

**Interpreting Ritualistic Landscape of India;  
Kalamezhuth Paatt, a Case Example**

Devakumar Thenchery

**PhD**

University of York

Archaeology

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## Abstract

In India the concept of a ritual landscape is used for places where religious rituals were established long ago but are still practiced to this day. In this thesis, I call these tangible yet intangible, contemporary yet ancient landscapes ‘ritualistic’; they are landscapes where the rituals conducted are so deeply embedded that they form its very soul. The ritual in its authentic form can only exist in that landscape and cannot be removed and placed somewhere else.

The unique ritual of the Indian state of Kerala, known as Kalamezhuth Paatt, is used to comprehend the concept of ritualistic landscape. This ritual art involves creating beautiful and vibrant powder drawings on the ground, accompanied by songs and percussion music, and is dedicated to different gods and goddesses in Kerala. These rituals are performed inside built spaces as well as in open ones, and there is a strong relationship between each ritual and the associated cultural space. As a result, a prominent and unique settlement pattern can be observed in regions where the ritual is practiced.

As a patron of the ceremony, it is my responsibility to ensure its continuation, as it has been a part of my family's ritual practice for many generations, so autoethnography is taken as a research approach. Nonetheless, its history, architecture, and tangible and intangible cultural heritage captivate me, and my fascination extends beyond a purely spiritual realm. I comprehend this ritual as a cultural phenomenon and a community affair, as different skill-based groups are involved in the ritual. The research is concerned with the documentation of the tangible and intangible aspects of the ritual, mapping the results and it engages with social science research methods using non-participant observation as well as semi-structured qualitative interviews. Ultimately, my work considers the definition of the term ‘ritualistic landscape’, with an understanding of its inherent character and components.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

ICH – Intangible Cultural Heritage

INTACH – Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage

OED – Oxford English Dictionary

UNESCO – United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

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## **Author's Declaration**

*I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.*

*I declare that the following conference paper has been published during the research.*

Thenchery, D. and Cooke, L (2023) Rituals and Practices as a binding force in connecting the communities in *ICOMOS 21<sup>st</sup> General Assembly and Scientific Symposium 'Heritage Changes'*, 1<sup>st</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> September 2023, Sydney, Australia.

This thesis is dedicated to all artists who practice the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt.

## Glossary of non-English words

Adhishtanam	Plinth
Agraharam	Brahmin settlement in the form of row house on the sides of road, mainly seen in TamilNadu and Kerala
Ashtadikpalaka	Gods who protect a land from all four cardinal directions and four corners
Bhakti	Love for God
Chadar	Bed sheet
Chenda	Traditional drums of Kerala. Use one or two sticks to produce sound.
Churika	A small sword with two sharp edges
Devaswom	An administrative body which looks after the temple matters
Edakka	A small percussion instrument. Use only one stick and it is the only percussion instrument which can produce <i>sapthaswara</i> , seven basic notes of music.
Ekadasi	11th day of a fortnight
Galam	A recessing band and a decorative element of plinth
Ganapathihomam	A fire sacrifice dedicated to lord Ganapathy, the elephant headed god
Illam/Mana	House of Kerala Brahmins. Some of the sub caste coming under Kerala brahmins are Namboodiri, Namboodirippad, Bhattathirippad.
Jagathy	Second band of the plinth
Kalamezhuth	Kalam means pictures on floor, ezhuth means to draw or to write, so kalamezhuth is drawing pictures on the floor.
Karamullu	Thorn of wild jasmine shrub
Kaurava	100 sons of king Dhritharashtra, based on the epic of Mahabharatha
Kazhakam	A community of temple servants who provides flowers and garlands to temples and places of worship
Keralaputhra	Son/people of Kerala.
Kizhakkini	Eastern block of traditional courtyard house.
Komaram	Oracle, considered as the representative or personification of the deity. Another word is Velichappad.
Komb	A wind instrument in the shape of horn.

Koora	The short name of kodi koora, it a piece of black/red coloured sacred silk cloth spread under the ritual pavilion of Kalamezhuth Paatt.
Kovilakam	Palaces or mansions where local rulers live.
Kumudam	A decorative band seen in the plinth, can be linear or curvi-linear
Kunda	A water body
Kurumbranadu	A local Hindu kingdom in the northern Kerala
Kurumkuzhal	Also known as kuzhal, it is a wind instrument which can produce sapthaswara, seven basic notes.
Kurup	A caste group in Kerala. Some sub castes of this group, Kallatta Kurup and Theyyampadi Kurup practice the ritual art of kalamezhuth.
Kuthuvilakku	A traditional oil lamp with a leg long enough to be erected on the ground
Kuzhithalam	A tiny instrument like a cymbal
Mahabharatha	One of the two Indian epics, related to Hinduism
Mahavishnu	One of the three major gods as per Hindu mythology
Mandapam	A pavilion.
Marar	A caste group whose ancestral job is to perform percussion instruments. Poduval is another community who is doing this role in some parts of Kerala.
Nadavazhi	Pathway
Nalukett	Traditional courtyard houses of Kerala, having a central courtyard and rooms around it.
Namaskara Pattar	A designation given to a Tamil Brahmin in Balussery temple dedicated to Vettakkorumakan
Namboothiri	A caste group in Kerala, belongs to the class 'Brahmins'
Nanthuni	A string instrument which has two strings
Paattumandapam/ pattarang	A pavilion with four vertical poles connected with horizontal reapers to conduct kalamezhuth paatt.
Padappaatt	Pada means war, paatt means song. So padappaatt represents song related to war.
Padi	Literal meaning step. A band in the plinth which projects out
Padinjatta	Western block of traditional courtyard house.

Padmam	Means lotus, geometric form made in the floor using powders to do worship is also known as padmam.
Paduka	Footwear. Lower most part of the plinth is also known as paduka
Pandava	Five sons of king Pandu, who are central characters of epic Mahabharatha
Parswasopana	Flight of steps from both sides of the door
Pashupathasthra	A powerful and irresistible arrow of lord Shiva
Pattupura	Pura means house, so paattupura is an independent structure only to conduct Kalamezhuth Paatt.
Peedham	A traditional timber stool
Prasada	Gracious gift offered from temple as flowers and sandal paste as part of worship. Another meaning is temple.
Qawwali	A branch of music
Rakshasas	Demons
Ramayana	One of the two Indian epics, related to Hinduism
Rasaleela	Dance by Lord Krishna and his lovers in joy
Sapthamathrikkal	Seven sacred mothers; Bhrahmani, Vaishnavi, Maheswari, Kaumari, Varahi, Indrani and Chamunda
Shabdatharavali	An authentic dictionary in Malayalam, regional language of Kerala
Sopana	A term used to denote the flight of steps including the banisters
Thandavam	Any dance performed vigorously
Thanthri	Chief priest
Thekkini	Southern block of traditional courtyard house.
Thinnai	Entrance patio
Thiriuzhichil	Thiri means cloth wicks, uzhichil means waving, so it is a ritual of waving the wicks.
Thirtha yathra	Pilgrimage
Thiruvudayada	The dresses of the highness – God or King. In kalamezhuth paatt, thiruvudayada is a piece of cloth stiffen with starch and pleated to get a semi-circular shape.
Thottam	Thottam in folklore studies is song or hymn praising the deity. Practice of thottam can be seen in many art forms like theyyam, theyatt etc.

Upapeedha	Subsidiary plinth to provide extra height to the main plinth
Upavanas	Small forest
Vadakkini	Northern block of traditional courtyard house.
Valkkannady	Word meaning: a mirror with a tail. It's an oval or round shaped object with a tail to hold, usually made up of brass.
Vana	Forest
Vasthusasthra	The traditional building science of India
Vedas	Veda means knowledge, it is a large collection of religious texts originated from Indo-Aryan culture
Veena	A string instrument
Veluthedan	Laundryman
Vettakkorumakan	Vetta means hunting, oru makan means a son, so a son for hunting.

## **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

*Being a member of a family who conducts the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt annually, I have been watching and enjoying this art form since my birth. When I was a child, my brother and I used to recreate the ritual on the next day of the real ritual. Drawing the picture of the deity on the floor of our outhouse using ashes and soil, beating buckets with sticks as if it was drums, decorating the play area with coconut leaves, reusing the garlands from the previous day, singing songs, and finally erasing the drawing were all part of our childhood play.*

## **1.1 Overview**

The culture of any region is shaped by several tangible and intangible factors. The diversity of cultures and heritage is an irreplaceable source of spiritual and intellectual richness for all humankind (ICOMOS, 1994, clause no.5). Rituals and practices are critical aspects that give a strong image and distinctiveness to the culture of an area. It varies from place to place and from person to person, but it may not vary from time to time. According to Hindu religion, performing major events with an oil lamp or *agni* (fire) as a witness is a regular tradition. Wedding ceremonies of any religion and region will have some sort of ritual such as exchanging rings and bouquets, wearing garlands or doing fire sacrifice. Similarly, various practices and rituals can be seen all over the world. Some of them are observed annually, some rituals are performed occasionally, and some of them are part of the daily routine. Every morning, after cleaning the front yard, female members of Hindu Brahmin families draw beautiful geometrical patterns using rice powder. This is commonly seen in the residential streets of Tamil Nadu, a state in India. Friday congregation is auspicious for Muslims, whereas Christians commonly visit church to offer prayers on Sundays. As pointed out by the sociologist Grimes (2014, 185), the meaning of the ritual changes according to the context. Moreover, these rituals play an integral part in shaping the cultural landscape of any region. Cultural landscape has become an important subject of research in the last few years all over the world. The 1992 World Heritage Convention acknowledged cultural landscapes as the combined works of nature and humans. The current research also falls under the broad subject of cultural landscape. As cultural landscape is a vast area, different types of landscapes are identified. It varies from a serene rural landscape to a busy historic urban landscape. The broad definition of cultural landscape - the combined effort of humans and nature - helped researchers interpret the landscape in their own way, and

ritual landscape is one of them. The concept of ritual landscape evolved in Europe in the late 20th century as an archaeological concept and is usually described as a prehistoric environment with a concentration of monuments. But in Asia, to be specific, in India, the concept is mainly based on rituals that have been established a long time ago, which are still in practice and that continue to the future and are always shared with religion. The research is on rituals and landscapes shaped by practices. The study provides an overview of the wider global perspective and narrows down to the context of Kerala, a state of India.

To comprehend the idea in detail, Kalamezhuth Paatt is taken as a case example. *Kalam* means picture, *ezhuth* means draw or write, and *paatt* means song. It is a powder-drawing ritual and a mode of worship dedicated to different gods and goddesses in Kerala. The daylong event consists of performances, some of which are performed inside built spaces and some in open spaces. There is a strong relationship between each ritual and the associated cultural spaces. As such, a prominent and unique settlement pattern can be seen in regions where the ritual is practiced. This repeated pattern includes the arrangement of traditional houses or temples, water tanks or streams, and open spaces.

Further, this ritual has been chosen as a research topic due to its significance, both in the context of cultural study and its relevance to the broader subject.. However, the shift from patron to researcher was not that easy, and I had to see things differently and change my perspective from participant to active researcher. Bryman (2012) points out that most students wish to do research in areas of personal interest, and in fact, in this case, this is an advantage due to my own understanding of the ritual. As a patron, I am confident in conducting the ceremony by organising the skilled artists, inviting friends and family, procuring the materials required, and finally experiencing the ritual. As a researcher, I can identify many gaps in the process, such as the meaning and purpose of each ritual. In transforming from patron/participant to active researcher, this research incorporates perspectives from architecture, conservation, anthropology, archaeology, and sociology, and as such, the research will be useful to all disciplines with an interest in heritage and how tangible meaning is created and sustained through intangible heritage practices.

## 1.2 Research Problem

The phrases ritual and landscape are clearly defined and widely used, but when these two terms are combined to produce ritual landscape, multiple layers of meaning emerge. According to Robb (1998), ritual landscape is a specific example of the use of landscape concepts in archaeology, and it is from the same group as ceremonial landscape, sacred landscape, and symbolically important landscape. The phrase ritual landscape often refers to a collection of impressive monuments dating from the mid-Neolithic to the early Bronze Age, around 3500–1800 BC (Robb, 1998). The landscape of Stonehenge is a good example in this category. The western concept of ritual landscape is usually described as the areas of prehistoric environment with a concentration of monuments. As such, it emerges from a western archaeological approach, defined by antiquarian interests in ‘past’ landscapes that are disconnected from current use.

Coming to the Indian subcontinent, the concept of ritual landscape is different and is mostly connected with religion. The conclusion of my postgraduate thesis is noted:

*‘Ritualistic landscape can be defined as a type of sacred landscape in which the soul of the landscape will be a ritual, and if this particular ritual is removed from the landscape, the landscape cannot exist’* (Thenchery, 2016, 162).

This current research is an attempt to examine the definition of ritualistic landscape. The main research question is whether the landscape shaped by any present-day ritual can be called a ritualistic landscape. Kalamezhuth Paatt is taken as an example here because the ritual art is a blend of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Though different types of powder drawing can be seen in different parts of India, Kalamezhuth Paatt has been adopted since it is a unique art form that is practiced only in Kerala. Moreover, it is a combination of various elements of intangible cultural heritage, such as performing arts, oral tradition, mythology, traditional knowledge systems, and belief systems. Kalamezhuth Paatt is a mode of worship where artists from specific skill-based communities draw the form of various deities based on the mythology associated with each of the gods and goddesses on the floor using five colours made from natural materials. The five colours used to depict the form of the deity are white, black, yellow, green, and red. The artists sing songs known as *thottam* praising the deity and erase the drawing using ritualistic dance

movements with background music on *chenda*, the traditional drums of Kerala. So, the festival of Kalamezhuth Paatt is a combination of aesthetics in powder drawing, oral tradition in terms of *thottam*, and performing arts in terms of ritualistic dance. It has a series of rituals that start in the morning and extend till midnight or the next morning. No major change is observed in the structure of these rituals over a period of time. Nevertheless, the heritage content in terms of both tangible and intangible elements and the heritage value embedded in the ritual are very high. Like most of Indian folklore, this ritual is also rooted in rich historical, oral, and visual sources. Though the Kerala Lalithakala Academy, a government organisation working on cultural heritage, has listed more than three hundred variants of Kalamezhuth Paatt, this project focuses on Kalamezhuth Paatt dedicated to Lord Vettakkorumakan. This is mainly because the process involved in Vettakkorumakan's Kalamezhuth Paatt is elaborate compared to Kalamezhuth Paatt dedicated to other deities and involves multiple communities holding specific roles in the ritual. Moreover, the mythological background and the image of Lord Vettakkorumakan as a war god and protector also make the ritual unique to Kerala.

### **1.3 State of Art and Research Gap**

This research is based on two fundamental concepts: cultural landscape and its interpretations, focusing on the concept of ritual landscape, and the case example of Kalamezhuth Paatt of India. The research uses key terminologies such as cultural landscape, ritual landscape, contemporary ritual landscape, sacred landscape and ritualistic landscape in different contexts. Most of the existing studies on ritual landscapes are about the past, whereas this research focuses on the landscape of rituals in the present day or contemporary ritual landscape. Further, in an Indian context, the study of ritual landscape is sparse, but we can see several studies on rituals, sacred spaces, sacred landscape, ritual spaces, cultural landscape and the like. The term ritualistic landscape is comparatively less explored in the heritage and conservation sectors, whereas cultural landscape is a well-recognised entity. Cultural landscape, as a term, was invented in the early 20th century, and the particular idea was promoted mainly by Sauer (1925) and the Berkeley School of Human Geographers in the USA. In the late 20th century, the term was adopted in the heritage and conservation discipline. The UNESCO World Heritage Convention updated in 1992 became the first legal instrument to protect the cultural landscape. The convention classified the

cultural landscape into three categories: clearly defined landscape, organically evolved landscape, such as relict landscape and continuing landscape, and associative cultural landscape (UNESCO, 1992). The landscape shaped by the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt may belong to the third category, an associative cultural landscape.

The state of Kerala exists at the southern tip of India, which is rich in its natural and cultural heritage. It is distinct from other parts of the country mainly because of the geographic conditions. Each region in the state has its own art form; for instance, Mudiyaatt is seen only in the southern part of the state, whereas Theyyam is prominent in northern Kerala. Kalamezhuth Paatt is one of them, which is practiced all over the state of Kerala. Looking into the previous studies on the ritual, Mundekkad's (2002) Kalamezhuth Paatt by Kallatta Kurup is the most significant and comprehensive work, written in the regional language, Malayalam. Though Mundekkad touched upon most of the intangible elements of the ritual and dealt with the life and skills of a community called Kallatta Kurup, the rich tangible aspects were not addressed. Mundekkad's approach to the study was based on folklore theories. So, the current research is significant as it comprehensively studies the tangible aspect of the ritual from the perspective of a conservation architect and all communities involved in the ritual.

#### **1.4 Aim and Objectives**

The goal of the research is to establish the existence of the term ritualistic landscape and to interpret the ritualistic landscape of Vettakkorumakan's Kalamezhuth Paatt in Kerala. The main objectives of the study are:

1. To understand different rituals leading to the formation of ritual landscapes through examples from different regions of the world. Though the term ritual landscape is mostly associated with archaeology (Robb, 1998), the research focuses on contemporary ritual landscapes and indigenous sacred landscape and then engages with concepts of cultural and natural heritage.
2. To critically assess the sociological aspects of the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt and thereby explore the ritual as a community affair with the case example. The role of Kalamezhuth Paatt in society, its symbolism, and its materiality are also researched. The main caste-based communities involved in the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt are

Kurup, *Komaram*, and Marar. These people create the core group, which is supported by other skill-based groups.

3. To locate the evolution of the ritual art of Kalamezhuth Paatt, specifically that dedicated to Lord Vettakkorumakan. The evolution of the ritual is intertwined with mythology. But evidence can be produced by closely looking at *thottam*, the oral tradition associated with the ritual. Historical and archaeological data also play a critical role in tracing the evolution of the ritual.
4. To investigate the evolution and transformation of associated cultural spaces and their role in the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Kalamezhuth Paatt. According to INTACH (2013), it is important that intangible heritage cannot be abstracted from the tangible forms of culture and is usually inherent in it, in the myths and legends surrounding the built or material heritage, and of course in the skills of master craftspeople who produce works of art. Study at the micro level concerns cultural spaces and their relations to tangible and intangible cultural heritage.
5. To evaluate the boundaries of the ritualistic landscape shaped by Kalamezhuth Paatt of Vettakkorumakan in the state of Kerala, India. This is concerned with understanding the extent of the landscape to understand its components and impacts on the formation and use of the landscape.

The research engages with social science research methods using non-participant observation as well as semi-structured qualitative interviews. The data collected (oral transcripts, photographs, videos etc.) is further analysed and presented, making use of mapping to understand the extent and connectivity of the ritual landscape.

### **1.5 Structure of the Thesis**

The research starts with introducing the problem, then understanding the context from a greater perspective, focusing down on a case example, and ending with interpreting the results. The structure of the thesis is divided into nine chapters excluding the introduction and conclusion. However, the entire content can be divided into three parts: a literature review, a data presentation (oral transcripts, photographs, and notes), and finally, a discussion and interpretation of the results.

Chapter two presents the literature review engaging with various disciplines (such as architecture, archaeology, sociology, and ethnography), and it mainly deals with three aspects: culture, landscapes, and rituals. The cultural landscape is the broader theme of the research. Hence, the first part is dedicated to culture, landscape, and cultural landscape. It also explores various components of a cultural landscape such as space and time. Having established the background of cultural landscape and sacred landscape, the second section focuses on the concept of ritual landscape, and the discussion includes the origin and type of ritual, the ritual landscape concept in archaeology, and the relationship with the surroundings. The main goal of this section is to gain a critical understanding of the way rituals have been studied, considering how they have evolved, developed, continued, and become a part of the lives of people. It also includes examples of contemporary ritual landscapes across the world. Intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO is significant, as the cultural properties that create ritual landscapes are identified based on the ICH list. Since the case study of Kalamezhuth Paatt belongs to India, it is important to create an understanding of the ritual and sacred landscapes of the country; this is presented in the third part of the literature review chapter.

