

## **Sankethams or the Ancient Religious Corporations of Malabar.**

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By MR. K. P. PADMANABHA MENON, B. A., B. L.

**A** *Sanketham* is one of the many peculiar institutions of Malabar, which has, in the course of the many political revolutions the country has been subjected to, altogether disappeared. The term itself has lost its original signification and is now used simply to mean a tract lying within certain defined limits. Originally it meant the independent jurisdiction of Pagodas and Brahman communities which were places of refuge altogether inviolable by any one by long established custom.

Many of the more important Devaswoms or temple endowments had their own Sankethams which were well defined and of large extent. Within these limits the temple Corporation used to exercise Sovereign authority. The temples and the lands attached to them were originally the creation of Brahman lords and communities who under the early theocratic form of rule owned the proprietorship of all lands in Malabar. Those Brahmin lords identified themselves with these Corporate estates which they had created and as time flowed on they associated with themselves, for political reasons, a secular leader to defend those possessions. That secular leader became part and parcel of the Devaswom Corporation. The Brahman lords themselves never gave up their right of ownership or management. They along with the secular leader and other persons attached to the temple collectively termed a *Yogam* managed the temple lands and ruled the tracts lying within the limits of the *Sanketham*.

The very existence of such a constitution as that of the *Sanke-tham* was much discussed recently in connection with certain disputes regarding the exercise of Sovereign rights within the limits of the lands attached to the Elangunnappuzha and Annamanada temples between the States of Travancore and Cochin. These disputes along with others were referred for settlement to the arbitration of an officer appointed by the Madras Government. The two temples mentioned may be taken as typical instances of Devaswom

Corporations. According to both parties the Elanguanapuzha endowment was the creation of a local Chief or Raja. Travancore contended that the pagoda was built by the Raja of Parur, and the villages which formed part of his territories were ceded to the *Devan* (god) and constituted into a *Sanketham* under his protection, on the 24th day of the month of Makarom of the year 2767 Kaliyugam Era (B.C. 335). According to Cochin the Devaswom was founded and endowed by the Raja of Cochin, who is said to have purchased 5½ *Desoms* or villages and presented them to the temple—date not known.

With regard to the Annamanada Devaswom Cochin stated that it was founded and endowed by ten Nambootiries and that the *Sanketham* of the Devaswom comprised 12½ villages. According to Travancore the lands attached to the temple were known as forming Adoor Gramam comprising many villages with a superficies of about 10 square miles and was styled Adoor Grama *Sanketham*. It is described as a remnant of Brahman sway over the Malabar country.

Travancore referred to a document containing answers to questions alleged to have been put to four Nambootiri Brahmans at the instance of Major Cadogan, British Resident in Travancore and Cochin in A.D. 1829 and answered by two of them. These questions were :—

1. What is meant by a *Sanketham*?
2. How many kinds of *Sankethams* are there?
3. What Sovereign powers can a Raja, whose territories surrounded a *Sanketham*, exercise over the properties and ryots of the said *Sanketham*?
4. Does the Civil and Criminal jurisdiction in a *Sanketham* vest in the Raja whose territories surround the *Sanketham*?
5. Please state in detail what *Koima*, *Aka Koima* and *Samudayam* are, and their respective functions and powers?

The substance of their answers was to the effect that the term *Sanketham* applies to a village over which no Sovereign has any right or jurisdiction, that there are two kinds of *Sankethams*, viz., those self-existent, as remnants of Brahman supremacy of old, and those created under concessions made by Sovereigns in favour of pagodas or Brahman communities from motives of religion ; that the

Sovereign whose territories surround a *Sanketham* has, as such, no authority of any kind over it, but all powers are vested in the *Sanke-tham* authorities conjointly with the Sovereign elected by them; that the Civil and Criminal jurisdiction over *Sankethams* vest in the constituent members elected or in the Sovereign protector of their choice; that the terms *Koima*, *Aka Koima*, *Samudayam* are applicable to the managing members who are generally Sovereigns elected for the purpose. In short, then, a *Sanketham* meant according to them an independent constitution governed by its own members and presided over by a Sovereign elected by them.

