

## ROLE OF TEMPLES IN THE SOCIAL FORMATION OF A SETTLEMENT OF KOTTAYAM

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### Abstract

In this paper the role of temples as center of redistribution and resource in the making the settlement of Kottayam has been traced. Social economic and cultural history of the temples determined the relations of production. The article made an enquiry into the fact that land ownership rights and management of agriculture helped temples to play an important part in the social formation of settlement. The multi-dimensional aspects of temples shows the mode of production. Brahmins and temples were the main land owners as is consolidated from Settlement Records. Specialized working classes mobilised and helped the redistribution of resources. Exchange centers showed surplus in production. Temple centred economy did contribute to the making of Kottayam. The transition from agricultural mode of production to feudal mode of production has been traced. The trade and exchange has not been dealt in detail. Temples closely knitted agriculture and created relations of production and played an important part in the formation of society. The Temples were built by Thekkumkur Rajas and they patronised arts. All the temple lands were cultivated and they managed resources. Various occupational groups were invited by the Rajas and temple served as the pivot of a landed group. The number of temples when compared to the total area is surprising as is noted in the Census reports. The implications of the socio economic and cultural networks that developed around the temple is a means of restructuring society and economy of Kottayam.

**Key words:** Social Formation, Land Holding Rights, Redistribution of Resources, Temples

### INTRODUCTION

City morphology in Asian countries is believed to have been influenced by its ceremonial character, the centre being marked by a monumental building, either religious or political (Murphy 1970 p.69). Religion does not mean the mere existence of beliefs in the other world or cult practices. It is that point of development in which a formalised system and practice plays an important part in the process of transformation of landscape. Through institutional means, it enables a certain politico- religious elite to command priority and exercise authority (Wheatly 1971 p.319). Temple acts as an institutional focus. Temple was invariably a royal project, both for legitimation of political authority and as an institution of integration, mobilisation, and redistribution of resources. The pattern of social dominances reflected in the architectural components of the

temple complex, establish it as a centre of politico-cultural regions. The growth of angadis and the transport of goods across various production regions was an inevitable accompaniment of the nature of production. The growth of temples further developed this process as the temples were major consumers not only of local products but goods brought through overseas trade networks. The development of temples in various production centres, not only helped in the redistribution of commodities, but also provided vital linkages in the relationship of the production centres with the trade process (Ganesh 2016 pp. 125-133).

### **TEMPLES**

Thekkumkur Rajas built many temples and patronised many temple arts. Temples built by them were Manikantapuram Srikrishna Swami Temple at Vakathanam, Thirunakkara Mahadeva Temple, Bhagavathy temple Puzhavathu, PuthiyaThrikkovil temple [Thirunakkaravadakkenada], Cheruvallikavu [Thirunakkara Vadakkenada], Ambala Kadavu, Karappuzha, Eruthikkal Temple, Cheruvallikavu, Olessa, Vettakkorumakan, Poovangulangaradevi Bhagavathi temple, Kiliroor, Ganapathi Temple Vazhapalli, Dharma Sastha temple Pakkil, Maha deva Temple Parippu, Siva Temple at Mariyapalli. They undertook renovations of temples of Taliyil Temple, Pallipurathu Kavu & Thidanadu. Financial assistance was given to Maha Ganapathy Temple of Kanjirapally, Madura Meenakhi Temple [Kanjirapalli]. Financial assistance was also given for the construction of Thrikkaikkattu Thrikkovil Kummanam, Mahadeva Temple at Amayannur, Ithithanam Ilangavu Thambalakadu temple, Devi Temple of Manarcadu and Parappadam Devi Temple. (Namboothiri 2014 p. 93-111)

The Thaliyil Siva Temple was for the royal family. Side by side with remnants of old palaces and forts of the Rajas of Thekkumkur at Thazhathangady on the western outskirts of Kottayam is seen the ancient Kottayam Thali. With the establishment of Thali this place was called Thaliyanadapuram. Thali hill was the centre of old Kottayam. It stands as a symbol of history of Naduvazhi administration. By the 5 & 6 century, Namboothiris who reached here influenced the Naduvazhis by their intellect and established 32 Gramams all across Kerala and established their authority over the land. By the 3 & 4 century AD they were successful in creating a caste based society and become an important power and authority. During the Second Chera Empire [9-12 century] the kings were