The third chapter sets out the methodological approaches and research design adopted in the project. It starts with various potential methodologies and sets forth a way to formulate the methodology for this research. The position of the researcher is important here, as both emic and etic approaches are equally applicable, and the impacts of these are discussed in this chapter. It also describes the ethical considerations in the research and the ethical process followed by the University of York.

After introducing the context of Kerala and its uniqueness in art, culture, and architecture, Chapter 4 briefly lists various types of Kalamezhuth Paatt and then focuses on the ritual dedicated to Lord Vettakkorumakan. It narrates the series of sub-rituals involved in Kalamezhuth Paatt and presents the meaning of the songs sung during the ritual. This chapter includes the documentation of the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt dedicated to Lord Vettakkorumakan through the use of two photo essays to establish Kalamezhuth Paatt as a unique ritual art of Kerala. Chapter 6 interprets Kalamezhuth Paatt as a cultural phenomenon by listing and documenting both tangible and intangible cultural heritage associated with the ritual.

The final and third parts of the thesis also have three chapters to shape the critical discussions. Firstly, considering the role of different communities in the ritual, it decodes the ritual as a community affair. This section elucidates how different generations of a community continuously create and modify intangible cultural heritage, in accordance with UNESCO (2011a). Chapter 8 is largely on the ritual in the past and address the origin and transformations that have happened to the ritual as well as the cultural spaces. Chapter 9 defines with the landscape shaped by the ritual and various components of the landscape. Chapter 10 summarises all the discussions that happened in the literature and the data presentation. It provides a summary of the whole process and disseminates the important results of the research as well.

### **1.6 Methodology Followed to Address Local Language**

The central challenge to this research on a distinct art form is the engagement with local languages. As a result, Malayalam, Kerala's native language, is used throughout. For instance, the oral tradition, *thottam*, is in Malayalam. To remedy this challenge, an extensive glossary of non-English words is provided at the starting of the thesis. In addition, key terms used in chapters are highlighted at the beginning of each chapter to provide pointers and help comprehend the meaning.

## **Chapter 2 Literature Review**

### **Culture, Ritual and Landscape**

## 2.1 Introduction

Literature reviews play a significant role in many research projects, as they provide context for the area of research (Snyder, 2019, Bryman, 2012). It helps to be familiar with concepts and theories related to a specific topic from different perspectives. Snyder (2019) considers literature review an important research method as it supports understanding of the research context and collective evidence in the particular area. As explained in the introductory chapter, the possibility of this study began not only with the concept of ritualistic landscape but also with the term 'cultural landscape'. Hence, the whole literature review is designed in three sections. The first section aims to build a strong understanding of cultural landscapes; the second part is on the rituals and landscapes created by the rituals in an international context; and the final section is on the ritual landscapes of the Indian subcontinent.

Many studies have been conducted over the past few decades across the world examining the idea of cultural landscape. Thus, the first section is essentially a consideration of various aspects of culture, landscape, and cultural landscape to provide the background and context for the research. The purpose of this section of the literature review is to examine different factors that affect the formation of cultural landscapes, as well as to perceive cultural landscapes as a construct of human beings and, similarly, as human beings shaped by the landscape. The characteristics of the Indian cultural landscape are somehow different from those of other parts of the world, as the traditional perception of culture in India is based on continuity rather than preservation (Thakur, 2011). Adapting to shifting social, political, and environmental conditions, India's cultural traditions, rituals, and history undergo continuous evolution. In contrast to this notion, many globalized conceptions of culture hold that cultural legacy should be protected against modernity and kept in its original form. In this way, every region in the world will have its own impression of culture and landscape. However, this section continues with a study of the numerous elements that go into making the cultural landscape, followed by an observation about how the cultural landscape might be seen as the source of other concepts that are comparable, such as sacred landscapes, ritual landscapes, and so forth.

## 2.2 Culture and Landscape

Culture or cultural, being the first part of the term cultural landscape, denotes the activities of humans and landscape; the later part denotes the settings or context. Culture is a broad entity, and it has different meanings. According to UNESCO (2001), culture may be defined as the unique combination of spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional characteristics that define a community or social group. Beliefs, values, traditions, and practices are only a few aspects of human existence that make up culture, it may alter and adapt throughout time, and they can differ greatly depending on the region (Naik, et al., 2023). The definition is significant here since the current project considers some social groups or communities and their characteristic features. The definition of culture also focuses on how these groups, communities, and societies define their identity, considering everything they maintain or create in their lives is a part of their culture. This may be the reason why Winchester et al. (2003) perceive culture as a kind of ethnic container into which people were born. Winchester et al. (2003) further explain the cultural container as distinct ethnic groups, categorised by religion, language, notions of race, or indigeneity. Psychologist Causadias (2020) defines culture as a system of people, places, and practices, for a purpose such as enacting, justifying, or challenging power, where people refers to population dynamics, social relations, and culture in groups. From the perspective of an anthropologist, Ingold (2000) explains that if people from different backgrounds are placed in the same situation, each one of them is likely to respond to the situation differently. Some of them will be aggressive, some people will act very calmly, and some people will act very diplomatically. The notion of cultural container can be perceived in two ways. The first one is by ethnicity, which is already discussed here. However, there are other intellectual aspects that shape the culture of a group or individual, rather than what is perceived by Winchester et al. (2003). This may be the reason for the shift from traditional culture and the formation of what we call global culture. The notion of indigeneity is reduced in this scenario. For example, the ancestral job of every community has its own value and is original in nature. This is why a potter's child tends to become a potter and a goldsmith's child shows interest in that job. However, in the present world, skills are more important than tradition. So, people outside the communities also get a chance to learn and practice the indigenous knowledge, thereby continuing the tradition.

The cultural cycle also appears to be crucial if we examine the synthesis of culture more systematically. The phrase "cultural cycle" refers to many stages of the development and transmission of culture, according to UNESCO (2009). It includes five phases: creation, production, dissemination, exhibition/reception/transmission, and consumption/participation UNESCO (2009). Even though these hierarchical stages are presented by UNESCO in a contemporary scenario, they can be applied in the current context of ritual art forms as well. To be specific, the creation of the ritual might have taken place much earlier. In the next stage, certain people or groups start producing and practicing the same for their livelihood. The communities disseminate the knowledge in specific regions and transmit it to the next generation, and the whole process continues as a cycle.

Various actions related to 'culture' described above need a platform or settings that can be interpreted as landscapes. It is clear from the previous research that the origin of the word landscape is from Germanic languages. One of the oldest references can be seen in the Dutch language in the early thirteenth century on *landscap*, *lantscep*, or *landschap*, which means a land region or an environment (Swaffield, 1991). Landscape architecture, landscape archaeology, historic urban landscape, landscape design, landscape ecology, etc. are different perspectives that show the plurality of the concept of landscape. So, the studies on landscapes are truly interdisciplinary in nature. 'What we see' is a much-celebrated definition of the term landscape. But Ingold (2017) argues that the suffix 'scape' does not come from the classical Greek *skopein*, which means 'to look', but from Old English *sceppan* or *skyppan*, which means 'to shape'. So landscape is not land looked at but land shaped. Considering the human activities in the world around us, Ingold's argument is relevant. One of the formal definitions, that is, a standardised definition based upon the agreement of signatory parties evolved through the European Landscape Convention. According to that (Council of Europe, 2000, Article I), 'Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors'. This definition emphasises the role of human actions in the creation of landscapes. According to the OED, landscape is defined as a view or prospect of natural inland scenery that can be taken in at a glance from one point of view; a piece of country scenery. This oldest definition of landscape in English is from the 16th century CE (Oxford University

Press, 2022). Similarly, Marc (2013) points out that the earliest realistic representations of landscape date to the 15th century through Renaissance painting, and the artists emphasised visual character and symbolic meaning. During that time, the word 'scenery' also gained popularity and as a result, the landscape began to represent the manifestation of human beliefs, ideas, and emotions (Marc, 2013). The phrase has also evolved into a metaphor, as in the political or media landscape. The political landscape is usually applied to a country or to a state. The majority of interest groups interacting with the same territory of land see different landscapes. This is why Marc (2013) argues that the meaning of the landscape shifts depending on the context and the background of the use. Meanwhile, Ingold (2012), through his essays on perception of the environment, claims that to perceive a landscape means to imagine it. The use of 'imagination' is significant here, as this is the way different people perceive or interpret a landscape in different ways. Therefore, Ingold (2012) considers why archaeologists or historians imagine things or places about the past and why landscape architects or designers think about the future. Hence, perception of the landscape is the deal between real and imagination, and Ingold (2012, 2) defines imagined landscape as 'landscape not of being but of becoming: a composition not of objects and surfaces but of movements and stillness, not there to be surveyed but cast in the current of time. It is, in this regard, closer to music than painting'. Ingold's notion of imagined landscape further leads to the thoughts on how landscapes are not limited to passive spaces, but dynamic environments including human experience, memory and time. This leads to the non-representational theories.

The interpretation of landscape underwent a significant shift toward the end of the 20th century CE. Non-representational theories (NRT) in landscape accentuate the experiential aspect of the context, as opposed to the conventional methods of presenting a landscape, which involve representation, symbolization, and description. British geographer Thrift (1996) introduced the concept of non-representational thinking in landscape, drawing inspiration from post-structuralists like Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, and Bruno Latour (Thrift, 1996). While this method of cultural and political geography is commonly used in the United Kingdom, it has found applications in a wide variety of geographical locations, including Denmark, Canada, Hong Kong, Argentina, and the United States, among many others (Waterton, 2018). According to Thrift (1996), the four pillars of

the theory are time-space, practice, subject, and agency, along with their respective roles within a landscape. Ingold's (1993) concept of taskscape, which emphasizes activities and their relationships with space and time, parallels the NRT. Here, cognition, impulse, intuition, and habit are all intertwined in a way that makes it difficult to separate them, creating a method of thinking that is better correctly described as a way of thinking about thinking (Waterton, 2013). It is crucial to recognize that several concepts embraced by non-representational methods, regardless of their name, have intricate histories that extend beyond the traditional boundaries of geography (Macpherson, 2010). Macpherson (2010, 3) further argues that we might view landscapes and bodies as products of their interplay within NRT, rather than as autonomous or objective "givens." Since NRT serves as a valuable tool for capturing the embodied experience of a region or landscape, numerous researchers have utilized it. For example, Pérez-Sindun's (2022) study on the coal region of eastern Germany relies heavily on NRT. Through the lens of NRT, we can also understand the role of seen and unseen elements, such as spirits, in a landscape or context. Herrmans (2020, 769) argues that understanding how the visible and invisible worlds interact with one another fosters a feeling of oneness between humans and the spirit world, as well as between humans and the material world, where the spirit world is pervasive and fundamental. Though NRT has the potential to see the landscape in a different way, especially when it comes to lived experience and rationality, some effort is required to translate the insights of the theory into a methodological framework.

As discussed so far, landscapes are creations of humans. Anthropologist Bender (1993) says about the characteristics of landscapes that they may be close-grained, modified, lived-in places, or they may be distant or partially fantasised. In this process of landscape, some aspects will be seen only on the top of the surface, and some of them can be seen under the surface. In fact, these aspects are the components of a landscape. In the case of natural landscapes, there are two types of contributors: landscape as surface, which consists of many materialistic points like slope, hardness, depth, or soil chemistry, vegetation, green spaces, rivers, open spaces, etc., and landscape as system, which again involves the interaction of cultural, social, historical, and economic conditions (Fakiri, 2016). In other words, the first set of aspects can be considered tangible elements, and the latter set consists of intangible aspects. The focus of the definition of landscape presented here varies

from entities such as its physical characteristics, the components, the contexts, and the perception. However, landscape can be considered a physical entity whose meaning changes according to the context and the perception of the people, both insiders and outsiders of the landscape.

It is worthwhile to mention here the term 'taskscape', which was put forward by Ingold in his essay on the temporality of landscapes. According to Ingold (1993, 158), 'a task is any practical operation done by a skilled person in an environment as part of his or her normal life, or it can be seen as constitutive acts of dwelling'. Each task or activity derives its significance from where it falls within an ensemble of related tasks that are often carried out simultaneously or in succession by several people. Ingold further clarifies that a landscape consists of a series of features, whereas a taskscape is made up of a set of activities or tasks. In short, the taskscape is to labour what the landscape is to land. In fact, Ingold (1993) expresses the association between temporality, which is related to time, and landscape as a taskscape. The notion of taskscape and temporality can be illustrated further through an example of the construction or regular maintenance of a vernacular house in the Kurichya tribal community, Wayanad district of Kerala, India. Annual repair and maintenance of houses involves a series of activities and rituals. For example, the community starts the work on an auspicious day by paying offerings to the family deities, collecting materials from nearby places, and executing the work. This has similarities to Ingold's notion of taskscape, as all the activities are temporal, and the finished or repaired dwellings and surroundings constitute the landscape. Ingold's intention was to look at the landscape not as a static entity but as dynamic, considering the temporality. Archaeology and anthropology mostly used the concept. However, in academia, the concept of taskscape received mixed responses. Archaeologist Thomas (2017, 268) points out that the taskscape concept is an effort to depict a dynamic environment, but it might put too much focus on people's deliberate actions. The concept of taskscape primarily concentrates on the daily activities of humans, which Ingold (1993) characterizes as the patterns of habitation. So, what about the non-living things in this context? In the above example of Kurichya tribes, there are physical objects like trees and stones in the surroundings, and the people consider them sacred. However, these sacred objects are not included in the taskscape.

Ingold (2017) later considered each activity or task as a linear line, and different such lines constitute a meshwork. In this refined concept, Ingold (2017) included living and non-living things. After 20 years of the introduction of the concept, Ingold (2017, 26) pointed out that taskscape might be a useful nickname for describing the spatiotemporal pattern of activity at a site. So, it is not a substitute for the term landscape, but it has scope when the context is temporal. Meanwhile, many scholars tried to develop taskscape scholarship (ikäs, 2017, Gruppuso & Whitehouse, 2020, Hawley, 2024) in various disciplines. Äikäs (2017) argues that landscape can be experienced through motion, activity, and participation. Äikäs used the concept of tasksape to understand the Sami sacred places of Finland and used the term ritual taskcape to describe the landscape. Gruppuso & Whitehouse (2020) and Hawley (2024) presented innovative concepts to expand the taskscape concept. Gruppuso & Whitehouse (2020, 593) assert the applicability of taskscape in broader contexts, particularly in relation to environmental relationships. Recently, Hawley (2024) used taskscape as a heuristic tool and emphasized an interpretation of human-environment interactions that is more nuanced and contentious. So, the concept of taskscape is being criticized for over-focusing on human activities, neglecting the issues of power, identity, and representation, and for omitting/not considering the non-tasks in the contexts. However, the further developments show that it has scope in many disciplines after some minor fine-tuning.

The interaction between culture and landscape can be considered a major factor that ensures the sustainability of that landscape. According to Naveh (1995), these interactions are reciprocal in nature. It is the cultural impacts that shape the landscape, and the perception of the landscape is also a product of culture. European Landscape Convention strengthened the notion of these interactions in the definition of landscape itself (Council of Europe, 2002). Anyway, cultural and social settings have a significant role in maintaining the surroundings. For instance, it is interesting to see how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people of Australia are now treated by the authorities. Government bodies like local Aboriginal Land Councils of Australia are committed to recognising and protecting the indigenous people, land, culture, spirituality, and heritage. Not only do they protect the landscape but also utilise the resources in a sustainable manner. The intangible cultural heritage in the form of belief systems is the key factor that materialises in this reciprocal

process. The 2023 ICOMOS General Assembly held in Sydney tried to uphold the contributions of aboriginal people to the country. It shows the cultural perspectives on caring for the country and how to respect the indigenous custodians of the land. Brooke Prentis (2019), an aboriginal leader from Australia, considers the country's acknowledgement of the contribution of traditional custodians of the land an honour. Another example is the custom of planting trees in India. Within the Hindu belief system, each person will have a birth star, and each star is associated with a particular tree. It is believed that each person should plant and protect at least one tree associated with his birth star throughout their life. Sacredness is the common element that can be observed in these examples.

Human actions and belief systems often ingrain the concept of sacredness in the landscape, leading to the creation of Indigenous sacred places and landscapes. Places where people gather to engage in religious or spiritual practices are considered sacred (Helmy, 2021). Sacredness extends beyond built elements to natural resources like rivers, mountains, and forests. Certain groups recognize these natural landmarks or expansive stretches of land or water, which hold great religious or cultural importance, as sacred national sites (Tatay & Merino, 2023). Helmy (2021) argues that the interaction between space, time, and faith is the key player in sacredness, connecting the notion of sacredness to memories and a sense of belonging. Similarly, LaDuke (2017), with reference to the lives of indigenous people of Turtle Island or the natives of North America, observes that cultural, spiritual, and historical aspects are integral in shaping the notion of sacredness in a community. LaDuke (2017, 84) continues that the sacred stories have a profound impact on their lives, teaching them important lessons about the need for community and respecting mother earth. People often forget these stories and their responsibility to the environment. Indigenous people, with their knowledge system and spiritual approach, maintain this connection. Stewart-Harawira (2011) points out that due to the ontological rift in the relationship between humans and the mother earth, ecological and spiritual crises evolve in modern society. Perhaps the restoration of sacred connection between the two entities will act as a solution. So, integrating indigenous knowledge systems related to land, such as Nishnaabeg intelligence, into pedagogy is a much-needed action (Simpson, 2014). Indeed, it calls into question the colonial educational system, which fails to provide adequate space for indigenous

knowledge. In many countries, this indigenous land becomes a topic of dispute. Legal issues involving Indigenous nations' sacred and cultural sites typically frame land in one of two ways: either as sacred or as property. Similarly, Lloyd (2023) explains that cases involving Native American sacred places often conflict between two fundamental rights: the right to practice one's religion and the right to own one's land. So, as Lloyd (2023, 12) points out, the real question here is what constitutes a sacred land. Such lands need our utmost respect and protection as holy dwelling places, as wild property, and as sovereign kin (Lloyd, 2023, 94). So the tension between indigenous and colonial perspectives is there in many parts of the country and the respective authorities are taking different approaches to it, for instance the case of Australia mentioned above. However, this part of the literature is to give critical insights into the indigenous aspects of colonial communities, and detailed discussion on the sacred landscape and its spatiality specific to Indian context is included in the upcoming section.

