

THRIKKODITHANAM MAHAVISHNU TEMPLE, CHANGANASSERY: A STUDY

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Thrikkodithanam Mahavishnu temple is one of the thirteen *divyadesams* or *patalpetta tiruppaties* in *Malainadu*, an epithet used for denoting Kerala¹. It is situated in the Changanassery taluk of Kottayam district, seven kilometres north of Thiruvalla. Nammalvar, who lived during the 9th century, had given graphic accounts on the prosperity of the temple in his book entitled *Thiruvaimozhi*. This temple is also considered as one among the *Panchapandava* temples in Kerala².

Etimology

In ancient literatures, the place was referred as Tirukhatisthanam. Ghatikas or *salais* were institutions mostly attached to temples where the *cattar* or *cathirar*, proficient in *Vedas*, *Sastras* and also in military activities, lived under the patronage of kings who considered their establishment and maintenance as great privilage. The members of these institutions played an important role in upholding the rights of the Brahmin *sabhas* and the power of their royal patrons who sometimes indulged in politics. One such centre prospered in this area near the temple giving the name - *Khatikasthanam*. Due to the presence of Vishnu temple, the prefix of respect 'Thiru' (Sree) got attached to it by making Thirukhatishanam. With the passage of time it is abbreviated to Thrikkodithanam. Another version is that 'Thirukotis' or temple flags used to be planted in and around the temple, by which the area derived the name³.

These are the two different views regarding the origin of the place name, Thrikkodithanam. Among this, the first argument is more appropriate and the second one lacks historicity.

Name of the Presiding Deity

In this temple, Lord Vishnu is consecrated on the eastern side and Narasimhamoorthy⁴ is placed on the western side. In the southern side of the *sreekovil*, Dakshinamoorthy⁵ is placed. Here Lord Vishnu is represented in a standing posture and is worshipped under the name *Atbhutha Narayanan* (miraculous Vishnu)⁶.

Subsidiary Deities

Besides these superior divinities mentioned above, there are many others allied to them. They are Vighneswara, Sastha or Ayyappan and Bhagavathi. There existed separate shrines for Bhagavathi and Sastha. Idol of Ayyappa has been installed outside the

Nalambalam. On the southern and northern side of *sreekovil*, Sastha and Bhagavathi shrines are constructed respectively. On the southern and western side of the Sastha shrine serpentine powers and *brahmarakshrasu* are placed respectively. Another minor God associated with the Thrikkodithanam temple is the Subramanya, the shrine was constructed outside the compound wall of this major temple.

Origin

The historical origin of the temple dates back to ancient period. The legends, traditions, and inscriptions provide some information regarding the origin of this temple. One of the earliest evidence, which proves the existence of the temple, is the work of Nammalvar. He praised this temple and the hymns were included in *Nalayiram Divyaprabandham*⁷. In this book, the presiding deity of Thrikkodithanam is extolled in these ten verses in an enchanting manner. It shows that the temple had been constructed during the 7th century⁸. This indicates that Thrikkodithanam was a prominent Vaishnavite centre prior to 7th century. Thus it can be inferred that at that time Thrikkodithanam was a part of Tamizhakam and there existed an unquestioned relation with Sangam age.

Other evidences which prove its connection with Sangam age are the Perunna inscriptions and the presence of Subrahmanya temple. The inscriptions from Perunna Subhramanya temple suggest that its ancient name was 'perunneytal'⁹. In addition to this, so many archaeological relics were discovered from Changanassery and it is believed that some portions of Changanassery were submerged under water¹⁰.

The presence of Subrahmanya shrine and the reference of neital is a positive indication towards Sangam age. Another opinion is that the temple belonged to the 5th century A.D¹¹. Subrahmanya or Murugan was an important male deity during the Sangam age. Lord Vishnu was worshipped by the Mullai tract under the name *Mayon*. People performed *Kudamkoothu*¹² (Pot dance) and *Kuravaikoothu* to propitiate Lord Vishnu. Another dance form named *Kudaikoothu*¹³ (Umbrella dance) was performed for propitiating Murugan¹⁴. These two dance forms are inscribed on the eastern *sopana* of Thrikkodithanam Mahavishnu temple.