Cochin stoutly denied the existence of any constitution as above set forth and put forward its own version thus :—" *Sanketham* is a tract of territory, belonging to a Pagoda, the limits of which are defined. Within these limits no act calculated to pollute the Pagoda, to which the tract belongs, can be committed. Such lands as are exclusively set apart for the performance of ceremonies, &c., at the pagoda are said to be lands comprised in the *Sanketham*; and the Sovereign has as much sovereign supremacy over it as he has over other portions of his territories."

Mr. J. C. Hannington the arbitrator rejected the Travancore document as "inadmissible under the rules of evidence," which, however, are not applicable to proceedings before an arbitrator,\*—and expressed his opinion that "the existence of such an extraordinary Corporation as is described as a *Sangaitham* or *Sanketham* in paras 13 to 15 of the Travancore Statement, must be admitted to be improbable, inasmuch as no trace of any such constitution exists." He continued, "That a Sovereign who founded a pagoda and endowed it with lands should give to the managers the power of emancipating themselves at pleasure from his sovereign authority and adopting at will a different and probably a rival chief as sovereign is well nigh incredible. The learned Arbitrator was forced to admit that "the condition of things in the days when this Pagoda (that of Elanguunnapuzha) was founded and endowed was very different to anything now existing. I am justified in stating that the Sovereigns of the State in which this *Devaswom* existed even though they themselves were the individual founders of the *Devaswom*

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\* See Indian Evidence Act, Section 1.

conceded to the deity through his managers, powers within the limits of the Devaswom which included every function of Government save and except Royalty. Within their Devaswom limits, the managers of the temple collected revenues and exercised all judicial powers. The Sovereigns themselves yielded homage and paid substantial tribute to the Devaswoms (they do so still). The various chiefs or Swaroopams assisted in the management of the Pagoda and in the celebration of its ceremonies. In course of time these endowments were infringed upon and these privileges curtailed as the secular influence prevailed and the religious influence diminished."

Possibly the learned Arbitrator was correct in his decision regarding the constitution of the particular Devaswoms with which he was dealing. But the reasons on which he founds his conclusion seem to throw doubt on the possibility or even the probability of existence at any time of any such institution as a *Sanketham*, as "an independent constitution governed by its own members and presided over by a Sovereign elected by them." We are in no way concerned with the merits of the dispute between the two States, but in the interests of history we think it necessary to scrutinise the general reasoning on which the non-existence of such a constitution at any period of Malabar history is sought to be based. It is argued that such an extraordinary corporation could not have existed as it is "improbable inasmuch as no trace of any such constitution exists at the present day." The argument is, to say the least, unsound and fallacious. Because we are not in a position, now, to detect traces of an ancient institution that had flourished in the remote past, does it follow that it could not have existed at any time at all? If so, many an ancient institution now defunct, having passed into the limbo of oblivion, leaving behind but a bare name will have to be declared as having never existed at all and yet we have instances of institutions and usages of hoary antiquity of which very little trace can now be found. Mr. Hannington himself observes "I believe that the condition of things in the days when this Pagoda was founded and endowed was very different to any thing now existing." He adds "In course of time these endowments were infringed upon and these privileges curtailed as the secular influence prevailed and the religious influence diminished" and this supplies a conclusive answer

to his objection that "no trace of any such constitution exists at the present day." Not to travel beyond Malabar itself we find at present no traces whatever of the following old institutions and customs, viz., *Kudippaka*, *Mamankam*, *Changadam*, the custom of Nairs constituting themselves "Amoneos" or Amocchi. Nor is there any trace at present of the custom mentioned by Barbosa of the Kings of Quilacare publicly cutting their own throats clean at the end of their 12 years' term. Such instances, e.g. *Pangam*, *Purapad*, *Pattini*, &c, may easily be multiplied specially with reference to the period of Brahman sway in Malabar.