Landscapes can also be seen as representations that construct and reinforce identity; the identity can be of a nation, a region, or a society (Winchester et. al. 2003). The word identity is significant here as it is produced because of the interlinkage between culture and landscape. According to Bender (1993, 3), 'landscape is never inert, as people always engage with it and re-work it, and it is part of the way in which identities are created and questioned, even though this identity is at an individual, group, or nation'. People can have a feeling of having a place or a sense of belonging to a particular landscape, frequently in the region where they spent their childhood or where they encountered an essential period in their life span (Stobbelaar & Pedroli, 2011). The concept of the landscape identity is used to understand various possible interactions in this regard (Stobbelaar & Hendriks, 2004). According to this idea, at least two types of identities can be found: geographical identity and existential identity. The first one is related to the scientific perception of landscape, and it is mainly tangible or materialistic in nature, whereas the other is related to the influence of landscape on individuals and is intangible. A clearer definition of landscape identity is by Stobbelaar & Pedroli (2011, 334), who note that 'landscape identity is the perceived uniqueness of a place, i.e., it can be seen as the psycho-sociological perception of a place defined in a spatial-cultural space'. Some people see the positive aspects of a landscape, whereas others critically analyse the negative features of the landscape. Invisible forces,

such as spirits and exorcism, can occasionally impact the identity of a landscape. For people who are familiar with the context, it becomes an integral aspect of their lives. However, for others who are not accustomed to it, it often leads to several unpleasant encounters. Stobbelaar & Pedroli (2011) explain that even though people attribute landscape identity to an area, the concept is not limited to the physical features of that area; rather, it is a social and personal construction. It is clear that landscape identity, in this sense, never has an absolute character because observations of people just don't get along. Similarly, Ingold (2000) argues that indigenous communities lived experience of inhabiting the land depends upon five terms: ancestry, generation, substance, memory, and land. Even if Ingold is focusing on indigenous communities, these five terms, especially memory can be applied to any place and community, thereby establishing a connection with the identity of the landscape.. The text presented here are insightful, but the identity of the landscape can be further elaborated to find its real meaning and then its impact on the people component in the landscape.

Furthermore, these intercommunications also have an impact on the local settlement patterns and, thereby, the landscape. Rapoport clearly depicted the interaction of people with their surroundings and the influence of culture in vernacular architecture and settlement. Dwellings are the basic element of culture, and Rappoport (1969) argues that the construction of houses is a cultural phenomenon, where its form and settings are highly influenced by the cultural background to which it belongs. According to Rapoport (1969), these houses and settlements are the direct expressions of changing values, images, perceptions, and lifestyles, and socio-cultural aspects, namely basic needs, family, the position of women and men, privacy, and social intercourse, are the major elements that shape the dwelling form. Like other researchers in landscape, Rapoport also considered time as a major factor. But looking at various indigenous communities, it can be understood that these temporal changes don't have much impact on the built form and settlement. This is mostly due to the fact that vernacular buildings and settlements are the outcomes of the aspirations and preferences of certain groups seeking an ideal living environment. It doesn't mean that there is no iteration in vernacular architecture, the product is indeed a result of pragmatic approach in design. Many of them are reluctant to accept the changes. This is why many of the traditional cultures related to vernacular architecture are still intact. For

example, the vernacular houses of Dogon village, Mali are earthen dwellings and an integral part of Dogon culture and history. Despite its designation as a UNESCO World Heritage site, the residents are experiencing the challenges of living in an environment reminiscent of a museum, and they are making significant efforts to save their own culture (Wickle, 2016). The settlement pattern of Kurichya tribes in Wynadu, Kerala, is also in the same line. The dwelling, ancillary structures - like a kitchen complex, a yard to dry agricultural products, cultural spaces to conduct rituals and gatherings, a paddy field, and the pathways connecting it to the house, etc. all contribute towards the formation of a well-defined agricultural settlement. However, the settlement patterns of traditional communities are largely influenced by socio-cultural aspects and belief systems in all parts of the world. To understand landscapes in a holistic sense, cultural scientist Stephenson (2008) developed a cultural value model integrating various values associated with a landscape. Stephenson explains that the significance of a landscape is commonly explained by telling tales related to certain locations. Here, the word "stories" is used in a broad sense to refer to myths, historical occurrences, and the wide spectrum between history and myth. With reference to a study of Akaroa landscapes in New Zealand, Stephenson (2008) argues that there is significant overlap between the landscape interests of community members, or insiders, and disciplines, often outsiders. To elaborate on this, insider opinions were based on firsthand knowledge and local expertise, as well as a more widespread occurrence than would generally be of interest to a particular discipline. It was also remarkable that insiders placed a far larger focus on intangible qualities than would often be the case in traditional expert-based analyses of the physical forms of the landscape (stories, genealogies, practices, etc.). Additionally, community members often did not limit themselves to the landscape as described by conventional evaluation typologies but instead freely spanned a wide variety of topics. Nevertheless, to develop the cultural value model, Stephenson (2008) categorised various aspects of the landscape into three areas: forms, practices (including processes), and relationships. Forms include all tangible aspects such as archaeological features, man-made structures, vegetation, historic features, and natural landforms. Practices consist of human practices as well as natural processes, which include ecological processes, natural processes, historical processes, historic events, traditional activities, and human activities. The third set is introduced to deal with the interactions among the people and the interaction between the people and the landscape. This final category includes

spirituality, symbols, ideology, memories, sense of place, meanings, aesthetics, and stories. The landscape dynamics created by these three aspects are important in this study, and they will be revisited during the discussion chapter.

It is clear from the brief discussion that both the terms culture and landscape are vast. Many aspects, especially when encompassing rituals and customs, will be explained in the following sections. Having explored these words separately, the rest of this section considers the terms together.

The cultural landscape as a field of study developed in academia only in the 20th century. Plumwood (2006) suggests that the desire to understand the prior presence of indigenous people and to dismiss the colonial representation of land is the rationale for the popularity of cultural landscape studies in the humanities. This statement shows the importance of the cultural landscape as an interdisciplinary entity. Fowler (2000) suggests that a cultural landscape must have been dynamic, though by now its energies may be played out as in a relict landscape. It is also known that people and nature have interacted, and the result is the landscape in view of its particular character. However, it is realised that defining the cultural landscape is complex. The contributions of pioneers like Sauer (1925) and Bryan (1931) in defining and perceiving the cultural landscape in the early 20th century are significant. Sauer (1925), one of the forerunners in the subject, argued that landscape is an area made up of a distinct association of forms, both physical and cultural, and the cultural landscape is something fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group. Sauer further interprets culture as the agent, nature as the medium, and the cultural landscape as the result. Bryan (1931) argues that the study of the cultural landscape is about anatomical and physiological understanding. That means the structural part of the landscape, such as dwellings, railway lines, and fields, contributes to the anatomy, and actions such as growing crops, moving animals, harvesting, and conveyance of commodities constitute the physiological part. These definitions may be interpreted as an extension of the concept of natural landscape, and the intangible aspects are missing. Nonetheless, these initial definitions served as commendable endeavours to comprehend the ways in which individuals engage with their environment.

Even though the concept of cultural landscape was evolved in the discipline of geography, the National Park Service (NPS) of America adopted this for defining landscape architecture

and further modified it from 'cultural landscape' (National Park Service, 2021). According to the NPS, cultural landscapes are historically significant places that exhibit human interaction with the physical environment. The approach of the NPS to the cultural landscape is different, as it deals only with places within the United States that are particularly significant in American history and are considered to have authenticity to a historically important period. The real cultural landscape and indigenous sacred lands mentioned by LaDuke (2017) are not coming under this definition. As pointed out by LaDuke (2017, 92), we can only understand sovereignty against genocide and colonial dispossession. A gap can be seen in the early definition of cultural landscape, as the separation of natural and cultural heritage is not clearly established. However, towards the end of the 20th century, the contribution of 'people' is acknowledged in the notion of cultural landscape. Lowenthal (2015) believes that human activity has significantly transformed all of the aspects of the natural world, and we still perceive them as separate from our cultural heritage, which encompasses the structures and infrastructure, artistic creations, linguistic expressions, and customs that people have developed using the resources provided by nature. However, the fundamental element is that all activities happening inside the landscape are to satisfy the basic requirements and anything and everything beyond that is the improvisation of the basic needs. UNESCO also played an important role in identifying human activities in the landscape.

The contributions of UNESCO to recognising and protecting cultural landscapes across the globe are significant. The 1992 World Heritage Convention acknowledged cultural landscapes as the combined works of nature and humans. According to Article 1 of 1992's convention,

*'Cultural landscapes show how human settlement and society have changed over time, shaped by the natural environment's limitations and/or opportunities, as well as changing social, economic, and cultural forces from within and outside the society.'*

Further, according to paragraph 39 of the operational guidelines (UNESCO, 1999), cultural landscape can be divided into three categories: clearly defined landscape, organically evolved landscape, and associative cultural landscape. As the title denotes, clearly defined landscapes are landscapes designed and created purposefully by human activity and include gardens and parklands generated for aesthetics, gatherings, etc. This type of landscape is

usually, but not always, associated with religious or other monumental buildings and ensembles. Referring to the list of World Heritage properties (UNESCO, 1992-2024), examples of this category are Fountains Abbey in the UK, the Mughal Gardens of India, which include the Taj Mahal, Humayun's tomb, and Shalimar Gardens in Pakistan. An organically evolved landscape is considered the outcome of underlying social, economic, administrative, and/or religious objectives and has built up its present form through association with its natural environment. It has two subcategories, the first being relict or fossil landscapes, which are about the past and how the evolutionary process came to an end. The ecosystem and relict cultural landscape of Lopé-Okanda, Africa, and the cultural landscape and archaeological remains of the Bamiyan Valley, Afghanistan are some of the examples of this type. The second sub-category is the continuing landscape, which retains an active social role in contemporary society, is closely associated with the traditional way of life, and in which the evolutionary process is still in progress. The rock shelters of Bhimbetka in India are an example of this category. Associative cultural landscape is characterised by religious, artistic, or cultural association of elements rather than material culture. Cultural Landscape of Bali Province: The Subak System as a Manifestation of the Tri Hita Karana Philosophy is a model of this type.

Even though this categorization is meant for the inscription of cultural landscapes on the World Heritage List, these criteria are highly helpful in understanding and interpreting various landscapes. UNESCO identifies and lists the sites according to the above categorization and the perceived Outstanding Universal Value embedded in the property. The aim of the World Heritage listing of cultural landscapes is to uncover and sustain the extraordinary variety of associations among people and their current environment, to ensure living traditional cultures, and to safeguard the traces of those that have disappeared (UNESCO, 1992). However, there are some drawbacks to the UNESCO-adopted method of identifying cultural property. Upon examining the earlier examples of World Heritage cultural landscapes such as Tongariro National Park in New Zealand and Uluru National Park in Australia, it can be seen that either 'cultural' or 'natural' was focused upon. Thus, it can be noted that the concept of World Heritage initially focused solely on cultural or natural aspects and did not encompass intangible assets. This progression has led to the

current situation, in which cultural landscapes represent both cultural and natural heritage, as well as the intertwining of tangible and intangible heritage (Woodward & Cooke, 2023).

In addition to the previous discussion, there are several cultural landscapes distributed over the globe. As of writing, a total of 121 sites in 62 countries have been officially recognised and classified by UNESCO as World Heritage cultural landscapes (UNESCO, 1992–2024). Unfortunately, the World Heritage List underrepresents the number of cultural landscapes. This may be because of the extensive nomination process to be followed. Fowler (2003, 19) notes that the notion of cultural landscape as a World Heritage site revolves around some specific ideas, namely belonging, outstanding, significance, locality, meaning, value, and singularity of place. As such, a cultural landscape can have a great role in that region. It also has some great local values, whether they are economic, cultural, or aesthetic. Fowler (2003) notes that even though a cultural property has great local values it may fail to be recognised by UNESCO because of the limited criteria on which outstanding universal value can be assessed. This might be understood as an outcome of the bureaucratic framework and colonial perspectives of heritage value. However, the value assessment process followed by UNESCO through the World Heritage process does provide a useful framework. For example, as per paragraph 77 (UNESCO, 2008), a cultural property should meet at least one of the six criteria to be considered to have outstanding universal value and a natural heritage property should meet any of the four criteria.

Apart from the above points, World Heritage sites should also pass the test for authenticity and integrity. The authenticity of a cultural property is judged based on the Nara document of 1994, which considers the values attributed to a heritage as the basis for the conservation of cultural heritage in all its forms. The way of understanding these values depends upon the truthfulness of the source of information, and thus the source of information is a requisite basis for assessing all aspects of authenticity (ICOMOS, 1994). This source of information includes material, written, oral and figurative sources which helps to interpret a piece of heritage. Furthermore,

*'All judgements about values attributed to cultural properties as well as the credibility of related information sources may differ from culture to culture and even within the same culture. It is thus not possible to base judgements of values and authenticity on fixed criteria.'*

*On the contrary, respect for all cultures requires that heritage properties be considered and judged within the cultural contexts to which they belong'. (ICOMOS, 1994, clause no.11)*

It's clear that context plays a major role in judging the authenticity of a cultural property. The Nara document further emphasises on the faithfulness of a cultural property. According to the document, the importance of preserving cultural heritage in all its manifestations and time periods stems from the values placed on it. The trustworthiness and veracity of the information sources on these values have a role in our capacity to comprehend them (ICOMOS, 1994). The document also considers culture and heritage as an incalculable source of intellectual and spiritual wealth and traditional ways of expression, both tangible and intangible, are the bedrock of any culture and society. Many cultures have a distinct understanding of what constitutes landscapes and what does not, especially when it comes to cultural landscapes (Fowler, 2003). This thought of Fowler regarding authenticity and integrity is true, as this is a spontaneous action, and we also see different unique aspects of landscapes and produce different value judgements about their significance. Nonetheless, a detailed discussion on the possibility of utilising these criteria, authenticity, and integrity in current research is included in the coming chapter.

The process followed by UNESCO in identifying a cultural property thus involves outstanding universal values and testing authenticity and integrity. Apart from this, the values attributed to a heritage property are also important here. Feilden (1982) has listed various values associated with a heritage property, such as emotion, culture, and use value. A more relevant interpretation of the heritage of culturally significant places and its conservation is provided by the Australian ICOMOS Burra Charter (2013). According to the Burra Charter (2013, 1), 'places of cultural significance enrich people's lives, often providing a deep and inspirational sense of connection to community and landscape, to the past, and to lived experiences... Places of cultural significance reflect the diversity of our communities, telling us about who we are and the past that has formed us'. Though the charter does not use the word cultural landscape, the interrelationship between communities and landscape is evident in the description. Similarly, Avrami et al. (2019) argue that conservation of a heritage property should consider values such as aesthetic, historic, scientific, spiritual, and social values held by past, present, and future generations. Through the implementation of a value-based evaluation, individuals may gain a comprehensive understanding of a cultural

property by considering the perspectives of several stakeholders. Possible stakeholders are local communities including indigenous groups, traditional custodians and practitioners; government officials and tourists. Nevertheless, the examination of heritage values has great importance in this thesis as it aids in the subsequent analysis of the case example's heritage.

As discussed so far, people's interactions with landscapes result in the creation of cultural landscapes. Humans, like all living species, are an integral part of the natural environment. According to Plumwood (2006), the actions of people in a cultural landscape might be described as human-centric, human-created, humanised, or as evidence of human presence. Plumwood's theory demonstrates the dominance of humans in the landscape, leading to the marginalisation or suppression of nonhuman forces. For example, the rock shelters of Bhimbetka, a World Heritage cultural landscape from India, illustrate the above impression. The property is situated in the foothills of the Vindhayn Hills in central India. Five clusters of rock shelters, which are distributed in the dense forest, display paintings that date from the Mesolithic period right through the historic period. The buffer zone has 21 villages that exhibit notable continuity with the rock art and the history of hunting and gathering shown in the paintings. A significant number of rock shelters within the World Heritage property are located in deep forest, characterised by a wide variety of plant and animal species that are actively collected by the local people. Bhimbetka has been inscribed by the World Heritage Centre because of the long interaction between people and the landscape (criterion iii and v). What makes Bhimbetka important is the way humans have engaged with the environment and how some aspects of that connection have persisted across many generations. There are still certain interactions and behaviours associated with the hunting and gathering culture (ICOMOS, 2003). Archaeological evidence supports the presence of long cultural continuity. Even though the caves were formed because of the natural process, humans modified those resources for dwelling and for cultural practices. These practices are in the form of paintings. The contents of the painting were mainly related to the animal life, economic, political, and social lives of humans. People have left their mark on landscapes by serving as guardians of the vast expanse and landscapes have left their mark on people by carrying on the practice for so long.

By the same token, Ingold (2000) depicts the landscape and humans as the representations of natural science and cultural anthropology, respectively. From the perspective of an anthropologist, Ingold notes that, on many occasions, human beings have two accounts, one from biological science and another from anthropology. In biological science, one is hunting an animal to fill the stomach, as a biological action. On the other hand, cultural anthropologists view the hunter-gatherer culture in a different way. For them, an animal is offering their life in front of the hunter, as per the basic law of landscape ecology (Ingold, 2000). That is why Ingold strongly suggests through the hunter-gatherer example that natural science and cultural anthropology converge on a common point. Furthermore, Ingold's view on how humans perceive the world around them is also significant here. Ingold (2000) puts forward some preliminary points regarding the notion of environment. The first is that the environment is a relative term; one's environment is the world around him or her, and it came into existence along with that person and developed along with that person. The second thought is that the environment is never complete, which means the world will be under continuous construction until life is there. The third one is a mix of the above two. Ingold states that the world can remain as nature where there is no sense of belonging. In other words, the difference between environment and nature correlates with the difference in perspective between considering yourself as being within a world (emic) and as being without it (etic). It is clear that there is continuous interaction between humans and their surroundings, and the moulding process is complimentary if there is a sense of belonging in the minds of inhabitants. However, Ingold's focus on environmental relativism may simplify the tensions between different epistemologies (e.g., biological vs. cultural), but Ingold provides a perceptive critique of the dualistic approach to human-environment connections. When cultural practices or ideas are difficult to reconcile with biological imperatives, it is possible that these viewpoints will not "converge" as smoothly as Ingold proposes. If cultural landscape is viewed as a physical entity, certain essential factors must be considered to ensure its existence. A list is prepared based on the tangible and intangible elements in the cultural landscape put forth by Venkatachary & Kawathekar (2018) and Stephenson's (2008) exploration of landscape components in the cultural value model. They have identified the following components that strengthen the cultural landscape:

- i) Parcels of land
- ii) Landform
- iii) Fauna- flora (habitats)
- iv) Viewpoints
- v) Routes and networks
- vi) Human activity
- vii) Boundary reflecting the combined work of human- nature.
- viii) Villages
- ix) Water system and other infrastructure
- x) Climate and season
- xi) Visual realm of heavenly bodies
- xii) Artificial landscapes
- xiii) Built structures.
- xiv) Archaeological remains.
- xv) Visible and invisible natural and cultural resources
- xvi) Traditional knowledge system.

This list is a good mix of tangible and intangible aspects that can be associated with a landscape. Points no. i, ii, iii, v, vii, viii, ix, x, xii, xiii, and xiv denote the practical aspects and are clearly tangible. However, based on the literature review presented so far, it lacks completeness as the intangible parts are very minimally emphasised. To strive for comprehensiveness, further components might be incorporated.

- a. Mythological stories – the mythological grid places the individuals and helps them to boost their ancestral inheritance (Bender, 1993).
- b. Rituals and other customs
- c. Cultural spaces – which acts as a common point in both tangible and intangible cultural heritage.
- d. Belief system

Nevertheless, by listing the components, it can be concluded that landscapes can be perceived as a result of memories, myths, stories of gods and heroes, places of worship,

and, of course, the visible factors like built-and-unbuilt structures and ecological elements such as water bodies, flora, and fauna. To sum up, the purpose of this section was to establish a solid groundwork for the in-depth discussions that would take place in the subsequent chapters. A thorough analysis of literature on culture, landscape, indigenous sacred landscapes and cultural landscape has successfully accomplished the goal. This literature review provides a comprehensive overview of the intersection between culture and landscape; however, there are some gaps. Despite the study being conducted in an Indian context, the focus of this literature section is on discourses on culture, ritual, and landscape in a global context. The next section will fill this gap. The upcoming section will tackle the scarcity of contemporary examples of cultural and ritual landscapes. Further, this thesis will address the significant questions of ownership, continuity, and identity of indigenous sacred places and landscapes.