The Political Structure

King occupied highest position in administration and he was referred as Raja Rajadhiraja Parameswara Bhattaraka in Vazhapally inscriptions¹⁵. This high sounding title indicates the consecrating status of the king. His income was meagre and constituted from crown lands and land dues from the villages¹⁶.

King acted as an intermediary force of agrarian settlements managed by the bodies constituted by the Brahmins. The co-ordinating force of the king could be more cultural than material. The Brahmin headed agrarian corporations were acted as the political power as well as the settlements are concerned. Between the temple corporations and the king, there were a few chiefs (*natuvazhis*) as the co-ordinating political force.

Koyiladhikari

The overall authority in regard to the management of temple was vested in the hands of the *Koyiladhikarikal*. His position in administration was next to king, who had control over the subordinate rulers of districts and small principalities such as Venad, Nanthuzhainadu etc. This is clearly indicated in Thrikkodithanam inscription that the defaulty *uralar* shall pay hundred *kalanju* gold to the Perumal, fifty *kalanju* to *Koyiladhikari* and twentyfive *kalanju* to *Naduvazhi*. *Koyiladhikarikal* had the right to appoint governor to administer Nanthuzhainadu¹⁷.

Natuvazhis

During the Kulasekhara period, the empire was divided into *natus* under *natuvazhis* (local chiefs). The chief was referred in Thrikkodithanam inscriptions as *natuvazhunnavar*. It seems that chief was the overall authority in his locality. However, the king enjoyed supreme authority over the chiefs. The higher authority of the king was expressed in the Thrikkodithanam inscription that the king solemised the accession of a local ruler. The inscription seems to mention that the *natuvazhi* of Venad was made the *natuvazhi* of Nanthuzhainatu also¹⁸. These corporations were to pay the *natuvazhis*, a *rakshabhoga* for the protection offered by the hundreds. It also appears that *rakshabhoga* constituted the primary source of the local chiefs.

The Temple Corporations

The landed Brahmanas of the *Ur* called *sabha* managed the administration of the temple and also the settlement. Temple was considered as the head quarters for all matters. The members of the *sabha* were called *uralar, urar, sabhaiyar* etc. To denote the *urar*, other terms like the *Tali, Tali Adhikarikal, Taliyar* etc are used. The term *urar* was used in Tamil inscriptions to denote the non-brahmin land holders. *Uralar* received *virutti* for rendering their service¹⁹. The *uralars* (trustees) used to collect the income from temple properties with the help of local assembly. If they misappropriated the property of the temple or failed to perform the prescribed daily *pujas* and offerings, they were to be awarded punishments graded according to the nature of the offence. For effective administrative management, a sub-committee was constituted and was called *paratai* or *parishad*. All important decisions with regard to the temple affairs were taken by the joint council of *paratai, sabha* and *potuval*. Inspite of this council, Thrikkodithanam inscription mentions about the role played by *variyan* (secretary) and *samanjithan* in the temple affairs²⁰.

The temple corporation had their own learning centres called *salais* attached to temples for training their youth. The Parthivapuram copper plates of the Ay king Karunandatakkann refer to the establishment of *sala* with royal endowments in A.D 898²¹. It also proves that training was mainly offered to *vyakarana* and *mimamsa*. A set of rules were formulated for the students. The *cattirar* were not permitted to keep their concubines and insisted them to follow *brahmacharya* during this period. Carrying arms to the *sabha* and playing dice in the temple were strictly prohibited. The *cattirar* and *bhattar* were given free food and accommodation by the temples²². These regulations were common to all the *salais*.

