

TRIPUNITHURA GRANDHAVARI
A STUDY

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P. NARAYANAN



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY
Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla-171005

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Abbreviations

TGMS	Tripunithura Temple Grandhavari
TGP	<i>Tripunithura Kshetram</i>
VG	<i>Vanjeri Grandhavari</i>

Preface

An attempt is made in the ensuing pages to describe the socio-economic and cultural milieu of the Tripunithura temple during the 17th and 18th centuries on the basis of an unpublished Malayalam manuscript titled 'Tripunithura Grandhavari', accessed from the Regional Archives at Kochi.

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P. NARAYANAN

Introduction

This study seeks to unravel the socio-economic and cultural transactions of the Tripunithura temple (located in the former princely state of Cochin), and also its relations with the ruling chief, in the light of an unpublished Malayalam manuscript titled 'Tripunithura Temple Grandhavari' (henceforth TGMS), procured from the Regional Archives at Cochin (now Kochi). A manuscript can be defined as any document or book transcribed by hand. These original sources are quite reliable, and have meaning and importance beyond a coterie of specialists. *Grandhavari*, the regional term for manuscripts, is a combination of Sanskrit and Malayalam words: *grandha* is a Sanskrit word which means tying, binding, stringing together, etc.,¹ and *vari* in Malayalam denotes something written or marked.² Before print culture became widespread, records were preserved in Kerala by using a small iron rod less than 6 inches long to mark/write on palm leaves that measured 3 inches by 4 on an average. These leaves were tied together with a thread looped through a hole in the centre. Therefore, the term 'grandhavari' means written materials that have been fastened together.

In pre-modern Kerala, individuals and institutions preserved their documents and records of daily transactions in this form. Often, the private documents of families and institutions are preserved in manuscript form as grandhavaris. These chronicles provide vital information about land grants and the extent of property holdings, tributes, social customs or taboos, rites and rituals, households, daily expenses, wages and price indices, weights and measures, intra-regional and inter-regional trade relations, and transport and communication. Not all grandhavaris possess all these attributes. At the same time, this cluster of characteristics serves as a general

guide for identifying the features of the grandhavaris that appeared in medieval Kerala.

The grandhavari is distinct from the *koyil olugu* found in Tamil Nadu, which can be described as the practices, traditions, methods of worship, festivals and administration related to a temple.³ Besides providing details of the temple property and its history, the grandhavaris also offer an insight into rural life—its material culture, agricultural practices, and the relations between spiritual and temporal powers—along with an elaborate account of the ritual hierarchy in the temple. They offer insight into a host of values, beliefs and attitudes, particularly those concerning religion, debt, crime and social taboos in the pre-modern period. The first attempt to elevate grandhavaris to the status of a historical corpus was made by M. G. S. Narayanan in his *Vanjeri Grandhavari*.⁴ Subsequently, a few other publications appeared in this genre.⁵ But for such stray publications and occasional references, however, the grandhavaris as such have not merited the attention of researchers.

The grandhavari that forms the focus of this study, the TGMS, is quite unique in several aspects. It seems that the grandhavari was originally written on a day-to-day basis in the form of chronicles on palm leaves, and at a particular point of time it was copied onto paper. The title page of the 334-page Malayalam manuscript has the following lines: ‘Trippunithura Temple Grandhavari copied from the original [palm leaf] by H. H. Rama Varma, G.C.I.E., L.L.D, the Maharaja of Cochin’.⁶ The year in which these chronicles were transcribed onto paper is not mentioned here. At the same time, a perusal of the documents in the TGMS reveals that they were copied in the course of the late 19th century, as the most recent document in the text dates to AD 1896. It may be reasonably assumed that this exercise was undertaken by King Rama Varma, who ruled Cochin from 1895 to 1914. Popularly known as Rajarshi, Rama Varma was an erudite scholar and a great patron of learning and literature. Besides setting up a Sanskrit college, he made Tripunithura a centre of learning. He also had an excellent collection of palm leaf records. Unlike his predecessors, Rama Varma was quite progressive in his outlook and had no hesitation in disposing of a part of the jewellery of the temple for building railways in Cochin.⁷ Naturally,

his independent outlook and bold state-building policies produced tensions in his relations with the colonial masters, resulting in his abdication in 1914.

It should be noted here that the records in the grandhavari do not bear a chronological sequence, and some are not even dated. It seems that while attempting to copy, the palm leaves might have been shuffled due to their caducity, as they become quite brittle with the passage of time. In fact, this is the only chronicle to have been transcribed onto paper by a ruling chief. What prompted the ruler to copy these chronicles from the palm leaves is not clear.

Apart from highlighting the rituals of the temple, the manuscript also points to the collaboration and conflict between sacred and secular powers. This is the most attractive aspect of this grandhavari. The style and script of the language belong to the medieval period; there is no long vowel or elongation. Nor do we come across punctuation marks like the comma in these documents. Equally interesting is the fact that the manuscript does not use the decimal system, and instead has fractions for everything—indeed, it was a ‘world of fractions and symbols’. The fractions vary from $1/320$ to $1/8$; more interestingly, symbols are used to denote these fractions. For example, we never come across $1/320$ or $1/8$ in numerals but only certain symbols for these fractions. It is at times extremely difficult to decipher the symbol because of the style of writing, posing a challenge to a study like the present one. Certainly this document has to be supplemented with other temple records to get a comprehensive picture of the temple. For instance, in 1943, the Devaswom Department of Cochin State published a volume in Malayalam titled *Tripunithura Kshetram* (henceforth TGP).⁸

The significance of describing the past in its totality by drawing upon a wide variety of sources, including the details of life among ordinary people, was first suggested by Jules Michelet.⁹ The idea of ‘total history’ gained a new momentum in the writings of the French Annales School, especially Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, whose works have been widely read since the second half of the 20th century. These scholars highlighted how day-to-day events in the lives of individuals and institutions can be integrated with mainstream historiography. The study of the grandhavaris of medieval Kerala should be placed

in this context. Apart from authors like C. Achyuta Menon or K. P. Padmanabha Menon,¹⁰ others have not consulted the native chronicles in their studies. Such historical writings, based mainly on travelogues or administrative records, have been concerned largely with politics and trade. In fact, the chronicles form a rich vein that could be explored for constructing an integrated picture of the past.

The period covered by these documents corresponds to the political turbulence that Cochin experienced in the wake of the intrusion of European powers on the Malabar coast. Kerala by the 13th century had become a mosaic of petty feudal states that had acquired bit by bit the land and authority of the defunct Chera kingdom. Kshatriyas, Nairs and less frequently Brahmin chieftains set themselves up as rajas: besides the major *svarupams*¹¹ like Venad (Travancore), Cochin, Calicut and Kolathunadu, there were more than 30 minor principalities, including some minuscule states with conflicting interests. This produced an infinite variety of constantly changing alliances and alignments at all levels of life.

Cochin made its debut as a political entity when the Perumpatappu svarupam¹² adopted the city as its capital. The Perumpatappu family had its early abode at Vanneri Nadu, located between present-day Kunnamkulam and Ponnai taluks. Unable to cope with the unequal fight with the Zamorin of Calicut, the family shifted its capital to Mahodayapuram (near Muziris) in the second half of the 13th century. The Zamorin, however, continued to be a source of danger to the svarupam. Meanwhile, certain geological changes brought into existence the harbour of Cochin in AD 1341, which also resulted in the diminution of the Muziris/Cranganore harbour. The Perumpatappu family subsequently moved to Cochin, which had originally belonged to the Brahmin chief of Idappalli. Known in Dutch records as Repolim, Idappalli comprised Cochin, Mattancherry and Punithura, which originally belonged to the ruler of Chempakasserry (Ambalappuzha). This place was purchased by the raja of Kolathunadu (ruler of north Malabar) and gifted to the Tripunithura temple to be protected by the chief of Idappalli:

Kolathatikal [ruler of Kolathunadu] had congenital blindness and when astrological consultation was made it was revealed that the wrath of

Lord Vishnu was the reason for this amaurosis and as an atonement he should make an outright purchase of Punithura desam from the ruler of Chempakasserry and gift it to the temple of Tripunithura. Accordingly the ruler secured the area along with its inhabitants and presented [it] before the temple. Thus he got his vision and he also urged the ruler of Idappilli to protect the whole area with his people.¹³

Though this document is not dated, it can be inferred that these events might have taken place before the 14th century, and that the Idappalli chief might have come to possess Punithura and its suburbs through this transaction. Early in the 15th century, 'the raja of Idappalli made a present of it to the king of Cochin who happened to be his son. His successors resented this ceding of territory and made repeated attempts on it without success.'¹⁴ Thus began an era of hostilities between Cochin and Idappalli, which assumed new dimensions when the latter approached the Zamorin for help. This gave the Zamorin the opportunity and an excuse to frequently form alliances against Cochin.

It is significant that the Brahmin lineage mentioned above did not give the rulers of Cochin the status of a Brahmin family, and they remained Kshatriyas. Francis Day suggests that Cochin alone had a Kshatriya ruler in medieval Kerala.¹⁵ 'It shows the caste of the Kulasekhara rulers to which Perumpatappu kings originally belonged through matrilineal system, continued even when the father was a Brahmin. But it also suggests that the Brahmin links, which this royal family claimed, included claims over temples.'¹⁶ At the same time, the shifting of the capital of the Perumpatappu family from Vanneri to Cochin via Mahodayapuram also indicates the desire of its ruler 'to rely on the surplus maritime trade for building up a strong state-structure that could counter the expansionist moves of the Zamorin of Calicut'.¹⁷ Subsequent developments have proved that this decision yielded the ruling family both economic and strategic advantages.

Writes Dietmar Rothermund, 'the king of Cochin was an exceptional one, because his power was mainly based on the control of many temples in the hinterland. His ritual sovereignty had real benefits not only because he could derive income from these temples, but *because* he had access to *pepper producing* areas'.¹⁸ Admittedly,

the new capital turned out to be quite conducive for replenishing the state's coffers, but how far the new state structure was strong enough to combat the religious elements needs to be assessed afresh. For, with the disappearance of Chera power in the 13th century, Kerala was parcelled into various principalities where the religious element very often attempted to dominate political power. The following chapters will reveal that the 'state' remained submissive to the overbearing attitude of the ecclesiastical lobby at least till the end of the 18th century.

However, the Zamorin menace continued to haunt the ruling family even in its new abode. How the rancorous relations between Cochin and Calicut induced the former to welcome the Portuguese, who gradually displaced Cochin from the pepper trade, and also how Cochin became a victim of the trade stratagem of the Dutch, are well documented both in indigenous and foreign texts,¹⁹ and hence it would be idle to describe these events here. The fragile state became even more vulnerable with the ravages of Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan. The series of Mysorean invasions, which were subsequently supported by the French, drove Cochin (and also Travancore) to rally behind the English. While the treaty of Seringapatam (1782) wiped out the Mysorean menace, it reduced Cochin to a mere vassalage of the English East India Company. The situation became more appalling for Cochin when the mercantile company imposed an annual tribute of two lakh (200,000) rupees.²⁰ The state's resources were in disarray, and hence financial imperatives drove the state to take over major temples of the land. This bold policy of Cochin's ruler Sakthan Thampuran (1790–1805), as may be gleaned from the following chapters, had far-reaching consequences for the relations between the temporal and spiritual powers in the state. In fact, the period covered in the grandhavari constitutes a period of transition in the political history of Cochin.

The period of colonial incursions, persisting through the 16th–18th centuries and encompassing the whole of the Malabar coast, also witnessed certain internal wrangles within the ruling family of Cochin. The friction was associated with the labyrinthine rules of royal succession. The Perumpatappu family comprised five branches (*tavalis*)—Mutta, Elaya, Pallurutti, Muringoor or Madattunkil, and

Cazhur—and the succession was confined to the eldest male member of all the branches taken together.²¹ If the reigning chief desired to step down due to one reason or another, he could abnegate in favour of the next heir apparent, and then lead a life of religious seclusion. He also had the option of installing a *de facto* ruler by abdicating in favour of the next most senior member of his own branch. In such an event, upon the demise of the abdicated ruler, the *de facto* chief was also required to step down, paving the way for the accession of the *de jure* chief, while the former led a life in retirement. This strange practice at times led to factionalism in the state. Though abdication amounted to the ‘demise’ of the sovereign, some of the abdicated rulers of Cochin continued to meddle with the administration, causing embarrassment for both the ruler and the ruled.

This unpleasant state of affairs assumed new dimensions with the advent of the colonial powers, who tampered with the customs and conventions of the land in pursuit of their commercial interests. The Portuguese, in contravention of time-honoured practice, forcibly prevented the accession of the *de jure* chief of the Mutta tavalali when the abdicated ruler passed away in 1510. Instead, the *de facto* ruler belonging to the Elaya tavalali was installed on the throne. The Portuguese suspected that the Mutta tavalali prince was an ally of the Zamorin, with whom they had already crossed swords. For over a century, the Portuguese divested the other four tavalalis of their legitimate share in succession by confining the throne exclusively to the Elaya tavalali.²² This led to another curious practice: ‘the eldest member of all other branches taken together, if senior to the reigning prince of Elaya tavalali, was allowed to assume the title of Muppu (or chief) of the Perumpatappu; the reigning prince was known as the Maharaja of Cochin.’²³

Contemporary literature speaks about the deepening crisis in the ruling family in the 17th century.²⁴ In order to arrest the extinction of the family, the Muringoor chief, with the approval of the sovereign, nominated the heir apparent of the Elaya tavalali as his inheritor. Naturally, during the reign of this prince (Goda Varma), Muringoor coalesced with the Elaya tavalali. Goda Varma also made some adoptions from all the surviving collateral branches. But the death of Goda Varma in 1645 revealed the imprudence behind such

adoption. For there ensued an inevitable scramble for power among the assorted adoptees.²⁵ Determined to rule out even the remote possibility of the accession of the Mutta tavali prince, the Portuguese installed Virarayira Varma of the Pallurutti branch on the throne of Cochin.

Similarly, when the throne became vacant in 1656 consequent upon the demise of King Rama Varma of the Cazhur branch, the Portuguese and the Travancore prince Ramana Koil adroitly encouraged Princess Gangadhara Lakshmi, the only surviving member of the Elaya tavali, to usurp the throne.²⁶ The sole woman ruler of Cochin, this princess made some incommodious adoptions from the family of Tanur or Vettam raja in Malabar. Adoption from an alien lineage, when there still remained eligible candidates in the collateral branches of the Cochin royal family, sowed the seeds of discord in the royal family. Soon, Cazhur rallied behind the Mutta tavali, and they resolved to approach the Zamorin for recovering their lost possessions.²⁷

In order to exploit what appeared as a golden opportunity to get even with the Portuguese in Cochin, the Zamorin readily agreed to support the recalcitrant princes, and entered into a treaty with them. The treaty required the Mutta tavali to defray all expenses incurred by the Calicut ruler in this venture. The agreement also contained a rider which entitled the Zamorin to occupy 'all the lands and strongholds that they might jointly conquer'²⁸ until the war expenses were reimbursed. This proviso, as will be seen in the following pages, had far-reaching repercussions for the Perumpatappu family. Having signed the contract, the joint forces of the Zamorin and the dispossessed princes moved on Cochin in 1660 in an offensive which was effectively resisted by the rani and the Portuguese.

Meanwhile, the advent of the Dutch on the Malabar coast changed the character of the war. Soon, the Zamorin and his team wooed the Dutch and obtained an assurance as to the restoration of the Mutta tavali family. The Dutch besieged Cochin and made the reigning princess a prisoner; they prevailed upon her to recognize the Mutta tavali prince as the *de jure* ruler of Cochin.²⁹

Thus ended in 1663 for a while the century-old disgraceful fratricidal warfare in Cochin. But the throne to which the Mutta

tavali prince succeeded was not a bed of roses. The inability of Cochin to compensate the Zamorin for his expenses in the war, and the consequent refusal of the latter to part with the territories he had conquered, strained their relations. Coupled with this was the decision of the raja to adopt a few members from the Czhur tavali to the Perumpatappu family, which created bitterness among the feudatory chiefs who favoured fostering members from Vettam.

The accession of Rama Varma in 1701 was a turning point in the history of Cochin. This prince 'delighted in wars' and enjoyed rubbing both his friends and his foes the wrong way. Naturally his domineering attitude might have made even the members of the palace hostile to him.³⁰ Unwilling to acquiesce to the excessive demands of the Zamorin, Rama Varma declared war on Calicut immediately after his accession. The Cochin chief approached the Dutch for assistance, but found them initially lukewarm. In the meantime, skirmishes between Cochin and the Zamorin continued unabated. Finally, the Dutch were forced to espouse the cause of Cochin. In 1718 the Dutch defeated the Zamorin, and, in the treaty that followed, the Calicut ruler agreed not to trouble Cochin in future and ceded to Cochin most of the territories he had occupied.³¹

However, the Zamorin did not return the territories in Vanneri Nadu to Cochin. The failure to regain Vanneri came as a rude shock to the Cochin rulers. As mentioned earlier, Vanneri was the original home of the Perumpatappu family, where it had resided from time immemorial. In fact, in 1718, the ruling chief of Cochin Raja Rama Varma, hoping fervently to recover Vanneri, even took a solemn pledge when he ascended the throne that 'he would not be crowned except at Chitrakutam (Vanneri) and that he would never wear a crown till he went through the ceremony of coronation there.'³² But neither Rama Varma nor his successors could fulfil this promise; and consequently the Perumpatappu rulers were reduced to kings without a crown, and their accession was devoid of any coronation ritual. 'The ceremony of coronation has not been performed for many years,' commented Francis Day, 'as the temple in which it is obliged to be celebrated, is at Ponany [Ponnani], and some reason has militated against the Rajahs of Cochin visiting this place.'³³ Thus the

Perumpatappu family remained in an uncomfortable and unstable limbo during the period covered in these documents.

Temples in Kerala stand in stark contrast to their counterparts in the rest of the peninsula due to the ecological peculiarities of the region. Since bionomics had a crucial role not only in deciding the structure of the temples but also in moulding the settlement pattern of the state, it would be appropriate to dwell briefly on the geophysical attributes that make Kerala distinct from the rest of the subcontinent. Hemmed in between the Western Ghats on one side and the Arabian Sea on the other, Kerala is a narrow, leaf-shaped region on the south-west coast of India, interrupted by rivers, estuaries and ravines. If the Sahyadri ranges isolated the state from the socio-political convulsions that took place in north and peninsular India, the Arabian Sea had exposed it to the augmentations of seaborne trade from ancient times. It was the mountainous belt of the Western Ghats that had interrupted Turkish rule in the north of the Deccan from permeating to Kerala. Similarly, both ideas and people from the north took considerable time to reach Kerala, owing to the Sahyadri mountains. As observed by M. G. S. Narayanan, 'The protections and relative isolation provided by the Sahya ranges [Western Ghats] blocked all invasions before the modern age.... While Deccan and South India down to Kanyakumari were overrun and devastated by the Delhi Sultanate armies of Alauddin Khilji Kerala alone escaped unhurt and continued to grow as before.'³⁴

This disconnexion from the country's mainstream history, due to the geographical imperative, has given Kerala a singular identity and culture of its own, which is reflected in the settlement pattern of the early inhabitants as well as in the voting pattern of the state's population in independent India. But the Western Ghats could arrest only the overland association with the rest of the subcontinent, and not the connections through the sea route, which extended to regions like Rome, China and Arabia in earlier times. This seaborne trade was even largely responsible for the establishment of Western dominance over India. 'Kerala never formed part of any North Indian empire but it was the first region of India to be included in European Empires of the modern period, that of the Portuguese and the Dutch in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.'³⁵

In addition to the 'Sahyadri factor', Kerala is also distinguished by its unique environmental qualities, especially its rich water resources. Over 40 rivers flow through the state, enriching the fertility of the soil. This water is supplemented by the south-west and north-east monsoons which provide the state with altogether 120–40 rainy days in a year. This abundant monsoon contributes more than the requisite amount of water. It might have been this 'aqua aspect' of its ecology that encouraged the Aryan migrants to evolve a district settlement pattern on the Malabar coast. V. A. Janaki shows in great detail how geographical features exerted a notable influence on the settlement pattern of Kerala. The physical features of the region marred the formation of compact settlements. The scattered settlement pattern which is unique to Kerala is found

in the more fertile and uniform regions where water is abundant and where no co-operative effort is needed for cultivation, whereas nucleated settlements are confined to the more difficult regions of the gaps, southern Travancore, the foot-hill regions and the highland regions. In the latter group of regions there is a dearth of water or conditions unfavourable to economic development which in turn necessitates co-operative planned effort.... An historical survey enables us to conclude that the original inhabitants of the country generally lived in dispersed settlements whereas the foreigners from the east coast or from beyond the Arabian Sea have for reasons for security or occupation settled in nucleated villages or even urban centres.³⁶

This diffused habitation emerging from ecological factors was fundamental in moulding the history of the land. As suggested by M. G. S. Narayanan in a recent study, 'Natural conditions like large number of rivers, hills and dales and dispersed settlements with plenty of water without the need for collective labour etc. ruled out the rise of big kingdoms equipped with large armies.'³⁷ Since no shared endeavour was required for irrigation or agriculture, distributed settlements became common in Kerala. Hence, there were no large-scale irrigation works and road-building activities involving public expenditure, which also obviated the need for raising land revenue, at least until the Mysorean invasion of the 18th century. Consequently, there was no need for a complicated bureaucracy either. Certainly there were state formations, but they were small and loosely organized

and never reached the level of complexity attained on the east coast.³⁸ In fact, the scattered settlements created the exclusive Malayali house in its own compound with its food-producing trees. C. Achyuta Menon in his *State Manual* states that 'while people of other parts of India love to congregate in closely built villages, close neighbourhood is repugnant to the genius of Malayalis, who are averse to living in houses not standing in their premises.'³⁹ Thus, the geophysical attributes of the region have resulted in a linear settlement pattern in Kerala where 'every man has his own orchard, with his house in the middle and a wooden palisade round it.'⁴⁰ The terrain has shaped not only the habitations but also the culture, values, religious beliefs and practices of the people.

In contrast, serious water shortage resulted in the nucleated or the *agrahara* style of habitation in other parts of south India, requiring united enterprise for irrigation, besides a chief for protection and the coordination of efforts. In a detailed study on the traditional village in Madras, Joan Mencher shows that

among the reasons why people congregated in such villages certain ones are obvious, e.g., the necessity for co-operation in clearing jungle areas and the need to locate where water was available for domestic purposes the year around. Above all, however, the nature of the land on this coast was such that any type of complex agriculture was rendered possible only by the construction of irrigation works. The construction of large-scale water courses, tanks, etc. presupposes the organization of groups of men through the help of at least a partially centralized government.⁴¹

Thus, environmental factors necessitated a concentrated, nucleated settlement pattern in the neighbouring state of Madras. The flat terrain with its unpredictable monsoon, often too meagre for farming, and the dearth of wells with potable water, required joint effort for agriculture and irrigation, which resulted in the appearance of village administration. Naturally, irrigation became one of the serious concerns of the temples in those regions. 'Temples in south India played a vital role in irrigation. Temple endowments were used to maintain tanks, irrigation channel, and to cultivate temple land.'⁴² Mencher also shows how these administrative units gradually 'tended toward greater centralization and bureaucratization than those found

in Kerala... No attempt was made in these traditional kingdoms [in Kerala] to set up a complex bureaucratic machinery of the type found in Madras.⁴³ As a corollary of the formation of states with rigid centralization practices, frequent wars between them became inevitable.

Temples in these regions were mainly state sponsored, or built to commemorate victories in war or other spectacular achievements of the royal family. As just mentioned, irrigation was invariably a major concern of these temples. The resources of the rulers were replenished by the rich Krishna/Godavari delta, which in turn enriched the coffers of the temple through extensive land grants and sizeable gold/cash donations. Further, the availability of excellent granite encouraged the construction of gigantic temple structures, and also the production of abundant inscriptions. The presence of a central power served as an inspiration and support to these temples. In comparison, neither the chiefs nor the temples in Kerala were so prosperous, and ecological factors prevented the construction of massive temple structures. As Kerala is a heavy rainfall zone, its temples are characterized by a unique roof system. This usually consists of low overhanging eaves in a series of diminishing gable roofs covered with tiles and supported on a wooden frame. These special attributes have to be borne in mind while making any investigation into the workings of these temples.

Tripunithura town is located 9 kilometres south-east of Ernakulam, the capital of Cochin state.⁴⁴ Tripunithura and its suburbs were also known as Vedanadu or Vedamangalam (abode of the Vedas). The Brahmins of this area cherish Tripunithura as their *gramakshetra*.⁴⁵ The Vishnu temple dedicated to Lord Poornathrayesa mentioned in the grandhavarī under consideration is housed in the heart of the town. It is said that certain managerial rights of this temple were bestowed on the Perumpatappu family after the extinction of the Kuriyur family in the 12th century.⁴⁶ As mentioned earlier, the area currently called Tripunithura and its suburbs was known as Punithura, and belonged to the Brahmin chief of Idappalli. 'Punithura' in the regional language suggests an arch-shaped harbour. One of the branches of the river Periyar merges with the backwaters north of Tripunithura.⁴⁷ It might have been at this spot that the

arch-shaped harbour existed. With the formation of Cochin harbour in 1341 due to geophysical changes, this port might have become defunct. Two significant developments, already referred to, took place parallel to this, i.e., the shifting of the Perumpatappu family to Cochin, and the grant of Punithura and other places to Cochin by the ruler of Idappalli. Subsequently, the royal family selected places in and around the temple for their residence, and consequently the swathe of land between the temple and the royal palace came to be called Tripunithura.

The prefix *tr* in the Malayalam language indicates something fortunate or blessed.⁴⁸ This prefix (*tr*) is usually attached to names and events associated with temples and palaces. Thus the name Tripunithura came to be associated with that tract of land comprising the royal palace and its precincts, including the temple. The establishment of the royal household stimulated the socio-cultural life of Tripunithura and boosted its economic activities. Naturally, the setting up of the royal palace may have resulted in migration, increased use of money, and encouraged improvements in transport and communication. An impressive aspect of the cultural life was the Attachamayam⁴⁹ held in connection with Onam, Kerala's grand harvest festival in August–September. Ten days before Onam, the raja in his royal grab, accompanied by all the state officers, went in procession around the town in palanquins. The procession was followed by the raja's levee, with the officers and other dignitaries offering salutations to the ruler and receiving from him cash presents on a graduated scale.⁵⁰ The festival is said to be held in commemoration of the day when the first Cochin raja entered into possession of his Malabar dominions.⁵¹

Notes

1. Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit–English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1872), p. 302.
2. S. Jayaseela Stephen, *The Coromandel Coast and Its Hinterland: Economy, Society, and Political System, A.D. 1500–1600* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1997), p. 22n.
3. *Sabdatharavali: A Malayalam–Malayalam Dictionary* (Kottayam: D.C. Books, 2010), p. 786.

4. M. G. S. Narayanan (ed.), *Vanjeri Grandhavari* (Calicut: University of Calicut, 1987) (henceforth VG).
5. These include: K. K. N. Kurup (ed.), *Kutali Papers* (Calicut: University of Calicut, 1995); N. M. Nambudiri (ed.), *Vellayute Carithram* (Sukapuram: Vallathol Vidyapeedom, 1998); P. Unnikrishna Pillai (ed.), *Tiruvalla Grandhavari* (Kottayam: M. G. University, 1998); and M. R. Raghava Varier (ed.), *Kozhikkodam Grandhavari* (Sukapuram: Vallathol Vidyapeedom, 2004).
6. Though Tripunithura is spelt as ‘Trippunithura’ in the grandhavari, this study adopts the former spelling.
7. P. Narayanan, ‘Towards a New Frontier: The Building of Railways in Cochin’, *23rd Annual Proceedings of the South Indian History Congress* (2006), pp. 421–25.
8. *Gosreemoola Grandhamala 2. Trippunithara Kshetram* (Government of Cochin: Devaswom Department, 1943).
9. T. Borrows, “‘Their Patron Saint and Eponymous Hero’: Jules Michelet and the ‘Annales’ School”, *Clio*, 12(1), 1982, pp. 67–81.
10. C. Achyuta Menon, *The Cochin State Manual 1911* (Trivandrum, 1995), p. 4; K. P. Padmanabha Menon, *Cochirajya Charithram* (Malayalam) (Calicut, 1996 [1914]).
11. ‘Svarupam’ refers to an independent principality.
12. Perumpattu is the name of the Cochin royal family.
13. TGP, p. 13.
14. Achyuta Menon, *The Cochin State Manual 1911*, p. 57.
15. Francis Day, *The Land of the Permauls, or Cochin, Its Past and Its Present* (Madras: Gantz, 1863), p. 45.
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19. Frederick Danvers, *The Portuguese in India: Being a History of the Rise and Decline of Their Eastern Empire* (London: Cass, 1966), 2 vols; Jan Kieniewicz, ‘The Portuguese Trade in Malabar during the Sixteenth Century’, *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 6(1), 1969, pp. 61–84; K. S. Mathew, *Portuguese Trade with India in the Sixteenth Century* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1983); Mathew, *Maritime Malabar*

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 22. Achyuta Menon, *The Cochin State Manual 1911*, p. 95.
 23. Ibid.
 24. Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer (ed.), *Patappattu* (Trivandrum: University of Kerala, 1924).
 25. Achyuta Menon, *The Cochin State Manual 1911*, p. 102.
 26. V. K. R. Menon, 'Rani Gangadhara Lakshmi and Raghava Koil', *Bulletin of Rama Varma Research Institute*, vol. VII, part I, n.d., pp. 49–54.
 27. Achyuta Menon, *The Cochin State Manual 1911*, p. 112.
 28. Ibid., p. 113.
 29. Ibid., p. M.
 30. Ibid., p. 121.
 31. Ibid., p. 131.
 32. Ibid.
 33. Day, *The Land of the Permauls*, p. 312.
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44. Achyuta Menon, *The Cochin State Manual 1911*, p. 486.
45. The central temple of a Brahmin settlement in Kerala.
46. TGP, p. 7.
47. Malekandathil, *Portuguese Cochin*, p. 50.
48. *Sabdatharavali*, p. 1047.
49. Attachamayam is an annual royal procession in Tripunithura heralding the Onam festival.
50. Achyuta Menon, *The Cochin State Manual 1911*, p. 48.
51. Day, *The Land of the Permauls*.