The detailed section on UNESCO and its role in interpreting, recognising, and protecting cultural landscapes reveals that the current research falls under categories ii and iii. In organically evolved landscapes, ritual landscapes come under the sub-category relict landscape, and at the same time, landscapes shaped by present-day rituals come under the later one called continuing landscape. Another important discussion concerns the various interactions between culture, nature, and landscape, where humans are positioned at the centre of these. The non-representational theories in landscape also have potential in this study. It is also interesting that many scholars relate humans to culture, as culture is produced by human beings, and nature to landscape. The next section of the literature focuses on the rituals and the landscape shaped by the rituals in a global context.

### 2.3 Ritual landscapes of the World

Having explored the concept of cultural landscape and listed the components that create the landscape so far, the next step is to review and analyse some of the factors related to rituals. As stated in the introduction chapter, the target of this section is to gain good knowledge about various rituals and the way they have evolved, developed, continued, and hence become a part of the lives of people. To begin with, rituals are actions regularly followed in almost the same way every time; they create curiosity among those who perform and those who witness rituals; and they usually follow strict rules and regulations and schedule, whether it is daily, weekly, monthly, or annually occurring rituals. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2021), 'a compulsive act or routine, the non-performance of which results in tension and anxiety, is referred to as ritual'. Also in later use: an action or series of actions regularly or habitually repeated. Further definitions and discussions on the concept of rituals are included in this chapter. Rituals can also be considered one of the richest elements of intangible aspects of culture. The specific spaces where the rituals are happening can be called cultural spaces or specific ritual spaces. So, a dialogue on cultural spaces, which represent the tangible aspects, is also included here. The latter half of this section is dedicated to discussing the role of these rituals and customs in shaping the landscape or environment. To borrow the idea of Ingold (2000), there are two types of nature: the first is 'really' nature, and the second is culturally 'perceived' nature. The first notion deals with untouched nature which is original, whereas the latter concept of nature includes the interaction of humans and nature. However, the focus here is on the second concept of nature, and ritual landscape is taken as the medium to illustrate the interaction of humans and nature. Therefore, different examples of ritual landscapes across the world are also included in the chapter, where both Western and non-Western cases are examined. Methodology followed in this chapter examines the cultural spaces and landscapes created by selected rituals from the UNESCO intangible cultural heritage list and try to interpret the ritual landscape from this perspective.

When I was a child aged 7 years belonging to a Namboodiri Brahmin (a caste group pertaining to Kerala) family, a religious ceremony was conducted at my house called '*upanayanam*'. I remember that relatives and family friends were there to attend the ceremony, and my brother and I received gifts and blessings from them. The ritual involved

wearing the sacred thread across the body on the left shoulder. Since that day, I have been doing the daily rituals to be followed by a Brahmin during the morning and evening. These rituals include worshipping the god Sun through chanting 'Gayathri', a hymn. Surprisingly, I am still searching for the meaning of these rituals. I am sure that most people can talk about similar rituals based on their experiences. This is why Grimes (2014), a ritual theorist, describes the foundation of a ritual as firmly adhering to the ritual's style of execution even without comprehending the meaning, and the popular idiom "because we always have" is thus valid here as well. This is true for several religious rites since the practitioners either lack knowledge or intentionally refrain from questioning the profound essence of these rituals. Nevertheless, it is advantageous to examine several scientific definitions at this juncture.

Grimes (2014) argues the meaning of the ritual changes according to the context, so does the definition, and argues that defining ritual is like defining jazz - this means it is not possible to explain the notion in a perfect manner. So, everything we do as a part of our daily routine can be a ritual (Frawley, 2008) for instance, brushing teeth and taking a shower in the morning. The way of doing this gets changed according to the context. The origin of the term ritual is partially from Latin and partially from French. So 'ritual' is derived from the French word '*rituel*', which is connected to religious rituals, as well as the Latin word '*ritualis*', which is associated with religious ceremonies (OED, 2021). Words which are similar to ritual are rites, customs and, the usages revolving around ritual are ritualisation, ritualising, ritualistic etc. As the current study is dealing with a ritual in the Indian context, it is useful to understand the meaning and definition of ritual in that setting. A similar word to ritual in Malayalam language is *anushtanam*, whose different meanings are to do or execute, to act according to another, or to do some work scientifically (Pilla, 1898). Most of the Indian religious rituals are closely related to water or water bodies and mountains, which show the significant relationship with nature. These definitions again give the notion that ritual is something to be executed scientifically, with some prior references. As the concept of the term ritual varies according to different disciplines, it is worth considering definitions from anthropologists, archaeologists, sociologists, and so on.

Understanding and construction of rituals are different for different communities; in fact, rituals are the central pillar of the social identity of each community (Coppet, 1992). Coppet

raises some important questions, such as whether rituals have any effect, what each ritual actually does, and how rituals serve society. These inquiries lead to the purpose of the rituals and will be addressed through their fundamental framework. Hobsbawm (2012), through his seminal work on inventing traditions, discusses the importance of customs and rituals in old and new societies. Hobsbawm argues that in traditional societies, 'custom' serves as both a flywheel and a motor. A flywheel is an example of tradition and a motor represents tectonics. So, a custom does not outright prohibit innovation and change, but it clearly places significant restrictions on it. 'Custom' achieves this by establishing historical precedent for any desired change or opposition to innovation. The energy with which the 'custom' works can be the belief system of the people. The common law system or 'customary' thus continues to display this hybrid of substantive freedom and formal conformity to precedent. Tradition is another term which is similar to custom. Hobsbawm notes that invariance is the major object and characteristics of tradition, whether it is real or invented, and repetition and other permanent patterns are imposed by the past, if actual or imagined. However, customs and rituals have their own role in society, and they get adapted even in new conditions without much compromise in purpose.

Further regarding the definition of rituals, Bell (1992) noticed that after the 1970s, the logical framework for theory had changed, and most efforts to describe a ritual included articulating the inherent characteristics of an independent phenomenon. These efforts tentatively assert that there exists a concept known as ritual, which exhibits distinct characteristics whenever and wherever it is seen. Bell defines ritual as a generalised medium of social interaction and suggests that while defining ritual, it would be better to consider nonritual activities in the context as well. According to Beattie (1964), the ritual has two characters: expressive and instrumental. Expressive aspects interpret rite as a kind of language; by enacting a rite, social actors are trying to communicate something. The second one denotes that when people do some rites, they are trying to bring about some favourable or desired state of affairs or to prevent some unfavourable or undesired ones.

It is also interesting that there are ritual and non-ritual actions that come across in life. According to Chinese sociologist Wu (2008), the difference between these actions lies in the opposition between technicality and supernaturalism. Wu's argument of technicality and supernaturalism can be illustrated through the example of the steps involved in the

beginning of the construction of houses or other buildings in India. As per *Vasthusathra*, the traditional building science of India, any construction starts with a ritual called '*shangusthapana*'. On that day, after setting out the plan, the architect or chief carpenter pays some offering to '*Vasthupurusha*', the protecting god of that land, and erect a wooden pole in the south-west corner (Cheruvalli, 2007). Setting out the plan represents the technicality, and worshipping the god embodies supernaturalism.

It is a common notion among anthropologists that the major difference between ritual and non-ritual activities is that other human activities are normal and profane, whereas rituals are sacred and serious. Frawley (2008) observes that religious rituals can be called special actions with spiritual intent that are repeated in order to inspire a higher power. Frawley argues that ritual is necessary for everyone, and it purifies the mind and even brings positive forces to society. Grimes (2014) argues that the formal definitions require a specification of what is to be included and what is to be excluded. Looking at these definitions, it can be understood that researchers are making their own assumptions. Grimes also defined ritual many times, and it is useful to note that Grimes gave equal importance to terms like ritualizing and rites that are coming in the process of understanding the ritual.

Grimes (2014, 192) argues that 'ritualizing transpires as animated persons enact formative gestures in the face of receptivity during crucial times in founded places'. Grimes criticises himself for not presenting the usage of animated people or formative gestures with sufficient transparency, resulting in the definition not being clear. But the description of rites made by Grimes is appropriate; accordingly, 'the term rite refers to a set of actions widely recognised by members of a culture. Rites are differentiated (compartmentalised, segregated) from ordinary behaviour. Typically, they are classified as "other" than ordinary and assigned a place discrete from such activities' (Grimes 2014, 192). Hence, rites are mostly part of larger entities, a ritual system, or a ritual tradition. In that sense, rites can be called sub-rituals. Finally, the simplest but most meaningful description of rituals by Grimes says that 'Ritual is embodied, condensed, and prescribed enactment' (2014, 195).

As a result of the criteria presented above, it is possible to draw the conclusion that rituals are formal behaviours, that they include certain robust patterns of activity, and that they have some powerful meanings. Context also plays a major role in shaping the structure and meaning of a ritual. They can be religious or secular.

If ritual is a human invention, then its genesis should be tied to human origins. However, rituals or ritual-like concepts may have emerged earlier. *Homo sapiens*' rituals are common now, although it is unclear when they originated to play these roles in its evolutionary past. However, archaeological evidence suggests that Neanderthal culture, about 130,000 to 40,000 years BCE, practiced rituals. Rituals and ritualised behaviours may have been utilised to pass on technical knowledge (Nielsen et al., 2020). Neilson also suggests that Neanderthals had a high possibility of communal rituals (connected to psychological and anthropological understanding of cultural rituals), but more precise characterization of ritualised conduct may be sparse. Archaeologists have extensively investigated the evolutionary history of ritual in humans; however, the specific details are excluded here.

The evolution of ritual can also be closely related to that of religion. Alcorta & Sosis (2005) tried to correlate the origin of rituals to music and the arts. According to them, even though it is difficult to trace the ritual's evolution to a symbolic signalling system, distinguishing features of rituals, for instance, chanting, music, and dance, can provide important clues. In the later stages of the evolution of religion, this symbolic signalling system played a crucial role. Yet, the exact timing of the emergence of symbolic conduct in human development still remains obscure. Alcorta & Sosis (2005) conclude on the basis of various ethno-archaeological evidence that the ritual origin of the symbolic system emerged some 1,00,000 years before the present. They interpreted the presence of red ochre pigment at numerous African Middle Stone Age sites as an indicator of ritual activities.

Another important clue that sheds light on the origin of ritual is rock art and related activities. These rock or cave paintings can be seen as part of artwork or related to ritual. As discussed in the previous section (the case of Bhimbetka cave shelters, India), rock art is usually associated with the hunter-gatherer phenomenon. Paradoxically, Whitely (2012) says that the origin, meaning, and purpose of rock art do not correlate perfectly with some sort of religious system. Rather, White conceptualises rock art in two categories: art intended to portray visionary or altered states of consciousness (ASC) and motifs made to illustrate other subjects and/or created for other reasons. Here, shamanism is the central component of the first kind, as it commonly portrays visionary images, symbolising in a general sense a supernatural experience or event. Pilgrimage commemoration, cult ceremonies, war events, and honours are the topics of the latter category (Whitely, 2012).

The upper Palaeolithic era, which dates between 36,000 and 10,000 BCE, is currently recognised as the earliest period of rock art and maybe the first evidence of organised ritual and religion (Whitely, 2012). Activities like hunting magic, totemic signs, mythological markers, art for art's sake, and shamanism were interpreted on this site by various researchers. Nonetheless, ritualised behaviours that may have begun in Neanderthal society evolved over millennia to become structured rituals in the upper Palaeolithic period.

Furthermore, we cannot omit the role of last honours in the evolution of rituals. The separation of nonhuman and human rituals is significant here. It is interesting that a few mammalian species, like chimpanzees, elephants, and dolphins, pay particular attention to the deaths of their close relatives. This can also be considered the beginning of death rituals. Renfrew (2016) points out that it is better to understand the response of humans to death than look into the death rituals of the early period. Clues regarding the burial of human bodies are seen in the Palaeolithic ages (Renfrew, 2016). The argument of Whitely regarding rock art and the notes of Renfrew on death rituals match the timeline, as both are dealing with prehistory.

Classifying rituals is a difficult process, as suggested by many of the ritual theorists. Plenty of keywords are created by prefixing or suffixing 'ritual', for instance, interaction ritual, rituals of exchange, rituals of rebellion, secular ritual, status conferral ritual, status maintenance ritual, status reversal ritual, etc. (Bell, 1992; Grimes, 2014). Other terms are used instead of ritual, for example, sacrifice, ceremony, rites, liturgy, customs, etc. Grimes (2014) points out that these words or usages are ill-defined and overlapping, and Grimes suggests that as ritual is an expansive category it should be divided into smaller sets. Grimes implemented that idea by identifying six modes of ritual, namely ritualization, decorum, ceremony, magic, liturgy, and celebration, to organise the entire world of ritual. However, these can be considered as different layers rather than ritual typology, as the degree of the ritual or the ritualised behaviour is different in all these categories.

Grimes' (2014) concept of six modes of rituals is, of course, a good way to begin the classification. Mannerisms, habits, and symptoms fall under ritualization, whereas greetings, departing, bowing, etc. are examples of decorum. Several examples, like inaugurations, rallies, and political functions, can be added to ceremonies. Magic, the fourth category, is strictly related to the cause and consists of healing, fertility, sacrifice, divination, etc.

Sometimes, it can be related to black magic also. Liturgy is religiously mature; some of the examples are mediation, invocation, and praise. The final category, celebration, is highly colourful and aesthetic because of the inclusion of examples like festivals, birthdays, and feasts.

It is true that there are chances of overlapping these layers and Grimes (2014) notes they interact, combine, and modify one another. Even though Grimes' perception of rituals is in a Western context, it can equally be applied to a larger context. Onam, the regional festival of Kerala, is a colourful festival that commemorates the good days of Mahabali, the demon king. But some interpret it as a religious festival. Onam can also be interpreted as an agricultural and harvesting festival, as it is the beginning of a new year in the regional calendar. During its evolution, some rituals which are religious in nature might have been added to the festival of Onam. For instance, people belonging to the Hindu religion connect this festival of Onam to Vamana, an incarnation of Lord Mahavishnu. Maybe due to this, some people consider it a religious festival. Hence, the same ritual exhibits the nature of different modes prescribed by Grimes. The situation is not different in the Floral Belt Dai's rituals in China, as explained by Wu (2018). This is related to agricultural practice, and each step, beginning with collecting the seeds, germinating them, and finally harvesting, is carried out in a ritualistic manner. Nevertheless, as discussed earlier, these layers or modes are merely a way of organising various rituals into a preliminary category. To sum up, the broadest classification can be religious or secular, and the major factors that help to categorise the rituals are the meaning, context, and time.

Gender considerations are also important in various rituals. According to Rapoport (1969), ritual actions play a significant role not only in belief systems or ideological constructs but also in human relationships. So, the rituals strengthen social relationships through interactions and doing them together, and each gender plays their own role in rituals. From an archaeological perspective, gender relations are also established within communities or households through systems for example, food procurement, storage, preparation, and consumption (Gilchrist, 1999). All these activities might have created a routine, and this routine itself can be interpreted as ritualised. Archaeologists have been confronted with difficult decisions when examining the gendering of work from an archaeological viewpoint. Gilchrist (1999) argues that generalisations might be drawn from toolkits found in graves

with sexed corpses or from extensive anthropological evidence of the division of work based on sex. Further, a study of gender and mortuary rituals in Mexico reveals that significant disparities between the quantity and type of burial accessories found on males and females would indicate that sex played a significant role in determining social positions and possibly the relative valuation of individuals (Clayton, 2011). Similar to Gilchrist, Dempsey (2022) suggests gender roles and identities are examined through inquiries directed at the material evidence, which includes landscape, space, architecture, food, bodies, and artefacts. Genders may be embodied in a variety of ways during the course of a person's life, which means that individuals (re)negotiate their gender roles and identities on a regular basis throughout their lives (Dempsey, 2022). In spite of the fact that Dempsey's premise is related to gender archaeology, it is equally applicable to ritual theories. If society accepts this phenomenon, people of different genders can play different roles within a ritual. Coming to the present world, it can be observed that rituals change things, they change relationships as well (Grims, 2014). Through a wedding ceremony, a woman becomes a wife, and a man becomes a husband. Similarly, through death rituals, a wife becomes a widow and vice versa. So, these rituals should be psychologically the same for all genders. That is why Wojtkowiak (2018) believes ritual is a powerful cultural tool to acknowledge and confirm life-changing events for all genders.

These situations are not different in the Indian subcontinent. For example, the dancing girl of Harappa shows the importance of females in societal interactions, and even though during the Indus Valley civilization and the Vedic period women had equal status, this started to gradually diminish (Dwivedi, 2022). But it doesn't mean that their role in rituals has also been reduced. Oral tradition performed by women members of the family in Kangra Valley, Himalaya, is an example of the role of women in rituals. Narayan (1995) observed that even though men in the region sing devotional songs, it is not considered a ritual. Similarly, there are some rituals that are specifically executed by male members.

Apart from the common structure of the rituals, there are some unseen elements. Symbolism is one of them, and this often gives meaning to the ritual. Each ritual needs a social environment to exist and have social significance (Subhadra, 2017). According to Subhadra, the strength of the rituals resides in the powerful impression they leave in the minds of the general populace. This can be interpreted as the basic theory of rituals.

Cultural anthropologists always emphasised the symbolic value of rituals. According to Gbadamosi (2005), cultural components in an organisation are symbols, language, narratives, rituals, totems, and practices, and Gbadamosi defines symbols as the most basic and smallest unit of culture. Gbadamosi further observes that traditional medical practitioners, who follow some practices, play a vital role in African communities. They attribute some supernatural power to these people. Similarly in non-western cultures, mainly in Africa, witch doctors, magicians, and medicine men have the strength to fulfil the wishes of common people. The Tumbuka people, who live in northern Malawi, are fond of the healing dance known as vimbuza. It is a significant example of the healing practice known as ng'oma, which is practiced across Bantu-speaking Africa. Additionally, UNESCO declared it to be a part of the ICH, noting most of the patients are females who are suffering from various mental diseases. After diagnosis, patients undergo a healing dance (UNESCO ICH, 2008). Songs sung by people around and the beats of drums make the patient possessed by Vimbuza spirits, and they express their mental problems to society through the spirit. The ritual actions mentioned here are highly symbolic in nature and psychological ways of healing illness.

The spatial arrangement of houses in traditional Dogon villages in Mali shows the role of symbolism in planning. The concept of planning symbolises a prone human body, and the most important structure, called the toguna, represents the head. Likewise, their death rituals and mask dances are also highly symbolic (Wickle, 2016). In the same token, Basso (2006) notes that the names of the places and the landscape of the Cibecue region of North America are closely associated with stories and beliefs. The Apache community, the native tribes of North America, are the traditional custodians of this region. However, symbolism can be seen in all aspects of the cultural environment such as planning and naming of the villages, rituals and other art forms.

In addition to the current discussion on symbolism, another important aspect of the ritual is materiality. The concept of materiality is crucial in the humanities since it encompasses the interaction between subjects and objects and explores the reasons behind the importance of certain material properties for individuals (Tilley, 2007). Given that each material possesses distinct features, with only a limited number being relevant to humans, Christopher defines materiality as the aspect that specifically pertains to the interaction

between items and individuals in a social context. Shriver-Rice (2009) defines materialisation as the process of converting abstract concepts such as beliefs, ideals, myths, and ideas into tangible physical forms. These instances can be observed in various contexts, including residential structures, ceremonial practices, symbolic artefacts, or political landmarks. In addition, Lan (2018) affirms that beliefs serve as the underlying factors that drive actions. Lan queries the rationale of carrying out an activity if we are aware that it will not result in any changes to individuals or circumstances, and our beliefs regarding the aim of the action will remain unchanged. Consequently, the majority of individuals possess an understanding of the advantages associated with engaging in a ritual, which may encompass psychological, physical, or a synergistic blend of both. Ancestral worship is prevalent in several regions around the globe. Regardless of the framework, the aim remains the same in all instances. While certain individuals express their reverence for ancestors through the act of presenting flowers, others commemorate their forebears with elaborate feasts, and some choose to honour them by observing periods of fasting. In the end, materiality manifests itself in various forms.

