Chapter VII

TEMPLE ADMINISTRATION

With three main deities and half a dozen minor deities of this temple complex, there arose the necessity of various functionaries to perform the daily chores, i.e. to perform the spiritual service, known as the puja, to collect and arrange flowers for garlands, to prepare and offer naivedya and to manage the properties, both moveable and immoveable.

A good number of people both males as well as females were in the employ of this temple. All the famous temples of Kerala had to keep in their muster different sets of people, as the records of the various temples would testify.

Due to various accidents, the original records of the temple were destroyed. Whatever survived is in the private collection of those who were in the service of the temple. Some of them were published but still there are more. Of the four lithic records, none of them is studied so far. With the help of these, we are discussing the various functionaries, and their relative position in the administration of this temple.

The earliest lithic records are found on the base of the Vatakunathan shrine itself. The inscription on the western side of the base records, "Sattan suruvan of Mullappalli". Sattan is the name of the person, son of Suruvan, who belongs to the family of Mullappalli. An inscription of Kulasekhar Alwar temple of Mannargud (Tanjore district) records, "the temple was constructed by Vacudevan Kecavan of Mullappalli, of Malai-
mandalam". 1 Malaimandalam is the ancient Chera country, i.e. Kerala. One Vasudevan of Mullappalli had constructed the temple at the instance of the King. 2 Mullappalli might be, therefore, the house of architects, at the service of the Imperial Cheras. Whenever the rulers wanted to build or re-build a temple, it may have been the duty of the Mullappallis to execute it. It is possible, therefore, that this temple complex was under the superintendence of the royal architect in deference of the wishes of a Chera ruler.

The inscription found on the north-western side of the base records, "Sattan suruvan Kanatan of Mullappalli". Here again the name Sattan, the architect of Mullappalli is engraved. The characters of the inscriptions are of eleventh and the twelfth centuries. 3 The patron has to be identified from the lithic evidences. Rama Varma Kulasekhara (1090-1102) was the Chera emperor who redeemed the land of Cheras from the Cholas. Probably after the hundred years war, this temple had to be renovated or rebuilt. Since he was the last Chera emperor, who could employ the Mullappalli architect, it is possible he might be the patron. He had the unique qualification of combining himself both the offices of altar and crown.

Other inscriptions relating to the management are

1. Pillai, Elamkulam Kunjan; Chēra sāmrājyam onpatum pattum nūttandil, p.11
2. Ibid.
3. Vide Chapter III.
of the same century and, therefore, we shall have to study the working of other temples for this purpose. The general pattern is the same with, of course, local variations as can be corroborated with the records of the later period.

As early as ninth century A.D., the Suchindram temple in the far south of Kerala (now forms a part of Tamilnadu) has records relating to the management of the temple. There was a Mulaparida, which exercised complete control over the temple. The Mulaparida was a small committee of large Mahasabha or the assembly of the Ur (village). It could interfere as and when necessary and it did interfere, when the administration was found to be inefficient and corrupt. By 1000 A.D., the Mulaparida submitted its resignation. "The reason for the resignation could be inefficiency on the part of the members of the Mulaparida in discharging their duties or it might have earned the distrust of the Mahasabha as implicitly revealed in the records." However, those members of the Mulaparida could never find a place in the administration, even in lesser capacity as penal clauses were inserted such as "the erring members shall have to pay a fine of 50 kalanju of gold as fine etc." After the disappearance of the Mulaparida, it was replaced by Variyam

1. Pillai, K.K., op.cit., p.144.
3. Ibid.
and Karnathan by about 1000 A.D.¹

An inscription near Alatur (Palghat) ascribable to the tenth century, tells us of an assembly of the Muvāryiram (three thousand laymen) the Adhikāri of the Tirukkuvayil Tevar (the authorities of the temple) the Pati and Padamulam (the pontiff and clerical staff of the temple) etc...having met, decided and recorded² a deed transacted by them. The deed relates to the collection and appropriation of revenues.

Suchindram is about 400 k.m. south of Trichur, and Alatur is about 50 k.m. north of it. The earliest recorded information is relevant regarding the administration of temple from north Palghat to Suchindram including the temples of Trichur. At Suchindram, there was a Mahāsabha, though details are not known about its composition whereas at Alatur there was an assembly consisting of 3000 members in addition to the officers and clerical staff controlling the administration of the respective temples. It can be assumed that the same might be the pattern of assembly holding charge of administration throughout the state of Kerala. Across the ghats, similar institutions controlled the temples of Tamilnadu as we hear Amruta Ganattar³ of Tiruvottiyur, during the reign of the Pallavas.

During the tenth and eleventh centuries, the nature and composition of the assembly, the officials and their

1. Pillai, K.K., op. cit., p.147.
respective powers in the administration of temples, can be studied from the inscriptions found in Trippunitara (about 60 k.m. from Trichur) which was the capital of the erstwhile Cochin rulers. It reads as follows:—

"Hail prosperity!

"The thirteenth year of the King Koda Ravi Adiccan, the Picca Paradayar (the executive assembly) and the Potuval (secretary) having unanimously met under the Presidency of Ravi Adiccan made the following regulation:—

"The paradayan shall not remove anyone of the servants (on the temple staff) from the Sānti (Chief priest) to Sīkkol (sweeper)"

"Those who remove shall not be eligible for a plank (seat) in the assembly. They shall not enter the sanctum sanctorum and remove any official, nor shall they accept money".

Those who violate this agreement shall have to pay a fine of 20 kalaju of gold....This deed is drafted by Cattan Kumaran".  

From this inscription, it can be seen that the King Koda Ravi (917-947 A.D.) was present in the assembly, of this temple and presided over it. Thus, the royal patronage was extended to the temple. The member of the executive assembly unanimously formulated a major policy matter with regard to security and safety of the service of the temple employees, from the highest (priest) to the lowest (sweeper). The protection

1.T.A.S., Vol.VI, Part I, inscription No.52, p.64.
of the rights of the employees was jealously guarded by the assembly. This spirit is refreshingly modern, as many a workers' union of to-day strive hard to maintain the clause, that 'none shall be removed from the service'. To have conceived this spirit of welfare in the early tenth century in Kerala speaks volumes for the pro-labour policy of the ruler and the ruled. What was prevalent in this temple certainly would have become the order of the day, throughout the State and more so, in the vicinity of Trichur itself. The fact that Piccai Paridayar or the members of the assembly is conspicuous in the deed like the Parida of Suchindram temple or the assembly of Alatur. The inscription does not speak of the composition or the mode of election. The new officer potuval (the Secretary) appears as one of the signatories. The rise of this new category and the simultaneous fall of Parida is one of the important developments in the history of temple management in Kerala. Hereafter all the inscriptions do refer to the Potuval who used to wield a position of great eminence in the hierarchy of the executives of the temples.

The inscriptions of Trippunathara throws light on the functionaries. Hopefully one can see the highest Sānti (priest) and the lowest Sikkol (sweeper) and none in between even though there were many a functionary who were to enjoy the security of service. The inscription gives another idea that since the actual number of functionaries was known and uniform
throughout the State, it needed hardly any detailed explanation to the people of the tenth century. What was light in the tenth century has now turned to be a shadow in the 20th century.

Rewarding it would be to study some of the contemporary records. The Ay king, Karunatakkan, built the temple of Parthivapuram, about 866 A.D. His munificent donation for the temple endowments consisted of landed property yielding not less than 15,000 paras of paddy. The temple inscription supplies further details about the designation of the officers and the payment against....