Development

By the beginning of 9th century, Brahmin settlements were well established and prosperous with *upagramas*²³. The Brahmin settlements in Kerala were essentially temple centred and that the temple was synonymous with the Brahmin settlement and vice versa. A peculiar feature of this Brahmin settlement was the existence of Brahmin educational-military and missionary organization named '*ghatika*' or *salai*²⁴. Thrikkodithanam Mahavishnu temple was a '*gramakshetra*' of such a prosperous Brahmin settlement and the *uralars* of this temple were migrated from Thriuvalla²⁵.

Inscriptions are the reliable sources to reconstruct the history of this temple. It dates from the second half of the tenth to the first half of the eleventh century. These inscriptions are engraved on the north and west walls of the central shrine of the temple, which is written in the *Vattezhuthu* alphabet and in the Tamil language. Epigraphically, the temple belonged to the period of Bhaskara Ravivarman I (963-1019A.D) ²⁶. The Kulasekhara period witnessed the construction and renovation of so many Vaishnavite temples in Kerala and some are renovated by them. Thrikkodithanam temple comes under the second category.

More than eight inscriptions were discovered from this temple. Most of these inscriptions pertain to the internal and external administration of the temple. During the Kulasekhara period, area comprising the present Kottayam district was included in the three separate *nadus* or administrative divisions viz Nanthuzhainadu, Manjunadu and Vempolinadu²⁷. Nanthuzhainadu comprised of the Changanassery and Kanjurappally taluks, the whole of the High ranges and also of the Thiruvalla and Chengannur taluks. Manjunadu included the Kottayam-Ettumanur area and Vempolinadu, the Vaikom taluk and portions of Meenachil. The whole area of Changanassery comes under the supervision of Nanthuzhainadu. Perunna, Puzhavathu, Vazhaipalli, Thrikkodithanam etc also belongs to this *nadu*²⁸. As records from Tiruvanvandur, Thrikkodithanam and Perunna refer to taxes payable to Nanthuzhainadu and claim protection from its officers suggests that the district was situated in this region. An inscription of 995 A.D. from the temple suggests that Thrikkodithanam was the capital of Nanthuzhainadu²⁹.

Each *nadu* was divided into number of *desams* under *Desavazhi* or *Vazhkaivazhi*³⁰. A well established administrative and judicial system existed during that time. A royal representative called *Koyiladhikarikal* exercised control over the feudatory governors. The governors were also controlled in their own domains by a local assembly called *Munnuttuvar*. Punishments were severe and that depended upon the nature of crime. Imposition of fines was common but sometimes capital punishment was issued³¹. An authentic evidence to prove this is the presence of *Kazhuvettikallu*, which was placed outside the compound wall of the temple³².

Bhaskara Ravivarman in 976 A.D. appointed Govardhana Marthanda, as governor of Venad to administer Nanthuzhainadu also³³. He controlled the administrative affairs of the Thrikkodithanam temple also. After having appointed as governor, he issued orders to give a yearly payment from Thrikkodithanam village to Nanthuzhainatu. The *Koyiladhikari* used

this revenue for feeding Brahmanas in the temple. Those who stood against this arrangement or stops it shall pay a fine to *Koyiladhikari*, *Naduvazhi* and *Desavazhi*³⁴.

The daily administration of the temple was entrusted with *Poduval* or secretary. The tenure of the committee was fixed. In the southern parts of Kerala, these executive committees were called *Variyams*. For administrative matters *Naduvazhis* were assisted by *Desavazhis*. *Koyiladhikarikal* was the supreme authority in regard to the administration of the temple. He was also known as *Purakoyma* (external overlord)³⁵. They enjoyed very high position and extensive powers. They acted as intermediary between the rulers and the chieftains. Above all, they enjoyed the right to appoint the chieftains of Venad, Odanad and other kingdoms³⁶. Thrikkodithanam inscriptions suggest that Govardhana Marthanda, governor of Venad was appointed by the *Koyiladhikari* of Bhaskara Ravivarma³⁷. The administration of Nanthuzhainadu was carried out smoothly with the support of *Munnuttuvvar*, the guardians of the endowment for the temple³⁸. Besides this Nanthuzhainadu *Munnuttuvvar*, *Vazhaipally urar* and *Paradai sabhas* were also helped in the administration. With the support of these officers, Kulasekharas continued in power till 12th century.

