

**IDIOM AND IDEOLOGY:
A STUDY OF
THE CHRISTIAN PERFORMANCE TRADITION
OF KERALA**

A Thesis Submitted to the University of Hyderabad
for the Award of the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy
in
Performing Arts**

**By
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INDIA
DECEMBER, 1997**

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DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the work reported in this thesis has been carried out by me individually in the Sarojini Naidu School, University of Hyderabad, under the supervision of Dr. Y. A. Sudhakar Reddy. I also declare that this work is original and is not submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship or associateship of any University or Institution.



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Certificate

Certified that the work contained in the thesis entitled **IDIOM AND IDEOLOGY: A STUDY OF THE CHRISTIAN PERFORMANCE TRADITION OF KERALA** has been carried out by Mr. Joly Puthussery under my supervision and the same has not been submitted elsewhere for any degree.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank

Dr. Y A. Sudhakar Reddy who is not only my supervisor but also my teacher and friend. I thank him for all the time and the efforts he has spared to guide me , the patience he exercised while dealing with me and also for his inimitable love and care.

The Dean, Sarojini Naidu School , University of Hyderabad for providing me with the facilities to carry out this work. I also express my sense of gratitude to all the faculty members of the school, especially to Bhasker Shewalker and Dr Kanaka Durga

My relatives, friends, teachers and institutions, to whom I have incurred many and lasting debts during the course of this project

My friends, both those who stayed and those who moved on, I owe debts that I can barely articulate, let alone repay.

The University Grants Commission for their financial assistance in the form of junior and senior research fellowships during this course.

All those people who worked and shared their memories and energy for the completion of this thesis.

Joly

Note on Transliteration and the Texts Used

In the texts, the Tamil words are found to be more in number than the **Malayalam** words. Hence, all the words have been changed following the Tamil transliteration system, so that a uniformity can be maintained throughout the thesis.

Tamil Transliteration

Vowels

a aa i ii u uu e ee ai o oo au

Consonants

k ñ c n T N t n p m y r
l v z L R ṛ

The verses from the texts are cited from the following works and manuscripts :

S.R. Sabeena Raphy, *CaviTTunaaTakam*

V.S.A. V.S.Andrews, "CaviTTunaaTakattile **Sahityam**",
Parishat Quarterly 1(1932).

R.A. Raphel Acharuparambil, *aanjellikka naaTakam* (unpublished manuscript)

The verses for the *muuvaracunaaTakam* are taken from the copied manuscript available with **Antoni Swami** of mariyan viiTu, attikkooTu

Chapter - 1

INTRODUCTION

Kerala has the largest Christian population among all the Indian states. This is the only state where a clearly marked Christian theatre exists. Therefore, if one wants to understand the nature and the development of the Christian performance tradition, one necessarily should go to the historicity of the advent of Christianity itself. The advent of Christianity in Kerala can be understood broadly in two ways: The first one is derived from the legends and the oral traditions; the second one is based on the historical writings.

It is very interesting to note that the Kerala Christian groups owe their existence to the European advent. No imperial state ever stayed for long in the Kerala territories like the British. Even the British has little influence over these territories, especially in the realm of Christian missionary activity. It is the Roman Catholics and the Syrian Orthodox traditions that prevailed dominantly in the lands of Kerala, though neither of them ever played the role of colonizers in India. In this context, it is interesting to note that the early European powers such as the Papal State or the Syrian Orthodox Church spread their religious ideology in Kerala not for political reasons but for religious expansion.

Later, European powers such as the Dutch, the British, the French etc. were interested in expanding the territories for political gains and to form them as part of their colonial possessions. The Roman Catholicism and the Orthodox churches never craved for possession of territories on the Indian soil. This makes a distinction of Kerala Christianity from that of the other Christian missionary movements in India. Hence, the Christianity in Kerala as such is not a colonial entrepreneurship but a part of ecumenical faith that was pursued by the catholic and orthodox churches. Though, the protestant movements aroused in parts of India as a by-product of the European colonial power could not penetrate the indigenous system of worship. The Protestants remained a distinct group from the native faiths. Contrary to this, Kerala Christian tradition amalgamated, agglomerated several indigenous practises and beliefs. The rites of passage, the order of worship, the mode of votive offerings are all intermixed and are allowed to stay within the Christian system of belief of the natives.

The intermixture of the natives with the western religious dogmas is strategically interwoven even at the realm of performance traditions to enlarge on the one hand, the base of Christian conversion and on the other, to sustain the already converted ones in the faith. In this sense advent of Christianity in Kerala is unique and quite different from the other parts of the country. The colonization preceded the Christian advent whereas in Kerala Christianity was never a colonial enterprise but on the contrary, prevailed during the pre-colonial phases of history.

Likewise, the Kerala Christian performance tradition also dates back to the pre-colonial era. Later, the advent of the European missionary contributed towards the growth of the Kerala Christianity as well as the Christian performance tradition. This Christian performance tradition which comprises various semi-theatrical and theatrical genres with a large number of performing troupes spread all over the country and holds an important position in the cultural milieu of Kerala. The impact of this tradition with its transformation and continuity through the ages attracted the attention of the scholars to probe into the phenomenon of cultural continuum.

The European Missionary Interface of Kerala

Kerala has been the meeting place of the East and the West for long, by virtue of its geographically strategic location as the land lying in the West Coast, bordering the Arabian Sea. The Greek, the Roman, the Jew, the Syrian, the Arab, the Chinese, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French, the English and a host of others had established relations with Kerala through the ages either as traders, travellers, adventures, bureaucrats, historians, or religious missionaries. There has been a continuous intermixture of cultures, a continuous process of give and take. In this land a section of people believe and often claim that St. Thomas, the apostle of Jesus came and baptised their ancestors into Christianity.¹ They believe that they are really the descendants of those early Christians, who according to the legend were once *Namboodiri Brahmins* (the upper caste) and there are seven churches believed to be ordained by the apostle.² They retained this legends effectively by making it a part of a living tradition through the oral and performing cultural traditions which includes written and unwritten songs and stories. This traditions allowed them to retain their upper caste status, or in a way, this performances legitimised their dominant status in the social milieu of ancient Kerala. The most famous

among these are the ceremonial songs presented and performed at the marriages and the customary feasts. Another prominent one among the *paaTTu* tradition is the **Ramban paaTTu**³. This is claimed to have been originally composed by the first disciple of the apostle in Malabar, supposed to be 'Niranathu Maliyekkal **Thoma Ramban**', in its present design, it is possibly a 16th century reinterpretation by one 'Thomas **Ramban**' who belonged to the same Maliyekkal family and the 48th in the hereditary line of priests. The above details about the authorship, were stated in the text itself. The Maliyekkal family house is still existing in **Niranam**.⁴ Today, these verses are known as the '**Mar Thoma Geetam**'. The Syrian Christians have preferred to rely on the traditions handed through generations, which have now crystallised into the collective memory of a community. The cultural experience of time varies, and the St. Thomas Christians notate time from the coming of **St. Thomas** to **Muziris** or **Kodungallur** in the first century of Christian era.⁵ This will make one assume the part played by those living traditions behind legitimising the perhaps and probables of a 'legendary' history.

At the next stage from 4th century A.D, as attested by Kerala tradition, there were waves of Christian migration from Persia to Kerala. The arrival of *Thomas of cana* with seventy-two families and clergy including a bishop considerably influenced the native **christians**. The contents of the *Thomas cana copper plates (A.D.345-?)* and *Tarisappally copper plates* (9th century) reveals the socio economic implications of Persian Christian migration to Kerala.⁶ This East-Syrian connection helped the native **christians** to develop into trading class. These colonists were from the lands where the chaldean civilization flourished. This connection paved the way for heirarchical and sacramental dependence of Kerala christians on chaldean church. Finally, when Christianity struck its deep root in the land of Kerala, "the characteristic form it took was the result of a protracted interaction between the Malabar cultural milieu and the chaldean ecclesiastical system. A harmonious blend of these two factors became a reality in the secular as well as in the ecclesiastical life of Christian community. Hence, the christians of St.Thomas could easily be integrated into the social and religious fabric of the country."⁷ There are many others who view this colonisation quite differently. They believe that this particular Syrian invasion was an obstacle in the long run. Because, it restricted the natural growth of the Indian Christian into authentic Indian church with an Indian pattern of thought, worship and life style. This is true to some extent since, the East-Syrian invasion made Indian

christians borrow Persian theology, worship forms, laws, customs and practices. They were constrained to lead a life not in one world but in two worlds at the same time by making an assimilation of the geographical, political and socio-cultural environment of India and the ecclesiastical world of the East-Syrian church. This was to an extent an artificial and unnatural kind of life.⁸ This was the early state of Christian performance tradition, one can consider this as a first phase, which is ancient and traditional with its art forms (especially the dance tradition, which include the genres like *maaRgamkaLi*, *vaTTakaLi*, and *paricamuttukaLi*) having Indian form and spirit with an oriental way of performance structure. These traditions have undergone drastic transformations and acculturation and have survived to the present date.

On May 14th, 1498 Vasco da Gama, the famous Portuguese navigator, landed at **Kappad** near Calicut on the Malabar Coast. The most conspicuous stage of missionary enterprise started with the arrival of Portuguese. The Christianity they found in Kerala was lacking in well-defined dogmas and practices that ensured Christian exclusiveness.⁹ They came with the doctrines and practices completely shaped in militancy in the West. They wished to bring the Indian church into complete uniformity with the Western church. This in turn helped them in expanding their temporal as well as economic domains. As a result, the Latinisation/Westernisation of the '**Marthoma Nazranikal**' (St. Thomas christians) and the vigorous conversion policy enacted by the Romish missionaries began in this country.¹⁰ More over India came under the *Padroado* jurisdiction attained by the Portuguese from the Pope.¹¹ This resulted in the emergence of a new social group (latin christians) along the sea-coast from Cochin to Rameshwaram.

This nascent church under the leadership of Western missionaries developed its own identity independent of **St. Thomas** christians. They were forbidden by the missionaries from practising Hindu rituals and participating in the temple arts of Kerala,¹² which were intended for spreading the Hindu legends and myths. The **vaccum** thus created in the cultural life of Kerala christians was filled by the newly invented customs, and performances. These are similar to the Western European Christian sacred and secular traditions, customs and practices which were popular in Europe after the Renaissance. Moreover the establishment of Christendom in Europe adopted a number of cultural practices from its predecessors i.e., the Greek and Roman civilizations. So, the religious

observances and courtly manners of the christenedom resembled the practices of early Roman civilization. This **enlightenment** in the cultural sphere of Europe during the **Post-Renaissance** Scenario was also reflected in and influenced the **various** missionary activities in Kerala. It can be seen in the beginning stages of printing, art, architecture, music and other performing arts.¹³ Among these, the theatrical representations or the liturgical dramas established by the missionaries in the Kerala churches were working either as a part of the conversion machinery or as a counterpart to the native art forms. This is the second phase or the medieval phase of Christian performance tradition.

The sever latinization adapted by the Westerner's caused the (dislikeness) of the St. Thomas Christians. They started objecting to the latinizing policies and looked down upon the synod of **Diamper** (1599) and the synod of **Angamaly** (1603) as encroachments by the Western colonialists on their religious and social life.¹⁴ This resulted in a series of conflicts that culminated in the "Koonan **Kurisu**" oath of 1653 where the leaders of native Christians Solemnly swore that they would never be under the Paulists (Jesuits). This further resulted in the initial schisms in the Christian community of Kerala and separated the Marthoma nazranikal into Puthankoottukar and the Pazhaya Koottukar.¹⁵ This also paved the way for the Rome's intervention into the internal matters of Kerala Christians. Thus began the exercise of 'Propaganda' Jurisdiction side by side with the 'Padroado' in Malabar. The conflicts of these two colonial religious enterprises further aggravated the disorientations inside the **religio-socio** fabric of Kerala Christians.

Towards the end of the first half of the 17th century, the Portuguese lost their political supremacy in India and the Dutch who expelled them objected to the free exercise of the padroado jurisdiction. During the Dutch period (1663-1795) the Western missionary activities continued at a slow pace. The Propaganda went ahead with its policy of direct evangelization and established many vicariates apostolics. These became dioceses or archdioceses only in 1886-7, when the Indian heirarchy was constituted.¹⁶ The Dutch let in a few protestant missionaries and later, the British opened the gates for the in flow of protestant missionary activity in Kerala. The activities of London Missionary Society (LMS) in Southern Kerala, Church Missionary Society (CMS) in central Kerala and the Basel Mission in North Malabar brought in fresh waves of christianisation in Kerala during the nineteenth century and in the first half of twentieth Century. This varied form

of Kerala Christianity boast a host of performance genres which up holds its identity. This genres had undergone transformations due to the cultural interventions through the ages.

In order to understand the identity of Kerala Christians one should go through intricate sub-divisions in the Kerala Christian community. That is, between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, the catholic church of Malabar was divided into Syrian Catholics, Latin Catholics and Jacobites. This divisions were made considering their liturgical language and adherence to the ritual patterns. Earlier it was the dissident group at the time of koonan kurisu gave birth to the **jacobites** but later Protestant missionary influence **promoted** further fission in the 19th and early 20th centuries and created some major sects like marthomite church, **syro-malenkara** church and the **syrian** orthodox church. Besides this there exists many minor ones with a few adherents situated indifferent localities and also many distinct protestant groups. The following table will give an idea of the church groups of Kerala.

Table-1: Church Groups of Kerala (% of Christian Population) [1961]

	Group [Church]	Head of the Church	% out of christian Population
I. Catholic	a. Syrian Catholic b. Syro Malankara c. Latin Catholic	Pope	a. 33.4 b. 3.2 59.1 c. 22.5
II. Orthodox	a. Jacobite b. Syrian Orthodox c. Marthomite	Patriarch of Antioch nominally, but effectively catholicos of East [Kottayam] Metropolitan of Malankara [Thriuvalla]	20 7.9
III. Chaldean	Nestorian	Patriarch of Babylon	Negligible
IV. Protestant	a. Church of South India b. Other Churches	Moderator of C.S.I. Madras	5.5 7.5

Alongwith the propaganda's promotion of indigenous vocations, as part of the direct evangelization, some of the performance traditions were used as a means of proselytization by the propagators of Christianity. This genres like *CaviTTunaaTakam* with its western thematic affinity and the native idiomatic assimilation becomes one of the true example for the 'Western ambivalence'. Which, on the one hand suspected the native Christians of superstition, (practically, this attitude was against any sort of Indianisation or Integration of Christianity with the Indian culture), and on the other, created the art forms by integrating their themes with the native performance tradition. This ambivalence, which is the backbone of hybridization, made these genres survive through the ages by undergoing further hybridizations, which results in the creation and amalgamation of new forms. Later this hybrid varieties becomes the part of the modern phase of Kerala Christian performance tradition. An indepth analysis of this forms will bring out the nuances of the 'colonial modernity' introduced by the Christian missionaries and the Kerala Christian identity.

Literature Survey

The literature survey comprises of three broad categories of works: the first category of works are related to Christian art forms and literature in India in general and **Kerala** in particular. The second category deals with the theatrical works which include works on performance studies and theater productions. The third category includes ideological and theoretical works in cultural studies which encompass the concepts such as orientalism, postcolonialism, new ethnography. These books are included in the literature survey to spell out the stand taken by the researcher both for interpreting and presenting the data. Only a few works as an example in literature survey is added in this section which follow the chronological order in the presentation.

First category:

The works in this category are treated with giving importance to the authors. Because all of them are filled with the subjective renditions of its authors. The material is presented with a view to make some distinction between the present thesis and the works already done, especially on *cavaTTunaTakam*.

In the book 'Malayala sahityavum kristiyanikalum', P.J. Thomas writes about the work done by missionaries and the early Christian community for the development of Kerala culture. In the introductory chapters he deals with the various folksongs and dances of Kerala Christians especially **St.Thomas** Christians. This collection of songs practiced by the early Syrian Christians during their marriage ceremony is interesting. Those rituals show varieties of conventions practiced by the Syrian Christian community. His account on *CaviTTunaaTakam* is based on the opinions of V.S Andrews.¹⁷ He firmly believed that *CaviTTunaaTakam* evolved as a counter part to *Kathakali*. His chapter on *CaviTTunaaTakam* **mostly** deals with the descriptions of the lyrical quality of the verses in those plays.

Sabeena Raphy authored the first book about *CaviTTunaaTakam*-**'dramatic opera'** of Kerala Christians.¹⁸ She belonged to the family of patrons of this splendid, the then popular theatrical form. The book was published in Malayalam. She gave more importance to the historical and literary aspects of this form. Even though she discuss about basic steps and hand gestures, her study was not at all theatrical. She was interested in finding out the historical evolution of *CaviTTunaaTakam*. She considers it as a Christian counter part to *Kathakali* (a dance drama of Kerala). She was trying to establish an Indian root to this performing art form. She was interested in the native aspects of this theatre and applied *Natya*, *Nrta*, *Nrtya* concepts based on *Natyasastra* (A treatise on Indian dramaturgy) as parameters to analyze *CaviTTunaaTakam* performance. Even though this theater has undergone a drastic transition by **1970's** she neglected it. She merely mentioned the change occurred in the literary aspects of the plays.

Chummar Choondal was a pioneer in the field of Christian folklore. His study of Christian theatre,¹⁹ mainly of *CaviTTunaaTakam* was based on the folkloristic methodology. Through a broad description of the performance as an event, he goes through various aspects of the genre. He discusses the family traditions of *Asans* and various sociological aspects of the theatre. He gave more importance to the Western elements of this particular form and tries to compare it with opera in certain aspects. He also made an attempt to establish the intercultural qualities by **comparing** *CaviTTunaaTakam* with *Terukoothu* (a folk theater form of Tamilnadu) and *Nadagam* of Srilanka. Moreover he collected the details regarding the themes of various plays like *Karalman*, *Jenova*,

Braseena which were popular dramas in the early era of **CaviTTunaaTakam**. His study of **CaviTTunaaTakam** was more based on ethnographic data blending anthropological and sociological perspectives. However his study lacks a theatrical approach and precision. The description of the conventions, the production and training process lacks analysis. Simultaneous glorification of the Western influences and the logocentric comments leads the reader into confusion.

Francis Peter Barboza worked on the subject titled 'Christianity in Indian dances' for his doctoral degree. He compiled and collected details regarding the dance forms which were exclusively practised by the Christians and the Christian themes depicted in other Indian dance forms. He gave more importance to South Indian dance forms especially the forms in Kerala and Goa. His rich experience in **Bharathanatyam** helped him to a large extent to work on certain Christian themes in this classical dance format and also to propagate this through various performances. He developed certain *mudras* (hand gestures) for Jesus, Mother Mary, resurrection - according to the themes in the framework of the classical Bharathanatyam structure. His analysis of audience response based on his own performances added further support to his newly created *mudras*.

In the first two introductory chapters, he deals with dance in the Christian scriptures and the importance of dance in the Christian community. In the third chapter, 'Dance in the life of church', he makes a brief survey of the development of 'sacred dance' in various parts of the world with the respective church history.

Fourth chapter deals with the dance forms of the Christians in Kerala. This chapter is divided into three parts. In the first part, the author discusses **maaRgamkaLi** - one of the ancient art forms practiced by the Syrian Christians in general and **Knaanaaya** Christians (A sect of endogamous Syrian Christians) in particular. Second part includes **paricamuttukaLi** (a dance form in which dancers use sword and shield, the shield is called **parica** in **Malayalam**). Here he discusses the difference between the **paricamuttukaLi** of Syrian, Latin and orthodox Jacobite Christians. In the third part he describes **CavaT-TunaTakam**. He compiled the opinions of various earlier authors on **CaviTTunaaTakam** and briefly introduces the form and its nature of performance. Most of his opinions were taken from **Chummar** Choondal's observations. The author describes the choreographic pattern with the help of line drawings, which is the only **noval** idea he introduces in

this account. For *maaRgamkaLi* and *paricamuttukaLi* the line drawings of the simples form will be very helpful for a better understanding of the steps and movement patterns. But in the case of *CaviTTunaaTakam* the basic steps and patterns differ according to the place and style (tradition) of *Asans* (masters). The combinations selected by the author were not enough to explain the intricacies of the beautiful movement patterns of *CaviTTunaaTakam*.

In the final chapters Barboza **describes** the Christian dance forms in Goa and especially the Christian themes adopted or used in the already existing traditions of Indian dance, specially South Indian and North Indian tribal dances. The concluding **chap-**ter deals with some of the contemporary attempts made by some organizations, which incorporated Christian themes in the classical and folk performances.

All together the above mentioned works fall short of theatrical analysis of the Christian performance tradition instead of that the four authors mainly describes the art forms by providing information. In order to understand a performance, one must consider it as an aesthetic mode of communication (with a target audience), which is integrally related to a particular event (context) with **culture-specific** and cross-culturally variable characteristics (idioms). In other words, one should develop a performance centered praxis of text making.

Second Category:

This category comprises of works from the 'theatre studies' including its two major components. They are: (1) Theatre history, (2) performance theory. In view of keeping the specific nature of the present work, the first one is further divided in to two sections like: (A) Theatre history of Kerala, (B) Mediveal Theatre of Western Europe. The second, (2) conglomerates various perspectives in the performance theory. Owing to the elaborate nature of this category this session clings to make some precise comments.

(A). The early accounts on the theatre history of Kerala was part of the Malayalam literary history. These early works based on the printed dramatic literature constructed the theatre history.²⁰ Some of the theatre scholars like: G. Sankarapillai, C.J. Thomas, Kattumadam Narayanan, Madavoor Bhasi, N.N. Pillai etc., came up with their works

by giving priority to the various theatre productions of Kerala.²¹ Except some passing comments none of the above works considered the Christian theatre productions and the important part played by the *CaviTTunaaTakam* genre in the evolutionary stages of **malayalam** drama stage. The remarks made by some of the western scholars on Kerala theatre especially on *CaviTTunaaTakam* performance,²² can be taken as an excellent example for the 'western/imperial gaze' upon the 'exotic' oriental phenomena.

At this juncture the present thesis tries to explore the nuances and details regarding the Christian theatre productions of the early sangeetha natakam stage from the biographies,²³ and the later stage from the play bills, notices, the accounts on the troupes and also using the interview based field work.

(B). The peripheral similarity of the Christian themes for the dramatic representations in the Medieval Europe and the Kerala demanded a literature survey. This inturn brought to light a host of details connecting the similar patterning of both the traditions. The accounts by O.B. Hardison and Karl Young explained the early liturgical ritualistic performances and its nature and function. The works by E.K. Chambers, Richard Axton gives a clear picture of the part played by the secular themese along with the sacred in flourishing the medieval stage. The books by Glynne Wickham reveals the various historical stages of this tradition and the writings of A.C. Cawley and William Tydeman make one understand the methods of processional as well as the fixed staging of the medieval productions. All together the above mentioned works along with a number of others enlightened and enriched the present thesis.²⁴

The study of the performance theory by the 'outsider theorists' (Erving **Goffmam** and Victor Turner) and the insider theorists' (Richard Schechner and Peggy Phelan) according to the Schechnerian terms,²⁵ helped the thesis to understand the underlying layer's of meaning behind the term performance. Goffman with his definition of performance as "all the activity of a given participant on a given occassion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants" related the term into an aesthetic extension of every day life with our own repeated behavioural patterns.²⁶ Victor Turner on the other hand made the metaphorical expansion of the theme with his influential idea that, social conflicts are structured like dramas; they occur in four phases or "**acts**", moving from breach, to crisis, to redress, ending in (either) reintegration or schism.²⁷ Both these

concepts reinstates their 'outsider' status as one who is not involved in the process of performance. The other two, that is Peggy Phelan with her understanding of the **"performance's"** only life in the present i.e., performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance". Performance **"becomes"** itself through disappearance" sees this phenomena from the 'spectator' stand point.²⁸ But Schechner puts the idea, **"performance"** are always actually performed" favours the repeated behaviour, and his contention that "restored (or twice-behaved) behaviour is the main characteristic of performance" upholds his performer stand point.²⁹ This stand point makes these theorists as very much **'insiders'**. On the one hand the study of the performance theory convinced the researcher that a complete definition of the term performance is a semantic impossibility. On the other this theory encouraged the present work to envisage the concept of performance with all its nuances in order to build up the concept Kerala Christian performance tradition.

Third Category:

As already mentioned, this category purely deals with the theoretical works which helped to formulate a substantial paradigm to analyse the historical development of Christian performance tradition of Kerala, with keeping in mind the vigorous debates concerning the relation of 'theory' to 'history'. Owing to the great impact made by Edward Said and Johannes Fabian in the cultural studies, this section gives a little priority to two works by them.³⁰ The section also comprises accounts on the post-colonial discourse's and theories on ideology.

Edward Said in his process of the "unlearning of the inherent dominative mode" contributes certain ideas to redefine the established notions about orient by the Western intelligentsia. Orientalism describes the ways of cultural domination of the West taken place step by step and the spheres in which they were prominent.

Edward Said begins with the various myths (created) about the orient like, (i) Orient as a European invention which possesses exotic beings, haunting memories and **landscape**. (ii) Orient as the "other" to define **Europe**. (iii) Orient as a carrier etc.. Then he explains how these myths got established or the ways through which "European culture was able

to manage and even produce the orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post-enlightenment period". This directly leads us to think about the relationship between accident and orient, as a relationship of power, of domination of varying degrees of complex hegemony. Throughout this book Said was trying to study this uneven exchange of power in political, intellectual, cultural and moral realms of the knowledge. Innumerable works followed after the publication of this book to find out the real facts about the Western dominated cultural and political "fact" as called as orientalism. This proves the credibility of Said's proposed theories through this work.

Said comments about his book "for students of literature and criticism orientalism offers a marvelous instance of the interrelations between society, history and textuality; moreover, the cultural role played by the Orient in the West connects Orientalism with ideology, politics and logic of power, matters of **relevance**. For the general reader, this study deals with matters that always compel attention. All of them connected not only with Western conceptions and treatments of the other but also with the singularly important role played by Western culture". This itself justifies the need for taking this book to formulate a theoretical frame.

In 1985 the anthropologist Johannes Fabian, working in the Shaba province of Zaire, first encountered the saying *Le pouvoir est mange entire* ("Power is eaten whole"). It simplifications - for the several charismatic religious movements Fabian was examining and for the culture of Luba peoples - continued to intergure him, **and** on a visit the following year he mentioned the saying to a company of popular actors: "I was overwhelmed by their eagerness te explain "Power is eaten whole" to me and to themself. Spontaneously they decided that it would be just the right topic for their next play. On the spot they began planning - first suggestions for a plot were made, problems of translating the French term *pouvoir* were debated, several actors cited sayings and customs from their home country - in short I have trigered an ethnographic brain storm" (Fabian p3).

"Power and performance" should be read by every researcher in the field of drama; for Fabian not only illustrates how the performance of *Le pouvoir Se mange entire* was created, rehearsed, and performed by the troupe. "Theatrale Mufwankolo" (the play examines various issues of power through a series of conflicts between villagers and their

chief) but also reminds us that much of what ethnographers study as “**culture**” is performance. Power and performance contains both rehearsal and performance version of the text of *Le pouvoir Se mange entire* in Swahili and in English translation. This excellent work proves the possibilities of “**New** ethnography”.

Said's orientalism initiated a colonial discourse analysis which aims at the study of the discursive operations of the concept colonialism, showing the intimate connection between the language and forms of knowledge developed for the study of cultures and the history of colonialism and imperialism. In other words the diverse ideological practices of colonialism, underlying in the concepts and representations of a large number of 'texts' across a range of 'disciplines' were subjected into thorough analysis. This in turn produced plenty of 'theories' or 'works' which can be clubbed under the title post-colonial theory.

The contribution of colonial-discourse analysis is that it provides a significant frame work for that 'other' work by emphasizing that all perspectives on colonialism share and have to deal with a common discursive medium which was also that of colonialism itself. The language used to enact, enforce, describe or analyse colonialisms is not transparent, innocent, a historical or simply instrumental. Colonial discourse analysis can therefore look at the wide variety of texts of colonialism as something more than mere documentation or 'evidence', and also emphasize the ways in which colonialism involved not just as a military or economic activity, but permeated forms of knowledge, which, if unchallenged, may continue to be the very ones through which we try to understand colonialism itself. **Homi K. Bhabha's** works become important at this juncture. By challenging certain totalizing concepts of Said, Bhabha emphasised the 'ambivalence' underlying in the western hegemonic practices. With the help of psychoanalysis Bhabha questioned the 'authority' of the dominant discourse when placed in a colonial context. This questioning further revealed the multilayered identity or the 'irresistible hybridity' of the cultural practices in the colonial context, which in turn clarify the hybridized cultural identity of the post-colonial phase.

In search of the meaning and definition of the term 'ideology' will definitely lead one to the works of J.B. Thompson. His works with its precise nature of the selection of articles and arrangement will help the scholars to understand the historical development

of the concept, the various ideological practises and the analysis of the ideology through 'depth **heremenutics**'. Thompson's compilation of Martin Seliger's theory of ideology as a belief system and the Paul Ricoeur's theory of interpretation used for the analysis of the concept helped the present thesis to formulate a **metholdology** of interpretation.

The Importance of the Study

The main focus of the study is to understand how theatre as a genre internalizes the native idioms with the western ideologies and survive as a distinct genre by itself. The mechanics of internalization results in cultural continuum and produces certain metaphors which are capable of becoming identities in the process of theatrical production. In a way theatre upholds the identity of the community and inturn serves as a strategy to **de**-marcate its cultural frontiers. However, these identities are not static and keep changing due to generic continuum. The cultural influences play a vital role in producing generic continuum and give rise to pluralistic meanings to the identity of the community.

The performance genres of any given period, in turn, produce and influence new ones and simultaneously imbibe the cultural and contextual transformations. The theatrical forms like *CaviTTunaaTakam* and *muuvaracunaTakam* can be considered as the base for the **neo-colonial**, multi-cultural interactions in the realm of theatre.

The cultural continuum of the Kerala **christian** performance tradition from the **pre**-colonial era is worth **understanding**— how alien ideologies got internalized through a process of acculturation and **produced**, in turn, hybridized forms of expressions for its identity. This multi-cultural nature and the basic characteristic form of syncretism which prevail in the Christian performance tradition demand a study of this hybrid variety using 'cultural hybridity' as a theoretical paradigm. This hybridity which evolved out of the cultural synthesis is nothing but the heterogeneous, diverse and polyphonic identity of the modern society.

What Is Christian Theatre ?

It is very **diffuclt** to confine the concept of Christian theatre within the frame work of a definition. It has undergone a drastic change through the ages. So it is better to find

out the components of Christian theatre and justify the concept. The components are:

- (i) the plays written and produced by the **christians**,
- (ii) the plays patronized, propagated and entertained by the christians,
- (iii) the plays based on Christian, biblical themes as well as on the socio-political status of Christian community.
- (iv) theatre practices inside and outside the church: the rituals, ceremonies, festivals, competitions and church's own Professional and Amateur itinerant groups.
- (v) the technical theatre with the costume and make-up representing the western Christian vestment types idiomatic as markers.
- (vi) the plays with the semiotic signification of the Christian ideological paradigms and metaphorical representation through the signs of cross marks, kneeling postures and conventional blessings.

Aims and Objectives

- I.** To identify the presence of Christian theatre as a genre by itself in the cultural realm of the Kerala Christian community. The theatre specialists ignored the Kerala Christian performance tradition as a subject of study and hence the ambivalence of the art form is not focussed. Even the academic circles, except mentioning the existence of Kerala Christian theatre, also ignored the **impracticacies** of the modes of expression of the community through the art form.
- II.** To understand how an art form can become a vehicle of communication and how it represents the communities which have the art form. In this sense, the Kerala Christian performance tradition is not just an object of reality, but that reality exists in the representations through the ages. Thus theatre becomes a mode of representation rather than a mere piece of entertainment.
- III.** To analyse how theatre can become a product of 'hybridity' and represent pluralistic identities that exist within a cultural system it represents. Theatre as a marker of

identity persists through the ages with the potential of polyphonic representations. To demonstrate this particular **aspect**, *CaviTTunaaTakam* and *muuvaracunaTakam* of the Kerala Christian performance tradition are conceived as objects of study.

Methodology

The basic methodology followed in this work is the performance and the ethnographic method. Since Christian theatre is conceived as an identity of the community, the above mentioned dual method is essential. Performance method is conceived not only as a method for collecting data but also as a point of interpretation. The data is interpreted both from the performances as well the audience points of view by applying this method. The ethnographic method is vividly used to study the members of the community vis-a-vis the sponsors of the tradition. Through this method, the Christian ideology and idioms are brought to light in order to understand their relative positions in a given time frame. This methodology also helps in understanding the potential of the performance tradition to adopt itself to changing times. For this reason, the 'focussed interviews' instead of structured interview,³¹ are made use along with observation as a method. Partly, **post-modern** ethnographic view point is also taken in this study by not placing the researcher above the informant but putting the informant on a parallel footing. The object of the study thus becomes a subject of confidence and so places the informant as a 'specialist' in the study. Through this alone, the polyphonic nature of the Christian performance tradition can be understood and becomes a source of identity of the community to which it belongs. Partly due to this stand point, the researcher in this thesis resorted to 'the thick description' which Geertz and other post-modern ethnologists employed to bring to focus the nuances of representation.

Sources of the Study

Major sources of the study include:

1) Various kinds of Christian performances and the behavioral patterns of the community. 2) The oral tradition including legends, myths, beliefs, rituals and folk speeches. 3) The archival and non-archival literature on the Christian community and the performance tradition.

Brief Chapterisation

This thesis consists of seven chapters,

/ Introduction:

This chapter deals with a brief introduction to the advent of Christianity and the various phases through which it has passed. A detailed survey of Literature on the art form as well the performance theories and the post-modern theoretical positions are carried out. The aims and the objectives of the thesis as well as the methodology adapted in the study is also explained in this introductory chapter.

//. Phases of Christian Performance Tradition: A Theoretical Paradigm

This chapter has two sections. The first section deals with the theoretical position as well as the conceptual frame of the study. Recent debates on expressive forms of culture and their interpretations is highlighted in this section. The second section deals with the Christian performance tradition from its inception to the present day. Broadly, three phases are identified in the Christian performance tradition, keeping in view theatre as a variable parameter.

///. The Origin and Development of CaviTTunaaTakam

This chapter deals with the evolution and the development of *CaviTTunaaTakam* as a theatrical form. The importance of *CaviTTunaaTakam* as an identity to the community which it represents is vividly explained.

IV. CaviTTunaaTakam: Text, Texture and Textuality

This chapter treats text as a centrifocal object of study to the performance. It studies how the text manifests itself in the performance and imparts together new meanings to both the performer and the audience. This textual dynamics is viewed in this chapter as the source of continuity of the art form. To illustrate this idea, the chapter is divided into three sections. Each of them separately deals with the text, the texture and the textuality, and their inter-relationships in context of the performance.

V. *Theatrical Aspects of CaviTTunaaTakam*

This chapter focusses on the issues related to theatre and the production process. The backstage events which are vital but often undermined are exclusively dealt in with in this chapter to show how these elements determine the performance **itself**. *CaviTTunaaTakam* is taken as an example for this study. The theatrical elements are broadly divided in to three segments in this chapter. They are: (a) The performance process, (b) The performance, (c) The theatrical issues.

VI. *muuvaracunaaTakam: A Christian Performance Metaphor*

In this chapter, moovarasunatakam, an important genre within the Christian theatre tradition, is conceived as the core of the tradition which represents the community and its relation to other communities. In this sense, *muuvaracunaTakam* becomes a metaphor for Christian theatre and that metaphor is rhetorically expressed through annual cyclical play productions which inturn produce a space for the community to which it **authoritatively** cling to. The idioms with ideological overtones expressed in the art form are brought to light in this chapter.

VII. *Conclusions*

The conclusions are broadly drawn based on the study on Kerala Christian performance **tradition**. it is found that the Kerala Christian performance tradition is not homogenous but a product of hybridity and hence is ambivalent in nature. The long sojourn of Kerala Christian performance tradition right from its inception to the present day speaks about the vibrant and the dynamic stature of theatre as it conveys plural meanings and **multi-ethnic** identities. In this sense, theatre functions not just as a **re-**reflection of the society but represents the society, what it thinks and how it reacts to a given socio-economic milieu.

Notes

1. Quoted in Scaria, **Zacharia**, ed., *The Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper* (Edamattom: IICS, 1994) 12-13.
 'From the **Syriac**-write up by Mar Gabriel (a persian bishop who lived in Kerala 1705 •••). 'The antiquity of the Syrian Christians and historical events relating to them'. 'Fifty two years after the birth of Messiah (i.e., in AD52), the holy Apostle Thomas arrived at Mailapore on the coast of Coromandel preaching the Gospel and founding churches there. Passing from thence to Malabar, the holy man landed on the island of Maliankarre (situated between cranganore and paroer), preached and taught and built churches in that island, having finished his works in this part and ordained two priests, returned to the land of pandies'.
2. The Seven Churches believed to be ordained by St. Thomas are (in the present names) Palayoor, Kodungalloor, Kottakkavu (Parur), Korkkumangalam, **Niranam** (**Thrikappaswaram**), Kollom/Quilon and Nilakkal (Chayal). Among this except **Kollam** and Nilakkal the others were famous Namboodiri Villages of Kerala.
3. A.M. Mundadan, *Traditions of the St. Thomas Christians*. (Bangalore: Dharmaram College, 1970) 60. Some historians say that the **RambanpaaTTu** is closely influenced by the *Acts of Thomas*. The RambanpaaTTu or which is in other way locally known as **purathanapattu** (literaly means the ancient songs) consists of the episodes which narrates the Apostles coming into Kerala, his missionary works leading to the conversions and the explicit listing of the miracles he performed in Malabar, hist organising of the churches, ordaining of the priests and the **consecration** of a bishop who was a member of Royal formily of kodungalloor till the martyrdom at Mylapore. A.F.J. **Klijn**, ed., *The Acts of Thomas* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1961) is an apocryphal work, believed to have been written around the 3rd Century A.D. in Syriac.
4. P.J. Thomas, *Malayala Sahityavum Kristiyanikalum* (Kottayam: D.C. Books, 1989) 70.
5. Susan, Visvanathan, *The Christians of Kerala*, (Madras: Oxford University Press, 1993).

6. As referred by Gouvea, Thomas cana copper plates was in the hands of Mar Yakkobu. This refers about the rights granted to Cana Thoma and his family by the then ruler. See, Mundadan, *traditions* 170-3. Tarisappally copper plates are two in number's. They were kept in Kottayam and Devalokam archives, both were given to the Christians of **Kollam** by Ayyan of Venattu (A.D. 849-?). For a translation of this copper plates (in **malayalam** *Cheppedu* which means a proof for the sanction of certain rights). see Xavier, Koodapuzha, *Bharatha Sabha Charithram* (Kottayam: Oriental Institute, 1984) 152-165. The modern interpretation of this Copper plates also explains the improved socio-economic status of Thomas Christians see Varier and Gurukkal, *Kerala Charithram*. (Kottayam: Current Books, 1991) 109-111.
7. Jacob, Kollaparambil, *The St. Thomas Christians Revolution in 1653* (Kottayam: Jyothi, 1981) 3.
8. A.M. Mundadan, 'The Unique Identity and Autonomy of the Church of St. Thomas Christians in India'. *Tanima*, Vol. I, (1993) 8.
9. According to Mundadan, What is really involved here is the understanding of the doctrine *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (out side the church there is no salvation) by the Portuguese and St. Thomas Christians respectively. 'The Portuguese come from the west where a rigid interpretation of the dictum had prevailed for a long time and had become acute in the 16th century in the context of the antiprotestant counter-reformation spirit'.
 Apart from that the session IV decree XVII (about the Doctrine of holy sacrament of Baptism) and the Session IX (on the Reformation of manners) shows the measures taken by the Portuguese in the synod of Diamper in order to maintain Christian exclusiveness. See in Scaria, Zacharia, *The Acts and Decrees of Synod of Diamper* (Edamattam): IICS, 1994.
10. By AD 16th and 17th centuries groups of Jesuits, Augustinians, Dominicans and other missionaries came to the coastal Kerala along with the famous navigators like **Gama**, Cabral etc., under the patronage of Portugal. See Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala Charithram* (Kottayam: NBS, 1969) 264-266.

11. 'Padroado', was given by Pope Alexander VIth in June 1st 1497 by *Ineffabilis* record in order to avoid the constant fights in between Spain and Portugal over the colonial and missionary expansion. According to 'Padroado', Portugal is entitled to look after the missionary enterprise in the East and Spain is to do the same in the West. India comes under the Eastern provinces, see Moraes George Mark, *A History of Christianity in India, Vol. I* (Bombay: 1964) 124; also in Xavier Koodapuzha *Thirusabha Charithram* 846.
12. The decree IV of the session IX of the synod of Diamper 1599, which prohibits the Christians from participating in the *Onam* celebration and the decree IV in Session III, condemns the heathen practices, said to be held by the Christians shows the Portuguese extreme radical interpretation of the Christianity and their contempt towards the other religions. See Scaria, Zacharia, *The Acts and Decrees*.
13. First press from Europe to India was brought to Goa in 1576 and the next one to *Vaippicota*, Kerala in 1577. The first book was printed in 1579, at *Vaippicotta* in Tamil *lingua franca* of Kerala at the time. The letters were prepared by an expert, John Gonzalvez by name, a Jesuit missionary from Spain. A copy of this printed book "Doctrina Christiana" is kept in Sorbonne University Library, Paris. See in P.J. Thomas *Malayala Sahithyam* 82.
 Images and paintings were first introduced into the Churches of Kerala by the missionaries between 16-17 centuries. Before that there was only the cross. The Roman bented arch supported by massive columns, the thin pointed arch and slim clustered columns of Gothic style, the Cuppola and other western styles of architecture were introduced in Churches of Kerala during this time. See John, F., Butler, *Christian art in India* (Madras: CLS, 1986) 24-39. The Latin Organ music of Kerala Churches is the innavation of missionaries during the Portuguese period. Before that the music (chanting of sermons) was in Syriac. For details see George, Menachery, ed., *The St. Thomas Christian Encyclopaedia of India*, Vol. II, (Trichur: 1973).
14. The Synod of Angamaly under bishop Roz, S.J., who was the first latin bishop of the Malabar Church took some practical decisions and nullified certain ones made at Diamper. The text of the most solemn Qurbana (latin) was made at this, is still

kept in the manannam monastery. Based on the recommendations of this synod, Roz, also compiled a diocesan statute book.

15. The oath of "Koonan Kurisu" held at Mattancherry can be considered as a historic, recorded, resistance made by the native christians against the westernization. *Pazhayakoottukar* old division (Roman catholics) are the people who continued with the use of chaldean structure of liturgy. Puthankoottukar - new division (Jacobites) are the people who left the chaldean structure and accepted Antiokian methods.
16. A.M. Mundadan, *Indian Christians* (Bangalore: Dharmaram, 1984) 131.
17. P.J. Thomas, *Malayala Sahityam* 10.
18. Sabeena Raphy, *CaviTTunaaTakam* (Kottayam: SPCS, 1969).
19. Chummar Choondal, *Christian Folklore* (Trichur: KFA, 1988).
20. The works are: Ulloor S. Parameshwara Iyyer *Kerala Sahitya Charithram, Vol. 4.* (Trivandrum: Kerala University, 1964).
K.M. George, ed. *Sahitya Charithram Prasthanangalilude* (Kottayam: NBS, 1973).
T.M. Chummar, *Bhasha Gadya Sahitya Charithram.* (Kottayam: NBS, 1979).
21. G. Sankarapillai, *Malayala Nataka Sahitya Charithram*; C.J. Thomas, *Uyarunna Yavanika*; K. Narayanan, *Malayala Nataka Prasthanam*; M. Bhasi, *Malayala Nataka Sarvaswam*; N.N. Pillai, *Natakadharpanam* are some examples.
22. The accounts by, Francis Day, *Land of Perumals.* (Madras: Adelphi Press, 1863) 396-97; Arnold Adrian Bake, "Charlemagne in Malabar", *Folk-lore* 74 (1963) 450-59; Yvonne Rainer, "From an Indian Journal" *Theatre Drama Review Vol. 15.* (1971) 132-39; and for same extend F.P. Richmond, ed., *Indian Theatre: Tradions of Performance.* (Honolulu: University of Hawai, 1990).
23. V.S. Andrews, *Athmakatha* (Calicut: Mascot Press, 1965); P.J. Cheriyan, *Entekalajeevitham*; Sebastian Kunju Kunju Bhagavatar, *Nataka Smaranakal.* (Trichur: Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Academy, 1986).
24. The works are: O.B. Hardison, *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages*; Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church 2 Vols.*; E.K. Chambers,

The Early Medieval stage 2 vols.; Richard Axton, *European Drama of the Early Middle ages*; Glynne Wickham, *Medieval Theatre*; A.C. Cawley, ed. *The Staging of Medieval Drama* and William Tydeman, *English Medieval Theatre*. 1400-1500.

25. Richard Schechner, ed., *By means of performance: intercultural studies of the Theatre and Ritual*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 28.
26. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Double day, 1959) 15.
27. Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*. (New York: PAJ Publication, 1982) 68-69.
28. Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. (London: Routledge, 1993) 146.
29. Richard Schechner, *Between Theatre and Anthropology*. (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1985) 35.
30. These works are, Said's *Orientalism* and Fabian's *Power on Performance*.
31. Robert K. Merton, ed., *The Focussed Interview: A Manual of Problems and Procedures*. (New York: Free Press, 1990) 54.

Chapter - 2

Phases of Christian Performance Tradition: A Theoretical Paradigm

Studies in Indian performance tradition in general and in Kerala performance tradition in particular so far carried classicist bias and tried to attribute pan-Indianness to the performances. In fact it is quite interesting to explore the variations and versions, of the performances that exist in Indian tradition and to appreciate the indigenous expressive behavioural patterns. They in fact reflect the community or regional ethos and their world view. This nativeness of the performance tradition with all its idiom and ideology leads one to search for native cultural paradigms. In the process how these natives, who do not live in isolation, but in a social context with in a cultural hegemonic niche, try to evolve an identity and represent themselves with in the complex cultural system is of due analytical importance.

However, searching for a native paradigm is not simple. In fact, the issues related to identity and representation are double fold. The community in search of their identity accept certain super-impositions in the initial phase of development. At the later stages when the community attains its identity, the way it represents itself through its expressive tradition becomes more complex. These representations, being affected by the historical forces, do not remain static but are subject to constant changes and this makes the representation more dynamic and complex.

In this chapter an attempt is made to analyse the issues related to the changing identities of a community and its representations through the concepts of idiom and ideology. After a careful analysis of the data the concept of 'hybridization of culture' and 'cultural hybridity' is suggested as a native paradigm for Christian performance tradition of Kerala.

This chapter is divided into two sections. Section one deals with the concept of idiom and ideology and the issues related to cultural hybridity as a native paradigm. The second section deals with the Kerala Christian performance tradition from a historical perspective. This section is further divided into three phases of the Christian performance tradition. They are; the Ancient, the Medieval and the Modern. The chapter is concluded with a note on the division of performance tradition as the 'core' and the 'periphery'. This division is important from the analytical perspective because it gives meanings of representation of the community which owns the art forms.

I

Idiom and Ideology

Performance tradition forms a part of the expressive behaviour of the community which includes both verbal and non-verbal genres. The material culture associated with narrative technique determines the format of the performance. Therefore the idiom and ideology as reflected in the verbal and non verbal genres of performance tradition give space for the evolving native paradigms. Hence concepts such as ideology, idiom and cultural hybridization are dealt in detail to bring out the identity and the representation of the communities' cultural ethos.

Ideology : definition, meaning and interpretation

"The term ideology has a wide range of historical meanings, all the way from the unworkably broad sense of the social determination of thought to the suspiciously narrow idea of the deployment of false ideas in the direct interests of a ruling class".¹ So before forming it into a theory, one has to trace the conceptual strands of this term through the divergent histories and possibly pick up the needful meanings, by assessing the importance according to the purpose of study.

The earlier notion of the term ideology comes in Bacon's concept of *idola*, meaning impediment to knowledge. Then its Greek equivalent *idoma* denoted the fifth century struggle between the ancients and moderns. In Marx's conception the term gained some practical aspects which became a human practice that play an active role in the functioning and transformation of society. This practical aspect is directly associated with the structure of class domination. By considering "the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas",² they put forward the most conspicuous (criticised) or (in) famous 'dominant ideology thesis'. This made people realise ideology as an expression of social power and it can be understood in terms of a sociology of knowledge, that is, ideology always conforms to the 'interests' of those from whom it comes so that what you think or say depends in part on who you are and where you are and when you are saying it.

Later, on the Marxist lines, Frankfurt school had concentrated to understand the ideological basis of all forms of social knowledge including the natural sciences.³ It's offshoot, the New Marxism argued that literary meaning was a form of ideology, that is meaning originating not in an individual mind but inter subjectively. Ideology, therefore as a socially shared meanings as determined ultimately but not immediately by their

relation to economic mode of production.

The term was further enriched and elaborated through a reflection on the language. The study of ideology became equated with the study of language in the social world. It is to study the ways in which the multifarious uses of language intersect with power, nourishing it, sustaining it, enacting it and finally legitimating the power of dominant social group or class. The ideology as legitimation thesis, which concerned the nature of power earned much from the Foucauldian view of 'power is not something confined to armies and parliaments: It is, rather, a pervasive, intangible network of force which weaves itself into our slightest gestures and most intimate utterances'.⁴ This omnipresent nature of power expanded the concept of ideology into an unlimited realm. On the other hand the meaning of ruling belief systems for ideology inescapably referred to illusion, mystification and false consciousness. The false consciousness of ideology became a much debated discussion along with the above references within the one mainstream tradition who has the central lineage from Hegel and Marx to George Lukács and some later Marxist thinkers. This tradition has been much pre occupied with ideas of true and false cognition, with ideology as illusion, distortion, and mystification whereas the other alternative tradition of thought has been less epistemological than sociological, concerned more with the function of ideas within the social life than with their reality or unreality.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century itself a broad array of terms seem to have been used in similar fashion. They are *Weltanschauung*, "collective representation", and sometimes even "culture", all to capture the idea of the total mental set-up of society. In France, Durkheim and *Anna's sociologique* school elaborated the analysis of the relation between social structure and the organisation of collective representations (religious, intellectual and otherwise) that are meant to reflect the 'ideologies' wide reaching relevance. Later, in the work of British functionalists there has been a concentration on the way in which ideology (religion and ritual) maintains 'social solidarity' (Radcliffe-Brown), provides a 'charter' (Malinowski) for the social order, or otherwise prevents social disintegration (Gluckman).⁵ The discussions of ideology in classical social science have been characterised by a pervasive dualism of idea/reality, ideology/practice, idealism/materialism. The recent trend of making a critique of the concept ideology is centered around criticising this mind/body dualism which has systematically conflated ideology and ideas, thought and meaning.

Both these senses of the term ideology with its more Marxist heritage and the other

sociological lineage has its own uses and show the change in its conceptual meaning at various stages or in other way one can divide the usage of the term, in its history of development, in two ways: (1) as a descriptive term or a rationalist view, here one speaks of 'system of thought', of 'systems of belief, of 'symbolic practices' which pertain to social action or political projects. This neutral conception never elaborates about the kinds of action and projects. This inadequate conception misses the affective, unconscious, mythical or symbolic dimensions of ideology; (2) as a critical conception of ideology here the term is linked with the process of sustaining asymmetrical relations of power - that is, to the process of maintaining domination. This conception lead one into the ideology of **conflict** and contradiction and finally bind the analysis of ideology to the question of critique.

Because of its drastic transformations through the vicissitudes of history, the task of defining the term becomes more complex. Here I would like to propose a set of definitions on the same line with Terry Eagleton in his 'Ideology: An Introduction'.⁶ According to him it is possible to roughly define ideology in six different ways. The first one which is neutral in political and epistemological spheres, encompasses the general material process of production of ideas, beliefs and values in social life. This is close to the broader meaning of the term 'culture', ideology, or culture would here denote the whole complex of signifying practices and symbolic processes in a particular society. (This sense of ideology is wider than the lexical sense of the word culture but narrower than the Anthropological definition of culture, which would encompass all the practices and institutions of a form of life). This general definition seems to be unworkably broad and suspiciously silent on the question of political conflict. So the second one, which is slightly less general takes the definition as Ideas and beliefs (whether true or false) which symbolizes the conditions and life experiences of a specific socially significant group or class. The specificity and the criterion gained by the group as a socially significant one with its own character or identity makes the concept of ideology very close with the idea of the 'world view' of that particular society, group, or class. The world views are usually pre-occupied with fundamental matters such as the meaning of death and life of a particular society. Both the above definitions point out ideology as a kind of collective symbolic self-expression and they never try to see these performative, rhetorical expressions in relational or **conflictive** terms, this initiated the need for another definition which attends to the 'promotion' and 'legitimation' of the interests of such social groups

in the face of opposing interests. In a way, the third definition of ideology becomes more political and power oriented. Here, ideology can be seen as a discursive field in which self-promoting social powers conflict and collide over questions central to the reproduction of social power as a whole. This definition may entail the assumption that ideology is a peculiarly 'action-oriented' discourse, in which contemplative cognition is generally subordinated to the furtherance of 'rational' interests and desires. This definition tends to make a negative, parochial, partisan as well as opportunistic attitude in the use of the concept. But this definition brings in the ideological strategies of varied kinds in a single system ie. it proclaims the ideological forces from both sides, that is, an oppositional or resistance force against all dominant forces. The fourth definition along with retaining this emphasis on promotion and legitimization of sectoral interests brings in the activities of a dominant social power and puts forward the 'dominant ideological thesis'. This asserts that such dominant ideologies help to 'unify' a social formation in ways convenient for its rulers; that it is not simply a matter of imposing ideas from the above but of securing the complicity of subordinated classes and groups and so on. The fifth definition evolves out of the further refinement of the earlier one. In this, ideology signifies ideas and beliefs which helps to legitimate the interests of a ruling group or class specifically by distortion and dissimulation. In this last two definitions one has to look into two missing aspects, that is, not all the ideas of a dominant group are ideological and the other is, the purposeful avoidance of the other politically oppositional discourse, which promotes and seeks to legitimate the interests of a subordinate group or class by such devices as the 'naturalising' and universalising of their interests. This gives rise to possibility of the sixth definition of ideology, which retains an emphasis on false or deceptive beliefs but regards such beliefs as arising not from the interests of a dominant class but from the material structure of the society as a whole. Eventhough the term ideology remains pejorative here, it avoids the class-genetic account.⁷ Eventhough the above six meanings purposefully neglect the question of ideology as 'lived relations' rather than empirical representations, these meanings leads one to consider ideology as a matter of 'discourse' rather than of 'language' of certain discursive effects, rather than of signification as such. It represents the points where authority has its impacts upon certain utterances and inscribes itself tacitly within them. But it is not therefore to be equated with just any form of discursive partisanship, 'interested' speech or rhetorical bias; rather, the concept of ideology aims at disclosing something of the relation between an utterance and its

material conditions of possibility, when those conditions of possibility are viewed in the light of certain power-struggles central to the reproduction (or contestation) of a whole form of social life.

Moreover the above six meanings of the term reveal lot of parallels in its conceptual formation with some of the theorists of ideology. As Raymond Geuss in his work 'The Idea of a Critical Theory' tries to define ideology through distinctions made between 'descriptive', 'pejorative' and 'positive' definitions of the term reminds most of the above meanings.⁸ J.B.Thompson; Larraín Jorge; D.J.Manning and some others who worked on the term and elaborately suggest the complex nature of its meaning and the elaborate sense of the word used at the various times of the human evolution.⁹ By realizing all the complexities behind the ideological discourses and social interests, most of the theorists and practitioners agree with a broad definition of the ideology as a body of meanings and values encoding certain interests relevant to the social power. In order to make it more specific, they say, the term to be 'unifying, action oriented, rationalising, legitimating, universalising and naturalising'.

The vastness of the term makes this particular thesis to consider the concept in a more flexible way as a discourse with discursive notions of various kinds. The above mentioned specific characteristic features of the ideology concept has taken into consideration by giving priority to its effect upon the performance phenomenon (or subject). In this study, these features apply simultaneously to the dominant ones (Western Christianity) and the oppositional ideologies (indigenous belief systems). So the present thesis considers an array of meanings for the term (also gives importance to the most popular, widely appreciated definition of ideology by J.B.Thomson). The meanings chosen out of the definitions of ideology currently in circulation:

- (a) a body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class;
- (b) meanings, signs, and values which offer a position for a subject;
- (c) forms of thought motivated by social interests;
- (d) identity thinking;
- (e) action-oriented sets of beliefs;
- (f) the indispensable medium in which individuals live out their relations to a social structure;
- (g) the process whereby social life is converted to a natural reality.

The above list of formulations are an abstraction of the compatible ones taken out

from the wide array of definitions in current circulation.¹⁰ Some of the above ones are neutral, the first one for a example. These definitions purposefully avoid the implications that they were false or chimerical. More than that most of these formulations involve epistemological questions (which are concerned with our knowledge of the world) and they lead one to consider ideology as an open issue (discourse) which is at times silent and most of the times action-oriented, (like in the above formulation: (e)). This further leads one to look at ideology as a process (conscious or unconscious) which works with an active transaction of power relations. This activity enforces the present thesis to take up the most popular and widely appreciated definition of the term by John B.Thompson. In 'Studies in the theory of ideology' he writes, "to study ideology is to study the ways in which meaning (or signification) serves to sustain relations of dominations".¹¹ This process of legitimation seems to involve at least six different strategies at the functional level. They are: A dominant power may legitimate itself by 'promoting' beliefs and values congenial to it; 'naturalizing' and 'universalizing' such beliefs so as to render them as self-evident and apparently inevitable; 'denigrating' ideas which might challenge it; 'excluding' rival forms of thought, perhaps by some unspoken but systematic logic; and 'obscuring' social reality in ways convenient to itself. Such 'mystification', as it is commonly known, frequently takes the form of **maskings** or suppressing social conflicts, from which arises the conception of ideology as an imaginary resolution of real conditions. Like in the present case study, in any actual ideological formations, all six of these strategies are likely to interact in complex ways.

But there are at least two major difficulties with this otherwise persuasive definition of ideology. The first thing is the fact that not every body of beliefs which people commonly term ideological is associated with a dominant political power. If the term ideology is confined to dominant forms of social thought, such a move would be inaccurate and needlessly confusing; so one has to think about the otherside of the term, that is the ideology of the subjugated, oppressed and the minor varieties like the radical uprisings against the dominants. This leads to the second flow of the definition which centers around the question of 'ideology as legitimation' thesis. This question concerns the nature of power and further expands the concept.

The dominant ideology in opposition to the oppressed resistance resolves through a process of acculturation more so in the sphere of religious behaviour and belief systems. The dominant power group authorises its ideology to incorporate and legitimate the

'resisting groups' ideology in order to sustain the mass base. The resisting group on the other hand also seeks a help of the dominant group as a strategy to sustain their identity by incorporating their cultural idioms. This reciprocity converges and gets manifested through several forms. The Christian performance tradition of Kerala, according to this thesis, is one such manifestation which helped both the groups in balancing their power relationships. This is inevitable for the simple reason that the ideology that is being discussed in the context is not a secular ideology of a purely political type but an ideology which deals with the worshiping modes and belief systems.

Therefore, the present thesis adopts a more flexible and broader meaning for the concept of ideology by taking its complexities in the social structure, the nuances of its power relations, and simultaneously blends the widely accepted persuasive definition of J.B.Thompson and its six functional strategies by devoiding its major two flaws. This is made possible only by considering the presence of two ideologies among the Kerala society (the Christian in particular) in the realms of religion and performance. That is, the ideology of the European subjugator (missionary) and that of the subjugated (native). In other words, among the ideological orders the first one is foreign or external and the second one is indigenous or internal.

The acceptance of the simultaneous existence of these two ideologies leads one to further questions in the case of analysing the performance tradition of Kerala (Christian). In order to make a truthful, and convincing account, one should make the reliance upon the indigenous as well as internal sources and also should cross check the reliability of the Western missionary sources, accounts and conceptions. But one should not forget the fact that, there were quite a large amount of facts and accounts about the Indian social systems which were replaced by the westerners with their often 'unified' and 'interested' ways. So the present thesis seeks to understand the idioms and ideology of the Christian performance tradition of Kerala to **demonstate**, how Christian missionaries manipulated strategically to safeguard their 'colonial desires' and to enlarge their frontiers without prompting resistance from the natives.

The conflict between the dominant ideology and the oppressed ideology resolves in begetting new forms of expressions which sustain through self correction, in other words new forms of expressions as the resolutions of the conflicts get amalgamated and settle to form a new characteristic of a given culture. This process, therefore emanates new cultural idioms which logically represent new group of people who emerge out of this

amalgamation. In the Kerala Christian performance tradition, the native Christians or in other words the early converts was the group which formed out of the **conflict** between the dominant and resistance ideologies. This group needs new cultural idioms as a package to show their identity as a group.

Idiom as a concept

The term 'idiom' plays an important role in the ideological process. 'Idiom'- is a characteristic word, an element particular and 'peculiar' (as in Oxford English Dictionary) or a speech proper to a people or place, which is the unique quality of a language (as in Oxford English Language Companion). This peculiar uniqueness of the word 'idiom' traces back to the Latin *idios* with a meaning of 'ones own', 'personal', 'private'. This further extends one to the unique quality of the idioms in a language (or in a cultural phenomena) whose sense is not predictable from the meanings and arrangements of its elements. So for a meaningful presence, the idiom should immerse itself in a system or vice versa.

Here, ideology is that system of ideas pertaining to politics and society in which idioms are embedded and by which they are encoded, that is, the system from which the idioms acquire a particularity of their meaning. In other words, one of the basic characteristic of ideology is that, it constructs idioms, which in turn bestows a position and identity by hailing or addressing on the subjects or subjectivities, who according to Althusser is the 'interpellated' human beings in an ideological process.¹² But the subjects could be also collective ones such as class or group or corporate entities. The construction of idioms make ideology always a subject centered discourse and leads the ideological analysis into a search for the identities. That is the identity of the social structure in which the ideological forces work and the identity of the constituent individual parts which as a whole construct the social structure. On the other hand the 'idioms' as identity markers of a whole system have more relationship with this individual constituents. So the concept of identity can be further broken down into three interrelated concepts-individual identity, personal identity and collective identity.¹³ Here in the present study individual identity refers and have direct relationship to one single Christian performance, with in a space and time with its own state, thought and action. The personal identity which depends upon a sense of continuity of the individual identities and as a composite form it is the performance genres or the Christian performance traditions come under this. The collective identity refers to those aspects of particular Christian performance

genres which are derived from the expressions and experiences common to a group. This is nothing other than Kerala Christianity in the present study, which produces a deep sense of identification with others as a kind of consciousness.¹⁴

These divisions and complexities in defining and merging both concepts make the present study more complex and broad. So one needs a broad but strict categorisation of the use of the term 'ideology'. This makes the present thesis divide the concept into two, in parallel with Martin Selgier's use of the concept, that is (1) fundamental ideology and (2) operative ideology.¹⁵ The first one is nothing other than the Christian religious ideology in Kerala. Here religion is a set of beliefs which is action oriented and the implementation of this 'system of ideas' that symbolize the 'collective conscience' of society requires a political action. Here Christianity is a Western political action (desire), this inseparable quality of politics and ideology, established Christianity as a fundamental ideology.

This ideology needs certain operative methods for the establishment of its symbolic representation. This operative means and methods becomes the second category of the operative ideology. Here the Christian performance traditions serve this purpose and can be considered as an example for the operative ideology. Foucault's notion of the discourse and the operation of ideology, both as a form of consciousness and as a lived material practice is worth mentioning here. The first one can be the fundamental religion and the second one is of course the operative performance tradition.

After the selection of a broad definition and strict categorisation one has to think about the analysis part of this ideological discourse. The tradition of '**hermeneutics**' reminds us that the forms of discourse (or the object of the investigations — performances, utterances, expressions, texts) which one seeks to analyse are already an interpretation, so that to undertake an analysis of discourse is to produce an interpretation of an interpretation,¹⁶ to re-interpret a pre-interpreted domain. The hermeneutic tradition reminds one that, the discourse which forms the object of investigation (the Christian performances) is the discourse of a subject (which is the Christianity in Kerala). To analyse the discourse is to investigate an object which is produced by a subject and received, read, listened to, understood or seen by other subjects (here it is the people of Kerala). Paul Ricoeur devised a widely accepted three phase procedure for the interpretation of ideology.¹⁷ These three phases which together constitute a form of 'depth hermeneutics' as per Ricoeur, is adapted for the present re-interpretation of the ideol-

ogy. The first phase - social analysis is concerned with the social historical conditions within which agents act and interact (socio-historic condition of the Kerala society and the missionary endeavour). It is essential to analyse these conditions in terms of their institutional features and in terms of their historical specificity, because one cannot study ideology without studying relations of domination and the ways in which these relations are sustained by meaningful expressions. These expressions include the religious ritualistic symbolic representations. The second phase may be described as a 'discursive analysis'. To undertake a discursive analysis is to study a sequence of expressions, (ie. the performances, language, ritual etc) not only as a socially and historically situated occurrence, but also as a linguistic construction which displays an articulated structure (ie. the Christian performance structure). This structure can be studied in various ways, with a view towards explicating the role of a discourse in the operation of ideology (or in other words these Christian performances are part of the operative category of the ideological discourse). The third phase is the (re) 'interpretation'. In interpreting a form of discourse (here the term discourse denotes the Idiom and Ideology of Kerala Christian performance tradition) one may seek to move beyond the study of discursive structure and to construct meaning which shows how discourse serves to sustain relations of domination. In a way the interpretation of ideology as a form of depth *hermeneutics* must be mediated by a discursive analysis of linguistic as well as performative constructions and a social analysis of the conditions in which the discourse is produced and received. The discursive analysis of the Christian performance genres are dealt with in the following chapters giving priority to the Geertz's method of 'thick description'.¹⁸ The interpretation of the already interpreted Christian performances leads one into a theory of 'hybridity' as propagated by the post colonial critics, especially Homi K. Bhabha by staying inside the parameters of colonial discourse.

Cultural Hybridization: postcolonial conceptions

The analysis of colonial discourse was initiated as an academic sub-discipline within literary and cultural theory by Edward Said's 'Orientalism' in 1978. This is not to suggest that colonialism has not been studied before then, but it was Said who shifted the study of colonialism among cultural critics towards its discursive operations, showing the intimate connection between the language and forms of knowledge developed for the study of cultures and the history of colonialism and imperialism. This meant that the kinds of concepts and representations used in literary texts, travel writings, memoirs and academic

studies across a range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences could be analysed as a means for understanding the diverse ideological practices of colonialism. Said argued that the enabling cultural construction of orientalism was not simply determined by the economic factors of the Western expansion into the East, and thus established a certain autonomy of the cultural sphere of orientalism. Said's work and the revelation of the construction of truth behind orientalism developed a lot number of case studies and gave rise to a colonial paradigm to analyse the representations of the other 'by the west'.

This reached into certain disturbing possibility that all western knowledge is directly or indirectly, a form of colonial discourse.¹⁹ Later Said's concept of orientalism "as a kind of western projection on to and will to govern over orient" has been much criticised by his critics because there was no alternative to the western construction of the orient in other words there was no 'orient',²⁰ because the orient is itself an orientalist concept. This flaw in Said's work caused later revisions and the most productive revisions have focussed on the question of representation, mediated with analyses of counter-histories or the effects of colonialism on colonial subjects and the forms of their subjectivity. The challenge of Said's 'orientalism' made by Homi K. Bhabha becomes relevant at this juncture.²¹

Bhabha focussed on Said's claim that orientalist knowledge was instrumental and always worked successfully when put it into practice. "By adding psycho-analysis to, Said's Foucauldian analysis",²² Bhabha called attention to the moment in which Said briefly, but in an undeveloped way, set up the possibility of 'orientalism' working at two conflictual levels, distinguished between a 'manifest' orientalism (the conscious body of scientific knowledge about the orient) and a 'latent' orientalism (an unconscious positivity of fantasmatic desire). Bhabha's outstanding contribution has been to develop the implications of this idea by emphasizing the extent to which the two levels fused and were in operation, inseparable; he has shown how colonial discourse of whatever kind operated not only as an instrumental construction of knowledge but also according to the ambivalent protocols of fantasy and desire. Ambivalence is a key word for Bhabha, which he takes from psychoanalysis where it was first developed to describe a continual fluctuation between wanting one thing and its opposite (also simultaneous attraction toward and repulsion from an object, person or action). "In making ambivalence the constitutive heart of his analysis, Bhabha has in effect performed a political reversal at a conceptual level in which the periphery — the borderline, the marginal, the unclassifiable, the doubtful - has become the equivocal, indefinite, indeterminate ambivalence

that characterises the centre".²³

Bhabha has subsequently extended this idea of a constitutive ambivalence resting at the heart of colonial discursive production, an ambivalence that its appearance in a non-European context only accentuated. He has exhibited through a series of analyses the ways in which European colonial discourse - whether it be governmental decree, district officers reports or missionary accounts - is effectively decentred from its position of power and authority.²⁴ In his "Signs taken for wonders" one can see, how Bhabha shows that this occurs when authority becomes hybridised when placed in a colonial context and finds itself layered against other cultures, very often through the exploitation by the colonised themselves of its evident equivocations and contradictions that are all too apparent in the more hostile and challenging criteria of alien surroundings. The present ideological analysis of the Christian performance tradition as a colonial/missionary discursive production becomes an ample example for the different kind of framing that western culture receives when translated into different contexts. This once again demonstrates Bhabha's thesis of colonialists oscillation or ambivalence and points towards the acculturation and layering of the cultural product and leads to the theory of cultural hybridity.

However, in the long history of cultural interaction, a very few models have been developed to analyse the heterogeneity and diversity of the cultural-interchanged identity of the social practices or society. However, comparatively little attention has been given to the mechanics of the intricate process of cultural contact, intrusion, fusion and disjunction. The early models such as diffusionism and evolutionism, (assimilation or isolation in archaeology) conceptualised such encounters of cultures as a process of the deculturation of the less powerful society and its transformation towards the norms of the west.²⁵ 'It is only recently that cultural critics have begun to develop accounts of the commerce between cultures that map and shadow the complexities of its generative and destructive processes' by giving importance to interaction or counteraction.²⁶ These recent trends or models stress separateness, and the process of acculturation, where by groups are modified through inter-cultural exchange and socialization with other groups. This most productive recent paradigms have been taken from language. 'Pidgin and creolized languages constitute powerful models because they preserve the real historical forms of cultural contact. The structure of Pidgin — crudely, the vocabulary of one language superimposed on the grammar of another — suggests a different model from that of a straight forward power relation of dominance of the colonizer over the colonized'.²⁷ This

structural device of 'the different model' in which the native idioms' quality of tacitly decomposing the authority of the dominant form is nothing other than the acculturation. The end products of this process (cultural interaction) can be regarded as 'hybrid' forms.

The word hybrid has biological and botanical origins: in Latin it meant the offspring of a tame sow and a wild boar and hence the Oxford English dictionary puts it, 'of human parents of different races, half-breed'. The dictionary continues : 'A few examples of this word occur early in the seventeenth century; but it was scarcely in use until the nineteenth'. In the nineteenth century it was used to refer to a physiological phenomenon; in the twentieth century it has been reactivated to describe a cultural one. In the nineteenth century itself the meaning of the word Hybridity had gone through various changes. Its earliest usage was connected with human fertility then the word hybrid started denoting a mongrel or mule; an animal or a plant, produced from the mixture of two species. By the mid-century, it indicated the crossing of the people of different races and at the far end of the century came its philological use, to denote 'a composite word formed of elements belonging to different languages'. In a way, one can see the extensive use of the word hybridity along with fertility in the cultural debate of the last century. But the present thesis deals with the meaning of the word from the late twentieth century cultural politics. Here the word acquired its sense and relevance from the Bakhtian use of Linguistic Hybridity.

Bakhtin uses 'hybridity' in its philological sense in order to describe something particular in his own theory. For Bakhtin, however, hybridity delineates the way in which language, even within a single sentence, can be 'double voiced'. He continues; "what is a hybridization? It is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousness, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor".²⁸ This **double-voiced**, hybridized discourse serves a purpose, whereby each voice can unmask the other. That is, for Bakhtin, hybridity describes the process of the authorial unmasking of another's speech, through a language which is 'double-accented' and double styled. On the other hand, hybridity describes the condition of languages fundamental ability to be simultaneously the same but different.²⁹

Hybridity is thus itself a hybrid concept for Bakhtin and he further makes two divisions in this hybridization process. They are: (a) organic hybridity (b) intentional hybridity.

(a) The first one, he calls unconscious 'organic hybridity' and considers this unintentional

tional, unconscious hybridization as one of the most important modes in the historical life and evolution of all languages. He says; "In organic hybridization there will be mixing and fusion or a kind of amalgamation, but in such situations the mixture remains mute and opaque, never making use of conscious contrasts and oppositions. But this unconscious ones have been at the same time profoundly productive historically: they are pregnant with potential for new world views with new 'internal forms' for perceiving the world in words" or in other words in the organic hybridity,³⁰ the mixture merges and is fused into a new language, world view or object.

(b) The second one, which gives priority to contestation uses hybridization to describe the ability of one voice to ironize and unmask the other within the same utterance. Bakhtin, however, is more concerned with this intentional hybrid phenomenon which is more political and contestatory in nature or hybridity as a division and separation. He says; "Intentional semantic hybrids are inevitably internally dialogic (as distinct from the other type more than that it is the intention of the artist that dialogizes hybridity) where two points of view are not mixed, but set against each other dialogically".³¹ 'This conflictual structure which retains a certain elemental, organic energy and open endedness'.

Bakhtin's doubled form of hybridity therefore involves an antithetical movement of coalescence and antagonism, with the unconscious set against the intentional, the organic against the divisive, the generative against the undermining. Hybridity is itself an example of hybridity, of a doubleness that both brings together, fuses, but also maintains separation. For Bakhtin himself, the crucial effect of hybridization comes with the latter, political category, the moment where, within a single discourse, one voice is able to unmask the other. This is the point where authoritative discourse is undone. Authoritative discourse according to Bakhtin must be singular and he continues, 'it is by its very nature incapable of being double-voiced. It cannot enter into hybrid construction'³²-or if it does, its single voiced authority will immediately be undermined. (This Bakhtian undoing of authority in language through hybridization always involves its concrete social dimension. It becomes the beginning point for Bhabha's theory on the cultural politics of Hybridity).

In an astute move, Homi K Bhabha has shifted this subversion of authority through hybridization to the dialogical situation of colonialism, where it describes a process that 'reveals the ambivalence at the source of traditional discourse on authority'. In Bhabha's

article, "Sign's Taken for Wonders"; hybridity becomes the moment in which the discourse of colonial authority loses its univocal grip on meaning and finds itself open to the trace of the language of the other, enabling the critic to trace the complex movements of disarming alterity in the colonial text.³³ Bhabha defines hybridity as "a problematic of colonial representation.....that reverses the colonial disavowal, so that other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its *authority*".³⁴ The hybridity of colonial discourse thus reverses the structures of domination in the colonial situation. It describes a process in which the single voice of colonial authority undermines the operation of colonial power by inscribing and disclosing the trace of the other so that it reveals itself as double-voiced and the voice of colonial authority thus hears itself speaking differently, interrogated and strategically reversed or in another way. The effect of colonial power is seen to be the 'production' of hybridization rather than the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent repression of the native traditions. Thus it "enables a form of subversion.....that turns the discursive conditions of domination into the grounds of intervention".³⁵ Bakhtin's intentional hybrid has been transformed by Bhabha into an active moment of challenge and resistance against a dominant cultural power. Bhabha then translates this moment into a 'hybrid displacing space' which develops in the interaction between the indigenous and colonial culture which has the effect, he suggests, of depriving "the imposed imperialist culture, not only of the authority that it has for so long imposed politically, often through violence, but also of its own claims to authenticity".³⁶

By including the concepts of authority and authenticity, Bhabha in the recent works, extends the notion of hybridity to include forms of counter-authority and attributes it as a 'third space' which intervenes to effect, "the hybrid moment of political change. Here the transformational value lies in the re-articulation, or translation, of elements that are neither the one (of the dominant or unitary class) nor the other (of the oppressed or of the agitators) but something else besides which contests the terms and territories of both".³⁷ At this point, hybridity begins to become the form of cultural difference itself, the jarrings of a differentiated culture whose 'hybrid counter-emergies', in Said's phrase, challenge the centred, dominant cultural norms with their unsettling perplexities generated out of their 'disjunctive, liminal space'.³⁸ In other words, hybridity becomes a third term for an extension of the cultural analysis of the post-colonial situation, where it tries to exhaust the differences between the early monstrous colonial ideological inversions of the

dominant and the blind, miscreated resistances made by the progenitors of hybridity.

The present thesis takes up the notion, an often proposed 'new cultural hybridity' in the recent post-colonial cultural analysis, as an amalgamation of Bakhtin and Bhabha. That is, while hybridity denotes a fusion, it also describes a dialectical articulation. Thus, this doubled hybridity model can be used to account for the "form of syncretism that characterise all postcolonial literatures and cultures"³⁹ (especially in the case of Kerala Christian performance tradition). At the same time, in its more radical guise of disarticulating authority, hybridity has also increasingly come to stand for the interrogative languages of minority cultures like the Christianity of Kerala. Moreover the analysis agrees with the fact that the concept of hybridity progresses and operates with the same **conflictual** structures which it propagates as a contemporary theory. In other words, it changes as it repeats, but it also repeats as it changes.

The theoretical paradigm which concludes in the new cultural theory of hybridity traverse through various theories including the discursive ideological analysis of (Kerala) cultures in its broad sense and the conflicting traditions (performance) as its ingredient. This also gives priority to the part played by the dominant force as well as the immediate resistance which propped up the conflictual structures in the society. Then along with the tradition and modernity it searches the concepts of idioms which are the markers of a community. The search for identity further leads to the continuing conflicting cultural changes at different contexts and ends up with the concept hybridity which according to Robert.C. Young "makes difference into sameness, and sameness into difference, but in a way that makes the same no longer the same, the different no longer the different. In that sense it operates according to the form of logic....**difference** and sameness in an apparently impossible simultaneity.....This double logic, which goes against the convention of rational either/or choices, but which is repeated in science in the split between the incompatible coexisting logics of classical and quantum physics, could be said to be the characteristic of twentieth century as oppositional dialectical thinking was of the nineteenth".⁴⁰ So this hybridity, with its hybridising heterogeneity, with the impossibility of essentialism will be the apt theory for the analysis of the old essentialising categories of cultural identity.

The cultural identity of the Christian community thus interwoven with ideological strands, represented the community as a complex one multi faceted and polyphonic through the ages. The performance tradition changed ever since its inception by a tech-

nique of adaption and **enculturation** by incorporating the native traditions. The western ideology which was super imposed over the community of the new converts inturn internalised by the community by their own native idioms broadly grasped from their cultural milieue, made the whole representation as a cultural hybridization. Even in the present day the process of cultural hybridization is in vogue and virtually developed the art form from the identity of the community to that of an identity of the region. This process of development can be seen only when one takes into cognition the historicity of the art **form**.

The following section therefore deals with different phases of Christian performance tradition in order to understand the dynamics of the cultural process of **the** performance tradition.

II

This section deals with three major phases based on time frame as ancient, **medieval**, modern/ contemporary. The Christian performance tradition can further be classified into the 'core' and the 'periphery' based on the position of the art forms vis-a-vis the communities' adaption to the changing times. In general the three phases represent three strands of adaption techniques such as 'neighbourhood', 'super imposition' and 'hybridization'.

Christian performance tradition of Kerala

The Kerala Christian performance tradition pre supposes the settlement of Christianity itself as a religious system followed by a distinct group of people who took up Christianity as their faith. During the early period of the advent of Christianity, the new believers in order to propagate and ensure the community's sustenance in the faith, prompted them to 'Christianize' certain ritual performances connected **with** the rites of passage.⁴¹ The early Kerala Christians performed these rituals by **paaTTu** (song) tradition which can be considered as a semi-theatrical performance. Though the audience, performer, text, and context as elements of theatre are found in these performances, other elements of theatre such as the stage setting, costume, make-up, and musical accompaniments are totally absent. Moreover the texts are composed in such a way that there is no scope for individual role. The whole group of performers sing together. In this sense, these performances are called semi-theatrical.

The early Christian community gave much importance for semi-theatrical performances during the rites of passage as to the case with other native communities belong-

ing to Hindu and other religious faiths. Of all the rites of passage, the early Christian communities considered marriage celebration as the most important component in their performance tradition. Marriage being an important event not only to the family in which it is celebrated but also to the community itself, much of the community's progress and growth depended on matrimonial relations. Therefore the Christian community made it a point to make marriage celebration an important custom to reveal their identity as a group by performing certain songs which narrated their faith, dictums, and idioms in a didactic fashion. The native custom of the celebration of marriage is strategically manipulated to incorporate the Christian ideology in their performing traditions. There are several varieties of performances in *paaTTu* tradition which take place during the marriage ceremony.⁴²

In the course of the enactment of *paaTTu* tradition, the early Christian community also resorted to dancing traditions during the celebrations. The earliest form of the dancing tradition of the natives involves circular movements while singing in gathering. *PaLLippaaTTu*, *maaRgamkaLi*, *vaTTakaLi*, were of some of those performing tradition of the early Christian community. The circular dance form reflects the organizational capability of the community on the one hand and on the other the size of the community itself. Usually when the community is small, it develops a mode of communication which is closed and akin to the community itself. The community members are capable of coding and decoding the messages send through songs or verbal expressions. No specialist as such as a leader emerges in these performances. In other words, who so ever is powerful in memory culture would act the lead role. The *maaRgamkaLi* and other round dance performances are the best examples for the band level organization of the early Christian community. The concept of super imposition does not apply in the first phase where the early Christian community was performing as band level organization. In course of time the lead singer takes the role of the specialist and places himself at the center and the performers revolve around him, with stereo typed simpler step movements, forming as a closed chain back and forth keeping the circular motion intact. This continue till the leader alienates himself from the community of performers and becomes a specialist. By virtue of his creativity, he attains the status of the Guru or *aasaan* (master) and becomes the beginner of new forms of performances. The community replaces the leader with an object such as lamp (or any icon) and the ritual space provided to the leader is replaced with the substitute object and perform the circular dances. However these dance

forms in due course become insignificant or die out or remain as negligent performances. *maaRgamkaLi*, *vaTTakaLi* are the best examples for studying this kind of process.

Table-2: Semi-Theatrical Performances

Genres	Text/Theme	Performance structure	Present status
<i>maaRgamkaLi</i>	Narrates the legnedary episodes in the life of St. Thomas and his mission-ary activities	Round dance with a strict circular formation	Mostly in the youth festival as a competitive item
<i>paricamuttukaLi</i>	Same as above in the case of Syrian Christians. But Latin Christians performs native Saintlores, especially Santiago (St. Jacob) St. Peter and St. Sebastian	Round dance with basic circular formation including clockwise and anti-clockwise direction. There are two parallel linie combination too	As a votive offering in festivals and in the propaganda processions
<i>vaTTakkaLi</i>	Old Testament stories and the descriptions of the Christian cultural practices	Round dance with the clapping performed mostly by women	Already extinct or redundant

maaRgamkaLi

maaRgamkaLi is one of the ancient semi-theatrical round dance (group dance) forms of Kerala practiced by Syrian Christians in general and Knaanaaya Christians in particular.⁴³ This round dance form, beautifully moulds religion, history, culture, customs, faith and art together into one. Traditionally *maaRgamkaLi* includes *vaTTakaLi* (group dance in circle or round dance) performed for a particular ballad called *maaRgamkaLippaaTTu* (*maaRgamkaLi* song) by men-folk. This text comprises fourteen *padams* (stanzas) which narrate the life and work of St. Thomas in Kerala. In the early days, during the rendering of ninth stanza, in which the theme dealt with the arrest of St. Thomas and his companion 'Avan' *paricamuttukaLi* (sword and shield dance) was performed.⁴⁴ But now a days *maaRgamkaLi*, being a female domain, is devoid of this portion of sword and shield dance and is often performed as a competitive event in the youth-festivals. More over the revival of this art form under the patronage of Knaanaaya Christians of Kottayam diocese during 1980s gave a fresh birth to the otherwise extinct round dance form with the semi-theatrical components.

Etymology

The etymological meaning of the term *maaRgamkaLi* itself suggests its historical antiquity and the Christian leanings. The literal translation of the word *maaRgams* is 'way' or

'path', *kaLi* means dance. In the olden days conversion to Islam and Christianity was called *maaRgamkooTuka* or joining the way. Those who embraced a new faith were called *maaRgakkar* or *maaRgavasikaL* (converts) or in other words "those who joined the new way". This term was popular till recent times. But among Christians in Kerala, the word *maaRgam* got more in depth religious sense. The *paaTTu* tradition of St. Thomas Christians equates the word *maaRgam* with the religion of Christ, the way of Christ or those who practised Christian faith.⁴⁵ In a way the early Kerala Christians who were in the way of Jesus Christ was known as St. Thomas Christians and the dance performed by them was called *maaRgamkaLi*. The song based on which this dance was performed was *maaRgamkaLippaaTTu*.

Historical back ground

It is difficult to fix the period of the origin of this dance form. There are a number of controversies regarding the authorship of the *paaTTukaL* and the legendary sources.⁴⁶ Based on the linguistic analysis scholars always argue over the exact time period of its origin.

However, the present thesis ascertains the fact that *maaRgamkaLi* is certain to have been in practice long before the advent of Portuguese in Kerala.⁴⁷ Even though "the difficulty of studying the early history of Christianity in Kerala is increased by the fact that such sources for the history of Christianity in the region down to the modern times were burned into ashes after the *synod of Diamper* in 1599. Therefore the Malabar Church has been left without authoritative documentation for the history of its ancient past. Our information concerning the early history of this Church must be derived from Syria and Greek sources/authors had no particular interest in India, and therefore, provide us with only scattered and disconnected fragments of evidence".⁴⁸ So in order to reconstruct the history of the past, one has to rely upon the references and early accounts of the Western writers. Peter Maffei's (1558) account on the popularity of songs and dances narrates the adventures of St. Thomas during the early days of Portuguese arrival. The reference made by a Jesuit priest Coria Amandar (1564) about the early Christian pilgrimage and procession to Malyankara on every November 21st, to commemorate the day of *Marthomas* arrival on the Kerala soil, with singing songs about *Marthoma*.⁴⁹ The documented evidence of the Gouvea's description about the dance form performed by a group of young men at Angamali in order to entertain Arch bishop Menezes and Gouvea's explanations regarding the salient features of the performance, like its beginning, with the performers drawing a cross sign on their forehead by singing a prayer and the following song which narrates the episodes of the life of St. Thomas directly relate this with an early form of *maaRgamkaLi*.⁵⁰ More over the decrees of Diamper (1599)

which explicitly abandons some of the heathen practices of the then Christians and the participation in the non-Christian festivities, implicitly suggests the existence of an active performance tradition.⁵¹ Apart from that the famous granite cross of the Kaduthuruthy **Valiapalli**, (which was completed in 1594 A.D) with a basement decorated with carved sculptures (at the left side, facing the church) resembling round dance forms such as *maa.Rgamka.Li* and *ParicamuttukaLi* indicates the existence of these forms in the Pre-Diamper era.

On the other hand according to some of the veteran performers of this tradition, *maaRgamka* was performed by those people who came to India with Thomas of Cana.⁵² This hypothesis could hold because the song *maaRgamkaLi* itself speaks for the existence of this art form among the people (in *maaRgam*). Especially the first stanza of the text itself indicates the immigration of the Knaanaaya Christians; their colonization under the aegis of Thomas of Cana and Bishop Joseph of Ouraha (Edessa) and their jubilant wish to hold together for **ever**. Another reason was the prominent existence of dance in various spheres of the life of the people in India. More over, the linguistic features, the structural affinities and the performance contexts of this art form clearly shows the harmonious **co-existence** of the Hindu and Christian religions in the pre-Portuguese period as in the case of Kerala church architecture of the pre-Diamper era.⁵³ This mellifluous blend of native performance idioms with the Christian/Biblical themes resulting in the creation of another dignified performance which affirms an antiquity and preserves all the varied elements of a rich cultural heritage proclaims the identity of the early Kerala Christians as 'Christian in religion, that too, apostolic in origin, oriental (Syrian) in liturgy, yet thoroughly Indian (Malayalee) in culture'.⁵⁴

Text and Theme

The theme and the song text of *maaRgamkaLi* play an important role in understanding the significance of this semi-theatrical form. The sources of the theme is based on the first, second and thirteenth acts of an apocryphal work called *Acta Thomae* written by *Burdusan of Edessa* (Ouraha) in the 3rd century. Apart from this, Jacob Velliyan puts forward 'Homilies of Mar. Jacob', which include the writings of the Syrian scholar Mar. Jacob of Serug in the 6th century as another work which might have influenced the contents, especially the seventh stanza of the present *maaRgamkaLippaaTTu*.⁵⁵

The text is based on **St.Thomas**, the great Apostle of Jesus Christ who is said to have come to India in 52 A.D. In the text of *maaRgamkaLi* there is an elaborate description of his arrival, work, relation with the local people, difficulties and problems and finally his persecution and end have been incorporated in the fourteen stanzas *padam* of the song. The

song which begins with a *vaNtanageetam* or invocation, which refers to *Marthoma* and the *Mayilvaahanam* (rider on peacock) in the beginning ends up calling up on *St.Thomas* to come, help and bless. The later portion of the theme in a comprised manner is the dream of a beautiful mansion by *ccoZan* (probably the Chola king of Mylapore), the sending of his minister, *Avan*, to bring in a master architect, the bringing in of *St.Thomas*, the delight of the king on seeing a fine drawing by the apostle, the collection of innumerable materials for building, *St.Thomas* going away on Gospel work to Kerala and then to Malacca and China, imprisoning of the holyman on his return by the irate king, the ailment and apparent death of the heir (king's brother), his soul being taken by Angels to heaven where it beholds the fair mansion prepared for *ccoZan*, the souls' miraculous return to the flesh before cremation and the re-born brother telling the king of the good tidings, the conversion of the royal family and the rapid progress of Christianity with the multitude of followers, the lancing of the saint by the *Embrans* who are the priests of the temple and in the concluding stanza the angels are hasten into the scene, they carry his holy spirit to the white throne of God and the body to *Chinna Mala*, (now called as Little Mount). The song throws light into the historical, geographical and socio-political life of the people of Kerala in those times.⁵⁶

Performance Structure and The Mode of Presentation

The stanzas of *maaRgamkaLi* is in separate pieces of dance choreography. These fourteen stanzas are sung during the performance by mixing different kinds of *kaalasam*. The *kaalasams* suggest the end of a particular stanza. Like the other round dance traditions of Hindus, the *maaRgamkaLi* also have basic steps (*cuvaTu*). There are five basic steps, they are: *Thintaka thintat tai*, *MukkaNi*, *Murukku MukkaNi*, *eeRaTivaTTam*, and *Kacca Paadam*. In order to perform the movement one has to undergo training in these basic steps. Apart from the steps there are two basic postures too, they are : *praaramba staanam* (beginning posture) and *antima staanam* (concluding posture). Moreover, the basic choreography is developed around the circle formation. The lamp in the centre is kept as the connecting point for all the dancers. They never show their back to the lamp, even at the leaping positions they keep it facing the lamp.