1. "Mēl Śāntivṛitti (for the duty of the supreme priest) is to be given land yielding 5 kalams and 12 kurnipad lands (about 60 paras of paddy)

2. Akanālī pani (for the assistant priest) to get lands not specified."

3. The man who sprinkles Panjagavyam (a mixture of milk, butter, ghee, cow's urine and dung, considered to be holy even to-day) to get 2 kalams.

4. The man who gathers flowers is to be given lands yielding 2 kalams.

5. The musicians who perform Panchama to be given 16 kalams."

Similarly, the records of the Tiruvalla temple known as the Huzur office plates (dated about 1125 A.D.) refer to the designations Mēl Emberumakal (Supreme Priest) Kil Emberumakkal (assistant priest), Ayyappan Emberumakkal (priests exclusively

at the service of Lord Ayyappan), Samanjitan (accountant), Kil Samanjitan (Asst. Accountant), musicians, Pattas (Learned Brahmins) and also Divadasis, etc. The expenses roughly estimated could be more than a million rupees per year. From the examples quoted, it will be clear that the temples had become richer, and the richer they were, numerous were the members of the staff.

The position of Vatakkunathan temple complex can be studied from the following records:

Inscription I: English translation of the record is given below line by line:

L.1: When Jupiter is in Cancer, this Sunday of the month of Cancer, in the temple of Tiruccaperur, the assembly

L.2: Samanjitan (accountant) yogiär-Tiruvati (the yogiar saint) Potuvals (secretaries) have unanimously decided that the lands given to the temple Pen Kula (Devadasi) have been taken over...

L.3: This deed is executed in accordance with regulations of Kotuvayir Vēli Kacham (the agreement of Kotuvayir Veli)

L.4: anyone who violates this, and who aids and abets him, are all to be dealt with, in accordance with the agreement of Kotuvayir Veli.

L.5: applicable to all those who obstruct in the fields of cirakkal....


Inscription II: Hail prosperity!

L.1: When Jupiter in the zodiac of Capricorn,
L.2: this deed is transacted. Tiruccuvaperur
L.3: temple assembled, urmutatu, Elavatu,
L.4: KoĪl-adhikāri, Potuval, have unanimously decided
L.5: none shall enter inside the temple while performing the ritual, followed by music,
L.6: barred from using or misusing money from the (temple treasury)
L.7: this is in accordance with the agreement of Kotuvayir Vēli. One who violates shall be condemned, as one committed the crime of killing one's own father to secure mother as wife.
L.8: The same is the punishment to those aid abett him,
L.9: to him, who misappropriates rice, both cooked or raw, has to be condemned,
L.10: as stated above. The landed property of one who has violated,
L.11: to be confiscated and to be given to the temple
L.12: none shall receive alms from or give to him.
L.13: The same shall be the case with those who aid and abett,
L.14: to meet the expenditure....agreement
L.15: one who violates this agreement has to be ostracised from the temple.

The first inscription is found on the eastern base of a square, adjacent to the shrine of Ganapati. The second one
is found on the base of the Nālambalam at the entrance facing north. Both the inscriptions are broken and incomplete. They are in Vatteluttu script of the twelfth century A.D. The dates are not given but only the position of the Jupiter is given.\textsuperscript{1} The text of both inscriptions had been published without any explanation.\textsuperscript{2}

The problem of fixing the date is not easy, if the position of Jupiter alone is given. The Jupiter completes his circle of all the twelve zodiacs in twelve years. Hence the inscription has to be studied from the standpoint of the evolution of the language. Palaeographically these inscriptions can be dated in the early part of twelfth century.\textsuperscript{3} Having fixed the probable date as twelfth century, the next problem is as to which shall be the earlier one. Both the inscriptions were not executed at the same time, since the positions of Jupiter differs from one another. In the first, Jupiter is in Cancer, i.e. the fourth zodiac and in the second it is in Capricorn, i.e. the tenth zodiac. One clue for the problem is that in inscription No.1, the name of the temple is "Tiricca-perur" whereas in the other it is 'Tiriccuvaperur'. In the latter, the name has undergone a progressive change, i.e. the addition "va" and hence the latter can be later by at least seven years. Secondly, the second inscription has a number of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1}T.A.S., Vol.IV, Part II, p.194.
\item \textsuperscript{2}Ibid, pp.194-195.
\item \textsuperscript{3}Pillai, E.K., Kēralabhashayute vikāsa parināmangal, (Kottayam, 1957, 2nd ed.), p.137.
\end{itemize}
officers and hence it could be a later document.

The first one records that the landed property, given to the temple Devadasis, has been taken over. It was decided unanimously by the accountant, yogiār Saint and secretary. It was done in accordance with the agreement of Kotuvayir Veli. The lands at Cirakkal have also been taken over. The second inscription refers to specific prohibition to the people with regard to entry into the temple during a particular time. It registers another stricture about handling of revenue of the temple. Also it contains warning regarding the distribution of food. This deed was also in accordance with the agreement of Kotuvayir Veli and stipulates the punishment to the offences.

Thus, the different functionaries and their respective powers can be studied as detailed below:-

1. **Samanjitan**: Accountant. He was to keep the accounts of receipts and expenditure of the temple. Another duty is to keep cash and precious articles, donated to the temple and, therefore, he was in charge of the treasury. Lastly, he had to read aloud in front of everybody the total income and expenditure of the day and the balance to be carried over to the next day, before the closure of the temple.¹ In bigger temples, there were **Kil Samanjitan** (assistant accountants) to help him. Tiruvalla inscription has a reference of **Samanjitan** and **Kil Samanjitan**.²

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²Pillai, E.K., *Chera samrājya onpatum pattum nuttandil*, p. 20.
2. **Yogiar Tiruvati:** The Yogiar Saint. "Many an important temple, had attached to it, some sanyasins who were either Matha-dhipatis or common sanyasins. They had sometimes the job of supervision over the conduct of the business of the temple of offering Pushpānjali (worship with flowers) and perhaps also they participated in the teaching of student-boarders of the temple. These sanyasins are referred to in the west coast as Bhatara Tiruvati or Patara Tiruvati.¹ The Yogiar Tiruvati referred to in the inscriptions of Trichur and Peruvanam are the same officials.² There is a reference to 'Govinda Prajnaprabhitarar in the Tiruvilla inscription.³ In Trivandrum, the Yogiar used to preside over the Ettara Yōgam (the assembly) and to introduce rules and regulations and the conduct of daily, monthly and yearly celebrations.⁴

The earliest reference to the Yogiar saint of this temple is available from a manuscript in the southern Matha of Trichur. It reads "Padmapada succeeded Vilvamangalam in 829 A.D."⁵ Vilvamangalam is an eponymous hero claimed by all the temples like Parasurama and, therefore, there is a problem of identification. The association of Padmapadar and his preceptor Sankara with this temple can be traced from the same

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2. Pillai, E.K., Jannisampradāyam Kēralatil, p.25.
4. Pillai, E.K., Jannisampradāyam Kēralatil, p.26; and, Pillai, K.K., Suchindram temple, p.151.
manuscript. It has been established that both Sankara and Padmapani were contemporaries of Kulasekhara and Rajasekhara Perumals. Perhaps Vilvamangalam might be Sankara himself (?) in that case. The first pontiff might be Sankara whose mortal remains are supposed to be interred in the precincts of the Temple, now seen as a segment enclosure with the symbols of sankha and cakra. As his disciple, Padmapani became the pontiff till his death.

