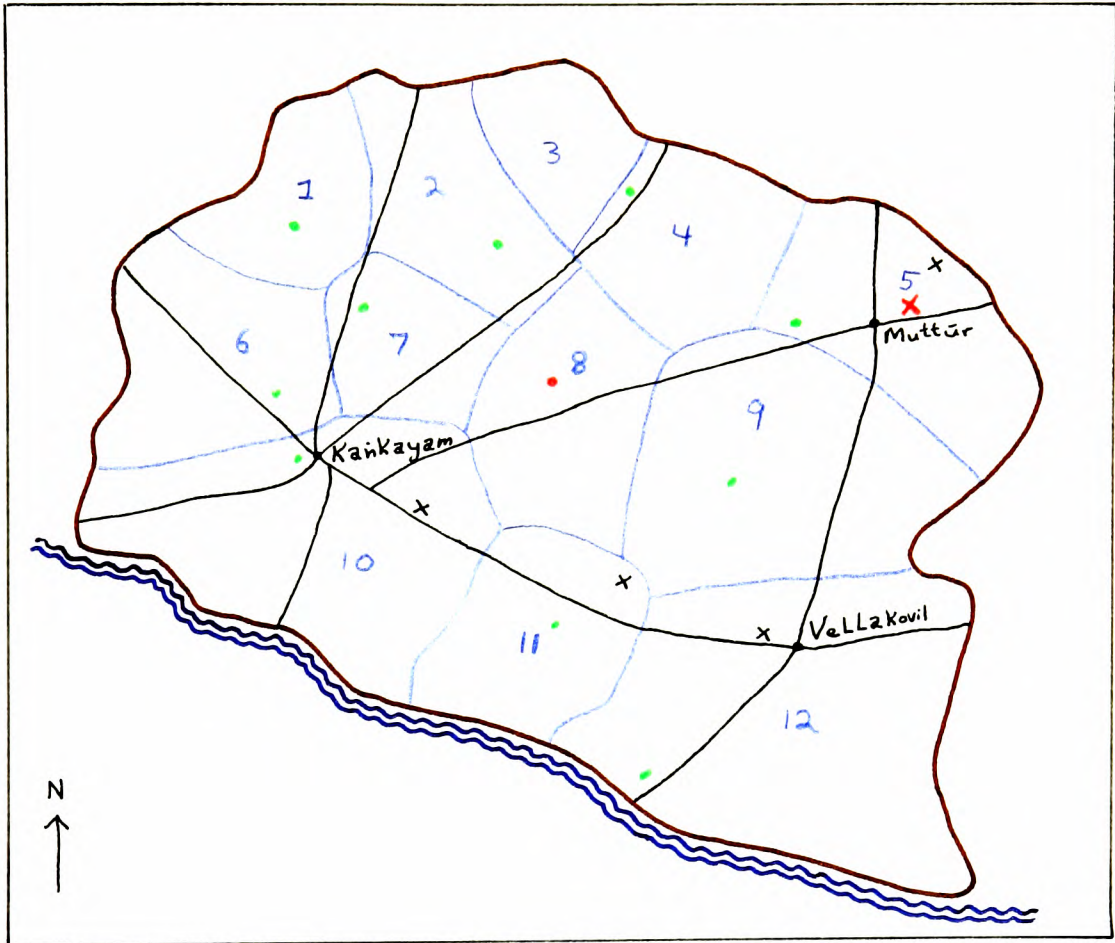
Not every kirāman in Koṅku has a Māriyamman temple. Out of the twelve kirāman in Kāṅkaya nāṭu, nine definitely have their own, distinct shrine for this goddess and celebrate a yearly festival for her. (See Map 16). In the tenth kirāman of this nāṭu a shrine to a local male deity, Virakumar, seems to provide the focus of the yearly kirāman festival, although there is a Māriyamman temple as well, which may have had a kirāman festival in the past. The eleventh kirāman is a small one and it lies at a considerable distance from OlappāLaiyam. Information is not sufficient to say where the focus of yearly festivities there lies, but it would appear from brief inquiry that a Māriyamman shrine is absent. The twelfth kirāman contains an

²⁴ It is true that devotees from outside a particular kirāman may also worship at a local Māriyamman shrine. Still, informants are explicit about her association with a defined territory.

²⁵ Sometimes families from the right-hand faction, notably Kavunṭars and Paṅṭārams, will name AṅkāLamman as a deity with whom they have a special association. However, in each case this appears to be an individually elected relationship, and not a connection which has been inherited by an entire clan or descent group.

²⁶ See Maps 9 and 10. A similar pattern is clear from descriptions of Madras City during the early days of the East India Company. See H.D. Love, Vestiges of Old Madras, (London, John Murray, 1913), Vol. II, pp. 25-26, 142-3 and 390.

MAP 16: MĀRIYAMMAN AND ANKĀLAMMAN TEMPLES OF KĀNKAYAM NĀTU



KEY

- Approximate Boundary of Nātu
- Roads
- Approximate Boundary of Kirāman
- Māriyamman Temples
- Ankālamman Temple
- x Kumaran Temples
- ⋯ Dry River Bed
- x Utaiyār Clan Temple (Dedicated to Ankālamman)

Kirāman Names

1. Kiranūr
2. Parenjevali
3. Maruturai
4. Nattakattaiyūr
5. Muttūr
6. Civanmalai
7. Alampati
8. Pappani
9. Valiyeraccal
10. Kānkayam
11. Kānapuram
12. Vellakovil

Aṅkāḷaṁman temple, and, again, no Māriyaṁman shrine.

Temple patterns, therefore, if mapped on a large scale, exhibit a degree of variation from kirāṁan to kirāṁan. Information is, at present, insufficient to discuss these variations in detail. However, the correlation between Māriyaṁman temples and individual kirāṁans is sufficiently high (and sufficiently stressed by informants) to consider this as the typical format on which the variations occur. This basic pattern is all that the present description is intended to describe. The details remain to be filled in by further study. It may be that one Aṅkāḷaṁman temple is commonly found per nāṭu, and that Māriyaṁman temples are usually absent in that kirāṁan of the nāṭu where the Aṅkāḷaṁman shrine is located. Information, however, is insufficient to confirm such a generalisation. Furthermore, unlike the relation between Māriyaṁman and individual kirāṁan, these are points which ^{informants} themselves have not stressed.²⁷

There is no tōraṅan tied during the Aṅkāḷaṁman festival, and thus no exclusion of a particular group or faction as may have been the case historically during the annual Māriyaṁman ceremonies. All the rituals connected with Aṅkāḷaṁman are performed by the temple priests. There are no Maṭaṭṭak-kāraṅ titles held by representatives of the various castes associated with the shrine. Devotion to Aṅkāḷaṁman is by choice, and determined by individual families or clans. Clearly then, no sense of community exists among the worshippers of Aṅkāḷaṁman, as is the case for the several castes who claim special attachment to Māriyaṁman.

The contrast between Māriyaṁman and Aṅkāḷaṁman is perhaps even clearer on the question of personality or general character. Māriyaṁman was born from a body of water. In ritual this is represented by a particular well of a kirāṁan territory to

²⁷ There is a second Aṅkāḷaṁman temple within Kāṅkaya nāṭu, but it is small and appears to belong to an individual Uṭaiyer clan, rather than being a general shrine where people of all communities find it appropriate to worship.

which she is firmly tied. She is the guardian of this area, preventing (when she likes) the attack of virulent diseases while at the same time being responsible for the growth of the crops and for general prosperity in the area by her control of the rain. Aṅkālamman, on the other hand, is concerned with humanity in general. The themes which her devotees and her festival ritual stress are those of birth and reproduction in the world at large.

Aṅkālamman was born in heaven and was sent to earth, by Cīva, only after she attained maturity. She has no strong territorial association. Instead she is said to have wandered from place to place, gathering devotees by chance encounters. The ceremonies of her annual festival centre around the story of a childless wife and the curse of the gods which surrounded her eventual pregnancy. The ritual is full of references to copulation and to childbirth, as the description which follows will indicate. And, furthermore, her annual ceremony commences on an all-India festival date, Cīvan Rātiri or Cīva's Night. Māriyamman's annual celebration not only varies, by month, in different villages, but is geared within the month to the lunar rather than to the solar calendar.

The story of Aṅkālamman is very long and only the portion which is directly relevant to the ritual performed at the temple is given in detail below. It is retold every year at the time of the festival by the temple drummer, a Veṭan by caste. As a prelude to the main events the story of this goddess provides a long description of her birth (as a manifestation of Fārvati) in heaven and her growth to maturity there. One day, as Cīva's wife, she displeases him and is sent earthwards on an errand to abolish evil spirits who are troubling mankind. On reaching the human world the local story recounts her first appearance at a place called Malaiyanūr.²⁸ ~~This~~

²⁸ A story recorded by Thurston confirms this detail. See Thurston, Castes and Tribes, Vol. VI, p. 356

This is said to be on the other side of the Tiruvāṅkōmalai mountains near Conjeeveram and well outside the Kōṅku area. Dumont has recorded a similar story, but with Malayalam substituted for Malaiyanūr, above.²⁹ Since this version speaks of the goddess as having been found, after some search, at Omandūr (Omālūr of the present Salem District?) it also depicts the goddess as having come from outside Kōṅku, and probably from the same north-easterly direction.

After her arrival on earth, Aṅkāḷaṁman began to wander here and there. The story is now broken into a number of sub-sections, each of which names a particular caste of the left-hand faction. After some misadventure or other, each of these castes, individually, is persuaded to serve her. In every case the goddess is described as having used some form of guile or trickery to extract a promise of devotion from the members of the particular community in question. The Aṅkāḷaṁman drummer at Maṭṭavālāku (4 miles north of Clappālaiyan) includes the stories of four left-hand castes, the Ācāri, the Ceṭṭiyār, the Cempaṭavan and the Vēṭan, in his account.³⁰ Dumont, however, has recorded a similar story linking the Nayakkaṅ, another left-hand caste, with the same goddess.³¹ None of these castes are said to have been 'born in order to serve Aṅkāḷaṁman' as the right-hand castes are said to have sprung from the fire in Śiva's hand to serve Māriyaṁman. Instead, each caste was separately persuaded and the stories about the several communities

²⁹ Dumont, Une-Sous-Caste, p. 391.

³⁰ Thurston has recorded a different version of the Cempaṭavan (fishermen) story in Castes and Tribes, Vol. VI, pp. 350-51. The Vēṭan, some of whom are drummers at Aṅkāḷaṁman temples, are a semi-migratory caste. Folk tradition claims that they are the descendants of an early hunting and gathering group community who once formed an important part of the population of the region.

³¹ Dumont, Une-Sous-Caste, p. 391.

are quite unconnected.

The final story in this long patchwork epic which takes about four nights to recite is also the most localized. It is the one around which the present festival ritual at the Kāṅkaya nāṭu Aṅkāḷamman temple has developed. The story begins with an account of the day that Aṅkāḷamman met the wives of a mean and miserly rāja named VaLLāla, who lived in a palace near the city of Madurai. It may be that what has been preserved in this folk epic is a story built around the memory of the famous BaLLāla Rāja³² who was involved in repeated hostilities with the Muslim sultanate in Madurai early in the 14th century. When BaLLāla finally lost his life in 1342, his skin was stuffed with straw and hung upon the wall of the city there.³³ There are many inscriptions which refer to his having been present at temple ceremonies in Koṅku, and to his having donated lands to them.³⁴ The story told about VaLLāla Rāja by the temple drummer, and perhaps distantly connected with these events, proceeds as follows:

One day Aṅkāḷamman decided to wander and to visit the people who lived to the South. She transformed herself into a Kuravatti, or gipsy fortune-teller, and set out with a little drum in one hand and a human skull in the other. On her journey she stopped here and there asking for alms and offering to tell people's fortunes. One day she was directed to the palace of a famous miser named VaLLāla Rāja. He lived near the present Madurai and he had a reputation for leading a charmed or indestructable existence. His one regret was that although he had five wives he had had no children.

When Aṅkāḷamman reached the palace it was the wives who called her in, as the great Rāja himself was out on a hunt. The women were eager to hear their fortunes, but unwilling to bestow gifts on the begger. They

³² The distinction between B and V is not phonetic in Tamil.

³³ J.C. Harle, ^{Keeper} ^{the Dept. of} Director of ^{the} Eastern Art at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, was the first to suggest this historical association to me. A short description of BaLLāla Rāja can be found in N. Sastri, A History of South India, pp. 238-40.

³⁴ Arokiaswami, Koṅku, p. 217

secretly made a plan to set a bowl of pearls before her, but to take them back as soon as the old woman had spoken her soothsay. The goddess began by divining the wives' predicament. She told them she had discovered their distress over having no children and that in the hope of begetting some they had been eating rice mixed with earth. She then suggested that these women were suffering the effects of a curse because of their miserliness towards beggars. The fortune-teller then asked for gifts and prepared to leave. The Rāja's wives, however, deaf to her explanation, sent her away with one measure of poor colam grain.

Aṅkālamman (still in her beggar disguise) left the Rāja's house in anger. Once outside the goddess began to dance. In her heat drops of sweat fell on the ground and out of these stepped Viraputiracāmi. On seeing this benign giant, Aṅkālamman ordered him to place himself as a child in the womb of the last wife of the Rāja. However, the goddess next cursed the wife, saying that the child was not to be born after a normal period of pregnancy. Instead, the goddess determined that the foetus was to go on swelling in size inside the woman until the goddess herself in the form of the old Kuravatti beggar, was called for aid.

After a time Vallāla Rāja returned home from his hunt and, to his delight, found his wife pregnant. The months passed, however, and the child was not born on schedule. One hundred different midwives were called, but still his wife did not give birth. Finally, in the fourteenth month of pregnancy the Rāja's household became desperate. They remembered the old beggar woman and began to search for her. Finally they found her, but the goddess, in her disguise, made many demands for gifts. Finally the Rāja, himself, went in person to beg her for assistance. At this she finally agreed, but with the condition that the wife be taken from the house and laid on a cot under an awning in the graveyard.

When this was done Aṅkālamman at last agreed to assist at the birth. On arrival, however, she said she was hungry and demanded rice to eat. The miserly Rāja, still not understanding the cause of his misery, gave her only a glass of rice-water. Again the goddess became angry. With a huge knife she cut the body of the pregnant woman in half, extracted the child and placed it in a basket. She then took the woman's liver in her mouth and draped the intestines of the corpse around her neck like a garland. She painted her body red with the spilt blood. Bedecked in this manner, Aṅkālamman danced over the graveyard.

In desperation the Rāja then called in a second fortune-teller (again Aṅkālamman in disguise). From this second soothsayer he finally came to understand how, because of his miserliness, so much misfortune had befallen

him. The Rāja then promised to worship Aṅkālaṃman as a family deity, and at this the goddess at last withdrew her curse. After bringing the Rāja's wife and child back to life, the people of the village fell at the feet of Aṅkālaṃman and began to worship her. When the crowd had gathered the goddess made one last petition. This was that her followers should perform a special pillai poṅkai for her each year, where her priest would dance with the intestines of a pregnant goat wrapped around his neck. The villagers agreed to the goddess's request and this special ceremony is now a part of the Aṅkālaṃman festival as it is performed each year.

The pillai poṅkai is not the only ritual of the Aṅkālaṃman temple festival which refers to this story of Vallāla Rāja, above. Indeed, the entire scene of the birth is re-enacted and a special image of a pregnant woman, some sixteen feet in length, is shaped out of earth from a nearby graveyard on this occasion. The ritual also contains other references to the processes of conception and birth. A fuller description of these ceremonies is given in the following pages.³⁵

The festival begins two nights before the new moon in the Tamil month of Māci (February-March). On this evening a special white flag called a koṭi is prepared and a reddish-yellow figure of a bull (the vehicle which both Aṅkālaṃman and Pārvati ride) is painted on it. Pūjā is performed to the koṭi and it is tied to the stambha or tall pillar which stands permanently in front of the shrine.

Before the pūjā to tie the koṭi has been performed the two main priests (Paṅtārams) must bathe, shave and tie a kāppu to their wrists. From this moment they begin their fast on a diet of paccai or uncooked foods. The goddess is also offered paccai foods as soon as the koṭi has been tied. Following this a new mud pot is placed, neck downwards, in front of the goddess. The two priests then take a handful of castor oil seeds and throw them at the pot shouting uhe, uhe!³⁶

³⁵ For a much shorter but clearly similar description, see Thruston's account of the Aṅkālaṃman festival at Malayanūr. Thruston, *Castes and Tribes*, pp. 356-8. The account given here compiles personal observation of all the main events (except the pillai poṅkai) with details supplied by the temple priest.

³⁶ Uhe is simply a kind of magical utterance without specific meaning. The name for castor seeds in Tamil, however, is koṭṭai muttu. Koṭṭai may also refer to the testicles of a man and muttu is a common term for seeds, in general.

The next morning a huge image of a pregnant woman, lying prone on her back, is fashioned out of earth in the temple graveyard nearby. This image is about 16 feet long and 5 to 6 feet wide. It is decorated with red cloths and a pantal or ceremonial awning is constructed from sugarcane stalks above it. Some castor seeds are sprinkled on the image. The eyes are made with two white chicken eggs. In the temple, itself, a winnowing fan is also prepared to represent Pēyciamman. This is done by turning it over and covering the back of the fan with moist rice flour. Eyes, a nose and a mouth are marked on it and margosa leaves are tied on either side. The body of the figure is covered with a red cloth. A kappu is tied to it.

One of the two temple priests now covers his body with ash and drapes himself with a red cloth to look like a sari. The, impersonating Pēyci, he picks up the image on the fan and begins to dance. A brass image of this goddess which is normally kept inside the temple is also decorated. Then there is a procession to the graveyard. The possessed priest leads, carrying the decorated winnowing fan in his hands. This is followed by the brass image of Pēyci in a decorated palanquin. On the way to the graveyard a black goat must be sacrificed. The priest then takes a lamp black and places two dots in the centre of the two white eggs representing the pregnant woman's eyes. By doing this he is said to 'open' her eyes and bring her to life. A small black pig is sacrificed at the foot of the image (speared in the side) and buried on the spot. A black chicken is also beheaded with the blow of a knife. Then the priest carrying the winnowing fan sets it down near the head of the image. The crowd of devotees looking on shouts mayānkollai meaning 'graveyard raid or killing' several times and then everyone leaves for the temple. The priests, however, will not re-enter the shrine before bathing.

Following this is a ceremony within the temple which is called 'invitation of the goddess to the battleground'. During this a drummer (Vētan by caste) will sing a song naming all the Aṅkāḷamman shrines which he can remember, inviting the goddess from each one in turn. Then an offering is made to an image of a bull (Nanti) which faces the entrance to the shrine. The offering contains not only the common substances of a pūjā such as clarified butter, coconuts and scented water, but also cooked pulses and tubers (substantial foods). A small camphor light is waved in front of the bull and it is said that this must be done in such a way that the goddess inside can see it. (The bull is the vehicle of Aṅkāḷamman and also

as she is a manifestation of Pārvati, of her husband Cīva). This is the night of Cīvan Rātiri.

The following morning, (third day of the festival) the two priests who have tied kāppu are required to bathe again. One of them will then make a mud pot and fill it with water from a special spring nearby. This pot is called a vintai kumpen or 'magical container' and a kāppu is also tied to it. This pot is brought to the temple with the same shout previously used -uho, uho. It is placed in front of the goddess on a small mound of white husked paddy, which, in turn, rests on a banana leaf. Then a special temple sword is laid across the top of the pot and the priests take several handfuls of rice and throw them at the sword, reciting mantrams or magical verses as they do so. The entire ritual is called aRaku Teruōna puja or 'pūjā for the beautiful appearance of god'.

Afterwards there is a ceremony for the removal of the sword or dagger. For this the priest takes pāci pīviru, a green pulse (considered to be very cooling when eaten) and throws it, along with a few other unspecified grains, in small handfuls at the image of the bull. Following this a huge trench 60 feet long is prepared outside the temple, where devotees will walk on burning coals the next morning. A pūjā of paasai foods is also made to the goddess. At midnight there is another pūjā to the goddess and her image is thickly covered with butter. She is now kept behind a screen.

Early on the fourth morning the devotees who have vowed to walk the sixty feet to her temple on burning coals prepare themselves by rubbing oil on their heads and bathing. Usually they have also fasted in preparation. Many are people who have had a request granted by the goddess (or are now making one) and have vowed to perform this feat of devotion to her in an expression of gratitude. For a large number the request is (or was) progeny. Pūjā is then done to the burning coals and flowers and lemons are thrown over them. Then the devotees walk one by one over the coals barefoot. Afterwards they rush into the temple and fall at the feet of the goddess. After the fire-walking is finished the butter is removed from the goddess and another pūjā is performed. The screen is now removed. At noon women bring offerings of nā vilakku and poṅkal rice. Following this there is a general feast in the homes of those who have participated.

On the final or fifth day of the festival the kāppu or kaṅkanams on the priests are removed. The koṭi flag is also taken down. People of the village are playful and pass the time by throwing turmeric-coloured water at their nānan/maccan (cross-relatives). A short pūjā is done to the goddess. That evening at about ten p.m. the pillai poṅkal requested by the goddess, in the story, is performed. For this event a pregnant goat is

sacrificed and a priest, disguised as Pēycciamman, wraps the intestines of the animal around his neck as a garland. He then takes its liver, places it on a winnowing fan and dances around the temple grounds, possessed. All the people watching contribute coins, called 'milk money', which they throw on the fan. The priest then takes the fan to a small rise at the edge of the village and sets it down, first removing the money for himself. A goat is sacrificed to Karuppa-Naccami (a male deity considered to be Pēycci's protector and helper) and poṅkal rice is offered to him. Then the temple priests feast and the festival is over.

Pēycciamman is described by informants as a kaiyal or helper for Aṅkāḷamman.³⁷

She is a mature woman, say of about thirty, and is often depicted with a child on her hip. Devotees speak of her as unmarried although she often occurs in association with a male deity such as Pūtirāja who acts as her general guardian and protector. Pēycciamman is closely connected with questions of midwifery, childbirth and infant disease. One informant said that women perform a special oblation to her during the seventh month of pregnancy, although this was not common practice in the Kāṅkayan area.

Her name means 'demoness' or 'woman possessed by an evil spirit'. She will accept meat offerings and has a changeable and rather frightening demeanour.³⁸ On the whole she must be cajoled into benevolence.

Other indications of Aṅkāḷamman's association with questions of pregnancy and childbirth are evident throughout the year. Women desirous of children, for example, will make a special pilgrimage to her shrine. The temple grounds are full of clay images of children which have been presented by devotees who have had their wish fulfilled. Inside the temple itself, just in front of the goddess, is a collection of little wooden cradles, also

³⁷ Sometimes she is also found in association with Māriyamman. See, for example, the story in Section I D 1. There is a special shrine to Pēycci inside the Māriyamman temple at Kannapuram. Here, as when found with Aṅkāḷamman she is spoken of as a goddess who looks after young children.

³⁸ See also Dumont, Une-Sous-Caste, pp. 366-72 and G. Oppert, On The Original Inhabitants of Bharatavarsa or India (London, Westminster, 1894), p. 485.

presented by worshippers in thanks for progeny requested.

The clearest sign of Aṅkālamman's connection with questions of reproduction and childbirth, however, is a small walled-in enclosure found in the northeast corner of the temple grounds. Inside this compound a pregnant sheep, goat or pig may be sacrificed by the devotee. After a short pūjā the foetus is extracted from the sacrificed animal and buried within the compound. This ritual is believed to be especially efficacious for women who have lost a number of children through unintended abortion. It is said to break the evil spell thought to have been cast over such a woman. The corner is referred to as the place of ārri karppu, 'seeking or acquiring pregnancy'.

The shape of the Aṅkālamman festival ritual, when considered as a whole, vividly illustrates the general themes with which this goddess is associated. The ceremonies begin with the tying of a white flag or koṭi to a pole outside the temple entrance. There is a parallel with the milky, white kampan or trunk erected outside the Māriyamman temple at the time of her festival. The shape and size of a koṭi is precisely that of a man's vesti or lower cloth, ^{white} koṭi is the koṭi term which is used for the ceremonial prestation of white cloths by parallel relatives at life-cycle ceremonies. Just as a kampan and a mukūrttakāl in these contexts, the tying of a koṭi at the beginning of an Aṅkālamman festival can be interpreted as an auspicious beginning, the preparation of a white background against which the ensuing and more elaborate rituals will occur.³⁹

The tying of the koṭi is followed by the construction of the great pregnant figure in the graveyard, covered with red cloths. The priests

³⁹ A similar koṭi or white flag with the vehicle of the deity painted on it in red is hung up at the beginning of festivals for Lattirakāli and for ...

also wear red and a number of black animals are sacrificed. There are references to a battle or raid which will ensue. There is also an invitation of the goddess to the battleground. Inside the temple the priests throw castor seeds at a pot in front of the goddess and do hā to the bull facing her temple. This bull is not only her vehicle, but that of her consort Śiva.

These rituals become clearer if it is remembered that they take place during the day which precedes Śivan Rātiri or Śiva's Night. It is the time of a great battle between Śiva and Yama over a man whom the latter wants to banish to hell for his lack of devotion to the gods. Śiva fights to save him, saying that the man has earned merit by accidentally performing the rites of a Śrī addressed to him. In the story Śiva is victorious and the man is eventually rescued. The battle on the graveyard is clearly a reflection of this famous puranic story, but somehow the tale of Vallāla Rāja and his pregnant wife have become associated with it. The devotees to be saved become the Rāja and his wife, after they agree to worship Ankalaman. Śiva comes to ward off the demons of the curse which are preventing the birth, and in the end the child of the Rāja is saved.

After this battle, presaged by all the red cloths and the sacrifice of black animals, the tone of the festival changes. The priests must bathe. Then there is a Śrī called 'the beautiful appearance of god' in which the temple door is laid across the neck of a pot representing the goddess and the magical words uho, uho are shouted.⁴⁰ Afterwards a green pulse, said to cool the body when eaten, is thrown at the vehicle of the goddess and her consort, Nanti. Although informants are not explicit on this point, the

⁴⁰ Note that castor seeds are now thrown at the upright pot, whereas previously they were thrown at an overturned one.

symbolic enactment of a sexual union between the goddess and her lover/husband seems a reasonable interpretation to make. Finally there is a ritual for withdrawing the sword.

The next morning the devotees prepare to walk sixty feet on the burning coals in front of the temple.⁴¹ Although to someone unfamiliar with this ritual it would seem a very hot undertaking, informants actually say that the goddess is 'cooling' her worshippers. It will be remembered that butter has been spread over the image of the goddess the night before. As devotees walk on the fire the butter is said to melt, because the goddess is absorbing the heat that would otherwise be burning their feet. Ankālanman is also said to throw the end of her own sari magically over the coals for those who have great faith, but that ordinary observers cannot see it. All that can be noted are the unburnt feet at the end of the ceremony and the butter which has melted on the image of the goddess inside. Then women bring offerings of nā vilakku and poṅkal rice. Later there is a great irōli and people throw turmeric-coloured water on their cross relatives, thus 'cooling' and purifying participants further. On the last night, however, a possessed priest dances around the temple with the intestines of a pregnant goat wrapped around his neck.

The festival thus begins with the great battle in the graveyard and a re-enactment of the rescue of Vallāla Rāja's pregnant wife. Then the goddess couples with her consort the next morning (a person is said to be 'cool' after intercourse)⁴² and the walking on burning coals is a kind of demonstration, by contrast, of how the 'coolness' and well-being of the goddess is transferred to her devotees. The ceremonies end with a special placation of Nēyodlanman

⁴¹ See Section II C 2 for a general discussion of the significance of 'heating' and 'cooling' in a ritual context.

⁴² Walking on a trench of burning coals is also, sometimes, associated with the festival of a Mēriyannan temple.

for the successful birth of children to her worshippers. Informants, however, are not quite this explicit about the progression of the festival events. For them the image in the graveyard, the expression of their own devotion by walking on fire, and the placation of Pēycci for the birth of children at the end are the highlights of the ceremony. The ritual coupling of the goddess with her lover passes nearly unnoticed inside the temple. What participants do say is that the goddess spreads her 'coolness' to them or (in reverse) that she 'absorbs' their heat. In return for their devotion she will grant them boons, as she once granted a son to the childless Valāla Rā .

The important contrasts between the festival ritual performed for Māriyammaṅ and that performed for AṅkāLammaṅ should now be clear. It remains to discuss certain similarities. One of these is the use of blood sacrifice to define important ritual boundaries. Dumont has already made a partial study of the partial separation of vegetarian and meat-eating deities in South Indian temples.⁴³ This same theme can be carried further to illustrate how blood sacrifice is used to define the limits of a series of important ritual areas outside the temple as well.

The first sacrifice in the Māriyammaṅ ritual is made at the well where the kampan has been soaked, just as it is lifted by the PaṅTāraṅ priest to be carried to the temple. The very moment the sacrifice is made informants say that the priest becomes possessed. As this happens he takes the kampan on his shoulders and begins to dance wildly. One might expect devotees to explain this in terms of a direct transference of the life of the animal to the goddess, who in her frenzy immediately possesses the priest. Informants

⁴³ Dumont, Une Sous-Caste, pp. 357-72.

insist, however, that the sacrifice is not made to Māriyamman herself, but to the pūtam (semi-divine giants) who normally separate this goddess from mankind. The blood goes to satisfy the thirst of these capricious beings who hover above the crowd. It is given to persuade them to withdraw so that the goddess can pass through to the priest.

The timing of this first sacrifice is important. A special pūja by a Brahman priest precedes it and the PaNTāram who will carry the kampam must be in an especially pure state. Impure people, particularly Mātāris, (left-hand untouchables) are not allowed to approach too near. This is because the goddess during these first few minutes of possession is considered to be in a particularly vulnerable position. Even slight pollution would reduce her power to fend off the pūtam who hover about her. The danger of pollution is not nearly so strong once the kampam has been installed inside the temple compound.

While the kampam is being carried along the path from the well to the temple, small sacrifices of chicks continue to be made. Lemons are sliced and thrown in the air in order to further placate the pūtam. The pitch of excitement reaches a climax as the procession passes under a large tamarind tree where a muni (a large and unpredictable spirit) is said to live. He hovers perpetually on the boundary of the temple area and will refuse to let the priest and the kampam pass without blood. The muni is said to be jealous of the festival about to be performed and to demand attention by asserting his power. This point is so dangerous a one in the passage that if no materials for sacrifice are available it is said that the priest will bite his own arm to draw blood. The tamarind tree is very near the spot where the tōraNam or ceremonial arch has been tied. Once this boundary has been passed and the area of the festival entered, the procession turns a right angle and proceeds directly to the temple.

In the first sacrifice a breakthrough from the divine to the human world, across a no-man's land of lesser spirits, is established. The joining with or possession of a human being by the goddess is always a dangerous event, but the danger is greatest in the period before the procession has entered the festival area. A third blood sacrifice is required, this time to the meat-eating guardian of the kampam and of the entrance to the inner shrine, when the mā viLakku or lamps of oil and moist rice flour are presented to the goddess. This happens on the 8th day of the festival. Perhaps the sacrifice is intended to placate the jealousy of this guardian at this high point in the ritual when events are focused on the goddess herself. However, informants are not explicit on this point.

The same evening a fourth sacrifice is made at the same spot, near the kampam, when the priest again becomes possessed and this trunk is wrenched from its base for the return journey to the well. The temple priest says that this final sacrifice is again for the muni, outside the temple, and that it is necessary to assure the kampam a safe passage back to the well. Thus there is an initial sacrifice at the boundary between the divine and the human realms, a second (of chicks) at the boundary between general space and ritual or festival space, and a third boundary at the entrance to the inner shrine of the goddess. The exit from the temple for the return journey to the well is similarly marked by a blood offering. During the Akkālamman festival there are two times of blood sacrifice. The first is during the passage from the temple enclosure to the graveyard and the beginning of the ceremonies. The second sacrifice is on the festival boundary to conclude the ritual events. The question of boundary demarcation, however, does not end here.

The ritual performed at the festival of Mākāliyammaṅ, or goddess of the ūr area, is nearly identical with that described above. Indeed,

Mākāliyanman is in every sense merely a reduced version or lesser manifestation of Māriyanman. Informants readily volunteer this parallel themselves, and the story they tell about the birth and childhood of Mākāliyanman is identical with the account recorded for Māriyanman, except that, in keeping with her inferior status, the tale is rendered in a slightly condensed and less detailed form. In the version told to me about Mākāliyanman, by devotees, the role of a husband was ignored entirely. This parallels the fact that in the Olappālaiyam festival for this goddess the erection of a kampan and the use of a pūvōtu are omitted. In some places a kampan is used, even for Mākāliyanman, but in Olappālaiyam a kuṅṅam or pot of water and green margosa branches is simply taken from the pre-determined well and placed in the shrine. It is returned to the well at the end of the ritual three days later.⁴⁴

It is interesting, however, that the ceremonies for Mākāliyanman highlight the passage of the same boundaries. The taking of the pot of water from the well is done in the same fashion, even if no kampan is used. When the village where the temple is located is reached, there is again a big muni who requires a sacrifice. This must be done before the procession can pass on to the temple area. Again there is a turn at right angles after this second blood offering is made. There is a third sacrifice when mā vilakku are presented and a fourth when the priest becomes possessed and again lifts the pot with the green branches to return to the well.⁴⁵

There is one further point of interest concerning Mākāliyanman. Her

⁴⁴ Note that in keeping with the lesser status of this goddess the festival is shortened to three days. In some places it lasts only two days, or even one.

⁴⁵ At the Mākāliyanman festival in Olappālaiyam there is also a fifth sacrifice for the guardian of the village boundary, Munniappan, on the return journey from the temple to the well. Elsewhere, however, this sacrifice is considered optional or extra.

shrine is usually found by the roadside of the main thoroughfare leading to the village.⁴⁶ Where the muni near her no longer marks the roadside

boundary or entrance to that village, it is probably because the village has expanded after the temple was built. (See, for example, Map 17).

Other, minor roads leading into a village also have a ritual boundary drawn across them, although only residents would be able to locate them. Beyond

the village in each direction there is a particular tree, which has been fixed upon by tradition.⁴⁷ Now and again the spirits of men who have died

in unusual circumstances return to trouble women of the village. These troublesome spirits, called pēy, must be exorcised by lengthy rituals.⁴⁸

Near the end of the ceremonial the pēy is asked which road away from the village he would like to take. Once named, the girl who is possessed is led in that direction, towards the tree in question. There a lock of hair is cut off and nailed into the wooden trunk. Before re-entering the village, however, she is stopped beside another tree, also designated by tradition, and told to face the East.

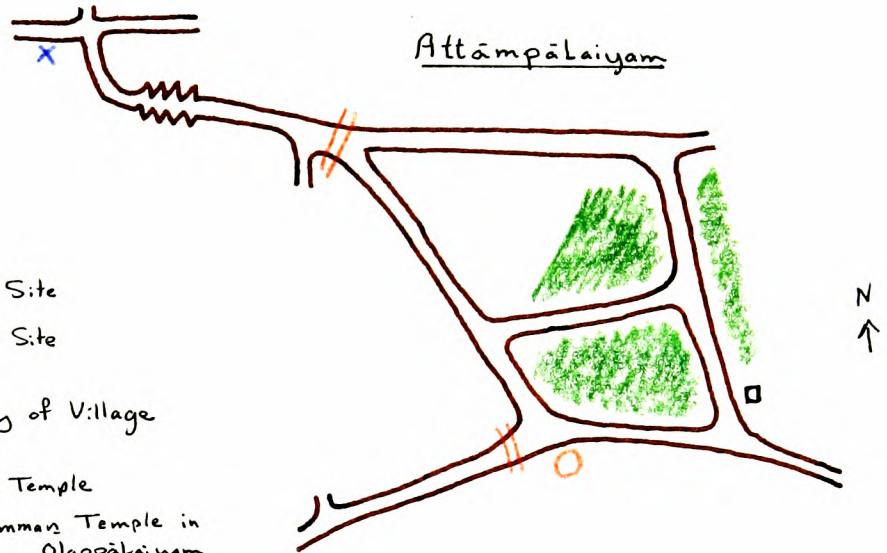
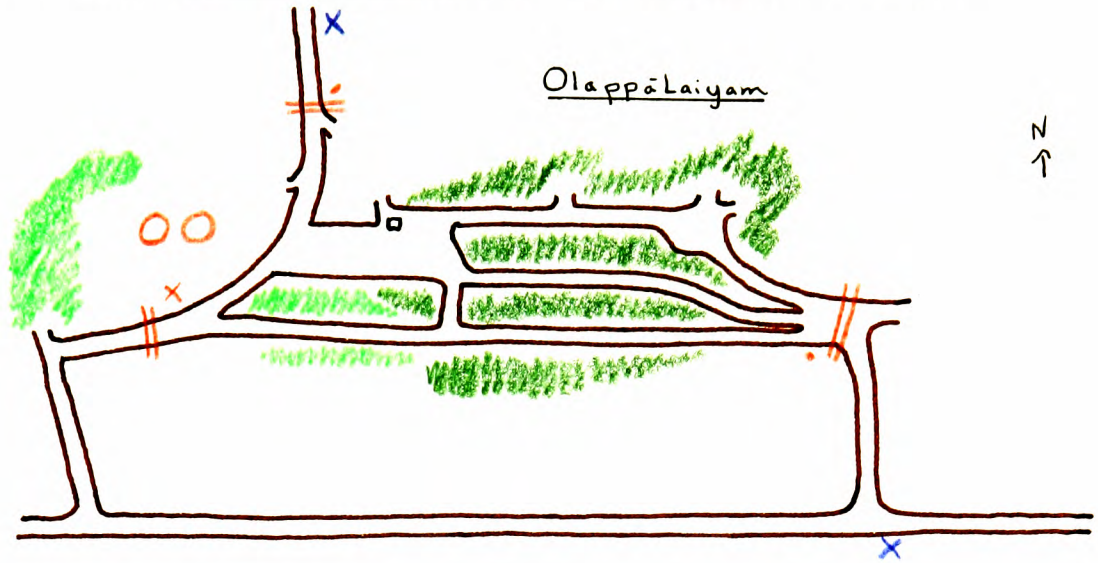
This second tree is the one which marks the ritual border of the village. At the boundary the girl's head is encircled three times, clockwise, with

⁴⁶ The well used for both Pāriyammaṅ and Mākāliyamman should not lie in the direction of a burning ground and should not be the major drinking well of the settlement. Usually it lies just outside the settlement area in a field. The well may, however, be used for agricultural purposes.

⁴⁷ The tree is usually growing on government land (border of a public thoroughfare) because owners of private land would object to a tree on their property being used in this manner. The tree should be of a species which is green throughout the year. Otherwise there is no specification of botanical variety, although tamarind trees are favourites. In Olappālai, am there are only two such trees, one marking the boundary to the North and the other to the East. The only other access road to the settlement, the main one, is guarded by Mākāliyamman and her associated muni.

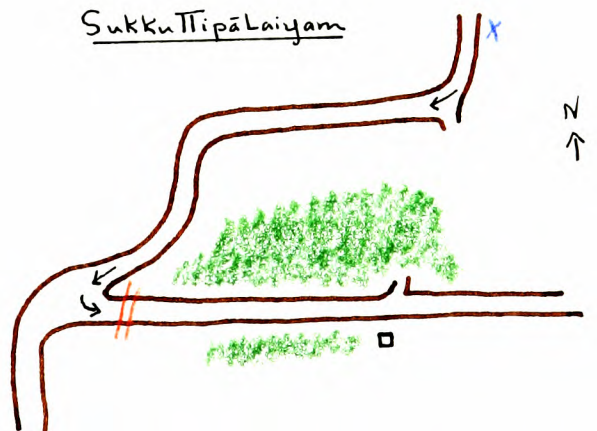
⁴⁸ The ritual associated with spirit exorcism is elaborate and the material that was gathered is rich. Only a few excerpts from it are given here. The main body of the description has been reserved for a separate article.

MAP 17: THE RITUAL BOUNDARIES OF VILLAGE SITES



KEY

- Road
- ⋈ Not to Scale
- █ Old Habitation Site
- █ New Habitation Site
- Vi.Nāyakar
- == Ritual Boundary of Village
- Tamarind Tree
- Mākāliyamma Temple
- Split Mākāliyamma Temple in Olappālaiyam
- ✕ KaṣuppaNacāmi
- ✕ Tree Used in Spirit Exorcism
- Ritual Approach to Village



a pot of cow dung and some sticks of cardamun. These are thrown away and the girl is doused with water from head to foot. Finally the spirit is asked to take an oath that it will not return and the girl must jump over a lighted palm leaf and an ulakkai or pounding pestle. All these ceremonies are to purify her and to remove the polluting effects of the spirit before the girl may cross the ritual boundary to re-enter the village.

It is at the same boundary that men carrying the bier of a deceased towards the burial ground during a funeral are required to make one half turn counterclockwise before proceeding. Although informants are not very explicit on this point, the turning is probably meant to confuse any evil spirits (pēy, picāco) so that they will neither follow the burial party nor cross into the village proper. Related to this is the fact that the female mourners at a funeral always remain within the village limits, never proceeding to the graveyard itself. Informants cannot readily explain the reason for this restriction, but I would suggest that it may be related, not just to an assumption that women are too emotional to withstand the sight of an actual burial (or cremation), but also to the fact that they are considered to be more vulnerable than men to attack and pollution by the excited activity of spirits who hover beyond the village boundary at this time.

In a general way, therefore, it may be said that there are three important spaces or areas marked out by ritual activities. These are concentric, but roughly square in shape.⁴⁹ The first is kātu or the no-man's land of forest scrub and of wild animals beyond the cultivated village area. The second is the ūr or habitation site (festival area in the case of a

⁴⁹ In classical Hindu cosmology space is generally conceived of as square. See S. Krauss, The Hindu Temple (Calcutta, University Press, 1946), Vol. I, p. 39. At a local and less philosophic level, the squareness of space is implied by informant's constant reference to the four directions and by the use of a square space for all important temple and life-cycle rituals.

temple) filled with people and human activity. The third is the kōyil (shrine) or vītu (house) of an individual deity or living person. These three areas are successively better and better protected from the capricious and often malicious will of the pēy (spirits) and pūtam (giants). Each successive boundary is guarded with increasing intensity by protective deities or kāval deyvan.

Each of these three areas enjoys an enhanced degree of ritual purity over the one preceding it. At each boundary human beings must meet successively more elaborate conditions to assure increasing degrees of purity, before they are allowed to enter. People who have been outcasted, like untouchables, were, according to tradition, not allowed to enter onto a troublesome village site. They were forced to live in the kāṭu or in the untouchable settlements, called cēri. As has been demonstrated, people possessed by spirits must still undergo purification before entry into an ūr area. The condition of purity sufficient for entry onto a village area is inadequate for purposes of passage into the inner rooms of a house, or into a temple shrine. Women who are menstrating and men who have been polluted by the recent death of a male parallel relative are allowed into a touchable village, but not into these latter places.

Beyond the kāṭu in the mountains surrounding Koṅku, (particularly the Koḷḷimalai), live the most dangerous of the spirits, the kuṭisātan or human familiars. It is to these mountains on the edge of Koṅku that people are said to go to study sorcery. The abode of the divinities is also beyond Koṅku proper, but above it, in the upper world vānam (associated with sky and rain clouds), rather than outside its boundaries. Divinity is manifest, in particular, in rain that has fallen to earth from this vānam to form rivers and wells. As has been indicated, these latter are the places to and from which symbols of the divine are taken in

ritual.⁵⁰

Further evidence of this ordered series of concentric spaces can be found in household and life-cycle ritual. A tōraNam, for example, is not only tied for a Māriyamma or Mākāliyamma festival, but also on the occasion of a wedding. It is always tied on the main route leading to the house or shrine, and must be between this ritual focus and the local Viñāyaka temple. All the guests who participate in the festivities are expected to stop and to pay their respects to Viñāyaka. Then they proceed to the place in question by walking under this archlike construction. This assures that the god responsible for an auspicious start to things (or for the removal of obstacles) has been worshipped in advance, and guarantees a minimal state of purity for all those proceeding to the place where the ritual will be performed.

A similar arch or string of margosa leaves may be hung at the entrance of a house if a person inside has a contagious disease (like smallpox) to indicate that no unnecessary visitors may enter. Although informants did not mention this themselves, the line of leaves appears to be intended to exclude not only people, but also any unwelcome spirits who might otherwise hover around the house at this time. Similar strings of leaves are tied at the entrance to a newly-built house, before occupation, again to keep malign influences at bay.⁵¹ Thus a tōraNam can be said to mark off a festival space from an ordinary one. It simultaneously marks the passage through which participants must enter and away from which all undesired comers must be kept.

⁵⁰ See D. Pocock and L. Dumont, "Pure and Impure", in Contributions To Indian Sociology, Vol. III, pp. 24-5 for a further discussion of the ~~significance of water~~ in ritual contexts.

⁵¹ A similar precaution is taken during the festival of Tai poñkal, but using a slightly different kind of leaf. See Section II C 2.

Related to the question of boundaries and the placation of malign spirits which might otherwise cross them is a short ceremony which takes place at about three in the morning, after the Pattirakāli festival is over and just before the festivals at the Cīva temple begin. This ritual is referred to as kirāman cānti or 'cooling the kirāman'. In it a Brahman priest, accompanied by an UTaiyār (potter), will go to the far Southeast corner of the festival area surrounding the three temples. (See Map 15). Here the UTaiyār will sacrifice a goat and mix its blood into a pot full of boiled rice. The potter circles the temple area once, clockwise, at a run, throwing handfuls of the mixture in the air and shouting. As he runs he is held from behind by two men who have tied a sort of leash made of strips of cloth around his waist.

The man throwing the bloody mixture must be held down to prevent his body being lifted by the spirits who dart about in excitement as the food offerings are thrown. The same men then circle the area a second time, carrying lighted torches (made from bunches of palmyra palm leaves) and shouting loudly. The fire and noise are said to frighten the satisfied spirits away. The entire ritual, spoken of as 'cooling the kirāman'⁵² is thought of as a preparation for the festival to follow. In fact, the participants do not circle the entire kirāman but only the temple area. The shrine complex here is made to represent the entire kirāman for ritual purposes, just as in classical speculation the Hindu temple can be said to represent the entire world.⁵³

Thurston has recorded several similar descriptions of kirāman festivals,

⁵² See the same Section II C 2 for a discussion of the general significance of 'cooling'.

⁵³ See S. Kramrisch, The Hindu Temple, Vol. II, p. 360.

where rice mixed with blood is thrown in the air during a procession through a village, and the remainder deposited beyond the boundary of the habitation site.⁵⁴ A similar occurrence was described at the end of the Ankālamma festival. Here, on the last night, the priest dances around the temple grounds with a goat's liver on a winnowing fan in his hands and a garland of intestines around his neck. These are then placed on a deserted rise outside the festival area and a goat is sacrificed to its guardian, KaruppaNācāmi.

A kind of ritual boundary is similarly drawn around a house during a funeral. This is done by sacrificing a chicken (goat if the corpse has remained in the house all night) and carrying the bleeding, headless body in one complete circle, counterclockwise, around it, before giving the corpse to a Paraiyan for disposal. Clearly, theⁿ blood sacrifice is closely associated with the demarcation of boundaries. In a broad sense a sacrifice can be said itself to create or mark this limit. In informants' eyes, however, the boundary is predetermined and all sacrifices are intended to placate the guardian who resides beside it.

In the foregoing it has been argued that ritual space and the boundaries of that space are important both in temple and in life-cycle ritual. Each festival defines an ordered series of these spaces, centring on the shrine of a particular god or house of a particular family. In addition, many deities are spoken of as the patrons or guards of fixed geographic areas. Māriamma is the goddess of the Kirāman and Mākāliamma the goddess of an ūr. Ankālamma's association with a territory is much less specific, although there may be some link between her and the nāTu area as a whole. Later the association between KaruppaNācāmi (the black guardian) and

⁵⁴ See Thurston, Castes and Tribes, Vol. IV, pp. 335-6 and also, perhaps, pp. 342-3 and 354.

individual family or clan fields will also be discussed. (See Section II B 2).

What, however, about Pattirakāli and Cīva, the other two deities who are important in the yearly festival cycle? Replies to questions about these two gods were usually vague. For informants these great deities are remote. Cīva is Lord of the Universe, and his wife Pārvati is the source of cakti or 'life power' which is diffused through it. Pattirakāli has generalized powers over the world of spirits and malign influences. This much informants can clarify. Any discussion of this kind, however, rapidly brings the comment that divinity, in its essence, is always found in the male/female pair, Cīva and Pārvati. All male divinities are ultimately manifestations of Cīva, all female deities, forms of Pārvati. Beyond this there is simply Kaṭavul, the divine in a diffuse, all-encompassing form.

All gods have a terrifying aspect, all are inscrutable and all can cause disorder and bring ruin to a man if they are angered. One informant even apologized to me for their evident caprice. Female forms of divinity are considered to control cakti or 'life force'. On the whole they are considered to be more readily approachable than the male gods and to take somewhat more interest in a devotee's personal difficulties. Pārvati, however, is so merged with Cīva in her role as his consort, that informants rarely speak of her or address her independently of him.

In their worship, therefore, devotees generally favour the various manifestations of Pārvati (as Pattirakāli, Aṅkālaṃman, Māriyaṃman and Mākāliyaṃman) where a female goddess presides alone in her temple. In general the less the immediate connection or association with Pārvati these other female goddesses have, the less of a role, if any, their husband plays.

The stories told by informants indicate that these manifestations of female divinity are concerned with the battle against and control of evil spirits in a way which Pārvati, as the wife of Cīva, never is. Beyond these great goddesses, however, are those female forms of divinity which occur in tiny, hand-hewn shrines about the countryside. These are 'younger' in age than the great goddesses. Pāycci, for example, is described as no more than thirty, and the seven Kannimār are barely in their teens. (See Section II B 2). The latter are poetically characterized as kanni or 'unmarried girls', who still wear the long pāvatai or skirts of childhood.

As the lesser female divinities recede further and further from direct association with Pārvati they grow younger in age. Their husbands become first less prominent and then non-existent. At the same time, however, these young females are given male guardians or protectors to accompany them in their shrines. Younger deities also become more and more closely identified with the people of one particular faction, territory or clan. Beyond these lesser female deities and their helpers or protectors are the spirits of men who have died an untimely death. Most of these are male. They are more human than divine. Some attack women with an amorous intent while others, the kuṭisātan or human familiars, are thoroughly demonic. The just, if inscrutable character of the great gods is unquestioned, but as one moves through lesser and lesser manifestations of the divine and into the spirit world, these beings become more and more open to bargaining, to propitiation and finally to direct and malicious manipulation by living men.

This concludes Section I. The intention in the first half of this account has been to describe Koṅku as a region and to provide a summary description of the peasant communities of the area. Questions about caste, social hierarchy, political organization and the nature of the deities have all been touched upon, briefly. Section II is intended to balance the

foregoing with a description of family, kin, and of the celebration of important events in an individual's life-cycle. At the end of the second section, however, the problem of the factional division between the right and the left-hand castes and of the nature of several basic ritual themes, will be taken up once again.

PART II: KIN, CLAN AND RITUAL WELL-BEING

II A) Marriage, Family and The Universe of Kin

1) Cross and Parallel Relatives

The kin universe of a Koṅku peasant is roughly coterminous with the boundaries of his endogamous subcaste. Strictly speaking, however, there is no precise term for this social unit in the Tamil language. Instead, there are many terms, all of which can refer to smaller or larger social divisions, depending on whom ego is talking to and the social distance between him and the listener.¹ Non-Indians have a tendency to imagine that castes comprise a series of discrete and exclusive social entities which can be thought of like blocks stacked in a vertical pile. People who live within the system, however, do not speak about the matter in such precise terms.

A person from outside Koṅku who asks a man belonging to this region about his jāti, or caste, will receive nothing better than a vague caste 'title' in answer to his question. Thus his informant might answer that he is a 'Piḷḷai' or a 'Mutaliyār'. If the interrogator and the informant are both resident in the region, however, then a more specific answer such as Kaṅaku Piḷḷai (Accountant Piḷḷai) or Kaikkōlan Mutaliyār (Weaving Mutaliyār) could be expected. If the questioner, in addition, already had a

¹ For a further discussion of this point see L. Dumont, Homo Hierarchicus, pp. 62-3 and p. 87.

general knowledge of the person's social position, then the reply could be still more specific. He could then reasonably hope to obtain some indication of the actual marriage group to which the informant belonged, such as the Cirun-tāli-kaTTi Kaikkōlan, or those 'weavers who tie a small marriage necklace'. This is the most difficult step in the inquiry as not all marriage communities are named. In addition some names like that referring to a small necklace have a slightly derogatory meaning and may be consciously avoided. Therefore, when questions about jāti are asked, the precise meaning of the answer obtained can only be derived from context. Many other terms in Tamil, like nāṭu and kirāman, are similar in nature.

Nonetheless, it is possible to say that jāti is the term usually used to designate the widest limits of the particular kin universe under discussion. When a speaker uses jāti he implies that the people referred to have something in common, they are of one 'class'. UTamparai, on the other hand, refers to those people who act as if they are associated, even though others may not normally class them in this fashion. They are the largest group who cooperate, using the idiom of kinship when they meet together. All the guests at a particular wedding or funeral, for example, can be referred to as uTamparai by the host. This means that these guests are acting with the concern of relatives, even though, in fact, the group includes unrelated friends and neighbours. Although jāti and uTamparai are not exact equivalents, they are similar terms. The first refers to the widest group to whom others consider ego to be related, the second to the largest group who act towards ego with the concern of kinsmen on important occasions. UTamparai refers to known people while jāti can refer to those who merely claim the same caste title.

Within this widest universe of kin-like people, ego can generally identify a named vakuppu, 'division or class', or vanicam, 'kindred'.

These words refer to a roughly endogamous group within which previous marriage ties are assumed to exist. People included in this classification are contakkārar, 'kin or relatives'. A precise knowledge of the genealogical link with particular contakkārar is unnecessary for the use of this term. Some are dūratta contam or 'distant relations'. Many people, when asked if they were related to their wife before marriage, will respond that the union was one of dūratta contam.

The third and smallest concentric circle of kin is the kuTumpam or family. The kuTumpam is a commensal unit focused around one or more married women and their respective husbands. Some people explicitly say pen illai, kuTumpam illai, meaning 'without a woman there cannot be a family'. A man with two wives, however, generally has two kuTumpam. A man who keeps a woman without marrying her does not establish a kuTumpam, but neither would he ask her to cook for him. Each would continue to live, effectively, with his own family of origin. They may meet frequently, but the man's formal wife, or his mother, will continue to cook for him.

If three or four generations of people are clustered together, then their eating habits determine whether they are a single kuTumpam or several. If ego eats regularly with his parent's kuTumpam he belongs to it. If he eats separately with his wife and children, then he has formed a separate household. Implied in sharing food is, of course, the sharing of responsibilities and hardships undertaken to procure that food. Pappamma and Sundaram spoke of me as a member of their kuTumpam, even though I was not biologically related to its other members. This was because I shared food with their unit and contributed to its support. The term kuTumpam can also refer in a general sense to all close relatives, just as jāti and yakappu have a meaning which varies with context. The general term for close relations, however, is pakkattala contam. KuTumpam is usually

reserved for the specific usage described above.²

A consideration of kuTumpam necessitates some mention of the prevalence of 'joint' family units in Koñku. In the material collected for this account, there was not a single case where a division of family property had been made without a similar division of cooking and eating arrangements. A break in the commensal unit, therefore, appears always to precede (if it does not precisely coincide with) a formal division of family property.³ However, as many households have little or no property to divide, it makes more sense to speak of the 'family' as 'that group of real or fictive kinsmen whose adult members share an obligation to contribute to the support and functioning of one commensal unit'. This definition follows an approach to this problem already proposed by others elsewhere.⁴

To be more exact, then, the Tamil term kuTumpam will be translated in this account as 'household'. A nuclear family is a kuTumpam which contains a single married couple and their non-adult children.⁵ A supplemented household is a kuTumpam containing one or more widowed parents, adult sibs, or adult children in addition to this single married pair. A fully joint household, on the other hand, has a core comprised of two or more married

² Thus the term kuTumpam in this account differs from Meyer's description of a similar word, kutumb, in Central India. See his Caste and Kinship in Central India, pp. 169-72

³ A similar pattern has been noted among Sirkanda peasants in the sub-Himalaya region. See Pauline Kolenda, "Regional Differences in Indian Family Structure" (Revised version of a paper read at The Association for Asian Studies Meetings in New York on April 5th, 1966. Unpublished) p. 18. Of course property can be divided in the accountant's register for the purpose of evading land ceiling legislation without necessitating a division of the actual commensal unit. However, few families own enough property to face such a problem. Where they do, the male head of the family usually maintains active control over the property of subordinates until the moment when eating arrangements are formally divided within the family.

⁴ P. Kolenda, "Regional Differences", p. 18.

⁵ Adults are defined as men over thirty or women over twenty-two.

couples. A nuclear family may be 'depleted' by the loss of one (or rarely of both) parents or in a case where an unmarried adult elects to live alone.

The positive value attached to living in joint household units, and the percentage of families who form such units in practice, varies considerably from caste to caste in Kōṅku. From Chart 21, some idea of the total percentage of joint units, and the variation in the degree of preference for joint family living, by caste, can be surmised. The most general and important observation to be made is that about 76. of the people in the sample live in nuclear, depleted nuclear, or single adult households. For all castes, therefore, the proportion of joint or supplemented households in the total is low. Because the latter constitute only one out of four households and because the total number of kuṭumpam in the sample (only 562) is small, it is difficult to say anything further with accuracy. Perhaps a slight correlation between caste status and the frequency of joint family households can be noted.

There are, however, also certain important differences in regard to the relative proportion of joint families in the right and in the left-hand communities which may be tentatively observed. Depleted nuclear families which remain independent, and unmarried, single adults who live alone, are three times as frequent among the right-hand castes as among the left. On the other hand, both joint and supplemented households are twice as frequent among castes of the left-hand community as among those of the right. Brahmans, clearly, have the highest rate of joint households in the sample. This difference is in keeping with the higher rate of literacy among Brahmans and the prestigious castes of the left, and with the enhanced emphasis which the latter castes generally place on the world-view expressed in the classical Sanskrit law books, the Dharma Śāstras. This prestigious and

Chart 21: Joint Household Statistics, By Caste

Key:

- A) Sample size
 B) Caste name
 C) % of joint families
 D) % of supplemented families
 E) % of nuclear families
 F) % of depleted families and/or of single adults

A	B	C	D	E	F	Total
37	Pirāman (Brahman)	27%	16%	43%	14%	100%

Right-Hand Castes

187	Kavūṅṅar	15%	15%	49%	21%	100%
28	Paṅṅaran	11%	18%	57%	14%	100%
17	Uṅṅaiyar	0%	11%	60%	29%	100%
51	ṅṅar	10%	6%	66%	18%	100%
8	ṅṅitan	0%	13%	87%	0%	100%
39	Paṅṅaiyan	5%	3%	64%	28%	100%
330	Average:	7%	11%	63%	18%	100%

Left-Hand Castes

23	Mutaliyar	13%	31%	47%	9%	100%
30	Ācāri	13%	20%	67%	0%	100%
27	ṅṅakkan	11%	11%	63%	15%	100%
33	Veṅṅan	6%	16%	76%	0%	100%
82	Māṅṅari	20%	14%	60%	6%	100%
195	Average:	13%	18%	63%	6%	100%

Note: These statistics include households from other settlements nearby, as well as from Olappālaiyan proper. Figures of the right-hand Veṅṅans, left-hand ṅṅitans and on both divisions of Ceṅṅiyārs have been omitted from the chart because of a lack of sufficient information.

literate tradition lays stress on the deference which a son should show his father, a wife to her husband, and a bride to her mother-in-law. The more imbued a family is with the teachings of this classical literature, the stronger the emphasis they place on family harmony and respect for elders and, therefore, on restraining a tendency to break up, in individual cases, into nuclear family units. Although this difference in the percentage of joint household units between the two factions is not, in itself, very striking, the general picture clearly fits with a wealth of other observable contrasts in the traditions and life-style of these two large social divisions.

People generally speak of the lack of joint families at the present as a degenerate situation. They think of such a pattern of family living as something which was once common to all castes, but which is now dying out. They remark, further, that this degenerate trend is most rapid among the wealthy, cosmopolitan, land-owning communities. It is common to hear someone say, disparagingly, that people can no longer live in joint families because they have become more argumentative and more independent than ever before. They are said not to respect their seniors as people once did. Now, informants claim, every young man wants to obtain his share of the inheritance as soon as he marries, so that he can break off and form a nuclear unit of his own. Whether people are correct in this view of their history is open to doubt. Unfortunately, no information is available on the percentage of joint family units in *koṅku* in the past, but the picture which informants paint, clearly, hangs heavy with the emotive colour of a previous 'golden age'.

The logic of the categories implicit in the kinship terminology of the Dravidian language family has been a topic of considerable discussion in

recent years.⁶ The languages of this group differ in the vocabulary they employ, and even small endogamous groups within one language differ in details of usage. However, the general pattern of kin terms is common to the entire Dravidian-speaking area and even to the neighbouring but unrelated languages such as Sinhalese. The diagram below lists only the fundamental terms, as they are used by the largest and most influential caste in Konku, the Kavuntaru. Only the basic category distinctions which underlie this terminology are considered in this section. For a discussion of the detailed differences between the usage in different caste groups see Section II A 2. A full list of kin terms is recorded in Appendix Six.

Chart 22: Elementary Kin Terms

Generation	<u>Parallel Terms</u>		<u>Cross Terms</u>	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Grandparents	Appāru FF	Āttā FN	Appucci MF	Ammāyi FM
Parents	Appā F	Ammā M	Māman MB	Attai FZ
Ego's Generation (elder)	AMMan B(e)	Akkā Z(e)	Maccān MBS(e), FZS(e)	Naṅkayā MBZ(e), FZD(e)
Ego's Generation (younger)	Tampi B(y)	Taṅkacci Z(y)	Māpillai MBS(y), FZS(y)	KoRuntivā MBZ(y), FZO(y)
Children	Makan S	Makal D	Marumakan *MS, *FS	Marumakal *MD *ZD
Grandchildren	Pēran SS	Pētti SD	Pēran DS	Pētti DD

N.B. * Male speaker
 • Female speaker

⁶ For example, E.R. Leach, Ful Eliya, A Village in Ceylon, (Cambridge, University Press, 1961) and the several publications of Louis Dumont, (see bibliography).
 and Nur Yalman

From the chart it should be clear that within the full kin universe the terminology makes four important kinds of distinctions. It states whether relatives are: a) parallel or cross, b) male or female, c) what generation they belong to and, d) their relative age. The sex of the speaker is relevant only to certain details. The relative age of the speaker, however, is very important as persons younger than ego are never addressed by the kin term, but only by name. Terms for younger kinsmen are used only in reference. All the parallel terms borrow morphemically from words used to designate ego's immediate nuclear family or his paternal grandparents. Thus they are all built on a few basic morphemic stems. The cross terms are more varied, but they also exhibit a certain degree of internal linguistic association.⁷

Of these four distinctions, the categorical separation of cross and parallel relatives is the most foreign to English speakers and therefore deserves the most complete discussion. Its importance lies in specifying which relatives stand in a marriageable relationship to ego and his nuclear family members. The contrast between cross and parallel relatives becomes clearer and also more significant when the extension of these terms to more distant relatives is examined.⁸ All the male siblings of the males shown in the parallel category of the chart are referred to by using the same term as ego would use for the equivalent member of his own nuclear family. The only modification is that periya (big) or cinna (little) are added to terms for males in senior generations in order to distinguish the age of these

⁷ Dumont, *Une Sous-Caste*, pp. 275-76.

⁸ Dumont has underplayed the importance of the contrast between cross and parallel terms for grandparents which he, himself, recorded. *Ibid.*, pp. 277-280. Others, too, have skipped over this detail. It may be that the contrast in the grandparental generation is entirely absent in some areas where Tamil is spoken. If so, the relative emphasis on these terms in Konkku would correlate with the general importance given to clans and to the territorial claims of lineally related males in this region. (See Section II B a).

kinsmen relative to ego's own parents or grandparents. Thus FFB(e) is periya appāru, FB(y) is cinna appā (pronounced cittappā), while FBS(e) is aNŋan. The same principle holds for female siblings of females in the nuclear family and their children. Thus MZ(e) is periyamaā and MZD(y) is taṅkagōi. Husbands of parallel females are called by the male parallel term in senior generations, but by the male cross term in ego's own and succeeding generations. Wives of cross males are called by the female cross term in senior generations, and by the parallel term in ego's own and ensuing generations.

These principles for the use of the terminology can be extended as far as genealogical knowledge will take one. Disputes over Radcliffe-Brown's use of the term 'extension' to the contrary, informants do clearly reason about distant relatives by this kind of 'algebra'. They will trace a connection back through several generations, or out 'sideways' through several marriages by noting where each change of generation of sex and each marriage took place and applying the 'terminological rules' to determine exactly what term of reference is appropriate. Thus FFFBSSS(e) would be periya appā while ZHFWDZD(y) would be naṅkayā. This kind of reasoning is very important in assessing whether or not a girl is marriageable, although some castes will allow marriage with persons who should be addressed by parallel terms, as will later be seen. For the moment, however, the point to be stressed is that this cross/parallel distinction is fundamental to the terminology. Reasoning in this idiom proceeds via a logical series of either/or choices.