After Govardhana Marthanda's period, the governorship went into the hands of persons from other families. This is clearly indicated in a record of A.D 1085 of Bhaskara Ravivarma from Thrikkodithanam temple that Manal Manrathu Iyakkan Cirikandan (Srikadan) was mentioned as the governor of the district³⁹. He enjoyed several rights and privileges. He confiscated the rights and property of a Brahmin called Tenser Sennan Tayan who stole from the temple treasury, depriving his *idayidu* (land on lease), *purayidam* (house and compound), *kuru* (share) in certain lands and *patakaram* (land assigned to one member of *gana*)⁴⁰. He used this wealth for instituting *panchamahasabda* in the temple⁴¹. Here the governor was described as Nayar⁴².

From a close study of the inscriptions, it appears that Thrikkodithanam temple was a self governing authority. The affairs of the temple were managed by a council known as *Ur*⁴³. From this council the executive committee was selected. This committee was known as *Paratai* (*parishad*)⁴⁴. The strength of this committee was often two, although this need not have been very rigid. Apart from the *Paratai*, there was a general secretary, the *Poduval* and an accountant, the *Variyam*⁴⁵. When certain specific endowments were made for a particular ceremony or festival, a special committee was constituted to manage the affairs related to that occasion. This committee was known as *kanam* or *gana*⁴⁶.

When Govardhana Marthanda was administering Nanthuzhainadu (976A.D), he consulted with all the temple servants and officers, issued several orders and made arrangements for the *uttiravizha* festival. An *uttirakanam* was established at Thrikkodithanam temple by Srivallabhan Kota (974A.D), governor of Venad for conducting *uttiravizha*⁴⁷. This festival was lasted for ten days with grand feast for fifty brahmins and *koothu* was performed every day through the ten days programme⁴⁸. It is stated that 1800 acres of land was particularly used for feeding Brahmins⁴⁹. This clearly shows that the enacting of Sanskrit dramas had become quite popular in Kerala temples. The responsibility to conduct

this festival was rested with *uttirakanattar*. Similar *Thirunalkanam* and *Thirudevadasikanam* were associated with Perunna and Thiruvalla temple respectively⁵⁰.

The village council was mainly concerned with the administration of properties owned by the temple and the properties were known as *devaswom* or the property of the deity. They managed the affairs of the temple also. If somebody from *paratai* and *sabha* violated the terms of the decisions of the council severe punishments were imposed upon them, which included payment of fines, confiscation of properties and even banishment from the village⁵¹.

Thrikkodithanam inscriptions are the only known instance of a thief being punished for his crime⁵². Such a type of decisions were taken by *Natuvaazhi* (district governor) in consultation with the *Ur* (village assembly), *Paratai* (managing temple committee) and *Sabha* (assembly of learned Brahmins). For every important matter such as punishing a serious offence or amending a basic regulation, an extraordinary meeting of all the above mentioned members were used to be convened. A *rakshapurusha* or *Koyiladhiyari* would be nominated to protect the temple from attack⁵³.

But certain matters were discussed with the presence of Nanthuzhainadu *Munnuttuvar*. The *Parishad*, the *Gana* and the *Poduval* of the Thrikkodithanam temple, *Munnuttuvar* of Nanthuzhainadu and the temple servants like Kunram Govindan of Nedumpuram and Raviraman met together and observed that the holdings of the drummers(*kottikal*) shall not be taken up for cultivation or on mortgage by the *Koyiludaiyar*, the supervisors of the temple. The *uralar*, the *idayidar* and the *Poduval* shall not take them on mortgage. Those who take these holdings on mortgage shall be liable to a fine of twenty-four *kalanju* of gold to the governor of the district and twelve *kalanju* to the officer in immediate charge of the village. Those who transgress this condition shall be subjected to the same fine⁵⁴. Above all, this inscription was written by the drummers which show their grievances against the authorities those who taken up their holdings. The aim of this inscription was to make their position secure.