The early Jewish and Syrian Copper Plates unmistakably show that when those deeds were executed there were guilds in existence exercising functions of government, not unlike those exercised by the constituent members of *Sankethams*. The Jewish and Syrian guilds assembled in their respective Corporate head-quarters at Anjuvannam and Manigramam "to protect the Church people's (Palliyar) town." Referring to the Syrian and Jewish Plates Mr. Logan observes "The light thrown by these deeds on the state of society as it existed in the 8th and 9th centuries A.D. exhibits a community in a very advanced state of organization. At the head of all was the *Kon* or King or Perumal—drawing from the land a share of produce of the soil called the *Ko-pad's* share (*Varam*). Another share of the produce went to the *Pati* (over-lord) intermediary between the *Kon* and the actual land-holder. The *Pati* it seems was not any particular person, but a body Corporate of the Jews in their Municipal township of Anjuvannam, and (inferentially) of the Nairs in their Corporation called the "Six Hundred." But each body corporate had a hereditary head-man or chieftain. These bodies corporate seem to have constituted the political backbone of the country and their particular functions in the State were those of protecting and of supervising . . . ."\* Where are these institutions or organisations at the present day? A hundred and odd years of British domination has wiped them off the face of Malabar so completely that the present day Malabar Christian, Jew and Nayar have no idea whatever of the position their forefathers occupied in the body politic. These deeds further indicate

\* Logan's *Manual of the Malabar District*, Vol. I, page 271.

the existence of other corporate bodies in Malabar such as those of the five kinds of artificers, the oil makers, Ezhavas, Chetties, &c.

To Mr. Hannyngton it seemed "well nigh incredible" that a Sovereign founder of a pagoda and its endowments should "give to the managers the power of emancipating themselves at pleasure from his Sovereign authority and adopting at will a different and probably a rival chief as Sovereign." Mr. Hannyngton has evidently failed to correctly understand the origin and nature of these foundations. In the particular case he was dealing with, he has assumed, or it may be that it was proved before him, that the temple in question was founded by the Sovereign and the lands attached to the Devaswom were a gift from him. But if we keep in mind the origin of the Malabar temples and the hierarchical rights given hereunder it will be clear that the learned Arbitrator's argument is of very little use to support his conclusion. To say that the ancient temples of Malabar were endowed by the Sovereigns would be to put the cart before the horse.

A writer in the *Calcutta Review* has given us a correct and rational account of the origin of these temples and their endowments and of the nature of the hierarchical rights so peculiar to Malabar.

"According to all legends and all available evidence, the Malabar Coast was populated by Aryan emigrants from the eastern side of the Ghauts. It is equally a fact that the priestly class not only predominated among the emigrants, but actually monopolised the whole of the land of their adoption to themselves, the rest of the emigrant population being their 'drawers of water and hewers of wood'—their serfs, or at the most, their tenants-at-will. But to stereotype the configuration of a society for all time to come is as much an impossibility as to fix that of the clouds in the sky. Aggregations and segregations of power, influence and wealth must ever and anon go on under the guidance of the universal law of struggle for existence and survival of the best. Those priests are the wisest, and consequently the most powerful, who without directly arrogating secular power to themselves can bring into the meshes of their moral influence, those in whose hands the universal law places such power. The ecclesiastics of the Malabar Coast knew this as instinctively

as the ecclesiastics of Rome. But they had the additional advantage of having something more solid than benedictions and indulgences to confer upon their political stewards—*viz.*, the sovereignty of the land which exclusively belonged to them. They were equally wise and far-sighted in another step they took. They foresaw that the halo of sanctity which encircled themselves might not be proof against the gradual degeneracy of religious feelings which time must produce and the consequent encroachment upon their supremacy in the land. And they constitutionalised that sanctity, by demising large tracts of land and their revenues to certain temples built and consecrated by them. Who would not hesitate to commit sacrilege on an object of general religious worship? Of these temples the priest assumed the proprietary wardenship. Almost every temple of note had a synod of these priestly wardens. They invited the leading lay-man or chief to a membership of the synod and entrusted to him the stewardship of the whole temple domain subject to their superior authority. Thus arose these rich temples. Thus arose the sovereignties of the Malabar Coast.”\*