CHAPTER I

The Temple of Tripunithura

The origin of an ancient temple is generally associated with a mythical character or some legend which legitimizes its existence. The birth of the temple dedicated to Lord Poornathrayesa in Tripunithura is related to the story of Santhanagopalam in the *Srimat Bhagavatam*.¹ According to the TGMS,² towards the end of the Dwapara Yuga, immediately after the Great War, a Brahmin approached Lord Krishna with the complaint that he had lost his newborn child. The lord smiled, and the Brahmin returned home. The Brahmin's second child was also stillborn, and similarly the third. He lost nine children in this way, and each time he came to the gates of the palace and blamed the lord for his inability to save the children. When he came to complain for the ninth time, Arjuna was with Krishna. Hearing the grievance of the Brahmin, Arjuna promised to help him and also vowed that, in case of failure, he would enter a blazing fire.

The next time the Brahmin's wife went into labour, the Brahmin rushed to Arjuna, who made a special chamber of divine arrows for the smooth delivery of the child. Soon the woman gave birth to a baby boy, but within seconds, the baby disappeared along with the special chamber. The Brahmin accused Arjuna of giving him false hope. Arjuna searched for the child in all the worlds; unable to locate the baby, he attempted to throw himself into a fire. At this moment Lord Krishna appeared and dissuaded him from this rash action. The lord promised him that he would find the baby. The two mounted a chariot and Krishna took Arjuna to Vaikuntha. There they saw all the children of the Brahmin with the Supreme Lord, who told them that He had taken the children expecting to see both Krishna and Arjuna together at this place. The Supreme Lord gave back the children, and

He also gave Arjuna an idol for daily worship with instructions to install it in an appropriate place. Arjuna placed the idol in his quiver.

On their return, the children were handed over to the Brahmin, and Arjuna started searching for a suitable place to install the idol. Arriving in a village just when the chanting of the Vedas was reaching a crescendo, Arjuna opened his quiver and ensconced the deity there. This place came to be known as Punithura, the place where Arjuna opened (*turakkuka* in Malayalam) his *puni* (quiver). This is the legendary origin of both the temple and the place itself.

The installation of the idol is supposed to have taken place towards the end of the Dwapara Yuga. The TGMS states that the original idol was destroyed during the invasion of the Hoysalas (*vatukanum patayum*) in the 11th century.³ The present icon is made of *pancha loha*, or five metals—gold, silver, copper, tin and iron—in the metallic composition considered ideal for making idols.⁴ The new idol was made by a brazier belonging to Pangarappilli. According to legend, the brazier could not join the mould properly despite repeated attempts; finally, he embraced the scorching hot cast in an effort to join it, and suddenly disappeared.⁵ The accepted understanding of this legend is that through the intensity of his devotion, the brazier became united with God. Certainly, the idol came out in the correct form. In memory of his sacrifice, one of the festivals in the temple is known as Moosari Utsavam, i.e., the festival held in memory of the the brazier. The second installation took place in 445 ME (1270 CE).⁶

Tripunithura Temple: Deity, Structure, Daily Rituals

The main deity of the temple is worshipped as Santhanagopala Moorthy, also known as Poornathrayesa (the lord who faces east). There is a small idol of Ganapati to the right of the main deity, facing south. Besides these idols, behind the main deity is a small idol of Ananta (the serpent god) facing west. Both Ganapati and Ananta can be worshipped only through a small opening in the wall, as there is no separate door on the southern or western side of the shrine. A record from 1653 documents the casting of a *titampu* with the figure

of Ananta engraved on it, for which the temple *tantri* (hereditary high priest) was paid 200 *panams* as *dakshina* in connection with the special rites conducted.⁷

A unique feature of the temple is the absence of any subordinate deity outside the adytum. Hence, in the *nalambalam* (the area just outside the adytum), there is no other structure, only the temple kitchen and the front porch called *mukha mandapa* (front platform which conjoins the adytum). It seems that initially the temple structure might have been quite moderate, and other paraphernalia like *gopurams* (towers on the sides of the temple), *uttupura* (a dining hall for Brahmins) and *vilakkumatam* (wooden frames with lamp holders) might have been added to the structure in due course. The eastern gopuram is quite solid and is made of concrete. Between the eastern gopuram and the *sribelipura* is the *natappura* or the *anappantal* (a high-pillared, roofed structure open on all sides, used for specific ceremonies), at the top of which are represented the figures of different gods. The *sribelipura* is a roofed area where the main *belikkal* (altar stone for offering sanctified food) is located. Here, a small bronze idol of Poornathrayesa facing east can also be seen. On the southern side of the eastern gopuram is a long shed facing west, which is designed to hold caparisoned elephants for processions. On either side of the southern gopuram are towers stretching from east to west, from where members of the palace used to watch the processions. The western gopuram is primitive, but certain renovations have been undertaken at its top. The *uttupura* is located in the northern part of the temple. There is no extraordinary work of sculpture or architecture in the temple.

What follows is a succinct overview of the daily rituals of the temple as revealed in the TGMS. Usually, the temple opened at 4.30 in the morning with *palliunarthal* (a ceremony in which the deity was woken from his sleep by the blowing of a conch shell). After removing the flowers, robes and ornaments from the image, the head priest performed the *abhisheka* (an oblation consisting of liquid). He then decorated the deity with new garlands and robes. Immediately after the *abhisheka* ceremony followed the offering of *nivedyam* (the ritual offering of sanctified food). The food offered at the beginning of the day included *kadali* plantains (*Musa sapientum*) along with

fried grain, jaggery and coconut. This was followed by the dawn worship, known as *usa puja*, during which cooked rice was offered. The TGMS mentions that 4 *nazhis* (approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ kilogram) of rice were to be cooked for the *usa puja*.⁸ The ensuing ceremony was the *ethruthu puja*, which was not common in all temples of Kerala. Eight *nazhis* of cooked rice were offered in this *puja*.

Once the *ethruthu puja* was over, the *siveli* (ceremonial circumambulation of the deity) was conducted. During this procession, the assistant priest carried the *siveli bimba*, also known as the *titampu*. He was led in the first *pradakshina* (circumambulation) by the head priest, who offered *beli* (an offering of cooked rice) at the different *belikkals* and also at the main *belikkal* in the *sribelipura*. The assistant priest then undertook two more *pradakshinas*, and then the idol was brought inside the *adytum*. Lamp bearers, drummers and *fifers* also formed part of the *siveli*.

At 8.30 a.m., the *pantirati puja* commenced, thus named because this *puja* was performed at the point of time when a person's shadow is 12 steps long. Four *nazhis* of cooked rice were offered in this *puja*. The *ucca puja* (noon *puja*) took place around 11 a.m., and 12 *nazhis* of rice were earmarked for this rite. This *puja* was accompanied by circumambulation, as in the morning *puja*. With this, the forenoon rites came to an end and the temple was closed.

The evening schedule began at 4.30 p.m. with the opening of the temple preceded by the blowing of a conch. Immediately after sunset, the *deeparadhana* (waving of lamps to the deity) took place. The *attala puja* or night *puja* took place around 8.00 p.m. with eight *nazhis* of rice, and then the *siveli* was conducted. Around 8.30 in the evening, the temple was closed at the end of the day's agenda. Drummers performed at all the *pujas*, including the *deeparadhana*. The timing of the *pujas* mentioned in the preceding paragraphs would be changed on special occasions. Besides, during festivals and other celebrations, a wide variety of additional *pujas* were conducted. The quantities of rice mentioned are as detailed in the TGMS, and have no relevance to present-day rituals at the temple. Similarly, the items offered could vary; for example, during the noon *puja*, *pal paysam* (a liquid delicacy made of milk, sugar and rice) was also offered. The temple earmarked particular quantities of foodstuffs for particular

pujas, which were usually supplemented by the offerings of devotees.

The temple management during the period under discussion was vested in the hands of the *yogam*, a body consisting of six Paritai Bhattathiris (great Vedic scholars; *paritai* means committee, hence, Brahmins who were capable of becoming members of the committee),⁹ the Moothath (general supervisor), the Koyma and the Pattamali (the person responsible for measuring the tributes to the temple). The six Bhattathiris were the Uralars (trustees) of the temple. Currently, the temple is managed by the Cochin Devaswom Board. The management of the temple will be addressed in detail in the next chapter.

The Wealth of the Tripunithura Temple

The sources of wealth of the Tripunithura temple consisted mainly of donations from the royal family and private individuals. These donations were received by the temple in the form of cash, valuable objects, livestock, elephants, and also income from grants of land along with villages and their inhabitants. Donations might be made for a number of reasons including gratitude for service rendered by the temple, or perhaps in fulfilment of a vow. Grants not only financed the building of the temple, but also provided for its upkeep and renovation. There were also grants for the performance of rituals for certain individuals, perhaps in perpetuity. Donors were prompted by the notion that a donation to the temple would promote religious merit and enhance the prospects of ultimate salvation. Substantial contributions were likely to foster the reputation of an individual or the power of a ruler.

Land Acquisition and Moveable Property

The grandhavari in hand mentions the extension of temple property by outright purchase, land grants and through auction. The temple also had the right to inherit the fortunes of a family when it became extinct. Of the 12 sale deeds mentioned in the grandhavari, barring one from the 14th century,¹⁰ all others belong to the 17th and 18th centuries. These title deeds relate to agricultural fields, *desams* and

parambus. Desam refers to a village under the proprietary possession of a landlord. Parambu may be defined as 'a garden, a plantation, especially of coca-nut and areca trees, but commonly used in a wider sense, or for an estate in general; such plantations forming very often the most valuable part of the property: also high ground not admitting to irrigation; also land raised and drained'.¹¹ In fact, a parambu may be regarded as an area unfit for paddy cultivation.

The property deeds under discussion have certain unique features. Other than in the case of agricultural fields, it is difficult to extract from them the exact extent of the property purchased. For, instead of explicitly stating the actual area of the property, these instruments simply describe the holdings as extending from one boundary to another, or the whole desam or parambu. Rice fields were listed as land adequate for sowing particular measures of paddy. In fact, till the early decades of the 20th century, the extent of land was calculated not with regard to its physical area, but in relation to the quantity of seed required for sowing it. Hence, a holding was described in terms of the particular measure of paddy required for cultivating it, usually expressed in terms of *paras* (roughly 10 kilograms). Initially, land area was computed in terms of *perukkams* (approximately one-fifth of a cent; 250 cents = 1 hectare). Until the mid-19th century, a para was taken as analogous to 60 perukkams, i.e., 12 cents of land ($60 \times 1/5$ cents).¹² In other words, a field on which 1 para of seed could be sown constituted 12 cents of land. After 1840, this computation was changed, with 40 perukkams now making 1 para, thereby changing the equation to 8 cents of land to sow 1 para of seed.¹³ There are two transactions in the TGMS dating to the post-1840 period where the second computation is used for calculation by the present writer. Para is also used as a unit of measurement for paddy and other grains; its constituent elements are described at the end of this chapter.

Similarly, the specific cash amounts involved in these dealings cannot be gleaned from the records, as they simply mention 'a price fixed at the current rate as determined by four people', or simply 'price at the current rate'. The outright purchase was known as *attipperu*, and the title deeds were called *attipperu ola* or *attipperu karanam*. Each attipperu was made with a libation of water. In all these transactions, the deed was executed in the name of members

of the yogam on behalf of the deity of the temple, thereby imputing a divine character to all dealings and reminding the stakeholders to be chaste in their activities. This aura of divinity conferred on temple property also meant that offenders were to be dealt with by appeal to the *Dharmasastras* and not the ordinary law of the land.

The earliest sale deed mentioned in the TGMS, which dates to 1357, states:

A complete outright purchase deed made in the Makaram [January–February] of 531 ME [1357]. Tevan Kandan and his heirs of Kadambanattu hereby make an outright sale of the Karamarakata desam along with paddy fields and garden lands therein to Kandan Kondan who represents the holy deity of Tripunithura Tevar in the *sabha* [yogam] and Perunthanathu Kotha Moorthy who is also the Tevar Kura Pattamali at a price decided by four people on that day.¹⁴

In this case, the Kadambanattu Tevan Kandan and his heirs were making an outright sale of their entire possession in Karamarakata desam to the temple for a price fixed by four people on that day. The deed was executed in favour of the deity through the members of the yogam, thus making it absolute and inalienable. Neither the actual extent of the property nor the amount involved in the transaction can be ascertained from this document. However, the next document reveals that the land was returned to the seller on lease, and that he was to give a *rakshabhogam* (protection fee) of 25 paras of paddy and 4 panams to Meleth Nair, the feudal lord.

In an interesting document from 1701, we get an idea of the amounts involved in the dealings, although the acreage continues to be a conundrum. The document also reflects the ability of the temple to earn wealth cleverly:

In the month of Etavam [May–June] of 875 ME [1701], Tevan Tevan and his heirs of Kadambanattu hereby make an outright sale of all their pambu located in Pravor near Poothotta in favour of Elayitathu Kandan Kandan who represents the holy deity of Tripunithura and to Elayitathu Kandan Tevan who is also the Tevar Kura Pattamali at a price fixed on that day by four people.... total receipt for this deed is 35,000 panams out of which 8,000 panam was adjusted towards work in the temple and for performing *kalasa* and also towards the allowances of the priest and the remaining 27,000 panam was given to the seller.¹⁵

Certainly there is no indication of the extent of parambu covered in the deed, but it admits that an amount of 35,000 panams was the total receipt, from which a sum of 8,000 panams was deducted at source for the upkeep of the temple, performance of kalasa, and the maintenance of the priests; the balance of 27,000 panams was awarded to the party. In fact, nearly 25 per cent of the money involved in this deed was ploughed back to the temple. Whether this was a 'voluntary contribution' or a 'forced gift' cannot be ascertained from the chronicles.

The transactions are less vague in cases of the disposal of property including paddy fields. A sale deed executed by one of the members of the royal family in 1704 states:

In the month of Metam [April–May] of 878 ME [1704] Perumattathu Thiruvinthala Lakshmi Ambika Koviladhikarikal executes an outright sale deed in favour of Elayitathu Kandan Kandan who represents the holy deity and Elayitathu Kandan Tevan who is the Tevar Kura Pattamali her property located in the Maradu desam and parambu field worth 2 para of seed, ... another field worth 3 para and a nearby one worth 3 para ... at a price fixed by four people.¹⁶

This sale deed involves a combination of desam, parambu and agricultural fields. Though the extent of both the desam and the parambu cannot be determined, we can get an idea about the agricultural property under transaction. Altogether land adequate for cultivating 33½ para of paddy was involved in the purchase. Since this sale took place before 1840, land worth 1 para of paddy was equivalent to 12 cents. Accordingly, in the present case, the total agricultural field area involved in the transaction was 402 cents (33½ × 12), i.e., 1.608 hectares. Nevertheless, we are in the dark as to the exact amount involved in the sale as well as the extent of the parambu.

A transaction by another member of the palace may be mentioned here:

An outright sale deed made in the month of Karkitakam [July–August] of the year 878 ME [1704]. Perumattathu Patappil Konkotha Veera Veera Kerala Rama Kochuthirukoviladhikarikal hereby makes a complete outright sale deed of his fields situated in Kollimuttom desam ... land worth 500 para of seed [paddy] along with another 59 para located in ... to Elayitathu

Kandan Kandan who represents the holy deity and Elayitathu Kandan Tevan who is the Tevar Kur Pattamali at a price fixed by four people.¹⁷

This sale deed comprised exclusively rice fields. In a single stroke, the temple obtained a substantial area, viz., 6,708 (559 × 12) cents of paddy fields, i.e., 26.832 hectares.

Another important aspect of the property transactions is represented by two sale deeds, both executed by a prince in the same month in 1704:

The complete outright sale deed executed in the month of Karkitakam [July–August] 878 ME [1704]. Gangadhara Veera Kerala Varma Tirukoviladhikarikal of Perumpatappu by means of this executes a complete outright sale deed of his property located in Karikkode desam ... along with rice fields worth 192 para of seed located in ... in favour of Elayitathu Kandan Kandan who represents the holy deity and Elayitathu Kandan Tevan who is also the Tevar Kura Pattamali at a price fixed by four people.¹⁸

This sale deed extended the temple property by another 2,304 cents (192 × 12), i.e., 9.216 hectares.

Again on the next page, we come across another document related to a property transaction by the same prince.

The complete outright sale deed made in the month of Karkitakam [May–August] of 878 ME [1704]. Gangadhara Veera Kerala Varma Thirukoviladhikarikal of Perumpatappu by means of this executes a complete outright sale deed of his property located in Puthanangadi desam ... in favour of Elayitathu Kandan Kandan who represents the holy deity and Elayitathu Kandan Tevan who is also the Tevar Kura Pattamali at a price fixed by four people.¹⁹

There is no mention of rice fields, and the whole transaction is centred on the parambu. As in other cases, the selling price cannot be calculated in this instance either.

It is not a coincidence that all these ‘royal transactions’ took place in the early 18th century. As discussed in the Introduction, in 1701 a strong-willed prince named Rama Varma ascended the throne of Cochin. He was determined to check the overbearing attitude of the Zamorin. In the course of his attempts to bridle the Calicut ruler, he incurred the wrath of his own kinsmen; and these royal sales might

have been undertaken to meet the expenses of the war. Whether these members of the royal family disposed of their property to help their chief or to support the enemy cannot be ascertained. The only conclusion that can be drawn is the simple fact that these sale deeds were necessitated by the war against the Zamorin.

The TGMS also cites other outright purchase deeds by the temple, some of which may be examined here:²⁰

A complete and outright sale deed executed in Vrichigam [November–December] of 884 ME [1669]. Konnan Mathevi and his heirs of Palluruthi desam hereby make a complete outright sale deed of their parambu ...

As usual, there is no clear-cut information about either the extent of the land or the amount covered in the deed. Another deed may be cited here:

A complete outright sale deed executed in the month of Kanni [September–October] of 935 ME [1760]. Vellambally Ramanrai Elayitom and his heirs hereby make a complete outright sale deed of their fields located in Vennala desam worth 16 paras of seed [paddy] in favour of Elayitathu Kandan Kandan who represents the holy deity of Tripunithura Tevar in the sabha [yogam] and to Komana Kandan Tevan who is the Pattamali at a price fixed by four people.²¹

Another 192 cents (0.768 hectares) of land were added to the temple's coffers through this deed.

One more transaction of the same year may be examined:

A complete outright sale deed executed in the month of Etavam [May–June] of 935 ME [1761]. Eravi Raman and his heirs hereby make a complete outright sale deed of their fields located in Kuruti desam worth 74 paras of seed [paddy] in favour of Elayitathu Kandan Kandan who represents the holy deity of Tripunithura Tevar in the sabha [yogam] and to Poonthanath Kotha Moorthy, who is also the Tevar Kura Pattamali at a price fixed by four people.²²

It can be inferred that the total area involved in this deed was (74 × 12 =) 888 cents of paddy field, i.e., 3.552 hectares. At the same time, however, the land value continues to be an enigma.

Another sale deed from 944 ME (1769) may be cited:

A complete outright sale deed executed in the month of Dhanu [December–January] in the year 944 ME [1769]. Raman Kelur and his heirs of Pazhoor hereby make a complete outright sale of their property along with all its plants and trees, animals and snakes, tanks and fish, space and ... treasure of whatever description located in Katathanadu desam with boundaries on the east: up to the west of the western canal of Kunnakkal desam, on the south: up to the north of the canal of Katamattom desam, on the west: up to the east of Mangattu desam, and on the north: up to the south of Mazhuvannoor desam, to Elayitathu Kandan Kandan who represents the holy deity of Tripunithura Tevar in the sabha [yogam] and to Manmala Narayanan Parameswaran who is also the Tevar Kura Pattamali at a price fixed by four people.²³

Certainly from the above description of property, we cannot gain any information either with regard to the total area under transaction or the land value. But the meticulous attention with which the document is drafted is indeed laudable. It can be assumed that the property under purchase included both paddy fields and garden lands.

Two transactions of the 19th century may also be scrutinized. A document from 1031 ME (1856) states:

A complete outright sale deed executed in the month of Danu [December–January] in the year 1031 ME [1856–57]. Kothakuttan and his heirs of Nanthipulamutaya hereby make a complete outright sale of their property in the Kotasseerry desam parambus, field worth 371½ paras of seed [paddy] to Elayitathu Kandan Narayanan who represents the holy deity of Tripunithura Tevar in the sabha [yogam] and to Periyola Narayanan Kumaran who is also the Tevar Kura Pattamali at a price fixed by four people.²⁴

By virtue of this post-1840 transaction, the temple enriched its property by another 2,972 cents ($371\frac{1}{2} \times 8$) or 11.888 hectares of land.

The last sale deed mentioned in the TGMS dating to 1871 is unique in certain ways:

A complete and outright sale deed executed in the month of Mithunam [June–July] of ME 1045 [1871]. Patiyoor Vasudevan and his heirs of Pullara *muri* [part of a desam] in Thazhakkatt Provorthy hereby make a complete and outright sale of their parambu located in 1/101, 1/103, 1/111/160 ...

of Itakkulam muri and fields in No. 88, 89 ... and also their ownership and control over Vishnu temple in Elambikattu ... and thus a total of 41 muri of parambu and land worth 599½ paras of seed [paddy] to Elayitathu Kandan Narayanan who represents the holy deity of Tripunithura temple in the sabha [yogam] and to Narayanan Parameswaran of Nedumpuram who is also the Tevar Kura Pattamali for a sum of 16,681⅞ panams received from the Tripunithura Devaswom; and this sale deed is registered in the Huzur as No. 81 of 1045 and in the register of Kovilakattumvatukkal as No. 1054.²⁵

Evidently this deed reflects certain administrative reforms that had taken place in the Cochin state in the 18th century, like the proper maintenance of land records with survey/serial numbers. There also began the practice of registering sale deeds both in the Huzur (secretariat) and in the register of the Kovilakattumvatukkal (the taluk office). The custom of recording the actual amount involved in the purchase was also begun. Since the transaction comprised both parambu and paddy fields, it is not feasible to arrive at the land value. Another crucial aspect is that though the sale deed was executed in the name of individuals representing the deity, the cash transaction was made by the Devaswom. The temple thus acquired agricultural fields to the extent of 4,796 cents (599.54 × 8) or 19.184 hectares, and 41 muri of parambu.

Besides such outright purchases, the temple also enhanced its assets through land grants. It may be gleaned from both the TGMS and the TGP that at least 10 land grants were made to the temple during the period under review. An attempt is made here to understand the character of these gifts. The earliest is a grant made in 1652:

In the month of Kanni [September–October] of 827 ME [1652] Pindinikkottath Nambiathiri deposited at the doorstep of the Tevar [deity] the property along with the slaves that he owned at Andimuttom desam ... and in the same month Moothath, Perayil Nambuthiri, Koyma Nambuthiri transferred the said property of Nambiathiri to the temple.²⁶

This grant was made by a Nambiathiri (a Brahmin general, who had the right to use arms) by depositing at the doorstep of the deity his gift deed, which was formally transferred to the assets of the temple by the members mentioned therein. The whole desam along with the

bond servants thus became the property of the temple. The vagueness in the sale deeds is reflected in the grants also.

Another grant of the 18th century states:

Gift deed by Eravi Raman; Menokki to inform the yogam that I hereby deposit at the doorstep of the Lord Tripunithura as offering the site of habitation of Vattaparambath located in Vendormuttom desam along with field worth 4 paras of seed [paddy] located to the east of the said habitation site.... This is written on the 1st of Metam [April–May] of 913 ME [1739].²⁷

This gift by Eravi Raman comprised a building and 48 cents (0.192 hectares) of paddy field. It was addressed to the Menokki, the record keeper, for intimating the yogam. Another gift deed from 1750 gave the temple certain parambus, the area of which cannot be determined due to the ambiguity of the document:

Gift deed by Kakkaran Kelan; Menokki to inform the yogam that I hereby submit at the doorstep of the Lord Tripunithura as offering the Chembhazhikkattu parambu located in the Peringala desam and also the parambu bounded on the east: up to the west of the western boundary of the rice field, on the south: up to the north of the northern boundary of Chembhazhikkattu, on the west: up to the east of the eastern boundary of Kakkatt Elayitom, and on the north: up to the south of the southern boundary of Vatakke Mattom.... This is written in the month of Cingam [August–September] of 925 ME [1750].²⁸

In fact, other than the data that the temple got some acreage of parambu, nothing else can be inferred from this deed.

There was another type of land grant whereby the donor gifted his share of produce from certain fields to the temple:

Details of assets dedicated by Maniyambally: Gift deed by Nellickappilly Devan Narayanan addressed to the yogam.... I hereby submit to the Tripunithura Tevar the produce that I am entitled to get from the fields of ... and thus a total of 39 paras of paddy.²⁹

Here the donor surrendered his share from a certain property to the deity, whereby the temple got 39 paras of paddy annually. Through a similar grant, the temple obtained 54 paras of paddy annually from the same family.³⁰ Through another grant, the temple acquired

fields worth 7 paras of paddy; since this land was in Muvaattupuzha, nearly 20 kilometres east of the temple, the donor was permitted to retain the land as *verumpattom*, i.e., giving the temple the rent or produce of the land without any advance or loan.³¹ Similarly, one of the temple functionaries granted 18 paras of paddy from his share annually to the temple.³² Records also indicate the grant of 360 paras of paddy annually to the temple by another functionary.³³

While all the above grants were general in nature, we have one gift deed specifically offering 1 nazhi of cooked rice daily to the deity.³⁴ There was also a royal grant in the year 1005 ME (1830) which gave the temple some parambu, the area of which cannot be ascertained for want of clarity.³⁵ When a family became extinct in 1027 ME (1853), the king bequeathed that property to the temple through a royal order.³⁶ In 1845, when the local court ordered the auction of the property of judgement-debtors (confirmed as debtors by courts of law) for clearing the liability of the decree holder (a person whose claims over the debtor have been confirmed by a court of law), the temple made a successful bid in the auction and obtained land worth 231 paras of paddy, i.e., 1,848 cents (7.392 hectares) for 1898½ panam.³⁷ A proper assessment of the bid is not possible for want of details in the TGMS.

The above records reveal certain interesting features. The sale deeds by private individuals speak about their joint possession. In all instruments we come across the phrase 'so and so his heirs ...', making it clear that the property was co-owned by all the declarers or signatories. Surprisingly, except from the royal family, there was not a single woman involved in any of the land transactions. Obviously, the outstanding element is the 'dedication' of all these transactions to the deity of the temple, thereby creating an aura of sanctity and perennality.

The temple saw an impressive accretion of landed property during the period under review. More importantly, we discern that the temple had become a giant purchaser of land, a fact which demonstrates its sound material position. The number of purchases outnumbered the grants. From what is explicitly mentioned in the records, we learn that the temple acquired through purchases and auctions nearly 20,158 cents (80.632 hectares) of agricultural land

in the 18th century alone. The exact area of the parambu remains obscure. In fact, the total acreage of the temple increases by leaps and bounds when we interpret the 'hidden meaning' of a phrase like 'property extending from one boundary to another'. Royal grants were negligible during these years. Certainly the landed property of the Tripunithura temple cannot be compared with that of temples in Tamil Nadu, where temples were built by rulers who were more prosperous than the native chiefs of Kerala and where royal grants were made regularly.

Evidently the temple did not directly cultivate these fields; instead, it gave them on lease to holders who paid their dues promptly. This system freed the temple of the risk of agriculture, and at the same time assured it a fixed annual supply of the produce (paddy), which no holder dared to violate because of the divinity tag attached to all the dealings of the temple.

The moveable property of the temple consisted of precious stones, cattle, elephants, gold and silver pots, various vessels for the conduct of daily and special pujas, and cash donations by devotees. The temple also had a good amount of jewellery and gold vessels, especially for the conduct of various rites, and about 15 golden ornamental head coverings for elephants. As mentioned in the Introduction, 14 such golden head coverings were disposed of by the ruler in the early 20th century to bring the railways to Cochin. The TGMS contains copious references to the presentation of silver pots by the functionaries as gifts to the deity for their omissions and commissions.³⁸ In fact, this was the usual form of reparation imposed by the yogam, and the temple received such pots at frequent intervals. There were also large numbers of *nilavilakku*, i.e., bell metal oil/ghee standing lamps used commonly in Kerala, besides several bronze hanging lamps. Large bronze and copper receptacles, urns, utensils, basins and boxes were required in the temple for the daily and special rites.