Likewise, for the conducting of *uttiravizha* festival arrangements were jointly made by the *Munnuttuvar*, *Poduval* and *Paradaiyar* of Thrikkodithanam temple. From inscriptional evidence Govardhana Marthanda should give away some of his *rakshabhogam* to the temple. It also registers that two sections of the people of Narayananamangalam village are supplying oil to the temple. They are to give two *padai* of oil before noon on the day of *utram* in the month of *Painguni* (*Kumbha*)⁵⁵.

It was the duty of the village assembly to look after the day today administration of the temple although, all the powers of the village assembly rested nominally with the *uralar* and *parishad*. Thus the decisions made by the *urar*, the *paradaiyar* and the *poduvals* in the temple are more relevant. The important among them are the following.

1. The *urar* and the *paradaiyar* were prohibited from stopping the amount expended for the food offerings made to the God, in burning perpetual lamp, for feeding Brahmanas and in the recitation of *Mahabharata*⁵⁶.

2. They were further prohibited from collecting rent from the tenants and to receive bribes from the priests and the reader of *Mahabharata*⁵⁷.
3. They should not allow the priest to continue service after three years from the date of appointment ⁵⁸.
4. The lands meant for food offerings and for the feeding of Brahmanas should measure and deliver in the temple before the *Thiruonam* day in the month of *Idavam*.
5. Those who hold the lands meant for perpetual lamps should deliver one half of their dues on the *Chittira Vishu* (*Meda Vishu*) day and the other half on the *Alpasi Vishu* (*Thula Vishu*) day⁵⁹. If the delivery is delayed for three days, they should pay double of their dues; if the payment is delayed for longer periods they should not merely be obliged to recoup all the dues but also lose their tenancy.
6. The income from those items ,that are set apart for the lamp,for the feeding of Brahmanas and for the recitation of *Mahabharata* should not be spent to another but must be expensed only for those purposes for which they are intended.
7. The *santhikkar* and the subordinate officers under him shall not be assumed by the *paradaimar*. The *paradaiyar* are prohibited from holding tenancy of the temple lands nor should lease them out. Those who are disobeying the above arrangements should be liable to a fine of twelve *kalanju* and five *kanam* of gold to the *sabha*. In addition to this, they should pay a fine of the same value of gold to the temple and to the then reigning king. The abettors on such illegal acts should also pay a similar fine.
8. The rent from lands set apart for burning lamps during the month *Vrischika(Karthika)* should deliver the ghee for that purposes before the *Sankranthi* of that month. There was no provision for mortgage something to substitute ghee. But if the lamp was unlit, they should pay a fine of ten *kanams* of gold to the king⁶⁰. These regulations were strictly observed for the smooth running of the temple. The village assembly was responsible to collect these donations and almost all donations were made by Brahmins.

Inspite of this, Thrikkodithanam temple received landed properties from non-brahmins also. This is clearly indicated in a record that provision was made by Mulakkad Iyakkan to lit perpetual lamp on *Medavishu* day and food offering for twelve brahmins on every *Amavasi* day in the temple⁶¹. For this he donated lands yielding four thousand, eight hundred *para* of paddy to the temple. Another instance is that a person named Devan Raman of Muttuttu made a gift of certain lands to the temple⁶². The temple properties were largely constituted by gifts of land and gold, made by chieftains and other wealthy persons in the society. These gifts were reached by the *uralar* and *parataiyar* on behalf of the temple and were owned collectively by them. They leased out these lands for cultivation. Incomes from these lands were used to meet the expenses for the daily rituals and the seasonal festivals of the temple. Functionaries of the temple from the priest to the sweeper were paid.

Another land donation (*Nelvathilkadu*) to the Thrikkodithanam temple was intended for the maintenance of perpetual lamp. The donation was made by Kandan Kumaran Alias Maluvakkon of Kilumalainadu⁶³. The recipients of the gifts were the members of the village assembly and *poduval*. They received the gift and gave the right to cultivate this land (*karanma*) to Iyakkan Govindan of Kodikkalam, in return for that he should pay either twelve *kalam* of paddy in kind or six *kalanju* of pure gold on the day of *Rohini* in the month of *Kumbha*⁶⁴.