Most if not all of these Devaswoms were Brahman foundations and the body of the Brahmans—the Yogam—the community to which these belonged called in the Sovereign or elected him only to protect the temple and its endowments, and to preserve the rights and customs, just as the Namboories called in or elected Perumals from outside Malabar to rule over them for a term of 12 years. The fact that these Sovereigns were generally Samantha Kshatryas and were designated Koviladhikarikal (Temple Managers) is significant enough. “Namputhiri Brahmans” observes Mr. Justice Kunhi Raman Nair in his Memo on the land tenures of Travancore,” who held sway over the Devaswoms or Pagodas possessing immense wealth and landed property, invoked the assistance of Samantha Kshetryas, and these managed the Devaswoms under the designation of Kovil Adhikarikals. The Devaswoms exercised sovereign functions within the limits of their landed property as did wealthy classes of Brahmans generally within the limits of their Sanke-thams (tracts assigned to Brahmans). The life and liberty of the

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\* Vol. for 1888, pp. 286—7.

Devaswom tenants were at one time at the mercy of these Devaswom communities."\*

The Copper Plate inscription dated Puthuvaipu 103, i.e., 619 M.E.—1444 A.D. filed by Cochin and marked A by the Arbitrator affords ample support to this. For, it concludes by saying "Perim-padappu (the Cochin Raja) has the authority (in the Elanguntapuzha temple) to cause the different Swaroopams (Principalities) to pay the fines should they have committed any irregularities, to protect the Sanketham and to preserve the rights and customs thereof." The Cochin Raja still styles himself Kovil Adhikarikal in the documents he executes with regard to landed properties. In the early days of Brahman supremacy their political and spiritual influence over the constituent members of the corporations as well over the various sovereign rulers whom they themselves had created or called in was so great that it was almost impossible for any conflict such as contemplated by Mr. Hannington to arise. It is an open secret that the ecclesiastics of Malabar like those of Rome always kept the rulers of the land under the thumb. To a large extent they do so still. There is indeed considerable force in the Travancore Dewan Ramiengar's observation that "such Corporations as Sankethams in olden days are by no means the myths he (the Arbitrator) imagines them to be. If there was such a thing as the Hanseatic League—a mere trade union—in existence till the fifteenth century exercising acts of sovereignty and judicial power which were incompatible with the supremacy of the rulers in whose States they were enforced; and if it is a fact that the Head of the Romish Church at one time so arrogated all civil power to himself as to set up kings and to depose kings, there is nothing incredible or extraordinary in the existence of such independent hierarchies as are implied by Sankethams in a country at all times acknowledging the domination and influence of its Priesthood."

That such institutions did actually exist and that they exercised sovereign powers within the limits of their authority, even though there were Sovereign protectors placed over them, we have abundant evidence to show. An *imperium in imperio* is not more

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\* Mr. Justice Kunhi Raman Nair's Memo on Land tenures of Travancore, para 28, pp. 10-11,



extraordinary in mediæval Malabar than in mediæval Europe. Have we not instances of Republics flourishing under the protecting ægis of Monarchies? The earliest mention we have by Portuguese writers of a Sanketham is that of Ilangunrapuzha itself. It is referred to as a "Sanctuary the Samorin dared not violate" to which the Cochin Raja retreated for safety after his defeat at the battle at the Edapilly ford where three of his nephews including the heir-apparent Narain, (Marumahan?) were killed\* (A.D.) 1503.