Varppu (a shallow, wide-mouthed vessel large enough to cook 28 paras of rice), bronze vessels which could prepare 100 litres of milk paysam, big bronze and copper spoons, various measuring vessels and wooden items were also owned by the temple. These vessels were often rented to neighbouring families for occasions like marriage. Members of the royal family enriched the coffers of the temple by

making liberal donations, e.g., of elephants, and also by conducting elaborate rituals like *kalabhom* (a specialized Vedic ritual involving the use of sandal in a huge quantity),³⁹ *kalasa*, *sahasrakalasa*,⁴⁰ *navakam* (a ritual involving nine kalasa pots), and *vijayabeli* (an elaborate ritual performed on rare occasions). Kalasa was also offered as atonement for acts of omission and commission on the part of devotees. In 852 ME (1677), the reigning chief conducted the highly expensive ritual of *vijayabeli* which lasted five days.⁴¹ The TGMS also recounts the performance of another costly ritual called *valia abhisheka* (oblation with special liquids) by the ruler in 1727,⁴² for which the palace spent roughly 37 para of rice, 12 para of paddy, around 100 double dhotis and 312 panams. There are several instances in the records detailing the contributions made in both kind and cash by believers.

Construction and Renovation Works

Frequent construction and renovation works also added to the material richness of the temple. The TGMS speaks about certain major construction works like creating a new flagstaff and renovating the *vilakkumatam*. A record from 828 ME (1694) speaks about the casting of a *titampu*. Though the details of the expenses are not mentioned in this late 18th-century document, it indicates that a sum of 200 panams was paid to the *tantri* as *dakshina* for the special rites conducted in connection with the new fabrication works.⁴³ Similarly, the TGMS cites the renovation of the *sri kovil* (sanctum sanctorum) and the *mandapa*, a raised, roofed platform open on all sides in front of the *sri kovil* where special rites like the *kalasa puja* were usually conducted, in 999 ME (1825) followed by customary rites.⁴⁴ Here also, we can derive only the amount spent for the rites, which came to 1,204 panams, as the charges for the renovation works are not stated in the records.

There is an elaborate description of the making of a new flagstaff in the *grandhavari*:

The flagstaff of Tripunithura Sri Narayana Kovil built in 708 ME tumbled down in 829 ME and a new flagstaff was installed in 830 ME which also fell down in 995 ME and a fresh one was consecrated in 1002 ME.⁴⁵

It can be gleaned from this note that the flagstaff created in 1533 became unusable in 1654, and accordingly a new flagstaff was consecrated, which also became dysfunctional by 995 ME (1821). The TGMS contains details about the construction of the new flagstaff during 1821 and 1827. Carpentry works for the new flagstaff were executed by Vatakkumcherry Chenna Panickken and Idappilli Unni Panickken and metal work was done by Ananja Perumal of Tiruvalla (in Travancore) and Vatakkumnathan of Parur. After extensive rites, the new flagstaff measuring about 286 *kol* (2.5 feet) and 8 fingers was consecrated on 17 Mithunam of 1002 ME (1827). The total expenditure for this mammoth project came approximately to 98,265 *puthan* (a coin valued at roughly 1/20th of a rupee). We can extract from the document the following approximate statement of expenditure for this construction programme:

Final rites for the old flagstaff	3,174
Total for construction works	33,865
Rituals associated with consecration	61,226
Total	98,265 <i>puthan</i>

The convention was that once the flagstaff became unusable for whatever reason, it had to be cremated with full religious rituals. It is interesting to note that nearly 62 per cent of the total expenditure was for organizing rituals associated with the consecration. The custom also demanded that an eight-day festival invariably accompany the consecration of a new flagstaff. Moreover, the whole installation process was spread over 11 days with elaborate rituals and feasts.

The construction expenditure may be further split into the following heads:

Carpentry work for 223 days (2 persons)	758¾ <i>puthan</i>
Coolie for braziers ^a	10 <i>puthan</i>
Cost of metals	14931¾ <i>puthan</i>
Charges for cutting 12 bamboos and 5 areca trees by 12 people	12 <i>puthan</i>
Charges for porters	2¼ <i>puthan</i>
One day's wages for 1 carpenter	3 <i>puthan</i>
Charges for dismantling the old flagstaff by 6 masons	5 <i>puthan</i> and 3 <i>itangazhi</i> ^b rice

Charges for bringing teakwood from Ernakulam (8 kilometres)
for making the new flagstaff (3 people) 3 puthan

^a Number of persons not mentioned.

^b 1 itangazhi is approximately 1 kilogram.

The normal rate for a carpenter per day was 3 puthan. In this case, the amount should have been $223 \times 3 \times 2$, i.e., 1,338 puthan, but it is recorded in the TGMS that the amount of $758\frac{3}{4}$ was paid after deducting their livelihood for those days. *Pokku neekki panuta tachu 223 kku anyam 758 $\frac{1}{4}$* , i.e., deducting at source the daily allowance paid. Pokku refers to livelihood, and anyam stands for wages. The carpenters were given accommodation in the temple during the period of work, in the course of which they were given a daily allowance which was deducted at the time of the final settlement. In addition to wages, the two carpenters received dakshina during the various rites performed in the course of making the new flagstaff.

Besides this, money was also spent under the construction head for building thatched sheds, both for the execution of work and for keeping finished items and auxiliary items like sand or cut stones, and wages to porters.

There was another way of calculating wages, as in the case of labour involved in converting paddy to rice manually.⁴⁶ For example, to convert 10 para of paddy to rice (by pounding it manually, usually considered the forte of females), the charge was '1/10 of double the rice produced'. The conversion of 10 paras of paddy would yield nearly $4\frac{1}{2}$ paras of rice, for which the charge would be:

double the amount of rice obtained = $4\frac{1}{2} \times 2 = 9$ paras of rice,
i.e., 360 nazhis of rice
 $1/10$ of 360 = 36 nazhis or
9 itangazhis

Therefore, by having 10 paras of paddy converted to rice, the owner would get 144 nazhis or 38 itangazhis, i.e., 3 paras and 8 itangazhis after paying 36 nazhis or 9 itangazhis as charges for conversion (10 itangazhis make 1 para and 4 nazhis make 1 itangazhi).

The TGMS also recounts the renovation work of the vilakkumatam between 1008 and 1015 ME.⁴⁷ Unlike earlier construction works, we

find the temple receiving donations for this venture. Contributions from various quarters including European bureaucrats in Cochin, local civil servants and members of the royal family embellished the corpus for the new vilakkumatam.⁴⁸ The ruling chief made a liberal donation of 6044¾ puthan to this expensive undertaking. The TGMS does not provide details as to when this mammoth project was completed or its total outlay. Similarly, the construction of a new strong *bhandaram* (a safe chest in which devotees deposited their offerings in cash) made of bronze was completed in 1047 ME (1873).⁴⁹ A significant development of this period was the prevalent use of terms like ‘cash keeper’ in the manuscript,⁵⁰ implying that the ‘steel frame’ of the Raj had started penetrating even the temple administration. Along with the construction of the *bhandaram*, major repair and maintenance works inside the temple were also planned. The whole exercise was successfully completed with an expenditure of 122,493 puthans. Details of the building of other edifices like gopurams or of major maintenance and reconstruction works are not properly recorded. Those constructions might have taken place over several years.

Purification Rites

The TGMS refers to a series of purification rites performed on various occasions which also contributed to the coffers of the temple. There are over 20 documents in the TGMS which narrate such cleansing acts, the grounds for which varied from the entry of a non-Hindu into the premises of the temple, to the ingress of a woman during her catamenia. Whenever such contamination was suspected, the *tantri*’s advice was sought and acted upon accordingly. The ‘five products of the cow’ were normally the purification agents; water, though highly susceptible to pollution, was also a chief ingredient in these programmes. These purificatory rites varied from simple cleaning with water to more elaborate rituals lasting three to five days. The extent of the purification rites was to be finalized by the *tantri*. In all these purification ceremonies, *danam* (gift) to the Brahmins constituted an essential component. In one instance,⁵¹ the gift was in the form of a cow and a calf. In extreme cases like a fire

in the *titappalli* (temple kitchen), the tantri himself milked the cow for making *pancagavya* (a combination of the five products of the cow) in order to maintain total purity.⁵² Interestingly, the expenses for such cleansing rites were recovered from the responsible parties. This practice was scrupulously followed in all instances, even when the wrongdoer happened to be a member of the royal family, as is evidenced in the three cases of women accessing the temple during their monthly period. Besides, expensive rites like *pal kalasa* were performed during the illness of the ruling chiefs.⁵³ These special rites provided the temple with additional resources and enhanced its authority.

As the temple became more prosperous, it began to patronize minor shrines which did not have much income. The TGMS mentions two such *kiletam* temples (i.e., pagodas under the patronage of a major temple), viz., Chakkamkulangara within its precincts, and Poothotta nearly 8 kilometres south of Tripunithura, where the temple had purchased some parambu in 1701. It can be gleaned from a document of 949 ME (1774) that an *astabandha kalasa* (purification ceremony for the deity) was performed in the Chakkamkulangara temple in connection with the consecration of a new chamber for Sri Sastha (Lord Ayyappa) under the aegis of the Poornathrayesa temple.⁵⁴ In ME 974 (1799), with the approval of the tantri, an annual festival was started in the Chakkamkulangara temple under the complete patronage of the Tripunithura temple. This was followed by the casting of a new titampu and the renovation of the temple, including the making of a new belikkal and the performance of kalasa. Similarly, in the Poothotta temple, the sri kovil and *valiyambalam* (the compound within which the temple structure is housed) were completely refurbished and a new compound wall was also built. These construction works were accompanied by customary Vedic rituals like *brahmakalasa*.⁵⁵ While the TGMS does not speak about the expenditure for the development works, some details about the money involved in the performance of the rites can be culled from the chronicles. About 45 paras of different varieties of rice, 17 paras of paddy, and precious jewels were consumed, besides the usual materials for the ritual, and an amount of 1,043 panams was spent on gifts to the various functionaries from the tantri to the drummers.

A mid-17th-century record indicates that provision was made to provide free food for wayfarers (*anna danam*), and 4½ *mazhis* of rice were cooked exclusively for them in the morning and the evening; this was in addition to the regular free food for the Brahmins.⁵⁶ Besides, elaborate arrangements were made for providing free meals to all during important occasions like festivals, or when special rites were performed. The quantities stated may have been increased in subsequent years.

The aforementioned depiction of the wealth of the Tripunithura temple furnishes a picture of affluence. The fact that land purchases outnumbered land grants reveals the health of the temple's economy. Frequent atonements by devotees and temple functionaries enriched its coffers with silver pots. Efficient financial management alone enabled the temple to undertake massive construction works. Equally impressive is the concept of *kiletam* temples, the patronizing of temples which could not generate the necessary resources, which while expanding the authority of the Tripunithura temple also gave it legitimization. The divine tag attached to all transactions ensured prompt remittance by tenants. Admittedly the temple amassed wealth, but there was a corresponding system of redistribution which reached all classes, from the *tantri* to the cleaners or washermen. The concept of providing free meals to travellers reflects the temple's social commitment. In the absence of modern public catering systems like restaurants, the temple's *anna danam* indeed had social relevance. The economy of the Tripunithura temple during the period under consideration was quite stable and sound.

Employees of the Temple

The coordination of large numbers of people, ranging from priests to oil mongers, mahouts, carpenters, administrators and weavers, was required for the performance of the elaborate rituals in the temple. Hence, an assorted group of people were employed to cater to the wide variety of conventions observed in the temple. The TGMS provides valuable information about the employment of regular and seasonal staff and their service conditions. Most of the functionaries held their positions under *karanma* tenure, i.e., a lease by which lands

were made over by trustees or managers of the temple to those who were employed for the performance of certain duties therein. So long as there was no dereliction of duty, these functionaries could remain in office.⁵⁷ It was a hereditary right to render a particular service in the temple, and so long as no dereliction of duty occurred, the right could not be taken away from the original heirs. The employees may be broadly grouped into priests, administrators and ancillary staff.

The priestly group was composed of the chief priest, the head priest, assistant priests, Bhattathiris for the recitation of various spiritual texts, and Vedic scholars to train the youth. The chief priest, also known as the *tantri*, alone had the prerogative to install the idol. He also had to perform certain rites, like hoisting the flag during the annual festival of the temple. The office of the *tantri* seems to have been a unique feature of Kerala temples. Yet the *Tantrasamuccaya* and *Isanaguru Deva Paddathi*, which *tantris* of the west coast followed, are not different from the *Agamas* adopted by priests in other parts of the country. The position of the *tantri* was hereditary and was held under *karanma* tenure. According to the TGMS, in the Tripunithura temple, this post had been assigned to the Puliyanloor family from time immemorial.⁵⁸ Besides the *karanma* rights, the *tantri* also received a cash reward (*dakshina*) for his services.

The head priest, popularly known as *melsanti*, was appointed from among the Vedic scholars of Shivahalli *grama* (village) in Karnataka for a period of one year.⁵⁹ Shivahalli Brahmins were Shaivites following the *advaita* philosophy of Sankaracharya; and later under Madhavacharya's influence many converted to Vaishnavism. Shivahalli was famous for its Vedic scholarship and also had an excellent centre to train young scholars. Shivahalli Brahmins, though they have lived in Karnataka for a long period, still speak the Tulu language.

The practice of entrusting priestly functions to Brahmin strangers from a far-off place might have been adopted to avoid potential conflicts arising out of familiarity. In spite of their scholarship, the Nambuthiri Brahmins did not consider the priestly profession desirable. The Nambuthiris seldom earned their livelihood by personal exertions. Even when they were rich landlords, they never cultivated the land themselves, but rather let it out to tenants. L. A.

Ananthakrishna Iyer goes to the extent of commenting that, ‘in fact, it is the Nambuthiris, of all Brahmins in India, who strictly follow the injunctions of Manu, “Never serve.”’⁶⁰ It was only in the 19th century when the younger Nambuthiris were beset with poverty that they resorted to priesthood. These may have been the factors that favoured the selection of Shivahalli priests. But from 1688 onwards, the priests were selected from Karnataka Brahmins living in and around Tripunithura.⁶¹ During his tenure, the head priest was sworn to celibacy and to staying in the temple.⁶² He was entitled to 10 nazhis of rice per day besides a share in all offerings to the deity. The head priest of Tripunithura was entitled to perform certain rites which the concerned tantris performed in other temples. For example, he was responsible for hoisting the flag during the festival in August–September.

The temple records speak about two assistant priests belonging to the Kanara Brahmin group. As in the case of the head priest, in due course these assistant priests were also selected from among local Kanara Brahmins.⁶³ These priests were also required to stay in the temple during their tenure. Their main concern was preparing the nivedyam for the deity and making available for the head priest the different items required for the temple rites. They enjoyed 4½ nazhis of cooked rice each per day and a share in the offerings made to the deity.

There were also six Bhattathiris to explain the science and sacred lore of ancient India viz., Tarka, Vedanta, Mimamsa, Vyakarana, Bharatha and Prabhakara.⁶⁴ The last two were, in fact, religious teachers who always had a large number of disciples. These six scholars were also included among the trustees of the temple. It seems that interpretation of the ancient scriptures was regarded as a scholarly exercise and was hence more revered than priesthood.

The TGMS suggests that four Nambuthiri families were assigned the duty of imparting Vedic education to the students. They held their posts under the karanma tenure, and also acted as substitute priests, performing the rituals of the temple when the head/chief/assistant priests were not in a position to discharge their duties due to pollution or other inconveniences.⁶⁵ The sources do not refer to the existence of any educational institution attached to the temple; these

scholars might have taught the local Nambuthiri boys in the temple.

The administrative cadre consisted of the general supervisor, the person responsible for overseeing the in-house business of the temple, the accountant, and a couple of tax collectors. The general supervisor, also known as the Moothath, enjoyed a prominent position in the temple administration.⁶⁶ Drawn from a subsection of the Nambuthiri community, the Moothath's usual role in Kerala temples has been to carry the idol during processions, and in some cases he was also in charge of the repository. But in the Tripunithura temple, the Moothath enjoyed exceptional powers. He is designated in the TGMS as *nityakaryam moothath*, i.e., the person responsible for serving as liaison in the day-to-day concerns of the temple. This post comes under the karanma tenure, and the records indicate that one family has held this post since the inception of the temple. Though not entitled to Vedic studies, the Moothath was authorized to perform certain rituals during the festival in Cingam, normally performed by tantris in other festivals. The Moothath had a major role in the administration of the temple, and he was also a member of the yogam. The grandhavari states that the affairs of the temple were to be managed jointly by the Moothath, the Akakoyma (the person in charge of the internal affairs of a temple), and the chief Pattamali. The Moothath was entitled to 9 nazhis of cooked rice per day in addition to a share in the offerings made to the deity.

The in-house business was to be managed by the office of the Akakoyma, usually held by a Nambuthiri.⁶⁷ A strange custom emerged in Kerala during the post-Chera period (which will be discussed in the next chapter), in which the trustees of a temple began to confer its managerial rights either in full or in part on chiefs, not necessarily those on whose territories the temple was located. When the local chiefs on whom such managerial rights were conferred became vassals of another political power, this practice paved the way for serious administrative problems. The TGMS reveals that at least from 1280 onwards, the Parur chief enjoyed the Akakoyma title of the Tripunithura temple.⁶⁸ Parur was one of the independent principalities that had emerged after the break-up of Chera rule, and it had a Brahmin chief. In the 18th century, when Parur became a part of Travancore State, this right merged with the Travancore

chief. The Akakoyma was also a member of the yogam and had a share in the offerings made to the deity. He had a crucial role in controlling the spiritual affairs of the temple. This post was not held under karanma tenure, but a person or family could continue in the position as long as they enjoyed the confidence of the trustees.

The Tevar Menokki or accountant of the temple was a post held under karanma tenure.⁶⁹ This post was conferred on a traditional Nair family of the Mepparampath house. Apart from maintaining proper records of the income and expenditure of the temple, the Menokki was also to chronicle the minutes of the yogam. The correspondence of the temple was also handled by him. He enjoyed $4\frac{1}{2}$ nazhis of rice per day and a share in the offerings made in the temple.

There were also tax collectors called Pattamalis (persons responsible for measuring the lord's share of the land), who were appointed for a period of five years. Curiously enough, all the four Pattamalis were imported from Vanneri Nadu. The chief among them was called the Tevar Kura Pattamali, i.e., the person who collected the share of the *tevar* (deity). Another, the Punithura Pattamali, looked after the temple property in and around Tripunithura. The Pantirati Pattamali was in charge of the land designated for conducting the pantirati rite. Another Pattamali, known as Velloor Vatayampati Pattamali, was in charge of the Velloor Vatayampati desam.⁷⁰ While the Punithura Pattamali was required to submit annual accounts on the day of the Uthram festival in Kumbham (February–March), the other two Pattamalis were to present their accounts on the day after the festival in Vrichigam (November–December).⁷¹ They were assigned land, and the chief Pattamali was also required to lend a hand to the Moothath in the administration of the temple.

For the successful conduct of its different rituals, the temple also employed a good number of ancillary staff. There was the garland maker and supplier of flowers, a position entrusted to the Varier family of Karappillil under karanma tenure.⁷² The appointee was remunerated with 3 nazhis of rice per day besides a share in the offerings in the temple. Similarly, there were drummers, singers and conch blowers who worked under karanma tenure. There were also lute players, lamp lighters, sprinklers of water, potters, washermen, bearers, astrologers, oil mongers, tailors, jewel stitchers, carpenters,

masons, mahouts, gold and bronze smiths, cooks, sweepers, cleaners and wood cutters on whom the temple depended for its daily and occasional needs; these employees were usually remunerated in kind, and on special occasions they were gifted both in cash and in kind.⁷³

Provision was also made for retaining four Cakiyar families under karanma tenure for performing *kuttu* during the festivals. Kuttu is a kind of stage show which consists of the recitation of Puranic stories and their explanation presented in a melodramatic style. The presentation takes place in the *kuttambalam*, outside the quadrangular edifice of the temple. In the Cakiyar kuttu, otherwise known as the *prabandam kuttu*, the entire drama is performed by a single actor (the Cakiyar) who provides narration, speech, mime and song, along with a female musical assistant (Nangiyar, a female member of the Cakiyar family) and a drummer called Nambiar. The female members of the Cakiyar family perform what is called Nangiyar kuttu. There were four festivals in the temple and each family was to perform the kuttu by rotation. The TGMS states that the Ceriya Parisha Cakiyar, Valiya Parisha Cakiyar, Pothiyil Cakiyar and Villivattom Nangiyar were to perform for the festivals in Vrichigam, Kumbham, Uthram (held in the month of Kumbham) and Cingam respectively.⁷⁴

In short, there was a heterogeneous group of employees working in the temple. They included spiritual and secular, skilled and unskilled, regular and seasonal, Brahmin and non-Brahmin, native and alien appointees whose concerted effort was vital for the very existence of the temple. In fact, every caste was integrated into the daily and special rites of the temple. For example, the dress of the chief priest had to be cleaned daily by the washerman, a non-Brahmin, and he enjoyed some privileges in return for this service. In this connection, it is worth mentioning that only in Kerala do we come across priests wearing simple white cotton robes, while their counterparts elsewhere in the country are robed in silk. Since the colour of the attire of the Kerala priests is white, their robes had to be washed daily, and the washermen's community was attached to the temple for this purpose. Interestingly, the clothes of the priest were considered 'purified' only if they were washed/sprinkled by the washerman. Similarly, earthen pots required for festivals demanded the labour of a potter, and wooden vessels necessary for daily and

special services necessitated the presence of a carpenter. This was also the case with metal workers and mahouts. By linking each caste to the performance of temple rituals, a sense of involvement, at least indirectly, was created among the believers.

Tripunithura Temple as a Consumer

Medieval temples were grand consumers, and the Tripunithura temple was not an exception to this rule. Large measures of different items were required for daily and special rites. This consumption was supplemented by frequent construction works. Besides the customary articles like flowers or *camatha* (*Butea frondosa*) or *darbha* (*kusa*, or *Poa cynosuroides*), the temple absorbed building materials, precious metals, and various types of pulses and vegetables in large quantities. The Tripunithura temple consumed the following inedible items daily, exclusively for ritual purposes: *tulasi* (*Ocimum sanctum*), lotus, all varieties of jasmine, *piccakam* (*Jasminum grandiflorum*) and *cembakam* (*Michelia champaca*). On special occasions like kalasa, flowers belonging to the *dasapusam* (10 flowers considered to possess special medicinal value) category were used; e.g., *visnukranti* (*Evolvulus alsinoides*) was required in large quantities during kalasa. Clothes, camphor, rosewater incense and sandal also formed part of the daily consumption. The TGMS provides a rough idea of the prices of clothes and sandalwood in the 19th century:

Two pieces of cloth of 18 <i>muzhams</i> by 2½ each	= 10 puthans
Dhoti, two pieces	= 5 puthans
Sandalwood, 1 <i>palam</i>	= 1 puthan

Details regarding weights and measures are provided in Appendix II at the end of the book.

Table 1.1 provides details of edible items consumed by the temple and their approximate prices.⁷⁵

Table 1.1 inevitably suffers from certain lacunae. The quantities cannot be standardized due to the different measuring units used for various items. Para, tulam and chothana were the common measuring units used for some commodities, while the quantities of

Table 1.1: Edible Commodities Consumed by the Tripunithura Temple and Their Approximate Cost in the 18th and 19th Centuries

<i>Sl No.</i>	<i>Name in English</i>	<i>Name in Malayalam</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Price in Puthan</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Price in Puthan</i>
01	Areca nut	<i>Atakka</i>	100	2.17	100	0.53
02	Arrack	<i>Carayam</i>	NA	NA	Not mentioned	3
03	Asafoetida	<i>Kayam</i>	NA	NA	8 kalanjus	2 ⁷ / ₈
04	Ash gourd (mature)	<i>Mootha ilavan</i>	100	50	100	44.52
05	Ash gourd (tender)	<i>Pinju ilavan</i>	NA	NA	100	40.66
06	Betel	<i>Verrila</i>	17 ¹ / ₂ bundles	7	45,023	179 ¹ / ₂
07	Black gram (split)	<i>Ulunnu parippu</i>	NA	NA	1 para	17 ¹ / ₂
08	Black gram (whole)	<i>Ulunnu</i>	NA	NA	1 para	5
09	Brinjal	<i>Valuthibinga</i>	100	3.09	100	4.69
10	Broad beans	<i>Amarakka</i>	NA	NA	1 para	5
11	Caraway	<i>Ayamodakam</i>	NA	NA	1 para	10
12	Chicken	<i>Koli</i>	NA	NA	3	4 ¹ / ₂
13	Coconut	<i>Nalikeram</i>	100	14.28	100	19.57
14	Coconut (tender)	<i>Karikku</i>	NA	NA	100	10
15	Coconut oil	<i>Velichenna</i>	1 chothana	20.23	1 chothana	30.16

16	Cucumber	<i>Vellericka</i>	NA	NA	100	40
17	Cumin	<i>Jeerakam</i>	1 para	160	1 para	30
18	Curd	<i>Tayir</i>	NA	NA	1 para	3.92
19	Dry white peas	<i>Ulavu</i>	NA	NA	1 para	11.83
20	Ghee	<i>Neyyu</i>	NA	NA	1 para	79.65
21	Ginger (dried)	<i>Cukku</i>	NA	NA	1 tulam	37
22	Ginger (fresh)	<i>Inchi</i>	NA	NA	1 tulam	14.96
23	Gingelly oil	<i>Nallenna</i>	NA	NA	1 chothana	48
24	Green chilli	<i>Pacha mulaku</i>	NA	NA	1 para	55
25	Green gram (whole)	<i>Cherupayar</i>	1 para	20	1 para	12½
26	Honey	<i>Teh</i>	1 itangazhi	4.15	1 itangazhi	4.48
27	Horse gram	<i>Mutira</i>	NA	NA	1 para	06
28	Jackfruit (raw)	<i>Pacha chakka</i>	NA	NA	100	101.56
29	Jaggery	<i>Sarkara</i>	1 tulam	27.97	1 tulam	11.99
30	Lemon	<i>Ceru naranga</i>	NA	NA	100	12.5
31	Lemon (pome cit-ron)	<i>Vatukapuli naranga</i>	NA	NA	100	18.19
32	Mango (raw)	<i>Pacha manga</i>	NA	NA	100	0.66
33	Milk	<i>Pal</i>	NA	NA	1 para	10

<i>Sl No.</i>	<i>Name in English</i>	<i>Name in Malayalam</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Price in Puthan</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Price in Puthan</i>
34	Mustard seed	<i>Katuku</i>	1 para	25	1 para	28.65
35	Paddy	<i>Nellu</i>	NA	NA	1 para	3½
36	<i>Panicum miliaceum</i>	<i>Camayari</i>	1 para	15	1 para	11.88
37	<i>Papad</i>	<i>Pappatam</i>	¾ bundle	1½	78,244	1,639¾
38	<i>Papad</i> (big)	<i>Valiya pappatam</i>	NA	NA	100	9.78
39	Plantain kadali	<i>Kadali palam</i>	100	4.64	100	3.27
40	Plantain leaf	<i>Vala ila</i>	100	16.64	100	1.44
41	Plantain raw	<i>Patatti kaya</i>	300	Not clear	11,998	223
42	Pepper	<i>Kurumulaku</i>	NA	NA	1 tulam	71.69
43	Pumpkin	<i>Mathanga</i>	NA	NA	100	68.53
44	Pumpkin (tender)	<i>Pinju mathanga</i>	NA	NA	100	39.67
45	Raw banana	<i>Neentra kaya</i>	NA	NA	100	7.76
46	Red chilli	<i>Cuvanna mulaku</i>	NA	NA	1 para	4.5
47	Red gram	<i>Tuvara parippu</i>	NA	NA	1 para	14.08
48	Rice flakes	<i>Aval</i>	1 para	8.57	NA	NA
49	Rock salt	<i>Inthuppu</i>	NA	NA	1 palam	9½
50	Salt in lump	<i>Kalluppu</i>	NA	NA	1 para	3.66

51	Sesame	<i>Ellu</i>	NA	NA	1 tulam	12.06
52	Sugar	<i>Panjasara</i>	NA	NA	1 tulam	56.40
53	Tamarind	<i>Puli</i>	NA	NA	1 tulam	6.55
54	Tobacco	<i>Pukayila</i>	1 bundle	10	1 bundle	19
55	Turmeric	<i>Manjal</i>	1 tulam	30	1 tulam	15
56	Yam	<i>Chena</i>	NA	NA	100	164.2

Source: TGMS, pp. 180–83 and 190–200. See Appendix II for descriptions of units of weight and measure.

others were expressed in terms of the number of items. The decimal system was not in use, and quantities were expressed in fractions. But in attempting to determine the price of 1 para/tulam/chothana or of a hundred units of a commodity, the decimal system has had to be used by this writer. However, when the quantity mentioned in the TGMS has been reproduced as such in Table 1.1, the fraction mentioned in the source is also reproduced as such. For example, in the case of asafoetida, both the quantity and the price are quoted as in the grandhavari, and hence a fraction is used.

In the case of curd (row 18), actually 1,853 puthans were paid for 472 paras and $6\frac{1}{4}$ itangazhis. To find the cost of 1 para of curd, we need to convert the whole quantity to itangazhi or nazhi:

$$\begin{aligned} 412 \text{ paras and } 6\frac{1}{4} \text{ itangazhis} &= 4,720 \text{ itangazhis} + 6 \text{ itangazhis} + 1 \text{ nazhi} \\ &= 4,726 \text{ itangazhis and } 1 \text{ nazhi} \\ &4,726 \times 4 + 1 = 18,905 \text{ nazhis} \end{aligned}$$

1,853 puthan is to be divided by 18,905 nazhis and multiplied by 40 to get the price of 1 para of curd, i.e., 3.920652 puthans.