Thus it can be concluded that the Thrikkodithanam temple became a prosperous institution because of the immense wealth contributed by ardent devotees and administrators. Inscriptions also proves the existence of a wooden granary (*pathayam*) for storing paddy collected from the temple lands⁶⁵.

In course of time, the temples, particularly the major temples came to possess immense wealth, mainly contributed by ardent devotees who included rulers, administrators and the public. The managers or the trustees of these temples enacted rules and laid down customs for the administration, basically favorable to them and not for the general interest of the temples. This led to mismanagement of temple properties. Thus large number of private Devaswoms came into existence. After the integration of Travancore and Cochin States, the administrative control of Devaswoms was vested with the Travancore Devaswom Board and the Cochin Devaswom Board⁶⁶. In 1936 the administration of Thrikkodithanam temple was taken over by Travancore Devaswom Board⁶⁷. Now all the administrative officers and other staffs were appointed by the Devaswom Board. Other employees of the temple can be divided in to two-those who had hereditary right or *karanma* and those who are appointed by Travancore Devaswom Board. The Board shall have absolute control over the holders of all *karanma* services and also over all the properties. The duties and responsibilities of *santhikkars* (priests), *tantris* (highest priest who is the final authority for a particular temple) were specified in the *Travancore Devaswom Manual*⁶⁸. The duties and responsibilities of the *tantris* are vast and varied⁶⁹. The important among them are the following.

1. They are not required to officiate in the daily services. They have to officiate only for the *utsavam* and for other extra-ordinary ceremonies.
2. They have to keep the details regarding the dates of commencement and termination of *utsavams* and other occasional ceremonies. In regard to extra-ordinary ceremonies the presence of *tantri* is necessary.
3. *Tantris* should attend all the important ceremonies, if it is not possible, the *tantri* should depute a proxy for performing the ceremony⁷⁰.

According to the nature of the services, *santhikkars* are classified in to two- *meldanthis* (chief priests), and *keezhsanthis* (assistants to the chief priest). *Meldanthi* is responsible to conduct the daily *pujas* or *nithyanidana*. *Keezhsanthis* have some special duties and responsibilities.

Duties of *Santhikkar*

1. To perform the *pujas* properly at stipulated times.

2. To conduct all *vazhipaats* offered in the best manner possible.
3. To give *prasadam*⁷¹ to the devotees.
4. To preserve the temple from pollution and destruction.
5. To keep the inside of the *garbhagriha* clean and tidy.
6. To take charge of ornaments and utensils.
7. To lock the *garbhagriha* securely when he leaves the temple after the *pujas* and to keep the keys safe in his custody⁷².

The positon of the *keezhsanthi* is that of an assistant to the *melsanthi* but the latter has no disciplinary powers over the former. The ordinary duties of the *keezhsanthi* are the following.

1. To prepare the *nivedyas* and *vazhipaats* for the *puja* services.
2. To take to the *sreekovil*, at the proper time, the water, flowers, *nivedyam*, etc required for several *pujas* and to remove them after use.
3. To carry the deity in procession for *sreebali*.

Apart from these officers, another group called *kazhukakkars* are closely associated with the day to day affairs of the temple. They are also known as *ambalavasis*. With the help of all these employees the administration of the Thrikkodithanam temple is going on properly.

Inshort, it can be stated that the Thrikkodithanam temple occupied a prominent place in history. Being the capital of Nanthuzhainadu, Thrikkodithanam enjoyed a notable position in administration. The historical significance of Changanassery begins with the development of Nanthuzhainadu.