In the early days this round dance performance usually took place during the celebrations of marriage and Church festivals. Mostly the venue of this performance was in the courtyard of the Church or in the *paNTal* of wedding party. In the centre of the performing place the traditional lamp (*nilaviLakku*) with twelve wicks were placed on a stool or a raised level. The *aasaan* came forward to light the lamp and stood by the side of the burning lamp. After

this, each dancer comes forward, touches the flame and touches his own chest and forehead with the same hand. Then he goes down and touches the feet of the *aasaan*. The *aasaan* in turn blesses the disciple. Then they proceed the dance piece with *vaNtanageetam*, an invocatory song. The *aasaan* recites the lines and the disciples repeat the same in chorus. Then they start clapping the hands together and the different patterns of circular movements continue. Each piece of dance ends with *kaalasam* and at the end of performance *mankaLam* comes, which is usually sung by standing in folded hands around the lit lamp. The whole performance involves devotional spirit.

This *maaRgamkaLi* performance structure has religious interpretation. That is, in the performance there are only twelve performers denoting the twelve Apostles of Christ. The flame having twelve wicks also spells out the same idea. The *aasaan* is to be considered as the representative of Christ. The lamp lit in the centre is like a pivot holding the twelve together and the twelve performers dance in the circle drawing strength from Jesus, the lamp.

Lyrics and Music

It is said that the lyrics originally might have been composed in Syria and later translated into Malayalam. St. Thomas Christian's use of Syria as their early liturgical language and the present existence of a number of Syria liturgical words and the musical affinity of *maaRgamkaLippaaTTu* with the Syrian liturgical chanting strengthen the above point of view.⁵⁷ But the early Christian's affinity and adaptability of the local culture and customs argue for the early composition of the text in the native language. More over the songs were written in Dravidian metrical scheme. As Jacob Velliyan opines, the music of *maaRgamkaLi* "is basically in Dravidian tunes with a touch of syria chants. The initial and concluding invocations for divine help also suggest its close resemblance to vedic chants".⁵⁸

Dress and Ornaments

The dress used for the *maaRgamkaLi* is very simple. In olden days the men had only two white pieces of clothes on their body. (1) *muNTu* is a long piece of white cloth tied around the waist. They tie it in such a way that inspite of vigorous and fast movements it remains as if it is a stitched costume. (2) *tooRttu* is a long white towel tried to their head.

Historical phases and Transformations

The disparity between the present condition of this form and the early days leads one to assume three important phases in the history of *maaRgamkaLi*. The first phase was the pre-Diamper one in which this semi-theatrical form was performed by the St. Thomas Christians

during special occasions. That time the sword and shield dance was a part of it. Later synod of **Diamper** curbed and suppressed this native form. During the late 17th century, due to the efforts of a Knaanaaya priest Itti Thomman Kathanar, the textual part of this form got certain upliftment and care. The *maaRgamkaLippaaTTu* might have been edited and refashioned into the present fourteen stanza structure during this time. However, till the fag end of the 19th century the art form was not very much in practice eventhough it did exist here and there. But at the end of the 19th and the beginning of 20th as the veteran *aasaans* assert, the form got popularity. Some of the structural changes took place. Masters such as Kalarikal Unni *aasaan*, Indumoottil Kocheppu *aasaan*, Indumoottil Kutto *aasaan* were some of them who were responsible for this change and upheaval. By this time *puttan* Puraikkal Uthuppu Lukose compiled and published *maaRgamkaLippaaTTukal* in 1910.⁵⁹ In this second phase the Knaanaaya Christian community acquired this form as their own tradition and heritage. Then again it had a set-back and during the 1950's to 1970's when it was on the verge of becoming extinct. But in the late 70's once again the Knaanaaya Christians of Kottayam diocese took the initiative to revive and popularise this form. This third phase resulted in the form acquiring a place in the competitive section of the youth festival and in the cultural festivals as a mark of Thoma Christian identity.

During these phases the form has gone through certain major transformations. Some of them are : The shift of performance context from the marriage rituals to the competitive venues of the youth festivals, where the dance is performed on the stage by the women clad in traditional Christian costume, around a lit *nilaviLakku* for a stipulated time, the number of performers being twelve. The additions like the red waist belt and the use of sleeveless banyans added to the costume of male performers and the inclusion of *vanccippaTTu* music into the format of *maaRgamkaLippaaTTu* and the removal of *aasaan* from the centre are some of the major changes that occurred due to socio-political reasons. Thus, the present status shows a transformation and continuity.

The other two genres of this semi-theatrical performances *ParicamuttukaLi* and *vaT-TakaLi* were a part of *maaRgamkaLi* in the early days. They also share similar kind of historical background and structural pattern so they are treated here in a comprise manner giving priority to the present condition.

paricamuttukaLi

The meaning of *paricamuttukaLi* can be derived by analysing the word itself, which is the combination of three words: *Paricaa* = shield, *muttu (ka)* = knock, cling (here, clinging

of the shield), **kaLi** = play (dance). This is one among the ancient folk dances of Kerala, which does not belong to any particular community. The ancient Christian community happened to possess and continue this semi-theatrical form purely due to aesthetic and sociological reasons. This round dance from which is martial in nature, is performed by skillful manipulations of sword and shield by the dancers. The sword and shield are made of either wood or metal. During the performance, by keeping to the tune of song and rhythmic movements in different patterns the dancers strike the sword and shield against each other. The dancers sing the lines together and a pair of **jaalraa (ilattaaLam)** is used by the **aasaan/leader** as an accompaniment to rhythm.

Among the Christians of Kerala, **ParicamuttukaLi** is found in varied forms and styles in different communities and denominations with striking similarities and peculiarities. The following table shows a comparative account of these characteristics.

Table - 3:

Communi- ty	Text and Themes	Structural speciality of the performance	Function
Syrian Christians	episodes in the life of St. Thomas (9th stanza in maaRgamkaLi)	Strictly circular formation, costumes similar to maaR gamkaLi	Part of marriage and church festivals
Latin Christians	Saint Lores, songs about St. Peter, St.Antony (St. Jacob) Mother Mary.	Circular with clockwise and anti-clockwise movements and Two parallel line choreography, bright (red) coloured shirts in the costumes	During pilgrimage and church festivals as an offering (neercca)
Jacobite (orthodox) Christians	Biblical narratives and stories pertaining to their churches	Strictly circular with more leaps and jumps, keeping the basic circle, accompaniments are not used, use of nilaviLakku at the centre, upper body is bare.	During the feasts at the particular churches of the community.

In order to perform this form one should undergo training in the foot steps and in the use of swords and shield. There are no written texts in print, so the performers memorize the lines during the training session. Only men perform this and about 30 to 40 people can simultaneously participate in this group dance form. Now a days, this is prevalent among the

Latin community of the coastal belt of Kerala and that too the fisher folk among the Kerala Christians. They often perform it as a part of their offering to *Santiyago PunnyavaLaan* (St.Jocab) of Mundamveli Church (Fort Kochin). Because of its powerful presence during the processions, it has been manipulated now a days by the political organizations for their propaganda.

vaTTakkaLi

The literal meaning of the term reveals it as a round dance which is common among the Kerala folk dance traditions. This group dance by women in connection with the marriage celebration of the early *St.Thomas* Christians is not performed now-a-days. This might have been acquired by the early Christians from the indigenous dance forms of the other communities. It seems to be difficult to explain the salient features of this performance from the available sources. The songs like *mankalyam vaTTakkaLi*, *eTTuttira vaTTakkaLi*, which describes the various programmes and process of the early Christian marriage tradition and their presence as part of the marriage festival suggests *vaTTakkaLi*s popularity and function in those days. The existence of songs like *PooRva Ouseppinte vaTTakkaLi* *Yakkobinte vaTTakkaLi* and *Moosayude vaTTakkaLi* reveals the use of Old Testament narratives for the performances.

From the foregone discussion, it can be surmised that the band level organization of the early Christian communities became almost redundant. The Christian community itself has developed into a stratified community due to several internal and external factors. The internal factors are (a) demographic (b) migration and immigration (c) occupational change (d) matrimonial alliance system etc. The external factors are (a) the advent of Europeans with the imposition of Western ideology (b) development of Church as an intermediary body of the dominant and resisting forces etc. Thus these factors as historical forces resulted in complex relationships of the community and their expressive forms. The simpler semi-theatrical round dance types by and large gave way to the complex theatrical representations such as *CaviTTunaaTakam* and *muuvaracunaaTakam* etc. This mark the second phase the Christian performance tradition.

As mentioned above, the gradual transition in the Christian performance tradition from semi-theatrical to theatrical can be observed with the introduction of performing art traditions such as (*CaviTTunaaTakam*, *muuvaracunaaTakam* and *paaska*). In this theatrical form all the characteristics of theatre such as text, context, structure, and the technical theatrical ingredients (costume, make-up etc.) are found. The departure from the first phase to the second is marked by the presence of *aasaan* as a director or (sometimes) the author. The first

phase is traditional, devoid of the *aasaan* as distinct player in making the performance. Once the alienation took place with regard to the position of *aasaan* as distinct from the other members of the group/community, the scope for his individual creativity got enlarged. This has given a sound pre-text to the Church to intervene as patron for these new born theatrical forms. Interestingly, the *aasaan* training a group for performances is quite native to the soil and hence when the Christian community adapted this form as a mode of communication, they found no difficulty in adjusting with the new patrons. Incidentally, the patron being the Church which owes its existence to the European advent, the Church imposed its themes over the native community. The *kaarlmaan naaTakam* and the *muuvaracunaaTakam* are some of the best examples for this. With the emergence of the church as a representative of colonial power, the western Christian ideology was thrust up on the native Christian community. For example, the concept of the cross of *Marthoma Nazaranikal* was changed to the cross representing the martyrdom of Jesus Christ. Earlier highly decorated cross without the figure of the crucifix was worshipped. The symbols associated with that cross was peacock or dove, symbolically representing the apostle St. Thomas. The order of worship to the cross also changed with the emergence of Church as an organized institution for the proclamation of Gospel. The cross with the crucified Christ advocated the very western conception of Christianity. Conversion became the crucial motto to the Church as well as the cross. The martyred Christ according to this tradition is a sacrificial god to make pact between God and his creation. The fall of Adam resulting in the distention of its progeny was nullified and brought together by the crucifixion of Christ at calvary. This interpretation was taken by all the Churches including Roman catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant of the west and was transplanted even to the medieval Church in India. This ideological departure had direct bearing on the themes that were taken for the theatrical performances of the second phase. The martyr themes gave birth to the saint lores in the history of Christianity in general and the Kerala Christian performance tradition in particular. The idea of Martyrdom and the saintlore become a major tool in the hands of Christendom to attract the perishing souls with the message of Love of Christ. This back ground started the whole conversion policy of the Medieval Church. This policy is strategically adapted by incorporating it into the performance tradition of the natives by the Church. Though the themes remained Western, the narrative structure followed the dictums of the native theatrical tradition. However in the narration the *aasaans* introduced not only the Christian ideology but also its idioms by juxtaposing them with the native ideology and belief systems. Quite often than not these

narratives resorted to sarcasm and fun on the pagan religious ideologies.⁶⁰ For this reason certain characters are depicted in the native costumes for this reason. The process of departing idiom and ideology in the play productions of *CaviTTunaaTakam* and *muuvaracunaaTakam* are exclusively dealt in the forth coming chapters.⁶¹

paaskaa

This theatrical ritualistic art, popularly known as *paaskaa* ('Pasque'), which was conducted inside the Churches only on 'Good Friday' is considered as a liturgical drama of Kerala Christians.⁶² This now extinct theatre form was very much popular and was performed in a few selected (Latin) Churches,⁶³ till the early decades of this century.

The theme of the *paaskaa* is passion : sufferings and crucifixion of Lord Jesus Christ which made these plays known as "passion plays". The episodes performed in the Kerala Churches include; the judgement of crucifixion by Pontius Pilate (the Roman Governor); the terrible sufferings of Jesus, his carrying the heavy cross inspite of the body being bruised all over; his painful episodes on the way to Golgotha; his crucifixion and the final internment in the tomb. This theme was divided into 14 stations or scenes.⁶⁴

This play was performed at the early dawn on Good Friday inside the Church, at the altar. The play is performed in profound silence with a highly devotional character. At the beginning of each scene the priest gives a short touching narration and at the close of which the faithful kneels in adoration. The scenes were enacted by means of huge statues of human size, movable with the aid of strings along with the minor characters (soldiers etc) represented by actual men. These scenes were enacted for a few minutes mostly in tableaux freezes. At the end of these life-like, intense scenes, on lookers often burst into tears or sometimes they swoon. This devotional ritualistic performances which gave priority to crucifixion and inturn the crucified figurine of Lord Jesus instilled life into the life like idols inside the Church. Due to prevalence among the Latin Christians and the Churches of coastal Cochin with its medieval liturgical spirit, *paaskaa* has been considered as a part of the second phase in this study.

Table - 4: Theatrical Performances

genre	Text/Theme	Performance Structure	Allied Tradition		Present status
			Native	Western	
CaviTTu naaTakam	Mainly Christian historical, religious, and biblical stories	Dance-dramas [<i>ganannrutta-natakam</i>] with the 'presentational style' of theatre production	Various south Indian performance traditions	Mysteries and Miracles including the 'autos' of Portugal and Spain	Perform in the organised cultural festivals either for tourism promotion or as a representative of Latin 'Christian heritage'. Rarely produced as part of its reconstruction/renovation restoration projects.
muuvaracuna naaTakam	Narrative deals with the journey of the three kings (magi) in search of infant Jesus and their encounter with king Herod in his palace.	Dance-drama-which uses fixed and floating stage for the production. Also uses procession as a means for the progress of production	Native theatre genres of Tamil speaking region and Nadagama of Sri Lanka	Magi Plays	Performed once in a year at St. Antony's church-attikkooTu (Palakkadu) as a ritual offering.
paaskaa	Narrative deal with the episodes of suffering and crucifixion of Jesus Christ.	Ritual performance performed on Good Friday, inside the Church using marionette as major characters and human beings as minor characters with a back ground narration	Ritualistic way of the cross	Passion plays of the west or Liturgical drama	Already defunct.

As long as the Church was a powerful instrument in upholding the community of new believers, the *aasaans* with their play productions worked for the solidarity of the community. Once the motto of the Church changed from conversion to that of the ritualization of the order of worship, the community is forced to stratify itself resulting in forming groups with varied interests, with in the Church. The internal politicization with in the Church in due course neglected the patronage of the *aasaans* and their art forms. The *aasaans*, not getting complete support from the Church had to face financial crisis. In order to save their art form this situation, they had to seek the patronage of governmental, non-governmental agencies and rich households. This marks the third phase of the performance tradition.

The third phase witnessed the emergence of theatre forms with the advent of the British. The concept of theatre space had undergone a change from semi-nomadic to sedentary where in proscenium theatres were built for the play productions. From 19th century onwards such changes can be observed. The specific location of the space where in theatrical space is built up alienated it from the Church. The Church vicinity neither was the main space for theatre production is no longer necessary be the place of production in the contemporary period. This spacial differentiation marginalised the Church from the performing troupes. The troupes on the other hand by adopting itself to the new spacial environment resorted to new techniques of play production resulting in not only the change of the themes but also the pattern of the production itself. This adoptability gave scope for the entry of new patrons into the play production. The new patrons who are totally different from the Church had their own interests in promoting this art forms. Thus, the process of commercialization begins even at the basic levels of 'theatrical' productions. The Christian theatre forms such as *CaviTTunaaTakam* and *muuvaracunaaTakam* have also undergone a change due to the impact of commercialization. As antique productions they continue to survive to show that their theatrical tradition is deep rooted in history and therefore in a way sacred to them. Partly due to this reason these antique forms attained a 'ritual status' and thereby continue to be in performance.

Another development which had taken place in the third phase is that the plays produced are not necessarily being prompted by a sponsor but conducted as part of 'competition'. Usually the entries are called for from different groups to perform in an event as part of competition. The best performance is rewarded at the end of the competition. Thus the commercialization of the Christian drama tradition transformed not only the techniques of play production but also the themes of the plays. New themes based on the biblical

subjects are designed and produced in these competition to get applause from not only the Christian community but from others also. In the process, the secular themes **were** interwoven with biblical subjects and were produced as social drama. Several troupes are involved in the socialization of Christian theatre. The following table will show an example of the performances of this phase.

Modern phase

Third phase

The third phase or the modern phase of Kerala Christian performance tradition shows the existence of the early theatrical performances with a transformation and continuity, and also, the evolution and, the development of the 'Christian theatre' productions. In this phase, one can observe the broad nature of the concept of Christian performance tradition. Here, the concept spreads its horizons by developing itself hand in hand with the rise and the growth of Malayalam drama stage or the Kerala stage. One can also see the important part played by the 'Christian theatre' (or themes) at various junctures of the century old 'theatre' history of the Malayalam drama stage.⁶⁵

The literary history of the Malayalam theatre comprises a host of plays/texts with Christian themes. But, this portion of the thesis particularly concentrates on the Christian theatre productions of the Kerala stage. This is broadly divided into two categories: (1) professional stage (2) Amateur stage.

Table - 5: Theatre's

Malayalam Christian		Text/Theme	Performance Structure	Allied Tradition
Drama	Stage			
Professional stage	A. Pre-independence. 1900-1950	Biblical themes, mainly the New Testament	'Sangeetha natakams' giving priority to actors singing and the super numerical characters	Tamil and Malayalam Sangeetha natakams and Sankaranatakams.
	B. Post-independence 1950-Onwards	Christian religious and biblical narratives. Most of them from Old Testament elevating the Christian moral life.	Dialogue dramas (prose) with lot of spectacular scenic presentations.	Professional Indian Stage.
Amateur Stage	A. Individual productions (1950-onwards)	Exclusively single stories from Bible	Dialogue dramas (prose) with lot of spectacular scenic presentations	Kerala Amateur Stage
	B. Drama Competitions (1980-onwards)	Individual episodes from Bible	Use of mixed styles of production within stipulated time. The chorus and the ending Tableau are important	Competition Dramas.

Professional stage

This most popular and powerful category in the Indian theatre history evolved during the British era. Apart from the major north Indian cities it also had its impact on the South India. It developed an individual identity with the concept of a permanent performance space with the proscenium arch and the curtains (or a stage with specific boundaries which demarcates the performers and the audience) along with the spectacular performances. In other words it developed the concept of "the theatre". Tamil *Sangeetha naaTakams*, which toured the Kerala soil from the fag end of nineteenth century till 1950s with a repertoire of plays, their own theatre sheds (temporarily built performance space), with the paid professional performers and ticket charges for each evening shows, can be considered an early example of the professional stage. By imitating this early *Sangeetha naaTakams* and later on producing a mixed breed of 'freak creations' called *Sankara naaTakams*, the Malayalam drama stage developed this professional stage category which is the most popular and powerful strand among the present Malayalam drama stages. The Christian theatre, with its peculiar nature and character, played important role at different phases of the Malayalam professional stage. For a better understanding, this category is further divided into two phases:

- (a) Pre-independence (1900-1947) and
- (b) Post-independence (1947 onwards)

(a) The pre-independence phase of Christian professional stage boasts of number of personalities whose contributions became the milestones in the history and the development of Malayalam drama stage in its formative period. Most prominent among them are: V.S.Andrews, P.J.Churian, P.J.Joseph, Sebastin Kunju Kunju Bhagavatar, Augustine Joseph, P.J.Abraham etc. In other words, the members of the *Narakkal Puthanangady* family (Cochin) and their whole hearted effort of putting up Bible dramas throughout Kerala during the early fifties strengthened the growth of the Christian theatre. It was P.J.Churian, a prominent member of that family, along——— with others and V.S.Andrews who formed the Royal cinema and the Dramatic Company (the first professional theatre company of Kerala) in 1928. Later, the differences of opinion among the leading people in the company gave birth to others like; *Narakkal Sanmarga Vilasam Sangeetha natana sabha* (1934), and *Sanmargaposhini Sangeetha Natana Sabha* (1935) (or later *Sanmargavilasam Natana Sabha Narakal*, P.J.Abraham and company). Apart from the above, there were certain other groups who also produced the biblical dramas at different localities and theatres during this phase.⁶⁶

The Royal cinema and dramatic company produced their first play *Parudeesa Nashtam*

(based on the Paradise Lost episode in old testament) under the 'tutelege' of V.S.Andrews.⁶⁷ Later, the production of "Messiha Charithram" (Life of Christ part I and II) by *Sanmargavilasam* during 1934 popularized the biblical themes, and opened up new vistas in the Professional Malayalam stage and immortalized this particular genre. This particular play, which portrays the various episodes from the birth of Jesus Christ till his resurrection enthralled one generation and popularized its author/tutor V.S.Andrews and actors like P.J.Chierian, P.J.Joseph, P.R.John, and Augustine Joseph, etc. It was this particular play mainly produced by four major troupes at various times, which for more than twenty five years dominated this phase and put a death knell to the infiltration of the Tamil *Sangeetha naaTaka* troupes into Kerala. The other popular biblical play productions of this phase were: *Vedaviharam* I and II (Old Testament), *Yogheendhran* or *Snapaka yohannan* (John the Baptist) Febiyola (St.Sebastin), *Manasthapa mandapam* (Conversion of Mary Magdalene), St.Xavier. These play productions were strongly influenced by the structural, the theatrical, and the spectacular qualities of the then popular *Sangeetha naaTakam* of various Tamil touring troupes which often hired one place and maintained a temporary shed (theatre space) for a particular period and performance the plays from their repertoire for the paid audience. But the early Malayalam professional troupes with its native ways of expressions and the themes of moral bent surpassed its allied Tamil competitors. These productions gave undue priority to music and songs. The on-stage singing of the actors and the individual mastery of the accompanists (harmonium and the percussions) were the essential commodities of those productions. The moral motto as proclaimed by the *Sanmargavilasam* troupe with their explicit dictum-come, see and retreat, and the popularity of the New Testament themes with the ever green stage presence of the character of Jesus Christ further enriched and developed this genre into the post-independence phase.

(b) During the post-independence phase, the nature and the fundamentals of theatre production of the professional Christian theatre got a different shape. Along with the rise of prose dramas and farces, the history of Malayalam drama stage acquired a different momentum. Individual ownership of the troupe, itinerary nature of producing plays during the 'season' and the rise of 'fine art halls' (permanently built auditorium with *aprocenium* stage and fixed chairs, rented for a single day performance) made drastic changes in the nature and the function of the theatre in the Kerala theatre scene. The malayalam dramatic literature too underwent transformations. It imbibed various new literary trends from the west and east. By giving more priority to the dialogue centered dramas, the authors started breaking

away from the linearity and the epic nature of the narrative. Instead, they presented characters living in the contemporary social reality and attention is given to their psychological interactions. Moreover, during this phase, the troupes became 'theatres' which, unlike in the initial phase, started functioning as an itinerant one with a single play for a single season with performances at various parts of the country. These individually crafted plays of this phase were either popular entertainments or propagandist pronouncements of the political or ideological groups. Most of these were a post 1970's phenomenon. Christian theatre also played an important role in making the theatre activity of this phase alive. A considerable number of groups and plays with Christian themes and their peculiar nature of functioning established a genre called the *Bible natakams* or *Bible drama scopes* and in turn the performing group became the *Bible Natakavcdi* (biblical drama troupe). This is very much unique to the **Malayalam** drama stage.

The *Bible Nataka Vedhi* or the Christian theatre of the post-independence phase has an eventful history with constant ups and downs with regard to its popularity among the audience and its impact on the cultural scene of Kerala. The play production of '*Kristhu-vinte aaramthirumurivu*', (based on *Nikos Kazantzakis* Last Temptation of Jesus Christ) by Suryakanthi theatres, Allapuzha in 1986 caused much uproar and agitations for and against the ban proclaimed on it by the Govt. of Kerala. The allegedly immoral way of the portrayal of Jesus Christ through the dramatic idiom became a deplorable and debatable issue in the cultural scene of Kerala. This, in turn, directed the attention of the people towards the professional Biblical drama stage of Kerala. On the other hand, Kerala catholic Bishop council took special interest and intervened into this peculiar drama scene by constituting a council and a professional drama competition for the Biblical dramas produced in every year.⁶⁸ All together, this re-vitalized and activated the Christian theatre movement in Kerala. So, one can observe two periods within this phase - one before 1986 and the other after 1986. During the first period i.e., before 1986, the professional bible drama stage showed its various stages of development. Initially, most of these dramas were an individual activity here and there as part of the Church festivals and were produced by the clubs or communities with either contribution from the local people or the patronage of the business households. These play productions were very much influenced by the early *Sangeetha naaTakam* troupes and they favoured the story of the 'life of Christ'. Along with the development of dialogue oriented prose plays in the Kerala theatre, the Biblical dramas too acquired this quality and gained its popularity. Moreover, biblical themes were also included in various forms of theatre presen-

tations like sound *natakams*.⁶⁹ Certain existing practising groups and clubs started including these themes into their repertoire.⁷⁰ The success of this plays encouraged more number of practicing troupes to take up Biblical dramas and later, by the end of 60s, theatres like *Assist (Quilon)*, and *Alleppy (Alapuzha)* came up with Biblical plays every year. By the mid 70s, clubs or youth centers associated with churches organized their own troupes and become professional Biblical drama troupes. *Carmel youth center of Holy Cross Church, Ernakulam*, became *Carmel theatres*, and stated producing Biblical dramas. The efforts of certain individuals like Joseph Cherian, Saithan Joseph, Kuyilan, Kottayam Shankunni, Cochin Babu which concentrate in producing only biblical dramas are worth mentioning. The Biblical dramas of this period gave priority to the element of stage spectacle by special effects with lights and set-pieces. Most of them concentrated on the Old Testament episodes with the portrayal of larger than life characters. The sharp, ascending lengthy dialogues, the intermittent laughs, secularized comic figures for entertainments and the songs and group dance sequences were specialities of the Biblical dramas of this period. Even though the characteristic nature of the professional Biblical dramas remained the same, the post- 1980 period shows various kinds of transformations in the genre. These include the rise and the growth of the professional 'theatres' which only performed biblical dramas. The indirect intervention of the Church and a thrust for moralistic ways of representing Biblical as well as secular characters and themes occupy major concern in these plays. The metaphorical inclusion of contemporary events into the otherwise Biblically contextualize plays, the increase in the popularity and the number of productions per year, and the necessary portrayal of Christ as a human god or the son of God are the qualities which imparted this an individual identity to professional biblical drama stage.

At this juncture, it is necessary to mention a number of individuals who worked as authors, directors, actors, song writers and producers to build up this particular genre. The prominent among them are: Joseph Karingada, Fr.Faustin, A.K.Puthussery, Kuyilan Francis, Nelson (as authors) Teddy Loppus, Saithan Joseph, Jessy Kuttikkad, (as directors) T.F.Jose, Joseph chacko, Kavanad Chandran, Joseph chaplin, etc. A detailed list of plays and troupes given in the the appendix enable one to understand the broad and the wide impact made by this genre on the professional stage of Kerala.

All together, the professional Christian drama stage with its peculiar identity evolved out of the hybridized nature of the generic quality of its predecessors (ie. the theatrical performances); and the individual crafting for a single play production by the western proscenium

theatres (ie. its contemporary) stands apart as a single large entity in the history of **Malayalam** drama stage. Moreover, this Biblical '*natakavedi*' can always boast about its distinct idioms which include; (a) its functioning under the direct control of certain individuals who are a part and parcel of the play production.⁷¹ (b) The indirect control enforced by the Church and laity over the selection of the themes and language used in the **plays**⁷² and (c) the importance given to the spectacular nature in production while giving priority to the dramatization of dreams, miracles, and song and dance sequences.⁷³ With all these, particular theatres needed very large amount of money as well as a large number of people working at various disciplines (ie. as on stage and off stage hands) to put up a single production.

Amateur Drama Stage

Malayalam amateur drama stage had a humble beginning with the performances put up by different organizations, like the clubs associated with different libraries and reading rooms or with the community institutions like Churches, colleges, schools etc, and the youth wings of the political parties. These individual productions with the patronage of a single donor or a community for a particular event, exclusively associated with the community and also with the honorary performers were the earliest productions of the amateur theatre movement of Kerala. An attempt to pinpoint the exact date or the period of evolution of this genre of will be futile. Moreover, the existing Kerala theatre historians have made only passing remarks on this otherwise popular genre till now. But definitely these individual amateur productions which aimed solely at the entertainment part both for the performers and the audience of the events or celebrations were present from the **pre-independence** phase of Malayalam drama stage⁷⁴ More than that, most of the actors in professional troupes had their beginning from these amateur theatre productions and their professional actors acquired training through these productions. Later, these productions with a stipulated duration and a specified number of characters were subjected to the competitions events. This **post-1970s** phenomenon enforced a momentum into this genre and a number of local associations and clubs started enthusiastically participating in these competitions. This, in turn, enhanced its popularity and improved the quality of the productions.

Similar to the professional Biblical dramas (or productions) of the post-independence phase, the amateur biblical drama stage also have a parallel history with the amateur Malayalam drama stage. This can be further divided into two, they are:

(a) individual productions (b) drama competitions.

(a) **Individual productions**

The associations or the clubs related to the Church and its cultural activities played an important part in producing the early individual amateur biblical dramas as part of various festivals related to the Church and the organization. In fact, these amateur play productions and their success paved the way for the evolution and growth of the professional biblical troupes.⁷⁵ Apart from this, one can see enormous number of individual amateur productions associated with various Churches of Kerala. It is this large number of productions along with the rise of Amateur drama competition in Kerala which gave an impetus to the Churches and its allied bodies to initiate the drama competitions. This is the second category.

(b) **Drama competition**

This category of amateur biblical stage started from the 1980s. Initially, individual Church's or its organizations were involved in conducting this kind of competitions by inviting various groups or Churches to take part in the competition and offering trophies or cash prizes. By the mid 80s, the popularity gained by these competitions and the rise of the bible *Kalostsavams* (Bible festivals) made certain church bodies like Kerala catholic bishop council and its pastoral orientation center to take up this event and the body started organizing the competitions on a large scale.⁷⁶ This competitions codified certain rules and regulations regarding the adaptations of the performances and in the presentations of the biblical themes. Rules were specified for the nature of the language used in the productions as well as for the duration and authenticity (biblical allegiance) of the plot and the competitors had to strictly have only a stipulated number of (eight to ten) performers for every production. Altogether, these laws positively 'purified' and enriched this genre of theatre. The groups started performing certain biblical episodes with its biblical (texts) authenticity and vigour, unlike the early individual productions which tend to produce certain biblical stories and often club the biblical with apocryphal or religious incidents into the plots. These plays were often crowded with sub-plots and 'comic-tracks'. Anyway, this amateur biblical play productions resembled, reflected and were influenced by the professional biblical stage. It also procured a Christian faith and spirit rooted in the Kerala Christian cultural idioms. Thus, this popular play productions of the modern phase of Christian performance tradition became an excellent example to show light to the identity of the Kerala Christians. Here the concept identity is not born out of the romantic thought that the Ethnic identity of the Christians of Kerala is primordial and unchanging and is to be identified in its purest form in the most distant history of them; but in standing up to the challenge of the colonial

mode of hegemonic discourses, which makes Kerala Christianity destined for dependence or subordination (either by the East Syrians or by the Westerners). The present thesis holds an in between position of culturally hybridized, amalgamated nature of the Kerala Christianity. In this way, the thesis considers the mutually beneficial cultural interactions in the establishment of Kerala Christianity and also tries to reveal the unique **ethenic** idioms of Christianity which proclaims the unity of faith not only with one voice but with as many voices possible.

Thus the above three phases in general deal with the Christian performance tradition right from its inception to the present. Throughout this period, the community tried to project its identity as a group as well as in relation to the neighbourhood groups in a given **socio-cultural** context. This made the community rigid in certain art forms and flexible in others in order to express their identity on the one hand and, on the other, to communicate their identity as a strategy of representation. Where ever there is a ritual component overtly imbibed, such art forms became rigid and the attitude of the community towards such art forms remained fixed. These art forms can be classified as the 'core art forms'. *muuvaracunaaTakam* can be taken as the best example of this. Where ever there is a feasibility of adaptation of neighbourhood performance traditions, the community strategically manipulated them into their art forms for not only representing their ideology but also for enlarging their tentacles to grip the new converts into its hold if possible. Such art forms can be classified as 'the periphery art forms'. *CaviTTunaaTakam* can be taken as an illustration for this peripheral category.

muuvaracunaaTakam, as already stated, exemplifies the 'core' content of the Christian performance tradition. To consider an art form as the '**core**', it should contain a ritual obligation between the three components ie. the performer, the audience, and the performance text. All these three major components are ritually interwoven to make the art form a **religious** event imparting the sectarian ideology through the performance as a ritual practice and social obligation. The following diagram illustrates the schematic relationships that exist between the different units of performance as core category in the Christian performance tradition of Kerala.

In figure 1, the major components such as the performers and the audience are related to each other through the performance text. In other words, the text is performed by the performers to a group of audience. However, this interaction takes place in a religious event as a ritual practice to fulfill a social obligation in order to decode the ideology on which

the performance structural fabric of the communities revolves. Hence, in the below figure, the other components such as: ritual practice, religious event, social obligation and religious ideology are shown at the outer circle. They are all mutually related in a cause and effect sequence. In such a situation, the performers invariably have hereditary right to perform the given roles. As a customary obligation, they perform annually in a given ritual/festival context. The audience also participate in the performance as a social obligation and behave as internal audience. It means that the audience are well aware of the performance text. They attribute sacredness to the performance and often change their roles as devotees and audience. This change of roles gives them absolute freedom to intervene during the performance to go even onto the stage and fulfill their vows by way of offerings to the characters of the play. At several stages of a play, it is very difficult to distinguish between the performers and the audience as the proximity between the two gets closer and closer. So, the interaction between the audience and the performers and also their relative position can be taken as some its major characteristics to categorize this art form as the core.

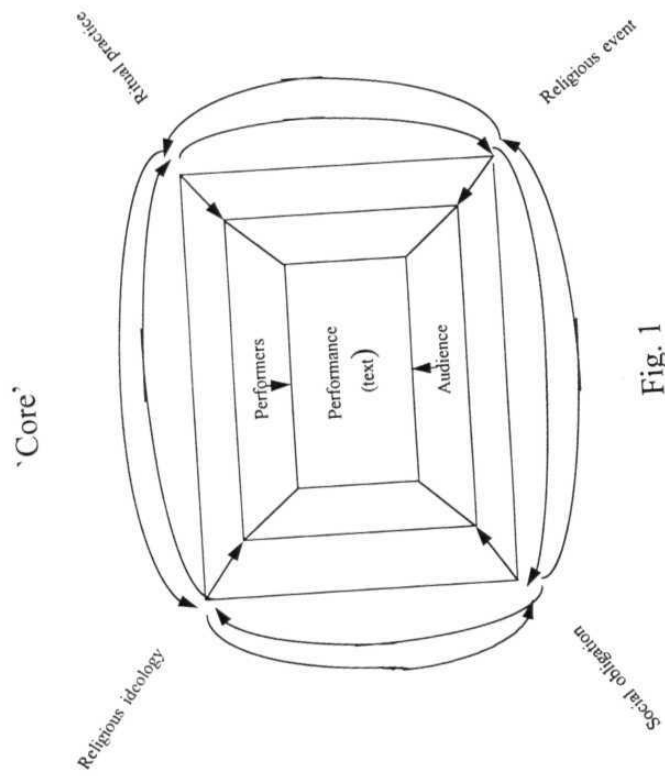


Fig. 1

2. An other characteristic feature of the core performance is the space. The space here means not only the context but also the physical space in which the event takes place. Usually, during the Christmas season or such festive occasions, the performance takes place. Therefore, the performance indicates a religious event and becomes a religious event itself. In other words, the performance is a manifestation of religious event wherein the community as a whole participate in the event as a ritual practice. This unique feature shatters the temporal boundaries and quite often than not the devotees/audience ascent to a spiritual plain and act in that ritual possession. This affinity to the ritual and to the religious event beyond the boundaries of space and time makes the community express their collective consciousness through a ritual behaviour. In the process even the physical distinction of space is grossly violated between the audience and the performers.

3. Another character of the core performance is its social obligation. The community views the performance as a social obligation and takes part as a whole to express their religiosity, performers as hereditary right holders audience as devotees (as internal audience) pay their respects to the performance text and fulfil their votive by way of sharing the resources meant for realizing the grave religious event. In the process, the religious ideology which is imbibed in the text and reflected in the ritual practices during the performance makes the community as an identifiable entity in a larger cultural milieu. Therefore the interaction between each component of the performance structure and the nature of interaction determines the core quality of the performance as illustrated above.

CaviTTunaaTakam as mentioned already can be taken as a suitable example of the 'periphery' performances. By and large, the 'periphery' performances lack the ritual component and hence need not be performed in a particular religious event. They are not either performed as ritual practices or as social obligation. Nevertheless, they too impart religious ideology not just to the community where it is performed but to the neighbourhood communities (in a given cultural milieu) as well. Hence, the idiom and the ideology in the periphery performances represent the indices of the community in relation to the neighbourhood communities. The neighbourhood communities identify any community through its 'periphery' performances. In other words, the 'periphery' performances can be treated as the messengers of a particular community. As machinery tools, the peripheral performances propagate the religious ideology to the new converts as well as to the neighbourhood communities.

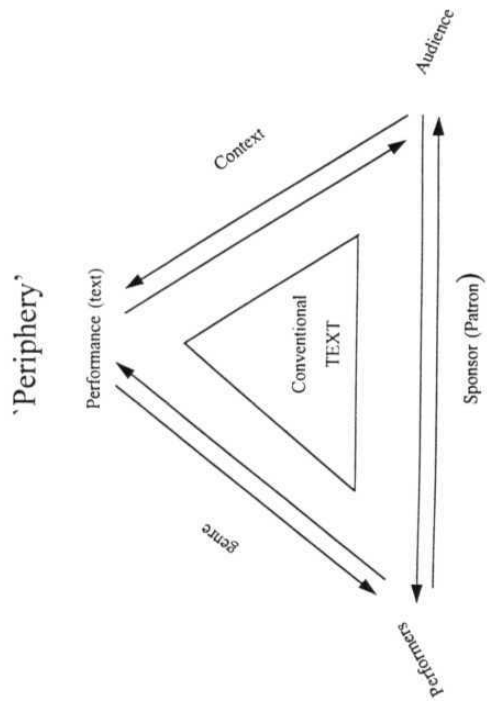


Fig. 2

The periphery performances are also structured around the major three components i.e. the performer, the audience and the performance (text). However, the schematic relationships that exist within the 'periphery' performances are totally different from that of the 'core' performance. The above figure 2 shows the relationships between these components.

The performers, the audience, and the performance (text) are related to each other like the vertices of a triangle as shown above. However, the relationship between any two of the above three components is two fold. The performers are not directly related to the audience but through their performance (text). The performance takes place; or in other words, the relationship between the audience and the performers is possible only with the help of a middleman (either as the sponsorer or the patron). In other words, the sponsorer or the patron plays a major role in making the performance event possible in a given context through a given genre.

As shown in the above figure the relationship between the performers and the performance (text) is in the form of a genre and the relationship is twofold. Genre here means the conventions and the inventions which make it an isolable cultural entity. Conventions represent familiar shared images and meanings which assert an on going continuum of values between the performer and the audience. They are known to the performers and the audience before hand. Inventions, on the other hand, are the elements uniquely imagined by the performer and they confront the audience with a new perception and meaning, which is realized afresh with every performance. In other words, the 'genre' consists of recognizable conventions which forms tradition. The performer may modify or alter some of the conventions by way of inventions within a genre. The generic nature changes whenever there is a change in the relationship between the three components over a period of time due to social, political, economic or technological factors.

Similarly, the relationship between the performance (text) and the audience is two fold. Context is the determining factor between the two. Context here means not only the space and the time of the event, but also the presentation of the text in a given cultural milieu. In other words any, change in time, space or text would lead to subsequent changes in the composition of the audience as well as in the nature of the performance. Often, it is the context which decides the text for a given audience. Therefore, the performer modifies or alters the conventional text in a given context to satisfy his audience.

The relationship between the artists and the audience is also twofold, and is decided by and large by the middleman (or the sponsorer or the patron). In other words, the performer

do not directly get into contact with the audience unless their performance is sponsored or patronized by the middle man. In a larger sense, the middle man dictates the genre and the context, and hence the performance. Whenever there is a change in either of the units such as the middle man, the genre or the context; there will be a change in the relationship between the performers, the performance (text) and the audience.

The 'periphery' performances can be identified by certain features. Firstly, the performers do not have any ritual compulsion or right to perform. Therefore, they do not have hereditary possession over the art form. Though, in certain cases, the family affinity to certain character roles is seen, it need not necessarily be the attitude of the communities or their preference to ascribe such roles as a family possession. Secondly, the audience are 'external audience'; that is to say the audience do not take part as devotees in the performance nor do they intervene by coming onto the stage during the performance for fulfilling their vows. Thirdly, a clearly demarked space between the audience and the performers can be seen during the performance and hence the audience remain audience and the performers remain performers throughout the performance without interchanging their roles. Moreover, a proscenium kind of elevated space for performance is observable in the 'periphery' performances. Fourthly, since there is a lack of social obligation and ritual components, the performances, by and large depend on the dictums of the sponsorers or the patrons. The patron decides the genre and the context and make the performance feasible for certain audience. The ideology imparted through the performance is, by and large, the ideology of the patrons who project it as the ideology of the community. That means the dominant ideology evolved because of the backing of the patrons who invariably impose it over the community. In that sense, the peripheral performances not only represent but also channelize the ideology of the community by the cautious efforts of the patrons.

Therefore, the frequency of occurrence and the placement of the performances with stipulated durations change according to the whims and the fancies of the patrons. In other words, the external factors (the sponsorer, the genre and the context) dominate the 'periphery' performances whereas the internal factors such as the performers, the audience and the performance (text) decide the 'core' performances. In a way, one can demarcate these two types of performance genres in the performance tradition of any community. But one should be familiar with the various phases of socio-cultural history and the religio-ritualistic (behavioral) patterns of the particular community, which possess a particular tradition.

In short, the advent and the history of Christianity and the Christian performance tradi-

tion go Is it "hand in hand"? Both can be divided into three main phases. The first phase is Apostolic and East Syrian migration which started during the **Pre-Renaissance** period. This period, by and large, can be reconstructed based on the legends, the place names and the oral traditions. In this phase, the natives having accepted the new faith made provision for incorporating it into their performance traditions. The 'semi-theatrical' performances of the ancient phase can be taken as an example. The native elements dominated for the simple reason that the new faith (the Christianity) in this phase did not come as an imposition of the colonial agent but as a neighbourhood faith.

The second phase ranges from 15th to 18th centuries. The Portuguese, as an agent of the Papal state, made inroads into the Kerala territories and brought the Roman Catholicism as a system of faith of Christianity. Roman Catholicism being a European tradition tried to superimpose the western idioms into the already existing **St.Thomas** Christian ideology. From the beginning itself, the Portuguese noted that the native Christians were different from them in rites, customs and hierarchical allegiance. 'In their zeal for souls, they wished they could bring the Indian Church into complete uniformity with the western Church. Besides, they were of the opinion that the removal of all the differences and a perfect union would better serve their temporal interests as well'.⁷⁷ So, in order to legitimize and impose their idioms, the Portuguese missionaries arranged the synod of **Diamper** (1599) and the Synod of Angamaly (1603) under the disguise of purifying the faith and customs of native Christians'. This domination of the western idiom in the Christian performance tradition of this phase can vividly be seen in the 'theatrical' performances of the medieval phase.

The third phase begins from 19th century where the protestant groups seriously involved in the evangelisation process, on the one hand, enhanced the 'schisms' inside the already intermixed Kerala Christianity and, on the other hand, expanded the spread of the Christian religion. Moreover, the further hybridization process in the **socio-cultural** spheres made the Kerala Christian identity heterogeneous. In other words, the different Christian sects of Kerala had many things in common but different focal points. The Christian performance tradition of this phase, which includes the still existing but transformed ones of the early phase and the newly christened ones like the 'theatres' of modern phase show the character of the continuity of hybridization, which is the self-conscious identity of the modern society because of its heterogeneity, cultural interchange and diversity.

All together the study of the idioms of Christian identity and the ideological discourses underlying in the formation and transformation of the 'performances' further leads one to

the two major divisions like: the 'core' and the 'periphery' in the Christian performance tradition. This unique character with its nuances is dealt in the following chapters by elaborating the genres such as *CaviTTunaaTakam* and *muuvaracunaaTakam*.

Notes

1. Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991) 221.
2. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, ed. C.J. Arthur (London: International Press, 1974) 64.
3. The Key Frankfurt School text in this regard is obviously Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* of 1944. Their work can be regarded as a reassessment of Hegelianism and the metaphysics of dialectical thought. By posing the question, how has the dialectic deviated into fascism? then ended up with the statement of 'Enlightenment is totalitarian'. See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1982).
4. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Allen Lane, 1977). Most of his other works also proclaims this idea of 'power'.
5. The statement reflects the major concern of the functionalist thought which suggests that the constituent parts of society or social institutions function together in mutual dependence as an integrated whole.
6. For a set of definitions see Eagleton, *Ideology*, 28-30.
7. The best example for this definition is Marx's theory of commodity fetishism. Marx employed this term in *Capital*, and had adapted it from its original meaning in which fetishism was used to describe the artefacts of African 'native' religions: an 'inanimate object worshipped by primitive peoples for its supposed. inherent magical powers or as being inhabited by a Spirit'.
8. Raymond Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
9. For Concise studies of the concept ideology, See John B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984); D.J. Manning, ed. *The Form of Ideology*, (London: 1980). More extended dismissals are provided by Jorge Larraín in his two books: *The Concept of Ideology* (London: Hutchinson, 1979); and *Marxism and Ideology* (London: Macmillan, 1983).

10. For more details see Eagleton, *Ideology*, 2.
11. John B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984) 4.
12. Althusser's account of ideology falls into two parts (according to Hirst). The first deals with the general notion of ideological state apparatuses and the second explores the nature and *modus operandi* of ideology. The quoted reference comes as the third thesis in the second part of Althusser's conception, i.e., through a process of interpellation the subject recognises itself as a subject. Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971) 121-73. See also Paul Hirst, *On Law and Ideology* (London: Macmillan, 1979) 59-60.
13. The terms for these concepts always vary. The present ones are from Eliot Orings paper. For definitions see Eliot Oring, "The Arts, Artifacts and Artifices of Identity", *Journal of American Folklore* 107 (1994): 212.
14. The term 'Collective Identity' is taken with its folkloristic concern and relevance. See Oring, *Journal of America Folklore* (1994) 213.
15. Martin Selgier developed an approach which is premised upon a distinction between two conceptions of ideology. The first one (fundamental) is the 'restrictive conception' which confines 'ideology' to specific political belief systems. The other one (operative) is 'inclusive' which applies the term to all political belief systems, irrespective of whether the beliefs guide action oriented towards preserving, destroying or rebuilding the social order. Martin Selgier, *Ideology and Politics* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976).
16. Thompson, *Studies in Ideology* 133.
17. An extensive account on these three phases see Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, trans. and ed. John B. Thompson (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981), and for a thematic exposition of Ricoeur's philosophy John B. Thompson, *Critical Hermeneutics: A study in the thought of Paul Ricoeur and Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981) and also Thompson, *Studies in Ideology*, 173-204.

18. For the method of 'thick description' see Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973). The initial chapters introduce this method and an excellent application of this can be seen in the article on Balinese cock fight.
19. Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of classical civilization. Vol.1. "The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1975-1985"*, (London: Free Association Books, 1987). This recent work holds out the much more disturbing possibility of considering all western knowledge as a form of colonial discourse.
20. Said, *Orientalism* 95.
21. As an example see Bhabha's works which includes: Homi.K.Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside Delhi, May 1817", *Critical Inquiry* 12:1 (1985): 144-65, "The commitment to Theory", *New Formations* 5 (1988):523, "The Post Colonial critic", *Arena* 96 (1991): 47-63, and Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990).
22. As referred by Robert C.Young, *Colonial Desire : Hybridity in Theory, culture and Race*, (London : Routledge, 1995) 161.
23. R.C. Young, *Colonial Desire* 161.
24. The best examples are: Homi.K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man : The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse", *October* 28 (1984) 125-33., "Signs Taken for Wonders", *Critical Inquiry* 12 :1 (1985) 144-65.
25. Significant historical work has been done on the exchange of commodities, of diseases, of healing systems and of religions. Commodities: See Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Health and Disease: Alfred W.Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Religion: Jean and Hohn Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution* (Chicago ; University of Chicago Press, 1991).
26. For example, the important works are: Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*; Bhabha, *Cultures in Conflict*; Fabian, *Time and the Work of Anthropology*; Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*; Reuter, *Race and Culture Contacts*; Spivak, *In Other Worlds* and *The Post-colonial*.

27. Among recent discussions on the same line, See in particular, Fabian, *Language and Colonial Power* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1986).
28. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination : Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin : University of Texas Press, 1974) 358.
29. This insight can be identified with the 'Romantic Irony' concept central to the contemporary work of Derrida and de Man, who point to it as a general characteristic of language, an undecidable oscillation in which it becomes impossible to tell which is the primary meaning. Bakhtin's irony, however, is more dramatic: he uses hybridization to describe the ability of one voice, to ironize and unmask the other with in the same utterance.
30. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* 360.
31. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* 360-61.
32. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* 344.
33. See Bhabha, *Critical Inquiry* 12;1 (1985) 154.
34. Bhabha, *Critical Inquiry* 12;1 (1985) 156.
35. Bhabha, *Critical Inquiry* 12;1 (1985) 154.
36. Bhabha, "The Post Colonial Critic", *Arena* 96 (1991) 57-58.
37. Bhabha, "The commitment to Theory", *New Formations* 5 (1988) 13.
38. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993) 406.
39. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989) 33-37.
40. R.C. Young, *Colonial Desire* 26-27.
41. The concept is used according to the term employed by Van Gennep. He noted that many rituals follow the same conceptual pattern as the initiation rites. This includes three separate ritual stages, that of separation, that of transition or liminality and that of reincorporation. See Van Gennep, *Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

42. Pattu tradition of the early Syrian Christian marriage can be broadly divided in to three sections: (1) songs which preceeds the ritual includes: *Marthomman Pattu*, *Mayilanchi Pattu*, *Antham Charthupattu*, *Aynippattu*; (2) Songs after the ritual includes: *Nalloru Orsaleem*, *Pandal Pattu*, *Vazhu Pattu*, *Ponnannidheedum*, (3) songs after the marriage day includes; *Ennappattu*, *Kulippattu*, *Atachuthurapttu*, for details see P.J. Thomas, *Malayala Sahityavum Kristiyanikalum* (Kottayam: D.C Books, 1989) Chap. 3.
43. Before the coming of Portuguese there were two traditions among the St. Thomas Christians of Kerala.
 - (1) The Apostolic tradition of St. Thomas Christians: This includes the early native converts of St. Thomas after his arrival at Malyankara near cranganore in Kerala. These were called *Vatakkumbhaagam* or Northists because their settlement was in the north of the city. (2) Colonial Tradition of Thomas Cana: In the year 345 A.D. Thomas of Cana a merchant from Jerusalem come with 72 families, a few priests and a bishop. They settled down in the Southern part of Cranganore and were called southists or Thekkumbhaagam. This Knaanaaya Syrian Christians up holds *maargamkali*
44. Interview with Chummar Choondal dated 3rd January 1993.
45. The term *maarga*, a derivation of the Pali word *magga*, has always been used among St. Thomas Christians. See A. Thazhath, *Juridical Sources of the Syro-malabar Church* (Kottayam: OIRSI, Publication, 1987) 8. The Syriac equivalent of Maarga is *Urha* and it means 'a way', 'road', 'Journey', or a customs, manner of life or 'religion, the service of God'.
46. Chummar Choondal compiles the different view points regarding the origin. "According to P.J. Thomas the exact authorship is attributed to Itti Thomman Kathanar, a priest of Kallyssery diocese in *Kottayam*, ••, Thomas *makkil* is of the opinion that Anjilimuttill. Itti Thamman Kathanar, a 17th Century, Knaanaaya priest re-fashioned this form' and so on •••. See Chummar Choondal, *Christian Folk Songs* (Trissur: Kelralla Folklore Academy, 1981) 49.
47. For a similar view see P.J. Thomas, *malayala sahityam* 66.

48. K.J. John, ed., *Christian Heritage of Kerala* (Cochin: L.M. Pylee Foundation, 1981) 1.
49. See P.J. Thomas, *Malayala Sahityam*, 66-67.
50. Gouvea, *Jornada*, 87.
51. For example decree IV of Session IX which Prohibits Christian participation in **Onam** celebration and decree XVII of Session IV, for details of the decrees see. Scaria Zacharia, ed., *The Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper* (Edamattam: IICS, 1994).
52. Interview with Chummar Choondal dated 3rd January, 1993.
53. Andrew Athapilly in a research article on *Pre-Portuguese Kerala Church Art* writes, "The early Christians only saw their religion as a perfection of Hindu religion. Hence they did not hesitate to place *Kali* on the side of *our lady* and **Hanuman** on the side of angles! Even keeping *Ganapathi's* statue in Church was nothing against their practice of Christian religion. Hindu on the other considered Christian religion as a part of their own religion" •••. In K.J. John, ed., *Christian Heritage*, 80-81.
54. This is an extension of the most famous dictum by Placid, J. Podipara. (The greatest among the Kerala Church Historians).
55. Jacob Vellian, *Thanimayude Madhugeethi* (Kottayam: Hadusa, 1995) 45.
56. For a brief analysis of the socio-political life of people based on this theme see Thomas Makkil, "MaaRgamKaLi", *Thiru Hrdaya masika*, December 1953.
57. The present day song has many Syriac liturgical words like *sleeha* (cross), *maalakha* (angel), **mahoosa** (city), *maamodeesa* (baptism), **maaran** (Lord), **misha** (jesus) etc...
58. Vellian, *Madhugeethi*, 79.
59. P.U. Lukose, *Keralathile Suriyani Kristhiyanikalude Purathanappattukal* (Kottayam: Catholic Mission Press, 1910).
60. For example the Brahmin Character of **muuvaraccu naaTakam**. See below page.

61. See Chapters 3 to 6 of the thesis.
62. Paska is also popular in Tamilnadu. The paska at Edaikkattoor (near Madurai) was begun in 1877 and since thirty years there is a paska at Pallipatty (near **Selam**). These paskas are performed out side the church and after the Easter, this is the difference which they have with the Kerala ones.
63. According to some elders' of Cochin, the play was performed at the Churches of Vypeen, Venduruthy, Ernakulam (**Naduvilepally**) and North parur of Central Kerala.
64. It is notable that in all the Catholic churches of Kerala, the paintings or engravings of the 14 scenes of the Passion is fixed on walls at stated intervals, beginning from the right side of the Altar and ending at the left. On Fridays of Lent, the priest and people perform the “**way of cross**”, a ritual performance which is much like the passion play. The group walk from station to station, kneeling before each painting, praying and singing.
65. The play production of 'Janova' by Pallithottil Srampikkal Samuel is the best example for the earliest stages of malayalam drama stage.
Ebrayakutty (1892) by Kandathil Varughese Mappila gave birth to the use of prose and the biblical themes in the malayalam theatre; Mariyamma natakam (1903) by Kocheppan Tharakan made the themes into the social condition and used the tone of Dialects for the Dialogues.
66. For details, see V.S. Andrews, **Athmakatha** (Calicut: Mascot Press, 1965).
67. During these days the term director was unknown and like the *aasan* of theatrical performances the author/teacher who imparts training for the performance was called 'Tutor'.
68. See appendix for the rules and regulations for this competition.
69. Sound natakams are like the Radio plays. In this the actors never come on to the stage, instead they sit in a closed place and render their respective dialogues through the **micro-phones**. St. James Natana Kalasamithi's **Doorthaputhran** (Prodigalson) 1952, at Payippattu Church is an example.

70. The early examples are: Kalaprakash Quilon, **Kalanilayam**, Kerala dramatic club and Prakash **Kalakendram** of Changanassery.
71. Kuyilan, saithan, Mary Thomas and Teddy Loppus are the people behind the function of respective 'theatres' like Cochin Natakavedi, Alleppy Theatres, **Visuabharathi** and Assissi. These individuals simultaneously worked in various responsibilities like authors, actors, directors and producers.
72. For the Church's **Impremathoor** (1935), see, V.S. Andrews, **Athmakatha** (Calicut: mascot Press, 1965) 28. Kerala Catholic Bishop's Council laws and restrictions are explicit in their notices. See appendix.
73. Some examples are: In 1932-33, P.J. Cherian and his group produced the Heaven and the Hell with the help of gas lights in their 'Paradiselost'. In the early 70's Teddy Loppus and Assissi made a hanging garden on the stage. In the 'Arthaban' play kuyilan's Cochin natakavedi produced the make believe of an under water dream sequence.
74. The annual play productions by sree Chithirathirunal, Library, Trivandrum from 1919 onwards can be considered as an example for the Amateur drama activity in Trivandrum.
75. Some of the examples are the O.K. Club associated with the infant Jesus Church of **Ernakulam** started putting up individual biblical play production during the late **1950's** and slowly started functioning as a professional body. Royal (O.K.) theatre performed bible dramas like Kaiyappas. Later people who worked with these theatres started new ones. Similar is the case with the Assissi Arts and Sports club which is associated with **Thillery (Kollam) Capuchin** Church, became Assissi theatres and the Carmel youth center of Holy family Church (Ernakulam) became Carmel theatres.
76. See appendix for the list of prize winning plays in the state level bible drama competition.
77. Zacharia, *Acts and Decrees*, 15.

Chapter-3

The Origin and Development of CaviTTunaaTakam

CaviTTunaaTakam figures prominently in the medieval phase of Kerala Christian performance tradition. The themes in *CaviTTunaaTakam* are mostly imbibed from the west but are indigenised to communicate the essence of the native Christian identity. To understand the essence of native idioms within the Christian tradition, *CaviTTunaaTakam* will be of much help. Even today this medieval art form continue to exist as a popular performance among the Kerala Christians. However the meanings conveyed through this art form changed considerably keeping in pace with temporality. It is interesting to note that though *CaviTTunaaTakam* owe its origin to the western world, it nativised itself through a process of symbiosis. The combination of the elite, the folk and the popular elements of culture can easily be discern in this art form. Therefore it is imperative to study the origin and various stages of development of this art form.

The origin

There are three schools of thought on the issue related to the origin of texts of *CaviTTunaaTakam*. They are:

1. The dramas evolved from the **native** inhabitant's multi-ethnic aesthetic **pre-occupations**.
2. It might have come from **tamil** region.
3. Portuguese missionaries might have caused the origin.

Native version

Sabeena Raphy, K.L. Bernard, T.M. Chummar are some of the scholars who suggested the idea of native origin. According to this version *CaviTTunaaTakam* plays were performed to entertain the Arch bishop Menezes just before the synod of Diamper (1599).¹ The early Christians of Cochin practised this theatrical arts.² The early Christian authors of Cochin - Kodungallore namely *cimmattambi aNNaavi* and *veetanaayakam Pillai* were said to be the composers of *CaviTTunaaTakam*.³ This school of thought based their argument on the occurrence of the performances and their historical relativity with the great event of synod of Diamper.

Tamil version:

Tamil literary scholars were the foremost to argue for tamil version of the origin based on the text found in written form as well as in the performance form. According

to this version the *CaviTTunaaTakam* is found mostly in the tamil speaking regions of Kerala and the Tamilnadu portion adjacent to it. The most famous *sankakaaviyas* like *cilappatikaaram*, *patiRRuppattu* were composed in *Madevarpattanam tiruvañcikkulam-kodungallore* which was the capital of then Kerala. Similarly, *koTuñtamiZ* was also used for the early compositions. The *koTuñtamiZ* and *centamiz* were found as the language of the commoners. Even the missionaries used tamil script for printing Christian literature to be used in the churches during the early period. Even the theatrical form of *CaviTTunaaTakam* had certain conventions similar to *teerukkuuttu*. Based on these evidences the tamil literary scholars argued the tamil origin.

Portuguese missionary version

Of all the three versions, this is popular. Several scholars argued in favour of portuguese origin based on the performance as a whole. The themes, the narrative fashion, and the musical compositions etc., are closely connected to the western imagery. The characterization also reflect the western European theatrical overtones. Incidentally this art form is much popular among the latin Christians of Kerala, whose domicile is the coastal belt. Even now this artform is prevalent in Gothuruthi, Mathilakam, Thiruthipuram, Pallippuram, Koonamavu, Malipuram, Narakkal, Chathanadu, Mulavukadu, Val-larpadam, Pizhala, Vaduthala, Panambukadu, Fort-Cochin, Mattancheri, Soudi, Kumbalamghi, Chellanam. These are latin Christian dominated places belonging to 'seven hundred' or *eZunuuRRikaar*. (One among the four castes in latin converts, this people were converted from the soil-slaves, *iiZavas*, *pulaiyas* and *paRaiyas*).⁴ The 'seven hundreds' were the descendants of the military group among latinities who possessed the real tradition of *CaviTTunaaTakam*, and the lineages of these families testify this fact.

The three schools of thought on origin of *CaviTTunaaTakam* infact do not contradict but are related to each other. There may not be an isolated origin but the three versions merge when their parameters such as occurrence of the performance, language, form of the performance and the performance itself is taken together and analysed. The then natives who used tamil as their language adopted the performance tradition of the west and made possible the *CaviTTunaaTakam* as a distinct form of theatrical art. In course of time the use of Tamil in the texts diminished and was replaced by Malayalam. However the native idioms (Both Tamil and Malayalam) are tactically textured in the play production subscribing to the western Christian ideology especially in the latin Christian domain. This as a missionary enterprise aimed at reaching out the pagans. In due

course this art form has become an identity symbol to the latin **christian** community. The latin Christian community itself has gone through several stages of development to get an independent identity. In this process it has used *CaviTTunaaTakam* as one of the expressive tradition to speak what the community world view is. In other words the esoteric view of the community with respect to the ideology to which it clings and it expresses through idioms which are distinct from the others through the art form of *CaviTTunaaTakam*. Several historical and cultural factors are responsible in shaping this art form to represent, through the ages their communities' distinct character.

This thesis argues that the *CaviTTunaaTakam* originated from the rituals acted out, that is, Christian religious rituals, out of which gradually evolved certain myths, and these myths became epic narratives. The epic narratives are obviously European-latinised narratives of 10th to 16th century. During the latinisation or westernization of the church the Portuguese established their themes through the rituals or ritual dramas and it got certain definite shape or characteristics after the Synod of Diamper. This is later became known as *CaviTTunaaTakam*. During the formative period this form adopted theatrical conventions of the west and the native soil. Thus *CaviTTunaaTakam* becomes the earliest example of an **intercultural/multicultural** theatre. In other words the explicit multi-cultural nature of this artform makes one to think this as an ancestor to all **neo-colonial** interactions in the field of theatre.

Cultural Milieu and Development of *CaviTTunaaTakam*

CaviTTunaaTakam passed through various stages, and acquired from as well as shared so many elements with other cultural phenomenon in the process of its development. The present stage of *CaviTTunaaTakam* shows a mixture of various styles of dramatic conventions of east and west. The major trends in the history of Kerala theatre can be observed in the development of *CaviTTunaaTakam*.

The present day *CaviTTunaaTakam* blends two historical strands of Kerala theatre history, that is, the Tamil *sankiitanaaTakam* tradition of the **pre-independence** era and the technically advanced 'professional **stage**' of itinerary groups in the post-independence period. This blending can be clearly discerned by taking a present performance as a case study. The *viirakkumaaran* play performed on 16th march 1996 at kurumbathuruthi (Cochin) shows an amalgamation of the acting style of Tamil *sankiitanaaTakas* of pre-independence era and the technical elements taken from the 'professional stage' of the post independence phase. The characteristic features of acting style (Tamil sangeetha

naaTakams) such as the tableaux freezes and intermittent loud laugh were overtly incorporated in the performance. The technical elements such as perspective sceneries, pointed **side-wings** and the special effect spot lights were harmoniously blended in the performance. Apart from this blending the performance of *viirakkumaaran* still keeps up the verbal language rendering pattern and *cuvaTus* (foot steps) of early *CaviTTunaaTakam* tradition.

In order to probe in detail of the development of this art form one has to look into the cultural milieu that the art form has gone through the ages. It is not only the cultural influences that this form imbibed through different stages of its historical periods but also the ideological overtones which it incorporated within the genre as conceptual schemes. Hence, the cultural milieu and development of *CaviTTunaaTakam* can be divided into three components i.e., (A) cultural influences (B) historical forces (C) ideological strands. (A) Cultural influences

CaviTTunaaTakam is a pure musical play, it is a Christian counter part of Kathakali and reminds one of the operas popular in the west".⁵ This quotation shows the **multi** cultural nature of *CaviTTunaaTakam*. *CaviTTunaaTakam* was formed, as we have seen, by blending the elements from the native theatrical traditions with medieval European theatre conventions giving priority to the Christian themes. Two levels of cultural influences can be noted (1) native influence (2) European influence. In the former, martial art background of the Kerala **christians** comes in the fore front. It is the martial background or *kaLari* culture of Kerala christians which paved the way to its popularity and acceptability of these dramas which has *viira rasaa* as its life. One of the earliest and most popular drama *kaarlmaan naaTakam* has ferocious battle scenes with breath taking adventures of its heroes *rooltoon*, Oliver and Gouthver Konche.

The early Kerala christians were known for their association with army and played an important role in the martial history of kerala. There were number of *kaLari* and *paNikkars* (gurus in the gymnasiums) belonging to the Christian community. According to Asia Portuguese of Barbosa,⁶ there was no caste barrier in the military force of early Kerala. There were military forces and training the young pupil, belonging to Nair, **nambuutiri**, *nasraaNi*, *iiZava*, and *caaNaan*. Each community had their own gurus and a group of soldiers. Later the function of the soldiers and military force transformed and it is handed over to the control of a certain sub-caste of Nairs.⁷

kaLarippayaTTu was in the fore front of Kerala martial culture during the medieval

periods of 15th and 16th centuries. Those days were famous for the feuds by the local Christians of semi-feudal principalities. Kerala was divided into more than two hundred villages with their own rulers and forces. Before “The Diampher there were 50,000 Christian soldiers under the Perumpadappu dynasty as reported by Gibbon”.⁸ There were legendary stories about a family of Christian soldiers who belonged to a place near Kodungallore i.e., Chendamangalam, (Kottekolothukunnu). They were called *villaarvaTTam coorupam*. It is said that, they were fully equipped with arms, received Vascodagama in his second visit in 1502 at Cochin later, and proclaimed their loyalties to the Portuguese emperor.⁹ During that time all the male members of the Christian community of 8 to 25 age group have to undergo the training for the army service in the traditional *kaLari*. In the *kaLari* they got training in using weapons and fast flexible body movements. This fact is mentioned by the Portuguese as well as Dutch historians like, Gaspar correa, francis Day, J.C.Vischer, and capt. Nienhoff. Apart from this, Portuguese and Dutch took some of the natives into their army and gave the titles of *kappittaan* (captain) and *Komman danti* (commandant).¹⁰ All this shows the importance of martial culture among the early Christians of Kerala. Because of this, *CaviTTunaaTakam* portrayed realistic war scenes and duels on the stage. Most of the *CaviTTunaaTakams*, which revolve around the theme of the valorous deeds of its heroes, include a martial training session during the portrayal of the up bringing stages of the hero. The training in *kaLarippayaTTu* is a must for the actors because there are frequent *payats* (combats) in the drama and this helps the actor in his free, flexible use of body and quickness in the movements.

The following table shows some of the influences of *kaLaripayattu* training system on *CaviTTunaaTakam*.

Table - 6

<i>kaLarippayaTTu</i>	<i>CaviTTunaaTakam</i>
1. Gurukkal is the sole authority	<i>aasaan</i> or the <i>aNNaavi</i> is the sole authority
2. According to the <i>vaayttaari</i> of the Gurukkal the <i>sisyaas</i> move,	<i>aasaan</i> sings and controls the text. He also gives directions

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>or the vaayttaari (words of commands) controls the <i>cuva Tus</i> of trainees (foot steps and movements).</p> | <p>of kavittams, and Kalaasams in accordance with this the students change their cuvaTus</p> |
| <p>3. The importance and sacredness affiliated with puuttara which is the seat of kaLari devata (presiding diety).</p> | <p>The importance given to the presence of text during the sessions.</p> |
| <p>4. Starts with Paying of obeisance to the deities, the place (<i>tara</i>) and the Gurukkal, it also ends with a salute to the presiding diety</p> | <p>The training and rehearsal sessions starts with paying obeisance to the cuvaTi and aasaan. There is also a small prayer to mother mary or patron saint of that particular locality</p> |
| <p>5. Here the first exercises are leg exercises called (kaal) next they Go in to — i.e., hand exercises with postures (<i>kai</i>) This gives balance and rhythm to the body. After this there are combination of leg and hand movements.</p> | <p>The aasaan begins with the training of <i>cuvaTus</i> There are 14 of them. Then he trains kalaasams, kavittams, iTakkalaasams. Then only he goes in to the training and practice of hand gestures (<i>muttirai</i>). This is related to the meaningful representation of lines. The above mentioned ingredients put together are called colliyaaTTam</p> |
| <p>6. After <i>kai</i> the student is trained in meypay TTu or body control</p> | <p>Just after the colliyaaTTam they start the rehearsal of scenes which includes a combi-</p> |

exercises which is a combination of steps, poses, leg exercises, jumps, leaps and turns.

nation of entry and exit movements with *cuvatus* and hand gestures, ably mixed with the endings of **kavittams**.

7. The body massage with oil is done.

The body massage with oil (**uZicci**) is done.

The nature of feudal war state and the rich martial art tradition of the people determined the selection of the themes of early *CaviTTunaaTakam*. This may be one of the reason behind the preference of *kaarlmaan naaTakam* which has a social milieu of European Christianity fights against Turks. Eventhough the characters were European, with a back ground setting of medieval Europe, clad in the Roman style costumes the actors displayed or fought on the stage as in the case of a native **kaLari** practice. In a way the training in the *kaLaris* helped them to depict the fights in a realistic manner.

Before **portuguese** invasion itself the native Christians acquired the skills of theatrical presentations.¹¹ This can be understood from the earlier mentioned semi-theatrical performance. They are the early forms of Christian expression, which are prominently indebted to the religious ritual practices of the then natives. The round dance forms, worshipping the deity, was the first human expression of Joy, and Communal harmony in the history of theatre.¹² The expressive tradition has roots in the ritual practice. The ritual practices of the christians before **diampher** was very much native or Hindu in nature. They also had Pagan beliefs and practiced **bali** (oblation) and magical rituals. **manti-ravaatam**. "The *nasraaNi maappiLLa* of the Diampher time was in the Christian religion externally, and in the Hindu *Savarna* religion internally. Out side they have churches and inside they had temple, they were nothing other than a **Savarna** (upper cast) Nair and **nambuutiri**.¹³ This ambivalent nature of the *nasraaNi* can be easily seen in their early theatrical presentations as well as in *CaviTTunaaTakam*. This leads to the second important native influence, which is the South Indian folk theatre.

The folk theatre forms of South India had a direct relationship with *CaviTTunaaTakam*, most of them were related in the various aspects of conventions. Some of the theatrical conventions and elements were later acquired or adapted in to the *CaviTTunaaTakam* productions.

CaviTTunaaTakam conventionally linked with the folk theatre forms of Thanjavur,

Thiruchirappally and Thengasi of Tamil region. They were called *naaTTuva niruttas* of that region. Apart from this *CaviTTunaaTakam* is related to *teerukkuuttu* in the movement patterns i.e., *cuvaTus* and in some aspects of the presentation of valorous scenes. Both this forms have similarities in the *cuvaTus* and movements of the actors, in both the actors sing and the backing vocalists repeat the lines and help the actors to move according to *cuvaTus*. They have similar endings i.e., *kalaasams*. The Durbar scenes of these dramas were very much related to the entry of the king with his barrons or chief-tains. They form similar kinds of choreographic patterns giving importance to the king. Both *baakavatameela* and *CaviTTunaaTakam* show similarities in the initial ceremonies.

Both the dramas start with a praise of the diety, guru, and the text. Before the entry of the main character there comes a number of characters on the stage as in *baakavatameela* the Ganapathy comes *first*, then comes *koNanki* and then comes the *kaTTiyan*. In the case of early *CaviTTunaaTakams*, *baalappaarTTu* comes first, *tooTaiyaaTTam* second followed by *kaTTiyan* and there will be an exchange of dialogues in between *kaTTiyan* and *aasaan* with group of singers, only then the announcement about the main character and his entry is made. In both these dramas the actors enter through one door, often from the up stage left and exit through the door which is at the up stage right.

The following table will enumerate *CaviTTunaaTakams* conventional allegiance with the other South Indian theatrical genres. In other words this similarities will enunciate the native influences on *CaviTTunaaTakam* tradition.

Table - 7

S.No.	South Indian theatrical genres	similarity (in the function, conventional order and placement)	<i>CaviTTunaaTakam</i>
1.	Initial prayer song	invocation of Gods and deities for the blessing	Initial <i>stutipaaTTu</i>
2.	The clown/jester character (<i>kaTTiyakkaran</i> , <i>koNanki</i> , and <i>suuttiradaara</i> of <i>teerukkuuttu</i> , <i>baakavatameela</i> and <i>kucipudi</i> respectively)	comic interludes to make the play alive. His interactions (with the master and backing vocals) and narrations make the play progress. The duties of a stage manager.	<i>kaTTiyan</i> (the clown)

3.	Patra prevesha daru (of baakavatameela and kucipudi)	Sung by the backing vocals introducing the entry of the character with descriptions.	varavuviruttam
4.	The master/trainer (aNNaavi , baakavatar , suuttiradaara of teerukkuuttu , yakshagana and baakavatameela)	Imports training. His on stage presence boosts the morale of the actors. His interventions correct the mistakes and help the smooth progress .	aNNaavi or aasaan (the master)
5.	Puranic, mythological and religious (Hindu) themes of the early stage	up helds the ultimate victory of the moralistic, valliant hero over the evil on stage portrayal of violent acts and fight s. Infiltration of secular/folk themese in the later stage.	Christian religious, historical and Biblical themes oi the early stage.
6.	The backing vocals including the master or leader, vocalists and instrumentalists. (pinpaaTTu of teerukkuuttu)	On stage placement at the back (upstage center). The domination of percussion instruments	pinpaaTTukaar led by the aasaan with Cymbals, singers and Percussionists.
7.	Acting include the presentation of song, dance, dialogue and the gestures	Acting style shows a mixture of loka dharmi (direct representation) and natyadharmi (symbolic representation)	Acting with elaborate gestures loud swinging and thunderous foot steps.
8.	The common presence of minor characters who connect the play with the present context by providing social criticism	Examples are: the folk sooth-sayers, greedy Hinduritualists. Washermen and women Peddler, doctor, Judge, Flower girl etc..	Minor characters who becomes catalysts in turning the events.
9.	Open-air performance place with the elevated platform (structure) from the ground level	Temporarily built ones - in the open fields at the vicinity of religious places	naaTakataTTu made of wooden planks with a thatched covering of the tap.

European influences

After the Portuguese or European invasion the contacts with the native people got strengthened with the trade and missionary work. The coastal area of Kerala with a large number of ports around were the centres of this cultural interaction. Later this places became famous for the theatre activity called *CaviTTunaaTakam*. The missionaries who came to Kerala with the purpose of establishing Christian religion had a rich tradition of

medieval European theatre behind them. So the nuances of their performance traditions reflected in the newly created theatre forms for the converts. The establishment of Christian religion made possible through certain cultural practices. The creation of the cultural practices earned the priority in the missionary activity. It was necessary to create certain religious observances, in order to show the Christian way of expression and way of life which accord to the religious scriptures and sayings. To propagate these religious observances cultural activities or performances became necessary.

In Europe, during the establishment of Christian religion, there was a definite attempt to create certain observances out of the already existing cultural practices and relics. Thus, for e.g., in A.D. 601 Pope Gregory the Great instructed the clergy not to destroy the fanes (i.e., pagan temples).

"**destroy** the idols; purify the buildings with holy water, set relics there; and let them become the temples of the true God. So the people will have no need to change their places of concourse, and where of old they were wont to sacrifice cattle to demons, thither let them continue to resort on the day of the saint to whom the church is dedicated and slay their beasts no longer as a sacrifice, but for a social meal in honour of him whom they now worship".¹⁴

This passage reveals the strategy worked out by the early Christian establishment in Europe. The early European medieval Christian theatre also shows the evolution of liturgical dramas to the miracle, mysteries and moralities from the pagan **folk** traditions of mimicry, combat and dancing games of the early agrarian society of medieval Europe. The early stages of liturgical dramas reflect, the practices of folk cult and customs including the magical rituals, and fertility rites. The same kind of strategy was employed by the early Christian missionaries in Kerala, while establishing a new performance tradition as a counter part to the existing religious traditions. They imbibed certain aspects from the existing traditions and incorporated their biblical themes and Medieval European theatre conventions. *CaviTTunaaTakams* is a clear example of this kind.

There is a clear evidence of the influence of medieval European theatre on *CaviT-TunaaTakam*. Almost every aspects of this tradition starting from themes and characterization to the theatrical conventions, make-up and costume have striking similarities with mysteries, and miracles of medieval Europe. An analysis of the similarities between: *CaviTTunaaTakam* and medieval Christian theatre in Europe will reveal the amount of European influences upon this theatre genre.

European influences upon this theatre form can be seen at three broad levels: They are, (a) conventional level (b) thematic level and (c) evolution level. The demarcation of these levels of influence is essential because the Kerala Christian theatre did not, at any point of time, initiate or reproduce as such any single play of Europe through out its theatre history. This amount to say that when the Christian theatre was introduced during the missionary period, they already had a strong tradition which developed through the ages. In this background the tradition of Christian theatre was transmitted into the Kerala soil, and therefore, no single play **can** be pointed out as a complete imitation of the western play. In order to understand the influences on the traditions, both in Europe and in India, the levels of influences by sub-typing them into conventions, themes and evolution need to be dealt separately.

(A) *At conventional level*

Both the theatre traditions follow a number of similar characteristics in the ways of productions. Both were almost totally non-naturalistic in presentation and characterization; 'authenticity' is not its aesthetic goal. Expositions are bold and unashamed, story-telling is simple and plain, while stylization and symbolism form the central features of its characteristic technique. One should not expect elaborately narrated plots with all sub plots contributing a major share in the development of actions in to climaxes. Eventhough there were well made, structured plots in both genres most of them fall into an episodic nature having a number of sub-plots each with its own individuality. In most of the cases various elements in these sub-plots help the main theme to create certain dramatic effects. The art of subversion was not used in the development of individual characters, but as types of humanity whose traits are determined by the given facts of their situation or dramatic function, rather than being inherent in their personalities. The authors followed a highly formal format in the case of dialogue presentations. There was a ceremoniousness in the diction, whose presence may appear to conflict with the vibrant colloquialisms or vernacular exchanges found in the other sections of the same scenes or pieces. The shepherds dialogues in the nativity plays of medieval Europe and the *kaTTiyans* improvised dialogues of *CaviTTunaaTakam* shows this mixed combination of stylised formal diction with the vernacular ways of renderings. The themes of these dramas used to demonstrate a **pre-determined** theosophy which remained valid for all sorts and conditions of men at all times and in all places. For this reason medieval Christian theatre of Europe and Kerala are predominantly celebratory and confirmatory

rather than questioning or revolutionary in nature. Most often the 'status quo' is upheld and justified rather than challenged or subverted.

Both these theatre traditions have certain characteristics which constitute a strong sense of folk-tradition. Performances are seasonal, it is purely male performance, it belongs to rural communities and most of the actors are perambulatory in nature.

Theatrical conventions practised on and off stage by these two theatre traditions have similarities in various aspects. For a better comparison of this conventional practices of both these traditions as a whole, different stages of its evolution to the present conditions have to be considered.

1. The presence of the author with the text on the stage, also the presenter and the musicians were visible to the audience and they were placed on a higher level or in a box like shaded place upon the stage.

This convention can be found from the time of Terence (a Roman Poet) in the medieval European stage and also in the case of *CaviTTunaaTakam*. The presence of the *aasaan* with the text on the stage is a must. The stage with the orchestra placed at the up stage center in a booth like place similarly corresponds to the poet on the stage as described by Lydgate (a poet in the court of Henry VI) in his *Troy book*.¹⁵ The book describes the Priams' theatre in Troy where the *awncienpoete* standing in a pulpit and sings indites while the mimed, masked characters moves around in a circle.

2. The play begins with the preparation of the acting space and diverting audience attention towards it. In England the presenter cries room room! and clear a space among the audience. In the Gothic play of the 6th C, the presenter rides about to describe the acting circles. In the case of Kerala Christian theatre, which was a late 16th C phenomena, the making of the temporary wooden stage for acting takes place in the beginning and later they use the drumming to get audience attention and start with the song of the presenter. In the *chester* cycle a presenter uses the same traditional formulae to introduce one of its famous old testament characters. eg., *Arome, a rome, arome I cry. Let good king Gaarge step this way*.¹⁶

This was a formula used in the *chester* cycle plays to introduce new characters to the stage, and later this practice continued in the 'miracle' plays. The presenter introduces his character to the audience through certain boasts and descriptions

and he also promises the audience that, "The approaching champion will *pierce your skin* etc.". In the *CaviTTunaaTakam* tradition this duty of presenting characters was taken up by *kaTTiyan* (clown). This ever transforming and most flexible character with his dialogues with the *aasaan*, introduces the entry of the new character.

3. The acting style in both traditions has a lot of similarities. It is a mixture of formalism (most extreme in the movements of sword dance and presentation of war scenes) and improvised antics. In the case of *CaviTTunaaTakam* there are prescribed *cuvatus* and *muttirai* with definitely ascribed meanings. Apart from the backing vocals and narrations from the music pit, especially during the dialogue rendering sequences, the characters rant, squeak or gibber. They never act or speak normally' as if impersonating real people. In some of the plays the words are spoken in an incantatory manner, broken up by periodic and apparently senseless banging of swords or sticks and death is conveyed by simply hanging the head. In presenting war scenes or battles the *CaviTTunaaTakams* are very much related to the medieval European dramas which came under the **hero-combat** themes like some of the early gothic plays of 6th century. In the former they present the battle scenes in a realistic manner using metallic swords and staves etc., but in the latter they mostly use wooden weapons for fighting. The formation of circles and geometric patterns of rhythmic movement with repetition in the action is similar in both tradition.
4. The costumes play an important role in the analysis of similarities between the two theatre traditions. In general with odd exceptions, non-representational according to a specific time. Because most of the costumes portray periodic styles with a mix-up of different periods/ages. So finally characters create a sense of more than what they are as real life kings and peers etc. In the case of *CaviTTunaaTakam* the characters' costumes have its root in the **Greco-Roman** style. The soldiers with armoury clearly represent a European soldier in the Romanesque attire. This directly relates to the Romanesque style in Christian art and architecture in the early stages of the development of European Christianity. From the time of Gregory the Great's accession to papacy in A.D. 590, he started certain reforms in the church art and architecture. The dramatic performances became Christian in inspiration and Romanesque in style.¹⁷ Later, when the christian society felt the need in the eleventh

and twelfth centuries to approach dramatic art as a teaching instrument in the service of the faith, it found models and precedents in the Greek and Roman plays, theatres and amphitheatres. Before the huns destroyed the Roman empire, the drama possessed a distinguished past. The Greeks had carried this heritage east and south into Asia minor, the middle east, Alexandria and North Africa. The Romans had extended their influence northwards and westwards in to Germany, France and Britain. In the fourth century A.D., when Christianity claimed its first emperor as a convert, the community were familiar with the Roman *Ludi scenici* and the *spectacula*.¹⁸ After the fall of the Roman empire, the surviving buildings and architecture helped to develop communal recreation centers. This Roman connection is also reflected in the Christian colonial enterprise called *CaviTTunaaTakam*.

5. Some of the early *CaviTTunaaTakams* were very much related to the 6th C Gothic **hero-combat** plays; they were traditional performances firmly enclosed by courtly and Christian frame-work. A splendid and little known example is recorded in the book of ceremonies of the Byzantine Court of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (A.D. 905-959).¹⁹ In the book the concluding fragments of these performances were recorded. The concluding verses were followed by Greek verses in which the warriors commemorated the battles of the old testament won by the heroes of the Christian God. Finally the Goths sang in praise of the emperor, hailing him as the inheritor of the fief of Rome, Sun like in virtue, and invoking christs blessing on his empire. The same sequences of commemoration, the hailing of the emperor and blessing sought from the Christ is evident in all early *CaviTTunaaTakams*, which portray the heroic deeds of Christian lords.
6. Along with an existing dichotomy in the case of the austerity in Christian philosophy and the celebration in their performances, both these traditions show similarity in the duration (time taken for the performance event) and the context of the play production. Especially the early cycle plays of the medieval Europe including the old and new testament plays enacted in York and Coventry by the clerics prior to the first decade of the fifteenth century and the early *CaviTTunaaTakams* used to take more than seven to eight days duration to complete the performance.

(B) At thematic level:

The thematic level influence in the structure and story lines of both these traditions can be seen by taking the whole medieval religious plays of Europe and Kerala Christian theatre. There are five categories:

- a) plays of a generally biblical character which form no part of a longer series of related pieces
- b) plays which celebrate the life and work of any saint or equally venerated upholder of the Christian faith
- c) dramas whose central feature is the performance of one or more miracles to Gods greater glory
- d) sequences of cyclic episodes depicting the Christian view of mankind's salvation through Christ and covering a span stretching 'from creation to dooms day'
- e) Other plays (especially moralities) which prescribe the improvement of the standards of human life/personal conduct in the mundane and spiritual spheres by illustrating the human potential for salvation or damnation.

Apart from these basic classes there are certain similar thematic patterns which work in these traditions. The first one is the main structure of the saint's plays. (they are two digby plays and one cornish play) or the plays in which the saints feature adhere to the pattern of sin → repentance → conversion.²⁰ The morality plays show a more elaborate and similar pattern to the former, as the structure shows first an innocent soul then the soul is being seduced by the evil in various ways leads into the sin, then comes the realization of the sin and the phase of repentance. In this phase the soul undergoes different stages and finally it regains the lost virtues, once again it becomes an innocent/sacred soul bounded with virtues. In a simplified manner, the structure is:

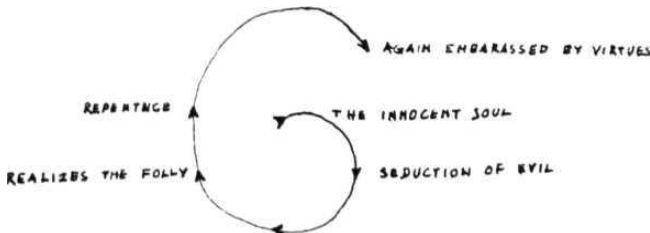


Fig -3

Most of the Kerala Christian theatre themes also follow the same kind of pattern. Mostly, from the later *CaviTTunaaTakam* plays to the themes recently presented by the biblical drama troupes. In the Early European Christian theatre in the **Roswitha's** plays, in which theme are a number of allegorical seems depicting the conversion of characters into Christianity.²¹ Roswitha's another characteristic genius lies in modulating secular feelings into sacred ones. The early *CaviTTunaaTakams*, mostly the themes after **diampher** shows certain similarity in this aspects. Plays like *alpoonsu*, *jeenoova*, *birasiña* show the conversion of Pagan characters and the transformations of secular habits into sacred rituals. Folk characters having no-direct relation with the theme can also be seen in miracle plays and *CaviTTunaaTakams*. They serve certain immediate dramatic purposes.

The thematic structures of **hero-combat** tradition of medieval Europe is very much akin to the early *CaviTTunaaTakams* which portray the heroic deeds of Roland, Oliver, St. George, Brutus etc. Some of the categories follow:

In the **first** one, the action includes the killing of protagonist or a main character and ends with the resurrection of the same. The second category shows the same figures or characters a play recurring in similar combinations or with less differences in various plays. In the third category, some plays having the same character types with reversals in the fortunes. For example, *alpoonsu naaTakam* portrays the chastity of the male character in his moral life and *Brijith naaTakam* shows the female character and her craving for the chastity. These dramas treat certain moral institutions or values guarded by individuals, devoid of their gender, against the seducing forces of evil and gain's ultimate victory through sacrifice.

