

as a hallowed precinct. The founder or the earliest-remembered ancestor of the *okka* is worshipped as the *karanava*.<sup>8</sup> In some *okkas*, a female ancestor, the *karanachi*, is worshipped if she is the earliest-remembered ancestor or is renowned for something important that she had done for the *okka* (for example, getting the *ainmane* built).

Some *okkas* have more than one *karanava*. If the earliest-remembered *karanava* had no children and the members of the *okka* are descendants of his brother/patrilineal cousin, the latter is also considered a *karanava*. There are instances where the ancestor who built the first *ainmane*<sup>9</sup> or a famous hero is regarded as a *karanava*.

### EVOLUTION OF THE AINMANE

As early as the eighth century AD, probably even earlier, the *mula nivasis* lived in simple mud huts, with sloping bamboo and reed roofs thatched with wild grass, in *ur guppes* (village settlements, *ur* meaning ‘village’ and *guppe* ‘cluster’). It is very likely that the earliest of these used very little wood, if at all. Simple openings in the walls perhaps served as entrance doors and windows. Even today, many cowsheds and attics in some *ainmanes* have such simple openings in their mud walls that serve as doors and windows.

All the members of an *ur guppe* shared the natural resources of the area and lived together in harmony. Each *okka* cultivated its own piece of land and grazed its cattle on common pastures. The *okkas* helped each other with manual labour while sowing, harvesting and thatching roofs—a practice called *pache pani* (barter of labour), which continues to

8. Also referred to as *karana* (literally ‘cause’, meaning ‘origin’), *guru karana*, (‘preceptor/guide’ who is the origin), or *karana purusha* (the original person).

9. He is also called the *mann mane thangnava*—which means ‘the one who built the mud-house-shelter’.

be prevalent in some areas of Kodagu. Members of an *ur guppe* also shared a common *thutengala/kekola* (cremation/burial ground).

It is believed that since about 600 years ago, the *paleyagaras* (local chieftains) broke up the *ur guppes* and gave each *okka* ‘rights’ over large tracts of land nearby so that more land could be brought under cultivation and more produce could be collected as revenue. This included wetland for cultivation of rice, land for grazing cattle and forest land.

Over time, each *okka* built a bigger, isolated house on its land and all the members of the *okka* lived together under one roof in this house. These houses were simple ones, with mud walls and sturdy tree trunks for pillars. Horizontal rough-cut wooden cross-beams laid over the pillars supported the triangular roof trusses built with rafters and reapers of bamboo and reed. The sloping roof was thatched with wild grass or rice straw. Wood that was available in abundance was used for doors and windows. This house, called a *balya mane* (large house), was probably the origin of the *ainmane* of the *okka*.<sup>10</sup> These early *ainmanes* are believed to have been built after people moved out of the *ur guppes*.

All the *okkas* who had lived together in an *ur guppe* continued to maintain close and friendly ties with each other. Some even continued to share the same *thutengala/kekola* that they had shared when they were members of the same *ur guppe*. The earliest settlers in a village proudly call themselves ‘*ninda kula*’ or ‘*thangi ninda kula*’ (clans who settled) and refer to those who came later as ‘*banda kula*’ (clans who came). They are recognised by the temporal order in which they settled in the village as ‘*ondane kula*’ (the first *okka* to settle in that village), ‘*dandane kula*’ (the second *okka* to settle), etc.

FACING PAGE: Roof with rough-cut wooden beams and bamboo rafters found in old *ainmanes*

10. Some *okkas* continue to refer to their *ainmanes* as *balya manes*.



When an *okka* moved away from an *ur guppe* to an isolated *ainmane*, there was a need felt for a friendly and caring *okka* to call upon for help during good and bad times. This *okka*, usually a neighbouring one that had originally lived in the same *ur guppe*, was called its *aruva*<sup>11</sup> *okka*. A few *okkas* have more than one *aruva okka*. The *aruva okka* could be from any community, although it was most often from the same community. This mutually agreed upon arrangement to help each other, called ‘*aruvame*’, is permanent and usually reciprocal. Even today the *aruva okka* plays an important, if ceremonial, role during the wedding and death ceremonies in the *okka* for which it is the *aruva*.

All the members of an *okka* lived together in their *ainmane* and shared the work on the land attached to it. Income from a portion of the ancestral property was often set apart for the maintenance of the *ainmane*, for expenses related to the ceremonies conducted there and for maintenance of destitute members of the *okka* who lived in the *ainmane*. This practice continues to this day.

When an *okka* grew and more living space was required, some of the nuclear families of the *okka* built *ale pores*<sup>12</sup> (dwelling huts) also called *pora manes* (outhouses) for themselves, around their *ainmane* and close to it. Some built houses on land belonging to the *okka* in *koppas* (hamlets) further away, and these were called *koppath mane* or *koppa*. Originally these were probably shelters built by the *okka* for temporary stay when grazing cattle and looking after their land in those areas.

