

**HIS5Bo7 KERALA SOCIETY AND CULTURE:ANCIENT AND
MEDIEVAL**

MODULE-3

TOPIC-AGRICULTURE & VILLAGE COMMUNITIES



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- With the formation of regional & local power centers- expansion of agriculture & village communities took place
- Expansion of agriculture- formation of new villages & village communities
- Local power centers- different organizational forms & nomenclatures
- Names of these local centers are often confusing as their powers overlapped each other
- Predominant local centre- ‘Desom’, ‘Thara’, ‘Tharavad’ or family unit
- Had an agrarian base as the resources derived from agricultural base was a significant factor
- More land – brought under cultivation



- Better techniques – used in the process of agricultural production
- Newly emerged regional powers granted land to military men by way of service tenure
- Newly formed Nair militia – administrators & judicial authorities in rural areas- Controlled actual cultivators of land belonging to lower caste
- Since consolidation of agricultural village system, with the proliferation of subcastes caused by developing divisions of labour, caste mechanism functioned as a political structure



- Village settlements in Kerala- remained in scattered form instead of clustered nucleated villages
- All castes of high & low status lived in these villages including occupational groups
- Non-Brahmin localities had an assembly called ‘Thara’- not organized on the basis of any geographical extent- local organization of several Nair families / taravads
- As militia group Nairs had vast areas of land under control



- Each 'Thara' had a 'Yajamanan'- a karalar Nair
- Thara – civil & municipal body in respective localities
- Thara – in session known as 'Tharakootam'- represented by elder members of Nair taravads within the locality
- Thara – specific community, co-ordinating & serving the interests of people of the Thara
- Hereditary functionaries like carpenter, washerman, barber, blacksmith, astrologer, physician etc- rendered services to the people of Thara, under the direction & supervision of Tharakootam
- Kalaris- organized where young boys were provided armed training, especially Nair boys





- Southern Kerala –term ‘Kara’ used for Thara
- Uru – assembly of the Nambuthiris
- ‘Desom’- another village community – headed by ‘Desathalavan’- Nair chief- nominal loyalty to Naduvazhi
- Desom –based on geographical extent normally ranging upto 10 sq.kms
- Logan- there were 126 Desoms & 72 Tharas in Malabar
- Desom was a part of village
- Geographical extent of Desom varied according to the density of population
- Desathalavan was assisted by ‘Pramanis’ in the administration of desom

SANKETAMS



- Temple corporations existed in early Medieval Kerala
- Existed b/w 12th & 18th C
- Temples- land owner, employer, customer & as centre of redistribution of resources- temples become the socio- economic & cultural institution
- Brahmins- dominant group as owners & proprietors of both Brahmaswam & Devswom lands- become defacto rulers of villages
- Term Sanketam used in historical records in various contextual meanings



- A small area or village under the spiritual & material control of the temple or Nambuthiri Brahmin community – Sanketam
- Sovereign power centre, the temple council known as the ‘Yogam’ with only Nambuthiri Brahmins as the members was also referred to as Sanketam
- Sanketam- used to notify those village which were not directly ruled by the Naduvazhis
- Pointed out to the yogam of the Brahmins & their power in relation to the administration of temples & temple properties



- Temple sanketams turned out to be autonomous ruling bodies in the course of time
- Absence of a centralised power also helped the growth of this autonomy of the temple corporations
- Land granted by the rulers to the temples or Brahmins was also came to be known as ‘Janadhina sanketam’ & ;kshetradhina sanketam’
- Officials of sanketam were the ‘Koima’ & ‘Akakoima’
- It is presumed that these administrators even conducted judicial administration of their respective areas & they had the power to try & punish even the local ‘desavazhis’ for their crimes



- Sanketams of Payyanur, Chovvara, Trikakara, Tiruvalla, Panniyur- most powerful
- Sanketams- maintained their own Nair militia called 'Changatam'
- Duty of changatam was to protect the temple property
- It provided armed assistance to sanetams to maintain law & order & conduct judicial proceedings
- Remuneration paid to the members of the changatam was fixed according to the financial capacity of the concerned sanketams
- Foreign travellers – mentioned about existence of changatam in different parts of the state



Thank You