To immediately classify all relatives as either cross or parallel kinsmen, however, is too simple. Men can easily and permanently be assigned to one of these two categories, women can not. In the case of a male, all other males in his subcaste are either parallel relatives with whom he

shares a common descent, inheritance and the danger of death pollution, or they are non-parallel relatives with whom he may exchange gifts and whose sisters and daughters he may marry. Sons born to men of either category will be automatically classified as members of the same group to which their father belonged.

A similar terminological distinction is recognized between cross and parallel women. The contrast between the two categories of females is more difficult, however, because not all female children can be classified as members of the same category as their mother. The arrows in the chart below indicate a mother-daughter tie, while the vertical columns represent the group of women who have been born as sisters, in successive generations, to a single line of males. The colours indicate the two categories of the terminology. Thus the daughters of an āttā (FFW, parallel) are attai (FM, cross). The daughters of an attai are naikayā (W or BW, cross), and her daughters are makaI (D, cross).

Women are born into one category (that of their father) but marry into the other where they produce children. Thus a woman who is a sister 'parallel' female to ego will become a FZ or 'cross' female for his son. Women belong to the 'cross' category in the eyes of their husband's and their husband's parents, but they are mothers and parallel relatives to their children. Women married into ego's family in senior generations are 'mothers', while women who marry ego or his sons are 'cross' relatives (wives and daughters-in-law). A woman's relations with her own and succeeding generations are determined by the category to which her husband and her children belong. Diagram Two, below, shows how the same woman is classified as 'parallel' by ego's father, but as a 'cross' relative by ego and his sons.

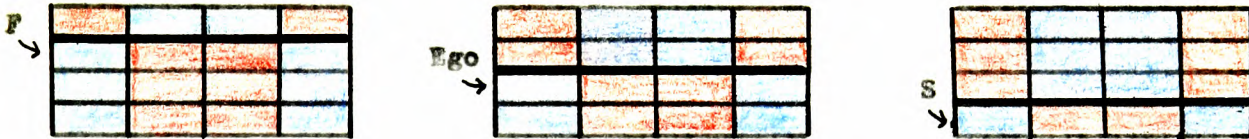
When it is made clear that the category into which sisters of parallel males fall when they belong to senior generations is a reversal of where they

Chart 23: Female Kin Terms

Generation	Parallel Males'		Cross Males'	
	Z	W	Z	W
FP	Ammāyi	Āttā	Āttā	Ammāyi
F	Attai	Ammā	Ammā	Attai
Ego	Akkā Taṅkacci	Naṅkayā Koṅṅuntiyā	Naṅkayā Koṅṅuntiyā	Akkā Taṅkacci
S	Makal	Marumakal	Marumakal	Makal

N.B. Parallel Women Cross Women

Diagram 2: Change in Category of Kin Term Used to Refer To One Female By Three Descending Generations Of Males



fall when they are in ego's gen., there is no difficulty in speaking of ego's mother as a cross relative and of his FZ as a parallel female. These two women are precisely this in the eyes of ego's father, but for ego they are reversed. A FZ is always a cross relative for her nephew and a mother can not be anything but a parallel female in the eyes of her son. This is just another way of stating what others have said before when they described the Dravidian kin terminology as a 'system of bifurcate merging'.⁹ A brother and sister are parallel relatives, but their children will be cross cousins and (if of opposite sex) are eminently suited marriage partners. ~~children of cousins are again parallel relatives.~~

All cross relatives can be thought of as descended from a brother-sister pair (actual or terminological) in the preceding generation. ~~==~~

⁹ J. Dumont, "Hierarchy and Marriage Alliance", p. 26.

All brothers and sisters, therefore, are potential 'cross' relatives themselves. They acquire this relationship, in a sense, through the birth and marriage of their children. In Koṅku, people of all castes favour ZD marriage. Some castes sanction 'terminological' sister marriage as well, although everywhere partnership with an actual sister would be considered incestuous and strongly disapproved of.¹⁰ The degree to which this ban on sexual contact is extended beyond the actual sister to terminological sisters and to sister's daughters varies in different regions of the South. In Koṅku most castes do not extend the ban beyond the sister herself. (See Section II A 2).

The kin terminology discussed above irrevocably classifies all ego's relations as either 'cross' or 'parallel' kinsmen. To use the terminology one must employ the either/or logic of the categories implicit in it. Nothing in this language, however, specifies the nature of the descent groupings which may coexist with it. Nothing, for example, specifies the nature of the relationship between all those males who fall into the same category. Depending on the community using the terminology, each category of males may or may not contain named descent groups.¹¹ All the castes described in this account do have such named descent units within the mānan/tampi and mānan/maṣṣān categories. The knowledge of and importance given to these clan groupings, however, varies considerably with the caste. The term used to refer to these descent divisions also varies. The chart below gives the word used by individual castes to designate male clan

¹⁰ One of the worst swear words in the language refers to actual brother-sister copulation.

¹¹ A few Tamil-speaking castes outside the Koṅku region have exogamous, named, female descent units called kilai or 'branches'. These, where they occur, do not fill the terminological categories, but, rather cut across them (as the arrows in Chart 22 show). None of the castes in this account illustrate this feature.

divisions.¹²Chart 24: Terms for Clan, by Caste

<u>Right-Hand</u>		<u>Left-Hand</u>	
<u>Caste</u>	<u>Clan Term</u>	<u>Caste</u>	<u>Clan Term</u>
KavuNTar	kulam	Brahman	kōtiram
Koṅku CeTTiyār	kulam	KaNakku PiLLai	kōtiram
NāTār	kulam	Kōmatti CeTTiyār	kōtiram
FaNTāram	nāTu	Āsāri	kōtiram
UTaiyār	nāTu	Mutaliyār	kūTTam
Koṅku Nāvitan	nāTu	Nāyakkan	kūTTam
Koṅku VaNNan	nāTu	Non-Koṅku Nāvitan	nāTu
Paraiyan	nāTu	Non-Koṅku VaNNan	nāTu
		VēTan	nāTu
		Mātari	kūTTam (?)
		Kuravan	kūTTam

It is clear at a glance that the terms used by the right-hand castes can be contrasted with those used by the left. There is also a contrast within the right-hand group between the term used by the landed and wealthiest three castes and the term used by the ritual service groups associated with them. For the left-hand division this division is between the highly literate upper castes, who consciously use the Sanskrit term kōtiram (Mutaliyār excepted)¹³ and the other, less respectable service castes and landless labourers who use nāTu and kūTTam respectively.¹⁴ Kulam, kūTTam and kōtiram

¹² In selecting the term clan, this account follows the usage of Meyer Fortes in his now classic essay, "The Structure of Unilineal Descent Groups", AA, Vol. 55, 1953, p. 25. Here Fortes reserves the term lineage for a corporate unit which is identifiable 'from the outside' and where the significance of descent, in economic and legal terms, is paramount. He contrasts this kind of grouping with that of a wide and often dispersed division which is ordered to the notion of a mythological and non-demonstrable ancestry, and which lack a corporate economic and legal character. These latter groupings he has called clans. In following Fortes, Dumont's 'la lignée' has been translated by the term clan. The phenomena, however, is the same as the one which this latter author has described in Une Sous-Caste.

¹³ For a discussion of the unusual position of the Mutaliyār, see conclusion.

¹⁴ Kulam is derived from the Sanskrit kula meaning 'caste, herd or race'. KūTTam is an equivalent term, but is probably of Dravidian lexical origin. It means 'assembly, flock or heap'. See Burrow and Emeneau, A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary, p. 128 and Emeneau and Burrow, Dravidian Borrowings From Indo-Aryan, p. 25.

are all terms which refer to a large and physically scattered group. The men in this group assume that their lineal antecedents can be traced back to a single founding ancestor, via a common mythology, but the specific genealogical links between distant members often remain unknown. Even the name of the common ancestor can be unimportant.

The most important common characteristic of all clans is that they are spoken of as derived from descent groupings which were, at one time, exogamous units (they are ideally exogamous) even if, in some cases, they are not quite this today. Castes which use the term kulan or kuTTam have clan names which frequently describe a mythical common ancestor or are the name of a food or animal thought to bear a special relation to the group.¹⁵ Names of kētirams, on the other hand, sound literary. Many, it would seem, are the names of mythological sages directly borrowed from puranic texts. Kulan and kuTTam names, by contrast, most frequently borrow the names of local warriors or heroes of other kinds. The terms are colloquial and not literary ones. nāTu, the fourth term used to refer to clan divisions, is somewhat distinctive. This is because it makes a direct reference to some kind of territorial or political unit. Names of nāTu, it would appear, always match the names of actual territorial divisions of the past (names of the 24 nāTu of Koṅku, or of their subdivisions). Informants who use the name of a nāTu for their own descent division can usually locate the territory to which it refers, at least in rough outline.

Oral tradition in Koṅku suggests that the KavunTar themselves originally were exogamous by nāTu or territorial area.¹⁶ People think of Koṅku as a region which was settled or cleared in stages. —————→

¹⁵ See Section I B 2.

¹⁶ See Section II B 2.

Each area or nāṭu, as it came under cultivation, became dominated by a leading KavunṬar family and around each of these big landlords a cluster of dependent ritual castes was formed. According to oral tradition, the service castes have retained their association with specific families and the nāṭu they dominated. In keeping with their conservatism on other matters, these ritual castes are said to maintain the fiction of exogamy by territory, while the KavunṬars themselves have long since found this system cumbersome and have changed over to clan names instead.

The term 'fiction' is suggested in regard to nāṭu exogamy, because the ritual service castes themselves are sometimes confused on this matter. Many informants can not remember the name of their nāṭu. Where they can remember it they often point out that māman/macoān have moved in and that both they and their marriageable relations now use the same nāṭu name. Thus a nāṭu, for the castes who use this term, is very often no longer exogamous, although the claim is always maintained that it was in the past. nāṭu names, however, have no positive association with endogamy, ~~etc.~~. When they are remembered they are most often used not in connection with marriage arrangements, but simply as an indication of a prestigious link with a great landowning family of that territory in the past.

The variation in the term used for 'clan' is related to certain differences^s in different castes, in the rules of marriage arrangement. There are three major variations in these rules, depending on the community in question. The most orthodox rules, from the point of view of the terminology, are followed by the high left-hand castes and by the service communities who use the nāṭu term. These castes calculate marriageability strictly by the algebraic logic of the terminology. In searching for a marriage partner for a son, the parents will first trace the genealogical connection between their family and any other particular family where a

a suitable girl can be found. When the general genealogical link between the two families is determined, the terminological relationship appropriate to the two people in question is easily calculated. If the girl falls into the parallel category, marriage is unthinkable. If, on the contrary, she falls into the 'cross' category and can be addressed by a term that indicates that she is not above ego in generation,¹⁷ then the first test of desirability is passed. Other considerations, of course, are later brought to bear. (See Section II A 2). According to this logic, any relative of the opposite sex who falls into the parallel category of the terminology is automatically excluded from consideration of marriage.

The test of this method or procedure, however, comes when the genealogical connection between ego and the girl in question is not precisely known. Exploratory inquiries would, of course, be made, but if the matter can not be decided the girl would probably be considered marriageable. That is, people with unknown connections are tentatively assumed to fall into the 'cross' category. There is no other term which can be used to describe them. How far this search for precise connection is carried, however, is a matter of some variation. Usually the inquiry is extended further on the father's side than on the mother's. Because the place of residence of ego's FF will be known, the most important question is whether the girl's FF or, indeed, any of her direct male ancestors have come from the same village. If they did, a parallel connection between the two would be suspected immediately. This would cancel the prospects of marriage unless it could be shown that one of the two men came to the village to reside matrilocally and was thus never lineally related to the first.

¹⁷ If she is terminologically a cross-relative of a senior generation, then the girl must be a FZ or a FFZ. Such a marriage is unthinkable because her F and the groom's FF (or FFF) would then have belonged to one clan.

There is a definite fear of discovering a lineal connection through males and of the incestuous relationship which would result from overlooking it. Vague doubts would be enough to break off most marriage negotiations. However, positive ignorance of any connection is enough to classify a girl as marriageable. It is impossible to get figures on how many people marry without exact knowledge of the previous genealogical connection with their spouse. Many people will say that they married duratta contam or 'distant relations' with whom they can not specify the connection. Others will simply say contam illai, or 'there was no relationship' previous to the marriage. Whether, however, their parents actually knew something more than this, at the time when the wedding was arranged, is difficult to ascertain. My general impression is that quite a number of people do marry distant or unknown members of the same endogamous subcaste. The percentage may be increasing with the increased ease of travel.¹⁸

Although the high ranking castes of the left-hand faction use the term kōtiram for their clans, they have not adopted the elaborate Sanskrit rules which are normally associated with this term, and which require that the groom avoid a bride whose MB's kōtiram is similar to that of his own MB. Neither did any informant mention the rule that exogamy in the father's kōtiram is only necessary through the 7th ascendant generation. All these castes, as well as the Brahmans themselves, simply employ, in practice, the algebraic reasoning about cross and parallel relatives which is described above.¹⁹

¹⁸ A rough guess of the percentage of people, at present, who do marry women to whom no clear connection can be traced might be 10 or 15%. This is a guess pertaining to the rural areas. The several castes have been averaged together.

¹⁹ Ācāris will allow MMZDD marriage (terminologically a parallel female) if the kōtirams of the bride and groom are different.

The Kavuntar community has marriage rules which are significantly different from those described above. For this dominant and landed caste it is the kulam which acts as the exogamous unit. The kulam name is always known, and any girl whose father was of a different kulam from that of the bridegroom (even if she be slightly older in age than he) is marriageable. This means that girls who are terminologically parallel relatives are quite acceptable spouses, as long as their father belongs to a different clan than ego's own.²⁰ Generation, too, is not a concern in the same sense. Marriages with terminological MZs occur now and then. I even recorded one case of a marriage with the actual, biological MZ. This latter union was strongly disapproved of. It was done only to keep the wealth in the family (see Section II A 2), but the fact that it was carried through at all is significant. Marriages with actual MZs account for only 1.2% of all weddings recorded, but explicit disapproval of such a match among the Kavuntars themselves is of the mildest kind.²¹ It is rather that a positive preference operates in favour of terminological cross-cousins and MZs. (See Section II A 2).

A few touchable castes of both factions (the Konku Celiyār, Nātār, Mutaliyār, non-Konku Vanṅaṅ and the Nāyakkaṅ) are ambivalent about their marriage rules. They verbally disapprove of Kavuntars for marrying terminological 'sisters'. At the same time, however, they recognize the Kavuntars as the most numerous, most powerful and most prestigious caste in the region. They say, quite correctly, that Kavuntars make such marriages because they place economic considerations above the niceties of kinship algebra.

²⁰ The ritual service castes of the right-hand disapprove strongly of the Kavuntars on this account. They gossip about the Kavuntars freely, but the latter appear to be unperturbed.

²¹ Elsewhere in the South, where kilai or female exogamous units occur, these also take precedence over the terminological categories in matters of marriage. See Dumont, "Hierarchy and Marriage Alliance", p. 28.

I recorded no actual marriages with parallel relatives in these castes, but many people seemed to harbour the feeling, 'the Kavuntars do it, why can't we?'.
 .

It is the untouchable castes of the left-hand faction which supply the third distinct approach to marriage rules. In a sense they extend both of the above variations to their logical meeting point. Among the Vēṭan, Kuravan, and the four sub-castes of Kātāri where I made inquiries, male descent groups are always described as belonging to one of two exogamous moieties which interchange women. These divisions are always unnamed and, as far as I am aware, have no counterpart in ritual. Their only importance is in regulating marriage. The description given by informants in each case is similar. All the clans in the endogamous community are either 'brothers' to ego's own clan, or one of a series of 'brother' clans in the opposite (cross) moiety. Clans with 'brother' status can not marry among themselves. Each division must marry women from the other. In this situation, exogamy by clan groups is completely consistent with the categories of the kin terminology. There can never be a person who is a member of the subcaste, but whose position in terms of the parallel/cross terminology is unknown.

In Tamil a WZH (and a BWZH) are always called cakalan. These men are said to be 'like brothers'. It is the lowest castes of the left-hand faction who carry this reasoning to its ultimate conclusion. Kavuntars and Mutaliyars will allow a man to marry his own BAZHZ and insist that a difference in clan name is the only rule which must be observed. Many of the other castes, above, only forbid the marriage of a man with the P or D of an actual cakalan, but ignore the case of a woman who is only terminologically a 'sister' or a 'daughter' to such a man. Because of their

two-section or moiety system, however, the lowest left- and castes forbid ego's marriage with even these very distant but terminologically 'parallel' relatives.²² In these communities the clans of one moiety all stand in a sakalan relationship to one another. Sometimes an interesting story is told to explain how two clans in one of these moieties can be 'brothers'. The following was told to me by a priest of the Annappu subcaste of Mātāri, in Karur.

Long ago there were eight exogamous clans among the Annappu Mātāri. A man of one clan could marry a girl from any of the other seven. Then, one day, a man from the Pottunār clan had a beautiful daughter of marriageable age. A man from each of the other seven clans came and one by one they bargained with the father. He encouraged each separately and secretly accepted the bridewealth sum (parigan) from each one. In this way the father collected money from all seven men and proceeded to spend it. In the end, however, all seven men came to him at once, each one demanding the girl for himself. Then the man of the Pottunār clan answered, "I have only one daughter. How can I give her to seven men?". Thus he decided to put his daughter into a wooden box and let her float on the river. He asked the bravest of the suitors to wade into the river, rescue the girl and take her in marriage. A man of the Cōkanār clan then came forward, took the box from the river and brought it safely to the bank. When he opened the box, however, the girl jumped out, falling into the arms of this man crying, "Father, father, you have saved me!" From this time onwards the men of the Cōkanār clan have been unable to marry girls of the Pottunār clan.

Sometimes a 'brother' relationship between clans is explained in other ways, such as by a story that they are descended from a single male ancestor who had two wives. Half brothers, just as sakalan, use the terminology of full brothers in address.

This use of the term 'brother' in address is not limited, however, to

²² There are also references to this moiety division among the 'tribes' of Madras State in the Government of Madras Village Survey Monographs, No. 17, p. 9. Thurston makes a number of references to similar divisions in his Castes and Tribes.

parallel relatives (of roughly the same generation) within the endogamous community. A similar use of kin terms can often be observed between men of other castes, as long as their general social rank remains roughly equivalent to ego's own. In address across caste lines men always prefer parallel terms, so that no possibility of intermarriage is implied. A NāTār, for example, may address a slightly older man of the PaNTāram and UTaiyār castes as 'aNNan'. A younger man of these castes, just as a younger brother, will be addressed by name. A NāTār, however, would be hesitant to extend the use of the term aNNan to a Nāyakkan, as he would consider this latter caste to be rather beneath his own in status. PaNTāram usage is similar. They would use the term aNNan for older men of the Koṅku CeTTiyār, Mutaliyār, NāTār and UTaiyār communities.

Men considerably above ego in caste rank, however, are not addressed as 'brothers', but with a caste title such as 'Aiyār' (Brahman), or 'KavunTar'. When it is important to give a particular emphasis to their respected position, a favourable descriptive epithet may be substituted for the normal title. Thus a Brahman may be called a cāmiyār, 'guru or wise man', and a wealthy KavunTar may be called eiṃoṅka, meaning 'powerful landlord'. A man of a caste considerably lower in rank than one's own is addressed by his personal name with his caste title as a suffix.

Furthermore, there are some castes who address each other as 'father' and 'son'.²³ All Telugu and Kannada-speaking subcastes of Mātāri, for example, refer to themselves as the jāti pilāi or 'caste children' of the Nāyakkans. The life cycle ceremonies of the Nāyakkans and the Mātāris have a certain number of rituals in common. In addition, the Mātāris consider that they are entitled to go to a leading Nāyakkan family in their area for

²³ See Dumont's discussion of this topic in Homo Hierarchicus, p. 55.

a judgement, in the time of caste disputes. Stories are common which describe how the Nāyakkān and various subcastes of Mātāri came into Kōṅku together, from the North, at some time in the distant past. The two accounts recorded below were told to me an Annappu Mātāri and a Vataku kātāri, respectively.

1) Annappu Subcaste of Mātāri (Kannada-speaking)

In Bellary, to the North, a man of the Pottunār clan of Annappu Mātāri was working under a Totti Nāyakkān. The Mātāri's duty was to dress the groom for the wedding, to seat him on a horse, and to hold the reins while taking him on a procession through the village. In this way, the Annappu Mātāri were performing various services for the Totti Nāyakkāns. One day some Totti Nāyakkān families came to Tamilnad and the Pottunār clan accompanied them. One man of the Pottunār Mātāri who came South had two wives (and thus brother clans arose in time?). Shortly afterwards a second Nāyakkān family started from the North for Tamilnad and a man of the Stuppanār clan of Annappu Mātāri accompanied him. A man of the CōRanār clan came with a third Nāyakkān. All the present clans of Annappu Mātāri are related to these original three.

ii) Vataku Subcaste of Mātāri (Kannada-speaking)

Once there lived a Totti Nāyakkān and his younger brother. However, one day there was not enough food in the house and so the younger brother had to go out to search for work. Six or seven days elapsed. The younger brother became hungry and the roads leading back to his elder brother's house were flooded because of heavy rains. Finally he ate a young calf in desperation. When he returned to his elder brother's house the latter came to learn of what his brother had eaten. He asked him to leave the family as a result. Thus the elder brother's descendent became Nāyakkāns and the younger brother's descendents Mātāris. However, the two castes retain a memory of their former relationship and to this day the Mātāris have a right to claim their status as younger brothers.

All the examples of the use of parallel kin terms for address across caste lines which were collected are examples of address between members of castes in one factional division. The evidence is insufficient, however, to extend this principle to its logical limit and conclude that for the purposes of address all members of one faction are parallel relatives.

Certainly, however, there is a tendency in this direction.

Between subcastes of one caste, men may sometimes address each other as māman (MB) or maṅṅān (ZH) if they are elder, māpillai if they are younger. This is a very friendly and pleasing kind of address as it implies the possibility of intermarriage, even if such a marriage has never in fact taken place. Aiyāṅkar men (Vishnevite Brahmans), for example, will sometimes address Aiyar men (Shivite Brahmans) in this way. However, the women of either subcaste would always address men of the other with the parallel term aṅṅān in order to avoid a possible sexual overtone. The MēLakāran Mutaliyār also, at times, refer among themselves to the Aiyar Brahmans as maṅṅān. They say this is because the latter tie the tāli on their sisters whom they used to dedicate to the temples as dancing girls. (Dancing girls, in practice, often became the mistresses of these Brahman priests, as well). However, since the Brahmans are considerably above the Mutaliyār in social rank, the maṅṅān relationship is more one of wishful thinking on their part than of actual address in practice.

In general, relations between cross relatives are more informal, more boisterous and more relaxed than those between parallel relatives. Visits of cross-relatives to the house are anticipated as a chance for some fun. Hospitality is important where cross relatives are concerned. The first thought is to offer them food. At life-cycle ceremonies these relatives bring gifts. They must be feasted in return. The relationship is one not so much of sharing as of gift exchange. In play between cross relatives, sexual overtones are commonplace.

Cross-cousins are the paramount relatives for joking because both parties are of one generation. Teasing, playfulness and even boisterous behaviour is common between cross-cousins of the same sex. They can throw their arms about one another, push or ^{tussle} ~~scuffle~~, and talk loudly. Jokes

can be crude. They are allowed to tickle one another and to test each other's strength. A similar but slightly less pronounced relationship exists between men and their Zs. Playfulness between cross-cousins of opposite sex is more subdued. There is little physical contact. Usually it is the man who takes the lead and the girl who feels veTcam 'shyness or reserve'. A man can throw coloured water or other fairly harmless substances at a female cross-cousin. He can try to dip the ends of her braids in something. She can pretend annoyance, smile, laugh or run. After marriage there is no joking between husband and wife. The latter acts with deference towards her husband and also her grown sons. DNs also receive deference from a woman.

Joking between cross-relatives of different generations is also subdued. Relations between a man and his mother's brother are relaxed and friendly. They can tease one another, but playfulness is limited to a verbal repartie. On the whole, the elder of the two would take the lead. Informants contrast the MB with the attitude towards FZs, and MBWs. Here there is some avoidance. This avoidance will be more marked if either of these women is also MM. People are well aware of the delicacy of the in-law relationship. It tends to be one of reserve and of respect by ego towards his spouse's parents. Avoidance is common for the cross-sex pairs DN/MM and SA/MB.

There are several elements in this relationship between a man and his FZ which explain the reserve described above. As with the MB, a FZ is of an elder generation. In addition, she is of the opposite sex. But unlike the MB/ZD pair, marriage with a FZ is forbidden, and all innuendos of attraction must be suppressed. Furthermore, whatever ego's sex, a FZ is also a potential mother-in-law. What is more, this woman was father's sibling. Even though she is terminologically a cross relative for ego, she was a

parallel relative for the senior men of ego's household. When a terminologically confusing marriage is made and the possibility of calling a relative by either a cross or a parallel term develops, it is always the parallel relationship which receives stress. (See Section II A 2). The situation is similar with regard to the parallel aspect of ego's relation with his FZ. In the same manner, MZ is treated with reserve. She is a parallel relative for ego even though she was once a cross relative from the point of view of ego's father.

Consistent with this difference between FZs and MBs, people point out a very slight difference between a FZS and a MBS. Joking is common with both, but the latter is the paramount example, the joking relative PER. Of course, if one boy is the FZS the second must be MBS to him. This slight difference means, in practice, that the FZS enjoys slightly greater freedom to take the lead, to direct play towards his MBS. This fits with the fact that a mild respect ought to be given by MB and his family to ego's family. Ego's F and M, in turn, must defer slightly to FMB and his family. The former, in each case, are the wife-givers, the latter the wife-takers. Wife-givers are also the paramount gift-givers. This parallels their prominent role in life-cycle ceremonies (see Section II C 2). Informants, themselves, point out this slight difference between a MB and a FZS. Nonetheless, there is no feeling whatsoever that this slight status differential should be preserved in the next generation. Marriages with a ZFZ, a FZD and a D are all highly approved. The fact that they will reverse the direction in which respect and gifts travel between families is unimportant. People are not concerned. They do not reason in this manner. (See Section II A 2).

Relations between brothers are generally sober and slightly formal.

They are expected to help one another and to share in time of hardship. The great epic of Koṅku, 'The Story of the Brothers', emphasises the importance of cooperation between brothers and describes their lengthy struggle against more distant paikali who are trying to wrest the land from them. Of course there are many suppressed tensions between actual brothers and they occasionally do have bitter arguments and strike one another. Two examples of such disputes in Olappalayan are given below. They are excerpts from my diary.

- i) There has been a long, drawn out and bitter argument between the KavunṬar brothers living in houses 46 and 7 over the inheritance of some lands. There has been a case in the law courts for many years. Many residents of the village took sides and this rivalry is the origin of the two Makāliyaṣamam factions today. Even though a law court in Madras finally decided the case in favour of house 7, feeling still runs high. Members of the two households do not speak to each other nor do they attend each other's life-cycle ceremonies. After the court decision house 46 has purchased the part of the land they considered their share from house 7. However the field has not yet been formally divided and to avoid meeting face to face the brothers have arranged to let the field out to a tenant and divide the income.
- ii) There was a fierce fight this evening between the Ācāri in house 98A and his brother in 98B. It was over a tree which belonged to the elder brother and which the younger brother tried to cut down. The fight was bloody and there was talk of calling the police, although they never came. The younger brother was seen walking down the main street of the village later the same night, talking loudly about the dispute with a friend.

Although actual brothers fight, they also support one another when threatened from the outside. They consider themselves as interchangeable representatives of the family and can command each others rights as well as obligations. Brothers, in particular, substitute for each other in performing the traditional services or supplying the traditional skills of their caste. They can represent each other at temple and life-cycle ceremonies. A man will always go to his brother first in time of difficulty,

and he will always prefer to ask his close paṅkali for money, if he must borrow. By contrast, there is an embarrassment about asking a MB for help or in depending on anyone who stands in a māma/maccān relation.

It is young children who receive the greatest amount of attention of anyone in the family. Nursing infants are given constant affection. They are cuddled and their mothers are indulgent towards their demands. Weaning is late and gradual. Usually the child more or less weans itself. One can still see some children demanding the mother's breast at the age of three or four. Toilet training is also gradual. After weaning parents become more distant, unpredictable and severe. Children between the ages of four and about ten are expected to be quiet, well-behaved and to remember their place as junior members of the household. They may not talk in front of elders, nor demand attention when others are busy.

The transition from infant, kuṛantai, to child, pillai, is more painful and rapid for a girl, on the whole, than for a boy. She will be given less attention and will be less admired than her brothers. She will be expected to keep clean and neat, and to begin helping with household tasks, and to supervise younger siblings as soon as she is physically able. Young boys are given less responsibility and are allowed to be more rowdy. They are also, on the whole, more self-indulgent. Parents like girls, but they often comment that they will grow up to serve another man in another household, while sons will remain to take over rights and responsibilities in their own homes.

Fathers are generally somewhat distant and stern figures who do not express much overt affection. They are more likely to admire and to physically cuddle sons, however, than daughters. A mother's behaviour is even less predictable. She will play with a child one minute and chastize it the next. Physical punishment, by striking with a hand or a light stick,

is common. Frightening a child with threats that a third person will strike them or carry them off is also frequent. People often made me the centre of a game in which they, as a parent, would suggest to their child that I was going to grab ^{him} or kidnap ^{him} in the black of the night and carry ^{him} to a faraway place. The suggestion would be repeated intentionally until the child showed signs of real fright or began to cry. Then the parent would reach out to comfort it. Such games were considered a great joke on the child, not on me. People laughed about the threats freely.

Other examples of threats and loving indulgence in quick succession were common. Take for example these of a child of three and his grandmother. The following excerpts are from my notebook.

- i) The grandmother was playing with the child and threw a small green tomato on the floor. The boy mischievously chased it. The game continued until the child squashed the tomato experimentally on his arm. (The fruit was of no use for cooking purposes). Then the grandmother struck him and scolded him in a loud voice, until he began to cry. Then she cuddled him sympathetically. He began to play again and rubbed his hand, still covered with tomato, on her sari. The grandmother became angry again and shouted at him for dirtying her clothing.
- ii) The grandmother began playing with the child, who was wearing only a shirt, by grabbing his penis and asking him what it was. The child laughed. Then she suggested that this part of the body was unnecessary and that it would be better cut off. The child's face became clouded and disturbed and he tried to push the grandmother's hands away and to close his legs. A little later the grandmother came with a little stick and playfully threatened to whip him. The child puffed up with resentment and began to sob. Then the grandmother hit him once lightly on the buttocks and twice lightly across his genitals for crying. She then took him home still crying, nuzzling him to her hip.

This alternate love/threat behaviour, however, must be understood as existing against a background of great love for children. It is only by eliciting a response from the child so that there is an excuse to cuddle it. Mothers, in particular, demand a great deal of love from their sons, but simultaneously

enjoy their commanding position and the fear the child has of it. The possible parallel between this kind of treatment of children and the personalities of the local female goddesses should not be overlooked. (See Section I D).

The rules of inheritance must be mentioned in any description of the attitudes of parents towards their children. These rules, of course, influence the relations of siblings towards each other. Despite certain variations in kin terminology and in specific marriage preferences among the castes described in this account, the rules of inheritance are common to all. In outline these rules are simple, though in detail they may be complex. The basic term which informants use in this connection is pañku meaning 'share'. Pañkali means 'the men who share'. A man, while he is alive, holds his own inherited property in common with all his sons.²⁴ He and his sons can divide the whole into equal shares at any time, but it is considered far better to manage it jointly, at least until the former's death. In theory a father can not sell any part of his inherited property without consulting his sons, as he would be selling something in which they have a right, by birth, to share. However, in practice, men are not considered adult until they are sixteen and fathers often manage the property without consulting their sons before they reach this age. From the joint property of a father and sons stems a joint obligation to support his wife and, later, any daughters-in-law. Adequate dowry must also be supplied to each of the father's daughters and they ought to be married to men whose financial position at least equals that of their own brothers. Only after the father has died and these other obligations have been met can the

²⁴ In counter-distinction to inherited property people say that a man may dispose of his earned, self-acquired property as he pleases, while he is alive. However, usually such assets are not treated separately from what he has formally inherited. Any self-acquired assets remaining after death become inherited assets for the next generation.

remaining inheritance be equally divided among all the male siblings.

If, when a father dies, he leaves a widow or any unmarried daughters, then adequate sums for their support and their marriage should be laid aside before any division of the property among the surviving sons proceeds. Usually a girl's dowry is taken from the family's liquid assets, while any land and animals descend strictly in the male line. Jewellery, female clothing and household utensils, on the other hand, normally descend in the female line. Anything a woman received at her own marriage which remains intact and which she can spare will be divided in turn among her daughters, at their marriages. After marriage, however, a girl can not expect any further share in her parent's property. If all the daughters of a woman have been married, any remainder in this property at the time of her death will descend to her sons. Thus, as informants will explain, a girl receives her entire share in the inheritance at the time of marriage. Brothers, on the other hand, should retain their joint holdings until their father's death.

If a man should die without sons, all his property (after provision for wives and daughters) is divided among his surviving brothers and BSs. A clever man can avoid this eventuality, however, by adopting a son, the only stipulation being that the boy must be of the same clan as his own, preferably a BS or BBS.²⁵ Adoption is referred to as tattu eṭṭai, 'to jump or leap over' in Tamil and an adopted son is a tattu vāṅṅai, 'a son who has been leaped over to'. The adopted son acquires full rights to his father's property, just as a real son would have done. There is a small ceremony

²⁵ Two informants of the left-hand faction, a Vēṭṭuva Vāṅṅṭṭar and a Vēṭṭan, objected to this and insisted that the property of a man who dies without sons must be divided among brothers, in other words, that adoption is not permissible. This insistence is in keeping with the greater stress the left-hand caste place on the prestigious legal traditions of the great Sanskrit law books.

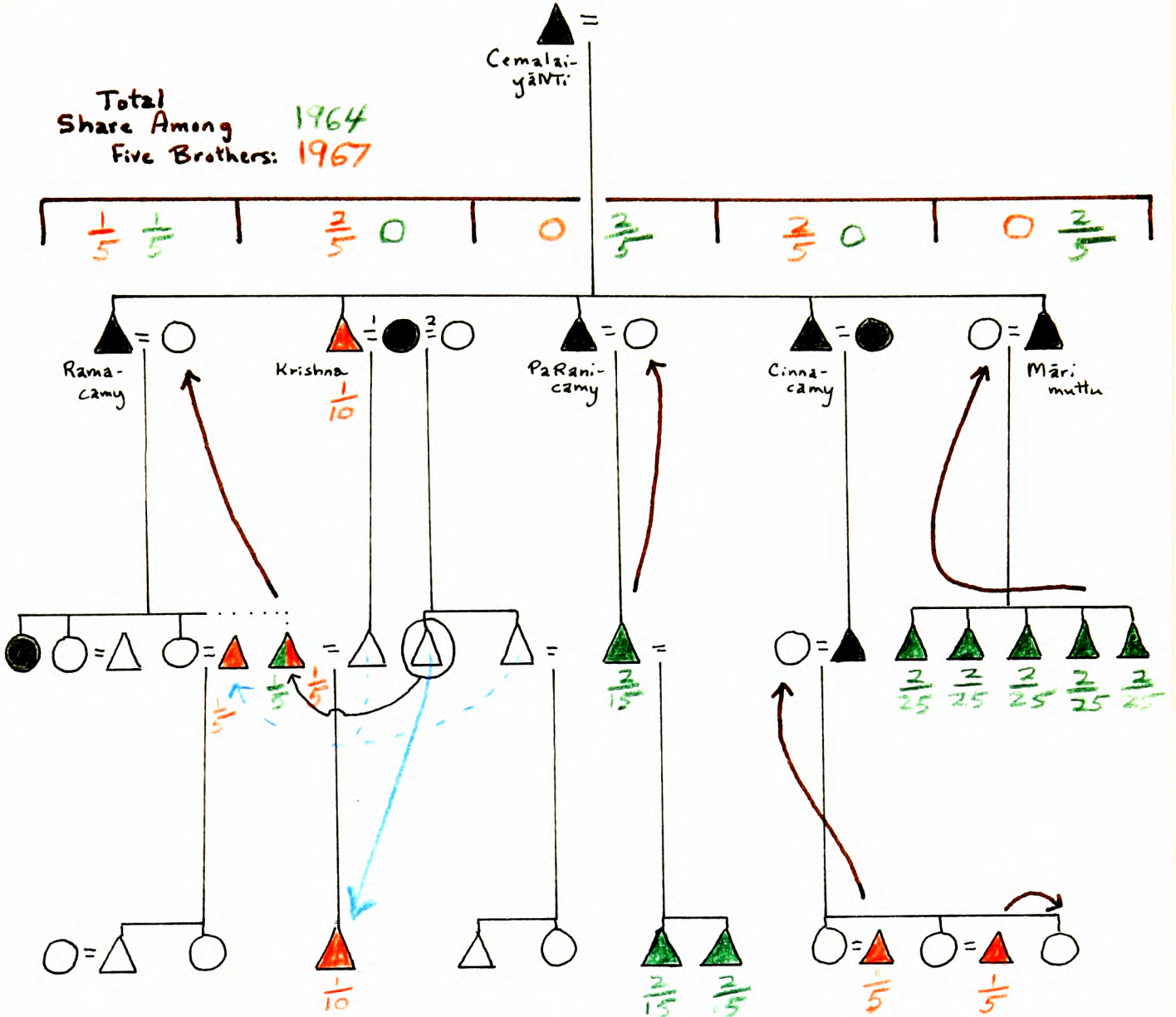
for adoption as follows:

At an adoption a tumbler full of water mixed with turmeric powder is prepared. The adopting mother must drink the first half of the contents and the son to be adopted the second half. The adopting parents must then provide a feast for relations.

An adopted son is expected to perform the funeral rites for his adopted parents and to continue to perform oblations for them after death, should they request it in a dream. He is also obliged to support the widow of his adopted father and to provide dowry for any of his unmarried daughters, just as actual sons would have done. In other words, an adopted son acquires all the social rights and responsibilities of an actual, physically begotten, male heir.

There is also a second possibility open to a man without sons. He may invite his daughter's husband to reside matrilocally and let his property pass through his daughter to his daughter's sons. Both the adoption of a son and the matriloal residence of a son-in-law are ways of circumventing the strict letter of the inheritance rules. Both solutions are common but they are likely to create an uproar of objection among a man's more distant pankeli who stand to lose what would otherwise be their share. Many legends and traditional stories turn on this theme. (See Section II F 2). Matriloal residence is perhaps more bitterly objected to than adoption as it means the land will pass to a man of another clan. According to current law used in the state courts, widows can inherit from their husbands and on the parents demise, daughters inherit equally with sons. Personal wills are recognized as superseding both claims. Informants explicitly say that these laws give new teeth to these old techniques of circumvention. Everyone has heard rumours that both daughters and adopted children can now take their claims to court although few have actually tried it. Informants still think of these new laws as a way 'to get around' the highly prestigious

CHART 25: DIVISION OF INHERITANCE CLAIMS, AN EXAMPLE



KEY

- Obligation to support (in addition to wife, non-adult sons and unmarried daughters)
- Share sold officially
- - - Share sold unofficially
- $\frac{x}{y}$ Percentage of total proceeds received in 1964
- $\frac{x}{y}$ Percentage of total proceeds received in 1967
- Deceased

Mitāksarā legal tradition.

The following is a detailed example of a recent legal adoption and its operation against the backdrop of traditional inheritance claims. It concerns the division of the right to proceeds from the yearly Māriyamma temple festival in Kannapuram by a group of PaNTāram priests.

There are three distinct descent groups of OkecāNTi PaNTāram who currently have rights at the Kannapuram Māriyamma temple (see story in Section II B 1). The third group are recent immigrants to the area. They trace the history of their temple rights back to their FF, CemalāNTi. When he settled in ReTTivalasu, the KavunTar family there who had invited him also assured him that he would receive a full third of the temple income. The first two were to receive the festival proceeds for two successive years. CemalāNTi was to receive the full proceeds once every three years.

CemalāNTi had five sons (See Diagram 3). Some time ago the division of rights was complicated by the decision that the first time (a) the festival fell to them his sons Ramacāmi, Krishna and Cinnucāmi would take $1/5$, $2/5$ and $2/5$ of the proceeds respectively. The next time (B) the festival fell to them Ramacāmi would again take $1/5$ while the other brothers PaRani and Mārimuttu, would each take $2/5$. Thus Ramacāmi was to get one fifth every three years and the other four brothers two fifths every six years. Each brother was then left to divide his share into equal portions with his own sons.

One of the five brothers, Ramacāmi, had no sons. On his death his widow Celamma tried to prevent the loss of the temple rights to her husband's brothers' descendents by arranging for the share to descend via her daughter's husband to her grandson. At this suggestion, however, the paṅkali raised loud objections. Finally she abandoned this idea and adopted her HBs (also her own ZS) as an heir. The paṅkali were not pleased but let it pass. The adopted son does not yet feel altogether secure in his right to this share. While normally it is not necessary for all the claimants to be present at any one festival to receive their portion of the proceeds, the adopted son has made it a point to take on temple responsibilities and to be present at any discussions about temple management. While, in the long run, one must do one's share of the festival work to receive one's share of the proceeds, the other paṅkali will swap their work around informally. The position of the adopted son is somewhat envied by his male cousins and could still be a cause for dispute in the future.

At about the same time that a son was adopted by Ramasami's widow the same fellow decided to sell the share in the proceeds which he inherited from his own father, to his brother's son. This share comes to $(2/5) \times (1/4)$ or $1/10$ of the proceeds every six years. In order to sell it he had to take the permission of his father and both his brothers, as they hold the right to the initial $2/5$ jointly. They agreed and he sold it for Rs. 200 several years ago.

Furthermore, the adopted son's two brothers have both mortgaged their share of the inheritance to their FBDH for Rs. 200. This kind of loan is common. It means that the two brothers have the opportunity to spend in the present, but that when the festival time comes around they must turn over their proceeds to the relative from whom they obtained the loan. This is an informal agreement, not a permanent sale. Thus it does not require the assent of the other brothers or of the father, as in the previous case. The diagram on the following page shows how the proceeds were actually divided in 1964 and in 1967.

When a man has had sons outside the formal bond of marriage, the question of inheritance is a very delicate one.²⁶ In no case can these sons press formal claims. However, it is said that their demands can easily move a man sentimentally. Physiological paternity has a claim on a man's affection, and no one would like to entirely ignore such a son. In such a case a man usually makes the son presents during his own lifetime, often gifts of cash or of moveable goods, such as he would give to a daughter in dowry. One Annappu Matari informant described an interesting ritual in his caste which is performed if a woman's husband should die while she happens to be living with another man. In such a case, he explained, a headman or other respected leader will bring the woman a mud pot filled with water. If the woman accepts the pot then any future children born to her will be considered to be hers by her lover, otherwise they will be treated as descendants of her deceased husband. If she does not accept the pot then she may not remarry. The transfer of the pot may, ~~in this~~

²⁶ Note that in the detailed example given above, the sons of both Krishna's legal wives inherited equally. Sons of second marriages do not have reduced claims on property.

in this case, indicate a transfer of the rule of descent from the male to the female line.

The claims of illegitimate sons on their fathers, however, are strongest when they are accepted by the community at large. A son of a passing affair with a low caste woman suffers a much higher risk of being disclaimed or ignored.

A woman who was dedicated to the Kannapuram Cīva temple as a taci some sixty years ago, became the accepted concubine of the Brahman priest there. When he died she and her children were allowed to live in his house (because, perhaps, he had no sons of his own?) One of the taci's daughters was dedicated to the temple in her turn. She too soon became the mistress of a wealthy KavunTar family living nearby. This daughter has now been provided with a separate house and cash gifts by the KavunTar who kept her. One of this woman's daughters is, in turn, a teacher in the local school. (Dedicating women to the temple was prohibited by law about 20 years ago). It is expected that this girl will eventually marry a man born of some similar union, rather than a full-caste kavunTar. Her mother's brothers have made their way in the community largely by their own efforts (one is a store keeper and one a clerk), but have perhaps received a certain amount of help in establishing themselves from the families with which their mother and sister are connected.

Intercaste marriages, as a whole, are rare. Informants are able to cite three or four examples which have taken place in or near Olappālaiyam village during the last fifteen years. In every case the couple met outside the village context. They have also settled permanently at a considerable distance (Madras city, for example). They do not visit the village and they write very infrequently. In two cases the caste of the marriage partner is not one which exists at all in the immediate vicinity and therefore the status of the in-laws is rather unclear to village relatives. Such marriages are tolerated at a great distance. The partners are not outcaste, but they would cause considerable embarrassment and discomfort to relatives if they were to return to Olappālaiyam to live. =

In the eyes of informants these people simply live and move in a separate and unknown world. There is, however, one recent example of an inter-caste marriage from a nearby settlement where the couple met locally and where they plan to settle permanently near Olappālaiyam itself. The incident is now well-known in local circles.

The KavunTar priest of the Karuppanacāmi temple in Cukkutipālaiyam (the priest at this temple could well have been a PaNTāram) came from a poor and landless family. His son had found a job as a cook for a wealthy KavunTar household nearby (also a job usually held by a PaNTāram). In the same household a young PaNTāram girl was employed as a maid to look after a greatly respected but aging woman. The cook and the maid became lovers in secret. After a time they ran away together to a distant village, knowing that their friendship would cause a stir if revealed locally. People immediately suspected a love-match when the two disappeared simultaneously. Relatives searched for several weeks and finally the couple were found in another village some forty miles away. They were brought back and with some consternation were married with the consent of both families. (KavunTars and PaNTārams have exactly the same marriage rituals). The couple are now settled locally and it is said that their children will be considered members of the KavunTar community.

According to informants a child of an intercaste marriage will belong to the caste of its father. They claim that caste is inherited in the male line just as property rights are. However, at the same time, people continually refer to children of mixed parentage using such phrases as atu cuttamāna KavunTar alla or 'that is not a real, clean KavunTar'. It is taken for granted that children of mixed unions will have difficulty in marrying and are likely to make a match with others of a mixed background similar to their own. Wealth, however, can make a difference here. By offering the promise of a secure income (or of a large dowry in the case of a girl) people of mixed caste ancestry sometimes manage to arrange a match with someone of more prestigious descent than their own.

Everyone recognizes the connection between intercourse, conception and

pregnancy. Opinions differ, however, as to the extent of influence the two parents have, individually, on the development of the fetus. It was often said, for example, that a son resembled his father in looks. However, the fact that a child remains for so long in its mother's womb and that it later feeds at her breast are arguments people use to stress the connection the child has by blood (and perhaps by internal fluids generally) with the mother. It is the mother, it would seem, who is most closely associated with the purity of the child. Her cooking and ritual cleaning of the household are also associated with the purity of the family generally. If a child of mixed parentage is not really cuttam, not really 'clean', the implication is that this soiled aspect has been transmitted to it by the mother. Any woman who became pregnant before marriage would almost certainly resort to abortion. This is also a common reason given for suicide. There was one case of a Kavuntar girl some miles away, pregnant by a man of the same caste, who was trying to persuade him to marry her by enlisting the sympathy of a leading family in the area. The case was much debated. It appears that she was not having marked success.

Even though informants say that one's caste affiliation descends in the male line, they will quickly add qualifications to such a statement. Indeed, it would be most unusual for a marriage to occur between members of two castes who were not socially very close to one another in other respects. It would be even more unusual for a married couple from two castes of disparate social positions to remain in the local setting. No one was able to imagine such a situation well enough to say what might happen. If a woman becomes pregnant by a man not her husband, after her marriage, she risks being disowned by him. Unless he openly expels her from the house, however, the community will attribute him with the physical paternity of all her children. As one informant commented: "How could we imagine

otherwise?" Such children inherit equally with those conceived by the woman's legal husband.

II A) 2) Marriage and Preferential Alliance

Everywhere in Konkku people are concerned with the question of material wealth. They are also greatly concerned with marriage. These are two favourite topics of conversation, speculation and intrigue. More than this, they are closely related. Material considerations of family property and earning power are fundamental to the arrangement of marital unions. The marriage ceremony itself is usually the biggest and most ostentatious affair a family will ever be called upon to finance. At the same time, however, the concern that marriage should be with close relatives of the 'cross' category is persistently expressed, both by parents in arranging matches, and in ritual. This section will progress through the various topics related to the question of marriage in some detail. In the conclusion an attempt is made to draw these several considerations together in an attempt to clarify the process by which individual decisions about marriage matches are arrived at.

For all the castes in Konkku there is a specific urumai pen, one particular girl whom 'a man has a right to marry'. All informants agree that this term refers only to a man's actual FFBs or MBs. There is no conception of urumai or 'right' in regard to more distant cross-cousins or in regard to a ZD. This specific meaning of urumai pen is unaltered by the fact that these latter are also very desirable categories for marriage and that, statistically, women of these specifications are even more ^{often} chosen than the urumai girl, herself. Conversely, a girl may refer to her urumai urumalai or 'beautiful green' (s FFB or MB). However, as people say, urumai urumalai urumalai or 'a man has a very strong right', implying that the woman's claim is less. Thus the question is usually discussed from the male point

of view.²⁷

The meaning of urumai in a ritual context is even more specific. The urumai pen is either the MBD or the F, not both. The variation is by subcaste, see Chart 26, but the MBD right is by far the more common of the two. Furthermore, only one urumai or 'right' exists for each entire sibling group. Once one brother has married a girl of the correct genealogical specification then the other brothers have no further claim upon other girls in the same category. Some informants say it should be the eldest brother who makes such a marriage and the younger ones who are 'free' to marry elsewhere, but no one would argue over this fine point, as long as one of several brothers will consent.²⁸

Insistence on an urumai marriage is now considered old-fashioned. Few people press such claims today. Most adults, however, at least know the meaning of the term, and consider that urumai was quite important in arranging marriages in the past. The MBD preference is dominant in the Konku region (it is the Kavu-Tar practice) and informants are much clearer about details in this regard than they are about the urumai MBD claim. Nonetheless, a special point was made of inquiring into the latter, and there is no doubt that the MBD right is traditional in some communities.

As is the case in many other matters as well, there is no marked difference between the low castes of the right and the low castes of the left in the question of the urumai girl. However, there is a certain differentia-

²⁷ Ururrai can also mean 'right' in the sense of inheritance claim on property. Informants always treat this meaning of the term separate. Nonetheless, claims on a marriage partner and claims to inheritance are not entirely unconnected. See Yalman, Under The Bo Tree, p. 133, for emphasis on this association.

²⁸ Dumont has described a similar preference among the Travankoli Vellar and accounts for it as an expression of the emphasis placed on the transmission of an alliance relationship between male lineages through successive generations. The material gathered for this study supports this conclusion. See Dumont, The Hons-Caste, pp. 188-196 and also "Hierarchy and Marriage Alliance" p. 22-23.

Chart 26: Cross-Cousin or In-law Marriage Rights, By Caste

Right-Hand		Left-Hand	
Caste	Urumai	Caste	Urumai
	(Prahman)		(PZD)
1. Kavuntar (Koṅku)	MBD	Kavuntar (VeTTuva)	PZD
2. Iantāran (Kodāni)	MBD	Cettiyan (Vomūṭṭi)	PZD
3. Natar (Marameri)	MBD	Kanaku Pillai	MBD
4. Ttaiyar (Koṅku)	MBD	Kutaliyar (Kaikolan)	MBD
5. Navitan (Koṅku)	MBD	Acari (Coṛi & Koṅku)	MBD
6. Paraiyan (Koṅku)	MBD	Cempatavan	MBD
		Nayakken	MBD
		Vannan (Vataku)	MBD
		VeTan	MBD
		Netari (Toṭṭi & Moracu)	MBD

1. Indicates those castes which have a inai cīr ritual as a part of their marriage ceremony.

tion between the prestigious castes of the right and the prestigious castes of the left in this regard. Although the correspondence is not complete, PZD urumai is associated, it would seem, only with Brahmins and with certain upper castes of the left-hand faction. Within the larger block of castes which emphasize MBD urumai, there is a further division between those who perform a very colourful ceremony called the inai cīr or 'uniting ceremony' at their weddings, and the others, whose ritual surrounding the question of urumai is minimal. The inai cīr is a ceremony which is performed by the groom and his sister, not ^{by} the nuptial couple ^{themselves}. It is one of a series of rituals performed at weddings of this kind which emphasize the existing ties the groom has with his mother and his sisters, i.e. the women of his own descent group, before the joining of the groom with a girl from another descent group, takes place. (See Section II C 1). During the inai cīr the sister is understood to be ritually requesting one of her brother's future daughters in marriage for her own son. Thus the ceremony concerns

a promise by the groom to his sister about a marriage in the succeeding generation. If the groom does not consent and complete the ritual, then his own marriage can not proceed. Thus, with each marriage, the promise of a marriage in the succeeding generation has already been given. On a man's second marriage, however, the inaī cīr is omitted.

Inaī Cīr: A Short Description.

The groom is first seated in front of a huge mound of raw, husked rice. His sister comes and stands to his right. The wedding sari, with the bride's tāli or wedding necklace tied in it, is then placed in a winnowing fan with fruits and other gifts. (Later, the bride will wear this sari for the culminating marriage rituals). The sister takes this fan and its contents, places it on her head and circles, twice, clockwise, the place where the groom is sitting. The contents of the fan are then given to the groom. The sister stands with her feet on the winnowing basket and the gifts of fruit are given back by the groom and tied in the sister's apron. He also hands her a few betel leaves and some areca nuts. The wedding sari is then stretched between the sister's hands and the brother's right arm. While the sari is held between them the brother's hands are placed, cupped together with the palms up, into the centre of the huge mound of rice. Several auspicious songs are sung by the barber and then the brother and sister circle the mound of rice together. It is preferred that the sister performing the ritual be unmarried.

From the above description one can hardly escape the emphasis the ritual places on the tie between a brother and sister. This link will contribute to the prosperity and fertility of the brother's family. Several local folktales illustrate how a pure and devoted sister, especially a virgin, brings strength and good fortune to her brothers. At the same time, the sister has a claim on her brother's daughter as a wife for her own son. In the ceremony she ritually requests a part of the fruits of his prosperity (a daughter) for the continuance of her own family through her son's marriage. Informants are explicit about this request. The gift of betel leaves and areca nuts to the sister by her brother is considered to indicate his consent.

Before the brother can marry and turn to the concerns of his new family, the sister's claims must be met. Her well-being is essential to his own prosperity. If at any time in the future she suffers, he must support her, feed her if necessary. If he does not fulfill these obligations the sister can curse him and his family and prevent their prosperity. Likewise, if when the time comes for the marriage between the brother's daughter and the sister's son, the brother refuses, then the sister can take an earthen pot full of salt and break it on the doorsill of her brother's house. Such a curse is considered to rest upon the household for ever. Informants say that a sister would not go to this extreme nowadays, but that she would certainly bar her door to her brother and break off all association with him.

As far as is clear from the material, the other castes which claim the MBD of the urumai girl have a much simpler ceremony. These castes include all those in the above chart who have a MBD right, but do not have the mark (a) by their names. For these castes the ritual reference to a future marriage between the ZS and the BD takes place after the culminating rituals of the marriage ceremony, rather than before them. This alone may indicate that the emphasis on the right in these castes is not so strong. (The brother is already married and thus refusal of the sister's demand does not give her recourse to interrupt the ceremony). Usually, in the case of these latter castes, the ceremony occurs when the couple attempt to enter the groom's house together for the first time soon after the major wedding ceremonies have been completed. In this ritual the sister refuses to let the couple enter her father's house until she has extracted a promise from her brother that he will give his future daughter to her son. The two jest for a moment and then the brother will consent and the sister opens the door. For the Abuaku Pilnai caste a small game is played in addition

to the ceremony just described. In this game the newly wedded couple swing a cradle together in which there is a baby doll. The groom's sister lifts the doll out of the cradle and asks for it as a bride for her son. Her brother, after some jest, is expected to agree to the request.

In all the versions of the ritual described above, it is the sister who makes the demand of her brother at his wedding, often years before she is married and the children in question are even born. For the castes who speak of the urumai pen as the FZD, however, a ceremony takes place only when this girl is about to marry another, non-urumai man. According to informants, the priest of the ceremony must inquire into the relationship between the couple to be married, just before the final preparations to tie the wedding necklace are made. If the groom is not the man with the rightful urumai, he will ask the latter to step up to the wedding platform from the audience. The actual groom's family must then pay him $1\frac{1}{4}$ rupees or $2\frac{1}{2}$ rupees as compensation. After the urumai groom has accepted the money he is honour bound to let the ceremony proceed.²⁹

In the case of FZD urumai it is the BS who demands compensation at the time the girl over whom he had a 'right' is actually being married to another man. The brother has no power to curse his sister (as with a pot of salt) if the latter's daughter is married elsewhere. He may only demand the compensation payment to his son. The difference in the ceremony in the two cases indicates, perhaps, the special power which a sister is considered to have to curse her brother and to adversely affect his prosperity. The brother has no reciprocal sanction over a perverse sister. The claim is

²⁹ Note the parallel with Dumont's description of the gūp pō pen in Une Sous-Caste, p. 191. See also certain similarities with Yelman, Under The Bo Tree, pp. 167 and 170, and with Gough, "Female Initiation Rites on the Malabar Coast", JRAI, 85: p. 59.

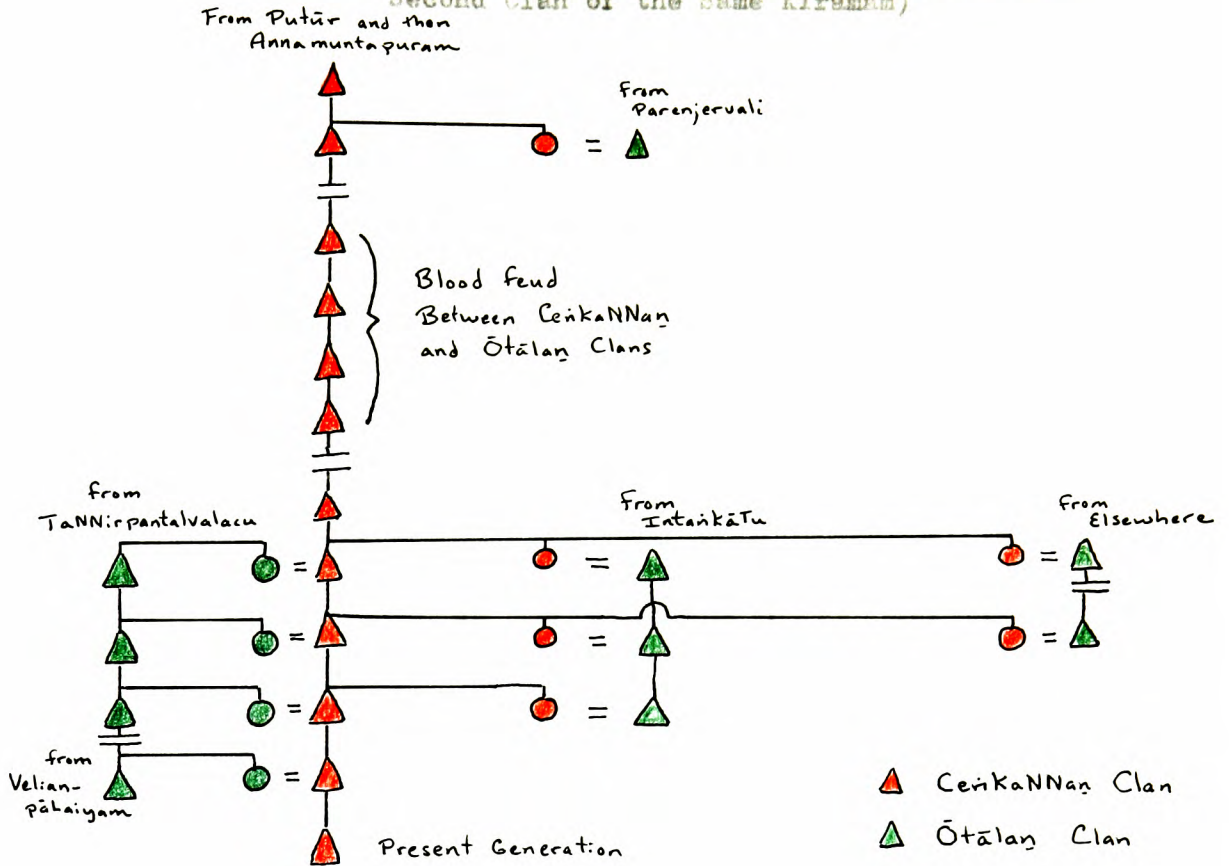
that of his son, and it is made only at the time of the MD's marriage elsewhere. The ritual has a legalistic character.

The fact that the MBD claim is made one generation in advance, at the time of the parent's marriage, is also, perhaps, significant. It is consistent with an emphasis on alliance, in other words, that a relation of a wife-giving lineage to a wife-receiving lineage established in one generation will be perpetuated by a MBD marriage in the next. Although informants do not place emphasis on this kind of reasoning nowadays, it does appear as a part of their description of their past history. Such an alliance, for example, occurs in the ANNannar Katai or 'The Story of the Brothers'. (See Section I C 2).

Similar 'alliances' exist in informant's descriptions of the history of clan settlement in Kannapuram Kirāman area. The oldest lineage of the clan with first rights in the Kannapuram Kirāman (the CeṅkaNṅan) can trace their history in semi-legendary fashion, back to the time when they first married a girl matrilocally to a man of the ŪtāLa clan. This clan now has second rights at temples in the same territory. An illustration of the 'marriage alliance' with the ŪtāLa clan which they describe is given in Diagram 3. It can be seen immediately that while the CeṅkaNṅan have continued to 'give women' to ŪtāLa resident in certain settlements of the kirāman, they also began to 'receive' women from ŪtāLa of other settlements, at least five generations ago. The 'alliance' was asymmetrical locally, but symmetrical over the kirāman territory as a whole. Actual MBD marriage, although important in theory, was not always carried out. Terminological MBDs were sometimes substituted in practice. Unfortunately, informants do not know the genealogies well enough to specify where this occurred.

Diagram 3: Genealogy of the First Lineage of The First Clan, Kannapuram Kiraman

(Showing a Marriage Alliance, Over Time, With The Second Clan of the Same Kiraman)



A P2B marriage maintains the marriage relationship between two lines of males, but reverses the direction in which the woman is given. The 'feel' of such a marriage is that of pulling two families more tightly together and of abolishing any possible feeling of status difference between them. Informants are aware, to some extent, of this difference. Mothers are said to look up slightly to their Zds. A P2B will be entertained well. MB, on the other hand, is a gift-... person will feel relaxed and informal in his presence. Differentiation between these two relatives, however, is very... There is no disapproval whatsoever about the reversal of the giving and receiving status, either in the same generation (P2B/P2B marriage) or in the next. (See Section II A 1). It is consistent that

the PBD preference should only occur among the high left- and castes where there is a special stress laid on purity and on tight endogamy.

It is interesting, in this regard, to note the slight variations in the structure of the kin terminology as well among certain of the upper or more prestigious castes of the left-hand. A chart of important variations in this respect is given below:

Chart 27: Important Variations in Kin Terminology By Caste

Caste		PZB=MB W=PZ	PBD=PDZ MPS=PZC	P=MB W=MB
High Left Hand Castes	Brahman	✓	✓	=
	Kaṅṅku Pīṭai	✓	✓	=
	Ṭcāri (Cō i)	-	-	-
	Ṭcāri (Koṅku)	-	-	✓
	Geṭṭiyār (VōmuṬṬi)	✓(?)	-	✓
	Ṭṭaliyār	-	-	=(?)
High Right Hand Castes	Kavūṭṭar (Koṅku)	-	-	✓
	Nāṭār (Maramēri)	-	-	✓
	ṬṬaiyār (Koṅku)	-	-	✓
	Paṅṅārāṅ (OkēcāṆṬi)	-	-	✓
Lower Castes	Nāyakkāṅ	-	-	✓
	Nāṭitan (Koṅku)	-	-	✓
	VaṆṆan (Vataku)	-	-	✓
	Paṭaiyāṅ (Koṅku)	-	-	✓
	Ṭāṭāri (ṬoṆṬi)	-	-	✓
	Kuṅṅar	-	-	✓

N.B. (?) Indicated that some informants show a tendency to slide over this detail and to merge with the dominant pattern. In some cases, however, at least one informant indicated that the difference existed.

A few comments are necessary to clarify the interest of the details summarized above. The Brahman and Maṅṅku illai communities are the only ones to make the distinction ṁṁṁṁṁ and ṁṁṁṁṁ. They make a similar contrast between the parents of these cousins, i.e. ṁṁṁṁṁ and ṁṁṁṁṁ. The Kōṁṁṁṁṁ Ceṁṁṁṁṁ perhaps show a tendency in the same direction. The ṁṁṁṁṁ and the Kōṁṁṁṁṁ Ceṁṁṁṁṁ both have a ṁṁṁṁṁ marriage preference. Although the Maṅṅku illai have a ṁṁṁṁṁ urumai, they follow Brahman custom in almost every other detail. For a moment this distinction between ṁṁṁṁṁ's family and ṁṁṁṁṁ's family might appear to contradict the explicit interest in ṁṁṁṁṁ marriages. The terminological contrast between the ṁṁṁṁṁ and ṁṁṁṁṁ of kin emphasizes the ṁṁṁṁṁ ṁṁṁṁṁ of the wife-living and the wife-taking groups. The same castes also emphasize down (see following), another indication of a tendency towards hy ṁṁṁṁṁ. Why, then, do these same castes also favour the return of women in alternate generations? Yalmar has made a most interesting observation regarding situations of this kind. He suggests that where a distinction between wife-givers and wife-takers is combined with a preference for reversing the direction in which ṁṁṁṁṁ are given, the combination indicates a heightened interest both in the status and in ritual purity. As Yalmar has put it, this interest is expressed in 'countersubstitutional fashion' by stressing both 'endogamy and utilitarian descent'.³⁰ This preference, on the other hand, lays less stress on ritual endogamy and more on discrete descent groups or clans.