Later, as the *okkas* grew even larger and the need for privacy and independence became stronger, some of the wealthier nuclear families

11. *Aruva* stands for *ariyuvava*, which means ‘one who knows’.

12. *Ale* appears to be the Malayalam *thadbhava* (form derived from Sanskrit) of *alaya*, which means ‘dwelling’, and *pore* means ‘hut’.

acquired land in locations that were quite dispersed and not adjacent to the land belonging to the *okka*, and built their own individual houses there. However, members of all these families who lived away from their *ainmane* assembled in their *ainmane* for ceremonies and festivals.

The *ainmane* of an *okka* was built on its *jamma*<sup>13</sup> land, with its front facing east towards the rising sun, with a few exceptions.

When they could afford it, the *okkas* rebuilt their *ainmanes*. The rebuilt *ainmanes* were large imposing structures of mud and wood. They had wooden ceilings with sloping roof trusses made of wooden beams, rafters and reapers, and were thatched with rice straw. The woodwork in many of them was finely crafted with doorways and windows displaying beautiful carvings by skilled artisans from neighbouring Malabar (in north Kerala), some of whom had migrated to Kodagu even before the advent of the Kodagu rajas (kings of the Haleri dynasty) in the 1600s.

The rebuilt *ainmane* was usually built on the base of the older *ainmane* or close to it. There are instances where the *okka* rebuilt its *ainmane* a little away from its former site because the original location was considered to be unlucky for the *okka*. In a few cases, an *okka* was forced to move its *ainmane* to another village, because the raja found the *okka* becoming too powerful in the area where its *ainmane* was originally situated and, fearing that power, gave the *okka* alternative *jamma* land in a far-away village. In one case it was because the raja wanted to build a palace at the site of the *ainmane*. There are rare cases where an *okka* exchanged its *jamma* land and *ainmane* with that of another *okka*.

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13. Ancestral property of the *okka* that is hereditary for the *okka*, jointly owned by its members and nominally taxed. From the Sanskrit *janma* which means 'a life-time'. See Appendix 4, Land Tenure.

The architecture of the *ainmane* evolved to include the characteristic features of what is now considered a ‘traditional’ *ainmane*—a typical *kayyale* (verandah) in front with solid, square, carved, wooden pillars tapering upwards, often with beautifully crafted carvings on the capitals on top of the pillars; *aimaras* (bench-seats) of solid, polished slabs of wood laid over low parapets of mud built between the pillars; a sturdily built wooden *machi*<sup>14</sup> (ceiling of wooden planks plastered with mud on top to form the floor of the attic) resting on horizontal joists supported by the pillars; and a sloped roof thatched with rice straw. The *kayyale* invariably has a window with a beautifully carved wooden frame, inset with an intricately carved wooden screen and a carved wooden panel on top. The main door in the *kayyale* that leads to the *nellakki nadu bade* (central hall) has an ornate, carved door frame with a carved wooden panel above it. Doors from the central hall lead to the rooms of the *ainmane*. The mud floor of the *ainmane* is stamped down and washed with a mixture of cow-dung and water. This type of traditional *ainmane* with a single roof is called an *othe pore*, a one-winged house (*othe* literally means ‘single’ and *pore* is a ‘hut’ or ‘thatched roof’). See Appendix 16 for a sketch of the floor plan of a typical *othe pore*.

The other type of traditional *ainmane*, which is not as common as the *othe pore* is a *mund mane*,<sup>15</sup> at the centre of which is a *mund*, a square,

14. In the folk songs of Kodagu, a *machi mane* (house with a wooden ceiling and attic) is attributed to a well-to-do *okka*.
15. Of the 683 traditional *ainmanes* we have seen, 85 are *mund manes*. These are somewhat similar to the ‘courtyard houses’ found in many parts of India, especially the *nal kett* (*nal* means ‘four’ and *kett* means ‘structure’ in Malayalam) *tharavads*, the ancestral houses of the Nairs and Namboodris in Kerala; the *malla illu* (*malla* means ‘large’ and *illu* means ‘house’ in Tulu) ancestral homes of Tulunad; and the *thotti mane* or *dodda mane* (*thotti* means ‘trough’, *dodda* means ‘large’ and *mane* means ‘house’ in Kannada) houses of Karnataka. The main difference is that the *mund mane* in Kodagu has *aimaras* around the *mund* and in the *kayyale*—a feature not found in the other houses. Besides, square pillars tapering upwards are unique to the houses in Kodagu.