There is another common structural element which shows a debt to popular tradition. That is a pattern of boast, challenge, counter-challenge, battle and submission. *kaarlmaan naaTakam* and the initial part of Tegemese play of Antichrist and the Northern England tribes men play from Lubbek can be taken as **examples**.²² Most often this pattern is repeated more than three times in a single play in both traditions. The establishment of Christianity caused certain major changes in the performing traditions of Northern England tribal people. Their performances or folk dramas were highly formal in nature and deal with historical **hero-victories**, has been re-formed by a Christian society. Later these tribesmen are set to imperial flattery and made to realign their traditional heroes with old testament figures, as forerunners of the Christian Emperor. In Kerala the

same strategy was repeated and the Christian missionary endeavour became successful in creating and legitimizing their own historical/biblical heroes through the performance traditions.

Similarities in the themes can be easily established by studying the European antecedents (counter parts) of the most famous *CaviTTunaaTakams* of Charlemagne *kaarlmaan naaTakam* and St. George *givargisu naaTakam*. The story line of the *kaarlmaan naaTakam* is taken from the Western European Christian legends of king Charles who was the son of Pepin and the most powerful emperor of the Christendom. The legends consist of the adventures and valorous deeds of his paladins including Roland and Oliver. The character Roland can also be seen in Ludvico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*. Apart from this thematic inheritance, there are performances directly and indirectly related with emperor Charlemagne and Roland in the medieval hero-combat traditions and secular folk plays. These plays were folk traditional performances firmly enclosed by a courtly and Christian frame work. The earliest account of the performance which deals with the character Roland occurs in the chronicle tradition. In the chronicle accounts of battle of Hastings,²³ the Norman invaders were urged into battle by the example of a 'joglere' or histrio, named Taillefer, who 'played' with his sword before the English *Ludens coram gente Anglorum* as he performed part of an epic chason of Roland. Another example is a fifteenth century low German play from Lubeck.²⁴ This is a part of the simplistic sword-dance combat tradition. The dance ends up with creating a locking circle. In this the holy Roman empire, Kaiser Karl (Charlemagne) summons in turn each of five kings (Joshua, Hector, David, Alexander, Judas Maecabaeus. In another version they are kings of England, Saxony, Poland, Denmark and Moorland) to 'fetch' with him. They introduce themselves in turn, each dancing forward to engage in combat with Kaiser, each in turn conceding victory. The same kind of combat scenes are common in the *CaviTTunaaTakam* plays. There are some other plays which have the parallel theme of the charlemagne legends. Except for the change in the names of characters most of the incidents in these plays coincide with Kerala *kaarlmaan naaTakam*. This extraordinary combination of eschatological legend with militaristic wish-fulfillment can be seen in the Tegernsee play of Antichrist, which was probably performed before the holy Roman Emperor, Frederick I.²⁵ The play *Ludus de Abntichristos* milieu is set in the court of the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. The play was supposed to be performed before the Emperor to urge him to realize his ambition of becoming emperor of the east and west, and

military defender of Christendom. The play which consists of a lot of battle sequences of vast armies is described as the best play/literary product of German ecclesiastical life in the twelfth century by Karl Young.²⁶ There are puppetry and minstrel traditions which portray this theme. The Sicilian marionette tradition which had been in use from the period of Romans was famous for its dramatization of the conflict between Christianity and Islam. The most famous play in this tradition centers around the story of Orlando, the perfect knight, the leader of the Paladins (twelve peers) who accompanied king Charle **magne**. Except with the major difference at the end, the **kaarlmaan naaTakam aanjellika baagam** and this puppet drama shows Orlando's love towards Angelica, the daughter of Agramante and valorous events. The former ends up with the marriage as in the portuguese play *auto de floripes* which comes under the *autos* and *Moiris cadas* of Portuguese folk theatre.²⁷ The latter with the killing of king Agramante, the leader of the Saracens. The historical character Charlemagne is also connected with the patronage of art and architecture. It is only after the coronation of Charlemagne on a christmas day in 800 A.D., that new era started in the cultural history of Christianity. Charlemagne waged a number of battles against the 'Pagan' kings to build the sole Christian empire.

Another important character is St. George. The mummers play tradition shows different versions of the St. George story. The dragon slaying champion was a common figure in the folk drama traditions of Europe. Some times they used to change the hero's name (as Rabelais describes about one play at **metz**), of which; however the hero was not St. George, but St. Clement, another dragon slayer.²⁸ The character St. George as a Warrior was popular in the sword-dance traditions of Europe. The medieval period had its dramatic or semi-dramatic performances in which the character St. George figured or substituted the protagonist. These performances, generally took the form of 'a riding' or procession on St. George's day, April 23. **St.George** was the patron saint of England and his day was honoured as one of the greatest feasts, notably at the court, where the chivalric order was supposed to be under his protection. Later the guilds as a half social, half religious fraternity took up the patronage of this festival days. There are historical records which describe the processions on the saint's day, the impersonations and the enactment of dragon slaying episode.²⁹ E.K. Chambers mentions twenty nine texts which deals with the **St.George** theme or the main character St. George. All versions of the theme with the possible exception of the one found at Brill, seem to be derived from a common type. This archetype can be seen all over Europe including the

minor communities. The theme shows St. George's fight with the dragon or beast and the rescue of Sabra, daughter of the king of Egypt. There are some minor variations in the names and nature of the other characters.³⁰ But the presentations show some structural similarities, in terms of the presenter, who introduces the characters, the fighters or the other kings who introduce themselves, and in the use of swords and fighting. Their common grotesque and supernumerary characters add strength to the similarities. All the above dramatic presentations were associated with festivals and ceremonies.

The play which deals with the 'beheading' and its association with new year festival can be traced in the middle English Poem 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', hinted at by king Arthur's jocular reference to Christmas 'enter ludez'.³¹ An ancient Scandinavian drama has reasonably been hypothesized from medieval pictorial evidence and from the poetic speeches inset in the prose sagas: this drama concerned the combat of a hero and another contestant masked as a beast-god.³² During the 15th century various guilds took over the charge of celebrating St. George's day. There were regular miracle-plays with the St. George theme in different parts of Europe. Chamber's, refers to the performance described by Collier as taking place before Henry-V and the emperor Sigismund at Windsor in 1416, Lydd in 1456.³³

In CaviTTunaaTakam tradition of Kerala, the theme seems to be the same with a little localization in various incidents. Later this famous theme was adapted or taken in the repertoire of the professional drama troupes. Some of the structural aspects also seems to be parallel in both of these traditional presentations of the St. George theme.

Thus the above mentioned categories at thematic level had their influence on the Kerala Christian theatre. These themes by and large developed over a period of time and therefore they had a very strong root in culture. When these themes were taken in CaviTTunaaTakam, the cultural influence of the west in terms of costume, make-up, music etc. remained on the surface level and the religious ideology especially the Christian world view and ethics operated at the deep structural level and hence conveyed the meaning as a whole as Christian performance.

(c) At evolution level:

Eventhough the evolution (establishment) of Christian theatre in Kerala took place only after the 15th century by the arrival of Europeans there were a lot of similarities in its stages of development with the European medieval Christian theatre which have feady attained a mature stage by the 15th century. The various aspects related to the

trends in themes and changes in the performance structure coincide or show similarity in the 'patterns'. The way in which Christianity established and legitimized its symbols in the formation of a Christendom in itself become an established religion. The same kind of methodology/patterning worked out in Kerala during the establishment of Christianity, and this is reflected in the performance tradition also. Thus one can see similar patterns in the evolution of historical stages in the Christian performance tradition of Europe and Kerala.

Along with the strictly religious liturgical plays (mostly instructing) there were a lot of local, folk traditions which contributed to the development of the medieval Christian theatre. The evolution of this theatre can be traced from the mimic representations of the ministerls and Jongleurs, through the combat traditions, dancing games and church ceremonies. This intermingled with the ritualistic dramatic representations (occurred inside the church), especially in the festive days of Christmas, Corpus Christie, Easter and other saintly days gave rise to varieties of dramas. These similarities described in the three sections directly show the European influence in patterning of *CaviTTunaaTakam*. The various strands in the thematic as well as conventional development of medieval drama can be very well compared with the various stages in the evolution and continuity of *CaviTTunaaTakam*.

The various strands in the thematic as well as conventional development of Medieval drama can be very well compared with the various stages in the evolution and continuity of the *CaviTTunaaTakam*.

Table - 8:

The drama of the Medieval church *CaviTTunaaTakam*
(Western Europe)

Early liturgical plays with its ceremonial ritual observances

The Ancient Phase of Kerala Christian performance tradition with semi-theatrical ritualistic round dances.

Miracle plays in which the dramatic tensions were resolved through the miraculous interventions of virgin Mary. This also consists secular romances with religious overtones.

Initial phase of historical/legenderic themes portraying the miraculous and adventurous deeds of valliant Christian heroes.

Mystery plays with the truthful historicity and the themes based on life of Saints and biblical material	Second phase of <i>naaTakams</i> with Saint-lore's and old testament themes.
Morality plays with its didactic aim and allegorical characters of representation of 'moral types'	The later phase with the aim of imparting Christian morality with the native characters and stories.
The infiltration of secular themes and the entertainment oriented productions	The inclusion of more secularised folk themes and the priority of entertainment.
The decline and its influence up on the successive genres.	The decline and its influence up on the modern phase Christian performance tradition.
The revival and historical reconstructions	The reconstruction and restoration attempts.

To surmise from the above discussion, the themes mentioned above have a long history which developed the theatre into a tradition rooted in Europe and Kerala. The themes may seem to be similar at the surface level, but at the deeper structural level, they may convey totally different images and meanings to the audience as well as the performers themselves. This is so because at the imagery level, during the development of tradition, different writers, performers, and audience interacted at different points of historical times. This understanding is essential because the utility value of the play production operates on the concept of historical relativism. This means to say that the time and space components in the play production were always the determining factors of the interplay of the authors, performers and audience. In the process of interaction certain formulae were automatically evolve and lead to the 'repertoire' of the performances. The whole range of this 'repertoire' in Europe were time tested and survived with change and continuity. Therefore, the influence of the western theatre need to be seen broadly from the 'repertoire' angle by segmenting into conventions, themes and the process of evolution itself.

Historical Forces

It is accepted that *CaviTTunaaTakam* originated with the advent of Portuguese mis-

sionaries in Kerala. It also possess some of the theatrical expressive tradition of the early St. Thomas Christians of Kerala and was a counterpart to the temple theatre forms like *kuuttu*, *kuuTiyaaTTam* and Kathakali. This theatre form developed, transformed and has undergone drastic changes due to certain historical forces. So this historical forces have an important role in the present condition of *CaviTTunaaTakam*. In its four centuries of history the forces can be roughly divided into (1) pre-colonial (2) colonial and (3) post-colonial.

Pre-colonial:

The historical events in this period had no direct influence upon the conditioning of *CaviTTunaaTakam*. In turn it conditioned some historical contexts to mould the evolution of the art form. The first among this was the European Renaissance which helped the revival of classics and the up coming of Christian empire in western Europe. This finally led to the establishment of Christendom all over the world. The patronage given to the cultural activities especially the performance tradition sprung up with the themes centered around the adventurous deeds of the crusaders. The importance attributed to the legends of Christian martyrs helped the proselytization work of missionaries in their invented colonies. The other part of the story was not very different. The cultural milieu of the colonies like India with their martial culture and love for the ritualistic way of expressions and early performance forms helped the development of this art form.

Colonial:

During this period the major historical factors are the development of trade with other European countries, the invasion and establishment of religion especially by the missionaries who came along with Vasco da gama and Cabral.³⁴ The other missionary endeavours include that Franciscans, Augustineans, Jesuits etc. Another aspect was the fight between Portuguese and other colonial people for the legitimacy of their power and religion. The fights between the westerners and **muslim** invaders to gain control of the people through religion is another important factor.³⁵

The major historical factor which shaped and developed this theatre form was the Synod of **Diamper A.D.1599** and the latinization of the Kerala church and its rituals. The Synod can be viewed as a piece of church legislation, as a document of church history or as a record of **socio-cultural** movement etc. This was the first strong western cultural infiltration through religion in Kerala. After the Synod, Portuguese became successful in bringing the ancient Kerala church under their jurisdiction. Instead of Syrian liturgy they

introduced Latin liturgy and the Portuguese style of architecture was introduced. The internal decoration and modification of churches paved the way for the image worship cult. In order to teach catechism Latin texts were translated into vernaculars. The decrees in the session IX portray the Reformations insisted upon by the Diamper in the cultural life of St. Thomas **christians**.³⁶ Decree I states about the abolishment of all superstitious customs. Decree IV forbids the attendance on heathen festivities. Likewise most of them insist on the reformation of life from western point of view. This Synod made the Kerala Christians under the jurisdiction of the catholic Pope in Rome and westernized the religious practices, social customs and life in general. In that way the Synod played an important role in shaping the *CaviTTunaaTakam* and its performance context. Even though the theatre evolved with the advent of Portuguese in the early days of the 16th century, in the later days of the same century i.e., in the post Diamper phase, the themes were refined with the inclusion of stories like *alleecu naaTakam*, *alpoonsu naaTakam* etc. which gave prominence to the moral values of life and to make people aware of the constant mercy of God.

Other historical factors which inversely influenced and developed the *CaviTTunaaTakam* were the Ban on wearing swords and weapons by Christians after Diamper, the Bill passed by Britishers which imposed a restriction on carrying knives which were more than six inches in length. The Former ban abolished the custom of wearing weapons like swords and knives by the ancient Kerala **christians** as part of their usual attire. The historical feudal war state milieu was already in transition when the Portuguese landed in the **Kerala** soil. By then itself the carrying of weapons not for protection but for fashion was already in vogue. The Britishers put a death knell even to this practice by an ordinance. Under such circumstances, *CaviTTunaaTakam* came as a resume to give vent to the feelings of martial character of the people through the fighting scenes, where in the weapons are symbolically used. Thus, the suppressed feudal character of the people found a new out let through this performance and strengthened the art form itself.

Post-colonial:

The post colonial phase of *CaviTTunaaTakam* shows two historical factors which are very much implicit in the performance history of this genre. First one, as part of the theatre history of Kerala shows the influence of proscenium stage with its spectacle oriented theatre techniques based on the technical advancement in the field of light and sound. The painted perspective sceneries also made certain changes in the play productions.

The second one was the change of patronage. The Church's policy change regarding the modes and methods of conversion along with the development of **audio-visual** media caused the rise of new patrons in the form of associations, clubs business households and later the individuals occasionally funded by government or quasi governmental organizations. Moreover, for a period of time, there was a ban imposed against this performance, called *Palli mudakku*,³⁷ which was prevalent in the coastal belt of **Kerala**. Both these factors affected and shaped the present *CaviTTunaaTakam*. The major change that occurred during this phase is in the selection of themes. A handful of native folk stories and Hindu mythological subjects pierced into the well established repertoire i.e., The popularity gained by other media caused decline of the number of productions of this particular genre.

Ideological Strands

This part deals with the major conceptual frames which worked implicitly and explicitly in the process of development of this theatre form. The major schemes centered around issues related with conversion, idolization, and patronage.

To understand the religion and literature of people one should first consider their myths and legends. Some times these legends as sacred stories, embody the religious tradition of the people. The stories are both the origins of the religious tradition and also later expression of their ethical message. In the case of Kerala Christians this comes in the form of themes of their performances.

The transformations and change in the theme directly leads one to certain issues of conversion and idolization. The earliest themes in Christianity dealt with the valour, courage and adventures by the heroes mostly the European lords. This comes under the origin and establishment of Christian religion and its practices. In the case of western Europe by 9th century after the coronation of Emperor Charlemagne a new era had begin for the art and performance in service of Christianity. The emperor, as the great patron of Christian art featured in a row of legend which followed his rule. The artists in order to depict Christ, the prophets and apostles had solved their problem by idealizing these figures in recognizably imperial terms of reference; on the other hand the question of how to behave when communicating with the God in the newly built basilicas were also solved by imitating the ceremonial of the imperial court at Byzantium (on greeting the emperor one prostrated one self: in his presence the subjects removed their head gear and so on). Slowly, the movements, dress, and gestures necessary to the execution of

the liturgy and the whole practises of worship in the Church assimilated and got in to a shape by the traditional rituals of court life. This in turn established and legitimized a religious hierarchy. Therefore the Charlemagnes territories were considered as the holy Roman empire. Incidentally the threat from the turks strengthened the establishment of the holy Roman empire and the Charlemagne's heroic valour with the Christian attributes and the idioms to his rule. This has projected him as a cultural hero rather than a mere ruler. This image of a cultural hero has been transplanted into Kerala where the Portuguese had confronted with a pagan culture, which is not just **muslim** but also Hindu. *CaviTTunaaTakam* represents *kaarlmaan* as a cultural hero who could spread Christianity in his domains by checking the in roads of Turks and the other **muslims**. The Portuguese had only this model in their cultural back ground. Hence, through Church they forced this model in *CaviTTunaaTakam* to propagate the Christian ideology as a conversion formulae. Hence the European Christianity originated by the arrival of Portuguese so as the legends of Charlemagne and his paladins, who were **fighting** for the sake of the sacred things. These themes legitimizes the victory of European Christianity upon the Turkish muslim invaders. There were a lot of battles in between Portuguese and the Islamic kings in the early days. On the route to India Vasco da **gama** confronted muslims in Mozambique and suffered severe loss. All these happenings reflected and directed the selection of themes. The need for the creation of heroes and the establishment of idols happened simultaneously. These Martyr heroes who fought for the religion establish and legitimize a religious tradition. The presence of their idols always refresh the memory of the people and these expressions of faith helps them to tie up with the religious practice. The post diamper phase showed great interest in the iconography and decorative art of church and a number of churches were built with Gothic architectural design.

The ancient Kerala Christians practised untouchability and were not interested in proselytization. The Synod of **Diampher** abolished their caste hierarchy and took up the task of conversion of lower castes into Christianity. The themes of the plays after the Synod mainly aims at this goal. The later phase of the themes were **filled** with the teaching of the Christian doctrines. There were lot of stories from the Bible, mainly from the old testament, which proclaims the **christian** morals, laws and way of life. This comes under the later part as the ethical message which has messianic hopes. These stories **will** help the converts to familiarizes their sacred texts which become the authentic part of their laws. The written scriptures makes the ideology more authentic. The sacredness

attributed to the text in the play production developed during this stage.

Then comes the themes of saints who died for the sake of a Christian morality. They practised the life of an absolute Christian. These legendary stories were not merely told for entertainment. They were intended to convey lessons in holy living, faith and courage. They were said or narrated with the back drop of a proper milieu. The purified life, the spirit of martyrdom and the burden of sins were carefully knitted with giving importance to the social life of the people in those days. This was mainly to hold the converts in the religion. In the first phase it worked as a counterpart to Temple art forms. Later it became a part of their life. So the stories which were part of the psychological inheritance of the west slowly found out a place in the heart of Kerala Christians and it adopted localized symbols and actions which were legitimized later through the extensive ritualistic practices. The festivals of saints in the local churches giving importance to certain Christian activities like procession, offerings, *neerccai*, *vaNakka maasam* and other ritualistic observances slowly registered these symbols in the local Christians collective memory.³⁸ Later these symbols and actions looked as though they arose naturally from their Christian environment as expressions of faith.

These saintly legends which spread over Kerala through performances created local heroes or the localized version of the Christian hero. These heroes became the patron saints, approachable to people through the local church as mediators in between God and human beings. These easily accessible mediators made the religious spirit sink deeper into the human minds. They made inroads into the spiritual life of men. This geared a new tendency in the development of *CaviTTunaaTakam* themes. Some of the folk narratives or themes were transformed and went through phases like invention, dramatization, elaboration and editing before they were taken in to the repertoire. Later this stories operated successfully in the Christian milieu.

The patronage given to this art forms development is parallel to the target of conversion. Earlier it enjoyed a complete patronage of the church. Those days missionaries were keen in converting mostly the upper-class people and there was a necessity to create counter heroes against their pagan beliefs. That developed into the enhancement of the repertoire with the inclusion of local stories and its variants. This time, especially after the *diamper* the major target of conversion was lower class people. Then also the church was patronizing the art form. Thus these performances became part of their propaganda machinery. Later church and its people gained a position in the society. They became

a structured community with a set of observable symbols and rites. Then the target audience was the Christians (already converted) and the major function of the art form was to hold them to the religion. This created power struggles in the community and as part of the legitimization of authority certain wealthy families took up the patronage. During this phase the performances were scheduled as part of the church festivals. Those days Christian community of a locality was governed by a set of **families**. (a number of wealthy families) and the observances of a single festival of the parish in a year was done by a member of a wealthy family. He was called *presudeenti*. They were the patrons for the cultural activities. This was a part of power struggle and an important feature was *CaviTTunaaTakam*. This has changed its function from a religious means of conversion into a religious object for entertainment. Later due to the socio-economic reasons there was a change in the nature of *presudeentis*. A group of people started celebrating the festivals. This made another change in the patronage of the *CaviTTunaaTakam*; it slowly fell into the hands of the performers as the patrons. The function was merely out of their interest and for recreation. But it was considered as part of their identity. The nuances of the style itself gave an individuality to the form. So it freed the *CaviTTunaaTakam* from the clutches of the restrictions made in the case of themes which was supposed to be Christian in spirit. *CaviTTunaaTakam* adopted whatever was accessible and enjoyable for the people. But the Christian spirit was unconsciously there, because it was a part of their Christian identity. Recently the patronship changed the hands from the performers to the business households, NGO's, Governmental organizations, clubs etc. due to the commercialization impact on the community and the land.

From the above discussion it can be surmised that the nature of patron did not remain constant but varied according to the times. In the initial phases the Church became the dominant sponsor. This can be equated with the classical tradition where in an institution always supported the art form. In the Indian context it was the temple or the courts. In the Kerala Christian performance tradition the Church supported the art form. The second phase of patronage may be seen as folk traditional practice. All the folk art forms through out the sub-continent survived because of the performer and the community interest and, therefore, they became the chief patrons. The reciprocity norms were interwoven between the community and the performers in such a way that the performance became a right to the artist and to make the performance possible has become the obligation on the part of the community. The third stage of patronage can

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be viewed as popular tradition. The art form survives in popular tradition cutting across different strata of society and in the process commercializes itself for its survival.

To conclude, *CaviTTunaaTakam* originated with the advent of the Portuguese missionaries and sustained due to the acculturation with the native traditional art forms. However the whole process of acculturation over a period of time was necessitated by certain cultural influences, historical forces and ideological strands.

In terms of cultural influences the west even Christendom played dominant role as the feeder of ideology into the written text of the art form. The native influence can be seen at the performance text level. When the written text becomes a performance, the natives as performers and the audience visualized these texts from their cultural background which resulted in the hybridization of the art form itself.

The process of hybridization was due to atleast three major historical forces over the period of time. The **pre-colonial**, colonial and post-colonial forces shaped the *CaviTTunaaTakam* to facilitate the elite, the folk, and the popular traditions to survive even to this present day. This long journey of *CaviTTunaaTakam* witnessed several sponsors right from the Church to the individual business households on one hand and on the other divergent communities as audience to it.

Notes

1. **Sabeena** Raphy, *CaviTTunaaTakam*, (Kottayam: SPCS, 1964).
2. Interview with K.L. Bernard (historian) dated 4th May, 1993.
3. T.M. **Chummar**, *Padya Sahitya charithram* (kottayam: NBS, 1973).
4. For details regarding the four latin catholic castes see Francis Day, *Land of perumals of Cochin its past and its present* (Madras, 1863) 231. Their martial background and tradition is explained in detail in E.P. Antony, "Martial Heritage of Latin Catholics", *Christian Heritage of Kerala*, ed. K.J. John (Cochin: L.M. Pylee Foundation, 1981) 117-127.
5. S.K. Nair, *Keralattile Natoti naaTakamgal* (Madras: Madras University Publication, 1962) 134-44.
6. Barbosa, *Barbosas Description of East Africa and Malabar* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1866) or Dames, Mansel longworth ed. and trans., *The book of Durate Barbosa* (London, Royal Academy of Sciences, 1921).
7. The then Lords who had an intimate relationship with ruling class of country and religion (Brahmins). They were the sudras who later raised to the rank of Kshatriyas. See the word Nair in Herman Gundert, *Guderttu Nigandu* (Kottayam: Vidyarthi mithram, 1972).
8. The quotation is from Sabeena Raphy, *CaviTTunaaTakam*, *Parishat Quarterly*, 25 (1956) 336.
9. Cf. K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *Kochi Rajya Charithram* 1st ed. Vol. I (Trichur: Bharathi Vilaasam Press, 1912) 255-56.
10. See Raphy, *Parishat* 25 (1956) 336-37. See also John, *Christian Heritage*, 117-27.
11. Gouvea mentions, some troupes from Cochin performed some kind of performances in order to entertain Archbishop Menezis in the synod of Diamper. See Gouvea, *Jornada*.
12. Paul Kuritz, *The making of theatre history* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988) 4-8.

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13. K.M. **Varughese**, “**Purathana** Kristiyanikalude Punnyaha **Karmangal**”, *Malayala Manorama* 4 Jan. 1938.
14. Glynne Wickham, *Medieval Theatre*, (London: Cambridge University Publication, 1987) 125-26.
15. See, Richard Axton, *European Drama of the Early Middle Ages* (London: Hutchinson, 1974) 25.
16. These lines quoted from the **chester** octavian play in Axton, *European Drama*, 39, 185.
17. Wickham, *Medieval Theatre*, 22.
18. Wickham, *Medieval Theatre*, 125-149.
19. For example see Axton, *European Drama*, 33.
20. For more details see. William **Tydemann**, *English Medieval Theatre 1400-1500* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986) 19.
21. See Axton, *European Drama*, 29.
22. For the text of Antichrist see Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church Vol. 2* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933) 524-25.
23. Cf. Axton, *European Drama*, 33.
24. Cf. Axton, *European Drama*, **43-45**, for similar examples see E.K. Chambers, *Medieval Stage 2 vols.* (London: Oxford University Press, 1903) Book 11.
25. See Axton, *European Drama*, 45, 88.
26. Cf. Young, *Medieval Church Vol.*, 11, 412.
27. Both these parts, one liturgical (*Auto*) and the other with secular over tones (*Moiriscada*) depicts the victory of Christians over pagans (turks) in the background of crusades. For details regarding Sri Lankan **Balasanta Nadagam**, which goes in Parallel with the above. See Goonatilleka, *Nadagama*, 62-63.

28. See Chambers, *Medieval Stage I*, 225. For details on the Saint, see, F.L. Cross, ed. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (London: Oxford Uni. Press, 1974).
29. See Chambers, *Medieval Stage I*, 222-23.
30. For the Variations see Chambers, *Medieval Stage I*, 217.
31. Cf. Axton, *European Drama* 34.
32. Axton, *European Drama*, 34, see also Bertha Phillpotts, *The Elder Edda and Ancient Scandinavian Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Publication, 1920).
33. Chambers, *Medieval Stage I*, 224.
34. See K.L. Bernard, *Kerala and Portuguese*, 33-42. For the arrival of Jesuits, Augustinians, Dominicans and other missionaries in the sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries, see Menon, *Kerala Charithram* 264-66.
35. For the accounts of Portuguese atrocities against the Muslims, see Sheik, Saimuddin, *Tuhffuthul Mujahiddeen*, trans. Velayudhan Panikkassery (Kottayam: NBS, 1978).
36. Decrees of sessions III and IX of the synod of Diamper, see Zacharia, the *Acts and Decrees* 90-109, 202-14. The condemnations were aimed at many of the social customs shared by the St. Thomas Christians with non-christian communities and they show the portuguese radical interpretation of Christianity and their contempt toward other religions.
37. For an example, Raphy, *CaviTTunaaTakam* 212-13. This anecdotal account portray the ban of cinna roottoon in 1930 at Gothuruthi.
38. *vaNakkamaasam* Which means a month of religious obedience to one particular Saint. Kerala christians observe thirty one day long prayer sessions devoted to different saints (example, St. Sebastin *vaNakkamaasam*) which includes a reading of an incident from the life of the saint, a small retreat about it and a special set of prayers on the last day i.e., *vaNakkamaasa Odukkam* the prayer end with the family sharing of *Pachoru* (rice Cooked with jaggery) and they celebrate the day with burning crackers.

Chapter - 4

CaviTTunaaTakam: Text, Texture and Textuality

Any theatrical form, by and large, is based on a text for its performance. The text narrates the development of the story line based on the plot of the play, in other words the text determines the structure of the play and in general, the process of the development of the communicative, technique of the play. The proscenium theatre productions, by and large, based on a written text; whereas the folk theatre gives importance to the oral text. Nevertheless, both the texts, when acted out as play, produce the performance text. The text of *CaviTTunaaTakam* is a combination of both proscenium and folk theatrical textual format. It is interesting to note that *CaviTTunaaTakam* texts were primarily written down documents and were handed over through the centuries to the posterity. The written texts were not totally followed during the production of the performance. It is the plot which plays the central role in the production of performance text. However, certain key concepts (codes) are manipulated and used during the play. Those key concepts (codes) are derived from the phrases of the written texts. In combination with this, traditional and conventional idioms were also used in the play as to add the flavour of a distinct character to the play. In a nutshell, the process of development of the text takes place at three levels. 1) The author's level, 2) the performers level 3) the audience level. These three levels converge at various points and produce the meanings of the text of the performance. These meanings are subject to change whenever there is a change in any of the above three levels. These levels of interaction again are determined by the temporal (space/time) factors and the patrons who act as external agencies in influencing the play. Therefore, every play production, to an extent, is unique and novel; and gives life to the theatre in general and *CaviTTunaaTakam* in particular.

Keeping in view the complex relationships in the production of the text, the following chapter is divided into sub-themes such as: Text, Texture and Textuality.

1

The Text

Different components that go into the making of a text need to be seen from a micro level in order to understand the dynamics of the production of the texts. There are three major components. They are: (a) *CaviTTunaaTakam* texts being primarily written down,

the authors (or the directors in the form of *aasaans* who become an integral part of the production process of the text, (b) manuscripts and the written scripts as a representative of the nature of plot of the play, (c) Themes as reflections of the distinctive character of the text. This three major components are further elaborated in the following discussion.

The Authors

The authors of the earlier texts were unknown. It is difficult to ascertain who the authors of these *CaviTTunaaTakam* were. The scholars on *CaviTTunaaTakam* tried to answer this question in various ways. Sabeena Raphy referred to a sage like figure called *cinnattambi aNNaavi* who had composed the earlier drama called *birasīna naaTakam*. (St.Brijith) and,¹ in her opinion, this was the first drama which made a tremendous change in the subject matter of *CaviTTunaaTakam* plays. The earliest drama like *kaarl-maan* only dealt with the heroic combats, valorous deeds and gave prior importance to war in an atmosphere similar to that of European crusades. But, *birasīna* dealt with the story of a beautiful maiden and her struggle to be in the moral way of life against the trickery of 'Alwan' the antagonist. At last, the truth and the moral chastity win against all the bad elements. The text with the this theme upholds a Christian way of life with its spiritual and moral chastity gave birth to the production of such type of texts in this genre. The above mentioned text excels the others in its **rhymic** qualities and textual concreteness. The oral tradition also mentions *cinnattambi aNNaavi* as the earliest **author/aasaan** of these **plays**.²

T.M. Chummar and Chummar Choonaal favour the authorship to Tamil scholars.³ In the former's opinion, *cinnattambi aNNaavi*, *veetanaayakam* Pillai and other Christian authors who belonged to *cochin-koTuñāLLuur* and its surroundings might have composed *CaviTTunaaTakam*. The latter tries to attribute the authorship of early plays to *Veetanaayakam* Pillai or *Veetanaayakam* Sastrikal with the help of Tamil Encyclopaedia.⁴

Some of the present *aasaans* too say about this *Veetanaayakam*. In the words of Peter Koloth, this dramas were brought by *veetanaayakar*.⁵ There is a lot of scope for the influence of the middle spokesmen or the scholars on formulating the opinion of the folk performers, who bear this performance tradition.⁶

Some texts of the early days contain details of the time period of its writing and of its author (as in the case of *pilamenaacaritam naaTakam*. (St. Philomina). In the **beginning** of that text, there is a stanza. The lines of which are:

*aTiyinuTai*guru *uTaiya caraNam* *paNintu koNTum*
celvam mikum caka *sitrat tooTu eTTucata*milanki
ceernta SooTacamamaam kaNakku koNTum
cekam pukaznta rakkacnaiyaam piRanta kaalam [S.R.]

This lines refer to a time period of adding 8x10 with a thousand and then adding sixteen to it thereby meaning 1816 (A.D.) (eighteen hundred and sixteen). This play was supposed to be written by *miinku* (Michael) *aNNaavi* of Pallippuram. In the same way, the initial *viruttams* of some *cuvati*s suggest the name and the place of the author along with the reference about his hereditary lineage. Usually, the name of the places are allegorically described like, *pukaz koNTa kocci*, *vaLar koNTa manacherry Desam*, *celvamikum TumboLi* or in the lines.

The connection of *cinnattambi* in a legend with the 'oath of bended cross of Mattanchery' i.e. *kuunankurisu cattiyam* refers to the time period of *birasinanaaTakam*. *kuunankurisu cattiyam* is historical fact which dates back to A.D.1653.⁷ There was clash between the native christians and the Portuguese. The native Christians took an oath against the Portuguese rule and became *puttankuuTTukar* by making the cross at the Mattanchery as a witness.⁸ The legend behind making this cross belted was with *cinnattambi aNNaavi*.⁹ This gives one an approximate time period of the evolution of *birasinanaaTakam*. But, the text of *kaarlmaan naaTakam* and its authorship still remain unclear. So, one can probably estimate it as more than 350 years old. The time period related to the authors *veetanaayakam* Pillai/Sastri clearly suggests that they might be authors of some of the later texts; it shows clear evidence of the authorship of Tamil poetic scholars having Christian faith and spirit.

Some of the early *cuvati*s bear names like *ceccutaccan* (servant of Jesus) and *mariataccan* (servant of Mary). These were the titles usually used by the missionaries.¹⁰ This factor along with the sharp understanding of the European history and legends of Charlemagne by the earliest author suggest one to consider some Portuguese missionary as the earliest author of these dramas. It might have happened like this -: the missionaries were in search of a counter art form to win away the local/native christians (mostly newly converted) from the temple performances prevalent in this country. So, the idea of *CaviTTunaaTakam* was conceived by the Portuguese missionaries and was written with the help of some local language scholar(s). The proficiency of some of the early missionaries in the language provokes one to argue that the the Tamil scholars played

a relatively minor part in the making of the earliest texts.¹¹ Another important point is that the literary language of the then Kerala was **Tamil/centamiZ**; this also suggests the possibility of the involvement of local language scholar(s) rather than a poet from **Tamilnadu**. Their time period also complements this argument. They composed **rhymic stanzas** and their literary scheme made a set pattern for this art form.

During the glorious period of *CaviTTunaaTakam* i.e., the late 19th century and the early 20th century, a number of texts came into existence. Most of them were imitations or interpolated ones. There are several local variations for *kaarlmaan naaTakam*. The authorship of some of the texts was claimed by so many people. But through a close scrutiny, one can easily understand that those are simply scribes who transcribed these plays. The sole authority of the *aasaan* over the script also created this problem of making more number of texts for a single theme, because the *aasaans* from the various places needed a written script each for their authority and its legitimacy. Thus, all of them claimed the authorship of the same text. They also started writing and, in this process, there was a tendency of taking up any kind of story and making it a play by imbibing poetic stanzas from other *naaTakams*. As for example *kaarlmaan naaTakam* has more than four local varieties. Moreover, they were not ready to part with their text. They claimed that they acquired it as part of their traditional inheritance. During this phase of passing hands, a lot of improvisational scenes and dialogues came into the texts. The early Tamil scripts with the alliteration of Malayalam at a latter stage became a kind of 'Malayam-Tamil' scripts.¹² Some of the *cuvaTi* of a single text claim its authorship to a person from one particular place and it also contains the reference about the place. The *cuvaTi* which mentions the author as Vareechan *aNNaavi* and the place as *pukaz koNTa kocchi* (the famous cochin) as mentioned by P.J. Thomas in his book establishes Vareechan *aNNaavi* as the author of that particular text.¹³ The *viruttam* and *koluviltaru* of the text by Vareechan *aNNaavi* mentioned by P.J. Thomas also differs from others and it possesses its own quality. This makes this thesis give complete credit of the authorship of that particular text to Vareechan *aNNaavi* of Cochin.

Apart from the earlier plays, certain details regarding the authorship of the later (mostly native, having themes directly related to the soil and social context) plays are also known. At this juncture it is difficult to differentiate between the authors and *aasaans*, so the following table shows a number of *aasaans/authors* and their places.

This partial list includes the *aasaans/authors* after *cinnattambi aNNaavi, veetanaayakam*

Pillai most of the *aasaans* claimed as *shishyas* of *cinnattambi*

Table - 9

<i>aasaan</i> / Author	Place
Anthonikkutti aNNaavi	Manappattu
Vareechan <i>aNNaavi</i>	Cochin
Vareed <i>aNNaavi</i>	Cochin
Anthoni <i>aNNaavi</i>	Kottayil
John <i>aNNaavi</i>	Kottayil
Souriyar <i>aNNaavi</i>	Ponjikkara
Sanchon <i>aNNaavi</i>	
Cherrichen <i>aNNaavi</i>	
miinku (michael) <i>aNNaavi</i>	Pallippuram
Agastheenju <i>aNNaavi</i>	Pallippuram
Achambi <i>aNNaavi</i>	Pallippuram
koccu Ouseph <i>aasaan</i>	Edavanakkadu
Ouseph <i>aasaan</i>	Gothuruthu
Korath <i>aasaan</i>	Gothuruthu
Varu (Varghese) <i>aasaan</i>	Gothuruthu
Chouri <i>aasaan</i>	Madapplam thuruthu
Ouseppachon Maliakkal	Pallippuram
V.G. John	Fort Kochi
Pattalom	
T.F. Joseph	Fort Kochi
Eesy Joseph	Thiruthippuram
Raphel	
Acharuparambil	Pallippuram
P.O. Thomas	Neerikodu

Some of the texts were mere imitations of old ones or the themes and the lines were changed with the names of characters and setting. A number of texts were just transcribed into the Malayalam language with minor changes from the old *koTumtamiz* texts. Apart from this, there was a custom among the *aasaans*/Authors to take the name of their own *aasaan* (master) to keep the traditional inheritance of their authoritative position. eg. Varu *aasaan* who reportedly wrote six plays, took the name Chouri *aasaan* after

the death of his **aasaan** (Chouri **aasaan**). This newly christened chouri **aasaan** is considered to be the author of the famous malayalam *CaviTTunaaTakam viirakkumaaran*. The **aasaans/authors** who belonged to different localities changed the script according to their convenience and ability to remember the lines belonging to the play, because most of them acquired the scripts through oral traditions. The earlier *aNNaavis*, to keep their authority, never used to part with the scripts. The same habit continues in the present days also.¹⁴

The above table also shows two important aspects (1) The coming or the evolution of native/folk stories and puranic themes in the most of the malayalam written plays of the recent era. (2) The use of the title *aasaans* by the masters and authors towards the latter part as *aasaans* (a malayalam term) instead of *aNNaavi* (Tamil Term). This shows that the transition of *CaviTTunaaTakam* texts corresponds with the evolution of malayalam language and literature from the clutches of Tamil. So the study of this development of *CaviTTunaaTakam* texts into malayalam can easily enrich the knowledge of the complexities behind the evolution of malayalam literary history (taking this microcosm to analyse the macrocosm of literary historical development of malayalam will bring out a number of hidden processes behind the transition and evolution of a language).

Manuscripts

Unlike the other folk performance transitions of Kerala, *CaviTTunaaTakam* attributes great importance to the performance text, right from the rituals performed at the beginning of rehearsals to the actual final performance. These performance texts are not published so far. The early works such as the plays of *kaarlmaan (charlemagne)*, *birasiina* (St. Brijith) and *jeenoova* (St. Genevieve) were probably written during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Earlier, they were oral narratives traditionally possessed by certain families. The text known as *cuvaTi* (hand written script)¹⁵ were first written in palm leaves in *vaTTaeZuttu* or *giraantaaksara*, the languages then used for inscription in Kerala. These Palm leaves scripts are no longer available.¹⁶

Later works show that a mixture of Tamil and malayalam scripts are also available. The recent scripts are written in malayalam with malayalam vocabulary. Apart from the recent additions, most of the works were authored by anonymous writers. The *aasaans* were keeping these scripts as their own property inherited by them traditionally or orally transmitted through generations. They were not ready to part with the text. This stiii prevailing tendency of the **author/aasaan** resulted in the creation of a number of scripts

for the same play and also barred the printing of the scripts. This shows the prevailing hierarchy/monarchy of the *aasaan* or *aNNaavi* in this genre. The control over the scripts made *aasaan* the sole authority of this art form.

The texts

There are about seventy plays (titles) in the *CaviTTunaaTakam* repertoire. Most of them have not been performed more than a few times. Some of the texts are mere imitations or reproductions of the earliest texts. In the recent times, the early texts like *kaarlmaan* are split into four texts: (1) *cinna roottoon naaTakam* or (*koccu roottoon*) (2) *Parimarude* Maranam (the death of peers) (3) *aanjellikka naaTakam* (4) *kaarlmaan (plorippus baagam* because earlier *kaarlmaan naaTakams* were performed for all fifteen nights with more than a hundred performers. Now a days, the constraints of time and money have made the performers/groups wind up the plays into durations of two to three hour.

The early palm leaf scripts are not available but the scripts available in the paper are written in Tamil mixed *malayalam koTumtamiz* and in Malayalam. Some of the old texts like (a) *alleccu naaTakam* (St. Alexius) and (b) *kaarlmaan naaTakam* (early script) are in Tamil. i.e., *koTuñtamiZ*; their language can be compared in certain aspects to the Tamil written script of *muuvaracunaaTakam* or *muunRuraajakuuttu* of *attikkooTu* village of Palghat district of Kerala. Some of the recent scripts are purely in Malayalam. Another important factor is that most of these malayalam scripts have themes from Hindu puranic epics (like *Mahabharatha* and *Ramayana*) and also social/moral native folk stories. The examples are: (a) *bahavad doodh* (author T.F. Joseph, fort cochin) (b) *aZalkusumam* (Raphel Acharuparambil, Gothuruthy). Most of the available written scripts were written with malayalam letters and their language is a mixture of Tamil and Malayalam. Even though there are more than fifty texts available, only a few of them were performed in this decade. The most performed play and the one in demand is *kaarlmaan naaTakam*; the others are St. George *naaTakam*, St. Sebastin *naaTakam*, *taaviidum gooliyaattum* or *taaviidum turbuutavum*, *viirakkumaaran caritam*. The early texts consist of the themes of kings and lords who were martyred for the spreading of Christianity. After this, saint lores came into the scene and there were a lot of plays based on the stories of European/christian saints who lived as examples of pure *christians*. Simultaneously, the stories from the bible and apocryphal texts came into the repertoire. Most of them were stories from the old testament of bible. By that time the, natives

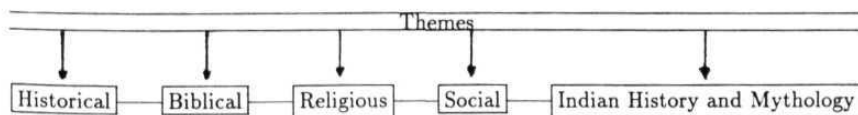
became familiar with the biblical stories and the converted started living as Christians. Only after this, the native folk stories with social and moral lessons came into existence. Now a days, there are texts which consist of the puranic themes of Hindus. This pattern of the evolution of texts clearly indicates the structured way of missionary enterprises, its ambitions of conversion and its development into the making of Kerala Christian society. The later stages of texts show the natives ability to react and make their own texts by taking stories from their soil and mythologies.

Themes

CaviTTunaaTakam themes comprising of a wide varieties of stories had absorbed various trends and changes from the time of its missionary evolution till date. The aim of every story is to educate the village folk. This is how it was conceived and constructed for the christians as well as the non-christians. Earlier the major aim behind the theme was 'Propaganda'. To propagate the Christian ideology, themes were constructed with the biblical and Christian historical stories. The major sources of the themes were the histories and the romances of medieval Christian kings and lords who waged war for the establishment of a new Christendom during the middle ages. There were biblical as well as apocryphal stories including the saint lores which were later conceived and adapted for the making of *CaviTTunaaTakam*. During the later stages, a kind of interest arose in taking up folk stories. In the recent times, there were stories dealing with Indian history and native Mythology as well.

The themes of *CaviTTunaaTakam* can be divided into the following categories.¹⁷

The themes are divided as shown in the picture/table below.



Historical:

The term 'historical' is used here in a very broad sense. The *CaviTTunaaTakam* plays of this category are proved to be the first and most famous among others in this genre. Most of them were directly or indirectly connected with the Christian history of medieval Europe. Even though some of them have little traits of factual characters according to the recorded history, they are also considered in this section. Some of the plays were parts of epic narratives like the Charlemagne legends. This part includes the Christian

legends/mythology of western Europe and other parts of Christendom. This part includes unauthentic or **unverifiable** stories, handed down by the tradition and accepted in its own milieu as accurate history. Most of the core facts in this might be a tiny nugget of reality.

Table -10

No.	Title of the play	No. of Actors	Remarks
1.	kaarlmaan naaTakam " caritam	42	The earliest and most performed
2.	jeenoova naaTakam	38	performed at different times
3.	alpoonsu naaTakam	26	performed at different times
4.	aanjellikka	21	performed at different times
5.	Robert	not known	rarely performed
6.	Peregruese	not known	rarely performed
7.	Lucina naaTakam (Princess Lucina of Hungary)	not known	rarely performed
8.	rooltoon cinna rooltoon, koccu Roldon	28	Performed at different times
9.	NapoliannaaTakam	32	less performed
10.	Clovis naaTakam	34	rarely performed
11.	Fabiola	30	rarely performed
12.	Richardinte <i>dirakrtyam</i>	24	less performed
13.	Victoriya naaTakam	26	rarely performed
14.	Stanely <i>Vijayam</i>	20	rarely performed
15.	Nabilon	31	rarely performed
16.	Alexton	not known	rarely performed
17.	Jameslar	not known	rarely performed
18.	Sanjiclos	not known	rarely performed
19.	Bales	not known	recent script
20.	Paul Melin	not known	
21.	paarimaaruTai maraNam		recent script

Biblical

These were the plays having themes from old testament and new testament. Most of the earlier ones were from old testament and it is not correctly followed as in the Bible. There were a lot of linked stories of other characters and fictious elements in these plays. Most of the stories were effective means of teaching the converted **christians** the Christian doctrines. These plays helped the **christians** to get acquaintance with biblical stories.

Table - 11:

No.	Title of the play	No. of actors	Remarks
1.	Istakki naaTakam	48	Issac, O.T
2.	Purva Ouseph <i>naaTakam</i>	41	Ordo Joseph, O.T
3.	Yakkobu <i>naaTakam</i>	not known	O.T.
4.	Tobiyas	39	O.T.
5.	fcoccu/Tobiyas (abridged)	29	
6.	Abraham <i>naaTakam</i>	not known	O.T.
7.	taaviidu <i>vijayam/</i> taaviidum gooliyaattum/ taaviidum turathmavum		Most performed.
8.	Samson	32	
9.	Gabriel	32	N.T.
10.	Barabas	51	N.T.
11.	Tiru Vastram	not known	
12.	Yakkobinte Makkal		recent script.

Religious (saintly)

This part mainly deals with the texts on the life of saints. All of them are directly related with the saint lores of Europe. Some of the themes portray the influence of the native cultural milieu. Most of them hold the utmost Christian spiritual way of life as a model pattern set for the people by saints.

No.	Title of the play	No. of actors	Remarks
1.	alleecu <i>naaTakam</i> Mar alleecu <i>naaTakam</i>	32	St. Alexius
2.	Alphonsa <i>naaTakam</i>	not known	
3.	birasiña <i>naaTakam</i> Brajina <i>naaTakam</i>	not known	St. Brijith
4.	<i>givargii.su paTayaaLi/</i> givargiisumperupaampum	28	St. George
5.	St. Sebastin	24	
6.	Lilly	not known	St. Elizebeth

7.	<i>pilamenaa naaTakam</i>	not known	St. Philomina
8.	Martin Katha	not known	St. Martin
9.	Anastasiya	not known	
10.	Sabina <i>naaTakam</i>	not known	
11.	<i>Cathrina naaTakam</i>	not known	
12.	Nicholas <i>naaTakam</i>	not known	

Some of the above mentioned saint lores were later considered (proved) to be pagan stories or the folk stories by the Holy Roman catholic church and their positions as saints were taken off by the papal authority, example St. Philomina, **St. George** etc. But in the Christendom, especially in certain locales, they were considered to be patron saints and the churches exist in their name and festivals are celebrated in their honour.

Social Themes

Most of the stories in this category came from the moralistic, folk/popular story lines. These are later inclusions in this repertoire. Most of them resemble the life of natives and are very much connected to their environment. A number of them were popular as *CaviTTunaaTakams*. This category shows some of the recent scripts.

Table - 13

No.	Title of the play	No. of actors	Remarks
1.	<i>kanaka balan</i>	Not fixed	
2.	<i>komala chandrika</i>	n	
3.	<i>viirakkumaaran</i>	"	most performed
4.	<i>dharmistan</i>	"	
5.	<i>valsakumari</i>	"	
(i.	<i>sathyapalan</i>	n	performed at various times
7.	<i>vanabalan</i>	-	
S.	<i>aZalkusumam</i>	"	recent scripts
9.	<i>kattu rani</i>	n	recent scripts
10.	<i>jnana sundari</i>	•26	performed at different times
11.	<i>athisaya valli</i>		performed at different times
12.	Kottara Rahasyam	not known	recent scripts
13.	<i>thirayum theerakkattum</i>		recent scripts

Themes Based on the Indian history and mythology:

After the 1960s, stories from the Indian history and the Hindu puranic epics were introduced into the *CaviTTunaaTakam* repertoire as themes. Another native dance-drama form called 'Ballet' (*Balle*) might have caused this inclusion. This **dance-dramas**

only deal with the Hindu puranic epics. They are mostly performed at the time of **ulcavam** (temple festivals).

Table - 14

No.	Title of the play	No. Actors	Remarks
1.	Akbar	Not fixed	
2.	Anarkali	"	
3.	Chandraguptan (king of Maurya)		
4.	Dharmaputran		
5.	Dharmistan		
6.	Bharatha Yudhattinte nandi		recent script
7.	bahavad doodh		performed
8.	Swami Ayyappan		not performed

The above tables include most of the *CaviTTunaaTakam* texts which were in existence. Some of the *cuvaTis* were not found; only references by the living performers are taken into consideration. A number of texts show similarities in their themes and verses. They were also treated as individual texts. There are quite a few of locally varied *cuvaTi* for the same plays like *kaarlmaan*, *jeenoova*, *St. Sebastin*, *viirakkumaaran*, *St. George*, *taveedu vijayam* were available. Some of the plays like *Peregruese*, *Bales*, *Lilly*, *Dharnistan* and *Swami Ayyappan* were not yet performed.

The first three tables include plays of the colonial period. During that period, Religious, historical and biblical themes were popular and were established mostly. The Indian history and the Hindu mythological themes are the latest phenomena. Social themes with the local colour came into existence earlier to the Indian historical themes; but became popular only during the post-independence scenario.

The maximum number of plays in the first table shows the popularity of historical dramas with its wars and conquests and the *CaviTTunaaTakam* format's flexibility towards it. Even though *kaarlmaan* was one among the first dramas, it surpassed all these ages and is still existing as the most popular play of the genre. This theme might have influenced and attracted people to compose more plays similar in story line. As the war and fighting scenes are the main attractions in *CaviTTunaaTakam*, the recent authors of the new themes (i.e., the last table) have chosen such histories and myths where there is a lot of scope for presenting combat scenes. The tables easily show three stages of classification of the history and the development of *CaviTTunaaTakam* vis a vis (a) Religion

(b) Recreation (c) Commerce. The stage (a) comprises of the texts in the above tables (numbers 1,2,3) which deal with the religious themes. It also reveals the ideological **pro**-pagandist plan of the early patron, i.e., The **Church**. (b) Includes the texts in the table (4) and shows an era of performances which is an unavoidable element during Church festivities. By this time of recreation, the patronage had a shift towards the hands of Christian community. The phase (c) is the current phenomenon with the individuals as patrons . During the initial phase of this stage, one can observe the new entries of the Hindu puranas like the table (5) into the repertoire. Later, alongwith the present decline in the popularity of the genre, only the popular and ‘needful’ *CaviTTunaaTakams* remained in existence. In other words, some of the plays passed through this three stages of *CaviTTunaaTakam* history by changing their function.

It is in keeping with the discussion to have a comparative analysis of some of the story lines/themes from the above categories. The stories cited in the historical and saintly (i.e., Religious) category were popular in Europe and were retold generation after generation. These themes have a number of similar characteristics and plot structure. Later, most of the saint lores became enriched with the local/native folk themes and some of the plays with its local interpretations become more popular among the Kerala Christians. Even though they have portrayed and adapted the popular folk trends and taste; the basic characteristics, especially of the heroes, remain the same.

Synopsis of saintly/Religious CaviTTunaaTakams

St.George play is the most famous *CaviTTunaaTakam* among this group. This play is still in the Repertoire of the existing *CaviTTunaaTakam* troupes of Kerala.

Source

In the original source, **St.George** is the patron saint of England and a martyr for the Christian faith. The time period of this character is supposed to be before the ‘**Emperor Constantine of Rome**’.¹⁸ The character is very popular in the West and the East. Western medieval sword dances and mummers plays portray the character of **St.George** with a lot of local improvisations. **St.George** is often confused with king George in the mummers play, especially in the Lutten Worth Mummers Play of 1856.¹⁹ The title says about **St.George** but the fight fought by king George who dies in the combat for the country and earns martyrdom. There were a number of popular stories around this character in the West. In one of them, **St.George** was put to death three times when was chopped into small pieces first, then was buried deep in the earth and was consumed by fire; but

each time he resurrected by the power of God. There are a lot of wild as well as Pagan stories centered around **St.George**.²⁰ **St.George** was a character who moved around with others like Bessy (transvestite) Lady, Young Lover, Doctor around the streets of medieval England in the plough plays of Nottinghamshire.²¹ Even after Henry VIII's decree (1537) abolishing the holidays of majority of annual festivals in England, there was an exception for **St.George day**.²² This created a number of productions/performance dealing with **St.George** theme. The similarity of the theme with 'Sir Gawain and the Green knight' of the vernacular literature of Medieval period also shows the pagan origin of **St.George** stories.

The story line

The *CaviTTunaaTakam* theme describes the life of **St.George (givargiisu)**, a warrior who fought bravely against the evil elements and won glory for the service of Christianity. Big Dragon with all its devilish characters prevented the free flow of water in a river of England. This was the cause behind the sorrow of the people of that particular place. Later, they partially resolved it through an agreement with the Dragon ie: they will give a maiden each day to the Dragon for its food. Thus, almost all the beautiful girls were sacrificed. Finally the turn of the princess (the only daughter of the king) came.²³ She was brought to the place. Suddenly a young brave man rushed into the scene riding on a white horse and with a big spear encountered the dragon and killed the beast with his spear. Then, the brave youth leaves the place. But before the youth leaves the prince could make a memorable mark on his upper-garment by dipping her palm in the flowing blood of the dead beast. Later the king searches for the youth and finds him out due to this blood stained mark on his **gown**. *givargiisu* was not ready to accept the honour and presents given to him by the king because the king was leading a life with pagan beliefs and its Gods. One version ends up with the conversion of this pagan king into Christianity and another prolonged version includes the later displeasure of the king towards *givargiisu's* faith. This version ends up with the martyrdom of **St.George** for Christian faith.²⁴

As the text has a number of *cuvati's*, there are certain differences in some of them. The texts were titled like (a) *givargiisum perupaampum* (b) *givargiisu paTayaaLi* (c) **St.George naaTakam**. (d) *givargiisum turbuutavum*. In one of the plays **St.George** is introduced in the beginning as a warrior in the service of the king. He knows about the ill fate of the princess and volunteers himself to confront the dragon. After a brave

encounter with the monster, he overpowers and kills it. By this action, the princess fell in love with **St.George**. But **St.George** was not inclined to worldly pleasures; so he leaves the place. The theme is filled with thrilling and adventurous actions which portray the combat scenes in which **St.George** emerges as the best warrior in the country and the captain of army (senapathy) as well.

Apart from the stories dealing with valour, adventure and combats there is another kind of saintly dramas which portray the sacrifice of all worldly pleasures and life in favour of the strict moral path of Christian faith. *alleesu naaTakam-* a *CaviTTunaaTakam* on **St.Alexius**, is an important example of this kind. Alexius was born in a very rich family of Rome. He was the one and the only son and his father wanted him to be the captain of the kings army. Alexius was the most handsome, well built gentleman of Rome; so he deserved a coveted position in the country. But, at the same time, he was a strong believer and follower of christ. He wanted to live and follow the path of christ as a confirmed bachelor. Eventhough the father was a Christian, he was against Alexius's wish. So he somehow forced Alexius into marriage. But, the same night Alexius confessed before his wife about his belief and leaves her. (The scene shows the elegant character of Alexius; and the sweet and simple way of making the girl understand his wish marvels many other texts in Literature). Alexius went out and gave away all his precious marriage attires to a begger and in turn worn his rags. As a begger, He roamed around Rome, Italy, preaching christian faith and way of life. Later, he became wornout, tired, and diseased and came back to Rome, On the way, he met his father, who couldn't recognize his son. Alexius begged his father for a place to rest and his father allowed him. He stayed in his own house under the staircase for more than seventeen years with prayers and fasting. Later, after his death, the family members including his wife (she was waiting all these years) found out (from some documents in the hands of this dead person) that he was the one for whom they waited and longed with prayers all these days. Paradoxically they considered and treated him as the wretched in habitant in that family. Thematic relation of this story with the life of **St.Francis** Assisi and Budha is remarkable. The popularity of the story of Buddha might have encouraged or prompted the selection of this story. The saintly themes include not only the valour and the martyrdom of saints for Christianity, but also their sacrifice of worldly pleasures for the sake of a Christian way of life. Most of the stories combine both these elements of themes.

Synopsis of a Biblical CaviTTunaaTakam

Source

The major source of this theme is the bible, except Barabas and Gabrieleel, all the plays were based on the old testament. The *CaviTTunaaTakam* Daveedu vijayam is still popular in the repertoire. As various *cuvaTis* show the titles are: (a) Daveedu vijayam (b) *taaviidum gooliyaattum* (c) *taaviidum turbuutavum*. The story of David and Goliath were quite prominent in the medieval ages; especially, the guild plays were having this theme in their productions.

The story of David is there in the 1st book of Samuel 16th and it continues through the 2nd book of *samuel* in the old Testament. David was a great ruler, a poet, a fine musician and a skillful military commander. David's story starts with the anointment of David by Prophet Samuel. Then he is in the court of king Saul and Goliath's challenge comes. David kills the philistine giant with his sling catapult and stone. This makes him more popular and Saul becomes jealous of him. Even after David's marriage with his daughter Michael, Saul tried to kill David. Finally David has to flee from Israel and he manage to hide in the caves from Saul's soldiers with his compatriots. Even though David gets chances to kill Saul, he waits till the death of Saul and Jonathan. Later both are killed in the war against the philistines. On his return to Judae, people proclaimed David as king.

The story continues with the wars led by David for the expansion of his kingdom. Finally he is able to defeat philistines throughly and make Jerusalem the capital of his kingdom. Soon Israel becomes the strongest country in that region. Even though he is a skillful leader, his family life is miserable due to the polygamy practised by David. The family ended finally in the fighting and killing of one son by the other. Some of his practices are against the wishes of God but later he laments and become a God fearing man and builds an alter in Jerusalem. *CaviTTunaaTakam* themes preferred the early part of David's story and his confrontation with Goliath. Those performers were very keen in portraying the victory of the Christian David upon the pagan philistine giant.

Synopsis of a Historical CaviTTunaaTakam

Source

The major sources behind the most famous *kaarlmaan naaTakam* can be divided into two categories: historical and legendary. The former centers around the historical figure Charlemagne (Carolus Magnus, Charles the Great), the king of Franks (A.D. 768-814)

who was one of the greatest rulers of all times. He, the eldest son of Peppin, played an important role in making the Papal state (places under the jurisdiction of Pope and therefore known as Holy Roman Empire) stronger and wider. He united most of the Western Europe into one vast Christian kingdom (Christendom) by waging war against The Lombards. In 800 A.D., he was anointed as the Holy Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III (795-816). His reign was famous for the massive conversions into Christian religion. His period witnessed the rise of architectural edifices with the revival of iconoclasm for the service of God. He also revived and re-established the Justinian laws in his country. All the more, his time was the most glorious period for the development of intellectual, cultural and religious life of the people. Later, this historical Emperor and his twelve valiant peers became the most popular characters in a row of legends. The Charlemagne legends (or the old french epic) portrayed this first religious and political unifier of Europe as an ardent enemy of Islam, by taking its freedom in portraying the spirit of an era rather than the historical precision.²⁵ These legends were popular from the beginning of the eleventh century which is the crusading era in Europe. They were called *Chanson de geste* ('songs of deeds' - Latin *geste*, in the sense of achievements in war). The most popular one among these is *La Chanson de Roland*,²⁶ which is written in **Anglo-Norman** dialect by an unknown author. This finest epic depicts the valorous wars waged by king Charlemagne along with the great peers including the most famous Roland (Olifant) and Oliver. Roland (the nephew of the Emperor), the leader of the rear guard, overshadows all others in this legend. *Chanson de Roland* ends with the disaster at Rencesvals where all his peers including Roland die in a battle against the Arabs. Later Charlemagne avenges the death of his peers by defeating the Arabs. Apart from the song of Roland (*Chanson de Roland*), many stories grew up and enriched the tradition of Charlemagne legends. The *Pelerinage de Charlemagne* (Charlemagne's pilgrimage) is one of the most interesting early *Chanson de geste* in the cycle of the king. The Latin *Historia karoli Magm et Rotholandi*, of about 1140 was supposed to be an account of the wars Emperor the in Spain and written by Archbishop Turpin. By 13th century, Norway had a vast compilation of these legends assembled under the title *Karlamagnussaga*. Most of these legends acquired and equated the historical facts which is accounted in the latin *Vita karoli magni* by Einhard, Charlemagne's biographer (died 840 A.D.).

The story line

kaarlmaan CaviTTunaaTakam also portrays this vast varied valorous accounts of the

Emperor *kaarlmaan* and *rooltoon* (Roland) like the Charlemagne legends and the song of Roland which have five and four parts respectively.²⁷ The present *CaviTTunaaTakam* tradition of Kerala also performs this epic as four individual plays. They are:

(a) **koccu rooltoon**, or *cinna rooltoon*: This *CaviTTunaaTakam* deals with the story of the birth of *rooltoon* in a cave as to Lord Milan and Bedatha, the sister of Charlemagne. Due to the Emperor's disliking towards their affair, Lord Milan and Bedatha were living in exile at that time. Later, after the death of Milan, the Emperor invites his sister, receives her and carefully takes up the charge of bringing up the nephew, the hero. The drama consists of the early period of **Roland's** life and his successful training culminating in the Emperor's announcement of making him the head of his rear guard.

(b) **aanjellikka naaTakam**: This drama deals with the young valiant *rooltoon's* romance with the beautiful *aanjellikka*, daughter of the Emperor of Turks **Avutharman** (Ottaman). It is filled with breath taking adventures and his combats along with his friend Oliver. The final combat ends up with his marrying of *aanjellikka* along with the conversion of Turk Emperor into Christianity. This drama shows thematic parallel with *Orlando Furioso* of Ariosto except in the final sequence. Here, in **Ludvico's** text, *rooltoon* becomes mad due to Angela's marriage to another person and later he annihilates **Agramante**, the Islamic king of Egypt.

(c) **kaarlmaan naaTakam plorippus baagam** This is the most famous and popular one which comprises of the continuous battle of the Emperor *kaarlmaan* against the Turk *Albiranth Blom*. Here, the formidable enemy finally accepts defeat. This drama features another popular character from the Turk side who is **Perabraas** or Peraplass, the gigantic warrior son of the Turk Emperor. Whose fearsome dual with Oliver and the final conversion into Christianity were some of the most famous scenes in the genre. Apart from this, the portion revolves around the love of Plorippus (the daughter of Albiranth Blom) towards Goudver Gonj, the most handsome among the twelve peers. The drama culminates with their successful affair and the complete victory of the peers on Turks.

(d) **paarimaaruTai maraNam** The most recent among the series, *paarimaaruTai maraNam* deals with the disaster of Rencesvals, due to the treacherous conspiracy of Galalon (Ganelon), the minister of Charlemagne. This portrays the death of Roland and Oliver during the sudden attack by the Turks. The final dialogue between Roland and Oliver is the most emotional part of the 'song of Roland'. Finally, *kaarlmaan* reaches the scene and with the help of God, completely destroys the Turks.

[In the **early** days this one was a part of the *plorippus baagam* and which prolonged till the final pilgrimage of *kaarlmaan*.]

From the foregone discussion, one can observe the importance of the authors and their background in producing scripts with native idioms adopting to the western themes. The themes mentioned above and the narrative technique of the text reveal that *CaviT-TunaaTakam* plays centered around the **lives** and the history of cultural heroes (the Royal personages or the Saints). The development of the character of the protagonist is done at the cost of other minor characters as well as that of the villains. So to say, **the** hero crosses the limit of a cultural hero of the community not just by defending his own community but also by opposing and ridiculing the villain and his associates, invariably belonging to the pagan community. Therefore, the nature the of plot is treated in an anti-thesis formulae where one force is the good, virtuous and by all means Christian, whereas the other is bad, evil and pagan. The **authors/aasaans** placed the Christian characters hierarchically higher than the pagan ones (in the Indian context the native religious characters) while nativising the themes. This dual scheme usually starts with the Durbar scene and **pro-**ceeds through the war/hunting scenes and ultimately culminates with the victory which is projected again in the Durbar scene. Therefore, the passage of the play from Durbar scene to the Durbar scene projects the hero as one capable of understanding the tensions and the problems that his reign is facing and of solving them. The first Durbar scene represents the protagonist as a mighty and shrewd personality and a problem is posed, wherein the villain is also projected as equally shrewd and strong. Then, in the final Durbar scene, the protagonist emerge as victorious by solving the problems posed to him in the form of defeating the villain and restoring the peace and prosperity in double fold.

Another important observation one can make in analysing the text is the development of the character of the hero itself, not in relation to the opponent but in relation with his own kin/ethnic group to project the hero as a 'moral hero'. In other words, the protagonist emerges as hero initially within his community and finally even to the pagan community. In the process of making the hero moral and ethical, he is made to undergo several levels of training which require both mental and physical abilities. This development of the hero character also passes through challenge and response mode. His facing challenges owing to the ethical and moral standards that he imbibes within him **makes** him get the support of the **super-numerary** and celestial powers as represented by fairies, magical animals and objects etc.

Thus, though the *CaviTTunaaTakam* texts, adapts western themes as mentioned earlier, the nature of the narrative is based on the folk tale-telling technique. This precisely means that the western Christian ideology is imparted through the native idioms thus making the texts cultural hybridities and, for this reason, even today *CaviTTunaaTakam* survives in parts of Kerala as a distinct but representative of Kerala Christian performance tradition.

II

The Texture

The texture of any given text informs how that text is interwoven or noted. This pattern of netting reflects the style of the text. It also shows the ability of the author and his creativity in producing the text and the whole-hearted involvement of his self by which he becomes an insider of the community (to whom he is producing the text) while producing the text. This **emic** stand of the author, in a way, perpetuates the longevity of the text in performance tradition. The texts are well received only when the quality of the texture is maintained and serves the purpose in deriving meanings. It also acts as the linkage between the author and the performer. The performers' psyche can be tuned by the presence of the differential textures in the structure of the play. It leaves space to the performers to expose **psycho-somatic** emotions that are imbedded in the textures of the text. In other words the performer's ability to communicate clearly to the audience is indirectly determined by the texture of the text.

Thus the texture becomes a vital indicator of the differential abilities of the talents of the authors and performers and gives life to the text. In the process, the indigenous way of expression of emotions are idiomatically structured. Even certain alien idioms, when used in the play, attains the status of localization through repeated occurrence in the text. Therefore, texture becomes an integral part in analysing the text.

The texture of *CaviTTunaaTakam* can be studied by taking the metre scheme and the nomenclature.

Structure & Metre of CaviTTunaaTakam Texts:

Most of the frequent metres employed in the early '**Malayam-Tamil**' texts were part of the 'popular' Tamil metre scheme. The recent **Malayalam** scripts also follow these early trends in metre scheme because most of the authors either copy or imitates tunes and rendering patterns from the early texts and write verses according to these tunes.

The restrictions and conventions of the performance style also makes them to copy the tunes. The Tamil metres and song patterns such as *veNpaa*, *icai*, *kalitturai*, *taaZicai*, *viruttam*, *ciñtu*, *kavi* etc. are in use. No *viruttam* (metres) of Malayalam can be seen in the early texts. *CaviTTunaaTakam* texts repeats the characteristic rhyme schemes of *teerukkuuttu* texts, especially the rare ones like *cirattalkaappu*, *aacciriyam*, *paala*, *kalai*, *iyaltaru* were some of them. The *CaviTTunaaTakam* metre scheme had also some similarity with the the *paTTu* literary movement of malayalam.²⁸ The peculiar language of *CaviTTunaaTakam*, which includes so many folk ways of expressions clearly indicates its relationship with the *paTTu* movement, whose distinctive character was the use of simple, local language.

The structure of the *kaarlmaan naaTakam* roughly shows the metrical varieties and the song patterns with the titles given to certain scenes and dialogues. The structure is like this: the play begins with a prayer of the poet, *sleevaa veNpaa*. This is an invocation song paying homage to the Holy cross. It refers to the title of the play which can also directly guide the audience to the place and the time of the theme. This song is sung by *aasaan* and the group of backing vocalists who are known as *pinpaaTTukaar* or *cuvaTikkar*. This group is the first to occupy the stage. These days, they sing this song and the continuing *viruttam* with the closed front curtain. Then comes another *viruttam* in which the names of the poet and his guru is announced. After this comes *vaNtanaviruttam* which includes the poet's prayer to the God to bless him and the artistic production. A couple of songs follows seeking blessings from the God and the learned men among the audience. They are: *KalttuRai* and *Taazhilisai*. The latter also includes the prayer to excuse the errors committed in the play production. There are *viruttams* which are sung in praise of the local diety or the patron saint. Another important and rare song pattern is *aacciriyam*. The famous poets such as **Kambar** of Tamil, Kalidasa of Sanskrit, Thunchethezuthachan of Malayalam are referred here. In this song, the poet pays homage to those great writers and exclaims at their literary genius. After this comes *tooTaiyattaru*, prayer song mainly devoted to the sacrifices of Jesus Christ and Virgin Mary. In the recent productions, there is a tableau presentation of a sequence from the Bible or the saintly stories and there is a song in praise of that particular scene. Most of them imitate the popular tunes or songs related to the saint. The varieties of prayer songs take a considerable time. Then comes the **Kattiyakkaran** *toonRa viruttam* which portrays the arrival of *kaTTiyan*. *kaTTiyan* enters and has a witty encounter with the

audience and the group of people in the back stage. Then only the real story starts. The **aasaan**, along with his backing vocals and music, sings *varavu viruttam* of the **raajaas** or the kings. This song describes the qualities of the King. The king enters with his body guards guarding on the two sides in a row and entering the stage with steps and singing in praise of the King. This is called **pavanicimtu**. This is also called the **colliyaTTam** of the sentry. After this, the king sings a song which proclaims his qualities such as courage, valour and fame. This is called *koluviltaru*. Then, he calls for Minister and the Minister enters and narrates present state of the country. This is called **naaTTuvalama**. After this, most of the **naaTakams** proceed with either **naayaaTTu** (hunting) or the trips to conquer other countries. That ends up with fierce battles. In the battle field at the time of confrontation, kings of both sides usually sing a self appreciatory song. This is called *Wat*. Each king or their ministers boast about his valour and achievements. This is portrayed in **kalai**. Just after the **kalai**, ministers or chiefs of the army sing a stanza called **yuttattaru**. The army moves and fights according to the **taaLa[m]** of this **yuttattaru**. There are certain important and beautiful songs like **viruttams** which narrate and establish the love of the hero for the heroine. There are certain songs filled with pathos and sentiments like the *tuyaram taru* in *kaarlmaan naaTakam* in which Emperor *kaarlmaan* carries Roland's dead body and laments upon his death. The *naaTakam* always ends with the victory of the good over the evil followed by a prayer song sung by everybody. This is called **ellaavarum kuuTi teyvastuti**. Then comes the benedictory song called **mankalam**. This is the main sequential order of the song pattern in the structure of a *CaviTTunaaTakam* text.

The type of the metre system, recital pattern, and dialogue method of the *kaarlmaan naaTakam* is classified below. This will give an easy understanding of the use of Tamil metres by the early writers and their capacity to create new metrical forms through various permutations and combinations. Some of the songs were written according to certain rhythms and tunes which ably helps the actors in performances. Some titles given below were the titles given to those song patterns by the early *CaviTTunaaTakam* authors.

Table - 15

No.	Title of Metre/ Song/Dialogue	The numbers in the text of <i>kaarlmaan naaTakam</i> ²⁹
1.	<i>veNpaa</i>	40
2.	<i>viruttam</i>	42
3.	<i>kalitturai</i>	9
4.	<i>taaZicai</i>	4
5.	<i>cirattalkaappu</i>	8
6.	<i>aacciriyam</i>	1
7.	<i>tooTaiyat taru</i>	1
8.	<i>vacanam</i>	37
9.	<i>ciñtu</i>	66
10.	<i>poorttaru</i>	27
11.	<i>innicai</i>	7
12.	<i>kuRaTTi</i>	2
13.	<i>kavi</i>	4
14.	Tottiram <i>stoottiarm</i>	5
15.	<i>capaiyoorpaTi</i>	1
16.	<i>naaTTuvalamai</i>	5
17.	<i>paala</i>	2
18.	<i>kalai</i>	1
19.	<i>iyaltaru</i>	3
20.	<i>sambaasanam</i>	12
21.	<i>koccam</i>	2
22.	<i>taru</i>	3
23.	<i>kaTTurai</i>	1
24.	<i>teyvastuti</i> (Prayer)	3
25.	<i>piracankam</i>	1
26.	<i>mankalam</i>	1
Total		298

Some of the above Metre/Song/Dialogue schemes are explained with examples below. Some of them are the song patterns used in *teerukkuuttu* of Tamilnadu.

veNpaa

One of the four principal prosody stanzas. An important *veNpaa* is the *sleevea veNpaa* or the prayer of the poet in the beginning.

ciirpukazum piiracai tennavan ennum kaarmaan
eeR pukazum katai taniyee inbamu Tan-paarmiitil-

naaTaka aayaaTaa, naviluvataRkee ennaTi
naaTi tutittu viTuvoom, naam. [V.S.A.]

We can sing “*stoottiram*” (praise) to God for (presenting) rendering the most famous story of the glorious Emperor *kaarlmaan* of france.

viruttam

A sub-division of the four principal prosody stanzas. Most of the *viruttams* in *CaviT-TunaaTakams* explain or describe the status and the appearance of the major characters. In *viruttams*, there are extolling comparisons between the major characters and the precious things in the nature.

This is a *viruttam* sung by the *aasaan* and troupe stating the entry of *kaarlmaan*.

tanka rattina makuTa muTi cira ciltanka taarveentan manam
makiZa ctnkool occa-
tunkar matakari parikaL cuuzntu niRkka tulankariya-
coopana cankiitam paaTa-
inkitamaay irupuRavum kavari viica iTiya tiRa veTi
kumaRa natanam aaTa-
cinkan ennum kaarlmaan empiratoon raayan
celvaca paytannil itoo, VarunkinRaaree. [V.S.A.]

The lines describe the attire and the position of the Emperor Karalman and his entry to the court — his head- gear is studded with gold and precious pearls, his scepter (*ceñkool*) is very much appealing to the other simpler kings (barons). The procession consists of the courtiers in full uniform, elephants and horses. There are great music and fire works. On both sides of the Emperor, servants stand with fans made of *veNccaama-ram*. With all these possessions, the Emperor *kaarlmaan*, as valorous as a lion, enters the court.

[*viruttams* are part of the *paaTTu* section of the Tamil literature].

kalitturai:

It is a sub-division of *turai*, which is one of the four principal stanzas. This comes under the *paaTTu* section of Tamil literary metre scheme. In the early texts it was spelt as *Kalitturai* instead of *kalitturai*.

tiTTamaay uLamveku-kaTTiyaayirukkinRa-

tuTTaiyeeniinkaL ennum-maTTilaati Skanattil
VaTTamaay cecNai cuuznta-kooTTikaL kuuRiTammal
kaTTaLai iTTapaTi-kuTTiyai koNTu vaarum. [V.S.A.]

The above lines are taken from the play *pilamenaa caritam*. This is from the *kaTTaLai kalitturai* of Dioclesian Emperor. Here, the Emperor order *balakan* (the kid) to be present before him unhurt.

taru:

There are mainly four types of *taru's* in *CaviTTunaaTakam*. Most of them excel in their manner of words used according to the apt sounds. All of them contain descriptions giving more preference to the rhymed synonyms of described objects.

(A) *tooTaiyattaru* (also known as *tooTaiyapen*).

too Taiyam is a common feature. It is an invocation to the God followed by a reference to the names of the author and the play. This gives an historical evidence about the author and the story in *CaviTTunaaTakams*. In the case of 'Kathakali', it is a particular kind of dance which begins after the *ceNTa* ends.

[*taru* is nothing but a *kiirttanam* or a song.]

(B) *poorttaru oryuttattaru*:

This arrests the attention of the audience because of its thrilling nature and the clamour and loud voiced words used in it. An example is:

Oru aracan: Virutu pala pakarum-eTa maTaiyaa itu tiTanee
maraNam atu varavee, itu taruNa menappakarum
Opponent: pakarumena pakaTiivam poolpakarum kaLLap Payailee
pakaiooTu inta kaNameenuvee Paankaay veetu puriveen [V.S.A.]

Remember you, self boasting fool, you are surely going to die. Don't yell always like a donkey. This moment itself, I will kill you.

(C) *koluviltaru*:

Most of them were sung by the kings and the ministers after their entry. *aasaan* and the group of singers sing a *taru* before the entry of the major characters. This is a variation and is called *paattira piravesa taru* which literally means the entry song. In some of the texts, both are considered same and are denoted by the title. (either the first or latter). The lyric of the song is like:

ciirpukazum piraacai naaTaaL tennavar tennavaraana
eer pukazum kaarlmaanee, entalan cabaiyil vaaraar.
neer pukaz maRaiyee, kirupaakaraa-neecamooTa akamiitinilee
uyar ceer kavi icai paaNarkaL paaTiTa poorkaLum pooRRiTa cekamanuanai
paar pukaz kaarlmaan koTi aaTiTa-pakaintarkaL kulam
tannai nita aTakkiTa [V.S.A.]

The glorious Emperor of France, the most famous *kaarlmaan* is entering the court. My beSief in the compassionate God and the one and only true religion makes the bards sing my eulogy. All the people bless me because of my ardent belief in the true religion. My flags flutter itself so high so as to make the enemies silent.

(d) *tuyaram taru*:

These songs are famous for creating sad emotions *cooka rasam* in the minds of the audience. They are sung in an elongated, stressed *manner*. *tuyaram tarus* in *kaarlmaan* and *alpoonsu* are the famous ones.

vacanam:

vacanams are the portions of dialogue in between the songs in *CaviTTunaaTakam*. It is also called as *tamiZu parayuka*. This is titled like: *ceevakar vacanam* - The dialogues of the Barrons

mantiri vacanam - The dialogues of the Minister

Kattiyannutharam *vacanam* - Kattiyann's reply.

cintu:

Natana *ciñtus* are poetic and are famous for their extensive use in *CaviTTunaaTakam* and *teerukkuuttu*. Most of them were used for group dancing sequences because of its melodious recital pattern with the striking rhythm of words. This popular prosody form, *kaavaTi ciñtu*, is seen abundantly in the folk song tradition of south India. One example is the entry of *kaarlmaan* and the *pavanicintu* sung by the courtiers/servants, who accompany the king in two rows at both sides and recite this during their dance.

mantira aacana cundara nnacoundara tiira calaakkiyanee
mantira vaaL pukaz koNTilinkiya mannanee pukaz mankaLam
coma naLppaNi minnum maamakuTttira naakiya mannavaa
cukurtanaee tirumeeni kaNTayaTioor toZac ceyya mankLam. [V.S.A.]

Oh, thou king, who have courage, beauty and knowledge; who reside on the throne with

thy great sword; we bless all the prosperity to you.

Oh, the greatest among the kings who possess the gold crown studded with pearls.
Oh, saintly being, we bless all the best things to you with our closed palms.

kuRRaaTi

This is spelt as *kuRRaaTi* in a number of *CaviTTunaaTakam* texts. This is the song composed of small feet.

ankamenkum tankamilanka - muTi ambili maankalai ViLanka
cankait teert taLankaaLinka - viirac cankaaran-
peraprass toonRinaan.
tunkar tunkar aTi VaNaaka - maRut tunkariakaaza meel ozunka-
pankaL enkee tnket irunka - peraprassunum
iRai mallan toonRinaan. [S.R.]

Titled as **perabraas** *kuRRaaTi*, these lines from *kaarlmaan*, describe the glorious birth of *Perabraas* with certain signs.

innicai (Innisai)

It is a kind of song having melodious rhythm and is a sub-division of **paTTu**. This is an example from *aanjellika naaTakam*.

peRooramma poole enne
beetam illaata innuvare
eRRu vaLarttiyanal
uttama vaLarttamaiyee
IsTam aayte ninakku tanni Tunnu naanum eNTee
isTam meeru maa barana baNTaaramatiNTee- taakkooL. [R.A.]

kavi:

This is a kind of song used in various occasions and there are different types of *kavis* in *CaviTTunaaTakams*. They were different depending on the timings and the number of *maattirai* or morphemes used in the lines. They are: (1) *aacciriya kavi*, (2) *iyal kavi*, (3) *ceeTTu kavi* and (4) *kaTTaLai kavi*. Among these the last two are sung with longer duration, because they were considered as elongated, descriptive songs of *CaviTTunaaTakam*. The following is a *kaTTaLai kavi* of *pilamenaa naaTakam*. In this, the king sends for his minister (Avasalome), who is responsible for the enforcement of the code and conduct in the kingdom.

*namatu munnaNic ciRanta-uTTa cainikaree keeLaay
namatu raajiyankaL ellaam - neRi muRai naTattukinRa-
paTaiyarkaLuku atipanyaana - avacaloon mantiri tannai-
atic ciraNam kuuTTivaarum - anumati nalkineen naan. [S.R.]*

naaTTuvaLamai

These songs describe the prosperity of the country. Most of the *naa TTuvaLamais* were sung by the ministers in the court as answer to the query of the king about his country. It is also called as *mantiri vaLamai*. The following is from *kaarlmaan naaTakam*.

*taraLa muttu kaivairam-mikavaaka viLaintu
taraNi niRainta akam uruki maruvaracar makizroom
mallikaic ceN pakamalarkal mullai vekuvitamee
kalloli pool kaNmakiz kaNuminta naaTTil. [V.S.A.]*

Because our country is rich with the quarries of pearls and diamonds, the kings of other countries were simultaneously happy and desperate. Various kinds of flowers which make human eyes dazzling were common in our country.

kalai

It is a peculiar song variety widely used in *teerukkuuttu*. Most of these are sung during the war scenes. At the time of confrontation the kings boast about themselves. These songs were in *kalai* pattern. In *kaarlmaan naaTakam*, *perabraas kalai* is the most famous one. This is another one from *kaarlmaan naaTakam*

*Oru aracan: CanTaik koTuvinaI vintaik koNTavanai
kaarmak kuTaa! caTutit tanniltt natiTa etirituvenoo-
manRi-liiru-tuNTamaakee tiTamuTan arinitiTa-
maNTalaatipaanaana en viira vintaic ceeraNi kuuTiyee. [V.S.A.]*

One who is longing for the sinful war, having darkness as his crown, come fast and be in war with me. To chop you off into two pieces, as soon as possible, I, the Emperor
is ready with my company of soldiers.

koccakam

It is a type of poetry related with *kaaLimeTTu* (kali tune). These are short poems. Most of them are *iiryaTis* or two line poetry which consist of *cooka rasam* as the *sTay-
waavam*. These poems portray the desperate condition of the hero. The example below

is taken from the Plorippus part of the **kaarlmaan naaTakam**, and the sequence is of sentencing Goiduver Gonju.

*paar tanilee pukaz periyataam-
pirancai cainikarkku atipati enatu maaman-
karuma kuNan enpiratoor un mukamee-
kaNTu uyirpirivatu illaiyoo. [S.R.]*

The most famous soldiers of the world are the French soldiers. It's chieftain is my uncle and who is the noblest Emperor. I am longing to see his face before I die.

mankalam

The benedictory song. It is sung by all the actors together at the end of the play. It might have came later into the *CaviTTunaaTakam* texts. Just before this, there is a *teyvastuti* i.e., a song in praise of the God. *mankalam* comes as continuation of this song. As per the Sanskrit drama tradition *mankalam* is called ' Bharatha **vakyam**'.

*mankaLam nittya jeyaa [mankaLamee] (aatikaTavuluonee) jeya
jeyaa
mankaLam nittiya jeyaa mankalamte
mankaLam namoostutee mankaLam [V.S.A.]*

[This comprises of Sanskrit words and most of the other theatre forms also use the same kind of *mankalam*.]

sambaasanam

Apart from *vacanam*, there is another type of conversation between the characters. This dialogue delivery is called *sambaasanam*.

Taachichai:

It is sub-division of four principal stanzas.

cirattal kaappu, *aacciriyam* and *paala* are certain recital patterns/ song varieties commonly found in the text's of *teerukkuuttu*. Apart from this *kalai*, *ciñtu* and *iyal taru* are other varieties found in the *teerukkuuttu* as well as in the *CaviTTunaaTakam* texts. This phenomena strongly suggests that the literary roots of the **CaviTTunaaTakams** lie in the Tamil literary tradition. Apart from this, *CaviTTunaaTakam* texts are also famous for using a number of literary schemes of *centamiZ*. They are:

1. **iyaipu**, - Antiyanuprasam - lines with the alliteration of last words having the same sound.

2. **muraN**- consists of lines with 'words' denoting opposite meaning.
3. **aLapaTi** - lines having the words which ends with the sound 'plu'
4. **aTukku moZi** - words in each line have similar sound in pronunciations.

These qualities in the structure of poetry helped *CaviTTunaaTakam* to acquire a rhythmic musical quality and, in turn, helped the actors to present certain **baavams** with the help of appropriate rendering of songs.³⁰

In certain **old** texts, there was a practice of beginning one stanza with the word or the group of words used in the last line of the previous stanza. Mostly this occurs during the sessions of heated arguments between the Emperor and his chieftains. This style was common in *kaarlmaan* and **birasiṇa naaTakam**. In the literary scheme, it is called **antiyaatipraasam**.

Even though the language and the structure of the *CaviTTunaaTakam* texts merits closer examinations, it is not possible as most of the early authentic *cuvaTis* are not available due to certain reasons like: (1) The **aasaans** or **aNNaavis** are not interested in parting with the written text. (2) The presentation of the text on the stage in the exposition at the initiation sequences of the play production, and the sacredness associated to this particular written text, made others to write or re-create texts for them by recollecting lines from the memory. This resulted in the evolution of a number of texts with lots of variations for a single theme. (3) Not even a single *cuvaTi* of the *CaviTTunaaTakam* is published till date. The above reasons wrecked the literary quality of *CaviTTunaaTakam* texts. Later, this became one of the major reasons of the decline of the art form. The early written *cuvaTis* were not divided into scenes or acts. They were a bunch of songs which came one after another as the story proceeds. They can be divided into certain categories. The texts never mention about **kalaasams** and **iTakkalaasams** which occur in between the songs. Using this, the actors move their steps and finish the particular sequence with a dance freeze. The *cuvaTis* never suggest where the scenes begin and how they end. Hence, after a fierce fighting sequence, the story proceeds with another episode. This was one of the commonly understood ways of moving the stories. Earlier, one text was performed for three days continuously. Then only the epic saga would come to an end. There were a number of sub-stories in this epic sagas, so the loose structure of the earlier texts were a necessity at that time.

There are a number of reasons behind the drastic changes between the old and the new **cuvaTis**. A close examination reveals three major changes i.e., the change in the duration, in the language used, and the inclusion of dialogues instead of the verses.

(A) The Duration or the time period of the play production was changed from five to three days in the earlier days, to four to three hours of a single night.³¹ This resulted in the elimination of a number of conventional renderings and descriptive sequences. The change in the duration helped to create a scene-wise division for the new texts. The technical advancements in the areas of scenic changes, cut-outs and the extensive use of specific as well as special effect of lights also helped in making the change more effective. Now a days, the texts do not have the setting descriptions.