This method has been used for all conversions, and therefore there can be minor variations in the price index. However, in some cases quantities are listed in terms of two different units for the 18th and 19th centuries, and cannot be standardized. For example, in the case of betel leaf, for the 18th century the quantity is expressed in terms of 'bundles', and for the 19th century in 'numbers'; here, both units are quoted as given in the source. For the numbers in a 'bundle' varied from time to time. The same is the case with papads. Another handicap is that the prices of all commodities in the 18th century are not available, which makes a price comparison between the 18th and 19th centuries impossible. From the available data, we find a minor increase in the prices of brinjal, coconut, coconut oil, mustard seed and tobacco. At the same time the prices of areca nut, ash gourd, cumin seed, plantain leaf, kadali plantain and turmeric came down. Of these, the prices of areca nut, cumin seed, plantain leaf and turmeric saw a steep fall. There is no mention of rice among these items, evidently because temple paddy was procured as required and then converted into rice. Curiously enough, both arrack and chicken

are included in the list. These items might have been necessary for the *vastubeli* performed in connection with the building of the new flagstaff. It was the customary right of the head carpenter to conduct *vastubeli* once the new construction was over. In spite of all its lacunae and drawbacks, however, the table provides an exhaustive list of edible commodities consumed by the temple during the period under study. The most impressive aspect of these accounts is their straightforwardness: there is no use of the term 'miscellaneous expenditure'.

The temple also consumed a large quantity of inedible items, featured in Table 1.2.⁷⁶

The price and quantity of the following items could not be culled from the documents, but they were consumed by the temple in different quantities: basket made of palm leaves, brooms, granite, measuring vessels of various capacities, pestle for winnowing rice, scraper for coconut, sieve, winnow, and different measures of wood. The prices of gold and silver were as follows:

<1 line space>

Gold, 12 panamita	96.00
Silver, 12 panamita	9 ³ / ₄

<1 line space>

Most of the items were purchased from Ernakulam, which had a bi-weekly market. During the period under consideration, inland trade was conducted through pack animals and headloads since the terrain often made the use of wheeled transport difficult. The small river system also performed the useful function of arteries in the transport network of the 16th and 17th centuries. For instance, goods from the Ernakulam market were moved in *valloms* (small boats) to the western side of the temple, from where they were taken by headload to the temple. Certainly the rice requirements of the temple were met from its extensive agricultural fields, but since Kerala was a rice-deficit area, rice was also imported from Thanjavur, Andhra and even Bengal.

<Para>The rulers of Cochin patronized merchant communities like the Jews, Konkans and Muslims as well as Tamil Brahmins. The TGMS mentions one Chorukala Kammathy Kesavan (a Konkani), a leading metal merchant in Ernakulam, and Rama Pai Naranan in

Table 1.2: List of Inedible Commodities Consumed by the Tripunithura Temple and Their Approximate Cost in the 19th Century

<i>Sl. No.</i>	<i>Name in English</i>	<i>Name in Malayalam</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Price (in Puthan)</i>
01	Basket made out of creepers	<i>Vallikotta</i>	100 units	18.35
02	Big spoon of coconut shell	<i>Chiratta kaili</i>	100 units	2.94
03	Bronze	<i>Otu</i>	Tulam	184.79
04	Cloth (18 muzhams by 2½)	<i>Thorthu</i>	2 pieces	10.00
05	Charcoal of coconut shell	<i>Cirattakari</i>	1 para	2.00
06	Charcoal of coconut shell (ordinary)	<i>Kari</i>	1 para	1/10
07	Coconut palms	<i>Ola</i>	1 bundle	1.00
08	Coir	<i>Kayar</i>	1 tulam	8.00
09	Copper	<i>Cembu</i>	1 tulam	188.00
10	Cut stone	<i>Vettu kallu</i>	100 units	16.00
11	Dhoti	<i>Mundu</i>	2 units	5.00
12	Firewood	<i>Viraku</i>	1 canoe	15.00
13	Grain of cut stone	<i>Kalpoti</i>	1 canoe	3.00
14	Gravel	<i>Charal</i>	1 canoe	3.00
15	Husk of coconut	<i>Matal</i>	100 units	1.00
16	Lime	<i>Kummayam</i>	1 para	1.00
17	Mat (soft)	<i>Tazhappaya</i>	100 units	50.00
18	Pewter	<i>Velleyam</i>	1 tulam	228.00
19	Sand	<i>Manal</i>	1 canoe	4.00
20	Sandal	<i>Channanam</i>	1 palam	1.00
21	Straw	<i>Vaikol</i>	100 bundles	6.00
22	Strong fibrous fruit stalk of coconut	<i>Potumbu</i>	1,000	2.75
23	Tiles	<i>Ishtika</i>	100 units	600.00
24	Wooden plates	<i>Marakinnam</i>	100 units	12.60
25	Zinc	<i>Nakam</i>	1 tulam	144.86

Note: See Appendix II at the end of the book for definitions of units

Tripunithura as a leading provision dealer.⁷⁷ Incidentally, it may be mentioned that there was a migration of Tamil Brahmins to Kerala during the 15th and 16th centuries, when Kerala's trade was boosted due to the advent of the Portuguese. The reasons for this migration were varied. The collapse of the Vijayanagara kingdom accompanied by the Muslim conquest might have created a feeling of insecurity among the Brahmins in the Tamil region. Coupled with this was the demand for textiles, especially in the light of the blossoming trade, which prompted many enterprising Tamil Brahmins to come to Kerala to sell their wares. This is all the more important as Kerala did not have any textile industries. The absence of the textile sector might have influenced the simple cotton attire of the Kerala priests mentioned earlier. Another reason for the migration was the encouragement given by the ruler of Kollengode (Palghat) who had been boycotted by the Nambuthiris due to his affair with a tribal girl. Further, despite the internal rivalry among its rulers, Kerala remained a Hindu-ruled land and had better economic stability.

The Temple as Moneylender

On rare occasions, the temple also played the role of a moneylender. The TGMS throws light on this province of the temple's affairs. The Moothath, one of the temple functionaries, borrowed 970 panams from the temple in Kumbham (January–February) of 840 ME (1626), which was recovered from his daily allowances in instalments.⁷⁸ The terms and conditions of the loan including the rate of interest cannot be gleaned from this document. There is another amusing note in the TGMS which reveals the borrowing by the ruling chief from the temple:

The pledge deed executed by the Valiya Thampuram of Perumpatappu in the month of Karkitakam [July–August] of 878 ME [1703]. Perumpatappu Rama Varma Thampuram has received as loan from Elayitathu Kandan Kandan who represents the Lord of Tripunithura and Elayitathu Kandan Tevan who is also the Tevar Kura Pattamali a sum of 5001 *puthuppanam* by mortgaging property worth 40 *kandi* [approx. 500 lb] of seed [paddy]. The annual interest for this amount is 150 paddy.⁷⁹

This document provides some vital information. The ruling raja, Rama Varma Valiya Thampuram (the borrower), pledged property worth 40 kandis of paddy. Now, 144 perukkams constitute 1 kandi, i.e., $2\frac{2}{5}$ paras or $24\frac{4}{5}$ cents of land. In fact, the raja pledged 1,152 cents of agricultural fields to obtain 5,001 puthuppanams. It will be seen from the following chapter that in the same year, the yogam of the temple had punished the raja with a fine of 5,001 panam; whether the amount was borrowed to remit the fine or as an additional source to meet the expenses of the ongoing war with the ruler of Calicut cannot be ascertained. Surprisingly, the records do not mention the repayment of the loan.

There is another interesting instance where the ruler pledged to the temple the property on which he had advanced an amount. Receiving the documents for six tracts of agricultural fields (which included some parambu also), in 952 ME Mithunam⁸⁰ (June–July 1777), the ruling chief loaned an amount of $24,606\frac{3}{4}$ panams to Elambrakkatt Nambuthiri. Later in the same year the king mortgaged these properties to the temple and obtained an amount of $26,626\frac{3}{4}$ panams from the temple, which carried an annual interest of 15 paras of paddy per 1,000 panams. The temple was permitted to take *muppara* and *ettilonnu* from the property and credit it to the interest which the ruler had to pay. Muppara and ettilonnu were the customary dues enjoyed by the ruler, referring to 3 in 10 paras of rice land produce and 1 in 8 of produce from garden lands. Details regarding the repayment of the principal amount as well as the interest charged by the ruler from the Nambuthiri are not available in the chronicles. However, an extremely vague idea regarding the interest rate that prevailed in the 18th century can be calculated. One panam is one-fifth of a rupee, and 1,000 panam is equal to 200 rupees, which fetched an interest of 15 paras of paddy. Since the paddy–rupee ratio of the 18th century cannot be determined from the sources, the calculation is incomplete.

These examples raise questions regarding the extent of the moneylending activity of the temple. Except in one case, the borrower in other transactions was the king himself. In the first case from the 17th century, the borrower was the Moothath, one of the powerful members of the yogam. In the second instance from the early 18th

century, the ruler might have borrowed to pay the penalty imposed by the temple yogam. But the third case poses certain questions. In the first place, why did the Nambuthiri not approach the temple directly for a loan? The Brahmin-dominated yogam should not have had any difficulty in this regard, especially given the mortgage of the property. It cannot be assumed that the interest rate the king imposed might have been lower than that imposed by the temple. Nor can we conclude that the king had more than enough liquid cash in hand to spare. For in order to pay tribute to the Mysorean ruler, the Cochin chief had imposed a new tax on the people in the same year (ME 952). The *Cochin State Manual* states that 'as money was scarce in those days it was found impossible to realize this heavy assessment in money, and from next year onwards the rates were reduced.'⁸¹ Further, the TGMS does not cite any other moneylending activities undertaken by the temple. Therefore, it seems that the temple might have engaged in some lending activities in the 17th century, and discontinued the practice for one reason or another in course of time. Moreover, despite their supremacy in the yogam, the Brahmins might have been reluctant to decline a royal borrowing. In the present case, it seems that the Nambuthiri had taken money from the ruler by pledging the title deeds, and the latter had obtained 2,020 panam more by surrendering the same papers to the temple!

Festivals

Besides providing spiritual solace to the people, medieval temples were also the locus of their festivities. Temples remained the locale of all cultural activities during the period under discussion. In the Tripunithura temple, there were three major *utsavams* (festivals) of eight days' duration each, which, apart from focusing on certain exclusive rites for the deity, also gave the people an occasion for jubilation. All the three festivals began on Chothi (the 15th lunar asterism) and ended on Thiruvonam (the 22nd asterism). The festivals conducted in Kerala fell into three categories: *anghiradi*, *dvajadi* and *patahadi*. In *anghiradi* festivals, the ritual would commence with the moistening of the *navadanya* (nine grains) for germination. The grains would be used for special rites during the *arat* (the ceremonial

immersion of the deity) marking the conclusion of the festival. Known as the *mula puja*, this ritual was the prerogative of the tantri, and special rites were performed on the moistened navadanya in the *mula ara* (the special chamber where the mula puja was held) until the last day of the festival. The seeds would have sprouted by the day of arat, and would then be used for anointing the God, who on the previous night was supposed to have gone hunting as part of the festival. The belief was that the navadanya were caused to sprout within a short span of time due to the efficacy of the mantras chanted by the tantri.

In the second type of festival, i.e., dvajadi, the emphasis was on the hoisting of a flag to mark the commencement of the celebrations. *Dvaja* in Sanskrit means flagstaff, flag, etc. In patahadi festivals, the focus was on the playing of drums and music; *pataha* means drum in Sanskrit. All these elements might be present in a festival, but its identity was determined on the basis of the prominence given to each of these components.

The first festival fell in the month of Cingam (August–September). Known as Moosari Utsavam (festival held in memory of the brazier), it was celebrated as a patahadi utsavam. This festival had a few special attributes. Usually the tantri of the temple hoisted the flag in connection with the commencement of a festival, but in this particular festival the flag hoisting was done by the head priest. Similarly, the rituals connected with the closing of the festival, i.e., arat, were also performed by the tantri, but here such rites were executed by the Moothath.⁸² Fifteen nazhis of rice were earmarked for the special rites of this festival. The TGMS states categorically that no functionary was to have any additional benefit in this fete. The Villivattom Nangiyar was to perform Nangiyar kuttu for seven days on the theme of Sri Krishna Caritham (the story of the Lord Sri Krishna).⁸³ On all these days she was entitled to *mattu* (i.e., clothes), coconut oil, food, items like vermillion and red arsenic for her make-up. She also enjoyed a cash allowance of 16 panams. Other than the colourful processions inside the temple and the Nangiyar kuttu, we do not come across any other entertainment in the temple during these eight days.

The most important festival was the one held in the month of Vrichigam (November–December), which came under the anghiradi category. According to the TGMS, the *ahass* (expense for a day) in this festival was to be met by six families and two Pattamalis:⁸⁴

Expenses [*ahass*] on Chothe by Natumparappilli, on Visakham by Morakkala, on Anizham by Maniyampilli, on Trikketta by Valanthuruthi, on Moolam by Eloor, on Pooratam by Perayil Mana, on Uthradam by Velloor Vatayampati Pattamali, and on Thiruvonam day by Pantheerati Pattamali....

Outlay for the eight days (from Chothe to the Thiruvonam asterism) was to be shouldered by the six Nambuthiri families and the two tax collectors. The TGMS provides details of the rice to be contributed by each family and also its redistributive mechanism during the festival season.⁸⁵ It is interesting to note that the rice was to be measured according to the ‘deity’s measure’, generally called *tevar nazhi* or *tiru itangazhi*, which was definitely bigger than the usual measure. When the temple measured something out to the people, it used the ordinary measure. An example from the TGMS may be cited here:

Rice to be measured on the first day of the festival in the year ME 827 [1652] by Nedumparappilli mana 12 para according to *Tiru itangazhi*, i.e., 13 paras and 2 itangazhis, which would be equal to 396 *tevar nazhis*....⁸⁶

In the normal course of things, the family would have had to measure 12 paras of rice, which would have come to 120 itangazhis, that is, 480 nazhis of rice. But as per the document, the rice had to be measured by *tiru itangazhi*, which means that for every para there had to be an additional itangazhi, thereby making it 132 itangazhis or 3 paras and 2 itangazhis. Normally this would amount to 528 nazhis. But when measured by *tevar nazhi*, the quantity came to only 396 nazhis, i.e., 132 nazhis less than the normal measure. This shows that the *tevar nazhi* was times bigger than the ordinary nazhi (528 by 396). But during redistribution, the temple used the ordinary nazhi measure:

To *embrantiri* [the head priest] 51¼ nazhis, to the assistant priest 12 nazhis, to their helpers 12 nazhis....

Here there is no mention of *tevar nazhi*, and instead the quantity is stated simply as *nazhi*. Thus, there was a contrasting principle in the measuring standard of the temple. That is to say, when somebody was measuring rice/paddy to the temple, it should be in *tevar nazhi*, which was bigger than the ordinary *nazhi*, but while the temple was distributing rice/paddy to somebody (including priests), it was in the ordinary *nazhi*. Table 1.3 reveals the rice measured and redistributed during the eight days of the *Vrichigam* festival in ME 827 (1652).⁸⁷

The beneficiaries included all those who were involved in the activities of the temple, from the *tantri* to the menial staff. While the quantity was fixed in most cases, the allotment to the chief priest seems to have been in proportion to the quantity measured to the temple and to the assistant priests in the ratio of what the chief priest received except for the last two days. It was the turn of the tax collector of the *Veloor* and *Vatayampadi* regions and of the *Pantirati Pattamali* to supply the required quantity of rice on the seventh and eighth days respectively. The *Veloor* and *Vatayampati* regions had abundant paddy fields, and they were considered to be quite precious by the temple authorities. Similarly, the holdings of the *Pantirati Pattamali* were also coveted due to their high yield. The *Pantirati Pattamali* managed the fields earmarked for the *pantirati rites* in the temple.

There were also feasts on all days of the festival, which were promoted by different communities and families. For example, the feast for the first two days was held under the aegis of the Tamil Brahmin community of the locality. Male and female members of the palace and ministers of the *raja* were also involved in sponsoring feasts. The temple conducted the feast on the seventh day, while it was the ruling chief who sponsored the provisions for the last day. The Brahmins dined inside the temple and the non-Brahmins were given food in a *pandal* (a temporary roofed structure open at the sides) outside. The temple feasts consecrated an element of equality, since they 'marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privilege norms and prohibitions'.⁸⁸ Records also indicate that 17 non-Brahmin supervisors were appointed to monitor the different aspects of the festival, and they were given a share of the rice measured on the seventh day of the festival. Supervisors were responsible for

Table 1.3: Quantity of Rice Measured and Redistributed during the Vrichigam Festival of ME 828 (1653)

Day	Redistribution (in ordinary Nazhi)																	
	Rice Measured in Tevar Nazhi	Rituals	Tantri	Chief Priest	Assistant Priests	Helpers	Koyma	Moothath	Menokki	Chief Tax Collector	Garland Maker	Drummers	Singers	Cleaners	Washerman	Fifer	Workman	Others
1st	396	26	25½	51¼	19	14	08	10½	10	05	16	14½	2½	10	X	2½	X	16
2nd	198	32	26½	21¾	13	14	08	12	10	05	16	23	05	10	X	05	06	X
3rd	198	31½	26½	21¾	13	14	08	12	10	05	16	23	05	10	03	05	06	X
4th	196	35½	26½	63¼	25	14	08	12	10	05	16	23	05	10	06	05	06	11
5th	198	32½	26½	21¼	13	14	08	12	10	05	16	23	05	10	06	05	06	
6th	320	32	26½	29	13	14	08	12	10	05	16	23	05	10	03	05	06	
7th	887	36½	26½	51¾*	19	14	14	12	10	05	16	23	05	10	09	05	06	
8th	Not mentioned	47¾	26½	23*	13	14	08	10½	10	05	16	11½	2½	10	X	26½	06	

Notes:* Denotes that the rice was to be measured in tevar nazhi.

'Others' include the Cakiyar (only on the first day), brazier, carpenter and goldsmith (on the seventh day), and certain aristo-

organizing musical concerts and other entertainments, arranging for the free distribution of lassi and managing stores and supplies, and attending to the welfare of the religious mendicants who came for the festival. Another person was responsible for arranging for the elephants required for the festival.⁸⁹ In this connection, it is worth mentioning that Kerala is one of the few states where elephants play a crucial role in celebrations. While other states have chariots for their festivals, in Kerala we have elephants. This practice might have emerged for two reasons. The terrain may have been totally inhospitable for drawing chariots, especially because of the rivulets; and another reason could be the availability of healthy and beautiful elephants in the forests of the state. It can be gleaned from the records that the festival was organized with a great deal of planning and attention to minute details at every stage of its execution.

The utsavam in the month of Kumbham (January–February) was conducted mainly to receive tributes from the people. Hence, this festival is also known the Para Utsavam, i.e., a festival to receive tributes in paras. From the third day of the commencement of the festival, the deity was taken out in procession on a caparisoned elephant along a designated route to receive homage in the form of paddy, rice, fried grain and rice flakes, jaggery and fruits. When the procession reached the doorstep of a house (which would be decorated in advance), the offerings were made using a para. The quantity to be measured was not fixed, and people were at liberty to give whatever they could afford. In no case would the procession enter a compound or house other than that of a Brahmin or the royal palace. But for this, there is nothing significant about the festival in Kumbham, which is celebrated as dvajadi.

Besides these three festivals, the TGP manuscript also cites two single-day fetes. One was celebrated on Uthram (the 12th lunar asterism) in the month of Kumbham to commemorate the installation of the idol in the temple. The expenses for this one-day festival were to be met jointly by the two tax collectors of Punithura and Pantirati. They had to measure a total of 448½ tevar nazhis of rice, which was also distributed in almost the same pattern as during the festival in Vrichigam. A new one-day fete was added to the list when the temple was burnt to ashes in the early hours of 6th Tulam

(October–November) in ME 1096 (1921). When the fire broke out, the idol was immediately covered with a big bronze basin, and the small idol (used for processions) was removed to a nearby palace. It was brought back to the temple on the 9th of the same month. Thus, the idols emerged unhurt in the calamity. It is in commemoration of this event that a one-day fete has been celebrated on the 9th of Tulam every year. The crucial aspect of this ceremony is the burning of a huge quantity of camphor during the evening rites. This is the only festival that is conducted on a particular date instead of by asterism. Festivals thus contributed to the material enhancement of the temple and provided the people occasions for jubilation.

Conclusion

The preceding description of the Tripunithura temple, especially of its economic functions, brings home certain significant propositions. The gradual metamorphosis of the temple from a place of mere observance of religious rituals to a centre of hectic economic activity encompassing the whole fabric of the society is indeed amazing. A new social order with the Brahmin-dominated temple as the nerve centre became prevalent in medieval Kerala, justifying the contention of Geneviève Lemercinier that the cardinal element in the social formation of pre-modern Kerala was the dominance of the religious system.⁹⁰ This system further demanded the organization of collective life on the feudal model, which displaced the traditional dispersed settlement pattern of Kerala. In fact, temples had a major role in coordinating the various caste groups in the society, and also in enforcing an element of interdependence among them. In a way, no single caste can remain in isolation; there always exists a mutual dependence. As observed by Dumont, 'hierarchy integrates the society by reference to its values.'⁹¹ The augmentation in the undertakings of the temple resulted in the break-up of the traditional scattered settlements, and instead paved the way for a nucleated pattern with rigid caste hierarchy. The temple also appropriated the means of production (land) and dictated the social relations of production. How the absence of a central authority encouraged the temple to usurp the powers of the state is discussed in the next chapter.

The elaborate economic functions performed by the temple also indicate, in a way, the material condition of the society. Certainly, food deprivation was an extreme rarity in a feudal society. The porters or the coolies (the Pulayas and Parayas) had the lowest wage of 1 puthan per day, and it is pertinent to examine whether they could survive on this when the price of 1 para of paddy was 3½ puthans. One para of paddy, as noted earlier, would result in 4½ paras or 18 nazhis of rice. In this connection it should be noted that in the 19th century, rice was the main item of consumption, supplemented by the roots of certain edible plants. Vegetables were seasonal. As the anonymous Malayalam saying goes:

Talum takarayum mummasam
cakkayum mangayum mummasam
cenayum koorkayum mummasam
anginayum enginayum mummasam.

[For three months in a year, a person ate stalks and *Cassia tora*;
Jackfruit and mango for another three months;
Yam and roots for the next three months;
And this and that for the last three months.]

This was especially the case for poor people. Further, in a feudal society, payment in kind in addition to wages was also quite common. Against this background, with the help of Table 1.1, an attempt may be made to find out the living standard of the coolie.

The following calculation is made on the assumption that the coolie consumed 3 nazhis of rice per day (when 3 nazhis of rice are cooked, it would come to roughly 5 nazhis).

Rice, 3 nazhis	0.58333333 puthan
Dishes (with 0.5 nazhi of horse gram and 0.25 of a coconut) and 50 grams of coconut oil (for both cooking and bathing)	0.123925 puthan
1/20 nazhi of red chilli and 1/50 nazhi of salt	0.107988333 puthan
Total for food	0.815246667 puthan
Paan (1 areca nut, 5–6 betel leaves and five pieces of tobacco)*	0.143984256 puthan
Grand total	0.95923092 puthan

*The tobacco calculation need not be correct. One bundle of tobacco is too vague a quantity. The cost is calculated on the assumption that each bundle consisted of 800 pieces.

Clothes were usually distributed by aristocratic families during festivals like Onam. Similarly, firewood was collected from the neighbouring areas, and the kindling was provided by the lord in the form of a bundle of coconut leaves with a fire lit at one of its edges. Admittedly, a single individual might survive on 1 puthan per day, but then the question emerges about his family. Anantha Krishna Iyer in his *Tribes and Castes of Cochin* states that these people also practised their traditional occupation of making bamboo mats, umbrellas and baskets. They also engaged in all types of agricultural work. 'It is said that with few exceptions, all their women are basket-makers, netters, and weavers. The men supply them with bamboos, and sometimes take part in the work.'⁹² In fact, they led at least a hand-to-mouth existence. Even during the colonial period, famine did not occur in Kerala despite the fact that the state had to depend on other regions for the supply of rice. The economic condition of social groups like Ilavas, Nairs, the fishermen community, Konkans and various other caste groups was also not hopeless. The prosperity of the temple was reflected in the society in a graded manner, and the temple ensured that there was no deprivation of food among the different communities.

Notes

1. *Srimat Bhagavatam*, Book 10, Chapter 89.
2. TGMS, pp. 1–12.
3. Ibid.
4. Pancha loha is the widely accepted composition of metals for making idols in south India. This composition was prescribed by the ancient Sanskrit text *Silpasastra*.
5. TGP, pp. 188–91.
6. TGMS, p. 8.
7. Ibid., p. 34. The tantri is a hereditary high priest who is the ultimate authority for a particular temple. A titampu is a kind of frame in which a deity is carried in procession. Dakshina refers to the remuneration

given to the priest for performing temple rites. A panam is one-fifth of a rupee.

8. Ibid., p. 6.
9. Ibid., pp. 3, 5.
10. This document relating to land transactions is the oldest in the whole grandhavari.
11. H. H. Wilson, *A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms and of Useful Words Occurring in Official Documents relating to the Administration of the Government of British India* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1968 [1855]), p. 401.
12. Achyuta Menon, *The Cochin State Manual*, p. 39.
13. Ibid.
14. TGMS, pp. 168–69. See Appendix I for the Malayalam calendar and asterisms.
15. Ibid., pp. 131–32. Kalasa refers to a Vedic ritual requiring holy water/liquids in pots.
16. Ibid., pp. 132–33.
17. Ibid., pp. 134–35.
18. Ibid., pp. 135–36.
19. Ibid., p. 136.
20. Ibid., pp. 136–37.
21. Ibid., pp. 227–28.
22. Ibid., pp. 137–38.
23. Ibid., pp. 140–41.
24. Ibid., pp. 212–17.
25. Ibid., pp. 220–25.
26. TGP, p. 15.
27. TGMS, p. 138.
28. Ibid., p. 139.
29. Ibid., pp. 171–72.
30. Ibid., pp. 172–73.
31. Ibid., p. 173.
32. Ibid., p. 174.
33. Ibid., pp. 174–77.
34. Ibid., p. 177.
35. Ibid., pp. 178–79.
36. Ibid., pp. 217–19.
37. Ibid., pp. 200–212.
38. There are at least 10 incidents of the temple staff presenting silver pots as reparation for their faults. The number would increase if donations

- by the public are also taken into account. Unfortunately, the TGMS does not clearly mention such occasions.
39. Kalabhom is one of the costlier purification ceremonies necessitating the use of large amounts of sandal and rose water. This rite is usually followed by the offering of special food to the deity.
 40. *Sahasrakalasa* is another expensive rite involving a thousand pots of sanctified liquids like water and milk, sandal, and a huge quantity of food items.
 41. This highly expensive ritual was performed by the rulers on rare occasions to express their gratitude to God or for the prosperity of the country. Aswathi Thirunal Gouri Lakshmi Bayi in her *Thulasi Garland* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1998) states that vijayabeli was an elaborate ritual conducted once in 144 years in the Ambalappuzha temple (ibid., p. 433). The real motive of the Tripunithura ruler in conducting this rite is not clear. The TGMS does not mention any vijayabeli performed by other rulers.
 42. Valia abhisheka seems to have been a complicated ritual involving the anointing of the deity with different varieties of liquids in large quantities, certainly accompanied by elaborate foods.
 43. TGMS, p. 34.
 44. Ibid., pp. 234–49.
 45. Ibid., pp. 141–68.
 46. Ibid., p. 148.
 47. Ibid., pp. 249–62.
 48. Ibid., p. 258.
 49. Ibid., pp. 314–23.
 50. Ibid.
 51. Ibid., pp. 276–78.
 52. Ibid., p. 297.
 53. Ibid., pp. 298–307.
 54. Ibid., pp. 330–32.
 55. Ibid., pp. 327–30.
 56. Ibid., pp. 17–18.
 57. A. Appadorai, *Economic Conditions in Southern India (1000–1500)* (Chennai: University of Madras, 1990), vol. 1, pp. 119, 279.
 58. TGMS, p. 6.
 59. Ibid.
 60. L. K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, *The Tribes and Castes of Cochin* (New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1981 [1912]), vol. II, p. 277.
 61. TGMS, pp. 26–27.

62. Ibid., pp. 6–7.
63. Ibid., pp. 26–21.
64. Ibid., pp. 5–6.
65. Ibid., pp. 9–10.
66. Ibid., p. 6.
67. Ibid., pp. 7–8.
68. Ibid., pp. 8.
69. Ibid., pp. 4, 6.
70. Ibid., pp. 7, 11.
71. Ibid., pp. 9, 12.
72. Ibid., p. 10.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid., pp. 193–200.
76. Ibid., pp. 145–168, 193–200, 256–62.
77. Ibid., pp. 160, 192.
78. Ibid., pp. 14–15.
79. Ibid., pp. 133–34.
80. Ibid., pp. 226–27.
81. Achyuta Menon, *The Cochin State Manual*, p. 396.
82. TGMS, p. 10.
83. Ibid., pp. 123–24.
84. Ibid., p. 12.
85. Ibid., pp. 57–64.
86. Ibid., pp. 57–58.
87. This has been computed from TGMS, pp. 57–64.
88. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (trans. Helene Iswolsky) (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 10.
89. TGP, pp. 170–75.
90. Geneviève Lemercinier, *Religion and Ideology in Kerala* (Colombo, 1983), p. 127.
91. Quoted in Richard Lannoy, *The Speaking Tree: A Study of Indian Culture and Society* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 143.
92. Ananthakrishna Iyer, *The Tribes and Castes of Cochin*, vol. I, p. 8.