Again we read of the "free Desam" of Nedumpuram into which the Queen of Perittally retired when hard pressed by the King of Travancore. The Dutch Governor Mr. Adrian Van Moens in his 'Memorials' speaks of 'Raplin' or Elappilly as a "free town." He says:—"The Company has little to do with the Chief. However, it is expedient for us to know that his little State is a kind of asylum, like a free town, to which people, who are afraid of prosecution and punishment, retreat, and where they are safe; and more especially when they are able to reach a temple or pagoda there. This privilege is acknowledged and respected by all Malabar kings. However, I never could find out on what right or grounds this privilege is based, unless it be that this State obtained this privilege as a matter of course on account of its ruler being a priestly and a very pious chief of the principal priestly caste among the natives." But the Ambalapuzhay or Chempakaseri Raja who also belonged to the priestly caste and who as Hough assures us on the authority of Gouvea was no less pious never possessed the privilege so far as his territory was concerned. The origin of the privilege has to be sought for in the early peculiar institutions of Malabar. Close upon a century after Barbosa and the other Portuguese authors wrote, Gouvea in his *Journada* describing the visitation of Archbishop Menezes to the Romo-Syrian Churches mentions Chengannoor in Travancore as forming a Sanketham. We take the following extract from Hough who writes on the authority of Gouvea. "After passing through these villages he (Menezes) visited the Church of Chenganore. This town is said to have been more celebrated for the worship of idols than any other in Malabar. In fact, the country itself was the property of a pagoda

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\* *The Rise of the Portuguese Power in India* - Whiteway.  
*The Kerallapazham*, p. 39.

or temple *whose brahmans exercised sovereign power, and appointed governors and subordinate officers throughout the province.*"

"The Church at Chenganore stood out of the town, and so absolute was the power of the brahmans there, that the Christians were not allowed to repair it without their consent. Gouvea says, that it required a miracle to obtain for these poor people permission to tile their Church; for the Brahmans objected to it, lest the Christian temples should vie with their own."\*

Ward and Conner in their *Memoirs of the Great Trigonometrical Survey* (1816 to 20) describing Travancore say: "The original likeness, the ample space included within the modern limits of Travancore, is not to be traced in its present united form; at the commencement of the 18th century it presented the same divided authority as the other parts of Mallialum, but the imperfect memory of its ancient State, can now enumerate only a few of the larger principalities. Kotium was held by a Kurtav, Keedangoor Koymah was the independent possession of a number of *Sankaidoms*, (independent possession of pagodas) *was ruled by Brahman authority which extended through other tracts.*"†

As to the nature and extent of the authority exercised by these Corporations within the tracts ruled over by them it may be difficult to define them with precision at this distance of time when all traces of ancient institutions have been ruthlessly effaced. Still such Grandhavaris or contemporary chronicles of temples as have fortunately escaped the vandalism of the iconoclastic tendencies of modern times which have found expression in the organised and systematic destruction of old records in Government offices, &c., give us some faint conception of the powers exercised by Sankethams originally.

In the Grandhavari of the temple at Vaikkam, in Travancore, we read that it was the duty of the Nambootiries of the four *Cheries* or divisions into which the gramam was divided to report to the Samudaya Yogam, i.e., the Committee of Management, any crimes or *derelictions of duty committed* by any one in their respective divisions and it was the duty of the Samudaya Yogam to summon the offender at once to their presence, investigate the matter and

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\* *History of Christianity in India*—Hough. Vol. 2, pp. 175-6.

† *Selections from the Travancore Records*

inflict condign punishment on those convicted. Again before hoisting the flag for the *Utsavam*, i.e., the annual temple festival, the Committee of Management had to see those convicted by them of murder, within the Sanketham limits, hanged. This was observed till the year 977 M.E. (1802 A.D.) when it was stopped.