(B)The language used in the early texts were **centamiZ** and **koTuñtamiZ**; later on, became a mixture of Malayalam and Tamil and turned to be something called 'Malayam-Tamil'. The newly written texts are in pure Malayalam. Along with this change in the language, the metrescheme of Tamil literature which was evident in the early texts has undergone a drastic change. Due to the lack of ability of writers, most of the popular tunes from the other media and the mere imitation of the earlier song patterns have come into existence. During the onslaught of Tamil **sankiitanaaTakams** in the Kerala cultural scene, there were **CaviTTunaaTakams** which clearly contain certain parody songs from Sadarama and Harish chandra **naaTakams**. **CaviTTunaaTakam** also took some of the story lines from the Tamil **sankiitanaaTakams** like **Jnana sundari**.

The change in the pronunciation of certain words, especially during the transition period of the language from **vaTTaeZuttu** to Malayalam, also reflected its mark in the recent text. For example:

From the old **cuvaTi** of **kaarlmaan naaTakam**

pattiuttavanoo-ittaraiyil-kaarmaan raayan
catti pettavanoo [S.R.]

The same lines from the new **cuva Ti**

bakti uTTavanoo-ittaraiyil-kaarmaan raajan
cakthi peRRavanoo

(C) Earlier, the texts were full of verses and there was no dialogue. Later, the dialogues came into being instead of certain long descriptive **viruttams** and **kaTTaLai**

s. There are a couple of reasons behind this tendency. First is the influence of other dramatic forms. In the beginning, *CaviTTunaaTakams* were influenced by Tamil *sankiitanaaTakams* in all the aspects of theatre. They were dramas with a mixture of songs and dialogues. Second reason is the abundance of capable actors. Earlier, the actors used to sing and perform lengthy songs. Now, they are cut short by a number of dialogues, especially, in the sequences like the king calling his minister. The king asks *kaTTiyan* or a servant to bring the minister, who earlier they used to sing certain *kaTTaLai kavis* like in the already quoted *plemeeNa naaTakam*. Instead of that long verse, later they used dialogues like (in the recent production of *kaarlmaan naaTakam*) the Emperor says:

(a). *akoo varum ceevuka! namatu mantiriyaana-*

avacloomee-atu ciikkirattil azaittu vaarum

(b). *enbrooter-aareviTe?*

ceevukan-a Tiyan!

enbrooter-ciikiramaaka cenRu namatu mantiri

avacloonee aZaittuvaruvaikee

ceerukan - arulpaTiye azaittu varukiRoom, ayyaa caami. [R.A.]

There are plenty of sequences, which consist of conversational exchanges like this. Apart from this, the dialogues by *kaTTiyakkaran* (mostly the contextual references) and criticisms made by him are not in verses. The announcement in between the performance, mostly during the *polikkal*, are in dialogue format. Even though those pieces are not inscribed in the texts and most of those are created in the context sensitive manner, one can not ignore the loss of those textual elements. During their *naaTTuvaLamais* sequence the ministers also improvise certain dialogues which directly refer to the place/country, the time and mostly the political and social circumstances.

The nomenclature can be seen categorized into three sets. The first set comprises the native/folk terms, the second set includes *sanskrit/elite* and the third consists of Biblical/western terms. A close examination of the language used in the *CaviTTunaaTakam* texts reveals certain other factors like: (1) folk ways of expressions used in the *plays*. in other words, most of the texts consist of certain words which were directly taken from the local dialects and most of them were in the form of references and addresses by the *major* characters. Most of them are seen in the sequences of war and hunting. An ex-

animation of a **kalai** and a **yuttattaru** easily proves the number of local/vernacular ways of expressions.³²

naan vaaZranoo - eTaa! eTaa!! - mukaTamuRRavanoo
koRRavanoo - vaarumennuTanee - niipeRu. . . . [V.S.A.]

Even though the character singing this song is an Emperor, he addresses the opponent (a chieftain) 'Eda Eda' in a derogatory sense. In some other occasions, great characters like the Emperor **kaarlmaan** uses words like 'Eda, Vada' (even though those words look odd). They used to practice it in the **yuttattaru**. There are expressions like Eda Madaya (fool), Kallappayale (son of a thief) etc. These are very much heard in the conversations of local people.

(2) Sanskrit words were often used in the plays. The infiltration of Sanskrit words were common in the early stages of the development of Malayalam literature. There are a number of Sanskrit words and their *tadbhava* equivalents with similar meaning in the early **maNippiraavaLam** texts as well as in the *CaviTTunaaTakam* texts. The extensive use of Sanskrit words helped the stylistic presentation of foreign themes. Some of the examples for Sanskrit words and its meanings are given below: avani (earth), arkan (sun), adinatha (almighty), **Ikshanam** (at once), Kesadipadam (from hair to foot), aaranayam (forest), Uthaman (the most exquisite), Kanaka **ceṅkool** (Golden scepter), Kripa (compassion) Krodham (wrath) **Charanam** porni (save me God) **Japam** (knowledge) dharani (earth) nyaayavidhi (judgement), **navarathnam** (nine jewels). **paksham** (side), bakti(devotion), bhupati (king), **manimakutam** (golden crown), **mankalam** (felicity), **mukhya** prasidhan (the most distinguished), vandanam (salutation), vallabhan (genius), vilambaram (proclamation), satyam(truth), sabha (audience), sastram (philosophy, science), sthothram (hymn), santhatam (always).

(3) **Non-Indian** words are also used in the plays. Non Indian words, especially words from the European languages such as Portuguese, Syriac, Arabic and Latin are found in the texts. In certain cases, the words are found as their Indian counter parts or are spelt like Indian words. **Talsamas** and *tatbhavas* are seldom seen in contrast to the proposition of the same in the **socio-cultural** and political spheres. The words like *ispirittu* and *Ave maria* are seen in the invocatory parts of the **play**. i.e., *sletvaa veNpaa* or *Chiluvai viruttam*. The former is a Latin word indicating Holy spirit *Et spiritus sanctus*, in Malayalam **Parisudhathmavu**. The later is used as Ave Maria itself. Apart from the

above, words like **malak**, *amen* are used as ialsamas in the text. **Malak** - *maalakhaa* denotes meanings as diverse as ruler, emperor, khalit, prince, amir, etc. Root of the word 'Malak' mean to give advice or to govern. Amen is asyriac word meaning truly, verily and is used at the beginning of a sentence to add emphasis or solemnity and at the end of a sentence to signify assent, i.e., 'So be it, it is so' etc. In the course of time this word was used as a substitute for words like general consent, unanimity, agreement, concord, desire, wish, etc. Root of this word can be found in the personal names used in certain countries like Arabia and Phoenicia.

From the above discussion of the two major components of the texture viz-a-viz metre and nomenclature, the nature of texture seems to reflect a process of hybridization in the production of the text. The psychosomatic expressions in the form of gestures and vocal expressions are nativised even to the characters that are purely western in nature. The depiction of the royalty of the protagonist is so natively **idiomaised** that the foot steps and the circular movements reflect totally the Indian way of expressing the texture of the text. Even in war scenes, when the valour of the protagonist and his groups is shown, it contradicts the European ways of expression. The taping of the feet that go with the texture is typical to that of the folk ways of dancing in public performances. Thus, the hybridization at metrical level is very well interwoven to make the text not only indigenous but also acceptable to the natives.

Even the nomenclature used in the text reflects the same process of hybridization. The folk, the classical and the western phrases are nativised by using the formulae of repetition or by using the principle of native pronunciation.

III

The **Textuality**

Textuality indicates the various components that go into the making of a text and represents broadly what the text contains and how it is presented. **CaviTTunaaTakam** which is a combination of written script and oral transmission leaves, scope for the actors to improvise the text itself during performance. This process of improvisation is done through textuality. In other words, textuality acts as a linking agent between the written script of the authors and the communication skills of the performers. In the process, textuality becomes a coherent part of the performance text.

The determining factor of textuality depends on the context. Context means the text Presented in a particular time and space with a particular group of audience. Within

the concept of context, several factors can be enumerated to show how they act as forces to the production of a particular play. The components like: when, where, what, why, whom and how, by and large determines the textuality of the text during the production. Issues related to sociological, economic, cultural, religious and political spheres get into, while making the textuality of the text. For instance, the authors'/performers' economic standard and social status may force them to resort to certain comments during the play production which is not otherwise found in the written texts. Similarly, the political and ideological bend of mind of the audience/performers may also creep into the textuality by way of remark on the existing political system or on the local issues. Textuality, become the flesh and blood of the skeletal written text and keeps the performance alive in a variety of contexts.

Keeping in view the mood and the response of the audience, the *aasaans* and the performers use several oral formulae which are not written down, either in the text or in the treatises. For example, during the performance of the stanzas, the back stage musicians freely select any of the *kalaasams* or *iTakkalaasams* to maintain the harmony. They also cling to certain number of Kavithams which go very well with a particular audience. Due to the intense training, the performers can instantly get into any one of these oral formulae.

Similarly, where there is verbal communication - not by song and dance but by a monologue or dialogue fashion, the performance text differs from one performer to the other. In the case of *kaTTiyan*, who acts as a master of ceremonies (suthradhari) creates a text in performance by incorporating local issues, gossips, scoops etc, to keep the attention of audience intact. This improvisation process requires not only the skills of the actors but also their presence of mind to feel the mood of the audience. The written script is totally silent in this respect. However, the spirit of the written text is kept in mind while improvising on stage (for example see next chapter - V).

Textuality also makes a room for conventions and traditions. In the process of play production, the audience interact where ever there is a ritual component attached to a scene. For instance, votive *neerccai* of the audience are accepted during the performance as a convention; and during such direct interaction with the audience, the performers in general or a character in particular resorts to textuality technique in order to avoid the main sequence of the performance *text*. (for details see *kaTTiyan* and *polikkal*).

Another important feature of textuality is that it gives scope to compress or expand

or correct the text **during** performance. Especially, when the audience take up the role of critics during the performance, the **aasaans** and the performers in response to the demands of the audience use textuality as a technique to make the performance progress smoothly. For example, during my observation of the performance at Narakkal, there was a downpour but the audience did not allow the curtain call. Rather they stood up with their umbrellas open and the performers cut-short the text and hastened the production.

As mentioned earlier, sociological factors such as caste hierarchy also play a role in *CaviTTunaaTakam* play production. Here again, textuality adopts a convention to incorporate the audience into the newly imposed Christian ideology in performance of *CaviTTunaaTakam*. A kind of art of subversion is overtly interwoven in the textuality to project the Christian ideology as an egalitarian ideal which embraces all people cutting across their caste and communal backgrounds. For example, a *paRaiyan* saves the pregnant Queen Salvedatha (in *viirakkumaaran naaTakam*) from the forest and later on impart martial training to *viirakkumaaran*. Textuality is vividly used as a tool to impress upon the audience the sense of brotherhood which is maximum in the Christian ideology when this part of the text is performed. The *paRaiyan*, who is an untouchable in the caste hierarchy, is consciously projected as a king maker. This formulae of subverting the roles is not unknown in the native system of verbal genres, especially the sacred narratives. Almost all the creation myths of the lower communities have this subversion and they consider this myths as sacred narratives. In *CaviTTunaaTakam* also, such phenomenon is observable. Much larger scope is given (as part of textuality) to project *paRaiyan* as the one as is conceived as by the upper caste. He is projected as a drunkard, filthy person using typical slang which is not refined. His body movements are also in accordance with such depiction, and therefore are unsystematic and anarchic. Being what he is, he questions often the social caste system and it's vulgar manifestations. The textuality becomes a prominent tool in the hands of the *paRaiyan* character to vent his feelings of disgust against the caste system. The behaviour, in a normal course of life, is treated as anti-normative and hence punishable. Therefore, in the play the character of *paRaiyan* resort through textuality to let his feelings and anger release and is yet acceptable by the audience who hail from different castes and communities. Similarly, the character of *aaraccar* (one who beheads as part of inquisition), who is considered a wretched one in the society **and** a bystander in the other modes of performances, is having undue **importance** in the plays like Alphons *naaTakam* and *viirakkumaaran*. These roles are

presented by some of the popular actors in this genre. Mostly, the present prominent **aasaans** played these roles and as part of the textuality they create instantly the text during the performance.

To sum up, the textuality develop in parallel and converge into the text in such a way that often the audience is not able to understand the distinction between the text and the textuality. Only an internal audience or a researcher may be in a position to distinguish the textuality and the text as different components of the performance text. Therefore, the textuality performs a vital role in transforming a written text into a performance text.

CaviTTunaaTakam being an admixture of western proscenium and native folk theatrical form, the text, the texture and the textuality eventually become a hybridized phenomenon. In the text part, the western ideology is reflected through the borrowing of western themes and adopting to native textures i.e., the metre and the structure. The texture and the textuality together imbibed in native idioms produced a performance text. The amalgamation of the text (which has more western element) into the texture and the textuality (which has the native idiom) resulted in the hybridization of not only the art form but also the art form as a tradition. In the process, several conventions developed and made this art form a distinct art form for the Christian community to which they identify themselves. This sympathetic identification with the art form by the community created a symbiotic relationship with other communities because of borrowing several elements from their art forms as well. For this reason, the art form did not get into communal overtones and created neither tension nor riots in the whole history of this performance genre. Infact, not only the Christians but also the neighbourhood communities enjoy this art form whenever it is presented and in several instances people belonging to Non-Christian communities also participate as performers right from its inception, the patrons of the art form (ranging from church/clergy to the present day clubs/business households) have never ventured at any point of time to make this art form a tool for creating communal tensions nor for acquiring political benefits. Though the themes are connected with warfares and battles; never in reality, such means were purposefully targeted to impose the ideology either by the patrons or by the performers. That means, the texture and textuality are very well processed to give a native touch and made this art form virtually hybridized even at the text, texture and textuality level.

Notes

1. For more details and legendary stories on *cinnattambi*, see Raphy, *CaviTTunaaTakam*, 147-154.
2. Like **Chacko (kako) aasaan** of Vaduthala, many others claims that their forefathers inherited the tradition of *cinnattambi*; interview with Chacko *aasaan* dated 8th Dec. 1994..
3. For this view see T.M. Chummar, *Padya Sahitya Charithram (Kottayam: NBS, 1960) 163-66*; and Choondal, *Folklore* 128.
4. Cf. Choondal, *Folklore*, 127.
5. Interview with Peter Koloth, Alappuzha, dated 7th April, 1995.
6. Like in the case of the above mentioned two *aasaans*, Chacko may be quoting Sabeena Raphy and other Chummar Choondal.
7. For details, see Xavier Koodapuzha, ed., *Thirusabha Charithram* (Kottayam: OIRS, 1974) 763-69.
8. For details regarding the two divisions of *Malankara Sabha (puthankoor and pazhayakoor)* after *kuunankurisu*, see G. Chedyath, *Marthma Sleehayude Indian Sabha* (Kottayam: OIRS, 1992) 78-80.
9. These legends are popular among the **christians** who live in the coastal belt of Kerala. The legends are referred with variations in various published books. See Raphy, *CaviTTunaaTakam* 147-154, V.S. Andrews, "Kristiyanikalum Pracheenakalayum", *Kerala Times*, 31 Aug. 1958; and A. Daniel, "Kristiyanikalum Pracheena Kalayum", *Kerala Times*, 4 Sept. 1958.
10. In the dictionaries and grammar texts compiled by the missionaries they use to designate themselves with these names.
11. The missionaries and their early Literary compositions and contributions, especially, the development of 'Prose' and the printing alongwith the literary works of Robert de nobili (1577-1656), Rev. C.J. Beschi, Rev. Ross, S.J. etc. (For more examples and details, see Paul Manavalan, *Kerala Samskaravum Chrystava Missionariamaram* (Kottayam; DCB, 1990) 154-61, 242-251, and see also, Thomas, *Malayala Sahityam*, 91-149.

12. This term was initially used by V.S. Andrews (*Kerala Times* 31 Aug, 1958), and later by Sabeena Raphy (Raphy, *CaviTTunaaTakam*, 170-72).
13. The name was not found by the present author; even though, three other locally varied texts could be found out. See Thomas, *Malayala Sahityam*, 182.
14. The similar kind of attitude was prevalent in Kerala. It was rampant in the case of Ayurveda and Astrology which led into the loss of the most precious texts in these fields.
15. "It is also called *joTi* in the local dialect and is written in *koTumtamiz* with *malayalam* letters", as revealed by Chacko *aasaan* of Vaduthala. Interview dated 21st Feb. 1995.
16. The presently available paper scripts are written in Malayalam or *koTumtamiZ*. Sabeena Raphy claims that she examined forty six manuscripts during **1960's**; most of them were repetitions or interpolated ones. **Chummar** choondal says about the availability of twenty six texts which were written on paper. See Chummar Choondal, *Christian theatre in India* (Trichur: KFA, 1984) 125.
17. For a similar type of categorization, see F.P. Barboza, *Christianity in Indian Dances* (Delhi; Satguru, 1994).
18. The Great Emperor Constantine I (d. **306-337**) famous for his 'Edict of Milan' (d. 313) which provided the religious freedom to the early **christians**. See, cross, *Oxford dictionary*, 557.
19. Cf. Chambers, *Medieval Stage*, 276.
20. Some of the stories and the miracles about the saint are popular in Kerala because of their depiction in *vaNakkamaasam* texts. The story of the conversion of Princess Alexandra is one of them.
21. Cf. Wickham, *Medieval Theatre*, 139.
22. See Wickham, *Medieval Theatre*, 203-4.
23. In another version, the initial turn itself is that of the Princess.
24. This relates with the story popularized in the book called Golden Legend, in which George fell a victim to Emperor Dioclesian's persecution.

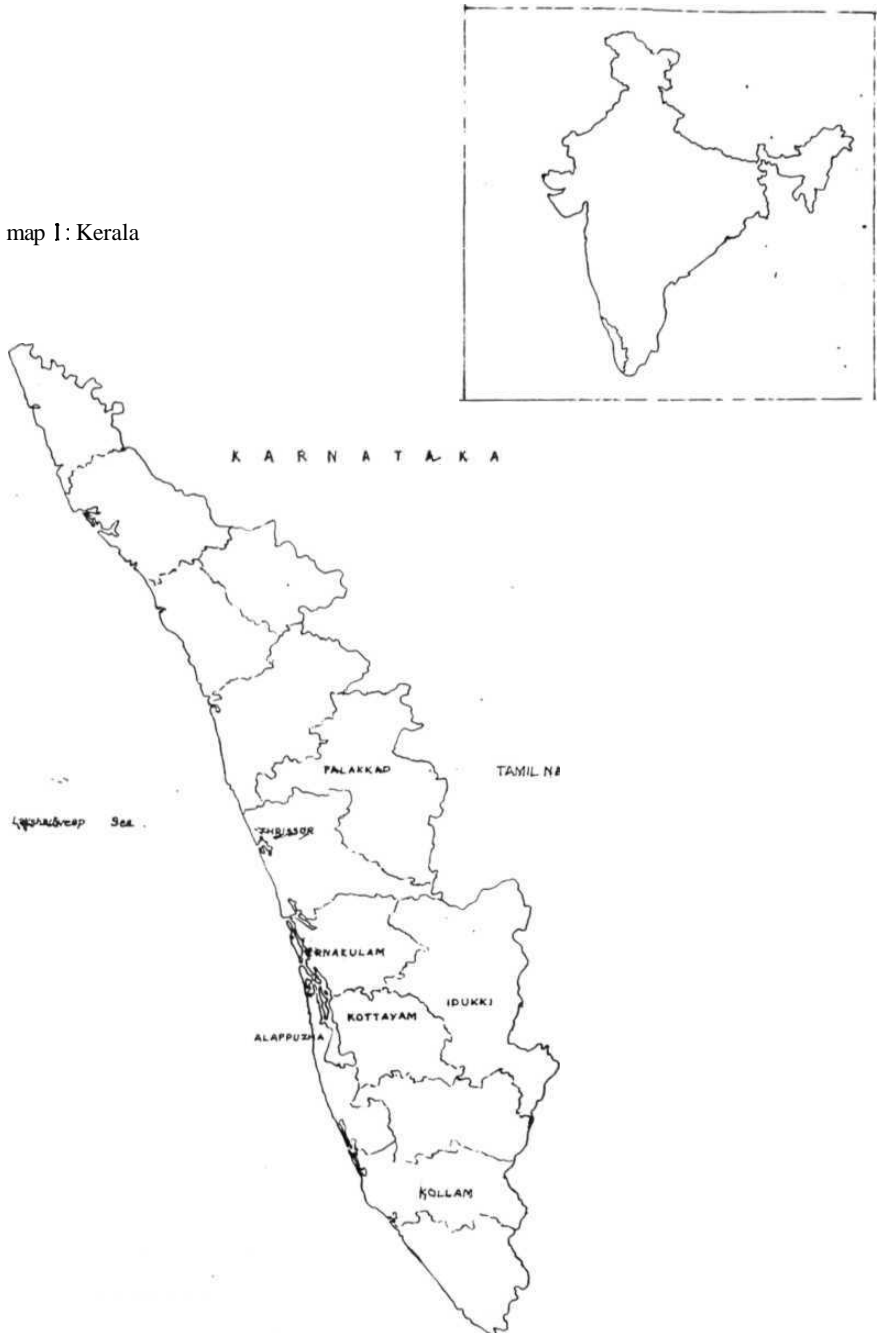
25. Historical Charlemagne never waged war against Muslims. Instead, he fought against the Saxons in Germany; and his time period is prior to the crusades. The legendary figure owed something to his grand father Charles Martel and his victory over Arabs at Poitiers in 732.
26. The available oldest manuscript of 12th century is kept in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. Relying on the last line: '*citalt lageste que Tuoldus declinet*' some scholars attribute the authorship to a person named *Tuoldus*. He may be a revisor or a scribe.
27. Most of the commentators consider that the song of Roland has the following four parts; (a) The betrayal of Ganelon, (b) The death of Roland, (c) The victory over Saracens and (d) The punishment of Ganelon. For the five parts of the Charlemagne legend see the oldest translated work from Portuguese to Malayalam, Jacob Klari, trans. *kaarlmann Empradorude carittram* (Alleppy: Vidyarambham Press, 1921).
28. During the early stages of Malayalam literature there were two dominant movements. One was the *maNippiraavaLam* movement and the other was *paaTTu* movement as per '*Leelathilakam*' (the first Malayalam grammatical treatise). According to it:

tiramiTa cankaataaksara nibattam
ettuuka moona virutta visessa yuktam paaTTu.

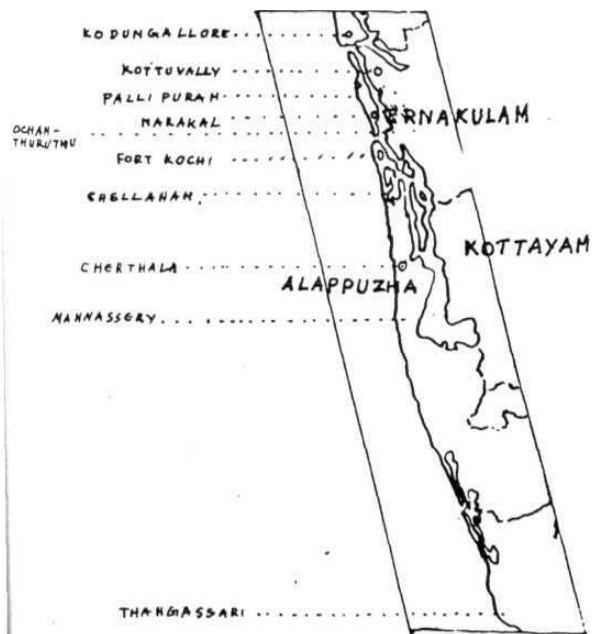
See K.M. George, ed., *Sahitya Charithram Prasthanagalilude* (Kottayam: NBS, 1973) 4. For *CaviTTunaaTakam* example See, *kalitturai*. This also shows two alternation Schemes: *ettuka* and *mona*.

29. The number of songs according to the *cuvaTi* available with Chummar Choondal.
30. See, as an example *perabraas kuRRaaTi*, quoted in the page. 161
31. Change in 'duration' is taken into consideration according to the experiences of the living *aasaans*.
32. See the already cited verses page. 139

map 1: Kerala



map 2: Palakkad district of Kerala-- 33 hamlets which possess the right to perform muuvaracu naaTakam are situated inside the circle; for the names of the places, see chap.6, note.



map 3: Coastal Kerala- the places famous for caviTTu naaTakam performance.

Chapter - 5

CaviTTunaaTakam Theatre Through the Ages

Performance studies began in the United States of America during 1970's as a part of the study on ethnic groups. The political premise that gave a strong base for the incorporation of minorities into different levels of political organizations led to the detailed study of the ethnic groups which were marginalised due to lack of written texts. These marginalised societies gave a new dimension to the oral tradition to reconstruct their cultural past and viewed the performances as cultural texts in order to study their life styles. Scholars such as Dan Ben Amos, Roger D. Abrahams, Victor Turner etc., started documenting the performances of these ethnic communities¹. Later Schechner, Frasca, and Zarrilli analysed the culture content of the ethnic groups from the theatrical point of view². Thus performance studies gave altogether new meanings to the performed, expressive behaviour when performed.

The study on Christian theatre, if viewed from a performance approach may reveal new insights into the community itself which owns and perpetuates their art forms through performances. In the process the community reflects their own idioms to distinguish themselves from the other communities. The identities that are reflected through the performances spread the messages of their distinct cultural nuances.

CaviTTunaaTakam if studied from this angle will reveal several idioms that are imbibed at the textual, contextual and performance textual levels and act as markers not only of the performance but also of the community. In order to understand their idioms it is imperative to study the theatrical and technical aspects of *CaviTTunaaTakam*.

This chapter seeks to examine three major aspects of the *CaviTTunaaTakam* performance and hence it is divided into three sections. The first one concentrates on the theatrical aspects of *CaviTTunaaTakam* in general and its technical aspects in particular. Since the context plays a significant role in a theatrical study of a particular form, one must give due importance to its historic past as well as to the recent present. Hence this study will also take into consideration its development from the early historic forms to the present. The impact of science and technology has been so powerful as to change the function and operation of all our traditional art forms. The *CaviTTunaaTakam* tradition

also accepted, adapted, absorbed and assimilated many ingredients mostly in its technical and functional levels. Some of them include the use of proscenium theatre conventions, the use of electric bulbs (spots and special effects), microphones and modern electronic musical instruments and artificial, chemical pigments for make-up.

Apart from the technical changes, *CaviTTunaaTakam* also went through many drastic transformations in terms of its texts and themes, performance structure and process, duration and patronage. A close examination in the history of this performance genre, reveals the decadence in the popularity of this form. It has unfortunately lost its vernacular native characters and dialect. In a way the present stage can be considered as the period of decline of *CaviTTunaaTakam*. The second part of this chapter takes up the stage of decline and probe into the historical, socio-political and economical factors behind this present condition.

The third part of the chapter deals with the various recent attempts towards reconstruction, renovation and reformations of this theatre form by various academic organizations and individuals. This part also includes the suggestions put forwarded by the people working inside and out side this theatre process for improving the present state of decline. Thus, the entire chapter shows various periods of *CaviTTunaaTakam* right from its evolution to the present.

Part-I

This section deals with the major theatrical and technical components of the *CaviTTunaaTakam* performance. This section is schematically arranged into three parts. The first part concentrates on the production process of *naaTakam* in which the troupes that are involved in the performance, the masters (**aasaans**) who actually give training to the troupes and the different aspects of training that the actors have to undergo for the presentation; The context of the performance and the physical space of the plays are also discussed in the early part of the section. All the above mentioned components are clubbed under the broad heading of the preliminaries of staging/production process of a *CaviTTunaa Takam*.

The second part of the section deals with actual play production which includes the

mode of **performance**. How the play begins and proceeds through different scenes such as *askeeli*, *viruttam muuLaL*, *stutiyoogar*, *tooTaiyaaTTam*, and the entry of *kaTTiyan* are covered. All those conventions are named after the characters/components which figure in the scenes and they prepare the audience to receive the narrative of the **performance**. Then the major scenes such as; Dubar, Hunting, **War** scenes, culminate into two conventional scenes like *polikkal* and *mankalam*.

The third part explains the techniques of *CaviTTunaaTakam* which comprises choreography and its components known variously as *cuvaTu*, *kavittam*, *kalaasam*, *iTakkalaasam*, *a Tanta*.

Apart from those mentioned above, this section also explains the acting techniques including the use of *muttira/i* and the facial expression. The other important components such as costume, make up and props, music and musical instruments are vividly described.

(A) Preliminaries of staging/production Process of a CaviTTunaaTakam

The dramatic presentations were closely associated with church and its festivities. The evolutionary reasons behind *CaviTTunaaTakam* clearly suggests that it functioned as part of the church's ideology and worked at two levels. First it served as a counter part to the other available popular temple/Hindu ritualistic performances and second as part of the propaganda machinery of the church. However, from the early days itself, *CaviTTunaaTakam* was not performed frequently. The number of performances were staged once or twice a year in a particular village or a diocese.³ The performances were associated with the church festivals or christmas and Easter celebrations of the local **christians**. The long duration for training, the large number of participants and the days taken for the completion of a single *naaTakam* demanded the participation of **the** whole village. Especially the **christians**, who belong to a single diocese decide to perform a play on a particular day which is auspicious according to the church's calender, at the church's vicinity or in the church compound. After the group formation which consists of untrained young lads, the local patrons (heads) search for an *aasaan* and decide the play according to *aasaan's* capacity. Earlier there were prominent *aasaans* available in most of the villages. The group then undergoes various types of training and finally the actors are selected. These actors later get more acquainted with the intricacies of the

text and soon will be in a position to perform. So in the preliminaries of staging, the setting up or the formation of group/troupe comes first or gets priority.

Production Process:

The Troupe:

The troupe/group generally consists of young and middle-aged men associated with a church. In the early days when the church was the sole patron and the **priests** were incharge of the play production, the men belonged to a particular diocese and were in a single group. They underwent training to perform a single play. In the early days itself apart from the *aasaan* or *aNNaavi* most of the others were part-timers doing other jobs for their livelihood. Generally, most of the performances end with a single production. So this group can be called or considered as an amateur group of youngsters trained for a single play. Due to their regular occupation, the training and practice sessions were possible only during the evenings and holidays. Most of them were trained for a single play and after the play production the group dispersed. That may be the reason for the different names acquired by the groups associated with different plays at a single church during those years. These groups acquired names temporarily according to the patron saint of the particular church to which they belonged, or by the major saintly hero of the **plays**.⁴ Later, the patronage shifted from the church to the local lords or the rich *maaTambis*, who become *pirsuteenti* for conducting the entire church festival.⁵ So the task of organizing the *aasaan* and the group for their festival play production became theirs. This gave rise to a certain hierarchy in getting the major roles in plays. The actors who belonged to rich families inherited certain major character roles of kings and **ministers**. *mantiri* (minister) part was considered to be a status symbol. Later, single families became incapable of making, conducting and financing the play production. So a gathering of rich people who belonged to a particular Church or Village started looking after this affair. The same system was followed in conducting the whole church festivals also. This phenomenon gave rise to certain organizations or guilds related to Church or Village and they took over as the authority in putting up the play. So a kind of professionalism entered in the establishment of the group. Later this tendency developed along with the rise of the professional dramatic theatres and clubs. This paved the way for the establishment of the present registered/quasi-professional troupes with a single

aasaan or a club as the governing body. Even though the present available troupes claim themselves to be the professional *CaviTTunaaTakam* groups, they perform mostly in tourist festivals (organized by govt. agencies). The troupes do not have full-time professional actors as in the professional theatres (drama troupes) of Kerala. Now a days we can find a number of troupes consisting of amateur actors, who are prepared to perform only one play. These groups mostly centre around the coastal belt of Central Kerala villages. The troupes possess the equipments and ability to perform in various parts of the country. In other words, they have the quality of itinerant groups who perform here and there according to the demand on various occasions. In the early days, most of the performances and groups were organized and crafted for a single production at a particular place. This is not the present situation. These days one group, even though they don't possess essential gadgets or materials like costumes, sceneries, sound and music can hire these things from different organizations and shops which lend these ready made stereotyped items.⁶

The *aasaan* or *aNNaavi*

Earlier, masters in Tamil were called *aNNaavis*. The teacher of *CaviTTunaaTakam* is also called the *aNNaavi*, a pure **tamil** word which means instructor. According to the dictionary of **Gundert**,⁷ the term *aNNaavi* is used in Tamil as well as in ancient Malayalam to denote a teacher or the head of a company of actors. But later the *aNNaavis* were known as ***aasaans***, a pure Malayalam word which means teacher. This in itself shows the transformation of the language of *CaviTTunaaTakams* from Tamil to Malayalam, with the development of Malayalam language and literature. The *aasaan* holds a unique position in all aspects of a single play production. In a way we can associate the ***aasaan's*** presence in the four spheres of a play **production**. (a) the *aasaan* decides, and brings the texts along with him. In the later stages *aasaans* were considered as the authors of most of the texts. There are a number of *aasaans* names associated with the authorship of various texts. ⁸ (b) During the training it is the *aasaan* who teaches and choreographs all ingredients of this particular **genre**. (c) At the time of production, the presence of the master with the *cuvaTi* is a must. He is the one who heads the group of backing vocalists and his interventions with the *kaTTiyan* and other characters, make the play progress. As D.L. Swan points out "The troupe leader serves as an on stage manager, directing

the action, encouraging the performers, prompting forgetful actors, and seeing that all night performance keep moving....”⁹ (d) Finally the **aasaans** are the sole inheritors of the tradition and the text. They will never depart with the **cuvaTi** they possess. So through the *aasaans*, the tradition survives and spreads.

The *aasaans* presence in the above spheres of a play production will easily give a rough idea regarding the qualities one should acquire to become an *aasaan*. An *aasaan* must be well-versed in **music,dance**, acting and stage craft and in languages like tamil and **malayalam**, He must also be an expert in martial arts including the use of weapons and gymnastics. As early *CaviTTunaaTakams* are written in tamil, the *aasaan* has to translate the story and interpret it convincingly to his disciples first and later the meaning must be effectively communicated to the audience with the aid of the actors histrionics. The sole authority of the *aasaan* in this genre created a kind of rigid hierarchy centered around the *aasaan*. This somewhat pyramidal structure of the hierarchy is visible in the religious and social activities of Christian religion. This sole authority of *aasaans* were legitimized by the various ritual activities during training and production of a *CaviTTunaaTakam*. It is also theatrically represented by the presence of the *aasaan* with the **cuvaTi** on the stage. Eventhough the self stylized *aasaans* who plagiarized, and interpolated texts caused the decline of *CaviTTunaaTakam*. One can also see a number of *aasaans* and their major roles they enacted as actors. The present functioning groups also functions with *aasaans* as center of all activity. The table given below shows some of the details regarding a number of famous *aasaans* of the earlier era.

Table-16

Name of the <i>aasaan</i>	Place	The major plays taught by the <i>aasaans</i>
Pulithara Gregory	mulavukadu	<i>pilamenaa naaTakam</i>
Raimenthu Louis	vaduthala	<i>birasina naaTakam</i>
Petho	vaduthala	<i>kaarlmaan naaTakam</i>
Chacko	vaduthala	<i>alpoonsu naaTakam</i>
Kuttikkal Ouseppukutty	kothadu	<i>aanjellikka naaTakam</i>
Koduvelipparambil	kothadu	<i>jnana suntari naaTakam</i>
Vareed Varky		
V.G. John Pattalam	Fort Kochi	<i>givargiisu naaTakam</i>
Chelankara Raphel Abel	Fort Kochi	<i>aanjellikka naaTakam</i>
Jerold Maruvakkad	Chellanam	<i>taviidu vijayam</i>
Chiraikkal Kochappau	Chellanam	<i>kottara Rahasyam</i>
Kakki Ouseppu	Chellanam	<i>mar. alleecu naaTakam</i>
V.M. Michel	Ochanthuruthi	<i>alpoonsu naaTakam</i>
V.A. Jossy	Palluruthy	<i>kaarlmaan naaTakam</i>
Antony charankulathu	Pallippuram	<i>kaarlmaan naaTakam</i>
Kattiparambil Poulouse	Gothuruthi	<i>kaarlmaan naaTakam</i>
Konoth George Kutty	Kurumbathuruthi	<i>kaarlmaan naaTakam</i>

The people who make costumes for particular major roles were also called *aasaans*. They were called as *uTuppaacaan*. During the *arañkeeRRam* (initial staging), these *aasaans* were called on to the stage and felicitated for making good costumes. In the early days, the *aasaans* never used to ask for fees or remuneration of any kind. During the training period, all their needs and daily necessities were looked after by the disciples or members of the group, or patron donor. Now a days the existing troupes are centered around an *aasaan*. So the question of payment towards teaching and directing never occurs. On the other hand they earn a little money as part of the professional remuneration gained through the productions.

Training of the actors

Once a group is temporarily formed, the *aasaan* selects a play which is familiar and suitable to the occasion. The knowledge of the text and availability of the *cuvaTi* also play an important role in the selection. The actors were trained in *kaLari*, the local

gymnasiums. They are exactly like the places or sheds used to train the martial art form called **kaLarippayaTTu** with one major difference in that, the placement of *nila viLakku* before *kuricu* (cross) in **kaLaris** is present, instead of the use of **kuttuviLakku** before **Paradevata** idol in an elevated place called **puuttara**. In the early days the acceptance of *sisyaas* (disciples) and training were done according to the age old **kurukula[m]** system. On an auspicious day, the interested boys were brought by the parents and elders to the *aNNaavi* in the **kaLari**. Before selecting the boys, an aptitude test of their voice, capacity to dance and march is conducted and, their physical looks and physique are considered. The selected boys take an oath of dedication to the art in front of a **kuricu** and the traditional *nila viLakku* before the *aNNaavi* and local dignitaries. The ceremonious admission rituals take place according to the age old **kurukula[m]** system. The boys come forward one by one and place ten **puttan** (old coin used in Cochin state) ie. one rupee, in three beetle leaves and present it to the *aNNaavi*. He then touches the master's feet with his two opened palms and touches his own forehead and chest. The master blesses him and makes him a disciple. After pledging allegiance to the master the boy pays his respect to the text. *aNNaavi* opens the first page of the *cuvati* and holds it out to the boy who inturn places /our **puttan** in the book and kisses it in reverence. The boy is admitted formally to the **kaLari**. Absolute obedience to the *aNNaavi* is expected of a disciple. There are a few stories prevalent among the people about some talented artists being doomed because of the curse of an *aNNaavi*.¹⁰ The money offered **first** with beetle leaves can be taken by the *aNNaavi* but the money offered for the text will be paid towards the mass in a Church for the repose of souls. Most of these celebrated ways of preliminary rites are still followed during the initial admissions into a group.

The training period goes on for many months depending upon the conditioning of the actors. For some plays the troupes take many years for preparations and grooming of the actors. Most of the training sessions will start with a large number of disciples but in due course of time many will leave the session due to various reasons mostly because of the hard physical exertion needed to master the basic foot work and positions. Sabeena ftaphy in her illuminating book, points out the decrease in the number of actors in a play production by Gothuruthi **charittunataka sangam**.¹¹ According to her in the initial stage there were 82 pupils for their production of St. **Philomina naaTakam** in 1964 but by the time of final production there were only twenty four actors. This is a general case.

After the admission the students are taught basic *cuvaTus* in different rhythms. There are mainly fourteen *cuvaTus* and all the actors should clear these fourteen *cuvaTus*. To clear up the basic foot work the *aasaan* makes his pupil stamp on the sand floor with full force and weight. After these fundamental steps of Choreography the *aasaan* goes for intricate ones including *iraTTippukaL*, *kaalacams* and *kavittams*. After mastering the steps, preliminary training is given in the use of arms especially the sword and lance. In most of the *CaviTTunaaTakam* plays the martial element is very much predominant. The sword fighting with the real weapons are common in the earlier stages of *CaviTTunaaTakam*. Most of the dramas portray various combat training sessions of the up-bringing of the heroes. So it was a compulsory rule that all actors should undergo martial training or various stages of *kaLarippayaTTu*. Now a days such training has been restricted to those who have to take part in scenes involving sword play and fencing. And the fights displayed now a days are minimal. In the case of *cuva Tus* also, actors and *aasaans* are not keen on clearing all of them. Instead they give importance only to some of them and their variations.

In the earlier days along with the clearing of *cuvaTus* and training of sword play, there were oil massages or body-massages called *uZiccil* done to make the actor's body supple and flexible to play all roles especially female impersonations. During the second stage of training the pupils are assigned different roles by *aasaans*. The selection of actors for characters are based on the physical grace of the trainee. Earlier some roles like king, *mantiri*, Roland, Oliver (both in *kaarlmaan*) were given to boys who belonged to certain families who has the tradition of presenting that particular character. Usually the members who belong to the important families of the village share the coveted roles in the plays. There is an economic reason behind this because the wealthy members alone can afford to make richer costumes and accessories needed for the character. These families used to patronize the theatre form. The second stage of training is called as *colliaaTTam*. The actual rehearsal starts only during this period. Every day *colliaaTTam* begins with a prayer and an action which shows the allegiance to the *aasaan* and the *cuvaTi*. The disciples come forward and touch the *aasaan's* feet and *cuvaTi* and then keep their hands on the forehead. Then using the thumb, each of them make an impression of *kuricu* on the forehead. This is called as *kuricu varaikkal*. Then they sing the *sleevaa viruttam* (a prayer song, which always occurs in the beginning of the play), which contains the

summary of the story and references of Christ, Mary or the patron saint. All the people including **asaans** and accompanying vocalists along with the actors sing this everyday at the beginning of *colliaaTTam*. The following is an example for an initial prayer.

**arccasisTTa ciluvai, tiruaTaiyaaLattinaaLee,
alaikalaam, catturu veNiTattil ninRu,
amalaapara enkeLee kaappaaRRik koLvaan.
tirucutane, stuttinaamee**

During this stage the **asaan** teaches his disciples by reciting the parts of the story, explains its meaning and interprets it according to the context. Then he teaches them how to act effectively their parts using eyes, hands, body and the Choreographic foot steps etc. This leads them to the third stage of the rehearsal process. In this stage the actors start singing and leading their corresponding parts. They also express the meaning with appropriate **muttira[i]** (symbolic gestures) and choreographic movements.

The final step of training is the presentation of the full length play in the *kaLari* itself. In earlier days this practice was compulsory. It was called as *kaLari arañkeeRRam*. This leads them to the final *taTTeel arañkeeRRam* ie. the staging of the play on the **naaTakataTTu**. Apart from the less time taken for preparation, every thing including the initial prayer and stages of training are followed as such in these days also. Now a days most of the troupes prefer evenings for rehearsal because of the various occupations of its members. The drastic cut in the duration of training has badly affected the quality of performance.

The context of the play production

The staging of *CaviTTunaaTakam* plays takes place usually during Christmas, Easter or the Church festival days. The churches in Kerala with a saint as a patron, celebrates one week festival called *peRunaaL* every year. Most of the *peRunaaLs* fall on the Patron saint's feast. Generally it is celebrated during the (prosperous) post-harvest period. Most of the plays are performed in the villages of coastal areas. Earlier the duration taken for the presentation was more than five days. So there used to be continuous performance

through out the *peRunaaL* week. Sometimes they performed the continuous parts of the same play on alternate days in the *peRunaaL* season.¹² With the commencement of *colliaaTTam*, the people in the village will start expecting the production. Usually *colliaaTTam* will take more than a year's time. This time period before the performance will make the localities a little familiar with the play. Because, the large number of actors required for the play production demands the participation of almost all families of that particular village. So most of the families will be knowing the story line of the play. Hence they develop some sort of affinity towards the play production. This intimacy devoids the necessity for notices, announcements or play bills. During the long span of training period, the people will get acquainted with the lines and the basic movements. In a way the audience for the *CaviTTunaaTakam* performance can be called as the "knowing audience".¹³ Now a days due to financial crisis, the troupes associated with the Church will produce a notice and they collect money from the people who belong to that place. The printing of notices and play bills has become common due to the availability of the technology as it also speeds up the communication channel. The localities' direct involvement with the *CaviTTunaaTakam* as participants and the indirect involvement as donors will make the *CaviTTunaaTakam* production a big affair in the village. The whole atmosphere will be identical to that of a festival. All the friends and relatives will be invited to watch the performance. On the day of performance, most of the families prepare food in advance and set their minds to spend a whole night watching the performance. Pongikkara Raphy in an interview, revealed the paraphernalia involved during the staging of Napoleon *naaTakam* in the second decade of this century. The play was staged in an Island called Varapuzha. People from nearby places of Cochin came to the performance place in big rafts called *patteemaaRi* and they made temporary thatches for their day time stay. They cooked food on the shore, spent time sleeping in the morning hours and watched the play at night for a whole week. The entire scene looked like a romantic, nomadic medieval Kerala life. Eventhough the duration of the performance is drastically reduced to four hours, this happens very rarely in a year in a rural coastal village of Kerala. That particular day the friends and relatives are invited and the whole atmosphere of the village transforms into festivities. So now a days also the performance of a *CaviTTunaaTakam* is a holistic affair in a village. They boast about the hereditary inheritance of this particular genre.

Along with the final stages of training which culminates in the *kaLari* **arañkeeRRam**, the preparation, costumes, properties, and *thenaaTakataTTu* (**stage**), **aniyara** (backstage), *viLakku* (light) also take place. The whole village in various fields work together for the making of the above accessories needed for the performance. In this, the making of **naaTakataTTu** is of importance. During the various stages of its transformation and development *CaviTTunaaTakam* acquired a lot of differences in the shape and method of preparation of the performance place. Earlier there were no sceneries and the *taTTu* (stage) was temporarily made only for one performance. But now they perform on the already built proscenium arched stages sometimes with out wooden flooring, with the help of back curtains, sceneries and side wing curtains. The following three descriptions of the *naaTakataTTu* by different authors will give an idea about the stage.

naaTakataTTu

CaviTTunaaTakam is performed in the open-air theatre of the village *Maidan* or in the Church premises. This raised stage of wooden planks is constructed with the joint efforts of the villagers not only with their contributions as money but also with their services in putting up this stage. The planks on the stage are fixed in such a way that while dancing they produce drumming sound. To produce this effect, along with the planks they fix a thin layer of tin sheets. The measurements and the ingredients of *naaTakataTTu* has undergone notable changes down the years. The major reasons behind this variation is the gradual decrease in the number of characters on the stage and in the duration of performance. The more flexible and adoptable technical developments in the case of sound and light also facilitated the variations in the construction of the stage. Sabeena **Raphy describes**,¹⁴ "The stage will be long i.e., 40-60 **kool** in length and 15-18 **kool** width. On either side of the stage, *two* up-stage porticos are placed. This upper chambers are called **meeTa[i]**. They are placed at a height of 6-8 feet. These **meeTa[i]** are connected to the stage by ladders. They are well decorated representing the palaces of the kings of the opposite parties. A bell metal **lamp** is lit on the stage before a cross. There is no curtain. The stage is open. On the farthest ends of the stage are two doors - the entrance and the exit for the actors. One is at the up stage left and another at the up stage right. Both are closed with curtains. Actors use their hands and remove the curtains for entries and exits. On the centre back of the stage at a 4 feet height there is a small window and

one lighted lamp is hung over there, through this rectangular casement the background musicians (**pinpaaTTukaar**) look on to the stage and follow the actors. **aNNaavi** with the cymbals in his hands takes his place near the bell metal lamp (**nila viLakku**) and other instrumental players especially the **ceNTa** player takes either sides of the **aNNaavi**. This description coincides with the opinions of the old **aasaans**.¹⁵ The stage was lit with the indigenous lamps made of clothes dipped in oil.

The **meeTa[i]** were used as the resting place for kings and their retinue. The war scenes are a must in *CaviTTunaaTakam*. So the **meeTa[i]** are built facing one another and the two opposing parties occupy the **meeTa[i]**. The soldiers display the ferocious fighting scenes in the space between the two **meeTa[i]**, the **kaLittaTTu**. In earlier days most valorous heroes would jump down from the **meeTa[i]** to the **kaLittaTTu** and fight. The female characters used ladders to go up and down. Some plays like **kaarlmaan** and "Napolean", which include scenes with a large number of characters, need a spacious performance place. In the Turkish Durbar scene of *kaarlmaan naaTakam*, the Turk emperor appears on the stage with his twenty five smaller kings and their retinue. Once in Gothuruthu they made a large stage of sixty feet,¹⁶ for this scene.

Another description is given by Prof. **K.J.Asugustine** in his article *CaviTTunaaTakam*.¹⁷ In this article he reveals the style and state of affair regarding the stage. According to him the **taTTu** has $1\frac{1}{2}$ **kool** height from the ground level, (where the audience sit and watch the performance), 8 **kool** width and 20 **kool** length. There is no front curtain, but in the centre of the stage there is a long curtain before which the drummers place themselves and play the **keeLi**. After that the **aNNaavi** and the accompanying vocal team occupy the stage. There will be a **nila viLakku** on the stage apart from the three or four fourteen number gas lights placed before the **taTTu**. The **nila viLakku** will be placed just in front of the **viru** (long curtain). The **aNNaavi** and his group stand by this and start singing. This second description lacks the clarity in specifying the entry and exit of the characters. The important aspect in the description is the reference of the use of gas lights instead of the indigenous lamps. In a way this transformation points out the flexible nature of the *CaviTTunaaTakam* groups in absorbing the technical theatrical changes at different junctures of theatre history.

Now a days the performances are staged on the permanent stages and auditoriums.

The use of front curtain and intermittent announcements are common. They use painted sceneries giving importance to the perspective drawings. Even though the troupes decor the stage temporarily they use painted curtains and side-wings to establish the atmosphere of the scene. The use of halogen lights and special effects is another newly introduced method to make the play production easier in terms of technical preparations. It is interesting to note that the audience always sit on the floor just before the stage.¹⁸ The *CaviTTunaaTakam* performance will always be free. And during the heavy, strenuous dance the wooden planks of the floor often break and the back stage people will keep repairing it by adding or nailing the new planks. Earlier, there used to be a back stage or *aniyara* for the characters to do their make up and to take rest. Sabeena Raphy point out that in the early days, *aniyara* was in the back side and most of them were detached from the performance place. In the permanently made auditoriums there are allotted places for make-up and preparation. See appendix for the early and the present condition of *naaTakataTTu*.

(B) Play production and mode of performance

CaviTTunaaTakam, like many other performing art forms of India, has a systematic code of performance. It follows a particular pattern of performance rituals right from the commencement of the play till the end. Due to various reasons there are some changes in the performance of rituals involved in giving *takcaNa* (money as a token of gratitude) to the *aasaans*. Earlier the disciple used to give the gift to *aasaans* on the stage, before the performance, in the presence of his father and uncle. In some other places this is a back stage affair, which happens just before the **make-up**. The *aasaan* with an open *cuvati* in one hand, makes an impression of the cross upon the forehead of the disciples. The disciples touch the *cuvati* with the palm and kiss it later. The disciple's Father and Uncle will initiate him to give the *takcaNa*. Most often this includes one **muNTu** and one *paavu muNTu*; some people give money along with this. The main *aasaan* will make the disciple give *takcaNa* to the *uTuppaacaan* (who make the costume of that particular character) this is also done in the *aniyara*. In the earlier days when all these rituals were part of a visible enactment upon the stage, the friends and relatives of some of the disciples also gave gifts, along with the *takcaNa*, to *aasaans*. Thus, usually in a single production the *aasaan* gets this token of gratitude thrice times. The first will be at the

time of selection. The second is at the time of **colliaaTTam**, after selecting them for the character roles. The third one is, as mentioned above, just before the performance at the beginning of make-up.

After the long period of **colli aaTTam**, the actors will be ready to perform the drama, and which is already announced and known to the village people. The **naaTakataTTu**, the costume and the properties will be democratically set by that day. The 'knowing audience' will also prepare themselves to attend the production, rather, they make sure of their participation that evening. The **aasaans** will be busy on that day. Early morning he takes his pupils to the Church, attends service, approaches the elders for sanction and blessings. Now a days the young **aasaans** who make their debut performances take their whole group to the senior **aasaans** and give **takcaNa** to them on the day of performance. This is called **cuvaTi vaNakkam**. This shows the absolute obedience of the disciple to the **aNNaavi** and the **cuvaTi**.

At seven O'clock in the evening, when the **ceNTa** makes the first announcement, the **make-up** starts. This is called the **oNNaam keeLi**(first **keeLi**). The inauguration of the make-up is done by the **aasaan** himself. The **aasaan** holding the **cuvaTi** in one hand makes a sign of the cross mark on the fore-head of each performer with a traditional make-up pigment called **manai oola[i]** (red-arsenic) and white powder. After this initial ceremony everyone gets busy with **caayamiTal** (make-up) and **uTuppaNiyal** (wearing costumes). The **keeLi** is followed by a number of performance conventions and characteristic scenes. They are : **stuti, viruttam muuLaLa**, **stutiyoogar**, **tooTaiyaaTTam** (tooTayappen), entry **ofkaTTiyan**, durbar, hunting and war scenes along with miraculous escapes and mysteries. This leads the play into **polivupaaTTu**, and ends with **mankalam**. This is followed in all **CaviTTunaaTakam** performances.

keeLi

keeLi is an announcement made, about the **CaviTTunaaTakam**, by playing the **ceNTa**. This is to remind the village folk of the evening play. There are three **keeLis** (musical bits), played on the **ceNTa** for a small duration with a basic **taaLa[m]** and different **gati**. This happens thrice before the show. The first one will be, as mentioned earlier, around 7 O'clock in the evening. This is called **oNNaam keeLi** (the first **keeLi**). This

initiates the process of **make-up**. The group headed by the **aasaan** start the make-up and costuming in the green room. Around eight ie. usually an hour later, the second *keeLi* sounds. According to the capacity of the *ceNTa* player, the duration and the quality of style changes. The audience evaluate the musicians by analysing their expertise in *keeLi*, hence here they are at their best. During this time the back stage will be active in giving the last minute touches for the production. By nine O'clock, the third *keeLi* (**muunaam keeLi**) sounds. This will be just before the play. The *keeLi* functions as the counter part to the bells and whistles in the other professional theatre forms.

Now a days, a lot of changes occurred like the introduction of front curtain and most of the productions are done in the permanent auditoriums with the facility of electric bells, which announce the commencement of the play production. But these transformations couldn't stop the concept and use of *keeLi* in *CaviTTunaaTakam*. Because *ceNTa* or some other main drum instrument is a necessity in a *CaviTTunaaTakam*. Due to the closed front curtain the present day *ceNTa* player or musician plays *keeLi* from the music pit, which is often set in the first right side wing of the theatre. They perform *keeLi* as a convention, just before the performance with a very less duration. Some troupes use electric bells along with it as an audible sign to catch the attention of the audience. The similarity between three bells before a professional drama production and the three *keeLis* before *CaviTTunaaTakam* performance is to be noted. The professional theatre might have inherited this concept of the announcement at three times with an audible sound/bell, from the function of the three *keeLis* of *CaviTTunaaTakam*.

stuti paatTTu and viruttam muuLaL

After the *keeLi* announcement with the playing of *ceNTa* and Cymbals, music starts from inside the stage. In this the *aasaan*, accompanying vocalists, chorus, actors and all back stage workers join together and sing in praise of the Almighty. This invocatory song seeks blessings from the holy cross, Jesus, Mary. The holy spirit is invoked to give light, saints are called upon, and the author and *aasaan* are thanked. In the early days the song was pretty long.

stuti paatTTu is followed by *viruttam muuLaL*. In some places there is no distinction made between *stuti paatTTu* and ***viruttam muuLaL*** and hence both together are called

viruttam muuLaL. In this, all the people, as in the case of *stuti paatTTu* join together with the orchestration and sing a long song in which the gist of the story to be performed that day is explained. This can be compared functionally with the prologue of Greek drama or the *nanti* of Sanskrit theatre. The duration of this song and ingredients vary according to places and production modes. Mostly the *viruttam muuLaL* starts with the *sleevaaveNpaa* which they sing during the *colliaaTTam*. The group makes the symbol of cross on their fore-head. This is followed by *meyaiviruttam* i.e. poets prayer and the briefing of the story. Generally popular, common rhymes and meters are used in *this viruttam muuLaL*, for an example of poets prayer.

*CiirpukaZum piraacai tennaven eNNum kaarmaan
eeRpukaZaiyum katai tanilee inpamuTan paarmiitil,
naaTakamaayaTa, naviluvataRkee eNNaTi
naaTi tutittuiToovoom, naam. [V.S.A.]*

Earlier this section of performance used to take hours. Due to the socio-economic circumstances and availability of free time, the audience could sit and listen to this long session. The musicians, especially the main singers used to take out all their abilities to perform this item. More than a warm up session, it gave them an opportunity to show their talent.

Now a days the *viruttam muuLaL* is reduced to a mere conventional necessity. The play begins with a session of prayer behind a closed front curtain - the poet's prayer, references about the text and the author- all these have become part of the announcements which are not sung but read out. In the *stuti* part also the troupes consider the most popular songs connected with the patron saints of the Church or the hero of the play. Along with the style of professional Bible dramas, the *CaviTTunaaTakam* performances incorporate a tableau of either St. Sebastin tied to the tree, or the crucified figure of Christ. They use special effect lights for this freezed sequences of a couple for minutes. Mostly after singing two stanzas beginning with the line *met/ ai viruttam* they go for this tableau. Then with the closed curtain there will be a song which refers to the Christ, Mary, Patron saints and the major characters of the play.

stutiyoogar or baala paarTTukaar

After **viruttam muuLaL** comes the *baala paarTTukaar*. Before the actual play begins there are three conventional entries. In this, the first one is the entry of two or four boys of the age of not more than fourteen years. They are called *stutiyoogar* which means venerators of the audience. This is a pure dance item performed by boys and hence it is called *baala paarTTukaar* (young actors). They enter through two doors of the stage at the opposite ends, executing powerful and sturdy steps and come into the down stage center and bow to the audience first. Then they take a go to the other side and kneel on one leg, and pay respect to the *aasaan* and *cuvaTi*. In the early days they used to give *Guru takcaNa* to the *aasaan* and later the *aasaan* would call upon the **uTuppaacaan**, who also got the presents. Some times, during the performance the family members also present *takcaNa* to the *aasaan*. Then they touch the feet of the *aasaan* and get on to the center of the stage. There they start displaying the basic *cuvaTus* according to the instructions given by the *aasaan* on the stage. The *aasaan* with his cymbals/**neTTuvaankam** gives directions and render *jati* for their basic and intricate *cuvaTus*.¹⁹ After the performance of this *nirutta* (pure dance) they display their mastery in the use of weapons according to their martial training received in the **kaLari**. Then they recite the story in a condensed form. The young actors sing and act the story. After each *adi* (stanzas) they display the *cuvaTus* generally from the first to fifth along with the music and end it with a **kalaasam** (ending). Finally after saluting the audience, they exit.

These characters are common in *tttrukkuuttu*. The present day performances also possess this sequence. The availability of young trainees and the necessity to show the training of the young 'hero' by a guru during the time of his grooming are factors that keep this going. The same pattern can be found in most of the themes and that became an unavoidable convention in the *CaviTTunaaTakam* repertoire. The only change is the drastic cut in the duration of the sequence. Earlier these sequences were performed for more than half an hour. But now it is only a part of the conventional entry and exit. Next comes the **tooTaiyaaTTam**.

tooTaiyaaTTam or tooTaiyappen

After *stutiyoogar*, a set of maidens enter the stage with a dance similar to the *Mo-hiniyattam* of Kerala. They are all boys dressed in the female attire. Their foot work and the dance with the slow tempo and melodious tunes express the *lasya baavams* of *CaviTTunaaTakam*. This establishes the transvestites quality and legitimizes the make-belief. The song usually contains a prayer to the Madona. The prayer begins with the lines:

ViNNaaLee maamariyee, **namoo, namoo maatee**

Now a days this scene of *tooTaiyappen* is not at all presented. The present living **aasaans** also are not familiar with such scenes. But they have heard about the sequence. In the early days, only men acted the female roles and these young trainees, proved their ability before the audience through these sequences. Later women themselves came into the scene and took up the main female character roles. This transition must have brought about an end to the great transvestites of *CaviTTunaaTakam* and in a way this might have caused the death of this sequence.

kaTTiyakkaaran or kaTTiyan

After the *tooTaiyaaTTam* another character enters the stage. He is the **kaTTiyan** or *kaTTiyakkaaran*, who was once an important, essential character but now a defunct, disjointed comic relief. The role of *kaTTiyakkaaran* has a number of European parallels like, the clown and jester in western drama, the grotesque comic figure of *comedia dell arte*, *De-boa* of Portuguese *Auto de lores*, and medieval European theatre. He can also be compared to the *Property-man* of the Chinese opera.²⁰ He has the liberty to enter the stage at any moment with his free and flexible movement. He moves around the stage, makes comments on every one including the audience, imitates the performers, picks up a cap, sword or any other thing left on the stage. One can even find him, at times carrying a dead soldier to the green-room.

kaTTiyan literally means 'the meaning'. The word *kaTTiyan* was used for describing the qualities of the characters in the *teerukkuuttu*. So the person who describes this came

to be called **kaTTiyakkaaran**. He presents this, in a lively manner through mimicry and clowning. This made the **kaTTiyakkaaran** figure as a joker in the modern sense. Usually **kaTTiyan** is the first to enter the stage and the last to leave the stage. So the presence of **kaTTiyan** can be felt through out the play. V.S. Andrews opines about this character's appearance: "**kaTTiyan** enters the stage with a milk-white beard and moustache, two rows of artificial teeth made of shells fixed in a bow like apparatus, stretched up to the bottom of ears. By stuffing all sort of things into the loose garment for making a massive, protruding stomach. He keeps a stick made of the tender part of the aracanute tree, which looks sturdy in appearance but very thin and flexible in nature".²¹ This early appearance of the **kaTTiyan** transformed drastically in the later period. **kaTTiyans** are now dressed like jokers or the Christmas Santa Clause with the long cone shaped hats and multi coloured garments.

According to the South Indian theatre tradition, the **kaTTiyakkaaran** has different names. These names directly relate him to his duties or style of function on and off the stage. Some of the names are: **baffuun**, **vituucakan**, **virutukaamiyan**, **cuttirataari**, **seevakan**, **kaavalkaaran**, **caba[i] alankaaran**, **koomaaLi**, **toppai kuuttaati**. His major function is to amuse the audience. For this he should be well versed in the execution of techniques like **cuvatus** and **muttira[i]**. He should be an **extempore-poet**, capable of versifying extempore, making parodies or parallel pieces to any of the original songs or verses. In short, one who is talented and capable of manipulating the entire text can become a successful **kaTTiyakkaaran**. When he is on stage the **aasaan** asks or checks with the **kaTTiyakkaaran** by asking him to perform **kavittams** or **cuvatus**, he has to do it with jocular ease. He often mimicks and imitates the others in order to make the audience **laugh**. His antics like trembling during a war scene, seriousness during a lighter movement on the stage are part of his performance. These actions of course relieve the tension of the audience.

Besides this, he has to provide a commentary for Tamil *CaviTTunaaTakam*. He enters into direct conversation with the **aNNaavi**. In a Durbar scene he asks:-

"**aNNaavi!** who is the big personage on the stage?",

aNNaavi:- "He is the great emperor Charlemagne of France seated on his high throne",

(The; jester bows low before the 'Emperor' and rejoins),

aNNaavi, what does the great emperor order?,

aNNaavi:- "The great emperor is giving orders to his ministers to prepare for a hunt-".

This is an example of the type of commentary one **kaTTiyan** provides during the play. This clarifies the doubts of the audience and establishes a connection between the scenes. Most often this type of commentaries by **kaTTiyan** and his intertextual references by linking the events of the story with the local native incidents contribute to the smooth development of the story. The **kaTTiyan** also provides descriptions of sceneries and if the play continues for the next day it is his duty to summarise the story line of the previous day's play in the beginning of the second day.

The **kaTTiyan** can enter the stage at anytime. He is like the *tooZan* character of the Sanskrit theatre, who is the intimate companion of kings. Usually one **kaTTiyakkaaran** is closely associated with two or more kings in a single play. He is often called up on the stage by the kings to send messages to their ministers. So he can enter the stage at anytime without the direction and sanction of the **aasaan**. He often does valuable services using this freedom. He picks up a sword or a cap or a breast plate that has fallen down by chance and keeps it in the proper place. He laments for the dead soldiers and carries the dead bodies into the green room. The lack of front curtain and the impossibility of dimming the stage light made this character's presence a must in the olden days. **kaTTiyan** used to come on to the stage and freely improvise to while away time or to provide time to set up the stage for the next scene. The improvements of mechanized techniques and rope tricks with the help of pulleys of the present time limited this free entry chances of the **kaTTiyan**. During these sessions **kaTTiyans** used to interact with the audience directly and were often rewarded with eatables and garlands. They used to eat and make fun of the donor till the audience yell to make the character go out of the stage. Early days audience used to shout at the **kaTTiyan** "go out and Don't come till we demand".²²

During the *takcaNa* ceremony the presence of **kaTTiyan** is essential. It is the **kaTTiyan** who presides that function. He stands on the extreme down stage and calls aloud,

"costume **aasaan** of this particular character (he also includes some prefixes to make the name popular **and** respectful) will come to the stage now". Then the *aasaan* comes and receives the gift from the actor. In the earlier days the last *polikkal* sequence, it is the *kaTTiyan* who yells out the names of the patrons, who have donated a particular sum for that performance. Apart from this, if a character needed rest or suddenly had to change the role it is the *kaTTiyan* who used to take up those roles to run the show with out any delay.

Even though the *kaTTiyan* has so many functions in a *CaviTTunaaTakam*, we cannot see one in the present day performances. According to the existing *aasaans*, after the 1960's, *kaTTiyans* were not present in the dramas, for a number of reasons. The most prominent among them are: the scarcity of talented actors, the reduction in the number of characters due to economic reasons, the technical development of theatre and the shortening of duration of the play production. These factors led to major changes in the functions of *kaTTiyans*. Apart from that, the text form of the *CaviTTunaaTakams* got prominence and most of them are written, in Malayalam. This brought about a sudden end to the interpreter and the person who dealt with the extra-textual elements. Infact, the same thing happened to the 'fools' in the medieval European secular dramas. Once these dramas became written texts, the characters who were dealing with the "texts" made in contexts became defunct.²³

The story begins. . . .Major scenes

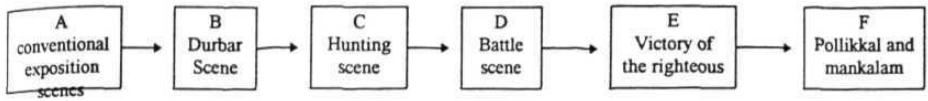
After the initial creation of the atmosphere with the consecutive entries of the conventional characters, the story begins. The long period of *colliaaTTam* and the whole hearted participation of the villagers make them aware of the tips and curves of the theme. Because of its traditionally handed over nature, the themes and climax will be already known to the audience. The only thing of its novelty will be the mode of presentation of each scenes by their Kith and Kin as impersonated kings and warriors. *stutiyoogar* in his short narration will hint at the scenes to be followed. They also lead the audience to the context in which the story happens, so usually in the beginning the audience expect the Durbar scenes of the king, who is one of the main characters of the play. In some of the later productions the story begin with scenes including the main character or the scene related to the major incident, which makes the story progress.

The second scene will be hunting sequences and finally this leads to further development of the story by creating a cause for war or combat. In the case of stories dealing with secular characters and themes, the misfortunes or the accident revelations related to the age old secrets, which occur during the hunting sequence will develop into climax, and the resolutions through the fights.²⁴ This always ends up with victory of the morally righteous heroes. In the plays dealing with historical as well as biblical themes, just after the Durbar scene, there will be either hunting or conquest sequences to show the power of the emperor. If it is hunting sequence, along with it or immediately after it the problem or the calamity facing that particular country will be established. This crisis will lead to the timely intervention or the rise of the hero character. Then it proceeds with a number of combats and duels which finally culminate either physically in the victory of the hero by total destruction of the evil or by ultimate spiritual victory of the hero through his martyrdom. These dramas also contain certain miraculous escapes of the major, morally righteous characters with the help of supernatural figures or supernumerary characters. Most of these sequences come in between the conflict and climax scenes. In most of the dramas, after climax sequences there will be action packed sequences and the final resolution sequences occur a little later. The *CaviTTunaaTakam* has a scenic structure as shown in the following diagram.

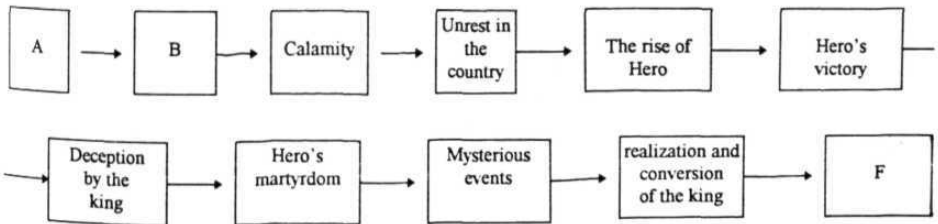
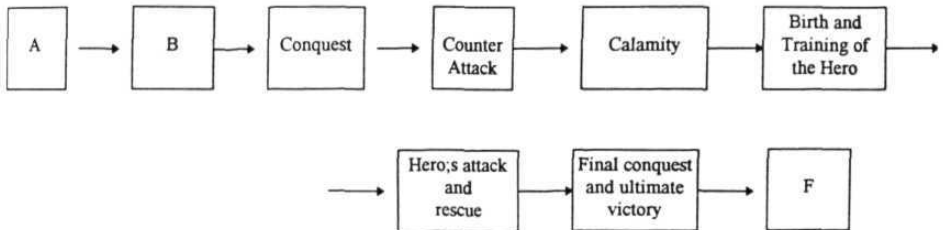
At this point, it will be interesting to consider some major scenes in the *CaviTTunaaTakam*, repertoire. One can see most of the dramas follow a particular pattern with regard to the structure of major scenes, and the mode of production.

Fig. 4 [a, b, c]

In the case of Folk/Native/Social themes.



In the case of Biblical/Religious themes



Durbar Scene

It is a common practice to introduce the story with Durbar Scenes of the kings. Usually the Durbar scene and the entry of the king into the durbar will be set with two initial expositions or announcement regarding the particular scene to follow. One is the *stutiyoogar*. He will ask the audience and the people to clear up the stage and streets for the excellent and royal entry of the emperor. Their reference is relevant to the audience as well as the performers.

elloorum viTu aRamanaivaacal
teru viitikaL eLLaam nanRaay
alankavittuk koLvIn. [V.S.A.]

This prepares the audience's mind to receive the most majestic scene of the *CaviT-TunaaTakam*. This also enlivens the back stage. They start a song which describes the grace and majesty of the emperor and his country. This song sequence is called *Varavu viruttam* (entrance song). This song sung by the *aasaan* with the *pinpaatTukaar* (accompanying vocals) signals the entry of the emperor. The song goes thus *Varavu viruttam*.²⁵

makimai ceer maNimakuTa kiiriTam minnaa-
mantara vaaL koTi paTaikaLaNitulanka-

cikamai ceer periyakaarmaaN raayan
ciRanta cabai tanilee.. varukinRaaree. [V.S.A.]

The initial two lines describe the appearance of *kaarlmaan raayan* (Emperor Charlemagne). The description of the appearance follow and end up with saying that with his famous army he is entering the durbar or court.

This song will arouse the anticipation of the audience. Then from the stage left door the emperor with the manifold virtues enters the stage. The emperor will be dressed up in

colourful and glittering robes, carrying a scepter in his left hand and wearing a royal crown often engraved with pearl or gold studded cross. The great king will be escorted by a dozen soldiers clad in greco-roman soldier costumes with helmets decorated with feathers. The soldiers will be placed on both sides of the emperor in two lines. They enter the stage singing and using sturdy steps. The entry will be a kind of a parallel Choreography. The soldiers sing this song in praise of the emperor, this is called *paattira piravesa taru* or some times this will be in *cintu* metrical scheme and is called *pavaniciñtu*.²⁶ Usually the great emperors like *kaarlmaan*, Dioclecian, and Albiranth will be having this *paattir piravesa taru*. In the *kaarlmaan caritam*, the song for Albiranth is like this:

*eNticaipukaz paTaitta-
alpiraattanum iiLan-
nakar koNTuiTavte-
enkaL maNTalaatipan varaar [R.A.]*

In a way this is a privilege enjoyed by the great emperors of *CaviTTunaaTakam* repertoire. This sequence will make the *taTTu* shiver with vibrations because of their heavy foot steps. This entry will form into a linear combination in the center stage with the emperor at the center. Then the *aasaan* leads this group's *colliaaTTam* with a nice *kavittam* and ends it with a *kalaasam*. The king in the meanwhile moves from left to right and checks the performance of his retinue. His movements will be majestic and forceful. The emperor starts singing *kooluviltaru* extolling his own greatness.²⁷ This is an example of the *kooluviltaru* by Dioclecian emperor in *pilamenaa caritam naaTakam*.

*CiirpukaZum roomai-
peer ciRanta nakar vaaZum-
tiyakkiLican enpiratoor-na anum-
kuRrariya nakar-celva vaLarmaikaL-
teRiyavee, koluviL vaaraa-
nakar enkumee, stuti kuRaa-
veku-caturvita-ni RamaalaikaL aNiyaree
Cittira navarattina muttukaL-
cuTavoLipala koorvaikaLaNiyaree-*

ativitampukaZ paTai nikar aNiyaree
tiTamuTan aTi koluvatil varaa [S.R.]

During this session the emperor dances with the **cuvaTu's** and acts using hand gestures according to the lines. This song consists of 12-18 stanzas. There will be small pauses after each stanzas, for every pause the group of soldiers dance together with **cuvaTus**, keeping with the rhythm of the **kooluvil taru** sung by the emperor. The session ends with **kalaasams**. By the end of the song all the members of the group dance together and they wind up the song with a thunderous **kalaasam**. Then the king asks for his **mantiri** (minister), who recedes to up stage and occupies the decorated throne. Often the king orders a soldier to inform his minister to report immediately. The soldier steps forward, salutes and exits.

A chorus from the back stage announces the minister's entrance. The minister often sings the first stanza of his entrance song from within, then enters, or jumps on to the stage with a drawn sword, singing and taking sturdy steps. The soldiers, rejuvenated at the sight of the minister, start following his steps and rhythm. As the minister finishes his entrance song he thrusts his sword up right into the wooden plank of the stage or completely takes it out from its cover and salutes the emperor. The minister bows before the emperor by kneeling on one leg and bending the other with reverence. He then enquires the reason for summoning him. The emperor inturn enquires with the minister about the well-being of his subjects. Then the minister gives a long narration about the well being of the empire and people. This is called **naaTTu vaLamai**,²⁸ while he sings and acts out this portion the entire soldiers join him, mostly they use the graceful **cuvaTus** called **aTanta** in this session.

The emperor will be satisfied with this narration. He would honour him or award medals just after his performance. Then the Emperor expresses his desire to go for a hunt or a conquest. The minister assents and the emperor, the minister and soldiers march off in order.

The durbar scenes generally establish the quality of the performance and the capacity of the group. There is a general belief that if the Durbar scene at the first instance itself arrests the attention of the audience and they react with applause, the performance is

half successful, otherwise nothing can hold the audience from staying up the whole night for the performances.²⁹ Apart from the reduction of descriptive narrations, and painted sceneries every aspect in the Durbar scenes of the present performance style is similar to that of the early days. Most of the *naaTakams* contain more than two varieties of Durbar scenes. The differences are carefully crafted and presented.³⁰ The durbar scene introduces the emperor, and his minister, garbed in glittering costumes, along with their retinue, whose foot steps and movements correctly correspond with the temperaments of the main characters. This is significant because it creates the milieu of the story to be performed that day. So the Durbar scenes especially the one which is presented first will be of major importance. This scene is followed by the hunting scene or the conquest scene.

Hunting scene/veeTTai, naayaaTTu

Hunting was a right enjoyed by the kings and Lords. They called it as *mirkaya vinoolam*. It was part of their recreational activity. In the early epic narratives, it was considered as a playful enjoyment of the powerful and inturn it legitimized their power. This particular sequence will provide the characters an opportunity to exhibit their talents in the use of weapons. It also gives the hero a chance to establish his prominence among others. Hunting scenes are common among the later plays which deal with folk/native themes. In the early historical and religious plays there were voyages and conquests coming just after the Durbar scenes. But in those plays also, there were long narrations in praise of the valour and feats of the heroes. There were references to their hunting abilities. If at all a hunting scene is there it occurs in between their Voyages as in *kaarlmaan naaTakam*.³¹ In saintly plays which generally centered around the question of morality, the hunting scenes were prominent. It was the shady mysterious atmosphere of the forests, and the killer or primitive instincts of man that tempted the villainous characters to commit the crimes or mis deeds. This infact later **contributed** to the progress of the story. Usually in the later plays like *viirakkumaaran*, Sathyapalan, and Alphones, the misfortunes happen to protagonists along with the hunting scenes. This becomes the turning point and it leads the plays into the major conflicts and later to the climax.

Hunting scenes involve various types of group choreographic movements. In the early

days, the productions consisted of movements with semi-circular and circular patterns and zig zag varieties of marching by a group of soldiers. Usually the masked animal characters (eg: the actors hide in the animal skins) appears on the stage and the group led by *mantiri* or the hero chases the prey. It was a common and effective practice to use bows and arrows in these scenes. The scenes end up with the killing of the prey and celebrations. Now a days the painted curtains which can be easily changed using the pulleys and strings along with the special effect lights help to create more effective hunting sequence on the stage. As in the early days, the groups of soldiers march into the forest and then split into a number of groups. Later they will have choreographed and practiced zig zag movements, strictly keeping the already planned direction. The use of entries and exits are manipulated for better effects. The use of bows and arrows and masked animal characters are common even today. The mood of the end sequences (either misfortune or cheating) determines the further progress of the action. In most of the hunting scene presentations, percussion plays an important part. The group will be moving with the *taalLa[m]* produced by the instruments. The tempo of this music usually follow an upward motion ie. from a low pitch to a high pitch and according to the mood of the scene it also gains its high tempo. These scenes include the songs sung by soldiers during their fight and the chase against the wild animals. The metres generally used for this songs are Kavadi *cintu* and **Paala**. The advantage of using this meter for the songs is that it can be sung rhythmically in high speed with variations.

War Scenes

War scenes are attractive and are an essential feature of a *CaviTTunaaTakam*. *CaviTTunaaTakam* is famous for the representation of martial tradition of the people. The year long training session in the *kaLari* will culminate in the ferocious display of fights. The *CaviTTunaaTakam* with its thematic speciality and mode of presentation is absolutely suitable for on stage battles and combats. The basic *rasaa* of *CaviTTunaaTakam* is *viira racam*. This *rasaa* as we have seen is effectively established through the valorous deeds of its heroes in their confrontations. Moreover, the duels and fights portrayed in these dramas sustain *veera* as its basic condition. The audience will be familiar with the basic fighting movements, the group is going to show, because those patterns will be already introduced in the *bala paarTTu* scene itself. By the end of their sequence, the *baala*

paarTTukaar show their mastery over the **aTavus** (which they learnt from their guru). This often includes a session of the display of **kuruvu aTi, vaTi** and **vaaL** etc (Sticks and sword). Most often there are scenes in which the hero is getting martial training from the guru. In all the important popular plays the hero character is presented by more than four actors of different ages.³² Most of them include, the scenes of the grooming up of the valiant (chivalrous) hero. These above sequences tunes up the audience's minds to a ferocious fight. [There are duels and group fights of 30 to 40 actors on the stage. Usually the kings do not actively take part in the fights]. The minister is the **commander-in-chief** of the army and leads the battle. Before going for the fight the emperor or king prays to God, kneeling on one leg. The soldiers together with the minister kneel down and join him in the prayer. Before setting out for war the emperor gives his blessing to the minister. The two opposite parties enter from the two ends of the long stage and march to the center. They stand face to face, often in two parallel rows with the swords and shields. When they meet face to face, the leaders or the kings sing a *kalai* in which they boast about their qualities in the art of war.³³ Then suddenly there will be a counter from the otherside, i.e., from the leader of the opposition. He will sing another *kalai*. This verbal exchange of boast and counter boast continues. Meanwhile the group of soldiers along with each leader responds and moves in accurate time measures (**cuvaTus**). This will create a suitable ambience for a combat. The presentation of *kalai* is powerfully depicted in the duel scenes. One of the most famous *kalai* of CaviTTunaaTakam repertoire is the **one by perabrass in kaarlmaan CaviTTunaaTakam**.

*pakti uttavanoo-ittaraiyil-
kaarmaaN raayan-caktipeRRavanoo-
attavanoo-manRil-Pa Tai ceytooni-
onRumee aRiyaata ennaka-
inRu poor ceyvarr-enRu kaariyam-
niyamoo-camprataayamoo-arul vaymoo
avan raayan raayanoo.....
ayyaa! enaipayinRa-meyyaa enai
anuppum, kaiyaal avantalai koituiTuveen [S.R.]*

While perabrass performs this *kalai* the stage and the audience shiver with fear. So these

types of sequences become the yardstick to assess the quality of the performance and actors.

After the *kalai* the leaders sing *yuttat taru* or *poort taru* (war cry) and step forward,³⁴ clanging his shield with the other leader and start fighting. The group would follow the leader. The group, whose leader sings the *yuttat taru* will step forward and attack according to the choreographed plan. The opposite group defends with their weapons and body movements. Most often one person fights with the other at one time and moves away from him. They use real metal swords and shields. The movement will be according to the *taaLa[m]* of the *yuttat taru*. One can identify three types of movements for group fights choreography they are : i) movements along parallel or horizontal lines (ii) movements in the circular format and iii) movements in the octagonal format. The two distinct groups make two similar basic patterns and start moving. It goes on for several rounds and stops abruptly at the signal of the cymbal by *aasaan*. The next turn comes for the opposite party. The leader sings *poort taru* and they become the attackers. The rhythm and movements change. The fight used to go on for nearly half an hour in the early days. The scene ends up with the submission of one leader or the fleeing of one party. The movements and rhythms proceed as per the direction of the *aasaan*.

Even today also fighting sequences are very interesting and are crafted carefully for popular appeal. Because of the lack of stamina and cut in the training period, the actual time duration devoted for these scenes are drastically reduced. The influence of filmy fights and the imitations of those popular types spoiled the original charm and improvised movements in the actual situations. Now a days all the actors will not be trained to fight on the stage. Hence the audience do miss the grand sequences of fights which involved originally more than thirty soldiers. At present, the effect created by the extensive use of flicker lights during the scenes creates the desired ferocity in the movements. This is only a technical adjustment to stunt the audience but the originality of the early *CaviTTunaaTakam* fights are now a part of memory.

The other important scenes

Even though the basic *rasaa* of *CaviTTunaaTakam* is *viiram* there are lovely love scenes in these plays. The love scenes in the historical/biblical themes follow a medieval

European pattern in which the feudal knight, devoid of all the obstacles, ceremoniously wins his lady love. In the **kaarlmaan naaTakam**, both parts consists of love affairs which are beautifully presented. In both the **naaTakams** the love entanglement happens between the people who are in the rival factions. In the case of **aanjellikka naaTakam** it is in between Roldon, the valour peer of **kaarlmaan** and Anchelikka, the daughter of Turkish king **Avutharman**. In **kaarlmaan caritam** (Plorippus part) there is a love affair between Plorippus, the daughter of **Albiranthblam**, and **Gouthever Konghgu** the handsome peer of **kaarlmaan**. For instance in the scene in which Roland (Roldon) sees the portrait of 'aanjellikka'. The valiant peer instantly falls in love with that beauty and starts describing about her.

*ambarattil utittu viLankum cantirantanoo
aRivaimukam taamaraiyoo veloo neettiram
pamparamoo, kuTaintu eTutta cimuloo konkai
paaka vekutaRc cilaiyoo, mukiloo kuuntal
impuviyil ivaLukkiNai maRRoruvan uNToo,
en ceyveen, unai kaaNa iTai epootoo.
tumpi pool PaRantu naan unnaik kaaNa
cukirtam ena keTTiTuv iTuvir, tookaiyaaree. [V.S.A.]*

There are also very intimate scenes in the *CaviTTunaaTakams* like *viirakkumaaran*. In the beginning scene, the king and Thiruselvi in their *aramana* closely discuss about their expected child and their relationship. These scenes with *sirunkaara rasaa* are presented with subtle acting and soft tunes.

There are scenes in which the *karuNa rasaa* is prominent. The death sequences and the martyrdom scenes evoke the *karuNa rasaa* in the audience. These grim, desperate scenes are presented in a highly emotional manner. Most often they become melodramatic. The music and metre used for these sequences are apt for its mood. These scenes involve a lot of facial expression and rendering of monologues by the leading characters. This is an example from *kaarlmaan caritam*.

iRaivan oLi nikar enatu kamala

*muka coobana cinkaara caTTu-
iTaRu varaatee onaik kaakka, eeka nitak
kaZinta aLankaara-
arumai uTayee peRRa anpaana unatu
taay uRu-ipoo-
taLu talutu kaNNunirraRupool
coRiyalu kaN makaNee*

*untan mukam paarkka vantoom
uLam menlintu vaaTi mika vaaneen.
ippoo — turtti peRu munnaiyirpocci iruL
ataintatenuku kaN makanee. [V.S.A.]*

This is one of the last scene in *kaarlmaan naaTakam*, in which the king rushes into the battle field where Roldon lies dead with bloody wounds on his body. The Emperor grabs his nephew's dead body and laments in the above lines. These scenes evoke a very different kind of emotion in the audience which is quite different from the predominant *rasaa* in *CaviTTunaaTakam*.

CaviTTunaaTakams often include scenes in which Christian rites are theatrically presented on the stage. Most of the dramas have proselytization scenes in which a priest is called upon the stage by the powerful (victorious emperors) and the Baptism for conversion takes place. These scenes are the exact replicas of the actual ritual practices of the Church. After their conquests, the Christian kings make the pagan lords converts to Christianity. This is a common scene in the historical *CaviTTunaaTakams*. Most of the converted characters in the native/religious plays receive new names in the following scenes or the name of the play is announced in the last scene along with the converted hero/heroines name.³⁵ There are prayer scenes in which all the characters are involved and they pray to God (Christ/Mary). *CaviTTunaaTakams* also show marriage scenes. They will be presented as a condensed marriage celebration in the Christian Church. They are moulded in a way to show the power of papacy. It also holds the celibacy and chastity of Christian family bondage.

A couple of mysterious and miraculous scenes are common in these dramas. Most of them include scenes in which angels, saints or mother Mary suddenly appears and helps the morally righteous hero/heroine and saves them from dangers. There are certain supernumerary characters and animals who also appear and perform miracles to resolve certain situations in the plays. Most of the *CaviTTunaaTakams* with folk themes include jail breaking sequences and miraculous escapes from the hands of the bandits. These dramas also include millies and orgys by the bandits and hooligans.

More over these plays consist of dance sequences as part of the victory celebrations by the kings during the war, or by the bandits because of their catch, or by the soldiers just after the *veeTTai*. They depict an orgy session which culminates in a dance. These dances will be slightly different from the set pattern of the *cuvaTu* of the actual *CaviTTunaaTakam* dance-drama.

The scenes of martyrdom, killing, and beheading are portrayed on the stage with the help of set pieces and dimming of the lights. Sometimes they are symbolically revealed to the audience. The audience as *Sahrdayas* indulge in this **make-believe** world suspending their disbelief.³⁶

The *CaviTTunaaTakams* end with two more conventional scenes: one is *polikkal* and the other is ***mankalam***.

polikkal or **polivupaaTTu**

This is a common practice in the case of folk and *sankiita naaTakam* traditions of South India. This session consists of collecting money from the audience as a token of gratitude towards the great expenditure for the production. In the early days it was a common practice and a big basin covered with a white cloth was placed in front of the *naaTakataTTu*, for the audience to throw money into it. But this was not compulsory. The staging of *CaviTTunaaTakam* was an expensive business and the dramas were performed absolutely free. So donations during this session was very much welcomed. In the early days the *kaTTiyan* used to play an important role in the session. It is the *kaTTiyan* who sings this *polivupaaTTu*.³⁷ When some one gives or throws money, the *Kattiya*m announces his/her name in a peculiar way to the audience. The **Kattiya**m yelk

ut the name adding so many prefixes then with the actual amount he adds thousands, lakhs and crores, for eg.,

mahaa raaja maanya raajyarsti policca
biriTTiccu ruupa anju, pattu, nuuRaayiram
koo Ti

The audience applaud the *kaTTiyans* performance and the donors good will. At present the donors and the patrons function changed drastically and most of the performances occur in the already constructed stages. The method of collecting money using receipts and tickets came in and this brought an end to this convention in the present day performances.

mankalam

As in the other performing art forms of India, in *CaviTTunaaTakam* too *mankalam* is sung as the concluding piece of the long dance drama.³⁸ In this closing scene, all the actors who participated in the play come in and line up in different rows or in a single semi-circular row. The *aasaan* starts the thanks giving song and all others join in chorus. The back stage workers and musicians also sing with the actors. The theme consists of thanking God, Mary and the patron saint for the successful and happy ending of the play. Then saluting the audience, all the performers march off to the green-room.

Most of the above mentioned conventional scenes are very much present in the recent productions. If the present status of the execution of certain scenes was not mentioned **specifically**, it would mean that they continue in the same format and structure as in the early days.

(c) The major theatrical aspects (techniques) of CaviTTunaaTakam

This section examines the technical as well as the major theatrical elements of *CaviTTunaaTakam*. The major technical elements can be classified as the choreography, Music, Costume and make-up, and lighting and special effects. Apart from the purely technical aspects, this part includes an analysis of the acting techniques and practices adopted by

the actors who usually portray a number of major roles in the repertoire. The acting is incorporated here because the performance of *CaviTTunaaTakam* gives priority to the stylization rather than to representational ways of depicting characters. The stylized ways of presentation strictly follow a set of rules and norms (ways) and the actors require training in this mode of presenting characters. So it must also be considered in the technical theatre section.