The Yogiar saints used to live in the Brahmasva Matha known as Vatakke Matha (now extinct). It was the prerogative of the eight houses from which the candidates for the post of Yogiar used to be chosen. They are, according to tradition known as Ashtagriha as stated below:

1. "Kalakanth which was split into Olappamanna, Ottur and Varikkasseri in the modern days.
2. Melatur now known as Kutallur.
3. Matur exists even to-day in the same name.
4. Kalakallur now known as Mappat.
5. Chemmangatu exists as it is.
6. Palur has split into Palur and Panapalur.
7. Muringattil became Vatakketam and Tekketam.
8. Vellangallur split into Akkara Kurisi, Mecheri and Valapalli.

1. Pillai, E.K., Kerala bhāshayute vikāsa parināmāṅgal, p. 52.
2. Ibid, p. 53.
The office of the Yogiar saint was duly elected by the king. Once elected, he would be the spiritual pontiff and could exercise sovereign powers not only on spiritual matters but also on temporal affairs. Since he could not be deposed, his powers were unbridled. However, no records are available with regard to the names of successive saints after Padmapada. There is a reference in the temple records of the last pontiff. He was a Nambutiri of Kotanatu. The date of his accession is not given but the date of his death is given as 1755 A.D.

Surprisingly, there was an usurper of this post, by name Patakkara Nambutiri. It happened because of the political feud between the rulers of Cochin and Calicut. The Zamorin, the ruler of Calicut, after having defeated the Cochin ruler made Trichur as his Head Quarters for a period of (1755-1757) roughly two years. The victorious ruler celebrated his victories with unusual religious fervour that he was reported to have performed Tulabhāra in the temple by weighing himself with gold. The Nambutiris who had crossed to his side were the beneficiaries of the gold. In order to show his power and pelf, the Zamorin appointed Patakkara Nambutiri to the post of the pontiff without observing the detailed

1. Ibid, p.495
2. Ibid, p.495
3. Ibid, p.501
4. T.G., p.159.
procedure in the year 1757 A.D. The record states, "in contra-
vention of the traditional procedure, the Zamorin with the
help of men and sword entered the temple and appointed, Pata-
kkara as the chief and committed many excesses in 1757".¹
But when the Zamorin left the Cochin ruler retaliated by sack-
ing the new incumbent, unceremoniously. The record continues,
"whereas the detailed procedures have not been adhered to in
electing the usurped pontiff and, therefore, having decided to
remove him (Patakkara) from the office as well as to deport
him from the Kingdom, orders have been issued to execute....
The orders were given to the Nambutiris of Tekkemath and
Natuvil Math, to evict Patakkara from the Vatakke math, through
the northern gates...."² The *modus operandi* of expulsion 'is
equally a romantic episode. Since the Brahmins were respected
nobody could lay their hands on them. The social customs
were such that even in enmity, no breach was tolerated. Hence,
'it was made to report to Patakkara Nambutiri, the orders of
the king, through a priest who was holding the position of
preceptor. In case, the usurper was unwilling to leave, even
after having told orally, physical pressure must be exerted
by the preceptor and his students.'³ Resistance was there by
the new pontiff, but he realised that the royal writ could be

¹Menon, P.R., *op.cit.*, p.501.
²Ibid, p.503.
³Ibid, p.504.
enforced through the third degree methods and, therefore, he became helpless and surrendered. The northern gate was opened for his exit and was thus deported. This historical event found a place in literature henceforward, 'to show the exit through the northern gate' so as to suggest deportation from Cochin kingdom. Since then the post of Yogiār Tiruvati remained vacant. Ramavarma (1790-1805), the redoubtable ruler, had decided not to fill the post. There was a purification ceremony in the year 1780, for the first time in the history of the temple without the benediction of the Yogiār Tiruvati. It was performed under the auspices of Velattur and Vellinali Nambutiris.

The caste Pisharoti is found attached to the temple. They are to collect flowers for making garlands to the temple service. Kunjan Pillai assumes that modern Pisharoti might have some connections with the old 'Patar Tiruvati' or 'Pilar Tiruvati' as prevalent in some other temples. Unnunīlī sandesam, a Malayalam literature condemns the Patar or Pitar saints, as debaucherous which implies their discredited position during the thirteenth century. The present Pisharotis attached to this temple might be, probably, a migration from

1. Ibid, p.504.
3. Ibid.
other temples as there was no chance of the Yogiar being degenerated here.

It is interesting to know the detailed procedure of the Yogiar saint. "The high priest, Alvancheri, must perform the first ritual by starting with 'Ganapati Puja'. He is seated in front of the lamp to its right facing south. The ruler of Cochin with his sword in scabbard shall stand and is allowed to sit, when given permission by the chief priest. He can sit facing north, on a white silk spread on the floor... besides the elite of the Brahmins are to be seated.

The chieftains, like Kurumtatiri, Vallakkonatiri, Tekkamkur, Vatakkumkur, the senior member of Kakkat family, the four tenants of the temples must stand outside and guard the assembly".

"The pattola (the announcer of the royal edicts) with the permission of the high priest and the king, shall read out the names of those who present for the special occasion of election of the Yogiariruvati. He announces the name of prospective candidate after having verified the attendance by the assemblage". (It seems approval is taken for granted).

"After the Ganapati Puja, three representatives are deputed to bring the nominee from his abode. The pattola has to accompany them along with palanquin and music. The first ritual is over".

"The marar (drummer and musician) has to blow his conch before the official designate gets into the palanquin and he is taken on a procession accompanied by music. The whole
train will be received by the king and the high priest. The ruler himself shall announce that the official nominee must get ready for the performance of Pushpanjali. The ritual demands a tonsure, and a subsequent ceremonial bath, before he enters the Sanctum Sanctorum. When he performs the most coveted Pushpanjali, he enters the order of the Yogiar saints.  

Potuval (Secretary): The offices of Potuvals are not heard in Chola, Pandya or Vijayanagar times but they are common in Kerala. The term Potuval means 'public' or 'common' to all. The expression Potuval occurs in both the inscriptions whereas the offices Samanjitan, Yogiar tiruvati do not appear in the second inscription. The Mamballi inscription (974 A.D.) refers to Potuval by name Sattan Satayan to whom were entrusted the temple of Aiyirur. A reference in Suchindram temple as to the rise of Potuval has already been mentioned. It can easily be seen that the term Potuval does not refer to a caste (as in the modern days). The Vellanallur inscription refers to the name of Potuval "Kunnan Kunnan of Mannur". The Mannur family is of the Nayars. It indicates, therefore, a class of officials and may be rendered into arbitrators or middlemen. The same occurs in Tamilnadu under the term Madhyastha.

The rights of Potuval can be studied from the following inscriptions. The Mamballi inscription\(^1\) entrusts the temple and the landed property to the Potuval. He had the rights of protecting these lands and of collecting the rent in order to meet the expenses. The inscription also lays down that neither the assembly (\(\text{ūrālar}\)) nor their agents could enter the lands or to collect money. Since the lands have been transferred to Potuval, they had, per force, to be divested of this authority which would henceforth be exercised by Potuval. Here is a case of special privilege granted to Potuval. In order to enhance his prestige and position, the inscription stipulates stringent punishment to the offenders.