Machimada *ainmane*

sunken inner courtyard open to the sky, with a hallway, the *nellakki nadu bade*, on all four sides around it. The carved pillars at the four corners of the *mund* are similar to the ones in the front *kayyale*, with carved capitals and *aimaras* between the pillars along the edges of the *mund*. The rooms of the *ainmane* are situated around this inner hallway with doors leading into them. It is said that in the past, a *mund mane* was a symbol of a *thakkame* (hereditary leadership role, see Appendix 10 on *Thakkame*) held by the *okka* or of a special honour granted to it by the raja, and could only be built with his permission. See Appendix 16 for a sketch of the floor plan of a typical *mund mane*.

Thus the architecture of the *ainmanes* evolved from (a) simple mud huts clustered in *ur guppes*, with crude openings in the walls for doors and windows and sloping bamboo and reed roofs thatched with wild grass,

to (b) isolated houses with mud walls, mud floors, sturdy tree trunks for pillars, wooden doors and windows and sloping bamboo and reed roofs thatched with wild grass or rice straw, to (c) what are now called ‘traditional’ *ainmanes*, with mud walls; *kayyales* with square, carved, wooden pillars tapering upwards supporting the attic, *aimaras* between the pillars, beautifully carved wooden door frames and windows; mud floors washed with a mixture of cow-dung and water; wooden ceilings of cross-beams; and sloping roofs with wood rafters and reapers, thatched with rice straw.

Many of these traditional *ainmanes* burnt down over time due to accidental fires (caused by sparks from the open wood stoves in the kitchen hearth igniting the thatched roofs) or when they were set on fire by enemies. In the distant past, when *nads* (administrative units, each of which consists of a group of villages) in Kodagu were under the control of local chieftains called *paleyagaras/nayakas* who fought amongst themselves over territory and power, it was common practice to set *ainmanes* of enemies on fire. Later, some *ainmanes* were burnt down by Tippu Sultan’s soldiers.<sup>16</sup>

With the passage of time, some of these traditional *ainmanes* collapsed due to incessant heavy rains. Some were dismantled because they had deteriorated, either due to lack of resources to maintain them (often because very few members were left in the *okka*), or because of neglect by members, many of whom no longer lived in their *ainmanes*. By tradition, an *ainmane* was never allowed to collapse or fall in ruins. If it was in a state of disrepair it had to be dismantled, after which it was rebuilt, often on the same base and in the same style.

16. Informants in eleven *ainmanes* that we visited told us that their original *ainmanes* along with the inmates were burnt down by Tippu Sultan’s soldiers. Tippu Sultan, the ruler of the neighbouring province of Mysore, led many armed campaigns against Kodagu in the late 1700s, in an attempt to subdue the people of the region.





Ammeyanda *ainmane*.  
(This ainmane  
was dismantled  
around 2008)

When the size of the *okka* was large enough and sufficient resources were available, some of the *ainmanes* that got burnt, fell down or were dismantled, were either rebuilt in the traditional style, exactly as they were earlier or even more sturdily, on the base of the old *ainmane* or near it. In some cases the original *mund mane* was rebuilt as an *othe pore*. The thatched roof of the *ainmane* has in most cases been replaced by clay tiles (introduced in Kodagu in the late 1800s) and the flooring in many *ainmanes* has now been partly or wholly cemented.

The impression one now gets is that where an *ainmane* is not well maintained, it could be due to any number of reasons—neglect by the younger generation that has moved away for economic reasons; disagreements between members on the use of the common resources of the *okka*; lack of resources; or simply because its members do

not appreciate the social, cultural and historical importance of their *ainmane*.

In recent years, however, many old *ainmanes* that were in a bad state have been replaced by simple houses that are smaller in size and are made of brick and mortar to make maintenance easier, so that the *okka* still has a common place where its members can assemble and conduct the traditional ceremonies and rituals associated with the *ainmane*. Some *ainmanes* that have fallen or were dismantled have not been rebuilt at all.

### STRUCTURES AND AREAS IN THE AINMANE COMPLEX

The *ainmane* is the hub of a composite cluster of structures and designated areas, all of which are located on the *jamma* land of the *okka* and many of which are still found in the vicinity of the *ainmane*. They include the following—listed roughly in the order in which one comes across them when one visits an *ainmane*. (Detailed descriptions of most of these are given in the text that follows.)

***Kalloni*** - Stone-paved lane that leads to the *ainmane*.

***Ubba*** - Gate made of a pair of stone posts and bamboo poles.

***Bale bakka*** - Clearing by the side of the path leading to the *ainmane*.

***Bakka pore*** - Guard's lookout hut at the top of the lane leading to the *ainmane*.

***Patti*** - Forecourt or yard in front of the *ainmane*.

***Kall boti*** - Stone post in the centre of the *patti* and/or in the *kala*.

***Kala*** - Threshing yard, usually located to the south of the *ainmane*.

***Kanathare*** - Circular well, usually located to the north-east of the *ainmane*.