There are other slight terminological differences which are noticeable among the upper castes of the left hand. These include a tendency not to distinguish between ṁṁṁṁṁ and ṁṁṁṁṁ and between ṁṁṁṁṁ and ṁṁṁṁṁ. As it has been called, in the grandparental generation they become common in

³⁰ Yalmar, Under the ṁṁṁṁṁ, p. 354.

other parts of the Tamil-speaking South. In Koñku it is the upper right-hand castes, combined with the lower ranking communities more generally, who do distinguish between grandparents on the mother's and on the father's side. This pattern clearly coincides with relative emphasis which the latter communities place on discrete, male descent groups.

Informants must be closely questioned, however, before they will clarify whether the actual urumai girl in their community is a MBD or a FZD. In general speech, either can be called an urumai girl. A KavunTar in OlappāLaiyam once told an interesting short story which will illustrate this point.

Once upon a time there lived a poor KavunTar man and his son. However, the same KavunTar happened to have a sister, far wealthier than himself. This sister had a lovely daughter. When the time for her marriage came, the KavunTar's son was overlooked because of his poverty and another bridegroom was selected. One day, after the date of the wedding had already been fixed, the poor KavunTar's son went to a patch of open ground to graze some sheep. It was the rainy season and when he saw some thick clouds coming he took off his clothes, leaving only a loin cloth, and hid them in an earthen pot he had used to carry his lunch in. He turned the pot upside down on a hillock so that water would not run into it. After the rain he dried himself off and redressed.

Just after the rain, a wandering ascetic happened to pass through the field. His hair was matted and he was shivering from his wet clothing. He addressed the young boy saying, 'I have learned so many magical verses and yet I am wet. How is it that you, a mere boy, remain dry in the rain? Will you not teach me your magic?' The boy promised to teach him, but he asked him in return to teach him the magic that would win him his lovely FZD in marriage. The ascetic agreed and gave the boy three stones, teaching him something to say with each stone at the right moment. The boy was very pleased and he taught the ascetic the simple trick he had used to keep his clothes dry. The older man then took his leave and continued his wanderings.

A few days later the day of the girl's wedding arrived. The father of the boy refused to attend in his anger, but the young boy told his father he would represent the family, despite the affront that he was about to

suffer. The young boy joined the crowd inconspicuously and sat down holding the three stones in his hand. The bride and the prearranged bridegroom were seated, facing East, ready for the priest to hand the marriage necklace to them. Then the boy threw away his first stone and made a wish that none in the crowd should be able to stand up. People began to murmur when they realized they were fixed to their places. Then the boy threw a second stone wishing that the marriage be prevented and that he, the man with urumai, be substituted as the groom. The assembled guests then realized the error. The prearranged bridegroom, hearing their discussion of the situation, became frightened and ran away. Then the poor KavunTar's son was called up to the wedding deis, instead, and was married to the girl. The boy then threw his third stone with the wish that all the guests be fed. The food prepared for the previous groom was brought out and all the crowd ate well. The poor boy, his magic having worked, was well satisfied with the events of the day.

The story illustrates very clearly the urumai or right a man has to marry his female cross-cousin. This right should override any difference in wealth or status between the two families. Urumai pen rights are reinforced by magical sanctions which are dangerous and can bring bad luck if trifled with. The story was told by a KavunTar, about a KavunTar family. Yet the girl specified is the FZD, not the MBD. When the story teller was asked about this anomaly in his account his answer was simple. For KavunTars, the FZD is a kind of second urumai girl. The 'right' extends to her too. The story, according to the teller, could just as well be told about the MBD. It can illustrate either urumai, as the teller pleases. That some castes make MBD the ritualized preference, some the FZD, is not a distinction of great interest to him or to other informants.

Nonetheless, the subject of urumai is an absorbing one and I continued to press questions about it. In further discussion I learned that a man of a caste with MBD urumai was allowed, in the past, the freedom of slipping a marriage necklace on the girl of a girl standing in this relationship, in secret. If he could succeed in this, no member of the family could object.

The couple were then considered as married.³¹ Two stories of this having happened in the recent past were collected. On the whole, however, such a manoeuvre was considered to be old fashioned.

1) Police Sub-Inspector, VeLLakōvil (caste unknown)

This man, of considerable social prestige, had his eye on the rightful urumai girl, his MB. For some reason, however, his MB had been refusing to let the wedding proceed. Therefore one night the Sub-Inspector appeared at the house where the girl lived with a few male friends. Together they took the girl (by ruse or by force was not clear), put her in a car and set off for the famous Murakan temple at Palani. There the Sub-Inspector slipped the wedding necklace on, and thus became quickly and unceremoniously married to her. The story is a whispered one, as the Sub-Inspector's relatives are a bit embarrassed about it.

2) NāTār, Olappālaiyam

Not too long ago, there was a NāTār girl of marriageable age in the village. Her father wanted to marry her to someone on his side of the family, and her mother to someone on hers. One night, therefore, without her husband's knowledge, the mother arranged for her MB to come and take the girl away in a cart. He quickly slipped the marriage necklace on her neck and the matter was finalized. The husband, however, objected strongly to his wife's behaviour. As a result a caste meeting was called. It was decided that the wife should pay Rs. 1½ as a fine (a formal sum) and feast the men at the meeting. The wedding itself was accepted without further ado.

In addition to the ritualized urumai preference for an immediate cross-cousin, marriage with the ZD is ~~very~~ generally & warmly approved in Koṅku. This is, in fact, a more frequent marriage statistically than a match with an urumai girl. (See subsequent statistical table). All castes appear to contract ZD marriages with equal frequency. Within a caste, however, there is a marked variation, by family. At the same time that marriage with the

³¹ In this one case, alone, informants would admit that a marriage could occur without ceremony. No one would agree that the grandeur or expense of a wedding could be less, when prearranged, simply because the girl was an urumai pen, or any other variety of close relative. A few informants, however, said the paricam or brideprice could be reduced in such a case.

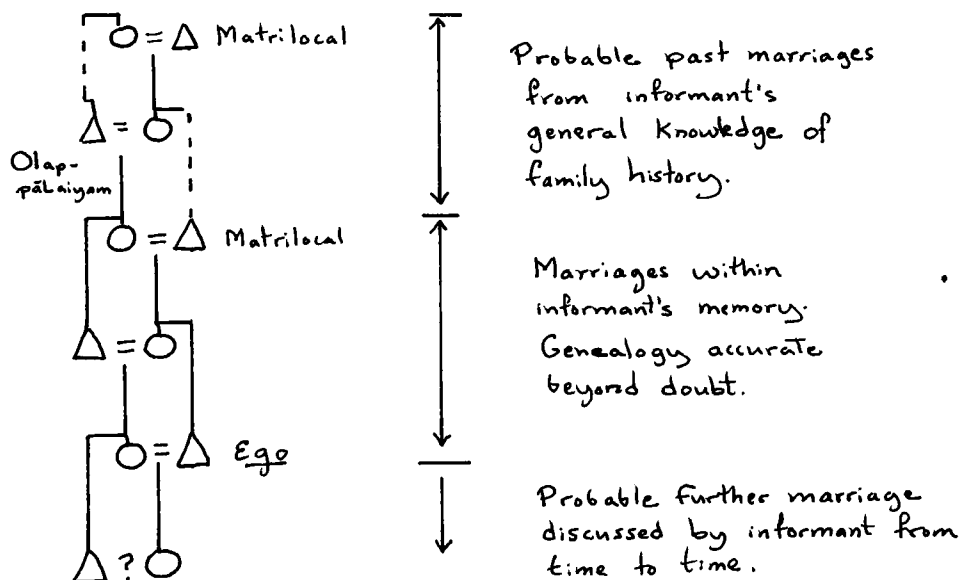
sister's daughter is generally approved, there is a mild awareness that this marriage is not equally sanctioned elsewhere in the South. One Kōmatti CeTtiyār woman was able to quote the saying tai māmanukku kuTuttal, virutti akātu, kuTumpam mēlē varātu, meaning 'if one gives a girl to her MB there will be no flourishing, the family will not prosper'. Others in Olappālaiyam recognized this warning, but no one could say why it was so. Whatever inauspiciousness is implied by tradition, the fear is ignored in an actual discussion of such marriages. There is positive enthusiasm in their arrangement.

Three excerpts from actual genealogies will show how developed the interest in ZD marriage is in some families.

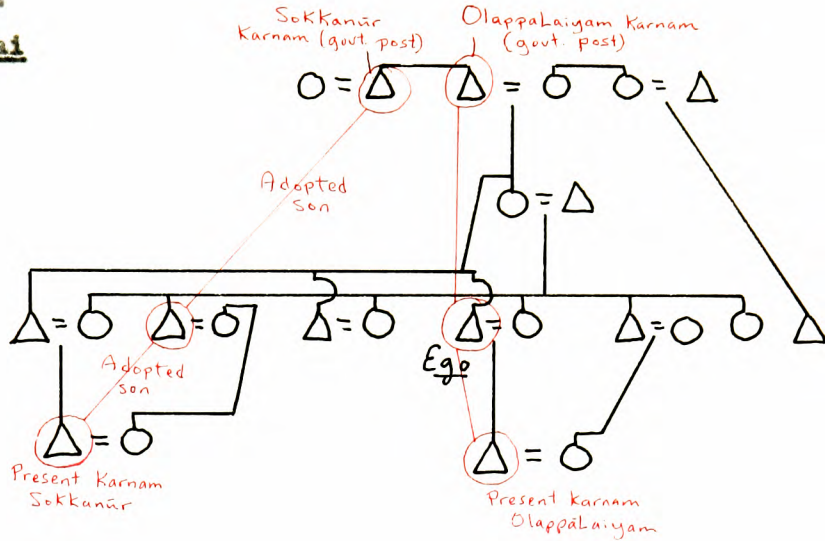
Diagram 4: Three Genealogical Examples of Tight Intermarriage

Genealogy 1:

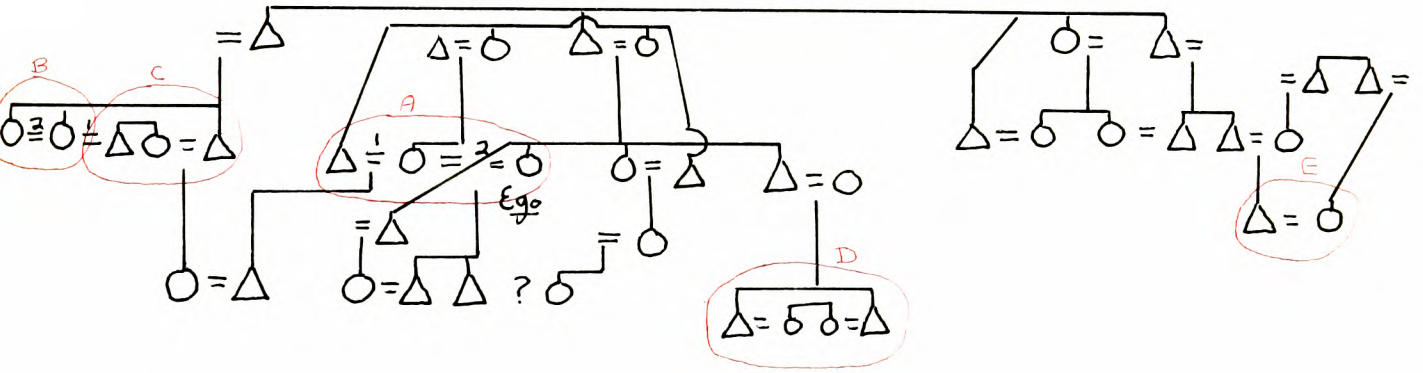
Mutaliyār



Genealogy 2:
Kaṅakku Pillai



Genealogy 3:
PaṅTaran



Genealogy 1 is taken from a family of merchants who have been settled in Olappalaiyam for at least four generations. They are proud of the tradition of ZD marriage in their family and they already speculate on the next in the series, that of a boy of fifteen with his ZD, now about eight. They can only trace their genealogy with certainty back to ego's grandparents, but the previous history of matrilineal residence is known and the family

speculates that two previous generations of similar marriages may have occurred.

Genealogy 2 concerns the village accountant, another family with specific economic rights in Olappālaiyam. An inquiry into their marriage history brought out three MD unions and one $MMZS$ union (terminologically MS) in a sibling group of four sisters. It also uncovered the unusual marriage (K) of a man with his VBZ (terminologically FZ). The genealogy shows the intense concern with keeping the advantages of the hereditary post within the immediate family group. The pencilled lines indicate the descent of the right to the Karnam's office in two villages through three generations. In the case of 'okkanūr the family has twice resorted to adoption because of the absence of direct heirs. The office passed first to a MDS and then to a ZS respectively.

Genealogy 3, that of a family of Pan̄tāram priests, shows an even more complex situation of tight intermarriage. Within two generations, the descendants of five siblings have, between them, made ZD marriages and one $MMZD$ (terminologically ZD) marriage. There has also been one FZD and one ABD marriage. Furthermore, there are two cases of sororate (A & B), an example of a direct exchange of sisters between brothers-in-law (C) and a case where two sisters have married two brothers^(D). Finally, there is one example of a $MPFD$ (E) (terminologically MZ) union. All these matches were made by the descendants of one set of siblings. Here, as before, their major interest in such close intermarriage was in preserving specific economic rights, this time with the proceeds of pūjas or oblations performed at local temples.

In more general terms, the genealogies collected bear out the pattern of an especially high rate of tight intermarriage in households of a middling

economic status, particularly among those families who have inherited specific economic rights which they want to preserve. The possibilities of a woman's daughter sharing in the economic rights of her mother's natal family and of their passing through this girl to her son (who will be both BS and ZDS) are an important consideration in arranging a ZD's marriage. If the marriage is repeated in a second generation, ego's daughter will benefit, in a similar fashion, from his ZS's inheritance. People also say that if the family is living jointly, a ZD can rule the household and enjoy seniority over her ZDS by claiming that the latter are 'outsiders'. A ZD is in an excellent position to curry favour with her husband's parents in order to gain their support in such daughter-in-law rivalries. Informants have told me stories to this effect.

The genealogies collected indicate that both very wealthy and very poor families tend to marry outsiders more. In the one case, it is a matter of cutting ties with close kin and looking for alliances with better placed people, in the other it is a case of being ignored by close relatives and thus being forced to search for brides elsewhere. Families whose wealth ranks above that of their close relations are continually trying to sever their ties with the latter, particularly if the entire family do not hold joint rights to a particular economic privilege.

At the same time, however, the disregard of poor relations is considered irresponsible and unfeeling. The ideal is a tie of mutual respect and strong feeling between brother and sister, so immutable that they can promise each other a generation in advance that their children will marry. This is the feeling behind the conception of urumai and it accounts for the extreme bitterness and ill-will which can arise between brother and sister when such an agreement is later broken. It will invariably be interpreted as a feeling of superiority on the part of one sibling relative to the other.

It is a situation considered not to have existed when they were children, but to have developed as a result of economic differentiation in later life.

Despite the strong approval of close marriages in all communities, the actual statistical frequency of these unions is not high. The figures tabulated from the material gathered for this account fit, in general, those which have been reported from elsewhere. The comparison is given in Chart 28 below.

Chart 28: Statistical Frequency of Close Marriages

Author ³²	1 Actual MBD	2 Actual FZD	3 Actual ZD	Total of Columns 1, 3 & 3	Total of all marriages where ego could specify exact relation to spouse	Sample Size
Gough	4%	4%	4%	12%	unspecified	not given
Yalman	7.7%	5.3%	none	13%	unspecified	169
Beck	5.7%	4.5%	6.8%	17.0%	34.8%	466
McCormack	6.5%	4.8%	9.8%	21.1%	44.2%	518
Sivertsen	15.2	15.2%	20.3%	50.7%	65.0	157

Apart from Sivertsen, whose figures seem surprisingly high, the frequencies calculated on material gathered for this account appear to fall well within the general range reported by others. This might be said to be somewhere between ten and twenty-five per cent, defining this figure as the total frequency of all MBD, FZD and ZD marriages taken together. Of the three, ZD

³² Sources for the table:
McCormack, 1958, Man In India No. 38, p. 34-46.
Yalman, Under the Bo Tree, p. 213
Gough, 'Brahman Kinship in a Tamil Village', A.S. Vol. 50, 1950, p. 844
Sivertsen, When Caste Barriers Fall, p. 96.

My sample includes only the marriages of all people living in Olappalaiyan in June 1965, their siblings marriages and their children's marriages. Records of other close marriages, despite their general interest, were not included so as not to bias the calculation. The sample also does not include any figures for the untouchable communities nearby.

would appear the most popular, in those areas where it is allowed. MBD marriages run second, FZD marriages are the least common of the three. In the material of this account is little variation in the proportion of these marriages by caste. At the same time, however, there appears to be a wide variation within a caste, by family. As has been noted above, families of middling wealth tending to have higher rates of close inter-marriage than those who are very rich or very poor.

FZD marriage stands out as somewhat more frequent among those castes who are associated with the left hand faction, while MBD marriage, by contrast, is slightly more favoured by the right hand group. The contrast is consistent with the ritualized preference for FZD as the urumai girl among some left hand communities while a MBD ritualized preference exists among all the right-hand castes. The statistical contrast, nonetheless, must be considered minimal because of the fact that castes with a MBD ritual preference are included in the left-hand block, and because the sample size for the latter faction is so small. Both groups show an equal enthusiasm for SD unions. An average percentage figure for these several types of marriages, by faction, is given below.

Chart 29: Percentages of Common Close Marriages
By Faction

	MBD	FZD	ZD	Total	Sample Size
Right Hand Castes	4.9%	3.8%	7.4%	16.1%	313
Left Hand Castes	3.7%	4.9%	7.6%	16.2%	143

N.B. Brahmans have been excluded from this calculation. This accounts for the difference in totals with the figures given in Chart 28. The columns indicate actual and not terminological relationships.

There are a few other varieties of close marriages discovered which occur in the sample as a whole and for which a figure of statistical frequency may be of interest. These unions are recorded in the chart below.

Chart 30: Percentages of More Unusual Marriages

MZD	M½Z	FWZ	Z½M	BWZ	Sororate (WZ)
1.2%	.2%	.4%	2.1%	3.6%	.6%

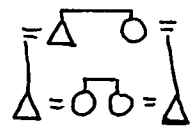
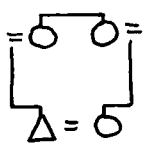
N.B. The columns indicate actual and not terminological relationships. The sample is the same as that used for Chart 28.

Still more unusual marriages were unearthed in the course of detailed inquiry. No statistical frequency can be given for these later, as they did not fall within the sample as defined for Chart 28. However, they are worth noting for their general interest. In all cases they go against the terminological rules; in other words ego married someone who was terminologically a M or a Z. In discussing these examples, informants always indicated that the terminological inconvenience had been overlooked due to larger economic considerations related to keeping wealth within the family. All examples below are drawn from the KavunTar community.

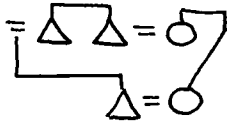
Diagram 5: Examples of Terminologically 'Confusing' Marriages

(A) MZD
(Commonplace. At least five examples)

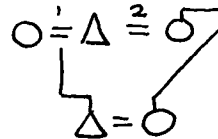
(B) FFWWZ
(Not unusual. However, only one example)



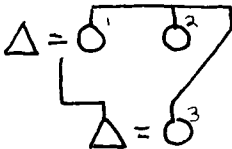
(C) FBWZ
(Rare. Two examples)



(D) FW₂Z
(Rare. Two examples)



(E) MZ
(Rare. Once confirmed and one unconfirmed example)



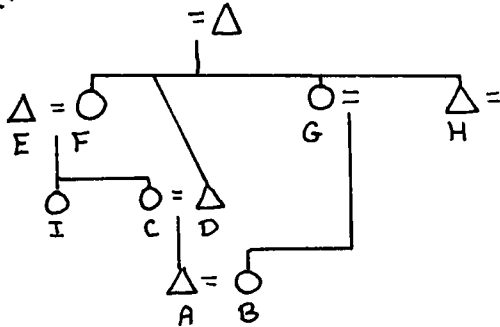
In this final example the family was wealthy but had only three daughters and no sons. At the time of the marriage the eldest sister was 65 and had a son of 30. The second sister was 60 and had remained

unmarried. Finally the son of the eldest sister was persuaded to marry the youngest even though she was his own MZ and twenty years his senior. The two elder sisters were not expected to live long. On their demise the third would be rich!

All these marriages create terminological problems because they 'confuse' parallel and cross relatives. Further difficulties are created by marriage across a generation. The way these linguistic conflicts are resolved by informants is a most interesting key to the way they think about kinship and marriage more generally. A number of examples of specific conflicts and their resolution are given below. Each example was checked with informants. The genealogies in Diagram 7, however, are hypothetical. They are meant only for illustration.

Diagram 6: Examples of Specific Terminological Conflicts
And Their Resolution

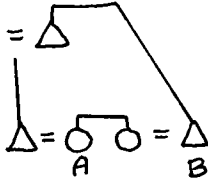
Example 1:



- For A, F = MM (not FZ)
- G = MMZ (not WM)
- For D, E = WF (not ZH)
- I = FZ (not ZD)
- For E, D = WB (not DH)
- For H, C = BH (not eZD)
- I, D = GH (not MB)

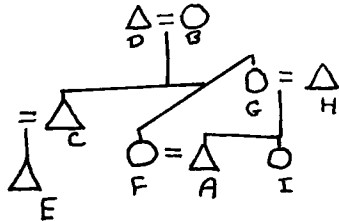
Reciprocal. Since E calls D 'maccan' he may reciprocate 'maccan' rather than 'mama'. However, the latter would be preferred as the more respectful.

Example 2:

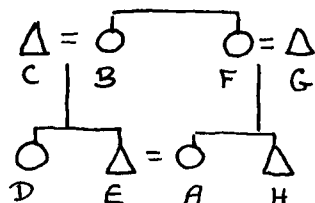


- For A, B = ZH (not HFB)
- For B, A = WZ (not BSW)

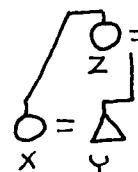
Example 3:



- For A, B = MM (not WM)
- C = WB (not MB)
- D = MF (not WF)
- For F, E = WBS (not MBS)
- G = Z (not eZ)
- H = HF (not FH)
- I = ZD (not HZ)

Example 4:

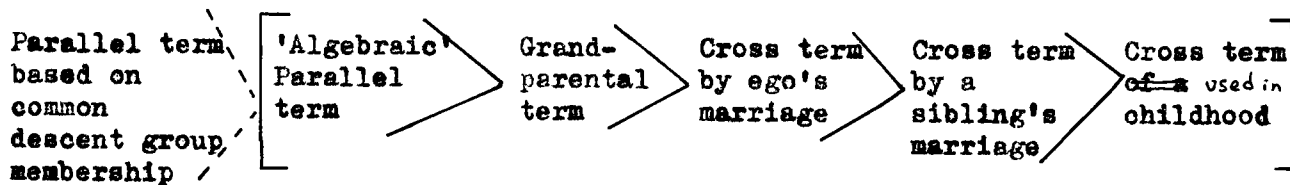
For A, B = FM (not MZ or HM)
 C = FF (not MZH or HF)
 D = MZD (not HZ)
 For E, F = FM (not MZ or WM)
 G = FF (not MZH or WF)
 H = MZS (not WB)
 For X, Z = Z (not HM)



N.B. ZD is a parallel term for a female speaker,
 but a cross term for a male speaker

From the first three sets of examples the following rule of priority

can be extracted:



Thus, if two terms are possible, the term of the category to the left will take precedence over any term in a category to the right. This means that a parallel kin term will always take priority over any other. The same principle can be seen underlying information on this subject reported by McCormack and Yalman.³³ It would appear, therefore, that the situation is general one among all speakers whose kin terminologies can be described as sharing a Dravidian-type structure.³⁴

³³ McCormack, "Sister's Daughter Marriage in a Mysore Village", Man in India, March, 1958, p. 34-47.

³⁴ Emeneau, in an article entitled "Language and Social Forms: A Study of Toda Kinship Terms and Dual Descent" reports material which gives 'an untraceable relationship through a matrilineal sib' precedence. The question should be investigated further, and perhaps is related to situations in other areas, where kilai or female descent units are found.

If the above rule of priority is general to a very large area, then it indicates a consistent concern with avoiding the use of cross terms (implying marriageability) for anyone to whom ego can trace a parallel relationship. Ego will use a cross term only after he has made a thorough and unproductive search for a parallel (or a common descent group) relationship. It is true that among many castes marriages do take place with women who could previously be addressed by a parallel term. The excuse is always that this woman's father was of a different clan than ego's own. Thus MZD, ZD, classificatory FZ (MBWZ) and even MZ marriages were discovered, but an actual FZ marriage is absolutely forbidden.

From the above, it would seem that a concern with exogamy is not absent, as Yalman has tried to argue.³⁵ Where liberties are taken with terminological relationships, the principle of clan exogamy must always be preserved. The situation appears to be similar where female clans are present. When a terminologically inappropriate marriage does occur, one female is transferred out of the 'parallel' category to become a 'spouse'. One never sees a female transferred out of her husband's descent group to become his spouse. After such a marriage all other relatives who previously had a parallel classification continue to retain it.

A parallel term for a relative is abandoned only when it is superseded by the argument of independent descent group membership, and then only in the context of an actual marriage. It would appear, therefore, that parallel terms operate with the same strength as descent group membership when the latter is absent. To abandon a parallel term without recourse to descent units would be to raise doubt as to the possibility of inadvertent incest. In this regard it is most interesting that Yalman notes that even in the

³⁵ Yalman, *Under the Bo Tree*, p. 337 and elsewhere.

highly cosmopolitan setting of Colombo, rules of prohibition appear to remain while 'positive rules', (as he calls the preference for cross-cousin marriage) have been attenuated.³⁶

To return to Diagram 7, above, the fourth example exhibits some special features. It should be noted that in an irregular marriage, a conflict over possible terms for parents -in-law is usually resolved, not by the general rule, but by resorting to a grandparental term. This is done even in a situation where a grandparental relationship does not actually exist. Such a 'euphemism' emphasizes the generational distance between ego and his parents-in-law and indicates a generalized respect by him for them. At the same time it evades the uncomfortable choice of a parallel term in ego's parental generation which would imply that ego had made an incestuous marriage with a sibling.

Where parents-in-law become involved in these terminological confusions, the gentle terms 'father of my father' and 'mother of my father' are always selected in referring to them. Since a generation has been skipped, the deduction that ego's wife is therefore a ~~FE~~ is ignored. Note, however, that in an actual ~~MZ~~ marriage a woman can not resort to a grandparental term for her sister. Here the generation gap is too great for such a euphemism. The sibling relationship is simply recognized as such. In fact, it becomes clear that an actual Z can never be anything but Z, nor an actual M anything but M.³⁷ It is only the classificatory use of these terms which is open to alteration.

The other important observation which can be made from the examples of

³⁶ Yelman, Ibid., p. 222.

³⁷ This is, indeed, the ultimate stronghold of feeling concerning incest. YakkaloRi and tayoRi or ammalokka, meaning intercourse with one's elder sister and with one's mother, respectively, are two of the most abusive and despising phrases in the language.

changes in kin terminology, described above, is the ease with which terminological usage slips across generational lines. The chart below shows the various terms which are partially identified by usage and which ego has a choice in selecting to refer to a particular individual, depending on his age and on the particular marriages in the kin group which have been made. It is notable that this 'slippage' occurs across every generational line.¹ The only distinction which remains is that of age relative to ego. This division of ego's kin universe into people older or younger than himself is a fundamental one. Respectful *v̄s.* intimate verb endings in speaking and many other details of *et̄*iquette are geared to relative age. Dumont has already stressed the importance of this principle elsewhere.³⁸

Chart 31: Cross-Generation Slippage in Kin Terms

Generation		Parallel		Cross	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
+2	FF	Aiyā	Āttā	Appucci	Ammāyi
+1	F	Appā	Ammā	Māman	Attai
0	elder Ego younger	ANNan	Akkā	Maccān	Naṅkayā
		Tampi	Taṅkacci	MāpiLLai	KoRuntiyā
-1	S	Makan	MakaL	Marumakan	MarumakaL
-2	SS	Pēran	Pētti	Pēran	Pētti

— 'Slippage' as a result of cross-generation marriages

— 'Slippage' in accordance with general usage

It is important to distinguish between those 'slippages' marked in red on Chart 31 and those marked in green. Those in red all occur as a result of marriage across generational lines and can be worked out from the examples given above. The use of terms for B(e), F and FF, however, are independent

³⁸ Dumont, Une Sous-Caste, pp. 265-71.

of such marriage and deserve comment. In the Kōnku region a child of either sex may refer to his mother's husband as ANNan or B(e), appā or P, and even as aiyā or PP, according to the age differential and the degree of intimacy which exists between him and this man. One can not be certain, therefore, who in a household is the exact genealogical father except by context or by detailed inquiry. ANNan is considered an old-fashioned way to address or refer to a father, but one can still hear it used spontaneously in Olappālaiyam by children of modest, unsophisticated families. There is no similar usage associated with the term for mother.

A father, when addressed as B(e), does not reciprocate to his children with a term for B(y) or Z(y), at least not in the Kānkayam area. This is explained partially by the fact that it is the general rule to refer to all relatives who are younger than oneself in age by name. In the Pollachi area in the Western extreme of Kōnku, however, fathers often refer to their sons as appan (father, informal) and to daughters as ammiNi (a diminutive of amma, mother). This striking disregard for generational distinctions within the nuclear family indicates the lack of emphasis on generation as a whole. Perhaps such usage occurs only in those regions of South India where cross-generational marriage is frequent and generally approved. In Kōnku the simultaneous presence of both features is at least consistent.

Informants are agreed that there is an excess of women of marriageable age and that brides are readily available. Men of all castes argue that the male is, therefore, placed in the better bargaining position. The reasons behind this perception of a disparity in numbers are probably complex. It does not appear from the genealogies that a very large male/female differential exists, in fact. It is true that a few men migrate to the towns and marry girls they meet there, but this trend is still negligible in the Kānkayam

area. More persuasive is the fact that girls marry younger than men. They are considered to be eligible as brides at puberty, although many wait several years, say until they are sixteen or seventeen. Men often do not marry until they are in their twenties.

Unmarried young women are noticed and are the subject of comment and gossip. If they wait too long their respectability and reputation are considered to be in danger. Men, however, can easily remain unmarried until their late twenties without being remarked upon. It is also true that the economic burden of marriage falls more heavily on the man and therefore sons of poor families are reluctant to commit themselves to having further mouths to feed. Women without nursing children can more or less support themselves by agricultural labour and various other manual jobs. However, in the long run, a man is taking on a greater financial burden by marrying, while the family of the girl is lightening theirs. All these considerations lead, it would seem, to a perception, on the part of informants, that there is an abundance of marriageable women.

The distance to which families go in their search for brides is some indication of their availability. However, this question also touches on the problem of what considerations influence a choice. Out of a sample of 200 marriages in Olappālaiyam only 64 had married within the village itself.³⁹ Furthermore most of the examples drawn are from castes with a relatively large local population. In no case did informants indicate that they were adverse to marrying within the settlement. However, considerations of family wealth, respectability and the character of the girl often outweigh the convenience of immediate proximity. In most cases there is simply not

³⁹ This figure includes all extant unions in 1965 where at least one partner to the marriage was still living, plus the marriages of these couples' children, whether the latter were resident in the village or not.

a wide enough choice of girls of a suitable age and family within the settlement itself.

The same consideration holds true, of course, for the distance at which people marry outside the village. Castes which have large local populations also tend to be populous in nearby settlements, although this is not as true of the artisan and trading communities as of others. Thus it is natural that small castes have marriage connections over a wider region. Nonetheless, it would also be true to say that the castes which are closely tied to the land tend to reinforce these bonds by selecting brides whose families reside within easy walking distance. The closer two families reside the more they will be able to cooperate to maintain and increase their local rights and privileges.

The chart below gives an impression of the varying distances to which members of different castes go in search of a spouse. Only castes where the sample size was five or more have been included in the following table.

Chart 32: Marriage Distance Analysis by Caste

Direction	Caste	Intra-Settlement of Marriages	Average Marriage Distance	% of Marriages contracted over 20 miles away	Sample Size
Right	A Kavuntar	4%	1-5 miles	4%	116
	Nātar	18%	5 miles	0%	11
	B Tātāram	0%	12 miles	55%	7
	UTaiyār	0%	20 miles	60%	10
C	Brahman	0%	20 miles	40%	5
Left	Kutaliyār	30%	15 miles	50%	10
	Ācāri	7%	20 miles	65%	16
	Nāyakkan	7%	12 miles	40%	16
	Others	-	-	-	9
		6%	10 miles	20%	200

From the above chart we can readily note a difference in distances various castes go to find a spouse. The territorially tied castes of the right hand (A) marry within a five to ten mile radius. They are greatly concerned with wealth, land, and local political influence. The artisan and trading communities of the left-hand, (D), by contrast, have small local populations and their marriage connections extend over a much wider area. Marriage at twenty miles or more is not uncommon. These castes are considerably more concerned with ritual and status divisions within their own ranks when arranging a marriage. However, wealth in monetary terms is also an important consideration. The more respected ritual service communities (B and C) resemble the artisan and trading castes in their small local populations, their concern with ritual status and the consequent distance to which a search for a bride is taken. Lower castes of both factions probably fall somewhere in between, although adequate information was not collected to determine this matter with certainty.

This pattern of a contrast between the upper left and the upper right-hand castes, with the lower castes falling somewhere in the middle, will be clearer if when the question of residence after marriage is considered. All castes share a general preference for the couple to settle with or near the family of the groom. However, the higher castes of the right are willing to overlook this if there are definite economic gains to be had by settling matrilocally. The high left-hand castes object more vehemently than do those of the right to matrilineal residence. They point out that respect ought to be given by the bride and her family to the groom. When the groom resides matrilocally he is, in a sense, reversing this position by indicating his dependence on his wife's family. The lower castes are less concerned about these niceties. At the same time they are often economically pressed.

Matrilocal residence among them is also fairly frequent.

Chart 33: Matrilocal and Virilocal Residence

<u>Matrilocal</u>	<u>Virilocal</u>	<u>High Right Hand:</u>	<u>Sample Size</u>
7%	6%	KavunTar NaTar PaNTaram UTaiyar	144
		<u>High Left Hand:</u>	
3%	37%	KaNakku Pillai CeTTiyar Acari Mutaliyar	30
		<u>Low Castes:</u>	
9%	24%	Nayakkan Navitan VaNNan	21

N.B. Matrilocality is defined as fairly permanent residence in the same settlement as the wife's parents, not necessarily the same house. Likewise virilocally means residence in a different settlement from either set of parents. The remaining proportion of the populations considered are patrilocal (same settlement) but this does not necessarily imply a joint household.

Specific Examples of Matrilocal Residence

1) KavunTar

Once W owned a little land in his father's village. However, he couldn't make ends meet and at the same time there was no large landowner to whom he could employ himself as a day labourer. He went into debt and was then forced to sell his land to cover it. Following this he moved to his wife's village. He has now established himself by trading in cattle.

2) NaTar

X was born some three miles away. However, after marriage the palayra palm trees in his natal village began to decrease in the quality and quantity of sap which they would yield. After some time he moved to his wife's village and began tapping trees there.

3) Acari

Y was born some 27 miles away. Soon after his marriage an astrologer told him that if he continued to live patrilocally his parents would die. Thus he moved with his wife to the town of Karur. Years later, after his parents had died, he decided to move his business to his wife's village where he lives at present.

4) Nāvitān

Z moved to the present village twenty-one years ago, soon after his marriage. At that time it was a place where his wife's father was carrying on a heavy trade. As this man was getting old and could no longer manage alone, he looked for a son-in-law who would help him. Finally he found a bridegroom and this son-in-law came to live in his wife's father's house. Later, however, he bought some government land and built his own, separate home. The father-in-law is now deceased.

Although the sample sizes for the above table are not large, the differential rate of matrilocality between the high left-hand and the high right-hand castes is consistent with other aspects of the different kind of emphasis which these two groups place on marriage and family life. In the absence of matrilocality, however, why is there such a high rate of virilocality among the more respected left-hand castes? This rate is related, in part, to a preference for virilocality over residence near the wife's family. However, virilocality is also related to the kinds of occupations which are prevalent in these communities. Artisans and traders often find it necessary to separate from the groom's family and move to another locale in order to find business. The rate of virilocality indicates a certain amount of mobility and a lack of permanent attachment to particular residential sites. The lower castes are not as mobile, but at the same time they are economically harder pressed. The chart brings out their intermediate position.

The same kind of pattern, to some extent, is noticeable in the rate of permanent separation after marriage. (Legal divorce is still very rare, partly because the groom is then obliged to pay alimony to the bride). The rate of permanent separation among the high left-hand castes is only 3%. It is 6% among the high right-hand castes, and 9% among the lower, but still touchable, communities.⁴⁰ The low castes undoubtedly tolerate a higher

⁴⁰ Again, unfortunately, there is not enough material available on the out-caste communities to enable comparison in this regard.

percentage of separation and give greater sexual freedom, in general, to their women than the high caste groups of either faction. The prohibition of widow remarriage among all high castes is one indication of this difference. Despite certain common features, however, the foregoing material illustrates the greater emphasis which the high left-hand castes place on the wife's subservience to her husband, and on her permanent transfer to his family. Consequently there is an avoidance of matrilocal residence and an increased tolerance of joint family living. The high left-hand castes can also be characterized as that group which places the greatest emphasis on the purity of the girl and her family, and on endogamy, generally. No informant from these castes (or any other) ever suggested that a particular direction in contracting a marriage was more favourable than another. The mild directionality of marriage ties which does show up in genealogies is rather the result of a preference which operates in favour of places where there are known concentrations of near kin. Sometimes these places just happen to lie in one particular direction or the other.

The most extreme and striking example of tight intermarriage discovered in the course of the present inquiry was among a group of Ceṅkuntā Mutaliyār who live near Bhavani, in the northeast corner of Yoḍku. There are about 600 of these Mutaliyār families who are all close relatives and who all live in three villages (actually four settlements) which lie in a circle whose radius is only about ten miles. These Mutaliyār claim to have never married any of their kin outside these three villages for at least as many generations back as the oldest informants can remember. Genealogies covering about 75 marriages and going back four generations were checked regarding this claim and no exceptions were found. This is not to say that mismarriages have not occurred, but they must be very few in number. Only in the past six years

have two determined and well-educated members of this micro-caste succeeded in marrying women from elsewhere. This was done, moreover, only against very, very strong objections from close relatives. This example of tight intermarriage is extreme, but it illustrates a general tendency among the high-left-hand castes which is certainly widespread.

Despite a general feeling that caste affiliation ought to be inherited in the male line, the reputation and status of a bride's family do significantly affect the status of her children. A single mismarriage can create a new and separate endogamous division. This, in fact, is the most common explanation given for the history of individual subcaste groups. One CeTTiyār, when asked to list the subcastes of his caste which he knew, explained the history of several different divisions as follows:

Chart 34: Mismarriage and Subcaste Formation

<u>Subcaste Name</u>	<u>Mismarriage which resulted in its formation</u>		<u>Approx. no. of years in existence</u>
	<u>Husband's Caste</u>	<u>Wife's Caste</u>	
Koñku CeTTiyār	Pandiya Navitan	KavuNTar	More than 100
KōmaTTi CeTTiyār	CeTTiyār	Mātāri	unknown
Vataku CeTTiyār	CeTTiyār	Nāyakkan	About 80 years
Ainutti Aintu CeTTiyār	CeTTiyār	KavuNTar	About 50 years
PaniraNTan CeTTiyār	CeTTiyār	Mutaliyār	unknown

The same CeTTiyār mentioned several other subcastes which distinguished on the basis of the language they spoke (Kannada or Telugu) or by their sectarian affiliation (Hingayat). In these cases the cultural differences are considered a sufficient reason for the existence of a separate endogamous community. No story of mismarriage is necessary. The accusations of mismarriage may or may not be true. The point is that informants conceive of

subcaste formation in this way. A man's second wife (or concubine), because of her inferior status, may also be responsible for the formation of a distinct descent group.

The informant for the above chart belonged to still another sub-community, the Makaram Ceṭṭiyār. He claimed to know no story about the formation of his own community, but someone of another subcaste of Ceṭṭiyār would, no doubt, have readily supplied one. Sometimes subcastes are distinguished in status by the size of the tāli or wedding necklace they wear. A story of mismarriage in the past always lies behind the reduction in the size of the necklace worn. Thus, in the Kaṅkayam area there are Perun-tāli (big tāli) and Cirun-tāli (little tāli) Mutaliyār.⁴¹ An informant is usually eager to hide the fact that he, himself, belongs to the little tāli group. Such information, as about the Ceṭṭiyār divisions, above, is best obtained from a third party. Thus a legend about past marriages often serves as an explanation of status divisions in the present. Correct new marriages are used to reaffirm the exclusive nature of the community in question and, if possible, to raise its status in the eyes of others. It is this kind of reasoning which has led to such tightly endogamous groups as the Mutaliyār community described above.

Weddings are a time of great pomp and show and often represent the biggest single expense of a lifetime.⁴² People are frequently willing to sell land or to go into debt in order to celebrate a marriage in a fashion they consider appropriate to their station in life. Conducting all the essential ceremonies requires about twenty-four hours, but this is itself

⁴¹ See B. Beck, An Examination of Marriage Ritual, (thesis submitted for the B. Litt. Degree, Oxford Univ., 1964, unpublished) for further discussion of large and small marriage necklaces.

⁴² Ibid., p. 29. See also Dumont, The Four-Caste, p. 216

a shortened version. Traditionally three to five days were necessary to complete a wedding properly. Inviting and feeding a huge crowd of guests is an important aspect of such occasions. Important people are always flooded with more invitations to weddings than they can possibly accept. It is not important to know a prestigious guest personally. The mere fact that he takes the trouble to attend and that he accepts food at the wedding feast greatly enhances the status of the host.

Dowry, the number of expensive saris the bride can display, and the amount of pure gold (even diamonds) in her ornaments are all noticed by the wedding guests. The very wealthy entertain with prestigious musicians and dancers brought from far away places to perform. It is true that the scale of grand weddings has perhaps increased in recent years, but the increase is only due to an increased difference in wealth between the rich and the poor. Weddings that used to be reserved for Maharajas are now performed by the wealthy industrialists of all the big towns. These weddings are only increased evidence of what is certainly a very old theme: marriage confirms in one event, both the ritual and the economic status of the family who celebrate it.

The reputation and the beauty of the bride, coupled with the economic and social position of her parents, are also fundamental considerations in arranging a marriage. In all castes there is an expressed preference (distinct from the ritualized preference described earlier) for immediate cross cousins. Usually such girls are considered first of all, and only if none of them meet the family's conscious requirements in terms of beauty, wealth or character, are more distant relatives contemplated.⁴³

⁴³ Attractive women are considered to be fair-skinned, modest in manner, to be neat and clean, to have long and thick black hair and to be neither thin nor very, very fat. Skills such as singing and dancing are also admired, although a girl would not usually continue to practice such arts after marriage. Good health and ability to work hard are also highly valued. A quarrel between the parents of the couple is the most common reason for ignoring an otherwise attractive match.

The circle within which a search is made widens gradually as more and more immediate kin are rejected. This extension of the area of search, however, is everywhere counterbalanced by a 'centrifugal' interest in marrying 'known' kin. The situation is similar to what Yalman describes as micro-caste or pavula for the Singalese-speakers of Ceylon. However, in Koñku these micro-castes are clearly less developed and less clearly defined than in his material.⁴⁴ Such a community is, by its very nature, associated with claims to 'purity of descent' which may be both admired and jealously disputed by outsiders. In most cases, however, it would seem that the boundaries beyond which marriage with so-called 'outsiders' ^{is} ~~are~~ not permitted ^{are} ~~is~~ vague. This vagueness is greatest in the case of the upper right-hand castes, while the boundaries of endogamous micro-units are best defined by the more prestigious castes of the left. Other lower castes fall somewhere in between.

In the Koñku region it is traditional that a girl receive a certain share in the family inheritance at the time of her marriage. This consists of a sufficient number of household pots, as well as the clothing and gold jewelery which will allow her to set up a new household at a level not too different from that to which she has already been accustomed at home. The groom offsets this expenditure on a kind of 'dowry' by providing a gold marriage necklace and a fixed brideprice called pāricam. The bride's family provide the groom's wedding clothes, and the groom's family provide a marriage sari for the bride. The expenses of the actual ceremony and the feeding of guests are traditionally considered to be shared more or less equally between them.

The pāricam is a fixed ceremonial sum which is supposed to be a stan-

⁴⁴ See Yalman, Under the Bo Tree, pp. 188-199.

standardized payment required equally of all groups within a single marriage community or micro-caste. Most informants know what the present sum is, but in many cases the amount has recently been raised and what was 'traditional' is, therefore, a matter of some confusion. Current sums vary from about 10½ rupees among some untouchables to 72½ (Paṅṅāraṅ) and 101½ (Kavunṅar). 'Traditional' sums quoted for these three groups were variable, but an approximate guess might put them at 1½, 31½ and 51½ respectively.⁴⁵ A few informants suggested that the amount could be reduced if the marriage was with an urumai girl, but this is not general practice.

Only two castes, the Brahmans and the Cōṛi Kōṛis, claim not to have a traditionally 'fixed' pāricam sum. They speak of this amount as something to be decided upon individually during wedding arrangements, and suggest that if the parties are agreeable, it need not be paid at all. It is most interesting that these two castes are the very ones who stress most the importance of dowry. Here the term means more than just the bride's jewels and household effects. It refers to an actual lump sum of money demanded by the groom and varying in amount with his earning capacity, and his general social status. Dowry, in this latter sense, can be a matter for a great deal of bargaining during the marriage arrangements. The only word which informants know for this is the Sanskrit term varadakshinai. The general household gifts which a girl accepts at her wedding are, more simply, koṅṅukka vēṅṅiya kurai, 'that which she has the right to receive'.

Many wealthy families are now beginning to adopt dowry in this latter sense, referring to a lump sum of money paid by the bride's father to the

⁴⁵ In a very general way, the amount of the pāricam increases with the general wealth and social status of the community in question. Odd sums are considered to be auspicious. The extra ½ rupee is an indication of 'increase' and thus an omen of future prosperity.

groom's family. This custom is one of growing prestige, although it has not yet greatly affected those who live in the rural areas. Dowry is associated with the literary theme of a father making a gift of his virgin daughter, just as the term varadakshini is literary and rather foreign for most informants. Dowry is most clearly associated with Brahmans, the one community who consistently make a FZM/MS and FZS/MSB distinction in their kin terminology. At the same time they are one of the few castes to have a ritualized claim or urumai on the FZD. All three factors, dowry, a distinction between wife-giver's and wife-takers in the terminology, and the importance given to FZD marriage, fit together. A father (or brother) gives away a girl to a groom of higher status than himself. The gift of a sum of money (dowry) with the girl emphasizes this status difference.⁴⁶

The father (or brother) acquires 'merit', so it is reasoned, by giving a woman of his family to a man more prestigious and more economically secure than himself. However, at the same time this status differential between a brother and his sister's husband is dangerous. It could lead to a gradual erosion of the brother/sister connection. Thus a son has the urumai or 'right' to claim his FZD in marriage in order to 'reverse' the balance and affirm a continuing bond between the families. Such a reversal of the direction in which women are given would be unthinkable in some hypergamous areas of North India. In Kodko, however, where a subtle status distinction is thought to have developed, the right to reverse it also appears. This

⁴⁶ It is interesting that it is those very families who are adopting dowry who are at the same time beginning to refuse any payments at weddings. any is a gift of a few rupees presented publicly, after the ceremonies, by a male representative of each household who were guests at the wedding. A record of the gift is kept. The host is then expected to repay a smaller or slightly larger sum at the next festival when he becomes the guest, and the guest, the host. These payments are an important aid to the host in financing the occasion. Refusal is part of the increased emphasis on the bride's father making the whole occasion part of a prestigious gift for which he, alone, foots the bill.

unusual situation can perhaps be best understood as a kind of combination of the prestige of a literate tradition and its emphasis on dowry, with a more immediate concern for the purity of a tightly interlaced endogamous community. In Konku this combination of prestigious elements is stressed, in particular, by the high left-hand communities.

The right-hand castes of Konku, on the other hand, did not, traditionally, think in terms of dowry or of a developing status difference between the groom's and the bride's family. The terminology, the importance of the pāricāṅ, plus the tradition of joint financing, all point to the wedding as creating a rather substantial equality between a brother and his 2H. This equality is brought out in the wedding ritual itself when the two hold hands beneath a single mound of husked rice. (See Section II C 1) The emphasis here is on the sister being well cared for, well placed, but equal to her brothers in her social position. This essential theme is further expressed, it would seem, when the sister makes the demand that her brother's daughter be considered the ṛiṣṭā or 'rightful bride' for her own son. In this the sister is asking for a kind of assurance from her brother that he will continue to care for her welfare, even after his marriage, and that he will marry her well enough so that her son will make an appropriate groom for his own daughter. The assurance of the brother's support and protection are emphasized by his gift of fruits to her and by the wedding sari which is stretched between them during this 'uniting' ritual.

The ṛiṣṭā themes in marriage are shared by both the left and the right-hand factions. The bond between a brother and a sister and the responsibilities which they have towards one another are fundamental. A man exercises control over the marriages of his sisters and daughters. They are women of his descent group who must marry out of the parallel line, but at the same time, preferably with close cross relatives. A sister must be protected

and married well by her brothers, for this will ensure the prestige and prosperity of their own family. She has the power to bless her brother's family or, equally, to curse it if he does not do his utmost for her. Similarly, a man must be careful in the choice of a spouse. A wife's purity and her family's general status will help to ensure the position his sons will inherit. It is the men who arrange marriages and who determine a family's economic position, but the women who are vital to a household's general status and prosperity. Tight intermarriage is an attempt to ensure the position and the purity of sisters, daughters and wives. Only when they are secure, content and well-protected, can the endogamous community flourish as a whole.

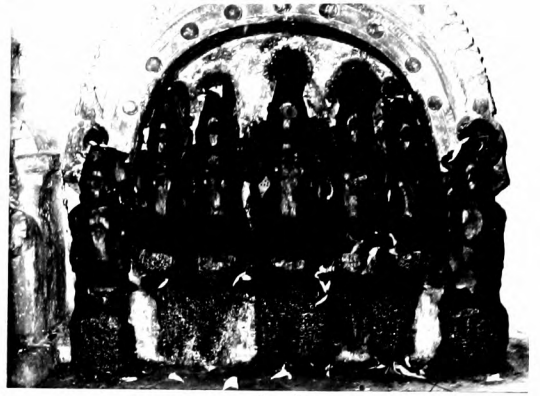
Plate 7: Ancestor And Clan Shrines

- a) A Mutaliyār Seated On The Canāṭi Built Over His
Father's Grave
- b) The Seven Kannimār
- c) KaruppaNacāmī
- d) Image of The Elder Brother In A Temple Commemorating
The Story Of The Brothers
- e) Father Of The Brothers Riding In a Palanquin, Same
Temple
- f) Tan̄kattal, The Ascetic Younger Sister Of The Brothers.
Same Temple.
- g) A Kavuntar Possessed By The Clan Deity During A Festival

PLATE 7



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(g)



(f)

II B) Lineage, Clan and Clan Shrines

1) Descent Groupings Among the Left-Hand and Low-Ranking Castes

All the castes described in this account have some form of named, patrilineal and traditionally exogamous descent units. The terms for these units and the marriage rules associated with them vary considerably from caste to caste. These variations have already been described in the preceding section. Associated with the terminology and the marriage rules of these units, however, are varied traditions of clan mythology, clan territory, clan temples and clan ceremonial rights. These, taken together, give a general index to the importance of clan divisions within any one caste. For the purposes of discussion and convenient reference, this account will refer to the extent of clan divisions within any one community as pervasive, moderate or tenuous. This section will discuss in detail the kind of material on which this classification is based and its general significance for understanding the differences between the several castes. A working definition of these terms is given below.

Definition of Terms for Describing the Extent of Clan Division Within A Given Caste

Pervasive

Clan divisions are associated with landownership, residence and local prestige. Clan exogamy regulates marriage and this reasoning easily overrides the niceties of kinship algebra. Clans may or may not be organized into an all-encompassing two-section system. There is a developed tradition of clan temples and clan ceremonial rights. Stories about these clans are extensive, but at the same time, generally localized. These stories refer infrequently, if at all, to the events recounted in the great purāṇa(s). Clans are frequently sub-divided and there are temples and stories to correspond to each sub-division.

Moderate

Clan temples occur here and there, but do not form a regular pattern. Clan ceremonial rights at particular temples are infrequent, but can sometimes be identified. Clans are frequently associated with a nāTu area, but association with a particular kirāram or ur is uncommon. Some clan stories show links with the great purāNa(s), others are localized. Clans are rarely sub-divided. Clan exogamy may be a factor in regulating marriage, but there is considerable hesitance in contracting unions which go against the logic of the kin terminology.

Tenuous

Clan groupings have no bearing on everyday affairs. People have difficulty in recollecting clan names and marriage is regulated solely by the 'algebra' of the kin terminology. There is no tradition of clan temples, clan territory, or clan ceremonial rights, although odd shrines to family ancestors can be found. Clan names appear to serve only as a faint claim to a prestigious descent from the sages of the past. Clan stories are consistently linked to the events recounted in the great purāNa(s), and unassociated with specific territorial locations. Clans are not sub-divided.

On the basis of the above definition of terms, a chart can be constructed to show the general variation in the strength and extent of clan divisions, by caste, in the Koṅku area. This has been done below:

Chart 35: Strength and Extent of Clans, By Caste

Caste	<u>Right-Hand</u>		Caste	<u>Left-Hand</u>	
	Clan Term	Strength & Extent of Clan Divisions		Clan Term	Strength & Extent of Clan Divisions
	Brahman		Kōtiram		Tenuous
KavuNTar	kulam	Pervasive	Kaṅakku Pillai	kōtiram	Tenuous
Koṅku CeTTiyār	kulam	Pervasive	Kōṅku CeTTiyār	kōtiram	Tenuous
NāTār	kulam	Pervasive	Mutaliyār	kūTTam	Tenuous
PaNTāram	nāTu	Moderate	Ācāri	kōtiram	Tenuous
UTaiyār	nāTu	Moderate	Nāyakkan	kūTTam	Tenuous
Koṅku Navitan	nāTu	Moderate	Vataku VāNnan	nāTu	Moderate
Paraiyan	nāTu	Moderate	VēTan	nāTu	Moderate
			Mātāri	kūTTam	Pervasive
	Kuravan		KūTTam		Pervasive

From a glance at Chart 35, the general pattern of clan division within the several castes should be clear. The upper right-hand castes have a pervasive clan tradition, while that of their ritual servants is only moderate. In the left-hand faction, on the other hand, the pattern is reversed. The upper left-hand castes have very attenuated clan divisions, while those of the service communities, again, are moderate. The lowest of all the left-hand castes, the Mātāri, have pervasive descent units. The high left-hand castes resemble the Brahmans in the general lack of emphasis they place on their clan divisions. The contrast is strongest between the tenuous clan divisions of these high left-hand castes and the strength of such divisions among their opposite numbers, the prestigious castes of the right. The difference in this matter of clan traditions lessens as one descends the social hierarchy. The first half of this section will describe the tenuous clans of the Brahmans and the high left-hand castes and the moderate clan traditions of the several service communities. In the second half, this description will be contrasted with the pervasive clan divisions which are found among the leading castes of the right.

The Brahmans have little in the way of knowledge of specific family or clan history. They do not keep genealogies, except, possibly, records of the names of priests at very big temples. They shave the heads of their children in a nearby Śiva or Viṣṇu temple where the family serve as priests, or at one of the great temples of the region. This shaving of the child's head is a ritual which the right-hand castes generally perform at a clan temple. The Brahmans have no such tradition of separate shrines for separate descent groups, although they do sometimes dedicate a small alcove of a larger temple to the memory of a particularly prominent, but

deceased, family member. Outside the Kannapuram Cīva temple, for example, is a small alcove dedicated to the FF of the present priest, who had a highly admired and extensive knowledge of astrology. The Brahmans of rural Koṅku have a fairly extensive knowledge of the South-Indian purāṇa stories. Nearly all (male and female) Brahmans are literate and one can often see members of this caste sitting on the porches of their houses reading to themselves. Their kōtiram(s) are named after various famous sages or rishi(s), from whom they say they are directly descended.

The Kaṇakku Piḷḷai family in Olappālaiyam, and their relations in neighbouring villages, strongly resemble the Brahmans in their interest in, and fairly developed knowledge of, purāṇa stories. They use the same corpus of rishi names for their kōtirams. As the Brahmans, they have no tradition of clan temples. For life-cycle ceremonies and the first shaving of a child's head, they go to a nearby Aṅkāḷamman temple or to a famous pilgrimage centre in the region. No stories are known about the history of the settlement of the Brahmans or of the Kaṇakku Piḷḷai in particular villages. The rishi(s) whose names are borrowed by the clans of these castes are mentioned here and there in the purāṇa(s), but they bear no relation to the location of temples or pattern of clans in a particular area.

The one story which I did find which made mention of the Brahmans and the Kaṇakku Piḷḷai in a more local context was written on a palm-leaf manuscript and stored in the house of the latter caste, in Olappālaiyam. This story is interesting for several reasons. For one, it ties the Brahmans and the Kaṇakku Piḷḷai in, if only incidentally, with a very widespread story in the South which is mainly about the other three prestigious castes of the left-hand, the Ciṭṭiyār, the Ācāris and the Kūtālāyār. Secondly, it alters other versions of this tale, so as to give it some relation to

the social and physical geography of the Koṅku region. And thirdly, it explains how the Koṅku Ceṭṭiyār (who call themselves the ainutti or 500 Ceṭṭiyār) became attached to the Kavunṭar community, and thus disassociated themselves from other subcastes of Ceṭṭiyār who belong to the left-hand faction.

The above-mentioned manuscript begins with a very long history of the gods and demons of another epoch. It is only in the second half of this work, after an elaborate, mythological introduction, that the story condensed below is found.

In Kāveripunpātinam there lived a Navakōṭi Ceṭṭiyār. He was a very wealthy merchant and had 60,000 people working in his shops. One day someone dared to insult him by saying that, despite his wealth, he was really nothing but an orange seller. At this the Ceṭṭiyār grew very angry and closed all his shops. The people could no longer buy spices and other necessary condiments. They suffered and complained to the king. The king approached the Ceṭṭiyār and encouraged him to reopen his shops. Finally the rich merchant agreed on the condition that the king humble himself by dressing and dancing like a woman at a festival. The king did this. Then the Ceṭṭiyār reopened his shops and for a while the two were outward friends again. However, the king nursed a grudge and one day he told the Ceṭṭiyār that he had had a dream in which Pattirekāṭi had appeared and demanded that the Ceṭṭiyār give a poṅkal feast for her. Learning this the 60,000 Ceṭṭiyārs got together and decided to give a feast inside the king's fort. They called the Brahman school teacher and asked him to bring them sons for the festivities. When all was ready, however, the king sent his army to the fort and tried to kill everyone within it. Many died but the teacher and the children managed to escape through an opening at the back of the fort which issued onto the river Cauvery. They wrote a magical verse on a palm leaf which read:

The River Ganges never overflowed
A virgin (young girl) can never be destroyed
So to cross the Cauvery
You, Krishna, show us the way.

Then they laid this palm leaf on the swollen waters of the river and it magically parted so that the party could walk across. The army followed them as far as the river bank, but there gave up, realizing that this Brahman teacher and his 500 children could not be destroyed.

The teacher and children then made their way to the palace of the famous PaTTakkārar at PaRaiyakōTTai (10 miles north of Olappālaiyam) where they told the great KavunTar family their story. The PaTTakkārar then ordered that one boy be fed in each house where he could command allegiance. Later, after some years, the question of the marriage of these boys arose. To solve this problem the Brahman school teacher thought of a trick. He bought 500 silk bags, filled them with stones and placed them by the river, telling people that this was the wealth that the children had brought with them from Kāveripunpātinam. The people believed him and brought forth their KavunTar daughters with offers of marriage. The ceremony took place and all the boys were married in one day. During the rituals the goddess PaTTirakāLi magically turned the stones in the little bags to gold. The young newly-weds, however, agreed to take only half of this inheritance themselves. The rest they decided to give to the Brahmaan teacher for his help. The teacher, however, declined the gift. Instead he gave the gold to the accountant (KaNaKku Pillai) of the PaTTakkārar with the condition that this money should be kept by him and used to finance the weddings of the children of the present couples. The KaNaKku Pillai wrote an agreement to this effect and all four PaTTakkārar of the region signed it. As a result, whenever a son of these CeTTiyār/KavunTar couples is married (they now call themselves the 500 or Koṅku CeTTiyār) the KaNaKku Pillai is obliged to give them, as a gift, one measure of rice, 1 of a rupee and a wedding necklace.

One group of these 500 or Koṅku CeTTiyār now live at Taiyampālaiyam, a kirāman some fifteen miles to the southeast of Kannapuram. These CeTTiyār have an elaborate series of clan temples and celebrate a large clan festival each year. They also associate themselves strongly with the ANNamār Katai or 'Story of The Brothers', an epic which largely concerns the KavunTar community. In these ways, then, the Koṅku CeTTiyār have associated themselves with the clan traditions and the epic story of the right-hand faction. The story above in a sense 'explains' this association.

Although I, myself, did not succeed in collecting any stories or myths at all from the other prestigious castes of the left-hand (the non-Koṅku CeTTiyār, the Mutaliyār and the Ācārā), Thurston has recorded some very

interesting tales about these three communities. Although Thurston himself, did not remark on the association, the tales about these three groups which one finds in his works appear to be connected. The common themes are the story of a besieged fort, a flood, some escapees, and, finally, a mixed marriage. The various permutations of the story which Thurston has given mention these three castes in several combinations. All the stories bear a resemblance to the story collected in Olappālaiyam, above. One example from Thurston, which highlights the Ācāri (Kammālan) community in this triad, is given below:

In the town of Māndāpuri, the Kammālans of the five divisions formerly lived closely united together. They were employed by all sorts of people, as there were no other artificers in the country, and charged very high rates for their wares. They feared and respected no king. This offended the kings of the country, who combined against them. As the fort in which the Kammālans concealed themselves, called Kāntakkōttai, was entirely constructed of loadstone, all the weapons were drawn away by it. The king then promised a big reward to anyone who would burn down the fort, and at length the Deva-dāsīs (courtesans) of a temple undertook to do this, and took betel and nut in signification of their promise. The king built a fort for them opposite Kāntakkōttai, and they attracted the Kammālans by their singing, and had children by them. One of the Deva-dāsīs at length succeeded in extracting from a young Kammālan the secret that, if the fort was surrounded with varagu straw and set on fire, it would be destroyed. The king ordered that this should be done, and in attempt to escape from the sudden conflagration, some of the Kammālans lost their lives. Others reached the ships, escaped by sea, or were captured and put to death. In consequence of this, artificers ceased to exist in the country. One pregnant Kammālan woman, however, took refuge in the house of a Beri Chetti, and escaped decapitation by being passed off as his daughter. The country was sorely troubled owing to the want of artificers and agriculture, manufacturers and weaving suffered a great deal. One of the kings wanted to know if any Kammālan escaped the general destruction, and sent round his kingdom a piece of coral possessing a tortuous aperture running through it, and a piece of thread. A big reward was promised to anyone who could succeed in passing the thread through the coral. At last, the boy born of the Kammālan woman in the Chetti's house undertook

to do it. He placed the coral over the mouth of an ant-hole, and having steeped the thread in sugar, laid it down at some distance from the hole. The ant took the thread, and drew it through the coral. The king, being pleased with the boy, sent him presents, and gave him more work to do. This he performed with the assistance of his mother, and satisfied the king.... The king provided him with the means for making plough-shares on a large scale, and got him married to the daughter of a Chetti, and made gifts of land for the maintenance of the couple. The Chetti woman bore him five sons, who followed the five branches of work now carried out by the Kammālan caste.¹

Thurston's story gives an account of the origin of the Ācāri (Kammālan) caste. His version mentions the anger and persecution of a king, the fleeing of a few members, and the irregular union of one of them with a Chetti (CeTTiyār). The offspring of this mixed marriage became the founders of a new line of Ācāris. The Dēva-dāsīs (a sub-group of Mutaliyār) are also mentioned briefly in the role of seductresses. In another account of what is clearly the same story, published recently by a local poet of the Konku area, it is the CeTTiyār who are prominent. Again there is a king in the role of persecutor, a few members flee and, in the end, enjoy an irregular union with a Mutaliyār woman. This time it is the CeTTiyār/Mutaliyār offspring who become the founders of a new CeTTiyār group. In a condensed translation, his story is as follows:

The Pannirendan CeTTiyār (twelve shares CeTTiyār) used to live in Kāveripunpātinam. However, they fled at the time of a great flood to Alahāpuri where a king asked for one of their girls in marriage. The CeTTiyār refused on the basis of caste. The king wanted to take revenge. However, the CeTTiyārs came to know and fled. Some of them escaped and one small boy went to a Kaikolan Mutaliyār house for refuge. The Mutaliyār protected him and he eventually married there and had eleven children. Later he wanted to divide his property, but it was awkward trying to divide it into eleven shares. Thus he went to a Uvālimalai and asked an elderly man

¹ Thurston, Castes and Tribes, Vol. III, p. 113-115. See also Vol. III, p. 315-317, Vol. I, p. 215-217 and Vol. II, p. 93-4.

there what to do. The man answered that he should divide the property into twelve shares. When the C. Tiyār did this the old man disappeared with the twelfth share. From a distance he called out that he was an orphan and deserved this much. Now he is worshipped as a god (and one twelfth of the income of these people, should, by tradition, be laid aside for him).²

The point of these stories is to illustrate that the more prestigious castes of the left-hand share a certain common corpus of stories about themselves all over the South. The assorted accounts collected all indicate a certain amount of reciprocal aid and sympathy between these communities. They all mention an angry king (of the right-hand?) who tried to destroy them. However, in each case, a few manage to evade him. Their escape is associated with a flood or the crossing of a swollen river. Those who escape intermarry to form a new grouping of left-hand communities and their offspring re-establish themselves on the basis of their skill in business and craft pursuits. Nowhere in these stories are territorial references prominent. Nowhere are clans or clan rights even mentioned. In keeping with this generalised mythology, none of these castes have a tradition of clan shrines or clan ceremonial rights. The most which my inquiries uncovered were a few shrines to prominent members of particular families.³ Many families of these castes keep old palm-leaf manuscripts in their houses, which used to be read by elders of the family, though most lie forgotten now. Most are famous purāṇa stories or works on astrology. For the head-shaving ceremony of a young child, or for any other life-cycle ceremony, these castes go to the nearest Aṅkāḷaṣṣan temple, or to some famous shrine

² Paṅniccāmi Pūḷavan, Koṅku Celvi. p. 150. For an account of another CaT-Tiyār group which shows a certain resemblance to this one see Thurston, Castes and Tribes, Vol. V, p. 258-62.