An inscription from Netiya Tali\(^2\) empowers the Potuval to receive money to meet the expenses in connection with the feeding of Brahmins of 'Bhagavatha pārāyanam'.

An inscription of 1703 A.D.\(^3\) empowers Tava Potuval (Sabha Potuval, i.e. Potuval of the Assembly) to receive an amount of 240 rasi panam, being the amount of fine imposed on Sankaran Kandan Velan, who assaulted a temple servant.

Similarly, an inscription from Perunrayil (of eleventh century)\(^4\) registers a gift of land by Kaviran of Jnanavarkatu

\(^{1}\)Pillai, E.K., Janmisampradayam Keralatil, p.23.
\(^{3}\)Ibid, p.55.
\(^{4}\)Ibid, pp.34-35.
to feed one thousand Brahmins on the occasion of a festival in the month of Kanni (September-October). An unusual request is made by the donor to give the lands in tenancy to himself and his family members! The inscription empowers the Potuval to receive paddy from the tenant. In case the tenant becomes defaulter, the Potuval and Tirumal Ganam (a special Committee for the festival) will have to take action in spite of the fact that the tenant was the donor himself. If the successors of the tenant fail to pay the rent the Potuval and others will have to take action including eviction. But the donor's last request is 'to render help to them under such circumstances'. The motive of the donor might be anything but religious. Certainly it seems to be ulterior. In order to get rid of the clutches of the royal revenue collectors, he had employed this strategy by which he could pay less to the temple while possessing the land. 'A novel method of tax evasion, indeed!'

Tiruvattar inscription (1188 A.D.) refers to Potuval to receive the keys after having cleaned the temple by sweepers and the Akapotuval should be made to sleep in the temple.

The Potuval was vested with powers of inspection and collection of fines as stipulated in the Kollurmadham inscriptions of (1189 A.D.). "The vast lands and estates of the temple are to be given for tenancy and the tenants shall reside in the allotted houses. Should the Potuval see those

houses vacant, he shall collect fines". The stipulated fine is 240 paras of paddy and 12 kalanju of gold (one kalanju gold is equivalent to 20 paras of paddy).

The Krishna temple at Chennamangalam has an inscription empowering Potuval to receive ghee on behalf of the temple. But there is also a penal clause inserted against Potuval and others 'who have no right to eject the tenants or increase the rent'.

Another inscription from Trikkulasekharapuram (Crangamore) imposes that Potuval and others shall not obstruct the tenants.

It would thus, appear from the inscription that Potuval exercised wide range of administrative and financial powers to collect rent, to receive gifts on behalf of the temple, to inspect the lands. Excepting the last two, all speak of the powers which were unlimited. The last two inscriptions certainly act as a check on Potuval and other officers.

The office of the Potuval seems to have two categories, i.e. Aka Potuval and Pura Potuval. Aka Potuval had to supervise the administration and internal matters of the temple, e.g. all about the performance and conduct of puja; whereas the pura Potuval had to be in charge of collection of rents from the

1. Ibid.
3. Ibid. p.193.
tenants and to receive gifts from the donors. In one of the
inscriptions stated above, the Pura Potuval received the key
and the Aka Potuval has to sleep inside the temple. The
Matilakam records\(^1\) refer to Kolannil mutatu and Cherayatu
mutatu as Aka Potuvals and Ollur Potuval as Pura Potuval in
the managing committee.

In the second inscription these two offices are
mentioned as Urmutatu and Elayatu. Those officers cannot be
identified as Aka Potuval and Pura Potuval respectively. The
Matilakam records specifically mention those officers whereas
in Trichur these officers appear in addition to Potuval. Accord­ing
to the view the Mutatu and Elayatu might have been evolved
from the Perumutiyan and Ulpatan respectively.\(^2\) In that case,
they are separate officers and cannot be identified as Potuvals
at all. The identification of the Urmutu and Elayatu is still
a problem.

In some temples, there are references to Variyam
(executive committee) elected by the assembly. The Triparkatal
inscription refers to the assembly consisting of ten members
to be constituted by Variyam consisting of two members each
for a period of one year.\(^3\) There is a reference to Variyam
in the Padmanabhasvamy temple, Trivandrum.\(^4\) In course of time,


\(^2\) T.A.S., Vol.IV, p.8, and Pillai, E.K., Janmisampradāyam

\(^3\) T.A.S., Vol.V, Part I, p.78, and Pillai, E.K., Janmisampradāyam
Keralatil, op.cit., pp.22-23.

the *variyan* became a caste, attached to the temple, like the modern *Pisharoti*, or even *Potuval* of the modern days. It is an apology to the 'ancient order' sans power and sans respect.

In this temple, there were more than one *Potuval* as per the first inscription when it refers to 'Potuvanmar' (*Potuval*). and hence, might be the *Aka Potuval* and *Pura Potuval*. In the second, there is a mention of only one *Potuval* and probably other *Potuvals* might have been replaced by *Mutatu* and *Elavatu*.

**Koil Adhikari**: This officer may be the supreme boss of the temple as *kōil-adhikāri* enjoyed supreme powers with regard to the administration of temples as the inscriptions testify.¹ The candidate to this highest office seems to be from the royal family itself. The Tarisappalli inscription (849 A.D.) refers to Vijayaragadeva as the *kōil-adhikāri* representing the emperor.² He was the son-in-law of Ramavarma Kulasekhara. One can estimate the exalted position of the *kōil-adhikāri* from a poetical work *Bhasākautilyam* according to which "the powers of the *kōil-adhikāri* are equivalent to twelve ministers".³ The administrative councils of ninth and tenth centuries were controlled by the Plenipotentiary *kōil-adhikāri* without whom no deed relating to the temple could be transacted.⁴

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³ Pillai, E.K., *Chēra sāmrājya onpatum pattum nuttāndil*, p.98
The Tiruvilla Huzur plates refer to a specific amount to be paid to Kōil-adhikāri by way of fine by the defaulters, \(^1\) "the landed property should not be resumed by any future officials and that any person who attempted to do so should be removed from his office and also to pay a fine of one hundred Kalanju of gold to the Kōil-adhikāri". The Perunnayil inscription refers to Kulasekhara Chakravarti as Kōil-adhikāri. \(^2\) The appointment of Govardhana Martanda, the ruler of Travancore to rule over Nanrulainatu was done by the Kōil-adhikāri of Bhaskara Ravi (962-1019 A.D.). \(^3\) The position of the Perumal vis-a-vis the Koil adhikari was, therefore, the same as that of the later Cirava Mupan vis-a-vis Trippappur Muppan of Travancore. \(^4\)

The Cochin rulers sign themselves as Kōil-adhikāri in documents relating to the temples. Their usual title being "Perumpatappu Gangadhara Virakerala Tirukoiladhikarikal" \(^5\) since Cheraman Perumal was the patron of Tiruvanji Kulam temple, the Cochin rulers retained the appellation "Gangadhara Veera Kērala Tirukōiladhikārikal". The Calicut records refer to Mangat Achan as the Koil adhikari. Mangat Achan was the prime minister of the Zamorins. \(^6\)

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From the above, it may be observed that the office of the Kōil-adhikāri was so high that it was second only to the king. Sometimes, the king himself used to be the Kōil-adhikāri. That he was far superior to the rulers of the provinces can be established by the rate of fine that Kōil-adhikāri was entitled to get. The presence of Kōil-adhikāri was responsible for the security of tenants otherwise the officers of the temple would let loose a reign of terror as can be seen from the regulations of various inscriptions. With regard to Kōil-adhikāri of this temple nothing can be said with definiteness as the records are scanty and do not throw much light.