A *Chatta Variola* or Rules for the regulation of business in the Elangunnapuzha Temple drawn up in 958 M. E. (1783 A. D.) embodies a provision for the hanging of murderers by the temple authorities within the Sanketham.

Even the Sovereigns themselves were subjected to penalties for acts of tyranny committed by them within the Sanketham limits and on the officers and men of the Sanketham. The constitutional rules of the Sanketham were such that if ever any of the chiefs or their followers committed an atrocity within Sanketham limits the Sanketham was held to be dissolved and till ample amends are made by the delinquent chief or till they are exacted from him by the Sovereign protector the working of the Sanketham comes to a standstill. The Sovereign protector himself is not exempted from these penalties if he is the erring individual. Thus in the Elangunnapuzha temple we gather from the copper plate inscription already referred to that "should any of the Swaroopams (Principalities) of the Sankethams be found guilty of any irregularities, the Nambooripad (the chairman of the yogam) fines the party and then gives permission to hoist the flag (for the *utsavam*) sending the Tevari Namboory along with him," and it is the duty of the Cochin Raja to levy the fine as protector of the rights of the Sanketham. Again another document dated 10th Kumbhom 191 Puthuvaippu Era, 697 M. E. 1522 A. D.; embodying the observances of the Devaswom marked D in the Arbitrator's records says "when all the Yogakkars (members of the Sanketham) shall have fully assembled they shall repair to the aforesaid place and ask the Nambooripad whether he would give permission for the Kodiyettu, commencement of the *Utsavam* (by hoisting the flag) and the Nambooripad shall, on his part, enforce a penalty from any of the Swaroopams (sovereigns) who has been guilty of any fault: and then grant the sanction applied for." It further proceeds to say "on the 18th Vrichigam 88 at half past 9 P. M. the individual named Peroomparayan was put to death by

Thekkankoor Raja. On the occasion the Sanketham was dissolved. Twelve months after the said date the Koimasthanam (an important office in the temple) was surrendered. For the above and certain other faults of Thekkankoor Raja in accordance with the decision of Arbitrators composed of a representative of the Perimpadappu Swaroopam, Parkalamattah Vasudevan Nambootiri, Perayil Narayanan Kumaran Nair and other Arbitrators then present, the Perempadappu Swaroopam (the Cochin Raja) who was the Melkoima, sovereign protector, presented (a euphemistic expression to mean that the Raja was mulct of an elephant as a penalty for not restoring the Sanketham) an elephant together with the Thotti and Walara (hook and stick) and thus renewed the management of the Sanketham." Another document a Grandhavari of Pallipurath Nambooripad marked E by the Arbitrator, of the date 740 M. E. 1564—1565 A. D. recording the encroachment and tyrannical acts committed by the Pintani Vattathu Swaroopam (the Paroor Raja) within the Nedungad Desam of the Elangunnappuzha Sanketham, on a particular day, mentioning the atrocities, goes on to say: We (Pallipurath Nambooripad, a high functionary of the temple) withdrew from the place on the same day; on that day the *Desam fell* (customary observances of the Desam were stopped)." Other atrocities followed. The Nedungad people retaliated by entering Paroor territory pulling down houses. The differences continued for about 8 years when the Pallipurath Nambooripad, says the document, "went in person to Elangunnappuzha and having said what was proper offered to do what was necessary. After this the Perimpadappu Swaroopam (Cochin Raja) and the Pintanivattathu Swaroopam (Paroor Raja) arrived at Elunggunnapuzha on the 7th Kumbhom and summoned Moothedathu Namboory \* \* \* \* \* Rayathil Para, Ponancottil Bhattathiri and Palikkamana Bhattathiri to act as Thatassers (arbitrators) in adjusting these points. In accordance with their decision the Pintanivattathu Swaroopam paid compensation for losses inflicted and expenses of the Pattiny fast as also fine for the wrongs committed. For the acts of aggression committed by the Perumpadappu Swaroopam the Pathies (on behalf of the Raja) presented an elephant and placed its Thotti and Walar (hook and stick)". The document then proceeds to prescribe the manner in