³ See, for example, Thurston, Castes and Tribes, Vol. I, pp. 187-90, Vol. III, pp. 325-331, Vol. IV, p. 293, and Vol. VII, p. 187.

in the region. Their clans are a formality and a matter of prestige. They have little bearing on everyday life.

The lower castes of the left-hand faction are more difficult to discuss as a group. The material collected for this account includes only scattered information about them and from this only a few generalisations can be made. Almost all the communities in this category speak Kannada or Telugu as their mother tongue and many of their traditions derive from a previous residence in either Mysore or Andhra. Of these two groups of immigrants into Koṅku, the Telugu-speakers are numerically more prevalent. They also represent a far wider variety of caste communities. There are Telugu-speaking merchants and artisans, as well as Telugu service castes and Telugu-speaking untouchable labourers. The Nāyakkan (Boyan or Bedan) community is also, originally, from Andhra. In the Kaṅkayam area this caste is of low status and its members are largely well-diggers, earth-movers and builders. In the southeast corner of Koṅku, however, some Nāyakkans were traditionally Zamindars, related to the descendants of the Nāyakkan dynasty in Madurai. Here they continue to maintain their position as large and wealthy land owners. Some also own land around the city of Coimbatore and have become influential industrialists there.

Although the evidence available is scanty, it would appear that there is a wealth of stories which connect up all these Telugu-speakers in terms of intermarriage, elder/younger brother associations and/or master servant ties.³ The story recorded in Section II A 1 about the sibling-like tie between Nāyakkans and Telugu Mātāris is an example of this. The story matches very suggestively with one recorded by Thurston on the same theme.⁴

³ See, for example, Thurston, Castes and Tribes, Vol. I, pp. 187-90, Vol. III, pp. 325-331, Vol. IV, p. 293, and Vol. VII, p. 187.

⁴ Thurston, Castes and Tribes, Vol. I, p. 187.

The folklore of the Nāyakkān community is associated with the literature of the puraṇa(s) and is full of references to prestigious kings and deities, just as are the stories of the other high left-hand castes. However, this folk literature about Nāyakkāns, Kōmūṭṭi Ceṭṭiyārs and other Telugu-speaking castes, does not appear to connect directly with the cycle of stories, outlined above, for the prestigious left-hand Tamil-speaking communities. Although not dissimilar in general tenor, the folklore concerning these Telugu-speaking groups is probably somewhat distinct.⁵ The only Kannada speakers encountered during the course of this study were two subcastes (Annappu and Moracu) of the untouchable Mātāri community. Whether these immigrant castes from Mysore have a cycle of stories of their own, and to what extent it, too, is distinctive, remains unclear.

In keeping with the other touchable castes of the left-hand, Kōmūṭṭi Ceṭṭiyārs and Nāyakkāns do not have particular territorial locality or series of temples associated with their clan names. Clans are not subdivided, nor is there any general gathering of members of one clan for a periodic festival. Marriage is regulated by the 'algebra' of the kin terminology. The service communities of the left-hand are in an intermediate position. When the lowest caste of this faction, the outcaste Mātāris, are considered, however, one finds that the tradition of clan divisions, clan territories and clan temples is well-developed. There are many subcastes of Mātāri, of which four or five were resident in the immediate area around Kāṅkayam. All of these speak either Telugu or Kannada as a mother tongue and it would appear that the entire caste (which now constitutes nearly twenty per cent of the rural population) were originally migrants from Mysore and Andhra. No mention is found of this caste either in early Tamil inscriptions or in

⁵ This is a topic which would be worthy of further research.

early Tamil literature.⁶

The Mātāris do claim a certain association with the prestigious stories of the purāṇa(s)⁷, but on the whole they rank too low to play much of a part in these classical epics. On the other hand, in contrast to the castes mentioned above, it is easy to collect individualized stories from them which recount the local history of particular clans and clan shrines. In view of the fact that this caste provides the bulk of the agricultural labour required for cultivation, an emphasis on the tie to the particular locality in which members of this caste reside is not surprising. They are less mobile in their habits than the upper castes of the left-hand, and lack, nearly entirely, the latter's stress on literacy and on prestigious references to literary tradition. However, all Mātāri subcastes do identify themselves with one particular story, that of Maturaivīran, the son of a ruler of Madurai who was cast into a forest as a babe (because he was born at an inauspicious moment), but then found and raised by a Mātāri couple. This boy grew up to marry the daughter of a Nāyakkan king and to perform many heroic deeds in battle. All the subcastes of Mātāris in Koṅku which I encountered named Maturaivīran as one of their special deities. This story is one which is known throughout the Tamil-speaking area. In a sense, perhaps, it serves as a sort of popularized and simplified purāṇa for this outcaste community.

All three Mātāri subcastes (Moracu, Annapu and Pōṅṅi) which I questioned in the course of this study have clans which are organized into two exogamous moieties which interchange women. All the clans within one moiety are aṅṅan/tampi or 'brothers', although each moiety as a whole is unnamed. Each clan has a headman and each moiety of clans has a head clan. The

⁶ Thurston, Castes and Tribes, Vol. II, p. 2.

⁷ Ibid., Vol. III, pp. 325-331 and Vol. IV, p. 293 and 315.

picture is complicated, however, by the fact that within each moiety there are several hereditary positions which are recognized by the subcaste as a whole. Among these leaders there appears to be a certain ^{division} ~~complementary~~ of ritual and secular functions. Take, for example, the four leaders of a subcaste of Annappu Mātāri who live around the town of Karur⁸ and whose hereditary titles and associated clans pattern as follows:

Chart 36: Hereditary Leadership, By Clan,
Among the Annappu Mātāri of Karur

<u>Moiety A</u> (Ritual Superiority?)			<u>Moiety B</u> (Secular Superiority?)		
Clan Name	Ritual Precedence	Hereditary Title	Clan Name	Ritual Precedence	Hereditary Title
Pottunār	1	<u>Kāppiliyan</u> (ritual leader of entire community?)	Tuppanār	2	<u>Pekattai</u> (Secular leader of entire community?)
CōPanār	3	<u>Kāṇṇiyan</u> (Secular leader of the moiety?)	Tittanār	4	<u>Kōlukkāran</u> (Ritual leader of the moiety?)

Each clan has its own clan shrine at which periodic festivals are held once every few years, if not, in all cases, annually. Members of all the clans within the marriage community will attend the festival, but the clan whose temple it is will enjoy ritual precedence or the first miras. A priest of this clan will perform the ceremonies. The second miras or ritual precedence, it appears, is given to the leading clan of the opposite moiety. Most clan shrines have individual stories connected with them which explain how the clan happened to settle in that particular location and acquire a particular deity. An example of such a story is given below:

⁸ I spent ^{just over} ~~more than~~ a week interviewing Mātāris in Karur, as any intimate contact with untouchable communities closer to Clappālaiyan was socially difficult, due to my general association with the upper castes of this area.

Story of the Vēṭṭuva Karuppaṅcāmi Temple, Vīracōrapuram
(From the priest of the Pūṭiyam clan, Moracu Mātāri)

Once, long ago, three Moracu Mātāri men from Vīracōrapuram left on a journey to Uppamaṅkalam, near Manaparai (east of Karur) to buy skins. They belonged to the Pūṭiyam, Kriyāṅṅi and Alaikar clans, respectively. Although these men spent a whole week in their search, no goat or cattle skins were available for purchase. So, they set off for home empty-handed. Half way, however, they found a shrine in a field, at the foot of a tree. In front of the god of this shrine an offering of cooked rice and meat had been set out on leaves. The three Mātāris were very hungry, so they surreptitiously ate this offering. Continuing their journey, they next discovered several skins lying across a fence of the same field. These, they realized, had been left to dry by the man who had made the sacrifice to the god. Each Mātāri picked up two of the skins and the men continued their journey home.

After a time, however, one of the men discovered that his skins were unusually heavy. He called to his māman but the latter was simply amused that his cross-relative was not able to carry his share. Finally the poor man set his skin down, opened it, and discovered that he had been carrying a big stone inside the hide. Throwing this stone away, he set off again with the others. Then a second man began to find his skins heavy. Laying them down, he too found a stone of the same size. This, too, was thrown away, but the experience was then repeated again for the third man. The stone (explains the storyteller) was really the god to whom the offerings had been made under the tree.

During this time, the god of the shrine had gone to the Vēṭṭuva Kavunṅar priest who had originally made the sacrifice and prepared the offering. The god told this man how these three Mātāris had come and eaten his offering. He complained that he wanted offerings from these men as well, and that the priest should give them the proper utensils so that they, too, could prepare something for him. Meanwhile the three men had been walking steadily. Finally they reached the town of Veḷḷakōvil. There one of their number died and had to be buried to the north of the settlement. Finally the two remaining men completed the final rites and then returned to their homes in Vīracōrapuram. When they arrived, however, they discovered that they had lost the power of speech. Their relatives, discovering this, became very worried. Finally they resolved to follow the men back to the field where they had discovered the shrine.

When they reached this tree for the second time they discovered the Vēṭṭuva Kavunṅar priest waiting there for them. He presented the Mātāris with all the articles

necessary to perform an oblation or pūjā. Having completed this, the two Mātāris and their relatives returned to Vīracōṅapuram. There they asked an old Kavuntar headman where they could install the new god. The headman answered that they must place it far enough from the village site so that the sounds of pounding and grinding grain could not be heard. Thus the Mātāris selected the bank of the stream bed to the South of this settlement, where they built a shrine and placed an image of the god in it, facing East. Next to this deity, named Vēṭṭuva KaruppaNacani, they also made a shrine for his younger sister, Virataṅkal.

A single pūjā at this shrine requires twenty measures of rice for the peṅkal and with it a goat, a pig and a black chicken must be sacrificed. An awning must also be built of sugarcane stalks, in front of the shrine. The priest is required to cover his mouth with a cloth when he is near the deity, and to perform the pūjā in a spirit of devotion.

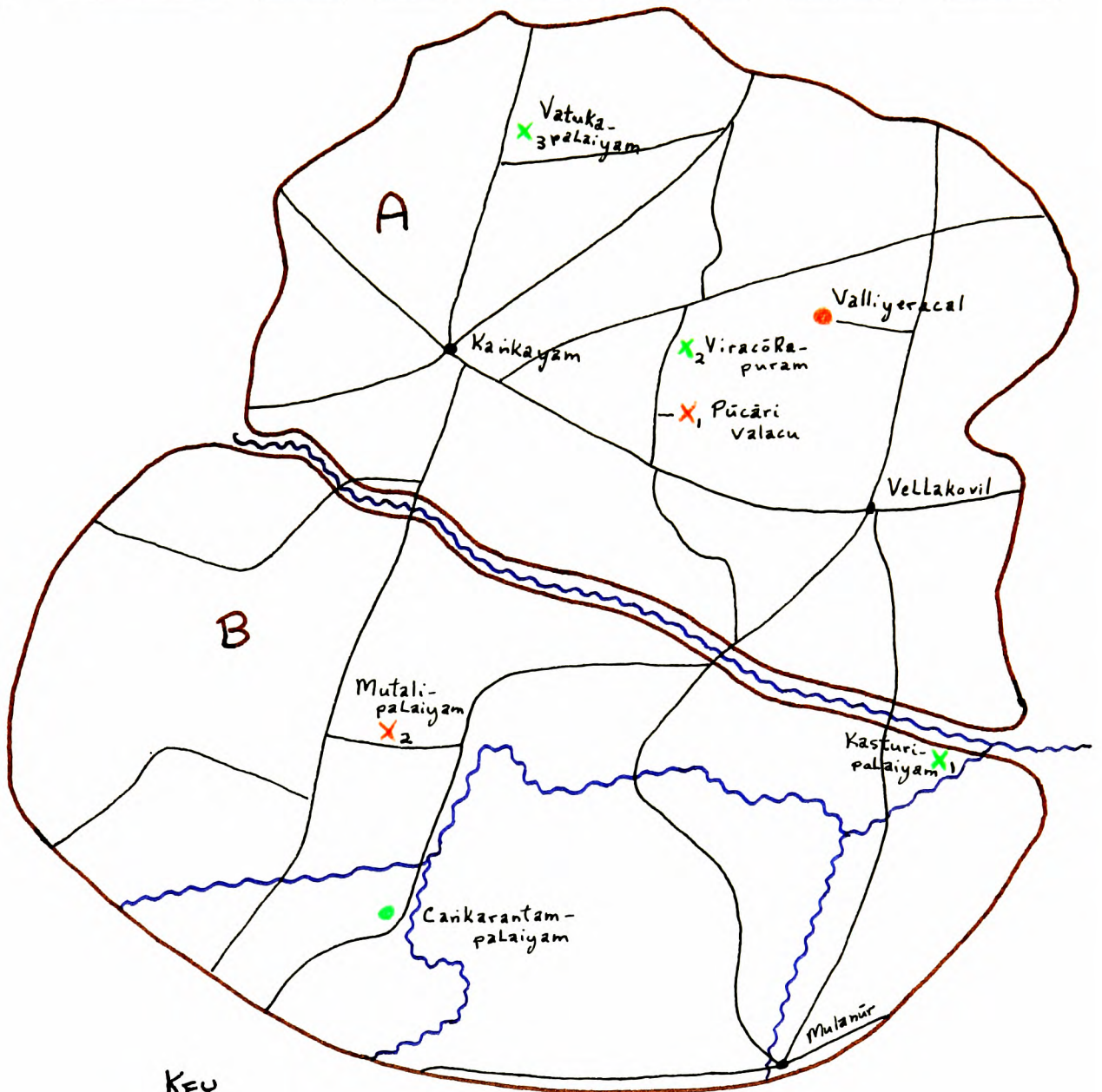
This story is interesting on several counts. It not only specifies the association of a particular village and shrine with three specific clans (the Iṭṭiṅam priest and two maṅcān, or members of the opposite society), but also of this subcaste, as a whole, with the Vēṭṭuva Kavuntar community. Vēṭṭuva Kavuntars, as Mātāris, are members of the left-hand faction. The former no longer live in the Iṭṭiṅam nāṅṅu area (a local story tells how they fled under Koṅku Kavuntar pressure), but there are areas in the North-east (Ṭāṅkalūn and East (Kodanudi) where they own a considerable amount of land. Despite the emphasis on this association with the Vēṭṭuva Kavuntar community, the story also points out that the Mātāris are untouchables and therefore that they must be content with a clan shrine which is constructed far from the main village site. The story also specifies that the deity (and perhaps the several clans as well?) originally came from the East, near the Karur area.

Members of several Mātāri subcastes mentioned an association between their marriage community and a particular nāṅṅu or territorial area. A general impression is that there is a tendency, in all these communities,

towards paired nāṭu units. These areas appear to be roughly endogamous while the clans within them seem to divide into two exogamous moieties. However, it is still unclear to what extent the boundaries of these areas are clearly demarcated and also to what extent marriage, or even ritual activity are confined within paired nāṭu units. Because of the social stigma attached to moving with untouchables, it was very difficult to gather detailed material on the Mātāri community during the course of the present inquiry. I did, however, obtain enough information to draw a rough sketch of the clan shrines of the Moracu Mātāri of Kāṅkayam and Tenkarai Nāṭus. The story about Vēṭṭuva KaruppaNacāmi, above, is associated with the shrine at VīracōRapuran, shown on Map 18, below. The map shows the order of ritual precedence, by clan, at two of the shrines. It also lists the hereditary ritual offices among various clans in the community, in so far as they are known. Probably these offices match with those listed for the Annappu Mātāri in Chart 36, but the material is not sufficiently detailed to decide this for certain.

From the foregoing the sharp contrast between the pervasive clan divisions of the Mātāri community and the very tenuous descent units of the touchable left-hand castes should be clear. Somewhere in between these two lie the ritual service communities. All these service castes use the names of nāṭu or territorial areas to define their descent units. In some cases, however, because of shifting residence, marriageable groups have come to acquire the same nāṭu name. Thus these units are in most cases no longer strictly exogamous. They are not a sure guide to common descent, although it is always held that they once were. Among the ritual service communities nāṭu exogamy could be used as an argument in favour of a marriage between terminologically parallel relatives. However, members of these

MAP 18: KĀNKAYAM NĀTU CLAN TEMPLES OF THE MORALU MĀTĀRI



KEY

X Moiety A (Clan Temple) Hereditary Office (Place of Residence)

- | | |
|------------------|-------------|
| 1. Eriyānti Clan | Kāppiliyan? |
| 2. Alikar Clan | • MaNiyam |

X Moiety B (Clan Temple) Hereditary Office (Place of Residence)

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Nākar Clan | • Periyatanakārar (Pakātai?) |
| 2. Pūtiyam Clan | Kōlukkāran? |
| 3. Mancāra Clan | - - - |