DEVARIN PENKULAM (DEVADASI): Attached to this temple were devadasis according to the first inscription. The inscription states that "the lands given to devadasis were taken over". This important piece of information has put this temple along with the others which had devadasis. To establish that this temple was also following the general pattern of Kerala, a probe into the origin and establishment of the devadasi system is necessary.

The temples of Kerala became the centres of cultural activities during the ninth and tenth centuries A.D. There were educational institutions and hospitals attached to the big temples. In order to patronise art and to create interest in art among the people, in performing arts, there were the Tēviticci (devadasi) institution. The earliest reference is

2. Pillai, E.K., Kērala caritratile irilataya ētukal, p.75.
available from Cokkur inscription dated 932 A.D. followed by Guhanathswamy inscription (district Kanyakumari, now, in Tamilnadu) dated 1040 A.D. But there are certain references in Tamil Nadu inscriptions testifying their existence, e.g. the inscription of Mukteswara temple inscription at Kanchipuram of the king Nandi Varman (731-795 A.D.) refers to Kutacci. Two devadasis donating two rathas to the temple Lokamahadevi (Pattadakal) occurs in the inscription dated 778 A.D. The institution was, therefore, in existence as early as the eighth century in Tamil Nadu. However, the institution prospered well under Raja Raja, the powerful Chola ruler. While consecrating (1009-1010 A.D.) the biggest edifice of his time. The Brihadeswara temple at Tanjore, Raja Raja had showered his munificent gifts to the devadasis. He had formed two long streets, inhabited by four hundred dancing women impressed from other Telicceri (street of the temple). In the appointment of a dancing girl, Raja Raja gave the well-drafted service rules which were applicable to all classes of temple servants. The requisite qualifications for a dancing girl according to the Natyasastra was enforced i.e. she should know all aspects of music and must be a musician herself. She must know all aspects

1. T.G., p.126.
2. Pillai, K.K., Suchindram temple, p.279.
3. Kutacci means devadasi. In modern times, it is unparliamentary word and obscene in Malayalam.
4. Pillai, K.K., Suchindram temple, p.279.
of dance and she must be young and beautiful.\(^1\) A dancing girl got a monthly salary of Rs.800/- in addition to free quarters and an award of annual bonus. The superintendent of dancing girls got Rs.1600/- and male dance teachers Rs.1600/- etc.\(^2\)

The institution of devadasi in Kerala may be attributed to Kulasekhara Perumal. They enjoyed a high status in society as is evidenced by the action of Kulasekhara presenting his daughter Cholakulavalli to Srirangam.\(^3\) The earliest Saivite devadasi might be Avaiyar, sister of Cheraman Perumal. Ravi Varma Kulasekhara of Venad (1313-1316 A.D.) gave his two daughters to Varadarajaswamy at Kanchipuram and Srirangam.\(^4\) All this proves that devadasis might be the most cultured women with the highest literary and artistic accomplishments and thereby they had earned the respect and admiration of the rulers. So respectable was one Unni that she could become the queen of King Iravi Kerala Varman of Travancore. The Kandiyur inscription (1218 A.D.) refers to this royal couple who renovated the temple.\(^5\) Another ruler who followed suit was the king of Odanadu by making Cherukara Kuttati as his Notre Dame.\(^6\)

\(^2\)Ibid, p.65.
\(^5\)Pillai, E.K., Kerala charitratile irulatanja etukal, p.71.
\(^6\)Ibid, p.72.
Devadasis contributed directly to the performing arts, like dance, music to a very great extent and indirectly to the evolution of Manipravālam (a macronic verse) literature of Kerala. Their irresistably charming faces 'launched thousand pens to push'. Many a devadasi became 'beau ideal' and the last word for beauty. The fertilising effect of devadasis was so profound and prolific in the poetical sensitivities that the gifted creators of the land vied with each other in their pursuits so as to achieve an impressive list of heroines of eighty-one in number\(^1\) in a wide range of literary works, consisting of ten in Manipravālam and six in Sanskrit.\(^2\)

In fact the term Manipravālam meant in those days 'description of women'.\(^3\) Examples like Unnyaccicaritam unicirutevi caritam of the thirteenth century and Sukasandēśam and Unnunīlī Sandēśam of the fourteenth century give an idea of it. A devadasi was most certainly a ba bleu and was held in high esteem by every one in the land.\(^4\)

The highest regard and respect that they had earned and retained as devadasi degenerated into kutacci during the turn of the fourteenth century. The Chera-Chola hundred years war had transformed the political, economic and social aspect

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2. Ibid,
4. Ibid, p.84.
of life in Kerala. The all-pervading change was perceptible in the temples, because of the domination of Nambutiris.¹ It is their hands that led the women of the erstwhile respectable system into the 'oldest profession'. The contemporary Manipravālam literature became erotic in content. The paintings of Mattancheri and the wood carvings of many temples are the best visible testimonials.² The depth of its fall is in Chandrōtsava, a Manipravālam literature. The poet of this magnum opus has cleverly concealed himself believing in the dictum "ars est celare artem" but his creation betrays his philosophy. "Other erotic writers were held up to laughter in Chandrōtsava (feast of Moon) in which princes and poets of the day, appear among the followers of their respective lady loves arriving for the festival, celebrated by the beauty-queen, Medini Vennilavu. Even the eighteen sanqhas of learned Brahmins came in with all their pomp and dignity to make their obeisance to the goddess of Amour, assist in their rites and confer their blessings"³ There is a slanderous reference to the deity of Vaṭakkunātha temple "frequenting the palace of the star devadasi, during nights":-

"Kailāsāśaila bhrama pāravasyāl
Sandhyāśu tenkailapati samastē"⁴

1. Ibid. p.81.
2. Vide Chapters on 'painting and wood-carving'.
Since the celebration takes place at Cittilapalli near Trichur, we have an irrefutable evidence to show the existence of the devadasi system in Trichur and near about areas by about 1500 A.D. which is approximately the date of composition of this work. According to the first inscription, it is proved that the devadasis were attached to the temple and hence they had their share of service in the temple rituals. In the second inscription, there is a reference to puja, followed by music. This reiterates the view that there was 'musical service' by the artists, attached to the temple. The purpose of the first inscription is to take over the lands given to the devadasis. It is not known what crime they had committed so as to invite such a rigorous punishment. We can be sure that before the commencement of this inscription, the devadasis enjoyed landed properties in lieu of their service to the temple. The second purpose of the first inscription is to take over the cirakkal lands. It is not clear from this inscription that lands of cirakkal were given to devadasis or whether the lands were given to tenancy. The only positive evidence is that the cirakkal lands belonged to the temple.

The objectives of the second inscription may be stated as follows:-

1. When there is puja, accompanied by music, none shall enter. May be referring to the ritual of sribali, when there must be music accompanied by instruments like chenta,
maddalam, itakka, etc.¹ Even to-day one can see this ritual sans music.