CHAPTER II

The Temple *Sanketam* of Tripunithura

Meaning of *Sanketam*

One of the unique features associated with the growth of Kerala temples is their gradual transformation into independent corporations known as temple *sanketams*. A *sanketam* can be defined as 'the territorial extent of the independent jurisdiction, spiritual and temporal, of a pagoda or Brahmin community in a particular locality within the limits of which no acts calculated to pollute the temple or the community were permitted by immemorial custom.'¹ In fact, along with its spiritual power, over the years the temple garnered authority to make its own laws, to decide both civil and criminal cases, and even the audacity to discipline the secular ruler. This metamorphosis of a simple place of worship into a great centre of power is almost unparalleled in history.

To appreciate the evolution of temples into *sanketams*, one has to understand the special character of the Kerala Brahmins. As discussed earlier, the ecological peculiarities of Kerala resulted in the dispersed settlements of Aryans centred on temples, and it also arrested further migration of the newcomers.² As the scope for subsequent expansion was extremely bleak due to geophysical factors, they had to think of alternative methods to 'keep their family property (*brahmaswam*) intact and [meet] the needs of the growing number of new members'.³ The usual solution was to avoid the fragmentation of family property through partition by restricting endogamous marriage to the eldest son and also sanctioning *sambandham* of the younger male members with females belonging to matrilineal castes. *Sambandham* was like morganatic marriage; hence, children born of such unions were unable to inherit their fathers' property. The eldest son was permitted to have liaisons with women from matrilineal castes, besides his legal

marriage. These liaisons, apart from providing sexual partners to the younger members, also created strong and useful connections with important families.

In no other part of India do we come across such an arrangement among any Brahmin community. In fact, ancient Indian scriptures like the *Manusmriti* interdicted such exogamous marriages for Brahmins. Thus, the Nambuthiris of Kerala differed radically from their counterparts in the rest of India in their customs, dress, rituals and traditions. This variance was also reflected in the rituals associated with the temples. It has been suggested that by the post-Chera period, the Nambuthiri Brahmins had 'gained complete control of land, polity and society in Kerala with the support of the kings and lords'.⁴ Their social status was further enhanced by their spiritual acumen. This material and spiritual supremacy made them allies of the ruling chiefs and also enabled them to become the Uralars (trustees) of the temples. If geophysical factors gave the temples of Kerala a distinct identity of their own, the uniqueness of the cultural and religious practices of Kerala Brahmins (Nambuthiris) gave the temples of the Malabar coast a totally independent ritual status when compared with temples in other parts of the country. It has been convincingly established by M. G. S. Narayanan in a recent study that medieval Kerala was different from the rest of India essentially because of its socio-political set-up, which emerged from geophysical constraints.⁵

Origin of Sanketams in Kerala

The dawn of the 13th century saw the appearance of various svarupams, the successor states of the Perumal kingdom. These rulers or Naduvalis were also the sons of Brahmins, which enabled the Nambuthiris to continue enjoying all the privileges they had enjoyed under the Chera rulers. In fact, the emergence of svarupams in Kerala was paralleled by the concurrent emergence of sanketams or temple-states. By the 13th century, this trend away from secular authority and towards temple-states was apparent in the sanketams that originated in different parts of Kerala. The sanketams were powerful and popular institutions associated with the temples of medieval Kerala.

One reason for the success of the sanketam was the religious and economic supremacy of the Nambuthiris. As Uralars, they controlled the vast temple property known as the Devaswom, and as the owners of the *ur* (region), they controlled the land under the guise of the brahmaswam. To gain legitimacy for their economic and political authority, the Uralars claimed that the mythical hero Parasurama had bestowed on them the proprietorship of all the land in Kerala. Though this theory has not been mentioned in any of the Puranas, the claim seems to have been recognized by Rajendra, a 10th-century Chola ruler.⁶

Another source of power of the temple-state was its alliance with the svarupam chiefs. Through such arrangements, the sanketam obtained essential military support and subservient officials to staff the temple. In return, alliance with the temple-states aided the svarupams by enhancing their prestige and status, besides ensuring them a haven during crises. For once a person took refuge in a sanketam, he was beyond the purview of any military attack or royal writ. Such was the immunity enjoyed by persons who sought asylum in a temple sanketam of medieval Kerala, justifying the view of Herman Gundert that it was 'an asylum, holy refuge exempted from war and profanation'.⁷ In the internal conflicts that accompanied colonial incursions, the sanketam of Idappalli served as a safe house for the rivals of the Perumpatappu rulers, as relations between Cochin and Idappalli were strained for reasons referred to earlier. Similarly, Portuguese writers cited the sanketam of Ilankunnappula (situated on the island of Vaipin) 'as a sanctuary the Samuri [Zamorin of Calicut] dared not to violate' and to which the raja of Cochin retreated for safety.⁸ Like the Hanseatic League of the 13th–15th centuries, these sanketams, whose sway was not confined to any particular locality, represented vast inroads into secular authority.

Admittedly one can find parallel institutions in other regions of medieval India. James Todd mentions the grants to the shrine of Naṭhadwara in Mewar, conferring on the temple even judicial authority and the right to collect taxes. The first paragraph of a royal grant dating to the early 19th century quoted by Todd is reproduced below:

Sri Maharana Bhima Sing-ji; commanding. To the towns of Sri-ji or to the (personal) lands of the Gosaen-ji no molestation shall be offered. No warrants or exactions shall be issued or levied upon them. All complaints, suits, or matters, in which justice is required, originating in Na'hadwara, shall be settled there; no one shall interfere therein, and the decisions of the Gosaen-ji, I shall invariably confirm. The towns and transit duties [of Na'hadwara and villages pertaining thereto], the assay [*purkhave*] fee from public markets, duties on precious metals [*kasoti*], all brokerages [*dulali*] and dues collected at the four gates; all contributions and taxes of whatever kind, are presented as an offering to Sri-ji; let the income thereof be placed in Sri-ji's coffers.⁹

The content of the grant is self explanatory, making the shrine and its precincts a 'state within the state' by awarding the priests full, free and absolute freedom in judicial and financial matters. Whether such a phenomenon existed throughout the pre-modern period in India requires further investigation. The exhaustive literature on temples in Tamil Nadu or Andhra Pradesh does not refer to such a practice. It has also to be ascertained whether this was exclusively a princely state phenomenon or not.

Tripunithura Temple Sanketam

The temple sanketam of medieval Kerala was at once strong, efficient and benevolent. It was distinguished by an unprecedented concentration of powers, both religious and temporal. During the Chera period, authority was wielded by a multitude of hands, spiritual and secular. The sovereignty of the sanketam came to be acknowledged by all individuals and chiefs during the post-Chera period. The sanketam emerged as the effulgent symbol of the state. The institution had no equal, certainly no rival. It stood high above the subjects in isolated splendour. The TGP reveals the vast powers of the sanketam of Tripunithura and also its functioning.

The earliest available reference to the temple of Tripunithura is in a 10th-century inscription from the 30th regnal year of King Ko Kota Ravi. According to the inscription,

the paritai [committee] shall not obstruct the work of temple servants from priest down to sweeper or obstruct the land and confiscate the produce of

devadana [property of the temple]. Those who violate this shall lose their position in the paritai and have to remit 12 *kalanju* of gold to the temple and until the remittance of the penalty they shall be dissociated.¹⁰

This inscription prohibits the members of the paritai from interfering with the work of temple servants under penalty of losing their membership in the committee and also a fine of 12 *kalanju* of gold to the temple. Similarly, the TGP mentions a royal order which empowers the yogam to have absolute rights over certain properties:

To the yogam of Tripunithura temple: Vadayambadi desam, Velloor desam and Peringol desam which Khezhappanangatt Nambutiri and others have bequeathed to the temple shall belong to the sanketam of the Tevar and these places shall be identified as part of the sanketam and no one shall interfere with it; and accordingly this order is issued.¹¹

This is a royal order (not dated) empowering the temple sanketam to hold the property situated in Vadayambadi desam, Velloor desam and Peringol desam, bequeathed by a Nambutiri family, in its absolute control, with the direction that nobody should interfere with the affairs of the sanketam. The properties mentioned here became a rich vein of resources for the temple.

Administration of the Sanketam

Usually the governing authority of the sanketam consisted of the Uralars, the Melkoyma, the Akakoyma and the Purakoyma, with certain local variations. 'Melkoyma' means overlord of the sanketam (*mel* means on top of all; and *koyma* means authority). The Akakoyma (*aka* means 'inside') was the person responsible for managing the spiritual affairs of the temple, including the conduct of the temple service; and the Purakoyma (*pura* means outside) was the man in charge of the temple's temporal concerns, besides the administration of its lands. There was no hard and fast rule that all the above Koymas should be present in a sanketam. In some cases, the sanketam had only a Melkoyma or an Akakoyma or a Purakoyma, and in others any combination of these three. However, when there were more than one Koyma, they were usually different rulers. It is quite remarkable that the trustees generally conferred on the rulers

(not necessarily those on whose territories the sanketam stood) any of these koymaships. Obviously, the curious practice of empowering a chief to exercise and enjoy jurisdiction, either wholly or partially, over a shrine housed in another's territory subsequently led to a series of inter-state disputes, some of which will be discussed later.

According to the TGP,¹² the Melkoyma right of the Tripunithura temple was initially vested with the raja of Kuriyur. When this family became extinct in the 12th century, the title was bestowed on the Perumpatappu family, i.e., the ruling family of Cochin.¹³ But we cannot ascertain the exact year in which the ruler of Cochin came to possess this title. The Cochin chief usually sent his representative to the meetings of the governing body of the sanketam. Though the title was Melkoyma, i.e., 'sovereign power', in actual practice the king was only one of the partners in the governance of the temple, as the following pages will reveal. It is clear from both records (TGMS and TGP) that from the year 455 ME (1280) onwards, the Akakoyma right of the Tripunithura temple was bequeathed to the svarupam of Parur, one of the independent principalities that had emerged upon the extinction of Chera power. Instead of the office of the Purakoyma, the Tripunithura temple had two offices, i.e., the Moothath and the Pattamali, which were described in the previous chapter.

Powers of the Yogam

The yogam or the council was the nerve centre of the administrative system of the sanketam. M. G. S. Narayanan suggests that the yogam was the continuation of the sabha of the Chera period: the meeting of the sabha was referred to as 'sabha yogam', and this term was shortened to 'yogam' in due course.¹⁴ The yogam consisted of four or five Nambuthiri Brahmins besides the members of the governing body of the sanketam. The crucial aspect of the structure of the yogam was that the chief deity of the temple was supposed to be its president; on behalf of the deity, the Uralars (who were Nambuthiri Brahmins) conducted the affairs of the yogam. This practice enhanced the power of the Brahmins and diminished that of the secular ruler in the yogam. In fact, the Melkoyma right of the secular authority in the yogam was only a decorative title. Until the

intrusion of the colonial powers, as can be seen from the following pages, the secular authority remained inferior to the yogam, where the presiding deity of the temple spoke through the Brahmins. It was this ambience of the yogam which emboldened it to punish even the ruling chiefs. The administrative powers of the yogam were so vast that it seems idle to enumerate them. The yogam dealt with relations with other sanketams, territorial defence and rebellion. It intervened in family quarrels and restored peace between husband and wife, master and servant. It also dealt with astronomy and necromancy; nothing was too great, nothing too insignificant to come under its paternal supervision. It was the supreme executive body of Kerala between the fall of the Chera kingdom and the advent of the colonial powers.

The yogam met regularly at the *vatilmatom*, the tower over the main gate of the temple, and its proceedings were recorded by the Menokki, who had custody of the records and accounts of the temple. A grandhavari document dated 1625 states that failure on the part of the members to attend the scheduled meetings of the yogam attracted a fine of 10 panams.¹⁵ It was also mandatory for the members to remain in session till the minutes of the meeting were fully recorded. It was the prerogative of the yogam to appoint all temple functionaries and to regulate their service conditions, including the share of each one in the offerings made in the temple.¹⁶ It controlled the receipts and expenditures, and monitored all financial transactions of the sanketam. The council even prescribed a detailed code of conduct to be observed on the demise of its members and their family members, and also regarding the nature and quantity of presents to be made to the survivors by various classes of society.¹⁷ Prior sanction of the yogam was essential for the installation of priests. It also laid down elaborate procedures for the assumption of the title 'Muppu' by the senior-most member of the royal family.¹⁸

Political authority and ritual were thus closely intertwined in the yogam, upholding the classical conception, 'it was not the king but the Brahmin who held the key to ultimate value and therefore to legitimacy and authority.' Hence, 'Kingship ... [was] theoretically suspended between sacrality and secularity, divinity and mortal humanity, legitimate authority and arbitrary power, dharma and

adharmā.... The king, therefore, desperately needs the Brahmins to sanction his power by linking it to the Brahmin's authority.¹⁹

The yogam also possessed vast legislative powers, like the right to grant approval for adoptions in the families of all temple functionaries. It wielded enormous judicial powers, with undefined powers of original jurisdiction both in criminal and civil domains, and its decisions were beyond any further review. It dealt with indiscipline, moral turpitude, theft, land disputes and even murder cases.²⁰ The yogam was guided in its proceedings and decisions by ancient canons like the *Dharmasastras*, and not by the law of the land. In minor cases, like a scuffle between two Brahmins, the yogam ordered the wrongdoers to donate one silver pot each to the temple.²¹ In an incident of consumption of alcohol by two Karnataka Brahmins on the premises of the sanketam, the yogam blacklisted both of them under intimation to their respective gramas.²² Records indicate that even reigning chiefs were not spared by the yogam. The yogam imposed on the ruling chief of Cochin in 1665 a fine of 1,000 panams and land yielding 375 paras of paddy as *pattom* (tenant's dues—the share of the landlord) as atonement for the vandalism of the Dutch East India Company in the sanketam of Tripunithura ('... the Dutch burnt houses, killed chickens and molested our women ...').²³

Similar examples can also be cited from other sanketams of medieval Kerala. A document from 1602 reveals that the raja of Vettom (in Malabar) had to surrender land yielding 48 *poti* (one poti is approximately 20 kilograms) along with the compound of a Brahmin and two persons (maybe slaves) to the sanketam of Thrikkandiyoor in expiation of the offences committed by himself and his siblings.²⁴ Even the members of the yogam were disciplined by the council. The *Vanjeri Grandhavari* refers to an incident in 1635 when a member of the yogam named Mangalacceri had to donate a silver pot to the temple of Thrikkandiyoor for his offences.²⁵ Not only medieval Cochin and Malabar but the southern region of Travancore also had similar practices. In 1325, the royal family of Travancore had to remit 30,000 panams and a huge plot to the temple of Sri Padmanabha Swamy in Thiruvananthapuram as atonement for a murder in the temple sanketam.²⁶ Another document from 1719

speaks about the remittance of 12,000 panams along with two elephants to the sanketam of Sri Padmanabha Swamy temple by Sri Vira Aditya Varma of the Travancore royal family.²⁷

The TGMS enumerates the punishment meted out in a murder case by the yogam in 1713. During the late hours of 23rd Kanni 888 ME (October 1713),

one of the members of the Kaikkatt Elayitom family abetted a person called Maratt Ittimakkotha to bring along Vazhappilly Panickkar who had already retired to sleep; and in a friendly atmosphere the three consumed alcohol and later accompanied Panickkar to his abode where he was treacherously killed and the corpse was dragged into a nearby tank; and this was followed by looting the house of the victim. Not seeing the said Panickkar on the next morning, though the doors of his house remained open, a detailed search was made in the course of which Maratt Ittimakkotha was taken into custody from where he escaped.... Subsequently the corpse was found; and on examination it was seen that the body had sustained two bullet injuries in the chest and a long piece of cloth was pushed through his mouth and another cloth-piece was fastened around the neck. The body was cremated at the expense of the temple; and in the urgent meeting of the yogam held immediately, it was decided to take over Elayitom's property located within the limits of the sanketam. Early in 890 ME (1715), the accused repeatedly expressed his willingness to make amends for his atrocities. In the next meeting of the yogam it was resolved to impose the following penalties on the accused: that he should surrender to the temple sanketam fields yielding 36 paras of paddy as pattom [the *janmi's* share] plus garden land worth 22 panams, and to the survivors of the victim he should make a complete gift of property worth 365 paras of pattom, a dwelling house, two hunting grounds along with 10 Nairs. The accused was initially reluctant to concede to these conditions but the yogam prevailed and towards the end of 890 ME Elayitom succumbed and his property within the limits of the sanketam was thus accordingly transferred both to the temple and the survivors of the victim's family.²⁸

Here it is interesting to note that the yogam had no hesitation in initiating necessary action against the accused though he happened to be a rich landlord. The supremacy of the sanketam was proclaimed by forcing the accused to pay appropriate damages in the form of landed property to the survivors of the victim, and the sanketam

also seized a part of his property. In fact, the culprit had to forfeit his property to both the survivors of the victim's family and the sanketam.

The *Vanjeri Grandhavari* contains a story about the trial in a murder case in 1608:

Karippuram Nambuthiri was cut down and killed while he was performing ablutions in the tank south of his family house. After the incident of murder, Urakattu Unnaman who was on *kaval* duty [protection of the sanketam], ran away in the direction of the south. Many people joined and raised a hue and cry, followed him and captured him from the north end of the Mangattur village. He was brought to the Patinjattakam of Thrikkandiyoor temple. Vanjeri Nambuthiri went to meet the Zamorin of Calicut who was residing at Vammenadu and apprised him about these developments. The Zamorin ordered that the culprit may be dealt with by the Koyma of Thrikkandiyoor sanketam in accordance with the *sanketa maryada* [law of the sanketam]. Following this the members of the yogam ... assembled and ... [decided to] put the culprit to death.²⁹

In this case, the culprit, Urakattu Unnaman, had been deputed by the neighbouring chieftain, the Zamorin of Calicut, for kaval duty, and therefore the Zamorin's concurrence was obtained for punishing the accused. An interesting issue to be considered relates to the two maxims adopted in the two murder cases. In the context of Tripunithura, the victim was a non-Brahmin, a Nair; and in the second instance the prey was a Brahmin. In the absence of any other evidence, it can be reasonably assumed, subject to ratification by further research, that since the decisions of the sanketam were governed by the *Dharmasastras*, the killing of a non-Brahmin (a Sudra) came under the category of felony, and therefore the accused was punished by forfeiture of land. On the other hand, the murder of a Brahmin or *brahmahathya* came under the *panchamahapapas* (five great sins); therefore, the culprit was given capital punishment. Hence the different grades of punishment adopted in identical cases.

From these events, we may extricate the fact that a Brahmin-dominated sanketam in medieval Kerala could discipline its own members, and also insist on answerability on the part of the secular chiefs. In fact, the yogam gave justice against 'over-mighty subjects',

whom no other institution of pre-colonial Kerala could bring to account.

Trial by Ordeal

The sanketam of Tripunithura also had the right to conduct *kaimukku*, or trial by ordeal. Kaimukku involved dipping the fingers of the accused in boiling ghee or oil to prove his innocence. This practice was prevalent in the Suchindram temple of the erstwhile Travancore state. But in Suchindram the practice was restricted to Nambuthiris who were found guilty by the *smartha vicharam*, i.e., a court of Vedic scholars which conducted inquiry into allegations regarding a Nambuthiri woman's uprightness. In that process, she would be forced to name the persons with whom she had had surreptitious relations. The woman then would be excommunicated, and the males whose name she had mentioned had to prove their innocence by undergoing the kaimukku process in Suchindram.³⁰

What is surprising about the kaimukku procedure in Tripunithura, however, was its universal character; members of all castes could partake in it. Elaborate procedures were laid out for the conduct of kaimukku. The accused had to get the prior sanction of the yogam and remit the required fee along with some betel leaves; and on the prescribed day after taking an oath, he had to dip his hand into the boiling liquid and take out a coin that had been placed in it. His hand was then tied with a freshly washed cloth. He had to remain on the premises of one of the temple functionaries till the third day, when the cloth covering was removed. If his hand was free from any wound or blister, he was declared innocent. Records indicate that early in the 18th century, the kaimukku held in the Tripunithura temple was shifted to the Chakkamkulangara shrine, which was a kiletam of the Poornathrayesa temple. The TGP reveals a few instances of kaimukku in the Tripunithura temple:

Statement recorded by Uzhuthuka Pattathiri in 876 ME on the occasion of the finger dipping by the mahout Kandan: 'I have no sexual relations with Karumba of Pakkathu Cheringathara of Poonithura Desam.' That hand became black.³¹

Here was an attempt to prove the innocence of Kandan, a mahout, who had been charged with the offence of illegal relations with Karumba. The yogam had deputed Uzhuthuka Pattathiri to record the statement of the accused, who vowed that he had had no such relations with Karumba. The document states that the hand of Kandan became black, the implication being that he was guilty of the charges. (Pattathiri is a corrupted form of 'Bhattathiri'.) The TGP does not provide the exact punishment meted out to those who were found guilty. Another record in the TGP (not dated) narrates a similar story:

Statement recorded by Cherumanel Pattathiri on the occasion of finger dipping by Cheruputtikkadan: 'I had no physical relations with Azhaki of Meenanam parambu.' That hand became black.³²

In this case, Cherumanel Pattathiri was recording the statement of Cheruputtikkadan, who was held for having improper relations with Azhaki. The defendant's hand turned black and he was incriminated.

The trial by ordeal was extended even to proving pilferage. Here is a fascinating instance of kaimukku associated with some of the temple functionaries:

Robbing of money from the bhandaram kept inside the temple on 12th Vrichigam of 914 ME created considerable distress, could not trace the culprit and also there was no unity among the members of the yogam. Hence the matter was presented before the king who sought the intervention of Vedic scholars from Vanneri Nadu, and they decided to assemble those who were inside the temple on that day and accordingly Moothath, garland makers, drummers were interrogated and finally it was decided that Moothath should undergo the trial by ordeal; and accordingly his hand was dipped on 12th Vrichigam of 922 ME before the deity of Chakkamkulangara temple and on the third day the cloth covering on his hand was removed and his hand was found white.³³

This trial by ordeal was conducted in connection with the appropriation of the cash kept in the temple chest. The incident came as a shock to all, and the yogam could not take a unanimous decision. Hence the matter was presented before the king. Since the issue concerned the temple, the ruling chief sought the interposition

of Vedic scholars, who grilled those who had been inside the temple on that day, viz., the Moothath, the garland makers and drummers. It was finally decided that the Moothath should prove his innocence through kaimukku. On 12th Vrichigam of 922 ME, the Moothath dipped his hand before the deity of Chakkamkulangara temple. When the hand was uncovered on the third day, his fingers had remained unhurt, and therefore he was declared innocent. The inordinate delay of eight years in conducting the trial seems a mystery. It might have been due to the involvement of temple functionaries like the Moothath, who was also a member of the yogam. These examples testify to the extraordinary powers exercised by the yogam.

Pattini

Naturally the presence of two parallel centres of influence—the religious and the political—tended to create occasional tension between the two domains, as reflected in the form of *pattini* (fasting). Essentially, *pattini* was a pressure tactic. For M. G. S. Narayanan, *pattini* was the medieval prototype of satyagraha.³⁴ However, the medieval *pattini* differed from the Gandhian satyagraha, which was designed to refine the mind of the opponent and thereby bring him closer to one's cause. The medieval *pattini* was a clever technique to force the ruling authority to accept one's demands under threat of a Brahminical curse over the whole domain. Admittedly, *pattini* was not the exclusive monopoly of the medieval temple sanketams of Kerala; it was used even by ordinary people for settling their disputes. Whenever there was a breach of promise, the aggrieved party would approach a Brahmin, who would resort to fasting before the house of the evildoer, thereby forcing the latter to solve the problem. In fact, the whole system rested on the belief that if anything untoward happened to the fasting Brahmin, it would throw out of gear the entire social fabric and could even jeopardize one's life in the other world!

James Todd gives a similar example from medieval Rajasthan: '... and the Brahmin may spill his blood on the threshold of his dwelling or in the field of dispute, which will be relinquished by the owner with his life'.³⁵ He adds that recalling grants to Brahmins would

result in 'sixty thousand years' residence in hell. He also refers to another interesting episode:

In 1820, one of the confidential servants of the rana [of Mewar] demanded payment of a petty tax called the *jungi*, of one rupee on each house, from some Brahmins who dwelt in the village, and which had always been received from them. They refused payment, and on being pressed, four of them stabbed themselves mortally. Their bodies were placed on the biers, and funeral rites withheld till punishment should be inflicted on the priest-killer.³⁶

Neither pattini nor the spilling of blood was the sole mode of protest in pre-modern India. Alexander Forbes discloses another interesting mode of protest in medieval Gujarat, where a woman of the ruling family chopped off one of her breasts in protest against the murder of her father.³⁷ Obviously, the *modus operandi* for expressing one's protest against the authorities in pre-modern India centred on quite 'delicate' tactics. If fasting or the spilling of blood by Brahmins could whip the secular authority into obedience in some cases, by severing one of her breasts a woman could definitely discipline the rulers in other cases. These obnoxious practices reveal the extremely weak base of ecclesiastical power and also the extremely vulnerable base of secular authority in pre-modern India. It is surprising that these Brahmins had no hesitation in becoming a 'suicide squad' for exacting acquiescence to their demands.

Almost all major temples of medieval Kerala had *pattinipuras* (fasting houses). K. R. Pisharoti gives us a detailed picture of pattini:

When a local chief becomes very aggressive and trespasses on the elementary rights of the people, the Brahmin leaders all assemble together in a hall especially built for the purpose where every arrangement for a feast has already been made. Then they all sit down for their midday meal after their orthodox religious rites and have water poured into their hands as the first preliminary. After all have been given water and before they have performed their *pranahuti* (oblation to the vital airs), the leader amongst them stands up and publicly announces the name of the chief who has hurt them. Then he narrates the wrongs he has done and finally calls upon the assembled guests to get them redressed before they touch their food. Thereupon the Brahmins all throw down the water in their hands: they rise up and take a

vow that they will not eat until their wrongs are avenged. Each one again sits down in front of the leaf and prays. There are indeed some conditions imposed upon the fasters and one of the rules is that the period of fasting should never exceed seven days. If the doer of wrong, the chief, does not turn over a new leaf before the week is out, there is yet a higher rite prescribed. On the eighth day all the strikers leave the hall in a body and after purifying themselves by a plunge in the tank or river, they perform their daily rituals. In the meanwhile they have got ready a wooden or stone statue of the wicked chief; this is then invested with life ... and then hanged in front of the temple wherein is enshrined the patron deity of the villagers. This final rite over, the Gramakkars all leave in a body in search of a new abode, where alone they break their fast. This final rite is supposed to be potent enough to bring instantaneous destruction of the offender.... Pattini then is a sanctified weapon of defence which religious leaders in Malabar instituted against oppressive chiefs.... Where a *Gramma* Pattini has been once conducted, Vedic sacrifices are no longer performed.³⁸

Naturally, a grama abandoned by the Brahmins, like a place stained with a Brahmin's blood, becomes a wasteland, a barren place and hence an abomination to the medieval world.

Medieval chronicles narrate the details of pattini conducted on various occasions, and it seems appropriate to examine a few of these instances. A record from 1444 (619 ME) indicates that before the commencement of the annual festival in the temple of Ilankunnappula (near Cochin), the Uralar was to initiate necessary action against those chieftains who had done injustice to the sanketam.³⁹ P. K. S. Raja mentions that 'before hoisting the flag for the annual temple festival it is said that the committee (yogam) had to see those convicted by them of murder hanged.'⁴⁰ Similarly, in the year 1565 (740 ME), the Parur chief (who was the Akakoyma in the Ilankunnappula temple) physically assaulted some of the temple functionaries, which led to a pattini being held in the temple. Soon the Parur chief conceded and made the required amends.⁴¹

Another incident took place in Cochin in 1702 (927 ME) when the ruler clandestinely sold one of the elephants of the Tripunithura temple. Consequently, the sanketam of Tripunithura resorted to pattini. The raja finally yielded and paid a compensation of 5,000 panams as compensation to the sanketam.⁴² More interesting is the

fact that since the raja did not possess the required cash, he borrowed 5,000 panams from the temple by mortgaging his property.⁴³ Documents reveal that a pattini was conducted in 1745 (920 ME) in the Tiruvaloor temple sanketam (near Cochin) in protest against the atrocities committed by one of the feudatories. Once the pattini started, both the feudal lord and the Perumpatappu chief made the necessary reparation.⁴⁴ To cite another example, in 1753 (928 ME), the annual festival in Arattupula (near Trichur) was obstructed due to the clash between two aristocratic families, and the pattini that followed yielded results.⁴⁵

The last pattini in Tripunithura was held in 1802 (877 ME) to press the raja to atone for the omissions and commissions of his immediate predecessor. Contrary to the time-honoured practice, the then Cochin ruler, Sakthan Thampuran, refused to yield to protestors, and thus the pattini turned into a fiasco, announcing the prostration of the sanketam.⁴⁶ How the political domain overpowered and reasserted its authority over the religious domain can be seen partly in the state-building activities of the rulers in the wake of colonial penetration, and partly in the latent problems both in the Nambuthiri community and in the sanketam.