Order of Clan Rights

Viracōrapuram		Pūcāri Valacu	
1st.	X ₂	1st.	X ₁
2nd.	X ₁	2nd.	X ₁
3rd.	X ₂		

- Approximate Boundary of:
- A** Kānkayam Nātu
- B** Tenkarai Nātu
- Roads
- ~~~~~** River Beds

castes may, conversely, overlook the fact of a common nāṭu name when a 'cross' relationship can be demonstrated to exist on the basis of the kinship 'algebra'. In general, there would be considerable hesitancy among the service castes in contracting a union which would contradict this terminological reasoning.

Within the large group of ritual service castes it is the barbers and washermen (of both factions) who have the least developed tradition of descent divisions. Within this service group they also have the least developed knowledge of their historical ties to a particular nāṭu area. On the contrary, barbers and washermen are the two castes who are most strongly tied to individual leading families in the region. They are the ones to migrate most easily when they become too numerous. On the other hand, devoted members of these castes will also readily follow the landlord whom they serve, should he decide to move himself. Among the barbers stories are told which emphasize their close bond with the particular families whom they serve and of which the following is an example. This particular story is very widely known in Koṅku, but was first told to me by the Koṅku Navitan of Olappālaiyam. Similar stories are probably told by washermen as well although I never thought to collect one.

Once a Vēṭṭuva Navitan (now a left-hand subcaste of barbers) was shaving the face of a Koṅku Navuṭṭar. When he had shaved only one side, a Vēṭṭuva Navuṭṭar (also a left-hand subcaste) rode up on a horse. He was, evidently, in a great hurry and he pleaded with the barber to jump up behind him and follow in order to help. The barber agreed and left his patron sitting in dismay. Sometime later the son of this half-shaven man returned from the fields and discovered his father in this embarrassing state. When he learned the story of how the barber had left with his father's rival he became angry and vowed to finish the job of shaving himself. Once the son had performed this defiling task, however, he was fated to become a barber himself. So he took up the task of shaving other relations, particularly on ritual occasions such as at marriage and death ceremonies. Thus the Koṅku

Nāvitan consider themselves to be the 'sons' of Koṅka Kavuntārs. They have the right to perform in their own homes the life-cycle rituals which are identical to those the Koṅka Kavuntārs follow themselves.

Although the term nāTu survives among barbers and washermen as a reference to a territorial area, it has little relevance to everyday affairs or to the arrangement of marriage. These castes only remember easily the names of the particular prestigious families they have served. They then work out their nāTu association from the nāTu where this important family live. Members of these two castes adapt their life-cycle ritual to the local shrines which their patrons frequent. These can be either territorial temples such as those dedicated to Māriyamman, or descent-group shrines. Barbers and washermen do not have clan shrines of their own, nor do all the members of any one descent division ever gather to celebrate a common festival.

The three other ritual service communities of the right-hand, the PaṅTārams, the Uṭaiyār and the Paraiyans, are less immediately linked to important, landed families. Although individual links to such families are not absent, the main affiliation of these three castes is to a kirāman area and the Māriyamman temple in it. All these castes have important ritual responsibilities during the Māriyamman festival and they describe their own history in terms of the length of their association with that particular temple. This is particularly true of the temple priests (PaṅTārams) and the temple drummers (Paraiyans). Some examples of the way in which the local histories of particular descent groups are remembered by members of these castes are given below:

PaṅTāran Descent Groups:

1. Long ago there was a group of KeerṅṅTi PaṅTāran paṅkaLi from a place called Celūrputūr. These men had the right to do pūjā at the Paṅnapuram Māriyamman temple. However, after some time they became

dissatisfied with the job and left. It seems that the KavunTar community may have been too demanding in extracting work from them.

2. Then the leading KavunTar family at Kannapuram called in a second Group of Okecanti PaNTaram from Konaran-Ticavati and Kolalipalaiyam. They then were given the temple rights. However, after a time the KavunTar family at ReTTivalacu (also in Kannapuram Kiraman) became dissatisfied because the PaNTarams were always being called by the Kannapuram family (with which there was, in any case, rivalry) and never had time to give them personal service.
3. Thus the ReTTivalacu KavunTar family called in their own group of Okecanti PaNTarams from Veruvotampalaiyam, west of Kharapuram, about one hundred years ago. The genealogy of male descendants of the man who was originally invited to settle in this line is known. The present priests are members of the third generation. Initially, group two, above, resisted the giving of a share of the temple rights to group three. However, the KavunTar family in ReTTivalacu was very influential and managed, after some difficulties, to provide for a share for their own priests.

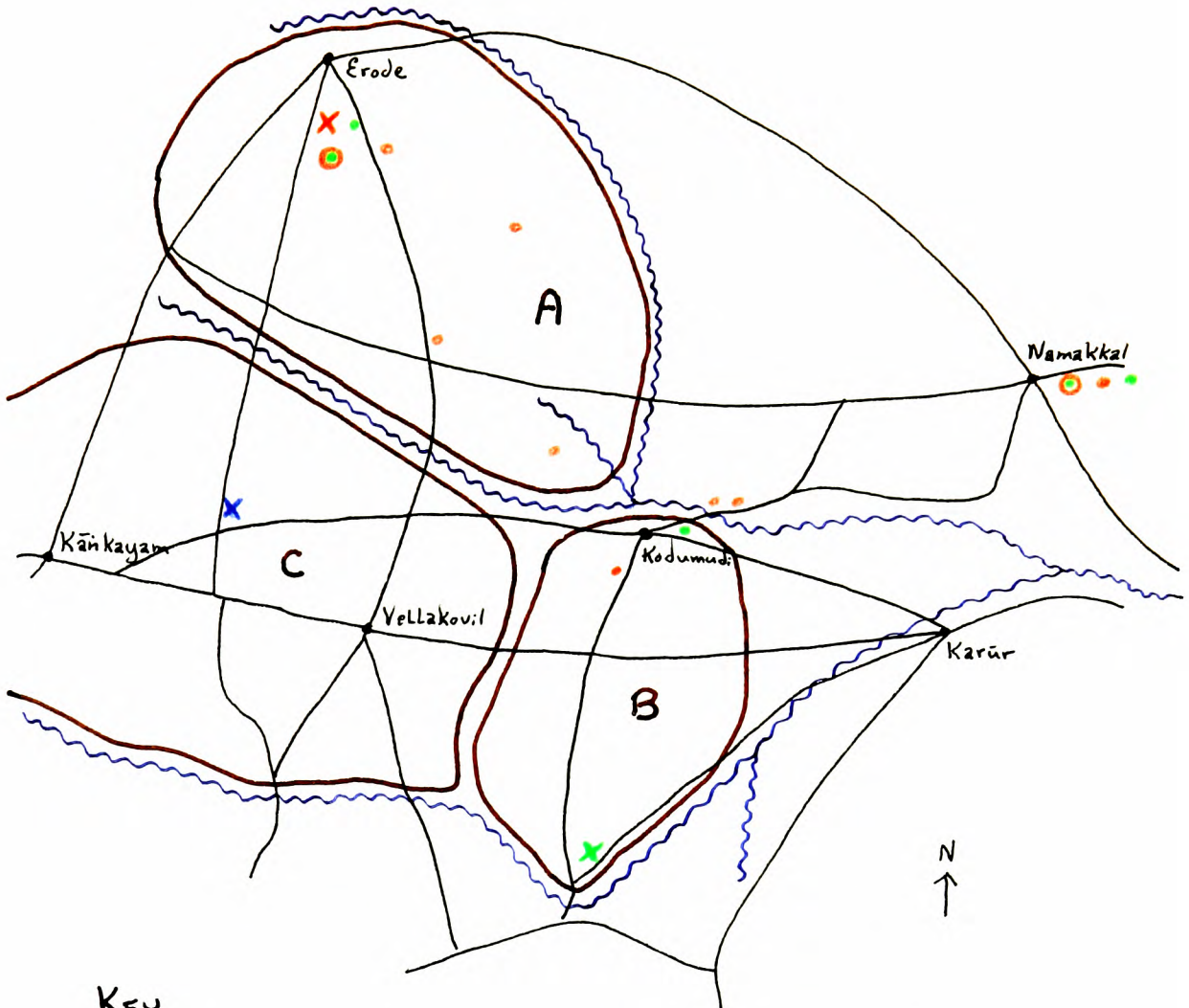
Paraiyan Descent Groups:

Originally all the Paraiyan families in Kannapuram Kiraman were lineally related. They shared the work of drumming without any formal division. Then in a time of famine (about two hundred years ago?) a maccan came to the village at a time of great hardship elsewhere. At this time the Paraiyans of Kannapuram were themselves overburdened with work as the population of the kiraman had grown and there were many festivals. Therefore they offered the newcomer a share in the work if he were to stay and help. He agreed and the division was formally made. After a time the original group of paikali also split into two. Thus there are now three divisions of Paraiyans in the kiraman and the work is divided between them. The outlying hamlets are allotted on the basis of a general territorial division of the area into three sections. However, the most important of the settlements, Kannapuram, is internally divided according to the pattern of KavunTar lineages within it. There are three major KavunTar clans in Kannapuram today and one division of the Paraiyans is responsible for drumming at the life-cycle ceremonies of each of these clans. The work of drumming for the Mariyaman festival each year, however, remains undivided.

The PaNTārams and UTaiyārs generally use these kirāman temples on the occasions of life-cycle ceremonies. They do not have clan shrines of their own. Sometimes they also visit and worship at the clan shrines of that PavuNTar family to whom they are particularly attached. Neither of these two castes celebrate festivals where an entire descent group will gather. In the case of Kannapuram Kirāman, the Paraiyans say that they once had a small replica of the kirāman Māriyaman shrine within their own hamlet where they would go to worship on the occasion of life-cycle ceremonies. This was because, as untouchables, they were not allowed into the inner temple of the general kirāman shrine, even though, as drummers, their presence in the outer compound was of great importance. Now, however, this group of Paraiyans, as many others in Koṅku, have been converted to Christianity. Their own Māriyaman temple, therefore, has fallen into disuse. However, they continue to serve as drummers in the general kirāman temple dedicated to this goddess.

Finally, the lowest service caste of the left-hand, the VēTan or drummers, are similar to the right-hand service castes described above. The VēTan also have a particular attachment to the Ankālamman temple of their nāTu. At present there are no VēTan in Pānkayam nāTu, although there may have been in the past. The Ankālamman temple north of Olappālaiyam, therefore, is currently served by a VēTan drummer from MaNa nāTu, to the East. This drummer tells me that, traditionally, all the VēTan of MaNa nāTu were parallel relatives. Thus MaNa nāTu VēTan were exogamous. At the same time, they intermarried, specifically, with women from another nāTu, called Pūnturai. Thus the whole formed a two-section system with the nāTu as the section unit. Pūnturai nāTu has an AnkaLamman shrine in Pūnturai town. This serves as a clan shrine for all the parallel relatives associated with

MAP 19: VĒTAN TERRITORIAL DISTRIBUTION



KEY

- ✕ Headman's Village (Pūnturai) and temple to Ainkālamman
- Other villages where Headman's paṅkālī reside
- ✕ Assistant Headman's Village (Cutāmani) and temple to Ainkālamman
- Other villages where Headman's māman/maccān reside
- ◉ Villages where both paṅkālī and māman/maccān reside
- ✕ Ainkālamman temple of Kānkayam Nāṭu where Assistant Headman now drums

— Approximate Boundary of old Nāṭu areas

A Pūnturai Nāṭu

B Maṅṅa Nāṭu

C Kānkayam Nāṭu

— Roads

~ Rivers

Scale:

One inch equals
about six miles

that territory. MaNa nāTu has a similar temple for its parallel VēTan in Cūṭamani. Pūṭurai nāTu has a headman or Taliavan for the entire marriage community, and MaNa nāTu also has a headman who is an assistant or second in rank to the former. There is also a lesser leader (Ur Taliavan) in each settlement where members of this caste actually reside. The present distribution of the members of this marriage community is given on Map 19. From the map it can be seen that there has been a good deal of movement and that the members of the two sections are no longer (if ever?) entirely resident within the nāTu with which they are associated. The headmen are responsible for approving marriage arrangements and should be present to receive the first miras at all life-cycle ceremonies. They are also responsible for mediation in times of dispute. However, there are no clan festivals or other specific occasions on which all members of one nāTu will gather. Worship at the Ankāḷamanu shrine of the nāTu is by individual family.

There may once have been a similar pattern of formal marriage relations between exogenous nāTu of all the service communities. Older members of many of these castes name continuous nāTu with which marriage relations are traditional and especially approved in their community. The names collected in this regard, from informants of quite unrelated communities, show a certain suggestively similar pattern. Pūṭurai and Tenkarai are named as Tai nāTu (original or 'mother' territories), while Kaṭṭayan and MaNa nāTu are their maṅgāṭi. In the traditional Koṅku marriage ritual, furthermore, there is a brief ceremony where an offering of areca nut and betel leaves should be given to the ritual representatives of Pūṭurai, Kāṅkavai and Tenkarai nāTu in that order, before they are distributed to the wedding guests generally.⁹

⁹ It would appear that this order does not vary with the nāTu in which the ceremony is held, but I am not certain on this point.

It is possible, therefore, that something like the two-moiety system of the Mātāris once existed among the service communities as well, but with clan divisions existing at the nāTu level. However, the material is so vague as to merit only a tentative suggestion in this regard.

What adds to the interest of the foregoing is the fact that the KavunTars themselves claim to have once been exogamous by nāTu areas. They tell the following story in this regard:

In the early days there were very few KavunTars to till the land. However, soon their numbers began to increase. At first these KavunTars arranged marriages only between nāTu. These nāTu were exogamous and there were no descent clans. The ritual leaders of all the nāTu were expected to be present when a marriage was celebrated. Soon, however, this system became cumbersome as there were too many marriages to be celebrated and the leaders were too busy to be asked to attend them all. As a result it was finally decided to erect a stone, called a nāTu kāl, in a certain spot in each village. These stones were, thereafter, to serve as a substitute for the actual presence of nāTu leaders at important life-cycle ceremonies. However, the number of KavunTars within each nāTu continued to grow and soon it became impractical to insist on nāTu exogamy. So another meeting of the leaders was called and it was decided to assign clan names to individual male lineages. When this was done the KavunTars became exogamous by clan rather than by nāTu.

The nāTu kāl, above, is still prominent in the marriage and death ceremonies of the 'Koŋku' ritual community. Although KavunTars are now exogamous only by named descent clans and not by territory, it may be that they once were organized in this fashion, as the story says. If so, the service communities may have only followed the KavunTars lead in organizing their own marriages on this pattern. It is not beyond possibility that the KavunTars have since changed to exogamy by named descent group in keeping with their liberty in other matters regarding the rules of ritual purity, and with their economically and socially dominant position. The service communities, more tied to traditional rules than the former, have perhaps retained, over a much

longer period, the social organization their landowning masters once had. (Though now it exists only in attenuated form, even among the latter). All this, of course, is conjectural history, but it is worth mentioning as other, related material could be uncovered by future ethnographic work on this topic.

The last of the service castes to be discussed are the right-hand UTaiyār. They appear to have the most developed tradition of clan divisions of all these ritually important communities. The strength of their clan divisions parallels, in a sense, the fact of their relatively weak tie to particular landed families of territorial temples. It is true that the potters of Olappālaiyam retain the right to supply the ritual containers (kuṅṅṅam, pūvōṭu and the ōṭu which cover the kampan) for Māriyamman at the time of her festival. They are also expected, by tradition, to supply cooking and ceremonial pots for the leading land-owning families of the kirāman. The degree of attachment to these particular families, however, as the degree of attachment to a particular temple, is less than that of the other service communities. Their relative economic independence may account, in part, for their established and independent clan shrines.

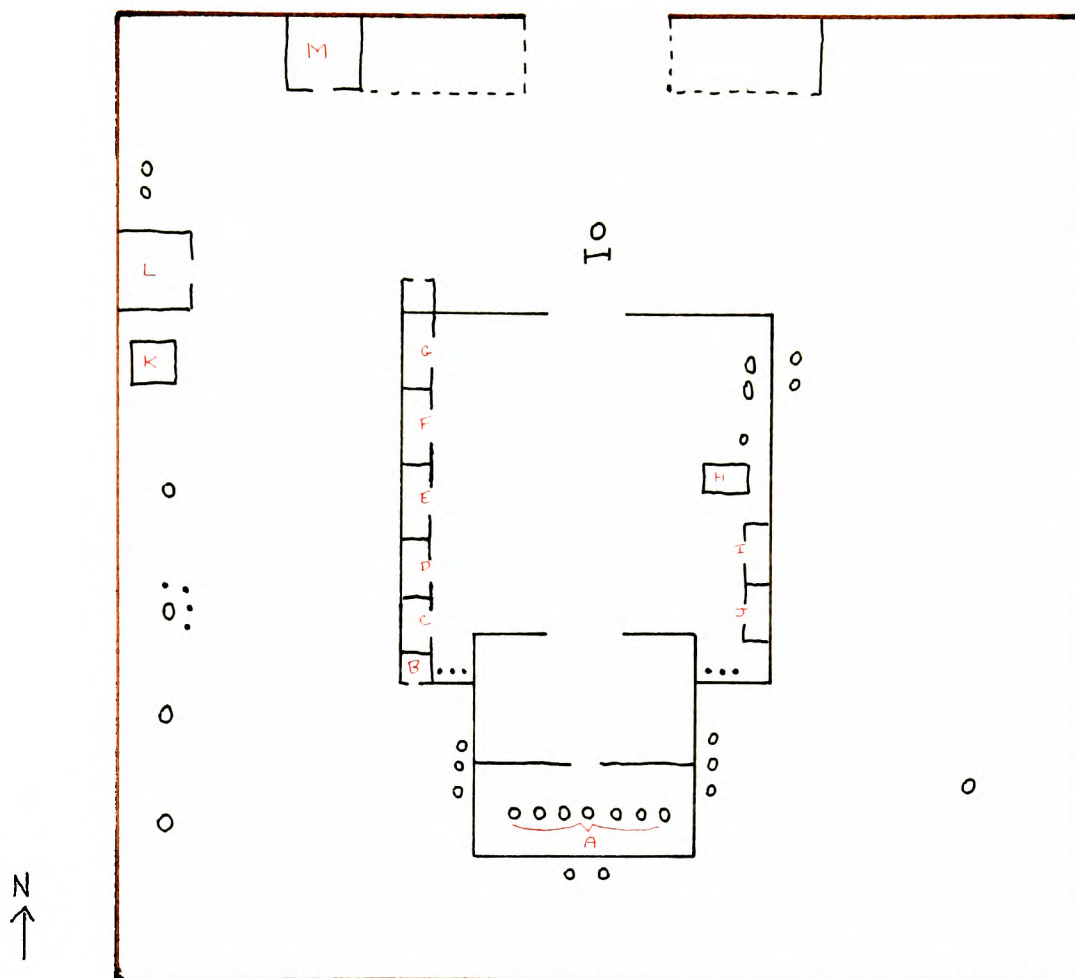
The Utaiyār, as the other service communities, are organized into vaguely exogamous nāṭu divisions. The Koṅku UTaiyār paṅkali of Vāṅkayam nāṭu have one common shrine which is dedicated to the seven sisters of Kannimar. Members of this caste say that there is a similar shrine belonging to cross relatives in Pūṅṅurai, the 'cross' nāṭu.¹⁰ Apparently there is

¹⁰ This shrine is dedicated to the 'Two Brothers' of the great ANNamār epic. Although I have not seen it, it is said to be located in a village called Cāvatiṅṅalaiyam, eight miles from Erode on the Kodamudi road. The fact that the temple is dedicated to the heroes of this epic is interesting. Just as the Koṅku Ceṅṅiyār and certain groups of Nāṅṅār have clan shrines dedicated to these heroes, the fact that the UTaiyār do^{to} may be related to their claim to membership in the right-hand faction and their concern to associate themselves with the prestigious, semi-mythological history of the Koṅku Kavuṅṅār community. The Kavuṅṅār, themselves, very rarely have clan shrines in which 'The Brothers' are prominent.



MAP 20: THE UTAIYAR CLAN TEMPLE OF KĀNKAYAM

NĀTU



KEY

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------|---|--|
| A | Kannimar | H | Temple Chariot (Made of Clay) |
| B | Patata Kalakshi | I | Pattirakāliyamma |
| C | Tanāci | J | KaruppaNacāmi (Vegetarian) |
| D | V.Nāyakar | K | Temple Well |
| E | Sitirakupta Nayanār | L | KaruppaNacāmi (Vegetarian) |
| F | KavunTār (female) | M | Cooking Room |
| G | KavunTār (male) | N | KaruppaNacāmi (Accepts meat offerings) |

also a second UTaiyār clan shrine in Kānkayam nāTu, dedicated to AñkāLamman (see Map 16). I have not made detailed inquiries about this second temple, but it probably belongs to an unrelated group of non-Koñku UTaiyār who, traditionally at least, used to serve members of the opposite (left-hand) faction.

The Kānkayam nāTu clan temple of the Koñku UTaiyār is in the fields near Pāppini, about four miles north of OlappāLaiyam. It is a substantial temple with many shrines and it has been very colourfully decorated with painted pottery images. (See map 20). There is a large gathering of clan members (plus many māman/maccān) for the yearly festival which is held there. The priesthood of the temple, however, is now split into three factions. According to informants, this split occurred about fifty years ago, during the life-time of the grandfather of the present potter in OlappāLaiyam. This man was, apparently, one of three brothers who quarrelled. Thus, according to the story, the clan became split into three distinct descent groups and each agreed to take one share in the temple. The descendents of each brother have their own priest. They now use the temple on a rotating basis.

The descent group to which the OlappāLaiyam family is linked, therefore, celebrate their clan festival once every three years.¹¹ In 1965 fifty-two out of a possible sixty households in this group paid the four rupee levy for the festival. Twenty-six of these families also brought a goat with them to sacrifice. Most of the fifty-two families actually attended the celebration. The offerings of food, coconuts, etc., made at the temple were divided into 52 shares. For each of these large, basic divisions within Kānkayam nāTu UTaiyār there are several officials: a Periyatanakkarār who

¹¹ I was present at this festival in 1965.

settles disputes, a Periya Pūcāri or senior priest, and a Siṅna Pūcāri or junior priest. The Periyatanakkārar will also oversee the collection of the levy for the festival and manage temple finances. At the festival he is expected to perform a special dance in which he will balance a tier of seven pots on his head (each of which represents one of the seven sisters of the main shrine) and to speak if possessed by these goddesses.

As has been pointed out previously, the UTaiyār have the most developed tradition of clan divisions of any of the service castes. Chart 35 has described the descent divisions of all these ritual communities as 'moderate', but from the foregoing it can be seen that within this grouping there is a clearly graded scale. The clans of the barbers and washermen are only slightly more important than the 'tenuous' descent divisions of the upper left-hand castes. The clans of the important castes of temple servants, the Taṅṅāram priests and Paraiyan drummers, on the other hand, are moderately important. The UTaiyār, finally, have a tradition of clan temples and clan festivals which is nearly as elaborate as the 'pervasive' descent divisions of the land-tied, right-hand castes, the Nāṭār and the Navuṅṅāra. UTaiyār clans have been described as 'moderate' rather than 'pervasive' because these nāṭu are not, in fact, strictly exogamous. As is the case for all the communities who use the term nāṭu for their descent units, the UTaiyār would be very hesitant to contract a marriage which went against the parallel/cross logic of the kin terminology. It is also true that subdivisions of the nāṭu unit among the UTaiyār, though they exist, have not become so pervasive as to necessitate the construction of separate temples.

11 B

2) Descent Groupings Among NāTārs and KavunTārs

The NāTār provide a good example of what a 'pervasive' tradition of descent divisions within a caste is like. Although the NāTārs have only a middling prestige in Koṅku, they have at times controlled considerable wealth. Although they do not own land directly, they take long-term leases on palmyra (and sometimes cocconut) palms on KavunTār land. They are able to make a good living on the products of these trees, of which they give back a certain amount of the KavunTārs as rent. Before prohibition the NāTārs in the Kāṅkayam area made a considerable profit on alcohol distilled from the sap of these palms and some of them lived in very well built, respectable homes. They are more mobile than the landowning KavunTārs and tend to move in drought years to areas where the sap in the trees still runs. The maramēri (tree climbing) NāTār are the most important subcaste of this community in the Kannapuram area. The headman or PeriyatanukTārar of the subcaste tells an interesting story of how the group came to settle in this location:

Long ago the NāTārs lived in a country called TīruvāTa which was ruled by a rājā. In this country there was a great lake with a dam and one day that dam broke and all the fields flooded. To repair the dam the rājā ordered one able-bodied man to come from each house and to bring a shovel. All the other communities sent men except the NāTārs. At this the king was very angry and he ordered them, as a penalty, to set their heads under an elephant's foot and be crushed to death. One NāTār followed the rājā's orders, but his relations, two brothers and a brother-in-law instead fled with their wives and children to Koṅku.

When this little group of travellers arrived on the south side of the place called Vīracōṅapuram, they found a forest full of Karuvēla trees. The three families set up camp and began to cook. However, a very wealthy man living in Vīracōṅapuram saw smoke rising from the forest. He mounted a bull and came to see who these people were. When he met them he invited the travellers to use a shelter for the night which was east of the road leading

south from the village. (This man knew full well that people who slept in this shelter never lived to see the next day). The NāTārs, unsuspecting, accepted his offer and lifted their baskets of belongings to move. However, when they raised them they quickly discovered a stone in one basket weighting it down. They threw the stone away only to discover another and this experience was repeated several times. When they had reached the shelter they threw this magic stone to the East for a final time. (The story-teller explains that the stone was really a god whom people now call ŌNTivīraiyan or 'the single brave man'). Where the stone landed a shrine was later constructed.

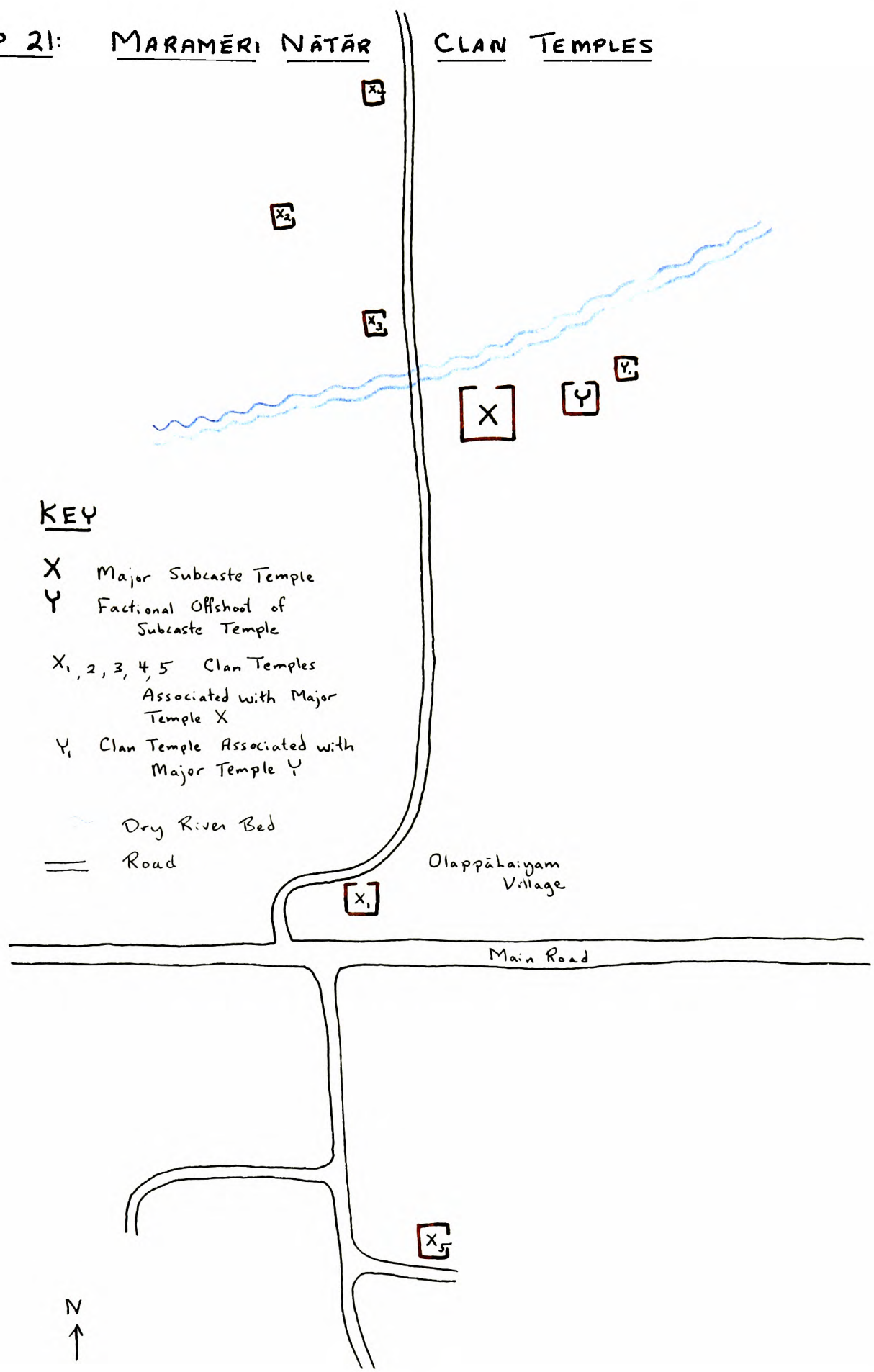
The reason why people camping in this shelter used to loose their lives was because there was a muni (frightening giant) living just to the west of the same road. This muni used to come and kill people living in the shelter during the night. That night the party of travellers heard a paḷli (wall lizard) cry out a warning sound about midnight. The elder brother of the group woke up, and frightened, shook his younger brother until he awoke also. The latter was well versed in the art of seeing into the future. He looked up the signs in a special book and predicted that they would all die if they stayed in the shelter until morning.

Just then the three men heard shouts and sounds like a man rushing towards them through the night. It was the muni on the ramparts and he was drawing near. However, just in time, the god who had revealed his presence by the stone stood up and fought the muni off. The elder brother tried to help. He caught hold of the muni's hair and managed to pull out his teeth.¹² He then carried the giant to the west of the road and set him down facing East. He then drew seven straight lines in front of him saying that if he never crossed these lines he would receive sacrifices and be fed.

The next morning a group of KavunTārs from Vīracō-Rapuram came to see if the NāTārs were dead or alive. They found them calmly smoking cigars and were much impressed. After a bit the NāTārs told these KavunTārs their story. The men from the village then asked what work the NāTārs could do and the latter answered that they could climb trees. The KavunTārs were pleased and offered them a chance to stay and to climb trees on their fields without asking rent. One of the NāTārs then climbed up a tall tree upside down (just to show off). The descendants of this man still live around VīracōRapuram.

¹² After a man's two upper front teeth have been pulled he no longer has the power to practice sorcery.

MAP 21: MARAMĒRI NĀTĀR CLAN TEMPLES



KEY

X Major Subcaste Temple

Y Factional Offshoot of Subcaste Temple

X_{1, 2, 3, 4, 5} Clan Temples Associated with Major Temple X

Y₁ Clan Temple Associated with Major Temple Y

~ Dry River Bed

== Road

Olappālaiyam Village

Main Road



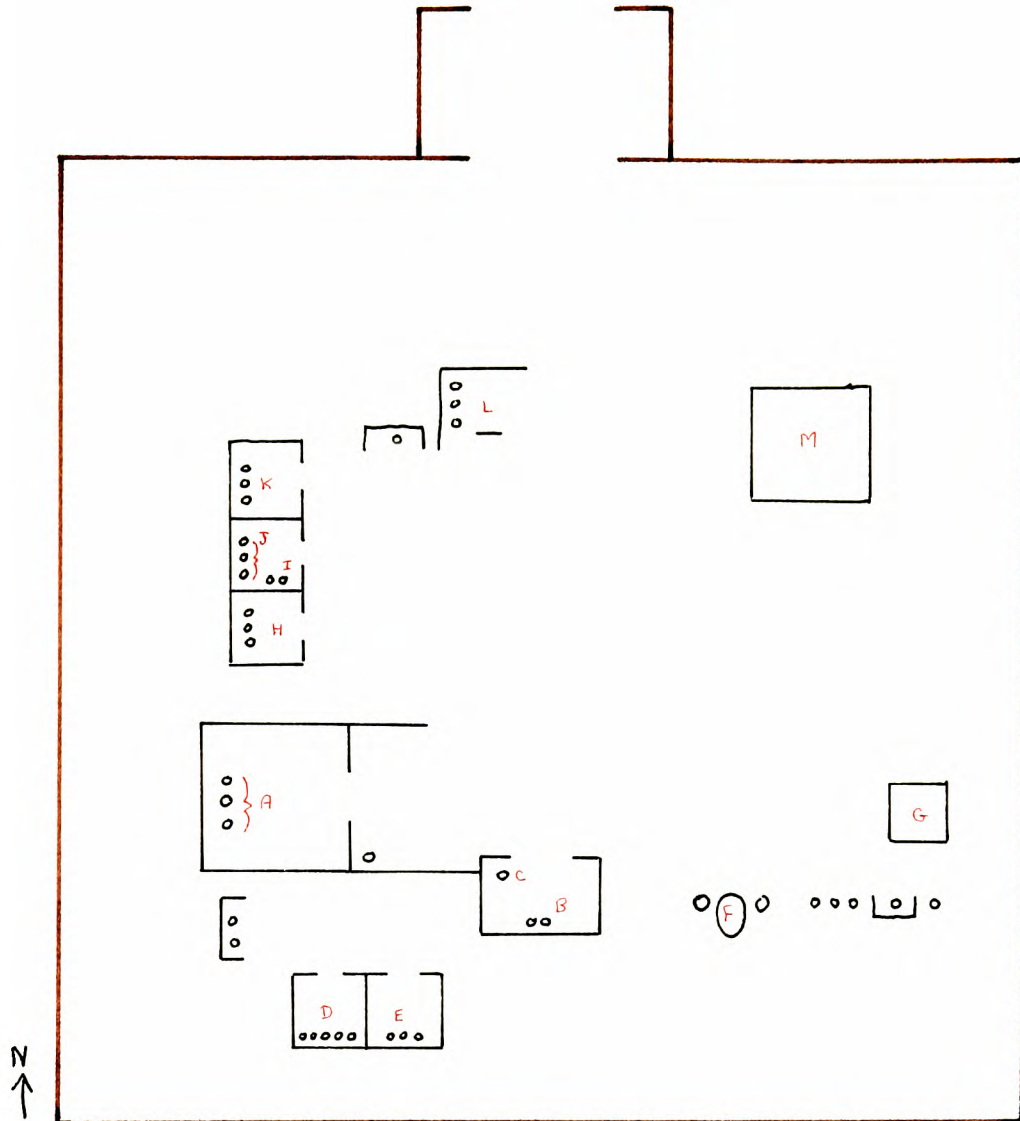
The story emphasizes the special relation between the subcaste and their protective deity. It also suggests that there was a special sign from this deity which sanctioned their original settlement in the area. Today their numbers have increased considerably and a number of clan shrines have been built. The relation between this story, however, and the current subcaste temple on the spot, dedicated to a deity called Mañcāramman (from Mañ, 'obstinate') is not clear. This temple stands on approximately the spot where Mañivāraiyān is said to have landed when the stone in the basket was thrown away. This temple is marked by a large X on Map 21. It faces North, on the south bank of a dry wash. The whole area is thick with palmyra palms, the main tree which the Nāṭārs climb.

There is no separate story about Mañcāramman. However, there is a very large muni inside the temple (constructed of brick and mortar and perhaps 20 feet high) which is the focus of much fear and of pig sacrifice during the temple festival. The name of this muni is Paramakāmuni. There are said to be 63 clans of Mañarēri Nāṭār associated with this temple¹³, but informants can name only about eight. Each clan sets up a small stone of its own inside the temple during a large festival and pujā is done to all these stones at once. For lesser festivities, each clan has its own clan shrine at some distance from the main temple. On the accompanying map these subsidiary clan shrines are:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| x ₁ <u>Muppan</u> Clan | x ₄ <u>Vatiyār</u> Clan |
| x ₂ <u>Cāpini</u> Clan | x ₅ <u>Kinarupāvā</u> Clan |
| x ₃ <u>Nāvattan</u> Clan | |

¹³ Sixty-three equals 3 x 21. Both these latter numbers occur as particularly suspicious in temple ritual. Mention of 21 gods in a temple is exceedingly rare in Konkna (frequent inquiries were made on this point), but appear to be more common further South. I found one other such temple, dedicated to Añkālamma and said to have 21 deities, in Karur. For a further discussion of this point see Dumont, Ind. Mus. Stud., pp. 257-66.

MAP 22: A MARAMĒRI NĀTĀR SUBCASTE TEMPLE



KEY

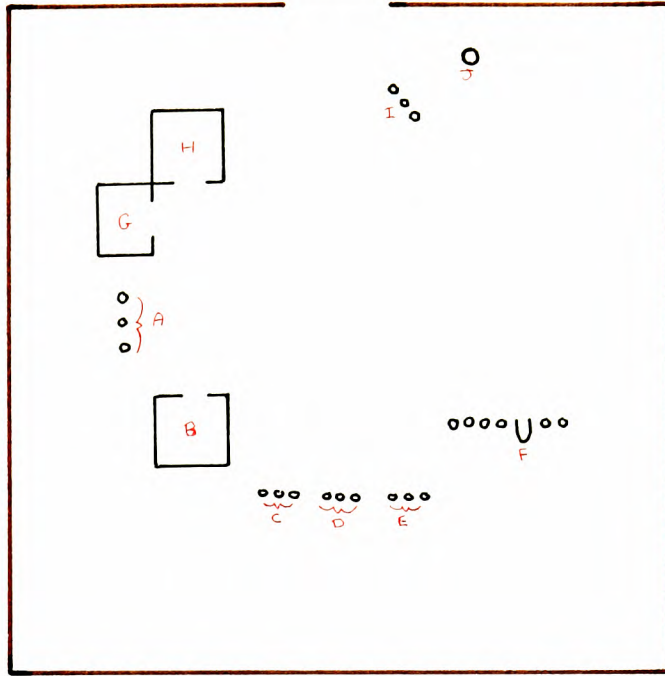
- | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| A | Atanjāramman | H | Tanāci with one male + one female figure |
| B | The Two Brothers | I | FF of Present Priest, and FF B |
| C | Tānkattal | J | Three Females (Unidentified) |
| D | Five Stones (Unidentified) | K | Two Males and One female (Unidentified) |
| E | Three Male Figures (Unidentified) | L | Irulappan |
| F | Paramakamani | M | Structure To Hold festive Cloths
During Large Subcaste Gatherings |
| G | Temple Well | | |

The story outlined above, about how this group of Nāṭār came to the area, was told by a man of the Mūppan clan. The story is, very likely, about his own lineal ancestors, as it is this clan which has inherited the right to fill the position of subcaste headman. They also have the right to the first miras or division of consecrated food offerings at the temple festival. The clan which has inherited the right to fill the position of temple priest, however, is named Cāpini. They have the right to the second miras at the festival. Informants can no longer remember clearly, but it would seem from their descriptions that there has been a long history of disputes between the Mūppan and Cāpini clans over this question of miras. The issue, it would seem, concerns whether the clan which inherited the secular leadership of the subcaste, or the clan with the ritual leader of the same group, ought to enjoy the first precedence at subcaste festivals.

Although no one could give me a very clear story about the history of these temples, the bits, when pieced together, give a picture as follows. At one time the Cāpini clan probably insisted on their right, because they held the hereditary office of subcaste priest, to first rights at the ATancāramman temple festival. The Mūppan clan were themselves divided on this issue. Some were willing to concede to the Cāpini, others insisted on constructing their own subcaste temple (a simplified replica of the former) nearby. This temple (Y) also acquired its own subsidiary Mūppan clan shrine y_1 . The goddess of temple Y, NāiyilāRakiyamma, faces East, as does ATancāramman of temple X. The two temples are very similar in layout, although Y contains only simple, neolithic stones placed in a neat pattern, rather than carved or painted pottery images. It is also smaller than X. (Compare maps 22 and 23).

Informants over fifty years of age can still remember something of the big festivals held at temple Y. They also remember x_1 (the clan shrine of

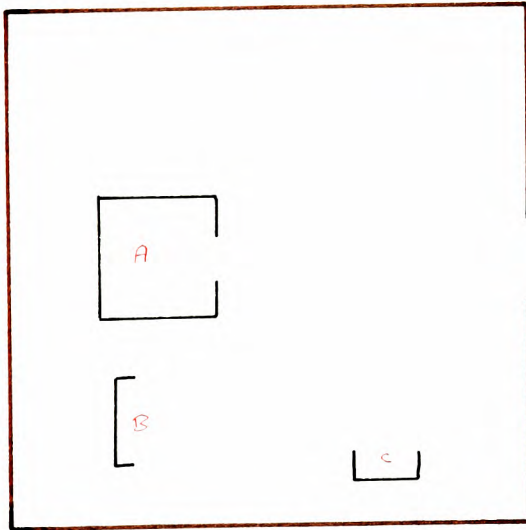
MAP 23: Two MARAMĒRI NĀTĀR CLAN TEMPLES NEAR VIRACĒRAPURAM



KEY

Anaikannacciyamman Temple (above)

- A Anaikannacciyamman
- B Campukuttiyamman
- C The Two Brothers + Their Sister
- D Three Women
- E Naignanar and Two putan
- F Nilamman
- G ViNāyakar
- H Poikal Room
- I Karuppanacāmi
- J Canputan (character in story of the brothers)



Munt: Karuppanan Temple

- A Munt: Karuppanacāmi
- B Kannimar
- C Taikattal

those Mūpan who never broke with temple X) as an impressive structure where elaborate rituals¹⁴ and extensive pig sacrifices used to take place. Now, however, the factional feeling between the Cāpini and the Mūpan has subsided, perhaps because the former has ceded first rights to the latter at the old ancestral temple, X. Temple Y, and clan shrine x_1 have now fallen into disuse (all the other temples shown on p. 21 are still kept up), and y_1 now replaces x_1 as the ūpan clan shrine for the big Tanjaraman temple. Big festivals of the entire marriage community of the subcaste, involving several hundred families, occur at temple X every ten or twelve years. They are very expensive to hold and thus are only planned in a year when the sap of the palmyra palms has been running well and the HāTāra have money to spare for the occasion. Festivals at the subsidiary clan temples are more frequent, say every two to three years. Individual families worship at these places frequently and they are visited on the occasion of any important life-cycle ceremony.

The KavuNTar tradition of clan shrines is similar to the HāTāra, described above. The difference is that KavuNTar clan shrines are more elaborately subdivided than the former, and, at the same time, in a more advanced state of abandon or disuse. The neglect of clan shrines which is so clear in the KavuNTar community is partly due to feuding over precedence, or within one clan, between lineages. Elder members of this community, however, do remember a certain number of clan festivals having been held in the past. The disinterest in such gatherings, today, is probably also related to a gradual shift in the interests of the powerful families of this caste away from these internal descent divisions towards modern

¹⁴ Such as a clan leader having to take three steps by placing one foot on the other on freshly boiled pots of white rice. I have never encountered this particular ceremony elsewhere.

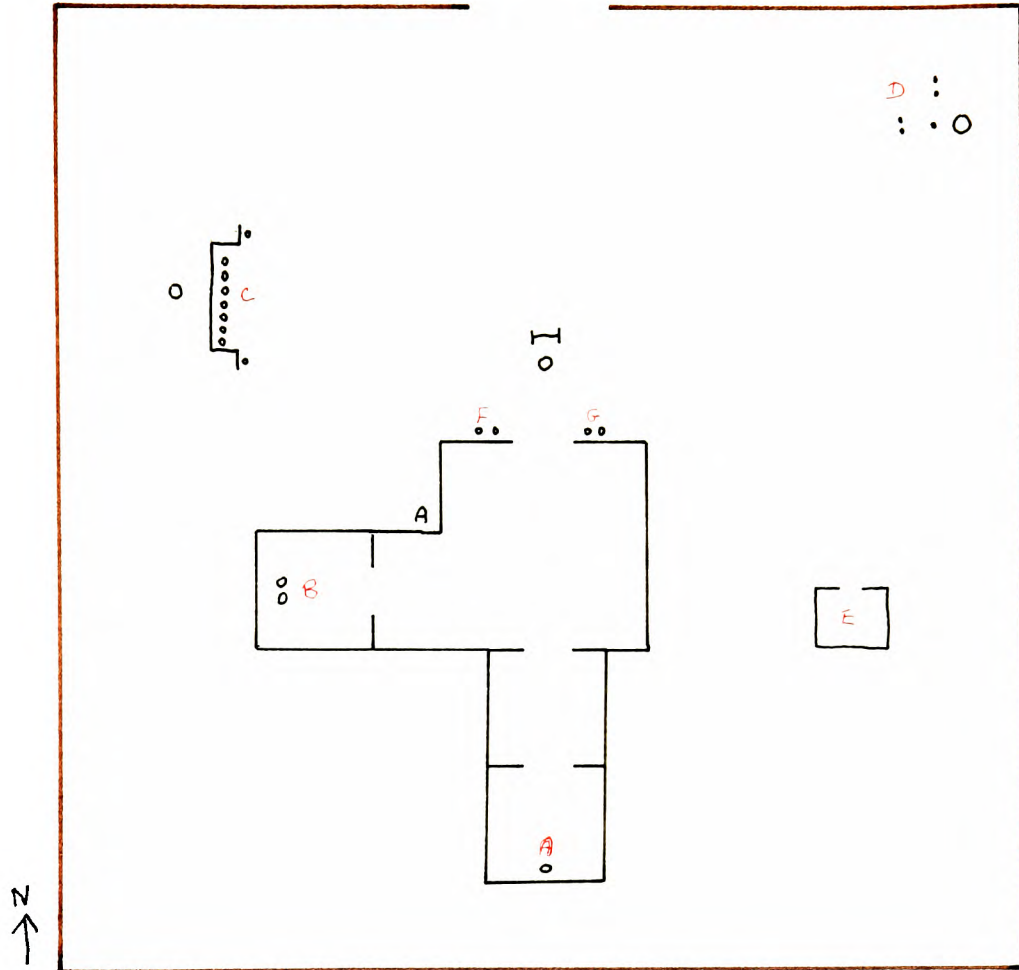
particular politics and techniques for displaying individual family position.¹⁵ Clearly clan divisions used to be of greater importance among the Kavuttars than they are today or so many impressive temples could not have been built to accord with this descent group.

Because there are no subcaste divisions or marriage communities of importance among the Konkku Kavuttars (except, perhaps, on the fringes of the region), the big temples around which clans cluster (as the Aṅcāṅṅam temple for the Nāṭārs) can not be readily identified with such a subcaste group. Instead they appear to mark out a territorial pattern of clan clusters. Within each cluster there is one traditionally dominant descent group who were entitled to the first precedence at clan festivals. Other clans followed their lead. Within each of these territorial clusters of clans one can find one or two temples, always dedicated to a female deity, and similar in function to the Aṅcāṅṅam temple of the Nāṭārs, above. Where there are two such temples in one area, it may represent some historical subdivision of the territory, due to feuding or, perhaps, to an increase in local population. The gīra or order of clan precedence at the Cīva temples constructed within these territories appears to coincide with that which was traditional at local temples associated with particular clusters of Kavuttar clans.

The architecture of these local temples is impressive. In the Kūṅkayan area, at least, these temples are built of stone, in an attempt to approximate the style of the great Cīva and Vaṣṅu temples of the region. Along one wall inside the shrine, however, a long line of stone images can usually be found. In the great temples of Konkku, these images represent the Nāṭyār

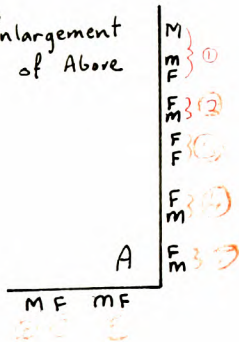
¹⁵ These techniques include expenditure on entertaining important government officials, on weddings, on electrification of the house, on well-pumps and so forth.

MAP 24: THE AIYAMMAN TEMPLE AT VIRANAMPĀLAIYAM



KEY

Enlargement of Above



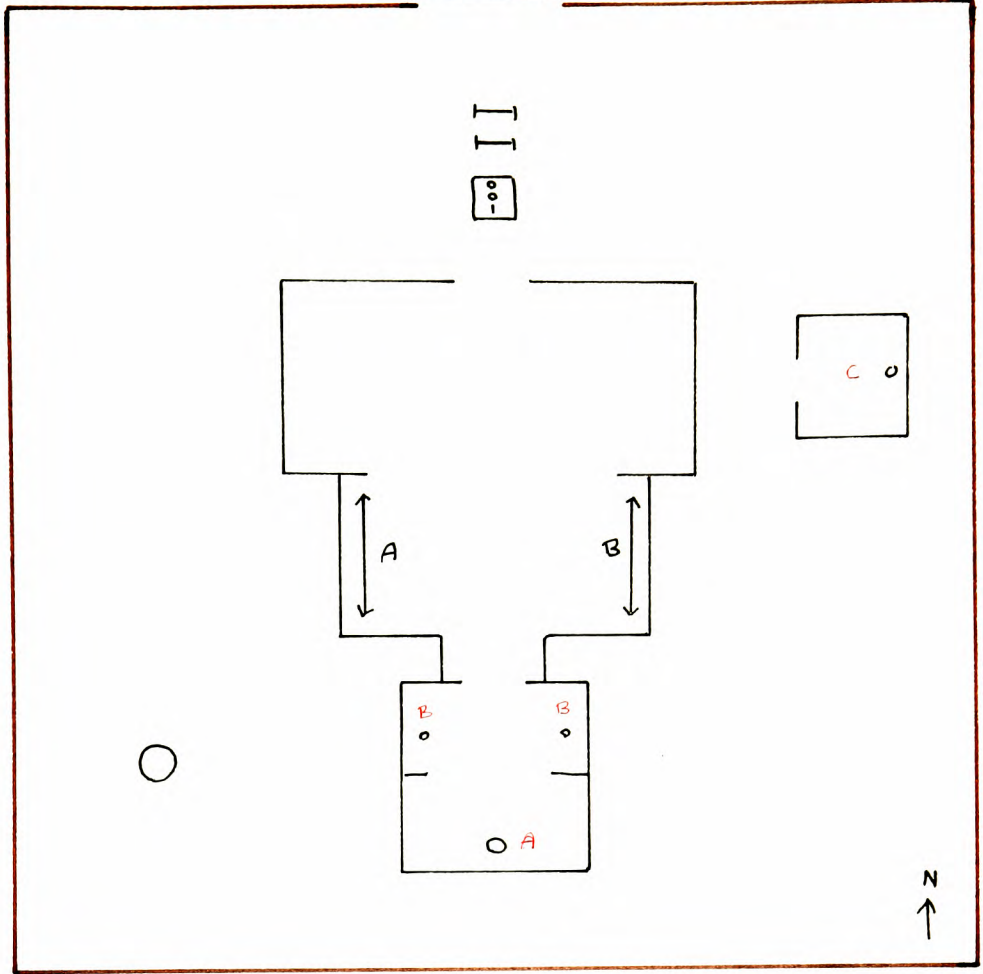
M indicates male image
F indicates female image

- A Aiyamman
- B Kumar (And Consort)
- C Kangimar
- D Mātāri Subcaste Shrine
- E Poikal Room
- F Nātar Subcaste Shrine
- G VaNNaṅ Subcaste Shrine

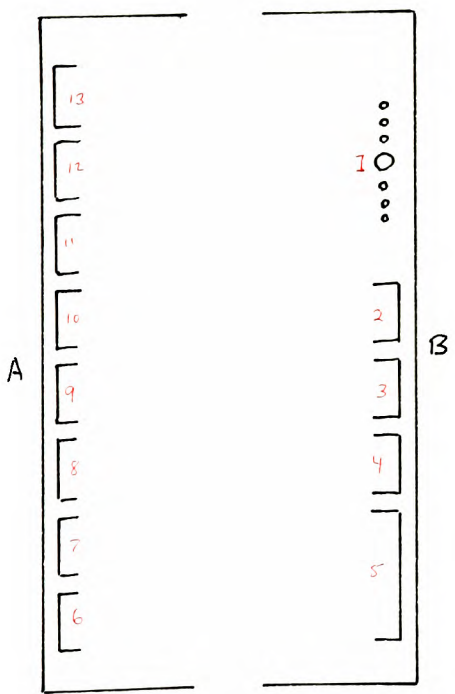
KavuNTar Clan Shrines

- ① Vanni
- ② Putumay
- ③ MuRakatan
- ④ Catantai
- ⑤ CeikANNan
- ⑥ Turan
- ⑦ Ventan
- ⑧ Perunkuti

MAP 25: THE ARAKANĀCIYAMMAN TEMPLE AT VIRANAMPĀLAIYAM



Enlargement of Above



KEY

- A ARakanacciyaṁman
- B Paṅṅāram Subcaste Deities
- C Malaiyala Kaṟuppaṅacēmi

Kaṁṁṅāraṅ Clan Shrines (and a few others)

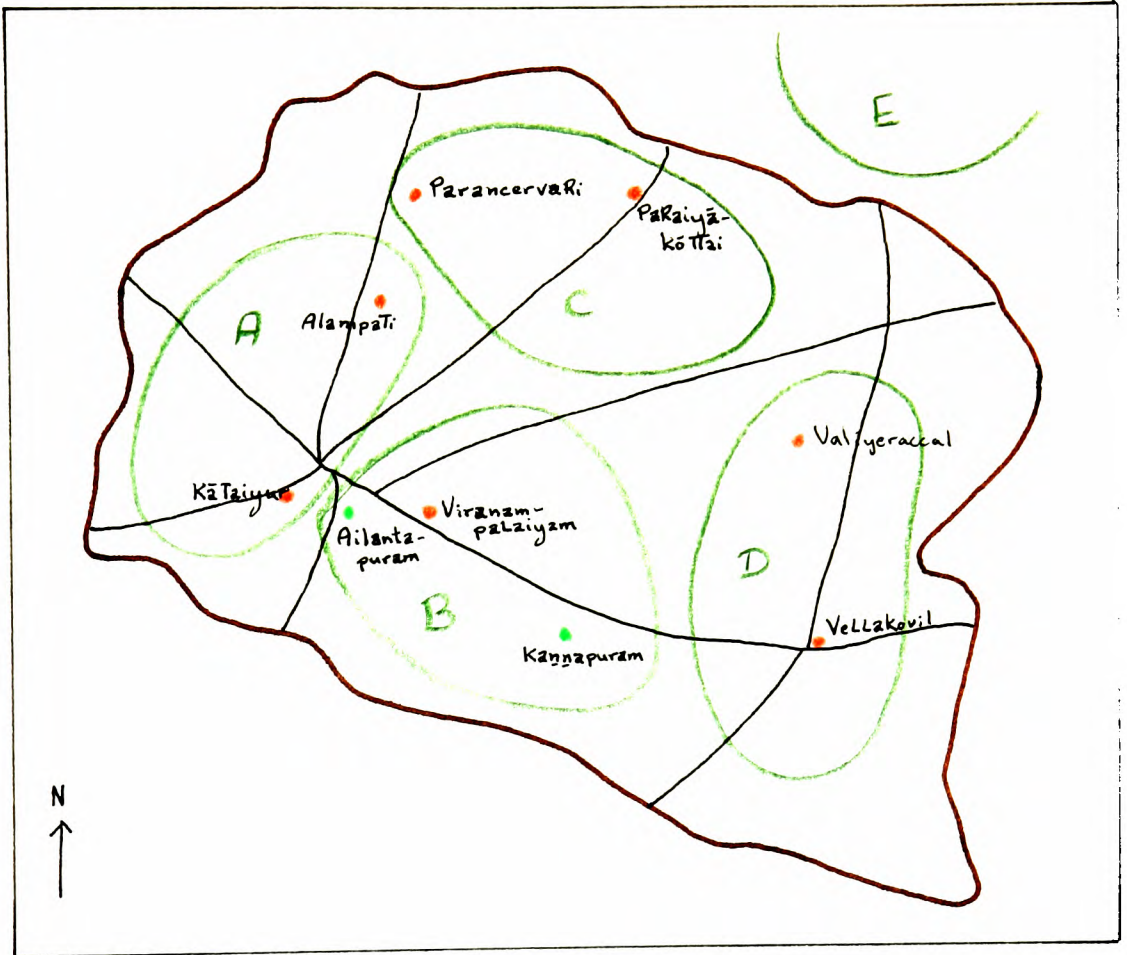
- 1 (Viṅṅāyakaṅ)
- 2 Vaṅṅakkaṅ
- 3 Kaṅṅāṅṅāi
- 4 Koiku Cēṅṅiṅṅāṅ
- 5 Molakaraṅ Mutaliṅṅāṅ
- 6 Vēṅṅiṅṅa Kaṅṅṅāraṅ
- 7 Paṅṅāi
- 8 Aṅṅāi
- 9 Kaṅṅakaṅ
- 10 Kāṅṅāi
- 11 Piṅṅāṅ
- 12 Cēṅṅāṅ
- 13 Viṅṅi

or 63 Tamil Śhivite saints. In local caste temples, however, this line of images corresponds to the number of KavunTar clans who can claim miras at that particular temple during its festival. They are similar to the 63 stones which are (in principle) installed in the NāTār temple for ATancāremman during her festival. These stones are often in male/female pairs, one pair being assigned to each clan. In the courtyards of these temples one frequently finds small shrines to the various Kōṅku service castes who are attached to these KavunTar clans. The deities of these local shrines belonging to KavunTar clan clusters are usually female. No large festivals are now celebrated at these places, although individual families do make their way to them to worship.

Maps 24 and 25 illustrate the pattern of clan deities in two such temples. With the help of a local poet, who has published the miras order traditional at a number of these temples in Kōṅku, a tentative picture of the traditional clusters of KavunTar clans in Kāṅkayam NāTu and their corresponding shrines can be sketched. Map 26 shows the scatter of these kinds of temples within the nāTu and defines the areas of clan clusters which were probably associated with them. Chart 37 gives the primary data on which map 26 has been constructed.

Map 26 and Chart 37 both represent a simplification of the material available, with the intention of illustrating the probable general pattern behind it. In the simplification the lesser clans and clan shrines of the area have been omitted. Even so, all but one of the four areas represented on the map have more than one local caste goddess. This duplication is an indication of the continual shift in the location of clans and of the feuding which must have gone on between them in the past. The miras at the two Cīva temples listed on the chart for area B illustrate how the rules of precedence at these great temples and at the shrines to local deities tended

MAP 26: TRADITIONAL CLUSTERS OF KAVUNTAR CLANS IN
KĀNKAYAM NĀTU



KEY

— Kānkayam Nātu Boundary

— Roads

• Amman Temple

• Civa Temple

○ Possible Area of Clan Rights (According to Temple miras)

A Porulantai Clan

B Ceṅkaṅṅan Clan

C Piriya Clan

D Āṅṅtai Clan

E Kātai Clan ? (Pūnturai Nātu)

Chart 37: Important Temples of Kānkayan Nāṭu and
The Miras Order of Major Clans¹⁵

Area on Map 26	Temple Name	Miras Order		
		1	2	3
A	Alampati Amman Kaṭaiyur Amman	Porulantai @CēTa	Porulantai	
B	Aiyamman Ailantapuram	+Peruikuṭi CeṅkaNnan	CeṅkaNnan	
	Cīva Kannapuram Cīva	CeṅkaNnan	ŌtāLa	KaNavāLa
C	Parancērvāri Amman	Piriya	ŌtāLa	
	PaṚaiyakōṭṭai Amman	Piriya		
D	Valiyeracal Amman	Āṅṅai		
	VeLLakōvil Amman	ANTai	ŌtāLa	

[~] Clan which is no longer resident in the area

⁺ Famous clan of the 'Story of the Brothers'. No longer resident in the area in large numbers.

N.B. Information for this chart was drawn from PaṚaniccāmi Pulavar, Koṅku Celvi, pp. 70-122 and combined with material gathered in my own inquiries. The chart represents a simplification and is intended only to illustrate the general pattern of single-clan dominance within a given territory.

to correspond. The arrows on Map 26 also show how the clans who now claim second and third precedence in Kannapuram Kirāman probably moved into the area, following the establishment of the first clan to settle in the area, CeṅkaNnan. These arrows have been drawn on the basis of local stories about these two clans, and from information about rights which they can still claim at temples to the North and Northwest of Kannapuram.

In addition to miras at these important shrines to a general caste goddess, where a cluster of clans claim rights in a given order, the Kavuntars

also have individual clan shrines. Their tradition, in this respect, parallels that of the NĀTār, already discussed, although the association between an individual clan shrine and the goddess of the cluster is not so readily clarified by KavunTar informants. This is probably because the tradition of festivals at these bigger temples is remembered now only by their priests. Each of the three leading clans in Kannapuram Kirāman has its own clan deity. Sometimes these are identified as actual ancestors of members of that clan, but at other times the deity is more generalized (simply Karuppanacāmi), or the story forgotten.

Many clans are subdivided and thus have more than one such shrine. From stories that the clan members tell it would seem that clans who move into a new area generally take a replica of the traditional deity with them. It is remembered, for example, that about three generations ago, during a famine, a group of men of the CeṅkaNnan clan left Kannapuram for a moist and less developed area to the West, around Pollachi. When they had settled they erected a new shrine dedicated to their original clan deity, ATikavunTan/CelāNTiyaman. (See below). According to the PaNTāram priest who tends the old shrine, they did not carry the actual deity, or a handful of earth, with them.¹⁶ The emigrant community has grown in size and they now worship almost entirely at the new temple. However, the priest of the original shrine still maintains the right to collect a few rupees from each of these households each year for his work in looking after the old site and for continuing to make offerings there. According to this priest, the god will never have the same degree of power (sakti) at the new site as it did at the initial one. Pilgrimages by the emigrants to this original spot are,

¹⁶ See Dumont, "A Note On Locality In Relation To Descent", Contributions to Indian Sociology, No. VII, pp. 71-76.

therefore, still necessary, as are the weekly offerings to this deity which the ^{priest} continues to make.¹⁷

KavuNTars readily explain that the CeñkaNNan and the KaNavāLan, clans also have shrines which have been erected by other branches of these descent groups elsewhere. I have not seen these, but descent group members can vaguely describe their location, and are thus well aware of the direction in which distant branches of their clan can be found. These temples mark, of course, the nodal points of these branches. KavuNTars, however, rarely celebrate large festivals at their clan or sub-clan shrines. A factional dispute between rival descendants, each of whom claims precedence, is the most common reason for such a celebration.

Men known to be of the same clan, but from distant settlements (or even from the same settlement when the genealogical connection is unknown), are usually called kulattakkārar, 'men of the clan'. This corresponds with Mayer's description of the term bhaibandh, what he calls the 'lineage of recognition'.¹⁸ Such men may also be referred to as pañkāLi or 'men who have a share', but the latter term is usually reserved for clansmen with whom ego has considerable contact and, very likely, a known genealogical connection. PañkāLi are generally that group of men whom ego thinks of as sharing a common inheritance to kirāman land, and with whom he attends important life-cycle rituals or shares death pollution. The pañkāLi, in this sense, resemble the grouping which Mayer calls 'a lineage of cooperation' and to which his informants referred as the khandan.¹⁹

¹⁷ The same priest, in explaining what he meant, gave two parallel examples: one of Murukan, who is believed to have his greatest power on the hill at Kalni, and of Christ who, surely, must have his greatest power at the spot where he was crucified.

¹⁸ Mayer, Caste and Kinship, pp. 167-69.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 167-69.

The way in which the internal structure of the descent group is remembered by KavunTars clearly illustrates the importance of this theme of 'shares' or paṅku in their thinking. It is not surprising that only the ŌtāLa, who until recently were the wealthiest and most powerful KavunTar lineage in Kannapuram, can remember their genealogy in depth or detail. Even here it is only a matter of eight generations, and these are only familiar to two of the oldest men. Most people can not remember genealogies beyond the generation of their grandparents. What KavunTar men do remember is the history of how the land has been divided or shared among the lineal descendants of a single settlement founder. Olappālaiyam village, dominated by the third class of the kirāman, is a good example of how this reasoning works.

The older and better informed men of Olappālaiyam say that in the time of their FFFF or mūpāTTan the KaNavālar clan lands were divided from one into six shares. In the time of the FFF or pāTTan these six shares were further subdivided according to the number of male descendants which each of the six 'brothers' had. These subdivisions were, many of them, further divided when they passed into the hands of the FFs or appāru of the present generation. Up to this point informants can only describe the history of the 1/6 share which has descended in their line. The story always has a depth of four generations, the history of the first two being one of simple subdivision, of the last two (from FF to the present) one of rich detail. The history of these latter generations is sometimes a complex story involving the adoption of sons or the sale of land. If these kinds of adjustments occurred in earlier periods as well, they have left no trace. The history of the mūpāTTan and the pāTTan is one of simple subdivision. No one informant could trace the history of all six shares, but each had a good knowledge of

his own family's subdivision. When the accounts of various descendents are pieced together, however, a consistent and impressive general genealogy emerges. This genealogy is given in Appendix 7.

It is not surprising that the genealogy is consistently 'collapsed' to a depth of four generations, even though the clan has probably inhabited the site for a considerably longer period. The terms pāṭṭan and mūpāṭṭan are both vague in their reference. They are used as terms to refer to the F₄ and F₃ of ego's own grandparents, but also more generally to refer to all the ancestors of the clan, to men who 'lived long ago'. It is interesting that the epic of 'The Brothers' who settled in Koṅku is also a story structured in terms of the history of four generations of one clan. Four generations is the greatest genealogical depth of which the term paṅkāli and the sense of a 'lineage of cooperation' can be pushed. These men, taken together, are the vaṛicu or 'descendants' of one munōn, or 'ancestor'.

If four generations is the depth to which paṅkāli or 'those who share' can be pushed, the term can also be extended sideways. The Kavunṭars speak of a F₃ as mutal paṅkāli (the 1st of those who share), likewise of a F₂ as raṭāvatu paṅkāli (the 2nd of those who share), and of a F₁ as a mūnṛāvatu paṅkāli (the 3rd of those who share). Neither the terminology nor genealogical knowledge is normally known beyond this point. The Kavunṭars, of course, are not the only caste to reason in this fashion. Everyone in the region does. It is the Kavunṭars, however, who express the most explicit interest in, and detailed knowledge of, the paṅkāli group. Their concern with this question parallels, of course, their attachment to the kirāma territory and their involvement in the details of rights to land.

Each of the three clans which can claim rights of precedence in Kannapuram Kiriṅman also have a clan shrine within this territory. Although

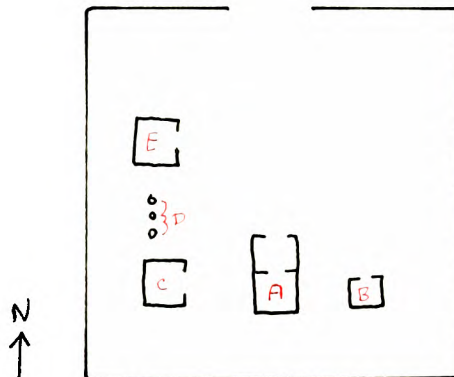
these shrines are now in various states of disrepair and clan festivals are no longer celebrated, they are still well-known to local residents. Two of the three are frequented by individual families of the descent group and modest celebrations are held at them from time to time. A description of these three shrines is given below:

KavuNTar Clan Shrines in Kannapuram

1) CenkeNnan Clan

The clan shrine is dedicated to ATikavuNTan/CelaNTiyamman and is inside a larger temple dedicated to PattirakāLi. There is no story remembered about it, but the image is of a couple, probably man and wife. The initial part of the name means something like 'first KavunTar' and the second part is a common name of a woman. Individual families worship here, but there are now no big clan festivals. This is the temple which has been duplicated by emigrants to the Pollachi area. It may be that the shrine of this leading clan was placed inside the PattirakāLi temple in an effort to create a general KavunTar temple (dedicated to a female deity) around which a cluster of clans would form, similar to the Aiyamman and ARakanacciyamman temples above, (Maps 24 & 25). If so, this particular temple never became as clearly developed, in this regard, as others. Its history is unknown to informants.

PattirakāLi Temple



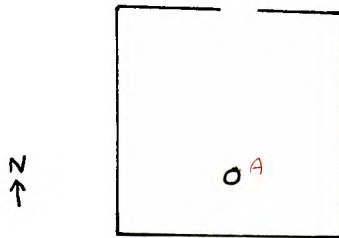
KEY

- A PattirakāLi
- B ATikavuNTan/CelaNTiyamman
- C Kannimar
- D ViNayakar + Nākar
- E KaruppaNacāmi

2) ŌtāLa Clan

The clan shrine is dedicated to Pannampala Kavuntar. According to the story he was the final descendant of the first group of ŌtāLa to settle in Kannapuram, and the only one to escape the ravage of a blood feud with the Cēkaṅṅan. (See Section I C 2). He is considered to be the seventh generation antecedent of the elderly ŌtāLas who live in the kirāṁam today. Two different informants were able to give fairly similar genealogies, including names, of all Pannampala's male descendants, through seven generations to the present. The shrine is now in a state of abandon and disuse. No rituals are any longer performed there. Some ŌtāLas do not consider this to be a clan shrine at all, and it may soon be forgotten entirely. The Cemmaṅṅappucci temple (see following), dedicated to a more recent ŌtāLa ancestor, may be gradually replacing it.

Pannampala Kavuntar Temple



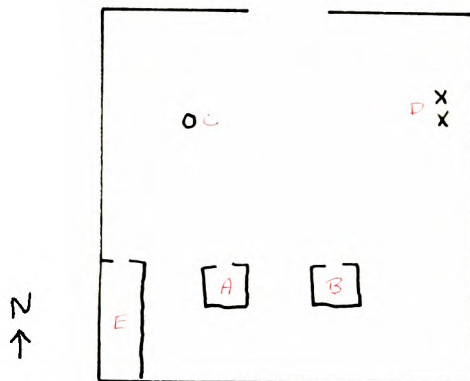
KEY

A Image of Pannampala Kavuntar

3) KaṅṅavāLa Clan

The clan shrine is dedicated to Karuppanacāmi. Informants do not know any particular stories about the deity. However, the stone carving in the temple shows three distinct men. Devotees say that they are 'brothers' and

KARUPPANACĀMI TEMPLE



KEY

- A Kannimar
- B Karuppanacāmi
- C V. Nāyakar
- D Two Putan
- E Paikal Room

that they stand in the order of their birth, the eldest being the furthest to the West. There used to be a big clan festival at this shrine every year. However, about fifty years ago there was a dispute over which head of household in Olappālaiyam should receive the first share of the consecrated offerings during the puja. The dispute appears to have been between the eldest son of the family and a 'younger brother' who was perhaps wealthier and more ambitious. At any rate, the challenger slipped into the temple early one day, at the time of the festival, and made his own sacrifice without the knowledge of the other. There was a fierce dispute as a result and the entire festival was discontinued. Now there is no large gathering of paṅkālī but many individual households, or cooperating groups of parallel males, make occasional offerings. The yearly tax on each household for the upkeep of the temple is collected by the leading KaNavāla family of Kannapuram village.

Within the KaNavāla clan there is a further split into two distinct groups. Each faction has its own secondary clan shrine. It is only members of the sub-clan group who now share death pollution when a senior member dies. The two sub-temples are exclusive in their membership, as neither sub-group will present offerings at the temple of the other. Thus they represent two distinct 'lineages of cooperation' within one larger 'lineage of recognition'. This large unit is itself a subdivision of the KaNavāla clan as a whole. Members of the clan are spread throughout Koṅku. Other 'lineages of recognition' within the KaNavāla group are said to have their temples near the towns of Kāṅkayan and Kāṭaiyūr.

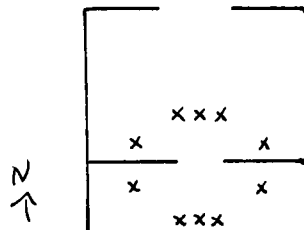
The story of the subdivision of the Kannapuram 'lineage of recognition' into two 'lineages of cooperation' is still remembered by some members of the community. One KavunTar told it to me as follows:

Long ago there was a KaNavāla KavunTar who had two wives. He lived during the time of Muslim rule in Koṅku. After some time the KavunTar died. At that time it was the custom for women to commit suicide on their husband's funeral pyre. However, in order to do this one had to ask permission of the ruling family and it was necessary to make a trip to Kāṅkayan to 'get a government order'. The first wife of the KavunTar decided that she would follow her husband by committing suicide on his pyre and she explained her plan to the younger wife. The children of the second wife, however, objected. Then the first wife became angry and cursed the second, saying that her family would never prosper. The first wife went along to

Kānkavan, got the order from the king's representative and threw herself on the burning pyre as she had promised. Thus the first wife became a goddess and a temple was built for her. Her name was Virattal and her descendants now do a yearly pūjā for her during the month of Āṭi (July-August). The descendants of the second wife do not worship at this temple.

The second wife's name was Dēvattal. After a time she jumped into a well, thus also committing suicide. Her followers worship her as a god and have built a small shrine to her in a field called Attikāṭu, south of Kannapuram. The shrine was a simple one at the foot of a Vēla tree. It is now abandoned and no festival is held.

Virattal Temple



KEY

x Ten simple square brick shapes. All are said to represent Virattal.

The above is a local story explaining the division of one descent group into two branches, a senior and a junior one, on account of a man's two wives. It may be recalled that a similar sort of legend is sometimes told to 'explain' how two entire clans became 'brothers' to one another. Thurston in Castes and Tribes, has recorded an equivalent story to justify the very largest division in South Indian society, that between the right and the left-hand factions:

A Kammālan who had two sons, one by a Balija woman, and the other by his Kammālan wife, was unjustly slain by a king of Conjeeveram, and was avenged by his two sons, who killed the king and divided his body. The Kammālan son took his head and used it as a weighing pan, while the Balija son made a pedler's carpet out of the skin, and threads out of the sinews for stringing bangles. A quarrel arose, because each thought the other had got the best of the division, and all the other castes joined

in, and took the side of either the Kamaalan or the Balijs.²⁰

Thus co-wives are the classic explanation of division within the descent group. Often they constitute the nodal point at which such a group will split. A woman, however, is placed in a somewhat similar position when she has no brothers to inherit her father's position, or when she resides matrilocally with her husband. The following is a story of this kind. It is told about the Kavuntar PaTTakkārar's family in KāTaiyūr and explains why their clan shrine is dedicated to Vellaiyanman (a white or albino girl). The story is from the temple priest.

Long ago in KāTaiyūr there was a clan of Cēra Kavuntars who had the misfortune to have an albino for a daughter. No man among the respectable families of the area would come forth to marry her. However, at the time there was a poor man of the Forulantai clan from Athikarumapuram who happened to be wandering around KāTaiyūr. The men of the Cēra clan tried to persuade him to marry their daughter by offering him some land. He accepted after a time, but soon after the marriage the girl's parents died. At this point in the story she had already given birth to three sons and was pregnant with a fourth. However, she also had two jealous brothers. After bitter dispute her brothers took away the land her father had given to her husband and killed him out of vengeance. She then tried to argue with her brothers but they only attempted to intimidate her and force her to leave the village.

Finally a village council was called to discuss the matter. At the meeting the brothers told their sister that they were prepared to give her land and money if she would meet one condition. The council members asked what this was and they said that she must take a VeTattalā (KaRu) tree which was felled ten years before in a field, sharpen one end of it and drive it into the ground with her hands. Each time she hits the tree to drive it into the ground it must also spread out branches and a leafy shade.

To everyone's surprise the sister agreed to the condition. First she gave birth to her fourth son. Then her brothers brought the tree for her from the field. The girl bathed and circumambulated the Cīva temple near

²⁰ Thurston, Castes and Tribes, pp. 117-118.

their home. Then she took the tree and drove it into the ground, as her brothers had suggested. It bounced back out of the ground twice and then on the third try, sprouted a leafy head of branches. As this happened she sang a song saying that the male branches of the tree would be cut off and die, while the female branches would grow and bear fruit. Her brothers were scared and ran away. Her sons grew to great strength and the fourth was able to control an elephant of the Pandiya kingdom which had run amok. The Pandiya king of that time was greatly pleased and gave the son the title Pattakkārar of Koṅku. Later the girl (Vallaiamma) was made a goddess and a shrine was erected in her memory inside the KāTaiyūr Cīva temple.

Again in the story above the role of a woman in dividing the descent group is emphasized. These stories are most common in the KavunTar community. A very similar tale, even including the detail of an undesirable albino daughter, is told about the temple in Kiranūr, of Pūnturai nāTu.²¹ In this case she was the daughter of a man of the Antuvar clan and was finally married to a man of the KāTai clan. It would appear that the KāTai later became a very powerful clan in the Pūnturai area. They claim first rights at many of its temples.

To summarize then, the strength and the nature of clan traditions among the various castes can be characterized as follows. Among the KavunTars the tradition of clan groupings is strong. Within clans there are elaborate subdivisions into lineages of recognition and lineages of cooperation, each marked by a separate temple. The points of clan division are often associated with women. Interest in and knowledge of their clans is closely linked to landed wealth and political influence which individual clans can command over a given territory. The KavunTar pattern of clan influence follows individual kirānam or administrative divisions to some extent, but can also reach beyond them. KavunTar clans are grouped into hierarchical clusters in any given

²¹ PaRaniccāmi Puluvar, Koṅku Colvi, pp. 95-98.

area and the cluster tends (or did tend) to gravitate around a single temple containing a female caste deity. Festivals are no longer held at these temples, but they once were. The halting of a caste festival can be due to rivalry between clans, or even within a clan, between families. However, such rivalries were probably even more intense in the past than they are now. The lack of festivals, therefore, is probably more closely related to a gradual shift in Kavuntar concerns away from descent group identification and towards a rivalry between individual families for status. The Nātārs are similar in their attachment to territory, but they have never been as powerful as the Kavuntars. Their pattern of clan organization resembles the latter and even clarifies it. In the case of the Nātār, the association between individual clan shrines and the subcaste temples around which they cluster, is much clearer. The Nātārs also continue to celebrate their periodic subcaste and clan festivals.

The ritual service communities are, many of them, linked directly and firmly with individual Kavuntar families. The barbers and washermen, for example, seem to adopt the shrines of their prestigious employers and to have little in the way of independent clan traditions. Others like the Paṅṭāraṅ and the Paraiyaṅ are more closely linked to kirāṅas and nāṭu shrines than to individual families (though ties of the latter kind are not absent). They, too, have little in the way of independent clan traditions, although they have a fairly elaborate knowledge of the history and division of ritual rights as they pertain to their own descent group. Of the ritual service communities the UTaiyār, perhaps, have the least direct tie with individual families or specific temples. Related to this fact may be their relatively strong tradition of independent subcaste temples and festivals. However, they, along with all the other ritual service communities, express descent in terms of nāṭu affiliation rather than by a series of independent, named

clans. All of the ritual service castes, then, remember their history in terms of their links with a particular administrative division and the leading families of that division.

The prestigious and higher ranking castes of the left-hand contrast with all of the above groups. Although these latter have named and exogamous descent groups, they have no tradition of clan shrines or festivals, or of an association with a particular territory. The stories they recall about their history of their community speak of subcaste or caste rather than ^{of} clan, and they refer to an all South India context. Their folklore resembles the great purāṇa(s) and is literary in style. It makes little if any reference to the place where informants actually reside. The untouchable Mātāris (also of the left), on the other hand, have a strong clan tradition. For this community there are numerous clan shrines and stories about the history of specific descent groups in the area. Mātāris often do refer to the administrative subdivisions of a territory, but they do not express their relation to it in terms of specific KavunṬar families or KavunṬar territorial shrines. They speak, rather, of the nāṭu as an area within which kin reside, and of a pair of nāṭu as a region shared by two exogamous but intermarrying moieties.

The conclusion, therefore, is that the more prestigious left-hand castes are distinct. They are not tied to land, to landed families or to territorial temples to the same degree that the right-hand castes are. At the top of the hierarchy there is a marked difference between those castes who are intimately concerned with land ownership and political power over a limited area, and those who are dedicated to specialized trades and crafts, and who turn to an all South India literate tradition for their prestige and status. In the lower reaches of the social order the clan traditions of the castes of the two factions are less dissimilar. They fall, one may say, into an intermediate position between the two poles marked by their

superiors. Among these latter communities the crucial factors which appear to correlate with the degree of clan development are caste size, relative territorial mobility and the degree of distance from (a lack of links to) important families of the region. A dense subcaste population coupled with relatively little territorial mobility and a lack of strong ties to superior communities may account for the relatively strong development of clan divisions in the Ātāri community. Paraiyans, on the other hand, with their small population and their important rights at Kavuṅṅar temples and life-cycle festivals have a much weaker clan tradition.

II B

3) Clan Shrines and Clan Deities

The foregoing is a summary of the nature and extent of variation in descent group division in the various caste communities. It remains to say something about the nature of these temples and about the deities which reside within them. The festivals held at clan shrines are not, from a ritual point of view, very interesting. Because stories about these deities are often vague or unknown, there is little in the way of special ceremonies. Usually the festival consists of a prolonged series of oblations or pūjā(s) to the deity by the priest of the temple's leading clan (periya pūcāri) and his assistant or 'younger brother' (cinna pūcāri). These festivals are accompanied by a large clan gathering in which all those households who can afford it bring an animal (usually a goat) for sacrifice. The meat from the sacrifice is shared in a feast, by individual household, afterwards. Often the feast is held near the temple itself and participants only begin to leave for home after it is over.

A large clan festival can last several days. Usually there is at least one possession of a participant by the deity to whom the main oblations are being made. Sometimes this person is known to perform this function year after year. In such a case he is called a cāmi āttira pūcāri.²² Whether this man is a paṅkāli or a cross relative of the main priest varies from shrine to shrine. Usually a special sign of the god is held during the possession. This can be a vēl (big spear), a bunch of murgosa leaves, or a tier of pots balanced on the head. An unexpected possession of some member of the festival crowd can also occur. There is nothing particularly

²² For a more detailed description of possession see Dumont, Une Sous-... etc., pp. 342 and 347-54.

distinctive about most of these oblations and possessions. The ceremonies can not be compared with the elaborate rituals associated with Māriyamman and AñkāLamman. Instead, it is important to focus on the character of the clan deities themselves and on the nature of their relation to the descent group members. To do this it is essential to begin with a description of the entire gamut of ancestral and divinized beings which are commemorated in local shrines. Only after this graded progression from divinized ancestors to full clan deities has been clarified can the question of the nature of these deities be tackled.

Just as there is no sharp break between castes whose clan divisions have been described as 'pervasive', and those which have been called 'moderate' or 'tenuous', so there is a long and graded scale between small shrines which commemorate immediate ancestors and those which, in this account, have been called full clan temples. The latter term has been used only to refer to those temples whose worshippers are kulattakkārar, in other words who assume that they are members of one descent group, but who can not trace their actual genealogical ties to one another. These temples are dedicated to rather generalized deities where the explanatory story about their relationship to actual clan ancestors is vague or non-existent. Furthermore, this definition includes only those shrines which have a tradition of periodic clan festivals, or at least a story that such celebrations were customary in the past.

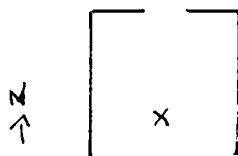
Ancestor shrines are dedicated to more immediate family ancestors and do not meet all of the above criteria. If they are built over the grave itself, these shrines are called camāti, otherwise munnāṭi deivam or munnāṭkaṭ. Such shrines are common to all castes. Usually they are constructed only if a descendent has been asked by the deceased, in a dream, to do so. Normally attention is only paid to these shrines for a

generation or two and then interest fades out and the shrine deteriorates until it finally disappears. In a few cases, however, it appears that these shrines become a defining point, a focal interest for the descent group as a whole. In such a case they may be reconstructed and enlarged and, finally, periodic festivals may be celebrated by the kulattakkārar at such a spot. By this time the specific ancestral connection has been forgotten and the deity has become more generalized. This sort of development never occurs among the high left-hand castes (or among most service communities), not because there are rules against it, but because the descent group is not a sufficiently important social unit as to become focused and developed on a particular ancestral shrine in this manner.²³

The following is a series of examples of ancestor shrines drawn from different castes. All the details were gathered from members of that family or families who actually worship at the shrine described.

1) Brahman

The FF of the present Brahman priest at the Pannapuram Śiva temple was famous for his knowledge of astrology and of magical chants. When he died a small alcove which faces North, outside the main temple compound, was dedicated to him and a stone image of a man in meditation was placed inside it. People used to pay their respects at this alcove as they came in and out of the main temple, and the descendants of this man would do puṣā there. Now, however, the whole is neglected and nearly forgotten.

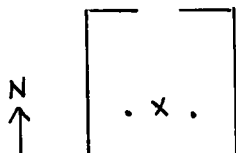


x Image of a man seated
in a meditating position
with legs crossed.

²³ Of course not all clan shrines have a history of this kind. Some are deities which have been brought by a group of descendants from a previous location, some have no doubt always been just generalized shrines, dedicated to KaruppaNacami and the annimā. The point is that the clan itself must be a sufficiently self-conscious group to want a physical focus for festivals and for worship.

2) Kavut̄tar

The FF of one of the leading Kavut̄tar families of the KaNavāLa clan in Olappālaiyam was famous for his knowledge of magical chants which would cure snake bites. On his death he was buried on family land North of the village and a camati was built on the site. His immediate descendants occasionally perform puja(s) at this shrine. However, there is now a bitter rivalry between his grandsons over this piece of land and the descendants, therefore, do not worship there as a group. The shrine is in a dilapidated condition.



X Image of a man standing
o Two stone cobras

3) Mutaliyār

The F of one of the present Mutaliyār merchants in Olappālaiyam is buried on a small piece of family land North of the village. A very modest camati has been built on the spot and his son's family place offerings there.



Built up grave with
a little shrine for a
light at the head

4) Ācāri

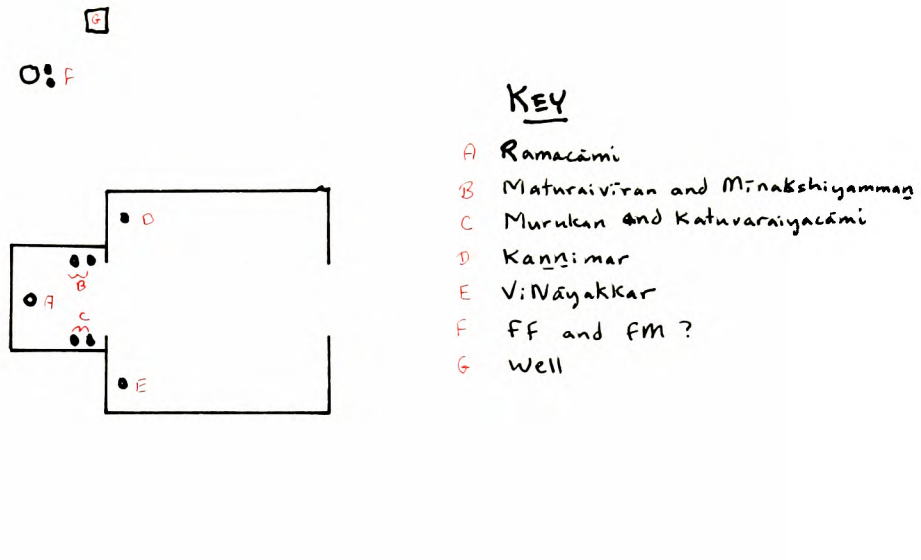
One family of carpenters in Olappālaiyam say that they have a small shrine under a tree in a field North of the village which is dedicated to Karuppa-Necāmi and the Kanniān. They gather here once a year to boil poṅṅi rice on the night of Cīvan Ratiri. However, no clan rights are associated with this shrine and no other festivals are celebrated there. (The shrine is perhaps intended for a deceased ancestor whose name and relationship has been forgotten? I never visited this particular shrine myself).

5) Nēyakkā

The deity of the Vattupataram clan of Vataku Nēyakkā is the famous Ramacāmi (Viṣṇu) of the Sri Raṅgam temple in Tiruchirappalli. The ancestors of the present Nēyakkā family of this clan in Kannapuram used to live in a village near Nuttūr called Maṅkalapatti. Here they had erected a small version of this famous shrine. When the present head of the family's FF came from this village to Kannapuram, he brought the statue of the god from his old home

with him. He also brought a little handful of earth from Tiruchirappalli, and a handful of earth from the old temple site in Maikalapatti.²⁴ The earth was placed under the spot where the present image stands in Kannapuram. There is no big festival, but the present head of the family will fast every Saturday morning until he has performed pūjā at the shrine. He and his FBS divide the work, each taking responsibility for three month intervals. The descendants of these two men gather at the shrine when a life-cycle ceremony is celebrated.

Just North of this temple is a little shrine to Aiyamma (F.), also sometimes called Pattaiya/Pattiyamma (FF and FM). The matter is somewhat confused, however, for the present priest says that the two stones commemorate the memory of his FF and that the latter, after death, requested his F to build the present shrine by means of a dream. There was also a long succession of young girls in his FF's family who died before marriage (four girls in all). The shrine to the Kannimar in the main temple is erected in their memory. In years when the family have sufficient savings, they make a trip to Tiruchirappalli during the month of TuraTTāci (September-October) to worship at the famous Ramacami temple there.



²⁴ I often asked about this matter of bringing a handful of earth when moving a clan temple. Answers were various, and it seems to be a matter of personal inclination rather than an absolute rule. However, there was agreement that gods object to being moved. One should not move a temple and then abandon pūjā in the old location. According to informants, if one duplicates a shrine by moving elsewhere, one must, from then on, make arrangements for pūjā(s) to be carried out at both locations. For a further discussion of this matter see Louis Dumont, "A Note On Locality in Relation To Descent", *Contributions To Indian Sociology*, Vol. VII, p. 71-76.

6) Nāyakkān

A small boy belonging to this caste died several years ago. He then appeared to his father in a dream and asked for a camati. His father built a small raised platform, with a little shrine to shelter a light, over his tomb.



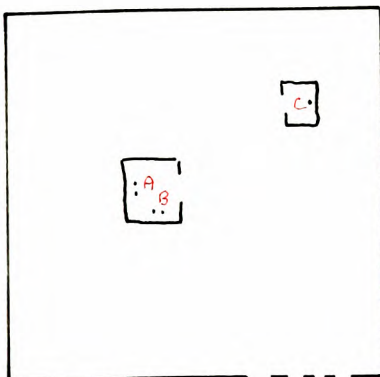
Raised Platform and
Shelter for a light

7) PaNTāram

The MPF of the present Māriyamman priest in Olappālaiyam was known for his knowledge of magical chants. On his death his relations erected a small shrine for him in the village where he lived, ten miles to the North. People used to worship there, but it has now more or less fallen into disuse. I did not visit the shrine myself.

8) Kolakāram Mutaliyār (Temple drummers and dancers)

Until about 30 years ago there used to be several dancing girls dedicated to the Kannapuram Cīva temple. About a hundred years ago one of these girls struck up a friendship with a PaNTāram priest who worked at the Nataraiyan temple about ten miles to the Northeast. The friendship was strengthened when this priest moved to Kannapuram. After a while the two began to live as man and wife. One day, however, the woman (Kuttiyammal) died suddenly. Then she appeared in a dream and asked the priest to build her a shrine. Since they had been lovers and very fond of one another, he decided to make a statue of both of them out of one stone. The people of the village, however, advised him against this plan, saying that no one should make a statue of himself (nor allow others to make one) while still alive. The priest, however, did not listen to their warnings of the dire fate which would befall him. Six months after the double statue was erected, he, too, died. The P's of Kuttīyammal still live in Kannapuram. They perform a weekly pūjā at the shrine. The priest's relatives are also said to come and worship there from time to time. One of his family, a man named SuppaNnan, died some years ago when away from his family in a place called Palghat. He appeared in the dreams of other family members and they decided to erect a shrine for him, as well, inside the same compound. The whole construction is now in a dilapidated condition. (The emphasis placed on the female line of descent, here, is clear. It is related to the importance of inheritance through females among temple dancers more generally).

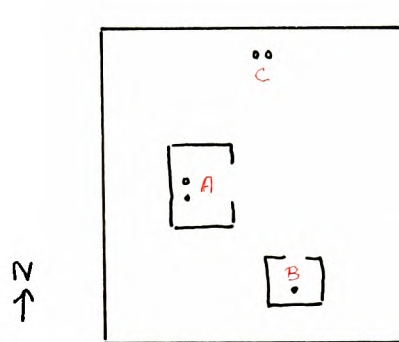


KEY

- A ViNāyakar and Nāka
- B Kuttīyammal and PaNTāram
- C SuppaNnan

9) KavuNTar

Once, perhaps a hundred years ago, there was a man of the OtāLa clan who lived in KeTTivalacu and who was famous for his skill as a cattle doctor. He knew many chants to recite when these animals were ill. After he died he was buried where the present shrine stands (on traditional clan land?). After some days some young boys were grazing cattle in the area and, for fun, they set up two stones over the burial spot and called them 'our CemāNTappucci'. They played at doing pūjā at their makeshift shrine. Soon the people of the village noticed that these boys were doing regular worship there. They decided to build a temple on the spot and to add a second shrine nearby to KaruppaNacāmi. He was to act as a helper or guard. Now a festival is celebrated at this shrine each year and many people from the kirāman participate. The OtāLa clan gets the first miras. (It is not yet regarded as a kula deyvam by members of the clan, but could soon become so). It is a temple where people with sick cattle will particularly go to make offerings. The name CemāNTappucci means 'exalted or reddened'.²⁵

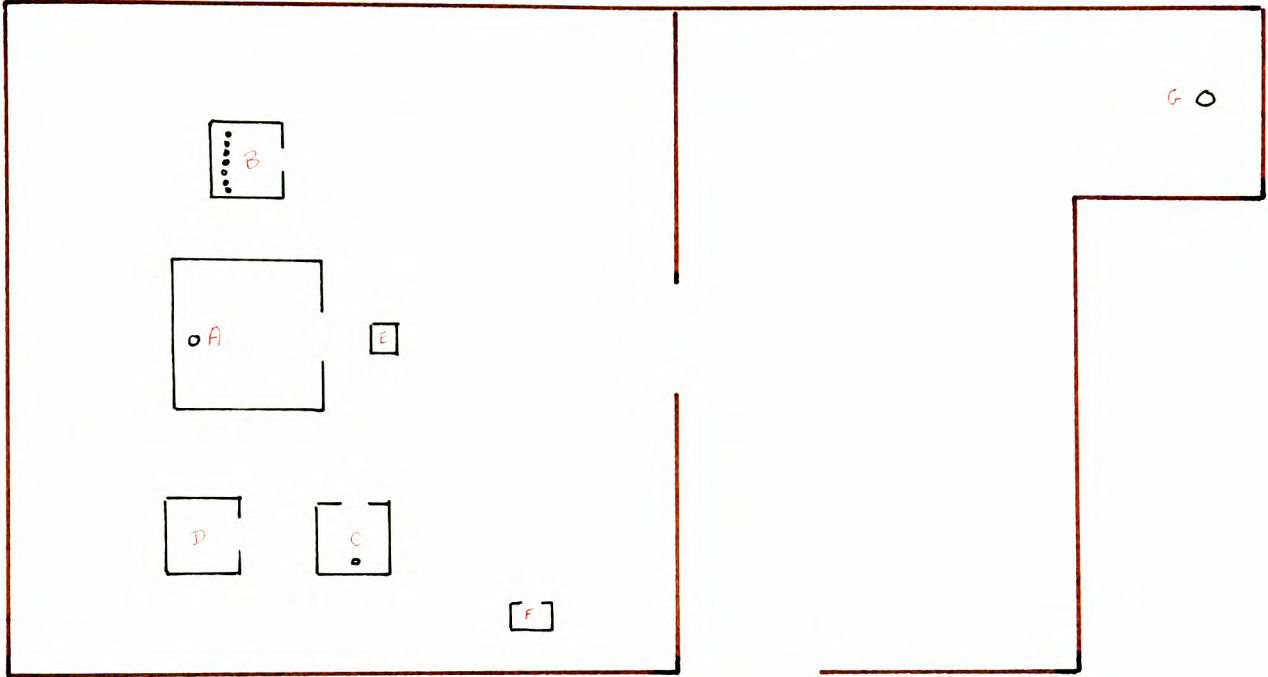
KEY

- A CemāNTappucci
- B KaruppaNacāmi
- C Ficus Religiosa and Mangosa Trees, Planted Together

The examples above illustrate the great variation which exists in types of ancestor shrines. The shading into a full clan shrines is gradual and in a generation or two the CemāNTappucci temple, above, may become one. Generally ancestor shrines are dedicated solely to one man, or to brothers, more rarely to a man and his wife. When such a shrine develops into a clan temple, however, or where something of the latter type is founded on its own, the Kannimār or seven young girls appear almost invariably as one of the deities worshiped.²⁵ Sometimes they are themselves the main deities in a clan shrine (see Map 20), sometimes they appear to be added as

²⁵ There are two exceptions out of about sixteen examples. In a few further cases, such as in the VeTTuva KaruppaNacāmi temple described for the Koracu Mātāri, above, their place is taken by another young girl called Paṅkattal or Paṅkattal.

MAP 27: TEMPLE OF THE KURA CLAN, KĀTUPĀLAIYAM



N
↑



KEY

- A Erutukuttiapparar
- B Kannimar
- C KaruppaNacāmi
- D Paikal Room
- E Nanti
- F Small pottery deity (unidentified)
- G Shrine to FFFF of present priest
- H ViNāyakar

an addition on what was originally a male ancestor shrine, as below:

Shrine of the Kura Clan of Kavuntara, PATTupāLaiyam
(From the shrine priest, a member of the clan himself)

Once, long ago, a man of the Kura clan was wandering over the area while grazing a herd of cattle. One day a frisky bull-calf kicked the ground and revealed a large stone with marks of blood on it. Later a female in the herd stood over the spot and let her udder drip milk on it. The shepherd noticed, and sensing something unusual, called his relatives. They recognized the signs of a divinity, and decided to build a shrine over the spot. Several members of the clan then decided to settle permanently nearby. Later they named the new shrine after the man whose bull-calf had discovered the sacred spot. The shrine is now sacred to all members of the Kura clan in the area and they celebrate periodic festivals within its compound. The PFFF of the present Kura priest of the temple has a caṁāti constructed in his memory in the outer courtyard. (See Map 27). It is called the ErutukuTTiappāru Temple or 'temple for the grandfather of the bull-calf'.

If Map 27 is compared with the map of the CemmaṆTappucci shrine, above, it can be seen that they are very similar in their basic plan. There is a main ancestor who faces East. To the South of this main shrine and facing North is KaruppaṆacāmi, his helper and guardian. All that has been added in the latter is a shrine to the Kannimār or seven sisters, also facing East, and a small room for boiling poṅkal. Sometimes the ancestor is omitted altogether and one finds these seven girls facing East, alone. Again the same guardian, KaruppaṆacāmi, is present. Rarely, however, do these two divinities face East (or North) together. Where they do, some other deity will oppose them by its orientation in the complementary direction. Only in the most elementary field shrines where these two deities are represented by a simple series of stones set up at the foot of a tree do the two commonly face East without opposition. Thus there are three important questions: who are the Kannimār and KaruppaṆacāmi, why do they appear so regularly in clan shrines, and what is important about directional orientation

in these temples? Informants never gave a clear answer to any of these questions, but a certain general attitude towards these deities and their directional orientation can be inferred from what people do and say.

The poetry about the Kannimār follows the traditional mode of describing young women in Sanskrit verse.²⁶ They are young girls, who have not yet reached puberty. They are slender, with black hair and small waists, and they decorate themselves with flowers. The sexuality of the Kannimār is emphasized, but it is always unconscious on their part. The description of their playing with balls is a traditional poetic device for describing their suggestive movements and slightly disarrayed clothing, without suggesting that they are, themselves, conscious of their seductive powers. Some examples of this poetry, taken from a selection of verses recited at the clan festival of the Koṅku Ceṭṭiyār of Taiyanūr, are given below. The verses are originally from a collection recorded on a palmleaf manuscript. The translation, my own, is a very free one.

Song of the Kannimār

The Kannimār are playing in the prosperous
 village of Taiyanūr
 Their black hair flows and they are singing
 Their bangles are shaking and tinkling
 They raise their arms and toss their seven balls.
 The 500²⁷ of Taiyanūr live like Kuberan with plenty
 of wealth
 Their hearts are kind and they speak softly,
 Let their descendents live long!
 In order that they may live, our Kannimār are
 playing like this
 They are making noise with their anklets. They are
 playing happily.

²⁶ This parallel has been suggested to me in an oral communication from Mrs. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty. Mrs. O'Flaherty is currently preparing a doctoral dissertation for Harvard University to be entitled The Erotic Ascetic: Chastity and Desire in the Mythology of Śiva. (To be presented to the Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Harvard, Spring, 1969).

²⁷ An alternate name for the Koṅku Ceṭṭiyār subcaste for a story about their origin, see Section II B 1.

For the prosperity of the 500 these girls are
 playing
 While they play their gold ornaments sway
 You can see the beauty of the muscles in their
 waists contracting
 Their braids of hair are swaying
 The devotees are asking for grace. All the
 gods are praising them.

For the prosperity of the 500 these girls are
 playing