2. There is a stricture on misuse of money from the temple treasury.

3. There is an injunction on misuse of rice, either cooked or raw, to be given in charity.

Both the inscriptions do refer to one authority Kotuvayirveli kaccam. The deed has been transacted and inscribed in accordance with the provisions contained in the Kotuvayirveli kaccam. There must have been an agreement inviolate, entered into by the people, and with the approval of the people, a code of conduct must have been laid down. The provisions of the agreement cannot be known as this is the solitary example of this agreement. There are references to other Kaccams (agreements) like Mūlikulam agreement, Katan-kantu agreement referred to in Avitatur inscription, Sankaramangalam agreement referred to in Tiruvalla of which Mūlikulam is the most important.² It seems that the representatives of all the temples might have assembled at Mūlikulam under the presidency of the Perumal or his deputy to safeguard the properties of the temples from mismanagement by the officials and to protect the tenants from the clutches of the heartless bureaucracy, passed unanimously 'Codes of Conduct' to be

¹For details of instruments, see Chapter on 'Wood carving'.
²Pillai, E.K., Janmisampradāyam Kēralatil, p.35.
observed and practised.\(^1\) This agreement is subsequently referred to in the inscriptions as *Mūlikulam Kaccam* or the *Mūlikulam* agreement. There are no records to know the details of this agreement. In the absence of proper records, there is a disagreement with regard to the probable date of execution of this agreement. It might be between the latter part of eighth and earlier part of the ninth century or between the latter part of the ninth and early part of the tenth century.\(^2\)

From the objective of the agreement, *Mūlikulam* agreement can be considered as *Magna Carta* of the tenants and other working class of the temples. At Suchindram, the officials were removed. Such drastic steps are rare in the available records of *Mūlikulam* that there are enough, to check and control them by making them responsible to the ruler or *Kōil-adhikāri* or to the local assembles. Of the wide scope of the codes, the following may be cited as examples. All are of *Mūlikulam* agreement:

1. The Tiruvanvandur inscription (about 970 A.D.) proclaims, inter alia, if the tenants be ejected from the land, the officials shall be subject to *Mūlikulam* agreement. There is a stipulation of fine to be paid to the emperor, ruler, etc.\(^3\)

2. The Tirukkakkara inscription (about 1031 A.D.) of Bhaskara

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Ravi Varma stipulates that 'a tenant has to pay double, on default'. This clause certainly goes ill with the pro-labour attitude. But further declaration is that 'the land should not be resumed by any future officers. Should anybody attempt to do so, he shall be removed from the office and have to pay a fine of one hundred Kalanju of gold to the Koiladhikari....neither could the officers nor their agents become the tenants'.

3. Another inscription of Bhaskara Ravi gives more details. "Officers should not give loan to the greatmen (Priests). If so, no proceedings will be taken against the debtors. If a priest receives loan, he shall not perform puja. As a debtor, if he continues to perform puja, he should be considered as a sinner having violated the regulations of Mulikulam."

The security of the tenancy is obtained from the first example cited; the same right is reiterated in the second and also the officers were prevented from becoming tenants, even by fraudulent methods. The officers are warned not to give loans to the priests and the priests were also warned with due consequences in the third example. Such examples can be multiplied. The Mulikulam kaccam has thus become the first mile stone in the history of the rights of the tenants against oppression by the bureaucrats. Its influence can be seen from the inscription from Tirunalli in the north to Tirunandikara

Kotuvayirveli Kaccam has its own peculiarities as can be seen from the inscription. The first inscription does not contain any information regarding the nature of punishment. It mainly mentions the name Kotuvayirveli Kaccam as the deed was executed in accordance with the provisions of it. The second inscription refers to offences.

Line 5: none shall enter the temple during a particular time of worship.
Line 6: none shall misuse the treasury.
Line 9: none shall misuse rice.

These crimes must have been listed as offences which are cognizable under the Kotuvayirveli agreement. The punishment stipulated would unnerve any devout Hindu.

Line 7: Defaulters will be treated as one "who has committed the sin of killing one's own father in order to keep one's own mother as wife!"
Line 8: Not only defaulters but those who aid and abett also are subject to such deterrent punishment.
Line 9 and 10: must be condemned as stated above.
Line 11: His lands will be confiscated to the temple
Line 12: Nobody shall receive alms from his house nor give him.
Line 13: Same shall be the case with those who aid and abett.
Line 15: One who violates this agreement has to be ostracised from this temple.

From the above, a general idea can be had with regard

to the crimes and punishments. It does not speak of punishment like imposition of fines but condemns merely as an abominable sinner. Killing one's own father to secure mother as wife is ghastly or bestial. The condemnation is extended to the aider and abettor too. The real punishment is for those who misappropriate rice. Their lands would be confiscated after condemning them. From the punishment that "nobody shall receive alms or give" is a social ostracism and the last one speaks of ex-communication from the temple. All the punishments lead to social banishment and strictures, excepting one i.e. confiscation of lands. Kotuvayirveli Kaccam is not the only one to conceive such a horrendous sin as there is one earlier inscription referring to it. The Valappali inscription of Rajasekhara Perumal circa 829 A.D. stipulates Matru-parigrham. The Alatur inscription is not so bad in condemning the criminal. It says i) 'having defied the order of Tirukunayil Tivar and the royal order, ii) having caused harm to holy bodies like Pancha Parameshtikal, iii) having slaved sages, Brahmins and cows". The penal section of the Mulikulam is not so harsh as it stipulates only fines, when compared to Kotuvayirveli kaccam. In fact the Magna carta is lost here. The devadasis were deprived of their lands. This was the general trend as can be seen during and after the twelfth century. Where there are no references to Mulikulam, the treatments are becoming harsher towards the tenants. 

bureaucrats were mercilessly squeezing the tenants by depriv­ing them of their lands, or subject them to corporeal punish­ments.

An inscription of circa 1184 A.D. refers to 'penal interest' and failing which the tenants shall be arrested and his lands taken over.¹ A tenant of Haripad was dispossessed as he failed to supply paddy.² Another one's entire property was confiscated. The crime was that he abused the priest.³ In Suchindram, a milk vendor was tortured as he supplied adulterated milk.⁴ Similarly, a tenant lost his right because the paddy was not properly cleaned. An inscription of about 1703 A.D. refers to one Edamana Sankaran Kandan who had to pay fine of four hundred kasi panam for assaulting a temple servant.⁵

The worst was during the reign of Saktan Tampuran as he laid down the codes with regard to Trichur temples. Some of the excerpts of his orders are given below (circa 1797) "The workers of the temple should come in the morning after their meals and shall return only in the evening for their meals. Nobody should chew betal or sleep inside the temple. If found sleeping the punishment is 90 beatings. If anybody

3. Ibid, inscription No.25.
happens to spit inside, the culprit must be asked to scrub it with his face, in addition to a fine. If the culprit happens to be a Brahmin, he is exempted from physical torture but has to pay the fine. If he has no money, he must be asked to do physical labour in the temple. If anybody happens to dry loin cloth (underwear), it must be burnt to ashes and the temple corporal must be asked to consume along with jaggery.¹ This is nothing but retributive justice of the savage. He had a counterpart in Charles X of France (1814-30) who seemed to have laws of sacrileges to his credit. In comparison, the Kotuveyirveli kaccam lays more stress in social control than retaliations.