Decline of the Sanketam

It seems that by the mid-18th century, the Cochin rulers were engaged in resisting the peremptory attitude of the landed aristocracy, who were supported by the Dutch. In a letter addressed to Batavia, the raja of Cochin pointed out how the Dutch manoeuvrings resulted in the alienation of the local chieftains from him.⁴⁷ The desire to sinew the kingship was also reflected in the treaty with Travancore signed in 1757 in which both sides decided 'not to give any support to each other's enemies'.⁴⁸ The unyielding attitude of the ruler was apparent in his decision to extract muppara and ettilonnu from the property of the sanketam in lieu of the traditional rakshabhogam. The following extract from the TGP substantiates the stern stand of the ruler in asserting his authority:

In 940 ME [1765] the Devaswom made an outright purchase of a portion

of the property of Kandan Thevan and his brothers as freehold. Although these paddy fields and coconut plantations now belonged wholly to the Devaswom, the raja [svarupam] demanded muppara and ettilonnu [in lieu of the rakshabhogam]. The yogam repeatedly objected; but the raja did not yield, and compelled the inhabitants to pay muppara and ettilonnu. Since then the Devaswom has not collected rakshabhogam from them.⁴⁹

The document reveals certain decisive facts. It was the practice of the sanketam to collect the rakshabhogam from the subjects under its jurisdiction and remit it to the state. As the head of state, it was the king's duty to protect his subjects, for which the fee for protection was levied on the people. In the case in hand, the king was expanding his claims by demanding muppara and ettilonnu in lieu of the rakshabhogam. Muppara was the tax levied on paddy fields (3 out 10), and ettilonnu was the levy on garden land, i.e., parambu (1 in 8 upon the produce of garden lands). Normally, rakshabhogam was one-sixth of the total produce, i.e., greater than the ettilonnu, and less than muppara. Hence, in the present case it can be assumed that the rice fields exceeded the garden lands. The sanketam was reluctant to accept the extraordinary claims of the ruler; their repeated efforts to convince the ruler met with repeated rebuffs. Finally, the royal will prevailed and the king forcibly collected the tax, upon which the sanketam ceased collection of rakshabhogam from the people of that area. The vital aspect here is that the sanketam remained handcuffed while the political authority arbitrarily implemented its decision to collect the dues. Interestingly, the sanketam did not resort to pattini or take any action when the raja freely trespassed on the religious domain. Thus the political domain gradually tightened its grip on the religious domain.

Another occasion to affirm the supremacy of the raja came with the merging of Parur svarupam with Travancore in 1762. As mentioned earlier, the Akakoyma right of the Tripunithura temple was vested in the Parur chief. After the union just mentioned, the Cochin raja pleaded for the transfer of those rights to the Perumpatappu family. The sanketam expressed its helplessness in replacing the incumbent Akakoyma. The wrangle continued, and four years later in 941 ME (1766), the raja insisted that the Akakoyma right must be ceded to him before the commencement of the festival in November—

December. The members of the yogam met the raja at his office and tried to dissuade the ruler, who remained unyielding. In the end, the yogam gave in.⁵⁰ Not content with this, three years later in 944 ME (1769), violating custom the raja installed a Kshatriya as the Akakoyma (which position had hitherto been held by a Brahmin) and thus further antagonized the priestly class.⁵¹ This gradual bridling of the religious element reached its logical conclusion when the ruler Sakthan Thampuran brazenly disdained the pattini held at the dawn of the 19th century.

The political developments of the period also contributed to the new denouement. The intrusion of colonial powers along the Malabar coast and the burgeoning conflict for hegemony among them, as well as the periodic clashes between the rival Kerala rulers in the 18th century, produced political instability in the state. Further, the traditional rancour between Cochin and the Zamorin of Calicut reached its climax in the 18th century. The series of Mysorean invasions in the second half of that century made the situation even more deleterious. In this climacteric situation, many aristocratic landlords deserted the Cochin raja and blatantly supported the Calicut ruler. The Zamorin, in cahoots with the Brahmins, meddled with the internal affairs of the Vatakkunathan temple in Trichur. The coalition between Cochin and Travancore was sufficient to show the Zamorin his place, and the treaty of Seringapatam (1782) quelled the Mysorean menace. But both Cochin and Travancore were reduced to mere vassalages of the English East India Company, which imposed arduous annual tributes on the princely states. Cochin had to pay a sum of two lakh rupees, and Travancore also had to pay a similar amount, later enhanced to eight lakh rupees.⁵²

As part of the quest for resources to pay the gruelling tribute to the mercantile company, the rulers of both Cochin and Travancore began to look to the resources of the temple, which the two states had been coveting for a fairly long time. Therefore, in a manner reminiscent of the dissolution of monasteries in 1539 by the Reformation Parliament in England, the two rulers, with the connivance of the Raj, took over the major income-generating temples of their states. Thus, the financial imperative, a necessary corollary of the colonial intervention, accelerated the withering away of the five-century-old

priestly domination over Kerala. Immediately after the cessation of hostilities, the raja decided to discipline the recalcitrant chiefs. The abettors of the Zamorin were flushed out from the Vatakkunathan temple and the feudal rights of the Brahmins were dispensed with; all the rebellious chiefs had to give a written guarantee as to their future loyalty.⁵³ Thus the state reined in the aristocracy which had defied royal authority, and ejected the ecclesiastical element from the political domain.

Another question that emerges for consideration concerns the comparative ease with which the secular authorities could subdue the medieval sanketams. It is quite amazing that there was not a single protest or any litigation in Kerala when the state carried out this coup, not even from the Nambuthiris, the major stakeholders of the sanketam. Arjun Appadurai, however, cites a series of litigations in several parts of present-day Tamil Nadu when the state interfered with the temple administration.⁵⁴ It could be that the younger Nambuthiris, who were destined to have sambandham relations and who were also denied their legitimate share in the family property, might have remained indifferent to the state intervention, since the ownership of the temple or the existence of the sanketam was immaterial to them. Further, during the Mysorean interlude, frightened by the atrocities of Tipu Sultan, many Nambuthiris had migrated to Travancore; another group deserted the Cochin raja and became the allies of the Zamorin of Calicut. The scattered elder members of the community, without the support of the younger members, were embarrassed when the political authority penetrated their bastions. And it took considerable time for the elders to recover from the shock; by the time they recovered, the younger generation under the leadership of V. T. Bhattathiripad had already started questioning the stepmotherly treatment meted out to them.⁵⁵ In fact, the Nambuthiri community's silence at the time of the state intervention was only the lull before the storm, a prelude to the sweeping reforms championed by V. T. Bhattathiripad, their messiah of the 20th century.

Further, the practice of the sanketam in conferring on any secular chief the managerial right of a temple, irrespective of its geographical location, later boomeranged. These arrangements became more

complicated with local chiefs eventually shifting their loyalties, resulting in 'state' intervention in the disputes that followed. The dispute in the Perumanam temple located in Cochin state is a case in point. The trustees of this temple had conferred on the independent svarupam of Parur the right to conduct midday services along with certain other annual rites like *nira* and *puthiri* in the temple.⁵⁶ Through the political convulsions of the 18th century, Parur became a part of Travancore, and consequently the rights of the Parur svarupam including the midday services and allied rights in the Perumanam temple coalesced with that kingdom. At the same time, all other services of the Perumanam temple were conducted by the Cochin state. This system of dual control led to protracted conflicts between the twin native states, which weakened the sanketam of Perumanam.

Interestingly, these inter-state disputes, known in the archival records as 'Boundary Disputes between Cochin and Travancore', were finally disposed of by Mr Hannington, the British arbitrator. He could not accept the very idea of the sanketam, and he therefore confirmed the system of dual control in the Perumanam temple with far-reaching consequences. The learned arbitrator was wrong in his contention that 'that a sovereign who founded a pagoda and endowed it with lands should give to the managers the power of emancipating themselves ... and adopting at will a different and probably a rival chief as sovereign is well-nigh incredible.'⁵⁷ The decision of the arbitrator sapped the very roots of this medieval Leviathan. Some other temples like Irinjalakuta and Annamanata where there was dual control also met with the same fate.⁵⁸ In fact, the practice of the sanketam conferring managerial rights on ruling chiefs beyond the geographical limits of the area in which the temple was located led, in due course, to prolonged litigations, especially with the changing political scenario in the wake of the colonial incursions. Thus the sanketam was powerless when the secular rulers (their former protectors) made inroads into their bastions. The local chieftains with the support of their colonial masters broke boldly and openly into the rich treasures of the temple. And the more they penetrated, the more they were encouraged to go on by the unexpected weakness they encountered, thus exploding the myth of invincibility around

the medieval sanketams of Kerala, and thereby liberating themselves from Brahminical control.

Interestingly, Hannington's spirit still haunts the Perumanam temple. After independence, all temples under the former Travancore state were incorporated into the Travancore Devaswom Board, and those of the former Cochin state under the Cochin Devaswom Board; but no step was taken to eliminate unhealthy practices like dual control in the Perumanam temple. The net result was that the roles of the two Devaswom Boards in the Perumanam temple continued those of the respective native states, this dual control leading to certain lapses in the rituals of the temple. For example, the *Mathrubhumi* on 30 July 2007 reported that the annual nira and puthiri in the Perumanam temple could not be conducted on 29 July as scheduled because the Travancore Devaswom Board did not make the necessary arrangements.⁵⁹ The error of judgement in Hannington's decision might be condoned, as he was totally ignorant of the traditions and culture of the land; but failure to rectify such mistakes even half a century after the formation of the state of Kerala is beyond comprehension.

Sanketam: An Evaluation

What precisely was the nature of the medieval temple sanketam of Kerala? Quoting both foreign and native chronicles, K. P. Padmanabha Menon arrives at the conclusion that they were autonomous temple corporations, free from interference and control by the secular powers.⁶⁰ Discussing at length the powers of the yogam including its right to punish the secular authority, Menon suggests that the sovereign (secular ruler) was only a handmaid of the religious domain. Padmanabha Menon's work was first published in 1911. Almost four decades later, in 1953, the same idea was echoed in the writing of P. K. S. Raja to whom the sanketam appeared as 'a self-working and self-contained community recognising no sovereign except the Yogam (the committee of the sanketam)'.⁶¹

Another three decades later, M. G. S. Narayanan attempted to redefine the concept of sanketam in his redaction of the *Vanjeri Grandhavari*. He rejected the contention that they were free from

the control of the secular chiefs and concluded that, at most, 'they were partly autonomous and partly dependent on local chiefs'.⁶² While scrutinizing the palm-leaf manuscript of the Vanjeri family, Narayanan realized that the sanketam 'depended very much on the neighbouring chieftains for every thing including the constitution of the yogam and the maintenance of law and order in their territory'.⁶³ One of Narayanan's main concerns is the absence of a militia in the sanketam, which compelled the priestly class to bank on the secular chief for protection. In fact, all these views need to be assessed afresh.

To assess the actual position of the sanketam in medieval Kerala history, it is necessary to have a detailed picture of its working. The sanketam and its precincts were situated within the territorial limits of the secular ruler, and the whole area, like the special economic zones of today, enjoyed special jurisdiction. From what can be called the rules and bye-laws of the sanketam, filed as an exhibit before the court jointly by Cochin and Travancore states in a suit related to the sanketam of Ilinkunnappula and quoted by Padmanabha Menon, the following details can be gleaned.⁶⁴ Clause 2 states that the affairs of the temple were to be managed jointly by the trustees/Uralars and the Akakoyma. It defines the yogam as the meeting of the Uralars and Akakoyma. Clauses 7–13 proclaim in unequivocal terms the supremacy of the yogam. The Akakoyma was made the supreme head of the yogam vide clauses 2, 7–13, 14, 29, 31 and 34. Clause 4 provides for the appointment of royal representatives called Desakoymas in each *desam*, and Clauses 31 and 34 give the Akakoyma an upper hand in such appointments. The rights and privileges of both the Uralar and the Koyma are mentioned in Clauses 31–34. Clause 9 authorizes the Koyma to levy and collect building tax from people belonging to certain castes. The sanketam was vested with judicial powers vide Clauses 5, 13, 16–20. The right to levy and collect property tax was bestowed on the sanketam by Clauses 8, 24–26, 32, 33, 39–40. All property transactions within the sanketam were to be registered in the Devaswom office by paying the required fee and the documents were to have the seal of the temple as per Clauses 11–23 and 36. In case of any misdeeds on the part of tenants, the Koyma and the owner of the property were

entitled to punish the wrongdoers vide Clauses 5 and 16–17. Oil presses within the sanketam were to be taxed according to Clause 15.

Obviously, the above regulations have reference to the sanketam of Ilankunnappula, but other sanketams might have also functioned more or less on the same pattern. There may have been regional variations in the structure of the sanketams, each sanketam adapting itself to the local situation. In the sanketam of Tripunithura, the yogam was more representative and also included the Melkoyma. In fact, both the Melkoyma and the Akakoyma sent their representatives to the yogam. From the TGMS also it can be inferred that the Akakoyma had vast powers. The issue to be considered is how a chief or his representative could dictate the deliberations in a council situated in another territory. This becomes all the more important when one realizes that the sanketam performed almost all the functions of the secular ruler. Admittedly, all its decisions, including those of fining or punishing the king, were taken in the presence of the royal representative. Similarly, the king accepted the punishment imposed by the yogam. It needs also to be ascertained whether the absence of a militia, as suggested by M. G. S. Narayanan, compelled the sanketam to bank on the secular power. But it appears that in the event of a contingency, if the ruler evaded protecting the sanketam, the secular chief himself would be the loser as the sanketam of the temple was located in his territory. Further, ancient Indian scriptures have categorically stated that it was the bounden duty of the king to protect and safeguard religious institutions.

It seems prudent to see the role of the medieval Kerala ruler in two distinct capacities: as a member of the religious community which governed the temple, and also as the head of state. In the former role, the ruler obeyed the dictates of the religious domain, as in the case of the modern Sikh religion where we have innumerable examples of members of the community being disciplined by its supreme body for their omissions and commissions in their capacity as former ministers and administrators. Realizing the hold of both Brahmins and the Hindu religion on medieval Kerala society, one has to admit that if the king were to violate the dictates of the religious domain, the public would have turned against him. At the same time, it may also be inferred that but for the occasional harmless punishments

in the form of fines (for which the king borrowed money from the temple itself), the priestly class did not trouble the secular chief. In a way, the sanketam was a necessary evil for the ruling chief, as it functioned in various capacities including that of a bank, which was helpful to him on several occasions. The sanketam also benefited from its alliance with the ruler, the ruling family enriching the coffers of the temple in various ways. There existed mutual dependence and mutual respect between the secular chief and the priestly class.

As the head of state, the king's authority was legitimized through the sanketam. By the medieval canons of law, the king was expected to protect the religious institution at any cost. As head of state, however, the ruler did not permit the sanketam to interfere in the administration, as can be seen in his dealings with the colonial powers. It is true that occasionally there were tensions between the sanketam and the political authorities, as can be seen in the various pattinis discussed earlier. But the relation between the religious domain and the political domain always remained one of 'collaboration and conflict', and not of mutual rivalry and suspicion. In medieval Europe also we come across this mutual dependence between the ecclesiastical and political domains. Since this interdependence was well balanced by tradition and custom in medieval Kerala, there never took place a struggle for supremacy between the religious and political domains as happened in Europe. The concept of the pattini can be seen as playing the role of a shock absorber in tensions between the priestly class and the political authority. It can certainly be stated that in medieval Kerala, there was some sort of 'double dominium' which may not fit into modern political theories, but which actually prevailed; and the system never crossed its limits. In fact, the political authority turned against the religious domain only when it had the support of one colonial power or another. Similarly, the religious heads became impertinent only when they had external support. In this context, the views of K. P. Padmanabha Menon and P. K. S. Raja that the sanketam was an 'autonomous' institution should be taken with a pinch of salt.

The institution of the sanketam and the accompanying practice of pattini created a bizarre situation in medieval Kerala, which occasionally curbed the powers of the political authority. One of the

crucial factors which favoured the growth of the sanketam in medieval Kerala was the ownership of temples. As mentioned earlier, temples in Kerala were founded and owned by the Nambuthiri Brahmins and not by the rulers as the history of Tamil Nadu or Karnataka reveals. After founding the temples, the Nambuthiris made the ruler one of the partners in the management of the pagoda, a situation distinct from the rest of India. Though there were royal grants to the temple, the shrines in Kerala never banked on such munificence from the ruler or from members of the palace. It was this economic security which gave them an upper hand in the administration of the temples. It has also been shown how the absence of a central power augmented the role of the Nambuthiris in medieval Kerala society. In this connection, the decisive part played by the ecology of Kerala in the formation of Aryan settlements should not be minimized. It should be emphasized that the ecology was mainly responsible for scattered Brahmin settlements in Kerala, which also resulted in the temple-centred culture of the land. Coupled with this was the uniqueness of medieval Kerala society as substantively proved by recent researches.⁶⁵ Thus, medieval Kerala was singular when compared with the rest of the country; this uniqueness may, as cited earlier, be attributed to the exclusive geophysical and ecological factors in Kerala which incapacitated the emergence of unified and powerful political domains in the state.

Notes

1. *Travancore Annual Report of Epigraphy* (Trivandrum, 1928), p. 8.
2. Janaki, 'Geographical Basis for the Distribution and Pattern of Rural Settlement in Kerala'.
3. Narayanan, 'Medieval Kerala: What Made It Different', p. 4.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
7. Herman Gundert, *A Malayalam and English Dictionary* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1992 [1872]), p. 1028.
8. Whiteway, *The Rise of the Portuguese Power in India*.
9. James Todd, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* (London, 1960 [1829]), vol. 1, pp. 442–43.

10. TGP, pp. 112–16.
11. Ibid., pp. 14–15.
12. Ibid., pp. 17, 20–21.
13. Ibid.
14. VG, p. xviii.
15. TGMS, pp. 15–17, 66–68.
16. Ibid., pp. 1–12.
17. Ibid., pp. 88–92.
18. The coronation ceremony had not been held in Cochin since 1718 for reasons already mentioned (see the Introduction to this volume). The chronicle is also silent about the details of pre-1718 coronations. At the same time, elaborate procedures for the assumption of the Muppu title can be culled from the documents. The chief enjoyed several privileges in social and religious matters.
19. J. C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 127, 111.
20. TGMS, pp. 31–34, 114.
21. Ibid., pp. 25–27.
22. Ibid., pp. 28–30.
23. TGP, pp. 21–22.
24. VG, p. xx.
25. Ibid., p. xxi.
26. Padmanabha Menon, *Cochirajya Charithram*, p. 107.
27. Ibid.
28. TGMS, pp. 100–108.
29. VG, p. xxvi.
30. For details see K. K. Pillay, *The Suchindram Temple* (Adyar, 1953), especially Chapter X.
31. TGP, p. 102.
32. Ibid., pp. 102–3.
33. Ibid., pp. 103–4.
34. VG, p. xxx.
35. Todd, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, p. 406.
36. Ibid., p. 406n1.
37. Alexander Forbes, *Ras Mala* (London: Oxford University Press, 1924), vol. I, p. 415.
38. K. R. Pisharoti, 'Pattini', *Man*, 34(154), August 1934, p. 13.
39. Padmanabha Menon, *Cochirajya Charithram*, p. 105.
40. P. K. S. Raja, *Medieval Kerala* (Calicut, 1966, 2nd edition), p. 243.

41. Padmanabha Menon, *Cochirajya Charithram*, p. 106.
42. TGP, p. 24.
43. Ibid.; see also TGMS, pp. 133–34.
44. Quoted in VG, p. 232.
45. Ibid., p. 44.
46. TGP, pp. 22–23.
47. Padmanabha Menon, *Cochirajya Charithram*, p. 465.
48. Achyuta Menon, *The Cochin State Manual*, p. 144.
49. TGP, p. 26.
50. Ibid., pp. 27–28.
51. Ibid.
52. Lee-Warner, *The Native States of India*, pp. 223–24.
53. Padmanabha Menon, *Cochirajya Charithram*, pp. 487–88.
54. Arjun Appadurai, *Worship and Conflict under Colonial Rule: A South Indian Case* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); also see Nicholas Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
55. V. T. Bhattathiripad, *VT yude Sampoorana Kruthikal* (Kottayam: DC Books, 2008) (Malayalam).
56. *Nira* is the annual cleansing of the temple/house door with offerings of rice, sticking new ears of corn over it with cow dung. *Puthari* is the offering of the new grains to God. This ritual is a prelude to the celebration of Onam, the harvest festival of Kerala.
57. Quoted in Raja, *Medieval Kerala*, p. 421.
58. Ibid.
59. *Mathrubhumi*, 30 July 2007 (Calicut edition).
60. Padmanabha Menon, *Cochirajya Charithram*, pp. 102ff.
61. Raja, *Medieval Kerala*, p. 243.
62. VG, p. xviii.
63. Ibid.
64. Padmanabha Menon, *Cochirajya Charithram*, pp. 108–9.
65. See Narayanan, ‘Medieval Kerala’.

Conclusion

A cruise through the 334-page Tripunithura Grandhavari reveals that the medieval Tripunithura temple was a gigantic institution embracing a wide range of spiritual and mundane matters. It had a patriarchal role as a rich landlord, employer, consumer, organizer of entertainments, patron of ancient scriptures, and also as custodian of the traditional system of law and economy, besides providing spiritual solace to the people. In order to integrate its multifarious activities, it coordinated the services of various caste groups, thereby creating a sense of mutual dependency and hierarchy among them.

It was the absence of strong political authority during the period under consideration that resulted in the formation of power centres with the temple as their focus. In fact, this was the case in medieval Europe also, when the ecclesiastical lobby tried to usurp the powers of the secular domain after the fall of the Roman Empire. The emergence of small principalities and chieftainships styled as 'svarupams' was the direct consequence of the decline of the central authority in the 12th century. This was accompanied by the appearance of temple sanketams, an institution singularly characteristic of Kerala in this period. Principalities like Cochin and Travancore remained enervated till the advent of the colonial powers because of the presence of the temple sanketams, and also due to the dominance of the Nambuthiris and Nairs in the society. P. K. S. Raja has observed that it was the strong presence of both Nambuthiris and Nairs that checked the autocratic tendencies of the period.¹ Following S. Shahani, it may be argued that the elaborate caste structure that prevailed in medieval Kerala impeded the formation of large, unified kingdoms.²

It was only after quelling the recalcitrant Nair lobby and Brahmin clique that rulers like Marthanda Varma or Sakthan Tampuran could establish a strong government in Travancore and Cochin,

respectively.³ Once the secular chiefs asserted their authority, the communal groups gradually lost their sway in administration. In fact, the secular rulers of Kerala had been choking under the pressure of the religious domain in pre-colonial times. In his brilliant study on medieval Pudukkottai (a princely state) in Madras Presidency, Nicholas Dirks argues that ‘until the emergence of British colonial rule in southern India, the crown was not so hollow as it has generally been made out to be. Kings were not inferior to brahmins; the political system was not encompassed by a religious domain.’⁴ The Kerala scenario invalidates such a proposition for reasons already discussed. In fact, until the establishment of British colonial rule in Kerala, the ecclesiastical authority overawed if not overpowered secular authority.

The grandhavari also indicates the generation, accumulation and distribution of wealth in the medieval Tripunithura temple. The extensive rituals and land grants enabled the temple to generate material resources which were converted into assets in the form of land; and the accumulation of resources emboldened the temple to venture into elaborate renovation and construction works. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai has shown that grants to the temple were an arrangement advantageous to the donor because

in most case the lands continued to be cultivated by those who had donated them. Moreover, the tax payable to the political authority corresponded to 1/5 of the harvest (1/10 to the *naduvazhi* and 1/10 to the *desavazhi*), while that payable to the temple was only 1/6 or 1/8, the donor no longer being obliged to pay anything to the civil authority. In addition, ‘salvation’ was assured, and on very favourable terms.⁵

Admittedly, grants were quite few in the temple under consideration; but the same logic can be applied to the purchase of property by the temple, where the land might continue to be cultivated by the seller with the temple receiving the produce regularly. The sale might have relieved the original owner from paying the customary dues to the ruling chief. The TGMS mentions a few instances of this nature.⁶ Under such conditions, the temple also played the role of a middleman as it collected the rakshabhogam from tenants and handed it over to the king.

One of the impressive features of the medieval Tripunithura temple was its foolproof accounting system, where there was no 'miscellaneous' head. The efficient financial management enabled the temple to become a patron of small shrines which could not generate much income. This patronage demonstrates the willingness of the temple to share the surpluses it had generated over the years and thereby bring smaller shrines into prominence. The spirit of accommodation and cooperation exhibited by the temple enabled financially weaker temples to overcome their temporary stasis. The temple transformed from being a mere manager of the surpluses attributed to a deity into a great lord in its own right, appropriating to a large extent the means of production (land) with elaborate arrangements for a reasonable distribution of resources. By providing food to wayfarers and the needy, the Tripunithura temple also performed one of the basic forms of charity in medieval society.

The medieval temple was also a platform for the conduct of elaborate rituals, involving substantial economic exchanges. Admittedly, analysing rituals exclusively 'in terms of secular economics would clearly miss the point.... Public display, assertion of hereditary rights and obligations, and devotionism are far more important than economic rationality, or the maximisation of material outcome.'⁷ At the same time, it should be emphasized that 'ritual and economy in South Indian temples are not independent and autonomous domains.'⁸ In the temple under discussion, there were extensive rituals necessitating abundant manpower and material resources, especially during festivals and in the performance of certain ambitious rituals like the sahasrakalasa.

Undoubtedly, temple festivals can be described as 'public rituals' as they provided an occasion for devotees to showcase their proximity to the temple deity. Festivals were an opportunity for all inhabitants of the locality—whether eligible for a 'ritual share' or not—to participate 'as a symbol of their collective religious and social identity'.⁹ The seminal feature of these social celebrations was the deity's procession on caparisoned elephants through the village streets, which was viewed as the effort of the god to come out of his solitude so as to mingle freely with the people and be available in the 'public space'. Elaborate preparations were made in advance

to receive the procession at each door, where devotees could offer grains and fruits to the deity. The people, feeling that 'the god is approaching us', presented to him whatever they could. Besides this aspect of accessibility, the processions also had an element of forced gifting. For, when the deity reached the doorstep of the householder, the latter could not send him away empty-handed; instead, the deity had to be given what was best. While the devotee had the satisfaction of receiving the god and paying tributes in kind and cash at his doorstep, the temple enriched its coffers. The temple processions 'fill[ed] the heart of the ordinary Hindu with almost superhuman exaltation'.¹⁰ At the same time, processions associated with the temple festival were another mechanism for the temple authorities to exact from devotees whatever they could on the pretext of the deity approaching the people. The economic aspect underlying the ritual of temple processions cannot be belittled.

There also existed an elaborate redistribution mechanism in the rituals of the temple. As stated in Chapter I, during the major festival in the month of November–December, the rice required for the eight days of the festival was supplied by different families and persons responsible for tribute collection, and it was redistributed in a systematic, graded manner; the beneficiaries ranged from the chief priest down to the washerman. The temple thus had a built-in mechanism to integrate the different communities into its fold in a hierarchical manner without giving scope for any dispute or litigation, as in the case of the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu.¹¹

One also comes across 'invented' rituals during the period of study, like the *pal kalasa*, performed when the ruler was sick.¹² Normally, the *kalasa* ritual is performed with water, but during the illness of a ruler or his kin, it was believed that substituting water with milk would make the ritual more effective (and more expensive). The sentiment in these invented rituals was that the god would be happier with expensive rituals, which thus offered a greater possibility of fulfilling the prayers of devotees. Such invented (costly) rituals also gave the donors an elevated status, as they were conducting the ritual 'with a difference'.

There were also a series of purification rites. Thus, a woman entering the temple during her catamenia or a person entering

after contracting a particularly contagious pollution (like the death of a relative) was considered to have polluted the temple premises, which demanded extensive purification rites. The nature and extent of the purification rites were to be decided by the *tantri* of the temple. An essential component in all these purification rites was 'gifts to Brahmins', which comprised cash, cloth pieces, gold and silver; in certain rare cases a cow and calf were gifted to Brahmins in connection with the purification rites.¹³ The five elements of the cow (*panchagavya*) were also considered a vital agent in purification rites. The rules of pollution were scrupulously followed and the writ of the *tantri* was unquestionable in this regard. All purification rites necessitated enormous amounts of material resources, which were redistributed among the various functionaries in a graded manner. The pollution of various objects was also graded according to the mechanism by which they could be cleansed; thus, earthenware had to be replaced; metal objects had to be cleaned; clothes washed by launderer or at least water sprinkled on them by him, and so on.

The extensive purification rites were also related to the uncompromising ritual purity maintained by medieval Kerala society. It has been stated that occupational differences and ritual purity formed the two basic expressions of the caste system. The scattered settlements and the layout of higher-caste houses and compounds also facilitated the practice of distance pollution in Kerala. Each house was a self-contained unit with its own bathing pond, well, garden crops, a small deity for worship, and even cremation ground. Hence the question of sharing a pond or well did not arise. This made it easy to observe rules like taking a bath before entering the house once the *Nambuthiri* went outside his compound. The ecological peculiarities of Kerala cited earlier enabled the maintenance of ritual purity on a large scale. Such rigidity could not be expected on the east coast, where there was a scarcity of water.