coronated with the title Cheraman Perumal or Kulasekharakoil Adhikarikal once in twelve years at Mahodayapuram[ Kodungallur]. Perumals were selected by Brahmins of Mel Thali, Kizh Thali, Chingapurathu Thali and Nediya Thali called Thaliyarmar. The chief was called Thaliyathiri. They anointed Perumal to control the 18 Desaoms. When some are distracted from their perspectives the Brahmins began to rethink of anointing Perumals. Thalasthanams were established in the centre of native states. They removed the last Perumal from power in AD 1103. General meeting of Thali is temple but the historical feature is Brahmin superiority and power. Thaliyarmar mediated disputes and Naduvazhis ruled according to their recommendations. Thali Temple was one of the eighteen and a half Thali shrines of Kerala. Thali was established at Kaduthuruthy of Vembanad and Kottayam of Munjunad. Thaliyarmar of Kumaranalloor managed the KottayamThali. Munjunad Raja Adichenkotha was given administrative guidance by Thaliyathiri Azhvancherry Thambrackkal of Kottayam Thali. Thaliyathiris belonged to 8 Namboothiri families. Siva Temple was an important part of Thali. All decisions were taken in the temple premises.

The Thalikota Mahadeva Temple near Uppoottikavala at Thazhatahngadi was an important place of worship of the Thekkumkur kingdom and is one among the 18 and a half Thali shrines in Kerala. The temple at Thaliyil Kottawas known as Thali. Thali denotes the Siva Temple. The word Thali denotes temple Sanketam. Earlier the Taliwas used to denote temples carved in stone or built with granite. Later the word denotes a place name. The Thalıs of Kerala are referred in EravikothansChepped. They are situated near the water bodies. It denotes the river water culture and all were Siva temples. The Gauna river [Meenachilriver] flows by the foot of the Thali hill is directed to western side. Within the precincts of the temple is the Cheruvallikavu enshrining the family diety of Thekkumkur Rajas. The Sri Kovil is full of paintings. It has the picture of camel. (Elamkulam p. 15). There is a place where Koothu art form is performed and a musical drum Mizhavu donated by Raja Kerararu Godavarman Manikandan [1650-1674] In the mizhavu of the temple was written Keralar Kothavarmer in Vattezhuthu script which is believed to the name of a Thekkumkur Raja. Ganapathi was sitting in one seat and Subramaniyan and sasthavu were seen seated in another one is seen. The idol of Bhadrakali is also seen here. The karanmasanthi was given to KummanamThuyyathullam.

In the tenth century a Gada Saraswatha temple was built at Thazhathangady by name Sree Venkatachalapathy Tirumala Temple. The location is near the Taliyilkotta Siva temple. Kottayam is one of the Ashtagramas and the temple is managed by the Alappuzha Anathanarayanapuram Thuravoor Tirumala Devaswom (AATTD). The main deity is Sree Venkatachalapathy. Other deities were Lakshmi Devi on the left and Bhoomidevi on the right. The idol made of Panchaloha also bears a sword. At the north east corner of the temple, the statue of the Poojari who brought the Venkatachalapathy idol to Kottayam is installed. There is a small Anapandal/elephant stable and part of the agrasala on the north side is converted to a small hall-cum-auditorium. Situated on a sloppy terrain and the main Gopuram entrance is about 6 feet below the road level. However, the west gate is above the road level. The Venkatachalapathy idol was brought to Kottayam by a Poojari who migrated from Varapuzha. At his request the Kottayam Thampuran (Raja) gave free land and helped the construction of the temple in 1841AD.

Thekkumkur Rajas built the Thirunakkara Mahadevar temple at Nakkara Kunnu [Nakkara hill present Kottayam] Nakkara in due course became Thirunakkara or blessed Nakkara (Kottarathil Sankoonni p. 213). The temple maidan had a deep hole on the same ground level with the Puthiya Thrikkovil Sree Krishna temple. The remnants of the Thaliyil fort were used for the construction of the temple maidan. Date of construction of Thirunakkara temple is unknown. K S Neelakantanunni says that both Taliyilkotta temple and Tirunakkara temple were consecrated by Parasurama. Both are Siva Temples. One Tekkumkur Raja had intense devotion to the deity in Trissur Vadakkumnatha Temple. He went there every month and used waterways and palanquin to reach there. When he got older, he found it very difficult to go this long way and he prayed to God to find a way. God appeared to him in dreams and assured his presence in Nakkarakunnu. He wanted him to build a temple there. The site of the temple at that time was full of trees, plants, and wild animals. The Swamiyar [High Priest of the temple] in the present Swamiyar Madom had done some cultivation in the nakkarakunnu. He conducted a feast and for that, he wanted his servants to get the vegetables from this place. They went and when they struck with the spade at the root of Amorphophallus, they saw a stone bleeding and they intimated the Swamiyar. He understood that it was a Shiva Linga and they conducted the rituals at the place. Then Thekkumkur Raja was intimated and he was happy. He