**TEMPLE AS SANKETAM**

"Sanketam is a closely guarded preserve, round the abode of a Hindu deity or equally sacred quarters of Brahmins and which was originally controlled by a powerful and independent religious corporations called yogam, mainly composed of Brahmins."² All temples had well-defined Sanketams of their own. Some of them like Pallavur (district Ilalghat) were very small, not more than two square miles in area, while others like Ilamkunnath puzha, Trikkanamatilakam and Trivandrum, exercised authority over hundreds of square miles.


with a number of subsidiary temple states under them.¹ There is abundant evidence to show that this temple had also Sankétam. The extents of the area of the Trichur temple Sankétam cannot be stated with certainty. One record states that the area includes "Kalnathukara, Aranattakara, Mukkottukara and Puranattukara".² Another one states that the sankétam lay between Pulakkal, Patturakkal, Viyyur, Kilakkampattukara and Kurkancheri.³ The former had roughly an area of fifteen square miles, while the latter had more, about twenty square miles in extent. The temporal and sacerdotal jurisdiction extents to all the areas of the Sanketam in which the slaughter of cows and other sacred animals or human beings; dancing, drinking were prohibited. Mahatma Gandhiji was one of the victims at Guruvayur when he was not admitted because he had Harijans as disciples. Similarly, Vinoba Bhave was denied admission in 1958 since there were non-Hindus along with him. Even to-day, Kerala Temples do prohibit non-Hindus. The Sanketam was a sanctuary which none, not even the most tyrannical sovereign dared violate for fear of social ostracism and religious ex-communication. It was virtually an Imperium-in-imperio. It afforded asylum to all kinds of fugitives for such unfortunate chosen people the Sanketam was their promised land.

¹ Ayyar, K.V.Krishnan, A history of Kerala, p.270.
² Menon, P.R., op.cit., p.460.
Edappalli state itself was a Sankētam where even the kings and chieftains could take refuge without entertaining any fear of perusal. Melkoyma (the over-lordship) of the Sankētam was a coveted position to which many did maneuver, manipulate and try with force. It became a casus belli for many wars in the state. By virtue of noble birth, the ruler of Cochin had the unique privilege to be the overlord of all the temples from Tiruvilamala in the north to Tiruvalla in south and, therefore, he had to face challenges many a time.¹ There was a rival in the chieftain of Kollengode claimed to have equally blue blood. He was the only chieftain in Kerala, where for all the yagna, he had to supply sāma, skin of deer etc. He alone could sit with Brahmins for feast and even to-day he can enter all the temples with his royal chappals on.² He was often supported by the Zamorins.

The earliest reference about the violation of Sankētam was in 1103 A.D. when the Perumal had to expiate for his sins by heavy fines.³ The ruler of earstwhile Travancore had to pay fines.⁴ Vira Ravi Varma had to donate an elephant.⁵ The ruler of Cochin had to take refuge in Blankunnathpuzha when

2. A yagna was conducted in the year 1975 at Celakkara, Trichur, under the auspices of many foreign scholars. The chieftain of Kollengode performed the same rites.
he was defeated by the Zamorin.  

If any crime was committed within the area of Sankētam, it was the responsibility of the overlord to take steps. The overlord of the Elankunnathpuzha was the ruler of Cochin and if anybody had violated the sanctity of Sankētam, he had to prosecute with the assistance of the ruler of Parur. If the culprit happened to be a citizen of other state, the ruler of that state had to donate an elephant.  

It is an irony of fate that the overlord himself had to resort to Sankētam!  

A record of Elankunnathpuzha temple (1770 A.D.) states that 'landed property yielding 3941 paras of paddy was collected as fine from the family of Ayinikur for having committed a murder in the Sankētam. The senior member donated one elephant and the ruler of Cochin also donated another elephant for having delayed the justice.  

If the overlord becomes indifferent to the crime, the Sankētam would cease to function. It was considered to be most disgraceful to the overlord. The temple did not celebrate any of the occasions; only the daily rituals continued. It was almost an interdict. A record of 1713 A.D. from Elankunnathpuzha records that "one Harijan (Paraya) was killed in the Sankētam. The indifference of the overlord ultimately led to the cessation of Sankētam. Finally the ruler of Cochin, 

had to donate an elephant to atone for his sins and to resume Sanketam.

If the overlords themselves were involved in crimes and they were indifferent, another weapon known as 'Pattini', i.e. fasting unto death was used. Many an arrogant ruler had to humble before this weapon which finally Gandhiji used against the British Government. There is a Pattinipura for such performances in this temple complex. But there are no records available to show whether the building was deserted or humming with activities. It can be taken as a political barometer to judge the efficiency as well as fair play of the overlord. Little the crowd, lesser were grievances of the people.

It will be interesting to see what the records say about this weapon, its use and its consequences. For political reasons, the Zamorins dismissed all the Moosads (Brahmins) from the Tali temple (district Kozhikode) and thereby violated the sanctity of Sanketam. He annexed all the properties to his royal treasury. The dispossessed ultimately resorted to 'Pattini' but the ruler was unmoved. 'He left them to suffer natural consequences of their misguided act.' Here is a case which indicates the failure of Pattini but it was not to be a failure. Sooner he was made to realise the great

1.Ibid, p.465.
sin he had committed through his astrologers. In 1309 A.D., he instituted the Pattatānam for seven days, in order to expiate for his sin. During those seven days thousands of Brahmins used to be fed and given rich presents for their learning.¹

The rulers of erstwhile Travancore had to face the fury not less than fourteen times during 1348 A.D. and 1721 A.D. and had to make amends as a result of Pattini. In 1632 A.D. he had to give surety that he would observe the canons of Sanketam of Padmanabhaswamy temple.²

Ambition also had frequently prompted the rulers to war for the control of famous temple Sanketams. The temple of Tirunavaya, where the pan-Kerala assembly met, had to be a mute witness for the ceaseless warfare between the rulers of Vallatiri and Calicut. The assembly, popularly known as Māmāṅkam (Mahamaghām), used to meet once in twelve years, when Jupiter transits in Leo. To the assembly, all the rulers of Kerala used to be present either by their royal presence or through their representatives, paying homage to the chief of Māmāṅkam, the ruler of Vallatiri. Through deceit and strategem, the Zamorin usurped the powers and he became the chief of Māmāṅkam and thereby he had enhanced his political as well as religious influence throughout Kerala. Many a time, the Zamorin was challenged by the vanquished ruler, but was

1.Ibid, p.166
2.Ibid, p.278.
The temples of Triprayar and Tiruvillamala became the banes of contention between the rulers of Calicut and Cochin. In Triprayar it happened because of a dispute in the appointment of the priest and so absorbing was it for the Zamorin that he neglected to make arrangements for the defence of his own kingdom against Haider Ali.¹

Tiruvillamala had to witness dramatic events. A nambutiri Brahmin was forcibly asked to dismount from the capprisoned elephant, during the prestigious procession (about 1416 A.D.) due to induction of politics.² Henceforward, it was decided that only the chief priest could ride the elephant holding the Titambu of the deity. The Zamorin was not to be cowed down. He donated copper sheets for roofing the temple.³ It was done with an ulterior motive. By allowing him to do some part of repairing work, he could claim and later establish certain rights. The same was the case with Perumanam temple. In 1792, their quarrels led to unpleasant consequences in the working of the temple and finally the government had to intervene, and restore normalcy. The feuds and jealousies were at least forgotten and the high-handedness forgiven when

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1. Ibid, p.268.
3. Menon, P.R., op.cit., p.461.
the Zamorin ruler built a deepa-stambha in front of the Vatakunathan temple to honour the eternal friendship between the two.\(^1\)

A granthavari record chronicles the different postures adopted by different rulers in Tiruvillamala temple. The seating arrangements in Tiruvillamala temple during the proceedings of administration of Sanketam are similar to the protocol of modern times. "The chief priest, representing all the tenants and labour will be seated in Balikkalpura, the representative of the Cochin ruler will have to stand outside with drawn-sword in his hand, the representative of the Raja of Palghat shall stand with the sword in his scabbard, the representatives of Zamorin and Vallattiri, each with a cane in his hand".\(^2\) The difference in the rights of the representatives was the important factor in holding their weapons in different stance and posture. "As the representative of Cochin ruler stood with his sword drawn out, he was to act immediately; while the representative of Palghat Raja was to go to his help when requested, as he stood with his sword unsheathed; the cane holders had to whip the two Rajas, if they were remiss in their duties."\(^3\)

The extent of area of Sanketam of Tiruvillamala lay between the river Bharata pula Kizhisseri fields, Ganapati

\(^1\)Ibid, p.461.