Choreography

CaviTTunaaTakam, as a dance-drama, has developed its own choreographic pattern. The basic element of its Choreography lies in the *cuvaTu* (**foot-work**) which goes in along with a saying in Malayalam i.e., *CaviTTunaaTakattin cuvaTu cuvattil aaNu*. It means that the root of *CaviTTunaaTakam* is its *cuvaTu*. *cuvaTu* means the root (a vernacular expression) and *cuvattil* means "in the foot-steps". In a way people ascribe the name *CaviTTunaaTakam* to this theatre because its beauty and difference lie in the striking *cuvaTu* or foot-steps.³⁹ By this, one can assume the importance of *cuvaTu* in *CaviTTunaaTakam*. In the *kaLari* the trainees will be initially taught body exercises according to the *kaLari* tradition of Kerala and then the *aNNaavi* teaches them the basic steps (*cuvaTus*). This is followed by *iraTTippukaL* (the multiplication of the basic ones). This is also considered as the basic steps. Then they proceed to intricate and complicated steps including *kavittams*, *kalaasam*, *iTakkalaasams* and *aTanta*. The principles of acting with *muttira[i]* and singing according to the tune of the metre used in the *paatams* are taught simultaneously.

Foot steps

The basic *cuvaTus* including *iraTTippukaL* varies in number from place to place and from *aasaan* to *aasaan*. The reason behind this is, in some places they never consider *iraTTippukaL* as a separate section. They count the *cuvaTus* and *iraTTippukaL* together. According to Sabeena Raphy, there are 12 varieties of *cuvaTu*'s, *iraTTippukaL*, *kalaasam*, *kavittam*, *iTakkalaasam* and *aTanta*. She also identifies eight different kinds of *cuvaTus* and *kavittams* used by the character of Turkish emperor and his group in the *kaarlmaan naaTakam*.⁴⁰ However, this number varies in between 12 to 16 according to different *aasaans* and places.

The numbers as mentioned by the living **aasaans** according to their present practice:

Table - 17:

Name	Place	Number of <i>cuva Tus</i>	<i>kavittams</i>
Chacko aasaan	Vaduthala	12	15
George Kutty	Kurumbathuruthi	12	8
Alex Thaluppadath	Pallippuram	14	8
Thampi Pyappili	Gothuruthi	14	8
Maneek Manakil	Gothuruthi	14	
Joseph Thottumkara	Ochanthuruthi	12	6
Xavier Arraickal	Chellanam	12	6
Ouseppukutti kuttikkal	Ernakulam	12	
Pius <i>aasaan</i>			
Joseph <i>aasaan</i>	Ponjikkara	14	8

At present most of the troupes use twelve basic *cuvaTus* and a maximum of eight types of *kavittams* for all the productions. In that also, except for the main characters, the others are not familiar with the maximum varieties of basic steps.

Most of the ***cuvaTus*** include forceful stamping of the foot, where the full sole of the feet touches the floor.⁴¹ This stamping of the foot will strictly coincide in time with the beats of the percussion instruments. They stamp the feet according to the particular number of ***cuvaTu*** [ie. like ***oNNaam cuvaTu*** has it's own style in the number of beats and movements and they use wrist rolling and the movements of hands along with it. Usually most of the *cuvaTus* including two hand positions ie. keep left hand close to the chest either in ***Dola hastta*** or keep it rest on the body with *sikaara*. The right hand always kept away from the body, in *artta chandra hastta*, with the palm facing the dancer. This stretching or outward movement of the hands goes along with the movements of the legs for stamping foots. While the group altogether displays the *cuvaTus*, both the hands will be kept a little away from the body and the palms are opened or closed simultaneously or used as one is closed and the other opened. They are raised to the chest region of the body. The basic position is stand at ease and most of the *cuvaTus* start with the

movement of the right leg. There are other types of **cuvaTus** used for entries and exits locally known as **vaNTic cuvaTu** which is a variation of the sixth and eighth **cuvaTu**.⁴² Most of the entries are marked by the movement of a group of soldiers in parallel or horizontal lines from the door to the center of the stage. **cuvaTus** used at the time of a group's performance will be often preplanned. But a single actor is permitted to select any **cuvaTu** according to the **taaLa[m]** during his solo enactments.

One single **cuvaTu** consists of a number of beats and movements. They differ in the basic patterns from place to place. But all together the structure and the body position and strict timing with the beat is the same. This can be understood only through a detailed description of the **cuvaTus.collukoTTus** of the **cuvaTus** include meaningless syllables (jatis as in the other South Indian performances) and a few verses of the popular songs of the play. The corresponding **collukoTTus** also differ from place to place, but most of the **aasaans** use the syllables '**That-Tha-Thi**'.

oNNaam cuvaTu:

All the **cuvaTus** basically have four beats from the basic position of stand at ease in which both the hands are resting on the hip and left leg kept little in front. For the first beat, the right foot is forcefully stamped in the front. The second beat corresponds with the stamping of left foot at the same position. On the third beat the right foot is brought back and stamped at the original position (basic stand at ease) and the left leg is stamped on the fourth beat. For the first two beats the right hand is kept in **arda candra hastta** facing out ward, a little away from the body at the chest level and for the third and fourth, this hand is brought back close to the body keeping the **hastta** facing in-ward. However the left hand is kept in it **hastta** at the navel level, very close to the body for the first three beats and at the fourth it is taken up to the chest level facing in-ward.

renTaam cuvaTu:

The right foot is stamped behind the left, in **mettu** for the first beat keeping the body position completely facing right side. The right hand is held in **arda candra hastta**, facing out-ward like in the first beat of the **oNNam cuvaTu**. The left hand is held in

hastta close to the novel. The body turns at the torso towards the right side and the dancer looks from right side to the other diagonally- The next two beats includes this change of position without stamping. The same movement is done on the left side too.

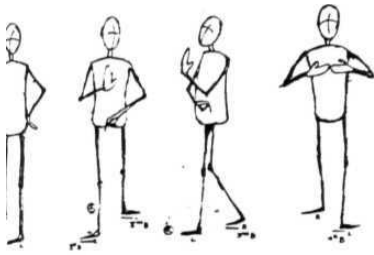
naalam cuvaTu:

The fourth one is a single step extension of the third. Here the basic position is profile and little bended and the right hand in *arda candra* is stamped on the normal position and on the second beat the right leg is placed behind the left, then the body is turned towards right and the right hand is kept at the chest level with the above *hastta* facing out ward. The left hand is placed closer to the body at the naval level. On the third, the right leg is again stamped in the original position and the fourth beat corresponds with stamping the left leg at the same. Both the hands are kept at the chest level facing in-ward. The movement for the ***muunam cuvaTu*** is completed and in the case of ***naalam cuvaTu*** one more half beat is added and for this the right leg is again raised and stamped (with a dip) at the front of the left by making the entire body facing towards left. For both these foot steps the reverse movement follows.

ainñcaam cuvaTu:

Here at the basic position both the hands are kept at chest level, held in *arda candra hastta* but one is kept facing out-ward and another in-ward. By taking right leg behind the behind the left, turns the body towards right. Then strike the left and right foot one after the other correspondingly changing the inward and out ward faces of the *hastta*. Then by facing the left direction completes the 3rd and 4th beats by stamping right and left. The hand also changes as earlier. The ultimate out come of this dance movement is a semi circle, and both the hands are kept through out at the chest level. they also have a graceful rolling of the wrists.

oNNaam cuvaTu

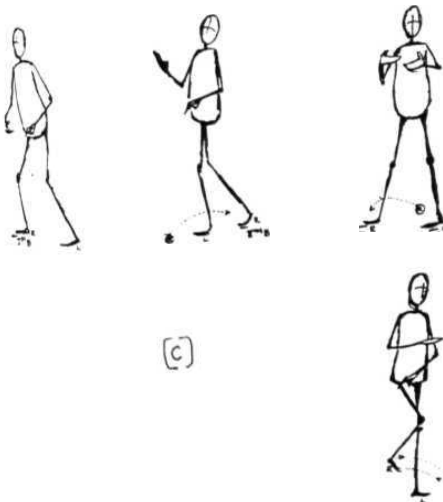


[a]

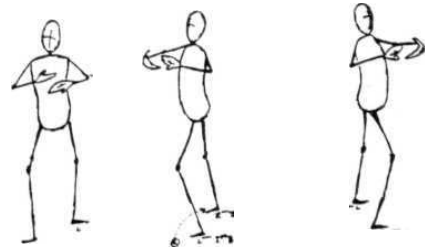
renTaam cuvaTu



[b]



[c]



muunam cuvaTu & naalam cuvaTu

ainncaam cuvaTu

Fig. 5

kavittam

In *CaviTTunaaTakam kavittam* means a rhythmic choreographic style or a piece performed. This is a pure dance (**nirutta**) piece usually performed at the beginning of a song. This is made of a beautiful blend of basic *cuvaTus*. While performing *kavittams*, actors concentrate only on the movements of **hands** and legs, with the exact positioning of stamping the foot. These three movements will be in unison with the beats and the rhythm of the syllables used for each *kavittam*. *kavittams* are the markers used by the audience, to examine the quality of the performer and of the performance *kavittam* is performed as a group piece and as solo dance piece by major characters. This group piece include already planned and blended *cuvaTus*. The single group *kavittam* follow a strict pattern and usually blends two basic *cuvaTus* for uniformity. In the case of solo pieces, they are not pre-planned but improvised on stage by blending more number of *cuvaTus*. There are distinguishable stylized *kavittams* for characters like king, *mantiri* and Turkish (villainous) emperor etc. Each talented **aasaans** are capable enough to choreograph different *kavittams* by mixing the basic foot-steps. The *kavittam* made by blending the sixth and ninth *cuvaTus*, is the most prominent and famous one. The group *kavittams* are performed by the soldiers at the starting of Durbar scene. The kings enter with their retinue. They enter mostly in parallel lines and on the stage they stand in a row. They start performing *kavittam* as directed by the **aasaan** from the music pit. Mostly *kavittams* start with *kavittam collal* i.e., the recitation of a stanza or **padam**. All dramas have this rich scene of presenting *kavittams* before the kings and queens. All *kavittams* should end with the stamping of right foot. It is said that traditionally sixteen *kavittams* were taught, of which only eight are in operation now. Now a days however, troupes use only four **kavittams** for a single play production. The duration of this *kavittams* varies according to the syllables and beats used in a single one. [There are certain *kavittams* which start with particular *cuvaTus*. The following is an example for one which starts with **oNNaam cuvaTu**]

tattiri tattiri taLanku tattiri
tattiri taankiri taam-
tilaankum taam

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Each has different ways of singing pattern but the movements and gestures will have slight variations because of the difference in the combination of various foot-steps. The same use of articulation of wrists, stepping behind the steps, and stamps of the feet are usual in **kavittams**. The actors give weight on the back foot, always slanting the body upwards. They keep rhythm with steps. In some of the steps the actors do small leaps and jumps without breaking the continuity of movement. They leap up and drop in to the kneeling position also. The *kavittams* must end with the stamping of right foot on the stage. The speed or flow of the **kavittam** differs according to the situations. Usually in the Durbar scenes with the proclamation of the adventurous deeds of the king, the speed of the flow increases from medium to the fastest and ends with a *kalaasam* with a freezing moment of tableau pose. Examples for *kavittam*:

kiTataka tat tari taka tari taka taLam
tattari toomtari takatari taa-
timurutat tatiikinattom
kiTataka tat tari takatari takataLam
tattari toomtari takatari laa
timurutat tatiikinattom

kiTataka tattari takataritta
timrutat tatiinkiNattom
kiTataka toomteri takataritaa
timrutat tattinkinattom
kiTataka tattari toom tarikiTa loom
takatari toom tarikiTa toom toom
taritoom tarikiTatoom
tattarikiTataka takatarikiTa toom-
tarikiTa takatoom tarikiTattaa.
tantaa tintaa taa timrutattiikinattom-
timrutattatiikinattom-tatiikinattom.

kalaasams

kalaasams are vigorous steps executed at the end of a song or a *kavittam*. If it is a *kavittam* the whole group performs *kalaasam* along with the beats of **percussion**. *kalaasam* includes a number of foot-steps with already planed spacing of the feet. The *kalaasams* usually end with the forceful stamping of a single foot with the full sole touching the floor. The whole group will use the same foot in the same direction while they perform *kalaasam*. There are *kalaasams* in between two single songs or after each single song. The actors sing the Padam, (a single stanza or a couple of lines) and move with the **cuvaTus** and act with the gestures (**muttira[i]**). By the end of the Padam, they perform a *kalaasam* and proceed to the **other**. *kaalacams* were spontaneously improvised or selected from the types by the actor at the time of performance. Even though it is said to be more than twelve *kaalacams*, in the traditional repertoire each **aasaan** and group device their own *kalaasams*. The whole group will be trained in those already prepared ones with the blending of foot steps. Eventhough they maintain an equality in the acceleration, in each *kalaasams* they will end up with different types of body positions or levels. Some *kalaasams* include small leaps and jumps. Sometimes they leave single beats in between, but they do this without breaking the continuity of the movement. The *kalaasams* of **CaviTTunaaTakam** is similar to that of Kathakali. They have striking similarities in terms of *taaLa[m]* system and style of reciting. However, the *kalaasams* in **CaviTTunaaTakams** are simpler in nature than that of the Kathakali. Three examples are given below. eg.,

1. tit terikiTa **timrta tiLaanku** takkiTa
timirtaka tatiinkinattom.
2. tey terikiTa timrta tiLaanku takkiTa
timirtaka tatiinkinattom.
3. terikiTa **kiTutee** terikiTa **kiTutee**
tinaankiruta tatiinkinattom.

These *kalaasams* and *iTakkalaasam* are not mentioned in the scripts. They are fixed and planned by the **aasaan** and the actors. They will be executed on stage appropriately by the actors.

iTakkalaasam

iTakkalaasam is marked by vigorous steps performed in the middle of a song. This is usually shorter than the **kalaasams**. *iTakkalaasam* is executed in a faster mode often by the solo performer in between each *aTi* (set of lines) in his performance of a song piece. While a group is performing a **kavittam** or a song together, they prefer **kalaasams** to **iTakkalaasams**. But if a *mantiri* performs his **naaTTu vaLamai**, in between, the *aTi* he uses is *iTakkalaasams*. This will be crisp and this helps the actor to maintain the same phase in each stanzas. This also helps the entire song to strictly follow the rhythm. They are said to be twelve in number but it varies according to the group. Even though they are trained and planned the solo actor has the liberty to choose one of them at the time of performance. The quick and crispy way of using **collukoTTus** in *iTakkalaasam* enables the solo actor to use more space and for free movement in any direction. While performing a solo song sequence, the *ceNTa* gives the **clue** and it plays *iTakkalaasam* along with the beat. The actor executes and sometimes improvises the foot-steps for *iTakkalaasam*, for eg.,

tarikataLam taakiTa timrtat tatiinkinattoom.

aTantas

aTantas is generally performed by the female characters in *CaviTTunaaTakam*. This piece is a combination of soft flowing steps performed very gracefully with wrist rolling. This is the **lasya** piece amidst the **taaNTava[m]** dominated foot steps of *CaviTTunaa Takam*.⁴³ The texture of this movement and foots steps will be in a lighter mode when compared to other foot-steps. This resembles the **Mohiniyattam** dance style of Kerala. Now a days *aTantas* is used in the soft, and close sequences. Examples are:

1. *temtaanittam taani tanaa tanee*
*tern taani **tananaa**. taanee*
tern taanittam taani tanaatanee
*temtaani **tananaa**.*
*temtaani **tananaa**.*

2. teeni **lantaanaa tanaatanaa taananai**
taani lantaana tanaatana taananai

tuTakirta tarikiTa titta . . . tuTakirta
tarikiTa toom tatimtakatoom.

Other important aspects of choreography are the basic positions of the actors on stage and their movements along with the group as well as alone on the stage.

There are mainly five basic positions which are frequently seen during the **performance**.⁴⁴ They are (1) stand at ease position: The dancer stands erect keeping his two feet apart, leaving a gap of four feet from one another. Hands are rested on the hips in **artta chandra hasttaa** facing downward. The chest is held upright, the head is kept straight, in the **sama** position. This is the most basic position and with this body stance the soldiers in a single row exactly resemble the soldiers of real life.

(2) Kneeling position: In the prayer sequences the actors kneel down, some times raise their hand up and keep their face tilted upwards. Most often they face the back stage. In the mysterious and magical interventions of angels and saints the same position is taken on the stage.

(3) Kneeling on one leg: The actors take this position during the sequences of greetings and blessings. When they greet the emperor asking for pardon, they assume this position. The hero in this position with the sword in the hand seeking blessings from the elders before the fight, is one of the most popular and thrilling sequences of *CaviTTunaaTakam*.

(4) **aramaNTi** position: This is a half sitting position in which the hands are kept apart. This position is taken when they perform the 10th and 11th basic **cuvaTus**. This is also the position which corresponds to the big jumps performed by the actors. This usually corresponds with the presentation of vigorous moods.

(5) Standing on one leg: Here the left leg is firmly placed on the floor and the right leg is raised to the chest level. This is found in the ninth basic **cuvaTu** to demonstrate

anger, pride etc. The emperor stands on the left leg with the right leg lifted to the hip level with a bended knee pointing to the right. He keeps (tilts) the torso towards right and looks at the raised left hand holding the Royal scepter. This is one of the most wonderful postures in a *CaviTTunaaTakam* performance.

Apart from this, there are other common postures like stressing the body weight on the back foot. While the weight is shifted to the back foot, the other leg extends forward and the chest is held up. Sometimes the feet are planted and the weight is shifted to one leg (left or right) in front of the other. But usually, at the end of foot steps, the actors return to the first basic position.

Movements

In the *CaviTTunaaTakam* choreography, along with the stamping of entire foot against the floor (by raising the legs in front of the body from the basic stance) the various movements of the body (in different directions along the performance space) are also given equal importance.

Most of these movements in space are linear. As in the western opera and ballet, the chest is held up in all the movements of the actors. The movements are rigid and erect. The back and forth movements are always practised throughout the play. Along with the movement there is a use of body level change in the space when the actors suddenly drops to kneel, take the *aramaNi* and the leaping upwards positions.

The movements of the body or parts of the body of a retinue of soldiers are carefully choreographed with strict measures for synchronization. The important aspects taken into consideration for this are: the use of space (direction and level), the timing of the movement (fast or slow), the mode of the movement (strong or light) and the patterns of the movement (bound or free) considering all the above aspects, the choreography in *CaviTTunaaTakam* can be divided into three categories:

(A) *Choreographic depiction of peace time:*

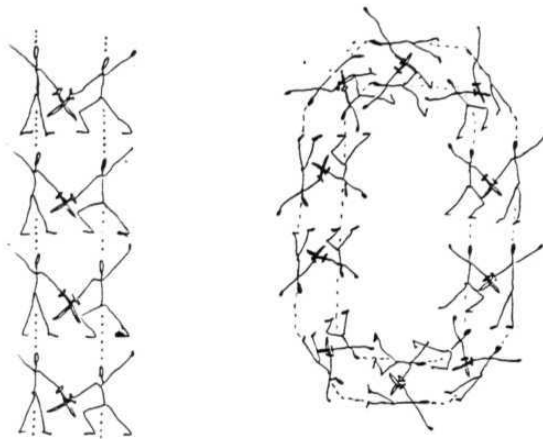
This includes the most famous Durbar scenes with the entries of the major characters and the dance of the soldiers. This also includes, conversations and verbal encounters

between limited number of characters. These scenes consist of **kavittams**, **iTakkalaasam**, **kalaasams** and **aTantas**. Here choreography is done using two main principles:

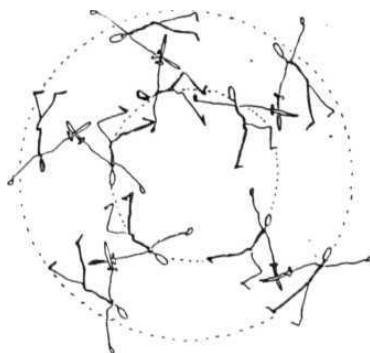
(a) Line as the basic principle: Here the actors, mainly the soldiers, dance in a row. This type of choreographic pattern manifests in one line, parallel, diagonal or in many lines. A single lines of soldiers, moving from one particular place to another keeping the same line with jerking and punctuating movements, is a usual scene in *CaviTTunaaTakam*. Most of the entries with the king and the formations of Durbar scenes create these varieties. The formation of diagonal lines and the direct movements keeping a clear path can be seen in hunting sequences too. The close scenes give priority to the formation of diagonal lines. In this the levels of the characters are purposefully manipulated by changing basic stance according to the importance and status of the individual characters present in the scene.

(b) Triangular formations: This is usually formed during the Durbar sequences. Triangles are formed by joining three linear choreographic lines or with the placements of many lines. This finally ends up with forming a triangular pattern with the emperor at the rear edge. This triangular formation will help to establish prominence and the focus of attention is given to the emperor. The triangular formations are maintained even in the back and forth movements of the emperor and in the movements of the soldiers (who have already formed many lines).

(c) Semi-circle: The movement of the body and feet will effect the formation of a semi circle in different patterns. The basic *cuvatu*s the fourth, fifth and sixth are often used to form this choreographic pattern. Mostly the actors stay in the basic line and their movements to different places will finally form this semi-circle. Generally this pattern is of three types. (1) Semi circle by a solo actor. (2) Semi circle formed by a group. (3) Many semi circles formed by individual performers in a big semi-circle. This choreographic semi-circles pronounce the impact of the proscenium space with its sight lines in controlling the movements of a group performing in it. The semi-circle patterns provide the maximum visibility to the audience.



a Fighting in the Parallel Line b. Fighting in the Octagonal



c. Fighting in the Circle

Fig. 6

(B) Choreography for fighting scenes:

Fighting scenes include the battles and duels choreography for these scenes they follow the movement patterns similar to the fencing of gladiators and the *kaLarippayaTTu* tradition of the native people. The choreography for this sequence is based on the basic principle of attack and defence. There are interesting patterns of group fights and individual fights. While attacking, the actor stands erect. However, the knees are slightly bent and the left **hand** is held high behind the **head**. (when shields are not used). The defender kneels on his right leg and the left hand is held behind the head. Usually the level of the defender will be a little lower than the attacker. Attack and defence goes on alternately according to the rhythm and direction of the *aNNaavi*. In the dual fights there will be movements in parallel line. The movements of both the attacker and the defender will be directed towards one side. Mostly the movement or line follows the line of the attackers focus i.e., the attacker will proceed and the defender recedes. The same movement in the line reverses and the defender now becomes the attacker and vice versa. In the case of group fights also the same pattern of movements through the direction of attackers focus continues. There are groups fighting in parallel and diagonal lines. In some cases the defending party formulates a shape like oval, circular, octagonal etc., and the attackers acquire the same pattern in the periphery and the same mode of Choreography repeats. One can classify the choreography for the fighting scene into (1) fighting in the single line (2) fighting group in the parallel or many lines (3) fighting in the already formed shapes i.e. circle, oval, octagonal. (4) fighting with jerks and zig zag movements. The last one will be an on stage improvisation with a number of leaps, jumps and chases.....

(C) Choreography for other scenes:

This section deals with choreography for the conventional scenes of *baala paarT-Tukaar*, *toTayappin* and entry of *kaTTiyan*. In the early days most of the characters took entry from the left rear door and entered the stage with sturdy foot-steps with measured time and exit through the rear right door. In that process they made a semi-circular choreographic pattern. Now a days, in the already constructed proscenium stages, they enter through the left and right wings. If it is a painted scenery for a Durbar scene the doors in the rear ends will be suggestive. This demands most of the entries in parallel

lines at the beginning and later they move according to the **scene**. **baala paarTTukaar** enter the stage from the side wings, usually one comes from the left and the other from the right. They always choose the wing at the up stage (usually the third wing) of a proscenium stage.

There are some specific entries for effective presentation. This includes the entry of Emperor Dioclesian in **pilamenaa naaTakam** and of Brutus in Alphons. The former comes through the audience and jump on to the stage. For the latter's entry, some troupes used even a horse. Another recent phenomenon is the individual/group dance pieces with popular filmy influences, produced as dances in this single dance drama. Mostly these dance sequences suggest a term like dance within a dance or meta-dance. These dance sequences are seen in the Durbar scenes of the villainous kings and in the dances of the jubilant soldiers after their victory in the battle or to celebrate their heavy catch in the hunting. Some of the plays with folk themes include the zig-zag dance pieces of the bandits after their orgays.⁴⁵ These dance sequences cannot be categorized into any particular style because they resemble the popular kind of folk dance pieces often used in films.

The analysis of choreography would reveal that *CaviTTunaaTakam* includes the elements of western and native dances mixed up in uneven proportions. As Sabeena **Raphy** points at, **CaviTTunaaTakam** choreography follows the **taaNTava[m]** style of dance rather than the **lasya** style of South Indian dance tradition.⁴⁶

Acting techniques

According to the ancient treatises on Indian drama, most of the performing art forms were divided into two - **siraviyam** and **dirasyam**. The **siraviyam** is related to the art forms which are to be enjoyed with the audible (faculty) and **dirasyam** is the one which will enable the audience to see or observe the form with the eyes. This **dirsyakaaviyam** is further divided into three. They are **nirutta**, **niruttiya**, and **naaTTiya**. **naaTakam** comes under **naaTTiya**. **nirutta** is pure dance, in which the movements of the limbs and hands are **important**. **niruttiya** consists of both the movements and gestures which conveys the meaning of the lines which is rendered. In the case of *CaviTTunaaTakam*, the actors sing their lines, simultaneously they move with the prescribed foot steps. They convey

the meaning of the lines with their hand gestures or (**muttira[i]**). They also use facial expressions according to the situation. The actors will be ably assisted in acting by their rich costumes and by the music from the pit. This will make us call *CaviTTunaaTakam*, a *sankiita nirutta niruttiya naaTakam*. In other words, *CaviTTunaaTakam* comprises of all the four varieties of *abinaya[m]*s as described in the *Natya sastra*. They are *vaaccika*, *aankika*, *aahariya* and *saatviika*. This can be further broadly categorized into two - **looka darmi** and *naaTTiya darmi*, *naaTTiya darmi* is the acting based on the prescribed gestural pattern (or **muttira[i]**), *looka darmi* is the imitation of the real life incidents. The *naa TTiyadarmi* is more stylized and the *looka darmi* is more natural. The mixing of both these styles in the acting will easily attract audience attention. The characters used this mixed and peculiar technique to convey the appropriate *baavams*.

Before going directly into the various intricate acting techniques involved in *CaviTTunaaTakam* it is better to take a quick look at the nature and appearance of some important popular characters of this repertoire. As C.J.Thomas opines *jeenoova naaTakam* which narrates the glories of the Roman Emperor Villon, possesses clear conflicts and realistically set up ways for the rise of action, with appropriate characterization and the natural ways of presentation. They were easily communicated with beautiful dialogues. In a way *CaviTTunaaTakam* consists of all the best elements of dramatic art” 47 This laudatory remark about a particular *CaviTTunaaTakam* which is less popular comparatively will easily make one imagine the quality and nature of characterization and presentation possessed by the more popular ones in this genre. The *CaviTTunaaTakam* repertoire consists of the great emperor characters like *kaarlmaan*, Dioclesian, Villon, **Albiranth**, **Avutharman** and the righteous and able ministers like Brutus, **Galo**, **Alphones**. This also includes a row of great warriors and heroes like Roland, Richards, Oliver, Perapras, **St.George**, and St.Sebastin, and female characters like Plorippus, **aanjellikka**, Brijeeeth, *pilamena*, and **birasiina**. This also includes the wicked characters like Galalon, Salvedatha. This repertoire also includes some of the minor characters who change the fortunes and help the main character during calamities like the **paRaiyan** and Karadi (bear) characters in *viirakkumaaran*. These characters are presented on the stage effectively by the combination of *looka darmi* and *naaTTiya darmi*, along with the *aankika*, *vaaccika*, *aahariya*, and *saatviika* variations.

Hand gestures

Besides the wrist rolling and opening and closing of the palms towards the body at the time of movements with the foot-steps, the actors used to use certain *muttirafi*. But no treatise were written or used as a basis for this *hasttas* single hand gestures. They were conveniently incorporated or adopted into this genre from Kathakali or **Bharatanatyam**. Some of them are part of the later inclusion into *CaviTTunaaTakam's* acting system. The domination of Kathakali with its precise and meaningful gestured ways of communication (use of *muttirafi*) might have caused these borrowings.

In *CaviTTunaaTakam*, the hands are placed a little away from the body, just above the chest level of the actor and the focus of the eyes will be on them. From this basic position the actors use hand gestures, mostly rhythmic and jerky, which will follow the words and the dialogue in a simple way. Most of the hand gestures are closely associated with the properties expressed by the actors. For instance, the emperor shows his position and greatness with a simple *muttirafi*. He uses his two forefingers of the right hand pointed towards the left hand which is in a raised position holding the royal scepter. The look or the focus of attention will be directly on the scepter with a fully turned face towards it. This is the *muttirafi* for the King, the emperor, the *nirupan*, the **mannan**, and the Lord. The minister or *mantiri* shows his position by holding the sword with the right hand or sometimes it is partially taken out from its cover (*vaaL uRai*) made of leather. In some cases the ministers take out the complete sword with their right hand and raise it above the head level. This *muttirafi* connected with the sword shows the **mantiri's** position and his status. Gods are denoted with the raising of both the left and right hands with the open palm turned towards the body above the head level. The eyes will be directed upwards with an upward tilted face. Most of the body parts and costume pieces are used to show or communicate ideas according to them. The **meeni** (the entire body) is shown by pointing the two forefingers of both the hands towards the body. On a close examination one can easily find that some of the hand gestures used in *CaviTTunaaTakam* are closely associated with the *naaTTiyadarmi* style, especially of the Kathakali and **Bharathanatyam** performances. For an example, 'the saying of the the king is demonstrated with the use of *hastta mrigasiirsha* by stretching the hand from the mouth to one foot towards the front. Many *hasttas* like *suuji*, **pataaka**, **musTi**, **sikaara**, **kapooTa**

are frequently and meaning fully used. Since the songs are sung by the actors along with the foot steps, the use of *muttira[i]* and *hasttas* are not very stylized and systematic. The jerky movements of *CaviTTunaaTakam* never insists upon the accurate use of hand gestures. So most of the actors use these gestures in a flexible manner.

Other basic gestural positions of the hands are: (1) the left arm is bent forming a 90° angle (2) the right hand (sometimes both) resting on the hip. (3) The frequent use of the palms with the *arttachandra* position during the pure dance sequences. (4) While moving with the foot-steps, the palms are also kept in the *sikaara* and *mrigasirsaspeeda*.

The facial expressions of the actors in these performances are more realistic and spontaneous. They are akin to the *looka darmi* style of expression. It means that the style never follows any kind of specified/symbolic movements of eyes, lips and cheek bones as in the case of 'Kathakali'. More than that the general make-up which specifies in the facial illumination will help them to have an innate kind of expression which naturally arises according to the demands of the situation. But in 'Kathakali' the case is different. The specified facial postures with the characteristic nature of make up (*ie*. 'Pacha' denotes the morally righteous hero) will bound the actors to follow a strict pattern which is already practised or established through the ages. Besides this, the singing of the lines by the actors themselves too also forces them to express the mental state by combining a natural way of facial expression along with vigorous foot steps and use of costumes and props. These may be the reasons for the extensive use of sword, scepter, and the robe during the acting.

Moreover the sole *aasaan* of the group dictates certain established ways of expression to the actors. Some of the less creative and unimaginative actors imitate the exact stage gestures and movements of their *aasaan*. This has resulted in a stereo typed and monotonous ways of presentation of some roles.

Another important aspect is the acting in the war and hunting scenes. Both these scenes demand more physical exertion and vigorous movements with the *cuvaTus*. Moreover the actors have to use realistic metal made swords and spheres. The effective execution of these scenes demands strenuous practice in the *kaLaris*. Some of the actors were extolled by the audience due to their ability to leap up and fight with more vigour.

The use of ad-libs in the form of high sounding words, as spontaneously improvised by the actors used to give more life to these scenes.

It is interesting to note at this point that some of the names of earliest eminent actors who portrayed certain most popular characters are now identified with respective character roles they handled. Examples are: **kaarlmaan** Lonamkutty, Roldon Maneek Manakkil, Milan K.V.Joseph, Plorippus, T.J.Antony, Albiranth K.J.Francis, Batheesha P.T. Francis. (all are from Gothuruthy), **kaarlmaan** Ouseppukutty **aasaan** (Kuttikkal, Kothadu) Richardh Kochuvareed (fort Cochin). Their performances have almost become proverbial and are proudly remembered by people in places like fort Cochin. People in fort Cochin still remember the leaps of Brutus fc Chandi (to save alphon from the nook) and the dance of Brieth as performed by Eippachan (Rappel Abel) and the singing style of Alphones by Lonankutty. But these anecdotal references and idolization have tended to make the audience compare the performance of some of the recent actors with these earlier eminent ones. Unfortunately, this has resulted in the recent actor's tendency to imitate the acting styles of their eminent predecessors.

Music and Musical instruments

Music in a *CaviTTunaaTakam* performance is indispensable. As a *gaana niruttan* **naaTakam**⁴⁸ this play production consist of the on stage singing of the actors and their dancing and acting in accordance with the accompanying vocalists and rhythms from the back stage. In a way one can consider *CaviTTunaaTakams* as pure musical dance dramas. The term musical will directly remind us of the operas produced in the Western countries in which the characters sing their lines and dance gracefully with soft movements. In *CaviTTunaaTakam* also every performer is expected to sing and in very less number of sequences the prose is used, that is also presented with a musical tone. But *CaviTTunaaTakam* gives priority to the high sounding beating of th **drum**. with vigorous movements. The dance will always be akin to the **taaNTava[m]** style and the music is based on the strict **taaLa[m]**s produced on *ceNTa*, which helps the actor to make sturdy foot steps.

As mentioned earlier, the musical part of *CaviTTunaaTakam* can be divided into two. The first one is the music produced on the stage as the actors sing their lines and move

with the foot steps. Most of these singing or rendering of the lines vary in the musical styles according to the emotional situation and the rhythmic quality of the lines. The rhythmic sounds produced by their stamping of the foot also can be included in this on stage music variety. With response to the number of the *cuvatu*, the timing and the count of foot stamping vary in different scenes. The specially prepared floor or *taTTu* with the combination of one layer of wooden planks fixed below the thin layer of tin sheets gives a metallic kind of sound quality to the stamping of the foot on the floor. This on stage variety of music which depends mostly on the rhyme and metrical schemes of the written scripts are enriched by the soft and sweet lines written in the *cemtamiZ icai* (song). "Kerala has inherited a rich legacy of Tamil musical literature, which is the music of the *sanka* poems, the classics of Tamil. It is from this vast and varied music literature and culture that Kerala developed its own music tradition. *CaviTTunaaTakam* plays are composed by a master mind in this sweet familiar Tamil *icai*. Those authors were very particular in giving certain alliteration and intonation patterns in the rhyme schemes of the lines. That is the reason behind the repeated use of *antiyaati praasam*, *dvittiyakshara praasam*. This helped the actors to depict the various *rasaas*, mainly the sentiments of valour, as most of the plays parade deeds of bravery and thrilling fights".⁴⁹ Apart from the fast, high sounding rhythms of the fighting, hunting and Durbar scenes, there are sweet and soft melodious tunes in love scenes and garden scenes. These *naaTakams* also contain slow tempoed, mournful songs in the sorrowful sequences. This variety of music according to the sentimental demands of the play made Sabeena Raphy compare the music of *CaviTTunaaTakam* with the various famous ragas of Karnatic music.⁵⁰ But in reality the *CaviTTunaaTakam* music is a distorted product of Karnatic ragas like *hari kaambooji*, *aananta bairavi*, and *sankaraabaraNam*. The crude imitation of these Ragas by the later musicians might have resulted in this distorted form of music. Because of the *cemtamiZ* and *koTumtamiZ* language used in the texts the *CaviTTunaaTakam* music shows a close affinity with that of the *teerukkuuttu* songs.

The second major variety of music in *CaviTTunaaTakam* is the back ground music. This is the core music of these plays, which includes the accompanying vocals for the main actors, (chorus singing or back-up), and the most important instrumental music used through out the play. It is this instrumental music, which sometimes gives solo rhythm, serves as an accompaniment while the text is presented, and provide the accurate

taaLa[m] and rhythm for the actor to dance and sing along with the chorus singing lines. This is the major part of the *CaviTTunaaTakam* play. In a way one can say that the music in *CaviTTunaaTakam* is set to the *taaLafmjs* of dance which varies according to the mood or context of the scene.

The *CaviTTunaaTakam* music shows the blending of various ingredients. It has adopted so many styles through the ages because of the transformations that have been occurring to the form. Since this form had a major foreign influence, it shows a blending of Western musical style and Western instruments with the native folk tunes. According to Rev. Justine Panakkal "the music of *CaviTTunaaTakam* has a close association with polyphonic music".⁵¹ The polyphonic music is sung in different voices ie. Tenor, Soprano, Bass etc. The *CaviTTunaaTakam* has a fascinating choral music (singing in many voices) which shows the features of polyphonic chanting. This concept of choral music with the harmonious combination of two or more parts is very much western. This choral chanting resemble the *CaviTTu naaTaka* music with the music used in the churches. Some of the scenes - like the marriage scenes and the scenes that require prayers-directly resemble the music presentations as in the Church. Later some of the local Christian marriage songs crept into these performances. The performance of the war songs or *poort taru* is a clear staccato of the Western style of singing- The war song between the Turk and *kaarlmaan*, *poort taru* of Perabass and the retaliation by Oliver etc. will substantiate the above statement.

The influence of folk songs and tunes from Tamil and Malayalam is another feature of the *CaviTTunaaTakam* music. Apart from the similarity with the *teerukkuuttu* music, tamil folk tunes like *kaavaTi*, *cintu*, *kummi*, *kool aaTTam* and *ammanntt* percolate into the music pattern of these play productions. In some songs the influence of Malayalam folk songs called *maaveeli paaTTu* and *tiruvaatira paaTTu* is found. The repetition of these tunes and rhythms are very common in a single play production. This is an important feature of South Indian folk theatre forms which is also seen in the music of *CaviTTunaaTakam*. Some of the songs in *CaviTTunaaTakam* start with a slow tempo and it slowly rise and end in a fast tempo. This can be compared with the *bajana* practice of the Hindus. This is an intrinsic feature of *CaviTTunaaTakam*.

All these above mentioned factors, styles and traditions of music have immensely

influenced *CaviTTunaaTakam* music in attaining a style and nature of its own. The play back singers in *CaviTTunaaTakam* are allowed only to accompany the actor. The actor sings in the higher octave, the accompanying singer repeats the same in the lower octave or in the higher octave. Some times the group of fellow actors like retinue of the king makes up accompanying vocals in order to help the actor in presenting certain important sequences. There are independent songs sung by this on stage group in many voices along with the backing vocalists and instruments. Most of the group sequences follow this pattern of choral singing which is a special feature of *CaviTTunaaTakam*. It is the actor who has to lead the lines sung in tune and that is why it is insisted that the actors must be good singers too. In earlier days play back was not admissible but now a days due to lack of preparation the backing vocalists dominate the play production. The change of position of the Orchestra has resulted in the non visibility of backing vocalists. This helps to make the audience believe that the actors are singing the lines.

The position of the Orchestra and Musical instruments

In the earlier days, the Orchestra along with musicians and back up singers headed by **aasaan** were partly visible to the audience. The backing vocal singers were called as *cuvaTikkaar* they were placed at the back stage centre behind the back curtain and through the window or casement they were visible. They stand in a group with the text (*cuvaTi*) open before them and a bell-metal lamp hung in front, they start the play by singing a chorus. They also have to sing a second time the songs sung by each of the actors. This repetition of the same lines helps the actor to act with the gestures and it also gives him time to begin a new stanza. In the early days the *aasaan* remains on stage, before the back curtain and with the *naTTuvaankam* or small sized cymbals in his hands, he used to give directions to the actors. The other percussionists especially the *ceNTa* player was placed with the *aasaan* at the back stage centre. At present this whole group of musicians and Orchestra are not on stage and placed at the right side of the stage mostly in between the first and second side wings. This group is not at all visible to the audience because they are placed out side the sight lines of the audience.

In *CaviTTunaaTakam* there is a lot of stress on rhythm because of the nature of the art form, which is basically *taaNTava[m]* and hence the rhythmic instruments like the *ceNTa*, **ilattaaLam** (the cymbals made of bell-metal), **mattaLam**, **mirutankam**, **toolakku**

and **jaalraa** of Indian origin, Kettle drum, stand cymbals, side drums and Tambore of the Western origin are used. These percussion instruments of the **laya** and metal type give a special kind of ambience for the projection of valorous characters. By using this percussion instruments which follow a particular classical *taaLafm]* system, *kavittams* and *kalaasams* were performed forcefully on the stage. **kalaasam** *caviTTal* is a portion in which the **ceNTa** gives a strict and heavy rhythm according to one particular *taaLafm]* of the *taaLafm]* system. The actors use the foot stamping along with the beating of the **ceNTa**. This is the best example for the performances' mellifluous blend of music, sound and dance, in *CaviTTunaaTakam*. **ceNTa** and **Elathalam** play a prominent role in the Orchestra. Before the beginning of the play, they perform *keeLikoTTu* (drum beating)- This signal on **ceNTa** is the announcement of the play. This is a common feature in many of the classical and folk theatre traditions of the South India.

Besides these *laya* type instruments, the string and wind instruments like Fiddle, Clarinet, Harmonium, Bulbul, Flute, and Violin are used. These instruments are mostly used to produce background in the sorrowful scenes and in love scenes. The slow paced, soft **lasya** type dances of the female characters are ably supported by these instruments. The use of instruments varies from place to place in style and number. Some troupes in the Northparur, **Pallipuram**, Fort Cochin, **Arathumgal** and **Vaduthala** use more Western instruments (kettle drum, side drum, Clarinet, Fiddle and other instruments of the band set) than the other groups. So these groups tend to avoid the **ceNTa** and mostly use the drums of the band set for rhythm. The troupes from Mannassery is famous for their **ceNTa** and the troupes of Cochin were famous for their Clarinet. A lot of transformations have occurred in the case of instruments. The coming of the electronic organ (key boards) and other electronic drums caused the drastic cut in the number of instruments used for a single play production. This caused the scarcity of the use of **ceNTa** which demands a single expert player and the vigorous foot stamping of the actors. So now a days **ceNTa**, Tambore and fiddle are rarely used by the performing troupes. Devoid of all these factors, the music remains as the major element which gives *CaviTTunaaTakam* its vigour and force as the popular saying goes, "a four line song of *CaviTTunaaTakam*, will make the old man and his stick dart". The Eastern and Western traditions can be seen clearly both in music and in the use of instruments.



CHARLEMAGNE



ALBRANTH BLOM



ROLAND



BRIJEETH

Costumes

aahariya abinaya[m] — expressions of mood with the aid of costumes, ornaments and make-up is quite important in *CaviTTunaaTakam*. The major function of the costumes is to help the audience understand and interpret the period, locale, and the socio-economic status of the characters. Great care is taken by the costume *aasaan* (now a days the producers) regarding this aspect of the play. "The costumes are noted for their artistic excellence. Since the plays are mostly of great emperors and medieval kings and knights of Europe, the costumes are elaborate as befits those personalities. The emperors and kings in their rich regal robes and dazzling crown and scepter, escorted by the soldiers in their **Greco-Roman** Uniform, helmet and armour make indeed an unforgettable sight".⁵² These realistic costumes (such as the Emperors and Kings are attired like the kings of the medieval Western Europe) are very much alien to the native condition. But, because of the demands of the play the would artisans make the local versions of this historical Western dress. Even though the various plays portrayed different time periods and locales of the western legendary Europe, the local artisans took inspirations from the **Greco-Roman** style and a little bit of later English (ie. Elizabethan) style of garments. This **Greco-Roman** roots for the Christian art and architecture can be traced back to the time of the great pope Gregory's Papacy of Rome in 6th century and later the Church vestments and behavioral patterns were built up on imitating the glorious Byzantine empire.⁵³ So this might have reflected in Kerala where the establishment of Christian religion with the Western hierarchy had just began with the coming of Portuguese. It was a necessity for them to introduce European courtly manners and garment styles which was the root of their liturgical practices. Whatever may be the hidden strategies behind the establishment of this genre of theatre, the costumes made by the local people are sumptuous in appearance which were very colourful. These costumes are made of various materials. There is a profuse display of colourful silk, velvet, *kasavu* and brocades studded with dazzling pearls, glass chips, metal coins and the like materials are often used in making various costume pieces for a single character. The stockings, the shoes made of thick clothes and canvas, the gloves, the waist belts and chest guards or breast plates made of leather studded with metal pieces are the other accessories in the costume. The actors used to wear a number of costume pieces. The bare body is never visible. They used to wear a tight corselet or an initial garment to cover the body and upon it

they used loose jackets with puffs and robes and various cloth pieces with frills, lines etc. Most of this upper garment pieces are well studded with the coloured stones on a silk or velvet cloth. The emperor and other characters playing the roles of kings queens and knights use costly velvet and silk. All the characters wear a jacket-like garment which stretches just below their waist. There is a long silk cloth fixed to the collar of their jacket extending to the shoulders. This embroidered silk cloth piece covers the backside of the actor and almost touches his heels. It is an extended or enlarged variety of the stole in the priests garments. This is called **meelañki** in Malayalam. While acting the emperors used this as a property in order to establish their position. For their legs and ankles they used tight coverings (hose) with cloth or canvas, at times full stockings were used. They used cloth or canvas shoes for their feet, at present the troupes use white stockings or tie their white pants in such a way as to give the impression of tight fit stockings. The hands are usually covered with gloves made of cloth. The cloth shoes are fast disappearing and in their place canvas shoes are being used. This custom of using shoes are alien to the Indian folk theatre tradition. This is taken into this art form as a western imitation in order to follow the **Greco-Roman** style of attire and later this in turn helped the actor to produce vigorous foot stamping sounds.

Like the scenic design the costume also uses the basic elements of design - line, mass, colour, texture and ornament - they combine together and produce the overall effect. Apart from the rich ornamentation and different textures, (due to the combination of various textured articles) the *CaviTTunaaTakam* costumes are filled with bright, contoured lines and shapes. Various type of running designs are stitched into the long, loose, frilled upper garment pieces of the kings and queens. The use of colour is an important element which is suitably manipulated in order to highlight the characterization. The *CaviTTunaaTakam* has a number of warring factions and in the group combat scenes, this will make lot of confusion in character relationships. Inorder to over come this confusion the same colour scheme for the costumes of all members of one faction is used. In the *kaarlmaan naaTakam* for instance, the Turkish Emperor and his retinue use the green colour, significant to the Muslim religion. Each king had his own choice of colour and design, mostly red, golden, rose, shamrock, yellow, emerald, sapphire etc. to mention a few. Black is used only on the occasion of death and funeral. White is used for the decoration of angels and also in joyous celebrations. Some of the minor characters like

Sanyasi, Priest, **paRaiyan**, Pookkari, Doctor, Judge, etc. are portrayed very realistically with their actual every day costumes.

The actors' body would be completely covered with costumes and props. Most of them are highly ornamental and are heavy and gaudy. The major parts of the costumes are (1) the head gear or *kiriTam* (2) scepter or **ceñkool** (3) the back robe or **meeñki** (4) breast plate or *poorcaTTaa* (5) the waist belt (6) the armoury or various types of sword, lance, and shield etc. (7) hand and leg covers (**kaiuRai** and **kaaluRai**) (8) various types of shoes. Among this *kiriTam* or the head gear is the most important item of the costume.

Practically all the characters adorn their **heads-Kings** and noble men with crowns, soldiers with helmets and other characters with caps of different kinds. The crowns of the kings are beautifully decorated with colourful stones, pearls and other glittering items. According to their status and religion, these **kiriTams** are embossed with various royal religious symbols. One can see the *kiriTam* of emperor *kaarlmaan* bears a cross studded with glittering articles and emperor Albiranth's crown bears the symbol of the half moon and a star - to suggest that he is a Moslem emperor. These crowns are made with extreme care. Some of the crowns are made with the pearls which take more than eight to ten days for a costume maker to complete.⁵⁴ The crowns of the lords, noblemen and especially the peers of *kaarlmaan* are made with a mixture of metallic design and are decorated with the feathers of the white crane. It is called the *peeNaacci* in **Malayalam**. These helmets decorated with *peeNaacci* was a proud possession of the actors of those times. These helmets are made by imitating the crowns of St.George and **Santiyagu** Punnyavalan (St.Yakkobu) as portrayed in their icons. The common soldiers used metallic type of helmets, as used by the **Greco-Roman** soldiers. They were also decorated with the *peeNaacci*. The female characters used smaller type of crowns with pearl studded designs. They used nets along with their crowns to cover the head. Among the other characters *kaTTiyan* uses a cone type, clownish cap and the angels are dressed up with a halo or Vendetta upon the head. These *kiriTams* are made with utmost care because it should be tight and suitable to the actor.

The Royal **ceñkool** (scepter) is compulsory for kings and each king has a *cehkool* of his own. The Turkish emperor has the symbol of a halfmoon and star on his scepter, a Christian emperor has a cross on his scepter. This *cehkool* is ably used by the emperors

to issue his orders to the subjects. This hand property which bear the Royal emblem helps the actor to legitimate his superiority over others.

Shields, swords, spears and other weapons including the sticks of various sizes are used in the *CaviTTunaaTakam* plays. Some groups use the weapons made of metal with less gauge in order to avoid the weight of the arms. Some groups use these weapons made of wood and hard board carved according to the **Greco-Roman** or medieval designs. Later these wooden blades are decorated either with the metallic paint or by sticking felt hilts up on it. Among these weapons the swords are kept in the covers made of leather and attached to the waist belts. The breast plates made by combining leather and metallic piece with puffed shoulder guards and arm covers make this look like the historical European figures engraved or portrayed in the pictures.

In the early days the making of costumes was competitive. The costume maker was called the **uTuppaacaan** (costume **aasaan**). Each characters' costumes were made by different **uTuppaacaans** and each one of them wanted to excel the others. They used to make it secretly. They revealed the costume only on the day of performance. The best costume maker used to get presents from the actor and from the patron and received the audience applause. They were called upon the stage by *kaTTiyan* and were adorned as a part of the performance. These competitions some times resulted in creating better costumes for minor characters than the major ones. But the main roles were done by the people who belonged to the wealthy class. So they used to spend more money for the betterment of their costumes. In the 1950's the costume of the *kaarlmaan* emperor for Kuttikkal Ouseppu *aasaan*, Kothadu cost nearly one thousand **rupees**;⁵⁵ from this one can assess the financial status of the people who performed and produced these dramas. There were so many patrons who sold of their inherited property for producing *CaviTTunaaTakam* plays.

In the earlier days they practised certain indigenous methods to make the costumes. These methods were kept a secret. At first they took the dimensions of the actors head and made a mould called *paasttaa* with the clay. Then they paste the cloth and papper pieces with a thick glue. This pasting will create a couple of coating on the mould. After the clay dries up, the head shaped, plastered mould with exact dimensions of the actors head remain. Because of these exact dimensions they do not have to tie up this helmet

under the chin. It will be tight and suitable to the size of head. Later this helmet shaped mould is painted with silver colour and decorated with glittering articles including the papers and pearls and finally the *peeNaacci* will be fixed on to it. For the making of the sword, the roots of trees were used in the early days. They used to select the thick flexible roots. They were boiled to a certain level, the skin was removed and dried. Later one end of this stick was fixed to a handle, shaped according to the design of the sword. Handles were usually made of a different kind of wood carved and nailed to attach the shining, flexible sword.

In the early days, queens were dressed in European style. Female characters used to wear a veil to partly cover their face and a net to cover their hair. This net almost extended down their shoulders and the backside of the body till the waist. Sometimes it touched their heels. Sometimes they used ribbon and tied this net covered hair into a round wreath shape and decorated it with glittering articles. Their lower part of the costumes were pyramid shaped with frills placed in the front, decorated with *kasavu* lines on both the sides from top to bottom. They used to fix this garment with the help of a thin belt designed with golden coloured paper. The upper part of the body was covered with a *caTTaa* (*paNic caTTaa*) **larger/extended** blouse which covered the knee of the hand, high necked with a round cut and almost covered the lower abdomen. This *caTTaa* blouse was also decorated with various types of *kasavu* designs. Later, most of the troupes started using sarees and blouses but even then they continued to use the decorated belts, crowns and nets for the female characters. Before the coming of the artificial wigs for female roles the hair for the male impersonated female roles were indigenously prepared. The *aasaans* used to cut the longer leaves of pineapple and immerse it in water for decay. After three to four days the green leaves will decay and the white fibers were easily extracted from it. They prepared a bunch of white fibers which were later subjected to dye with black colour. This dye is also prepared by boiling the locally available plants. At last this dyed fibre will get a oil soaking and it can be decorated and adjusted into various shapes using pins and coloured ribbons. With the advent of the English company, theatres brought various types of artificially prepared wigs into the Indian theatre scenario. *CaviTTunaaTakam* also absorbed this already prepared materials instead of their self made methods. Costume making is the most expensive and time consuming part of *CaviTTunaaTakam*. As P.A.Bruno, an expert costume maker of

fort Cochin says, 'atleast six months of labour of two people is required for making a complete set of costumes for a single *CaviTTunaaTakam* performance'.⁵⁶

These days the decrease in the number of productions and the economic feasibility make the groups hire the costumes from the Rental Houses. There are a couple of them in Cochin itself. The amateur nature of the organizations also makes this tendency popular because they will be performing one play at the maximum of three or four productions in a year. They can rent various types of costumes and props for a play which belongs to a single time period from the rental house. But often in order to produce the glossy glitteratta they end up renting the costume styles belonging to various time periods of European history.

Make-up and set properties

Make-up in *CaviTTunaaTakam* is simple and 'realistic'. They generally follow the straight **make-up** to highlight the actor on the stage. The specific or character make up is not given much priority. Eventhough the *CaviTTunaaTakam* actors use beard, moustache and wigs are used only to help the audience understand the nature of character and the age of the role one portrays. Usually they apply powder on their face and a little bit of lip-stick to project the lips. **Eye-brows** are touched to the minimum. In the olden days they used to paint their bare hands and legs white with the white powder. In this way, the *CaviTTunaaTakam* players used to cover parts of the body, which were not concealed by the costume. Most of the warriors or peers used moustaches and beards according to their character and age. In the case of these 'plastic **make-up**' items they kept a similar style for a single faction ie: the Turk emperor and his Lords usually keep a *bulkaan taaDi* or an altered French type beard which is typical to the middle East. The emperor *kaarlmaan* fixes a complete, long thick beard and his peers generally keep long moustaches only. For the making up of supernatural, and animated characters they use plastic and character **make-up** styles. The bear, of *viirakkumaaran naaTakam* wears a bear skin type costume and a specially prepared mask for the face. The angels and other supernatural characters also use some of the plastic or made projections for transforming the human figure into the imagined look alike. Eventhough some of these are later additions, these aspects contradict Sabeeena Raphy's statement that "In *CaviTTunaaTakam* they never use wigs, masks and other symbolic **representations**".⁵⁷

In the early days there were no sceneries or painted curtains. This infact is the reason for the rich, elaborated descriptions of the locales in the scripts. Mainly the entries of the kings and Durbars were richly narrated with the use of splendid metaphors.⁵⁸ During the later periods, the painted curtains and cut-outs replaced so many descriptive lines and the use of electric light with the specific area illuminations made the scene change easily communicable. These changes created or made a lot of property additions to the *CaviTTunaaTakam* repertoire.

To represent the palaces, different kinds of thrones are prepared. They used to make the structure of the chairs with carved wood or metal castings. They were ornated with jewellery, paints, glitter etc. The emblem of each king is also prepared carefully. These thrones are attractive on the stage and they signify the royal status of the characters. These thrones are placed at the centre stage infront of the painted Durbar curtain. The Durbar choreographic combinations are formed making this throne the corner of the triangle, as this gets the maximum attention. In some places the troupes use some indigenous items for stage settings; they are: *veNc caamaram*, *aalavaTTam* (made of peacock feathers), *veN koRRak koTai* or *muttuk koTai* (a royal umbrella decorated with pearls etc).for setting up of Royal places. These specially made umbrellas are used even now in the Church processions. St. Thomas Christians traditionally used these articles for their religious and social functions.⁵⁹ Mostly the *CaviTTunaaTakam* troupes from Gothuruthi, and Pongikkara use these items on the stage.

In the St. George (Givargheesu *naaTakam*) the horse and the dragon have very prominent roles. The wooden horse is built strongly because the hero has to ride the horse. Castors are fixed to the bottom of the wooden horse and the back stage workers pull the horse from one direction to the other with a strong rope.⁶⁰ The dragon is not completely made out of the artificial material as in the case with the horse. A person gets inside the casted figure and he crawls over the stage making hideous noises and fearsome gestures. This gives a realistic touch.

The angels wings are made of light hard board and covered with silver paper or feathers. The harness is made of elastic strapped securely into the wire of the wing frame or by hooking. Some troupes use small dummy figures of angels dropped in to the stage with the help of string and pulley.

In the earlier days the lighting of the stage was done by lighting the dipped clothes in the oil placed just before the performance space. Later it developed into the gas lights which were taken up and down with the help of strings and pulleys. Now a days **the** troupes use the general, specific and special effect lighting for the plays according to the nature of the scenes. The excessive use of strobe lights and the colour wheels started irritating the patience of the audience.⁶¹ The introduction of the title scenes, especially of the scene which portrays the martyrdom of St. Sebastin is executed with the help of special lights and with the arrows flying through the air with the rope technique. **The** electric shorts and the burning of the lighter dynamite in order to create sudden effects are also seen in the recent *CaviTTunaaTakam* productions. It is these colourful, glittering and fantastic aspects of these plays with elaborate stage setting, the spectacular costumes and the eye catching embellishments that proved to be the main source of attraction to the common village folk who crowd around the *CaviTTunaaTakam* stage. By enacting this glorious, majestic and colourful life which is in contrast to their life's realities the coastal people fulfill their dreams in the world of make believe. This theatrical space provides them a break from the mask of every day restrictions and prejudices and help them indulge in a world of absolute freedom.

Part-II

This section is a detailed examination of how *CaviTTunaaTakam* survived through the ages to the present. The main aim of this section is to show how an art form cannot survive in its 'pure and original' from its inception times and how it responds to the changing environments by transforming itself to suit to such environments. In the process of struggle for survival, the art form is faced with the issues of conflicts within the tradition and the economic and non-economic factors. These factors force the art form to change itself to suit modernity and in the process be come a Hybridized form. Hybridization takes place at two levels - one is at the community level which actually posses the tradition and the other is the art form itself.

The Hybridization of the community in relation to the other community shapes their world view and ideological stand points. The Hybridization of the art form as a part of the expressive tradition also influence the neighbourhood art forms with its own id-

iomatic thrusts on them. This eventually leads to the incorporation of the neighbourhood tradition in to the art form and makes it for a wider acceptance by the audience through polyphonic manifestation. The whole exercise of hybridization begins once the community realizes that their art form is losing its relevance in terms of popularity. The indicators for this stage are quantitatively less number of performances, larger gaps between the performances and the audience wise, very few internal audience left clinging to the art form. Once this state of affair in the art form emerges out then one may point it as the declining stage of an art form. However the art form having imbibed the potential resistance through hybridization recasts itself to the new contexts. Thus the change and continuity takes place to the art form and to the community.

This section therefore deals with the factors which cause alarming position of the art form such as the economic and non-economic factors.

CaviTTunaaTakam through the ages: The present stage **and decline**

V.S. Andrews in his article, *CaviTTu naaTakathile Sahityam* points out that it was a prominent cultural item in the ancient performances/art section of the 1930 Parishath conference at Ernakulam. According to him, " during those days itself, ie. in the 1930's, this theatre form was rarely found or performed and an immediate attention was demanded in order to retrieve the glorious past of this theatre genre".⁶² This in itself would show that the glorious period of *CaviTTunaaTakam* is largely related to the high social and economical status of the Kerala Christians. The establishment and the evolutionary stages of this theatre took place with the advent of the Portuguese. Later the post Diamper period structured, legitimized and activated the necessity of this form and it slowly got popularity and patronage from the Christians. During the glorious period of this theatre form in the early 18th to the middle of the 19th century, when the Christians as land lords and as merchant class enjoyed all the powers of the state, this particular art form was considered as a part of their ritual observations. A certain kind of sanctity was associated with *CaviTTunaaTakam* performance. The context of the performance was part of the religious observance or festival of the patron saint in the local Church. The performers considered it as a holy act which they were destined to do. The audience considered the participation in this performance as a boon. The make-believe was tremendously powerful and the audience used to blindly believe the on stage proclama-

tions. The spectacular miracles embellished them, led to a firm belief in the religion and thus sudden conversions took place. During those days the sole patron was the Church, which used to control the whole performance and used this as a medium for the propagation of Christian religion and way of life. Later these plays were attributed or ascribed to a set of systematically trained troupes patronized by the upper class society consisting of land lords, rich formers and merchants who belonged to the Christian community. The association with the Church still continued and these plays were performed as a part of the Church festivals in the vicinity of the Church. Then due to various reasons the single family or a single individual patronage was transferred into a group's hand. The troupes performing this theatre form slowly transformed into an individual body. A group of people associated with the Church or an organization which had some relationship with the local Church took over the overall possession of this art form. Now a days various types of media entertainments and technically manipulated pastimes are evolving in the society. This theatre form which deals with the most familiar Christian religious themes and with its longer duration is not at all appealing to the younger generation any more. *CaviTTunaaTakam* came to be dubbed as an art form for some old, Orthodox, or conservative people. This distaste of the younger minds due to their mis conception that *CaviTTunaaTakams* are "modern" activated the decline in popularity and quality of the play productions.

A set of synonyms came to be associated with *CaviTTunaaTakam* in the 20th century, that easily reveals the waning popular appeal for this theatre form. Right from the early 20th century this theatre genre was placed among the antiquities in a cultural heritage museum. It was the prominent one among the defunct theatre performance. It was called *aaTTa naaTakam*⁶³ in Malayalam in which the term *aaTTam* means swaying of body or a type of crude dance. By the middle of this century there were a number of structural changes taking place in this performance tradition. After the withdrawal of the upper class from the field this became an exclusive affair of the working class people who were economically, socially and educationally at the lower strata of the society. The Latin Christian community of the central coastal Kerala who inherited and performed this theatre form misconceived its vigorous performance style as *taTTupolippan* (ie. the breaking of the dancing floor) and the main characters also considered this breaking of the floor as an acting quality.⁶⁴ The breaking ability became a credential element in the

naaTakams. This made the people to consider these dramas as mere **taTTupolippan** (one which breaks the floor). This is quite evidently, a derogatory term for such a performing genre with a host of excellent qualities. They misconceived the form as mentioned earlier and inturn the form acquired another name **taTTupulaiyan** which is suggestive of the declining state of the form. In a couple of decades the training system, the quality of the **asaans** and the duration of the training period suffered a severe blow due to the economic constraints and the lack of popularity of this form. The form was also referred to by the people as a **caaTTakkaLi** in Malayalam, means a game or a play with leaps. This term clearly suggests the defects that crept into the form which proved to be derisive to the technical inputs of this form. Moreover, the excessive drinking habit of the performers and the blatant use of liquor on and off stage fetched this form another local name **kaLLukaLi**. This means "a play of liquor". The Malayalam word **kaLLu** means toddy which is an intoxicating drink extracted from the palm tree. Thus these synonyms suggest the present condition of this somewhat discarded art form.

The patronage, function, technique and style, themes and language, the socio-economic status of the performers, and performing community, the performing context and audience and the performance place were subjected to drastic transformations and changes through the ages. There were several factors responsible for these changes and these changes in themselves were causes for further transformations. Some of the important factors which contributed to the transformations and caused the decline this theatre of form are: (1) economic factors (2) functional issues (3) influences and invasion of other media.

I The economic factors

In an economically backward country like India, the existence, survival, preservation and propagation of a performance tradition demand a sound financial background/support. Along with the artistic qualities it is the economic factor that determines the development and survival of a performance tradition. More over the present precarious position of this art form is reducing it to an exclusive affair of the rural working class people who are socially and economically at the lower strata of the society. This makes us think about the financial conditions of the society which upholds this tradition, the cost of production and patronage given to it by the society in the various time periods from its

evolution to the present condition.

It will be interesting to take a look at the economic back ground of the Christian community who prepared the ground for the initial growth of their performing arts. The period between AD 600 and 1300 had been very significant in the economic and commercial history of the Malabar coast. During this time the Arabs, Christians and Jews who settled in this coast were organized into commercial communities. They had enjoyed the political power with regard to tax collection, the administration of law and order, military organization and the local self government.⁶⁵ The records show the Christian merchants and their organizations as wealthy and prosperous. This helped them to play a vital role in the social, economic and cultural life of the region.⁶⁶ Eventhough the sources are silent about the conditions of the life of ordinary Christians, some of the social groups connected with the Christian institutions and Church authorities are referred to in some records. According to the grant of Viraraghava, Vaniar (oil pressers) and **Ainkammalar** (the five groups of smiths) were given to IraviKortan as slaves.⁶⁷ The rights to protect and punish these bonded labourers were entrusted with the Church authorities. In these circumstances it may not be incorrect to infer that, the low class labourers were under the influence of the religious institution and that those labourers were likely to have embraced the faith of the institution which supplied them their daily bread and necessary protection. Thus the Christian community was composed of two distinct classes of people, one the upper class and the other the lower class.

The missionary advent during the Portuguese colonization made a reaching results in the propagation of Christianity along the coastal belt of central Kerala. This resulted in the conversion of a large number of people into Christianity. Most of them were fishermen, agricultural labourers, and other skilled and unskilled categories of landless working class community.

When one looks at the economic status of the Kerala society from the angle of land tenure and agrarian structure, one can see the predominance of the upper class.⁶⁸ Control of land and people being the basis of political power, every group yearned to acquire it. Merchants being the moneyed class could easily persuade kings for grants and people (labourers) for them. This accounted for the growth of powerful merchant bodies in the early medieval South India. The Christian merchants along with the indigenous mer-

chants, persuaded the royal authorities to make land grants in their favour.⁶⁹ This paved the way for the emergence of Christian land lords who also like the local Hindu chieftains leased out land to the tenants (in medieval Kerala).⁷⁰ Till independence the *kuTiyaans* and the *kuTikiTappukaar* in Kerala were completely at the mercy of the landlords and of the **well-to-do** farmers. Later the peasant movements made a considerable change in the structure. The bills passed by the communist party (the first democratically elected party in Kerala) caused major changes and these people acquired the security of tenure, fair rent and reasonable wage.⁷¹ During the present stage this progeny of the *kuTiyaans* and *kuTikiTappukaar* of the Christian community uphold the heritage and tradition of Christian performing arts. These people were geographically spread along the coastal and rural areas of central Kerala. The thick concentration of this performing community comes under the *Latindiocese* of Kerala.

The standard of living of the most of the present day performers of Christian theatre is very low. They are under the poverty line. (ie the percapita income rate) and lead a miserable life. The educational status of these performers when compared to the others in the same locality is comparatively low. Most of them are literate and have completed the upper primary education, only a few of them have passed the secondary examination at the high school level. Most of the *aasaans* above the sixty year old group had only Lower primary education but they are acquainted with Tamil which they learnt informally. We cannot precisely say about the occupational status of the present day performers. There is not even a single completely full time professional *CaviTTunaaTakam* performer. Except some of the *aasaans*, who belong to the age group of 55 to 70 years, all the others have different kinds of occupation. Most of them are engaged partly in agriculture, in casual labour and in various other activities. Generally they are farmers, landless agricultural labourers, skilled and unskilled artisans like mason, carpenter, cobbler etc., dock-workers, fishermen and other unskilled labourers in the fishing industry. Apart from this some of the *CaviTTunaaTakam* performers of Gothuruthi and Vypeen are illustrious for their engagement in the art of brewing and distilling illicit liquor which is allegedly an underground cottage industry in those places. In a nut shell, the occupation of most of the performers is not only seasonal, uncertain, laborious and the least lucrative but it is also looked down upon in the society.

Their nature of occupation (seasonal as well as the itinerary) the continuous struggles with the land lords as **kuTiyaans**, and the meanest standard of living tempted them to uphold this tradition of performance with the pompous, grandeur of kings and lords. They derive a vicarious pleasure in enacting the majestic world of make believe.

Cost of production and income

The money spent by the troupe and members towards the performance is an important part in the economic factors of the *CaviTTunaaTakam* production. For purpose of convenient analysis the total cost of production can be divided into two categories (1) over head costs and (2) the prime costs.

The overhead costs are those costs borne by the members of the troupe exclusively on the rituals, training and rehearsals which are held prior to the performance. Before the training in the **kaLari** the trainees have to take an oath of dedication. This oath taking is a ritual activity and the actors have to spend some money as *takcaNa* (offering) to the *aasaan*. In the early days the trainees kept ten **puttan**⁷² on three **veRRilaa** (**betal** leaf) and reverently offered it to the *aasaan*. This oath is taken in front of a **kuricu** (cross) and a lit *nilaviLakku* (bell metal lamp lit with oil). Now also the same tradition continues with the change in the amount.

The expenditure during the rehearsals is mostly for the *aasaan* and (the miscellaneous) for the night time rehearsals. Most of the trainees who were engaged in their occupational activities find time only in the night and they gather at the rehearsal place in the night; now a days mostly during holidays. The **aasaans** are not paid directly for the play productions. The *aasaans* considered it as their own moral duty to train the actors. If the *aasaan* hails from a distant place the trainees make all arrangements for his boarding and lodging through out the training period. Usually one of the trainees offers himself to serve as the host of the *aasaan*. Most of his expenditure for the daily needs including the drinks are to be met by the disciples either equally or equitably. From the subscribed fund, provision is also made for meeting the expenses of oil for night lamp, black tea, or coffee, **taampuuLam** etc. Now a days they have to hire a rehearsal place or they make a temporary shed for the rehearsal at one of the troupe member's place.

Towards the end of training there is another **important** expensive ritual called **arañkeeRRam**, which is a formal inauguration conducted by the troupe. In the *CaviTTunaaTakam* repertoire there are two phases of **arañkeeRRam**. The first one is called *kaLari arahkeeRRam* which is a kind of valedictory function for the training program, conducted with the invitation of the members. On this occasion clothes are offered as *takcaNa* to the **aasaan** individually by each artist. The second and final phase of *arahkeeRRam* is considered as the first public performance of the troupe. In the past, this programme was sponsored by some dignitaries in the local place. The actors invited their relatives and friends for the show. They came with varieties of presentations. Normally, the best out of all the presentations and money was very reverently offered to the **aasaan** as a final *takcaNa* and he publicly blesses the disciples. Now a days this offering is always some money and the troupe members along with their leader offer this money to the *aasaan*, when they officially take the *cuvaTi* on the day of performance. They give a lumpsum amount kept in between the pages of the *cuvaTi* to the *aasaan* and sometimes to the authors also. This is the only remuneration they get for their work in the initial stage. This practice is called *cuvaTi vaNakkam*.

The major part of expenditure comes for the major items such as the construction of the stage, supply or making of the stage properties, **make-up**, the remuneration to the artists, conveyance etc. These prime costs of production have also undergone drastic transformation through the ages due to the functional as well as technical changes happening to the *CaviTTunaaTakam* performances.

Eventhough most of the present day performances are put up on an already made proscenium stage or theatre, the *CaviTTunaaTakam* play demands a dancing floor made of one layer of wooden planks nailed and fixed on thick wooden bars. This is an additional cost and there are some expert stage/floor makers in *Vypeen*. The presence of one carpenter to mend the stage during the performance due to the consistent breaking of the planks is also an additional source of expenditure in these performances. In early days the temporary stage of width 30 feet x length 80 feet. were made for the performance. The planks, bamboo pillars, roofing and covering materials and other furniture and lighting materials were hired or supplied by the back stage workers in order to make the *naaTakataTTu*. Most of these materials were collected freely from

various places. The **aasaan** and the whole members of the troupe along with the people of that particular locality honorarily work for making this stage. Because of this social cost the actual expenditure becomes very less. They spend the money only for hiring the articles and the decorative items to make the stage. Free or concessional wage, rent free stage materials and land along with the honorary supervision of the **aasaan** were some of the important factors which made the expenditure for this item less.

In the early days the costumes and properties were made by artisans according to the characters of the play and depending on the financial status of the actor who performed the role. The actors used to spend lots of money and entrusted one person called the **uTuppaacaan** to make a local version of the historical European set of attire with the costly materials like pearls, jewels and **kasavu** stitched on velvet. So the making of the costumes and parts of costumes like **ceñkool** and **kiriTam** were part of the family prestige and a costly affair. Later people started using imitation materials and glittering articles like silver and golden coloured paper with gilts (glitters). Now a days most of the costumes, set (sceneries) and stage properties are rented from various rental houses. Some of the troupes try to make their own costumes for the play. For this, apart from the material cost the fulltime labour of three people is needed for more than three months. So the social cost is more than the actual expenditure.

Both the concepts of income and remuneration come into the scene after the **1960's**. Before that, eventhough the performers were amateur in nature, the cost of the production was looked after by some establishment like the Church, or an association or troupe connected with the celebration of the festival or a single wealthy patron. By the beginning of the 20th century, a group of people of a single locality started performing the play. Initially they used to spend some amount equally or equitably. Later during the performance they used to get some money in the form of donation from the wealthy audience. These donations are known as **polikkal**. The invited friends, relatives and other wealthy people among the audience participate in this. But this contribution is not compulsory. **kaTTiyan** calls out the name of the person and reveals the amount in a comic manner. In this the first amount is the real donation and the others were suffixes to encourage the patrons among the audience. In the early days this practice disturbed the continuity of the production and later the troupes specified a time, just before the

mankalam.

Some times a local group of people go for a compulsory donation from the locality of the performance and perform the play during their Church or patron saints festival. The popularity of the professional itinerary drama troupes and their way of functioning influenced the entire play production process in Kerala and the *CaviTTunaaTakam* troupes also started getting orders or booking or invitations to perform the ***naaTakam*** in various parts of Kerala. In such cases the emoluments of the troupe is fixed on a contract basis. Mostly the *aasaan* or the troupe manager fixes the charge and receives some advance payment. Then the expenses with regards to the hiring of costumes, set, lights and some times the music are met by these two people. The remaining money, if any, is divided equally among the members of the troupe. The *aasaan* also gets one share. In some contracts the festival committee looks after all the technical as well as the conveyance of the troupe. In that case the ***aasaans*** need not bear much risk in financial matters. The money is equally divided according to the number of the people in the troupe. The question of remuneration occurs in certain cases where some special actors mostly female artists were hired from different places. These actors were well paid for the production. In general the members of the group return home with empty purse with additional burden when the performance is over.

Patronage is the most important aspect among the economical factors of this performing art tradition. It is this patronage which is directly related to the financial status of the society and the cost of production. So by analysing the change in this factor, one will easily get a clear picture of the transformation that has occurred to the performing art tradition and its economic status.

Unlike like Kathakali, *CaviTTunaaTakam* and other Christian theatre forms could not enjoy the Royal patronage and later the governmental support. The major patrons of this theatre tradition was the Church and its institutions. But one cannot ignore the governmental and quasi governmental encouragement given to this art forms. Two sources of patronage can be identified, one is the Church and other Christian institutions and the second is governmental and quasi govt. organisations. The Church's patronage shows an ambiguity or a lot of variations at different ages and levels. Christianity in Kerala is mainly interested in the liturgical, educational, social and ecclesiastical activities

to such an extent that their own traditional art and cultural faculties are sometimes considerably ignored, even though the Church is supposed to play an active role in it. From the pages of the Church history of Kerala it would be clear that Christianity was cut off from the main stream of cultural thought of the region, for they were forbidden to participate in the pagan worships and Hindu ritualistic art forms after the Synod of **Diamper**. The Hindus also, following the caste system, did not allow the Christians to enter the precincts of the temples. At the same time the Christian community has served as a vital factor in the cultural kaleidoscope of Kerala. The Western missionaries, following the western traditions, encouraged the growth of Christian performing arts. The early period of missionary activities paved the way for the development of these arts and the performances were patronized by the Church. These performances were enacted inside and at the vicinity of the Church as part of the Church festivals. Later on the local Christians became more powerful and the wealthy community started patronizing the whole Church festivals. These wealthy family members were called *pirsuteenti*. The Church festivals became more and more expensive and a group of people started putting money and started celebrating the festival. This gave rise to the associations or troupes which along with the Church, started patronizing this particular form. In this way, the art form became popular and the local group of people started financing and **organizing CaviTTunaaTakam** performance. For this they used to collect donations from different families of that particular locality. Because the performance was a part of the local Church *peRunaal* (festival), the local Christians used to spend money for it by giving money in the form of compulsory donations. Now a days also most of the performances are part of the Church **peRunaal**. So the organizing committee of a Church festival used to book or order one group for playing a particular *CaviTTunaaTakam*. Even though the present day performers blame the Christian leaders and Church authorities for not taking much pains for the development and restoration of this theatre form, it is the Church and its various institutions which still patronize this form.

The second form of patronage comes from the governmental and quasi governmental institutions such as the Sahitya Academy, the *sankiita naaTaka Academy*, the Lalitakala Academy, the All India Radio, Dooradarshan, Departments of culture, tourism and education. *CaviTTunaaTakam* could enjoy comparatively less patronage than any other folk or traditional art form of Kerala from the above mentioned institutions. But one

has to acknowledge the services and patronage of these institutions. The All India Radio enabled the various *CaviTTunaaTakam* troupes to perform different dramas and most of it was wired to the various parts of the country.⁷³ The Dept. of Tourism patronize this art form at various times by including it as a cultural item in the ancient folk performances section.⁷⁴ Some of the *CaviTTunaaTakam* artists were given fellowships and awarded pension by the Sangeetha nataka Academy.⁷⁵ The other institutions also encouraged this theatre tradition by providing various chances to perform in different places.

Apart from the above mentioned agencies there are some private clubs and **organi-**zations which also tried to patronize this art form. In **Pallippuram**, a troupe tried to present a *CaviTTunaaTakam* by selling tickets. Even though this attempt to stage the production like a professional show was somewhat successful, they could not repeat the programme. At present the major patrons of the form are various Churches and the Dept. of Tourism.

II. **The functional issues and influences/Invasion of other media**

Drastic changes took place in the function due to the influences/invasion of other media which caused the present condition of deterioration on *CaviTTunaaTakams*. The social function or the objective of this theatre form in itself changed due to various reasons. This functional change affected the production process and the prospects of this form. The earliest function of this form was the propaganda of Christian **morals** and themes through the moralistic victory of the Christian heroes. This resulted in a large amount of conversions. Slowly this art form gave the converts a platform for their creative energy to flourish. Thus it became a counterpart to the other artistic expressions of other religious communities. Slowly the popularity of the art form increased and it achieved a prime position in the Church festivals. These festivals were aimed at the enjoyment and celebrations of the society. Subsequently, some changes in the character of these performances took place. The secular themes and ideas infiltrated into this art form and recreational aspects got priority. Popular native stories and local versions of the Christian legends got more popularity. The language also started changing because the use of Malayalam in place of Tamil became more popular and a lot of Malayalam words infiltrated into the old Tamil texts. The authors started writing in Malayalam. By this time the patronage had also undergone changes. Apart from the Church performances,

these plays were staged at various parts of the local village.

The major change was in the duration of the play and rehearsal process. These plays became more and more a source of recreation. The more these plays became part of recreation, more the people became materialistic. Due to the materialistic nature of the present generation, the play's duration is drastically cut short. The popularity of the other modes of enjoyment, the infiltration of various theatrical technical conventions into these performances, its detachment from the ritualistic activities and the hierarchical single landlord or a single family patronage activated this drastic shortening of duration. Earlier these plays which were performed for days together with a number of actors were reduced to performances of a few hours in a single night. People's concept of 'Time is money' affected the number of hours spent for the training of the actors. Earlier they used to take years for preparing one single play which caused the most popular *aasaans* or actors to take part in the play productions not more than thirty times in a life time. At present, after getting the order or a call for the performance, the *aasaan* picks up a few youngsters and give training for a few days. Because of the influence of proscenium stage and of other professional itinerary groups, lot of technical aspects such as painted scenery, lights, special effects recorded music etc infiltrated into the performance structure of present day *CaviTTunaaTakams*. Moreover, the privately owned groups ie. groups maintained by a single *aasaan* or an association or club, started getting orders for the production (it is called booking) during the festival season from various parts of Kerala and these groups go there and perform these dramas. Slowly this theatre genre became more commercial. But due to the large number of cast, Tamil mixed language and lack of technical **perfection**, the popularity of these plays negatively affected, and they were unable to compete with the other fast moving professional troupes, which catered to the social trends and tastes. *CaviTTunaaTakams* became more and more sidelined and only the Churches and Christian organizations consider it as a part of their Latin Christian Heritage. They started seeing it as a fossiled antiquity which proclaims the traditional ways and behaviours. This attribution helped some troupes to get one or two productions during the Tourism Week Celebrations. These plays are placed among the ancient traditional/folk theatre items. Thus, they have to present the plays with in a short time. These 20 minutes to 30 minutes productions are of a kind of parades which is only aimed at increasing the number of arts presented in this section. According to

the 'insiders' the major concern of the present day performances is to show it as a part of the Heritage of Christian community.

During this time the attitude of the audience also had undergone drastic changes. **In** the early days, the entire families in a village (eventhough they knew the text of the play) made preparations from the morning to watch the play. By evening the entire family sets out to the performance place. The performance is a part of their festival of patron saint and mostly the story is about their own religion and this retained their interest in watching the performance which went on for several nights. They considered it as a sacred pilgrimage, a part of the fulfillment of their religious life. Later more secular items came in and the performance places were shifted into the already made auditoriums. The monotony in the treatment of the subject and the absence of quality production detached the audience from their sacred consideration to a mere enjoyment and amusement. The people who belonged to other religions also flocked around the stage impressed by the vigorous body dynamics, choreography, spectacular costumes, and later this art form fell into the hands of working class and the urban 'elites' and educated people slowly made a withdrawal from the scene. This sophisticated elite group considered the participation in this art form as a degradation of their social status. They continued watching this only because of their curiosity and not because of any devotion or appreciation.

The infiltration and influence of other media and technical theatre was prominent in the urban areas where this art form was prevalent.⁷⁶ The areas which is very much close to the cities were influenced by this sudden change. The lack of professionalism and quality in the productions also reduced the number of audience. The areas⁷⁷ where these forms are more traditional still draw the audience because people consider it as a part of their heritage. The actors and other people who participate in these plays are very much familiar to the locality. The present Tourist performance which is more or less like a parade makes the audience to look upon this as an antiquity and as a crude spectacle.

At present the number of productions and the number of troupes practising *CaviT-TunaaTakam* are very less. There are hardly any new texts or new plays coming up in the places or with the troupes where the genre still exists. There are some attempts to revive or restore this art form along the central coastal belt of Kerala in not more than ten places. But this is far from satisfactory. The latest survey shows only three active

groups and those groups also perform including the governmental and quasi governmental shows not more than ten times in a year. In entire Kerala there are a maximum of fifteen shows including the tourist performances. Now, it goes without saying that this art form is on the verge of decline. This alarming status of the *CaviTTunaaTakam* performances and the understanding of the reasons which caused the present state of decline further leads one to probe into various issues which are active at this Juncture.

Part-III

The Third part of this chapter concentrates its attention on bringing out certain issues which are very much alive in the phase of decline of *CaviTTunaaTakam*. The present thesis try to bring out these issues and suggestions from the opinions made by the insiders like masters, performers, patrons and the outsiders including scholars and cultural enthusiasts. A compiled note of this references based on the field work further demands and invites an immediate scholarly intervention at the present condition of *CaviTTunaaTakam* **which,inorder** to survive, has acquired a 'doubly hybridized' status by amalgamating and incorporating the conceptions and formulae required for the immediate performance contexts. This state of affairs broadly divide the concerned people into two categories: the traditional Purists and the modern survivalists. This division enhances further schisms in their opinions regarding the already existing controversies and suggestions for improvements.

The realization of the reasons behind the decline by performers, scholars and connoisseurs and the audience impressions gave birth to various attempts towards restoration, reconstruction and reformation of this particular art form. It is interesting to have an overview of this attempts. On the one hand it will clearly give the picture of the present condition and on the other these attempts will give a hast of suggestions for the betterment of the present state of *CaviTTunaaTakam*. But before going to the suggestions towards improvement it is better to find out some of controversies and polemics which were active and are still present in this genre. This part presents these conditions of this art form.

Controversies **and** Polemics

The search for the identity and the betterment of the present condition, along with the wider understanding about a host of reasons behind the decline (of *CaviTTunaaTakam*) brought to life some of the already existing and newly popped up controversies. They are in the performance genre itself and in its mode of presentation. The Polemics surrounding the performance genre includes: (a) issues related to themes and language (b) issues related to music and costume.

The first one, (a) deals with the arguments favouring and against the change of language needed for the existing and forthcoming texts. That is, the people for this idea argue that, the texts must be written or re-written in malayalam language. They also favour and long for new **Socio-Political** themes, which are very much akin to the present cultural milieu. The people who oppose this idea argue that only the emthamil (**Malayalam-Tamil**) texture of the texts can provide the vigour and identity to the *CaviTTunaaTakam* performances. By showing the existing popularity of the early texts such as *Alphones* and *kaarlmaan*, they rule out the question of lack of communication due to the hybrid language and also favours the categories of themes with heroic militancy and strives for the revival of such themes.

The second one, (b) which centres around the issues in favouring the styles required for the two important ingredients of the genre is: music and costume. Here the styles in debate are: Western and Indian (or in particular Dravidian). Some people favour the use of more indigenous music and costumes giving priority to the percussion instrument *ceNTa* in the lead role at the music pit.

They also favour nativised costumes, especially for women characters. This brought in the experiments like the use of **Bharatanatyam** costumes and the use of props like *veNc caamaram* and *aalavaTTam* in the court scenes. The people who oppose these trends prefer the use of western Band set at the music pit and they still cling to the local versions of the European courtly garments.

The polemics surrounding the mode of presentation includes : (a) controversies **re-**garding the fixed number of basic performance ingredients like : foot steps, *kavittams*,

and **kalaasams**, (b) issues for and against the theatrical conventions, (c) the question of the duration of a single performance, (d) the performance issue regarding the static on stage presence of the group (chorus).

The first one, (a) centres around the basic differences of opinions regarding the number of **cuvatu** and **kavittam** etc, which occurs due to the different patterns followed by various schools and individual **aasaans** at different places. This internal controversy between the groups on the other hand helped the genre in its development and refinement of certain theatrical ingredients. Even though some people argue for a commonness in these numbers and style of presentation most of the others prefer the individual styles of different groups and grants freedom to the **aasaans** and their innovation. The second one, (b) is the most debatable issue in the genre. The so called purists of the tradition strongly oppose the idea of the removal of these conventions in order to shorten the duration of the performance. They also argue in favour of the revival of all these preliminary sequences (like : **baala paarTTukaar**, **tooTaiyaaTTam** etc) not in the fashion of parades but by giving proper importance and time period to these theatrical conventions. The third one (c) deals with the issue of duration required. This comprises of a section of people who are against the re-establishment of the 'defunct' (as they call it) conventions and argue for the shortened versions of these **naaTakams** for a couple of performance hours without losing its ingredient mood, strength and phase. The opposers on the other hand argue that the drastic cut in the performance duration will affect the entire charm of the play. The fourth one, (d) is solely related to the performance aspect and tries to solve a much debated aspect regarding the static presence of the group of soldiers (or chorus). These are the people, who accompany the king or **mantiri** as his retinue. Are they supposed to move or to be static like in a tableau, while the king or **mantiri** presents their solo songs? This debate went on in the **CaviTTunaaTakam** circle and some **aasaans** favoured the movement of the group along with the main characters and other's opted the tableaux freezes of the group and some other's had taken an in between stand of combining both the freeze and movement for this group. The above mentioned are some of the polemics which are alive till date. These polemics on the one hand reveals the existence of tradition - modernity schism in the performance genre and on the other shows the continuous presence of ambivalence in this already hybridized art form and it enhances the possibility of further hybridizations in the stressed contexts.

Reconstructions and Restorations

The knowledge of the reasons behind the decline and the alive polemics centered around the present condition of *CaviTTunaaTakam* are the footsteps of every renovation or reconstruction projects. The challenging attempts towards restoration, reconstruction and reformation of this genre had a long history. Infact it started in the early decades of this century.⁷⁸ Then itself this genre was rare and it provided space to the upcoming **Malayalam** drama stage. Later, during the 50's and 60's the in time scholarly intervention of late Sabeena **Raphy** reactivated a movement of reformation of this art form and called forth the popular appeal toward the reconstruction. Hence it paved the way for this art form to enter into government and quasi-government organized cultural festivals and it also got wired through the all India Radio. But due to various reasons and the invasion of the other media, this has once again pushed the attempts of revival into anonymity. The cultural trend of the quest in search of ethnic identity in the early 90's, once again **re-activated** the restoration movement of this form. The present thesis only accounts for this post-ninety's attempts.