built the biggest and the most magnificent temple at Nakkarakunnu. The stone linga in front of the temple at Cottayamis said to be a slave, turned into a stone for too near approach. (Mateer 1883 p.185). For the expenses of the temple lands were given. In the book MahakshetrangalkkuMunpil written by Nalankal Krishna Pillai recorded the comment of a Raja of Cochin who was an expert in temple architecture. Temple has all the features of a Mahatemple as specified in temple architecture Main priest or melsanthi was Pereparamban Namboothiri, a close associate of raja. Tharananalloor was the Thantri. Daily administration was under Chengazhasseri and Punnasseri Moosathu. The Chengazhasseri and Punnasserimoosathu who witnessed the sivalinga were given special rights in temple affairs. The Palakodan and Nedumangadan the servants of Swamiyarmadom whose families got the right to harvest. The Karanma right was given to Punnasseri Moosathu. As per the data available in settlement register there is proof showing these persons getting Devasom lands for their service.

Bull was considered as the secondary God and so was given much importance. Bull at the temple went to eat the cultivation in the near by paddy fields at Veloor. Once a paraya man stoned the bull In response, the Thekkumkur raja brought the same field at Veloor for the temple to meet the needs of the temple bull. It was known as Kala kandomtill now. The hump of the bull had a swelling and this was an indication of danger that can happen to king or country, So special worship was conducted and the Government allotted thousand rupees for this. The bull was successfully treated by the Vayaskara Moos of Ashtavaidhya family. Special offerings were given to the bull prepared under the supervision of Moos. He was honoured by giving a purse annually which was continued even today. The permission to grant electricity to temple under Government expense was sanctioned by Sree Chithira Tirunal Maharaja [1931-1949] to Vayaskara Moos Eastern Gopuram has bronze coated chuttuvilakku/lamp. It also has Sheevelippura and Flag post coated with Gold. The height of the flagpost depended on the measurement of the temple. South western corner has a vattezhuthu [an old script which is now defunct] script “eravipuramthonttinayandu 212”. This shows the Kollam era 212 which is equivalent to CE 1037. Eravi is the name of given to Thekkumkur Raja. Small Mandapam [Platform] has the stone statue of the bull. It has a tiled roof. It was also worshipped. Including MandapamSreekovil has three chambers. Temple

also has the deities of Ayyappa, Ganapathi, Subramaniyan, Vadakkumnathan, Durga, Brahma rakshassu etc. The four gopuram [the entrance tower of the temple] has stone steps, stone pillars and stone doorways. The temple was decorated by paintings and sculptures. The theme is the story of Ramayana. The walls have paintings of Gods and themes taken from the story of Purana. Under the umbrella of a Pipal tree a row of stone statues of snakes Goddess with eight hands is seated in a lotus flower. Ganapathi was also seen here. Siva was the main deity. The fencing of the temple maidan was done by Diwan C P Ramaswamiyer. The pipal tree was planted by Paivallikkal Potti. The offertory Mandapam has the idol of Ganapathi. (Smaranika 2016). The tradition of Thirunakkara Kallu states that a pulaya man and woman tried to kill and eat the bull of the temple. They were cursed by God and they turned into a kallu-stone which still stands in the road in front of temple. In 2007 like the Trissur pooram, Pakalpooram was conducted here from 4pm to 7pm reveals the relation between Tirunakkara temple and Trissur Vadakkumnatha temple. 22 to 26 elephants participated. (Sadasivam 2015 pp. 220-236)

Puthiya Thrikkovil Temple is a Sree Krishna temple to the north of Thirunakkara temple. One of the Thekkumkur Raja who was not on good terms with the Raja of Ambalapuzha found it difficult to reach Ambalapuzha to worship Krishna. He therefore constructed this temple. After the Thekkumkur Dynasty, Velliyodu Potti of Kodimatha and Kuttamasserri Namboothiri claimed the ownership of the temple. Still later, this temple was handed over to the Devaswom authorities. The land given to this temple by the Raja is the Mayilpadom. The Cheruvalli Kavu was seen both at Olessa and at Thirunakkara near Brahmana Samuha Madom. The Cheruvalli Bhagavathy or Goddess was the main deity of Thekkumkur Rajas. The Thekkumkur Rajas possessed right of supremacy over the Olesha temple.