 As they play they kneel down to throw
 As they play they bounce the balls
 Their hands meet and their whole body moves
 These girls are playing so that the 500 can
 live happily
 Their hands and legs shake as they play
 Sweat is running down their yellowed, turmeric-
 coloured faces.

For the prosperity of the 500 these girls play
 The eyes of the girls wander like bumble-bees,
 darting here and there
 The sweat on their heads gathers into drops
 Their saris are loosening on their shoulders
 Their cries sound like music wavering
 Their buns of hair are slipping
 Their anklets are tinkling
 Their eyes are like sharp spears.

The 500 are people who praise Cīva
 They are always friendly and speak kind words
 They are the people who deal in the pearl business
 Their words are like elixir, they always respect
 their teachers
 They are the people in Kaiyanūr, let their prosperity
 increase!

As the girls play, sweet smells come from the
 mixed flower garlands in their hair
 Their golden ornaments are tinkling, their mouths
 are like coral,
 Their sweet-smelling hair is swaying from
 side to side.

The 500 have name and wealth, they were born
 to be charitable
 They listen to stories about the gods, they
 observe fasts.
 They will not go against the words of a teacher,
 let their families prosper!

The girl's hair is tangled from play
 They are breathless, but sweet-voiced
 Their jackets are loosened by movement
 Their waist belts are slipping down
 The border of their skirts rise as they play
 They are beautiful, like a pearl.

The people of Taiyanūr have built rest houses
 for feeding the poor
 They have built a house where the disabled
 can stay.
 Justice prevails and they are famous, let
 these people flourish!

The waists of the girls are small as lightning,
 perspiration drops from their bodies,
 One hand is open, another poised
 When coloured flowers fall from their hair,
 shivers run through the earth.

The 500 are charitable and have hands which
 worship god,
 They speak truthfully and justly. They are
 kindhearted.
 They have this rare gift, let them prosper!

The ornaments in their hair are swinging
 Their eyes are following the ball
 Their bracelets are bouncing
 Their anklets are tinkling
 Their buns of hair are slipping a bit
 Cīva is pleased as he watches
 The seven girls wear a garland of pearls.

Let the admired 500 and their relatives live,
 Let their teachers live, let excellent men
 prosper

Let the goddess of the game live, let Koṅkunār
 of Ponnmalai live!²⁸

Let the song of these goddesses live, let the
 balls they have played with live!

The most striking thing about the above poem is the continual alternation between the descriptions of the seven sisters and the stanzas praising the men of the clan who are singing it. The unconscious sexuality of these girls is repeatedly stressed, as it is also clear that these girls must continue their play in order that the men may prosper. Other poems describe the beauty of these girls as watched, unawares, while they bathe. They also associate these young women with the milk sea, with red flowers and with a black forest. Finally, the Kannimār are associated with the paddy harvest and with the husking of the new grain. Only the briefest examples

²⁸ Koṅkunār is one of the deities of this subcaste. He resides on Ponnmalai or 'the hill of gold'.

of these associations are given below:

- Plucking the red flower, the Kannī will come
crossing the seven seas....
- The Kannī covers herself with an areca-nut
coloured sari....
- Why, why Kannī have you delayed so long? In
the black vēlam-tree forest which
a spear cannot penetrate....²⁹
- Good, good Kannī at the door, Kannī spread a
nālī (measure) of paddy before the door
to dry, Kannī pound the paddy and
winnow it....³⁰
- The paddy has decreased, (and) it is time for the
arrival of Kanniyammāl, while the green
crops are shining, (and) the wives are
clapping their hands....³¹
- The Kannī play with seven balls made of gold
When they miss the ball it falls into the
milk sea
- The girls will bring the balls back
They will cross the river and transform fire....³²

In the Kaṅkayam area the only one of these seven girls which devotees can name is Nākattāl (cobra-girl). There are, however, more extensive associations of these girls with cobras. For example, cobras are always black,³³ and the seven girls are often called the Karuppukkannimar or 'black' girls. They are most commonly carved on black stone in a tight row with a raised ledge of stone above their heads so that they look almost like seven females inside the hood of the classical seven-headed cobra of Indian sculptural tradition.³⁴ Furthermore, another poem in the collection from

²⁹ This excerpt and the two following are taken from some songs about the Kannimar collected near Chidambaram in South Arcot by M.N. Srinivas. See his article entitled "Some Tamil Folk Songs," in The Journal of the University of Bombay, Vol. XII, Part I, July, 1943, p. 62.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 61.

³¹ Ibid., p. 72.

³² This is an excerpt translated from the body of poetry about these seven girls which I collected from the Koṅku Ceṭṭiyār of Taiyanūr. The entire text is about 50 pages in length.

³³ The Sanskrit term for cobra is Kalanaga or, literally, 'black snake'.

³⁴ See Veronica Ions, Indian Mythology (London, Paul Hamlyn, 1967), pp. 105-6.

Taiyanūr reads:

Even a cobra will come and happily
 away its umbrella over you, Kannimār
 It will come on your shoulder and make
 an umbrella for you.

Nākakanni and kannikai are compound terms used to describe a female cobra, while kanni, itself, means simply 'a young unmarried girl, a virgin'. The words kannimār and kannikai can also be used to describe young girls. In other parts of the South, women sometimes wear earrings called nākapāṇam with the figure of a serpent on them, though I have not seen such a decoration used in Kōnku. The same term is used to describe the spread and figured neck of a cobra.³⁵ Why should there be all these associations between women and cobras? No one could answer this question for me directly, but I have been told by Sundaram that female cobras are worshipped for their cakti or power and that they obtain this power because of their sexual abstinence.

Stored-up sexual desire due to abstinence can be transformed into cakti or power. This power often takes a fiery form. The person who has cakti has fire within him which he is able to control and to direct to his own ends. Thus Cīva, the greatest of all ascetics, has a third eye from which fire radiates when he wants to destroy enemies. Māriyamman, after refusing to be seduced by the lowly acūra, turns her stored sexual energy into fire which she then throws at him (see Section I D 1). For Aṅkālamman the story is not so vivid, but the name of this goddess means 'fire' in Sanskrit. In the 'Story of the Brothers', the mother of these two men is able to burn down a house with the fire obtained from her stored-up chastity. Uṅṅam, or the practice of a devoted wife sacrificing herself on her husband's

³⁵ Fabricius, Tamil-English Dictionary, p. 599.

funeral pyre, is probably connected with this theme. Here the woman's cakti gives her power to control the fire and thus enable her to pass through it, unhurt, to join her husband.³⁶

The control over fire which is obtained through asceticism is heating and people with such powers need to be kept cool. Fire can be cooled and controlled by water and by plants like the margosa tree which are associated with rain and with damp places. How the fire of Māriyamman is cooled by the pot of water and the margosa tree branches^h which are placed, in alternation with fire, on the post in front of her temple has already been described in Section I D 1. In the same way, the line of the poem, above, which describes the Kannimār by saying 'they will cross the river and transform fire' refers, in all probability, to the same effect.

Cobras have large amounts of stored-up power due to their sexual abstinence. So do young, unmarried women. Most important of all, from the point of view of the clan, a young girl can transfer her power to her brothers and a chaste wife can transfer it to her husband. Both these points are illustrated in "The Story of the Brothers". The wives of these two men are locked up in isolated rooms where their husbands never visit them. The brothers' chaste, unmarried sister blesses their knives as they go into battle with the Vēṭṭuvas. The story makes it clear that it is partly as a result of the chaste power or cakti of these women that the brothers eventually triumph in the great battle. (See Section I C 2). Therefore, just as cobras and their stored-up powers are associated with fertility and prosperity in the world at large³⁷, so the Kannimār are associated with the fertility

³⁶ For a further discussion of the relation between sexual power and fire see Mrs. Wendy O'Flaherty's unpublished dissertation, The Erotic Ascetic, op. cit.

³⁷ See Section II C 2. Female cobras are also associated with fertility in the Tantric tradition. Here the female cobra is often wrapped around the lingam and has been given the name kundalini or 'coiled goddess'.

increase of individual male clans. They, as unmarried sisters, transfer the power of their chastity to these men. 'They play so that the 500 may prosper', the playing being the poetic expression of the potential, but yet unconscious sexuality which they possess. As a result of their powers, the clan prospers.

There is, undoubtedly, an association between these seven unmarried sisters or Kannimār in the South and the Sapta Mātrikā or seven wives of the North. In the countryside the Kannimār remain unnamed (except for their association with the cobra-girl Nākattal). In the big shrines of the South, however, there are sometimes labels on these goddesses. At the Cīva temple in Kodumudi, for example, they are given the names of the wives or consorts of the various forms and avasthā(s), of the great triad of gods, Brahma, Viṣṇu and Cīva.³⁸ Their husbands are, in large part, ascetics, and as wives of these great deities these women enjoy stored-up śakti due to their constancy. In one case as chaste wives, in the other as virgin sisters, the fundamental theme which surrounds the power of these seven women is common to both the North and the South.

The association between the seven Kannimār and the actual virgin sisters of clan members is very direct. If a young girl dies before marriage the family will erect a shrine to the Kannimār and explicitly say that their daughter has become one of them. (See example 5 in the list of ancestor shrines, above). Many of the Kannimār shrines in clan temples undoubtedly have a similar history. Unmarried girls are also asked to dance and to sing songs about the Kannimār during the poikāl festival. (See section III C 2).

³⁸ The names from left to right were: Avirāsi (wife of Brahma), Makēṅgari (wife of Cīva), Kaumāri (wife of Skanda), Vaisṇavi (wife of Viṣṇu), Vaṅgī (wife of Viṣṇu's incarnation as a boar), Makēntiri (wife of Cīva in his form as an obscurer), and Camuṅgi (wife of Cīva in her form as Durgā).

Sometimes in a shrine to the Kannimār one can see an eighth female added at the end of the line of seven. Commonly she will be called Paṅkattal, and be associated with the virgin sister of the two heroes in the 'Story of the Brothers' who is known by that name. The addition of an eighth woman to the original group of seven goddesses, a female responsible for victory in battle and whose body is enveloped in black snakes, is also mentioned in the Agni Purana.³⁹ Just as in the problem of ancestral and clan shrines more generally, it is often not clear whether the Kannimār are young girls of the clan who have died, or whether they are deities in their own right. The one class blends ever so gradually into the other. There are shrines to specific girls who have died. There are shrines to Paṅkattal as a half folk, half ancestral hero, and shrines to the Kannimār as independent goddesses in their own right.

The Kannimār are never found alone. They are always accompanied by a protective male deity who is best described as their guardian and servant. His name is almost always KaruppaNacāmi. A poem to this 'black guardian' will make his character more vivid. It comes from the same collection of songs, gathered in Taiyanūr.

Oh Karuppayā with 8,000 tusks, come and
stand on Mt. Kollimalai
Oh Karuppayā, who granted purity to 60 and
then to 70 people⁴⁰
We have gold-handled, heavy knives and we
are ready to use them
We have silver-handled, heavy knives and we
are ready to use them
The heavy knives are working Karuppayā
our sacrificed goat is in spasms, Karuppayā
The killing knife is swung, Karuppayā
For you the cock is in spasms, Karuppayā
A goat, a pig and a cock are ready for your
three pūjās, Karuppayā

³⁹ See Mme. Mallmann, Les Enseignements Iconographiques de l'Agni-Purana (Paris, Annales du Musée Guimet, 1963), p. 153

⁴⁰ The reference here is unclear.

The blood pot is ready for you, Karuppayā
 Your eyes are becoming red, Karuppaya
 Your moustache twitches and your anger increases
 You have a beautiful knot of hair above your
 forehead, and a round turban
 Your moustache is skillfully twisted, Karuppayā
 When you hunt with your big iron stick,
 not a single devil will come before you
 Drive the devils with your silver stick,
 Karuppayā
 Take a big stick and drive the darkness,
 Karuppayā
 You must grant us all health, Karuppayā

Thus karuppaNacāmi lives in a sort of borderline world between the habitat of malicious spirits or devils (pēy) and of frightening giants (pūtan) and the world of the divinities, proper. He is, himself, very large, very black and very strong. He has a thick moustache and a heavy head of hair. He is a hunter and he revels in blood sacrifice. He is associated with borders of all kinds (See Section I D 2) and is clearly a kind of guardian employed by the greater deities to keep away demons. Significantly, he guards both young women and the fields, while the crops mature and become ready for harvest.

It is the Kannimār/KaruppaNacāmi pair which dominate the pattern of clan temples, although sometimes a generalized shrine to a clan ancestor is also present. (Take, for example, the case of ErutukuTTiappāru, Map 27). Where the Kannimār are absent it seems there is always a shrine dedicated to some other female ancestor, such as one who committed suicide (another case of a female transferring her cakti to clan members?). Here there is the example of the Virattal temple of the KaNavāLa Kavuntars of OlappāLaiyam. Subcaste temples around which clan shrines cluster follow an even more obvious pattern of dedication to female deities. One would expect a similar association between the cakti of these goddesses and the power of the men of the subcaste, although unfortunately I did not manage to collect any stories of this kind. Finally, where the Kannimār or some other female deity is not directly

worshipped, one finds that it was a sister or wife of clan members who was somehow responsible for the transport of the deity to the spot in question. The two brief stories below illustrate this point. Both stories were told to me by a priest of the temple in question.

Cempatavan (Fishermen)

Three miles from Kilvani is a village called KūttampūNTi. Here, long ago, there used to be a temple to KaruppaNacāmi. At one time the members of the clan to whom the temple belonged began to fight. During the argument they ignored one of their unmarried sisters. She became angry at this. At her demand one of her brothers was forced to take a large sacred knife (aruvā) from the temple and give it to her. Then, because of the girl's arul or 'grace', she was able to carry this knife with her on her journey to the village of KallīnkāTTūr, some miles away. When she reached this spot she placed the knife in a field called kōpalla kāTu. Here a temple was built. Members of the clan who moved to this latter village began to worship at it. The shrine is dedicated to Kōballa kāTu KaruppaNacāmi.

NāTār

Long ago a group of NāTārs migrated from the Madurai area to a place called PARaiyakōTTai (10 miles North of Kannapuram). While they were on their way, the wife of a distant male ancestor of the present clan priest carried a large basket of belongings on her head. After a while, however, the basket became heavy and when she set down she discovered a stone in it. She hrew it away, but as she began to walk again it reappeared. This happened several times. Finally, she stopped at the outcropping of rock where the present temple is. When she threw away the stone for the final time it became lodged in a big crack in this outcropping and the rock closed over it. Thus a temple was built on the spot and became called MūTuparai KaruppaNacāmi or 'the rock that closed on KaruppaNacāmi'.

As has been illustrated above, in Koṅku there exist a vast and graded series of shrines whose deities shade over gradually from the realm of immediate ancestors to that of generalized clan and caste gods. Sisters or daughters who die before marriage are commonly worshipped as the Kannimēr on the festival of Tai nonpu each year, (see Section II C 2), but only rarely are they given a permanent shrine. It is the senior males of the

family, when they die, who very often acquire an actual camāti to their memory. This is particularly likely if they have been well-known for some particular talent, such as an ability to cure snakebite by the recitation of magical verses.⁴¹ Ancestor shrines for married females are rare, although they may be included in an oblation to their husbands. It would seem that shrines for females are only constructed as a result of some dramatic gesture of their fidelity, such as suicide, an event which transfers their oakti or power to their male descendants. Although actual shrines for deceased females are rare, it is around these latter, rather than around the shrine to a male, that clan temples tend to develop. If the shrine to a male becomes prominent, such as that to CemmanTappucci, above, one can almost predict that the story about some female or an alcove for the Kannimār will eventually be added to it. Although the pattern of clan and subcaste temples shows considerable variation, the relation between some female divinity and the power or virility of the males who worship there is a theme which one finds repeated over and over again in various forms.

The same is true when the question of the directional orientation of several shrines within one temple compound is considered. North and East are the favoured directions which the deities generally face. Therefore, people generally prefer to sleep with their heads to the South or the West, in order to avoid an inadvertent insult to a deity by stretching their feet towards the entrance of a shrine. Likewise a corpse is always buried on its back with its head to the South. Graveyards are, in general, found to the North of settlements, but well away from important shrines.

⁴¹ These are in no sense obligatory. Formal offerings to the deceased end with the Karumāti ritual on the final day of the funeral. They may be continued on the festival of ATi noapu each year (see Section II C 1) by choice. Shrines are only constructed if the deceased makes a request in a dream. There is a contrast here with the Brahman community who alone require the eldest son of the family to continue to make offerings to his deceased ancestors every month of the year on the new moon day.

A corpse is buried on its back with the head to the South. If it were imagined to sit up, it would face North. Some castes, in the South of India, in fact, appear to have a custom of actually burying the corpse in a seated position, facing North, although I have never heard of this in Kōnku.⁴² Similarly, amāti shrines built on the grave site always have a little room or cubical constructed over the place where the head lies. This cubical sometimes contains a statue, sometimes just a place for a light, but always faces North.⁴³ Shrines constructed for ancestors away from the burial site do not follow this rule as regularly. Similarly, shrines to the great deities such as Cīva, Pārvati, Murukan and ViNāyakar always face East (with a few striking reversals where they face West). Thus one can say that there is a very general preference for shrines to the great deities to face East, while those to ancestors face North. It must be stressed, however, that this is a preference, deduced from observation, not a firm rule on which informants insist.

Similarly, there is a general preference for male deities to face East but for ^{female} deities, in the absence of their husbands, to face North. Māriyamman, MākāLiyamman and PattirakāLi almost invariably face North. So do most female deities of subcaste and caste shrines (see Maps 20, 24, 25 and in Map 22, the entrance, if not the shrine, itself). Informants themselves say that East is the most auspicious direction, North is the second most favourable. The contrasting orientation of deities within a temple compound, then, is used to indicate a deity which is primary in some way (faces East) and a deity which is secondary (faces North). West and South can be

⁴² See Thruston, Castes and Tribes, Vol. IV, p. 285.

⁴³ The CemmaNTappucci shrine (Example 9 of ancestor shrines, above) is the only exception to this rule which I encountered.

auspicious reversals of these two primary directions, or simply further possibilities for other minor deities. Which characteristic is chosen as the basis on which to fix the primary/secondary contrast, however, is variable. A list of common ones is given below.

Associated Pairs in Temple Shrines

(Read across: vertical associations do not necessarily follow)

<u>Primary</u>	<u>Secondary</u>
East - - - - -	North
West - - - - -	South
Main Deity - - - - -	Secondary Deity
God & Consort- - - - -	Goddess Alone
General Deity- - - - -	Ancestor
God - - - - -	Guardian
Main Deity - - - - -	Temple Entrance
Vegetarian Deity - - - - -	Meat-Eating Deity
Elder- - - - -	Younger

Not all of these contrasts will be important in any one temple.

Usually only one or two of them are highlighted at a time, while the others are skipped over. However, in almost all shrines directional orientation is used to emphasize one or more of the pairs in the chart by highlighting their juxtaposition in space. If this juxtaposition is not achieved within the temple itself it may be achieved by a series of temples, side by side, as in Map 15.

One final point of interest is the number of images (or stones) used to represent any particular deity. Here again, there is no overt rule which informants state, and yet a general patterning can be noticed. A single image can be either male or female. Only males, however, are represented by the even numbers two and four. Rarely one finds a line of four stones which are treated, together, as Karuṇaśāmi. There are also four Kūmaran temples in Kānkayam Nāṭu which are said to be dedicated to four brothers

(see Map 24 for one example). They stretch in a rough line from West to East, the eldest brother being furthest to the West. More commonly one finds KaruppaNacāmi represented by two stones, as if the shrine were dedicated to two brothers. Similarly the aNNan/tampi pair in the 'Story of the Brothers' are usually represented standing together. Two actual brothers may also be commemorated by a double shrine, as in the following story, told to me by the present priest of the ATancāramman temple near VīracōRapuram (See map 23).

A former priest of the temple died an unnatural death some years ago. It seems that he expired under a tamarind tree which stands just outside the shrine. His younger brother then inherited the job of priest. However, he was most upset by the loss of his elder brother and soon he hung himself on the branches of the same tree. Two images commemorating the two brothers were subsequently erected side by side inside the temple compound.

The number three is somewhat more strongly associated with female deities than with males. Sundaram says that one can usually recognize a temple to a female deity by the fact that there are three pots or kalasam along the line of its roof (or gateway), while only one pot in the case of a male. However, I have seen three brothers represented in a line (again the eldest to the West), as in the clan temple of the KaNavāLa KavunTars in Kannapuram. A shrine dedicated to a female deity with three stones inside, however, is more common. Seven stones in a line almost invariably represent the Kannimār or seven sisters, although rarely one finds the Virakumar or seven brothers as well. Certainly there is a mild contrast between 2 & 4 (male) and 3 & 7 (female).⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Large temples dedicated to Civa or VisNu and their consort are said to always have five kalasam in a row on their gateways. This could result from the addition of 2 (male) and 3 (female).

It would be more accurate, however, to say that even numbers of stones (images or even shrines) always seem to denote a male deity, while odd numbers may be either male or female.⁴⁵

In conclusion, one point must be stressed. The transition from the offerings which are made to immediate ancestors, and the small shrines set up to commemorate them, to the worship at large clan shrines is a long and gradual ~~one~~. Similarly, there is a shading and gradual change in emphasis between those castes where descent divisions are pervasive and those in which they are moderate or tenuous. In a discussion of local shrines and temples in Konku, therefore, it is the general patterns which are important, not opposed categories or fixed rules of placement. The themes are associational, they deal with primary/secondary pairs. Specific linkages can not be seized upon in any one context, but rather must be recognized by their repeated conjunction in shrine after shrine. There is a similarity here with the multiplicity of episodes in Sanskrit mythology. In these stories the plots and the progression of specific events vary endlessly. Frequently they are even reversed. To understand material of this kind it is essential to recognize repeated clusters of simple motifs amongst an endless variety of examples. It is only by identifying this underlying pattern of associations that the assumptions which order people's thoughts and actions with regard to clans and clan deities can begin to crystalize.

⁴⁵ The traditional number of castes belonging to the right-hand faction is 18, and to the left, 9. This could be read as 18/9 or 2/1, both associating the even number with the right-hand group and implying, perhaps, its 'male' qualities (economic and political dominance). For a further discussion of this point, see the conclusion.

II C) Agricultural Abundance, Household Ritual and Well-Being

1) Agricultural and Life-Cycle Rituals

The ceremonies which are directly associated with planting and the harvest seem brief and simple, if compared to the elaborate temple festivals previously described. There are, indeed, only three rituals in this category. The first is a ceremony which should be performed just before the yearly sowing of kāTu kampu (wild millet). The second is a ritual to be observed when the first stalks of this plant are harvested some four to five months later. These ceremonies are performed by each individual household engaged in kampu cultivation. Usually this means Kavuntars, although other castes can perform these two rituals if they own land or if they plant and harvest this millet as tenants. The third ceremony focuses on harvesting the sap of the palmyra palm. For this reason it is performed only by Nāfars, and occurs just before the palms are tapped for the first time in each new year. Again this ritual is observed by individual household. Nowadays none of these agricultural ceremonies are taken too seriously. Some cultivating households will omit them entirely.¹

Planting

This ritual takes place just after the beginning of the first rains in the month of ĀTi (July-August). For the ceremony, seeds of 'wild' millet (kāTu kampu) are mixed in an earthen pot with four kinds of pulses, namely tatti payaru, paccai payaru, mucci payaru and nari payaru.² The pot is called a vete kuntam or 'seed vessel'. It is painted with white lime wash on the outside and around its mouth is tied a yellowed string or manjal kappu. It is placed against the central wall of the house, naTu vitu, and next to it is laid the metal tip of a plow. A little mound is fashioned out of cow dung to represent the god Viṅāyakkar and a small puṅṅā is performed by the man who will do the plowing. The actual seeding is done later and without ceremony, usually by the man's wife. The seeds should be carried to the field

¹ These descriptions are from informants. I have never actually seen any of these rituals performed.

² The only one of these terms for which I can find an English equivalent is the second, i.e. green gram.

and sown from a similar pot which has also been painted white. This need not, however, be the same pot as the one over which the pūjā was performed. There is no similar ritual for the planting of other grains.

Harvesting

Wild millet planted in the month of M̄ṛi can usually be harvested during Kartikai (November-December). Just before the reaping of this crop is begun, three stalks of grain will be cut and balanced on end against one another to form an upright triangle. These are tied at the apex and in front of them, to the East, are set out seven small stones (preferably white) to represent the Kannimār. A large pot of ponkal is boiled nearby. The cooked rice is then set out as an offering on seven little leaves in front of the seven goddesses. The man directing the harvest conducts the pūjā. He then takes the three stalks home and ties them to the roof of his house, again against the central wall or naṭu vitu. Here a second pūjā is done. Then the crop is harvested and brought in. When the first grain from this harvest is husked, it is boiled in the same fashion. This is also placed on a leaf in front of the naṭu vitu and a third pūjā is performed. Only after this is completed will the family eat. This first meal of the new harvest is called pūtu cātam or 'new food'. No harvest ceremonies are conducted for any other crop.

Commencement of Tree-Tapping

The sap of the male palmyra palm begins to flow just about the time of the wild millet harvest. (Sap from the female trees runs later). During the month of Kartikai (November-December) when the male palm begins to blossom, the head of the household who will do the tapping cuts one large leaf and stalk from one of them. This is cut into three parts and laid near the foot of the tree. Then the Nāṭār performing the ceremony will face East and call out 'Oh Viṅāyakar, this year let me reap sap in plenty'. Then he will cut two more leaves with their stalks. One he will take to the Viṅāyakar temple in the village where he will cut it into three parts and make the same request in front of this god's shrine. The third leaf and stalk he will take home and stick in the roof above the naṭu vitu of his house. He will mention Viṅāyakar's name a third time. Only after this ceremony is over will the actual tapping be begun.

It is most interesting that these planting and harvest ceremonies are singularly focused on wild millet, pulses and the sweet sap of the palmyra palm. People claim that this is because these are the oldest staple crops of the region. Although none of these play an important role in the favoured or prestigious daily diet at present, there is no doubt that these are the crops relied upon, even now, in times of famine. The Kannimār or seven sisters are worshipped at the time of the kampu harvest, just as they

are at śai poṅkaḷ (see Section II C 2). It would appear that these seven girls are not only associated with the prosperity of clan members, but also with the fertility of their fields. However, informants themselves do not see this correlation clearly.

The fact that Viṅayakar is called upon during the planting ceremony as well as before beginning the tree-tapping is consistent with his presence at the commencement of any new undertaking. He is the god whose name must be mentioned to assure an auspicious start. He is the god who removes all obstacles. Similarly, the use of the naṅṅu vitu or central wall of the house is familiar from other ritual.³ The naṅṅu vitu is the ceremonial centre of the home. In traditional architecture it always has a small triangular niche where a little light may burn. Doing pūjā at this spot is as if one were making an offering to the deceased family members, before proceeding with an important event.

The repetitive use of the number three is common to most ceremonies. Informants have nothing particular to say about it except that this number is auspicious. It is probable that it is also associated with a sense of completion or with the finality of an event.⁴ There is also a reference in the above rituals to poṅkaḷ, the boiling over of a pot of rice or other white substance. This is one of the most important and often repeated rituals in Koṅku. It is explicitly and very generally associated with the general themes of prosperity, increase and well-being. This theme will be further discussed in the second half of this section.

³ The naṅṅu vitu is the place where any pūjā or offerings made to the deceased members of the family would be made. During a funeral the corpse is placed perpendicular to the naṅṅu vitu with its head just under the place where a little light burns. For a similar tradition elsewhere see M.N. Srinivas, Religion and Society Among the Coorgs, p. 96

⁴ See E. Beck, The Examination of Marriage Ritual Among Selected Groups in South India (B.Litt. Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Anthropology and Geography, Oxford University, 1964), unpublished, pp. 96-98.

Plate 8: Protective Devices And Boundary Markers

- a) A Komāli Painted On A Tree To Protect The Crops
- b) Over-Turned Pots Painted White With Black Spots
And Used For The Same Purpose
- c) A Pūtam Guarding A Temple
- d) A Brahman rapping A Special Protective Thread On A
Pot Before A Ceremony
- e) String Of Mango Leaves Over A Doorway Of A House
During A Life-Cycle Ritual
- f) Brahman Priest Carrying The KoTi Flag During The
PattiraKāliyamma Festival.
- g) The KoTi Flag Tied Outside The Civa Temple During
A Festival

PLATE 8



(a)



(b)



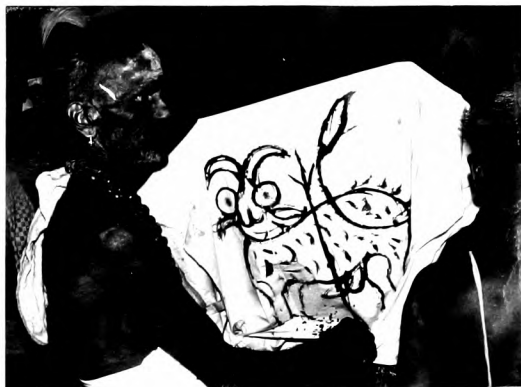
(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)



(g)

The vete kuntan or seed vessel is interesting as well. Round earthen pots with a slightly narrowed opening at the top are treated as the temporary abode of a god or spirit in many rituals performed both in temples and in the home. (See Section I D for some examples). The white paint on the outside is expressly used as a protection against possible malign influences. Pappamma once told me a story, trembling at the memory, of how a kuficātan (human familiar), in the form of a young girl, one day stole such a pot from her house and left it with a strange man. This man later returned it to the family saying that it had been presented to him as a gift by a small child. He claimed that the child was male. This change in sex in the man's version of the story was interpreted as yet another trick of the familiar.

Similar pots, painted white on the outside and covered with black spots, are often turned upside down on the forked twigs of a large branch, which can be found planted at the edge of fields. They are intended to ward off spirits which might otherwise attack the crops. Usually the branch has three forks and one pot rests on each.⁵ Temples often have one, three or five pots placed right-side up in a row on the roof of their innermost shrine, or at a big temple, on the kōpuram (gate) of the entire compound.⁶ These pots, called kalacān, form a sort of ultimate abode for the god enshrined inside. Pots also represent the goddess in both the Māriyamman and Aṅkālamman ceremonies. However, it is always an inverted pot which is found tied to the summit of a funeral bier (which in its structure resembles a

⁵ These pots are said to divert jealous eyes which, it is thought, could otherwise harm the crops by their malicious gaze. Simple white figures, called komali (jokers), are also painted on the trunks of trees bordering fields. These are considered to afford a similar kind of protection.

⁶ At local temples three pots generally indicate that the shrine is dedicated to a female deity, while a single one indicates that it is dedicated to a male. However, this rule does not hold for the more important temples. See Section II B 3.

temple). Although informants were not explicit on this point, the inversion of a pot appears to be connected with an interest in warding off malign influences, while upright pots represent the gods in temples and in general ritual.⁷

The protective thread or kāppu which is tied around the neck of the pot is also familiar in other contexts. Indeed, threads tied around things to give them magical protection is a very widespread feature of South Indian ritual. Kāppu may be tied to pots, to posts, or indeed to any important object in a ceremony. A similar term is used for the special branches stuck into the roof of the house, over the doorway, during the Tai poṅkal festival. (See Section II C 2). More interesting yet is that kāppu are often tied to people. Take, for example, the threads tied on the wrists of the three ceremonial specialists during the height of the Māriyamman festival, and on the main priests of the Aṅkālamman ceremonies. Kāppu are also tied to the bride and groom during the climax of the wedding ritual. The wearing of kāppu is always accompanied by a diet of very clean, cool foods. During the Māriyamman festival the entire kirāman participates in this diet by their offerings of mā vilakku (rice-flour lamps) and sacred water from the Cauvery on the eight day.

Usually the tying of a kāppu is associated with the increased power and imminence of a deity, or with an important but rather dangerous moment of ritual union between a male and female. Kāppu are not only tied to ritual specialists, but also to the major participants in a ceremony, be they people (as in a wedding) or objects representing the imminence of the gods. During the time of the ceremony there is thought to be a narrowing of the gap

⁷ The inversion of a pot in a ritual is relatively rare. One example, which occurs during the Aṅkālamman ceremonies has been described (see Section I D 2). The afterbirth of a cow may also be covered with an inverted pot, as may the spot where a person expired. (See ensuing descriptions).

between the human the the divine realm. This proximity is dangerous for both parties. The kāppu is a sign of parity and at the same time a kind of protection during this period. It is a vital time, when malicious spirits may seize the least taint of pollution as a weak point from whence they may intrude. There are always malign influences (pey, picāce, pūtaṁ, karuppu, to name a few) who seek to disturb this periodic divine/human rapprochement, and hence upset a delicate balance from which flows the over-all prosperity and well-being of the world.

The foregoing is just a taste of the rich detail displayed in the ceremonies which the people of Keṅku perform. While the agricultural rituals just described take only minutes, temple and life-cycle festivals take days. A full description and discussion of these latter would require several volumes as my notes on this subject (in Tamil, alone) fill more than a hundred pages.⁸ In this account, therefore, it has been decided to treat only a few selected and general themes. One of these is the importance of performing any ceremony at the right moment. There are certain ritual steps one can take to decrease the dangers of impurity (for example, bathing) and also magical barriers one can erect to reduce the possibility of the intrusion of malign influences, (such as tōraṇam, kappu and over-turned pots). Before taking any of these specific steps, however, it is first of all necessary to consider whether the time in which the events are to occur is itself auspicious.

All months, weeks, days and even hours are elaborately subdivided into several times, some of which are more or less auspicious for certain events than others. Everyone knows the elementary rules of this division, but for the precise timing of important events people rely on the detailed information

⁸ It is hoped that the full descriptions can be edited and published, with a commentary, in a few years.

of specialists. The most important of these specialists are the Brahman priests who refer to printed astrological handbooks (panjāṅkaṃ) and established astrologers who make a business from the writing and examination of personal horoscopes (cōṣiyan). People also take a general interest in local forms of divination and spirit possession, all of which say something about auspicious and inauspicious times. Wandering palmists and fortune tellers are well regarded. Certain everyday events can also be taken as omens in these matters. A single Brahman or a single Ācāri seen walking towards one, for example, is a bad sign, while two of either of the foregoing are considered to be auspicious. If a bad omen has been noticed, nothing important must be undertaken until a better omen has appeared subsequently.

People continually refer to the time when something ^{bad} happened as a keTTa neram (ⁱⁿauspicious moment). These are general excuses, in fact, for any windfall or misfortune which befalls someone. Days of the week, months of the year and the phases of the moon are all classified by their relative degree of nefarious or benign influence. General knowledge on this subject has been condensed into Chart 38, below. For knowledge about individual moments of the day, however, as well as for periods of several years together (under the influence of one or another planet) a specialist is usually consulted. Important occasions such as a wedding, or the building of a new house, are always fixed after such consultation. Specialists are also called in to pronounce upon the nature of the time during which a death occurred. If the time was inauspicious, extra ceremonies must be performed to ward off malign influences. Extra ceremonies must also be performed if a child is born on an inauspicious day.

Chart 38: Auspicious and Inauspicious Times

(Including only those details which are common knowledge to all adults)

X Indicates a time which is generally considered auspicious

Days of the Week

- X Monday A good day to start anything. An excellent day for the birth of a boy. It is said to be Cīva's birthday. Monday is also a good day for temple pūjā(s).
- Tuesday An average to rather poor day. Not a good day to set off on a trip.
- X Wednesday A good day for any undertaking, although not quite as good as Monday. Wednesday is a good day to be born on and a good day for starting a trip. It is a good day for temple pūjā(s).
- Thursday An average to poor day. One should not begin anything new, especially a trip.
- X Friday A good day for most things. It is an excellent day for the birth of a girl, but inauspicious for the birth of a boy. People say it is Fārvati's birthday. It is an excellent day for temple pūjā(s), but not a good day to travel.
- Saturday An inauspicious day. One should avoid travel and, in general, beginning anything new.
- Sunday An average day, neither very good nor very bad. It is best to avoid travel and any new undertakings.

Months of the Year

- Cittirai (April-May) An inauspicious month. No weddings are held and it is not a good month for travel or for starting new things. It is not a good month to be born in.
- X Vaikāci (May-June) An auspicious month for weddings, births and the start of anything new.
- X Āni (June-July) An auspicious month for weddings, births and the start of anything new.
- Āṣi (July-August) In general an inauspicious month. However, it is an excellent time for making offerings to the deceased and for exorcising malignant spirits. These two are best done while the moon is waxing. Weddings are not auspicious but a number of temple festivals are held. Birth during this month is particularly inauspicious.

- X Āvaṅī (August-September) An auspicious month for weddings, births and the start of anything new.
- FuraTTāci (September-October) An inauspicious month for weddings and for childbirth. However, it is a good month for temple pūjā(s). Special offerings are also made to the deceased on the dark moon day.
- X Aippaci (October-November) An auspicious month for weddings, births and the start of anything new.
- X Kārttikai (November-December) An auspicious month for weddings, births and the start of anything new.
- Mārkaṛi (December-January) An inauspicious month for weddings and for childbirth. During this month many preparatory pūjā(s) and fasts are made for the festival which begins on the first day of Tai.
- X Tai (January-February) An auspicious time for weddings and for childbirth. There is a big poṅkal festival held on the first three days. This is a general festival month for all deities.
- X Māci (February-March) An auspicious month for weddings and for childbirth. Special pūjā(s) for the deceased are performed on Cīvan Rātiri.
- X Paṅkuni (March-April) An auspicious month for weddings and for childbirth. Also a festival month for the gods.

The chart, above, summarizes general knowledge on the subject of auspicious and inauspicious days and months. The situation is somewhat complicated, however, by a slightly different emphasis on the different months by the different castes of Koṅku. In general, the year is divided into two halves by two big festivals or nompū which fall on the 18th of ĀṬi (ĀṬi nompū) and the 1st of Tai (Tai nompū). These festivals correspond roughly with the summer and the winter solstices. People do not speak of the solstices, but they do call the first day of the Tai festival caṅkarānti poṅkal, referring to the passage of the sun from one sign of the zodiac to another. It is said that poṅkal rice is offered to the sun on this day. The month of ĀṬi, and the festival held on the 18th of this month, are also related to movements of the sun.

Āṭi is the month of the first rains, when the wild millet is planted. It is the time of pūjā(s) at clan shrines and also for the guardian of the fields, KaruppaNacāmi. On the 18th or nompū day, all recently married women are expected to return to their natal homes where they will be feasted and presented with gifts of new cloths. It is said that the Pandava brothers of the Mahabharata fought their great battle against the Kuravas at this time and that the 18th was the day of their victory. This is why the festival day falls on the 18th of the month. A special pūjā is conducted for the deceased at this time, especially if the departed has made a request for such in a dream.

Tai nompū, on the other hand, comes after the harvest of wild millet. In some places the rice and cash crops are also in by this date, but not in all. Although the big three day festival makes many references to the fields, animals and crops, informants do not associate Tai with the harvest, any more than they think of Āṭi as associated with the planting. Tai means 'green plant or young thing' in Tamil and the festival is particularly associated with young children, especially young girls. (See Section II C 2). Pūjā(s) are sometimes performed for the deceased, but more often they are said to be a sign of remembrance for young children in the family who have died. The emphasis is on the living world, on prosperity and on increase, rather than (during Āṭi) on clan ancestors and on protection from nefarious influences.

Tai is a thoroughly auspicious month, while Āṭi is inauspicious. In general the 14 days of each month during which the moon is waxing are considered to be more auspicious than the 14 during which it is waning.⁹ During Āṭi,

⁹ The Tamil months are governed by the sun, not the moon. Thus the waxing and waning of the moon fall during different parts of the month during different years. Some festivals, like that for Māriyamman, follow the moon and thus have a variable date each year. Other festivals, like Āṭi and Tai nompū follow the sun and are thus fixed to particular dates. Thus they fall on the same day of the month each year.

however, the waxing of the moon is also considered dangerous. The Cauvery river is said to overflow on the 18th day of Āṭi. This month, therefore, has a certain association with heat, swelling and maturation. The 'danger' appears to be that of excessive increase, or of overflow out of season. This is the worst month of the year for childbirth and some informants tell stories of how women avoid intercourse during Aippacci and Kārttikai (nine months in advance) in order not to give birth during Āṭi.¹⁰

Āṭi and Tai nonpu(s) are the outstanding family-centred festivals of the year. They form two ends of an axis, so to speak, along which the months progress. The period between Ṭi and Tai is one of rain and is generally pleasant and cool. The period between Tai and Āṭi, on the otherhand, is one of intense sun and drying wind. This picture is complicated, however, by the fact that there exists a second and rather similar pair of festivals which take place in Puraṭṭāci and Māci respectively. (These latter are only five months apart). If these two months are given emphasis, then the angle of the axis dividing the year is slightly shifted.

Puraṭṭāci is a time of special pūjā(s) to Viṣṇu. The dark moon day of this month is considered particularly suited to conducting ceremonies for the deceased. (Dark moon days are generally very inauspicious except for the exorcism of spirits). In a way, these festivities resemble those conducted more generally during the month of Āṭi. Both Āṭi and Puraṭṭāci are inauspicious months of the year. Āṭi and Puraṭṭāci are inauspicious months of the year. Five months later, in Māci, there is an all-India festival called Āivan Rāttiri. This festival falls on the dark moon night and again it is a time for pūjā(s)

¹⁰ It was never suggested to me that intercourse should be avoided during Āṭi and that this is why married women are sent home at this time. When queried on the subject, people explained that women do not go home for the whole month, but only for the nonpu day. In general, it was stressed that childbirth is more dangerous than intercourse during Āṭi. However, people admit that a child conceived during Āṭi may suffer from difficulties in later life. See also Dumont, Une Sous-Caste, p. 374

to the deceased. Many clan temples have festivals on this night. Interestingly enough, however, this festival also has a second name, which is yuvati nempu (the celebration for young women). Furthermore, it is the time when the ceremonies at the Añkālamma temple are celebrated. The strong association of this goddess with pregnancy and childbirth has already been pointed out in Section I D 2.

The dark moon of Purattāci resembles the dark moon of ĀTi. There is also a kind of similarity between Cīvan Rātiri and Tai nempu. Informants, however, did not clearly pair Purattāci and Māci (as they pair ĀTi and Tai) so that the comparison is a delicate one. Nonetheless, the Purattāci and Māci festivals do form a kind of secondary or additional festival axis. The dates of these latter celebrations fit with an all-India festival calendar. Not surprisingly, Purattāci and Māci are months which are given great importance by the Brahmins and by the higher left-hand castes, while ĀTi and Tai are stressed by the Kavuntars, the leading caste of the right.

The above ceremonies, associated with the agricultural cycle and the months of the year, are relatively simple. When it comes to life-cycle ritual, however, the ceremonies performed are voluminous. They are also very complex. Birth is relatively simple and the full details of this event are given in the following text. From the time of puberty onwards, however, the life-cycle ceremonies become rich with detail and require days at a time to perform. They also vary considerably from caste to caste. The description of these more elaborate events, therefore, has been limited to an outline account. Furthermore, this account will only cover the so called 'Koñku' ceremonies, those performed by the Kavuntar community and their right-

had associates.¹¹ Birth will be discussed first, while an account of pregnancy has been placed later, in order that it may accompany a description of the beliefs which surround menstruation.

In Konku, birth is not an event which women greatly fear, or which they become excited about. They do not, in general, dwell on the horrors or the pain of childbirth in conversation, nor do they make a fuss over pregnancy and its accompanying discomforts. I have, myself, seen a woman in Olappālaiyam pounding grain (one of the most exhausting household tasks) after birth contractions had already begun. Work is abandoned only when the pains became steady and severe. In general, women do not scream or otherwise dramatize their sufferings. Within a few minutes of birth they are expected to get up on their knees to clean up the mess which has been created. The blood, the mucus and the afterbirth are all very polluting and no other woman (not even the midwife) will touch them unless absolutely necessary. The birth of a first child almost always takes place in the woman's natal home. A wife may continue to return to her own parent's house for succeeding births if she chooses, but the probability that she will do so decreases with each successive child. Women rest and remain isolated after a birth, for only three days.¹²

¹¹ Many details about the wedding and death ceremonies of other castes were also collected. The variations are so lengthy and complex, however, that a full discussion of this topic has been reserved for a separate study. For an initial attempt at a comparison of the life-cycle ceremonies of the different castes see B. Beck, 'The Examination of Marriage Ritual Among Selected Groups in South India' *Op. cit.*, and a companion study on funeral ritual currently in preparation by Michael Moffatt (to be submitted for the degree of B. Litt., Faculty of Anthropology and Geography, Oxford University, Summer, 1968).

¹² The following is an account of the traditional observances surrounding birth, given to me by Papamma. Her own sons were both born in this fashion (some thirty years ago). However, the government midwives are now attempting some modifications to bring births more into line with modern medical practice. Women, for example, are now encouraged to lie down and an attempt is made to persuade the mother to nurse the child from the first, rather than from the third day. Local midwives are always older women with children of their own. Usually they are of the Navitan or Nayakkan caste. However, they may also be UTaiyars.

Birth

When the time for a birth draws near (local calculation is ten months from the date of probable conception) a small corner of the house is screened off with woven mats made of coconut fronds. The spot chosen will be part of a porch or outer room, easily accessible to the front door, and often the same place which has been used to seclude the woman during her menstrual periods. When the birth contractions become regular and severe, the woman will kneel on the bare earth floor (no cloth or mat is used) with her legs slightly apart, and hold on to a heavy cord which has been specially tied to hang from the rafters above her. The woman is not considered to be polluted until the breaking of the waters.

During the period of contractions the woman's M, Z or B^w may pour warm waters over her belly and rub, to ease the pain and quicken the birth. The person may also hold the woman's shoulders. Unless there are unusual complications, the child should emerge and drop gently downwards onto the earth surface, unaided. (Now the government mid wives encourage the women to lie prone and they may often pull the child out in the final stages, after the head has emerged). The direction which a mother faces while giving birth is not important. During the latter stages a woman's sari is removed, and replaced by a small cloth which is tied around her hips for modesty.

The child should lie on the earthen surface, untouched, until after the afterbirth has also been expelled. (Government midwives do not observe this convention). The fear of touching the child before this is that the umbilical cord may break and leave the afterbirth permanently inside. Only after this latter appears will the midwife cut the umbilical cord and tie a small cloth around the stub which is left attached to the child. She will then lift the child in her hands and carry it outside to be washed. The midwife first dips a small cloth in sugared water and squeezes this in the child's mouth. Then she bathes it in cold water and pours a little castor oil (koT^{ai} muttu ennay) over the child's body. First the oil is poured into the mouth, then into the nose, then into the eyes and ears, and finally over the entire body. This oil is said to make the child look lovely. Then it is held in the midwife's arms and shown to any other interested women of the household or friends who may have been standing by. Men generally remain well away from the scene. To show an eager interest in a new born child is considered slightly unmanly and therefore embarrassing. However, an anxious father would be allowed a glimpse of the child at this time. If twins are born it is considered to be a pleasant surprise. However, no special beliefs or ritual surround this occurrence.

The mother, who has been given a few minutes to recline and rest, is now expected to rise to her knees and to mop

up the blood and the afterbirth which surround her. These are put in a mud pot and later buried. Great care is taken than no animal dig it up and eat it for this is said to endanger the flow of milk in the mother. A similar precaution is taken with the afterbirth of a cow. It will either be covered with a pot or hung on a thorn. Usually the mother will do the initial cleaning with sawdust or loose earth. After this she will carefully cover the entire area with fresh cowdung mixed with water. She will repeat the application of cowdung on this spot on the 3rd, 5th, 7th and 9th day. If a woman is too weak to manage, her M, Z or BW will help her to clean up on the first day. The mother may not bathe on the first day, but on the second she is allowed to wash from the waist down. During this period she may not wear her own clothes, but only those clothes which have been given to her for this purpose by the washerman.

After the child is bathed, it is carried inside to sleep beside the mother on another old cloth supplied by the washerman. Just after the child is carried in, some women of the household will take a brass plate in her hand and a piece of burning wood from the kitchen fire. Holding the wood over the path which was used to carry the child into the house she will pronounce the phrase, 'If there is, if there was, begone', three times. For the first three days the child will be fed only castor oil, which is squeezed or poured gently into its mouth. The cholesterol-yellowed milk which the mother produces during this period is considered to be very polluting and the mother must squeeze it out herself onto a wall or a cloth.

A little castor oil will be poured into the mouth, nose, eyes and ears of the child three times a day for a month. On the third day, however, a little of the albumin of a fresh chicken egg will also be poured into the child's eyes. Then it will be bathed and again its body will be rubbed with oil. After this, nine kinds of grain will be placed on a small plate and mixed with lime, turmeric and water. (This turns the whole substance red). This mixture is called alatti¹³ and it is now waved in front of the child. Then the child is carried into the house and dried

¹³ The nine kinds of grain are given below. Each is associated with one of the nine planets and is considered to be an appropriate offering to it: 1) Kōtumai (wheat), for the sun, 2) nel (paddy), for the moon, 3) Tuvarai (red gram), for Mars, 4) payaru (a pulse), for Mercury, 5) kaTalai (Bengal gram), for Jupiter, 6) Avarai (beans), for Venus, 7) eL (sesamum), for Saturn, 8) uLuntu (black gram), for Rahu, and 9) koL (a gram), for Kethu. The last two planets exist only in Indian astrological reckoning and do not correspond to any visible heavenly bodies. Dumont mentions the nine kinds of grain in Une Sous-Caste, pp. 100-102. For a further discussion of alatti see the same, pp. 224-5 and also Section II C 2.

well. A little burning incense is placed in a large metal spoon and again this is waved in front of it. Then a little milk is poured into a tiny earthen lamp and in the milk are placed a fly and an ant. These insects are then removed and this milk is fed to the child. A small white cloth is then taken, torn into strips and tied around the child's belly.¹⁴ On the third day the mother must also bathe thoroughly and rub her body with oil, usually after the ceremonies described for the child, above, have been completed. She may then tie a fresh sari (although one given her by the washerman, not her own) and enter the house. The mother now is asked to pour a little water over the child's head from an earthen pot. She will then wave the latter around its head three times before breaking it against the ground. This entire ritual, which takes place on the third day, is called 'mother's milk'.

The husband of the woman and the other members of the nuclear household only need to bathe after the birth if they have actually touched the child. The husband, however, is said to suffer a mild pollution for three days (some say until the 9th) and during this period he may not enter a temple. The wife continues to suffer mild pollution until the ninth day, and she must continue to sleep in the special place constructed for her. On the 9th day the entire family will bathe again and a Brahman is called to perform a pūjā called the puNNiyarocanai or 'sacred utterance'. This is the day on which the child is given a name. (See below).

A husband and wife normally avoid intercourse for three months after the birth of a child. Some people say that one ought to wait to resume physical intimacy until after the child has stopped nursing entirely (nine months to two years), but probably such abstinence is unusual. (Intercourse is thought to interfere with the flow of the mother's milk?). As one informant commented, "After all, what woman would be willing to wait a whole year?" Such a comment is consistent with the general assumption that it is women who are more desirous of frequent sexual union than men. Intercourse is also avoided, normally, for three days during a woman's mensus, some informants say five. On the other hand, one large landowner explained

¹⁴ In the case of a boy, this cloth will be replaced after 30 days by an aNNa kiyiru or 'male cord'. This string (for the wealthy it can be a silver or gold chain) will be worn around a man's waist all his life. It would seem that it has a certain protective magic about it, as all other strings and cords. Sometimes it is called an araNa kiyiru or 'protective cord' as in araNmenai meaning a 'fortified palace'. A cord is also tied around a girl's belly on the 30th day. However, this is later allowed to fall off and will be forgotten. A man's cord, on the other hand, is only removed on his death.

that there was no danger of pregnancy if one only coupled with a woman during her period of bleeding. In order to avoid an eventual division of the inheritance between too many sons, he claimed to regulate the days of intercourse with his wife in this fashion. Thus, not everyone takes the ban on physical intimacy during a woman's menses seriously.

Abortion, however, is the most common method of birth control. This is usually done by inserting the stem of a poisonous plant, the caloropsis gigantea, into the cervix. The local midwife may do this for a fee, but the procedure is usually secretive. Abortion in this fashion is very dangerous, particularly if it is not done in the early stages of pregnancy. I heard of two deaths within one year, in villages near Olappālaiyam, where local gossip attributed the death of a young girl to this cause. Nonetheless, people say that abortion is frequent. Perhaps it terminates between 10 and 20% of all pregnancies. In general, people are concerned with reducing the number of births for economic reasons.

The euphemism for 'family planning' is widely known and understood. In this sense the government propaganda on birth control has been successful. The reason for the lack of success in reducing the number of actual births, at least in the Kānkayam area, is not a lack of local interest, but rather the non-availability of any workable and locally acceptable techniques. From all indications, the intra-uterine coil would be well received, as this method is similar but preferable to the abortion technique with which people are already familiar.

One sterilization was performed on a woman in Paccapālaiyam Kirānam during 1965, but the general resistance to this method of birth control is very high. People are frightened by the idea of an operation, by its irreversibility, and by the debilitating effect which sterilization is said to have. Foam tablets were available through the local government midwife, but women found them impractical. During 1965 twenty-one women accepted a first bottle of these tablets on trial. Only two returned to ask for a second, and only one for a third. After this all requests ceased. Sheaths were available only through a Male Health Visitor. They were disliked as they were said to interfere with the intensity of sensation during climax.

Children are weaned any time after six months although allowing a year or more to lapse is standard. People say that if one feeds a child cow's milk steadily for fifteen days that it will forget the mother's breast. Some women rub their breasts with seeds from the margosa tree or other plants, so that the nipples will taste bitter and the child will lose his interest.

All births and deaths are required, by law, to be registered with the Maniar of the Panchayat (the same Kirānam official who is responsible for collecting taxes). No record, however, is kept of marriages, unless they are performed under civil law in a town. There is considerable motivation to register a birth, as ration cards and voting rights are dependent on having one's name entered on these records. Nonetheless, the Maniar of the Paccapā-Laiyam Panchayat estimates that he only succeeds in recording 90 of the actual births each year. From his estimate of actual births, a general birth rate in the Panchayat can be calculated. This comes to about 30 births per thousand, per year.

The child is usually named on the ninth day after birth, when a Brahman priest is called in to do a special pūjā, the puNNiyārccanai. This involves the chanting of mantram(s) or sacred utterances by the Brahman and a series of sacrificial offerings, first to a kalacam (a metal pot filled with water, with its lip lined with mango leaves, and resting on them, a coconut) and then to akni, the sacred fire. The priest helps the father of the child to make the offerings to the kalacam, but he makes the offerings to the fire himself.¹⁵ While the priest chants the name to be given to the child is included in his verses and repeated three times.

Naming (Naming of a Kavun¹⁵ boy, OlapāLaiyam. From my notes of March 31, 1965.

The Brahman priest sat facing North in front of several large plantain leaves. To the NE was a large lamp with some oil burning in it. Near the centre,

¹⁵ During a puNNiyārccanai the sacrificer is asked to cup his hands and to hold a mango leaf which extends from his fingertips to the mouth of the kalacam. According to various informants, the kalacam is a sort of generalized representation of divinity. It is also associated with prosperity, increase and with ongoing life in general. The gesture of the sacrificer makes it look as if he were pouring into the kalacam, via the leaf, his own contribution on the occasion of the birth of a new child. The other occasion on which a man is asked to make offerings to the kalacam during a puNNiyārccanai is at his marriage. Here, again, although a child has not yet been born, there is the prospect of new life to come.

slightly to the North, was a brass pot with turmeric spots placed on its four sides and a number of mango leaves and a cocconut in its mouth. (A kalacam). This was the centre of the ceremony. There was also a small tumbler containing milk, cow's urine (plus ghee, dung and curd, the other three sacred products of the cow?). Mango leaves were dipped in this and used for sprinkling the pot and the cocconut on top of it. The priest uttered mantram(s) while the father of the child sprinkled various substances on the cocconut and encircled it, clockwise, with his right hand. Both he and his wife sat facing East (on the West side of the ritual area), with the wife to the South holding the newborn child in her lap. At one point the father held his hands forward, palms upward and cupped slightly, and extended a mango leaf from the tips of his fingers to the mouth of the kalacam. The gesture was done in such a way as to look as if he were pouring an invisible substance into the pot. The Brahman priest lit a small sacred fire (akni) and sprinkled ghee on it while reciting more verses.

After the recitation of many mantram(s) and sprinkling the kalacam amply, the priest prepared a tray with fruits and lit a small fire on it made with squares of camphor. The tray was passed first to the father, then to the mother and then to the FF and other members of the family seated in the background. Each made a respectful gesture to the flame in turn by placing both hands over it, slightly cupped, palms down. The father then uttered the child's name three times and so did the FF. (The priest had already uttered the name three times, earlier, during his recitation of verses). Then the father placed a mark of turmeric (puTu) on the child's forehead. The priest then made the same mark on the forehead of the F, M, FF and the other guests present. The latter (notably the mother's parents) presented a small cash gift of several rupees to the child and the ceremony was over. There was also a rupee lying to the south of the kalacam during the ritual. The whole ceremony took place in the inner room of the house of the wife's parents (where the child was born). There was a string of mango leaves hung over the entrance to the room. Later the family invited all those present at the ceremony to a festive meal.

Traditionally, a male child is given the name of its FF.¹⁶ However, the names of other paṅkāli or lineal male relations may also be chosen. Names of maccan(s) or cross relatives are generally avoided. It is also common to name a child (male or female) after the particular deity which is

¹⁶ Thus the term pāran or 'grandson', meaning 'boy who carries one's name'.

associated with that descent group. Because of this tendency to name children after the clan divinity or to repeat the names of lineal relations of ascending generations, clans and even whole castes tend to use certain names with great frequency. In contrast to the right-hand communities, the upper castes of the left hand tend to select for their children the names of deities which are strongly identified with the literate tradition. They also favour the names of stars or planets which were in the ascendancy at the moment of the child's birth. Since their clan deities are also the great gods of the region, these castes commonly use derivative names or epithets applied to these gods as personal names.

Thus there is a noticeable degree of association between personal names and caste affiliation. However, the degree of difference now appears to be fading rapidly. Thus one can not guess the caste background of young men from their names as well as one can guess caste in the case of elderly people. Familiarity with literary names and with the names of cinema heroes has increased rapidly in recent years. People are also becoming more self-conscious about their caste identification and sometimes attempt to conceal their origins by selecting for their children names which are thought to be neutral and at the same time generally prestigious in their associations.¹⁷

The next childhood ceremony is the first haircut (actually head shave). The child's hair is allowed to grow from birth, to the time of this ceremony, without being cut at all. This ritual will be performed during the child's 1st or his 3rd year, but not during the second. On an auspicious and care-

¹⁷ There is no tradition of second or family names in Tamil. A person is referred to by a personal name only. The personal name is usually preceded by two initials. The first indicates the initial letter of the village where one was born, and the second initial, the first letter of one's father's personal name. Thus O.M. Karuppan (Karuppan who was born in Olappālaiyam and is the son of Muttucāmi).

fully chosen day, the child is bathed and dressed in a new set of clothes presented to him by his MB. Then he is taken to the temple where his head is shaved clean by a family or temple barber. Turmeric is applied generously to the bald scalp and then the child worships at the shrine of the deity in question. The hair itself remains with the barber and is thrown away or sold.

There is a certain preference for offering the hair of the child to a deity of the same sex. Thus, for castes of the right hand, the child is usually taken to a temple of the clan deity. If the major deity of the clan temple is male, however, and the child is female, she may be taken to the goddess of the kirānam, Māriyamman, instead. The Brahmans and the higher castes of the left hand also shave the heads of their children at the temples of deities which they particularly associate with their own descent group. However, since their clan deities are often great gods of the region, they may travel many miles in order to perform this ritual.

The Brahmans in Olappālaiyam would take a daughter to the AṅkāLamman temple just four miles to the North, but make a trip of 30 to the South to the Murukan shrine at Palani for a boy. Similarly, the KaNakku Pillai family would go 25 miles to shave the heads of their children for the first time. They, too, would select an AṅkāLamman shrine for a girl, but a PerumaL (ViṣNu) temple for a boy. A KavunṬar family would be less concerned with matching the sex of the deity with the child in question. They would also be more likely to select their own clan temple, nearby, than to seek out a famous distant shrine known throughout the region.

Letting the hair grow and then shaving the scalp bald can be repeated as a gesture of asceticism and of devotion to a particular deity in later life. Usually before letting the hair grow a person will have noticed a small knot or mat in it, while combing. This is taken to be a sign from a

particular deity that the hair should be left unkept and long, by a personal vow or resolution, for a stipulated period (usually an odd number of months). At the end of this period the person awaits a second sign from the deity, before shaving it off.

Proper hair should be long, thick and black, and carefully combed and oiled. It should always be worn in a bun. Traditionally both men and women wore their hair in this fashion, the difference being that men kept the front portion of their head completely bald. When letting the hair grow as the result of a vow, it should be left loose, tangled and matted. However, if one is not careful, loose hair can be inhabited, not only by various divinities, but also by malign spirits. Thus the growing of hair is often accompanied by fasting and by other signs of asceticism, which give the person extra powers of resistance against these spirits. Frequently matted hair is accompanied by periodic possession. In such cases the person is thought to speak for the divinity in question and his words are listened to as those of an oracle or soothsayer.

A period during which the hair has been growing should be terminated by a special cleansing (any body hair is slightly polluting). The deity to whom the vow has been made should then be worshipped in a bald (particularly pure) state.¹⁸ Widows shave their heads on their husband's death as a sign of renunciation of worldly pleasures. The eldest son is expected to shave his head during the final funeral rites for his father (the karumāti), usually on the sixteenth day. Informants explicitly say that this shaving is a kind of purification which removes from the son the taint of pollution acquired by lighting the father's funeral pyre.

¹⁸ It may be that the tradition of men shaving the front portion of their heads is a kind of gesture indicating the desirability of a perpetually shaven head. Yalman, in Under The Bo Tree, p. 61, suggests that a complete shaven head, in the case of Buddhist monks, indicates that the devotee has entered or passed across an important boundary and that it signals that he has entered on the narrow and difficult path leading towards union with the gods.

The third important life-cycle ceremony, after naming and head-shaving, is the piercing of the ears. Any child which dies more than three days after birth will have its ears pierced with a thorn before burial. The family of a healthy child, however, may wait to pierce its ears for several years. Formerly this was done for both boys and girls. It should be held in the first, third, fifth or seventh year of the child's life. Formally the child will have the piercing done at home and the father will pay for the ceremony as well as for the feeding of the guests. However, the MB will present a new set of clothes to the child, along with betel leaf and areca nuts, and a few annas in cash. The MB may also give gifts to the child's parents if he can afford it. Ear piercing is an auspicious ceremony which is performed with more or less grandeur, depending on what the family can afford.

Ear Piercing (Piercing of the ears of an Ācāri girl, Olappālaiyam, notes of March 5, 1965. As far as I know, Koṅku Kavuntars perform this ritual in an identical fashion).

The girl was first bathed and dressed in a set of new clothes presented to her by her MB. The family then set off as a group in procession to the ViNāyakar temple in the centre of the village. Five married female relations (the precise relationship is not considered important) carried plates filled with offerings on their heads. These offerings included fruits, betel, and objects such as a small mirror and comb, as well as gifts of cloth. (These resemble exactly the gifts described for the coming of age ceremony for a girl, except that they may be less elaborate). A Brahman priest performed a pūjā at the temple and the party returned to the house.

The procession was accompanied by a group of Mutaliyār musicians (who also play at coming of age ceremonies and weddings). Before the party returned to the house they stopped briefly and ceremoniously paid these men with cash and betel leaf placed on a tray. Once in the house the party seated itself conveniently in the reception hall. The Brahman priest sat facing the North, with his articles for puṅṅiyarocanai set out in front of him (see description of naming ceremony above). The MB of the girl sat to the West of this space, facing East, with the child in his lap. Another MB sat on his left, also facing East. The musicians sat to the East of the priest,

facing West and the crowd of guests was arrayed behind them.

After performing the puNNiyarccanai, the priest pierced the girl's ears quickly with a thorn which had been stuck, as a kind of needle, on the head of the earring stem. The girl (age five) cried briefly, more in fright than in pain. Afterwards the two MBs presented more gifts of cloth to the girl's F, Bs and U. The guests were treated to sweets and fruits which had been part of the offering at the temple earlier. The ceremony was over.

With adolescence the more complex life-cycle ceremonies begin. A boy, if he is a member of one of the high left-hand castes, will follow the Brahman custom and begin to wear a pū nūl or 'flower thread'. For girls of all castes there is a maturing ceremony called pūppakam or 'flowering' when a girl begins to menstruate. This association of adolescence with flowers is one aspect of an important theme which will be further discussed in Section II C 2. The putting on of the pū nūl for the first time is an auspicious occasion. According to the Sanskrit texts, this thread is associated with the notion of an initiation or 'rebirth' and it is only after this ceremony has been performed that a boy may enter into formal student life and begin to study the sacred chants or mantram(s). Brahman, Kaṅaku Pillai, Ācāri and Ceṭṭiyār men (with the exception of the Koṅku Ceṭṭiyār) are all supposed to wear the pū nūl from adolescence. Some of the ritual service communities, notably Paṅṭārams and UTaiyārs, will wear a similar thread on important ritual occasion.