Likewise, the relationship between material and immaterial aspects of ritual is very important. People manifest their prayers, intentions, feelings, etc. through ritual items. Rosemary (2006) interprets these results in her investigation of the power of ritual objects through the medium of clothes and threads. The objects used in the ritual allow the participants to perform symbolic actions, move through symbolic spaces and time, and follow symbolic paths. She was particularly concerned with identifying the qualities that contribute to the properties of the rituals. Rosemary contends that the majority of ritual objects benefit from the qualities that good craftsmanship can bring to an object.

Having explored various intangible aspects of the ritual, it is worthwhile to review the tangible features of the rituals. The term cultural space is also significant here, as this research is dealing with a cultural phenomenon. It is also interesting that 'space' is one of the fundamental aspects of architecture, and it can be suffixed with many words to create useful concepts, for instance, cultural space, ritual space, sacred space, and all these terms have their own 'space' in this research. Moreover, these spaces, especially cultural spaces, can also be considered important elements in the micro-modules of a cultural landscape.

From an anthropological perspective, Hall and Hall (2011) point out that every living object has a visible physical boundary separating it from its external environment. This visible boundary is surrounded by a series of invisible layers that are more difficult to define but can be considered real. These other boundaries begin with the individual's personal space and terminate with her or his 'territory'. This concept of physical boundaries and territory can be defined as cultural space. However, this definition of cultural space is closely related to people and is more relevant in cultural studies. It can be interpreted in the case of a ritual as well. For instance, if a person is performing a religious ritual, the surrounding spaces also have their own influence on the execution of the ritual. It affects both the psychological and physical state of the performer. Another example is *Koodiyattam*, one of India's ICHs recognised by UNESCO. It is a Sanskrit theatre that is usually performed inside a traditional building called *Koothambalam* (which means a temple to perform *Kooth* and *Koodiyattam*). As the term denotes, it is similar to a temple, and hence it is sacred in nature. The quality and dimensions of the spaces, construction details, etc. are strictly based on the traditional architecture knowledge system of Kerala. Moreover, the visual clarity of the performance and acoustics are also addressed in the design (Panchal, 1984). The performers are able to bring the audience to an unbelievable state of appreciation, mainly because of the ambience of the *koothambalam*. This shows the significance of cultural spaces in the performing arts. Nevertheless, these cultural spaces are more sacred in nature and closely related to the intangible cultural heritage.

Cole (2004) points out in work on the ancient Greek landscape that there are three occasions for forming a ritual space. The first situation is when establishing a new community; the second occasion happens when introducing a new ritual; and the last one occurs when a normal secular space is to be used for a temporary ritual event. Even though the interpretation is in the Greek context, this is applicable everywhere, but there may be more circumstances for the generation of ritual spaces. The first situation, establishing a community, is a gradual process, and it may take a long time to form the culture and lifestyle of a community. The evolution of the ritual may also take place along with this process. Here, the spaces allocated, or the spaces transformed for performing the rituals, can be called ritual spaces.

The scenario can be demonstrated through the example of Namboodiri Brahmins, a community in Kerala, India. The hereditary job of these people is priesthood in temples, so the community is maintaining a ritualistic life. The saints of India have set some rules and regulations to be followed by each human being. People belonging to the Hindu religion, especially Brahmins, still strictly following these rules. These special rules and practices are known as *shodasakriya*, which comprises sixteen enhancement rituals in the lifespan of a person, from birth to death (Pandey, 1993). Apart from these occasional rituals, they also have daily rituals, for instance, performing sacrifices and daily worship of their favourite deities. So, these rituals have evolved as a part of community life and might have taken a long time to establish. Moreover, specific spaces are also assigned for performing these rituals and routines in the house. *Nalukett*, the traditional courtyard house of Kerala, has four blocks around a central courtyard, in which *Vadakkini*, the northern block, is reserved for conducting the occasional rituals. Whereas the eastern and southern blocks are for daily rituals, these spaces clearly depict the connection between various rituals and the specific spaces for performing the rituals (Thenchery, 2016). Guettel Cole's (2004) third case talks about temporary ritual events. In the case of *Nalukettu*, more secular spaces like the front courtyard become venues for annual or temporal rituals, for instance, harvesting festivals. These are all seasonal rituals or festivals, and one can experience the wonderful transformation of unused or undefined spaces during the rituals.

Secular rituals also have strong connections with spaces. The national anthem, national day, and national flag of any country are sacred in nature, and they invoke a feeling of reverence in citizens. So, the cultural spaces associated with national day celebrations are also considered sacred. The military practice at the Wagah border is a good example in this context. The Wagah border is on Grand Trunk Road, and it separates India and Pakistan. In order to maintain a good relationship, both governments jointly decided to start this practice in 1959. The military event, also known as the Wagah border retreat, happens daily before sunset, and it includes parades by the Indian border security force and Pakistani rangers and ends with the coordinated lowering of flags (India Today, 2022). This ritual exemplifies Cole's (2004) second and third cases of ritual spaces. A place that was merely a border on a grand trunk road becomes a strong ritual space due to the introduction of the ritual of the flag ceremony. Similarly, Hobsbawm (2012), through the example of Swiss

nationalism, describes how traditions are reinvented in the new context and how traditional customary practices, including folk songs, physical contests, and marksmanship, were modified, ritualised, and institutionalised to create national identity. Hobsbawm (2012, 6) further observes that the statues of the Federal Song Festival in Switzerland produce a powerful ritual complex, which includes festival pavilions, structures for the display of flags, temples for offering, processions, bellringing, tableaux, gun-salutes, government delegations in honour of the festival, dinners, toasts, and oratory. This example shows the power of politics, the importance of rituals, and the interpretation of ritual spaces in the modern world.

In brief, the notion of ritual space is a construct of the need for a defined space for conducting any ritual. It can be an open space, or it can be a covered space. It can be a temporary arrangement, or it can be a permanent venue. The extent also varies from a small area for a handful of people to a large area with a carrying capacity of thousands of people, according to the nature of the ritual. But these are always sacred in nature, and the actors and actions of the rituals contribute to defining a ritual space. Hence, a normal place is becoming a ritual space because of the approach and perception of participants and the sense of ownership.

Having discussed both terms separately, this section considers the concept of ritual landscape to form new meanings. The straight meaning of the words indicates that a ritual landscape is a landscape that is created by rituals. But as mentioned earlier, this is an archaeological concept that evolved in the late 20th century and is highly connected with specific terms, namely ceremonial landscape, sacred landscape, and symbolically important landscape (Robb, 1998). It is also to be noted that the concept of ritual landscape in archaeology is strictly related to a particular period, and the term has been used to indicate groups of monuments in Europe dating from the mid-Neolithic to the early Bronze Age, from 3500 to 1800 BC. It includes Neolithic long barrows, bank and ditch enclosures, and stone circles and alignments (Robb, 1998). Robb clarifies that Neolithic and early Bronze Age monumentalism represent a unique sequence of human adaptation to the landscapes of Western Europe that has left long-lasting and visible traces in the present. Robb (1998) points out that after the 1990s, the appearance of ritual landscapes in archaeological literature was sparse. However, dense monument distributions in Stonehenge, Avebury etc.

are considered examples of this category. All these examples show the characters of a ritual landscape, and it is clear from this evidence that there was a continuous performance of rituals, mainly related to death and burial.

Bradley (2000) describes in his work 'an archaeology of natural space' how Arthur Evans, son of John Evans, one of the founders of British archaeology, managed to discover the Saami sacrificial sites in Finland. According to Bradley (2000), Evans visited Ukonsaari and found long bones, fish bones and antlers outside the cave confirming it as a sacrificial site. The cave Evans explored in Finland is considered one of several sacrifice sites made by the local inhabitants of northern Scandinavia, consisting of hunters and reindeer herders. It is interesting to observe that these sacrificial sites are often characterised by the formation of rocks that resemble the forms of humans, birds, or animals. Apart from the natural formations, they used to use timber or stone idols, and the sacrifice was dedicated to natural forces such as wind, water, sun, and thunder (Bradley, 2000). This practice shows how nature was important in the life of the Saami. Even though the example of Ukonsaari is not known as a ritual landscape following the definition by Robb, the ritual content was enormous during a long period in the Bronze Age, and it represents the sacred geography of western Europe in that era. On the other hand, the concept is something different in American archaeology. Unlike in the ritual landscapes of the West, the time frame of the origin of settlements or ritual settings is not specified. Joel Palka (2015), an American anthropologist, argues that ritual landscapes are places of interaction. Significant places like large cave mouths, lofty mountains, high waterfalls, and deep pools attract humans due to their unique natural features for ritual purposes; thus, people make connections to the landscape through rituals. Palka's view can be interpreted through the example of the ritual landscapes of Mesoamerica. Palka (2015) considers ritual landscapes as unique, culturally significant geographical features that Maya people selected as places for pilgrimage. Here, the ritual landscape concept is associated with myths, beliefs, ancestors, and spiritual strengths, and Maya pilgrimage to the ritual landscape is continuing. However, it is important to observe that the ritual landscape concepts of Europe and America vary, and archaeologists' focus on the West is mainly on past landscapes, whereas the focus in other parts of the world is on the aspects of continuity. In this regard, to get more interesting results from the research, the next part reviews various examples of ritual landscapes across

the world. The UNESCO listing of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and early examples of World Heritage cultural landscapes is taken as a source in this project, and nomination documents submitted by state parties or organisations are taken as major references.

Before moving on to the case studies, the evolution and significance of UNESCO's ICH are to be introduced. The 2003 Convention stresses the importance of intangible cultural heritage as critical for cultural diversity and in recognising the processes of globalisation and social transformation. According to the convention, ICH means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills—as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts, and cultural spaces associated therewith—that communities, groups, and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage. ICH is transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature, and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. The 2003 convention also proposed five domains to organise and identify intangible cultural properties. They are,

- Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage.
- Performing arts.
- Social practices, rituals, and festive events.
- Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, and
- Traditional craftsmanship.

As of March 2024, 730 elements have been identified by UNESCO as ICH distributed across 145 countries and 182 countries have joined the mission for safeguarding ICH after ratifying the convention (UNESCO intangible cultural heritage, 2024). A review of the list provides insight into the ritual content and their relationship with the space to interpret the possibility of ritual landscapes. However, there are some drawbacks in the process followed by UNESCO in identifying and listing the elements. This includes lack of community involvement in the process, over dependency on written documentation, emphasis on national identity, and a Western centric view of cultural heritage. So, the methodology is framed considering these gaps.

The first example is related to the practice of worshipping mountains among some specific communities in Mongolia and the Buryat Mongols in the Russian Federation. According to UNESCO (2017), the practice is closely associated with ancient shamanism and nomadic culture. The communities believe in the invisible deities; hence, they consider the sky, earth, rivers, mountains, and surroundings sacred. They also believe that God exists on the top of a mountain or any hill between the sky and earth. This is the basis for conducting rituals in connection with worshipping the sacred sites (UNESCO, 2017). The element has been inscribed on the UNESCO ICH list under two domains: 1) social practices, rituals, and festive events, 2) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe. The worship of sites is conducted during a day in the summer and/or autumn, and the particular day is fixed according to local astrological wisdom. People create a stone mound called '*Ovoo*' near the mountain to be worshipped, and the leader of the process is known as the owner of *Ovoo*. The leader can be an elder person of the community, but a shaman or a Buddhist monk can also play the role, as some of the regions in Mongolia have Buddhist influence (Sneath, 2018). The people who are participating in the event gather near the *Ovoo* on the day before sunrise and tie colourful shawls on a timber piece near the *Ovoo*. The head invokes the presence of the deity in the site, and then others offer dairy products and meat in front of the *Ovoo* and pray for success and prosperity in life. The rituals are followed by events like horse riding, archery, and wrestling competitions. Lindskog (2022) argues that an *Ovoo* offering channels the efficacy of the spirits by symbolically condensing their abilities and capabilities to impact the welfare of the land, its inhabitants, and the living creatures that traverse it. This symbolic connection between the spirits and the people can be considered the most significant part of this landscape. According to UNESCO (2017), there were around 1000 sacred sites in Mongolia where the local people used to conduct the worship ceremony, but now less than 200 sites are intact. These sacred places can be called ritual landscapes not only because of the ritual activities but also because of the participation of the communities and their reverence and approach towards the settings.

Playing drums is widely seen in many parts of the world. But Tamboradas is a Spanish drum-playing ritual. The scale of the event is so large that it consists of the continuous beating of drums by thousands of people without interruptions for days and nights. It is conducted in the holy week of the Catholic Church, starts on the daybreak of Wednesday, continues till

Good Friday, takes a break on Holy Saturday, and restarts on Sunday. The venue for the event is usually a village or urban street in Spain. This event creates a landscape of joyful sound and identity that is full of resonance and vibration (UNESCO, 2018). This element has been identified and listed as an important ICH by UNESCO because of the presence of the following domains: 1) oral tradition and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage 2) social practices, rituals, and festive events 3) traditional craftsmanship. It is believed that the drum-playing ritual, which is primarily associated with agricultural and metallurgical cycles, began between the 13th and 15th centuries AD. Presently, the ritual covers a large part of 17 places in Spain, from Baena, a town in the south, to La Puebla de Híjar, a northern town. According to UNESCO (2018), different communities are involved in the ritual, and the entire event is managed by the National Consortium of Drum and Bass Drum Villages of Spain. Communities involved in the ritual organise the members into various groups according to age, gender, and socio-economic status, and on the day of the ritual, they move to the nearest city to beat the drums. The groups also encourage anyone who wishes to join spontaneously. Even though the event lasts for only a week, the impact of the ritual is there for the entire year. The members of the group, as well as the percussion instrument makers, will be engaged in preparing and maintaining the drums and costumes throughout the year. The influence of the ritual can be seen in the young as well, as the families dedicate time to transferring the knowledge to the next generation. This transmission of knowledge creates a sense of belonging and a deep identity among the young. Instrument-making is an excellent example of a traditional knowledge system. The cultural spaces in this case are the heritage and modern streets of various cities. The local authorities provide the necessary logistics for the groups during the event and the transformation of these streets as cultural spaces during the whole week. In brief, the cultural spaces of the streets of 17 cities and villages, along with several communities distributed over the country, create the ritual landscape of Tamboradas.

The cases discussed so far are from the continents of Europe and Asia, and they are distributed on multiple sites. The example of the Kit Mikayi shrine in Kenya reveals the rituals and customs seen at a single site. Kit Mikayi Shrine is a cluster of huge rocks in Kisumu County, in the countryside of western Kenya. The word means 'the stone of the first wife', and the history of Kit Mikayi is as old as the settlement in the region called Sema

(UNESCO, 2019). This shrine is associated with the wellbeing of the Seme people and other communities living around the shrine. The element satisfies four domains of UNESCO ICH, namely: 1) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of intangible cultural heritage. 2) Performing arts 3) social practices, rituals, and festive events; and 4) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe. The ritual is not related to a particular date but is conducted according to the needs of the people visiting the shrine. The process involves slaughtering a cow or goat and offering the cooked meat to the god. These rituals are carried out by male members of the community, and female members support their relatives by dancing and singing songs. These dances and songs represent the wide cultural, spiritual, and natural significance of the site. The purpose of these practices is to get rain, wealth, welfare, and healing. According to Nyamweru (n.d.), people visit the site for successful job promotion and even for political intervention. So, many people visit the shrine during the election season. The shrine is surrounded by several medicinal trees and shrubs, and it is also believed that the water coming from the stream of the shrine is medicinal. People from other communities also come to get the holy medicinal water. Unfortunately, the number of rituals conducted per year and the number of knowledgeable people is diminishing due to many reasons. The cultural spaces in this case are the shrine, a space for performances like song and dance, and the surrounding herbal forest or garden. Even though the scale of the landscape is smaller, the heritage value embedded in the element is high, so this can be considered a ritual landscape. The tangible element, a cluster of rocks, is a creation of nature, but it is the rituals, practices, and belief systems that make the site sustainable.

Another example is Yaokwa, the Enawene Nawe people's ritual for the maintenance of social and cosmic order in Brazil. The tribes of Enawene Nawe are indigenous to the southern region of the Amazon rainforest and live by the river Ique. Though they are less than 600 in number, they are rich in culture and maintain harmony with nature. Yaokwa, a seven-month-long ritual illustrates how they are maintaining social and cosmic order. Hence, they possess a larger indigenous territory in the north-west of the state of Mato Grosso (Institute of National Historical and Artistic Heritage, 2021). As the following domains are present in this ritual: 1) social practices, rituals, and festive acts; 2) knowledge and practices related to nature and the universe; and 3) traditional craftsmanship, UNESCO

has identified it as a precious element of ICH. Enawene Nawe people perform the ritual of Yaokwa every year, and for them, it is a part of their everyday lives. It is dedicated to spiritual forces who are owners of natural resources and peers of death and misfortune. Each year, the entire community is divided into two clans: the hosts, including men, women, and children, make all arrangements to receive the spirits, and the men in the other group go on fishing expeditions. The second group build fishing dams using locally available materials, catch fish from scattered places in the Enawene Nawe region, and come back to the village after two months with smoked fish. By this time, the hosts have prepared food items and rock salt to be offered to the spirits, stored firewood for a bonfire, and cleaned the village and paths to receive the Yakairti spirits. The hosts offer rock salt, ritual food, play flutes and other instruments, sing songs, and dance to make the spirits happy. After enacting these rituals, they start agricultural activities (UNESCO, 2011b). The Enawene Nawe people's ritual is a combination of traditional knowledge systems - building fish dams and preserving the fish; indigenous techniques of making artefacts - various musical instruments, costumes, and tools; and performing arts and belief systems. The ritual spaces of yards, huts, pathways, agricultural fields, and fishing places contribute to the ritual landscape of the region.

So far, the cases presented were based on the UNESCO ICH list. It is worthwhile here to look at the early examples of UNESCO cultural landscapes, as the World Heritage convention introduced cultural landscapes before they started listing ICH. New Zealand's Tongariro National Park and Australia's Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park are the first two properties to fall under the above category (UNESCO, 1992). According to Palmer & Feyerherm (2018), the New Zealand government, along with the Department of Lands and Surveys (DLS), led the nomination, describing Tongariro Park as an untouched volcanic environment of exceptional natural beauty. However, the report lacked any substantial information about the Maori people's intangible connections with the landscape. Later, ICOMOS (1993) established the cultural significance and the role of intangible cultural heritage in the landscape. In the same year, Tongariro became the first property to be inscribed on the World Heritage List under the revised criteria describing cultural landscapes. According to the nomination dossier, Tongariro Park has been inscribed in the World Heritage List because of criterion vi: 'The mountains that lie at the heart of the Tongariro National Park

are of great cultural and religious significance to the Maori people and are potent symbols of the fundamental spiritual connections between this human community and its natural environment' (ICOMOS, 1993; 139). According to ICOMOS (1993), the Ngati Tuwharetoa iwi consider this landscape to be alive, possessing its own mauri (life force). Furthermore, the presence of both active and dormant volcanoes, as well as hot pools, establishes a clear ancestral connection between this location and their ancient homeland in Hawaiki, as well as their landing site in the Bay of Plenty. This strong connection between the people and the land, which is intertwined with oral tradition, gives the landscape a strong sacred image. As examples of various contexts were presented, the next section collated the observations to list the components of ritual landscapes.