Pallipurathu Kavuis situated on the side of MC Road in Kodimatha. Main deity is Bhadrakali. The Kumbhakudam festival on Pathamudayam is famous. Vayaskara Moose is the patron. Being the family goddess of Kottarathil Sankunni, administration of the Kavus is in the hands of Kottarathil Unnis. Panachikkadu temple famous as Dakshina Mookambika of South India is Known as Saraswathy temple. The main deity is Mahavishnu. The custom of the devotee here is to worship Vishnu first before Goddess Saraswathy. Ganapathi, Shiva, Sasthavu and Yakshi were sub-deities. There is no temple structure for Saraswathy.

Keralapuram temple is situated behind the Thirunakkara Devaswom office. This Sree Krishna temple belonged to Naduvile Madom Swamiyar. It has Copper plated SriKovil. Later he gave this to Keralapuram Warriyam. The Pazhyidathu site south of Kodimatha Pallipurathukavu situated one of the palaces of Thekkumkur Raja. the deity of Sasthavu was consecrated at Kodimatha and it became famous as Sasthamkunnu. The Sastha temple at Kodimatha of the Vayaskarallam is now under the supervision of Ayyappa Seva Sangham. The Pallipurathukavu was built with the help of the Thekkumkur Raja. Kodupunnallam conduct worship here. The palace physician Vayaskara moose also helped in the construction of the temple and he donated a purayidom to the temple. This is recorded in the Granthavari. During Pathamudayam the Kumbakudam festival was conducted here. The Vaniyar community members performed the music of Villadichampattu

Sree Saraswathi temple famous as Dhakshina Mookambika at Panachikkadu has the deity Goddess Sarawathi. Its history started in AD 14 century. The Keezhuppuram Nampoothiri adopted a male child from Karnattu family as per the revelation the main deity was covered by the Brahmi plantchildren used to have their initiation for studies here till now. A freshwater source from the feet of Lord Vishnu end in the well where the main deity was consecrated. Kaimukku, Keezhuppuram and Karunattillams were closely associated with this temple. Navarathri festival and the dance festival of the temple were famous. Maharaja Karthika Tirunal Ramavarma visited the temple and offered ornaments for the deity and special offerings too. (Sadasivam 2015 p. 220-236) Sree Devi temple of Kumaranalloor has the main deity Mathura Meenakshi. The temple is related to Trissur temple and Zamorin of Kozhikode. The ornament of Goddess includes a necklace named Tipu Sultan offered by the Zamorin. The place was governed by nine Nampoothiri family and one member from the Chempakasseri [today's Ambalappuzha] Raja under the name Devan Nair. The Mandapa has a lamp bearing the name Devan Narayanan has been there. KunjanNambiar used to visit the temple, Swathi Tirunal Maharaja and Uthram Thirunal who donated the golden Thazhikakudam, . In 1849 copper coated Flag post was established and in 1914 golden flag post by the Travancore royal family.

## **TEMPLES AS AN AGENT OF SOCIAL FORMATION**

Temple culture is deeply complex. The signs and symbols had an important place. The worship of a super natural power, nature's power, stone statues to metal statues of Gods and Goddesses were the practices followed. With urbanization people began to make Gods and Goddesses in their own likeness. The temple is the residence of God. God is considered as a power who understands human nature, emotions and aspirations and a source of blessing. Temples were the origin of Bhakti based on the belief that God reside in the temple. In the opinion of KanchiParamaacharyan when a person make temple visit a habit and believe that God reside in temple, he will soon develop real bhakti and see God and later he will understand the universal character of God. The worship and the rituals make the place holy and will help the humans to surrenderto God. Temples stood as the symbol of spiritual culture. The mantras and the chanting were based on Vedas. A devotee can approach God by Yoga-Yajna-Karma-Bhakti Jhanamarga.

Temples were not only centres of worship but also the centre of education, culture, information, seminars, speech, art work, sculpture native art, dance, and drama.

The food served in the outside verandhas was called Seevllippura. Balikallu consolidates all divine creations who guard this universe. Flag post is the sign of mond. Mughamandapam is the brain Sreekovil is the heart, the paths that surround the main God and Goddesses is the faceand gopuram is feet of God. A person's life events were very much related to God.