The ceremony for putting on the pū nūl for the first time is brief and is usually just a family affair. Frequently it is performed just before the wedding and so is not a separate occasion for celebration. I have never seen this particular ritual myself, but the Brahman priest in Olappālaiyam has described it to me as follows:

Putting on The Sacred Thread

For a Brahman this ceremony ought to be performed before marriage, somewhere between a boy's 7th and 16th year. An auspicious date is determined and relatives gather in the boy's home. In preparation for the ceremony four little earthen lamps are filled with earth from an ant hill. In this earth are placed the nine kinds of grain (see the description of a birth). These seed containers are called molappali. They are kept in a damp place and allowed to sprout.

On the day of the ceremony the boy bathes and is seated, facing East and in front of him is placed a banana leaf. On the leaf is a small mound of husked rice, and on this is placed a kalacam. A kaikaNam (or yellowed thread is tied to the boy's right wrist. Then the Brahman priest does a pūjā to the kalacam, a pūjā for the nine planets (using the nine kinds of grain?) and makes oblations to the sacred fire. Then he lifts a plate on which are placed a coconut, bananas, betel leaves and areca nut, insense, camphor and three 'flower strings', one made of gold, one of silver and one of ordinary thread. The silver thread is placed on the boy first, then the gold one and finally the plain thread one. The priest then says a mantram over the boy. He is then expected to take a vessel and ask the relatives in the crowd which has gathered for donations, as a wandering ascetic and begger would do. People will place a $\frac{1}{2}$ of a measure of rice in his bowl, and also fruits, betel leaves and small coins. Finally his kaikaNam is removed and placed on a plate with the molappali or sprouted seeds. These are taken and placed in a nearby well. When all this is over the relatives take turmeric coloured water and throw it at one another in fun.

All the expenses of the ceremony are covered by the boy's father. However his ME must present him with a new set of clothes and also the three threads used in the ritual. The Brahman priest is presented with a gift of the gold and silver threads after the ceremony (the boy retains the thread one) and also the kalacam, the coconut and the rice it was placed on.

The non-Brahman castes who wear a pū nūl perform the ceremony just preceding, but on the same day as the marriage ritual. The ceremony is the same, except that only two threads, a silver one and a plain one, are used. Also, the groom will keep the silver thread, rather than give it to the priest.

The maturation ceremony for a girl is given more importance than is the thread ceremony for a boy. While the thread ceremony is only performed by the high left-hand castes, the coming of age rituals for a girl are, in

principle, performed by all communities. However, some families now avoid the maturation ritual as well because expense. A girl does not always tell her parents, herself, when she menstruates for the first time. She may, instead, tell one of her close friends and ask the friend, in turn, to tell her mother. When her parents learn of the event they will consult an astrologer to find an auspicious day for performing the required ceremony. This ritual is called pūppakkam, 'flowering', or tiraTTi, 'like milk which has been thickened by boiling'. The description of this ritual which follows is a combination of my own observations on several such occasions with certain details which were later clarified by questioning.

First Menstruation (KavutTar community)

When a girl first begins to menstruate (as on every occasion when she periodically bleeds thereafter) a small, screened off area is constructed for her on the outer porch of the house. Usually the area is demarcated with screens made of woven coconut fronds. For the first three (or five) days of the bleeding (depending on the custom of the family) the girl must not enter the house and not touch any cooking utensils, cloths, or any other members of the household. She will sleep in the special room and remain on the porch or entirely outside the house during the day. She is also not allowed to enter the compound of a temple or approach any other spot which is dedicated to a deity. On the third (or fifth) day after the bleeding began she will go to a bathing spot outside the house. Here she will rub a little arappu (refuse which remains after grinding iluppai or bassia longifolia seeds) on her forehead, mixing this substance with clarified butter. Then she will have a female relative pour a pot of cold water over her and her clothes so that they become thoroughly damp. She may then remove the clothes and place them in a spot for the washerman to pick up. (The washerman will always pick up menstrual clothes on the end of a stick so as not to touch them directly). She will then wash thoroughly and put on freshly washed clothes which she has been careful not to touch previous to the bath. After this bath she may re-enter the house and the period of pollution is considered to be over. According to Pappamma, a girl used to be polluted from the day she first started bleeding until after the tiraTTi ritual was performed. This ritual may be performed any time after the bath, described above, but within the first month after bleeding has begun. It may not be performed during the second month

so that if the first month is skipped it will be performed during the third. Traditionally the tiraTTi ceremony was always performed in the third month and the girl was considered to be polluted during this entire period. Until this time she had to remain outside the house in the specially constructed hut (as described above). Now, however, this period of pollution, between the third day after the bleeding began and the time of the actual ceremony, is usually overlooked and the girl treated as normal.

On the day of the ceremony the hut on the porch of the house is again constructed. Inside is placed a mud pot filled with earth and covered with cow dung. On the dry dung is placed a small oil lamp which burns. The girl is asked to remain inside the hut, but it is not necessary for her to bathe before the ceremonies begin. Relatives and friends will begin to gather. The first ceremony is the erection of a muküttakkal or pāla kāl meaning the 'auspicious' or 'milky' post. This post is cut from a paṅcaī plant (a kind of large green bush having a milky sap inside). The cutting is actually a branch which has five smaller branches emerging from one central point on the stem. It is tied to a central pillar of the house and milk, water and again milk are poured over it as a kind of oblation. A little sack made of turmeric-yellowed cloth and containing the nine kinds of grain is also tied to it.

Many trays with offerings of fruits, cloths, betel leaves, areca nut and other gifts are prepared. These are carried to the Viṅāyakar temple in a procession, to music played by Mutaliyar musicians. The main trays are carried by five married women. Other guests follow the procession. At the temple the procession returns to the house with the trays of offerings. These are then laid out on large white cloths on the floor and the girl is brought out from her hut by her BV. She is seated to the West of the trays of offerings, facing East. A female caste priest or aruṅṅikari will then perform a short pūjā in front of her and rub her forehead with a little clarified butter.

After this the female caste priest will lead the girl to the entrance of the house. Here the girl will be seated, facing East. The caste priest will take a little cooked white rice in a plate and some hot coals in a metal spoon. A little clarified butter is put on the burning coals. The plate with the rice is then waved in front of the girl three times and then laid on the ground. Then a little water is poured in the dish and the priest will sprinkle it around her head (first clockwise, then counterclockwise, and again clockwise) three times. This cooked rice is then placed on the ground. Three pots of water are then poured over the girl so that she and her clothes are thoroughly wet. Then three balls of cooked rice which have been coloured

red by turmeric and lime are placed in the same plate. The priest waves these balls over the girl's head in turn and puts one down on the earth to her right, one behind her and one to her left. Then more water is poured into the plate and sprinkled around her head (as above). Then again three large pots of water are poured over her head. Finally some white cooked rice is again placed in the plate and this is waved around her and set down. Water is poured on the plate and sprinkled on her a third time. Then another three pots of water are poured over her head (making nine pots in all). Then a spool of thread is waved around the girl's head three times. Finally she will take a proper bath and change into new clothes which have been given to her by her MB. The tiraTTi ritual is over. The house will be freshly whitewashed and the floor freshly covered with cow dung. The pollution period is now over and the girl may re-enter the house.

The marriage ceremony follows as soon after the first menstruation ritual as will allow the family to find a suitable groom and prepare for the considerable expense of the occasion. Frequently a family will spend a year's income, if not more, on a wedding. The more prestigious castes of the left-hand faction used to insist on marrying their women before puberty and thus reverse the order of the marriage and the puberty ceremony. However, no caste, not even the Brahman community, insist on prepuberty marriages for their women today. The marriage ceremony is preceded by betrothal arrangements which are, themselves, ritualized. The marriage day and exact marriage time must be fixed in consultation with an astrologer. The horoscopes of the two parties to the marriage will also be compared. The following is a description of a KavunTar marriage. The ceremonies on this occasion always take place in the bride's house. The description is a combination of my own observations on many occasions, and details which were later clarified by questioning. The account given here is greatly condensed. The full wedding rituals take about eighteen hours to perform (and this constitutes only the core, as there are other ceremonies which follow on later days). Because the description is simplified and inter-

spersed with comments, it has not been single-spaced.

A wedding usually begins about sunset and the main rituals are completed by noon the following day. The climax of the ceremony, the mukūrttam or auspicious hour when the bride's tāli is tied, is usually just at dawn. The first ritual in the wedding, as in the tiraTTi or first menstruation, is the tying of a 'milky post' to a pillar of the house. This time, however, two of these branches are tied rather than only one. The first is placed in the room where the marriage will actually take place, the other in an ante room (called the groom's house) where the groom will wait during the preliminary ceremonies. Other preliminaries include a short ritual where six married women must bring pots of water needed for the ceremonies from a nearby well. The two families and all their relations will also make a trip to the ViNāyakar temple with trays of offerings (as in the ear-piercing and tiraTTi ceremonies, above). The procession is accompanied by Mutaliyār musicians and a short pūjā is performed at the temple by a Brahman priest.

The groom is then seated, facing East, and asked to place his hands in a large mound of husked, white rice. He is rubbed with milk by a barber and shaved. He is then bathed, but preliminary to this there is a short ritual performed by a caste priest. During this ritual a sequence of white, red, and then white rice is waved in front of him, as in the tiraTTi ceremony (above). The groom and his bride's B are seated facing each other with their hands joined under the same pile of rice. While in this position a protective thread, kankaNan, (like a kāppu) is tied to the groom's right wrist. Sometime later the bride is given a similar bath, using the same sequence of white, red, and then again white rice. As in the case of the groom, the bathing ritual is supervised by a female caste priest. The bride then inserts her hands in a mound of rice and a kankaNan is tied to

her right wrist.¹⁹ This completes the purification of the bride and groom and prepares them for the core of the wedding ceremony.

Following this there is a series of short rituals which focus on the groom. They are intended, it would seem, to express his deference to the leaders of the nāṭu or region, and his ties of responsibility to his sisters and his mother. For the first, the groom will go with a small company of relatives to the nāṭu kal, a small but important stone which can be found in every village somewhere near the Viṇāyakar temple. Here there is a short pūjā and the groom pays his respect to the ritual substitute for the ^dheaven of the various nāṭu who are not actually present. (Informants are explicit on this point. See Section II B 2).

Second, there is a long and interesting ceremony called the iṇai cīr or 'uniting ritual' during which the wedding sari will be stretched between the groom and his sister and the former is understood to promise one of his unborn daughters in marriage to his sister's yet unborn son. The groom and his sister then circle a great mound of white rice which has been set before them, together. (See Section II A 2). In the third ceremony the groom is fed a meal by his mother. Lastly, after this meal, he will lead a procession bearing trays of gifts to the Viṇāyakar temple where a short pūjā is performed. On his return the groom is welcomed to the house by the bride's family. The groom presents the trays of gifts and is considered to have arrived for the wedding. He will now wait in the ante-room which has been prepared for him, and where the 'milk post' has been tied.

The bride now dresses in the wedding sari which the groom has presented

¹⁹ In some communities it is the custom to tie the kaṅkaṅam to the left wrist of the bride. In the cases I observed these were left-hand castes, but whether this pattern of right wrist for the brides of the right-hand and the left wrist for brides of the left-hand faction can be generalized, is not certain.

(the same garment previously used for the iNai cīr, above) and a tiny gold band, resembling a crown, is tied on her forehead by her MB. The bride also makes a trip to the nāTu kal and a short pūjā is performed over it. In her case, however, there is no ceremony which requires the presence of her brother or her mother to parallel those rituals which were performed for the groom. The groom is now brought to a specially prepared wedding dais and alātti is performed for him on the way. (See the description of the birth ritual). The groom circles the dais twice, clockwise, and sits, facing East. The bride is also brought out. She circles the dais just as the groom did and is then seated beside him, on his right.

When the couple are seated a Brahman priest arrives and performs a puNNiyārccanai in front of them, similar to that described for the naming ceremony, above. At the end of this pūjā the groom ties the tāli or wedding necklace on the bride's neck with three knots. The couple then exchange flower garlands, the groom first garlanding the bride and then visa versa. This is the climax of the ceremony. After tying the tāli and exchanging garlands the two are considered married. The bride and groom sit down and again the groom joins hands with his MB under the large mound of white rice in front of him. While the hands of these new brothers-in-law are thus joined, a barber is called in to recite the maṅkalavārtu or 'auspicious chant'. This is a long poem which blesses the couple in their new married state. It is similar in tone and function to the mantra(s) recited by the Brahman priest during the puNNiyārccanai, above.²⁰ When the barber has finished, the kaṅkaNam or protective threads on the wrists of the couple are united. They are placed in a dish of curd.

²⁰ These verses recited by the barber are spoken of proudly by the KavunTar community. They are associated specifically and solely with the Koṅku wedding ceremonies.

The height of the wedding ritual is now over. The great mound of white rice in front of the couple is removed. The groom now turns to a series of short ceremonies making use of the colour red, and which appear to accent the sexual connection between bride and groom, rather than the general significance of joining two families together. These rituals begin with the bride and groom hooking the little fingers of their right hands. The caste priest then ties their fingers together firmly with a big red cloth. Now the bride and groom, still tied to each other, are asked to exit briefly together. When they return the groom rubs a bright red substance on the bride's shoulder and visa versa. Following this is a third ritual in which the female caste priest parts the bride's hair with a little tamarind and salt. Finally, the bride and the groom are given a second ritual bath. The sequence of white, red and then again white rice waved in front of them before the bath is repeated. The woman who performs this ceremony must also bathe.

Many other lesser ceremonies follow this second ritual bath. These include the bride feeding the groom for the first time. Cash contributions (muy) are also collected from the guests to help cover the wedding expenses. The bride and groom go to the Viñāyakar temple of the village for a final pūjā. They then proceed to the groom's village where they are welcomed and feasted. The couple sleep separately and are accompanied on a return trip to the bride's village the next day. Now poṅkal rice is prepared by the bride from a small pot of paddy which was placed inconspicuously near the main dais during the height of the wedding rituals the previous day. On this third night (the wedding began in the evening), the bride and groom sleep in the same room for the first time. This is called the cānti kalyanam or 'cool wedding'. Before the couple are left together, a plate with milk and fruits is placed before them which they are expected to eat.

The next morning a poet comes to the house to recite an auspicious poem. He, too, is offered milk. On the third day the couple return to the groom's house to settle.

From the above description it can be seen that the marriage ceremony breaks into a series of steps or stages. First, various auspicious preparations are made. Then the bride and groom are ritually bathed and protective threads are tied to their wrists. Next the groom performs a series of rituals which refer to the headmen of the nāTu, to his sister, and to his mother. Only after these existing ties and responsibilities have been given expression is he welcomed, as a new arrival, at the bride's house. During the climax of the wedding, as indicated, the ceremonies which involve the couple ^{itself} ~~themselves~~ are brief. The emphasis is on the linking of two families and on the new tie between two brothers-in-law. Only after this formal joining has been completed does the emphasis shift to the sexuality of the couple and the anticipation of pregnancy (the parting of the bride's hair with tamarind and salt). After this there is a second bath and, finally, various references to the new domestic responsibilities ahead. According to an early description of the KavunTar marriage ceremony in Koṅku, it was the caste priest and not the groom who was expected to tie the tāli on the bride's neck.²¹ This detail of traditional practice makes the division between that part of the ceremonies which emphasize the legalistic union and those rituals which latter stress the sexuality of the couple even clearer.

There are, of course, many other interesting observations which could be made on the wedding ritual. First, however, this study will proceed with the description of the life-cycle ceremonies by providing a summary account of the proceedings which are necessary for initiation into the

²¹ F.A. Nicholson, Manual of the Coimbatore District (Madras, Government Press, 1887), p. 57.

position of Arumaikkārar (caste priest or ritual specialist). Finally, a brief description of the funeral ritual will be given. A discussion of some of the major themes which run through all of these life-cycle ceremonies has been reserved for the second half of the section.

The ceremony for becoming a caste priest or Arumaikkārar is associated specifically with the so-called Koṅku life-cycle rituals. These are performed only by the KavunTars and by several closely associated right-hand communities. (See the castes marked G in Chart 26). The ceremony which entitles one to become a caste priest is, in a sense, the most auspicious life-cycle ritual of all. It is called eLitin̄kal and as this name implies, it is 'difficult of attainment'. Arumaikkārar(s) are traditionally expected to receive considerable deference from the rest of the community. According to strict usage only they are allowed the honour of having a pantal or swing outside their homes.²² They are also the only ones allowed to perform important rituals (such as dancing with a tier of pots representing the goddess) at a clan temple festival. Although the Arumaikkārar do not receive as much deference today as it appears they once did, these ritual specialists are still persons of importance. The eLitin̄kal ceremony is not often performed nowadays and I have, therefore, never seen this particular ritual myself. The account below was supplied by a Koṅku Nāvitan, Maṅṅālaiyan's leading specialist on KavunTar ritual.

The eLitin̄kal ceremony is a kind of repetition or continuation of the wedding ritual for the bride, as can be seen from the description below. It takes place in the wife's natal home, sometime after the birth of her first child. It is performed at the expense of her brothers. The eLitin̄kal is the sixth life-cycle ceremony for a woman. (The sequence began

²² Ibid., p. 57.

with naming and progressed through head-shaving, ear piercing, the first menstruation and marriage). The seventh ceremony of this sort will be her son's marriage, when she and her husband may finally attain the status of caste priests. A man can not become a caste priest himself unless his wife has been through all seven of these ceremonies. This is only one of the many indications of the stress which is put on the ritual condition of women. The purity of a man is not so vulnerable. It is, in a sense, taken for granted.

Once married, the ritual condition of a man and a woman are indissolubly linked. A man may not attain the ultimate position of caste priest except via his wife. Before she can pass the sixth ceremony, however, this woman is required to establish her auspicious condition by giving birth to a child. Even after eLitinkal is performed, it is only upon the marriage of their first son that a couple can actually obtain the coveted Arumaikkārar position, themselves. On this occasion the husband and wife are required to stand together in a special, brief additional wedding ritual. In this a Brahman priest will say a mantram over them. This mantram is called Arumai vaittal or 'the conferring of rareness'. Only after this ceremony may both the husband and wife act as caste priests or ritual specialists. They may now officiate at the life-cycle ceremonies of others, either as a couple or in cooperation with others of the same status. They will retain the position of Arumaikkārar only until one of the two dies. Thus it may be understood why the ritual associated with becoming an Arumaikkārar is termed 'that which is difficult of attainment'.

The eLitinkal ceremony begins with the tying of a 'milky post' to a pillar of the house, as do many of the rituals previously described. Following this a special dais (pantal) is erected. A stone mōṭar, a grinding stone and an ox yoke are all ritually washed, tied with kāppu, and placed

nearby. Then the woman for whom the ceremony is to be performed is ritually bathed. In this bath another caste priest must wave a sequence of white, red and then again white rice in front of her (as above). After this, but before she bathes thoroughly, two branches taken from a tamarind tree are briefly held over her head and then lowered to the ground where she is asked to put her toe on them. Finally a measure of paddy containing a spool of thread is circled around her head. These last two rituals were performed for the groom during his initial bath in preparation for the wedding. They were not performed for the bride. This constitutes the only difference between their bathes at the time of the wedding preparations. Now, after the birth of her first child, a woman, too, enjoys for the first and only time, this additional purifying ceremony.

Now the central events of alitiñkaL begin. They divide into three parts. First, the woman is seated on the ox yoke, facing East, and there she is garlanded by another Arumaikkārar. Then she is fed a rice meal by the same person. Finally, some ficus religiosa leaves are floated on a layer of water in an earthen pot. On these leaves are placed small balls of moist rice flour with lumps of brown sugar concealed inside them. These balls are called kōtai or 'flower garlands' and the entire pot is now steamed for the night.

The next morning these flour balls are split ceremoniously on a doorstep with a knife and, if the brown sugar in the middle has remained a clear lump, it is said that the family of the woman will prosper (i.e. that she will bear many children).²³ A game is also played in which the woman is asked

²³ Although informants never offered an explicit interpretation of this ritual, I suggest that the ficus leaves can be taken as male (see Section II C 2) and the pot of water as female (see Sections I D 1). The heating or steaming (see Section II C 2) is like a period of pregnancy or gestation. The whole ritual, it would seem, thus refers to the fertility and child-bearing capacity of the woman for whom the ceremony is performed.

to run (in competition with another woman) carrying a stone pestle (called kuṛai or 'young child'), and to sit first on a small stool set against the central wall (naṭu vitu) of the house. Finally, there is a procession to the Viṅṅayakar temple and all the guests are feasted. Contributions in cash are collected from all who attended, to help cover the cost of the ceremony (as in the case of all other auspicious life-cycle rituals). The naṭu vitu of the house is associated with the worship of ancestors, and focus of the eLitin̄kaL ritual, clearly, is on confirming the status of a woman who has born children. Less directly it emphasizes the importance of a son. This boy will, eventually, by his own marriage, assume the responsibility of performing the necessary oblations for the deceased at the naṭu vitu. Only after his marriage will his parents assume their full status as Arumaikkārar.

The death ceremony is the final ritual of the life cycle. It is in some ways a reversal of the ceremonies performed earlier in life, but also, in some ways it is a continuation of them, a final restatement of their themes. A short description of this funeral ritual is given below. Following this the second part of this section will take up for general discussion some of the most important skeins which run through these Kavun̄tar life-cycle rituals as a whole.

It is preferred that a person die outside the house, or at least, in its exterior portion. Thus people on the verge of death are usually removed from the inner rooms. After a person has expired, the corpse is carried back into the house and laid against the central wall (naṭu vitu), so that the head is directly under it and the feet stretch perpendicular to the wall, towards the entrance. A barber is called. On arrival he will tie the two thumbs and the two big toes of the deceased together, plug the mouth, nose and ears of the corpse with cotton, and tie the mouth closed with a strip of white cloth. The body is then laid on its back on a straw mat. It is

covered to the neck with another large, white cloth. A Mātāri is sent to notify all close relations of the death. People then make their way to the funeral house as quickly as possible.

The male members of the household sit outside. As other male relatives arrive, those who are already sitting in the courtyard hold their hands out, palms up. The arriving guests touch them, without speaking, their own hands being placed on the former, palms down. This touching is a gesture of sympathy and also an indication that the pollution of the death is to be shared by all comers. Female relatives and guests usually arrive in groups. As they approach they beat their heads and breasts with their hands in rhythmic gestures, crying out stylized mourning phrases. Women go straight into the house to the room where the corpse is laid out. Here they join hands in large circles, placing their arms around each others' shoulders or waists, and sway rhythmically to the right and to the left. In time with these movements the women will sing oppārippāṭu or 'crying songs'. These tearful songs will continue for hours, various people taking turns on solos, while the others join in duets or choruses. Each song is about a particular relative. It praises that relative and describes the relationship between him and the singer. Most of the songs are highly stylized. Women are admired for their traditional dirges, but also for their ability to innovate and to construct new ones on the correct patterns.

Usually only married people attend funerals. If someone of a respected family dies, almost every married person in the village, in addition to relatives from elsewhere, will put in a short appearance during the mourning period. For families of less importance, the visit of one married male representative from each household is considered a sufficient gesture. Even Brahmans will attend the funeral of a prestigious Navuṭṭar. Brahman men will refrain from actually touching anyone at a funeral, while those

of all other castes are expected to place their hands on the upturned palms of males of the mourning household as they arrive. Brahman women, however, will enter the house of a non-Brahman (of a respected family) at this time and join the circle of other females inside. Men are not expected to weep or to sing dirges as the women do. They simply talk quietly in the courtyard.

Beyond the front gate of the mourning household, a group of four or five Paraiyans will dance counterclockwise in a circle, singing funeral songs and playing a special beat on their rums. They dance around a small white cloth into which all the guests at the funeral are expected to throw cash. When anyone contributes to this collection, the Paraiyans sing a praise song for him which mentions his name and the village from which he has come. These musicians remain until the end of the ritual and are expected to accompany the corpse, on its journey to the burning ground, as far as the edge of the village.

If the death was in the morning, the family will try to complete the burial (or cremation) by evening. Under no circumstances would the body be kept in the house for more than about 36 hours. As soon as all the important members of the family have arrived the important funeral rituals begin. First the BW (or wife of another lineal relation of the deceased) is asked to put on a red sari. While wearing this colour of cloth she will husk some paddy and grind some turmeric, both in special mortars which have been placed at the door of the funeral house for this purpose. (In the case of the death of a woman, the person to do the grinding is her HBW). Then several lights are lit by the corpse, plates of fruits and other offerings are placed near it, and a small pūjā is done. The ground turmeric is used to make a red paste which the barber will then place on the eyelids of the corpse. Several carpenters (Ācāris) are also called to prepare a funeral bier. This bier

is elegantly decorated and strongly resembles a wedding pantal in miniature. The only difference in basic construction is that the bier has an inverted pot placed over the central point of its roof. The bier is built on no man's land somewhere near the edge of the village, not in the courtyard of the funeral house.

While the bier is being constructed a short ceremony called kolmuricēir (discontinuing the harvest?) is performed at the door of the house of the deceased. In this ritual the same female, still wearing red, will mix a measure of campu grain with water in a new earthen pot. This uncooked mixture is then placed at the doorstep of the funeral house along with a burning stalk of this same plant. The stalk is lit from the lamp which burns near the head of the corpse. A Paraiyan drummer will come to carry both the pot and the burning stalk away. The corpse is then carried outside the house and laid on its back on a cot. Here it is ritually washed by the barber. All the grandchildren are asked, briefly, to hold tiny burning torches above the body.

Next, the corpse is lifted off the cot where it was bathed and laid on the ground with its head towards the door which leads into the central rooms of the house. Over it several male relatives hold an awning or arch of leafy branches cut from the nocci (vitex negundu) tree. While under this arch, the deceased is presented with a red cloth (paTTu) by his brother, a white cloth (kōTī) by a HB and, finally, untied flowers (pinnappū) by a DS. (The first gift is omitted if the deceased is male, all three are made, if female). Following this a chicken is sacrificed and its bleeding body is carried once around the house where the corpse has laid. (A goat is sacrificed if the body has been the house overnight). This animal is then given to a Paraiyan and these drummers are also paid a small wage for their services.

After these rituals are over the body is lifted and carried on an elementary wooden stretcher as far as the spot where the constructed bier is waiting. Any male relatives of the deceased may join in and help at this point. The women of the household follow behind the men, weeping and beating their breasts. The corpse is then transferred to the bier. This elegant palanquin is carried in a formal procession, feet first, out of the village. At the ritual boundary of the settlement the branches of the nocci tree which have been carried along side the bier are now thrown away. A Paraiyan drummer draws a circle on the ground. He then climbs on the shoulders of a second Paraiyan to blow a special loud noise on his horn. When these rituals are complete the bier is turned one half turn counterclockwise and the procession proceeds to the graveyard. The women stay behind, within the village limits, where they form one large circle to weep.

A person will be cremated if he was a respected senior member of the family and if the family can afford the wood for the funeral pyre. Most people are simply buried. Before the entombing is complete, however, there are still further ceremonies to perform. The paddy which was husked by the woman in the red sari earlier is now thrown on a white cloth by relatives, to be later buried with the corpse. All the rings on the body are removed and so is the waistcord (araNa kiyiru) in the case of a man. The eldest son of the deceased circles the grave sprinkling it with water from an earthen pot held on his shoulder. The placing of the first clod of earth, or the lighting of the pyre, must also be done by the same son. Then the grave is covered with earth or the fire left to burn.

The funeral party return to the village and bathe. A meal is prepared but the pot of rice is not allowed to boil over (as it would be in the preparation of poñkal). In the boiled rice is placed a brinjal plant which has been cut into three parts. This rice is served along with other food

to all the parallel relatives of the deceased. If there are other guests as well, an outside cook will be employed to prepare food for them. If a woman has been widowed by the death of her husband, there is a further ceremony to remove the sign of her marriage, the tāli. During this ritual her sari is changed to white, the colour which all KavunTar widows must wear. Finally, there is a small pūjā to the deceased in the house itself. For this ritual three horizontal white stripes and a red dot are drawn on the wall of the naṭu vitu. (This is the same design which a man will make on his forehead after returning from worship at a temple). After this the house is purified with a cow dung mixture and cooked rice is thrown over the roof by relations to disperse any evil spirits.

This completes the initial ceremonies of the funeral. They are followed by the karumāti ritual (ceremony of expiation, preparatory to the passage of the spirit of the deceased into the next world.²⁴) which is traditionally performed on the 16th day. Many KavunTars, however, now perform karumāti on the fifth, third or even on the same day as the funeral itself. For this ceremony the son of the deceased must return to the graveyard with a few close relatives. There he will draw an outline of the corpse on the ground, just over the spot where it once lay. He will then plant two bitter shrubs called erukku (caloropis gigantea), one at the head and one at the foot of the image he has drawn. The son then pours clarified butter and milk over these shrubs and also sprinkles them with grain. Then he cuts them down with three strokes of a knife. If there are bones left from the cremation, he will collect these, powder them and put them in a

²⁴ People recognize the name of the god Yeman and associate him with death. They also say that he ensnares the spirit with a pācā cord at death. They know that Yeman rides a buffalo, but could not say in which direction he resided. Beyond this they are not explicit about what happens in the period between death and the performing of the karumāti ritual.

pot to be carried to a river. Offerings are left to the crows and the party will return to the village.

The son of the deceased and the others who gave gifts to the corpse as it lay under the arch of nēcci branches (above) must now take a ritual bath. The three who gave these ritual gifts take an ordinary bath, but the son of the deceased is given a special cleansing which involves the same sequence of white, red and then again white rice, as in the marriage and eLitinkal ceremonies. These three men are now asked to stand in a line. Each one receives a gift of cloth (one upper and one lower garment) from a cross relative. The first three gifts are paid for by the son of the deceased, but his gift is paid for by his MB. Each of the men, in turn, is then asked to partially chew a mouthful of betel leaf and areca nut and then to spit it out. The son of the deceased is also expected to crush a small clay lamp under his foot. The four men then return to the house of the deceased where they each pay respects, in turn, to a little lamp lit in the niche of the naTu vitu. A poñkal feast is prepared for relatives and the funeral pollution is over, that is unless the death was considered to be particularly inauspicious, as below.

The time of death is carefully remembered and an astrologer is consulted at the earliest opportunity to determine whether or not the moment was auspicious. If the time of death was sufficiently auspicious, no particular ritual beyond that already described is required. Pollution is generally over after the Karumāti ceremony. Men, however, will generally wait a full thirty days before entering a temple. If the time was inauspicious, however, the spot where the head of the person lay at the moment of death must be covered with mud taken from a cow pen. Over this will be placed an earthen pot containing water. The room, if it was in the house, will then be closed and locked. The cracks will be stuffed with leaves of the palmyra palm to keep the light out and thorns will be placed around the

the door to keep malign spirits away. No clan member will enter a temple during the period prescribed by the astrologer. This can be three, six or even twelve months, depending on the degree of inauspiciousness. No weddings or other auspicious ceremonies will be performed during this period. At the end of this time the room will be opened, on a Friday, and a young, female cow will be kept in it for one night. The following morning the room will be whitewashed and the floor given a new coat of dung. The cow must be sold and not kept in the family. A Brahman priest is called to perform a puNNiyārccanai. After the pūjā the family will invite close relations to a feast.

If the family can not afford to give up the entire room for this period, then a brick will be placed on the mud from the cow pen instead. Each evening the family will light a small light on the brick with a bit of camphor and do a short pūjā, sprinkling the floor around the brick three times with water. Then the entire area will be covered with an inverted pot until the following evening.²⁵ On the final day a more elaborate pūjā with offerings of fruit will be performed. All the offerings are then placed in a basket with the brick and the mud it stood on. These will be carried to a place outside the village and left. The house is then whitewashed and relations are feasted, as above.

If a child of under sixteen dies (before marriage, in the case of a girl) there is no elaborate ceremony. Turmeric will be ground by the deceased's FBW. This substance is then rubbed on the body of the corpse, but the latter is not bathed. The ears are pierced with a thorn if the child was more than three (sometimes 15) days old. If it was very small the body is placed in a winnowing basket and handed to the mother who must

²⁵ For the importance of inverted pots, see the comments earlier in this section.

raise and lower it in front of the naTu vitu three times before it is buried. A father or brother will throw the first clod of earth on the grave, which is usually dug in a special graveyard called piLLai meTu or 'children's hillock'. The house is whitewashed and given a new coat of cow dung. Relatives will be feasted. If the child was the first born there is an additional ceremony required of the mother which is performed in the doorway and at the naTu vitu of the house at this time.

If a man of more than sixteen years, but still unmarried, should die there is an additional ritual to that described for persons under this age. He is laid outside the house and presented with a white cloth (koṭi) by a brother. His hands are placed in a large mound of white rice and a kaṅkalam is tied to his wrist, as in preparation for marriage. His brother presents the corpse with a flower garland before it is carried to the grave. This is considered to be the ritual equivalent of a marriage. The karumāti ritual is performed in the same manner as above except that only the brother (or father) need bathe specially, and it is only he who receives the ritualizer's gift of an upper and a lower garment.

The full funeral ceremonies, as described initially, are performed only for married people. If the family is poor, they will settle for burial rather than cremation. The rituals following the bathing of the corpse (the paṇi or 'cow' paṇi made of naṅgi branches and the decorated bier, called paṇṭer or 'flower chariot') may also be eliminated. These ceremonies are prestigious and add extra importance to the funeral. They are thought of as a unit and must either be performed in full, or disregarded completely. As is the case in many rituals, these events are understood to hang together as a sequence. One can not pick and choose without destroying the coherence of the whole.

Plate 9: Life-Cycle Ritual

- a) Exchange Of PoTu Between Mothers-In-Law During The Wedding Ceremony Of Their Children
- b) Same As Above
- e) A Young Boy At His Hair Shaving Ceremony
- d) A Bride And Groom
- e) The Naming Ceremony Of A New-Born Son
- f) The INai Cir During A Wedding
- g) Brothers-in-law Holding Hands Under A Mound Of White Rice During The Wedding Ceremony. The Groom Is Seated At The Left

PLATE 9



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)



(g)

II C

2) General Themes in the Moiku Ceremonies

The above summary provides a general outline of the rituals which surround the lives of individuals in the KavunTar community. It remains to highlight a few of the general features which run through these rituals as a whole. The financing of the ceremonies and the exchange of gifts between cross and parallel relatives will be considered first. Next, the account will touch briefly upon the question of purity and pollution in relation to the life cycle and on the importance of auspicious actions and signs in relation to this ritual more generally. Finally, the discussion will move on to consider two very broad and important themes which underlie all these ceremonies more generally. One theme concerns the flowering of women and their new buds, children; the other concerns abundance and the rising or bubbling up that is associated with all good things.

All the life-cycle ceremonies which precede marriage (except naming) are performed in the house of the child's father. In the case of a man they continue to be performed either in this house, or in his own, until death. All those ceremonies which concern a married woman are performed in her husband's house with the exception of those which are directly linked to the birth of her children. For these she must return to her father's house. A woman's father and brothers will invite her home for a feast during the 7th month of her pregnancy. They will keep her in their home during the time of her confinement and until the child has been named and has reached the age of about three months.²⁶ In the third month her husband is invited to a feast by her parents and the child is given a cradle cloth and a waist cord. Only after accepting these prestations may the young

²⁶ This is always the case for the first child, but with later pregnancies the stress placed on returning to the girl's home for the birth is less.

couple return to the husband's home.

The only other auspicious ceremony which is performed for a married woman (eLitinkal) is also performed in her father's home. A woman's funeral, on the otherhand, takes place in her husband's house. Thus it is the two life-cycle rituals which are directly linked to the birth of children which are performed in a married woman's natal home. These children will become DSs to her father and ZSs to her brothers. In the birth and eLitinkal rituals the woman's father and brothers in a sense anticipate the arrival of a new generation of cross relatives for whom they will, in time, become the prime gift-givers.

This shift in the location of the ceremonies parallels a gradual shift in the responsibility for financing them. During the first few months of life it is the girl's parents who take on the entire expense of her new-born child. Gradually the responsibility is transferred to the child's own parents. This change/over begins in the third month when the child is first taken from its MB's house to that house of its own father. The wife's brother continues to make important gifts at the ear piercing and maturation ceremonies, but the feast to relatives must now be provided by the child's own parents. At marriage the greatest proportion of the expenses are (traditionally) borne equally by the bride's and the groom's parents.²⁷

²⁷ Expenses related to the wedding are traditionally understood to be more or less equally borne by the two families involved. Only with the recently increased prestige of dowry (according to informants) have the expenses of the bride's family begun to outstrip those of the groom's. In general the bride's family supplies the house for the main festivities, a gift of pots and other articles (cir) to the new household, jewels for the bride, plus one sari for her and two vestis for the groom. His family will contribute a brideprice of fixed amount (now 100 $\frac{1}{4}$ Rs. for most KavuNTars), a tali or wedding necklace and two saris for the bride. The two families divide the cost of the ceremonies and the feasts. Now, however, in association with the increasing prestige of dowry marriages, some families of brides insist on giving the girl jewels far beyond the value of the brideprice or paricam, and in paying for the ceremonies and the feasting by themselves.

The contribution made by the mother's brother of either the bride or the groom is minimal, though not altogether absent. After marriage the ritual responsibility for a woman passes completely from her MB to her own father and brothers. Now it is they who make the gifts of cloths to her on the birth of her children and for her eLitinkal ceremony. It is they who have a ritual role at her funeral.

For a man there is a similar shift in gift-giving responsibility after his marriage. In this case, the transfer of responsibility is from his MB to his WB. The shift of gift-givers in relation to a woman parallels her transfer from her natal family to that of her husband's. When she was a child her MB was her primary cross relative. After marriage, however, she becomes a member of her husband's family. A woman, in a sense, loses her independent ritual link with a cross relative by her marriage. Her husband's new affine (her B) now becomes gift-giver to them both.²⁸ It is a married woman's brother, not her MB, who will present her with a new coloured sari on ĀTi and Tai nompū(s) each year, and with a red cloth (paTTu) at her funeral.²⁹ The last gift a woman receives from her MB is at her wedding.

The association of red with married women, above, deserves further mention.³⁰ The HBW, for example, must wear a red sari while grinding turmeric and husking paddy during the funeral ritual. In some areas of India women are required to wear a red sari for their wedding, though not in Konku (where the colour of the wedding sari is unspecified). Wedding

²⁸ For a similar shift in the kin terms for women see Section II A 2.

²⁹ paTTu actually means 'silk', though in ritual this term is always taken to designate the colour red, rather than the type of cloth used. A man is expected to present his sister with a red cloth at her funeral even if she is a widow.

³⁰ For a further discussion of the importance of red see B. Beck, The Examination of Marriage Ritual, pp. 138-40.

invitations are frequently printed in red ink. The red dabs of powder applied to the part of the hair, and the red dot in the middle of the forehead, are also associated primarily with married women. A woman's brother (or F) initiates this red state by giving his Z (or D) in marriage to a cross relative. The association is preserved by the further presentation of a red cloth at her funeral.

In contrast, a woman's HB presents her with a white cloth or koTi at her funeral, just as he would present to his own brother or son. It would appear that the colour white has a general association with the nuclear family, with ritual purity and with prosperity, just as red is found in the context of marriage and in situations where sexuality is stressed. No informant, however, ever stated this association to me explicitly. The conclusion is drawn from general observations about how these colours are used in ritual, rather than from what people explicitly say about them. A koTi (also of white cloth) is tied to a post or flag pole in front of most temples at the beginning of a festival and a mukūrtakkāl (post with a milk-white sap) is erected at the beginning of all major auspicious life-cycle rituals. Ponkal, or the boiling over of a white substance, is a central theme which appears regularly in all forms of ceremony. In general, it might be said that all auspicious events are conducted against a background of white.³¹ The central rituals of the marriage ceremony, for example, are performed in association with great mounds of husked white rice. Later, however, the ceremonies are concerned with the sexuality of the couple and are full of red cloths and red substances.

Black is the colour generally associated with malign spirits. The

³¹ veL is the root morpheme referring to white in Tamil. Words using this stem refer to cultivation (veLLānmai), flood, deluge or sea (veLLam), and true, honest men (veLLar).

term karuppu means both 'black', and 'evil spirits' or 'enemies'. Thus, perhaps, the sacrifice of black animals before the 'graveyard raid' during the Ankalamman festival. In a cautious way black may be opposed to white in ritual, but only where both colours are used in the context of other events. White, alone, on the other hand, has a strong association with the inauspicious state of widowhood.³² Black alone, by contrast, may have a magical or protective quality. Black also has an association with asceticism. Thus women from the Telugu-speaking castes in Koṅku sometimes wear a black bead on their wedding necklace, and men on pilgrimage to the famous Aiyappan temple in Kerala are obliged to wear black cloths. The seven Kannimār may be referred to as the 'black girls', as they are usually carved out of black stone. The colour black (or blue) in these contexts is probably linked to a renunciation of worldly pleasures and the storing up of fiery power which ensues. Thus Cīva, for example, who is the prime ascetic, is often described as a deity with a blue/black body but red hair.

In discussing white, therefore, it must be considered in context. In ritual, white is a background colour. It does not occur alone. Most frequently it is white and red which can be found together on ceremonial occasions. On a temple flag or koṭi, for example, an image of an animal (the vehicle of the particular deity in question) is always painted in red against the white background. White cloths which are presented as gifts at life-cycle ceremonies are often edged in red. White and red are also associated in the ritual bath, as has been described above. The sequential use of red and white stands out most clearly, perhaps, in a simple divination

³² Widowed women may not wear red, but only white. There are, however, some exceptions to this rule in the case of castes who do not follow the Koṅku life-cycle rituals. The colour of the sari which widows of various communities wear is given in Appendix 2.

ceremony which priests perform, on request, at local temples. The procedure of divination is as follows:

At local temples, after the deity has been worshipped the devotee may ask the priest to divine the answer to certain questions for him. This is done by using six little green bundles of leaves, three of which contain red flowers and three, white flowers. The colour is concealed inside so that all six bundles look green. The priest then juggles and throws them, as one might cowry shells, and a small child, usually a bystander, is asked to select one. The bundle is unwrapped by the priest and is either red or white inside. Then the bundle is rewrapped and a second throw and a second selection are made. If a question about a future auspicious event such as 'should I marry my daughter to so and so's son?' has been put to the deity, the affirmative answer is considered to be a sequence of red flowers on the first throw and white flowers on the second. However, for a question such as 'will my brother recover from his illness?' the affirmative colour progression is white and then red.

From the description, above, it is clear that on the occasion of a marriage or any other auspicious event, it is desirable to pass through red to white. On the occasion of illness or severe pollution, however, it is desirable to pass from white to red. If attention is drawn to the ritual bath, it will be recalled that the progression there is first white, then red, and then again white. One first passes from an ordinary or polluted state to red, and then from that to a new white. The second white may represent a return to normal from extreme impurity (the tiraTTi bath and the funeral bath for the son) or it may represent a state of special purity (the marriage and eLitinkal baths) in anticipation of some auspicious event to follow. As ritual baths are associated with a transition from one state of purity (generally inferior) to another (generally superior), so the ritual of the bath takes the bather from one state of whiteness, through red, to another white. It is important to mention, however, that no informant saw this colour progression quite as clearly as I have stated it here.

The vegetal green of certain plants and their leaves, ^{is} ~~are~~ also a

recurrent theme in ritual. Green is usually not found alone, but only in association with both red and white. Green is a cool colour. Informants themselves link it to water and particularly to the luxuriant vegetation which follows a heavy rain.³³ One finds green branches of the tamarind tree used in the bathing ritual after the sequence of coloured rice on the first bath of the marriage in the case of men and the first bath of the eLitinkal ceremony for women. According to one local account, these branches have a kind of expiratory and purificatory effect. Sometimes they are used to beat a person who has told a lie or committed some other offence.

During the funeral ritual, just before the corpse is carried to the graveyard, it is placed under an awning of green branches of the nocci tree. Similar leaves are used to guard forts and to protect warriors in battle. In the funeral ritual these branches are carried alongside the dead body until they are discarded at the edge of the village. Although no one could adequately explain the reason for the use of these branches, it is probable that they are associated with the funeral because of the magical or protective effect they are thought to have against malign influences. Nefarious powers can be active at the time of a death, as well as in the confusion and bloodshed of battle. Green leaves of the margosa tree are used in constructing the arch or tōraNam at the boundary of ritual areas during festivals. They also represent the cooling aspect of a goddess during the height of the kirānam temple ceremonies. (See Section I D 1). Note also that it is the green leaves of the ficus religiosa which are used to float the balls of white rice flour with a brown sugary centre during the eLitinkal ceremony

³³ Tan, in Tamil, expresses the desirable qualities of coolness, grace and love. TaNNir means cool water, as does the colloquial expression paccal taNNir, green-cool water. Paccal alone means green, but also refers to young, unripe things and to freshness and coolness in general. To praise someone in Tamil one may say he has a 'green-cool heart' or avarkaLukku paccal manacu. One can also say of a person avarkaL perun ta'mai, meaning he is a generous man or literally 'he is very cool'.

for a woman. The mukūrtakkāl or milky post tied during auspicious life-cycle rituals has a bright green stem.

In a tentative fashion, therefore, reaching beyond what informants themselves put into words, it can be suggested that green has associations in ritual with coolness, dampness and the verdant growth of the vegetal world. Red, in a way, contrasts with or is set against green by its association with blood and with body heat more generally.³⁴ Both red and green occur in association with a generally auspicious, but also more everyday background of white. This can be seen with particular clarity in the Māriyammaṅ festival where there is a repeated alternation of a pot containing water and green leafy branches with a pot containing hot, red fire. The pots are set on the forked branches of a large, white post (kampam), one by day and the other by night, for nine nights. The one pot represents the goddess in her cooling, rain-bearing, vegetal aspect, the other symbolizes this deity in her angry, hot, disease-bearing form.

The two festival pots in the Māriyammaṅ ritual together can be seen as an alternation of red and green on a white base. Similarly, ritual bathing takes a person through a white, red, white sequence and a mukūrtakkāl at a life-cycle ceremony is a green branch with a white sap. Red has the human associations of heat, maturation, anger, sexuality and pollution, while green refers more frequently to man's vegetal environment. It is the more magical of these two important ritual colours. Only women wear coloured clothing and only women are associated with red in ritual. Men wear white, and only receive prestations of white cloth. The kampam or post, said to be Māriyammaṅ's husband, is white, but the mukūrtakkāl of the life-cycle

³⁴ Cem is the root morpheme of most words referring to red. The letter m, changed to n by adjacent letters, becomes cennir meaning blood (red water) and centī meaning fire.

ceremonies is both green and white. Perhaps the latter can be seen as providing an auspicious vegetal background for important human events.

Beyond these colour associations, however, and more important as a general theme, is the stress on flowers or pū. There are many words built on the vase pū which refer to abundance, fullness and prosperity.³⁵ More interesting still is the term pūval which means red in the vernacular, but which can also be given the more literal translation 'to become fruitful with flowers'. Other words built on the verb vala can refer to a female, to a large family and even to birth contractions.³⁶ Pūnkoṭi refers to a 'young tendril' or a 'woman' and pūppu to menstruation as a kind of flowering. The term for jackal, a general trickster in Indian folklore, is a negative form of the term pūri, meaning 'abundance' or 'gold'.³⁷

Pū itself is both a noun meaning 'a flower' and a verb meaning 'to flower'. This is a most important distinction as both the use of language and the rituals described above lead me to apply the noun form, 'flower' to young children and the verb form 'flowering' to mature women. The references to children as flowers are various. Take, for example, the eLitinkal ceremony for the married woman where little balls of rice flour which are linked to child-bearing are called kōtai or 'flower garlands'. There is also a ceremony which is performed in some places (but not in Koṅku) during the third month of a woman's pregnancy, when the quickening occurs and which is called pūncavanam, literally 'speeding the flower'. Pū may

³⁵ pū means flower, but also to put forth blossom, to prosper, to flourish. Pūmi refers to the earth or the world, pūmin to the goddess Lakṣmi, pūri to abundance, pūraṇam to fullness, abundance or plenty, pūraṇami to the full moon, and pūlōkam to heaven.

³⁶ Vala means to become fruitful or strong, valaṅkam refers to a large family vali can refer to the pain of birth contractions and valavai to a female, like the goddess Kali.

³⁷ Pūrimayu means jackal, but literally 'deceptive or illusive abundance'.

also be used as a verb meaning 'to give birth'.

The third day of the nompū celebration in the month of Tai (January-February) is called pū poṅkal, literally the 'boiling over or flourishing of flowers'. (On this day there are special festivities for children. A brother must present his sister's first daughter with presents on the first (or second) pū poṅkal after birth, and this is the beginning of a series of ritual gifts (nāman cīr) which the MB is expected to make to his sister's daughter up to the time of her marriage. Just as children dance and throw flowers in the air during pū poṅkal, so is it the DS (or any person standing in the relation of grandchild) who must throw untied flowers, pinnapū, on the body of the deceased before burial. It is also a child, it may be remembered, who is asked to select the little packet of flowers tied in a leaf during the divining ceremony at local temples.

Just as children are poetically 'flowers', so mature people are the vines or plants from which flowers grow. Thus a young woman may be called, not only pū, but also pūṅkoṭi or 'young tendril'. A woman's maturation ceremony, similarly, is called the pūppakam or 'flowering'. Most poetic of all, perhaps, is the expression macam oru pū, varacam oru kai, meaning 'a flower a month, and a fruit a year', which is a figurative phrase referring to a woman which I once heard a man use while he was possessed by a local goddess.

Men also have an association with flowering plants, though not as strong as the association for women. Thus the thread tied around a man's shoulder and chest at his maturation ceremony is called a pū nūl, meaning 'a thread to protect that which will flower?'. A bride and groom at their wedding may be referred to as pūvaiyūm and pūmanūm, or 'a female flower' and 'a male flower', respectively. Garlanding the spouse with flowers, pūmalai, ~~is one~~

is one of the central rituals of the marriage. Exchanging flower garlands is, in itself, enough to marry the couple in the eyes of the local community.

Cīr is another important term used in ritual contexts which has a whole fan or spectrum of meanings. In its most general sense, cīr refers to all temple and life-cycle ceremonies. Somewhat more limited is the reference it has to all material gifts, such as cloth and pots, which may be given on such an occasion. In its narrowest, but perhaps most interesting sense, however, cīr refers to the māman cīr or ritual actions and gifts which are the responsibility of the MB. These begin with the ZD's first pū poṅkal when the MB must present new clothes to the girl, along with paddy, sugarcane, and coconuts.³⁸ If he is wealthy, the MB may also present his sister's family with a new pot in which the poṅkal rice will be boiled. A MB, if he pleases, will continue to make similar gifts to his ZD on every pū poṅkal thereafter, until the day of her marriage. The first poṅkal, however, is the most important.

Following on the above are the prestations of cloth, of fruits and of betel leaves which a māman is expected to make to his sister's children when their heads are first shaved and when their ears are pierced. More important, however, is the maturation ceremony for a girl or the 'thread ceremony' for a boy. Again the MB must provide a new set of clothes. In the case of a boy he will also supply the pū nul. In the case of the girl he will add to his gifts such things as a comb, a mirror and sweets. The fifth and final occasion on which a MB must present cīr or gifts to his sister's children is at the time of their wedding. If the child is male, a gift of clothes is sufficient. In the case of ZD, however, the MB must also present

³⁸ Birth is not strongly associated with the māman since it is normally the woman's parents, rather than her brothers, who present gifts to the child at this time.

a small band of gold which he himself will tie on her forehead. He will then lead the girl to the nāṭṭukkal and finally to the wedding dais.³⁹

Clearly, then, there is an important relation between a MB and all his sister's children. This relationship finds its poetic expression in the idiom of 'flowers'. The importance of the MB, however, is intensified in the case of the ZDs. The mānan cīr, in this case, include pū poṅkal, and the poetic association is with a kind of 'fruit-bearing plant' which will eventually yield 'flowers' of its own.

A girl, when she first begins to menstruate, is treated as if she were hot. Furthermore, in figurative speech, the attainment of puberty is likened to a process of boiling over, like milk or cooked rice in a pot. There are a number of euphemisms in Tamil for the coming of age of a girl which have a strong connotation of heat. Take, for example, amaital which means 'to mature', 'to attain puberty', while amaittal (the transitive form) means 'to cook'. Similarly, tiraṭṭiccīr is one of the popular names for the coming of age ceremony, while tiraṭṭuppāl refers to milk thickened by boiling with sugar. Because a girl is thought to be in a 'heated' condition when she matures, it is interesting to note that the climax of the puberty ceremony comes when the female caste priest rubs a little clarified butter on her forehead, just before she takes her ceremonial bath. Clarified butter is considered to be both a purifying and a cooling substance. Although informants were not explicit about the significance of this particular gesture, it might be interpreted as 'cooling' the girl in preparation for the bath to follow. This bath will mark her transition from pālai (from pāl, milk) meaning 'young

³⁹ Informants say that the MB used to carry the girl on his shoulders to both these places. However, it seems that some years ago there was a caste meeting where it was decided that this practice was dangerous. Now the MB only walks with the girl at his side. Some people say that a MB of the groom used to carry him in a similar position.

girl', to pū, the poetic term signifying a mature or 'flowering' woman.

Children, however, are associated not only with milk, but also with a yellow or turmeric colour. If they should die, for example, children are rubbed with turmeric before the burial. The adoption ceremony for children, furthermore, requires that both the mother and the child drink turmeric-coloured water. One of the euphemisms for the first menstruation of a girl is mancattannir karaittal or the 'overflowing of turmeric water'. When turmeric is mixed with water and lime (the way the colour red is obtained in most rituals) it becomes red and a certain amount of heat is produced. This process matches the other indications, above, that a girl is considered to be 'hot' when she matures. In poetic terms, the turmeric-coloured substance in a child becomes heated at puberty. In the case of a girl it becomes red and overflows.

Foods are very generally divided, according to South Indian custom, into those substances which are considered to 'heat' and those which are considered to 'cool' the body. Eating 'heating' foods is considered to bring blood to the surface of the skin and blood to the stool. Eating 'cooling' foods, on the other hand, is said to make the body slightly pale and greenish in colour. Blood has a clear association with heat in local medical tradition. The blood of all animals is considered to be 'heating' when eaten, for example, even though the meat of some animals, notably pig and sheep, is thought to be 'cooling'.

The build-up of blood at concentrated points, such as in pimples or in the stool, is thought to be a sign of excessive body heat. Patients in this condition are advised to eat 'cooling' foods. Facial pimples, according to one informant, are particularly associated with the heat of sexual desire. The best cure for pimples, therefore, is marriage and frequent sexual inter-

course.⁴⁰ The reduction of desire, or of the dispersal of blood from concentrated oṅṅa, is associated with a cooling effect. Thus after menstruation, after sexual intercourse, and more so after childbirth, a woman is thought to be somewhat 'cool'.

During pregnancy, especially, a woman must avoid eating heating foods in quantity. Very hot foods (such as unripe mangos or papayas) can cause abortion if taken at this time. During pregnancy, therefore, sweet and savoury foods are preferred. After childbirth, on the other hand, a woman is said to be paccai, 'cool or slightly green'. She must now be careful not to eat 'chilling' foods. Various informants say that a woman must avoid buttermilk, curd, plantain fruits, oranges, limes, certain kinds of greens, pumpkin and squash while her child is very small, otherwise she may pass her 'chill' to her child through her milk. A nursing mother, rather, is encouraged to drink warm water and to cover her head with a cloth when leaving the house. Perunkaiyam, a particularly heating spice, is given liberally to woman after childbirth. Ginger, pepper, garlic, and palmyra palm sugar, all of which have a heating effect, are also recommended. Old age, however, is apparently associated with the gradual loss of body heat. Old people are careful not to eat large quantities of cooling foods.

Beyond flowering, and the importance given to 'heating' and 'cooling', lies the general theme of poṅkal. This term literally means 'boiling or swelling', but in its more general forms, poṅku, poṅkam and poṅkāram, it refers to abundance, prosperity and well-being in a very wide sense. The ritual associated with poṅkal is, itself, very simple. The term refers to

⁴⁰ The first night which a married couple spend together is called the canti kalyāṇam or 'cool wedding'. Before the bride and groom are left alone, however, a tray of cooling fruits and two tumblers of milk (a very cooling substance) are set before them and they are asked to eat.

the ceremonial boiling of husked paddy in water or milk, or to the boiling of milk alone. This boiling is done, preferably, in a new earthen pot. The pot is tipped slightly to assure that the white substance will boil over the neck slightly, in an Easterly direction. Then it is removed from the fire and a portion of the contents is set out as an offering to a deity or to the ancestors. Finally, the remainder is divided between the person who performed the ceremony and his relatives and guests. Poṅkal rice is usually accompanied by other festive dishes.

Poṅkal rice sweetened with sugar is boiled at the end of the wedding ceremony. Poṅkal is also boiled for a funeral, but here it is not sweetened and it is prepared only after the karmāṭi ceremony. The boiling of poṅkal rice at a funeral is a kind of sign that the death pollution has ended.⁴¹ In a festival for a local deity, poṅkal rice is prepared separately by each household which participates. The boiling ceremony always occurs at the climax of the festival, and a portion of the cooked rice must be presented as an offering to the god or goddess in question, before the family can enjoy its own feast. The participants in a festival, however, do not make this offering themselves. Instead, one of the temple priests will take a spoonful from each fresh poṅkal pot and place it, with other spoonfuls, in one large container (so that the cooked food of all except the lowest caste is mixed). The rice from this communal pot is then set on one or more leaves before the deity. Afterwards the priests feast on the offering.

One of the striking features of a temple poṅkal, therefore, is that it is the one time when the cooked food of several castes is mixed together.

⁴¹ One can not boil poṅkal rice, for any reason, while in a state of pollution, e.g., in a state which is not considered to be sufficiently pure to allow a person to enter a temple compound.

Since a higher caste will normally never accept cooked food from a lower one, and since a deity is considered to be higher and purer than any of the castes who worship it, there is something very special about the fact that the god or goddess is offered cooked poṅkal food. Clearly there is a chief bridging of the separation between man and the divine, a narrowing of the ritual distance between them, during the festive offering of poṅkal rice.⁴² poṅkal is also important in bringing together, or narrowing the divide between the festival participants and the temple priest. The latter will eat the offering of rice after its dedication to the god, even though a part of it has been cooked by members of castes from whose hand he would not normally accept cooked food.⁴³ In this sense, the priest, during a festival, enters the realm of or acquires some of the powers of the deity he serves. The gap between god and priest is narrowed by a convergence from both directions. poṅkal rice must also be shared with all members of the family who offered it a $\frac{d}{n}$ of course, with their guests.

Although poṅkal is a general ritual theme which reoccurs in festival after festival, its importance is highlighted once a year during the three day poṅkal festival which begins the month of Tai (January-February). The major events of these three days are described, from my own observations, below.

42 This point was originally suggested to me by Nur Yalman in a private communication, and not by an informant. On the whole, the offering of poṅkal rice is taken for granted. People do not discuss its significance in this fashion.

43 In temples where the Brahmans act as priests, only they will boil poṅkal rice to offer the deity. It is only at those shrines where there are non-Brahman priests that the general public (kirāman members, excluding barbers, washermen, untouchables, and perhaps traditionally, all members of the left hand) can participate in this ceremony.

The Poṅkal Festival

1st Day: ViTTu Poṅkal, Periya Poṅkal or Caṅkarānti Poṅkal

(Poṅkal of the House, Big Poṅkal, or Poṅkal for the passage of the sun from one sign of the zodiac to another)

Throughout the entire month of Mārkaṛi (the month preceding Tai) some families (particularly Brahmans and Ācāris) give the floor of their home a fresh coat of cow dung each day. On the freshly cleaned floor they make designs with rice flour, called kolams, and on these they place little conical piles of dried dung. These are said to be images of ViNāyakar and they are worshipped each day by sprinkling a little water on them with the right hand, first circling the water around them in a cupped palm clockwise, then counter-clockwise, and then again clockwise. The devotee will then fold his hands briefly, a sign of respect. After this the little conical images are placed on a shelf until they are taken down again the next day.

On the last day of Mārkaṛi the eves of the house are decorated with pūla and avaram flowers⁴⁴ and branches of the margosa tree. These are called kāppu, the same term used for the protective threads tied on the wrists of priests during festivals and on others during important and auspicious life-cycle events. These kāppu are especially hung over the front door, around the outside of the house and around the central courtyard. They are also tied on the fenced enclosures for animals in the fields and on the thorn bushes fencing the fields themselves. After the kāppu are tied there is no further worship of the little conical images.

On the next day, that of viTTu poṅkal, the family simply boil poṅkal rice, perform a brief pūjā at the naṭu vitu or central wall of the house and enjoy a general feast. Often special sweets are prepared on this day. Sometimes viTTu poṅkal is only performed by the senior branch of the family, those who continue to live in the ancestral house.

2nd Day: MāTTu Poṅkal or PaTTi Poṅkal (Cow or Cow Pen Poṅkal)

A young, unmarried girl of the house is asked to fast through the morning, until the pūjā (below) is performed. A pot of husked paddy is boiled in a new pot in the doorway of the house or in the courtyard, in the usual poṅkal fashion. The house floor is given a fresh layer of cow dung and new kolams made of rice flour are drawn. In the

⁴⁴ The botanical names of these flowers are Bombax malabaricum and cassia auriculata, respectively.

^{centre}
 of one of these are heaped the little conical images of ViNāyakar, left over from the month or MārkaRi. On the top of this are piled pūLa and āvāraṃ flowers. Added to the pile are sticks of sugarcane and a bunch of turmeric. In front of the pile is placed a single ViNāyakar, again made of cow dung. In front of all this, to the East, small portions of poṅkal rice are laid out on leaves. On each portion of rice a little bit of brown sugar is placed. Usually there is one leaf for each member of the family, but care is taken to see that the total number is odd. Then a pūjā is performed by a PaNTāram, using camphor and incense as well as offerings of coconuts and plantains. A member of the family may also perform this pūjā if they are not wealthy enough to call in a PaNTāram for the occasion.

The same night paTTi poṅkal or the boiling of rice in the cow pen (enclosure for animals in the field) is performed. The enclosure itself will be square. Inside it is dug a small, square depression called a teppa kulam, some three inches deep. This is filled with water and at the West end of it are placed a large heap of baskets (those in which people have brought rice to boil for poṅkal). These are placed upside down so as to support the other ceremonial items which are placed in front of them. To the East of the baskets, on the edge of the depression, seven white stones are set out in a row. These are said to represent the Kannimār or seven young goddesses. Two stalks of sugarcane are tied so as to arch over this line of stones. Some turmeric is placed nearby and a mirror is placed behind them. In front of all this, on the edge of the depression, a small image of ViNāyakar, made of cow dung, is constructed. A small red dot (poṭṭu) is placed on this and on the seven stones, in preparation for pūjā (as for any deity). On the Eastern edge of the depression a number of leaves are laid out. On these the offerings of poṅkal rice are placed. During these preparations, poṅkal is separately boiled by each household attending the ceremony. The gathering usually includes the owner of the animals, his relations and any other families who regularly work for them. Each family sets up its own small fire inside the animal enclosure, and boils its own offering. The sheep and goats in the compound are sprinkled with a red substance and the cows have had their horns freshly painted.