Name of the ritual	Country	Community/organizers	Duration of ritual	Frequency in a year	Tangible elements/ritual spaces	Intangible elements	Extent of the landscape
Traditional practices of worshipping the sacred sites	Mongolia	Local people	A daytime	Once or twice	Ovoo, the stone mound and the spaces around.	Nature worship, performing arts,	Spread over 200 sites in the country
Tamboradas, drum playing ritual	Spain	National consortium of drum and bass drum Villages of Spain	One week	Once	Village/urban streets	Performing arts, traditional craftsmanship of drums and costumes	17 places in the country
Rituals and practices at Kit Mikayi shrine	Kenya	People of Sema	A daytime	No fixed number.	The rocks, herbal forest	Oral tradition, performing arts, social practices	Single site
Yaokwa - the ritual for the maintenance of social and cosmic order.	Brazil	Enawene Nawe people	Long for Seven months	Once	Yards, pathways, huts, fishing bunds	Knowledge of nature, social practices and craftsmanship	The whole region of Enawene Nawe

*Table 1 Comparison of Ritual landscapes in Global context. It collates tangible and intangible characteristics of various rituals and provides a summary of cases discussed.*

All the examples presented so far show the significance of ICH and how they are intertwined with the lives of people. All aspects of rituals discussed earlier in this chapter like gender considerations, materiality, and symbolism are evident in these case examples. Table 1

shows the summary of the case studies. The element of 'sacred' is there in all four examples, so it can be called a sacred landscape. But, to call it a cultural landscape, there should be a joint effort between humans and nature (UNESCO, 1992). Since it is missing in Tamboradas, it remains a sacred landscape. In the rest of the cases, as the combined effort of humans and nature is visible, they can be called cultural landscapes. Moreover, since the component of ritual is prominent, they can be known as ritual landscapes. The components of these landscapes can be generalised as shown in Table 2.

Elements	Contributors
Tangible elements	Built and open spaces
Intangible elements	Social practices, performing arts, craftsmanship, rituals and festivals, oral tradition
Natural elements	Rivers, mountains, forests (waterbodies, stones and trees and in other words)
People	Indigenous communities, organizing committees and individuals
Non-human agents	Spirits of ancestors

*Table 2 Components of ritual landscape derived based on various cases presented in the chapter.*

Various examples of ritual landscapes discussed here can be called contemporary ritual landscapes. These rituals are created by humans, and the landscapes are shaped by the rituals. It is also interesting that the rituals are also moulded by the landscape. As pointed out by Virtanen et al. (2017), when thinking about ritual landscapes, one should pay attention to the question of transformation. The transformation can be in terms of political, cultural, religious, and social aspects, and these changes continuously affect the relationship between the actors and the accumulation that creates the ritual landscape. As pointed out by Herrmans (2020, 769) understanding how the visible and invisible worlds interact with one another fosters a feeling of oneness between humans and spiritual forces, as well as between humans and the material world, where the former is pervasive and fundamental. The non-human elements, like the spirits of ancestors, are also equally important in shaping the ritual and thus the landscape, which is evident in cases like Yaokwa. The next section provides a context for Kalamezhuth Paatt by exploring the rituals and landscapes in an Indian context.

## 2.4 Rituals and Landscapes of India

Having described the idea of rituals, their origin, types, and the ritual landscape in a larger context in the previous section, the current section of the literature focuses on the rituals and landscapes in an Indian context. The Indian knowledge system is based on the ancient epics, *vedas*, and *upanishads*. The landscapes of ancient cities and places are clearly depicted in these works. *Mayamata*, which is considered the comprehensive text of the *vastusatra* (traditional architecture of India), includes treaties on the design of villages and towns (Dagens, 2017). However, the term 'landscape' has many prefixes in this chapter: cultural, sacred, and ritual. This is because these terms cannot be separated, especially in India. India is the land of folklore, folktales, beliefs, and myths spread over villages and semi-urban areas. The heritage of the country is evident in both tangible and intangible forms, and its diversity contributes to the overall culture of the nation (INTACH, 2016). The intangible heritage encompasses the existing culture of traditional construction expertise and knowledge, ceremonial practices and customs, social interactions, and ways of life of the residents, which, along with the physical heritage, form the living heritage. According to INTACH (2016), this 'living' heritage lacks legal protection and is intricately connected to the natural ecosystems in which it first developed, forming symbiotic interactions. Moreover, heritage conservation in India draws from both Western conservation theories and principles brought by colonialism and later influenced by guidelines from UNESCO, ICOMOS, and international agencies (such as INTACH, 2016). In general, each region of the nation possesses a significant quantity of cultural heritage.

The cultural traditions of India date back at least 5000 years. Immigration, invasions, colonial rule, and modernization have all brought with them foreign influences, only a portion of which have been integrated into indigenous Indian worldviews; the remainder cohabit with the overarching Indian worldviews. The way different researchers explore these cultural traditions is influenced by their own culturally based approaches to Indian culture (Sinha & Kumar, 2004). As mentioned, the cultural and architectural account of India starts from the prehistoric period itself. The cave paintings of Bhimbetka rock shelters date to the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods. The Indus Valley civilization, one of the earliest settlements in the world, shows the expertise of Indians in city planning. Though the evidence for the idol worship or worship place was missing in Mohenjo Daro and Harappa, it

was sure that some rituals were associated with the great bath, a large water tank, in Mohenjo Daro (Brown, 2014). The Indus Valley civilization declined somewhere in the mid-second millennium BC, and the invaders from the north-east of India established their place in India. This represents the beginning of Aryan, or Vedic, culture. Religious activities became evident during the Vedic period. They formulated various hymns known as *vedas* to praise the gods and goddesses (Brown, 2014). It is to be noted that the *Vedas* are still intact, and people still follow this culture. India established trade links with different parts of the world and invasions from different countries in the later period. Even though culture has become more global nowadays, several rituals, both religious and secular, are still unchanged, and the focus of this section is on those rituals, culture, and the associated landscapes.

This part of the literature deals with landscapes from different contexts. Ritual landscapes with archaeological background, as discussed in the last section, are very few or sparse in India. One of the notable features in Andhra Pradesh is the presence of ash mounds (Boivin, 2004, Johansen, 2004).). It begins by examining the rituals and landscapes associated with these ash mounds. Most of the sacred landscapes in India are associated with pilgrimage, and the rituals which contribute to the landscapes are mainly religious in nature. Most of them are living rituals as well. Nevertheless, considering the scale, extent (both spiritual and material) and significance, the ritual landscape of Banaras, and the sacred landscape of Pandharur, Sabarimala and Braj have been taken as examples. Apart from pilgrimage, towns and settlements which originate due to the presence of temples and other religious institutes also create special landscapes. *Agraharam*, or settlements of Brahmins in the state of Tamil Nadu, is an example under this category. The purpose of this contextualization is to give a clear idea of the ritual landscapes of India.

The idea of nature-culture interaction and interpretation of the outcome is pertinent to many regions, especially the Indian subcontinent. Since heritage is the major contributor to 'culture', the interpretation of landscape is also different. The concept of heritage is also different in India as it is interwoven with the lives of the people and is mainly lived in nature. According to Thakur (2011, 2):

*'Indian cultural landscape can be called intellectual landscape, a collection of religious, cultural, and physical meanings ascribed to geographical components through collective*

*memory, planted on the ground (shaped in real world and real time—the landscape) in active engagement of communities over generations, empowering nature and land from the physical to the metaphysical’.*

Thakur suggests that the traditional perception of culture and its resources in India is based on continuity instead of preservation. This can also be taken as the basis of the cultural landscape in the country. According to Eck (2012), each place in India is associated with the stories of gods. Every place has to tell its own story, and these stories are repositories of myths and legends. It is also interesting that the same stories relate to different regions of India, and people from those places claim their association with heroes of the epics like Mahabharatha and Ramayana. Eck (2012, 5) believes that ‘local, regional, and transregional practices of pilgrimage in India connect these places together, and the repetition of these places, the creation of clusters and circles of sacred places, etc. creates a clear symbolic landscape called an imagined landscape’. Eck’s notion of imagined landscape which is created due to clusters of sacred places is insightful, but it does not mention how this landscape is metaphorically "imagined." Moreover, the formation of clusters and circles of sacred sites may not consistently correspond to the individual religious perception or the changing character of their pilgrimage experience.

India has many heritage monuments and sites spread over different parts of the country. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) records that more than 3600 monuments are protected by the organisation (Archaeological Survey of India, 2023). However, according to INTACH (2016), India's architectural heritage and sites are largely unprotected, and these are a unique civilizational legacy that is as valuable as legally protected monuments. Nevertheless, modernization and urbanisation are eroding this heritage, and many unprotected sites are still in use, representing the 'living' heritage of India. Some of these structures form a landscape as well, such as Mehrauli archaeological park in Delhi or the monuments of Hampi, Karnataka, etc. Mehrauli archaeological park comprises various monuments from the pre-Islamic period (11th century CE) to the colonial period, spanning a large area of more than 80 hectares. The archaeological site also tells the socio-political and socio-economic history of the capital city of India (Mukherjee, 2021). The group of monuments at Hampi is a World Heritage Site, which includes several ruined temples and monuments. The complex, which has an area of more than 4000 hectares, was the capital

city of the Vijayanagara Empires from the 14th to the 16th centuries CE (UNESCO, 2012). Both examples represent art and architecture that existed at that time. Even though these examples are of great archaeological, cultural, and architectural value, evidence of associated rituals is absent. So, they cannot be considered ritual landscapes with an archaeological background.

One of the important examples that can fall under the above category is ash mounds in Andhra Pradesh. Although many archaeologists have conducted studies of these phenomena from the early 19th century onward, some of the most important and contemporary inquiries are by Boivin (2004) and Johansen (2004). Ash mounds are formations found in and around the farmers' fields of the Deccan plateau, the central part of the vast rocky land of South India. They are large heap-like features made of stratified deposits of decomposing, burned, and vitrified cow dung and other culturally modified soils that include a range of artefacts. They were formed mostly during the South Indian Neolithic period between 3000 and 1200 BCE and vary in size, with the surface area ranging from 28 square metres to 4951 square metres and the height varying from 1 metre to 10 metres (Johansen, 2004). Local stories say that the mounds were created by the burned bones of giant demons, or *rakshasas*. Another interpretation of the formation is that the mounds were created due to volcanic formations or lime stones, by-products of industrial activity such as the making of stones, or due to some mass funeral (Boivin, 2004). However, these studies show that the ash mounds were formed by the periodic rituals of burning cow dung for the cattle's health and fertility. So, the repeated sites can be interpreted as an example of the Indian ritual landscape. Some of the sites are still intact, whereas many are in danger. Nevertheless, they are the evidence of a pastoral civilization that once thrived as a component of South Indian Neolithic society, and only the ash mounds remain as physical, tangible evidence, not the intangible customs and traditions.

Furthermore, large open areas comprising megaliths can also fall under the category of ritual landscapes. Megaliths in the Indian context, in spite of their real meaning, are structures built by cultures in a specific phase of their history, such as Iron Age cultures in the Indian subcontinent. The structures were used as graves, memorials, and for purposes as yet unknown (Menon, 2012). The majority of the megaliths in India are seen in the southern part and are known as the South Indian megalithic complex. They are mainly

distributed in three states, namely Karnataka, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh. The practice of erecting megaliths is believed to have occurred between 1500 BCE and 200 CE. The types include boulders placed in a circular pattern, small menhirs, dolmen, burial chambers, etc (Menon, 2012). Although the ash mounds in Andhra Pradesh and the megaliths of South India are an intriguing archaeological phenomena, their main importance appears to be established in historical and ceremonial customs from the South Indian Neolithic and Iron Age respectively. The contributions of Boivin (2004) and Johansen (2004) demonstrate the significance of these entities in ancient agricultural and ceremonial practices. Nevertheless, the emphasis on historical activities and interpretations, such as the connection to indigenous mythology or social activities, fails to thoroughly tackle the notion of present-day landscapes.

According to the Hindu belief system, *panchabhoota*, the five elements of material life, are highly important in many of the rituals. Out of these five elements, water is most important, and some people attribute the materialisation of Lord Vishnu to water. Singh (2011) discusses the metaphysical importance of water as a container of life, strength, and energy and, most importantly, interprets it as the best purifier of the body and mind. This may be the evolution of the ritual of taking holy baths in sacred rivers like Ganga, Yamuna, etc. symbolically to attain eternity. The significance of riverside or water rituals is that a common link of interconnection between human society and the river is maintained by these ritual traditions and performances. Even though in Hindu mythology, all rivers are considered removers of the bad or pollution, the Ganga is the most prominent one (Eck, 2012). It is believed that it flows through heaven, earth, and the netherworld, and so most of the pilgrimages are associated with these water bodies.

The landscape created by pilgrimage is another entity. Pilgrimage is a common human activity and a widespread phenomenon around the world. Pilgrimage is a journey (usually of a long distance) made to a sacred place as an act of religious devotion (Oxford University Press, 2022). The concept of pilgrimage in India, especially in Hinduism, is known as *thirtha yathra* (Eck, 2012). The purpose, duration, extent of the place, etc. vary from case to case. For example, the sacred landscape of Braj. Braj is actually not a place, but a cultural region. Geographically, it covers around 35 square kilometres of area and spreads over three northern states of India, namely Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Haryana. This cultural region

includes more than a hundred sacred sites associated with the stories of Krishna, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, one of the three prime gods in Hindu mythology. These places include where Krishna spent his childhood, the hills and fields where he and his friends took the cattle for grazing, the river Kalindi, where Krishna found and fought against the dangerous serpent Kaliya, and the forest in which he enacted *Rasaleela*, a dance in divine pleasure with his lovers. Indian American landscape architect Sinha (2014) points out that Braj has been reclaimed several times since antiquity, and the recent appropriation occurred five centuries ago due to the iconoclasm of local Islamic rulers. It is believed that after that incident, the sacred region of Braj was re-established in the 16th century CE by Vaishnava poets or saints of Bhakti movements (the love for the god), namely Narayana Bhatt, Chaitanya, Vallabha, and Madhavendra Puri (Shinde, 2010; Sinha, 2014). The old cities of Madhura and Vrindavan are the major cities in the region. Apart from these, the temples, water bodies, hills, and trees that are connected to the various life events of Krishna are revered by the local people and those from other parts of the country. The above-mentioned holy natural locations and temples are the destinations of the Braj *yatra*, a pilgrimage by Krishna devotees. So, these places, along with the actions of the people in terms of pilgrimage, create a sacred landscape. Braj 84 *Kos Yatra* is the most important and longest pilgrimage circuit in the region. *Kos* is an ancient unit for measuring distance in India, and 84 *kos* is approximately 250 kilometres. This long stretch includes Vrindavan as the focal point and its 12 *vanas* or forests, 24 *upavanas* or groves, 12 *kundas* or waterbodies, sacred hill Govardhana, sacred river Yamuna, and numerous places mentioned above (Sinha, 2014). Major customs of the pilgrimage include singing the stories, seeing the Lord Krishna and his lover Radha in temples, recreating Krishna's activities in the temple, *parikramana*, or circumambulation of sacred hills, and enacting Rasa Leela, the theatre that showcases the romance between Radha and Krishna. Usually, the distance is covered in one month if it is by walking. However, nowadays there are pilgrimages of shorter duration, starting even after 3 days.

The landscape of Braj can be interpreted in many ways. Sinha (2014) portrays it both as an imagined landscape and an enacted landscape through the interpretation of visual imagery in texts, paintings, and popular culture, and as one that is studied through direct observation of pilgrims and their activities in circumambulatory ritual. Since the evidence of

archaeological excavations is not available, all these interpretations are done through the memories and belief systems of the people. Another important factor in the landscape is symbolism. The hill of Govardhan is interpreted as Krishna itself. The rituals enacted by the pilgrims at each place of the landscape have some meaning, and the priests help the performer of the pilgrims understand the meanings (Shinde, 2010). Similarly, the landscape created by the installation of new temple dedicated to lord Rama at Ayodhya, Delhi can also come under this category in the future. *Ram Janmabhoomi* or the birth place of Rama was a contested land for the past 3 decades (Sinha, 2022, Vakil, 2022). Construction of the temple was completed in early 2024 and it has become a major point of attraction of the Hindu community in the country (The Hindu, 2024). Sinha (2022) discussed that memory of the people regarding the story of Rama will be a key point in narrating the landscape shaped by the new temple. Sinha (2022) also suggests integrating the ritual practices in the design of landscape to ensure the meaningful experience of place. Pilgrims may perform circumambulation of the temple and important places of Rama's story, creating a loop similar to Braj. Even though many rituals are associated with the Braj *yatra*, the ritual content of the landscape is less; rather, the memories, belief system, and mythology dominate. In the case of Ayodhya, it can become a major part of religious tourism in the future. However, a pilgrimage itself is a cultural landscape in theory and practice (Shinde, 2010).

As the essence of the landscape is the love for the deity Krishna, and the whole area is boosting the emotion of the sacred, the region of Braj may be identified as a sacred landscape and Ayodhya as a contemporary sacred landscape. Different values and principles are associated with these landscapes, which make it eligible to be an associative cultural landscape. Banerjee (2023) through the example of temple city of Madhura explores idea of associate multi-cultural complex. Madhura as a historic and temple city has association with Bhuddism, Jainisam, Naga and Yaksha cults and Brahmanical culture (Banerjee, 2023).

Another example is Pandharpur, which is a sacred city in the state of Maharashtra, geographically placed between North and South India. A temple dedicated to Lord Vitthal, an incarnation of Lord Krishna, other small temples around this main temple, and a river, namely Bhima, are the major physical components of the landscape. Similar to the previous case, it is pilgrimage that makes this city different. As the city of Pandharpur is a unique

centre of pilgrimage, it is known as the philosophical capital of Maharashtra. The evolution of pilgrimage in Pandharpur is connected to the Bhakthi movement, which gained momentum in the 13th century CE (Ghatpande, 2019; Sand, 2011). Saints of that period, namely Tukaram and Jnanadev, had created enormous works on Bhakthi, the 'love for the god', especially for the god of Pandharpur, Vitthala. After the demise of the great saints, the followers of these saints and devotees of Lord Vitthala started a culture of conducting pilgrimage to Pandharpur, keeping the paduka or footwear of the saints in a palanquin. Gradually, people from different parts of the state and even from outside Maharashtra started conducting journeys in small and big groups to Pandharpur to see their favourite deity by walking. During the journey, they sing songs praising the deity and perform dances. *Wari* means pilgrimage, and *warkari* means pilgrim in the local language, Marathi. So, the journey to Pandharpur is generally known as Pandharpur *wari*. This is usually conducted on *ekadasi*, the eleventh day of some auspicious months; in the common calendar, it falls in July and November. The longest and oldest *wari* is from Alandi, in memory of saint Njanaswar, which is around 250 kilometres away from Pandharpur. It takes eighteen to twenty days to reach the destination. Once they reach the premises of the city of Pandharpur, they stay in open places, do some specific performances called *keertan*, which can be explained as spiritual discourses on devotional themes. The next day, they visit the temple of Vittala and then go back to their homes (Koiso, n.d.).

The scale of the pilgrimage is so high that around one million people visit the place annually, irrespective of caste, creed, and gender. Even though the *wari* happens twice a year, the entire precinct maintains its sacredness throughout the year. The 'homecoming' festival is a similar event that is seen in Marcela, Goa. Devotees carry their village protective female goddess or *gramadevatha* to their original homes. It's a 19<sup>th</sup> century tradition and by making a spectacle out of their journey of many kilometres to their former "home," these modes of assertion continue to ritualize space even in modern times (Kulkarni, 2024). Cities like Pandharpur and Marcela can be considered a sacred landscape. The system of pilgrimage of the *Warkari Sampradaya* and homecoming acts as a powerful medium of communication, connecting the people together. This is mainly due to the ICH in the form of the belief system, the oral tradition of *Sankeertan*, and, of course, the love for the god. The people of Marcel, Goa, unknowingly create a boundary for the religious landscape shaped by the

annual event. However, the spiritual boundary of Pandharpur's sacred landscape transcends the state because its physical boundary can match the city's.