Altogether these attempts towards the reconstructions reflect certain common characteristics like : (1) they were in one way or the other linked with the churches and its institutions. In other words mostly latin parishes or the parish priests of a particular area guided this movement by providing a chance and performance space as part of the church's festival. (2) Most of these plays portrayed the earliest themes. (3) Except a couple, which had a few repeated shows all others were single productions and all these production were at various places. (4) Eventhough all of them were aimed at reconstruction in principle but incorporated modern trends in the technique of production. In fact the inclusion of the term or position of '**director**' reveals the amount of changes. (5) The lack of research and precision in selecting themes, the lack of skilled **aasaans** and performers, the carelessness in the training process along with the lack of '**time**' and the economic constraints barred these otherwise noble attempts from gaining the maximum result. (6) Finally, all these attempts resulted in merely showing the present generation that - this is *CaviTTunaaTakam*, the bearer of the latin Christian heritage. At this juncture it is interesting to have a look at these productions which proclaim and become an evidence to the present status of the reconstruction. They

are: (a) 1990: Postoral **orientation** centre of K.C.B.C (**Ernakulam**) organized Ancellika *naaTakam* by the **St.Antony's** yuvajana **Kalasamithi Pallippuram**. (b) 1991: Kerala Catholic School League (K.C.S.L) started organizing *CaviTTunaaTakam* competitions for the school **children**. (c) 1992: At the Chellanam Church as a part of the Sebastion-s festival, under the able guidance of **Fr.Firmuse** Kachappilly the local actors produced '**Mar. AllesunaaTakam**'. Later, **Fr.Firmise** tried to organize one more *CaviTTunaaTakam* titled *taaLa[m] taaLa[m]ppizha* (Malayalam text) with the same group. This failed attempt was in 1995. (d) 1993: Kerala Catholic youth movement (K.C.Y.M **Kottappuram** diocese, Ernakulam) organized one day symposium on *CaviTTunaaTakam* at Parur, with the performance of *kaarlmaan naaTakam* by 'Gothuruthu *CaviTTunaaTaka Sangham*'. During this symposium the organizer's honoured Konoth Georgekutty *aasaan* (Kurumbathuruthi) for his services towards the art **form**. (e) 1994: **Fr.V.P.Joseph** of **St.Francis** Church (Alleppy) organized '**Thirayam** theerakkattum' a Malayalam *CaviTTunaaTakam* completely based on the social theme by Kripasanam Media ministry at Cethi beach of Alleppy. (f) 1995: With the effort of certain individuals (like: Maneek Manakkil, **Thampi** payyappilli, Lorenz master) a number of people belonging to various groups in Gothuruth joined together and formed 'Yuvajana *CaviTTunaaTakam* Kalasamithi'. This group performed more than five shows of *kaarlmaan naaTakam* and *pilamenaanaaTakam*, including their participation in **Bharatholsavam** 95 at Andaman Islands and Dept. of culture (Kerala) programme at **Trivandrum**. By the end of this year, with the headship of Georgekutty *aasaan* one more group is formed. That is, 'Vdaya natana Kalasamithi' of Kurumbathuruthi. (g) 1996: One can see for a number of attempts aimed at the revival of groups and the genre at various places. It started with the performance of **viirakkumaaran** *naaTakam* by Udaya natana Kalasamithi at **St.Joseph's** Church Kurumbathuruthi, as part of Church's festival. **St.James** natana Kalasamithi Pongikkara under the able guidance of Joseph *aasaan* practiced *Geevargheesu caritam* and performed at two places, the first one as part of the national conference of catholic youth movement at Ernakulam, the second at the Bolgatty infant Jesus Church. By April, **Fr.Antony Kop-**pandussury of Malippuram Church organized *CaviTTunaaTakam* artists of that place and formed '**St.Mary's** natana Kalasamithi' (Ochanthuruthi). Under the guidance of Joseph Thottunkara *aasaan* they performed 'Alphones *naaTakam*'. Since the 1986 production of Alphones there was not even a single one at this place till this one. By the end of the year at Vaduthala **St.Antony's** Church a local group under the able guidance

of K.A.Chacko *aasaan* produced Alphones *naaTakam*. (h) 1997: This year started with the production of *kaarlmaan naaTakam* by 'Yuvajana *kalasamithi*' at Narakkal church.

Apart from this, during the above mentioned years a group of people from Gothuruthi under the guidance of Georgekutty *aasaan* and Maneek *manakkil* as *Gothuruthi CaviT-TunaaTaka Sangham* performed at various places. Most of them were either part of the tourist week celebration by Kerala government and the quasi governmental agencies with the sponsorship of business households or the programmes organized by All India Radio's different stations. In order to understand the present status it is always better to have a look at these performances too.

Suggestions and opinions:

The present survival of this genre through the reconstruction attempts and as tourist performances created an awareness among the cultural enthusiasts towards the restoration and revival of this form. Eventhough they differ in their suggestions and opinions (according to the earlier mentioned controversies) for the betterment their aim is noble. It is worth mentioning some of them. These suggestions are picked from the opinions of various people during the present field work. The suggestions can be broadly divided into two categories. The first one is the suggestions aiming at conservation and restoration of these *naaTakams*. The second one includes the suggestions to improve the theatrical quality of the present versions, keeping in view the economic constraints, and the popular appeal.

The first category includes : (1) An immediate scholarly attention demanded towards the restoration process. In order to facilitate this, seminars, symposiums and the workshops, which make an interaction between scholar, *aasaans*, and performers, are proposed. (2) The conservation and documentation of the earlier texts are suggested with an aim of printing the available texts. (3) In order to popularise this form *CaviTTunaaTakam* festivals under the auspices of the Sangeeth nataka academy, catholic orientation centers and other quasi-governmental agencies are urged. (4) In their opinion it is quite feasible to start one school (central government funded) for the *CaviTTunaaTakam* training or another one similar to that of Cheruthuruthy Kerala *Kalamandalam*.

The second category encompasses suggestions made by the present practitioners. They are : (1) In order to avoid the popular misconception towards this form they all suggest the ban for the use of excessive liquor during the practice and performance.⁷⁹ (2) In view of popularity they urge the and immediate support from the other **medias** like Radio and Television. (3) The inclusion of this form among the competitive events in the youth festivals (for schools and colleges) and the village festivals is demanded. They hope this will hasten the transformation of this form from the present to the future generations. Moreover these competitive events will help the **aasaans** to overcome their economic difficulties. (4) Most of them suggest new themes in **Malayalam** for less duration with less number of performer or the **re-arranged** parts of the old themes with in between announcements in Malayalam. The less number of actors is preferred because all of them suggest the smooth function of the troupe as an itinerary one and appeal for the patronage from all available sources. (5) All the suggestions prefer the adaptation of theatrical techniques of using scenic and light effects. Some of them prefer electronic organs and go to the extend of proposing recorded music for the production.

The present status of the art form signals the stage of transition a new kind of art form, which is a hybridized version. The formulae and the conventions, which made the art form as *CaviTTunaaTakam* by and large loosing their validity and function for the reason that their enactment is possible only when there is a considerable duration for the time frame of performance. In the present situation the Christian community as such transformed from the agrarian based with feudal connection to urban based commercial pursuits. This change in the occupation of the community inturn changed their preferences and attitudes to express their religious identity. Hither to, the Christian theatre was used as a symbol of Christian identity which expressed elaborately by sequencing with considerable time duration the scenes with in the art form of any given episode of the *CaviTTunaaTakam*. It was like an 'epic' to which the Christian community always **clinged** and expressed their identity through the enactment. In the present day context due to the change as stated earlier in the professions of the Christian community *CaviTTunaaTakam* no longer is preferred to express their cultural identity. In fact the expression of the community identity by the Christians is not by rejecting the art form totally but by modifications and alterations in the art form. This made the art form a symbol of the cultural identity confined to the Kerala state, yet pointing it out as a

distinct heritage of the Christians of Kerala in particular and the region in general. This transformation from community identity to a cultural identity of a larger region, in this case the Kerala region, is quite note-worthy. Similar process is not un common with several other genres. For instance the Ramayana and Mahabharath epics once confined to particular territory was blown up to give the picture of Hindu and Indian identity. Therefore the decline of the art form should be considered as the decline to represent a community and at the same time to be considered as an indication for transition from the community level to that of the larger cultural level of a region. In the process new themes, not necessarily confining to Christian idiom and ideology is also incorporated and played in *CaviTTunaaTakam* format. When the old themes are performed as a part of heritage, their duration of enactment is considerably reduced and hence several conventions and formulae get transformed to make the performance feasible for short presentations.

As stated in the beginning of this chapter, the *CaviTTunaaTakam* within the Christian performance tradition is placed at the periphery. Being in the periphery the art form is more prone to modern schisms for its continuity. In the process, adoption to contemporary demands made by the socio-economic forces that operate behind the production of the art form gave altogether a new dimension to it by transforming it from community level to that of a region's cultural level. The performers and the audience since, lack the customary obligation as it required to the core performance, made the art form see new sponsors such as business households, clubs, governmental agencies for play production. This inturn commercialized the art form itself and hence caused the presentation of art form in new-viscinities or venues where other audiences also witness the performance. During the tourist festivals non-christians form *the* major audience and since *they lack* commitment to the subject or theme of the performance, they become by passers during the performance. This change is crucial because the core art form demands the participation of internal audience so to say the audience who transform between the domains of audience and devotees all through the performance. In the *CaviTTunaaTakam* such transformation of audience become lesser and lesser owing to quick transitions that is taking place in the art form and the audience in which case by and large becomes external audience and there fore free to alienate themselves from the audience position to that of onlookers. However the peripheral nature of the art form is also important from the Christian performing tradition point of view because it is this peripherality which is ca-

pable of adapting to contemporary conditions which made the Christian identity express the **multi** faceted nature of the Christian community - which has several layer's such as clergy, missionary, devotee, and the formal non-practitioners of the Christian faith. This art form represents all these layers of Christian community as well the general ethos of the land in which they are living.

Notes

1. Their works such as: Dan **Ben-Amos**, *Folklore Genres* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976) and *folk lore in context* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1982); **Rager**, D. Abrahams, "Introductory remarks to a Rhetorical Theory of Folk lore", *Journal of American folklore* 81 (1968) 143-148. and *Deep Down in the Jungle* (Chicago: Aldine, 1970); Victor Turner, *The Ritual process: Dramas, Fields and Metaphors* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974).
2. The following are Indian case studies: Richard Schechner, *Performative circumstances: From the Avant Garde to Ramlila* (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1983); Richard A. Frasea, *The Theater of the Mahabharatha* (Honolulu: University of Hawai, 1990); Philip B. Zarrilli, *The kathakali complex: Actor, Performance, structure* (New Delhi: 1984).
3. This is a part of the institutional hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church, one diocese comprises a number of churches, which follows a single rite and belongs to a particular geographical area. The diocese comes under the Arch diocese.
4. Interview with Chacko **aasaan**, vaduthala dated 8th december 1994. He says, the temporarily organized local troupe, with a name St. Antonys Natanakala **Samithi** performed Alphones *naaTakam* at St. antonys auditorium Vaduthala in 1970. The same group of local people performed the same *naaTakam* in 1991 with changing the groups name as Cochin Natana **kala**.
5. The term presudentee is the title given to patron who spends money for conducting the festival.
6. Jos Cochin and Bruno Parithussery of Fort kochi **Veli** lends costumes and sceneries. S.A.K and udaya sounds of Ernakulam are famous in supplying sound and light equipments for the play production.
7. Gunderts *Malyalam Dictionary* (Kottayam: Vidyarthimithram, 1972).
8. See above page 112.

9. Fareley Richmond, Darius L. Swan, ed., *Indian Theatre* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii, 1993) 245.
10. For example, see Raphy, *CaviTTunaaTakam*, 98.
11. See Raphy, *CaviTTunaaTakam*, 100.
12. Sabeena Raphy's reference about the fifteen days duration taken for presenting *Karalman naaTakam* will definitely surprise the modern audience. Pongikkara Raphy in his book 'Swarga Doothan' describes the seven days performance of a single play 'Napolean'. Joseph Thottunkara *aasaan* of Ochanthuruttu said that (in 1930's) three alternative days of performance was required for the completion of *Alphons naaTakam*.
13. This is in referent to Richard Axtons famous term, see Axton, *European Drama*.
14. The quotation is from, Raphy, *CaviTTunaaTakam*, 102. The descriptio of the stage show some similarities of the facades and front portion of the Christian churches with European design e.g., vaduthala, St. Antonys Church.
15. Interview with Chacko and Petho *aasaans* of Vaduthala on 8th december 1994.
16. Raphy, *CaviTTunaaTakam*, 102.
17. Augustine, K.J., "*CaviTTunaaTakam*", *Sahitya Parishat Quarterly I* (1932), 187-188.
18. Now a days, there are certain rare exceptions of the performances in Auditoriums with fixed seating.
19. Here *aasaans* use simple Jathi (sounds without meaning) like *Tha tha thi*. For details see Raphy, *CaviTTunaaTakam*", *Sahitya Parishath Quarterly*, 25 (1956): 340.
20. The similar kind of character is prevalent in Therukoothu of **Tamilnadu**.
21. Andrews, "*CaviTTunaaTakathile Sahityam*", *Sahitya Parishath Quarterly I* (1932) 315.

22. Interview with **Chacko aasaan** of **Vaduthala** on 5th November, 1996.
23. Cf. Axton, *European Drama*, 19.
24. In **viirakkumaaran naaTakam**, the first hunting scene portrays the death of the king udayavarman (father of **viirakkumaaran**), which is a misfortune and the secret is preserved as dramatic irony. During the second hunting sequence, the sanyasin accidentally reveals the truth behind the death of the king to **viirakkumaaran**.
25. For another example see above, page 134.
26. For e.g., see above page. 137
27. For another e.g., see above page 136.
28. For e.g., see above page 138.
29. Interview with George Kutty **aasaan** Kurumbha thuruthi, dated 21st September, 1995.
30. For example, in **kaarlmaan** both the durbar scenes i.e., **kaarlmaan's** and Albiranth's are distinctively performed giving importance to the 'contrasts' in their basic character and belief.
31. In **kaarlmaan caritam** (Plorippus **Bhagam**) **kaarlmaan's** peers, on the way to conquer Jerusalem, after the confrontation with Battissa minister of Albiranth the **veTTai** sequence comes, in that soldiers fight with wild animals.
32. In the plays like: **viirakkumaaran**, St. George, chinna Roldon, Vanabalan, the presentation of theme demand various time periods in the life of the hero. Now a days also, there are five actors including a small kid present, the various stages of **viirakkumaaran**. The third one (a twelve year old boy, who presents the role) is shown as getting martial training from **paRaiyan** (guru) in the forest.
33. For e.g., see above page. 139
34. For e.g., see above page 135.

35. For e.g., in Athishaya **valli naaTakam**, the heroine Athishayavalli become converted in to Jnana Valli and at the end the play's name is announced as Jnana Valli. According to petho **aasaan** the same is the case of Jnana Sundari also.
36. They are the most receptive and Flexible audience of a dramatic performance, who can easily identity themselves with the on stage characters and relish their feelings.
37. A similar custom can also be found in Terukkoothu, where they sing **vaLap paaTTu** which is like the **polivupaaTTu** of *CaviTTunaaTakam*.
38. For e.g., see above page 139.
39. The word *CaviTTunaaTakam* can be split in to two **malayalam** words i.e., **CaviTTu** which means stamping with the feet and '**naaTakam**', means drama.
40. See **Raphy**, *CaviTTunaaTakam*, 187.
41. Earlier, Villainous characters like: thieves, bandits, magicians and murderers were suppose to stamp their feet, not with the full sole touching the ground but with the *matampu*, which is one part of the **feet**. (e.g., right side of right feet and left side of left feet).
42. In the places like Vaduthala and Kothadu this term is more popular and the actors must enter and exit with this fast variety of *cuvaTu*.
43. For details on **lasya** and Tandava according to Natya sastra see P.S.R. ApPa Rao, *Amonograph on Natya sastra* (Hyderabad: Natya Mala, 1967).
44. Due to the lack of native terms and also considering the similarity, some of the terms like **sama**, **artta chandra** *hashtaa*, *aramaN*Ti are taken from the **Bharathanatyam** repertoire and used in the following discussion.
45. The dance of the bandits in the jungle in the *viirakkumaaran* is the most famous one in this genre.
46. See **Raphy**, *CaviTTunaaTakam*, 187.
47. C.J. Thomas, *Uyarunna Yavanika* (Kottayam: SPCS, 1950) 23.

48. This is Sabeena **Raphy's** famous term. See Raphy, *CaviTTunaaTakam*.
49. The quotation is from, Sabeena Raphy, "**CaviTTunaaTakam**: dramatic opera of Kerala", *Sangeet Natak* 12 (1969): 59.
50. On this line, see Raphy, *CaviTTunaaTakam*, 180-84.
51. Personal correspondence; Dr. Panakkal was the former music director at pontifical seminary, Alwaye.
52. Raphy, *CaviTTunaaTakam*, 95-96.
53. Gregory had effected the reforms, which paved the way for the advent of a new drama and a new theatre, Christian in inspiration and Romanesque in style. See **Wickham**, *Medieval Theatre* 21-22.
54. Interview with George Kutty Konoth dated 22nd September 1995.
55. Raphy, "**CaviTTu** naaTakathile aasaan mar" *Parishat Quarterly* (1978) 27.
56. Quoted in **Chummar** Choondal, *Christian Theatre in India* (Trichur: K.F.A., 1984) 112.
57. Raphy, *Sangeeth Natak*, 12 (1969) 61.
58. See above **page. 171**
59. For example, see Thomas, *Malayala Sahityam*, 38.
60. The horse belonged to the **paaTTalam** V.J. John *aasaan* was one of the most famous one in the genre.
61. Personal experience from the reactions of the audience at the recent productions.
62. V.S. Andrews, *Parishat Quarterly*, 13 (1932) 315.
63. I refer to V.S. Andrews term, see Andrews, "**Kristiyanikalum** Pracheena **Kalyum**", *Kerala Times*, 31 Aug., 1958: 2.
64. For eg. See Raphy, *Parishat Quarterly* (1973) 87.

65. K.K. Pillai, *Kerala Charithram*, Vol. I (Cochin: Kerala History Association, 1973) 144-45.
66. K.P. Velayudhan, "Trade Guilds and the Character of state in early south India", *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* (Hyderabad: 1978).
67. The earliest inscriptional sources for the study on the socio-economic conditions of Christianity are the copper plates such as: Iravi kortan copper plates or the grant of Vira Raghavan, **Thoma** cana copper plates, Tarisappalli copper plates I and II. For details, see M.G.S. Narayanan, *cultural Symbiosis in Kerala (Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Society, 1972)* and also Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, *Studies in Kerala History (Kottayam: NBS, 1970)* 570-71.
68. Ronald J. Herring, "Abolition of Landlordism in Kerala — A redistribution of priviledge", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 15:26 (1980).
69. Narayanan, *Cultural Symbiosis*, 33-36.
70. Narayanan, *Cultural Symbiosis*, 86-91.
71. Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill was introduced in December 1957 and subsequently passed in 1959. The main distributive measures in the legislation were: abolition of tenancy, transfer of ownership over home stead to kudikidappukor and ceiling on land holding and distribution of surplus land.
72. *Puttan* is an erstwhile cochin coin, which is equal to tenpie, (19.25 puttan = one Rupee). It is extinct from circulation. **Betal** leaf indicates prosperity, reverence and hospitality.
73. All India Radio Calicut, Trichur and Trivandrum recorded and broad casted various **natakams** at different occassiuons. The recen one is the velrakumaran **natakam** by udaya natana **kala** samithi broadcasted through Calicut station in 1997.
74. In 1961 they performed at New Delhi as part of the Republic day celebrations. Later at various occassions CaviTTu **naaTakam** was included in this parade. In the recent years this became one of the inevitable item in the Tourist week celebrations of Kerala Government at Trivandrum and Cochin. The performer's also participated in the 1995 Andaman Tourist festival.

75. Eesi Joseph of Thiruthippuram is the only artist who got a fellowship from the Kerala Sangeeth nataka Academy in 1993.
76. Performances at the areas close to Ernakulam (Cochin city) like Fiort-Kochi Veli, Pattalam, and Voduthala show extensive use of electric effects and more member of scenic changes.
77. Performances at Kurumbathuruthi, Narakal, and Vallarpadam can be taken as examples. These performances attracted large number of local people. Their exclusive and enthusiastic participation was visible during the field work.
78. This can be inferred from the writings of V.S. Andrews, who writes "The production of CaviTTunaaTakam for the *sahitya* parishath, Conference at Ernakulam was scheduled along with the declining ancient art forms". See *parishath Quarterly* 1:3 (1932) 314.
79. Misconception is clear from the synonyms gained by this art form, like: *chattakkali*, *kallukali*, and *kumbarikkali* all of them shows the connection of liquor.

Chapter - 6

muuvaracunaaTakam: A Christian Performance Metaphor

One of the chief Kerala Christian theatrical forms is the *muuvaracu naaTakam*. This form is performed by the community, for the community, and is of the community and therefore it has come to stay as the 'core' of the Christian performance tradition. **The** striking feature of this art lies in its ritualistic association. As an integral part of the enactment of belief of the birth of christ, this performance is interwoven with the context of the Christian festival in which the ritual practice is explicitly expressed through word and deed, not only during the performance but also in the preparation for the performance. In other words the ritual observances that go along with the production of *muuvaracunaaTakam* moulds the performance as the 'core' with its idiom and ideology. This practice of linking ritual with performance tradition is not uncommon in the native tradition. Most of the performances of the natives where votive offerings are cyclically and ritually exchanged are termed as ritual theatre in the Indian context. **All** the characteristics that make a theatrical performance a ritual theatre go well with the *muuvaracunaaTakam*. The context, event, performance and audience relationship with no clear distinctions of boundaries of the text are some of the characteristic features attributed to the sacredness of the ritual theatre, can also be seen in *muuvaracunaaTakam*. Ritual theatre by and large is 'community specific' where the identity of community is expressed through the performance. It is the community which ascribe and behave with reverence while taking part in the performance. It is the community's attitude towards a particular religious dogma when expressed through a performance that performance becomes ritual theatre to the community perse. The attitude of the community to identify itself esoterically, force the community to perpetuate the enactment of core belief through performance annually and cyclically. By annual repetition of the performance, the community expressed its authority over the art form and in the process established its solidarity. The repetition of the performance also attest the Christian communities idiom and ideology not for just identification but for a space for its own **among** the neighbourhood cultures. This strategy is quite important because Christianity is conceived as an alien religion and therefore antagonistic to the natives. This inbuilt conflict made the *muuvaracunaaTakam* establish its identity at the cost of neighbourhood cultures by making fun of those belief systems; and by convincingly merging the native systems of expression, it resolved the conflict through ritual process. The natives too, though anti-

thetical to the theme, did identify the art form as the community's and respected it as one of its heritage. This process of enculturation of the art form as one of the native expressive tradition made the art form to continue even till date.

For these reasons *muuvaracunaaTakam*, a core art form of Kerala Christian tradition, started as a combination of the west and the east but organically got indigenised in such a way that the western ideology was confined to the thematic level and the native performance idioms were organically absorbed and moulded so as to suit the native context and the missionary purpose without any internal **conflicts** within the endeavour.

Keeping in view the complexity of the issues related to *muuvaracunaaTakam*, this chapter is divided into several sub-headings. Basically to understand this art form one has to necessarily consider the geographical locale in which the art form originated and developed. As a prelude to this, the significance of this art form is discussed. The geographical locale is followed by an analysis of the relationship between the performers and the art form. This brings out one of the core elements of the art form. The latter part focusses on the performance aspects. In other words, the sequence of scenes along with the characters appearance on the stage is narrated, vividly following 'thick description' model. The issues related to the performance pertaining to the theatrical elements are also dealt in detail in this chapter to bring out the uniqueness of the artform and to give a feel to the reader on 'the organic hybridization' that made the art form function as a cultural continuum of the Christian community.

The significance of **the art** form

Dramatization of Christian themes was a sine-qua-non in the process of evangelization. The rudiments of liturgical drama were introduced and propagated in the different parts of the sub-continent with the arrival of various missionaries at different time periods in the history of the advent of Christianity and of the development of Christian performance tradition.¹

Even though the western missionaries were in different parishes and belonged to various parts of Europe and had varied cultural backgrounds of liturgical and vernacular theatre traditions, they encouraged and patronized local versions of biblical themes presentations as a part of their parish **festivals**.² *muuvaracu naaTakam* or the *muunRu raaja kuuttu* which portrays the story of nativity and the journey of the Magi is a prominent genre among these traditions. This comes under the medieval phase of the Kerala Christian performance tradition and also reveals an organic hybridity of fusing the western

biblical themes with the native performance idiom.

muuvaracunaaTakam is a dance drama which depicts, the story of Epiphany.³ At present this religious dramatic performance is conducted every year on the **first** Sunday of January at the premises of St. Anthony's church, *attikkooTu*, Kuzinjanpara town, Chittoor taaluk of Palakkad district, Kerala state. The narrative contents of this dance drama consists of all the incidents that happened after the birth of Jesus Christ in *Bethlehem* until the three kings from the East come and adore the infant-Jesus with gold, *myrrh* and *frankincense*. This visually rich and impressive portion in the Gospel of St. Mathew:-

"After Jesus has been born at Bethlehem in Judaea during the reign of King Herod¹ some wise men came to Jerusalem from the east. 'Where is the infant king of the Jews?' they asked. 'We saw his star as it rose and have come to do him **homage**.' When King Herod heard this he was perturbed, and so was the whole of Jerusalem. He called together all the chief priests and the scribes of the people,² and enquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 'At Bethlehem in Judaea, they told him 'for this is what the prophet wrote:

*And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
you are by no means least among the leaders of Judah,
for out of you will come a leader
who will shepherd my people Israel'.*

Then Herod summoned the wise men to see him **privately**. he asked them the exact date on which the star had appeared, and sent them on to Bethlehem.

Go and find out all about the child,' he said 'and when you have found him, let me know, so that I too may go and to him **homage**.' Having listened to what the king had to say, they set out. And there in front of them was the star they had seen rising; it went forward and halted over the place where the child. The sight of the star filled them with delight, and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did him **homage**. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold and *frankincense* and *myrrh*.³ But they were warned in a dream not to go back

¹About 5 or 4 B.C. Herod was king of Judaea. Idumaea and Samaria from 37-4 B.C. Cf. **L.k.** 2:2+.

²**Docotors** of the Law: usually, but not always, from the ranks of the Pharisees (3:7+). Together with the high priests and the elders they constituted the Great Sanhedrin.

³**The** wealth and perfumes of Arabia (Jr. 6:20; Ezk 27:22). The Fathers see in them symbols of the royalty (gold), divinity (incense), Passion (myrrh) of Christ. The adoration of the Magi fulfils the

to Herod, and returned to their own country by a different way.

This biblical account provides great scope for dramatization. The visual abundance is the reason behind the existence of Magi plays in Medieval Europe,⁴ which deals with the 'nativity' themes and was performed during the Christmas season on some of the important days of liturgical *calender*.⁵ These Magi plays which were performed in between the 10th and 16th centuries (in medieval Europe) played an important role in the development of the religious drama and in the history of world theatre. These simpler Magi plays with a highly developed Herod theme and its characterization projected a lot of similarities with *muuvaracunaaTakam* in its content and dramatic manner. They also show greater similarity in structure and content with an early vernacular play from Spain. This play '*The Auto delos Reyes Magos*' (the play of the Royal Magi) probably dates from the end of the 12th century, is the only pre 15th century extant castilian vernacular play. This play also progresses with the argument picked up by the Magi with king Herod. The fact that the most popular and important play among the fleury play-book is the plays of the Magi demands certain amount of attention here.⁶ Apart from this we can find a similar kind of dramatic performance in Sri Lanka.⁷ Eventhough the dramatic incidents of all these plays parallels to each other, they differ from the presentational aspects of *muuvaracunaaTakam*. Interestingly both the Sinhalese, and Tamil drama of Sri Lanka show significant presentational, similarities with *CaviTTunaaTakam* and *teerukkuuttu*.⁸

muuvaracunaaTakam of *attikkooTu* shows presentational similarities with the *teerukkuuttu* traditions of **Tamilnadu**. After the advent of the missionary interface the biblical themes also proliferated into this vernacular/folk theatre genre and missionaries used them for proselytization. Most of these dramas portray the Saint Lores of the Western Christian Europe. (These performances show distinctive similarities in the case of themes, singing, dialogue presentation, movement patterns and choreography with the *CaviTTunaaTakam* tradition of Kerala). These *teerukkuuttu* tradition with the Christian religious themes dates back to the early 17th century and was popular in the areas where the Tamil speaking Latin Christian inhabitation was prominent. In a way there were a couple of troupes who used to perform these dramas in the Church festivals of various places in Palakkad district of Kerala, which is on the border of Kerala and Tamilnadu.⁹ Thus the Latin Christian population of this border region is familiar with not only **muu-messianic** prophecies of the homage paid by the nations to the God of Israel.

varacu naaTakam, but other Christian performances as well.¹⁰

The *muuvaracunaaTakam* of *attikkooTu* portrays king Herod as a Hindu, who believes in the *puraaNams* and *saastiraa* of Hindus and relays his faith on the Veda Sastri/*paappaan* (Sooth sayer cum ritualist). The movements and rendering of dialogue show similarity to the *teerukkuuttu* tradition. With the record of an uninterrupted 147 years of performance, the *muuvaracunaaTakam* stands itself as an important genre among the medieval phase of Christian theatre traditions. More over this wholly Christian patronized (i.e. church and Christian Community of that particular Parish area) theatre form has internalized the local expressive as well as behavioral patterns for the effective presentation of their religious theme. This representation fuses the religious faith and the social aspiration of a particular community with a number of identifying features.

Cinnappa vaattiyar the great teacher of *muuvaracunaa Takam*, believed that this play has been staged for the last three centuries.¹¹ However as per the records available, since 1850 it has been staged regularly at the *attikkooTu* St. Antony's Church premises on the 13th day after the **Christmas**. (i.e. the Epiphany day which is mostly on January 7th or 8th). The duration of the play production and the probable date of the production were changed subsequently. Earlier the entire play production was for three whole nights and the production was exactly on the 13th day, now the duration is only for 6 hours and it is conveniently fixed on the first Sunday night of every January and the play ends by the Monday morning mass at the *attikkooTu* Church.

The right to perform *muuvaracunaaTakam* is vested with the people of thirty three *teesams* or **uuru**.¹² All the places are in the border areas of Palakkad district of Kerala. Formerly these hamlets were under **Tamilnadu** state. The Christian Community which comprises mostly of *VaNNiyar* class Latin Christians, performed this *naaTakam*.

The speciality of this play production is its 'fluid' performance space, which requires the entire village including the space inside the church compound and out side the church compound. The former include: the compound around the church building with a demarcated boundary wall, the permanent stage on the ground (in side the compound), and the interior portion of the church. The later consists of three distinctive places (*Pappanpalli*, *NaTupalayam*, *Venkarapalayam*), a little away from the church compound, with permanent **koovil** (sacred place) structures and the roads from this three directions leading to the church also used for the performance and included in this category. These places are approximately half a kilometer away from the church in three directions. In

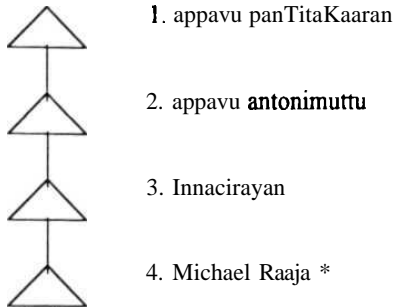
a way the *muuvaracunaaTakam* geographically make use of the entire *attikkooTu* village. This symbolically represents the journey of the Magi from the different parts of East to Bethlehem and metaphorically implicates the domains of the sacred parish church. The map produced at the beginning will clearly give an idea of the geographical placement.

Origin and development of the present *muuvaracunaaTakam*

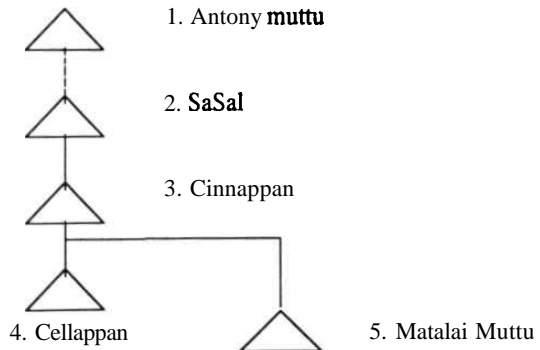
According to the legend and the manuscript available in the *paNTitacaaran* House (which is said to be copied into paper from the palm leaves by *vaattiyar Sasal* who is the father of *Chinnappavaattiyar* the most popular and prominent among the teachers), the *muuvaracunaaTakam* and the *attikkooTu* Church built by the western missionaries have the same age. In 1850 the Vicar of the Church a French missionary named **Fr.J.C.** Bruyera, called by people as *Arulananda Swamy* narrated the story of the Magi to the then poet and scholar *arokiya vaattiyar*,¹³ son of *sourimuttu* who was the helper of *Arulananda Swamy*. The family of *arokiya vaattiyar* had migrated from *paandiya nadu* to *attikkooTu* and the author was born in *aikkuTiyoor* near Madurai. He completed *muuvaracunaaTakam* consisting two hundred and sixty nine songs. (The initial twenty five songs called as *paayiram paaTTu* reveal the details of the patron, the family lineage of the author etc). Besides *arokiya vaattiyar* the author, Innaci rayan of *pappanpalli* who belonged to the *paNTitacaaran* House, Ciluvai **muthu maniyakkaaran** of Nadupalayam, Akappa Maniyakkran of venkara **Palayam** and many others under the supervision of *Arulananda Swamy* performed the *muuvaracunaaTakam* in the year 1850 at The *attikkooTu* Church premises. *Arulananda Swamy* died after nine years, i.e. in 1859 and he was buried inside the Church. But the play continued to be produced once in an year till date except in 1951 when it did not take place at the Epiphany day, because of **Thambi maniyakkaaran's objection**. regarding the right to sing *paayiram paaTTu* - which in a way gives an authority to control the performance on the otherhand this status will make him prominent in the community.¹⁴ The roles were handed over hereditarily and the *vaattiyar*, the actors who portrays different roles, the person who sings *paayiram paaTTu*; *aaramban* and some of the participants who decorate the cart or participate as one among the backing vocal groups posses the hereditary rights. So during this 147 years one can see a number of families of the *attikkooTu* village, who **compulsorily** participate and perform in this play, from the families of *paNTitacaaran*, *muraTaN*, *uumai viiTu*, *kooTTik kaaran*, *malaiyappan*, **veLLaikkaraan**, *upateesi* and *mariyan*. At present the *paNTitacaaran* family has the *eeTu* (script) and it is they who arrange and lead the

Genealogical chart representing the inheritance of Performance right

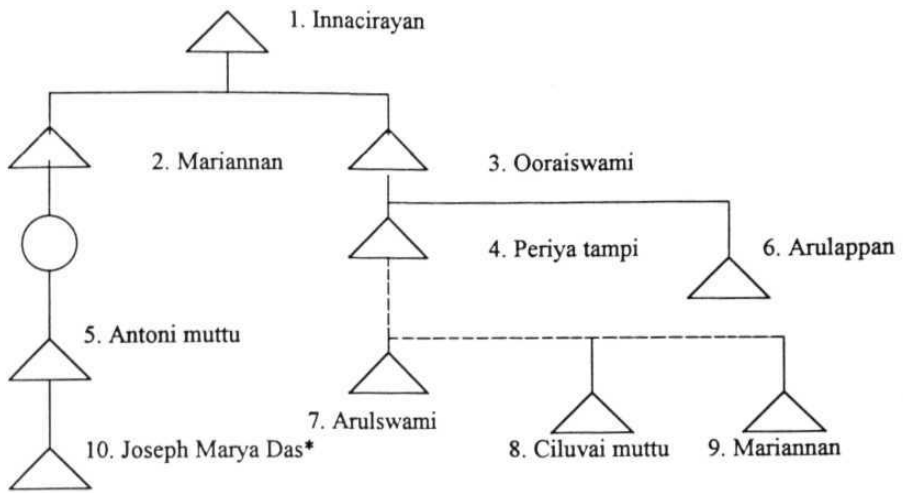
A. Aarampan (PaNTitaKaaranKuTumpam)



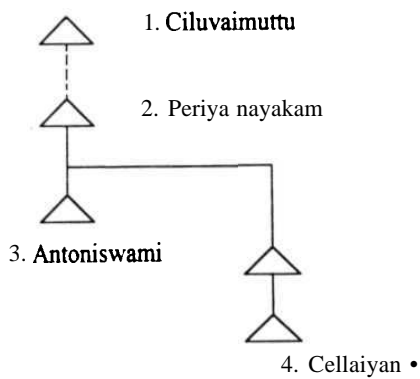
B. Vaattiyar (PaNTitaKaaran KuTumpam)



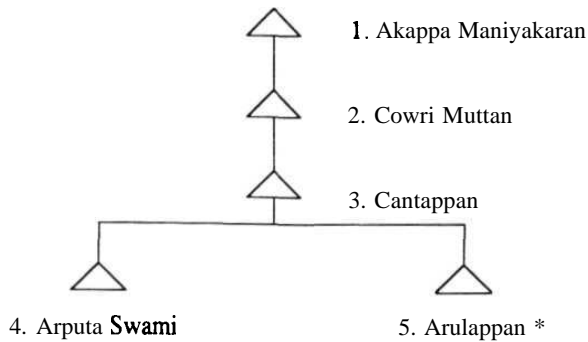
C. First King, Balthasar (PaNTitaKarah)



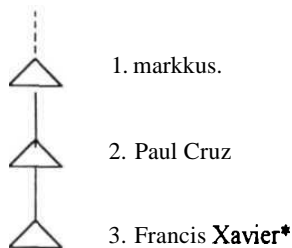
D. Second King, Melchior (Mariyan ViiTu)



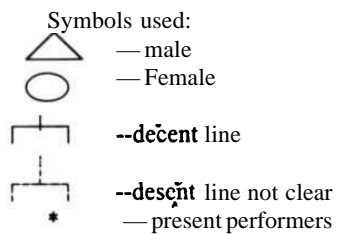
E. Third King, Caspar (veLLaiKKaaran ViiTu)



F. King, Herod (upateesi ViiTu)



numbering represents the order of performances right inherited



performance. For the past five generations this family in the Chittoor Taluk, **Bagavathypara** village keeps the hereditary rights of teaching *muuvaracunaaTakam*. These rights are called as **paNTitiyam**¹⁵ The earliest teacher in the **paNTitakaaran** House, known as Innacimuttu and called as Anthony Muttu performed with the author. Later his son *vaattiyaar* **Sasal**, who was a direct disciple of Arokiya *vaattiyaar*, took over the charge of teaching and the production. From 1942, *Cinnappa vaattiyaar* took the incharge of teaching. After him, his sons Chellappan and **Madalaimuthu** are looking after the **pro**duction. **Madalaimuthu**, who has been hearing and seeing this play since he was twelve years old, is now the teacher and thus the decisive force behind this play production. The actors and exponents

The people of *attikkooTu* area regard the eminent artistes of this form with high esteem. The right to act a particular role in *muuvaracunaaTakam* comes down in the family as its heritage. Because of this, one can see a certain amount of sentimental attachment to certain roles by the actors and one can also see a hereditary lineage and inter relationship between the actors of various roles. The following hereditary chart will give a clear picture of a roles/actors genealogical pedigree. Because of the attention given to the only particular genealogical feature of the transmission of the 'right to perform' a role, the other biological relationships are omitted. This list is made with the informations provided by the performers in a culturally-specific fashion and a simple form of symbols or forms of notation is adapted in order to cope with the present field work situation.¹⁶ Apart from the first king's (Balthasar's) role acquired and kept by the *paNTitacaaran* family of **pappanpalli** the other charts are simple and show a rigid patrilineal descent in keeping the rights of performance. The dotted lines denote the lack of clarity regarding the information. The roles of the satans, Brahmins and the priest are acted out by various people depending on their availability. It is a fact that some of the actors were continuously performing these roles for more than a decade. Even though the right to perform this play is vested upon the Christian population of the above mentioned thirty three *teesams*, artistes from Coimbatore and near by villages now a days take part in it. The people of this community, who have migrated from Thanjore and Trichy to *attikkooTu* and further to various parts of Tamilnadu in search of better jobs and opportunities gather to perform this play. As an antithesis to the local diasporic, activity they consider the act of congregation for the participation not as a ritual but as itself a service to God and the fulfillment of their own right. The play production is

done by the participation of all Christian families under the *attikkooTu* parish. It was performed as an important part of the church festival and the *paNTitacaaran* family takes lead in all the organizational arrangements for training and production. Training is done in a temporary palm leaf roofed shed put up in the premises of *attikkooTu* Church, which is called *kuuttuc caalai*. Here the practice commences at night after the evening meal. Since most of the participants are agriculturists or daily labourers, it is the only time they can spare for the practice. Before every practice session they invoke Lord Jesus in a **Sloka** or a **hym**. The youngsters begin to practice quite early and the older actors start their session on the evening of Christmas.

Training and Technique

Like many other South Indian performing art forms *muuvaracu naaTakam* also demands rigorous training and certain types of **socio-religious** ritualistic observances as part of the training. From the stages of practice itself religion and its customs, along with the family lineage, play an important role. This organized **religio-civic** rites, expressing the solidarity of the local communities, need certain kind of strict observances right from the beginning of the training session. In the case of *muuvaracunaaTakam* the training goes on for nearly two to three months. The boys were selected depending on their interest, and family tradition for particular roles and then they were admitted to the *kuuttuc caalai* in a ceremonial way on an auspicious day by the *vaattiyar* in the presence of *maniyakkaaran* and other elders of the village. The disciple gives *kuru taTccaNai* to the *vaattiyar*, which is normally five rupees folded in a **betel-leaf** together with a *veesTi* (a new cloth piece). While presenting them to the Guru (*vaattiyar*), they kneel down before him for blessings. The *vaattiyar* places his left hand on the disciples' head and makes the sign of the cross on his forehead. Then the disciples touch the *vaattiyaars* feet and the *vaattiyar* verbally blesses them in the name of **St. Anthony**. On the Christmas day too the disciples go to the *vaattiyar* for blessing. The elder artistes/pupils start practice from the Christmas day onwards. They rehearse during the night time and each day's practice begins with a prayer in praise of Jesus. This type of religious observances continue till the end of the performance of *muuvaracunaaTakam*. Especially on the day of performance, the entire troupe participates in the morning *Eucharist* at the St. Antony's Church and fast till evening, after seeing the Star on the sky, they take food. It is important to note that this drama ends up with the early morning *Eucharist* (Sunday) celebrated just after the last procession of Magi holding the Jesus **Christ**. In

a way the religious rituals and certain customs control and direct the entire process of training and play production.

The training of the actor is the most important element of all the Asian traditional theatre forms. *muuvaracunaaTakam* has a strong literary text, written by a well versed author with a highly metaphorical language based on Christian scriptures, but it also gives priority to the actors on stage presentations to connect the theme pragmatically and finally communicate the content effectively among the audience through their histrionic movements and techniques. So in a way one cannot attribute the centrality of this performance genre either to the text or the actor alone. Because of this quality the training of *muuvaracu naaTakam* maintains a two step process which includes the learning of the text (lines) and the mastering of performance conventions (style). This process is preparation concentrated at the actor who is the source and repository of most performance information. The first task of the actor is to become proficient in the artistic and performance 'codes', the artistic languages of the *muuvaracunaaTakam*. In a way one does not begin by training to 'act', but begins by training to be a skilled 'artist'. In this genre of theatre, every beginner has to learn the five basic steps which they call *kaal* (foot-step). Each *kaal* has a definite *vaittaari* for step,¹⁷ which denotes stamping with the foot. The *vaattiyaar* recites the *vaittaari* while the students perform the same. Later the *vaittaari* blends with the background music. These five basic steps of Choreography are called *oNNaankkaal*, *reNTaankaal*, *muunankaal*, *naalamkaal* and *aincaamkaal*. *oNNaankkaal*

The students begin their training with this step. The position of the feet is like the normal position of the Kathak dancer and from this stance the right and the left foot are stamped against the floor alternately. The beginning will be with the right leg and the stamping is not as hard as in *CaviTTunaaTakam* and *teerukkuuttu*. Eventhough this first step is similar to the first step of *taTTaameTTu* of Bharatanatyam style, the basic stance *aramaNti* of the same style is not observed. *oNNaankkaal* is practically done by all the performers. The students master the rhythm by practising this step. In the case of *oNNaankkaal* the body is always kept in the normal straight position. *reNTaankaal*

This is the second step a student learns in his training period. In this step for the first beat they strike the right foot across in front of left leg; for the second beat, they strike the left leg and for the third and fourth beats, the right leg is used. On the first

and second beats the body bends back and on the third and fourth the body is brought back to the normal position.

Munnaamkaal

This foot step is more soft and the movement of the step is suggestive of *lasya* (graceful) style. This step consists of five beats. On the first beat the right foot is kept across the left in the front, on the second beat, movement is by the left foot at the same place, the third and fourth beats are taken in the normal position and the fifth beat is taken by the right foot by placing it behind the left striking the front portion of the foot (ie. *meTTu*). The same is repeated on the left side with the left foot placing on the first beat. The body is bent as in the above *kaal* in the initial two beats.

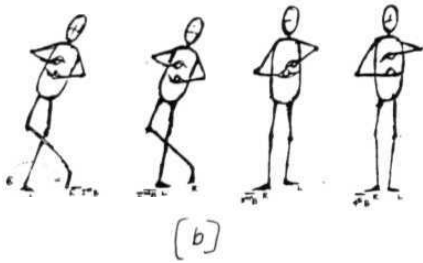
naalamkaal

This is the fourth step with a count of eight beats. The movement formation resembles the half circle formed by one foot making a half circle side ways keeping the other in the centre (i.e. if the movement starts with the stamping of right foot it marks a half circle in the right direction of the body keeping the left foot as a centre). On the first beat the right foot is kept across the left in the front and the body above the torso is bent towards the right (a little backwards). On the second beat the left foot is stamped in the same position keeping the body posture as in the first beat. On the third and fourth beats the body comes back to the normal stance and the beating with the right and left feet is repeated. On the fifth beat the right foot will go behind the left foot and the body portion above the torso is bent a little towards the left side. Keeping the same body posture the sixth beat corresponds with the beating of left foot at the same position. In seventh and eighth the body comes back to the normal beating positions as indicated in the above foot-steps.

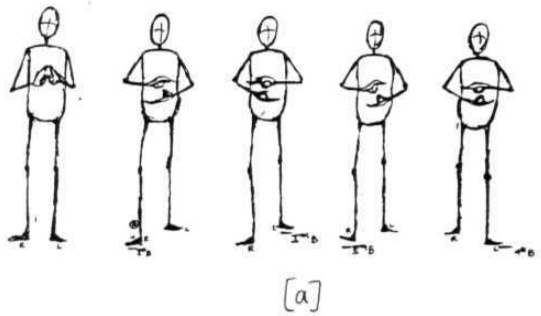
aiñcaamkaal

The fifth step is also performed practically by all the performers. This is set to a four beat rhythm. This step includes a small leap after the third beat into the air. In that case the fourth, beat which corresponds with the stamping of left and right feet together, will be a little louder than the others. The performers use this *kaal* with variations also. By keeping the fourth beat silent (without stamping) they make a movement; in this way this step is used for a free movement on the stage. At the first beat, the right foot is used with the normal stance, the second beat goes along with the stamping of the left in the same position. During the third beat, two leg movements simultaneously happen

reNTaan kaal



oNNaan kaal



aincaamkaal

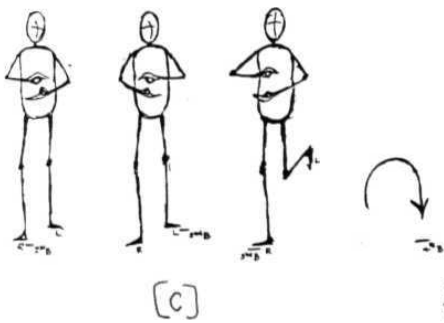


Fig. 8

-- the stamping of the right foot and the rising of the left leg by bending the knee. This will hasten the next movement that is either a small leap or a movement into other spot (a change of normal stance).

While doing these steps (*kaal*) the hands are held in *Hamsasyahasta* in the opposite direction. The right hand is kept (at the chest level with the palm closing the opened palm of the left hand which is kept little below the chest level) upwards when they strike the right foot. The same kind of hand position and pattern are followed in the striking of the left foot. This closing and opening of the palms held up and down at the chest level with the above pattern of variation is the same for all the five basic steps. These five steps are skillfully employed in the Choreography of the whole dance drama. The artist should undergo rigorous training in order to make his body supple for graceful presentation. For a better understanding see the sketches.

Only after this firm artistic base, i.e., the primary training in foot-work, the second stage of training begins. In this stage, the actor memorizes the text with songs and dialogues. He also learns to enact this with hand gestures and facial expressions, i.e., *abinaya[m]*. Because of their unfamiliarity with the literary old Tamil of the text, the trainees rely upon the songs and dialogues from the oral presentations of *vaattiyaaar*. This daily training session includes recitation of the text. During this session, all the trainees concentrate and memorize the lines. In this second stage the actors learn to enact the roles along with the lines. They act with hand gestures and facial as well as body expressions. *muuvaracunaaTakam* does not have a well developed hand gestural pattern as in many other South Indian dance dramas. But they do keep or use hand gestures related to the *Lokhadharmi* tradition of Natya presentations. The major characters like the three Magi always, keep their hands in *pataaka* Mudra and king Herod, apart from keeping this mudra uses some of the hand gestures related to *teerukkuuttu* tradition (more details are dealt in the section on choreography) Because of the lack of hand gestures the actors use more vocal and facial expressions to communicate the text. In a way the actors act with in certain 'genre role-types' that have been developed by the earlier generation of performers within the artistic codes and subject matter of the performance from. The traditional inheritance of the roles and a single character being performed by a single actor for years make this generic role types legitimized among the audience. So in the second stages the actors learn certain codes to communicate, and familiarize themselves with the 'pre-known' artistic codes. The performance is nothing other than

the manipulation of this **pre-known** elements. So the duty of the **vaattiyaar** is to make the disciples learn and familiarize these artistic codes.

Infact, these actors become the source of knowledge of the mode of performance. They adopt performance codes to suit and project the direction of the *vaattiyaar*. In doing so they remain flexible enough to perform specific situational directions while building on their repertoire of general performance codes. Since these are the people who transmit this knowledge to the next generation, the training of the actors in these two levels is important for the existence of the genre itself. The search for the formative aspects of the *muuvaracunaaTakam* in terms of its earlier generations acquiring these performance codes leads one to the possible conclusion that the earliest *vaattiyaar* (**arokiya vaattiyaar**) and his knowledge about the local performing forms like **teerukkuuttu**, **kummi** and **poraaTTunaaTakam** might have resulted in shaping the structural patterns of this form. This is evident from the striking structural resemblances between this and the above mentioned performance traditions. Here it should be noted that the form also has an obvious influence of the western magi plays. This already learned or '**pre-known**' performance codes which are transmitted from father to son or through the hereditary clans undergo transformation through the ages. This generic-role-types infuse or diffuse a lot of personal likenesses into their own presentational styles.¹⁸ This leads us to formulate that like most of the Asian-Oceanic performance genres, *muuvaracunaaTakam* also shows the performance as a momentary arrangement of pre-known elements by actors, dancers, and musicians (as they are the living source of performance knowledge) who are capable of working as a self-directing *ensemble*. In this self directing ensemble the question of the role and necessity of the *vaattiyaar* or teacher arises.

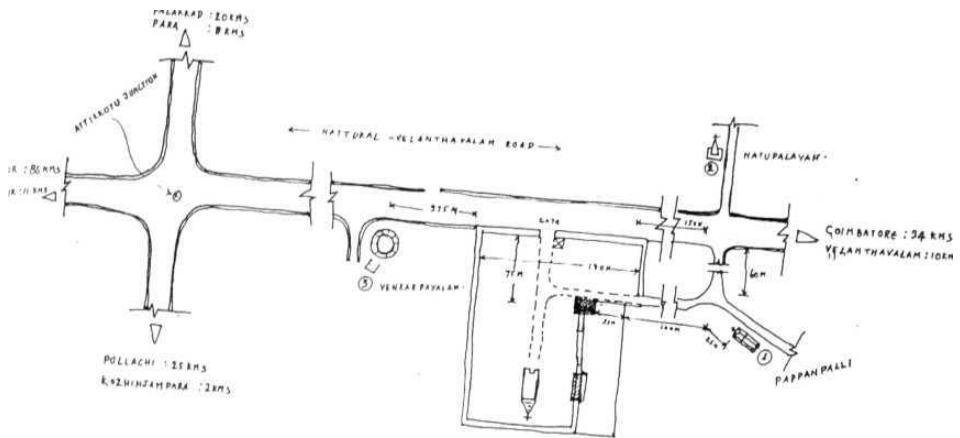
Unlike the other performance genres of the region, *muuvaracunaaTakam* is a single play and this single play becomes a distinct performance genre. The other plays in different Asian performance genres are one in a series of performances with similar type of performance codes.¹⁹ In this way a single performance of a play is an example for a living artistic tradition or form rather than that single play production; 'The play is not the thing; the genre, the art form is'.²⁰ Hence the training of the system of performance codes is vital to the survival of this genre. If one generation fails to learn, a theatre genre will be lost irrevocably. This possibility is acute in the case of *muuvaracunaaTakam* due to its being a single play and the fact that it has a single production per year. More over its highly developed musical, dance and voice techniques, its indebtedness to the text or

ee **Tu** with its prominent and sacred presence on the stage, and the **vaattiyaars** on and off stage presence as on stage manager, directing and inter linking the action, encouraging the performers, prompting forgetful actors, serving as a commentator, **translator and** often taking the roles like that of the *kaTTiyakkaaran* (of *teerukkuuttu*) **in** interacting with the other characters and seeing that all night performance is kept moving till date are unforgettable. This also underline the prominent presence/place of *vaattiyaar* **in a** *muuvaracunaaTakam* performance. The entire training system of *muuvaracunaaTakam* is informal. Eventhough the performance codes reside in the living **performer-teacher**, they acquire this by assisting, watching and receiving informal instructions from their older generations over an extended period, perhaps a life time.

At present, the **kuuttuc caalai** (shed made for training) which is temporarily made during the season has disappeared and the training sessions start by the day of Christmas at the portico of the church. Because most of the senior actors have migrated to various parts of Tamilnadu for their economic survival they come to *attikkooTu* only for this performance. The present day younger generation shows less interest in this activity so whoever assembles informally during the evening hours at the portico of St. Antony's Church undergo informal training. But once an actor decides to give away or pass his role or the hereditary right to the next, the new one is brought and trained during the training session. Mostly the new one attends the complete training session of the **year** prior to his debutant performance.

The play production/performance analysis

The *muuvaracunaaTakam*, with its quality of fusing all the performance aspects together can be considered as an example of the of 'total theatre' (most of the South Indian performance forms come under this category). This form shows the various performance aspects under the interwoven fabric of music, dance and acting. All acting follows well-defined movement codes, and every stage movement is carefully controlled. This choreographed stage movements fuse steps, turns, stamps, jumps, hand and arm gestures and facial expressions with rhythmic music and they often incorporate singing (lyrics) and crisp dialogues. The dance with slow opening, gradual development and speedy conclusion is specifically placed in the structure of this theatre form. It is this major structural component along with the story telling and changes in the space or setting that makes the dramatic form complete and communicates effectively to the audience turned devotees. So one can ably call *muuvaracunaaTakam* as a dance drama and

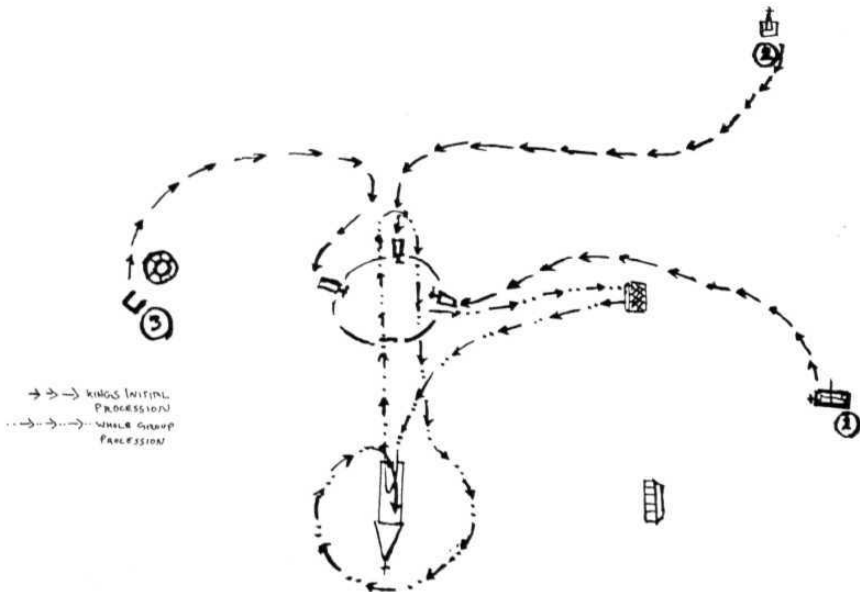


LEGEND

- ① ② PLACES FROM WHICH - BALTHAZAR, MELCHIOR, CASPAR START THEIR JOURNEY TOWARDS THE CHURCH.
- CHURCH COMPOUND. CHURCH. STAGE WHERE THE PLAY IS PERFORMED. PRIEST'S QUARTERS.
- WELL. TEMPORARY SHED. DRAWING NOT TO SCALE, DIMENSIONS ARE APPROXIMATE

MAP - 4

PERFORMANCE SPACE



a dense description is the only possible way to enumerate various performance codes of this genre, where theatre is equated with performance, not literature.

Performance

The performance utilizes various stages and places according to the need of action and the story develops along with the change of performance place and the entries of the various characters. The entire village participates throughout the performance and the entire geographical space of the village is used, as clearly illustrated in the map 3 which explains the various performance spaces.

On the day of performance most of the performers and their relatives who assembled as part of the festival along with the Christian community of the *attikkooTu* attend the (morning) special Holy Mass mostly observed in the presence of three priests at the St. Antony's Church, *attikkooTu*. The actors especially the *muuvaracar* (three kings) observe fasting in this day. They take only water and observe certain kind of purity in their behaviour. After the morning mass, the people belonging to the three places from where the kings start - - like the first king Balthasar from *pappanpalli*, the second melchior from *naTupalayam* and the third casper from *venkarpalayam* - - decorate the same old bullock-carts and the wooden chair used for the kings journey. They decorate them with colour papers, tender coconut leaves, plantain trunks, sugar cane leaves etc. Altogether the decoration resembles the festivities of the farmers (agrarian festivals after the crop). The bullocks are bathed and given rest.

By evening the main characters, especially the kings, visit elders belonging to their locality in order to seek blessings. The second king Anthony *swamy* visits the main Christian families in the *naTupalayam* area and the eldest member of the House blesses the actor by keeping his left hand on the kings head and draws a symbol of cross with the right hand on the kings forehead (this is called *kurisuvaraikkal* in the Vernacular). Like wise, the other two kings go around their respective areas and seek blessings from the elders. [Some of the older families in the parish also observe a practice of meeting and giving presents to the parish priest.]

During the evening hours, the Church and its vicinity become active. The church compound and the Main Road before the St. Antony's Church are alive with the way traders of festival sweets, bangles, balloons and '*Port*' (an eatable made of rice). The facade of the Church and its compounds is illuminated temporarily with colour lights. On the permanent stage built at the right side of the church compound, some cultural

programmes are staged by the young local people. These programmes were started about fifteen years ago. **Now-a-days**, they screen an old **movie** which is supposed to be suitable with moral themes or religious subject. This screening or the dramas engage the audience assembled in the compound. The screening takes place from 8 P.M to 10 P.M. By that time the make-up room or **oppnai** room,²¹ which is just behind the permanent stage (shed with six sidepillars and an asbestos roof), becomes busy. The make-up man comfortably places and hangs the ornaments, make-up pigments etc. The actors reach the **oppnai** by 10 P.M and the make-up starts with the three kings. Before they go for general highlighting of the face the actor goes to the **vaattiyar** or Guru for the blessing. The **vaattiyar** draws a cross mark on the forehead of the performer, with the make-up powder. After this, each actor goes to the make-up man and the make-up progresses with costuming. After this each king, including Herod, comes with their head gear and kneels in front of the **vaattiyar**. The **vaattiyar** ties the **muTi** (kiritam) on their head, assisted by the make-up man. This moment of wearing the **muTi** transforms the actors into the kingly roles. After this they cover their **muTi** (head gear) with a cloth and walk to their respective places along with a couple of people. The first king Balthasar goes to **pappanpalli**. In **pappanpalli** along with the **paNTitacaaran** House, there is a small room and in it the **ruupakkuTu** (a place where the idols, framed photographs of Jesus, St. Anthony and the cross is kept) is placed with the lit candles before it. The first king along with the people who follow him from **oppnai** room and the elders who are supposed to accompany the king in his forth coming journey kneel down in this **koovil** (place of worship) and pray. The same kind of rituals are performed by the other two kings. The second king Melchior, along with elders, kneels down in the **koovil** at **naTupalayam**, which is a separate single building with a small hall and a cross is placed on a level at one end of the hall. The second king lights up a candle, keeps it in his hand, kneels down before the cross and prays. After the prayer the king bows down, touches the feet of the elder person (who was doing the second kings role earlier) and keeps his hands together in a **namaskaaram** posture in order to pay respect. By this time the music of **ceNTa** and **ilattaaLam** begins at that place and makes the atmosphere more solemn. The elders garland the second king with Jamanthi flowers. The people belongings to this area gather there and some children are brought to the king and the king draws cross on their foreheads. Some people come, kneel down before the king and touch his feet.

The same things also happen in the third king's place. The third king Casper starts

from **venkarpalayam**, which is at the left side of the Church. There is also a small **koovil** and the king does his initial prayer and blessings along with the music and the people belonging to that area. The kings along with the group wait, till they hear the firing of the pop-gun from any of the other areas. Once the pop-gun is fired in one place, correspondingly it is fired from the other two as a signal to start the Journey. At the first pop-gun fire, the kings along with a group of people who belong to their respective areas and who function as the Magi's subjects as well as **pinpaaTTukaar** (Chorus who follows the king in the vocal presentation), get into the bullock-cart. The king is majestically made to occupy the decorated wooden chair placed in the front just behind the cart-driver. The others stand behind him.²²

The first procession or the journey following the star begins. The music group (ie. **ceNTa meeLam**), consisting of **ceNTa** and **ilattaaLam**, moves just behind the group of the people who fire pop-guns, crackers and fire torches through out the journey. The people holding **petromaxes** (gas lights) also move in order to show the way (in the early days they used indigenous torches). People dance and shout along with the **meeLam**, especially in the case of second king, there is a special offering of **tappu meeLam**²³ by a family in this procession. This adds to the enthusiasm of the crowd moving with this particular king. On the way small kids are brought to the kings, who draw a mark of cross on their forehead. Both the second and third kings get into the main (metal) road (early) (which is Nattukal via and passes in front of the Church). The first king (Balthasar) travels through the interior tidy paths and gets into the Church's vicinity. A minister also accompanies the first king. Mostly from **pappanpalli** itself the attired minister character gets into the cart and stands adjacent to the king's throne or in some cases, if his make-up prolongs, the minister joins on the way. Both sides of the road are filled with people. Some of them pray to the kings and show respect by drawing the cross on their forehead (**kurisuvaraikkal**). Some of them bring their children for seeking blessings. The others touch the kings feet with their hand and kiss their hand. On the way itself people join the procession and follow the cart. The people who belong to the respective area consider this as their right to send or bring their king with all pomp, proud and majesty. They see to it that the cart always keeps to the centre of the path.

When they reach the Church, both the second and third kings face each other and wait for the signal to enter. Once the first king also reaches the entrance to the Church compound at the left side of the Church wall, the pop-guns are fired again prominently

and it is repeated by the other parties. So the sound is heard thrice and the third king and party enter through the gate first, followed by the second, they take the main mud path which goes to the main entrance of the Church trade. The first king also proceeds into the compound and comes into the front portion of the Church²⁴

Meanwhile the people mainly belonging to the early mentioned thirty three *teesams* already assemble in the courtyard. The entry of the three kings activates the permanent stage, on which king Herod is seated. At the down stage left, a couple of young boys with a minimal head-band and waist belt move side wise from left to right in front of the Herod. They are the **cevakars** (servants) of the king. Some people, mainly women and children go on to the stage, kneel before Herod and get blessings from him. During this time, the back stage (*oppantai* room) is also busy with the make-up of other characters.

The three kings along with a minister enter the Church compound and they take a position in front of the Church facing the facade from three directions, that is, the first king's cart faces the Church from the right position, the second king's cart is placed face to face with the main front door of the Church and the third one faces the Church by keeping his cart on the left side. The minister gets down from the first cart and stands on the ground facing the three kings. The audience and the group of people surround the carts and the compound. The atmosphere is filled with the sound of *ceNTa* and Tappu **meeLam** and the fire-works. There is an elaborate fire-work display called **veTikaTTu**²⁵ and the *ceNTa meeLam* (music) stops indicating the end of the journey and in turn, the end of the first session.

Now the atmosphere is set for the beginning of the dialogues and **viruttam**. The minister mounts on a table which is set facing the three magi and parallel to the Church's direction. The three kings salute each other with the sign of traditional **namaskaaram**. All the three kings stand up on the cart and the minister on the table, face the facade of the Church. Along with the kings their respective groups and most of the audience who stand on the ground also face the Church. Then they together pray silently to the God by putting the sign of cross on the **fore-head**. The first king starts his **viruttam** and prominently draws the sign of cross on his own fore-head, lips and chest, after each line of this first **viruttam**.²⁶ The group who stand on the cart along with the first king **also** sing the last portions of the each lines and extends the last word in an elongated fashion. The first king completes reciting his **viruttam** and sits on the chair in the cart. The second king picks up, also renders one **viruttam** and sits, then the third king begins,

both of them use the same tune, the gesture of putting the sign of cross and are similarly supported by their respective backing vocal group (*pinpaaTTukaar*). In this initial set of narration which is poetically sung, the kings, in the name of God and Holy cross, express their desire to narrate the story of the three kings as mentioned in the scriptures. Till the third king invites or initiates the questions from the first king, for which he is ready to answer, the session continues.

After this each king stands up on his cart, recites the lines with the help of backing vocal (group) and acts out the meaning of the content through hand gestures and facial expressions. Most of these hand gestures belong to the Lokadharmi tradition and give priority to the *vaakkiyaarthabinaya* pattern.²⁷ The handkerchief or *tuuvala* which is kept in the left hand through the forefinger helps them to project their hand gestures. After each song or the presentation of the stanza, the presenter (king) occupies the chair on the cart and the other one stands up and answers. This pattern of song presentation continues one after another in a row, like the first, second, third and then again the first and so on.

This presentation of eight line *viruttams* with the pattern of queries and answers explains the country, name and the character of the three kings. This initial conversation gives an introduction to the audience about the place and culture of the three kings. As an answer to the first king's question about the name of other, the second one begins with the explanation of the country, the place to which he belongs and ends with repeating the question to the other king. The descriptions of each king are metaphorically rich and the other characters as well as the audience get a clear picture of the nature and purpose of the journey. From their first conversations we know that the second king Melchior belongs to the country Arabia and he righteously rules his kingdom. The third one Casper, who conquered many countries, belongs to Persia and the first king, whose 'flag stands piercing the sky' belongs to the country of Sabha. He who believes in the preaching of the prophets and in the existence of one God is called Balthasar. Their conversation slowly leads to the reference to the star and further reveals their knowledge in astrology, the oriental and the Christian scriptures. The main purpose behind their journey is established from their references concerning the appearance of the star, its brightness and its movement as a path finder. This ends up in the saying of the third king.

muunRaam aracan:

*tiirppoom nammaL mun manucan aataamaalee
jenmitta pollaataa toosam pookki
kaappataRkkup paalakanaayp puviyil vanta
karttaruTa tiruvuTalaik kaNNaal naamaL
paarppoomavar tamaiyiinRa aZiyaak kanni
paatamatait teNTaniTTupaalan kaatil
vaarppoom nammaLiraNTu kaNNaar kaNNircinti
vaaZittiyee avar paatattaik kaZuvalaamee*

This particular song is important in two ways (1) it reveals about the purpose of Christ's birth. (2) this directly connects to the action in the final **offereing** sequence. That is, the first one is to wipe away the sin committed by our elderly father Adam and save humanity. The second one is theatrically presented by the end of this performance, inside the Church, before the manger or **pulkuuTu**, in which the idol of infant jesus is kept.

After the sequence which evokes the eagerness of the magi as well as of the audience in rushing and meeting the new born saviour, the next entry begins. Just after the third king's song (above) the audience hear the song sung from the stage through the microphone (which is a recent inclusion). This group song from the stage suddenly captures attention of the audience and from the stage a small procession starts. These are the messengers from Herod. The procession is led by the **cevakars** (child soldiers) who were guarding Herod seated in his throne all through the time and the group consists of **vaattiyaar** with the **jaalra**. The members of the **pinpaaTTukaarare** led by the **eeTupakka vaattiyaar** (the one who holds the **CuvaTi**). This group steps out of the stage and proceeds towards the minister who is standing up on the table amidst the people in the ground. The initial part of their lines are loud and audible because they were sung from the stage through mike. The song continues while the procession is on with the backing of **taaLam** produced with **jaalra** or **naTTuvaankam**. The first part of this song narrates the greatness and status of king Herod among other kings and it reveals the way how other kings send presents to Herod. The second part of the song reveals the bravery and patriotism of these servants in guarding the country. The soldiers claim and assert their will to fight and save their country and king Herod. They boast by asking enemies to retreat instead of losing their life. This song is sung by the group on their way to the Magi's meeting place, where the minister is standing on the elevated place.²⁸ Once they

reach the place, the group sing along with the 'Jalara' and ends up with a ***kalasam***,²⁹ then one of the ***cevakan*** (child soldier) hands over a message on a scroll (this is a stage property made of cloth and a stick, which is commonly used in the ***naaTakams*** for kingly messages) saying the dialogue. This is the first natural conversation in the dialogue (or ***vacanam***) format used in the play. In this dialogue *cevakan* asks the minister to take the message from their king Herod. The minister obeys, informs the Magi and seeks permission to read it. Balthasar at once grants the permission. The message reveals the anguish of king Herod, who hears about the arrival of three kings with "chariots, fireworks, swords, spears, and other artillery" with a big group. This make Herod think that they have come for a conquest. Even though it is three against one, Herod is ready and asks them to fix a date of the war and write to him as per the ethics of combat. This message infuriates Balthasar. The agitated magi demands the minister an immediate conquest of king Herod. The other two kings console him by reminding him of their sole purpose and God's will and likeness towards peace. The enlightened Balthasar agrees to send a peace message to king Herod and the minister prepares and reads out a message to the king Herod. This message stresses the points that the Magi have not come for war, but have come on a right path and that they realized that they are in Herod's country (ie. Jerusalem) only then. Then they ask Herod to take a decision as he wishes. All the three Magi sign the message and sends it back to the stage (i.e. Herod's palace in Judaea) through the same group. The same group goes back to the stage as a procession with the letter (stage prop) and on the stage the group surround Herod who is seated on the chair. Meanwhile they sing this message and the messenger reports to Herod. Herod sends another message. Once again the group comes back to the minister and gives Herod's reply. The minister reports this to the Magi and Balthasar asks him to read out the message. This is an invitation from king Herod to the magi to visit his palace and have a talk. Herod also offers them his help. The Magi agree and order the minister to take their army and guide them to Herod's palace.

This exchange of messages has a lot of theatrical importance. This is the sequence which presents the first conflict. The demarcation of the performers and spectators comes into existence only after this sequence. The dialogue rendering pattern also changes after the common speech dialogue by *cevakan*. The ***mantiri*** uses crisp, staccato way of rendering the dialogue especially in the reading of the message. The group reaches beside him along with the procession and transforms as his ***pinpaaTTukaar***. The Magi

then introduce '*vacanam*' (the dialogue rendered as prose) apart from the singing of their *viruttams*. During the time of this dialogue rendering the *pinpaaTTukaar* give the backing sound of **Ah-Ah**—. This rendering of the dialogues gives more opportunity to the Magi to orally express their emotions. One of the most famous is the agitated dialogue of Balthasar demanding the immediate war with Herod. This situation suddenly captures attention of the audience due to its vigorous presentation of the immediate conflict.³⁰ This portion which strictly shows the difference in locales through the passages of the group with the message also establishes the unity of the Magi's purpose and their will by their presentation of certain lines together (or unified answers and decision). This resembles some of the chorus answering sequences of other major dramas of the 'classical' theatre. This sequence directly establishes (exposes) the character and attitude of the three Magi and their minister and the character of Herod as indirectly reflected in the message.

Now the grand procession begins, the path is cleared amidst the audience in order to make the movement of the procession from the ground to the stage. The *ceNTa* players come into the scene and the three Magi gets down from their bullock-carts and join together on the ground in a straight line facing the stage. The procession consists of *ceNTa* players with the *ilattaLam* in the fore front, just behind them two lights are carried at both sides and the *cevakar* follow as guards for the kings. Then the three kings stand in a parallel row, just behind them is the minister and then, the group of people including the *pinpaaTTukaar* with *eeTupakka vaattiyaar*, *vaattiyaar* with *jaalra* and the others followed by the prominent *pinpaaTTukaar* who come along with the kings from their respective places. In the early days the *pinpaaTTukaar* sing a song which narrates, the Magi's strong belief in God and Herod's welcome of them into his palace. Once the procession reaches near the stage *ceNTameeLam* will be sent to the sides and Herod gets down, i.e., comes out of the stage and receives the three kings and takes them to the stage. Apart from the petromaxes (lights) and the *ceNTameeLam* all others get onto the stage and the sound of fire works (*veTikaTTu*) fills the atmosphere along with the *kalasam* of *ceNTa* giving the procession and reception a grand finale. The built-in stage is filled with people including the participants of the earlier procession and some people from the audience who come again to offer *neercca* (votive offering) to the Magi. The Magi are seated on the bench placed at the center stage and they sit in a row from stage right to left as Balthasar, Melchior and Casper. The others including *pinpaa TTukaar* and *vaattiyaar* etc. stand behind the Magi. Now Herod calls upon the

minister and asks him to make the Durbar/or his subjects present in the court (in turn audience on and off the stage) to maintain silence in order to make his conversation with the Magi more **audiable/clear**. The minister who came along with the Magi answers this call. Eventhough he is a single character (i.e., *mantiri*) played by a single actor, in this sequence or situation he transforms his position, performs as Herod's minister and addresses the audience in order to satisfy Herod's call. The performance structure acquires the complete freedom from disbelief to present this transformation of the position of *mantiri* without using any single conventions (it is amazing because there are a host of dramatic conventions available in the South Indian performance genres for character transformations). Here only with the change of space i.e., *martin's* place on the stage along with other important characters and a dialogue pointed towards him by Herod mentioning "*mantirias* you know my wishes before **hand**" will enable the minister to speak on behalf of Herod is the maximum utilization of dramatic freedom in the folk theatre production. The *mantiri's* address is without any backing vocals and directed towards the audience to control them. It also contains the reference to the expected "**miraculous** speech of the king, which is going to fill them with enormous **joy**".³¹ Once again, he asks the audience to be silent and exits from the stage.

By this time the stage becomes busy with the people mostly ladies from the audience who come on to the stage and kneel down before the three kings as part of their offers and get blessings from them. An important person now comes into the down stage and makes an announcement through the mike [for the last year the same announcement was done by the *vaattiyar* 'Madalaimuthu' himself]. This person, who is garlanded by the main people in the sides of the stage is supposed to keep the rights of this *paayiram paaTTu* Session.³² In this announcement the person first salutes the people in a very polite manner and asks them to point out the mistakes in the play - He also gives the right and priority to the audience to question the faults they found in this play and its subject. Then he cleverly enforces the point that it is he who is saying the truthful (right/justice) accounts about the scriptures. Eventhough they know about science, *puraaNams* and the scriptures, he stresses at this juncture that it is his learning which is the truth. Once again the announcer seeks pardon from the audience for this intrusion and invites questions regarding the 'truth'. Finally, he proclaims that he is going to show/reveal the truth to the people belonging to the four directions.

Now the *vaattiyar* and the person with the *Chuvadi* along with the *pinpaaTTukaar* (a

selected group who has been there with the *vaattiyaar* from the beginning) come down stage and sing a **viruttam**. This is *peey* (satan) *varavu viruttam*, which describes the desire of *Lucifer* and his mission to send two satans to tempt Herods. [Eventhough the text refers to only two Satans in the performance there are four "**peey**" characters] and make him do something against God.

This time the three kings and king Herod clear the stage. This is exactly not an exit, they take to the side wings for taking rest. By the time the *peey varavu viruttam* ends, the compound (audience) is ready to receive the *peey* entry. The **ceNTameeLam** starts from the two sides and one can hear the sounds of whistling and howling from the sides (generally two *peey* start from the left side of the stage and use the already made partition in the centre which directly leads to the stage). The petromax lights are placed in order to make the entry more visible. The **peey/satans** move here and there and their smooth movement towards the stage is purposefully obstructed or interfered by one or two persons with a stick. The *peey* push them aside and making all sorts of noises, rush into the stage. Their uncontrolled zig-zag movements, whistling, howling and the use of unusual things along with their distorted costume and make-up, and all the more the cheering sound of audience and the **ceNTa meeLam** give an appropriate ambience for this sequence. The *peey* make a straight line formation on the stage and start playing certain clownish actions including the cracking of balloons which are in their hands and also worn as part of their garlands. The **ceNTameeLam** is put off and the *peey* start singing together, with a *kavittam* like tune and pick up the lines.³³ They are ably helped by the back stage singers and the *vaattiyaar* with **ilattaaLam**. While they sing this song the text is not heard properly due to various reasons, they move forward and backwards (ie. down stage and up stage) by taking the right leg into the front and the same into the back. This song which is mostly sung by the backing vocal group initially describes some of the impossible things in the world, or unbelievable acts in the world and attributes that "Even if (if at all) that happens, never will the satan do good".³⁴ This also says the leader Lucifer had sent satans to tempt Herod and make him oppose the words of the three kings and kill all the children born in his country. The latter part of the song which is begun by each satan in turn but sung together describes the character and appearance of the satans. This metaphorically rich and amusingly decorated songs³⁵ equate various misbehaviour of the satan with various species of the world. All these stanzas end with the line which repeatedly stresses that the satan comes into the court of Herod with an

intention of changing his **mind**.³⁶

Now **aaramban** (**vaattiyaar**) comes into the scene and directly interacts with the *peey*. He calls one *peey* 'Eda, Vada' which is derogatory and without any respect-this infuriates the *peey* and they physically misbehave with the *aaramban*. This ends with uncontrolled physical pulling and pushing on the stage. Then *aarambans* question and each *peey* answer singly in turn. Sometimes they sing together answers to the *aarambans* questions. In doing so, they are helped by the backing vocals with the same songs and when they interact with other each the **pinpaaTTukaar** produce a sound of **Ah—Ah** intermittently after their words which makes the scene orally effective. Eventhough the *peey* wear distorted and different costumes with colour, texture and size; they show uncontrolled variations in their oral expressions with unspecified gestures. But they keep some unity in their whole presentation especially in their movement pattern, the tune of the songs, the variation of the speed, the same kind of **cuvaTu** (foot step) with the same pattern of keeping unspecified hand gestures, sometimes they sing the songs together while simply standing in the same row parallel to the audience. Most of the tunes are folk-based and some are the popular **kummi** and **vancippaaTTu**. After each song they employ **kalasam** at the end and begin the other. The movement consists of four directions. Initially to the front and back with the right leg moving forward along with the right hand, the right hand palm is kept with the second finger pointing upwards (pointing finger). Once right leg is taken backward the hand also comes down. This time the left leg will be in the front with the left hand kept in front at the chest level with the left palm kept opened towards the audience. While they move sidewise, ie., to left and right by taking two steps side wise with the leg which corresponds to the direction as the lead. They keep both the hands close at the chest level with keeping both the opened palms curved by fixing the stressed fingers apart. With the sidewise movement, both the hands will be swinging sidewise facing the audience. Sometimes they run around the stage shouting and howling. This is very much evident in the last sequence where they directly interact with Herod, tempting, advising him to kill all the children born in Jerusalem.

The audience enjoy this part of the play. Eventhough *peey's* attires and on stage behaviour are orchestrated with a lot of contrasts and complexities to produce fear and contempt, the audience laugh at them, because of the way of presentation and for various theatrical reasons, including the actors misuse of the freedom of intoxication, lack of training etc. They are very clear in their purpose and the text presented in this scene

has lot of importance in the development of play. The content of the scene in this part is revealed through the **satan's** answer to the questions by **aaramban**. The initial part narrates the presence and the general appearance of the *peey* just before their on stage presence along with their first group **viruttam**. In the next part their names and the immediate purpose of taking the souls of people to the hell by making them fall into sins against God.³⁷ They also reveal the tricks they cast upon people to go against the will of God. This part indirectly consists of the elements of moral teaching according to the Christian point of view. This also makes the audience think about what they should not do in order to get into the God's path.

After revealing a host of sins which make the people live against God and **fall** into the hell, the satans disclose some of the prominent human beings who had fallen as a prey to their tricks. This portion refers so many old testament characters, their sins and final fate. This includes Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel and also the incidents like Naoh's **Arc**. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah Exile from Egypt, their idol worship on the way etc. The above mentioned examples are also given as an answer to the **aaramban's** query (who has been already spoiled by satans). By this time the kings including Magi and Herod are back on the stage. They will take their seats as the three Magi sit on the bench in the up stage in the order of Balthasar, Melchior, Caspar from left to right. The Herod occupies his throne which is kept down right side of the stage. The Satans mostly move around the down stage and the backing vocals occupy the corner space in between Herod and the Magi. This is the time when the maximum number of characters are present on the stage.

The Satans hurry up and tell the *aaramban* that they are losing their time in telling the stories and they have to hurry up and talk to Herod. Then they will start interacting with Herod. They show certain frantic movements of running around in this talking sequence. The *peey* in unision proclaim to Herod that if he pays attention the words of the kings he will be in danger, he will lose his splendid life, kingdom and the lineage.³⁸ So, they ask him to kill all the infants in the city when the three kings leave. With this proclamation they run out of the stage and go into the audience. There they will indulge in so many activities like snatching away things from the small stalls and vendors. They collect money and eatables from the people in the compound, they keep all these items in their skirts. The *aaramban* reminds the audience in the last *viruttam* of this sequence that king Herod is overruled by the satans and with confided feelings of his anger and hatred

he is welcoming the three for discussion. This **arambham viruttam** leads the performance to the next sequence of (courtly) discussion.

The following scene is another important one in the case of dramatic interest and with reference to the propagandist concerns of the catholic Church. This argument scene involves only the kings in the Herods Court. After the *peey* exit and the **aaramban's** introduction to the sequence, Herod gets up from his throne and welcomes the three kings. He compares them with the **tirumuurtis** (*Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva* (Rudra as in play)) of Hindu mythology and asks their purpose of visit with the offering of all the help that he can do. As an answer to this query **Balthasar** starts interacting with Herod and introduces the others and their kingdoms. He clearly states the purpose of their journey. He also refers to the prophecies regarding the saviour relating to the appearance of a bright star in the sky and its help in giving them the direction to reach the place till they get the message from Herod. Herod is not able to believe the birth of a saviour God as a human and the sign of the star as revealed by the kings and the prophets. He is a little agitated and infuriated by their proclamation of "the birth of this child from a virgin",³⁹ more over the reference to Adam and Eve, their sin and the purpose of the birth of the saviour to wash away this and the sin done by rest of the human beings. This makes him argue against the claims of the three kings with the help of the beliefs in the Hindu mythology. In the metaphorically studded speeches which follow marvel in the descriptions of the various puranic (Hindu mythological) characters and the incidents related to them. All the arguments of Herod are logically rejected by the Magi. They criticize the religious as well as mythological beliefs of Herod and argue for **stern** belief in the one and only God Jesus Christ. They moreover expose the 'Gods' as referred by Herod as lustful, and finally the magi make Herods admit that all his Gods are not devoid of this fault. The three kings also warn Herod that the Gods, animals, birds etc., worshipped by Herod will only make his path to the Hell. Dejected Herod, as a solace, inorder to check the claims made by the Magi about the star and prophecies calls for the temple priest of his kingdom.

This argument sequence which is of much interest with the rising of action is ably presented with strict patterns of Choreography. The freedom given to the characters to verbally and vehemently present their arguments and counter arguments is admirable. The theatrical presentation of this portion abounds in unified actions and prescribed patterns in terms of the various theatrical elements like the rendering of lines or songs.

The songs are presented in a single tune by the three kings and in another single tune by the Herod all through this sequence. Moreover, the rendering of dialogues as well as the changes in the pace and volume of the chants etc., are patterned and precise with the same timing. All songs conclude with a repetition of the same stanza sung in faster pace and finally end up with a **kalasam**. The hand gestures and Choreography for each prescribed portion are presented either in single or in groups of the same pattern. Then it slightly alters and continues for another portion of this argument sequence. There are only two patterns followed in this whole sequence. This sequence follows a literal pattern **ofantiyaatipraasam** in terms of ideas, i.e., when the actor concludes a song with a word the other actor or the one who counters the earlier argument begins his song with the same word (here, the same idea) and so on. Eventhough the whole play mostly follows this literal pattern in this particular argument sequence it works better with the tempo and concept.

Each song is led by particular characters in solo as well as in the group (i.e., In the later sequence, the Magi inturn reacts to Herod's arguments and in the initial sequences they sing the songs together). All the songs, including Herods, are ably supported by the *pinpaaTTukaar* including the *vaattiyar* giving the appropriate timing with his *jaalra* (except two times). During the time of dialogue (**vacanam**) deliveries, the group use the sound **Ah—Ah—** intermittently to fill the gaps and to make the presentation more effective. This time *jaalra* is not used along with the backing vocals. Apart from this when the three kings answer Herod's queries one by one, *jaalra* is not used. This makes the text more clear and audible to the audience and this is an excellent use of theatrical music.

After Balthasar's introduction of the others, the argument begins with Herod's dialogue. Herod is surprised about the birth of 'God/king' as a human and his movements and reactions are apt and typical of this genre. This pattern continues till the end of the sequence. His rendering of lines includes the loud projection of short syllables. He uses more breaks and splits in the lines along with his movements; he first vibrantly jumps to both sides with the corresponding legs leading the direction (i.e., left leg to left and right leg to right). Then with the rendering of lines, he makes a circular movement with the right hand raised and kept one foot away from the body just below the face level with an opened palm facing it. The left hand is kept resting on the hips. He keeps this posture while executing the circular movement which begins towards the right. After this move-

ment, the same lines will be rendered in a faster pace and ends up in a *kalasam*. This time Herod takes the above movement using more space and once he faces the audience he changes the hands or replaces the right with the left and continues the movement towards the left. Mostly this faster pace is sung by the backing vocal group. In response to this, the magi make light, sweet, movements without jerks and jumps. Their rendering of the lines is in an elongated fashion with more audible words. In the beginning they sit and sing two lines together using the right hand, kept in the *pataaka* gesture and the left resting on their hips. Then they get up together and move diagonally to the down left of the stage keeping both the hands in the *pataaka* gesture and face Herod, who is in the right centre stage. This movement coincides with the repetition of the same by the backing vocals. Then they move side wise (into right and left) in a single parallel line singing together and keeping the hands at the chest level. They close and open their palms which is kept in *pataaka* and placed one above the other. While moving, they interchange the position of hands. This will continue till the end of that particular song (or stanza) and once it is over the same stanza or song is repeated by the kings and the backing vocals together in a speedy pace and which ends in a *kalasam*. This time the three kings make a circular movement similar to that of Herod's movement. Together they keep their right hands up at the neck level facing the opened palms and keep their left hands resting on the hips. This is followed by the movement which begins with the right leg first and the circle is formed towards the **up-stage** right. They start together and move one after the other and come back to a position facing the audience. They change the hands, i.e., instead of the right they use the left hands facing the face and right hands on the hips. Then the movement will be towards the left side. This is a continuous movement. In general they make two circles one towards the right and the other towards the left. This movement is used once in a song which ends with the *kalasam*. After this movement they recede and sit on the bench, while Herod retaliates.

This pattern continues for some time, then they sit on the bench and talk for some more time. This will provide the actors a little rest and the audience a chance to come on the stage and do offerings. Then the second session begins. During the second session, each king reciting and interacts with Herod taking turns. They get up from the bench and start singing their lines. While singing they face the audience (they make a movement towards the down stage then diagonally go up facing Herod) and during the *vacanam* they face Herod, seated at his throne. In this session they use their hand gestures along

with the lines and forcefully present their advices to Herod.

The three kings drubbes all the arguments made by the Herod and make him accept that all the Gods and animals who are believed by Herod were **womanisers** but in order to survive Herod wanted to cross check the argument of three kings about the birth of 'the God as human from a virgin'. He calls for his temple priest. Here for Herod's call for the *mantiri* the *aaramban* answers and he in turn asks his servant to bring the temple priest in the next song.

The *aaramban* (*vaattiyar* with *jaalra*) along with the backing vocals group comes out of the stage and goes to the right side of the compound (facing the stage) where the audience sit. By the time the *paappaans* (two Brahmins-ritualists) will be ready, clad in their typical costume which gives the immediate suggestion of a Hindu Brahmin priest or *paappaan*. They all sing together with the group of backing vocals and move towards the stage (no lights are used). This group takes the on stage entry through the steps which is permanently fixed at the down stage in front of the platform. (By this time the kings temporarily leave the main stage in order to take rest). In the song which follows the entry of *paappaan*, they act with their hands in a Lokadharmi fashion. This song generally describes the character, appearance and capacities of the two priests and exposes their greed for money and their half knowledge in their own *saastiraa*.^{*0} The song includes the movements of front and back, and the sidewise movements. Towards the end of each song, they along with the backing vocals pick up pace and reproduce the same kind of movements performed by the three kings earlier. Parts of the above songs are sung by the backing vocals by taking the lead from the interactions of the two *paappaans*.