This concern with ritual purity stretched to the practices of worship in the temples of Kerala, where nobody other than the priests were expected to touch the belongings of the deity, like his ornaments or crown. In other parts of India, however, 'an important honour is the placing of the *Sri Satakopan* (a gold crown symbolizing the feet of Vishnu) on the heads of worshippers at the conclusion

of the puja and in the course of processions.¹⁴ Further, physical contact between priest and devotees was ruled out in Kerala temples, whereas contamination by 'contact' was not observed in such a rigorous manner in the rest of the country. The ritual purity (facilitated by ecological attributes) which the Nambuthiris observed in their personal and social life was thus extended to the relations between deity and devotees in the temples of Kerala, where the deity was conceived as a sovereign person in both letter and spirit. This might have been the reason for the performance of a large number of purification rites in the Tripunithura temple, ranging from simple *punyaham* (sprinkling of water) to the sophisticated sahasrakalasa.

Entertainments were an inevitable part of the rituals associated with temple festivals. Apart from the classical art forms, popular performances like rope dancing and juggling were also included. One of the main entertainments was the Cakiyar kuttu, which incorporated an element of satire. Accompanied by mime and gesture, the Cakiyar's narration was pregnant with satire, analogies and allusions, and contemporary political and social issues were discussed during the performance. While performing the kuttu, the Cakiyar was at liberty to make fun of any person including the ruling chief, and nobody in the audience had the right to respond to the comments of the performer. In fact, kuttu performance could be considered as an occasion to express the society's concerns, protests and feelings: it was 'a ritual of expressing and relieving, if not resolving, conflict'.¹⁵ The performance of kuttu might be regarded as a conflict management technique that did not, of course, permit rebellion against the ruler, but served as a dramatization of conflict. Before print culture became common, the ancient scriptures were popularized through these temple entertainments. The role of the medieval temples in preserving and popularizing the ancient scriptures was indeed precious. The significance of festivals in medieval temples is to be seen not exclusively in its ritualistic content, but more importantly in its social and economic implications. The contention of Richard Lannoy with regard to Indian festivals can be extended to the festivals of the temple under discussion: 'As with festivals throughout the world, seasonal rites in India are accompanied by accelerated circulation of wealth and flaunting of prestige through

the distribution of accumulated reserves by the members of the *Jagmani* collective.¹⁶

Admittedly, an enhanced distribution of material resources occurred during festivals, as detailed in Chapter I. Various families and tax collectors contributed, in the form of 'tribute', the required rice for each day of the festival. This tribute was distributed unequally among hierarchical castes according to their ritual status. The processions might be occasions to demonstrate one's prestige and vanity, but, on the whole, festivals were opportunities for family get-togethers, social exchanges, renewal of friendships, and expanded economic activity in the form of temporary stalls and mobile vendors. Many household items like special earthen pots or agricultural implements like spades were available in different varieties during these festive days, as were cosmetic products and toys like balloons and small flutes made of bamboo. Festival days were important to both traders and customers because, unlike in the modern period, those items were not available throughout the year. Festivals also lifted the taboo on certain snacks like peanuts or small sweet delicacies; the consumption of these items was not common on ordinary days, especially among the members of the upper castes. On festival days, however, it was common to watch the entertainments while nibbling at peanuts or twisted and fried cakes made out of rice and Bengal gram.

Following Mikhail Bakhtin, it may be argued that fairs and festivals also contributed to a language 'quite unlike the language of the Church, palace, courts and institutions'; festivals 'had something in common and were imbued with the atmosphere of freedom, frankness and familiarity'.¹⁷ Markets associated with festivals and carnivals produced a language distinct from the official language. In Kerala too, the fairs attached to the medieval temple festivals produced significant social changes. They facilitated the evolution of a new Malayalam literary style that 'enabled Tunjat Ezhuthachan to compile *Adhyatma Ramayanam* in Malayalam language and also to set up a chain of schools in protest against the Brahmin monopoly over Sanskrit learning. Late in the eighteenth century Kunjan Nambiar developed this style to perfection when he started *Ottam Thullal* against the Sanskrit dominated *Cakyar Kuttu*.'¹⁸

Freedom from insecurity and the prevalence of both a sound economy and a leisurely class enabled pre-colonial Kerala to make substantial contributions in the fields of creative arts and knowledge. The question emerges whether similar conditions always result in the production of new learning in all places. It was indeed the existence of powerful moneyed families like the Medici that encouraged artists like Michelangelo to contribute lavishly in the field of art, architecture and sculpture during the Renaissance. The Medici family controlled the destiny of the Italian city of Florence from the 15th century to the early 1700s. They were merchants who had amassed enormous wealth and became patrons of the arts. The patronage of the rich has been essential for the very survival of artists. However, in the 15th and 16th centuries, wealth was accumulated among several groups in India, but we do not come across such a florescence of knowledge in all these places.

Gujarat is a case in point. The strategic location of Gujarat proved propitious for its merchants. Its long coastline with a string of harbours from Sind to the Konkan exposed the state to the rich maritime trade. The Vaniya merchant community in Gujarat became fairly affluent during the period under consideration, but 'the *Vaniya*'s single minded focus on generating profits had another outcome: a gradual but steady decline of the intellectual tradition nurtured by Jain and Brahman poets and scholars.'¹⁹ In fact, the tendency of the Gujaratis to neglect knowledge traditions due to the mercantile ethos (*vaishyavriti*) was reflected in the speeches and writings of its leaders.²⁰ Gujarat thus could not make significant contributions to scientific learning during the period with which we are concerned. Thus, the mere accumulation of wealth does not necessarily promote creative knowledge. The mercantile climate has often discouraged free and original thinking. What was missing in Gujarat was the component of leisure, an imperative for creative thinking. Another example is that of the Nattukottai Chettiars of Tamil Nadu, who emerged as a leading business community with investments in all the major sectors.²¹ The Parsi experience is also not different.²² The wealthy Tata Trust has extended its support to all fields, from hospitals to information technology. Yet often the aim of groups which produced money was primarily to make more profit.

The Nambuthiris in Kerala, however, did not generate wealth, and

there was always somebody to look after their affairs and indeed to patronize their scholarly and creative pursuits. Contemplation of the theoretical formulations of higher mathematics, for instance, involves a philosophical element that requires a particular atmosphere, especially in the absence of modern equipment and infrastructure. Such scholarly reflections can be pursued only when the landscape correctly matches the mindscape. Aristotle asserts in his *Metaphysics* that a state of leisure is required for the highest kinds of knowledge. Hence, the sciences which do not aim at giving pleasure or fulfilling the necessities of life were discovered first in the places where men began to have leisure. This is why the mathematical arts were founded in Egypt, for there the priestly caste was allowed to be at leisure. It was the presence of a leisure class with a rich intellectual tradition that resulted in the production of creative knowledge in medieval Kerala. Though this was a short-lived phenomenon, it was quite impressive. This significant aspect of medieval Kerala has not yet been thoroughly investigated.

Another absorbing point about the medieval Kerala temple was the complete absence of the two opposing groups of Shaivites and Vaishnavites and the subsequent conflict and schism among them. The Kerala Brahmins, unlike their counterparts in the rest of the peninsula, had no hesitation in incorporating both Shiva and Vishnu as major/minor deities in their temples; we come across the worship of both Shiva and Vishnu in the same temple. This uniqueness can be attributed to the culture which the Kerala Brahmins had inherited. They claim to have migrated from Ahikshetram (Aihole); having settled in Kerala, they resorted to religious seclusion and evolved a distinct culture of their own. Even among the Chalukya rulers there was no conflict between the Shaivites and Vaishnavites, and as far as the Chera rulers were concerned, all but one were Vaishnavites. As Kerala never formed part of the Pallava or Vijayanagara kingdoms where there was visible patronage to one sect or another, the grouping into followers of Vishnu or Shiva did not take place here. While saints like Ramanuja or Madhava or Sekkilar were championing for one school or another in other parts of south India, Kerala under the Nambuthiris peacefully worshipped both Shiva and Vishnu along with other deities, perhaps following the teaching of their patron saint Sankaracharya. The absence of such sectarian groups also prevented

several litigations centred on 'authority, honour or redistribution', as had taken place in the temples of neighbouring states.²³

It can be gleaned from the grandhavari in hand that the Poornathrayesa temple of Tripunithura, dedicated to Lord Vishnu, had no hesitation in patronizing the Chakkamkulangara shrine dedicated to Lord Shiva. There was no degradation of any deity on the basis of any sect or philosophy in medieval Kerala. The role of the Nambuthiris in maintaining equal status among all gods including Vishnu and Shiva cannot be minimized. This coexistence of 'holy ash' and 'sandal paste' is an exceptional phenomenon in the whole of India, and it demonstrates the religious and cultural symbiosis which Kerala had accomplished in pre-colonial days. Incidentally, it may be noted that an 'anti-Brahmin' (anti-Nambuthiri) movement did not take place in Kerala as it had in the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu. Even the Malayali and Ezhava Memorials²⁴ of the late 19th century emerged to resist the dominance of Tamil Brahmins in the Travancore public service, and were not directed against the Nambuthiri Brahmin.

What precisely was the nature of political authority during the period under consideration? We have seen that the post-Chera period witnessed the fragmentation of the state into various minor principalities. While there is a large body of literature on the political structure of 'early' and 'proper' medieval Kerala,²⁵ there is not much work on the late medieval period.²⁶ The enormous land grants in various forms indicate that the temple remained a feudal institution. Certainly this claim has to be prefaced with the statement that the 'feudal' period was not preceded by a 'classical age' in Kerala. Further, feudal tenure was visible only in the Devaswom and brahmaswam property. One of the major elements of feudalism was sub-infeudation. This aspect was prevalent in the case in hand. The temple did not cultivate land directly; rather, land was granted for cultivation to the aristocracy, who further infeudated it to tenants and sub-tenants. Alienation of judicial and financial rights can also be seen in the present context. The power of the state was enjoyed by the temple sanketam in the spheres of both protection and punishment. We have examples where the sanketam exercised the right to decide murder cases. The state was to implement the

decisions of the sanketam. Documents also suggest that in many cases, labourers were also transferred along with the land when it was sold, mortgaged or gifted. In fact, this resembles a type of bonded labour. These aspects are more in consonance with the system described by Noboru Karashima, summarized by Veluthat as consisting of the following features:²⁷

1. The basic direct producers are not slaves but peasants who own the means of production themselves.
2. Local magnates, who possess superior rights to the land that the peasants cultivate, subdue the peasants under their control and extract the surplus produced by means of extra-economic coercion.
3. Political power assumes a hierarchical structure which is sustained by land grants among the ruling class and also by a certain ideology.
4. Commodity production is not generalized but limited only to surplus production, which is appropriated by the exploiting class.

At the same time, these elements were prevalent, at least to some extent, only when the sanketam was alive. It has already been established that once the princely states came under colonial authority, they had to take several steps to curb the powers of the ritual heads at the behest of their colonial masters. The dissolution of the sanketam is a case in point. Archival records indicate that in order to curb the practice of huge dowries among the Nambuthiri Brahmins, both Cochin and Travancore states promulgated separate ordinances in 1823 limiting the maximum dowry to 350 panams.²⁸ These ordinances were issued due to the pressure exerted by the British Resident.²⁹ The introduction of English education is another example. The state's policy of appeasing Brahmins was thus checked by colonial rulers, and this had its repercussions on the status of the Tripunithura temple. Nonetheless, certain feudal elements, like sub-infeudation, continued even after the collapse of the sanketam and the formation of the Devaswom Board, although judicial rights (both civil and criminal) remained with the state during the colonial period.

The annals of Tripunithura extracted from the chronicle in

hand testify that the grandhavaris can offer exceptional support in reconstructing the past. These documents, initially preserved as notes of daily transactions in the temple, constitute an indispensable source for understanding the past. Both sacred and profane intercourses of the temple are mirrored in the latter's own language, in its own style and in its own seriousness through the pages of the grandhavarī. The meticulous attention and brutal honesty with which these transactions were recorded on a day-to-day basis, especially the system of accounting where one never comes across vague phrases like 'miscellaneous', is quite surprising. Interestingly, statements of expenditure also included descriptions of items obtained 'free of cost', like a broom for sweeping or medicinal plants for rituals.³⁰ Facts have been recorded in an unambiguous style, leaving no room for any future debate or dispute. As disclosed in the earlier chapters, it has been possible to abstract from these documents an approximate idea about the general economic conditions of the age, the living standard of the people, the relationships between different social groups, and also the exchanges between the political and religious domains, besides the character of Tripunithura temple itself in the pre-colonial period. Admittedly there are challenges, especially the problem of grasping exact meanings in the archaic language, or deciphering the symbols used by that generation to express fractions, and also the context in which they were used. This has meant leaving certain findings open-ended in this study. Such handicaps do exist in one way or another in all historical investigations. Certainly, with the help of these manuscripts and supported by other published sources, one can attempt to reconstruct this historical period. With all their obvious limitations, the grandhavaris of medieval Kerala deserve to be elevated to the status of a historical corpus after a careful scrutiny of their contents.

Notes

1. Raja, *Medieval Kerala*, p. 253.
2. S. Shahani, 'A Comparative Study of the Traditional Political Organizations of Kerala and Punjab', PhD dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 1965.

3. A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History* (Madras, 1991), pp. 232, 247.
4. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, p. 4.
5. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, *Studies in Kerala History* (Kottayam, 1970), pp. 284–91.
6. TGMS, p. 173.
7. Anthony Good, *Worship and the Ceremonial Economy of a Royal South Indian Temple* (Lewiston: E. Mellen, 2004), p. 21.
8. Ute Husken and K. K. A. Venkatachari, 'Ritual Economy and South Indian Practice', in Christiane Brosius and Ute Husken (eds) *Ritual Matters: Dynamic Dimensions in Practice* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2010), p. 295.
9. K. Mukund, *The View from Below: Indigenous Society, Temples and the Early Colonial State in Tamil Nadu, 1700–1835* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2005), p. 65.
10. A. L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India* (New Delhi: Rupa, 1974 [1954]), p. 202.
11. Appadurai, *Worship and Conflict under Colonial Rule*.
12. At least on four occasions, the pal kalasa ritual was performed in connection with the sickness of the rulers. See Documents 141–44 in the summary of documents provided in Appendix III at the end of this book.
13. See Document 127 in Appendix III.
14. Appadurai, *Worship and Conflict under Colonial Rule*, p. 36.
15. Lannoy, *The Speaking Tree*, p. 197.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
17. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 153.
18. M. G. S. Narayanan, 'A Note on Educational Traditions in Ancient Kerala: Persuasions from the Past', Working Paper, University of Calicut, n.d.
19. Achyut Yagnik and Suchitra Sait, *The Shaping of Modern Gujarat: Plurality, Hindutva and Beyond* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2005), p. 36.
20. *Ibid.*
21. For an excellent study of the Nattukottai Chettiars, see David Rudner, *Caste and Capitalism in Colonial India: The Nattukottai Chettiars* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1995).
22. See R. M. Lala, *The Heart Beat of a Trust* (New Delhi: McGraw-Hill, 1984).
23. Arjun Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge, 'The South Indian Temple:

- Authority, Honour and Redistribution', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 10(2), 1976, pp. 187–211.
24. In Travancore, there existed a practice of 'importing' Tamil Brahmins to fill various vacancies in the public service. In protest against the domination of the Tamil Brahmins, a memorandum signed by 10,028 people of all castes was submitted to the king in 1891. This is known as the 'Malayali Memorial'. However, this was accompanied by the 'Ezhava Memorial' signed by the members of the Ezhava community in 1896.
 25. Kesavan Veluthat, *The Political Structure of Early Medieval South India* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1993).
 26. *Ibid.*, pp. 260–61.
 27. *Ibid.*
 28. File no. 1157, Selected Proclamations (Travancore) no. 104, dt. 1.12.998 (16 July 1823), Regarding fixing the age limit for the marriage of Nambudiri girls and fixing their maximum dowry (CAT).
 29. Series File no. III, Bundle V, no. 152. dt. 22.12.1098 (6 August 1823) (RAE), Regarding the age and dowry limit of Namboodiri girls.
 30. TGMS, p. 197.

APPENDIX I

Malayalam Calendar and Asterisms

Malayalam Calendar

Cingam	August–September
Kanni	September–October
Tulam	October–November
Vrichigam	November–December
Dhanu	December–January
Makaram	January–February
Kumbham	February–March
Meenam	March–April
Metam	April–May
Etavam	May–June
Mithunam	June–July
Karkitakam	July–August

The Malayalam Era is supposed to have begun in AD 825. In order to convert the Malayalam Era to the Christian Era, 825 is added to the former.

Asterisms

1	Aswathi	10	Makam	19	Moolam
2	Bharani	11	Pooram	20	Pooratam
3	Karthika	12	Uthram	21	Uthradam
4	Rohini	13	Atham	22	Thiruvonam
5	Makayiram	14	Chithira	23	Avittam
6	Thiruvathira	15	Chothi	24	Chathayam
7	Punartham	16	Visakham	25	Pooruruttathi
8	Pooyam	17	Anizham	26	Uthrittathi
9	Ayilyam	18	Trikketta	27	Revathi

APPENDIX II

Weights and Measures

Articles Other Than Gold, Silver, Precious Stones and Medicines

2 <i>yavam</i> (barley seeds)	1 <i>kunni</i>
21 <i>kunni</i>	2 <i>masham</i> (kidney beans)
16 <i>masham</i>	1 <i>karsham</i>
4 <i>karsham</i>	1 <i>palam</i>
61¼ <i>palam</i>	1 lb
100 <i>palam</i>	1 <i>tulam</i>
20 lb	1 <i>tulam</i>
25 lb	1 <i>maund</i>
20 <i>maund</i>	1 <i>candi</i>

Measures of Capacity: Dry Measures

2 <i>alakku</i>	1 <i>ulakku</i>
2 <i>ulakku</i>	1 <i>uri</i>
2 <i>uri</i>	1 <i>nazhi</i>
4 <i>nazhi</i>	1 <i>itangazhi</i>
10 <i>itangazhi</i>	1 <i>para</i>

Note: There existed different *paras*, i.e., containing 8 as well as 9 *itangazhis*; but generally accepted was the 10 *itangazhi para*.

Measures of Capacity: Liquid Measures

4 <i>tavi</i> or <i>tutam</i>	1 <i>nazhi</i>
4 <i>nazhi</i>	1 <i>itangazhi</i>
10 <i>itangazhi</i>	1 <i>para</i>
12 <i>itangazhi</i>	1 <i>chothana</i>
25 <i>chothana</i>	1 <i>candi</i>

Measures of Length

8 grains of paddy (in breadth)	1 <i>angulam</i> (1 1/6 inches)
24 <i>angulam</i>	1 <i>kol</i> (also known as carpenter's <i>kol</i> , i.e., 2½ feet)
4 <i>kol</i>	1 <i>dandu</i> (9½ feet)
800 <i>dandu</i>	1 <i>nazhika</i>
2½ <i>nazhika</i>	1 <i>katham</i>
4 <i>katham</i>	1 <i>yojana</i>
9 inches	1 span (space from the end of the thumb to the end of the little finger when the fingers are extended)
2 span	1 <i>muzham</i> or cubit
2 <i>muzham</i>	yard

Measures of Surface

12 fingers or <i>angulam</i>	1 <i>muzham</i>
2 <i>muzham</i>	1 <i>kol</i> (2½ feet)
4 <i>kol</i>	1 <i>perukkam</i> (1/5 cent)
40 <i>perukkam</i> *	1 <i>para</i> *

* Note the change in the computation of the paddy rate before and after 1840.

Gold and Silver

3 grains of paddy	1 <i>manjati</i>
1 <i>kunni</i>	2 <i>kunni</i>
42 <i>manjati</i>	1 <i>kalanju</i>
4 <i>kunni</i>	1 <i>panamita</i> (<i>panam</i> weight)
21 <i>panamita</i>	1 sovereign

Adapted from C. Achyuta Menon, *The Cochin State Manual*, 1911 (Trivandrum, 1995); and Herman Gundert, *A Malayalam and English Dictionary* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1992 [1872]).

APPENDIX III

Summary of the Documents in the Tripunithura Grandhavari

An endeavour is made in the following pages to give a brief overview of the contents of the 334–page Tripunithura Grandhavari, which is at the core of this treatise. I do not attempt to provide a literal translation of the manuscript. As mentioned earlier, these chronicles were written on a daily basis on palm leaves. At a particular point of time (in 1885), they were transcribed onto paper. They do not appear in any chronological sequence for reasons stated at the outset, and quite a few of them are not even dated. What follows is a gist of the documents in the order they appear in the original text, numbered by the present writer for the sake of convenience.

Document No. 1 (not dated, pp. 1–12)

Delineates the legendary origin of the temple related to the Santanagopalam story in the *Srimat Bhagavata Purana* and the installation of the deity by Arjuna. The elders of the 64 gramas met to discuss the future course of action and entrusted the temple to the care of four Brahmin scholars from Vanneri Nadu. They established regulations for the appointment of temple functionaries and for the conduct of annual festivals, and also fixed the tributes to be made by each Pattamali for the conduct of the festivals. The share to each of the functionaries including that of the Cakiyar was also settled.

Document No. 2 (800 ME, pp. 13–14)

Decision of the yogam regarding the division and distribution of the daily offerings made to the deity.

Document No. 3 (840 ME, pp. 14–15)

Moothath obtains a loan of 970 panam from the temple; terms and conditions for its repayment.

Document No. 4 (800 ME, pp. 15–17)

Decision of the yogam to impose a fine of 10 panam on those who abstain from its meetings, and also all members shall remain in session until the minutes of the meeting are recorded and approved.

Document No. 5 (ME 836, pp. 17–18)

Decision of the yogam to enhance the daily offerings by 24 rial of rice, out of which 4 viriali were earmarked for wayfarers in addition to the daily free food to Brahmins.

Document No. 6 (800 ME, p. 19)

Encumbrance of the Punithura tax collector, like making payments in cash and kind to some of the temple functionaries from the month of Kanni to Kumbham, and also to conduct the Uthram festival in that month, and on the next day to present the income and expenditure statement before the yogam.

Document No. 7 (not dated, pp. 19–20)

Details regarding the procedure to be contemplated for the installation of the temple tantris.

Document No. 8 (831 ME pp. 20–21)

Regarding apportioning of the claims on the vacant position of Bhattathiris among the current holders.

Document No. 9 (819 ME, pp. 21–23)

Procedure to be followed in the installation of a new Koyma.

Document No. 10 (not dated, pp. 23–24)

Procedure to be adopted in the installation of Tevar Kura Pattamali.

Document No. 11 (not dated, pp. 24–25)

Procedure for the installation of the chief priest.

Document No. 12 (849 ME, pp. 25–26)

Protest by some of the Tulu Brahmins about the office of the chief priest and the consequent presentation of a silver pot before the deity as atonement for their omissions and commissions.

Document No. 13 (863 ME, pp. 26–27)

Decision of the yogam to appoint the local Tulu Brahmins as both chief and assistant priests of the temple.

Document Nos 13, 14 and 15 (868, 971 and 872 ME, pp. 27–28)

Appointment of chief priest in the respective years.

Document No. 16 (874 ME, pp. 28–30)

In the month of Etavam of 874 ME, one of the Tulu Brahmins, named Sankaranarayanan, confessed that after performing Sakthi puja, a couple of them had consumed alcohol. The said Sankaranarayanan wanted to undergo a purification rite for his sin. (Sakthi puja involves the offering of meat and spirits, and hence is forbidden to Brahmins.) Accordingly the Brahmin scholars were summoned and the yogam, which met on 26th Karkitakam of 874 ME, decided to exclude those 13 wrongdoers from the subsequent installation. Installation could be conducted by the remaining members of their family once they also underwent the purification rite. The matter was also intimated to their respective gramas.

Document No. 17 (869 ME, p. 30)

On the 8th of Makaram in 869 ME, after sunset, Variraya Nambi was manhandled by a group of people and the victim made a complaint to the yogam. He could not identify the culprits, but after a few days there were some indications with regard to their identity. Two miscreants were recognized and they were ordered to present one silver pot each to the temple as punishment. Both of them paid 120 panam each towards the silver pot. Later it was found out that one more person was involved in the incident, and he also was fined 120 panam as the cost of the silver pot.

Document No. 18 (865 ME, p. 31)

Approval for an adoption in the Puliyanloor family, i.e., the house of temple tantri.

Document No. 19 (840 ME, pp. 31–34)

Installation of Moothath; procedure thereon.

Document No. 20 (828 ME, p. 34)

Payment for the rites associated with the casting of a new titampu with the figure of Anantha engraved on it: 200 panam to the Puliyanloor tantri as dakshina, 50 panam to the chief priest, 32 panam to the assistant priest, 10 panam to the chief tax collector, all together 12 pieces of double-cloth, 10 panam for garland makers, and 12 panam to drummers.

Document No. 21 (868 ME, p. 34)

The flagstaff of the temple fell down and was replaced. Kalasa puja was performed; an amount of 2,300 panam was given to the temple tantri towards these rituals.

Document No. 22 (867 ME, pp. 34–36)

During the festival in Vrichigam of 867 ME, a person having

contracted pollution entered the temple and worshipped the deity; this document enumerates the purification rituals held thereon.

Document No. 23 (not dated, pp. 36–41)

Elaborate list of items required for conducting five-day *drivya kalasa*.

Document No. 24 (872 ME, pp. 41–42)

Details of drivya kalasa performed for purification rituals in connection with the bleeding from the leg of the priest. A total amount of 129 *Vi* panam was spent for dakshina to the priests and their helpers; and 15 itangazhi ghee was also required for the function.

Document No. 25 (871 ME, p. 42)

In the month of Karkitakam of 871 ME, some shortcomings were noticed in the conduct of morning services. To make up for these deficiencies, a drivya kalasa was performed which involved 2 para of ghee and 22 panam.

Document No. 26 (871 ME, pp. 42–44)

Details of drivya kalasa performed by the temple authorities in the month of Karkitakam of 871 ME.

Document No. 27 (869 ME, pp. 47–48)

Expenses for utsava beli (special offerings of sanctified food to the subordinate deities and to divine doorkeepers during festivals) conducted by queen dowager during the Vrichigam festival in 969 ME. Rice 28 para, paddy 1 para and 1 itangazhi, about 12 double dhotis and 260 panam were spent on this ritual.

Document No. 28 (not dated, pp. 48–49)

Expenditure and items required for performing kalabhom. Sandal 5

Vzlb, rose water 5 bottles, fresh smelling substances 8; 160 panam to be paid to various functionaries from the tantru to the fifer.

Document No. 29 (852 ME, pp. 49–54)

Detailed statement of items required and amount involved for conducting vijayabeli. This was conducted by the ruling chief of Cochin in the month of Meenam (March–April) of 852 ME. (This highly expensive rite involved the redistribution of items from the tantru to the woodcutter.)

Document No. 30 (863 ME, pp. 54–55)

Expenses incurred and the procedure to be followed in connection with the prince becoming the senior raja or attaining tirumooppu in the year 863 ME. (The interesting aspect in this document is the admission that there was no special puja or the usual meeting under the tree after the function.)

Document No. 31 (814 ME, pp. 56–57)

Details of tirumooppu ceremony in 814 ME.

Document Nos 32–39 (828 ME, pp. 57–64)

Role of the different Brahmin families and the various tax collectors in the eight-day festival in the month of Vrichigam and the quantity of rice to be measured by them during the days of the festival.

Document No. 40 (828 ME, pp. 64–66)

Expenses for the special rites performed in connection with the change of equinox in the month of Makaram.

Document No. 41 (888 ME, p. 66)

Grant of approval to the adoption in the family of the tantru.

Document No. 42 (800 ME, pp. 66–68)

This is a repetition of Document No. 4 (pp. 15–17)

Document No. 43 (873 ME, pp. 68–69)

Installation of Tevar Kura Pattamali.

Document No. 44 (867 ME, p. 69)

On 18th Tulam, 867 ME, a new Koyma was installed.

Document No. 45 (869 ME, pp. 69–71)

In the month of Vrichigam of 869 ME, while some of the functionaries were engaged in the preparation of the feast in connection with the building of a new palace, a clash took place between a Tulu and a Tamil Brahmin. The Tamil Brahmin immediately made amends for his mistakes; but the Tulu Brahmin remained indifferent. He was therefore dissociated by the yogam. Later he agreed to present one silver pot to the deity; and he also had to pay 32 panam to the victim as compensation.

Document No. 46 (not dated, pp. 71–72)

Procedures to be followed in the installation of tax collectors in Punithura and Pantirati.

Document No. 47 (857 ME, pp. 72–73)

Expenses incurred in connection with the installation of tax collectors in Punithura and Pantirati in the year 857 ME.

Document No. 48 (not dated, pp. 74–77)

Customary rites to be followed during the installation of Koyma.

Document No. 49 (848 ME, pp. 77–79)

Installation of Moothath.

Document No. 50 (819 ME, pp. 79–80)

Installation of Moothath in the month of Kumbham, 819 ME.

Document No. 51 (not dated, pp. 80–82)

Commodities essential for the various purification rites in the temple, and share allotted to each functionary in those rituals.

Document No. 52 (not dated p. 82)

Quantity of rice and number of clothes required for conducting utsava beli in the temple.