References

1. A.Sreedhara Menon, *Cultural Heritage of Kerala an Introduction*, p.39.
2. According to legends this is one of the five temples of Central Travancore where the original Vishnu images said to have been worshipped by the *Pandavas* and were consecrated by them on their own initiative. The Vishnu image of Thrikkodithanam temple has consecrated by Sahadeva, those of Yudhishtira, Bhima, Arjuna and Nakula having been set up at Thrichittat, Trippuliyur, Thiruvaranmula respectively.
3. Aswathi Thirunal Gouri Lakshmi Bai, *Thulasigarland*, p.289.
4. Here it is believed that the image of Narasimhamoorthy was consecrated by a Vijayanagara ruler.
5. Dakshinamoorthy is a form of Siva.
6. V.Nagam Aiya, *Travancore State Manual*, Vol.II, p.50.
7. *Ibid.*
8. M.Gopalan Nair, 'Thrikkodithanam -A Unique Ancient Heritage', *Temple Smaranika*, p.81.
9. A.S.Ramanatha Ayyar, *Travancore Archeological Series*, Vol.V, p.34.
10. Scaria Zacharia, *Changanassery'99*, p.64.

11. T.K.Velupillai, *The Travncore State Manual*, Vol.1, p.602.
12. *Silappathikaram* is the only book which provides information about these dance forms.
13. P.Viswanathan Nair, *Chilappathikaram -Translation*, p.159.
14. Elamkulam P.N.Kunjan Pillai, *Keralam Anchum Aarum Nuttandukalil*, p.24.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Rajan Gurukkal, *The Kerala Temple and Early Medieval Agrarian System*, p.71.
17. A.S.Ramanatha Ayyar, *op.cit.*, p.177.
18. *Ibid.*, pp.71-72.
19. Elamkulam P.N.Kunjan Pillai, *op.cit.*, p.38.
20. *Ibid.*, p.24.
21. Elamkulam P.N.Kunjan Pillai, *Studies in Kerala History*, p.268.
22. Rajan Gurukkal, *op.cit.*, p.80.
23. Kesavan Veluthat, *Brahmin Settlements of Kerala*, p.4.
24. *Ibid.*
25. M.R.Raghava Varier and Rajan Gurukkal, *Kerala Charithram*, p.90.
26. It was assumed that there was only one Bhaskara Ravi Varman on the Chera throne as the immediate successor of Indu kotha Varma. More than twenty inscriptions bearing the name of Bhaskara Ravi Varman have been discovered from different parts of Kerala such as Thrikkakkara, Thirunelli, Perunna etc. A study of variations in the position of Jupiter in these records has lead to the conclusion that there are two kings of the same name of Bhaskara Ravi Varman, who ruled over Chera empire as the immediate successor of Indu Kotha Varma (944-962) and also there was a third king of the same name who ruled from 1043 to 1082 as the successor of Rajasimha. On the basis of this account, it is concluded that the Thrikkodithanam temple belongs to the period of Bhaskara Ravi Varman I.
27. A.Sreedhara Menon, *Gazetteer of India, Karala, Kottayam*, p.21.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Scaria Zacharia, *op.cit.*, p.65.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*
32. On the eastern entrance of the temple, a stone pillar known as *kazhuvettikkallu* was erected. The statue of a man was placed above the pillar (plate no.2). Only his waist rests on the pillar, rest of the body is unsupported. He holds a *samkhu* (conch shell) in his left hand and wears holly thread, indication of the higher castes. Puthusseri Rakhavan in his book, *Keralathinte Adisthana Rekhakal* mentioned that *kazhuvettithiruvizha* was celebrated in ancient times. This meant that it was a severe punishment. *Vide*, K.K.N.Kurupu, *Aspects of Kerala History and Culture*, p.14. In this book he describes about the hero worship. The top portion of these stones depict the Vaishnava symbols like conch shell instead of the linga and bull in the Saiva sect. The finish of the figures also reveals their origin in a later period. Generally it is believed

that, the Vaishnava *bhakti* cult in Kerala seems to have become popular only after the Saiva *bhakti* cult had established its roots in this region. However, both sects had accepted and popularized the Sangam institution of *veerakkal* in Kerala.