which the fines are to be levied. It says:—"When the latter ceremony takes place (i. e. the levy of the fine) Pazhedath Panikkar should stand in the Kanni Rasi. We (Nambooripad) should occupy a seat in the Mandapam (raised stone platform in front of the inner shrine) and Thevari (priest) and Yogakkar (members of the Sanketham) assemble and stand in the Telikkappura (Portico of the temple). When the Yogakkar ask us "whether we are satisfied with the fine we should signify our assent and order it to be levied and then Mannath Noothathu should take charge of it."

On the 23rd of April 1814 the Uralers or Elders of the Elangunnapuzha temple and various aged men of the Desams attached to it, having been called on to depose "to the rules and usage observed in the Elangunnapuzha Devaswom Sanketham and Desams from ancient times," stated that Ochenthuruth, Manjanacaud, Moondegad, Vysrakal, Poocad and Nedungad Desams (villages) formed the Sanketham or jurisdiction of the Elangunnapuzha Devaswom. Among the rules and usages mentioned by them is the following: "If a man commits a crime in any of the Desams, so that it becomes corrupt, the Paroor and Cochin Rajas should both jointly repair to the Vadulmatam gate, in the Pagoda, and cause the culprit to be punished and the Sovereign of the culprit should present the Pagoda with an elephant."

In the Trichoor temple Grandhavari for the year 945 M.E. (1770 A.D.) we see that before the Kalasam ceremony was performed in the Pagoda heavy penalties were exacted from the Ayanikkoor Chief for having shot thirty-two men of the Devaswom and committed other atrocities in the Sanketham. He had to surrender 3,941 paras of seed-sowing land, Mangalath Matapad, one of his residences, as also six villages in addition to it. The fine was levied at a public ceremony in the temple in the presence of the Swamiars, Vadhyan Nambootiri, the Brahmans of the Yogam, Kakkat Karnavapad and other local Chieftains and the Cochin Raja. The Kakkat Karnavapad as the head of the Ayanikkoor family had to confess the crime, pay the penalty and present an elephant. The Cochin Raja, too, had to present an elephant for the delay in enforcing the penalty on the wrong-doer. This was on the 14th of Medom 825 M.E. (1770 A.D.)

Similarly, the account preserved in the Archives of the

Trevandrum Pagoda show several entries of heavy payments exacted by the Yogam from various Chiefs as well as from the Rajas of Travancore for acts of aggression committed by them in the Devaswom Sanketham. So far as can be ascertained at present these entries range from 500 M.E. (1325 A.D.) to 903 M.E. (1728 A.D.). The earliest entry says that a sum of 30,000 fanams had to be paid as fine together with the surrender of valuable lands sowing 150 paras of paddy seed to the temple by Kunninmel Sree Veera Kerala Varman Tiruvadi (of Travancore) for killing the officers of the temple. The latest one says that Sree Veera Rama Varma of Trippappoor Kizhapperoor, (Travancore) being the Mootha (eldest) Pandaram of Cheravai, was mulct in an elephant for his having, on the 14th of Medam 896, committed various atrocities and killed Devaswom officers within the limits of Aykkonam, Veeranarayanasseri, Vikramanadichamangalam, Pulloor Kuruchi and Rajakkamangalam, lands belonging to Sree Padmanabha Perumal (the presiding deity of the Trevandrum temple). Another entry of the 15th Dhanu 894 refers expressly to the Sanketham. Payments had to be made in full by Sri Vera Aditya Varma of Trippappoor Kizhapperoor (Travancore) being the Mootha Tiruvadi of Cheravai for committing atrocities within Sree Padmanabha Swamy's Sanketham and collecting revenue therefrom. Villages yielding an annual revenue of 12,000 fanams were surrendered for this. For committing incursions in the Sanketham Villages two elephants had to be presented and in place of men and slaves killed others had to be given up.