\(^2\)Ibid, p.474.

\(^3\)Ayyar, K.V.Krishna, A history of Kerala, p.269.
Tirtham and the Kovilaka parambu. It would be almost eight square miles. It was in 1363, the ruler of Cochin revised the extent of the Sanketam which included the river Bharata pula Malisamangalam, Cirakuli and Mayanur. It would be four times more in extent than the earlier one. From such instances, we can infer how the difference arose in the areas of Vatakunnathan temple.

While the Cochin had settled with her northern neighbours, he had to wait for some more time for the settlement of the problems with her southern neighbour, i.e. king of Travancore. The temple Iringalakkuda had a different story to relate. The ruler of Cochin was the overlord of this temple. He granted a concession to the ruler of Kayan Kulam to supervise the customary repairs of the temple. The architect, Kumara Kurup, was specially entrusted with the work. He was honoured as Taccutaya Kaimal (literally, the officer-in-charge of silpa) in circa 1341-42 A.D. When the king of Travancore put a claim to send his man, the trouble arose. Travancore had conquered Kayankulam and, therefore, he put forth his claims. He even went to the extent of sending one Kaimal who constructed a Kootambalam which was destroyed by Tippu. Since Cochin had overlordship over the temples upto Tiruvalla, which were under the control of Travancore, there used to be tensions till 1766, when an agreement was

2. Ibid, pp.11-12.
reached between the two, declaring that both the parties should surrender their rights over the temples, which were not in their territories and to retain the rights over all temples which were in their respective territories.¹

In Vatakkanathan Sanketam, certain formalities were observed in accepting the fine, "Palayetat Panikkar will stand towards south (Kanni rasi) the priest will sit in the Bali-kkalpura when the assembly will ask the sinner whether he admits and confesses. If so the compensation shall be received by the senior man of the assembly".²

An officer, viz. Panammukkatu kaimal broke the oil can and was fined by the assembly.³ Indeed, the fine was too heavy! He constructed the northern gōpuram in 1780 A.D. The southern gōpuram was built by the amount received towards policcelutu (renewal) of tenancy. In the absence of the Yogiar saint, the entire purification ceremony took place under the auspices of the chief tenant, Velutur Pattamali and the Vellinali nambutiri.⁴ The latter supervised the renovation of kutambalam.

It was also one of the formalities that no festival could start in the temple without redressing the grievances of

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1. Menon, P.R., op.cit., p.941.
2. Ibid., p.504.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
the people. Hence it behoves the concerned official, to announce the day, before the festival whether anybody had any complaints. If so, it was to be disposed before the festival. Does it not show the prevalence of rule of law in those Sankētams? Even to-day, in the temple of Triprayar before the flag is being hoisted, the chief priest would come out and ask aloud whether there are any petitioners. There used to be the reply 'no' from the crowd. The festival starts only after this ritual. At Pudiyamkom (Alatur), District Palghat also this ritual takes place before the Vela festival begins. Seven days before the actual festival, the whole inhabitants of the village, irrespective of caste, community, will be present under the traditional banyan tree. The karnavan (senior, most) of the village will ask, if there are any petitioners. After getting the reply 'no', he declares the festival formally inaugurated.¹ The Pānas of the village will ceremoniously announce the greatness of the assembly in blank verse, often ex tempore, and they have the exclusive right to celebrate the whole might with their programmes.² This may be a meaning-

¹.Logan, Malabar, Vol. II, Madras (1958, 2nd ed.), p.cccxcv. He records that Pudiyankom Vela as one of the most important festivals in 1870. It attracted at least 7000 people in those days.

².Pānas were men of letters, of ancient days of the whole of Tamilnadu. Sangham literature has many references about them. Now they are Harijans treated as scheduled caste!
less formality, but a rich legacy which links the bygone with
the present and if interpreted in proper perspective can see
the influence of Sanketam and rule of law.

Attached to the temples were educational institutions known as sala. The most important among them are Mulimulam, Tiruvalla, Kantalur, Srivallabha, etc.¹ Tiruvalla had a hospital² too, and many a rich donated to it. But this temple does not seem to have records to throw light on these aspects like the temple of Katavallur, one of the highest centres of learning which is only about 25 km. away from this temple.³ Till the beginning of this century, there used to be three proficiency tests conducted here. They were katanni-rikkal, valiyatu and cheriyathu.

From the above, the following general observations can be made with regard to the management of Vatakunathan temple complex.

From the days of Perumals, it had enjoyed royal patronage upto the twelfth century. The senior rulers of Cochin royal house became the patrons and the Köil adhikaris. The additions and alterations were made under the benevolent care of Veerakerala Varma (1591-1615). It continued upto the eighteenth century, when there was a short interlude from

1755-1767 A.D., known as the Zamorin interregnum. In 1768, it was returned to the legitimate Cochin rulers. Tippu made the Vatakunatha temple as his army headquarters for about two months in November and December of 1789. After the exit of Tippu, Saktan Tampuran usurped all the rights and he became the de jure and de facto ruler of this temple. It became under the control of Cochin Devaswam Board.

The Yogiar saints presided over the spiritual as well as temporal affairs of the temple, starting with Padmapani till the Fatakara in 1763. Vellineli Nambutiri became the spiritual adviser till the last century.

Even though there are no references to the priests in earlier records, we cannot assume that they did not exist. They were very much there and continue to be even now. There might be a chief and assistants to him. A special category for the exclusive since of Ayyappan might also be included in the list.

The secretaries looked after the day to day administration and the revenue and expenditure. After the exit of Zamorin, the Velatur Pattamali (chief tenant) also assisted them.

The marars (drummers and musicians) were also to be included in the functionaries. They had to blow the bugle at 4-00 a.m. in the morning, a practice, continues even to-day. The existence of devadasi system is a clear proof of the 'musical and dance' aspects of the ritual. It must have come to an end totally during the occupation of Tippu. But women
were continued to be employed for husking paddy and sweeping the floor.

The presence of Kutambalam makes one believe the existence of cakyars attached to this temple. Records are silent about it.

Similarly, the functionary 'oracle' is conspicuous by its absence. Tradition has it that Saktan Tampuran discontinued it by beheading the last one.

Since there are flower gardens around the temple, there might be gardeners employed exclusively for it. The Pisharotis might be in charge of flowers. Regarding property, no proper records are available. Needless to state, it had extensive landed properties as referred to in the lithic record and granthavari. The four main tenants have a place in the proceedings of the assembly. The chief tenant, Pattamali exercised tremendous powers during the eighteenth century.

The temple was a Sanketam and there used to be an assembly consisting of the patron, pontiff, secretaries and other dignitaries to look after the entire administration of Sanketam.