Now the *aaramban* (*vaattiyar*) comes into the scene and he directly interacts with the two priests. In the beginning the *aaramban* as a servant of Herod asks "Do you have the courage and knowledge to defend our king".⁴¹ *paappaans* answer to this and their attempt to read the hands of the servant (*aaramban*) reveals their lack of knowledge, greed and their illogical ways of the interpretation of Hindu mythology. It also exposes their misdeeds in the name of religion and their Gods. By the time Herod and the three kings are back to their respective positions. Then the **Servant/aaramban** informs Herod about the arrival of Brahmins. Herod directly interacts with the Brahmins. Herod begins with a description of the Brahmins and it is very much true to their on stage appearance. *paappaan* asks Herod about the arrival of the three kings along with their troops. Herod

mentions the purpose of visit of the Magi and the appearance of the star in the sky. He asks the truth regarding the stars. The Brahmins offer their service in return for *takcaNa* from Herod (in the beginning itself). The Brahmins give a list of things which they are supposed to get as *takcaNa* (a kind of offertory fees for the priest in Hindu practices). Herod orders his minister to get those things and *aaramban/vaattiyaar* agrees to bring them. After this there is a sequence in which both the Brahmins quarrel with each other for the articles. This aptly exposes their greed. The *servant/aaramban* once again comes into the scene. This time he asks the Brahmins to foretell (predict) his star signs. Their prediction reveals their cunning and crooked nature and their lack of knowledge in astrology especially when they say “He would have a boy and if by chance it doesn’t happen it will surely be a **girl**.⁴² Then the servant divides the articles equally and reports to Herod. As an answer to Herod’s queries, the Brahmins refer to the *Kalki avataar*^{*3} of Lord *Vishnu* and the predicted destruction of the world. They oppose the concept of the birth of God as a human being and the appearance of the star as a lie by the three kings. This makes the three kings react to the words of *paappaans* (Brahmins). Balthasar starts questioning the Brahmin. Then each in turn asks questions to the Brahmins. The Brahmins also react to their questions. The three kings criticize the *tasaaavartaaram* (ten incarnations) of Lord *Vishnu* and the story of the Brahmin. This argument sequence (can be called as the second in the play) includes lot of references to mythology like the earlier one. Finally the Brahmins ask for the proof of the Human born God as suggested by the Magi. Then the three kings request Herod to call for the elderly priest of Jerusalem to which Herod agrees. During this argument sequence the Magi adopt the stereotyped movements. Sometimes they ask together and at times they interact each in turn. Now-a-days this portion of the performance is subjected to drastic on stage editing in order to reduce the duration of the performance. And some of the articles are not used, especially those mentioned in the *takcaNa* are not taken on to the stage (which the actors in the early days used to present on stage). Moreover most of the time *vaattiyaar* and the group interrupt, follow the actors with *cuvaTi* and hastens the progress of the performance (from one place to the other). As per the request of the Magi, Herod gives orders to call the priest of Jerusalem. Once again the *aaramban/Servant* obeys the call and the *vaattiyaar*, along with the backing vocals go out of the stage to the right side of the compound. The kings and the Brahmins remain on stage. Meanwhile, at the right side of the compound, the priest, clad in the traditional white Cassock and a red, thick band around his waist

with a red kerchief in the left hand (similar to that of the kings), is ready with two boys holding lit candles. The backing vocal group from the stage joins them and another small processional entry begins. This procession towards the stage is led by the boys with the lit candles on both sides and the priest in the middle with the group of singers singing a *viruttam* and following them. In this song they describe the qualities of this particular old priest of Jerusalem stressing his knowledge about the scriptures and his dislike towards worldly pleasures. In this way his character is contrasted to that of the Brahmins. Moreover, according to the lyrics, the priest reads only the true book (ie. The Holy Bible). This procession makes an on stage entry through the main staircase. On the stage the *aaramban/Servant* interacts with the priest by seeking his blessings. The priest (Guru) asks his assistant to get the Holy book and the *aaramban/Servant* obeys. Then the priest sings a song (*viruttam*) which resembles the Christian Church song in tune. He moves forward and backward along with the two boys holding the candles at their chest levels at both sides. They also move down and up the stage with the priest. The backing vocals help in this session without the *jaalra*. The Guru keeps his both hands at the chest level resting on the body with the traditional gesture *namaskaaram*. This song also consists of dialogues in between. While he renders this dialogue, the priest takes a triangular movement in which he always faces the audience straight. This time the boys with the candle stay back (upstage centre) in a parallel line. This *viruttam* and dialogues serve to project the general character and appearance of an old European priest.⁴⁴ Also, these songs subtly suggest the presence of an assistant who helps the priest in his duties. The Priest ends the song praising God and sends the *Servant/aaramban* to inform Herod about their arrival. The *aaramban* informs Herod and Herod interacts with the priest.

The priest sits on a chair at the down stage center and the boys with candles stand at both the sides. The *aaramban* gives him a book (a stage property i.e., Holy bible) and the priest keeps it in his hand. As an answer to Herods question about the “mentioning of Lords birth as a Human from a Virgin in the holy book and the signs related to it” the priest reads out the Bible. He also quotes from the Prophets. He refers Moses, David, **Elias**, Daniel, etc. He also points out the appearance of the star as a sign and the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. He renders this dialogue (reading) in the exact tune with which the priests deliver Holy mass in a Church. Each dialogue of the priest is carefully repeated by the backing vocals in the same tone. The priest uses his left hand freely while delivering these lines. The red kerchief (cloth) in the hand helps to project his hand gestures. The

priest once again confirms the birth of Jesus as a human in a stable in Bethlehem and says that the purpose of his birth is to wipe out the sins committed by people since Adam and Eve. He also asks Herod to go and pay his respect to the child. The priest then gets up from the chair and addresses the people. In this address he refers to the sins committed by Angels and their subsequent loss of paradise. He also mentions the incidents in the old testament like the Noah's Ark, Moses journey etc. Then he warns the people, "**whoever** sins will surely go to **Hell**".⁴⁵ Once again the priest asks Herod to visit and pay his respects to the Lord. Then he exits with the boys to the side wings. An angry Herod asks the servant to put the Brahmins in prison. The **aaramban/Servant** responds and takes the Brahmins to the right wings.

Now on the stage only Herod and three kings remain and the Magi invite Herod to come along and visit the new born king. Even though Herod's dialogues confirm his belief, he rejects the idea of going together with the Magi due to his engagements in his kingdom, therefore he asks them to visit the new born baby and come back and report to him. The three kings once again ask Herod to visit the child and live according to the faith brought by the child.⁴⁶ Then they together bless Herod to rule the country prosperously and take leave of him. Herod leaves the stage this time, he goes to the *oppalai* room (**make-up** room) at the back and the three kings come into the fore front of the down stage.⁴⁷ Then the **aaramban/ vaattiyar** comes and joins the group. He sings a **viruttam** which describes the journey of the three kings in a nutshell and the disappearance of the star and says that the three kings knelt down and prayed for help.⁴⁸ Simultaneously the three kings kneel down at the edge of the down stage, keeping their hands with the open gesture at the chest level, showing the alms posture and with the eye fixed to the sky. They together start the song, which is a prayer asking God to show them the star and the way to the place. This prayer is also a thanks - giving to God for his **help** in need. The **aaramban** with the group of singers approaches them while a lot of other activities go on the stage. The elders who are on the stage come to the fore front and place three plates in the hands of the Magi. In each plate they keep a towel and place the idols of respective kings on them. The candles are also lit and kept on these plates. Tremendous changes happen among the audience also; they slowly start moving towards the stage. The **aaramban** along with the backing vocals sing a song in which he says that the star re-appeared and guided the kings on their way. The kings along with the group led by **vaattiyar** and others start singing a melodious song which has the resonances of a

prayer; each of the two lines of this song which is sung in an elongated way, is repeated. The sound of pop gun and **fireworks** along with the continuous tolling of the Church bell, provide ambience for this song. This is called *teevaaram* (**muuvaracu**). By this time the participants/audience give their offering. They come in queue, get on to the stage and put money in the plate. Some people get/take water in a small vessel and wash the legs of the kings and kiss them. Some of them touch the feet of the kings and pray. Some others touch the idols and pray. Most of the audience also sing *teevaaram* and most of them will be crying and praying. The *teevaaram* will continue till all the participants/audience complete their offering. In between the kings will get seated again on the same bench at the down stage. This will enable the people to do the offering. The kings go into a trance.⁴⁹ The *teevaaram* narrates and refers to instances in the old testament where Gods give salvation to the human beings. The speciality of *teevaaram* is that all people sing together. The tolling of the church bell and the sound pop guns keep the background alive.

By the end of offerings, the *ceNTa meeLam* once again goes near the stage and the procession to the Church starts. The *ceNTa* leads the procession and the **petromaxes** follow. Then the kings get down holding the plates in their hands. The **vaattiyaar** and group follow just behind them. The audience move in two parallel rows with the lit candles as a procession. They reach inside the Church where the crib (manager) is placed at the left side and the parish priest is waiting. The entire group enters the Church and a grand fire-work display follows. Then the kings keep the plates with money in the crib, remove their head gears, suddenly on their knees and stretch along the floor. Many others also fall along with the kings. Most of the audience get into a ritual trance. The parish priest blesses them with the holy water. Then some people take the decorated *ruupakkuu Tu* (**their-made** of wood) to the front gate of the Church compound. The priest and the kings come to the compound gate. They place infant Jesus (the idol which was kept in the Crib) inside the *ruupakkuuTu* and a procession starts which is again led by the **ceNTameeLam** and followed by people with lit candles. The kings (without their head gears) take the particular *ruupakkuuTu* along with some others and join last in the procession. The procession goes around the Church and stops for a while. This time the kings holding the *ruupakkuuTu* will face the opened main door of the Church (ie. the altar) and there will be a reading inside the Church. This reading by the **Upadeshiyar** includes the name of the people who have given the offering called *teer ooTTu*. After

this reading the procession makes another round and enters the Church. When the *ruupakkuuTu* is placed at the nave. The Holy mass starts. The people along with the kings participate in this mass. With this, the performance process comes to an end.

Theatrical elements and Performance issues

This part deals with the theatrical elements : the music and musical instruments, make-up and costumes, set and properties, along with certain performance issues and characteristics which differentiate *muvaracunaaTakam* from the other South-Indian performing genres. These issues are related to the concepts of space and time, role types and characterizations, the oral presentations such as the intra-dramatic speeches, and audience addresses. This section also throws light on the extra theatrical aspects of **propaganda**, patronage, present function of the form etc. which come under the religious aspect of this performance genre. The importance of Choreography and the histrionic gestural presentations of the actors and the production process have already been discussed in the training and technique portion. The textual qualities including the textual structure of the drama, its comparison with the Western dramatic structure and its differences from the Medieval English Magi plays and the textual deviation from the Bible and the scriptures are dealt with in this section. Some of the issues are discussed along with the prominent theatrical aspects related to it for instance along with make-up and costumes, the role types and characterization is discussed. But while discussing certain general issues like the religion and textual qualities all the above theatrical aspects **are** taken into consideration.

Music and Musical Instruments

The music of *muvaracunaaTakam* is a mixture of dramatic dialogues and songs which is prevalent in the folk theatre forms of South india. Moreover the dialogue presentations of this performance show the influence of Church music like the choral chants and the scriptural readings during the Church rituals. It is said that the *eeTu* (the earlier script) of olden days included certain references to the *taaLas* and ragas (time measure and Rhythmic Pattern) for different verses. This shows,⁵⁰ the composer's (*arokiya vaattiyaars*) knowledge in classical music. However, what they perform today does not abide to those earlier directives. All those instructions are absent in their copied, paper scripts. The songs used in the present day script show more *viruttams* and *tamiZ cintus*. Some of the song patterns used for singing includes *kummi*, *kaavaTic cintu*, *taaraaTTu* tunes, *veNpaa*, *innicai*, *taaZ icai*, *kavi* and *vacanam*. As the play progresses, the characters sing

viruttams and incorporate the dialogues after each song. The main characters like the three kings and Herod take the lead in their singing. But for others like *peey*, Brahmins and priest, the backing vocals take the initiative for singing their portions. The pattern of presenting songs and dialogues alternatively is followed through out the play. There are also instances where exchange of dialogues takes place between characters. The characters in certain junctures as in the interaction of messengers and in the ***aaramban/vaattiyaar*** intervention sequences, the exchange of dialogues takes place. When considering the musical qualities of *muvaracunaaTakam*, one should also take into account some of the intra-dramatic speeches. These intra-dramatic speeches like the revelations by *peey* (satan) and the prayers (the opening prayer and the *teevaaram*) used in this play need special attention. During the satan's revelation sequence, the tempo and the rhythm used in the presentation along with the howling and whistling produced on stage as ad-libs (appropriate) lend a rhythmic flow, complemented with a faster rendering of lines. This faster tempo helps the satan's unconventionally lucid movements and the freedom in the use of space. Moreover they execute their purpose of visit in a fearful manner. The opening prayer sequence gives a serene atmosphere. But the last one in which all the audience along with the characters and the back stage musicians sing and cry (*tee-vaaram*) is nothing other than a kind of devotional song pattern, in a ritual which creates a special atmosphere of community feeling and produces a purgation of emotions

The major part of the 'music' in *muvaracunaaTakam* is rendered by the backing vocals or the *pinpaaTTukaar* present on and off stage, just behind the characters. This is a group which generally consists of five to six members. In the initial stage of the play i.e., during their first journey with the bullock-cart and their initial *exposition* sequence in which the three kings meet each other in the compound, each of them has a group of people along with them in the cart. They are also called *pinpaaTTukaar* and this 'pinpathukar' group belongs to the particular places from where the kings start their journey. Each group consists six to ten people. But the earlier mentioned group of backing vocals is the main one which is present on the stage. This group consists of people like Vadayar in the main role, the *eeTupakka vaattiyaar* or the person with the script, the person who plays *jaalra* and a couple of others who are well versed with the possibilities of the script. This backing vocal group begins their performance with the first messenger sequence. Mostly this group is placed at the up stage behind the performers. This is the group which goes out and brings the other characters like the

paappaan and the *priest* from the compound right. This group lead and provides the songs (eventhough they are placed behind the characters), during the main processions of the three kings like the first one on to the stage to meet Herod and the second one into the church to Bethlehem to meet the infant child, etc. **Infact**, this group initiates the smooth progress of the performance. They always stand on the stage and support the actors, some times they move along with the performers. It is said that the Harmonium and Ravekka (fiddle) were used by this group in the olden days but now a days they give more importance to the singing of the backing vocals.

The main instrument used on stage is *jaalra*, a miniature of elathalam. This is called as **naTTuvaankam** in the classical dance performances, usually **vaattiyaar** plays this *jaalra*, some times one among the *pinpaaTTukaar* also uses it in order to provide some rest to the *vaattiyaar*. **jaalra's taaLamm** helps the actors to constitute (employ) **kalaasams** as a culmination for every **viruttams**. The *vaattiyaars* use of this instrument helps him to control the **kalaasams** and in a way guides the progress of the performance. The **ceNTameeLam** is played off stage (it serves in the compound only) intermittently working as a part of the instrumental music. The *ceNTameeLam* employs tunes like *aTantaa*, *paNTi*, and *cempaTaa*. This **meeLam** includes includes *ceNTa*, *timila* and the **ilattaaLam**. The *ceNTameeLams* are used during the processions especially in the initial procession, with the carts. They come along with the three kings from three directions and in the church compound these three groups join together and produce a grand *meeLam* for some time. This *meeLam* culminates with the display of fireworks. Later this *meeLam* is used for the initial procession of the three kings onto the stage, at the time of satan's entry, and during the last two processions: one to the church and the other one with the **ruupakkuTu** around the church. Except during the satan's entry the *ceNTameeLam* culminates with a firework as a **kalasam**. This combination of *meeLam* and fireworks is fascinating and it also produces a certain ambience for the performance. The off stage use of high-sounding *ceNTa* makes the on stage musical balance well maintained.

Besides the *ceNTameeLam*, **tappumeeLam** is also used in the first journey. The **tappu meeLam** is a recent inclusion - - a part of the offering made by Arputha **swamy** of naTupalayam (*marian viiTu*). This comes only with the second king's procession and concludes at the three kings initial meeting point of the church compound just before the opening prayer sequence.

Apart from the musical instruments, some sounds are produced during the perfor-

mance which give a certain amount of musical background to the performance. These sounds include those produced with the pop-guns, fire-works, church bells (during the **teevaaram** sequence) and the howling and whistling produced purposefully by the audience during the satan's entry. The filling sound of 'Ah.' 'Ah' used by the backing vocals during the **vacanam** of characters is another main sound effect.

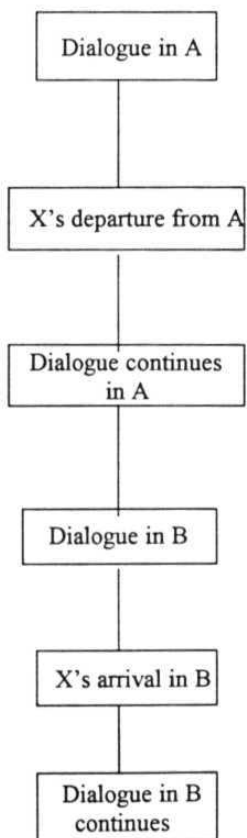
The use of microphone on the stage and the its absence in the compound during the processions for entries and exits; the unconscious cutting of **jaalra** usage in the later part of the argument sequence between the kings and Herod; the announcements of **aaramban** during the **paayiram paaTTu** and the upadeshiyar's calling of names during the **teer ooTTu** are some of the minor, but significant factors which contribute to the overall music and sound effects.

Set and stage:

This section deals with some of the main theatrical issues related to *muuvaracunaTakam*. Apart from the theatrical-technical gadgets used in order to make the performance space or locale, this portion analyses the concept of space and time used in this performance. More over this portion brings out some of the constant (permanent) characteristics like the 'contrasts' and the 'continuous correspondence structure' in the narrative of the text in performance.

Once the drama starts, there is no interval and there are no sceneries or technical/theatrical aspects temporarily employed (as in the popular mythological theatre of Kerala) in order to establish the various locals and incidents which are context-sensitive in nature. Rather it is the whole village, and its parts that serve as the backdrop to the performance. The performance progresses with a rhythm and change of action. This is one of the important as well as a very rare aspect of this particular form. The continuity is made possible in *muuvaracu naaTakam* with the manipulation of performance space. This is because it employs one of the basic techniques which is used to resolve the treatment of the second world time and space on the stage with a number of events distributed in more than a single locality. This can be called the technique of 'continuous correspondence' and it is different from the 'cutting' technique (term borrowed from movies). The first one demands that a person's departure from 'A', and his travel to 'B' be represented on stage. The latter (cutting) means that the journey is 'cut out' and that the dialogue either continues at **palce** 'A' after the person's departure for some time or 'cuts' to place 'B' immediately.

Cutting:



Continuous Correspondence:

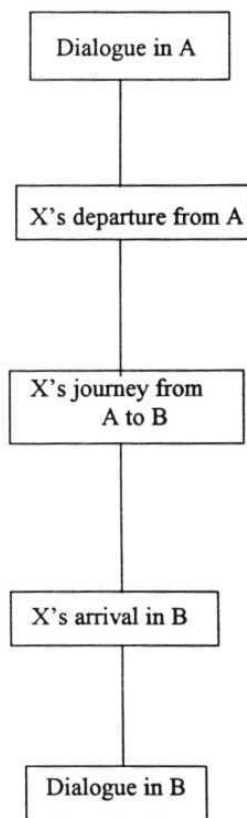


Fig. 9

Even though the continuous correspondence technique shows more dependence to the narrative text and it looks **out-dated** to the present day viewer, it is employed effectively in *muuvaracunaaTakam*. That is why, the 'processions' with the music which makes the audience as participants becomes important in the study of the stage. The music employed during the processions with appropriate sound effects and *meeLams* which create effective ambience in the atmosphere avoids the discrepancy between the second world and first world in the minds of the audience.

muuvaracunaaTakam employs a combination of the 'fluid' and 'floating' set in its entire presentation.⁵¹ This fluid set implies the moving set pieces, mainly the carts and pageant wagons of the medieval period for which we have a local counterpart in *muuvaracunaaTakam* - the bullock-carts. These fluid stage presentations demand a continuous movement of the action and the locale, i.e., the performance with regards to the progress of action and change of events in various locales and the contexts changing from one place to another. This movement compels the audience to keep moving together with the performers in order to facilitate a complete viewing. In *muuvaracunaaTakam*, the initial journey of the three kings from three different places through the roads to a particular place in the church compound, then from there to the permanent stage and finally once again to the manger or crib which is kept inside the church will definitely show the use of fluid stage setting. But the major part of the dramatic action is unveiled on the permanent stage in the compound. In between these sequences, especially for the entries of each new characters, the action is taken out of the stage and the compound is used (mostly the right side of the compound facing the permanent stage). So the dramatic action occurs in more than one place before its culmination and especially in the exchange of messages sequence, where the three kings receive, send and waits for the messengers at their initial meeting place, the simultaneous presence of the Herod on the permanent stage is very much visible to the audience gathered in between these two locales and around the earlier meeting place. This is a peculiar way of floating stage presentation in which more than one locale is simultaneously used for the effective communication of the actual message. The speciality of *muuvaracunaaTakam* is that the real message and messenger bridge the two locales.

This mellifluous combination of two styles used in the stage (to drive the attentions of the audience to various issues, qualities and ingredients used for the smooth execution of this change or progression of locales) turns one's attention to the use of the combination of

permanent building structures and the temporary pathways or space which connect them and reveals the extensive use of the concept. 'Contrast' is found in this performance event. The permanent structures which are part of the floating space include the three **koovils** at three places around **attikkooTu** village, i.e., the small building structures with the sacred cross, idols, photos of the mother **Mary** and Jesus christ at **pappanpalli**, **naTupalayam** and **venkarpalayam**, specially establish that the three kings belong to three different countries. Their dialogues contain their self references to their backgrounds and the speech thus supplements the audience's visual understanding of the character's place of origin. These places are associated with Sabha, Arabia and Persia (all of them are the Eastern lands). Then the initial procession starts with the timing given by the pop-guns. This process is an excellent example for the fluid stage with the set materials like bullock-drawn cart and an old arm chair placed in it. This decorated cart and its movement towards the church compound amidst the other ingredients like the **meeLam**, fire-works, dancing people and petromaxes or the indigenous torches, which reminds one the pageant waggon's of the middle English mystery cycles or the caravans which announce the commencement of an event or performance to attract people to the performance space.⁵² Here the bullock cart is used for combining its utilitarian and representative values. The cart as a means of transport facilitates the movement of the actor from one place to another. Simultaneously the cart as a fluid set piece (moving) represents the journey of the king from the East as guided by the star and aids the journey's progress. It is this fusion of function and fiction which helps the actor to transform himself from the first world reality to the represented second world character of the king who like in the scriptures had gone in search of the infant's birth in Bethlehem (this birth, as the interpreters say, is the birth of (an) otherworld).⁵³ The local participants posing as the king's subjects or servants who accompany the king in the journey, and the way side **on-lookers** (devotes/audience) involvement by the seeking of blessing from the king **etc.**, make this transformation into the other world easily possible.

The bullock cart is decorated carefully as a part of the offerings (**neerca**) by people. They use colourful papers pasted on a string and a designed pattern is made by cutting the paper into various shapes. This is used to decorate the wheels and the front portion of the cart. The wooden chair on which the king is to be seated is also decorated by pasting these colourful papers. The top and side portions of the wooden cart is decorated with the agricultural crops available in the locality. For this they make a canopy like structure

on the top with the tender coconut leaves and the sides are covered with tender banana and sugarcane trunks with leaves tied to the wooden structure at the sides of the cart. This decoration with the available agricultural crops localize the thematic representation of the journey. **Simultaneously** this transformation represents a make - believe world on the one hand and truthfully localizes the journey as a part of their life. On the other this localization of the western theme is one of the major aspects which makes the continuous survival of *muuvaracunaaTakam* possible to the present day. The journey proceeds and ends in a place inside the church compound and the three carts are made to face the church. This temporary meeting place (temporary in the sense it has no fixed markings or boundaries) is also a part of the fluid stage. It creates a locale for the initial meeting of the kings. Their positioning, facing the permanent facade and portico of the church, gives certain prominence to this meeting point. Here the bullock carts function as levels which give the characters a little prominence and helps the audience to distinguish them. In order to maintain the standing level and to demarcate him from the audience, the minister is also provided with a level to stand facing the kings. Here a wooden table functions as a level. According to the text, this meeting place which is in a parallel line with a temporarily cleared path way (amidst the audience) and with the permanent stage truly represents a place in 'Jerusalem,' or the outskirts of Judaea, (where Herod resides) according to the text. The reply message of the kings to Herod specifically spells out the portion before the church facade as Jerusalem or some part of Herod's country. The message sent by Herod also justifies this appropriation. This open, circular (because of the placement of carts and the table) space with the higher levels of placement provides the kings to effectively present their intention to narrate the story and reveal the purpose of their journey. The other place, which is a permanent structure and the major part of the floating stage, truly represents Herod's palace in Judaea. The permanent stage with a top covering has a closed wall as the backdrop. Even though there are no side wings in the proscenium arch-like structure, three concrete pillars at the left and right sides provide an illusion of the above basic elements of the stage with the fourth wall open to facilitate the vision of the audience. There is a permanently built staircase at the front side which connects the compound and the platform which used for most of the entries and exits. As the dialogues and action at the meeting point take place (space in the compound), the permanent stage is also lit with Herod seated on a chair and the servants moving crosswise (guarding). Then the scene develops into the exchange of messages between

Herod and the three kings. This exchange of messages with the use of a stage property (which is made like a scroll i.e., a skin attached with a rule and it is kept rolled in a cylindrical shape), the to and fro movement of a group of people as the carriers of this messages through the cleared path in between these two spaces (where the audience sit) and the simultaneous use of these two locales is an excellent example of the holistic use of performance space to communicate the intended message. By connecting one permanent locale with a temporary meeting point with a procession 'of the message', to show the exchange of messages directly. A sense of distance is conveyed and created in the minds of the audience. Later the three kings are invited and welcomed by king Herod in a majestic way with the theatrical use of space and procession. The procession of the three kings to Herod's palace includes the *meeLam*, lights, the group of *cevakars/pinpaaTTukaar* culminating with the fireworks display. This also shows the grandiosity of the welcome. King Herod himself steps out of the stage, comes into the compound hugs the Magi and leads them to stage. This also turns the attention of the audience onto the permanent stage. King Herod's order to the minister and the minister's address to the audience, inturn establishes the stage as Herod's *Durbar or Court*. Then the minister exits through the left side to the *oppantai* room. This is the first exit of a character. This exit also establishes the quality of the performance space. The above procession of the three kings onto the stage with the *pinpaaTTukaar*, the songs and other *meeLams* is different from the first procession. Here the actor is already in the second world of make - believe and their interactions and behaviour are part of the performance space. Moreover, the transformation of the messengers as a *pinpaaTTukaar* for the *mantiri* and their songs, during this procession show the excellent contextual manipulation of theatrical codes. Herod's interaction during the procession adds life to this fluid pathway and makes this procession more purposeful. This grand procession amidst the audience will divert their attention and it slowly directs them to the permanent stage.

The next sequence with its use of two fluid pathways amidst the audience in the compound shows another very good use of the compound. Two parts of the compound are used simultaneously and from these portions the *peey* (satans) rush into the stage. Spacially this represents their journey from Hell to Herod's palace in order to tempt Herod. During the beginning of this sequence the kings and the other people present on the stage temporarily leave the stage for taking rest. This open space helps the free movement of the *peey* and they effectively establishes their character and purpose.

The open space created on stage helps satan to establish a peculiar context for their devilish attitudes. Even though the kings enter into this place later, the audience will be attributing the ownership of that place to satans. Later, their only interaction with Herod, who is present in his court with the Magi shows the secret, invisible ways of satan with which they tempt their victims to commit sin. The exit of the satans into the compound and their behaviour, thoroughly exposes their character with the help of the use of space in a loosened way.

The next scenes are presented on the permanent stage which is represented by Herod's court. Even though in narration it is Herod's pompous court, the stage properties used are not decorated ones, i.e., Herod sits on a wooden chair and the Magi are seated on a bench made of wood. This colourless stage contrasts with the colourful costumes of the king. During this argument sequence the on stage space is **effectively** used with the choreographic movement, patterns like the circular, semi-circular and the triangular ones with their combinations and the major movements in parallel and horizontal lines facing the audience. Till the moment of *paappaan* (Brahmins) entry the action is concentrated on the stage. Then for the *paappaans* entry, once again, the action shifts to the right side of the compound and from there in a procession the *paappaans* get on to the stage. This entry procession includes two *paappaans* and the *pinpaaTTukaar*. Here also these characters will get an open stage due to the temporary exit of the kings to the sides for rest. By the time the kings come back this open space is comfortably used by the *paappaans* for their establishment. The second set of arguments continue with varied use of choreography and the space. This also happens on the stage (the court of Herod) but initially this open space locale is established as the space outside the Herod's court, where the servant interacts with *paappaans* and their lack of knowledge is exposed. Then they are taken into the court the same stage (space) but near in to the kings and the discussion follows till Herod orders his servant to take *paappaan* out and dip them in the ocean. During this second argument sequence, once again the action takes place in the compound. This is the right side of the compound and the priest enters. For this entrance the procession is used. This procession with the *pinpaaTTukaar* come down from the stage to that locale in the compound which is represented as the church of Bethlehem where the oldest priest resides. This procession is led by two boys with the lit candles on both sides of the priest. This processional entry of the priest is different from the early processional entry of the *paappaans*. Here the use of light and lit candles are a must. In

the earlier one the lights were not used. The priest also uses the permanent stage space (i.e., Herod court) with the diagonal and triangular choreographic patterns while always facing the audience. The placement of the boys with the lit candles at both sides makes his movements visually beautiful. Moreover, the priest is provided with a chair (wooden and not decorated) which is kept at the down stage centre of the permanent space. After occupying the chair the priest uses another stage property (which is the same type of scroll used earlier for the Herod's message) as the Holy bible for his confirmation of the prophetic revelation about the birth. The exit of the priest is also important as far as the space is concerned because he takes the exit into the compound and moves towards the right side of the compound. After ordering the servant to take away the Brahmins, Herod also exits from the stage to the left wing. These two opposite exits itself establish a logically justified boundary for Herod's court. After Herod's exit, the stage completely change. The audience get on to the stage and the three kings are placed at the rear edge of the down stage on the bench with the lit candles and idols in their hands. In this *teevaaram* sequence, even though audience get on the stage they use the main staircase and kneel down before the kings. Their movement towards the stage shows an ascending action but their kneeling position enables the kings to keep a higher level. This session with the prayer and offering visually represents the interior chapel of a church where the devotees go, kneel down before the idols at the altar.

This *teevaaram* sequence culminates with a grand procession towards the church and it ends before the **crib**⁵⁴ situated at the left corner of the St. Antony's chapel of **attikkooTu**. The Magi get into the church and offer money collected from the votive offerings of devotees. Along with that the idols carried by them in the plate is also placed in the crib. The Magi fall on the knees and remove their headgear. The above procession of the Magi holding their respective idols to the church includes **meeLam**, people with lit candles and all of them singing and crying. This evokes a mood of salvific atmosphere which is narrated and intended by the people. Even though the crib **pulkooTu** is merely suggestive and symbolical, the acts that follow with the **fireworks** and blessings of the priest make this place identical to the altar. And the represented world is heightened to a different realm which transcends all physical realities.

Once the **muTi** or crown is removed the characters once again transform to the actors. Then the last procession starts. This procession with the idol of the infant Jesus in the **ruupakkuuTu** (*teer*) begins from the main gate of the church, makes two rounds of the

church building and finally enters into the church where it ends with the Holy mass. The actors who play the roles of the kings hold this **ruupakkuTu** during this procession in which the people including the parish priest participate. It is also led by the **ceNTa meeLam** followed by the people in two rows with the lit candles and at the back the **teer** is brought. **Thematically**, this represents recognition given to the birth of the redeemer. This act of the visit of the Magi and their gifts legitimize the birth of the infant Jesus and the birth of the new religion or new life. This procession once again marks the use of **fluid** space with holding the decorated, sacred **teer** by the Magi to proclaim and glorify the act. The kneeling or falling of the Magi on the feet before the 'crib' fulfills their entire purpose of the Journey which is earlier mentioned by the third king. The **teer** is taken into the main gate of the compound and the procession makes two rounds of the church: the participation of all the people in it spacially transforms the compound into the entire **attikkooTu**. So this use of space and the participation of all makes them believe that the procession, which glorifies the birth, started from gate of the **attikkooTu** village and had gone through all the village before it ends. This directs them to a **whole-hearted** participation in the next holy mass which is the culmination of this performance event.

It is very important to note that the use of lights and other technical aspects like the properties and the music used are very suitable to this combination of **fluid** and floating stages. In the early days, **masaal** (indigenous lamps) were used to light up the procession and the permanent stage. But later, petromaxes or the gas lights came into the scene and it was made in such way with a wooden plank at the bottom that it can be **asily** transported and placed at various parts of the compound. Even though the electric lights are placed at the sides of the road, the Halogen (general light) used to light up the permanent stage and the illuminated facade of the church provides light for visibility, the specific use of petromaxes and the lit candles facilitates better visibility of the action. More than that, the particular use of this light meaningfully elevates the action and establishes the mode. It is important to note that the use of lit candles associate only with the procession of sacred characters, i.e., it is used during the procession of the priests entry, **teevaaram**, and the last procession with **teer**. It is also used at the time of the initial prayer of the kings at their respective **koovil**. The petromaxes are used in the initial journey to Jerusalem and then in the procession toward the Herod's palace. It is important to note that there are no moving lights used for the entry processions of pees and **paappaans**. It is not used for the message exchanging procession also. In order to

facilitate the entires, the movable petromaxes are placed on the ground (or some people hold them on their shoulders) at the meeting point of the kings and at the right side of the compound from where the *peeys* make their entry. Because of this extensive use of **fluid** stage the costumes are given more prominence than the handy minimal stage properties like the scroll, undecorated wooden chairs and the bench used on the permanent stage.

The form and content of *muuvaracunaaTakam* are influenced by the temporal and situational context. Since the subject matter revealed in the utterances encompasses various stages and locales and shows a continuum of human characters progress, behind each lines there is a necessity of the use of concepts like time and space for understanding the dramatic shaping. The when and where of an utterance becomes dramatically significant because *muuvaracunaaTakam* is a representation of the world containing (realistic) situations.

The spatial importance has already been discussed but when one deals with the temporal constrains of this performance one has to consider two things: one is the time period of the context mentioned in the text and the other is the duration of the performance (the time taken and controlled for this performance event). The earlier concept of time will be dealt later with the textual analysis. The second one is of importance here, i.e., the duration of the performance.

The liturgical significance of the church building and the time of divine service remain more powerful than the imaginative development of these forms of perception. So the holy mass which is to be followed just after the performance (the next day morning) becomes a stringent mark for the duration of *muuvaracu naaTakam*. So this makes the performers control their performance with textual adjustments. This is the major reason behind the recent inclusion of other cultural programs like the screening of cinema or dance, drama performances till the beginning of the journey. According to the elders, this started after the Coimbatore bishops order to remove so many portions ridiculing the Hindu religion during the 1960's. This drastic editing of the text shortened the performance time and the performers adjusted it by shifting the beginning from 9 **pm** to 11 **pm** in the night. Apart from this, the sounds of pop-guns and fire-works somewhat determines the time period of each sequence. Because of the simultaneous use of three locales in the beginning it is the sound of pop-gun which determines and controls the journey by giving signal (sound) to start. The use of fireworks as a culmination of each major sequence reminds us about the fire-work displays which culminates the *puuram* (elephant march) of the Hindu temple

festivals. It is these fire-works which provide an appropriate atmosphere for the progress of the performance. This works as a marker of the end of each sequence and as a catalyst which makes the play progress into the final culmination. The quality and quantity of the fire works used in between performances serves to differentiate the importance given to the scenes (i.e., the *teevaaram* culminates with a grand fire-work, the firework used at the time of the three kings entry and the meeting is more than the fireworks used at the time of Herod's welcome sequence). Moreover the *aaramban/vaattiyaar* along with the *eeTupakka vaattiyaar* control the duration of the sequence depending on the final target of the Holy mass. The dependancy of the text in use by minor characters over the *pinpaaTTukaar* helps them to do all on stage editing.

Thus one can say that the space is humanized in this play. This is evident not only in the fact that physical objects are used and (eventhough narrated with the metaphoric ornamentation) referred to as physical objects, but also in the way people deal with them. The establishment of the distance between each locale and the time taken to travel in between them once again justifies the above statement and reminds us about the realism used in the detailed representation of space and time in this performance. The physical and empirical use of different locales with the humanized manipulation of space makes the audience completely believe and involve in the represented second world. In this condition the propagators and producers inject the idea of going into another world with their repeated references about the birth of Jesus Christ which fulfills the promise of the eternal world. This ends up with the grateful, joyous proclamation with the processional carrying of the infant Jesus like in any other medieval liturgical drama. This proves them (including the performers and participants) as carriers of the soteriological function by the birth of Jesus Christ.

Make-up and costumes

muuvaracunaaTakam has its own peculiar make-up and costume tradition. Because of its fluid stage, the singularity of the performance and the audience's on stage presence and participation, costumes get more priority than the set and properties in the *muu-varacu naaTakam*. In order to demarcate, highlight and facilitate more visibility, make up and costumes are used in an excessive manner similar to the *teerukkuuttu* and *poraaTTunaaTakam* traditions. The facial make-up and the cutting of the upper-garment, shows a similarity with *CaviTTunaaTakam*. The use of decorations, ornamentations, the lower part of garments and bare foot show its similarity with *teerukkuuttu*. Even though

there are similarities in general, in particular, the above aspects of *muuvaracunaaTakam* shows its own individual identity.

Make-up begins with its own rituals; all characters except the *peeys* are painted with rose paste (rose powder mixed in white paste). In the early days they used articles like *manaiolai* (red arsenic) which provides red colour to the face and *kari* (charcoal) in order to highlight the face. Now a days also they are not using sophisticated cosmetic pan-cakes, but a mixture of rose powder with zinc white. Because of the excessive use of rose colour they make the faces of the kings and minister look like painted faces. They also use red **lip-sticks**, thick black eye-brows and **eye-liners**, thick and thin moustaches made with crape hair and gum (for some actors their own moustaches are darkened with **eye-brow** pencils). In the case of *peeys* their faces are painted with two colours. In order to make their appearance terrifying, for two *peeys* the right half of the face is painted with red and the left half is painted with white. In the case of the other two, red colour on the right half and black colour on the left half is used. This colour combination is not strictly followed in every year. Sometimes red and blue or white and black combinations are also used, only the concept of parting the face with two colours and the use of fixed/prepared, long, uneven moustaches and beard (which can be held together with the strings at the back) of brown and gray colours are followed. The faces of the other characters including the *paappaans* (two brahmins), priest (guru) and the minor characters like *cevakars* are highlighted with the facial paste (using less rose in zinc white). The other specific details of their facial make-up is left out. The prominent cross sign is drawn on the fore-heads of the three Magi and the traditional sign of *naamam* (used by the Vaishnavite sect on their forehead) is prominent on Herod's forehead. The three parallel white lines drawn on the forehead, chest, and arms of the Brahmins associate them with the Hindu ritualists. These are the major make-up used in the *muuvaracunaaTakam*.

The costume of *muuvaracunaaTakam* has two parts, one is the basic dress and the other is ornaments. The ornaments include Head Gear (*kiriTam* or **muTi**), broad waist belt (*arainaan* or *araippaTTai*), big sized necklaces (*maartaaZi* or *patakkam*) which cover the chest, ear-rings (**cevippuu** or *tooTa*) thick and broad bracelets used around wrists and arms (**bujam**, *kaippuusam*, *kankaNam*). These were made of soft wood and paper **mache** decorated with colourful and glittering papers. Because of the use of twines or strings all these can be tied and fixed to the body parts of the actors. All of them are hired and used for the performances. Kings are dressed up with all these ornaments.

The **kiriTam** used by king Herod and the minister show similarity with '**teerukkuuttu**' head gears. The round shaped '**muTi**' or *kiriTam* used by the three Magi are similar to that of kathakali. The *peeys* also use odd shaped **kiriTams**, but all of them have a pyramid structure. The *peeys* also use rustic looking chest plate cum necklaces and bracelets covering the wrists and arms (**kaappu, bujam**). Along with the necklace they wear garlands made with balloons and sometimes bring some toys made of balloons on the stage. In the early days they used to bring live cranes on **stage**. *paappaan* characters bring some of the hand properties like the stick, one brass pot (used for the Hindu rituals called **kiNTi**), and a cloth bag with some vegetables in it. This hand properties are not used but they work as costume pieces to establish the character.

The Brahmins wear white cloths. Both of the Brahmins tie the white *dootti* in the same manner as that of the ritualists in Hindu temples. One person wears a white brief and ties a white turban on the head. The other keeps the upper part of the body bare and the head free. Both of them wear the holy white thread (i.e., **pooNuul**) which is kept diagonally round the body. Both of them keep small money purses made of cloth around their waists. The Parish priest of Bethlehem wears a white cassock. He ties a broad red coloured cloth around his **waist**. He also uses a red handkerchief in his left hand. Both characters costumes are closer to the realistic mode and these costumes help them establish their respective characters. The *peeys* use **multi** coloured, uneven designs and combinations in their costumes. Their upper garments are round-necked full blouse shaped ones with a lot of colour patterns. The lower part is called *paavaaTai* (skirts) which is colourfully designed. These skirts are short and have lot of frills. These fictional costumes and their behaviour easily establish their character. The costumes of the Kings and the *mantiri* is directly related to the narration (textual) and it uses local theatrical realism in the presentation. The three kings themselves bring their costumes, which includes six meter long new white (**mall**) cloth. This is used for their lower body garment. This cloth is put on a white thread and thick frill are created. With this it looks like a long skirt (*paavaaTai*) which is tied to the waist. The upper body garment is coat-like, full shirt in plain colours. Even though no particular colour is attributed to each king, for the past many years the actors keeps a colour pattern for example, Balthasar uses a sky blue colour wat, Melchior uses white colour and Caspar's is blue black colour. They also wear long shawls with different plain colours on the neck which hangs on both the sides in the front. Upon this basic set of costumes they tie different

ornaments as mentioned above. In this way this shawl goes through the waist belt. Each one of them uses a kerchief in his left hand and wears a fresh flower garland (Jamanthi flower) around the neck. They do not use foot wears or bells (anklets) like in the other South Indian theatrical forms. King Herod also wears the same kind of basic costumes as the three kings. The main difference is in the symbol of *naamam* on his forehead and in the use of more decorated ornaments including the long shawl with thick *kasavu* (golden thread) lining. His *kiriTam* or *muTi* is dome-shaped with side wise elevations. He uses thick and broad necklaces which look like a breast plate. He does not use a flower garland keeps a kerchief or cloth pieces in his left hand. He is bare footed and devoid of any anklets (dancer's bell). The actor who plays Herod's character himself brings the lower garment piece (i.e, the same six meter white cloth). The ornaments of minister including the *kiriTam* (crown) and *bujam* (armplates) show *similarity* with Herod's ornaments. The minister's lower garment is short in size which exposes his bare legs up to knees. He neither uses the shawl nor the flower garland. There are no marks or symbols on his forehead. He does use the kerchief in the left hand. *cevakars*, the attendants of the king Herod usually enacted by boys, wear turbans or ribbons on their heads, paint their faces lightly and wear shirts and trousers.

muuvaracunaaTakam has its own peculiar make-up and costume tradition. Most of the elements of this style are akin to the *teerukkuuttu*, *poraaTTu* and other south Indian, folk theatre traditions. One reason is that some of the costumes and ornaments are hired from the *caamippaNTaaram* of thenari since a very long time, who has been giving costumes for rent for all the *poraaTTunaaTakam* and *kumbakaLi* of that region. More over one performance per year and the economic factors restrict the variety of costumes used for minor characters.

Because of the chilly climatic conditions, the whole night performance and its medieval English nativity connections might have lead to the European coat like design of the upper garment.

[a]



SATAN

[b]



BALTHASAR

MUTI

CEVI PPUN

bujam

maartaazi

KAAPPUN

PAAVAATAI

Fig.10

[c]



HEROD

Role types and characterizations

muuvaracunaaTakam comprises characters with peculiar characteristics and they show certain similarities and contrasts. Some of these characters bear the marks of certain established 'role types' of South Indian folk theatre like the terrifying *peeyas*, the greedy brahmins, the pagan king Herod, the three kings who are god fearing, righteous and **the** truthful parish priest etc. The characterization of each role in this play has been carefully drafted and presented throughout the play and the various aspects of text and performance help each actor to develop their own characters. In order to create the interest of the audience, most of the characters are diametrically contrasted with the others and this contrast is established through the argument sequences. It is sustained by the tension and rise of action depicting the contrasting nature of the characters involving in it.

It is not only the make-up and costume but also the other textual as well as performative elements which work behind this effective crafting of contrasting characterization of different roles. So a study of the characterization encompasses all these varied aspects of ***muuvaracunaaTakam***(which came together in presenting the characters). This session initially deals with the minor ones and later proceeds with the analysis of major characters.

It is interesting to note that *muuvaracunaaTakam* shows a peculiar pattern for the exposition of each character. Especially the characters like the Brahmins and the **priest** are introduced with an *aaramban viruttam* before their entry. This ***viruttam*** describes the nature and qualities of the 'community' of the character (to be introduced) in general. This song continues throughout their entry procession. Their characteristics are narrated in third person account. Then on the stage the characters start, interacting with the ***aaramban/servant***. During this second stage of boasting and self explanations, they expose their nature and qualities in first person. In the next stage, which immediately follows the second one, one can see a major character, referring to the entered character in second person. This narration concentrates on the character's physical presence and attire. Later their deeds and dialogues (in the onstage presentation) justify the nature of their already narrated characteristics.

When we take up the character of brahmins, the initial entry ***viruttam*** **elaborate-**ly describes the general characteristics of this particular community of Hindu religious priests. This satirical narration exposes more vices (in this case) of this particular community. In these lines the brahmin's vices like greed and lust are thoroughly exposed.

This metaphoric narration attributes all sorts of vices and cunningness to the brahmins looks and **behaviour**.⁵⁵ The lines are exaggerated by hyperbole. In their interaction **with** the *aaramban/servant* the brahmins expose their lack of knowledge in their own mythology and their illogical ways of interpretations and references about the Hindu mythology expose the follies of the Hindu gods (as narrated). More over their fight over the things they got as *takcaNa* shows their greed for material things. Their constructed story about solving the feud between the *Brahma* and *Shiva* with the help of bribery shows their lack of commitment towards their sacred ritualistic duties and this also, in a subtle manner exposes the follies of the Hindu Gods. Their reference about wives and children exposes them as womanizers. Herod's addresses, which includes certain references like the brahmin coming with his full body smeared in Holy ash and who always recites the prayers, can be equated with their stage presence, their make-up and their stage behaviour of chanting the prayer. Later in the argument sequence because of their lack of knowledge and capacity these brahmins are easily defeated by the Magi and finally Herod asks his servant to drown them in the sea.

On the other hand, the character of the priest and its presentation are exactly in contrast with that of brahmins. The introductory song by the group along the journey narrates the good qualities of the priest like his in depth knowledge in the holy scriptures, his rejection of the worldly things, his celibacy, his preaching and his ability to save and guide the people to Heaven. In this aspect he is compared with Moses of Old Testament who saved and led the people of God from Egypt to the Canaan (promised land of god). The *viruttam* also says that the priest rejects all the unholy books and teaches what is true. Later in his interaction with the *aaramban* there is a sequence (according to the manuscript available) in which he asks his servant to bring certain objects including 'walking stick, cap, holy book, umbrella and asks him to guide' him to the palace. **The** above articles give us a picture of an elderly European missionary of the last century. **But** the present stage appearance of the priest with a white cassock (as mentioned earlier) reveals a theatrical representation of the parish priest who also holds a red kerchief in the left hand, which is a mark of a South Indian folk theatre narrator. One can thus presume that in the earlier days, especially in the days of Fr. Bruyera the **priests** might have been presented with all the above articles. Moreover the purposeful removal of these *viruttams* during these days also points towards this inference. In the following sequences, the priest's behaviour and answers justify his above mentioned qualities. King

Herod respectfully seats him and for the questions regarding the birth of the infant from the virgin, the priest ably answers quoting the holy scripture. His answers reveal his knowledge in the scriptures and astrology. He refers to various prophets and **Old** Testament characters. His firm belief and confident answers really make an impact in the mind of the 'pagan' king Herod as well as the audience. His warning against the sinners and his request to Herod to go and meet the new born king dignifies his character.

The horizontal and triangular choreographic patterns of the priest while always facing the audience, his down stage seating position, the combination of the two boys with lit candles and his oral ways of presentation also place him as a dignified character in opposition to the brahmins.

peeys (satans) characterization

The characterization and presentation of the *peeys* (satans) is one of the most important sequence in this performance. As a theatrical presentation there are scenes which arouse the audience into reacting along with the *peeys*. The entire atmosphere of the performance rises. The entry of the *peeys* from the audience with the music (*meeLam*) and initial confrontation of the person with a stick among the audience itself establish the unusual fearful nature of the *peeys*. In fact this person controls the sudden careless movements of *peeys* amidst the audience and directs the entry of the actors (who are mostly out of their wits due to the consumption of liquor). This initial confrontation helps the *peeys* to slowly get into the character. Their onstage behaviour with whistling and howling, the uncontrolled parallel and horizontal movements, the split faces with **two** colours and the odd costumes justify their terrifying character and their purpose of arrival. In *peeys* characterization and their presentation one has to see two important characteristics of the text: a) *peeys* textual (manuscriptural) description and the difference in their physical (costumed) stage presence; To consider *peeys* long speeches as 'revelation speeches' in which they reveal their tricks to make people commit sin and their list of victims in the history of humanity. These 'revelation speeches' (eventhough they begin as an answer to the *aarambans* question, which reveals their nature and deeds) which work as an audience-address, impose a certain point of view on the spectator (the other speech types cannot do this; they offer more opportunities for expressing the subjective feelings of individual speakers i.e., affect speeches and dialogues). The 'revelation speeches' work as a part of the Christian moral teaching. Which is one purpose of this play production.

Though the first characteristic is common to other characters, in the case of *peeys* the metaphoric description and the on stage presence show a different kind of combination. The manuscript has only two *peeys*, they are ***koopam*** and ***akankaaram***, but on the stage there are four characters. On their arrival itself ***aaramban*** and the group will start singing. Later the *peeys* also join on stage and dance together with this ***viruttam***.

This *viruttam* begins with some improbable statements like: south becomes north, milk becomes black, water catches fire, donkey becomes crow, mongoose and snakes become friends, even if the earth splits and asserts that, never will the satan do good.⁵⁶ This analogy of the improbable and satan's doing good powerfully suggests the *peeys* characteristics and simultaneously caution the audience to keep away from satan and watch his present crooked purpose of arrival (i.e., to tempt king Herod). The following *viruttams* or songs metaphorically compare the bodily parts of satans with whatever that is claimed to be the ugliest in the world. The songs portray the similarities of satan's bodily parts with that of various species like; donkey's voice, monkey's body, crane's neck, owl's face, elephant's colour, cat's eyes, old monkey's looks, moustaches like Goats horns etc. Apart from their facial, as well as bodily parts, their ways of movements and behaviour are also presented with ugly comparisons (even though their stage make-up and costumes never correspond with what is described in the text). The make-up and costume of *peeys* with the terrifying facial colouring, uneven dress, the rustic ornaments, the odd moustaches and beard along with their lucid, unconventional movement pattern and unusual behaviour like the on stage use of live cranes, the snatching of *pori* (eatable made of rice) and other things from the audience, somehow creates an exact effect which is required according to the textual narration.

The first characteristic quality has one more important aspect, that is, in the initial entry *viruttam* itself, Lucifer, the head of the satans, sends two of his arch angels in order to tempt king Herod and do something against the God (i.e., to kill the children). This future prediction of the killing and the purpose of *peeys* arrival is repeatedly mentioned and stressed in each of the songs which describes the satans nature. This repeated prediction (pronouncement) awakes the audience and this in turn justifies the terrific presence of satan's and their brutal action to be followed. Another interesting thing is that this part shows an illogical alliance between two characters belonging to two mythologies, i.e., Lucifer is the head of satans according to Christian scriptures and apocryphal texts and Herod (rooteesu as in the manuscript) is portrayed in the manuscript and performance

as Hindu pagan king who believes and holds the mythological as well as the ritualistic life of the kings in Hindu ***puraaNams***. This incongruous connection made between two characters shows a bold and free intercultural (or inter-religious) exchange in the realm of mythology for effective dramatization as well as to save the propagandist purpose behind the performance. Moreover the attired stage appearance of this four *peeys* especially the basic shape of head gears resembles some characters of the temple art forms like the ***caakkiyaar*** in ***kuuttu*** and ***kuuTiyaaTTam*** and a Kathakali Paccha character - with their uncontrolled movements *peeys* are mimicking the above and in a subtle way criticising the other performances. It is important to note here that the stage choreography and the hand gestures used by the *peeys* are in contrast with that of the three Magi's. Especially the hand gestures (like the *peeys* use of open palm pointing forefinger and during their up and down movements) they use curved palms kept at the chest level and near to the body while their side wise movements, while the Magi keeps the '***pathaka***' ***muttirai*** in both hands and use it open and close according to their movement. Then for the final ***kalaasams*** or circular movements they keep one open palm facing their face at neck level and the other rests on the hip. This in turn contrasts with the most stylized ***muttirais*** used in the Hindu performances, mentioned earlier.

The second characteristic of *peeys* characterization is the revelation speeches made by them as an answer to the ***aarambans*** questions which has three phases. These three phases in turn reveal the character and the purpose of the *peeys* presence in this performance. The first phase deals with the tricks that *peeys* play upon human beings in order to make their souls fall into the hell. According to the *peeys*, they make people not to go for Sunday holy mass, morning and evening prayers, and for the teachings of the priest. They make people eat meat and take drinks on Friday in order to break their fast. They also make them talk ill of priests and the teaching of ***tiruccabai*** (Holy Roman Church). Thus they make people talk against their elders and go against the ***truth***. *peeys* also tempt men and women to commit moral sins in their life. They tempt them to go for illicit sexual relationships. They urge people to go against the laws and moral conduct of the caste, creed and society. They create internal troubles in the tranquility of family affairs. They divide the family members and make them quarrel between themselves. Here the *peeys* also mention the quarrel between brothers and sisters, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. They make people addicted to drugs and drinks and so on. This narration of the sins by satans as a first answer relates the audience directly to their purpose of visit.

Indirectly this description of sins shows the churches moral teachings about sins.⁵⁷ This description of *peeys* tricks in order to make people fall into hell reminds the people to be cautious about their behaviour and, in a subtle way, this directs them adhere to the Christian moral life and ethics as taught by the priest, church, and congregation. In the second phase as an answer, the *peeys* reveal the names of some people who had already fallen for their tricks. They also mention some of the incidents or narrate events from the Old Testament which show sinful acts committed by human beings and the punishment they got for going against the Almighty. This includes the characters and incidents like: Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah's Ark and the people destroyed by their sin, Sodom and Gomorrah and the destruction inflicted upon sinned people by the rain of fire and thunder, Moses and exile from the Egypt, their idol worship and God's hatred towards it etc. These references about the *peeys* victims legitimizes the capacity of the *peeys* to woo people into sin as well as it shows the penalty they paid for their sins. This in another way works as a part of the above mentioned moral (catechetical) teachings of the church. This portion shows an excellent contextual use and interpretation of a number of Old Testament episodes. Here one can see the religious use of Christian mythology to teach the Christian morals to a community as part of the propaganda of Christianity. These references work as an example to show the power of *peeys* tricks in this situation but later most of the references are used as an example to show the **salvific** acts of the Almighty (as portrayed in the later *teevaaram* session). So the early use of this Old Testament reference familiarizes the memories of the audience and powerfully works in a positive manner, towards the church's purpose of play production. The final phase of *peeys* answers once again reveal their present purpose of visit i.e., to tempt Herod and make him not to believe in the three kings and order him to kill the children. Due to their effective self presentations, the revelations of sins, and the fate of victims intensify their last pronouncement. Their stage movements including the last running into the compound also help them to ably present this pronouncements of killing. This particular sequence of pronouncement is having a number of specialities. It exposes the cruel nature of the *peeys* without having to boldly present it on the stage. In a way it consciously avoids a bloody on stage, activity, which can divert the audience's attention from the sacred birth of Jesus and the serene, prayful mood of devotees required at the end of the play. Moreover it is different from biblical and the apocryphal narration where Herod is the villain.*⁸ Here, it is the *peeys* who owns all the credit and wrath of this 'killing of the

children'.

The actors who perform as *peeys* are known to consume liquor and perform. Even though there is no restriction or instruction for the taking of liquor during the performance, they think that the consumption of liquor helps them establish their, illegible, **zig-zag** way of presentation. This (mis)conception also makes them **establish** a contrasting nature with that of kings who fast during the training and perform their roles. This single contrast itself shows how the role types, characterization and the stage behaviour distinguish the cultural, and performative functions of certain actor-characters.

Characterization of the three kings

The 'consistent' characterization of the the three Magi acquire greater significance in the text and performance of *muuvaracu naaTakam*. It is the decisive progress in the characterization of the Magi as it helps the play progress into a culmination as desired by the patron, i.e., the church and the Christian community. As carriers of the dramatic action the Magi fulfill the purpose of the play **production**. (aspiration of the Christian community). So the character design of this 'consistent' types (here the Magi is endowed with a consistent character continuum which is unified and progresses as the situation changes) demands an elaborate analysis.

The characterization of the Magi is carefully designed from the initial journey to the last procession with the infant Jesus. So the character analysis should consider the theatrical presentation of the character as well as the textual references of the character from their revelation and interaction speeches. The theatrical presentation of the character is ably helped by certain factors such as: the hereditary lineage and acquisition of the performance right, the actor's informal training and preparation; the **religio-ritualistic** observances before and during the play production and their responsibility to represent a number of particular **teesams**. All these factors make the transformation of actor into the character effectively and the presentation gains the aspired goal. The latter (i.e., the textual references) can be seen in the various parts of the play along with its progress of action.

Unlike the other characters in this play and in most of the South Indian folk theatre, the Magi are not introduced with a *varavu viruttam*. But their self introductory interaction in the meeting place initially reveals certain basic informations regarding their roles.

Eventhough, the audience is aware of the above factual details and the role and the

position of the Magi due to their familiarity with the scriptural, apocryphal narrative and the historicity of the performance, they give special attention in this session.

This session, which begins with an opening prayer and a desire to narrate the story, progresses with the conversation of the three Magi. This is self explanatory in nature and reveals the name, the country and the purpose of the Magi's journey. In a way this question-answer session with a rich **metaphoric** description introduces some basic and constant features of their character e.g., like their efficiency in ruling their country, their knowledge of the astrology and various scriptures, their strong belief in the birth of the redeemer, who is the only God and their sole purpose of the journey to meet infant Jesus. These constant features continue throughout the play and their purpose of the journey becomes the purpose of the play production. This is what makes a complete audience participation and in a way this becomes one of the strong reasons for the continuous existence of *muuvaracunaaTakam*. Apart from the above major features, this session also points out certain particular characteristic nature of each king and this can be compared with their corresponding kingdoms and final offerings (*muuvaracunaaTakam* does not say about the final offerings but in it the Magi offer money collected from the people during the performance as part of their *neerccai* or votive offering so the gifts considered here is taken from the apocryphal texts).

Their individual characteristics like the valour, justice and the ardent belief in God are reflected in their later dialogues. The next session which deals with the exchange of messages between king Herod and the Magi explicitly reveals the individual temperament and nature of the Magi. Herod's message as read out by the minister shows his anguish and misjudgement about the arrival of the Magi. Through this message he asks them to fix a date for the war according to the ethics of battles. This suddenly agitates the valourous **Balthasar** and he asks for an immediate counter-attack which should result in the capture of Herod's kingdom. But Melchior intervenes, reminds him of their purpose of the journey, points out the cruelty and animosity of the battle and suggests sending a letter of peace to the king Herod. The ardent believer Caspar says that the battle which results in the killing of so many innocents will be an activity against God and he also asks for a peace message to king Herod with the consent of others. Later Balthasar realizes the folly in his sudden reaction and they send a message in unison. This message also reveals their general peace loving, gentle nature, their strong belief in the birth of the redeemer and their whole- hearted unity in their purpose of the journey. The above

sequence reveals a general technique followed in this play in the case of characterization, presentation i.e., the three Magi have certain common characteristics and behave in a unified manner, yet each has a distinct individuality which manifests itself in their variation from the unified characteristics. A close analysis of each of the Magi reveals their peculiar behavioral traits which blend into their unified character motif. The play assembles both these characteristics and effectively presents the kings, (who is having priestly, serene nature in leading the folk to the God, the infant, the redeemer and finally to a new birth i.e., the birth of Christianity) as a contrast to the *peey*s and the pagan, idol worshipper king Herod. This contrast in nature and character is presented in the following argument sequences.

There are two argument sequences in *muuvaracunaaTakam*. Both of these take place inside Herod's court (the permanent stage). The first one includes the lengthy discussions between Herod and the kings about the truth in mythology. The second one works as a sequel to it which features two Brahmins and the Magi with the questions and counter attacks against the brahmin's claims. These two sequences involve a lot of mythological references, interpretations and interpolations, according to the situational status of the argument.

The first argument sequence begins with a warm welcome accorded to the three Magi by Herod. Herod compares the three Magi to the **thrimoorthys** (*Brahma*, Vishnu, *Shiva*) of Hindu mythology. This shows the grandeur of their presence. Balthasar initiates the conversation by introducing themselves and their purpose of visit, his revelation of the birth of an infant and the appearance of the star. Herod's disbelief leads the following question answer session, which involves metaphorically rich speeches of Herod. These speeches are studded with many Hindu mythological references about Gods, religious beliefs, ritual practices and customs.

Herod refers to the thrimoorthys: *Vishnu*, *Shiva* and *Brahma*, in the beginning. Then he proceeds with the story of Rama and also includes references to **Vamana** and Krishna. He also mentions Lord *Shiva* and the details narrated in *kaNTapuraaNam*. He mentions the immortality of the people like Vyasan, Markandan, Aswathathma, Maveli, Hanuman, Vibushan, and Parasuraman due to Lord **Shivas** blessings. Then Herod tries to convince the kings by referring to *Brahma*, **Arumugan**, and Ganeshan with the corresponding mythologies as well as the local **puraaNams** and legends related to them. The three kings logically convince Herod of the follies committed by the gods of Herod. And

they consistently argue for the birth of the one and only god Jesus in a human form, from the virgin Mary by attesting the sign of the star in the sky. Their arguments against the references of king Herod show their boldness, abundant knowledge in the oriental scriptures including the Hindu mythology and local traditions.⁵⁹ This sequence also shows their ability to use appropriate metaphors for their argument and finally their firm belief in Jesus Christ. This also reveals their manifold knowledge in the prophetic pronouncements regarding the birth of Jesus in convincing king Herod, and they agree to call the brahmins to supplement their claims.

After the brahmins entry, knowledge of the Magi exposes the follies and crookedness of the brahmins. Finally they defeat the arguments and references of the brahmins about the dasavatharams in the same manner. In both these argument sequences they expose the Hindu gods for their womanizing nature, their love towards violence and their misdeeds against the human beings. As a contrast to this they push forward the birth of the lord **Jesus-redeemer** in the human form - who is born from a virgin, their warning to king Herod about his destined fall into hell, if he pursues following all the animals, birds and other mentioned idols as gods. Their plea for bringing the elderly priest of Bethlehem for a cross check of the scriptural reference about the star and birth of Lord and their final repeated invitation to Herod to accompany them in search of the new born baby also show their broad mindedness and well constructed character.

During the final sequences everything changes and the kings act and behave as mediators of the salvific history of the humanity. They kneel down and humbly address God with a host of references from the Old Testament (*teevaaram* sequence) in which the Almighty acted as a redeemer and saviour for the people who repent. This prayer sequence convinces one to consider them as the major catalysts in the soeterological function of the birth of Jesus Christs. Through the final procession it is these kings who glorify, legitimate and reveal the birth of the saviour.

In this characterization, one has to consider some other factors, like the prominence given to the first king Balthasar in introducing the others to king Herod. He is the one who begins the conversations in each sequence. The choreography with diagonal, straight line movements and the use of hand gestures like the pathaka *muttirai* along with the well designed costumes which directly resemble and represent the kingly grandeur helps them to effectively present their onstage presence with life.

There is another important factor also. It is this peculiarities of the characterization

combined with the **religio-ritualistic** observances including their own prayers, **fasting**, **and** the blessing of audience with the cross sign from the beginning to the end, the appropriate response, encouragement and the devotee like behaviour of the audience (who always enter on stage and perform offerings of various kinds to the kings), **the** courage and valour to fight for the beliefs of Christianity gained through the argument sequence and the final impersonal prayer, which is studded with the references to **Old** Testament, the Christian salvific history are some of the important things which **work** towards the transformation of the actors into different levels i.e., the actors during their initial procession with people transform into the three kings, who started their **journey** in search of the redeemer, then the encounter and acceptance of king Herod legitimizes their second world presence as kings who represent a number of *teesams* and one single religious ideology. The response of the audience and their offerings elevate the kings sacred presence and instill certain religious responsibilities into their characters. The final prayer sequence with the audience slowly reveals the sacred mysteries of Christianity and transfers them as the carriers of this salvific history. The audience/devotees are then lead, into the eagerly awaited, proclaimed new birth of the infant Jesus (i.e., the **new** birth of humanity). Inside the church these actors turned Kings gain the final certitude of the mystery of human life. The final stage of the procession is a state of ritual trance which encompasses both the actors and the audience. The textual performative reason for this state is the long awaited, much expected yet prolonged revelation of the **birth** of Christ. However, despite our knowledge, belief, faith and aspiration of the participants, this state of trance eludes a simplistic understanding of the phenomenon. We might **be** able to term it as a 'super-realistic' experience surcharged with the religious fervor of **its** participants. Then it becomes a procession which ends with the community proclaiming the glory of God.

King Herod's characterization

The characterization and presentation of the role of King Herod is another important aspect in *muuvaracunaaTakam*. This role type character acquired a peculiar way of dramatic presentational style due to a single actor (Paus Cruz of upateesiviiTu) who kept the right of performing the role for more than five decades. One can assert that this is **a** Paul Cruzian character presentation of Herod.⁶⁰ The dramatic persona of 'Herod' in the text itself having a lot of qualities and specialities, combined with the above peculiarity of performance elevate the characterization of Herod role into the forefront of this genre.

This '**role-type**' character with a character continuum which varies its expression as the situation changes demands an elaborate analysis.⁶¹

Herod, consider as a "**Hindu**" king/ tyrant/ monarch occupies a prominent down stage left (space) and more time on the permanent stage, the 'second-world' represented reality. These features and his interaction with all the other characters in the '**world containing**' (theatrical realism in depicting the world) situation makes a distinction between *muuvaracunaaTakam* as a play from *muuvaracunaaTakam* as a **religio-ritualistic** ceremony, which ends up in the community's glorification of the God. This role brings various kinds of secular and folk conventions into this performance event and develops its structure into theatrical rather than completely ritualistic event. This **role** in a way helped *muuvaracunaaTakam* to break the boundaries of the liturgical structure of the performance where the actors behaved as liturgist and congregation behaved as revealers and recipients; no relationship existed between the two parties other than that established by the act of revelation.

The characterization of Herod deserves more attention due to its drastic variation from the actual scriptural, apocryphal accounts.⁶² The biblical accounts open up lot of possibilities for the portrayal of Herod as a pagan, idolater who can be easily deceived, tempted by the satans and as a prey to their trickeries unleash the wrathful behaviour which ends in a brutal activity, the killing of infants. In *muuvaracunaaTakam* the biblical variations are very clear with the portrayal of Herod as a pagan Hindu king who is tempted, and warned by the satans, (Lucifer's subjects *koopam* and *Ahangaram*) to kill all the infants. He also show a strong belief and knowledge in the Hindu *puraaNams* and sastras, argues for the truth of his mythological gods during the argument sequence. But the killing of infants or Herod proclamation for this brutal acts are not included in *muuvaracunaaTakam*.⁶³ In turn *muuvaracunaaTakam* attributes the blame of all this brutal, violent, sinful activity upon the *peeys*. Here Herod maintains a subtle crooked nature in helpless situation where he subjugates all his glory and arrogance. He has been forced to accept the follies of his Gods. Here he is in a peculiar mental state where his behaviour shows all the things against humility, dignity, and decorum of a tyrant monarch. He shows an escapist tendency to leave the situation immediately which is in very much in contrast with his early behaviour of throwing himself into situation and interpersonal relationships which ably expresses his personal motives and psychological reactions. In a way this peculiar condition of Herod, with his behaviour contrasted with

the dignity and moral victory of the three kings (Magi), makes the audience feel superior to this villain (Herod) character. This superiority results in some inferred value judgments among the audience which ultimately proclaims the final victory of their Christian beliefs over the pagan. That is nothing other than the intended purpose of this play production. So the development of Herod's character into this peculiar inferior state can be analysed through the episodic development of the narrative of *muuvaracunaaTakam*. Moreover these pagan king's character is reflected in his interactions and inter-personal relationships with other characters. His actions are not dictated by any conventional dramatic requirements, they spring from his personal motives. So this personal attitude of Herod must get priority in analysing his role.

Herod's presence on the permanent stage, (i.e., his court in Judaea) with his servants *cevakar* will be already established, by the culmination of the Magi's journey in the church compound. The onstage presence of kingly attired Herod seated on his throne guarded by the servants and blessing the people who come on to the stage, along with the audience's affinity with Royal court scenes easily and effectively make Herod's pompous introduction even before he utters a word.

Then just after the Magi's initial introduction at the meeting point the audience's attention turns towards the permanent stage. This time the *vaattiyaar* and a group start singing a *viruttam* from the stage. This song continues during their procession as the messengers of Herod, which describes the qualities of king Herod and the nature of his position among other kings. This particular song works like a *varavu viruttam* of the kings in South Indian performance tradition.⁶⁴ Here Herod's status as an emperor, receiving various precious things as tax and presents from other kings is narrated. This narration along with the *cevakars* self explanation of their commitment towards king Herod portray and establish Herod as a tyrant monarch who enjoys all the glories of the power. This *viruttam* shows another interesting aspect,⁶⁵ i.e., the description of the things collected by Herod as tax and the way it is presented by other kings shows a distinct similarity with the presents given to the foreign invaders by the local kings, [a number of examples can be seen in the history of medieval Kerala and also in the narratives of and about the foreign invasions and colonial trade].

The exchange of messages and the welcoming of three Magi by Herod is an important sequence in revealing Herod's character. The first message, read out by the minister shows Herod's anguish over the arrival of the three and their troops with pomp and

grandeur. Eventhough it was his misjudgement, his readiness towards battle as a loner against three reveals his adherence to the ethics of **war**. This is explicit from the lines in which he asks them to fix the date, time, and venue of battle.⁶⁶ Herod's second message inviting the Magi to his court with a promise of all sorts of help from his side and his action of getting out of **his** court, (by stepping down from the stage to the **compound**), welcoming the procession of the Magi and seating them on the thrones establish the benevolence and courteousness of the king. All these references, actions and business of Herod's character happen before he utters a single **viruttam**. This is a speciality in the case of a character in *muuvaracunaaTakam*. So Herod's character, gets more time and space to establish and transform himself as an important catalyst in the second world of make-believe. Moreover the direct references about king Herod's character by **cevakar** and the **mantiri** in his direct audience address once again install Herod's capacities in the minds of audience.

peeys interaction with Herod and their tempting advice for killing the children is an important phase in the character scheme of Herod. At the initial stage of the entry of *peeey* the **aaramban** reveals the purpose of *peeys* arrival and the audience get an idea.

The brutality of killing infants, even though not represented or referred, is attributed to *peeys*, not to Herod. This is a major difference between *muuvaracunaaTakam* and other medieval English mystery plays where Herod's wrath and its representation supercedes all the other incidents of the play. But the satan's temptation of Herod has its roots in the plastic arts and iconography of the Medieval Europe.⁶⁷ Even though this sequence shows a drastic difference from the biblical accounts.⁶⁸ It works as an important scene to expose the character change in Herod. This reveals Herod's evil nature behind his friendly mask and this sequence indicates Herod's cleverness than his unbridled temper in the following argument sequence. This indication of cleverness and his confided anger is boldly revealed in his last rejection of Magi's invitation to go and meet the infant child. The *peeys* temptation of Herod and his affinity towards their evil desires make the audience (who are well versed in Christian scriptures) easily contrast Herod with the three Magi and they also compare this incident with the New Testament reference of satan's temptation of Jesus Christ and Christ's curse on satan. Here Herod succumbs to the temptation and the audience easily form an opinion against this character's evil desires and consider him as a wretched one.

The following argument sequence reveals mixed kinds of behaviour from Herod. In

some of the arguments he becomes more emotional and falls into illogical conclusions. The arguments show various references from mythology but Herod's knowledge about them is not precise, sharp and complete. His accounts show that more than the *saastiraas*, he knows the local beliefs and legends. But he passionately and vigorously argues for the sake of his beliefs. This sequence is effectively portrayed and presented with the elements of contrast between Herod and the Magi. So from this sequence, we get the picture of Herod as a pagan, idol worshiper with full of misdeeds and disbeliefs which is against the desire of the Magi's true God. On the contrary, Herod shows a great amount of patience, enthusiasm, vigour and adherence to the courtly etiquettes in this sequence. Especially, Herod welcomes the Magi into the court by comparing them with *tirumuurtis* of Hindu mythology and he agrees to bring the temple priest first then the elder priest of Bethlehem as requested by the Magi. Eventhough he is agitated by the Magi's reference about Lord *Shiva* 'as a mad person' he, as a host, is ready to forgive them.⁶⁹ Most of his acceptances of his own follies, especially in the case of the arguments related to the immortals like Vyasa, Hanuman etc.. reveal his sensible as well as the flexible nature towards his own beliefs.⁷⁰

He becomes depressed with the senseless performance of the brahmins and as per the Magi's request, he calls for the priest. His behaviour in welcoming the priest and giving him a chair to sit and the polite nature of his questions show a different kind of king Herod who is devoid of all his boastful claims. All the more his final acceptance of the priest's account on the scriptural beliefs and prophetic proclamations and his corresponding act of sentencing the brahmins to drown in the sea as an action of his acceptance to all the Magi's arguments portray a different Herod on stage. Moreover his logical as well as clever reply for the Magi's invitation to go along with them to see the saviour also adds some flavour to this drastic change in Herod's character.

This reason directly corresponds with the purpose of the play-production. The author's maximum exploitation of the scriptural scope to portray king Herod as a pagan and conceiving him as Hindu king in *muuvaracunaaTakam* paves the way to establish the victory of the Christian converts of the locality over the others. The Christian population of that particular area had to establish their identity among the others. They are also trying to justify their inception into a new religion (i.e., Christianity due to conversion) by legitimizing the teachings of their religion as the truth. Their attempts to define themselves reflected in their expressive ways and methods. The production purpose and

process of ***muuvaracunaaTakam*** reflect and bring out the aspired ambition of this particular community. In a way, the author/ patron/ audience find Herod, the pagan/Hindu king as an instrument to use and fulfill their cherished ambitions. So the character is purposefully devoid of his villainous acts like the dramatically effective Herod's wrath and the killing of children, on the other hand, he is little worried over the pompous arrival of the kings. He is easily subjected to the temptation of the satans and in the later sequences he meekly obeys and surrenders before the wishes and arguments of the three kings. In the argument sequence this tendency is more evident and drastic. The predominantly Christian audience is allowed and made to feel superior to the villainous Herod, who has revealed his true character through his ardent pagan/Hindu beliefs which are exposed as illogical, senseless and designed for the people who travel through the path of sin with blind beliefs and customs. Later Herod's realization and acceptance of his follies through his final act of sentencing the brahmins to drown them in the sea proclaims the ultimate victory of the Christian beliefs. This effect of superiority of audience is achieved through the indirect, unconventional methods of character presentations. The objective value judgements do not come from Herod's own mouth, it has to be inferred by the audience from his behaviour. So his behaviour and presentations are purposefully and indirectly designed through stylistic means. This results in the contrasts and the drastic changes in Herod's character after the *peeys* interaction. (Herod's initial blessing of the audience with a cross is justified here because till the intervention of *peeys*, Herod [the Christian actor] is not a pagan and behaves properly and majestically like an emperor and his religious beliefs are not explicit [except the sign of *naamam* on the fore-head] in his behaviour). Thus, one can say that there are two phases in Herod's characterization. **Structure of *muuvaracunaaTakam* and its specialities**

This portion deals with the specialities in ***muuvaracunaaTakams*** performance structure and the major components used to achieve and maintain this structure. The present performance structure is evolved due to the influence of various factors such as:

- (a) The purpose and the function of the play.
- (b) The influences of other performance traditions especially the South Indian performance genres and the middle English Magi plays.
- (c) The contextual and climatic situations of this play production.

(a) The religious purpose of Evangelisation and the conversion of people into Christianity using this art form as part of the church's propaganda machinery influenced the structural formation of the theme. In order to maintain this purpose of the patron (i.e., church and Christian community) along with their self definition of the religious ideology and its teachings, the thematic structure acquired a peculiar form. This is very evident from the repeated use of Christian religious symbols, and the scriptural references. The initial exposition of the purpose of the journey by the Magi itself becomes the purpose of the play which is nothing other than their religious ambition to go and meet infant Jesus, who is the redeemer to offer their prayers and to seek the ultimate blessings of a new birth (i.e., the birth of Christianity). This is nothing other than the major aspiration of a community of people (*vaNNiyar*) who got converted into a new religion and who are trying to establish their roots in a different land (i.e., the different parts of Palakkad district of Kerala).⁷¹ The corresponding scenes which purposefully show the victory of the Magi in their arguments upon the religious beliefs and practices with king Herod and his brahmins once again legitimize the purpose of the play. These arguments and the mythological references used in this are carefully presented to gain the intended purpose of the patron. In order to achieve this, just after the initial exposition, the play presents a *peey* sequence in which it subtly introduces the moral teachings and the concept of sin according to the Christian belief. These moral teachings are done by exposing the qualities and the duties of the *peey*s through their revelations. As an answer to *aaramban* the *peey* boastfully proclaims that he came to this earth to induce people to commit such things, which includes *peey*s temptation of the people to go against the teachings, beliefs and laws by the priest, the Church, Holy Bible and *tiruc cabai*. Their references to the misdeeds and immoral activities of people like the extra marital relationships and incest relations in their domestic life, along with the *peey*s list of victims who had fallen into their trickeries, in turn warns the audience about the fate of people who fall into the hand of *peey*s temptation. Later this sequence helps the audience to identify and legitimize the 'attributed sins' committed by Hindu Gods. This careful manipulation of the structure helps the patron or the producer to achieve their intended purpose of the production. This purpose of production is the basic reason behind the major component of recurrent use of contrasts in this performance. The careful portrayal of the contrasts in characterization, thematical presentation and in the various nuances of acting is one of the major structural component which works positively for the Christian

propaganda and finally results in defining the religio-cultural identity of the Christian community of **attikkooTu**. This contrast can be easily seen in the argument sequences where the textual contents and the theatrical presentation are carefully contrasted. In the arguments between Herod and the Magi, Herod's arguments and statements (Hindu mythology and beliefs) are contrasted with the Christian mythology and beliefs of the Magi. The Magi's thrust point of the birth of Jesus as a human being from a virgin (Mary) is contrasted with the super human nature and the womanizing mischiefs of the Hindu Gods. The arguments of the Magi with the Brahmins reveal the complete disbelief of the Magi in Brahmins' claims and statements. With their thrust point, the Magi defeat the Brahmins' claims, here more than the Magi's victory the sequence exposes the bad qualities of the Hindu priest and their lack of commitment and responsibility towards their own ritualistic acts. They are contrasted with the character who is coming in the next scene i.e., the elderly Christian priest of Bethlehem. This priest's celibacy, his knowledge and the strong belief in the Holy Bible along with his own stage presence and behaviour is purposefully contrasted with the Brahmins' greed for money, lust for women and their half-knowledge. More than that the final acceptance of the Magi's claims which is shown through Herod's order to drown the Brahmins, the repeated warning of the priest against committing the sin, and a long prayer - like final sequence of **teevaaram** which is studded with the references of the salvific acts of God, ably assert the prominent place of the designed purpose of the play production over its structural **format**.

(b) The influences and affinities of the South Indian performance genres especially **teerukku-uttu**, **CaviTTunaaTakam**, **poraaTTunaaTakam**, etc., play another important role in the structural formulation of *muuvaracunaaTakam*. Like the other forms, the characters sing songs followed by a **vacanam** or dialogue. This form also practises a set pattern in introducing a new character into the scenes. All the characters, except the Magi, are introduced by a **viruttam** sung by the backing vocals along with the **vaattiyaar**. This describes the status and nature of the new entry (King Herod's entry is an example). The metaphorically rich and poetically rhythmic use of language also shows the similarity with other traditions. In *muuvaracunaaTakam*, the Magi are introduced at the initial meeting point through their self and direct address to the other characters. In the case of the entry of *ptcys*, *paappaans* and the priests, *muuvaracunaaTakam* follows an independent structural pattern, i.e., before their entry the general nature and character of the forthcoming characters are described by songs sung by backing vocals, then the

characters enter and boastfully reveal their purpose of arrival and in turn express their psychological stature. Later these characters are addressed by the other characters. This second persons address reveals the physical presence of the character. In this way **muuvaracunaaTakam** follows this pattern of introduction strictly and presents the characters effectively.

One can say that most of the South **Indian** theatre forms are a 'total theatre' in which all the performance aspects are fused into a single form.⁷² The nature of each form largely depends upon the particular balance maintained between its many components and constituent parts. This balance is maintained through the inclusion of a character presenter who takes decisions in giving emphasis to certain elements and the subordination of the other elements. This character **cuttirataari/ kooNanki/ kaTTiyakkaaran/ kuuttukoomaLi/ aaramban** and in most of the performance traditions the on stage presence of guru/ master/ **aasaan/ aNNaavi/ vaattiyaar** supplements this role and controls the performance. So this role acquires a prominent position and becomes the deciding factor of the progress of performance as well as the structure of the play. In the case of **muuvaracunaaTakam** it is the **aaramban** who controls, guides and makes the performance progress. So the study of the structure of this performance in fact revolves around this main character's interventions and interactions. The **vaattiyaar (matalaimuttu)** who is present on the stage takes up the role of **aaramban** and interacts with all other characters. Here an important thing is that, it is Chellappan, the elder son of **cinnppa vaattiyaar** who holds the right to be called as **vaattiyaar** and the younger **matalaimuttu** takes lead (eventhough chellappan is present on the stage) because of his knowledge of the script and his ability in singing.

This introduction of the **aaramban** occurs only in the beginning of the second stage (i.e., after the initial journey and meeting of the Magi and the exchange of messages which culminates in the Herod's welcome of the Magi into the court i.e., the permanent stage). This according to the manuscript comes as an introduction to the entry of **peeys**, this is called as **aaramban viruttam** describing the entry of satans. Eventhough, later **aaramban viruttams** and his direct interactions with the newly entered characters make the play progress, this late introduction of such an important catalyst of the performance genre (along with some people's claim for a separate character [other than the **vaattiyaar**] makes one to resolve the identity of **aaramban**. Before the supposed entry of the **aaramban** in the second world of representation (i.e., **aaramban viruttam** entry of the satans) four

important episodes and entries take place in the performance structure; They are:

1. The initial journey of the Magi and the 'exposition' at the temporary meeting place.
2. The exchange of messages, which culminate in a procession and the Herod's welcome of the Magi into his court.
3. The Herod's minister's direct interaction with the audience and his exit from the stage.
4. The entrance of a character who gets garlanded by the people at the sides and his direct address to the audience.

This direct address song is called '*paayirampaaTTu*' which consists of the details regarding the drama, its author etc. This song also asserts that whatever the person/singer of this song narrates is the truth. He reveals that he is going to unravel the truth of the scripture in front of the people and the audience, who are the believers of the scripture. They are free to ask anything, but once again he asserts that, whatever he is going to say/show through the following performance is the truth. In the early days there were twenty five songs in this session,⁷³ now a days they use only four songs. Who is this person? Some of the elderly people asserts that this is the *aaramban*,⁷⁴ who keeps the right of conducting this performance, as it is gained from the *Appavu paNTitakaaran*, who was a prominent figure along with *Arokiya vaattiyaar* and Fr. Bruyera in founding this performance genre. The eldest son of the family of Appavu *paNTitakaaran* of *paittu para* keeps the right of singing this song. It is this strong and powerful personality (*aaramban*) who confronts the dreadful *peey* characters. He has the right to call them *eTa!*, *vaaTaa!* etc. (which is often used by the elders to address the younger people. This addressing words establish the superiority of a character over the other). In the early days they were supposed to know all the nuances of this performance and are entrusted to guide and control this performance. Some people oppose the idea of naming the above as *aaramban*.⁷⁵ They say *aaramban* is the *vaattiyaar* himself, who knows the complete text, has the freedom to interfere, to interact with others and to control the performance as in the present days. Eventhough the person who sings *paayiram paaTTu* is present on the stage for a long time, it is the *vaattiyaar* turned *aaramban* who performs all the duties belonging to *aaramban* other than singing the *paayiram paaTTu*. This practice of *vaattiyaar* doing all the duties of interaction and controlling the performance might have

started from the time of **cinnappa vaattiyar** of *paNTitakaaran* family (who adored the position of *vaattiyar* for more than five decades) and is still continuing in the present days as his son Matalaimuttu has been performing for the past seven years. In that case considering the etymological meaning of the term *aaramban*, the status and powerful presence of **appaaru** *paNTitakaaran*, the lineage and the relevance of *paayiram paaTTv* with its bold statements regarding the truth to be revealed through the forthcoming performance, the rights of the *aaramban* to address *peeys* with derogatory terms along with the powerful control of the art form in the hands of Chinnppa *vaattiyar* during his tenure as master and the drastic change that happened in the patronage enforce one to consider *aaramban* as the person who sings *paayiram paaTTv* by the end of first session. With this song he directs the audience to the second world (represented world) of reality i.e., the stage presence of the **muuvaracunaaTakams**. But one has to consider the drastic transformation that has happened to the term and to the title *aaramban* i.e., at present, it is the *vaattiyar* who is present on stage with the backing vocals, interacting with other characters and performing all the *viruttams* belonging to the *aaramban* (in fact the last year the *matalaimuttu* himself sung *paayiram paaTTu* instead of *paNTitakaaran* Michael Raja of *paittu para*). This transformation might have started during the time of *cinnappa vaattiyar*. So it is possible for one to consider *vaattiyar* as *vaattiyar* with *jaalraa* along with the *pinpaaTTukaar* and when he interacts and gets into direct conversations with the characters of the audience, he must be considered as *aaramban*. Any way the presence of *aaramban* plays an important role in the progress of the performance and one can see this character as the foundation stone upon which the entire structure of the performance is built.

Among *aarambans* duties, the *varavu viruttams* before the entry of new characters comes first. It is through this *viruttams* that the audience get a general idea about the forthcoming entries of **characters**. *peey varavu*, *paappaan varavu*, and the song before the entry of the guru are some of the major examples. The *aarambans* direct on stage interactions with the newly entered characters furthermore reveals the nature and purpose of their present arrival. Later *aaramban* reports the arrival of these new characters to the already present characters on the **stage**. *aaramban* as a servant of king Herod responds to the call made by the brahmins and the priest, call upon king and reports their arrival to the king. All these incidents happen on the stage where all the characters are present and visible to the audience. Their interludes connect the various sequences and direct the

audience's attention and informs them about what is happening on the stage. Moreover these are the scenes which make the performance lively.

In a way this interconnecting sequences help the performance to progress without the help of sceneries or scenic descriptions. Even though all the characters are present on stage this interlude introduces and connects the newly entered characters with the others and makes the narrative progress. So the presence of *aaramban*, his interactions and introductions are a must in the episodic linearity and progress of this performance. Apart from this, the *aaramban* as a servant brings certain stage properties and hands over things to the characters present in the scene. This direct interactions of the *aaramban* especially his bringing the chair and Bible for the priest, his answers to the calls of king Herod including the final sequence in which he takes away the Brahmins for drowning them in the sea and his direct roles in his playing with the *peeys* and asking Brahmins to foretell his future etc., make one to consider him like a *kaTTiyakkaaran* of the South Indian performance genres. The *aarambans* direct audience addresses in *muuvaracunaaTakam* are peculiar and important in terms of the structure of the play. There are three direct addresses, the initial one is the *paayiram paaTTu* sequence, the second one is just after the exit of *peeys* (in this, the *aaramban* informs the audience that king Herod has been over-ruled by the *peeys* intentions). Then he reports that with this mental state Herod welcomes the three Magi into the court. This direct address once again brings back the audience into the play and its final purpose of the production. Moreover this address cautions the audience against the *peeys* temptations in one's life and specifies a bondage between Herod and the satans. This is a technique adopted by the author/producer to install the idea of the *peeys* intentions against the god-with the above explicit address. The last direct address of *aaramban* occurs just after the exit of the king Herod. Here *aaramban* once again narrates the journey of the Magi in brief and states that "on the way the star disappeared and the Magi knelt down and prayed". Correspondingly on the stage this action follows and the Magi, along with the *aaramban*, sing the most religious song sequence of the play known as *teevaaram*.