After a pūjā by a member of the landowning family or a PaNTāram priest, some of the rice offerings are taken and fed to a cow. Pūjā is also performed for the cow and it is taken to represent the animals of the enclosure as a whole. (If there are many cattle they are actually staked in a circle around the enclosure, rather than kept within it). The people celebrating the festival then eat themselves. After this, a stalk of sugarcane is tied to the neck of one calf and one sheep or goat. These animals are then creed out of the enclosure with a great shout.

The shepherd who herds them must now begin a chase in an attempt to remove the sugarcane which will be his prize. People then take the baskets with the cooked rice and return to their homes to continue the feast. (People who do not own animals will only perform a small poñkal in the evening of this day in their home).

3rd Day: Pū Poñkal (Flower Poñkal)

On this day a man must present a new cloth, some paddy, some sugarcane and some coconuts, to any newly born daughters of his sisters. He may also give gifts to older, but still unmarried, 2Ds if he pleases. Late in the morning the pre-puberty girls of the village each take the basket their family used for the celebrations the day before, and fill it with the dried left-over Viñayakar images. They also place sugarcane, raw rice, a little cooked rice, coconuts, bananas, pūla flowers and avāraṅ flowers in these baskets. They then join together outside the houses and make their way to a well, throwing flowers in the air and playing as they go. Often young boys join in the fun as well. When the well (or river) is reached, the contents of the baskets are ceremoniously thrown in. When the girls return they may pile their baskets upside down in a heap on the river bank or in the centre of the village and dance in a circle, singing songs about the Tennimār. Married women do not join in the throwing of flowers, although they may join in the dancing afterwards if they please.

From the above description it should be clear that the poñkal ritual is closely associated with the prosperity of the family, with the increase and health of cattle, and with young children (especially girls), in general. The ritual of boiling a pot of milk or freshly husked paddy is always linked to abundance, to good fortune and to general well-being. Poñkal substances are always white. It would appear that this whiteness, and the heating involved in making the contents of the pot swell, are both connected with the stress on abundance which the ritual is linked to.⁴⁵ Swelling and overflow are not always auspicious, however. They may be excessive or

⁴⁵ The earth from hillocks formed by white ants (and where cobras are said to reside) is considered to be a very auspicious substance for ceremonial purposes. This is because the size of these hillocks, it is said, is always increasing.

untimely. Thus, it would seem, the belief informants have that the first 18 days of the month of Āṭi are dangerous. The Cauvery River is said to overflow at this time. The opposite of poṅku is maṅku which means 'to grow dim, fade, decline or decay'. The latter is associated with clouds and with darkness, in contrast to the association of poṅkal with brightness, whiteness and light.

Poṅkal rice is also associated with the mukūrttakāl or 'milky post' erected at the beginning of all the bigger, auspicious life-cycle ceremonies. Informants are, themselves, quite articulate about this association. According to one person, for example, boiling cow's milk in a pot will cause it to rise or swell up. In the same way, he explained, people hope that the family performing the ceremonies where a mukūrttakāl is erected will increase and prosper. A mukūrttakāl is also planted on an auspicious day on the spot where any new house is to be built. Later a pot of milk is boiled. Only after this is the family allowed to move in.⁴⁶ As in a marriage or a temple festival, the period of ritual importance is introduced by the planting of a mukūrttakāl (or koṭi) and it is terminated by the boiling of poṅkal rice.

This important theme of increase appears in other contexts as well. All relatives who attend a life-cycle festival, for example, (with the exception of the nuclear family) are expected to make a cash gift of a few rupees.⁴⁷ This gift is called muy. It is collected with some ceremony and recorded in a book kept by the hosts. When they are next invited to a ceremony sponsored by one of the guests, they are expected to return the

⁴⁶ This ceremony was performed by my own cook before I was allowed to move into my house in OlappaLaiyam.

⁴⁷ This applies to relatives in the 'parallel' as well as in the 'cross' category.

gift of muy increased. Thus a man who gave three rupees may receive five, from the same household where he was a guest, some months or years later. People do not always manage to enlarge the original gift, but anyone can explain the principle involved. To the best of a person's financial means, he will always try to return slightly more muy than he received.

Another example of this emphasis on increase are the comings and goings of the bride and groom between their two natal homes after the wedding ceremony. In general, they are expected to come and go between the two houses five times: 1) to the groom's for a feast, 2) to the bride's for a poñkal to Viñāyakar, 3) to the groom's for the first night ceremony or 'cool' wedding', and to worship at his clan temple, 4) to the bride's to be feasted and to worship at the bride's father's clan temple, and 5) to the groom's to be feasted and to settle. After this the couple is expected to return to the bride's home for a feast on Tai and ĀTi nompu each year, although these latter visits may decrease with time. On each visit gifts are ceremoniously carried from one house to the other. On each return (particularly the return from the bride's home to the groom's) the baskets of fruit and of sweets are expected to increase. This coming and going between the bride's and the groom's house is not given as much emphasis, perhaps, as elsewhere in the South.⁴⁸ The principle of the increase of gifts with each visit, however, is well understood.

There is one further example of this theme of abundance and of well-being both in the natural and in the human world which deserves special mention. This is the ceremony for the marriage of two trees, a margosa (female) and a ficus religiosa (male), which one sees so often in South India, in front of temples and also as a solitary shrine along important roads. The trees

⁴⁸ See Dumont, The South-Caste, pp. 228-33

are planted next to each other as saplings, so that they will eventually grow together and intertwine. Usually the fig is the bigger and the margosa grows at its side. The wedding may be performed in the 3rd, the 5th or the 7th year after the trees have been planted. After the wedding a large stone carving of a cobra, or of two cobras upright and intertwined, is placed at the foot of the two trees. The whole now becomes a shrine to be worshipped by passers-by, ^{and} ~~but~~, in particular, by women who desire children.

Before the wedding of the two trees, the stone carving of the cobra(s) is carefully, ritually, prepared. First it is placed on a little pile of coins (gold and silver?) for 48 days. This period is called tanvācam or the 'increase of wealth'. Then the stone is placed on a muTTai (large measure) of paddy for 48 days and this is called tānyavācam or 'grain increase'. Finally, it is placed in a well for 48 days and this is termed jalavācam or 'water increase'. All of these point to the association of the cobra stone with the general abundance of the natural world.

After these three periods of 48 days each, the two trees are prepared for the wedding. First a dais and canopy are built around them. The branches are rubbed with oil (as in a wedding bath the bride and groom are similarly annointed) and then a large pūjā, called avicēkam, is performed using milk, curds, coconut milk and turmeric as offerings. Then a kañkaNam or protective thread is tied to each tree. A man's cloth or vesti is placed on the figus religiosa and a sari on the margosa. A Brahman is called to perform puNNiyāccanai and a little marriage necklace with a gold piece (poTTu) is tied to the margosa. Then the carved cobra stone is placed at the foot of the two trees. Puñkal rice is boiled, mixed with sugar and placed in front of the two as an offering. The wedding is complete.

These two trees are referred to as one unit. They are called the karpa maram or 'pregnancy tree' and they are worshipped, in particular, by women

who are eager for children. Thus, the two trees and the cobra carving at their foot are associated, not only with increase in the natural world, but also with human prosperity and abundant offspring. The ficus religiosa (male) is said to have a white sap. The marjosa (female) on the other hand, is said to have milk only in its fruits. The marriage of these two trees, which takes place now and then about the countryside, forms a kind of backdrop for the auspicious increase and fertility of the entire creation, just as the tying of a mukūrtakkāl, or koffi, followed by poṅkal, forms a backdrop for increase and abundance associated with all auspicious temple and life-cycle rituals. Of all these, the ritual of poṅkal can be said to be the most frequently performed and the most often referred to in conversation. If there is any one thread to be singled out which connects all the rituals which have been described above, it is that which is crystalized in the term poṅku, that magical and auspicious swelling of white substances which lies at the heart of abundance and well-being in the universe at large.

Conclusion: Kings, Priests and the Right Hand

One single theme runs through the entire preceding account. This is the persistent difference to be noted, on topic after topic, between the traditions of the right and of the left-hand castes. The contrast in customs between these two divisions has been described on the level of caste organization, in kinship, and even in the differing temple affiliations of the communities of these two groups. The social differences which mark these two divisions are greatest among those castes with high prestige and least among those of low status. Excluding the Brahmans, who remain largely aloof to this divide, the whole social order in Konku is shaped like a large V. The society is patterned or ordered into two halves. These halves are distinct in their higher reaches. They tend to merge as one descends in the social order.

While the contrast between the more prestigious castes of the two divisions is clear, the strength of these differences has a puzzling aspect. Why, if this social division is so marked, do people not talk about it more? Why are 'right-hand' and 'left-hand' almost obsolete terms which only elderly people can (with some effort) remember? It is clear from inscriptional evidence dating back as early as 1200, from the accounts of early missionaries, and from the records of the East India Company, that this right/left distinction has been a burning issue for centuries. However, by 1850 it had begun to fade and by 1950 the classical rivalry between these two groups had completely dissolved. Curiously, however, while the overall division gradually disappeared, the differences between the various castes of the two factions persists.¹ The foregoing account has only attempted to describe the actual

1 In this account the term 'faction' has frequently been used to refer to these two, conceptually opposed, divisions. Although these divisions have showed many of the characteristics of factions in the past, the term must not be taken to mean that any strong feeling of rivalry exists between them today.

social differences between these several castes which can be observed in Kōṅku today. Why is it that the overall right/left framework has ceased to exist, while the peasants of the region still act, in many ways, as if they were governed by it?

Before attempting an answer to the question which has been posed above, it will be helpful to review what is generally known about this prominent characteristic of traditional South Indian society. References to the 'right' and the 'left-hand' block of castes can be found in stone inscriptions of the Tamil-speaking area as early as the 12th century A.D.² The origin of this division has never been clear, but from its first mention in the inscriptions it is evident that the distinction rests on a differentiation of the communities directly concerned with agriculture from those concerned with trading, husbandry and the various skilled crafts.³ What the history of this factional rivalry was in the period up to the coming of the British is largely obscure, due to the lack of good documentation.⁴ The division seems to have stretched over the entire area covered by the modern states of Madras, Mysore and Andhra, but to never have had much force on the West Coast, in modern Kerala.⁵ In the early days of the East India Company in Madras, however, the records become more detailed. During this epoch the disputes between the two divisions were clearly intense. The early documents of the Company describe the situation with some vividness:

² Arokiaswami, Kōṅgu Country, p. 236 and 272.

³ Burton Stein, "The Integration of the Agrarian Order" (unpublished) p.20-21.

⁴ Burton Stein, in his paper above, has argued that these disputes became more intense during the Vijayanagar period due to "the greater exploitive direction of warriors and the concomitant breakdown of those social and cultural controls which had characterized the older nuclear areas". (Ibid., p. 30).

⁵ J.H. Hutton, Caste in India, Its Nature, Functions and Origins (Cambridge, University Press, 1946), p. 143.

In 1707 a quarrel of unusual violence broke out, which lasted in an acute form upwards of six months, and was not finally settled for a full year. The origin of the difference was an infringement by one caste on the alleged exclusive right of the other to the use of certain streets in Peddanaikpetta.... In July Mr. Raworth and the Gunner produced a Draught of all the streets and buildings in the Patta. This western petta was occupied almost entirely by the Right-hand caste, but two streets viz. Bridge Gate Street and Peddanaik Street were inhabited mainly by the Left-hand. The Government decided that these 'two streets are peculiarly appropriated for the left-hand caste to pass in at their making of their weddings and festivities' and directed that the few Right hand proprietors should sell their houses and transfer themselves to the Eastern petta. The Paymaster was instructed to set up 4 boundary stones to mark the limits of the portion assigned to the Left.

The Right then attempted to celebrate a wedding in the forbidden streets. The troops arrested a number of the participators and lodged them in the Choultry prison.⁶

From the description the clear physical separation of the houses and streets within the city is clear. Other passages make vivid the extreme bitterness of the rivalry. They also clarify that the temples of the two factions were located within their own settlement areas and that members of the other faction were not allowed to use these streets for their festivals. Frequently, too, faction members were not allowed to worship at any but their own shrines. In addition, the right-hand group insisted on the maintenance of certain exclusive rights and privileges for their own community. Examples of various privileges which sometimes formed an excuse for a dispute are listed below:

Chart 39: Exclusive Privileges which the Right-hand Communities Maintained Must Not Be Usurped By the Left⁷

- 1) Right to tie up one's hair in a red ribbon

⁶ Henry Davison Love, Vestiges of Old Madras (London, John Murray, 1913), Vol. II, pp. 25-6.

⁷ The details in this list are from Love, Ibid., Vol. III, p. 385-8 and Vol. II, pp. 25-27 and pp. 142-43.

- 2) Right to construct a house with a flat roof.
- 3) Right to use certain colours of banners (particularly white?) at a temple festival.
- 4) Right to use flags at a temple festival having certain figures (a monkey, kite, peacock or bull?) painted on them.
- 5) Right to place a brass cup on the top of a temple chariot.
- 6) Right to the exclusive use of certain streets for festive occasions.

It is also clear from the descriptions of the early British period that the factional allegiance of some castes was not absolute. In some cases different subcastes of a larger community, the Ottai and Irattai Vaniyans for example, belonged to opposite factions.⁸ The Kōmattī CeTTiyārs (at least in Madras) were apparently divided between factions even within one subcaste.⁹ Other castes, it seems, could not make up their minds, as is mentioned in the following excerpt from the East India Company Records:

Both Casts (factions) complain against the Vicullawarr weavers (Mutaliyār) and the Oyle men (Vaniyan?) that they were very fickle in their Cast, that they were sometimes of one Cast and sometimes of another, which gave trouble to both castes. So desired the heads may be sent for, which accordingly was done, when the Weavers declared for the Left hand and the Oyle men for the Right hand which they were ordered to keep to, or be severely punished.¹⁰

The case of the Mutaliyār is particularly interesting as, although they were generally classed with the left, they frequently served as soldiers in the armies of the right.¹¹ This is why, as has been mentioned in earlier chapters, the Mutaliyār appear to be somewhere in between the castes of the

⁸ Thurston, Castes and Tribes, Vol. VII, pp. 312-13.

⁹ S. Arasaratnam, "Aspects of the Role and Activities of South Indian Merchants C 1650-1750" (Paper read at the First Conference-Seminar of Tamil Studies, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, April, 1965, unpublished), p. 7.

¹⁰ H.D. Love, Vestiges of Old Madras, Vol. II, p. 29.

¹¹ Arokiaswami, The Kongu Country, p. 273.

right and those of the left. No story was discovered which connected the Mutaliyār with AnkaLamman, as is the case for all the other prestigious castes of the left-hand. Furthermore, they are the only caste of the left which the Koṅku Navitan (barber) will consent to shave. In questions of education and of joint family they more strongly resemble the left, while in their life-cycle ceremonies the Mutaliyār closely parallel the KavunTar community. Furthermore, two subdivisions of Mutaliyār, the Puluvaṅār (poets) and the MēLakāran (drummers for auspicious life-cycle ceremonies and at large temples) have an important tie of ritual service to the right-hand community.¹²

It may be that the situation of the Mutaliyār parallels that of the PaLli or PaTaiyācci KavunTars. This latter group was classed with the left-hand faction, but PaTaiyācci men helped to fight the battles of the right. One Census Report of 1871 records that the wives of these men were expected to refuse their husbands all sexual intimacy while they were engaged in fighting for the opposite faction.¹³ Similar mention, elsewhere, of a factional split between the men and women of a single community may have a similar explanation. For example, the following description of the Mātāri in Madura District:

While the men belong to the right, the women belong to and are energetic supporters of the left. It is even said that during the entire period of a faction riot, the Chakkili (Mātāri) women keep aloof from their husbands and deny them their marital rights.¹⁴

This custom fits well with a more general emphasis on the ritual purity of women, as discussed in preceding chapters. It appears that there was an understanding that men could cross the factional line in questions of

¹² The MēLakāran in some places themselves divided into two groups, those who would serve the right and those who would serve the left-hand faction. Thurston, Castes and Tribes, Vol. II, p. 128 and Vol. III, p. 40.

¹³ Thurston, Castes and Tribes, Vol. VI, pp. 15 and 361.

¹⁴ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 4.

business, while their wives remained unsullied by a simple prohibition on sexual intimacy between the two during this period. In many other accounts both Mātari men and Mātari women are unambiguously classed as members of the left. Remember, too, that it is only the women of the left-hand communities who (according to one informant) were forbidden to enter the ceremonial area.

Consistent with this apparent stress on the importance of the factional affiliation of women is the fact that the only two visual signs of factional membership are both associated with female dress. The first sign relates to the method of draping the sari. According to older women in Olappālaiyam, all the women of the more prestigious left-hand castes traditionally drape their sari clockwise so that the end falls over the right shoulder, leaving the left bare.¹⁵ Women of the right-hand community, on the contrary, drape their sari counterclockwise, passing it over the left shoulder, so as to leave the right one bare. In both cases the sari worn measured eight yards in length. It was draped in a distinctive fashion, with the pleats behind. It is only in the last thirty to fifty years that this distinction appears to have lapsed. Now most women wear a six yard sari and drape it over the left shoulder, in accordance with modern fashion. Some of the women of the right-hand community (and many women of the lower castes), however, still wear eight yards in the traditional style.¹⁶

The other sign of factional affiliation worn by women, it appears, is incorporated in the tāli or marriage necklace. Tāli styles vary with caste

¹⁵ This included the Kaṅakku Pillai, Ācāri, Kōmūṭṭi Ceṭṭiyār and (perhaps?) Mutaliyār. Brahman women wear nine yards, draping the cloth in a distinctive fashion, but also passing the end over the right shoulder.

¹⁶ Elderly Brahman and Kaṅakku Pillai women also continue their traditional modes of dress.

with caste and even with subcaste throughout peninsular India. Among the indigenous Tamil-speaking communities, however, all these necklaces strike me as being variations on one simple theme. The pendants on elaborate tālis (some of them) look like a tiny person. The others appear to be little more than a simplification or stylization of this basic shape. Although I asked a number of people about the significance of the tāli design no one suggested an answer. The shape was always explained as just a 'custom' or 'tradition'.

All the right hand castes in Koṅku wear a single shape of tāli pendant. The only variation appears to be in its size.¹⁷ What is curious about all the tālis of the right-hand communities in this region is that the 'little man' hangs upside~~down~~. Among the left-hand communities, the same ^{castes} ~~ones~~ who traditionally wore the sari to leave the left shoulder bare now wear a tāli which resembles that of the Brahmans.¹⁸ The Brahman marriage necklace pendant is double, that is it has 'two little men' side by side. It is also much flatter than the KavunTars tāli, and it hangs 'right side up'. The lower castes of the left-hand wear a simple poṭṭu or little round gold piece with a raised dot in the centre as their tāli. The poṭṭu resembles the tāli style worn in Andhra (even, apparently, by Brahmans). The fact that the low left-hand castes, most of whom migrated to Koṅku from Andhra, preserve the northern style is not surprising.

Where the real contrast with the right-hand tāli of Koṅku is found is among the left-hand castes further to the South and East. From what can

17 The wealthy wear larger tāli pendants than the poor, and to some extent the KavunTars appear to wear bigger and more decorative ones than the lower castes of this faction. Sometimes the more prestigious subcaste of a caste (aiyan tāli) will wear a larger tāli than a less respected subcaste (airun tāli).

18 Kutaliyārs sometimes wear a Brahman-style tāli, sometimes a tāli resembling that worn by KavunTars. This variation matches their intermediary position between the two factions in other respects.

be made out from printed sources, the left-hand tāli in these areas resembles, in basic design, the Kavuntar tāli in Konku. The only difference is that the left-hand tāli elsewhere is one 'little man' who hangs 'right side up'.¹⁹ This contrast is diagramed below.

Diagram 7: Tāli Styles

Side View



Front View

Brahman



Right Hand
(Konku)



Left Hand
(Elsewhere in the South)



Low Left Hand (Konku)
(All Castes, it would seem, in Andhra)



From the chart it is clear that the Brahman/Non-Brahman contrast in tāli pendant style is the contrast between a double and a single figure. (Note also the contrast in side views). Between the two factions the contrast is

¹⁹ The sources for this comparison are:

Government of Madras, Census of India, 1961, Volume IX, Part VI, Madras, Village Survey Monographs, Madras, Government Press

No. 2, Thenbaranadu, p. 14

No. 9, Thadagan, p. 29

No. 11, Kunnalur, p. 27

No. 12, Athangarai, p. 27

No. 17, Iswaramoorthipalayan, p. 19

No. 18, Aladipatti, p. 15

No. 25, Vilangulam, p. 17

See also E. Thurston, Castes and Tribes, Vol. V, pp. 253, 265.

In none of the above cases am I certain of the factional allegiance of the caste in question, although in each case my informed guess (independent of tāli style) would be 'left'. The two cases about which I have a greater doubt are listed separately below:

Government of Madras, pp. cit., Village Survey Monographs.

No. 6, Kanakagiri, pp. 21-22

No. 14, Visavanoor, p. 29.

not in the number of 'little men', but in the fact that one (the right hand) has been inverted. This contrast is tentative, however, as the high right-hand castes of Koṅku now wear a Brahman style of marriage necklace. Whether they once wore the style shown for the left hand elsewhere is a matter of conjecture. At the same time, I have not succeeded in finding more than one example of the right-hand tāli elsewhere.¹⁹ This example, however, does make the inversion clear. Whether the chart illustrates a pattern which was once general and well-known in the Tamil-speaking areas remains uncertain. Why the pendant is in the shape of a 'little man', and why the right-hand tāli, rather than the left, has been placed 'upside down' are also unanswered questions.

The fact that the more prestigious left-hand castes in Koṅku wear, at present, a Brahman style of marriage necklace is actually most interesting as it illustrates the degree to which these communities have attempted to imitate the Brahmans in general. The repeated parallel to be found between the Brahmans and the high left-hand castes in specific matters of custom has already been pointed out a number of times in preceding chapters. A further illustration of this is provided by records of legal disputes between the Brahmans and the Ācāris in Madras in 1817. At this time these two castes were locked in bitter controversy over the question of their respective rights to perform certain ceremonies. Excerpts from the court decision at Cittūr for this date read as follows:

This suit was brought against the defendants by the plaintiffs to recover Rs. 530½ damages on account of the defendants having prevented the plaintiffs from celebrating a marriage in their family.... The plaintiffs in this suit call themselves Kammālars (Ācāris), the descendents of five Brahmas.... The plaintiffs maintain that one of their own tribe is their Guru, and performs their religious

¹⁹ Government of Madras, op. cit., Village Survey Monographs, No. 26, Golwarpatti, p. 25.

rites, and that they will not attend to, nor employ a Brahmin therein... moreover, they state that they are neither of the Vaisya nor Sudra tribes, but are descendants of Brhama and that therefore they do not require Brahmins to officiate for them. That moreover they, the plaintiffs are Deva, or divine Brahmins, and that the defendants are Go or cow Brahmins who were originally Sudras.... The defendants in consequence deny that the plaintiffs could ever become Brahmins, though they were born again ever so many times. Moreover, that if the plaintiffs think proper to perform the marriage and other ceremonies using forms of prayers taken from the Veda they will not only be liable to suffer a great punishment in their next birth, but to be punished criminally... they state they would never suffer the plaintiffs to perform any ceremonies contrary to the law of their sect.²⁰

Clearly, the Ācāris were trying to become more Brahman than the Brahmans. The Brahmans themselves were infuriated by this attempt to usurp their exclusive priestly rights and tried to dissociate themselves from the Ācāris to the best of their ability. The British clearly wavered on the issue, for although they supported the Ācāris in this particular judgement, they reversed their sympathy in favour of the Brahmans when a similar case was tried in Salem in 1843.²¹ Although the Brahmans themselves tried to dissociate their community from the left-hand, others, it seems, tended to class them in this division.²²

The general picture, therefore, stands out quite clearly. The right-hand faction everywhere in the South consisted of those castes which had control over the land and its resources. Allied with the right-hand were those who provided them with manual labour and ritual services of various kinds. The castes of the left were more heterogeneous. Some were immigrants

²⁰ Gustav Oppert, On The Original Inhabitants of Bharatavarsa or India (London, Westminster, 1894), p. 59-60.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 61-62.

²² For example, Dr. Burnell in 1873. Ibid., p. 58. In this assessment Dr. Burnell was probably summarizing the judgement of the right-hand castes in this matter.

from non-Tamil-speaking areas. In large measure, however, the left-hand consisted of those communities who lived by trading or by their skills in one or another of the crafts. This group had their own, largely separate, bevy of ritual servants.

In general the left-hand castes tended to look down on those who were tied to the land as unrefined. Against the right they tried to counter-assert their own importance by stressing their ritual purity and their own greater familiarity with the literate and Sanskrit-dominated tradition. The Brahmans were embittered by this challenge to their exclusive position and tried to disassociate themselves from either faction. Because they served as a model for the higher castes on the left, however, many people associated them with the latter against their will.

The rivalry between the right and the left is little more than a repeat of a very old struggle in India between secular power and ritual purity. The Brahman priesthood itself does not appear to have been seriously challenged by those who controlled the basic resources. The members of the right hand were content as long as they could retain the temporal power for themselves. The difficulty lay with the merchants and artisans who, between them, controlled most of the liquid assets and essential skills. These people wanted recognition of their own importance. Because they could not, on the whole, get control of the land, they attempted to counter those who had this control by exhibiting their superior knowledge of the prestigious literature, and by this knowledge to confirm their greater ritual purity.

The left-hand castes have been in the difficult position of attempting to improve their own customs and traditions to accord with what was given prestige in the classical texts. Brahmans have resented this challenge, especially in the matter of their priestly rights and the special sacred chants which accompany them. Despite this resistance, however, the foregoing

chapters point out how successful, on the whole, the left-hand castes have been in their efforts. A clear contrast between the high left-hand castes and all other communities (except the Brahmans) exists in matters of diet, dress, tāli style, life-cycle ritual, kin terminology and details of marriage rights. Their separateness is also clear in the matter of caste organization, clan names and clan deities. Finally, these castes are distinct because of their stress on literacy, on the patrilocal joint family and on dowry. All this accords with their high regard for the values emphasized in the classical texts. The right-hand castes half admire the left-hand. They share the same general regard for this sacred literature and for the rituals which it advocates. At the same time they resent the pretensions of the left-hand faction. They have reasserted their own importance by refusing to dine with these castes and by taking great pride in their own kirāman-centred deities and in their distinctive Koṅku life-cycle rituals.

The Abbé Dubois, describing South Indian society in the period from 1792 to 1823, has several times referred to the intensity of the right and left-hand disputes. His editor, however, writing in 1906, felt it necessary to add a footnote explaining that these faction fights had in his time gradually disappeared.²³ However, the editor comments that in 1906 people still drew a general distinction between these two large groups. Now, however, even the terms left-hand and right-hand have largely disappeared and the fact that these two factions used to be bitter rivals is almost forgotten. Why should such an important social division, one which has had a history of nearly a thousand years, disappear in the course of one century?

The answer, it would seem, lies in the gradual integration of the entire

²³ Abbé J. A. Dubois, Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies, Henry Beauchamp ed. (Oxford University Press, 1906), pp. 24-27.

South under one administration after the coming of the British. With this new scale of government came an increased stability in administration. The result was a general expansion of communications, of trade, and with these, of social horizons in general. The right and the left-hand factions had served, in a sense, as the two big parties or interest groups which were common to the entire region. They served as guidelines for local cooperation and as alliances to guard vested interests in times of upheaval or adversity. They seem to have lost importance gradually, when they no longer had the same role to play. New alignments began to form within a single faction, based on rivalries for government favour. At the same time there was a new cross-faction allegiance based on a common opposition to the power of Brahmans in administrative positions. With the decline of the right and the left-hand factions the history of contemporary political parties in the South begins.

The person who attempts to describe the sociology of rural Koṅka today, therefore, is in a curious position. While the traditional conceptual order based on nāṭu, kirāman, and on the right/left factional split have become obsolete, the social customs based on this order largely remain. It is only by attempting to sketch out the traditional assumptions which underlie these customs that the significance of this social pattern, still to be observed, can be understood.

An attempt of this kind can not be glossed over as an effort to reconstruct a bygone age. For although the pattern in the traditional conceptual order has been obscured or diluted by the great increase in scale in administration and communication of modern times, many of the basic assumptions which underlay this pattern remain. The hierarchical patterning of all human relations, the importance of ritual purity, and of women, the essential regard for auspicious times and substances in relation to largely inscrutable deities,

the stress on natural abundance and on increase in general, the prestige of the ancient law books, all these and many other basic predilections remain. In the coming years some of the traditional customs described in the foregoing pages may be expected to gradually fade. However, the assumptions which underlay them, though changing in their configuration or arrangement, will probably endure. It is hoped that another observer working in the Koiku region in some years time can, with the help of this account, describe with more perspective the nature of these changes and the basic continuity which appears to run through them.

Appendix 1WEIGHTS, MEASURES AND PRICES (1966)
(according to Local Calculations)Standard Measures

The standard measure in purchasing grain or other dry foodstuffs is the paTi. One paTi equals about two heaped cupfulls (standard cooking measure) or about 1.2 pounds in weight. Larger quantities of agricultural produce are measured as follows:

4 paTi	=	1 vellam
16 vellam	=	1 muTa
24 vellam	=	1 muTai (sometimes $22\frac{1}{2}$ vellam)
6 muTa	=	1 pōTi
4 muTai	=	1 pōTi
1 manaku	=	About 25 lbs. of produce

Average Produce per Acre

One acre of good land fertilized with 100 cartloads of manure will produce in a good year:

3 pōTi	of	cōlam
(or)	4 pōTi	of cāmpu
(or)	5 pōTi	of rāki
(or)	6 pōTi	of paddy (if very well irrigated)

One acre of good land without fertilizer will produce in a good year:

2 pōTi	cōlam
(or)	3 pōTi cāmpu
(or)	4 pōTi rāki
(or)	$4\frac{1}{2}$ pōTi paddy (if well irrigated)

One acre of poor land without fertilizer will produce in a good year:

- 1 pōTi colam
- (or) $1\frac{1}{2}$ pōTi campu
- (or) 2 pōTi rāki
- (or) $2\frac{1}{2}$ pōTi paddy (with irrigation)

Market Price of Grain

In July, 1966 the above grains were selling in the Kānkeyam weekly market at approximately the prices below:

- 1 muTai rāki = 50.00 Rs.
- 1 muTai campu = 56.00 Rs.
- 1 muTai cōlam = 67.00 Rs.
- 1 muTai paddy = 120.00 Rs. (high quality paddy)

These prices were calculated at $22\frac{1}{2}$ vellam to the muTai)

Average Consumption Rate

At a rough estimate, a hard working man will eat:

- 1 pāTi grain a day
- $\frac{1}{2}$ muTa of grain a month
- 1 pōTi of grain a year

(Since a man also needs vegetables, spices, cooking oil, salt, cloth and other commodities, he needs to earn at least 1 muTa of grain (or its equivalent in cash) a month to support himself)

Average Wages

The standard wage for fulltime field labour by a man (of a touchable caste) is 2- vellam of grain (cōlam, rāki or campu) a month. The wage for untouchable field labour is 16 vellam a month or 15 to 35 Rs. a month plus a daily meal at noon.

In 1966 daily wages for field labour varied from $1\frac{1}{2}$ Rs. (average) to 2 Rs. for a man and from $\frac{3}{4}$ Rs. (average) to 1 Rs. for a woman. Untouchable labour may also be paid by the year, in which case a worker is entitled to $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{16}$ of the grain reaped at the time of the harvest by his employer.

Non-Agricultural Earnings

Weavers managed to earn 40-60 Rs. a month in 1966. Other skilled labourers such as masons or carpenters were earning from 60-90 (or 100) Rs. a month. Small roadside merchants, at an estimate, also brought home 100 Rs., or thereabouts, a month.

Land Prices

Land prices in Olappalaya in 1966 were estimated to be as follows. In actual fact, however, land did not come onto the market very frequently.

Good Land ('Dry' by revenue assessment standards, but water by good and reliable wells)
Up to Rs. 10,000 per acre.

Moderate Land (Soil less good but having reliable wells)
Up to Rs. 7,000 per acre.

Poor Land (Poor soil and moderate wells)
Up to Rs. 5,000 per acre.

Worst Land (Poor, rocky soil and shallow or unreliable wells)
Up to Rs. 4,000 per acre.

Land prices have been rising fast. Informants say they have doubled in the last ten years.

Building Prices

A small but solid home now costs about Rs. 1,000 to build, although thatched huts or minute dwellings could be constructed for less. A good and roomy home, such as landed KavunTar families would be accustomed to would cost at least Rs. 5,000 to build.

Appendix 2

THE CASTES of KŌŌFU: A SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

(Brackets indicate a less polite name also in use. Brackets plus underlining indicate an alternative polite name)

<u>Caste Name</u>	<u>Description</u>
Pirāman or Brahman (Aiyār and Paṅpan)	<p>The people of this caste represent the purest segment of the population from a ritual point of view. They are greatly respected on this account, but their numbers are small and they are not, in general, wealthy. Most Brahmans in rural areas are priests, a less respected occupation than pure scholarship. They are divided into two main groups: the Aiyār, who are Śivites, and the Aiyankār, who are usually attached as priests to local Śiva temples. They are strictly vegetarian and will not remarry widows. The older women can be identified at a glance by the fact that they wear a nine yard sari which is draped in a distinctive fashion so as to fall over the right shoulder. As widows they wear a light cream coloured sari with a small reddish border. Usually a widow's head will be shaved. Temple rights descend in the male line and so what hierarchy exists among local Brahman families is based on the hierarchy of the temples to which individual families are attached. The men bear the title Kurukkāl or 'officiating priest' and wear a pūnūl or thread which indicates that they have passed through an investiture ceremony. Normally the Aiyār place a dot of yellow sandalwood between the eyebrows, on top of which may be daubed a touch of red powder. Their forehead can also be smeared with the burnt ash of cowdung (vibūti). However, men of other castes sometimes decorate their foreheads in a similar fashion so that this habit alone is not an identifying feature.</p>

<u>Caste Name</u>	<u>Description</u>
Pirāṇam or Brahman (Aiyār and Pāppan) cont.	The Aiyankār are few in number in the rural areas. They perform the ritual at temples dedicated to Viṣṇu or 'PerumāL'. Among the Aiyankār there are many subsections, some of which identify themselves by painting three vertical stripes on the forehead. Only one family from a low ranking subsection called Coṛiya, live in Kannapuram Kirāṇam. Contrary to the assumption that all Tamil Brahmans are vegetarian, this group will eat both mutton and chicken. ¹ Also contrary to general belief, the general population are well aware of the Aiyār/Aiyankār distinction within the Brahman community. Generally people refer to the two groups by separate terms. ²
Kaṇakku Pillai	A small caste of accountants who keep the village land records. They are high in status and relatively well-to-do. They are strictly vegetarian. Their widows wear eight yard saris, rather than the nine yards as the Brahmans. However, they do drape the end of the sari over the right shoulder as a Brahman does. In general they follow the Brahmans in their life-cycle ceremonies. The men wear a <u>pūṇḍi</u> on these occasions.
Kavuṅṅar (also Koṅku Kavuṅṅar, Koṅku Vēlālar or Vēlālar Kavuṅṅar)	The kavuṅṅars are the leading caste in Kongu, both in numbers and in rural wealth and political influence. Kavuṅṅar is actually a title rather than a caste name, but it has been adopted so universally as a reference term by this group that no one would now mistake the meaning. There are several small subcastes of this group such as the Ūrāli Kavuṅṅars. They do not intermarry with the Koṅku or Vēlālar kavuṅṅars proper, although they occupy a position of similar landed

¹ Contrast this with the report by Andre Beteille, Caste, Class and Power, California, 1965, p.59.

² Ibid., p. 75-76.

Caste NameDescription

KavuNTar (also
Kōḍku KavuNTar,
Kōḍku VēLāLar or
VēLāLar KavuNTar cont.

influence in some of the peripheral areas of the region. The group this study is directly concerned with inhabit the heart of the Keḍku plain. Their style of life sets the character of the region as a whole.

The KavuNTars constitute at least 31 per cent of the population of the Keḍku region. Their numerical predominance probably is nearer to 50 per cent in rural areas. Within this very large group there is considerable variation in wealth, but not in religion and ritual. A few very wealthy families have become vegetarian but the vast majority are very non-Brahman in their outlook and living style. The KavuNTars, as a community, are proud of their peasant origin. They are astute in agricultural matters and they are not embarrassed to work with their hands. They are fond of both meat and alcohol and they are prone to a quick temper and a certain amount of violence. KavuNTar women traditionally wear an eight yard sari with a series of pleats set in back rather than in front. The end is drawn over their left shoulder and around the front like an apron. Some of the younger women are now changing to the urban six yard style with the pleats in front. The cord around the neck which women wear as a sign of marriage, called tāli, has a large gold-plated pendant of distinctive shape. Widows tie a white sari and do not remarry.

Mutaliyār (Ceḅkuntam, or
for many subcastes,
Kaikōlan)

The Mutaliyārs are traditionally a caste of weavers and warriors although many of them have taken to business and professions now, particularly in the towns. Mutaliyār is a recent title. More traditional terms referring to this group are Ceḅkuntam and Kaikōlan. They are more literate and more familiar with puranic mythology than most KavuNTars. Their status is equal to the KavuNTars, even above them in some parts of Northern Keḍku where they have large landholdings. On the whole, however, they rank just beneath the latter. The life-cycle ceremonies of this group are similar to those of the KavuNTar, except in minute

Caste NameDescription

Mutaliyār (Cōnkuntan, or
for many subcastes,
Kaikōlan)

cont.

details. Their dress and tāli are also similar, although some Mutaliyār women have now adopted a Brahman style of marriage necklace. Widows must wear white and are not allowed to remarry. There is one distinctive subcaste of Mutaliyār called Molakaram. The men of this subgroup were traditionally temple drummers and the women, temple dancers. In addition, there is a small subcaste of Mutaliyars who are poets.

Paṅṭāram (Āṅṭi)

These people are the non-Brahman priests at most of the temples in Koṅku. They officiate at almost all shrines to local gods while Brahmans officiate at ceremonies for Civa and Viṣṇu. Both Paṅṭārams and Brahmans have rights at Murukan temples but there is evidence to indicate that the Paṅṭārams may have been the original priests at these shrines before Brahman influence in the South became widespread. The Paṅṭārams are also cooks for the Kavunṭars and other high, non-Brahman communities. Other traditional skills of theirs are tying flower garlands and the preparation of edible leaves. Their life-cycle ceremonies and dress are exactly like that of the Koṅku Kavunṭars.

Uṭaiyār (Kēṅ Uṭaiyār,
Kuyevan or Kocuvan)

Uṭaiyār is a royal title and these people frequently are less respectfully referred to by the names in brackets. They are the potters of the region and also specialists in preparing baked clay images of gods for the temples. They supplement their income by doing some of the more skilled masonry jobs such as laying steps, setting windows and tiling roofs. In diet and in prohibition on widow remarriage, they follow the Koṅku Kavunṭars. Their life-cycle ceremonies, however, are somewhat different. The men wear a pūnūl on these occasions.

Nāṭār (Nūpan or Nāṅan)

These people are the toddy-drawers of the area. They are skilled in climbing the tall pāṅai tree (palmyra palm) and tapping its sap. This substance is distilled by them to make brown sugar and also, where prohibition is not enforced, alcohol. They used to be somewhat more prosperous than at present, due to recent

<u>Caste Name</u>	<u>Description</u>
NāTār (Mūpan or CāNan) cont.	<p>competition from refined white sugar and also because there has been severe government control on distillation, since Independence. NāTārs supplement their income by hiring themselves out as agricultural labour. In diet and dress they resemble the Koṅku KavunTārs, but their life-cycle ceremonies, like those of the UTaiyār above, are somewhat distinctive.</p>
CeTTiyār	<p>This is a general name referring to the merchant community. The caste is divided into several important subgroups. One subgroup, called Koṅku CeTTiyār, claim to be a merchant branch of the Koṅku KavunTārs. Their claim is generally accepted and their ceremonies and style of life are identical to the former except for the difference in occupation and the fact that the two groups do not intermarry. There are other important subcastes, however, which are quite different in their traditions and in their status. The most important in terms of this study are the Vysial, KōmaTTi or KōsuTTi CeTTiyār. Their mother tongue is Telugu, although all are bilingual as adults. This subgroup were originally immigrants from Andhra. In the villages they are disliked and resented. Frequent jokes are made at their expense. In the towns, however, the KōmaTTi are wealthy and enjoy a high status. They are vegetarian and traditionally wore the <u>punul</u> at all times, just as Brahmans. However, many do not follow this custom strictly now. Their life-cycle ceremonies also resemble those of the Brahmans. There are other groups of Telugu-speaking CeTTiyārs and Kannada-speaking ones as well.</p>
Ācāri (KāmmāLan)	<p>This is the artisan community, comprising the five traditional crafts of goldsmith, blacksmith, carpenter, stonemason and brazier. Again, there are subcastes with differing traditions which do not intermarry. However, the subcastes do not follow craft divisions. Instead each subgroup has several skills. In our sample two distinct communities are important. The first is the Koṅku Ācāri who now resemble the KavunTārs in dress and eating habits although</p>

Caste NameDescription

Ācāri (Kāmmāḷaṅ) cont.

they claim to have been vegetarian previously. Traditionally they insisted on a widow wearing a white sari but they have recently been easing up on this restriction. However, they still will not consent to widow remarriage. Their ceremonies are distinct from those of the Kavūṅṅar community and more closely resemble those of the Brahmans. The second important subgroup referred to in this study are the Cōṛi Ācāri. In contrast to the former, the Cōṛi are vegetarian and wear a punūl. Nonetheless, some of the younger men can be found ignoring this custom. They say that in the past they were much stricter regarding matters of pollution and purity than the Kavūṅṅar community and than their Koṅṅu counterparts. Although they do not normally allow a widow to remarry, the Cōṛi Ācāri say that they have never required such a woman to wear white. Their life-cycle ceremonies, however, are the same as those of the Koṅṅu subgroup described above.

Kāyakkaṅ (Īōyaṅ or OTTan)

These people are earth-movers, well-diggers and builders. Their mother tongue is Telugu although all are bilingual as adults. They eat meat, including pig, but excluding beef. People jokingly say that they eat bandycots or large rats as well, but this was not substantiated by observation. Kāyakkans are, in general, more lax in their regulations than the castes above them. In rural areas people consider them to be a low but still touchable community. They do not require that a widow wear white and will allow her to remarry. A different subdivision of this caste, which are known by the same general term Kāyakkaṅ (more respectfully Naṅṅu) live in the city of Coimbatore where they are extremely wealthy and successful businessmen. In contrast to the former, this subgroup is highly educated and Westernised. They are known, in particular for their entrepreneurship in the mill industry.

Caste Name
Nāvitan (Nācuvan
 or Ambattan)

Description

This is the barber's community. Within the Nāvitan there are three important subcastes. The first, the Koṅku Nāvitan, serve the Koṅku KavunTars and resemble them in dress, diet and ritual. The second group, the VēTTuva Nāvitan serve the VēTTuva subcaste of KavunTar and resemble them in their life-cycle rituals. The third group, the PāNTiya Nāvitan, also differ in their ritual from the Koṅku group. They, or the VēTTuva Nāvitan, generally shave the Ācāri, the NāTār, and other communities which the Koṅku Nāvitan will refuse to serve.

VaNNan

This is the washerman community. Again there are several distinct subcastes. The Koṅku VaNNan serve the Loṅku KavunTars and resemble them in dress, diet and in the details of their ritual. They require a widow to wear white and will not allow her to remarry. Other subgroups speak Telugu or Kannada as mother tongue and are less particular about their habits and the rules of governing widows. The ceremonies of these other subgroups are considerably different from those of the Koṅku VaNNan referred to above.

Paraiyan
 (Āti TirāviDa for
 Christians)

The Paraiyans are outcastes or "Untouchables" who live in settlements distinctly separated from the groups described above. They are the drummers at festivals and life-cycle ceremonies. When there is no occasion to drum they supplement their income by doing odd manual jobs. Despite their membership in the harijan community, these people are vital to the correct performance of the Koṅku ceremonies. Thus, even as untouchables, they maintain a position of some importance and respect. They will not eat beef. They insist, in addition, that their widows wear white, and they will not remarry them. To the extent that they can afford it, the Paraiyan life-cycle rituals follow those of the KavunTar community. During the past sixty years a large proportion of this community has been converted to Christianity. In theory, therefore, they have abandoned their traditional Hindu beliefs and practices. The KavunTars

<u>Caste Name</u>	<u>Description</u>
<p><u>Paraiyan</u> (Āti TiruvīDa for Christians) cont.</p>	<p>object strongly to their conversion because of their position as ritual servants. Many would threaten to terminate their services except for the fact that it is difficult to find substitutes. At the same time the Paraiyans are afraid of losing KavutTar patronage and are careful not to ridicule traditional beliefs. The Paraiyans place a high value on education and many young men, after a few years of schooling, migrate to the towns to find work. In ten to twenty years the KavutTars may be hard put to find Paraiyan drummers for their ceremonies.</p>
<p><u>Mātāri (Cakkiliyan)</u></p>	<p>This is the second important outcaste community. The Mātāris, alone, account for nearly 20% of the population in rural areas and supply the backbone of manual labour for agriculture. There are many subcastes, most of whom speak Telugu or Kānnaḍa as their mother tongue. They are lower in status than the Paraiyans and also poorer. Their special skill is in leather work. They not only supply sandals for the population at large, but they make the huge leather buckets which are used in well irrigation all over Keḍku. The need for these buckets is only now gradually being replaced by electrical pumps. A fair portion of the Mātāri community have also been converted to Christianity, but their understanding and adherence to the new faith is perhaps even more nominal than that of the Paraiyans. They are a backward group and much less interested in education than the former. A fair number are publicly 're-converted' to their traditional beliefs. Mātāris often do menial cleaning tasks and carry away animal carcasses. Their traditional ceremonial shows considerable differences with that of other communities described above. Some subcastes, however, bear a strong ritual relation to the Nāyakkan community.</p>
<p><u>Kugavan</u></p>	<p>This is the third untouchable group mentioned in this study. The Kugavan are basketweavers by tradition. Sometimes they supplement their income by hunting</p>

Caste NameDescriptionKuravan cont.

hare and birds. Their settlements are non-too-permanent and they wander about when they please, having no strong ties with any high-caste communities. They are poor but resourceful and have a certain pride even though they are greatly looked down upon by others. Their ritual does not resemble closely that of other groups described. They will eat beef and remarry widows.

Appendix Three

Population Details, By Caste, For the Coimbatore District

The chart below illustrates that the relative population, by caste, in Kannapuram Kirāman and in OlappāLaiyam Village does not differ greatly from the relative population, by caste, in the entire Coimbatore District. This fact is one of several which have been mentioned in the body of the text as reasons for selecting this particular locations as a base for an intensive study.

The first three columns record information taken from the Madras Presidency Census Reports of 1901, 1911 and 1921 respectively. After 1921 a variety of objections were raised to recording census information by caste and thus later censuses evaded the use of most caste names to avoid offense. There is no reason to believe, however, that the relative population by caste in the Coimbatore region has changed radically in the past 45 years. The fourth column records the relative caste population, by house compounds in Kannapuram Kirāman. The figures are based on my own survey as official statistics are not available. Column five records the actual population, by caste, in OlappāLaiyam Village. Again the figures are based on my own survey.

The actual population of OlappāLaiyam Village in April, 1965 was 410. Sixteen people, however, (one Kaṇakku FILLai family and one family of Telugu-speaking Naṭṭus who were newcomers) have been added only in the total, as their equivalent communities could not be identified in the census returns. Another 25 has been added on to this to represent the untouchable settlements which are physically distinct from OlappāLaiyam village, but which, none the less, form an important part of the local labour supply and of the rural community in general. This brings the basic sample size of this

study to 512. It is against this latter total that the comparisons with Coimbatore District as a whole are drawn in column six. In this final calculation the average of columns 1, 2 and 3 have been set against the average of columns 4 and 5.

The figures starred in blue in column six represent castes whose main occupation is closely tied to agriculture or to the demands of the dominant farming community, the Kavayārs. It is not surprising that these castes are somewhat more heavily represented in a sample from a rural area, than in the population as a whole. The opposite is true of the Cēṭṭiyār traders, starred in red. This caste gravitates to the towns and is, therefore, under-represented in rural areas.

Chart 40:

POPULATION DETAILS, BY CASTE

Caste Name	Coimbatore District Census of:						Kanna- pura Kiramam 1965 (%)	Olap- pala Village 1965 (%)	Relative Population District Sample
	1901 (%)	1911 (%)	1921 (%)	1965 (%)	1965 (%)	1965 (%)			
Brahman	33,788 2%	22,240 1%	23,616 1%	3	.3%	10	2%	1/1 %	
KavuNTar * (Vellala)	629,540 31%	639,557 30%	694,906 31%	558	53%	217	42%	31/47%	
Mutaliyār (Kaikolan)	56,249 3%	61,227 3%	83,000 3%	24	2%	30	6%	3/4 %	
PaNTāram (Andi)	35,160 2%	39,594 2%	38,344 2%	16	1%	10	2%	2/1 %	
UTaiyār (Kusuvan)	17,643 1%	22,090 1%	25,625 1%	18	2%	10	2%	1/2 %	
ceTTiyār * (Chetti)	100,544 5%	64,428 3%	47,989 2%	5	.5%	7	1%	3/1 %	
īcāri (Kammala)	46,043 2%	55,195 3%	33,345 1%	18	2%	36	7%	2/4 %	
NāTār * (Shannan)	70,655 3%	76,907 4%	72,923 3%	75	7%	34	7%	3/7 %	
Nāyakka (Tottiyān)	34,237 2%	26,643 1%	28,505 1%	23	2%	26	5%	1/3 %	
Nāvita (Ambattan)	24,823 1%	29,511 1%	30,485 1%	22	2%	6	1%	1/1 %	
VanNag (Vannan)	26,880 1%	29,734 1%	26,706 1%	21	2%	8	1%	1/1 %	
Paraiyan * (Paraiyan)	75,481 4%	69,849 3%	73,363 3%	55	5%	0	0%	3/5 %	
Mātāri * (Chakkiliyan)	176,608 9%	198,380 9%	206,162 9%	237	21%	0	0%	9/21%	
Kuraven (Korava)	12,417 .6	12,975 .6%	9,845 .4%	6	.5	0	0%	.5/.5	
Sub-total	1,340,068 67%	1,348,330 64%	1,394,814 63%	1,109	100%	+16 410	77%	65/100	
Total Population	2,004,839 100%	2,116,564 100%	2,219,848 100%	1,109	100%	+25 512	100%		

Sources

- Column one: Government of Madras, Madras District Manuals: Coimbatore, Vol. II, Madras, 1898, p. 17.
- Column two: Government of India, Census of India 1911, Vol. XII, Madras: Part II, Imperial and Provincial Tables, Madras, 1912, p. 2, 116-119.
- Column three: Government of India, Census of India 1921, Vol. XIII, Madras: Part II, Imperial and Provincial Tables, Madras, 1922, p. 4, 118-123.
- Column four: Author's survey.
- Column five: Author's survey.
- Column six: Represents an average of columns one, two and three set against an average of columns four and five.

N.B.

- a) Column 4 represents a count of house compounds, not of individual persons. Olappālaiyan is included as one of the settlements of the kirāman.
- b) Percentages in the chart have been rounded to the nearest whole number, except in the case of fractions of one per cent.
- c) About 55% of the castes named in the old census reports were not present in the Kannapuram Kirāman sample. Many of these are small groups which are unknown in the District as a whole. A few, however, (with populations over 20,000) are reasonably important communities. The names of these latter, along with a brief description, are given below.

Balijs - Telugu-speaking traders

Devanga - Telugu and Kanāda-speaking weavers

Kanna - Telugu-speakers. Originally soldiers, but now largely agriculturalists.

Kurusban - Tamil-speakers who live by hunting, gathering and crude agriculture in the hill areas.

Palli - Tamil-speakers. Mostly agricultural labourers and tenants.

Pallan - Tamil-speakers. A very low-ranking caste of agricultural labourers.

- d) From a glance at the chart it is clear that the population of some castes varied quite radically from one report to the next. This is due largely to confusions of definition, in other words to difficulties in deciding which subcastes should be listed together under one general heading. In addition, there were probably considerable inaccuracies in the counting procedures. An attempt has been made to minimize these variations by averaging together the results of several different counts. The intention of the chart is not to establish an actual membership count for any particular caste, but only to determine a community's relative strength in the population as a whole. It will be noticed that while the variation in the actual numbers recorded is considerable, the variation as a percentage of the total is small.

Appendix Four

Details of Caste Ranking Analysis

In determining the order in which castes are ranked in Koṅku, it was decided to follow the general approach suggested by Pauline Mahar (Kolenda).¹ Dr. Kolenda designed an interview for the study of caste ranking in Uttar Pradesh (1959) which focused on how individual informants view themselves vis a vis members of other castes with whom they come into contact. Her thirteen questions each describe a specific situation where the issue of ritual distance is at stake. The report of this study accords with my own experience that when Indian peasants are asked to think about social rank, they employ the criterion of ritual distance in discussing the position of other communities relative to their own.

The questionnaire I used in my study of ranking was designed to follow what had been done in Uttar Pradesh as closely as possible. I soon found, however, that four of Dr. Kolenda's questions could be eliminated from my own inquiry because they were based on ritual customs in North India which have no clear parallel in the South (her nos. 6, 7, 8 and 12).² In place of these I added one question of my own concerning which castes would and would not be invited to sit on a man's front porch. This detail many people

¹ Pauline Mahar, (Kolenda), "A Multiple Scaling Technique for Caste Ranking", Man In India, June, 1959, Vol. 39, pp. 126-47.

² Men do not smoke pipes in the South. They prefer tiny cigars called pīṭi. These are generally not shared once they have been placed on the lips. Thus Dr. Kolenda's questions 6 and 7 about sharing a pipe were irrelevant. Her question 8 concerns the sharing of pakkā food (cooked in milk or butter). In the North such food is apparently distinguished from dry, uncooked eatables called sukhā sidhā (her question 10). In Koṅku, however, people utilize only two basic food categories, raw (raw or uncooked) and cooked (cooked) food. Dr. Kolenda's questions 9 and 10 were considered sufficient to make this distinction. Furthermore, informants considered her questions 11 and 12 (touching a water vessel and touching the drinking water itself) to be equivalent. Thus her number 12 was also eliminated.

did distinguish from permission to sit on their sleeping cot or to enter their cooking area. Thus my interview consisted of ten questions, Dr. Kolenda's of thirteen.

This modified interview, as I have used it, has already been discussed in Section I B 1. The purpose of this appendix is merely to indicate how the scores used in Charts 9-11 were arrived at. For this purpose the questions in the interview are relisted below. Beside each query is the letter and corresponding score assigned to it for each positive answer.

No. in Text	Question	Corresponding Letter in Chart	Score for a Positive Reply
1.	Can a touch your children?	A	1
2.	Can a touch you?	B	1
3.	Can you accept fruits and betel leaves from the hand of a?	C	$\frac{1}{2}$
4.	Can a touch your brass vessels without your having to wash them?	D	$\frac{1}{2}$
5.	Can a touch your earthen vessels without your having to throw them away?	E	$\frac{1}{2}$
6.	Can a enter your kitchen?	F	$\frac{1}{2}$
7.	Can you accept water from the hand of a?	G	$\frac{1}{2}$
8.	Can you accept cooked rice from the hand of a?	H	$\frac{1}{2}$
9.	May a seat himself in your reception hall (or your porch?)	I)	1
10.	May a seat himself on your sleeping cot?	J)	

The questionnaire was given verbally to members of thirteen different castes, and one male and one female adult were selected from each as informants.³ The respondent was asked to answer question one with regard

³ In one case, that of the Paraiyans, I used only one informant, a male. His answers were so uniform that it did not seem necessary to check his responses with a second person. The scoring is therefore based on 25 interviews (13 male and 12 female).

to every other caste named (sixteen, minus the informant's own) before proceeding to question two. The caste names were deliberately presented in a haphazard order so as not to provide any ranking clues to the informant.

The initial scoring of the answers to the questionnaire is given in Chart 41. In this chart the vertical column of caste names to the left represent the names of the castes interviewed. The responses are recorded for one male and one female informant, in each case. Reading across the code indicates the number of positive answers given by the informant in regard to the particular caste inquired about (horizontal listings at top of chart). Questions A to H have been recorded separately from questions I and J to facilitate a separate scoring. Thus, if the informant has answered every question positively with regard to the particular caste in question, the chart reads (A-H IJ). If he has answered only questions A, C and F positively then the chart reads (A, C, F). Thus a dash means all questions listed between the two letters given were answered positively. A comma, on the otherhand, means only the letters actually recorded in the chart received a positive answer.

In a few cases informants commented that the ritual distance between them and the caste in question had lessened in the last few years. In such a case the traditional distance is recorded in black and the new custom in red. Thus (A, C/-c) means that the informant, in the past, would have only given a positive answer to questions A and C. Now he can give a positive answer to questions A through C. The scoring was done according to the total score for positive answers. Thus (A, C IJ) is scored as 1½ for the A through H count and as 1 for the IJ count. The totals, where modified by recent changes in custom, are given separately. The modified totals were not used in constructing the charts in the texts.

Chart 41:

INITIAL SCORING OF CASTE ASKING INQUIRY

Informant's Caste		Caste Inquired about							
		Brahman	KaNakku PILLai	KavuNTar	Koṅku CeTTiyār	Muta-iyār	PaNTāram	UTaiyār	
Brahman	Male		A, B I	A, C, D I	A, C, D I	A, C, D I	A, C, D I	A, C, D I	
	Female		A, B I	A, B I	A, C I	A, C I	A, C I	A, C I	
KaNaKku PILLai	M	A-H IJ		A-D IJ	A-D I	A-D I	A-D	A-D	
	F	A-H IJ		A-C IJ	A-C I	A-C I	A, C	A	
KavuNTar	M	A-H IJ	A-H IJ		A-F I	A-H I	A-H	A, B	
	F	A-H IJ	A-H IJ		A, E, G, H I	A-H I	A-H	A-E	
Mutaliyār	M	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ		A-H	A-E	
	F	A-H IJ	A-H I	A-H IJ	A-F I		A-H I	A-C	
PaNTāram	M	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ		A-F IJ	
	F	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ		A-F/HIJ	
UTaiyār	M	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-E IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ		
	F	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ		
KōmuTTi CeTTiyār	M	A-H IJ	A-C I	A, C I		A, C I	A, C I	A, C I	
	F	A-H IJ	A-C I	A, C I		A, C I	A, C I	A I	
NāTār	M	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-F IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	
	F	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-F IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	
Ācāri	M	A-H IJ	A, C _H IJ	A, C _H IJ	A, C _C IJ	A, C _C IJ	A, C _H I	A, C _C I	
	F	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-C IJ	A-H IJ	A-H	A-C I	
Nāyakkan	M	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	
	F	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	
Nāvitan	M	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	
	F	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	
VaNNan	M	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	
	F	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	
Paraiyan	M	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	
	F	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	
Total:	A-H	115	100	93	92	92	92	78	
Traditional	I&J	23	18	19	16	15	11	11	
Modified Recently		115	104	98	93	94	97	81	
		23	18	19	17	15	11	11	

N.B. The male Ācāri interviewed was from the Gōri Ācāri subcaste, the female from the Koṅku Ācāri subcaste. These two subcastes were not distinguished in the inquiry from the point of view of others. In other words, the questions were asked in the form "Would you accept from an Ācāri?" The sub caste was not specified.

Scores are rounded down to the nearest whole number.

Kümü T. Cetiyat	Natâr	Acâr	Nâyetkan	Nâvitan	Vannan	Pâvitan	Mataf	Kuravan
A,C,D I	A,C,D I	A,C,D I	A,C,D I	A	A	--	--	--
A,C I	A,C I	A,C I	--	C	--	--	--	--
A-D I	A-D	A-D I	A-D	A	A	--	--	--
A-C I	A,C	A-C I	A	A	A	--	--	--
A-D,F	A-D	A-C I	A,B	A,B	A	--	--	--
A-D I	A-D	A-D I	A-D	A-D	A-D	--	--	--
A-C	A-D	A-D IJ	A-C	A-C	A-C	--	--	--
A-D,FI	A-C	A-C I	A,B	A,B	A,B	--	--	--
A-D,FIJ	A-C I	A-D IJ	A-C I	A-C	A,B	--	--	--
A-C IJ	A-D I	A-C IJ	A-C I	A-C	A-C	--	--	--
A-E IJ	A-D I	A-C IJ	A-C I	A-C	A-C	A	A	A
A-C	A-H IJ	A-C,F IJ	A-C	A-C	A-C	--	--	--
 	A,C/c I	A,C/c I	A,C/c I	A/c	A/c	--	--	--
 	A,C I	A,C I	--	--	--	--	--	--
A-C,F IJ	 	A-C,F IJ	A	A	A	--	--	--
A-C,F IJ	 	A-C IJ	A,B	A-C	A,B	--	--	--
A,C/c IJ	A,C/c I	 	A-C	A-C	A-C	--	--	--
A-C IJ	A-D	 	A-C/I	A-C	A-C	--	--	--
A-H IJ	A-F IJ	A-F IJ	 	A-C	A-C	--	--	--
A-H IJ	A-F IJ	A-F IJ	 	A-D	A-D	--	--	--
A-D,F IJ	A-D,F IJ	A-D,F IJ	A-D,F IJ	 	A-D,F IJ	--	--	--
A-F IJ	A-F IJ	A-F IJ	A-F IJ	 	A-F IJ	--	--	--
A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-C,F IJ	A-H IJ	A-C,F IJ	 	A	A	A
A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-F IJ	A-H IJ	A-F IJ	 	--	--	--
A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	A-H IJ	 	--	--
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
76	71	67	57	50	48	2	2	2
14	8	14	5	3	3	0	0	0
77	73	68	58	50	48	2	2	2
14	8	14	5	3	3	0	0	0

Appendix Five

KavuNTar Clan Names

The residents of Olappālaiyam could only name about twenty KavuNTar clans with whom they had actually come into contact in their life time. Sometimes people could name a few more which they had 'heard of' by word of mouth. Many other clan names, however, are mentioned in various printed sources. A rough estimate might be that there are about a hundred extant clans in the Koṅku region today, and as many more, now extinct, which are mentioned in manuscripts and stories about the past. The list below includes all the clan names which I encountered during my two-year stay. Where the name is mentioned in a literary source the reference is indicated in the column to the right. To the best of my knowledge, all the names refer to Koṅku (VēLālar) KavuNTar clans.

Definition of columns:

1. A clan name familiar to the residents of Olappālaiyam and known to have living members in the Kāṅkayam area.
 2. A clan name mentioned in Cinnucāmi KavuNTar, Koṅku VēLālar (Erode, Tamiran Accakan, 1966).
 3. A clan name mentioned in K. PaRaniccāmi Pulavan, Koṅku Celvi (Coimbatore, Iudumalar Press, 1948).
 4. A clan name mentioned in K. PaRaniccāmi Pulavan, ed. Alakumalai Kuravanci (unpublished manuscript).
- N.B. Numbers one to forty-eight were named by PaRaniccāmi Pulavan as the first 48 clans to enter Koṅku (as VēLālars) from the southeast, during the period of Chola hegemony in the 11th and 12th centuries. Note that number forty-eight actually refers to a group of Ceṭṭiyārs rather than to a KavuNTar clan.

Clan Name	Columns			
	1	2	3	4
1. Antuvar (Antavan?)	x	x	x	x
2. Āti		x	x	x
3. Āntai	x	x	x	x
4. ĀTar		x	x	x

<u>Clan Name cont.</u>		<u>Columns cont.</u>			
		1	2	3	4
5.	Āvan		x	x	x
6.	Īncar		x	x	x
7.	OtāLar	x	x	x	x
8.	kaNNar (kaNNantaiyar)	x	x	x	x
9.	kaNavāLar	x	x	x	x
10.	kāTai (kāTavar)	x	x	x	x
11.	kāri		x		
12.	kīrar (kīran?)	x	x	x	
13.	kuyilar		x		
14.	kuHaiyar		x	x	x
15.	kūran		x		x
16.	kōventar		x		
17.	Caṭtantaiyar	x	x	x	x
18.	Celvar		x	x	x
19.	Cempan (Cempiyar)		x	x	x
20.	CaṅkaNNar	x	x	x	x
21.	Cempūtan		x	x	x
22.	Cevāyar		x		
23.	CēTan		x		
24.	Tēvēntirar		x	x	x
25.	TōTar (TōTai?)	x	x	x	x
26.	NīruNNiyar		x	x	
27.	PaNNan (PaNNai?)	x	x		x
28.	PavaLar		x		x
29.	Panaiyan		x		
30.	Payiran (Payara?)	x	x	x	x

<u>Clan Name</u> cont.	<u>Columns</u> cont.			
	1	2	3	4
31. PāNTiyan		x		x
32. Pūca <u>n</u>		x	x	x
33. Pūntai		x		x
34. Pūccantai		x		
35. Peru <u>ku</u> Ti	x	x	x	x
36. Periya	x	x		x
37. Poru <u>l</u> entai		x	x	x
38. Ponn <u>a</u> n		x	x	x
39. Ma <u>N</u> iy <u>a</u> n	x	x	x	x
40. Mā <u>T</u> ar		x	x	
41. M <u>u</u> tt <u>a</u> n		x	x	x
42. Vilaiyar		x		x
43. Vā <u>N</u> ar		x	x	
44. Villiyar		x	x	
45. Vi <u>R</u> iyar (VeLiyar)		x	x	x
46. Tū <u>r</u> ar			x	x
47. Nī <u>l</u> ar			x	x
48. Ce <u>T</u> Tiy <u>a</u> r			x	
49. Pataru	x			
50. Ma <u>R</u> ukkā <u>t</u> a	x			
51. Ku <u>n</u> ukkar		x		
52. Ce <u>R</u> iyar		x		
53. Tanancey <u>e</u> n		x	x	x
54. Patu <u>m</u> a <u>n</u>		x	x	
55. Pa <u>n</u> ankā <u>T</u> ar		x	x	
56. Patariyar		x	x	

<u>Clan Name</u> cont.	<u>Columns</u> cont.			
	1	2	3	4
57. Pillar (Pillar or Pillan)	x	x	x	x
58. Mayilar		x		
59. VeNNakkar	x	x	x	x
60. VeNTuvar	x	x		x
61. VeLLampar		x	x	
62. Velaiyan		x		
63. Vannarar			x	
64. Kāvaliyar			x	
65. Lānar			x	
66. TirumuTiyār			x	
67. Cērar		x	x	x
68. Kōvar			x	
69. Māvalar			x	
70. Ōrukkar			x	
71. PaTukunni			x	
72. Cēkar			x	
73. Puttan			x	
74. PoTiyān			x	
75. Ventan			x	
76. Māla			x	
77. ARakar			x	
78. Pacari			x	
79. Mūriyan			x	
80. Aṣṭuntuli			x	
81. Variviri			x	
82. Mātanke			x	
83. Pūtar			x	

Word Names cont.

Columns cont.

	1	2	3	4
84. Tōrakkar			x	
85. kaNakkar			x	
86. kunilan			x	
87. kunTeli			x	
88. Mēti			x	
89. Nēriyan			x	
90. Cūriyan			x	
91. Cūla			x	
92. Cōti			x	
93. Minavan			x	
94. ENnai			x	
95. Mātuli			x	
96. Maituli			x	
97. Ātirai			x	
98. VirakuNan			x	
99. Avuriyan			x	
100. Cavuriyan			x	
102. Peraman			x	
103. Pancapūtiyan			x	
104. MaRuvāRakar			x	
105. Tuntuva			x	
106. Cōman			x	
107. Talinci			x	
108. UvaNan			x	
109. Kaluri			x	
110. Nārai			x	
111. Nanter			x	

<u>Clan name</u> cont.	<u>Columns</u> cont.			
	1	2	3	4
112. KōTTārar			x	
113. URuvar			x	
114. Punnai			x	
115. Tēmān			x	
116. Cūrapi			x	
117. Mūvar			x	
118. Kapilan			x	
119. Intirar			x	
120. KarunkaNNen			x	
121. Vēniyan			x	
122. Kampa			x	
123. Akkini			x	
124. Cāttuvanāyan			x	
125. NaytaLi			x	
126. Parampan			x	
127. KaTcevi			x	
128. Nīla vilōcanan			x	
129. Tanapantan			x	
130. Anakan			x	
131. Canakan			x	
132. Ātturēyan			x	
133. Mūnaivirān			x	
134. Kiliyan			x	
135. MukkaNNan			x	

Appendix Six

Kin Terminologies, By Caste

The kin terms used by the Koñku (VēlāLar) KavunTars are listed below, in full. Alternate terms, less frequently used, are given in () brackets. In all cases it is the term of reference which is listed. These terms are also used for address, where the relative is elder to ego. Kinsmen who are younger than ego are always addressed by name. Kin terms in use by other castes are listed subsequently. To avoid repetition, only those terms which differ from the KavunTar listing are shown. All terms given are used by both male and female speakers, unless the relationship, itself indicates the sex of the speaker or the limitations of usage are indicated in [] brackets.

<u>Kin Term</u>	<u>Relation to Speaker</u>
1. Appāru (Ayyā)	FF [rarely MF]
2. Appucci	MF
3. Āttā (Appattā)	FB [rarely MB]
4. Ammayi (Amnicci)	MM
5. Appā (Ayyā)	F [rarely FF, MF or S]
6. Ammā	M
7. Periya Appā	FB(e), MZH(e)
8. Cittappā	FB(y), MZH(y)
9. Periya Ammā	MZ(e), FB ₁ (e), FB ₁
10. Cinna Ammā	MZ(y), FB(y), FB ₂
11. Māmā (Māman)	MB, FBH [rarely MBS(e) or FZS(e)]
12. Attai	MBW, FZ, WM, HM
13. ANNan	B(e), FBS(e), MZS(e), BDE(e), FLDH, FBDH

<u>Kin Term</u> cont.	<u>Relation to Speaker</u> cont.
14. Akkā	Z(e), MZD(e), FBD(e), WBW(e), HW ₁
15. Tampi	B(y), PBS(y), MZS(y), ZDH(y) /rarely S/
16. Tañkacci (Tañkai)	Z(y), FBD(y), MZD(y), WBW(y), HW ₂
17. Māmanār	WF, HF, WFB, HFB
18. Camanti	DHF, SHF, DHB, SHB
19. Marumakan (Māppillai)	DH, ZS /male speaker/, BS /female speaker/
20. Marumakal	SV, BD /female speaker/
21. Akkā Makal	SD /male speaker/
22. Maccāntār	MB(e)
23. Kōhuntaṅār	HB(y)
24. Maccan (Maittanar)	ZH(e), MBS(e), WB(e), FZS(e)
25. Māppillai (Maittanar)	ZH(y), MBS(y), WB(y), FZS(y)
26. Mañkayā	HW(e), HZ(e), WZ(e), MWB(e), FZD(e)
27. Kōhuntiṅā	HW(y), HB(y), FZ(y), MWB(y), FZD(y)
28. Cakalai	WBH /male speaker/
29. Furusan (Kaṅavan, Vīttukkārar)	H /Term avoided by women in reference to their own husband. When necessary the third is the preferred/.
30. Manaiivi (PonTāTTi, PeNcāti)	W
31. Makan (appā, or Tampi sometimes, in address)	S, BS /male speaker/, ZS /female speaker/, FRSS, MZSS, FZSS, MZBS

Kin Term cont.Relation to Speaker cont.

32. MākāL (Āminni sometimes, in address, Pollaoci area)	D, BD /male speaker/, ZD /female speaker/, FBSĪ, MZSD, FZDD, SLJD
33. Pēran	SS, DS
34. Pētti	SD, DD

To the best of my knowledge the Koṅku CeTTiyār, Mutaliyār, UTaiyār, PaNTāram, NĀPār, Koṅku Nāvitan, VaNhan (those who serve the KavunTar community) and Paraiyan communities all follow the KavunTar terminology, above, in every detail. Sometimes ANNi is mentioned as a prestigious alternate term for Naṅkayā by members of these castes.

Variations on the Above in the Kin
Terminology of Other Castes

<u>Kin Term</u>	(No. corresponds to KavunTar term)	<u>Relation to Speaker</u>
1 & 2	Tāttā	FF, MF
3 & 4	PāTTi	FM, MM
11	Amman	MB
	māma	FZH
24 & 25	Ammanci	MBS(e), MBS(y)
	Attān	FZS(e), FYC(y)
26 & 27	AmmaṅkaL	MHD(e), MBD(y)
	AttanṅkaL	FZD(e), FZD(y)

Kaṅakku PILLai

Same usage as the Brahmans, above, except that one informant ~~said~~ said Amman was preferred for both MB and FZH. Thus it would seem that the distinction between these two relatives may not be made as clearly as in the case of Brahmans.

Ācāri (CōLi subcaste)

1 & 2	Tātta	FF, MF
3 & 4	PāTTi	FM, MM

Ācāri (CŌLi subcaste) cont.

24	Attān	MBC(e), FZS(e)
26	ANAI	MBD(e), FZD(e)

Ātaliyār

1 & 2	Tātta	FF, MF
3 & 4	PāTTI	FM, MM

Āmā (Mother tongue Telugu)

1	Ayyā (Jēyāyyā, Appārayyā)	---
2	Tātta	MF
3	Ammayyā (Appattā)	FM
4	Avvā (PāTTI)	MM
11	Māmayyā (Māmā)	FZH
	Māmā	MB
12	Attammā (Attai)	MBD
	Attai	FB
19	AlluTu	DH, ZS /male speaker/ BS /female speaker/
20	KōTalu	SW, BD /female speaker/
24	Pāvā (Maccan)	MBS(e), FZS(e)
26	Oṭunai (ANAI)	MBD(e), FZD(e)

Nāyakkan (Mother tongue Telugu)

1	PēTTayyā (Appārayyā)	FF
2	Tāttā (Appucci)	MF
3	Āmāyammā (Appattā)	FM
4	Tāttammā (Ammāyi)	MM
24	Pāvā	MBS(e), FZS(e)
26	Vatanā (Pānkai)	MBS(e), FZD(e)

Mātari (Moracu Subcaste, Mother tongue Kannada)

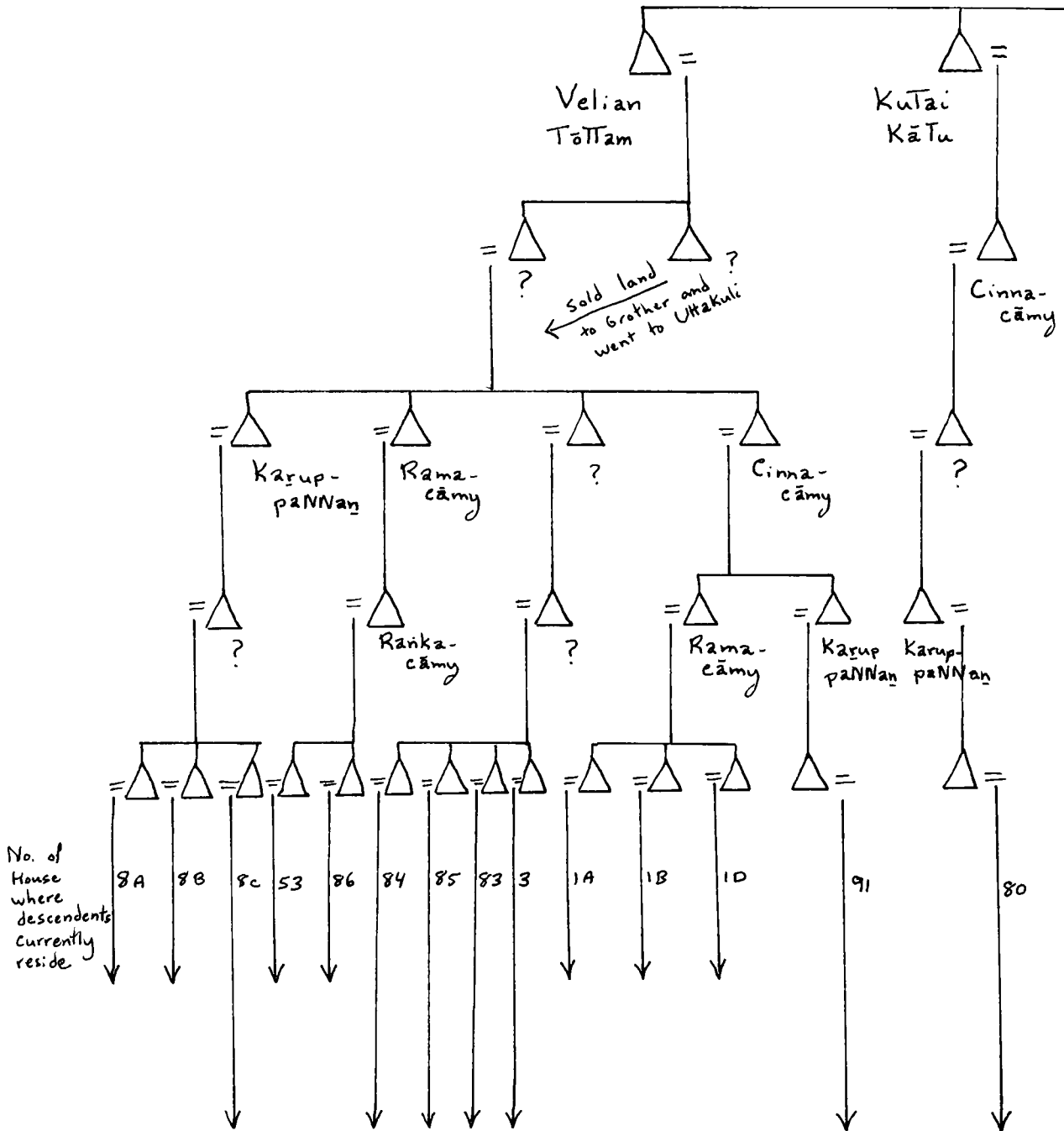
2	PāTTan	MF
3	Appattā (ToTTavi, PāTTi)	PM
4	PāTTi (PāTTivi)	MM
12	Akkā	PZ, MM
24	Mamā	MBS(e), F2S(e), /also used for MB and P2E/
26	Connavi (Cannavi)	MBS(e), F2D(e)

Kuravan

2	PāTTa (Appicci)	MF
12	Akkā (Attai)	MBV, PL

APPENDIX 7: GENEALOGY OF THE KANAVALAR CLAN OF OLAPPALAIYAM

Cont.



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| 1964 | No. 11 | <u>Kunnalur</u> |
| 1964 | No. 12 | <u>Athangarai</u> |
| 1965 | No. 14 | <u>Visavanoor</u> |
| 1965 | No. 17 | <u>Iswarancoorthipalayan</u> |
| 1965 | No. 18 | <u>Aladipatti</u> |
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