Document No. 53 (not dated, pp. 83–84)

Rice to be supplied by the tax collectors on the Uthram asterism in the month of Kumbham, and the system for its redistribution.

Document No. 54 (876 ME, pp. 84–86)

Conflict among the Tulu Brahmins and the consequent presentation of a silver pot to the temple by the culprits.

Document No. 55 (867 ME, pp. 86–87)

Details of expenditure incurred in connection with the performance of drivya kalasa as atonement for the entry of a Brahmin during pollution.

Document No. 56 (870 ME, pp. 87–88)

Resolution of the yogam which met on 12th Vrichigam: Considering

the continuing discord on the appointment of priests, it was decided to install a competent person from Shivahalli grama as the chief priest for a period of one year.

Document No. 57 (848 ME, pp. 88–90)

On 12th Kanni of 848 ME, Moothath died. A general mourning was declared. This document details the presents to be made to the survivors of the family by the different lords and tenants.

Document No. 58 (879 ME, pp. 90–92)

Death of the mother of Moothath; customs to be followed.

Document No. 59 (869 ME, p. 92)

Installation of both the chief and assistant priests on 4th Karkitakam, 869 ME.

Document No. 60 (869 ME, pp. 92–95)

Conflict among some Tulu Brahmins on the appointment of priests and the decision of the yogam to flush out those who remained impertinent; each miscreant had to present one silver pot to the deity.

Document No. 61 (880 ME, pp. 95–96)

Details of purification ceremony held in connection with the death of a cow inside the temple.

Document No. 62 (886 ME, pp. 96–97)

A chief priest was installed on 24th Metam, 886 ME. In 890, when a new installation became necessary, it was decided to make a choice between two former priests who were of sound character. Their names were written and lots were drawn, and the person so selected was installed.

Document No. 63 (886 ME, pp. 97–100)

Detailed expenditure statement for purification rites held in atonement for the entry of a Nair into the temple during pollution.

Document No. 64 (888 ME, pp. 100–108)

Expiation for a murder committed by Kaikkatt Elayitom: During the late hours of 23rd Kanni, 888 ME (October 1713), one of the members of the Kaikkatt Elayitom family abetted a person called Maratt Ittimakkotha to bring along Vazhappilly Panickkar who had already retired to sleep; and in a friendly atmosphere the three consumed alcohol and later accompanied Panickkar to his abode where he was treacherously killed and the corpse was dragged into a nearby tank. This was followed by the looting of the house of the victim. Not seeing the said Panickkar on the next morning, though the doors of his house remained open, a detailed search was made in the course of which Maratt Ittimakkotha was taken into custody from where he escaped.... Subsequently the corpse was found; and on examination it was seen that the body had sustained two bullet injuries in the chest and a long piece of cloth had been pushed through his mouth and another cloth piece was fastened around the neck. The body was cremated at the expense of the temple; and in the urgent meeting of the yogam held immediately, it was decided to take over Elayitom's property located within the limits of the sanketam. Early in 890 ME (1715), the accused repeatedly expressed his willingness to make amends for his atrocities. In the next meeting of the yogam, it was resolved to impose the following penalties on the accused: that he should surrender to the temple sanketam fields yielding 36 paras of paddy as pattom (the janmi's share) plus garden land worth 72 panam as pattom, and to the survivors of the victim he should make a complete gift of property worth 365 paras of paddy as pattom, a dwelling house, two hunting grounds along with 10 Nairs. The accused was initially reluctant to accede to these conditions; but the yogam prevailed and towards the end of 890 ME Elayitom surrendered to these demands. His property within the limits of the

sanketam was accordingly transferred both to the temple and to the survivors of the victim's family.

Document No. 65 (899 ME, pp. 108–9)

Copy of a letter received from Tulu Nadu on a complaint against one of the Tulu Brahmins.

Document No. 66 (899 ME, pp. 109–11)

Details of tirumooppu ceremony held in the month of Meenam in 899 ME.

Document No. 67 (869 ME, pp. 111–13)

Agreement signed by the Tulu Brahmins before the yogam on 1st Tulam 869. To avoid future controversies over the installation of priests, it was agreed that the priests be selected by lots. Those who were found violating this principle should pay to the temple 500 panam towards silver pots.

Document No. 68 (899 ME, pp. 113–14)

Deals with mild quarrels among the Tulu Brahmins.

Document No. 69 (901 ME, p. 114)

Elayitathu Kandan Kandan, who represents the holy deity of Tripunithura in the yogam, and Nedumparambil Narayanan Narayanan who is also the Tevar Kura Pattamali hereby endorse the nephews of Madyannath Panickkar, and they shall enjoy all rights and privileges of the said Panickkar.

Document No. 70 (900 ME, pp. 114–15)

Purification rites in connection with the entry of a person during pollution.

Document No. 71 (900 ME, p. 115)

Charter of the building and parambu of Kariyaparambathu. Royal order to the yogam of Tripunithura: Whereas the deed given by Devaswom to Ittikandan on Kariyaparambu is not traceable, the ruling chief hereby purchases that mortgage and takes possession of the aforesaid property.

Document No. 72 (901 ME, pp. 115–23)

Description of the *valiya* (major) abhishekam conducted in the month of Makaram of the year 901 ME. Items to be supplied from the palace: Rice about 13 para, paddy roughly 12 para, around 77 double dhotis and 312 panam besides a lot of other puja components. It was a five-day fete during which the above items were redistributed from Vedic teachers down to cleaners.

Document No. 73 (not dated, pp. 123–24)

For the festival in the month of Cingam, altogether 15 nazhi of rice: For the first and last day one nazhi each; and for the remaining six days two nazhi each; and one nazhi for making baked rice cake. The chief priest was to hoist the flag and Moothath to perform the rites on the last day. No functionary was to have any additional benefits or special privileges for this festival. Nangiyar kuttu was to be performed for which the Nangiyar is entitled to cosmetics, daily dress, and food; and also 16 panam. She is to enact the story of *Srikrishna Caritham*. The washerman is also to get 1 panam.

Document No. 74 (not dated, p. 124)

Regarding the *catussatam* offering (four items of 100 each, i.e., 100 nazhi rice, 100 palam jaggery, 100 kadali plantains and 100 coconuts), the charge for grating 100 coconuts and squeezing out coconut milk: 2 panam.

Document No. 75 (831 ME, p. 124)

Installation of Punithura and Pantirati tax collectors.

Document No. 76 (831 ME, p. 125)

Installation of tax collectors.

Document No. 77 (831 ME, pp. 125–26)

Installation of Kuzhikkatt Nambuthiri as the chief tax collector.

Document No. 77 (831 ME, p. 126)

In the month of Karkitakam of 831 ME, Kozhappanangattu Nambuthiri presented to the deity land worth 12 para of paddy, located in Veloor desam; the yogam decided that the said Nambuthiri himself shall manage the land.

Document No. 78 (854 ME, pp. 126–27)

In the month of Kumbham of 854 ME, the palace was constructed and a purification ceremony was held in which the drummer was paid 3 panam. When the procession reached the palace, the drummer was to be given 1 para of paddy, mahouts to get 1 para of paddy on each day of the procession; and the washerman to get 1 para for four days ...

Document No. 79 (854 ME, pp. 127–29)

Details of the panchagavya (five products of cow, i.e., milk, curd, ghee, cow dung and urine, used in ritual purification) offered by the Paliyam family.

Document No. 80 (816 ME, pp. 129–30)

Expenses for the kalasa performed in connection with the valiya abhishekam. Paddy 12 para, rice 36 para, jaggery 2 tulam ...

Document No. 81 (877 ME, pp. 130–31)

Temporary installation of chief priest.

Document No. 82 (875 ME, pp. 131–32)

Complete and outright sale deed executed in the month of Etavam of 875 ME. Thevan Thevan and his brothers of Kirangattu hereby make a complete and outright sale of their parambu situated in Paravoor desam to Elayithathu Kandan Kandan who represents the holy deity in the sabha and to Elayithathu Kandan Thevan who is also the Tevar Kura Pattamali ... for a price decided on that day by four people... the total amount involved in this deed is 35,000 panam out of which 8,000 panam to be adjusted towards work in the temple, kalasa, and the upkeep of the priests; and the remaining 27,000 panam to be given to the seller ...

Document No. 83 (878 ME, pp. 132–33)

Complete and outright sale deed executed in the month of Metam in the year 878 ME: Perumattathu Theruvinthala Lakshmi Ambika Koviladhikarikal executes an outright sale deed in favour of Elayithathu Kandan Kandan who represents the holy deity and Elayitathu Kandan Thevan who is the Tevar Kura Pattamali of her property located in the Maradu desam and parambu fields worth 2 para of seed,... another field worth 3 para, a nearby field worth 3 para ... another field worth 3 para and yet another plot of 1/4 para ... at a price fixed by four people ... (total 33 1/2 para).

Document No. 84 (878 ME, p. 133)

In the month of Meenam of 878 ME, the queen dowager presented to the deity certain parambus and fields worth 1 1/2 para of seed.

Document No. 85 (878 ME, pp. 133–34)

Mortgage deed executed by Perumpatappil Valiya Thampuran (ruling chief) in the month of Karkitakam of 878 ME: Received from Elayithathu Kandan Kandan who represents the holy deity in the sabha and Elayithathu Kandan Thevan who is the Tevar Kura Pattamali a sum of 50,001 puthu panam. Perumatappil Rama Varma

Thampuran mortgaging fields worth 40 kandi of seed ... interest per year 150 paddy(?)

Document No. 86 (878 ME, pp. 134–35)

Complete and outright sale deed executed in the month of Karkitakam of the year 878 ME: Konkathara Veera Veera Kerula Rama Kochu Thirukoviladhikarikal of Perumattathu Patappil hereby executes a complete and outright sale deed of the property in Kollimuttom desam parambu and paddy fields ... to Elayitathu Kandan Kandan who represents the holy deity and to Elayithathu Kandan Tevan who is also the Tevar Kura Pattamali for a price fixed on that day by four people ...

Document No. 87 (878 ME, pp. 135–36)

Complete and outright sale deed executed in the month of Karkitakam of 878 ME: Gangadhara Veera Kerula Rama Varma Thirukoviladhikarikal of Perumpatappu hereby executes a complete and outright sale deed of the property in Karikode desam ... paddy fields in favour of Elayithathu Kandan Kandan who represents the holy deity and Elayithathu Kandan Tevan who is also the Tevar Kura Pattamali for a price ...

Document No. 88 (878 ME, p. 136)

Gangadhara Veera Kerula Rama Varma Thirukoviladhikarikal of Perumpatappu hereby executes a complete outright sale deed of the parambu in Puthanangati ... in favour of ... in the month of Karkitakam of 878 ME ...

Document No. 89 (884 ME, pp. 136–37)

Complete and outright sale deed executed in the month of Vrichigam of 884 ME: Konnan Mathevi and brothers residing in Palluruthi desam hereby make an outright sale of their parambu and paddy fields ... for a price fixed on that day by four people ...

Document No. 90 (935 ME, pp. 137–38)

Eravirai and his brothers hereby make a complete and outright sale of their property located in Karuti desam ... a building and field worth 74 para ... in favour of ... for a price ...

Document No. 91 (912 ME, p. 138)

Letter from Eravi Raman; Menokki to read this before the yogam: On the 1st of Metam of 912 ME, the property in Vendormuttom desam along with agricultural field worth ... are being presented to the Lord Tripunithura as offering ...

Document No. 92 (925 ME, p. 139)

Letter from Kakkara Kelan; Menokki to read this before the yogam: The parambus located in Peringala desam ... are being presented to the Lord of Tripunithura as an offering ... in the month of Cingam of 925 ME ...

Document No. 93 (920 ME, pp. 139–40)

This is a repetition of Document No. 91.

Document No. 94 (944 ME, pp. 140–41)

Boundaries of the property in Katakkanadu desam.

Document No. 95 (931 ME, p. 141)

Regarding the field leased out by Kuttan of Kollimuttom desam to Raman Chakki ... and annual returns thereon ...

Document No. 96 (995–1002 ME, pp. 141–68)

The flagstaff of Tripunithura Sri Narayana Kovil built in 825 ME collapsed on 18th Meenam of 995 ME, and for the cremation of the defunct flagstaff rites were performed during the 2nd and 7th of Metam. A new flagstaff as per convention was made out of teakwood

with bronze coating and was installed on 17th Mithunam, 1002 ME. Detailed expenditure statement for both functions: About 158 para and 754 itangazhi paddy were pounded to meet the requirements of various types of rice for the cremation rites. Besides, clothes of different measurements, and innumerable items for the puja were also needed for the function. The expenditure for the final rites of the defunct flagstaff came to around 3,174 puthan. The teakwood required for the making of the new flagstaff was brought from Ernakulam with the help of two elephants named Anantha Padmanabhan and Padmanabhan. As a prelude to carpentry work certain rituals were conducted.... The woodwork was entrusted to Unni Panickkan of Idappilly and Chenna Panickkan of Vadakkumcherry; both of them were provided accommodation near the work site itself. They were paid 758 $\frac{1}{4}$ puthan as wages for 223 days after deducting the daily allowances. The carpentry work including the cost of accessories and the allied rites came to 2002 $\frac{1}{4}$ puthan.... The metal work was done by two braziers named Ananja Perumal from Tiruvalla and Vatakkunathan of Paravoor. About 28,092 $\frac{1}{2}$ puthan was spent on the metal work. To position the flagstaff firmly on the ground, a foundation of granite was also built. Total construction cost was approximately 33,865 puthan. The consecration of the new flagstaff was conducted in the month of Mithunam of 1002 ME with elaborate rituals accompanied by a feast. This document throws light on the prices of different items and provides a rough idea about the wages of some groups in early 1825.

Document No. 97 (531 ME, pp. 168–69)

Outright sale deed of Karamakkad desam by Meleth Nair: In the month of Makaram of the year 531 ME, Kadambanatt Tevan Kandan and his brothers make a complete and outright sale of their property located in Karamakkad along with all their rights thereon ... to the temple.

Document No. 98 (531 ME, pp. 169–70)

Deed written in the month of Makaram of 531 ME: through this deed the temple retransferred the property mentioned in the above

document to its owners, and the temple was to receive a part of its produce annually. The owners were to give 25 para annually to Meleth Nair as rakshabhogam.

Document No. 99 (879 ME, p. 171)

Decision of the yogam dated 12th Makaram of 879 ME: When Valiya Veetil Rarichan died, Meleth Nair was not permitted to join the final rites by the survivors of the deceased. Thereupon Meleth Nair approached the temple authorities with a complaint. The bereaved family members were asked to act as per the custom and convention of the land.... Decided not to approve any adoption in both families....

Document No. 100 (964 ME, pp. 171–72)

Details of the wealth dedicated by Maniyambally: Letter from Devan Narayanan of Nellickappilly addressed to the Tripunithura yogam: presenting to the temple my share of 39 para of paddy from ...

Document No. 101 (965–66 ME, pp. 172–73)

The above family further makes a grant of 54 para of paddy annually to the temple.

Document No. 102 (982 ME, p. 173)

Grant by Tevarkattil Chettiyar: dedicating land worth 7 para of paddy in Ramamangalam, near Moovattupuzha. The yogam asked the donor himself to look after the property under terms of *verum pattom*.

Document No. 103 (975 ME, p. 174)

Grant by Kotha Narayanan ... 18 para of paddy annually to the temple.

Document No. 104 (981 ME, pp. 174–77)

Grant by Komana Nambuthiri ... 360 para of paddy to the temple annually.

Document No. 105 (985 ME, pp. 177–78)

Maniyambilly Bhattathiri dedicates land worth 15 para of paddy to the temple and from the produce thus received 1 nazhi of cooked rice shall be offered to the deity daily without any break.

Document No. 106 (991 ME, p. 178)

Exchange of property between the temple and the ruling chief.

Document No. 107 (991 ME, pp. 178–79)

Royal grant of a part of the king's share from a property.

Document No. 108 (1005 ME, pp. 179–80)

Royal grant of some parambu to the temple.

Document No. 109 (999 ME, pp. 180–83)

Detailed expenditure statement for the conduct of *ashtabanda* kalasa in Chakkamkulangara, a temple under the patronage of the Tripunithura deity. Around 3,650 puthan, 3 dhotis and 160 cloth pieces ... were required for this ritual.

Document No. 110 (951 ME, pp. 184–90)

Details of 1,000 kalasa performed as atonement for the death of a Nambuthiri inside the temple. Towards the end of this document, there is also the settlement of a dispute between the conch blower and the drummers regarding the sharing of money during special occasions.

Document No. 111 (1021 ME, pp. 190–200)

Descriptive account of sahasrakalasam conducted in 1021 ME by the ruling chief. This eight-day fete began on 6th Mithunam and had its culmination on 13th Mithunam, 1021 ME. In addition to the special rites, there were also daily entertainment programmes like Chakiyar kuttu. Elaborate arrangements were made to provide a feast both in the morning and evening with four varieties of chips, papad, four different pickles, three types of vegetable dishes and paysam. On the concluding day, five types of vegetable curry, six types of chips, six varieties of pickle, two types of paysam, big and small papads were served along with rice. An approximate amount of 66,430 54 puthan was spent on this ceremony by the ruler. This document gives us an idea about the prices of different commodities in early 1847.

Document No. 112 (970 ME, p. 200)

Letter of appointment of Koyma: To the yogam of Tripunithura, Kottappurathu Ramararu is appointed the Koyma of Tripunithura temple and he shall discharge all the responsibilities of Koyma as per custom and precedence; and he should be given livelihood as was done earlier ...

Document No. 113 (1031 ME, pp. 200–212)

A local court orders auction of the property of the judgment debtor to clear the dues of the decree holder; the temple interferes and made a successful bid ...

Document No. 114 (1031 ME, pp. 212–17)

Complete and outright sale deed executed in the month of Dhanu of 1031 ME by Kothakuttan and his brothers of their property including both parambu and rice fields to Elayitathu Kandan Narayanan who represents the holy deity in the yogam and to Periyola Narayanan Kumaran who is also the Tevar Kura Pattamali ...

Document No. 115 (1041 ME, pp. 217–19)

In 1037 ME, the ruler had bequeathed to the temple the property of a family that had become extinct. This royal writ seems to have been damaged, and in this document the new ruler reiterates the earlier order.

Document No. 116 (1031 ME, pp. 219–20)

Royal assent to the deed executed by the surviving two female members of a family in favour of a Nambuthiri Brahmin in lieu of protection and maintenance of the women ...

Document No. 117 (1045 ME, pp. 220–25)

Complete and outright sale deed executed in the month of Mithunam of 1045 ME by Narayanan Vasudevan of Patiur of their parambus, No. 101 located in Etakkulam, muri No. 103 ... total of 22 muri parambu and paddy fields worth sowing 594 ¹/_A para of paddy for 16,681 \forall panam in favour of ...

Document No. 118 (952 ME, pp. 225–27)

A Nambuthiri obtains a loan of 24,606 ³/_A panam from the ruling chief by pledging the title deeds of his property located in and around Tripunithura. The raja makes a second mortgage of those title deeds to the temple and gets a loan of 26,626 % panam. The temple levied an annual interest of 15 para of paddy per 1,000 panam. The property comprised both agricultural land and parambu, and the former was leased out for cultivation.... The king wanted pattom to be adjusted towards the interest....

Document No. 119 (935 ME, pp. 227–28)

Sale deed executed in the month of Kanni of 935 ME: Ramanrai Elayitam and his brothers make a complete and outright sale of their property in Vennala desam worth 16 para ... to (the temple) ...

Document No. 120 (1007 ME, pp. 228–34)

Private individual participating in an auction ordered by the local court and clearing the liabilities of the judgment-debtor ...

Document No. 121 (999 ME, pp. 234–49)

Rituals performed in connection with the renovation of sri kovil and mandapa in the year 999 ME and descriptive list of various items required for the rituals.

Document No. 122 (1008–1015 ME, pp. 249–62)

The vilakkumatam (wooden frames with lamp holders) of the temple became putrid, and therefore Kanippayur Nambuthiri, an authority on *vastu vidya*, was consulted. After detailed examination of the site he prescribed with meticulous attention to detail the measurements for making a new frame. This document mentions contributions by European officers, local civil servants, members of the royal family and the ruling chief, but does not give any indication as to when it was completed.

Document No. 123 (988 ME, pp. 262–71)

Purification ceremony of brahmakalasa as atonement for the entry of a non-Hindu into the temple. Provides the list of items required ...

Document No. 124 (1005 ME, pp. 271–74)

This chronicle recounts the purification rites performed for the inadvertent entry into the temple of a Nambuthiri who was under pollution.

Document No. 125 (1044 ME, pp. 274–75)

Purification ceremony for the entry of a non-Hindu inside the temple.

Document No. 126 (1045 ME, pp. 275–77)

Purification rites for the entry of a mason inside the temple during the time of abhisheka.

Document No. 127 (1015 ME, pp. 277–79)

During the festival in the month of Vrichigam of 1015 ME, the temple tank got polluted due to the death of a dog inside it. This document narrates the special rites conducted to purify the tank.

Document No. 128 (1015 ME, pp. 279–80)

The tantri of the temple was incapacitated from attending the initial rites associated with the Vrichigam festival in the year 1015 ME due to pollution. Therefore Thottekkatt Othikkan Nambuthiri, one of the Vedic teachers who had the right to be a substitute of the tantri, was engaged to perform the rites for five days; and by the sixth day of the festival the tantri became eligible for conducting the rites. An interesting aspect of this document is the bargaining capacity of the priest who substituted for the tantri duty for the first five days. He refused to accept his remuneration at 20 puthan per day, and insisted that he should be given 24 puthan a day. After verifying earlier records, a precedent was found in the year 957 ME when another substitute was paid 24 puthan per day. Hence it was decided to honour the precedent and to pay this substitute priest 24 puthan per day.

Document No. 129 (1045 ME, pp. 280–81)

Purification ceremony held in connection with the death of one of the temple functionaries in the temple pond.

Document No. 130 (1052 ME, pp. 281–82)

In the course of the Kumbham festival of the said year, it was seen that the temple premises had become stinky due to a rotting fish. This document elaborates the purification rites held thereon.

Document No. 131 (1045 ME, p. 282)

Special rites performed as atonement for the breaking of the coir attached to the flagstaff in the course of the festival.

Document Nos 132, 133 (1053 and 1071 ME, pp. 282–83)

Similar occurrences.

Document Nos 133, 134 and 135 (1040, 1059 and 1068 ME, pp. 284–85)

Purification rites performed for the entry of women of the royal family inside the temple during their catamenia. The expenses for such rites were met by the palace itself.

Document No. 136 (1067 ME, p. 286)

Purification rites conducted for the entry of a non-Hindu in the temple.

Document No. 137 (1057 ME, p. 287)

Special rites performed in connection with the dress of the deity catching fire.

Document No. 138 (1057 ME, p. 287)

The small idol placed near the main deity fell while the head priest was performing some rites; and purification rituals were held for which the head priest had to foot the bill.

Document No. 139 (1057 ME, pp. 287–97)

Elaborate description of items required for the kalasa held in that year.

Document No. 140 (1069 ME, pp. 297–98)

On 12th Vrichigam of 1069 ME, a small fire broke out on the roof of the titappalli (temple kitchen); the fire was immediately extinguished and later purification rites were conducted as per tradition.

Document Nos 141–44 (1020, 1030, 1066 and 1071 ME, pp. 298–307)

Pal kalasa conducted when members of the royal family were ailing. Normally kalasa is performed with water, but in the present instance milk was used instead of water. This rite was expected to bestow on the devotee good health, and it was performed in the years 1020, 1030, 1066 and 1071 ME during the sickness of the rulers. In 1020 ME it was conducted as a 15-day ceremony requiring daily 1 ^x4 para of milk and other items. A total of 107 para of paddy was used for this function. A 20-day programme was observed in the other three instances.

Document Nos 145–49 (1028, 1029, 1049, 1061 and 1063 ME, pp. 307–314)

Purification rites organized in connection with the quenching of the lighted wicks of the main nilavilakku in the sanctum sanctorum, which was taken as a bad omen. Elaborate rituals accompanied by a feast were conducted as atonement during the five occasions mentioned.

Document No. 150 (1049 ME, pp. 314–23)

Rituals associated with the making of a new bhandaram with granite enclosure and also major repairs in the temple godown and renovation of the titappalli. The whole project was completed at a total cost of 122,493 puthan.

Document No. 151 (974 ME, pp. 323–27)

Details of the items required for the sahasrakalasa conducted in that year.

Document No. 152 (1060 ME, pp. 327–30)

Poototta temple, one of the kiletams (small temples under the patronage of a major temple) of Tripunithura temple, became obsolete and it was decided to reconstruct the whole edifice. Accordingly the sri kovil, *valia ambalam*, and the compound wall were rebuilt and the temple tank was repaired; these constructions were accompanied by elaborate rituals.

Document No. 153 (974 ME, pp. 330–32)

Decision to introduce an annual festival in Chakkamkulangara shrine, another kiletam of the Tripunithura temple. The desire to commence an annual festival in Chakkamkulangara was expressed to the tantrī, who gave his approval for an eight-day programme. The titampu of the temple was cast in 1037 ME, and the temple structure was completely renovated in 1068 ME when new belikkals were also made.

Document No. 154 (not dated, pp. 332–34)

Details of items required for the performance of *kalasa*.

Glossary

[For units of weight and measure, the Malayalam calendar and asterisms, see Appendices I and II.]

<i>abhisheka</i>	oblation with liquids
<i>ahass</i>	one day's expenditure for a festival in a temple
Akakoyma	person in charge of the internal affairs of a temple
<i>anyam</i>	wage for a day (for carpenters)
<i>arat</i>	the rite of immersing the idol on the last day of the temple festival
<i>attipperu</i>	complete and outright purchase of land
<i>beli</i>	sanctified food offerings to divinities/ancestors
<i>belikkal</i>	altar stone for offering sanctified food
<i>bhandaram</i>	treasury/strong chest in which cash is kept in the temple
<i>brahmakalasa</i>	an elaborate form of <i>kalasa</i>
Cakiyar	person responsible for performing <i>kuttu</i> in the temple
<i>dakshina</i>	remuneration given to the priest for performing temple rites
<i>desam</i>	village under the proprietorship of a landlord
<i>ettilonnu</i>	revenue amounting to 1 in 8 of produce from garden lands
<i>gopuram</i>	tower on the sides of a temple
<i>grama</i>	village
<i>grandhavari</i>	manuscript
<i>janmi</i>	holder of permanent rights over land
<i>kaimukku</i>	trial by ordeal

<i>kalabhom</i>	a sanctified ritual in a temple involving the use of a huge quantity of sandal
<i>kalanju</i>	12 <i>panamitas</i> of gold
<i>kalasa</i>	Vedic rituals involving sanctified holy water/liquids in pots
<i>kandi</i>	roughly 500 lb
<i>karanma</i>	a form of tenure under which lands were made over by temple trustees to those who were employed for the performance of certain duties in the temple
<i>kaval</i>	protection of the sanketam
<i>kiletam</i>	subsidiary temple under a major shrine
<i>kuttu</i>	stage show which consists of the recitation of Puranic stories and their explanation presented in a melodramatic style
<i>mattu</i>	cloth washed and purified by the washerman
<i>melsanti</i>	head priest
<i>mukha mandapa</i>	front platform conjoined with the sanctum
<i>mula puja</i>	ritual related to the commencement of the annual festival in a temple
<i>muppara</i>	revenue amounting to 3 in 10 <i>paras</i> of rice land produce
<i>muri</i>	part of a <i>desam</i>
<i>pal kalasa</i>	<i>kalasa</i> performed with milk (instead of water)
<i>panam</i>	one-fifth of a rupee
<i>panchagavya</i>	five products of the cow used for purification rites
<i>pandal</i>	temporary roofed structure half or fully open at the sides
<i>pantirati puja</i>	puja performed when one's shadow is 12 steps long
<i>parambu</i>	garden, plantation or estate
<i>paritai</i>	committee
Paritai Bhattathiri	a Nambuthiri well versed in ancient scriptures/a member of the council or committee
Pattamali	person responsible for measuring the tributes to the temple

<i>pattini</i>	fasting
<i>pattom</i>	tenant's dues to be paid to the landlord
<i>pradakshina</i>	circumambulation
<i>puthan</i>	a coin that prevailed, roughly 1/20th of a rupee
<i>rakshabhogam</i>	protection fee
<i>sahasrakalasa</i>	Vedic ritual involving sanctified liquid in a thousand pots
<i>sanketam</i>	temple-state
<i>siveli</i>	ceremonial circumambulation of the deity
<i>sri kovil</i>	sanctum sanctorum
<i>svarupam</i>	independent principality
<i>tantri</i>	the hereditary high priest who is the final authority for a particular temple
<i>tavali</i>	a branch of a family
<i>tevar</i>	deity
Tevar Menokki	person in charge of accounts and records in the Tripunithura temple
<i>titampu</i>	ornamental frame in which a deity is carried in procession
<i>titappalli</i>	temple kitchen
<i>ucca puja</i>	midday worship
Uralar	temple trustee
<i>usa puja</i>	puja performed at dawn
<i>utsavam</i>	annual festival in a temple
<i>vastubeli</i>	a ritual held immediately after the completion of a new building/structure to propitiate the gods
<i>vatilmatom</i>	tower on the main gate of the temple
<i>vijayabeli</i>	a special rite performed on rare occasions in a temple
<i>vilakkumatam</i>	wooden frames with lamp holders
<i>yogam</i>	administrative body responsible for temple management

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