In the *teevaaram* sequence, the ambience transforms into a different level. The audience turned devotees get onto the stage and the atmosphere changes into a religious one. The aim here, clearly, is not to come to the represented reality (dramatic consistency in presentation), but to use as many scenic and musical effects as possible in order to gain the ritual trance as a culmination of the event. The manipulation of the already

introduced **theatrical** devices through the overall supervision of the **vaattiyar** turned **aaramban** seems to maintain the formal balance of the above sequence. The presence of such a character (i.e., *vaattiyar* in disguise of a character) is common and essential for the smooth progress of most of the South Indian performance traditions.

Another important and similar structural device used in *muuvaracunaa Takam* is the minister's direct address to the courtiers in Herod's court. This kind of **mantiri kavi**, known as **naaTTu vaLamai** in *CaviTTunaaTakam*, are famous and common in other South Indian forms. Here, this occurs in a similar context at the beginning of the court scene, in a peculiar manner. Just after Herod's welcome of the Magi to the stage he calls upon the *mantiri* to address the subjects. The *mantiri* inturn performs a general audience address in which he asks the audience to remain patient and silent in order to listen to the forthcoming argument sequence. He also offers the audience subjects an intelligent as well as heart-throbbing speech from their king. In *muuvaracunaaTakam* this direct address works in two ways (a) it helps to capture back the attention of the audience which might have got disturbed due to the grand entry procession of the three kings amidst the audience and Herod's pompous welcome of the **Magi**. (b) It also works as an introductory address at the beginning of any performance and this address once again reminds the audience about the importance of the argument sequence and its relation with the Christological purpose of the play-production. In another way through this address, which considers the audience as an inevitable part of the play, their participation is confirmed once again and grants them permission to be a part of the play as the subjects of king Herod. This invitation later legitimizes their action of on stage offerings and presence during the argument sequences.

Eventhough it is not wise to compare and use the Western dramatic terminology to identify certain structural components of *muuvaracunaaTakam*, the thematic influence, the involvement of Western missionaries and the similarity between the structural patterns used in the medieval English Magi plays makes one to think about the influences inflicted by that tradition upon *muuvaracunaaTakam*. The initial meeting point and the self introductions by the three Magi in *muuvaracunaaTakam* is the 'exposition' part of the play. They reveal the purpose of their journey in this exposition sequence. The coming of the message from king Herod and the Magi's reaction show the first conflict; from there, the action slowly rises and due to the effective use of contrasts during the argument sequences, the rising of action reaches its peak. The entry of the eldest priest

of Bethlehem to resolve the conflicting opinions about the birth of god in human form sets up all that is required for a climax. The priest's revelation from the scriptures and Herod's order to sentence the **paappaans** become the climax. Then the performance takes a turn of falling of action in which Herod's realization of his own follies in the religious beliefs are subtly established. The Magi and in turn the Christian community, get an upper-hand in their beliefs. The following procession and the change of atmosphere in front of the manger, inside the church provide the cathartic purgation of their feelings and they slowly go into a kind of ritual trance. The final procession with the infant pronounces the ultimate joy they acquire through this world of representation and in turn helps them to come out of the **make-believe** world of the performance.

The use of messengers and the exchange of messages is one of the most important similarity one can find in between the medieval English Magi plays and the **muuvaracunaaTakam**; in both the genres the messengers render their lines in a very realistic as well as localized manner. The messengers represent an example of 'stage realism'. It is these messengers who connect the two stage spaces i.e., one temporary (path way) and the other permanently made (stage). These messengers direct and lift the performance from the status of an event to the second world of representation. It is this insertion of messengers in between the two sequences which makes the progress of the play possible. This introduction also slowly brings in the courtly etiquettes and makes the audience enter the world of make-believe where the courts are realistically represented. Later this scene ends up with a long, greeting ceremony in which king Herod comes out and receives the Magi. The messenger's sequence relates the text with the hint of the presence of the messenger in the apocryphal gospels.⁷⁶ This in turn conveys **muuvaracunaaTakams** indebtedness to Herod plays in the messenger sequences.

(c) The third factor which regulates the evolution of performance structure is the context of the festival and the geographical structure of the performance space. The context of 'epiphany celebrations' and the early morning holy mass at the St. Anthony's church dictate the selection of theme and the time for the culmination of performance. The chilled climatic conditions of January, influenced the selection of costumes which cover the entire part of the actor's body. The church compound and the stage built at the right side of the compound along with the density of Christian population living around the church specified the important places from where the journey of the Magi began. The metal as well as the mud roads towards the church become the way for their journey. During

the nineteen sixties, a permanent stage/performance space was built in the church's compound. Subsequently three small *koovils* were also built in the three places from where the journey began.⁷⁷ Christian people living around these three *koovils* used to spend money for the *muuvaracunaaTakam*. Every year, people belonging to one particular place take charge in collecting money and conducting the festival.⁷⁸ This contextual factor plays an important role in shaping the theatrical gadgets. More over the localization of Herod and characterization of Hindu ritualists (*paappaans*), can be explicitly seen in the decoration, ornamentation and the properties used for the performance. The use of bullock-cart and its decoration with agricultural crops available in that area, the use of localized lights (*masaal* and petromaxes), music and sound effects (*ceNTa meeLam*, pop-guns) are some of the examples. Another important aspect is the presence of local religious beliefs and practices like the procession, use of lit candles, the flower garlands as offering along with the washing of the feet of the Magi and the use of the symbol of cross for blessing etc. Altogether the artistic codes which are manipulated in the structural formation of the performance bear the marks of the social conditions of the *attikkooTu* village and its Christian population.

Religion

The presence of religion is dominant in all aspects of *muuvaracunaaTakam*. The emigrated Catholics from various parts of Tamilnadu to Palakkad region have caused the birth of this particular theatre form. The colony of the Catholics settled in this area by 1750 and they established a church at *attikkooTu* by 1850 under French missionaries. As per the beliefs the *muuvaracunaaTakam* started along with the building of the church in 1852. More than conversion, their ambition was to define their own 'upper' status over the others or to legitimize the sacredness of their religious practices through this performance. In order to achieve this, they purposefully selected a religious theme, associated with their own religious festival, which can be used as a counterpart to the other religious entertainments. Their attempts to define their religious identity along with the missionary zeal of the propagation of Christianity made this performance more religiously bounded in all its aspects. It is this overdose of Christianity which made this art form accessible and acceptable only to the Christian community. An initial knowledge in the Christian scriptures and mythology is necessary for one to understand and appreciate the thematic content of this performance. Moreover, prior knowledge and practice of the Christian religious observances (rites and rituals) would enable the

audience to be a part and parcel of this performance event. *muuvaracunaaTakam* can thus be considered as an exclusive Christian theatre form. This is one of the reasons for its single production and lesser popularity. This is the major factor which makes it a completely Catholic affair of a particular region. So the clutches of Christianity can be seen in all the spheres of this performance event. They are mainly (a) the rituals and religious offerings (b) the thematical references, the use of Christian symbols and the catechetical teachings of the church.

(a) This performance event is filled with the ritual practices and the religious offerings of the Christian community of the region. The event itself is structured with a beginning of a ritual and ends up with another. So one can see the various kinds of Christian ritualistic practices and offerings at the three important junctures of this performance event. They are:

1. before the commencement of the performance (2) during the performance and (3) at the end and after the performance.

The religious observances start during the practice session itself. Everyday, the practice of the play begins with a prayer and as explained earlier the *colliyaATTam* session comprises of certain observances. Just before the festival i.e., on the 1st of January, they hoist the flag which is decorated with some agricultural crops and flowers at St. Antony's church and along with the holy mass they adorn the infant Jesus in the manger (*pulkuuTu*) with gold chain, bangles and anklets (*kaappu*). This golden ornaments were acquired by the church as offerings from the people through the ages. These things are kept in the safe custody of the parish priest and taken out only for this particular festival. By the end of this function, the parish priest at the manger blesses the devotees. The day before the performance, there is another ritual offering called, *kaapparaci* (offering of ritual food). For this the Christians of that area, bring a ritual food made of raw-rice, coconut and jaggery to the Church. The exact half portion of each ones offering is taken by the Church and later it will be supplied to the poor people in the parish. The other half of the offering is taken back home and they cook and share the food. Before the play production most of the actors undergo fasting and all of them attend the early morning eucharist in the church. By evening some people go and meet the

parish priest. They also offer certain presents and renew their commitment and relationship with the church.

2. The performance process starts with the religious blessing and the *vaattiyaar* ceremoniously puts the cross symbol on the forehead of the actors. Later, the actors seek blessings from the elders and just before the beginning of the journey they kneel down and pray at their respective *koorils* and on their way to the church they bless the kids. During the performance, especially at the time of the argument sequences the seeking of blessing by the audience from the Magi continues, some of them kneel down before the Magi and the kings bless them by putting a sign of cross. This type of offerings (*neerccai*) can be seen in the initial stages too. Then the audience give money and take flower garlands from a person who is present on the stage holding a bunch of *jamanthi* garlands. The devotees from the audience offer these garlands to the kings. This votive offering is called *tankooTai*. Later these garlands are once again taken from the kings and kept in the hands of the same person who is in charge of collecting money in order to facilitate this offering.⁷⁹ During the last sequences (mostly at the *teevaaram* time), the audience turned devotees put money into the silver plate, which the three kings hold in their hands. They also bring water in a small vessel, wash the feet of the kings and kiss their feet.
3. By the end, i.e., after the *teevaaram* song all the devotees light candles and participate in the procession to the church. They sing *teevaaram* song at the manger. They almost fall into a ritual trance and perform a '**sashtannga namaskara**' (a complete prostration on the ground); along with the Magi. The parish priest sprinkles holy water on them. Then the audience participate in the final procession, with the infant Jesus kept in a '*teer*'-this is called *teerooTTu*. In this, the devotees keep lit candles in their hands. After the first round, the procession stops for a while. During this time, the *ubateesiyaar* announces the names and the family names of people who had offered a prescribed amount as *teerooTTu neerccai*. Even though most of the people offer this before the performance commences, but it is revealed and announced through the mike only after the performance. This particular offering had got no connection with the money they contribute for the performance. This *teerooTTu* money

along with the money collected during the performance will go to the church's exchequer. At last all the people participate in the holy mass along with the actors and the group of people who had performed and narrated the story of the Magi.

- (b) This section deals with the major religious issues and influences on the *muuvaracunaaTakam* performance.

The performance text of *muuvaracunaaTakam* contains a host of Old Testament references, incidents and the prophecies in order to present the contextual situations in the play and to set up an extraordinarily rich circumstance for the birth of Christ, the purpose of the birth and its effect upon human beings. The Old Testament references start from the initial meeting point where the third king refers and asserts that "in order to wash away the sins committed by Adam and Eve and the humanity, the redeemer come to earth". Later during the *peeys* revelation sequence one can hear a number of Old Testament names (and incidents), who as an example, had already fallen into the hands of satan's tricks. There is another reference describing Lucifer, the arch angel and the Head of satans sending his servants from the burning hell to the earth to tempt king Herod and make him do certain things against the will of God.

The argument sequences contain certain references to strengthen the Magi's stand on their beliefs, i.e., along with the prophecies narrated in the Old Testament, the Magi assert their belief of the birth of the son of god as a human being from the virgin Mary. They argue their statement showing the coming of a new star as a sign referred to in the holy scriptures. The Old Testament references along with the reading from the scriptures by the priest is more effective. Here the priest portray the sin committed by various Old Testament characters which include some of the already referred characters like Adam, Eve, Caine, Abel, Moses, Noah, angels etc. With the help of these references, he warns the people and Herod to keep away from the sins. He also reveals the truth behind the birth of Jesus as a human being and paves the way to another important session which once again refers to the earlier mentioned incidents along with description of God's timely interference and asserts his ultimate compassion and love for human being. This session which reminds the salvific purpose of the birth of Jesus Christ in the human form in a prayerful tone is the most beautiful as well as meaningful sequence in the performance. This *tēvaaram* sequence and its purposeful presentation along with its carefully planned

execution by the author, producer and the bearer of the tradition reveal the religious, christological and propagandist ideology behind this play production.

Besides the references from the scriptures, one can identify some other religious factors which work to produce the desired purpose of this play production. They are the repeated use of Christian symbols and the designed catechetical teachings of the church. The symbols used are the repeated use of the sign of cross initially as a result to seek blessing and to start the prayer and the play. Later this symbol is used throughout the play to **bless** the audience especially the ones who offer various kinds of **neerccaais**. The procession **is** another important thing used in this performance in order to celebrate and legitimize 'he birth of the redeemer. Other factors like the lit candles, garlands, washing of the feet with the water etc., are carefully presented in association with the sacredness attributed to certain characters and objects. The already planned and careful presentation and the on stage use of Holy Bible is another important aspect to be noted. Initially the Holy Bible is referred to and equated with the truth using the dialogues by the first king and the **aaramban**, later a number of references from the Bible are taken and presented in the pretext of truth **valu**. Finally the priest's on stage presence with the Holy Bible and his reading from the book which culminate in the warning against the people who commit sin, legitimize the ultimate authority and sacredness the Holy book possesses.

The moral teachings of the church are subtly and effectively produced using the *peeys* as an instrument. Earlier (the description of) Lucifer and the burning hell along with the satans characteristic presence and their proclamation of the tricks create awesome feeling in the minds of the audience. Later, the list of victims and their plights horrify them to take a decision not to fall into the *peeys* seduction. Finally the ultimate victory of the pious Magi over the pagan beliefs of king Herod and satans helps them to discard the temptations of satans. In this manner, the religion plays an important role in all spheres and makes this genre as the '**core**' of the Christian performance tradition. There are some more theatrical aspects which strengthen the concept of *muuvaracunaaTakam* as a '**core**' performance. They are: the 'improprieties', the 'unconscious gains' and the newly created conventions.

Some 'Improprieties' and certain unconscious gains:

muuvaracunaaTakam has a number of improprieties as observed by the outside participants and the present researcher. Apart from the interpolated and (mis) interpreted use of Hindu mythological references for a parochial purpose, the performance structure

shows certain theatrical improprieties. The use of a single character as minister for the Magi at the meeting point as well as king Herod at his palace without giving any conventional/artistic codes **for** the transformation of position really makes confusion in the mind of the audience. Moreover his hasty address to the audience on behalf of king Herod and the sudden exit from the stage after the address, along with the *aarambans* role play as a servant to obey king Herod's orders in the later sequences pose more problems to the stability and individuality of this single character *mantiri*. The excessive singing and unnecessary, intermittent, intrusions of backing vocals in the *muuvaracunaaTakam* is another draw back which badly affects the presentation skills of the actors and their communication devices. A lot of people from the audience always occupy the stage as if they are keeping some rights of the performance. Even though this ensures participation of the audience at various levels, it destroys the visual **image**. This makes the permanent stage more clumsy and breaks the concept of the actor - audience demarcation in the second world of representation. Herod's use of the symbol of cross for blessing the audience before the arrival of the Magi into the Church compound is also in a way an impropriety when we consider the pagan character of king Herod. This improprieties are overtly visible only to an outsider or to a theatre specialist but for an insider or for a participant observer they are seen as a part of the performance tradition and are received simply as a ritual/cultural event. There are a number of unconscious events or happenings which turn out to be 'positive' in this performance. They are: the removal of the star made of paper from the portico of Church just before the commencement of the play. This replaces the missing star which appeared as a sign for the birth of Jesus. The placement of the three idols of the kings from the east upon the table alter table before they are taken into the manager at the end of the performance by the actors who play the respective roles associates certain amount of sacredness to those idols. The placement of these idols in the manager after the grand procession, theatrically and logically justifies and represents the journey of the Magi and its fruitful completion. The opening of the church's closed main doors at the time of the priest's on stage **announcement** of the birth of redeemer, produces another sensible effect of the birth of a new era.

Apart from this, there are certain newly created conventions. They are: (1) the removal of the Head gear at the alter of the Church by (present) Herod to shows that he is leaving his hereditary might (2) the on stage transfer of *peeys* head gear by Arputha **swamy** to his son and his debutant performance from that scene onwards shows the

acquisition of the performance right. These conventions proclaim the ritualistic nature of the performance and the rigid nature of religiosity that engulfs this form.

From the above description of the play production and the theatrical elements of the genre, one can observe the striking attributes of the '**core**' characteristics of the Christian performance tradition. Owing to the process of ritualization of the theatre itself, this art form shatters the distinctions between the two spheres, ie. the audience and the performers and ritually incorporate both spheres through the holy mass. Therefore this element of integration between the two spheres through out the performance is viewed as a custom. Though the interference of the audience looks like a technical impediment for an outsider, for insider, it is a part of a social drama metaphorically spelt out through a ritual process to express communal solidarity as an idiom of identity. **It** is also because of this reason that the audience and the performers accept the performance text as it is presented. The sequential events of the play becomes a more prominent concern for both spheres than the narration itself. Therefore the cutting or enlarging of narrations of any given scenes as a part of stage improvisations during performance is received casually (as well as **normatively**) by both the spheres.

Even the 'improprieties' as conceived by an outsider or a theatre specialist are made possible only because of the fact that this theatre format is part of a ritual theatre of the community. The temporal and spacial dimensions become void as the play proceeds. For instance the Herod of Judaea becomes a Indian pagan/Hindu ruler and the scribes of Bethlehem become high caste hindu priest. The process of internalization not only of the characters but also of the events of the play transforms the whole play into a ritual theatre and thus becomes the '**core**' in the Christian performance tradition. Herod's first appearance on the stage is received by the audience with reverence and they seek his blessings. The hierarchical placement of Herod with the audience is that of the ruler with the subject and hence two distinct spheres of space is clearly marked between the two. Though it is amazing to seek the blessings of a pagan king by the Christian audience, it is conceived as a part of performance and is being acted out as subjects to the ruler. This enactment by the audience reveal the native tradition of paying homage to the ruler of the land. The hierarchies within the play get reversed with the holy mass. The ruler becomes a simple devotee and participates in the holy mass. This transformation in terms of the reversal of the characters from foes to devotees is amazing and infact brings out the core element of the conversion formulae that is embedded within the ideology of the Christian performance tradition.

Notes

1. Steganopicchio, an italian drama scholar who made a comprehensive study of the early **portuguese** theatre remarks. "**Theatre** was a pedagogic instrument and also a catechetical medium for the **jesuit** priests and this medium was capable of "**serving** as a ductile weapon which has the effect of piercing the souls of people who were conquered". Quoted in H. Goonatileka, *Nadagama* (New Delhi: Satguru, 1984) 29.
2. As Justin Ward points out "**The** society of Jesus had always considered dramatic performances as a **very** valuable form of training, both as listing certain ideals out of the region of cold abstractions and of mere intellectual assent into the sense of reality that action conveys."
3. The feast of ephiphany is one of the important church festivals in the liturgical calender (according to *Temporale*, i.e., Jan 5th *In vigilia Epiphaniae Domini* (Twelfth night), Jan. 6th *In Epiphania Domini* (Twelfth day). This is celebrated in different ways in various parts of the world "The day of light" is the name given for it in Greek. In Kerala this feast, is called *pindikuttiperunnal*.
4. The various parts of Europe has this nativity play tradition called Magi plays. These plays bear the name of the place along with its title, they are: Besancon, Bilsen, Compiègne, Fleury, Friesing, Laon, Limoges, Padua, **Rauen**, Rouen (montpellier), Sicily, Strassburg and Germany. One can include Benediktbeuern (christmas play) and the Shrewsbury (shepherds play) along with this list because of some of the contextual similarities in production.
5. Liturgical calender reveals the important days in a church year. The church year contains two parallel series of feasts. The first one *Temporale* (based on the life of christ) begins with Advent and runs through from christmas to pentecost. The date of Easter, the principal festival of the church, is not fixed so many feast days can occur on a range of dates. The second *Sanctorale* lists feasts of our lady and the saints through out the year. Dramas were performed during the major feasts of both the **series**.
6. A 13-th century manuscript from St. Benoit-sur-Loire, known as the fleury play-book, contains tenplays. Six of them are biblical. For details see "medieval drama in **Europe**" *The Cambridge Guide to Theatre*, 1992 ed. Martin **Banham** P. 636.

7. In Sri Lanka there are at present atleast two modified forms of the same theme. One is the earliest extant Sinhalese **Nadagama** text “**Raja-tun-Kattuva**” written by Mihindukula Suriya Gabriel Fernando of Chilaw and the other, a Tamil text or counter part of “**Raja-tun-Kattuva**” attributed to a Lorenz Pulavar, is called “**Muvirasakkal Nadagam**”. The former closely follows a Portuguese short play *Auto dos Tres Reis Magos* by Gel Via Cente who developed the Gospel story on more popular lines.
8. The begining rituals and benediction sequences are similar. The entry of the **protagonist** (king) follow the same sequenciai order like: starting with the group or a herald praising the king, the entry of the king and his boastful explanation of his status, then the minister is called upon the stage, the minister's entry and so on.... for details on Nadagam of Sri Lanka see H. Goonatilleka, *Nadagama*.
9. The performances of Christian themes in **teerukkuuttu** style include: antooniyaar naaTaKam, aleesiyaar naaTakam, paKttaMaarukirutaal, naana sundari, isttaakkiyuar **naaTakam**, sannikkilaas, Kunu **Kuntammaal** naaTakam, ciluvoppamaaL naaTakam, yoob etc. The two troupes are: **maNiyakkaaran** CaLLai, (paricakkuZal), naaTaka-**M an Ram**. (paaittupaari).
10. Besides the existing *muuvaracunaaTakam* tradition of attikkooTu, there were traits of the same kind of play production at the premises of St. Xavier's Church, **Souriyar Palayam**, seven miles east of Coimbatore. The weaver community, *Chaaliyars* (a community of later converts to the Christianity) were the artists and actors. The play was staged under the leadership of *Marryadas Chettiyar*. this play show clear variations in the case of action, dialogue, song, costume and the presentation. **But** the theme is distinctively similar in content.
11. Interview with Madali Muttu (second son of Cinnappa Vaattiyaar and the present master).
12. The places are: **Pappanpalli**, **NaTupalayam**, Venkarpalayam, Eruttenpati, Palaniyarpalayam, Cayatturai, Naluur, Lurapparai, VaaRaiyar, KollampaLLi, Cullimatai, Paralpaarai, KanlikooTu, Kovilpalayam, Palacampati, TeeranvankkoTTai, **Elippaarai**, Kottiparai, **Palliyammanturai**, **Konkanputur** **KeerampaLLam**, **Bakavati**-paar, **Meenoompaar**, Ventapalayam, Kirumbupaarai, Karaiyaampalayam, AttikkooTu, Kulukkaampaarai, **Kozipaarai**. Neelipaarai, **Konkanpaarai**, eRumaakkarannoor and **aTTapalayam**.

13. The popularity of the nativity themes in France from 12-th century onwards and the vast number of narrative poems performed as part of the training of clerics in the seminaries of France strengthen this possibility.
14. Later the church committee obtained the removal of the stay from the district court and performed the play as part of the ritual observance to full fill their right.
15. [his particular word with the literal meaning of one attaining the most **knowledgeable** state is used by the elderly local people like Gabriel and Mariyannan, of the same family in order to ascertain their right over the performance.
16. The method is taken from, Alan Barnard and Anthony Good, *Research Practices in the Study of Kinship* (London: Academic Press, 1984) 6-7.
17. This is a combination of syllables, meaningless but follows a pattern of sounding and rhythm. The same kind is called as **collukoTTu** in **Bharatanatyam** tradition e.g.. *Tha-Tha-Thi*.
18. As **Madalai** Muthu (the present *vaattiyaa*r) says, most of the actors never follow the exact foot-steps. They use their own styles of movements and some how adjust with the whole pattern. - This is very much evident from the 'Herods' constant and repeated use of **naalamkal**.
19. For example, '**CaviTTunaaTakam**' consists of a number of plays like. Kaarlmaan, Jenooa etc., with the similar performance codes, see the above chapter - IV.
20. James R. Brandon, ed. *The Cambridge Guide to Asian theatre* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 6.
21. The same term is also used in the other *kuuttu* performances of Tamilnadu.
22. The names of the kings according to the manuscript available shows little local variations in pronouncing. They are, *paltasaar*, **melkiyoo**, *kaaspar* respectively. But the thesis follows the apochryphal names as mentioned in the text.
23. *tappu* is lava type, high sounding instrument with single face. Mostly played with thin, curved stick.
24. The same kind of journey of three kings is prominent in Raja-tun-kattuva of Chilaw (**Sri** Lanka) where they use elephants instead of bullock-carts.

25. This fire-work display is an integral part of the Kerala festivals. This denotes the culmination of an auspicious action or a session.
26. *arccisiTTa ciluvaiyenum aTaiyaaLattaal*
alaKai enum catturukkaLiTRu ninbu
niccayamaay reccittuk KoLLu menkaL
ninaivil vaLarintirukku kinRa caruva iiycaa
talt cuyamaay pitaac cutan isparittu
cantuvendum tiruttuvattin naamattaalee
muRe ceyalaayt tiruccabaiyil naTantuvaram
muunRaracar caritai tanai moZikuveenee.
27. The mode of Abhinaya using gestural patterns which directly corresponds with the semantic meaning of the sentences. In the case of *padharthabhinaya* the gestures follow each word.
28. At present these songs are drastically edited in order to save the time.
29. An example: *taa tiTT taka taTTtax.*
30. *kaaraana olikeeTTuk kukaiyai niiKKi*
katattuTanee paayntoorkkuc cinKampoolee
paaraaLum entatumunpuancal ceeti
pakarnteeZutiviTTavan meelpaayntu ciiRi
teeraanai paripaTaikaL celuttiyantac
cerucalaiyaip piTittaracan tannaikkaTTi
vaaraalee MuZankujeyappeeri koTTi
varukuvaay mantiriyee varukuvaay.
31. *vantinkee kolamunpaayk KuTTankuuTi*
vantirukkum piracaikaLee onRu keeTpiir
cantaTiyumpeeccukaLai aTakki niinkaL
caatuvaayt taanirunkaL namatu raajan
vanta muuvaracaruTan carutai peeca
manankoNTaar aekaiyinaai maRRoorkkellaam
vintaiyuNTaam nanamuNTaam puttiyuNTaam
vinoolamuTan nayamu.VTaamviLambineenee.

32. *paarkkavinkee vantirukkuma canankeTkellaam*
paalamutti ceytukoNTeenroonRu keeTpiir
aarkkumee potu nayan kaNTaal colla
appaNaiyin appaTiyeeyaanun conneen
ceerkkaiyaay inku vanttenitanaalaarkkum
ciRiyavan meeleLLaLuvum koopam veeNTaam
taarkkivai yonRiTarinaal ennaik keeTka
cammaliteenyaareeninun caatippiiree.

33. An example for a kavittam:
nana . a.NNai nana na.NNai
nanana.NNai nanaNa.NNa

* * * * *
 * * * * * . nanaNa.NNa

34. *pariti matimiLai maaRi ten vaTakkaakinum*
paal karuppaaki viTinum
niir tannulee tiippaRRiveekinum paLLai
pakal naTamaaTinum velli.

* * * * *

* * * * *

vaarttaik kiNankaamalum tannuTaiya naaTTiRpIRanta
KuZaintaikaLai eilaam kollumpati turputti colli
vaarunkaL enRunuppina kuuLikaL varukinRaarkakenRu
aRiviirkaLaaka.

35. *tenkunilai pool vaLaintu niiNTa ceruntataaTi uroomamum*
teevaankuTulum aantaimukamum tiyentu karutta utaTumaay
cankaiyillaata kaZutaik kuralum caaTittaaNTi katitumee
caattaantatu maattaaaninta cabaiyil vantu toonRinaan.

36. See the **last** line of the above example, this line repeats in every stanza of this particular sequence.

37. *aTaa manitanee! mariyaataiyillaamal pooiaa vaaTaavenRu*
utaaLanam collunkinRaay. enkaL peer koopaneenRum
aankaaranenRumaam. enkaLuTaiya toZil unkaL vetamuRai

*miiRi JiaTakkiRavavkaLai caakiRa camaiyattil avarkaLuTaiya
aattumankaLai enkaL uuraaykiya nakakik kuZikkuk koNTu
pooyc ceerppoom, ataRku naankaLippootu tutaaka
vantoomenRaRaviiraaka.*

38. aNNee ituvum nalla puttiyaa niymettavaa
acatimaRatiyaaka iruntaal apattank kaaNumee
 peNNaaL paranaip peRuvatiliayee niyuumaarkaLaa
 peccukkiNanki poovaiyakil periya mooLamee
mannaa unnai varunti aZaippaaree poovaiyaakilaa
 vantiTunitu naaTu **nakaram** vaaZvum pookumee
conneen muuvar poona pinpumee niyu nakarilaa
 curukkaiyyaayira paalar **tammai** tuTikka varuppaaye.
 The last line reveal the *peys* proclamation.
39. *uraippatu keeLayyaa rootetcu veentanee uLakaalum eekaparan
 oppilaak kanniyiTattilu tippaarane ootitu caasttirankaL
 MaRaippan peccalla meyyaan teevan vaZuttiye colliyatai
 maayappivaTTenRee taLLaata cattiyam maarkkamum poyyalleevee*
40. *kaatinil kaTukkaNiTTu puuTTiya
 kaavik **Kampi** coomaniTai yuTutti
 caatiyil uyarkulattu pancaanka
 caastirimaar vantu toonRinaaree
 kullaavun **talaiyiliTTu niiTTiya**
 kuuntap panaikkuTai tooLil vaittu
 ullaala naTai naTantu**paNankaLai**
 uRincik KuTippavar toonRinaaree
 kuntik kunti naTai naTantu kaiyaik
 koTuppavar tamakku munneentik koNTa
 pantikku **MantumenRu** colliya
 paZamoZitanai **nampi** toonRinaaree
 kaLLooTi **Kutittavar** pool kaalpinni
 kaZuttaiyum iTuppaiyum raLaattu koNTu
 tallaaTit **taTumaaRi** taTikkampu
 taankiya pilattinaal toonRinaaree.*

41. *ayyaa caastirikalee! namatu raaja ninaitta kaariyam colla
caamarttiyamuNToo, ayyaree*

42. *tirivooNam aviTTam cooti cittirai makarampuuram
kunivaaram punti miinam kurootiyimoor naaL vantaal
ariyaakunk kiiripaampu tammilee uRavaam peNTiir
peruvatu aaNte allaal penpiLLai tappiTaatu.*

43. The last incarnation or *avataar* of Lord Vishnu in the
asa avartaaram series (ten incarnations to save the world of human
from the evil forces) of popular Hindu Mythology.

44. *ceevitto menRu yentan munnee vantu
ceerankee aracaruta cittampoolee
baavittom varuvataRkku ciisappiLLai
patyane taNTukool kullaa veetam
taavitta pustakamum kuTaiyu menkai
tarukuvaay nii uTupput tarittu meele
toopattai yiTTuc caantu paaku kaTTi
tarittentatu pinnaaka varukuvaay.*

45.
*kaRpanaipattum kanatiruccapai
kaRpanai aaRum kaTantiTu voorkaL
poypavac cetRRil puraNTumee marittu
kaippatu narakam kaaNpatu nijaymee
unkaLukkaaka uNmaiya uraitteen*

46. *colluviir enRuraitta rooteecu mannaa
ceeyaaki caruveecan piRantapakkam
celluvoom tuuyavan patattaik kaNTu naankaL
teNTaniTTuavaruTaiya cittam poolee
celluvoom nammaiyum umatuTaiya raajaniiti
cenkoolum valaiyaamal peruki vaaZka
celluvoom paranpatattai pooRRi vaaZka
ceppinoom MuunRaraLar pookinRoom"e.*

47. Last year Herod (Francis Xavier) came out of the stage and through the compound he walked down to the Church and he removed his **muTi** (headgear) and placed them at the altar — because he is leaving his inherited right to perform as Herod due to the personal reasons — This is a newly created convention.

48. *pooyianaar cerucalaiyai kaTantappaalee
putumiinum vaZikaaTTip pookap pooka
taayinaaR piRanta cutan tannaik kaaNa
tankaLukkaakat tkNaiyaayana miinunkaaNaa
pooyinataal muunRaracar manamum nontu
pulampi muZantaaLiruntu paranaip pooRRi
vaayinaal centamiZin paaTal colli
varuntiyeet tu.NaikeeTTu vaNankinaaree.*

49. In the last three years Anthony **Swamy** (Melchior) got into trance and was kept standing with the help of his mentors.
50. People of AttikkooTu including A Gabriel, Joseph Besky etc., claims this.
51. For the concepts see, “**The** Theatrical Space”, *Themes in Drama*, Vol. 9.
52. For details regarding the staging of mystery plays see Tydeman, *Medieval Theatre 1400-1500*.
53. For this interpretation see T.S. Eliot's, *Journey of The Magi*.
54. This simple crib is made with the grass and consists of small sized sculptures made of clay which symbolically represent the manger at Bethlehem, locally called **PulkuuTu**.

55. The following lines reveal their behaviour.
- kuntik kunti naTai naTantu kaiyaik
koTuppavar tamakku munneentik koNTa
pantikku MantumenRu colliya
paZamoZitanai nampi toonRinaaree
kaLLooTi Kutittavar pool kaalpinni
kaZuttaiyum i'fuppaiyum vaLaittu koNTu
tallaaTit taTumaaRi taTikkampu
taankiya pilattinaal toonRinaaree*

56. See already quoted '*kaZineTilaTi aaciriya viruttam*' and the *vacanam* i.e., notes no. 40.

57. The indirect way of revealing the sins are seen in the following lines.

*nayaRu kaTantiru naaLpuuca i kaaNaamal
raakkaalai ceba manutinaṁ puriyaamalum
koilul kuru piralankank keeLaamal
kurupakai tuuSaNaṁ ceyyena collumentan
veLLik kiZamai cantpulaalu Luruntuvam
virumpiyee oru canti anucariyaamalum
taLLiyee kurumoZimaRutturai peecavum
caalaakki mooTaankaaranj ceyyeenac collumentan
teevanaaruraipattum miiRiyee naTakkavum
tiruccabai muRaiyallaamal miiRiyee naTakkavum
aavalaay peRiyoorkal uraillaam naTakkavum
aRamo Tu tavaneRi kaTantiTaL ceyumenten
purucanak kaTankaamal peNTiir meelaakavum
puruLannilaatavaL piLLai peRReen tavam
karuvaZi taLirkku TTi Kaa TTinileeRiyarum
kaNavankaL piRaimanai pukuntiTac ceyyumenten
muurayaLintaLiyavar mookattuLLaantum
muuttavaL iLaiyavaL kuuTiyeepuNaravum
maRaivaZi kulamuRai inavakai tavaravum
maRiyaatai taviRiyee naTantiTac ceyyumeentan*

58. See St. Mathew 2.16.

Herod's wrath has been a favourite subject for the Middle English Mystery plays, a set of plays called 'Herod plays' became popular because of this sequence.

59. An example for boldness:

*iicuvanan annaiyum teyvam enRu ootiniir
erukku muRukaamoo Yooteesu
iiyamum veLLiyum cempatu tankamoo
irumpu ctmponnaamoo
peecuRiiri eTTiyum kaTTik karumpaamoo, rooteesu
peecurakkaay kaRiyoo, puviyil, yooteesu
peruccaali yaanaya taanaalum niir conna*

pittanum tee vaa moo, ookoo.

For knowledge in the scriptures:

kaaNiroo venRumee caaTciyaal oppittiir

kantapuraaNattilee - antak

kantapuraaNattin pinpaTalattuLLa

kataiyai niirkeeLum mannaa

ceeniirankenkaa bavani vaippaaTTiyum

ceeraamal iicuvarium vaZakkutan

cinaminci aaLukkoru kaaliZukkavee

cetta viTTaan Civanum, yooteesu.

Awariness about Local traditions:

annualkeelumaiyaa yaajaavee! palaniyaaNTiyaakiya

murukanait teyvammenRiir. avan tirukkai miinaaka

capikkappaTTu aneeka kaalam camuttarttilee kiTantaao,

atanaalee avanuTaiya taayaakiya iicuuariKKu

minaaTci enRapeeyuNTaayiRRu. ituvamallaamal

vaLLi enum KuRattiyirunta vanttil pooy, avaLai

KaRpaZikka paTaata paaTeellaam paTTuk kenciyum

*kuRavar aTittutaikkup payantu veenkai mararamaaki ninRapittanaiyum teyvemen-
Ru colluvoorai*

matiyiineRenRu Colla veeNum ayyaa, raajaavee.

60. In the interview, the present actor Xavier, who repeatedly mentioned that he is trying to follow the same kind of acting, dancing, singing style of his father (**Paul** cruz). Even his special likeness towards the use of **naalamkaal** is also reproduced by Xavier.
61. The 'role-type' (according to German *rollenmaBig* of P. Tack) is defined as a manner of expression that is fitted to character and situation. Quoted in Diller, *Medieval Plays* 58.
62. Thematic variation is the major factor behind the popularity of 'Herod plays' in the Medieval Europe. Where these plays shows a wide disperson and a great number of textual variants than the others. These plays which show a transition between pure revelation situations and the later liturgical plays combine new 'world-containing' aspects with traditional quasi-liturgical techniques. In their comparatively free combination of dramatic and liturgical elements they stand in marked contrast to

other Medieval passions and mysteries. For more details Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*. 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933); Diller, *Medieval Plays*.

63. This is one of the major change **muuvaracu naaTakam** have when compared to other Medieval English Herod plays of Fleury and Benedict burne, where the typical wrathful behaviour of king Herod is exploited for the **dramatic** effect. See Diller, *Medieval Plays*. 41-45. and also Karl Young, *Drama of Medieval Church*, Vol. 2, Chapter XVIII and XIX.
64. *CaviTTu naaTakam* and *terukkuuttu* extensively use this convention to described the garbed appearance of the major roles. Which is Sung by the backing vocals from the stage. Here its is a part of the procession and there is no description of the attire.
65. *nilavumati oLitikaZum vaLaiyin muttu*
niiNTavarai muunkil muttu cennal muttu
pulavumatak kaTak kaLattin kooTTu muttu
periyarava paTattin cennal muttu
kulavau veLLi yuar tankam ponnin kaacu
koNTuvantu tiraiyaLakkum kuRRraacar
valam vantu tenTaniTTu MakiZntu rooteecu
mannaarceevukarum varukinRaaree.
66. This is part of the reading of Herod's message by minister.
aanaal keeLumaiyaayaLarkalee! yata kaLaturuka
patatikaLooTu mattaappu, pantam, tiiveaTTi,
pakal varutti katanai veTivaana muTaneeyum,
vaaLaayutam, veel, kuntam, iiTTi, vallayam
mutalaakiya aayutap paaTTuTanee poorkkoolam
camaintu oruvan meel muunraracar caNTaikku
varalaameenRum, nallatu, inimeel innateeti
ittanai maNikku caNTai tuvakkalaamenRum
kuRittu eZutumpaTiyaay eZuti irukkirataiyaa,
cuvaami.
67. The triumphal arch of the Santa maria Maggoire in Rome (fifth century) shows Herod on his throne accompanied by a devil who symbolises his evil thoughts. St.

Maurice in Vienne (twelfth century) shows him between two masks, one of which seems to give sage counsel to the Magi. While the other whispers malicious plans to Herod's ear, for more details.

Diller, *Medieval Plays*. 42-43.

68. Which merely states that 'he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him' and that he called the wisemen 'privily' 'quoting from' 'St. Mathew 2.3 and 2.7).

69. **pittanenRu ootiniir cuRRumpayaminRi**
peeciniir, eecaloomoo muuvarae
peTTaiyoo, puttiyoo kaTTaiyoo kuTTaiyoo
peeymalai pee Ti camamoo
ittarai tannitee maRRoRupeer conmaal
in manan taaLaatu muuvarae
iruntiirkaL viruntaaka poruttiiniir enviiTTil
itanaalee poRutteen unkaLai

70. **aamappaa** iturenne terintatoo conneen
aneeka naaLaikku munnee naTanta peeccu
poomaappaa enkaLuTa caasttiramellam
pukalakilu kaNTaRintu conneenallaal
viimappaa avarurum peNTiir caati
viiTTilivarmakkaLaar piraayamellaam
naamppaa kaNTatillai civanaip paarkka
nallatenpaarpirmaruTa naTattai taanee.

71. The Christian converts (of vaNNiyar community) migrated from Dindugal, Tanjore and Thiruchirapally to this neighbouring parts of Coimbatore are belong to Coimbatore diocese. Since 1750 there was a colony of this migrated catholics in AttikkooTu area. Earlier they were the land owners of this place and now most of them sold their lands and become agricultural labourers.

72. Brandon, *Asian Theatre* 7.

73. Joseph Besky who had already collected these songs claims that they are twenty five in number.

74. People like A. Gabriel and **Mariyannan** of ***PaNTitakaaran*** family argue for this.
75. Interview with Joseph Besky and Madalai Muthu dated 2nd January, 1997.
76. Anz, Heinrich, *Die lateinischen Magier Spiele* C Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1905) 63. Quoted in Diller, *Medieval plays* 38.
77. At Pappanpalli this structure is a part of *PaNTitakaaran* House, NaTupalayam has a seperate building and at Venkarpalayam they make a temporary shed.
78. As an example, the *NaTupalayam* committee under Paul maniyakkaran decided the following rates of contribution for conducting i997 performance.
 1. agricultural laboures — 50/-
 2. sugar factory workers
(co-operative sugar, Menonpara)
 - (a) — (part-time) — 75/-
 - (b) — retired — 75/-
 - (c) — permanent — 100/-
 3. Govt.- Employees — 125/-
 4. Land Lords — 5/- per Acre.
79. The similar type of offerings are practiced in various Christian Churches of Kerala and Tamilnadu.

Conclusions

Christianity in India is conceived as a product of the colonial enterprise and it spread all over the sub-continent. However, it is unique to the Kerala Christianity to have a performance tradition of its own. Interestingly the **history** of performance tradition dates back to **pre-colonial** era and is as old as the first century A.D. In this sense, Kerala Christianity is not just a colonial product although it certainly imbibes certain traits of colonial influences. The cultural continuum of the Kerala Christian performance tradition from the pre-colonial era is worth understanding, how alien ideologies got internalised through a process of acculturation and produced, in turn, hybridized forms of expression for its identity. Based on this premise, the Christian performance tradition is studied in this thesis.

The Kerala Christian tradition is area specific in the sense that the advent of Christianity did not happen at one particular point of time nor was it confined to a specific geographical locale. Broadly, the advent of Christianity happened in two ways. During the **pre-colonial** phase, Christianity came to Kerala through land routes especially from the northern parts of Kerala where the land-scape is formed with mountainous ranges and valleys. By and large, this area is covered by Idukki, Kottayam and Trissur districts. The other way of Christian advent was through the sea routes and was, therefore, confined to the coastal belt of Kerala from Kodungallore to **Kollam**. These two advents had differential impact on the performance tradition. The first advent of Christianity **was** confined mostly to familial level, i.e., a few families who were converted into **Marthoma** tradition incorporated the Christian performance tradition with their own familial rituals. Therefore, most of the Marthoma Christian performances were associated with rites of passage such as birth, marriage, death etc. For this reason, the nature of performances were confined to 'round dances' while the narrative is sung. These narratives in the form of songs were didactic in nature and, therefore, address the community as to how it should express itself in a inter-cultural milieu. Through this, the identity of the community is proclaimed and is recycled stereotypically to establish its solidarity. In the process, legends are created and circulated periodically to establish its authority not just over the land but also over the ideology it imbibed. This process of conversion of the community to the new religion and conviction gave strength to disseminate at later date to other geographical parts.

The process of attaining authority through repeated performances is not uncommon to

the cultures surviving in the **mountaneous** regions and valleys. Basically, these cultures are kinship oriented and are, therefore, 'open' to their own kin groups. The cultural frontiers are formed based on the kinship groups and are expressed during the festivities. The strong sense of boundary is well expressed in their round dances. The religious ideas, the believe systems, the ritual practices- everything is circulated in the community and through this it attains an identity of its own. Thus, the influence of the geographical locale over the community is so strong that their performance tradition is well tuned to vent their feelings of identity in a structured manner.

The Christian performance tradition as such did not remain static but kept on changing with the changing scenario of the socio-economic organisation and the ideological **frames**. In this thesis, the entire Christian performance tradition is divided into three periods, i.e., Ancient, **Mediavel** and Modern, based on the underlying deep structural elements such as social formation and economic organisation of the community in relation to the other communities. Though the periods overlap with one another, the striking characteristics that correspond to the general historical processes of the region are reflected even in the sojourn of the Christian performance tradition. During the Ancient times, the art form circulated only within a small community of converts and, was, therefore, confined mostly to rituals pertinent to the rites of passage. During this phase, belief was an integral part of ideology. In other words, ideology was reflected in the ritual practices and was verbalised in the poetic narratives. During the Ancient period, the class distinction between the land owning and the land-less in the Christian community was not strikingly prevalent as far as the ideology is concerned. The whole religious dogma was built around the concept of brotherhood or fraternity which is considered fundamental to the Christian ethics. Therefore, the performance tradition during this phase reflected the religious expressive behaviour. Art forms such as *maaRgamkaLi*, *paricamuttukaLi*, and *vaTTakaLi*, all of which are basically 'semi-theatrical' in nature, are the best examples from the Ancient phase.

The medieval period of the Christian performance tradition starts with the advent of the Europeans, i.e., the second advent through the sea-route. Their western theatrical forms were hybridized to facilitate propaganda mechanism. The aim of this was not only to add a distinct identity to the Christian community but also to enlarge the community through new conversions. This has helped the Christian performance tradition evolve from the simple semi-theatrical familial performances to a full fledged

theatrical congregational performance events. In the process, the community itself was stratified and the reciprocity between the groups of the same community regulated by an institution such as Church became an apparent feature during this phase. The Indian feudal characteristics of the Medieval times gave scope to assimilate the western feudal traits. The Church, along with the clergy, became a feudal institution to propagate its ideology in its 'manor' to the new converts who are considered more or less as serfs. This feudal relationship between the Church and the new converts brought forth new terms of reference in the Christian performance tradition. A group of performers under the patronage of the Church emerged as customary performers and they legitimised the position of the art form amidst not only the new converts but also other communities which are co-existing. The process of legitimation was strategically played by adopting the themes that are basically drawn from the west but are also amicable to the Indian feudal ethos at the same time. Therefore, the stories of kings, ministers, and their warfares with the pagans were well received by the Christian community. The social stratification that prevailed in the medieval Kerala feudal society was well manipulated by the western Christian ideology and the new converts were made sub-servant to the Church. During this period, the Church practically occupied the position of the feudal lord. Thus, the brotherhood maxim of the ancient was replaced by overlordship of the Church over the community as a feudal imposer resulting in social stratification. The Christian performance tradition during this phase, therefore, reflected a kind of super imposition of the ideology by the Church through a group of customary performers to the community of audience in general.

In all the themes, the concept of loyalty is vividly expressed. The saint-lore or the martyr stories preferred as the subjects for the theatrical forms reveal the phenomena of loyalty. In the process of expressing loyalty to the God, the character itself elevates its position to the hero and that position gets acknowledged by the God in the narrative and by the audience in the performance contexts. In turn, the heroes themselves became mediators (as saints) between the devotees and the God, thereby expanding the domains of the Christian culture. This is typical to that of a feudal system where a loyalist is honoured by a feudal lord and is subinfeudated over some regions to act as a middle man between him and the subject. Thus, the characteristic of medieval Christian performance tradition as reflected in *CaviTTunaaTakam*, *muuvaracunaaTakam* and *paaska* shows a harmonious blending between the social reality and the religious ideology.

The modern phase of Christian performance tradition reflects the post-feudal socio-economic formation. During this phase, the concept of loyalty changed to the concept of alienation. The Church, which acted as an over-lord and to which the converts should owe their allegiance in terms of absolute loyalty, began to shatter as the Church itself underwent a process of transformation. The Church which was hitherto supported by the western funding as part of the colonial enterprise started getting neglected in the wake of nationalism that emerged within the sub-continent. It had to survive on the face of this challenge and, hence, nativised its institutional set-up. In the process, democratisation of the institution became inevitable. The denominational divisions are undermined in this new environment and the individuals started gaining prominence in the Churches. Thus, the Churches started playing the role of the entrepreneurs and also started urging for profits in their ventures. The properties of the Church gained during the colonial phase are invested to enhance their economic power in order to sustain in the changing scenario. This premise made the Church not totally control the community but to provide a platform for the congregational activities to express their identity. In other words, commercialisation of the Church itself paved the way for alienation in the art form between the performers and their audience. The individual households/caste groups which had a say in the Church started taking the art form outside the Church context and performing as part of the entertainment and to gain profit, if possible, out of that entertainment. In this context, the Christian group identity started expressing itself in the context of the presence of other communities. So to say, the performances are not done for the sake of their own community but to cater to the populist demands of others. This shift from loyalty to alienation made the community of performers change even the patrons. The Church is no longer the **sole** patron but becomes one among several other patrons. This is typical to capitalism where competition becomes the nerve of survival. The performance as well as the patrons were thrown open to such competitions in order to maximise their profits through commercialisation of the art form. The business households owned by the Christians also started venturing as patrons or sponsors of the art forms in order to sell their products by creating **good-will** among the community. Because of this, the professional and the amateur groups of performers replacing the customary performers started taking more interests in the Christian performances. Their *modus operandi* is basically itinerary and, hence, seasonal. This again corresponds to the modern theatre groups which also move from one place to another performing their repertoire.

Thus, the Ancient, the Medieval and the Modern phases of the Christian performance tradition consistently kept changing with the changing time. The performer - Audience - patron relationship shifted constantly from belief - loyalty - alienation to evolve a complex patterning of the performance tradition reflecting plural identities and polyphonic idioms of the community.

The changes in the Christian performance tradition from the Ancient to the Modern time is explained by the concept of 'Hybridity' in this thesis. Performance tradition as a cultural system is the resultant of the interaction of the historical forces of a given period. The dominant vis-a-vis the subdued cultures operate their cultural traits not just by imposition or by acculturation but by a cultural synthesis which is a product of hybridisation. The post-colonial discourse brought forth three different stand-points on cultural process. Gramsci and others who formulated the concept of cultural hegemony, argued in favour of the super-imposition model. Sartre and others advocated acculturation as a model which rests on the assumption of give and take relationships between the two cultures. Bakhtin, Bhabha and others prefer hybridity as a cultural concept which is a kind of revisionist position between the super-imposition and the acculturation models. In hybridity, the form that evolved as a product of hybridization cannot be desected from the culture and the portion from which it acquired the new trait. In other words, the dominant cultural traits are easily traceable in super-imposition and, in acculturation, the cultural traits between the dominant and the subdued can easily be traced back. In contrast, the ambivalence remains in tracing out the origin back in hybridization. Hybridity remains an independent cultural phenomena and refers to a distinct cultural group or expressive tradition. This gives scope for understanding a cultural system with all its heterogeneity and polyphonic nature. The identity of the groups which constantly changes can well be understood only when the concept of hybridity is applied. The hybridized cultural system only speaks about a cultural phenomenon which is in transition rather than in a static condition. Cultures in oscillation produce hybridities and further hybridize with this intelligibility, on the basis of which Kerala Christian performance tradition is analysed. Kerala Christian performance tradition (with its hybrid form of cultural synthesis from its evolutionary to the present) unravels the form of syncretism and the polyphonic voice characteristic of all post colonial representations. This is nothing but the self-conscious identity of the modern society with its catch-words such as heterogeneity, cultural interchange, **multi-culturalism** and diversity.

The hybrid form of Kerala Christian performance tradition is parallel to that of pidgin and other creolized languages. Because the structure of the performances in various genres (especially that of the medieval phase) show a **superimposition** of the theme on the conventional performance structure of another genre. But the synthesis and the continuous existence of this genre with a growth and transition suggest a model different from that of the straight forward power-relation of dominance and subjugation which exists in this cultural amalgamations. This different model, where the genres have the quality of tacit decomposition of the overpowering dominance of the themes (in an 'alien' or constructed or induced context) due to its possession of the native idioms, is nothing but the irresistible model of **cultural** hubridity. This hybrid displacing space gives priority to the hybrid idioms of the **genres**. These idioms uphold the collective identity of the performance tradition. This, in turn, proclaims the idea of the community in an imaginary realm. The performance idioms are immersed in the performance structure of each genre and this unique quality of the performance attributes a position to the genre. In other words, these idioms work as the identity markers in placing the performance genres in a performance tradition. In the case of the Christian performance idioms, one can see the major part played by the western missionary interface and its ideological establishment through a form of religion. Here, the native idioms were purposefully hybridized and used by the missionaries. So, one can undoubtedly consider the Christian performance idioms as hybridized ones which show the simultaneous existence of the mellifluous fusion and the dialectical articulation. In other words, these hybrid ones illustrate the examples 'organic' and 'intensional' hybridity of Bakhtin with breaking and joining at the same time, in the same place or the difference and sameness in an apparently impossible simultaneity. The hybrid idioms, its formation and relevance consist of a bizarre binate operation, where each impulse is qualified against the other, forcing momentary forms of dislocation and displacement into complex entities. This becomes the choice of this century in which the performing genres are placed at the cross-roads where every one prefers the heterogeneity and schisms in the existing ones or the existing ones are the multiple amalgamations of different cultures and styles with a polyphonic voice. Here, the hybridity becomes an example of the hybrid idioms and its continuous hybridization through the ages.

The organic and the intensional hybrid idioms of Kerala Christian performance tradition can be easily understood by taking two genres, namely *CaviTTunaaTakam* and

muuvaracunaaTakam as examples. Both of these originated in the medieval phase of the Kerala Christianity and permeated through ages. The striking features of organic hybrid idioms of performance are very much explicit in the formation of the performance codes and the structure of **the *muuvaracunaaTakam***, where the idioms are formulated through an unconscious mixing and fusion. Here, the mixture of the European theme and the Kerala performance codes remains mute and opaque, with no conscious contrast. This historically productive, hybrid idioms become a new language.

The following striking characteristic features of organic hybridity are explicit in the ***muuvaracunaaTakam*** genre. They are:

(a) Unintentional and unconscious:- The selection of the context of Ephiphany for the play production is unintentional because of the relevance of 'nativity' theme of biblical narrative during that festival. The importance given to the play productions, as part of the festivities among the different cultures in general and the Asia-Oceania region in particular, makes one think that the purpose behind the production is an unconscious one by the community and is devoid of the possible power centered ideological praxis. In other words, ***muuvaracunaaTakam*** becomes an unconscious part and parcel of the Ephiphany celebrations of the Kerala Christian community where the text also is unintentionally implanted in the context.

(b) Mixing:- The mellifluous mixing of the textual theme with the purpose of the context of Church celebration shows a complete fusion of the biblical as well as the apocryphal text and the theatrical performance tradition of Kerala. The organic amalgamation of the biblical text with the performance codes of the region is made possible through geographical and contextual adaptations of the narrative by using very much native elements such as: the bullock carts decorated with the agricultural crops of the country (as a mode of processional transportation of the kings); the use of indigenous torches and candles (for lighting the performance space); the musical ambience produced with the native percussion instruments and fire works; the excellent use of the sound of pop-gun as a marker of time along with the number of fire-work displays which demarcate the end and the beginning of the sequences. Apart from that, the accurate use of the locations such as the interior portion, the compound and the vicinity of **St. Antony's Church** used for connecting the floating performance space and the processional mode corresponding to the 'continuous correspondance' method used in the narrative will make the make-believe realistic. Similarly, the characterisation of king Herod as a pagan/Hindu king and

the Magi (the wise men from east) as kings from the three Eastern countries facilitate the complete native adaptation and amalgamation of the text into the context. In this absolute organic mixing, the mixture remains mute and opaque and makes the encounter occur within the limits of a single utterance.

(c) Absence of contrast:- The true mixture of the organic hybrids with its mute/opaque nature remain with no conscious contrast and oppositions. But, this hybrid mixture is very much productive in nature and it is evident from the powerful impact which *muuvaracunaaTakam* casts upon its people or audience. The harmonious blending of the theme and the performance codes along with the theatrical elements of the South Indian **dance-drama** tradition in an appropriate festive ritualistic context makes the smooth progress of the narrative possible without any **contradictions** in the style of acting, in the format of presentation and in the structure of the sequences. This progress finally ends up with the ritualistic trance of the active performer and the reactive audience/devotees. This finally creates an etherial realm of the performance where the votive or obligatory offerings of the performer and the participant get fulfilled. Altogether, they glorify the eternal bliss of the almighty and collectively proclaim their communal solidarity. This is possible only to a productive system which has no conscious contradictions. In the case of *muuvaracunaaTakam*, the mute/opaque **co-existence** of the hybrid idioms further extends its possibilities of the lack of contradictions and internalises certain dramatic 'improprieties'. The best example is the portrayal of king Herod as a pagan/Hindu king, who is being subjected to the temptation of satans of the Christian scriptures and whose blessing is also sought by the devotees in the initial sequence. Despite his pagan/Hindu belief, the king blesses the audience with the sign of cross. The organic hybridity subsumes this appropriately and keeps the make-believe intact. Moreover, the element of binary oppositions representing the good and the bad is used as a mode of characterisation in this play. This subverts the internal contrasts between the performer and the audience and keeps the whole structure of the play unified and proclaims the world view of the community.

(d) Language of identity:- The process of organic hybridization ends up in creating a new language for the hybrid variety that proclaims the mixture or makes this new variety an object. This is **nothing** but the gain of identity. Here, the performance genre with its new language illustrates an organic hybrid identity, distinct and rigid in nature. In other words, *muuvaracunaaTakam* shows an unconscious coalescence of cultural idioms

that have a distinct Christian identity with a rigid communal **spirit**. This altogether **makes muvaracunaa Takam** to stand as a distinct one representing the 'core' factor among the Christian performance tradition of Kerala.

The intentional hybridity in conflict with organic enables a contestatory activity and holds a setting of cultural differences set against each other dialogically. It is the organizing intention of the artist that dialogizes this hybridity and makes it a hybrid variety of division and separation. *CaviTTunaaTakam* bears the distinct features of this internally dialogic hybridity.

In general, *CaviTTunaaTakam* is a mixture of the Western European Christian themes with the Asia-Oceanic generic performance codes or conventions. But, this hybrid variety shows an intentionally artistic mixing of various theatrical elements in its structural formation. In a way, the hybrid idioms of *CaviTTunaaTakam* show the existence of one voice within another with a clear demarcation of the boundaries. The evident difference of the European saintly themes from the structure and the context of the Kerala Christian milieu proclaims the intentionality behind the making of this mixture, dissection of which is easily possible, and this is the initial characteristic of an intentional hybrid. This difference is always present in all the hybrid idioms of *CaviTTunaaTakam*. As for example, the themes in the repertoire show completely Western European as well as saintly themes on one hand, and very much native, social and folk themes on the other. If one takes up the case of even a single production, one can see the infiltration and the important presence of the very much localised characters and the **scenes**. In other words, contrast of the sacred and the secular always exists. The performance structure reveals another interesting mixture of the characters clad in European attire and facial make-up who enact the roles using the South Indian performance codes including the rhythmic movements and the codified gestural patterns for conveying the meaning. The narrative, too, has a western linear structure that starts with an exposition and ends up with a cathartic effect or a pleasant note presented with the help of two ever-living, on and off stage characters kaTTiyan and aNNaavi. Their interventions, monologues and the dialogues with others and the audience show typical generic way of absolute freedom and this reveals another hybrid mixture of the performance. This further guides us to certain very much internal hybrids such as the Durbar scenes with its western perspective sceneries, the pyramidal structure in the placement and the consciously portrayed European courtly gestures with the south Indian histrionic modes, and its progress into

either hunting or conquest which, in turn, displays the domination of the native martial arts like kaLari. The music is another important hybrid mixture which clearly shows the simultaneous use of the eastern and the western instruments, and the composition reveals the eastern rhythm and the western chanting. In a way, the presence of this mixture with the easily identifiable components leads one to the second characteristic of the intentional hybridity: the division or separation. The simultaneous presence of the dominant and the subdued in a single mixture with the quality of one to unmask or ironize the other leads one to the third characteristic nature of intentional hybridity. That is to say, the intentional hybrids are internally dialogic.

The change and the continuity of the *CavittunaaTakam* genre through the ages explicitly explain this internal dialogic nature of the art form. During the initial phases, it was the conversion formulae and the over-powering nature of the western missionary ideology through the religious endeavour which made the inception and the imposition of the art form possible. Later, the incorporation of the native themes and the change of patronage from the Church to the Christian community along with the growth of Christian population converted the art form to a Christian counterpart in the Kerala cultural scenario where the native replaced, through a mode of recreation, the dominance of the western in formulating the idioms. This resistance of the native further extended and caused further hybridizations. The invasion of other media and modes of recreation, and the extensive commercialization made further internal transformations and lead the genre to the present phase. In this phase, the commerce played a major role and the rise of individuals as aasaans cum troupe managers converted the form from a community affair to that of some personal profit oriented business. This again transported the performance from its festive context to the induced tourist festival contexts. More than that, the form started representing the region as a whole and not the community alone on one hand, and on the other, the community which lost the control over the art form ascribed the existing one as its antiquary. The transition through these phases thoroughly transformed the internal hybrid idioms of the genre and made this hybridity internally dialogic. The points of view are thus never mixed but remained parallel, that is, one set against the other. This transition of the hybridity reveals the fact that it is the intention of the artists/ audience/ patrons which dialogizes the hybridity and makes the hybridization irresistible.

This everliving hybridity retains **certain** elemental, organic energy and open-endedness.

It is the basic character of the *CaviTTunaaTakam* genre without which its existence is questionable.

The organic hybridity as represented in *muuvaracunaaTakam* and the intentional hybridity as reflected in *CaviTTunaaTakam* as a whole illustrates various intricacies involved in the **Christian** performance tradition of Kerala. The organic hybridity basically reveals what the community is all about and how the community reflects its solidarity (to its own members) through different layers of expressive behaviour in a given performance (ritual) context. The performance, in this sense transforms itself to the ritual and semiotically communicates its world view through an unconscious and casual verbal and body language.

The intentional hybridity, on the other hand makes the community express its view to other community's regarding topics like how it is different from the others and what it feels about others. As such, the Christian community which is alien to other Indian religious communities needs to establish its identity in a given inter cultural milieu. This makes the community evolve a strategy which is intentional to proclaim its independent self existence. Performance as a mode of communication is intentionally used for this purpose. The early missionaries evolved *CaviTTunaaTakam* as a part of their religious establishment. By a process of hybridizing the native systems of expressive genres, with a mixture of Christian ideological conceptual frames. Later, by internalising the performance tradition as part of their heritage, the native Christians used the art form not merely for ideological dispersal but also as a symbol of identity in the wake of intercultural setting. The identity of *CaviTTunaaTakam* is not monotonic and it disseminates plural identities of divergent ethnic communities which are brought into the Christian fold. The multi- denominational Christian congregation reflects such pluralistic identities. The Latin Christian and other orthodox denominations including Jesuits resorted to manifest their identities through the performance presentations. In this sense, *CaviTTunaaTakam* and *muuvaracunaaTakam* together represent dialectical articulation.

(e) One, advocating the solidarity of the communities with an inward orientation and the identity of the other communities with an out ward orientation. This dialectical articulation presented through *muuvaracunaaTakam* and *CaviTTunaaTakam* constitutes two units within the Christian performance tradition. They are: core and periphery.

muuvaracunaaTakam as the core of Kerala Christian performance tradition advocates the Christian ideology through the performance of the biblical text. The text as the

centrifocal force regulates the relationship between the performer and the audience in a performance event which demands certain social obligations on the part of the performers and ritual votives on the part of the audience. The process of translating Christian ideology into performance generate native idioms which themselves became language of communication. In *muvaracunaa Takam*, performers are not only assigned character roles but also inherit those roles as part of their social obligation. The audience gets transported to a make believe situation and realize the characters presented to them as the real personalities and they participate in the ritual votive offerings. Thus, the community, as a whole communicates the Christian ideology through the native idioms in the 'core' category of performance tradition.

CaviTTunaaTakam, as a representative of 'periphery' in the Christian performance tradition, altogether function on a different level of communication. The performers intentionally use formulae which have convention and invention communicate the Christian ideology so as to establish a distinct identity for it. Audience, on the other hand, participate in the performance event as observers and critics; and communicate their position to make the generic continuum of the art form possible. This parallel positioning of the audience and the performers creates an internal dialogue that makes *CaviTTunaaTakam* a dynamic performance tradition. The generic continuum achieved by inventions and conventions of the performers and the reactions of the audience result in hybridization of the already hybridized form. This becomes the chief character of periphery because it keeps in view the changing times and conditions through which the Christian community **is passing** through. In the process, the function of ideology does not remain static but keeps oscillating between heritage and the present identity. In other words, the periphery keeps swinging all the time between tradition and modernity. For this reason, *CaviTTunaaTakam* survived till date through the ages passing through colonial, post-colonial and the globalized phases. In the periphery, the middlemen or the patron play a vital role between the audience and the performers. Though the patron remains at the background yet decides the generic continuum. The play production is made possible by the patron at various contexts and events. Thus, *CaviTTunaaTakam* being in periphery not only functions as a mode of identity representation but also communicates the change in the identities.

Therefore, the core and the periphery categories of Kerala Christian performance **tradition** together advocate the ideology. The voice of the ideology is represented through

the theatre. The community either loses its scope for hybridity or remains ever subdued and sub-servant to alien ideologies. In other words, theatre is the voice of the community and represents rhetorically the identity of the community with all its nuances. The rhetoric theatrical presentations (from its inception to the present day) establish an **authority** which speaks for the community. This is made possible only due to the scope of hybridity within the theatrical idioms. Therefore, the theatre becomes the marker of the community and perpetuates the identity of the community in an ever changing socio-economic scenario. It does not survive on the community but it is the community which sustains its identity through the theatrical representations. The function of theatre in this context is not just to reflect the social reality or to mock at the social evil but to wholistically present the idioms and ideology of the community. The way the community is structured within and in relation to other communities can be seen in the very structure of the performance tradition with its 'core' and 'peripheral' units. Nevertheless the native idioms are kept intact with all the Christian ideological spirit. The Christian ideals such as love, brotherhood, sacrifice and forbearance form the basis of the themes of the performance tradition. Though the performances are repeated annually, the meanings they convey keep changing in tune with the time. The physical and secular position of the community may vary from time to time owing to their socio-economic status. Despite this, the theatre remains meaningful to the community because it is polyphonic and **multivocal** in nature.

To sum up, the Christian performance tradition of Kerala reflects the idioms and the ideology of the community and translates them through the theatrical modes of **representation**. The mode being a product of hybridity and capable of producing hybridized varieties facilitated the community to reflect their identity in the ever changing cultural scenario.

Appendix - I

Glossary

aasaan	- master.
abinaya[M]	- facial expression.
akankaaram	- pride.
aniyara	- back stage.
aNNaavi	- master.
araippaTTai	- broad waist belt.
aramaNTi	- Basic stance of Bharathanatyam.
arankeeRRam	- maiden performance.
baalapparTTukar	- Young actors.
(baala-parTTukar)	
bali	- Oblation.
bujam	- ornament used on the arms (armplate)
caakkiyaar	- the oral narrator or the one who keeps the right for presenting kuttu
	- make-up
caayamiTal	- servant of Jesus.
ceccutaccan	- scepter
ctnkol	- barrel shaped drum.
ceNTa	- servants.
cevakar	- earrings.
cevippuu	- training session
colliyaTTam	- the presenter/clown.
cuttirataari	- foot step.
cuva Tu	- script.
cuvuTi	- presiding deity.
devata	- ancient script.
ee Tu	- small sized cymbals.
ilattaaLam	- small sized cymbals.
jaalra	- leg.
kaal	- offering of ritual food.
kaapparaci	- hand
kai	- a martial art form.
kalarippayaTTu	- ornament for the wrists.
kankaNam	- captain
kappittan	- charcoal.
kari	- golden thread.
kasavu	- clown.
kaTTiyakkaran	- head gear.
kiriTam	

kinti	- brass vessel.
koopam	- anger.
koovil	- shrine [of a local deity].
kumbakali	- a folk dance form of Tamil Nadu.
kummi	- a popular folkdance.
kurisu	- cross.
kurisu varaikkal	- making sign of the cross.
kuuttuc Caalai	- thatched shed for performance training.
maartaaZi	- big size necklace.
manai olai	- red arsenic.
mantiravataam	- magic.
mantiri	- minister.
mariataccan	- servant of Mary.
masaal	- indigenous torch.
meeLam	- music of drums.
meypaya TTu	- body controlled exercises.
muTi	- crown/head gear.
muttirai	- hand gesture.
muvaracar	- three kings.
naamam	- Vaishnavite symbolic mark on the forehead.
naaTakutaTTu	- stage in a theatre.
naayattu	- hunting.
namaskaram	- gesture of salutation.
neercca	- ritual offering
oppanai	- make up room at the back stage.
paappan	- sothsayer cum ritualist [brahmin].
paavaatai	- long skirt.
paayiram PaaTTu	- the initial songs of the cuvati.
pallimudakku	- restriction imposed by the church.
patakkam	- necklace.
pavikkar	- trainers in the gymnasium.
payats	- combats.
peey	- satan.
pekunaaL	- church festival.
pinpaaTTukaar	- chorus who follows the main characters in vocal presentation.
pooNuul	- sacred thread worn by brahmins.
port	- an eatable made from fried rice grain.
presudeenti	- benefactor of annual church festival.
pulkuuTu	- crib.
puruuNam	- myth.

puttan
puuram
ruupakkuTu
saastiraa
sleevaaveNpa
takana
tasaavartaaram
teer
teerooTTu
teesam
teevaram
tirumuurttis
toTa
tuuvala
upateesiyaar
uTuppantiyal
uuru
uZiccil
vaattiyaa
vaaytlari
vacanam
vaNakkamasam

vancippaTTu
vaTTaeZuttu
veesTi
veTikaTTu
viLakku

- coin used in erstwhile Cochin state.
- temple festival.
- wooden enclosure for keeping the statue.
- science.
- poet's hymn praising the cross.
- the initial offering given to the master/ritualist.
- ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu.
- same as *ruupakkuTu*.
- procession.
- place or hamlet.
- prayer sequence.
- three gods, Brahmina Vishnu, Siva.
- earning.
- towel.
- assistant to the priest in rituals.
- donning of costumes.
- hamlet.
- body massage with oil.
- master
- words of commands.
- dialogue rendered as prose.
- the month dedicated to the observance of the veneration of saints (in Christian communities).
- song sung in chorus by boatmen (in boat-races).
- an ancient malayalam script.
- cloth.
- display of fireworks.
- lamp.

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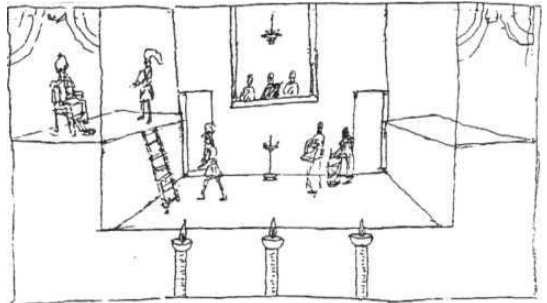


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(a)



(b)



(c)



(D)



Plate XXII

(E)



(F)



(G)



(H)



★ ഉൾ വാടന മഹാമഹം ★

ഉൾവാടകൻ - റവ: ഫാ. വില്യം, T. O. C. D., M. A. L. T., (പ്രിൻസിപ്പൽ S. B. കാളേജ്)



ചങ്ങനാശേരി ന്യതിയേററിൽ

1128 ഉദ്ധം 31 (15-11-52) - അതീയതി

ശനിയാഴ്ച രാത്രി 10 ന്.

★ പേർ "എം. എസ്. മിസ്തർ" മാട്രോണാർക്കും ★

M. M. ചങ്ങനാശേരി വാസസ്ഥലം



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സ്നാനിക യോഹന്നാൻ

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by M. S. ഉദ്ധംനാൻ

ഇവകാടികൾ സിൻസിൾ തയയവ

മായി അഭിനയിക്കപ്പെട്ടു

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സംഗീതവിദ്യാർത്ഥി K. R. അനന്തപ്പണിക്കർ,

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V. മൂലവന, V. M. കണ്ണൻപേരൂർ,

V. തങ്കപ്പയ്യൽ, ജേ.സ്. ആലഞ്ചേരി



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ഗാനരചന: **S. വൈക്കാട്ടശേരി**

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മാതൃക: P. K. ചമ്പ്രത്തലസ്ഥിതി,

പ്രൊഡക്ഷൻ: **മൂലവന**

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Plate XXIII



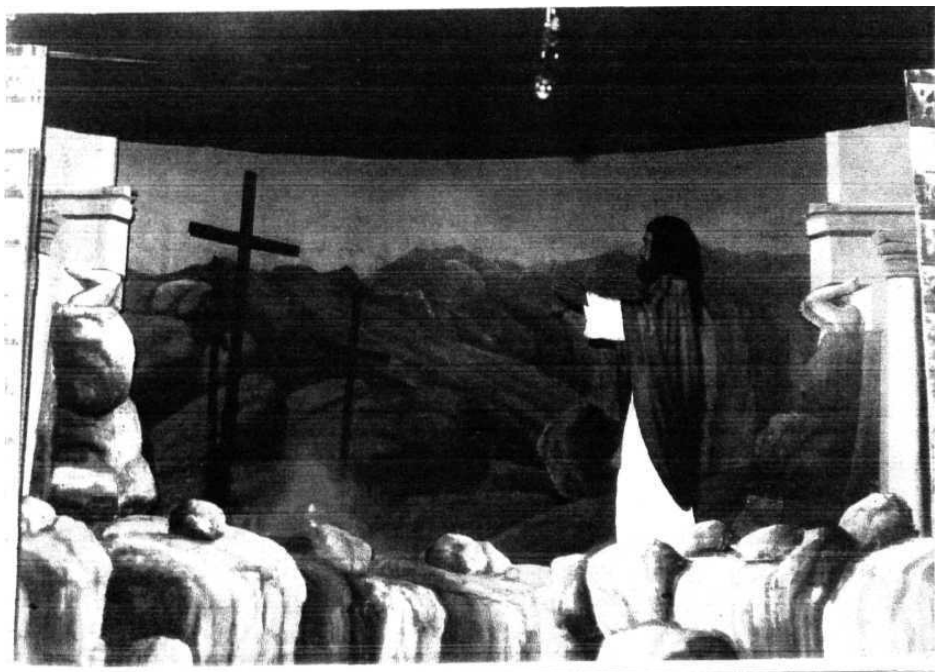
ഇവിടെ സാഹസവും സംഹാരവും രണ്ടു തട്ടുകളിൽ വെച്ചുപിടിച്ചു. സത്യം ഹോമീകപ്പെട്ടപ്പോൾ മനുഷ്യനെ തല
കീഴായി ക്രൂശിച്ചു. ആ കഷ്ടതയിൽ കനീശ മണ്ണിൽ ചെത്തി ആളിക്കത്തുന്നു. മനുഷ്യമാംസം തീന്ന മട്ടയ്ക്ക സിംഹ
ങ്ങളാണു്..... ആ രാക്ഷസീയരായെ ജയിച്ച മനുഷ്യരുണ്ടു്..... റോം കത്തിയെരിയുമ്പോൾ വീണവായിച്ചല്ലസി
ക്കുന്ന കരാളികരസംഭവം ഈ നാടകത്തിൽ കാണാം..... 1

Plate XXIV



Plate XXX : P.J. Cherian as Jesus Christ

Plate XXXI : Scene from Cochin Natakavedhi's Arthaban



Appendix-III

The List of Plays in the Modern Phase of Christian Performance Tradition

Year	Troupe	Play
1929-30	Royal Cinema & Dramatic Company	Parudeesa Nashtam [Paradise Lost]
1934	Sanmarga Vilasam Natana Sabha	Misiha Charithram Part I & II [The Story of Messiah Part I & II]
1935-45	Sanmarga Poshini Natana Sabha (P.J. Abraham & Co.)	Kristhu Natha Vijayam (Misiha Charithram Part I) [The Victory of Lord Christ]
1936	Sanmarga Vilasam Natana Sabha [P.J. Cheriyan & Co.]	Veda Vicharam [old Testment Part I & II]
1936	Kainikkara Brothers	Kaivariyile Kalpadapam [The Heavenly Tree of Calvary].
1937	Kainikkara Brothers	Parama Parithyagam (Misiha Charithram Part 2) [Ultimate Sacrifice]
1937-39	Sanmarga Poshini Natana Sabha [P.J. Abraham & Co.]	Sampoorna Misiha Charithram [The complete story of Messiah]
1940	Sanmarga Poshini Natana Sabha	Manasthapa Mandapam (Story of Mary Magdalene) (The Hall of Repentance)
1942-45	Joint Sanmarga Vilasam Natana Sabha	Sampoorna Misiha Charithram [Complete Story of Messiah]
1950	St. James Natana Kalasamithi Changanacherry	Kshamapanam (Story of Prodigal Son) [Apology]
1952	Prakash Sangeetha Natana Kalasamithi	Mungami (John the Baptist) [Herald]
1956	Prakash Sangeetha Natana Kalasamithi	Magdalena Mariyam [Mary Magdalene]
1956-60	O.K. Theatres Ernakulam	Kayyappasum Misihayum [Caiphas and Messiah]
1956-60	O.K. Theatres Ernakulam	Kaivariyile Kallanmar [Thieves of Calvary]
1956-60	O.K. Theatres Ernakulam	Alarunna Akasam [The Roaring Sky]
1964	Assissi Theatres	Adiyaravu Parayatha Raktham (Story of St. Sebastian) [The Blood that did not Surrender]
1965	Assissi Theatres	Raktha Pushpam (Story of St. Agnes) [Blood-Flower]
1965	O.K. Theatres, Ernakulam	Neethiman [The Righteous man]
1965-70	Alleppey Theatres	Muppathu Vellikkasu [Thirty Silver Coins]
1965-70	Ailleppey Theatres	Pathu Kalpanakal [Ten Commandments]

1965-70	Kalanilayam Sthiram Nataka Vedi	Kadamattathu Kathanar [The Priest of Kadamattom]
1965-70	Kalanilayam Sthiram Nataka Vedi	Misiha Charithram [The Story of Messiah]
1965-75	Kalanilayam	Sreeyesu [Jesus]
1965-75	Kalanilayam	Vellikkasa [The Silver Chalice]
1965-75	Kaaniyayam	Mariyam Magdalena [Mary Magdalene]
1966	Assissi Theatres	Vadatha Lilly (Story of Queen of Janova) [Un-fading Lilly]
1967	Assissi Theatres	Velutha Pisachukkal [White Devils]
1968	Assissi Theatres	Rakthambaram [Scarlet]
1968-69	Prakash Theatres Changanacherry	Valiya Mukkuvan [Head Fisherman]
1970	Cochin Natakavedi	Demetrius
1970	Assissi Theatres	Arpanam [Offering]
1970	Alleppey Theatres	Davidum Goliyathum [David and Goliath]
1971	Alleppey Theatres	Abrahaminte Bali [The Sacrifice of Abraham]
1971	Cochin Natakavedi	King Solomon
1971	Kalaprakash Samithi, Kollam	Sanson and Delilah
1972	Assissi Theatres	Silpy [Sculptor]
1972	Alleppey Theatres	Benhur
1973	Assissi Theatres	Pushpavarsham [Showering of Flowers]
1974	Assissi Theatres	Thyagadeepthi [Sacrificial Light]
1974-76	Alleppey Theatres	Quo Vadis
1975	Assissi Theatres	Visudha Geevarghese [St. George]
1975-79	Cochin Nataka Vedi	Veronica
1976-78	Changanacherry Kerala Dramatic Club	Fr. Damian
1976-78	Changanacherry Kerala Dramatic Club	Barrabas
1977	Assissi Theatres	Nilakkatha Ganam (Story of St. Francis) [Un-ceasing Song]
1978	Assissi Theatres	Anveshichu Kandethy [Searched, and Found]
1979	Carmel Theatres	Fabiola
1980	Assissi Theatres	Judith
1980	Kottayam Bharat theatres	St. Paul

1980-81	Changanacherry Kerala Dramatic Club	Judas
1980-81	Carmel Theatres	St. Paul
1980-81	Cochin Nataka Vedi	Absolom
1981	Assissi Theatres	Swapnam [Dream]
1982	Assissi Theatres	Neethiman [The Righteousman]
1982	Alleppey Theatres	St. Xavier
1982	Carmel theatres	Pravachakan [The Prophet]
1983	Cochin Nataka Vedi	Charlemagne
1983	Assissi Theatres	Simhasanam [Throne]
1983	Alleppey Theatres	Samson and Delilah
1983-84	Carmel Theatres	Vagdatha Bhoomi [The Promised Land]
1984	Alleppey Theatres	Kristhu Enna Viplavakari [Christ, the Revolutionary]
1984	Assissi Theatres	Velichame Nayichalum [Lead Kindly Light]
1986	Carmel Theatres	Babel Gopuram [Tower of Babel]
1986	Alleppey Theatres	Visudha Pathrose [St. Peter]
1986	Suryakanthi Theatres	Kristhuvinte Aram Thirumurivu [Sixth Holy Wound of Christ].
1986	Cochin Nataka Vedi	Big Fisherman
1987	Carmel Theatres	Akkal Dama
1987	Cochin Theatres	Kanayile Kalyanam [The Wedding at Cana]
1987	Alleppey Theatres	Ancham Thirumurivu [Fifth Holy Wound]
1987	Cochin Nataka Vedi	Arthaban
1987	Palai San Pious	Visudha Anki [The Holy Robe]
1988	Carmel Theatres	Sodom Gomorah
1988	Cochin Natakassala	Pravachanam [The prophecy]
1988	Cochin Theatres	Vachanam Thiruvachanam [Word, Holy Word]
1988	Viswabharati Theatres, Olassa	Mangalavaartha [The Annunciation]
1988	Alleppey Theatres	Sampoorna Bible [The Holy Bible]
1989	Cochin Theatres	Yahovayude Munthirithoppu [The Vineyard of Yahweh]
1989	Alleppey Theatres	Bharathathile Appsotholan [The Apostle of India]
1989	Adoor Malankara Sabha	Gagulthayile Sabdam [The Voice of Golgotha]
1989	Cochin Nataka Vedi	Benhur
1989	Carmel Theatres	Golgotha
1990	Cochin Theatres	Athippazhathinte Nattil [In the Land of fig]

1990	Anugraha Alappuzha	Mukthidayakan [The Saviour]
1990	Cochin Nataka Vedi	Caiphas
1990	Carmel Theatres	Samara Gadha [The Saga of Battle]
1991	Cochin Nataka Vedi	Misiha Charithram [The Story of Messiah]
1991	Amala Communications	The Rob
1991	Malankara Theatres, Adoor	Abhikshiktha [The Anointed]
1991	Alleppey Theatres	Rajadhirajan [King of Kings]
1992	Assissi Theatres	Samson and Delilah
1992-93	Cochin Nataka Vedi	Beth-Saida
1993	Assissi Theatres	Peelathose [Pilate]
1993	Cochin Theatres	Evanente Preeyaputhran [This is my son, the j Beloved]
1993	Cochin Nataka Vedi	Kalvariylle Nalla Kalian [The good thief of Calvary]
1993-95	Cochin Nataka Vedi	Kurisu Panithavan [The One who made the cross]
1995	Assissi Theatres	Queen Esther
1995	Cochin Theatres	Gileyadile Theekkattu [Fire-storm of Gileyadu]

Appendix-IV

List of Bible Dramas [amateur] which won prizes in the All Kerala Bible Drama Festival
Conducted by Kerala Catholic Bishops Council

1988	Presented by (Diocese)	Title
1.	Verapoly	Puthiya Velicham [The New Light]
2.	Kottayam	Kozhutha Kalakkutty [The fatted calf]
3.	Vijayapuram	Maruthyoma [From death]
1989		
1.	Not known	Nabothinte Munthirithottam [The Vineyard of Naboth]
2.	Not known	Dhanavante Sahodaran [The Richman's j Brother]
1990		
1.	Pala	Hamsallam
2.	Thrissur	Neethimante Rakthathil Enikku Pankilla [I am innocent of this righteous man's blood]
3.	Kollam	Anduvattathile Avasanadivasam [Last day of the year]
1991		
1.	Kothamangalam	Kazhuthayude Thadiyellu [The jaw of the Donkey]
2.	Verapoly	Josephinte Swapnangal [Dreams of Joseph]
3.	Ernakulam	Soosanna
1992		
1.	Changanacherry	Sabdam [Voice]
2.	Thrissur	Kezhunna Bathulia [Weeping Bathulia]
3.	Kollam	Enikku Dahikkunnu - Enikku Dahikkunnu [I thirst - I thirst]
1993		
1.	Verapoly	Nakshathrangalilninnnum Adarnnu Veena Penkutty The [Girl fallen from stars]
2.	Ernakulam	Amos Charithrathilninnnum Erangivanna Oral [Amos One who came out of history]
3.	Changanacherry	Bhranthu [Madness]
1994		
1.	Kottayam	Mudiyanaya Puthran [The prodigal son]
2.	Alappuzha	Pathukushta Rogikal [Ten lepers]
3.	Changanacherry .	Thalenth [Talent]

Appendix -V

All Kerala Professional Drama Festival -1992 Terms and Conditions

1. The **Festival** aims at recognising and patronising (**promoting**) (encouraging) those artists and **troupes** that demonstrate Bible messages and moral values through the art of dramatic performance.
2. Those professional troupes that perform Bible plays, and social dramas which uphold moral values, alone are entitled to take part.
3. The play should be the latest one of the troupe; i.e., the one for the present season of the year.
4. The Bible dramas shall not exceed 3 hours and should be of not less than 2 hours duration. The social dramas shall run into not less than 2 hours, but will not exceed a **duration** of 2.30 hours.
5. Dramas will be graded and a cash prize of **Rs. 1000/-** will be awarded to the one graded 'A'. The Committee will, thereafter, give the deserving and worthy publicity to it.
6. Those troupes that wish to be considered may send the scripts latest by (date). Their participation in the competition rest entirely on the direction of a selected committee, that is if they are selected as worthy of performance.
7. All the troupes that intend to compete shall pay an amount of Rs. (amount) towards registration.
8. No troupe shall bring about any change in the script when they participate in the competition as well as when performed afterwards.
9. Each of the selected plays for the festival will be given Rs. 1500/- and T.A. will be provided in the rate of Rs. 3/- per K.M.

Chairman
Rev. _____
 Kerala Catholic Bishop Council & Mass Media Commission.
P.O.C. Palarivattam
 Cochin - 25

Appendix - VI

List of People Interviewed

Sl.No	Name	Place	Role
1.	Alex Thaluppadatha	Pallipuram	aasaan/actor
2.	Anirudhan K.N.	Kurambutharuthi	aasaan
3.	Antony Charamkulathu	Pallipuram	aasaan
4.	! Antoni Swami	attikkooTu	Actor
5.	! Antoni Swami (cellaiyan)	Coimbatore	Actor
6.	Antony E.P.	Cochin	Scholar
7.	Arpputha Swamy	attikkooTu	Actor
8.	Bernard K.L.	Fort Kochi	Historian
9.	Chacko K.A.	attikkooTu	vaattiyaar
10.	Chellappan	attikkooTu	vattiyaar
11.	Cheriyen Andrews	Ernakulam	Scholar
12.	Chummar Choondal	Thrissar	Scholar
13.	Dorai	attikkooTu	Main Informant
14.	Eeshi Joseph	Thiruthipuram	Writer/aasaan
15.	Gabriel A.C.	attikkooTu	Actor
16.	George K.	Varappuzha	aasaan
17.	George Kutty Konath	Kurambathuruthi	aasaan
18.	Gopinath T.C.	Ernakulam	Scholar
19.	Jaison Padarnathummal	Kurambathuruthi	aasaan
20.	Jose Plachickal	Ernakulam	Media Person
21.	Jose T.F.	Ernakulam	Actor
22.	Joseph C.V.	Ernakulam, Pongikkara	aasaan
23.	Joseph Besky	attikkooTu	Scholar
24.	Joseph Cherian	Ernakulam	Actor
25.	Joseph Karingada	Fortkochi	Play Wright
26.	Joseph Maryadas	Coimbatore	Actor
27.	Joseph P.J	Aluva	Informant
28.	Joseph Thottunkara	Ochanthuruthu	aasaan
29.	Jossey V.A.	Palluruthi	aasaan/Actor
30.	Lorenz	Gothuruthu	Troupe Manager

Table contd.

Table contd...

Sl.No	Name	Place	Role
31.	Matalai Muttu	attikkooTu	Main Informant
32.	Maneek Manakkil	Gothuruthu	Main Actor
33.	Mariannan	attikkooTu	Main Informant
34.	Mathai Choothan Parambil	Ochanthuruthu	aasaan
35.	Peter Konathu	Gothuruthu	Musician
36.	Petho	Vaduthala	aasaan
37.	Pongikkara Raphy	Pongikkara	Letterateur
38.	Puthussery A.K	Cochin	Letterateur
39.	Raphel Acharuparambil	Palipuram	Writer/aasaan
40.	Thampi Payappilli	Gothuruthu	aasaan/Actor
41.	Thomuchan Alunkal	Chellanam	Actor
42.	Xavier Arakkal	Chellanam	Actor
43.	Xavier Francis	attikkooTu	Actor

Interviewed Members belong to Troupes

Troupes	Place
Alleppey Theatres	Alappuzha
Assissi Theatres	Kollam
Carmel Theatres	Cochin
Cochin Natanakala	Vaduthala
Cochin Nataka Vedi	Ernakulam
Cochin Theatres	Ernakulam
Malankara Theatres	Angamali
Sooryakanthi Theatres	Alappuzha
Udayanatana Kalasamithi	Kurumbathuruthi
Yuvasana Kalasamithi	Gothuruthu

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