33. Scaria Zacharia, *op.cit.*, p.66.
34. *Ibid.*
35. Adoor.K.K.Ramachandran Nair, *Kerala State Gazetteer*, Vol.2, p.265.
36. Stella Kramrisch, *Arts And Crafts of Kerala*, p.19.
37. Adoor.K.K.Ramachandran Nair, *op.cit.*, p265.
38. Thiruvanvandur inscription entrusts that the duty of the *Munnuttuvar* of Namthuzhainadu was to maintain the routine expenses of the temple. The record authorises them to die and kill to realise the stipulated amount in case of default or violation of rules.
39. A.Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala Charithra Shilpikal*, p.24. *Manram* was an organization prevailed in the villages during the Sangam age. Its main duty was to settle disputes.
40. *Ibid*
41. There was a proper -well defined procedure for the sounding of *panchamahasabda* in this temple at the time of God's bath. Similar provision was made in the Thiruvalla plates where this *panchamahasabda* was assisted by five musical instruments like *chenda, timila, chengila, kaithalam* and *kalam*. The Huzur office plates of Karunandatakkann give another list of five instruments like *tattali, maddali, karatigai, talam* and *kakalam*.
42. T.Madhava Menon, *Hand Book of Kerala*, p.130.
43. Elamkulam opined that such councils were constituted by Brahmins and non-brahmins alike. But M.G.S.Narayan has suggested that the membership for these councils were resorted to Brahmins only.
44. T.Madhava Menon, *op.cit.*, p.131.
45. Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, p.7.
46. Kesavan Veluthat, 'Organization and Administration of the Brahmin Settlements in Kerala in the Later Cera Period (A.D.800-1000)', *Journal of Kerala Studies*, p.189. The *gana* or *kanam* became an influential body at Thrikkodithanam is known from the fact that they were also associated with the meetings of the village properties in that place. These permanent committees or trusts attached to the temple, functioning under the village assembly took care of the festivals and feasts contributed a gaiety to rural existence.
47. M.G.S.Narayan in his *Perumals of Kerala* states that *Utram* was the birth star of the governor and his mother was fond of instituting charities in temples.
48. Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, p.38.
49. *Ibid.*
50. M.G.S.Narayan, *Perumals of Kerala*, p.195.
51. Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, p.8.
52. Raghava Variyar and Rajan Gurukkal, *op.cit.*, p.134.

53. Madhava Menon,*op.cit.*,p.131.
54. *Ibid.*
55. Its main purpose was to celebrate the *uttiravizha* festival constituted by Srivallabhan Kota. This *Painguni utram* festival is in the present day too an important annual festival in Vishnu temples of Kerala.
56. P.G.Rajendran, *Kshetra Vijnanakosam*, p.659.
57. M.G. S.Narayan,*op.cit.*,p.190.
58. *Ibid.*
59. These are the two seasons to revise lease. They are *Alpasi Vishu* and *Chittira Vishu*.
60. P.G.Rajendran,*op.cit.*,p.659.
61. A.S.Ramanatha Ayyar,*op.cit.*,p.190.
62. *Ibid.*
63. Kilumalainadu was the name of the tract of land in the north eastern corner of the state lying at the foot of the Western Ghats and represented by the Modern Taluks of Devikulam, Thodupuzha and a portion of Muvattupuzha. The capital of this independent principality was Karikkodu near Thodupuzha.
64. A.S.Ramanatha Ayyar, *op.cit.*,p.183.
65. *Ibid.*,p.173.
66. S.Jayashankar, *Temples of Kerala*,p.18.
67. N.Neelakandan Potty, 'Brahmarppanam', *Temple Smaranika*, p.42.
68. *Travancore Devaswom Manual*, Vol.I, p.163.
69. *Ibid.*,p.164.
70. *Ibid.*,p.165.
71. Sacred items given to devotees like flowers, sandal paste, *kumkum* etc.
72. *Travancore Devaswom Manual*,Vol.I, *op.cit.*,p.18.