Sabarimala is another renowned pilgrimage destination in India, located inside the green rainforest of the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary. It is situated on a hill station at an elevation of around 1600 feet above sea level in South Kerala. The central point of the journey is a small shrine devoted to Lord Ayyappa, or Sastha. Large numbers of individuals from the states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Telangana undertake a pilgrimage to Sabarimala (Osella & Osella, 2003). The temple is accessible to pilgrims from mid-November to the end of December for 41 days, for a period of 14 days in January, and for the first five days of each month according to the local calendar. This case has been considered relevant because of the contextual similarities between it and the Kalamezhuth Paatt case, as well as the same mythical backdrop of Lord Ayyappa and Vettakkorumakan. Both deities originate from the forest; hence, they are regarded as hunters. Furthermore, my first-hand experience as a pilgrim equips me with the ability to understand the environment of Sabarimala.

According to mythology, Ayyappa, a young boy conceived by Shiva and Vishnu, was abandoned by the Panthalam king and taken in by his wife. The queen wanted to eliminate Ayyappa, so she asked him to procure tiger's milk. Ayyappa embarked on a challenging journey, fighting Mahishi and forming a friendship with Vavar. He successfully obtained the milk and delivered it to his mother. Subsequently, he returned to the hill forest and requested his father, the king of Panthalam, to construct a temple for him since his desire to exist as a human had ceased and he had achieved his heavenly state. The location then became recognised as Sabarimala (Sekar, 1992). According to another account, Ayyappa is said to have sprung from a non-Vedic background and served as a leader and guardian of the Mala Aryans, a tribal society (Manoj, 2018). This narrative bears resemblance to the mythology of Vettakkorumakan, who is similarly revered as a guardian of the tribal people. Nevertheless, this will be elucidated in the forthcoming chapter. Many rituals are associated with the Sabarimala pilgrimage. Pilgrims are supposed to strictly follow abstinence from non-vegetarian food and sex for 41 days. All pilgrims carry a head bag filled with rice, coconuts, and coconuts filled with clarified butter. Upon reaching Pamba, the valley of the hill Sabarimala, they take a purificatory bath in the river Pamba, proceed to Sabarimala with

an arduous climb in remembrance of Ayyappa's journey, and finally climb the holy eighteen golden steps. After visiting the temple, they throw the coconut shell on fire, which creates a sense of merging with Lord Ayyappa. It is believed that only male devotees are allowed to enter the temple premises. Irrespective of the caste and creed, people from all parts of the country conduct the pilgrimage. However, girls below the age of 10 and women aged 50 and older are also allowed to visit. This is mainly because of Ayyappa's celibacy. The Supreme Court of India made a historic order in 2018 that females of menstrual age can also visit the Sabarimala to ensure gender equality (Parvathi, 2020), nonetheless, the belief system does not allow people to accept the court's verdict.

So, the question in this case is what kind of landscape Sabarimala creates. As previously mentioned the 41-day period of strict penance and the rituals performed both during the journey and at Sabarimala are the essences of the pilgrimage. The belief system also largely contributes to ICH. Both the deity and the one who is carrying out the pilgrimage are called Ayyapa; this creates the philosophical background. So, the natural components like rivers, hills, and forests, as well as the built heritage in terms of temples and intangible heritage, create the sacred landscape of Sabarimala. However, this is an example of how a natural landscape is converted into a busy sacred landscape with millions of pilgrims coming over. Similar to Pandharpur, the physical boundary of the sacred landscape may be small, but the spiritual boundary goes beyond the state and even spreads to neighbouring states.

All the examples introduced above are associated with the Hindu religion. So, this case of Ajmer particularly focuses on the Islamic pilgrimage and the landscape created by it. The art and culture of Islam in India were largely influenced by Persia in the initial phases and gradually developed their own style through the Delhi Sultanate and then the Mughal period (Brown, 2014) and by Sufism which is similar to the *Bhakhti* movement explained in the case of Pandharpur. However, Ajmer is a small city at the foot of Tharagarh Hill, situated in the northwest state of Rajasthan. The city is famous because of the presence of Ajmer Sharif Dargah and the tomb of Sufi saint Khawja Moinuddin Chisthi. Sufism is the method of religious life in Islam in which the focus is placed on the activities of the inner self rather than the execution of external rituals; in other words, it represents Islamic mysticism (Subhan, 2009). Followers of the saint started visiting the tomb after his death in the 13th century CE. Asher (2009) mentions that around 20,000 people visit the place on average

daily, which includes both Muslim and Hindu pilgrims and over 200,000 people attend *Urs*, the annual festival. The event honours Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti's death anniversary and is celebrated with lively processions, devotional music, and a spiritual gathering. Pilgrims are coming not only from different parts of India but also from nearby countries such as Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Rituals during the pilgrimage to Ajmer Darga include offering chadar, a sheet of cloth, rubbing the forehead on the floor of the shrine of Khwaja, offering flowers, and then attending *Qawwali* in the night (Subhan, 2009). Hyder & Petievich (2009) clarify that *Qawwali* are devotional and supplication songs written mostly in Urdu, Hindi, Persian, Punjabi, and Sindhi. Many *Qawwalis* employ a variety of languages, and they are frequently laced with Qur'anic verses or prophetic sayings. The presence of *Qawwali* shows the importance of intangible heritage in the pilgrimage. Like the *Bhakti* movement, devotees take *Qawwali* music as a medium to reach the principles of Sufism, which is mainly based on the inner selves. However, Ajmer can be called a sacred city, with Darga being the focal point. Similarly, there are many Dargas in the country, distributed in different parts of the country, which contribute to the sacred geography of Sufism. Each Darga is associated with a prominent Sufi, and the believers of the Sufi still continue the tradition.

The examples mentioned above focus on temples and pilgrimage but fail to acknowledge the significance of the surrounding villages and their integration into the sacred environment. So, this section talks about temple towns and villages and how the immediate settlements contribute to the landscape. Indian towns, especially South Indian temple towns, are distinctive in their design. The temple serves as the central nucleus around which the streets are created in gridiron or circular patterns, with a row of linear dwellings lining the route leading to the temple (Venkitaraman, 2014). According to Bharne (2022), a Hindu temple is not only a revered architectural structure, but also an integral component of a broader sacred environment including natural components and ecosystems, which symbolizes a profound heritage of sacred urbanism marked by numerous ceremonial landscapes. Bharne (2022) further classifies the landscape shaped by the temple rituals in three layers namely Ritual Micro-Landscape - within the temple precinct including walking, bathing, feeding, gratitude, and circumambulation; Ritual Meso-Landscapes - beyond the temple precinct consists of unifying temple, habitat and nature, chariots and rides,

mythology and theatre and finally Ritual Macro-Landscapes - beyond the sacred habitat includes regional mass processions, national sacredscapes and replications. This classification of landscape can be read together with the planning of temples and temple towns. Sharma (2022) points out that in all instances, the geometry of the temple construction footprint adheres to the auspicious shapes as prescribed by Vastushastra. The geometry of temple towns can be in different forms namely *dandaka*, *swasthika*, and *sarvathobhadra* and the streets and pathways inside the mandala or temple precinct provides and enhance the processional experience of temple visit. Some significant old temples in India have become places of pilgrimage for a greater population, such as Madurai, Tiruchirapalli, Chiadambaram, Kumbakonam, Tanjore, and many more. Throughout history, the temple as a religious focus has remained an important concept in the development of cities and communities (Singal, 2022). Intangible aspects such as the sound of a bell, the smell of incense sticks, and the colour of flowers, garlands, and powders contribute to the sacred landscape of temple towns.

Further regarding the communities, settlements of temple servants can be seen around the temple, of which those of Brahmins are seen in the immediate surroundings of the temples, in both towns and villages. These settlements are usually known as *Agraharam*, which means 'the front of the foremost row', implying a prestigious location (Desai, 2018; 117). It is an exclusive Brahmin settlement seen in most of the South Indian states, especially in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. It is a linear settlement, with row houses being built on both sides of a central pathway. Often, the road terminates in a temple dedicated to Lord Shiva at one end and a Vishnu temple on the other end (Desai, 2018). The front portion of each house has a colonnaded seating space called *thinnai*. Female members draw some geometrical patterns in front of the entry to the house, just outside the *thinnai*, using rice powder. This is an everyday ritual in the community. Tamil and Kerala Brahmins are particular about taking baths in running water or in tanks for cleansing the body and doing morning and evening rituals from the bank of the water body. So, water bodies are often associated with *Agraharam* settlements. Some of the examples of *Agraharam* are Sucheendram in Tamil Nadu and Kodunthirappally in Kerala (Singal, 2022).

It is important to discuss here how *Agraharam* are becoming an example of a sacred landscape. Desai (2008) explains that these Brahmins of *Agraharam* settlements excelled at

Vedic knowledge systems related to literature and *agama* traditions, and they consider their house and settlement as a universe of *mandala*, or divine energy. The traditional identity of *Agraharam* is built on functional organisation in response to everyday needs, space-making components in response to local material and climatic conditions, and multisensory experiences. The houses have been inhabited by many generations, resulting in numerous memories and relationships with their spaces (Singal, 2022). Aside from daily rituals, the central street transforms into a cultural space during celebrations for the temple procession. So, every space in the community - water bodies, temples, streets, front verandas, and so on - contributes to the ritualised life. Even though the *Agraharam* is on a smaller scale, its sacredness is immense. It represents a micro-level component of sacred geography at the macro level, which means hundreds of *Agraharam* spread over Tamil Nadu and Kerala create a sacred religious geography that is rich in tangible and intangible heritage. The ritual of drawing *kolam* is particularly important in this research since it is an example of floor drawing, but it is mostly practiced by female members of the family.

Indigenous festivals and social practices as a part or not as a part of the pilgrimage also create a landscape. Kailash sacred landscape is a trans-boundary landscape around the sacred mountain Kailash (Chaudhary, et al., 2017). This area is a repository of traditional knowledge and indigenous practices. According to Chaudhary, et al.(2017), this traditional knowledge is usually passed down through community activities or by subject matter experts. Family members learn from specialists orally and via practice. Bioregionalism is a similar philosophy which encompasses ecological, social, cultural, and community aspects shaped by local experiences and knowledge (Bandopadhyay, 2023). The concept is illustrated with the example of the life of Khonoma village in Nagaland during the nineteenth century, focusing on its folklore, rituals, and the interplay of labour and love within a naturally sustained community and Bandopadhyay's (2023) narration is based on Easterine Kire's novel on *Sky is My Father: A Naga Village Remembered*. Bioregionalism conceptualizes the land as the narrative space where material forces exert influence. Hence, the process of localized spiritual reintegration facilitated the acquisition and conservation of the forgotten hymns and rites, thereby safeguarding the imaginative aspects linked to human existence in a certain location (Bandopadhyay, 2023, 163). Similarly, tribal festivals and practices in India create a sustainable way of protecting the landscape and resilience to

climate changes. Mondal & Pandey (2024) illustrates this scenario through the examples of tribal community festivals such as *Sarhul*, *Baha*, and *Kunde Habba*, whereas Sarkar & Modak (2022) adopted the case of Chota Nagpur plateau of West Bengal and their indigenous practices to demonstrate the positive correlation with the environment. Sacred locations in India serve as repositories of profound spiritual and ecological importance and indigenous cultures hold great reverence for these locations since they epitomize their cultural, religious, and spiritual convictions (Mondal & Pandey, 2024. 3). Furthermore, the performance cultures linked to these festivals, encompassing songs, dances, and rituals, serve as means of demonstrating against globalisation. So it is true that the worldwide purpose of festivals and rituals of indigenous people is to worship nature and natural resources (Sarkar & Modak, 2022; Mondal & Pandey, 2024). By continuing these indigenous practices, they are indirectly protecting their cultural heritage as well as ensuring the conservation of the environment.

Further, the concentration of the ritual in the landscape and its impact on the people leads to the formation and interpretation of ritual landscapes. This is different from the concept which is discussed earlier in this chapter and it is living in nature. Bharne (2022) suggests that there three types of rituals – daily rituals, special or occasional rituals and annual rituals. Theyyam is a ritualistic art form of North Kerala and is rooted in tribal culture. Anjali & Kawathekar (2023) argue that the art form of Theyyam developed and became a widely popular ceremonial performance in the fertile areas of the production clusters of Kolathunaṭu, a region in North Kerala, and the elderly residents of the area still remember their agricultural lifestyle centered around marsh paddy farming, swidden farming, and hunting expeditions. They also suggest that there is a strong relationship between the art form and the cultural spaces including the sacred groves and other natural elements. On the same token, Joshi (2022) identifies Bastar Dusshera, a festival of North India as a strong intangible factor that serves as a foundation to establish the shared identity of the historic core and the culture of the people of Bastar. These two studies help to understand how a ritual is rooted in the life of the people and it provides layers of information such as history and meaning of the rituals. However, it is not clear how and why the landscape is named or defined as a ritualistic landscape.

The purpose of the section is to discuss different types of landscapes in India that are associated with rituals, but only a few cases were presented here. The sacred landscapes created by religions other than Hinduism and Islam are not presented here. However, from the above cases, it can be inferred that the archaeological evidence for the rituals is very low. So, the ritual landscapes with an archaeological background similar to the West are sparse. In the second set of landscapes created by pilgrimage, the belief system and mythology play a vital role in creating a strong image of a sacred landscape in society. Even though these pilgrimages are not happening throughout the year, as mentioned in the case of Pandharpur, the entire precinct maintains a sacred sensation. The case of temple towns and the activities and settlements around the temples shows the sacredness and richness of heritage. The *Agraharam* in Tamil Nadu and Kerala can be considered a microcosm of sacred landscape, rich in both tangible and intangible heritage, and an example of living heritage. Since these examples were created by the combined efforts of humans and nature, they all fall under the category of cultural landscape. As the notion of sacred is present in every aspect, these can be called sacred landscapes.

## **2.5 Summary**

The way in which various social groups or communities live their lives and modify or create their surroundings can be understood as the culture of that particular group. Revisiting the definition of culture by UNESCO implies that spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features are highly significant. Spiritual factors are important in the perception of landscape; for example, Maori tradition and culture in New Zealand stress the spiritual value of the land and bestow tribal identity and sentiments. This is why local people venerate Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park, New Zealand, as God (Carr, 2004). Similarly, evils, black magic, and black forces also come into the picture in some other contexts. Indeed, indigenous social groupings possess significant influence when it comes to establishing their own distinct identity, which embodies the concept of 'emotional' as described in the aforementioned definition. The identity serves as the essence of the group and, therefore, forms the foundation of the landscape. This identity of landscape and memory of the people is not created deliberately but has evolved over a period of time. Further, this identity of the landscape is also created through the continuous interactions of humans with nature. This is why Bender (1993) argued that a landscape is never inert. As humans continuously worked

and reworked the landscape, it caused the formation of a new concept - the cultural landscape - in the early 20th century. The notion of cultural landscape largely changed when UNESCO introduced cultural landscape in 1993 to the World Heritage process. Various discussions included in the first part of the literature show that a cultural landscape has various components, which are a mix of tangible and intangible elements. Adaptation of non-representational theories in landscape is a development that occurred towards the end of the 20th century (Thrift, 1996). The idea of taskscape put forward by Ingold (1993) is criticized for its overfocus on human activities. However, it can be a potential tool to interpret the landscape shaped by a contemporary ritual, provided the essence of non-representational theory, especially lived experience, is integrated into it. Ingold's (2017) idea of conceiving a landscape as a mesh of various activities and features helps in this regard.

Further, several rituals and festivals added colour to the landscape. Though the review of literature started from ritual landscape, an archaeological model that evolved in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century related to ceremonial landscapes of a specific period (Robb, 1998), it can be concluded that the particular concept is not enough to build a theoretical background. So, rather than limiting ritual landscape to an archaeological concept, the second part of the literature dealt with the changes created by the rituals in a landscape. As pointed out by Virtanen et al. (2017), when thinking about ritual landscapes, one should pay attention to the question of transformation. The transformation can be in political, cultural, religious, and social aspects, and these changes continuously affect the relationship between the actors and the accumulation that creates the ritual landscape. Since the rituals mentioned in the section are still being performed, the resulting landscape falls under the category of contemporary ritual landscapes. The formation of contemporary ritual landscape with a focus on sacred landscape and indigenous sacred places will definitely add value to this thesis in the later part. Here also, the rituals and landscapes seen in the Indian subcontinent are different from those in other parts of the world. The concept of landscape in Europe is mainly people-centric, whereas in North America, it is nature-centric..However, the Indian concept of landscape integrates both aspects and gives importance to the intangible heritage, which was created long before and is still continuing. Some significant questions related to ownership, continuity, and identity of indigenous sacred places and landscapes

are to be addressed with the help of case example. Intangible heritage is constituted by the existing culture of traditional construction expertise and knowledge, ceremonial practices and rituals, social customs, and ways of life of the residents, which, along with the tangible heritage, form the "living" heritage, and this living heritage is mainly unprotected (INTAC, 2016). The last part of the literature gave a picture about the notion of sacredness in various contexts such as home coming festivals of Goa, sacred temple geometry and ritual landscape of South Indian temples. However, this last part of the literature gave only an introduction to the rituals and landscapes of India, which also acts as a bridge between the international and Kerala contexts. A comprehensive case study which touches all aspects of heritage and landscape is missing in the literature and this gap is to be filled through this research. The next chapter discusses various methods adopted in this research to understand the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt.

## **Chapter 3 - Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In this section, I will examine methods for answering the research questions, building on the previous chapter's exposition of the study's context. Research is a methodical procedure that includes many conditions and challenges. As mentioned in the opening chapter, this research has emerged from my prior experience. Throughout my postgraduate studies, I successfully showcased my expertise in undertaking research on oral histories, oral recordings, and the spatial dimensions of intangible assets. Upon seeing the possibility for further exploration, I began contemplating several approaches to undertaking this research project, focusing on the concept of "ritualistic landscape" and the case study of Kalamezhuth Paatt. This chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of the difficulty of developing a robust framework to address the research question. Beginning with a discussion of several methodological issues, the chapter moves on to examine various research processes and how they were used in previous projects by different researchers. My experience as a conservation architect, together with my dual function as a scholar and patron of the ritual, is crucial in this context. The chapter provides a detailed examination of the researcher's position and the development of emic and etic approaches in various project scenarios. Ultimately, it expands upon many techniques that are pertinent to the present research.

### **3.2 Ways to Formulate Research Methodology**

A literature review of various research methodologies and case studies reveals that the framework varies from case to case. Some of these are mentioned below since they largely help to articulate the research approach. Mundekkad's (2002) work is highly influential since he had also worked on the same ritual art of Kalamezhuth Paatt, albeit dealing with a particular community involved in the ritual. Mundekkad's focus was on Kallatta Kurup, a prominent community in central Kerala that practices the ritual. The research was mainly rooted in folklore concepts and theories, and the method of data collection included unstructured interviews with artists and non-participant observation. Mundekkad utilised live recordings of the ritual as a method to study the oral tradition associated with the ritual. An in-depth understanding of the oral tradition is another highlight of the work. Even though artists from the Kallatta Kurup community have the wisdom to draw the *kalam* of

the 21 deities, only three or four *kalam* are most popular in the realm. Mundekkad dedicated his time to finding the senior most people in the community who have the traditional knowledge of preparing *kalam* for all 21 deities and made them draw the *kalam* only for the purpose of research and not as a part of the ritual Kalamezhuth Paatt. Mundekkad also relied on textual references to trace the evolution of the ritual. Even though the focus was on the community of Kallatta Kurup, the style was compared with other caste groups, for instance, Vannan, Velan, Pulluvan, Panan, Pulayan, Vettuvan, Koppalan, etc., and the similarities and deviations were considered. In general, this project enriches this research background as it is a detailed study in the line of anthropology and literature that has touched upon the life, culture, and traditional practices of Kallatta Kurup. It is also interesting to observe that even if Mundekkad belongs to a Brahmin family that conducts the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt regularly, he hardly relied on participant observation, rather he used an empirical approach in his research. This is because his focus was on only one community instead of having a holistic approach.