A document produced by Cochin and marked K in the arbitration records gives us a fair idea of the government of a Sanketham and the rules and observances obtaining therein. They deal indeed with the Elangunnappuzha Devaswom but they are an index of the general system followed in other Devaswom Sankethams as well.

A perusal of the document certainly leaves the impression that the administrative functions of the Sanketham are complete in their own way and provide for no intervention of an outsider. Para 2 lays down that the Uralers conjointly with the Aka Koymas constitute the governing body. Para 4 states that the Koyma or the representative of the Sovereign, whose duty is to administer the villager,

was to be nominated by him on intimation being received of a vacancy and the procedure to be followed at the ceremony of nomination. Paras 5, 13, 16 to 20 and 35 provide for punishment of offences and paras 8, 24 to 26, 32, 33, 39 and 40 provide for the collection of different kinds of land revenue from all the Villages. While paras 11, 12, 21 to 23 and 36 provide for a system of registration of all deeds relating to transactions of immovable property and the fees to be levied for the same paras 5, 16 and 17 show that the Koyma assisted by the Pathies exercised the authority to pull down houses, (similar provisions are to be found in the Trichoor Temple Grandhavari) and to inflict capital punishment over the inhabitants of the villages. Para 32 lays down that the money and paddy paid to the Devaswom for the paddy lands and gardens owned by the States of Cochin and Travancore shall be continued to be paid in future without intervention. The amount, if any, in arrears, should also be paid after due enquiry. Para 40 says the '*Karam*' (tax) payable to the Devaswom on the paddy lands and gardens of the six Desoms (villages) shall be paid regularly from 958 M.E. Para 9 authorises the Koyma to levy a house-tax on the houses of certain classes of the inhabitants, and para 10, a profession tax on outside Pulayars (agricultural slaves) while para 15 imposes a cess on oil mills. Paras 7 and 13 show that the Yogam, *i.e.*, the Aka Koyma together with the Uralers, constituted the highest governing body while paras 14—31 and 34 state that they received a subsidy from the villages besides other dues. Paras 2, 7—13, 14, 29, 31 and 34 make it clear that the Aka Koyma presides at the meetings of the Yogam bearing a prominent part in the ceremonies attendant on the appointment of a Koyma to the villages, receiving a double share of subsidy. He had at one time the privilege of demanding grants of money from the villages.

An attentive consideration of this document places it beyond dispute that the *Sanketham* in itself constituted a self-contained and independent community exercising sovereign powers. In fact we find in it all the elements that go to constitute a body politic which, though of primitive structure, was self-working and independent owning no Sovereign except the Yogam. Of course these *Sanketham* jurisdictions have ceased to exist with the rise of the Secular

power and the diminution of religious influences. Just as the Cochin Raja has stopped the Avarodham or installation of the Yogi-athiripad in the Trichoor temple, he as well as the other Rajas of Malabar have infringed upon the rights of the Devaswoms within their limits and annexed them to their respective States. With the advent of British Supremacy which was not long after followed by the assumption of the government of the Native States of Cochin and Travancore by the British Resident, Colonel Munro, most of the rich and important Devaswoms were annexed to the States and it necessarily followed that their Sankethams also ceased to exist as independent jurisdictions. It was about this time that the Jews also lost their independent jurisdiction in Cochin. The age of materialism had dawned. The rights of Sovereign States to ride roughshod over the privileges and liberties of the subject population hitherto curtailed by popular assemblies and institutions designed and aimed to safeguard the interests of the people, but which had ceased to exist for some time past, came now to be protected by the mighty power of the British Government which as the Paramount Power became henceforward the final Court of Appeal both for Prince and people.

K. P. PADMANABHA MENON.