Settlement register shows the role and importance of temples in modernisation. Brahmins and temples establish superior land holding rights over the cultivating settlements and the tillers. Considerable extent of lands was cultivated under the institutional control of temples. This led to socio-economic transformation. Settlement Register explains the multi-crop production pattern in Kottayam. Cultivation in the alluvial wet land [Nilam, Vayal] laterite garden lands [parambu] and house sites [Purayidom] existed. Paddy was the main crop. It was cultivated in the fertile tracts of river valleys and low-lying region. Almost entire accessible wet lands were brought under food or grain cultivation. Along with the land holding rights over the Brahmaswam, Devaswam and Cherikkal lands rights like Janmam, Verumpattam, Kanam, & Kuzhikkanam also existed.



Janmam appears in Granthavaris which is a hereditary titular right over the process of production and distribution. Verumpattam or simple leases were the most widespread form of land holding. Kanam is the controlling right obtained through mortgage. Janmam and Kanam became the dominant forms. Holder is Janmi. The Janmis include the temples and Brahmins members of the ruling family who received land grant with absolute holding rights [attipper] along with libation of water [Neerattipper/ Neer Attikkodutha]. This was later transformed into hereditary land ownership right. Kuzhikkanam is the land holding right over garden land.

The land was also held by higher caste non-Brahmins like the officials associated with accounting were Kanakku, Menon & Karyakkar. The martial groups associated with Brahmins and ruling chiefs like Nayars, Kuruppu, Nambiar etc. also held Janmam or Kanam land. Some Ezhavas, traditionally the toddy tappers were also lease holders [Pattam] in wet land. But the social position of Ezhavas did not improve with the rise in economic power. Not all Nairs and Ezhavas were landholders. Many Nairs and Ezhavas were producers many were Kutiyans [tenant] They were obliged to provide a share of produce known as melvaram, melodi, pattam etc to the landlord. Artisans and similar occupational groups enjoyed higher socio-economic status than Adiyar. The service of carpenters, masons and goldsmiths and other metal workers were used by temples and ruling families.

Christians and Muslim communities continued mainly as traders and later cultivators and became landholders. Muslims and Christians hold cash crop land. The monopoly on trade especially pepper, salt, tobacco made the economy of Travancore stable. Pandaravaka means state land. Though God was the focus of worship, temples were no longer mere centres of worship. Temples owned vast areas of agricultural fields and later became organizers of production.

The mode of production in settlement and the redistribution have been continued in a traditional manner. The settlement was occupied by different groups of people each occupying their own preferred space subjected to availability of area either chosen or given. The Settlement Register lists the names of the owners of land, the space they occupy, and the work they perform. Kottayam settlement have different labour groups like Carpenters, Potters, Goldsmith, Vannan, Veluthedan, Vaniyan, Chaliyan, Ezhavan, Kanakkan, Parayan,

Kaniyan and Pulayan. This formed the basis of social and cultural life. The support and influence of kings also contributed to the development of the settlement. The economic power of the temple was the agricultural land ownership. The Meenachilriver, Kodur river and Vembanad lake also contributed to the development of Kottayam.

Relations of productions are related to the means of production. In an agricultural economy land is the main means of production. So ownership of land is important. Records refer to Devaswom and Brahmaswom lands. Lands were given in lease to cultivation. Kings also gave lands to temples to meet the expenses of the temple. The temple employees like santhi, kazhakam, kuthu, vadhyam (musical instruments) performers, and readers of scriptures or parayanam were given lands called Viruthi. Several plots of land were known as Viruthi and the name themselves indicate the kind of services remunerated by the permanent assignment of lands to certain families. The basis of the relations of production in land was the Pulayas. Owners of land were institutions and individuals who formed the second phase of redistribution. Most important redistribution centre was temple. As pattam a large amount of paddy reached the temple. A part of it used to redistribute among the employees of the temple and for giving oottu of feast to Brahmins and non Brahmins. Plough agriculture led to surplus of production. Surplus depends on the extent of cultivation. This surplus of the society was reflected in the architecture of institutions of the locality. Vaniyan and Chaliyans were the popular groups in the settlement. Oil, an important fuel for lighting the lamps was an important item of trade. The only solution to fight darkness in the middle ages is oil lamps. So it is important in religious aspect.

The practical aspect or the history of the offertory of oil and ghee in lighting lamps in worship centres was this. Here oil is produced mainly from coconut. Chaliyans the Kerala weavers lived in streets. Kerala was not a centre of cotton cultivation. So the raw materials for weaving has to be procured from outside and thus had constant relations with the outside world and the basis of long distance trade. Exchange of spices like pepper also contributed to this trade. Full time merchants were a must for long distance trade.

The process of exchange is centred on institutions like temples, churches and angadis. When we consider the concept of temple it is not only the sculpture and

architecture of temples but also the activities associated with it. The architecture of the temple shows its social obligation. Temple architecture had its representations of the ideas of agricultural mode of production. Here agriculture is based on rainfall and sunlight. So climate is an important factor in agriculture. The forces of nature were pleased to control and order climate, is an important ritual of the temple. 'Abhishekam' the temple ritual is related to the idea of regulation of climate. The Mandapam and garbhagriha the main centre is the venue of the rituals. The post of thantri, melsanthi, and kizhsanthi depend on the resources of the temple whose number can be limited or increased on the basis of the resources possessed by the temple. The reciting or the chanting of mantras or verses is the sole authority of the Brahmins. Chuttambalam is the space for kitchen, preparation of offertories or nivedhyam and oottu or sadhya. The society was attracted to temple by feast served here. Festivals represent the prosperity of the harvest. People from all walks of life and age visit the temple during festivals. This is one of the great entertainment for the common people and an occasion for generating income for temples.

Kings built temples at selected places in accordance with the existing traditions for which myths and testification of the local religious leaders, opinions of astrologers and when idols of deities were found in a locality, which was considered a divine sign, were taken into account. Temples were believed to be the residences of the Gods. Later temples became larger and God was the focus of worship. People began to offer grain, oil, jaggery to temples as god was the theoretical owner of all resources. In the Kerala Charithram, it is stated that the temples were the most important centre of collection of resources. Oil, rice, and jaggery used in temples were supplied mostly by Christians. The festival of Thirunakkara Mahadeva temple begins by lighting the lamp of the temple from the flames of the lamp in Kurishupalli.

The main fuel for lighting the lamp of the temple is oil. Therefore, oil has given great importance. Vaniyans supplied oil. Darkness which represents the evil can be removed by light and continued as the custom and belief from the middle ages. Even today lighting the lamp by using oil and ghee is an important offertory of the worshipping places. Again, oil is employed in the preparation of feast for the Brahmins in various temples and for making different types of pudding for feasts. It is also used in the preparation for providing the worshippers with the blessing of the deity in the form of different sweet dishes. The descendants of the

Vaniyans who were invited by the Thekkumkur Rajas still live in Thazhathangady area of Kottayam. Temples maintain a number of Brahmin and non-Brahmin populations for various offerings and to sustain occupational groups for its service. The surplus produced from the temple lands and the incomes generated from various offerings were redistributed among the temple functionaries as the reward of their services. Viruthi or Jivitamcan be seen as examples of this sort of reward for the services thus rendered. (Warrier&Gurukkal 1996 pp. 144-147)

Temples created many social groups-temple authorities like Uralar, temple related occupational groups, groups which collected commodities for the temple, groups which handle temple resources, temple officials like Poduval [temple management] Warriam [temple committees] and temple performers [nangelis]. Offatory of aval/rice flakes was done by chetties. The centrality of the temple in social transformations is an important aspect in the history of Kottayam. Kerala depends on rainfall and a knowledge of seasons and climate cultivation was impossible. Ploughing and sowing seeds temples did their part well as they have the knowledge of astronomy and prediction of climate. Kerala did not made use of the technology of animal power in clearing rain forests. So, temples did their part well in extending agriculture. The establishment of temples by kings, self manifested/self sprung idols being bleeded as is cited by KottarathilSankunni in Aithiyamala were used as a way to clear forests and extend agriculture. The census reports describe the number of Hindu temples in Kerala when compared to the area is quite surprising.

## **CONCLUSION**

Temples of Kottayam were centres of beliefs, values and the way of life. They were not just sacred spaces but also secular spaces. It does have a space in the life of society and offers a social meaning. Temples serve as nuclei of important social economic, artistic and intellectual functions and thus the temple cultures were associated with socio cultural and economic history of Kottayam and play a crucial role in the making of the culture and economy of Kottayam. More than rituals, fairs and festivals temples have a multi dimensional view. A study of temples of Kottayam shows that there was a gradual evolution. The temple based land ownership testifies the importance attached to temples as resource management in the economy of Kottayam. Culturally temples were spaces of

mental peace and connect people spiritually. As a symbol of traditions, they serve as sources for the history and relations of production. Along with cultural and social role, the economic role of the temples of Kottayam moulded economy, agriculture, as trade centre, as urban centre, temple kitchens in managing the offertories and the schemes for society it made a great impact in the history of Kottayam.

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