In contrast, Marchand (2009) adopted participatory observation to learn about the work culture, intangible cultural heritage, and community affairs of the masons of Djenne, Mali, spending two seasons with the brick masons to understand their lives. The author's background as a social anthropologist and interest in space, place, and architecture are evident in many of the discussions. Different elements of the intangible cultural heritage of Djenne, which include the belief system, transmission of knowledge from one generation to another and from teacher to apprentice, a hierarchy of labour varying from trainee to chief mason, and a number of rituals performed during each stage of construction, etc., have been beautifully tackled in the work. According to Marchand (2009), the apprentice's major test is when his master asks him to construct a brick wall on his own. This research is significant here since a similar situation can be seen in the context of Kalamezhuth Paatt as well. It is a real challenge for a new artist to complete the major portion of the *kalam* alone. Marchand's methodology contextualised heritage in terms of traditional knowledge systems, belief systems, and their application and transmission. Participant observation is also a possible method of data collection and understanding the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt from an insider perspective. However, this can be discussed in detail as part of the position of the researcher.

Before finalising the approach taken, a number of points need to be considered. We can observe several rituals around us, especially in India, and the rationale for selecting Kalamezhuth Paatt of Kerala as a case example has already been discussed in Chapter 1. However, there needs to be a strong theoretical background to the study, and the concept of ritualistic landscape fulfils this requirement. For this reason, the main question has been formulated around the nature of ritualistic landscapes. We also need to discuss whether the concept can be called 'contemporary ritual landscape' or 'the Indian ritual landscape'. At this point, the research is going beyond the case of Kalamezhuth Paatt and using the analysis of Kalamezhuth Paatt to reflect on the nature of contemporary ritual landscapes in an Indian context. To find answers to these questions, different objectives have been established, and based on the features of the objectives, we moved on to an appropriate research design.

Miller and Salkind (2002) point out that the research design is the key to determining the time, cost, and other resources required for the study. Since this thesis has two parts, the research design is also a combination of two types. The first part is on ritualistic landscapes, which is an interpretation of cultural landscapes as well as the concept of ritual landscapes. The ritual landscape is about the past, whereas the ritualistic landscape (or contemporary ritual landscape) is about the present. Since the researcher does not have any control over the ritual landscapes since it is focused on things past, a strong comparative study of the past and present will help to better understand the situation. Hence, for this part of the research, a comparative research design will be adopted. This is designed to establish the different conditions that caused the formation and development of these landscapes. The other is an exceptional case study of Kalamezhuth Paatt, a unique art form from Kerala, India. In technical dialogue, as mentioned previously in Chapter 1, Kalamezhuth Paatt can be considered a phenomenon that has not been satisfactorily explained. So, the second part of the research is exploratory, and at the same time, it is descriptive. That means it explores the ritual as a cultural phenomenon and analyses various aspects of heritage associated with the ritual.

### 3.3 Position of the researcher

The position of the researcher in this process is critical as well because the main component is the case study of the ritual art of Kalamezhuth Paatt. Since different communities are involved in the ritual the project is also concerned with the nature of ethnographic research. Bergman and Lindgren (2018, 477) describe the relationship between researchers and participants in ethnographic studies as an important object of reflection. This is important as my family usually conducts this ritual annually, and I belong to the ethnic group of Namboodiri Brahmins, a caste group in Kerala. This study is therefore a form of autoethnography, which is the study, writing, and sharing of tales and practices that relate the autobiographical and personal. Though the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt is a male centric event, female members of the patron family and other community support offer support for the conduct of the ritual. So, gender considerations will also come to the picture. Personal experience is regarded as a significant source of knowledge in and of itself, as well as a source of insight into cultural experience in this approach. Ellis and Adams (2014, 254) consider autoethnography as autobiographies that self-consciously explore the interplay of an introspective, personally engaged self with cultural descriptions mediated through language, history, and ethnographic explanations. In this way, I can be a representative of that ethnic group and explain the role of that group in the ritual. My colourful childhood memories about the annual festival of Kalamezhuth Paatt, stories from my father about conducting Kalamezhuth Paatt when he was younger, and my recent experience in helping my family materialise the ritual all contribute to the autoethnographic conversation.

Furthermore, the possibility of utilising emic and etic approaches, i.e., the researcher's dual role as an outsider and insider, is an interesting factor in this context. As a researcher, I am closely observing the case example of Kalamezhuth Paatt from outside. In this etic approach, Kalamezhuth Paatt is considered a cultural phenomenon and is dealt with more technically. On the other hand, in an emotional way, as a member of a patronage family, I can witness the entire process from inside. Here, the narration of the ritual can be in terms of stories, and there may be an emotional touch to this storytelling. Beals, et al. (2020) argue in their paper that the binary position held by one researcher in a cultural field, and another should be pushed towards the edge and questioned. Sometimes the researcher occupies the edge or the margin between multiple worlds and perspectives and tends to

represent the insider and outsider positions as simply opposite. Even though equal importance is given to both views, I do not anticipate any such problems here, and indeed, different views will strengthen the arguments in the process. According to Eckensberger (2014), the dualism of emic and etic plays a vital role in creating three culturally emerging approaches, namely cross-cultural psychology, cultural psychology, and indigenous psychology. Of course, there will be differences and similarities between the responses received from these approaches. However, the goal here is to utilise all the benefits of this dual role.

### **3.4 Research Methodology and Methods**

The approach to this research and collection of the various data has been framed based on the above methodological concerns and approaches. Bryman (2012, 383) suggests that the most common qualitative research methods in ethnography are qualitative interviewing, focus groups, language-based approaches to collecting data, and qualitative analysis of texts and documents. Most of these are considered here. There is no place for the qualitative-quantitative chasm here, as the qualitative method is perfectly suitable for this kind of research, but on some occasions, mainly while dealing with the number of rituals happening annually and the number of rituals performed by each artist, quantifying is necessary to establish the growing or diminishing importance of Kalamezhuth Paatt.

To begin with, as the major aim is to establish the existence of the ritualistic landscape of Kerala shaped by the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt, the methodology adopted should be able to respect the context. This context could be of two types, one the physical context of Kerala and second the art form. So, the aim has been further broken down to set different objectives and suitable methods have been developed for various purposes. The first objective is to study different rituals that lead to the formation of ritual landscapes pertaining to different regions of the world. This is already achieved through the literature review. The second objective, which studies the sociological aspects of the ritual and explores the ritual art as a community affair is again achieved through the specific literature review. So, literature review is also taken as a method here – this doesn't mean that the section of the thesis again has a section titled literature review. Rather, works specific to Kalamezhuth Paatt and the *thottam* and the oral tradition associated with the ritual will be

critically reviewed. Similarly, the third objective, which is the study of the evolution of the ritual, can be supported by historic evidence such as maps, archival data, and literature. To study the evolution and transformation of the ritual and its role in tangible and intangible cultural heritage, it requires an understanding of the special qualities of the ritual, and my role as a conservation architect is crucial here as documentation of both forms of heritage (tangible and intangible) is taken as a method. Apart from documentation, non-participant observation and interviewing are also considered possible methods in this stage. The final objective is to demarcate the boundaries of the ritualistic landscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt in Vettakkorumakan, and of course, mapping is the tool dedicated to this. As the possible methods have been selected against the research objectives, each method will be discussed in detail in the coming section.

### **Nonparticipant Observation**

Nonparticipant observation is a relatively unobtrusive qualitative research technique for gathering primary data about some aspects of the social world without interacting directly with the participants (Williams 2008). As mentioned above, my dual role as a researcher and patron also had an influence on finalising the method. Participant observation was not required in this scenario because each community plays their own role in the ritual, and I didn't want to break this division of jobs by positioning myself inside a group. To elaborate, usually people from the Kurup community draw the *kalam*. If participant observation is adopted to document or learn how they are preparing the drawing, then the researcher, who is an outsider, has to work closely with them. As I belong to a patron family, it is anticipated that my involvement in the group will make other group members intimidated. This could potentially hinder the researcher's ability to gain accurate insights into their drawing process. Moreover, to get a fine and unbiased result from this ethnographic research, nonparticipant observation is taken as a major method, and the nature of the observation is unstructured. That means there is no fixed duration and questionnaire for this method. According to Bryman (2012), the goal of unstructured observation is to capture as much detail as possible about the activity of participants in order to build a narrative description of that behaviour. So, through the unstructured nonparticipant observation, I was able to record minute details such as mannerism of artists while rendering *kalam*—the drawing, facial expressions and styles followed by dancers in ritual dances, tunes and

rhythms of songs, etc. I was not completely silent during the ritual; often, these observations were accompanied by some interactions. For instance, while drawing the *kalam*, artists used to talk to each other, and the usual topics included their selected experiences from different venues and stories about rituals that happened one or two decades ago. I used to meet the ritual dancers while he took a rest after the first performance and took part in some casual discussions. These real stories and the interactions also became part of the nonparticipant observation. It also helped to understand their approach to the ritual.

Referring to Table 3, a total of 30 rituals was observed between 2019 and 2023, out of which 12 were before the arrival of COVID-19, 7 was during COVID-19, and 11 were in the post-COVID-19 period.

Month	Number of Rituals Attended				
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
January		5	1	2	
February		3			
March			1	3	
April				1	1
May			1	4	
June					
July					
August			1		
September		2			
October	1				
November	1		1		
December	2				
Total (30)	4	10	5	10	1

Colour	COVID Restrictions
	Low - no lock down
	Medium - partial lockdown
	Heavy - complete/partial lock down

Table 3 Shows the number of rituals documented as part of data collection and the impact of COVID-19 during the period.

It is a common notion that nonparticipant observation as a method may give an altered result due to the observed behaving differently (Bryman, 2012). During the initial phase of the research, I also had the same doubt about whether the ritual artists responded unnaturally due to a researcher's presence in the context. Most of the rituals I attended during the research period were in and around my hometown, so most of the artists were also familiar. In other cases, for those rituals happening outside my hometown, I used to introduce myself and explain the purpose of my visit to the artists. So, to get an accurate result and to avoid any ethical issues, in both cases, the nature of the researcher was kept overt, which means the identity was completely revealed. It is also true that in many venues, artists were slightly conscious of my presence throughout the process. In fact, I could see deliberate attempts from artists to make the *kalam* more attractive, sing the song legibly and beautifully, and perform the ritual dances with some special steps. However, because the Kalamezhuth Paatt ritual follows a strict framework, the ritual is unlikely to alter as a consequence of observation; this was merely a matter of 'performance anxiety' in which the participants wanted to perform well in my presence.

As stated earlier, the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt is conducted mainly from December to May, and its geographical spread is all over the state of Kerala. To explore the regional variations in execution, it is important to make a sample observation of ritual in different parts of Kerala. Due to this geographical spread and the duration of the ritual, which involves a day-long process, nonparticipant observation as a method consumed a lot of time. The activities of different people and communities involved in the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt were observed and subsequently mapped. From each venue, the following were noticed carefully: the arrival time of each group, gender considerations, mode of conveyance, their activities before the ritual, during the ritual, in between each ritual and after the ritual, the number of members in each group, their attire during, before, and after the performance, the division of jobs or hierarchy inside a group, interaction between different groups, and different materials used for the ritual. In general, this exercise gave an overall picture of the involvement of each group in the ritual. As mentioned above, the interactions with artists were reduced during the observation. To fill the data gaps, a semi-structured interview was used. Moreover, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of rituals was too low in 2020 and 2021. It is clear from Table 3 that

no rituals were happening or that the venues were not accessible for the researcher between April and August 2020. Moreover, there were restrictions on the public gathering of religious, secular/political congregations. This gap was also filled by the data collected through the interviews.

### **Semi structured Interviews**

Face-to-face and focus group interviews are common methods in qualitative research and considered the 'gold standard' (Clarke, et al., 2017). This statement itself shows the significance of interviews. Conversations serve as a means for humans to establish connections and deepen their understanding of one another. Through these exchanges, individuals gain valuable insights into the intricacies of personal experiences and the broader dynamics that shape our society. It is also true that interviewing is not just a matter of being able to ask questions; instead, it is a way of interaction between two people; towards the end, it reveals plenty of good moments, which is oriented towards an institutional end (Alby & Fatigante, 2014, 240). As mentioned before, my dual role as a patron and a researcher also helped here. Since the interviewee and interviewer already have a rapport, the quality of interactions that happened during the interview was much higher than expected.

According to Delyser & Sui (2014), effective interviews can access intense and intimate emotions and experiences that may go beyond words. In view of all these facts, interviews are taken as a major method to collect data. Non-structured interviews allow for flexibility and open-ended discussions, enabling participants to share their experiences and perspectives freely. However, it is important to note that structured and semi-structured interviews also have their advantages, such as providing a standardised approach and allowing for easier comparison of responses across participants. Ultimately, the choice of interview structure depends on the research objectives and the nature of the data being collected. Since the questions in semi-structured interviews are open-ended, some interviewees tend to lose focus. However, to get the required data and not miss any important ones, five theme-based questions have been prepared to conduct semi-structured interviews.

**Background:** In this prompt, the artists were asked about the circumstances that made them enter the profession of Kalamezhuth Paat. This set also includes questions about the training in the ritual and the teacher. So, this gave a clear picture of the beginning of their career.

**Practice:** this is mainly based on how they gained experience and developed their skills in it. Additionally, it is presumed that obtaining information on their work culture encompasses the division of work within a group, for instance, the Kurup community, as well as the distribution of responsibilities across other groups such as Kurup, *Komaram*, and Marar. So, this prompt focuses on the different communities involved in the ritual and their responsibilities in the ritual. How they are transmitting the tradition to the next generation is also a subject of inquiry.

**Beyond livelihood:** this theme focuses on the other side of rituals. It is expected to learn about their knowledge of the meaning and purpose of each ritual. Since the ritual happens mainly in the winter and summer seasons, the activities of the artists during the off-season also matter.

**Transformations:** critical questions in terms of the transformation of both spaces and performances are included here. Though they don't exactly know the meaning of the term 'transformation', it was interesting to interpret the data from their description. The particular theme also aims to inquire about modifications or experiments the artists tried during the performance.

**Quantitative aspects:** Finally, quantifying is also important, and this question is about the number of rituals practiced each year. This will help to create statistical data. It is also important to relate the location of the rituals to geography, which in turn helps in mapping. Likewise, the impact of the current pandemic situation is also included in this probe.

These prompts are prepared in such a way that the interviewer can pose sub-questions at any stage of the interaction. However, it is critical to test or pilot the structure of the questionnaire and the results of the interview before completing all interviews.

Pilot studies and small sampling in the early stages of the research always help to test if the method adopted is appropriate to find the answers to the research question (Bryman 2012,

92). The studies conducted by the researcher during post-graduation and those for Sahapedia (an open online source that provides comprehensive information about the arts, traditions, and legacy of India) of course, can be counted as background studies (Thenchery, 2018). Since the conditions are different and we are following a specific framework in this study, it was decided to test the above questionnaire. The first interview conducted in December 2020 is taken as a pilot study.

One major drawback can be the amount of time required to conduct an interview. Even though the expected duration of the interview was around one hour, the first interview took around three hours. As mentioned already, the major aim of the interview was to understand the sociological aspects of the ritual. Surprisingly, through the first two interviews, I was able to get elaborate data to interpret the sociology of the ritual. Moreover, the first interview shed light on the evolution, transformation, and symbolism of the ritual as well. However, the results of the pilot interview indicated that the prepared questions are very relevant and do justice to the research objectives. But it is also felt that it will be worthwhile to rearrange the questions without changing the content, as there was plenty of overlapping content in the answers. Providing a summary after each set of questions also helped the interviewee gain confidence and provides proper responses to the next set of prompts. Based on the feedback from this, the order of the questions has been slightly changed for the remaining interviews. The thought of considering focus group interviews as a research instrument also arose after doing the pilot study. According to Breen (2007, 466), focus group discussions are more appropriate for creating new ideas within a social context, and this makes the focus groups different from one-to-one interviews. Kalamezhuth Paatt is a community affair; each of them has their own responsibility and space in the system of the ritual. The data obtained from conducting individual interviews and making observations provided sufficient information to analyse the ritual as a communal affair. However, in the final stages of the study, it was determined that a focus group discussion would not be conducted. Furthermore, due to the personalised character of the undertaking, it was recognised that focus group discussions were unsuitable for gathering the data.

## **Planning the Interviews**

Preparing the list of research participants was the first task in planning the interviews. With the help of initial studies, around twenty artists were shortlisted based on their experience and quality of performance in the field. Representation from different districts was also ensured during this process. Since many of them did not have access to new media, the possibility of virtual interviews has not been considered. The venue of the interview was either the artist's own house or the place where the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt was happening. Even though the initial plan was to ensure representation from all core communities, after completing the first three interviews, it was decided to interview people only from two groups. It doesn't mean that other communities were excluded from the research; rather, their involvement was recorded through nonparticipant observation and documentation. However, nine semi-structured face-to-face qualitative interviews were conducted with duration of not more than 90 minutes. These covered the following:

*Komaram*, the ritual dancer: six artists from different locations (code: Ko01, Ko02, Ko03, Ko04, Ko05, and Ko06)

Kurup: three artists from different districts (code: Ku01, Ku02, and Ku03).

In order to comply with the research ethics (which are explained in the coming section) and to maintain confidentiality, each participant is pseudonymized during the discussion of the thesis, as shown above.

## **Transcription and Translation of Interviews**

Malayalam, the regional language, is the medium of all interviews, and this is the mother tongue of all research participants and the researcher. Since there are open-ended questions in the semi-structured interviews, as expected, there were lots of repetitions. The output of the first two interviews also denotes the same.

In order to avoid the additional work, it was decided to transcribe only the important segments rather than translating and transcribing the entire interview. Despite the interviews being based on the previously discussed prompts, many of the responses exhibited significant overlaps and repetitions. For instance, all interviewees elaborated on the mythology of Lord Vettakkorumakan. In other instances, respondents began narrating

humorous incidents that transpired within the ritual venues. These show their high involvement and dedication to the ritual. However, in these cases, I used my insider knowledge to select which one is important and which one is not important while transcribing the interviews and omitted the sections that were not relevant to the themes. Even though a trial was conducted to transcribe and translate the pilot interview using interview transcript software, it went in vein due to the complexity of the slang and language. So, all interviews were translated to English and then transcribed manually. Apart from video and audio recording software, no other software was used in transcribing. This strategy was selected to incorporate the expressions of the artists during the interview. Even though it took a long time to transcribe all nine interviews, it was a confidence-building exercise. All transcriptions are coded and included in the appendix 2.

### **Documentation of Cultural Heritage of Kalamezhuth Paatt**

Documentation is another major tool that is relevant in this project, as it deals with cultural heritage. Here, the cultural spaces associated with this ritual are unique; it is also important that the pattern of these spaces be repeated in the region. The evolution and transformation of these spaces have a close relationship with the components of intangible cultural heritage, such as belief systems (Thenchery, 2018). So, the ICH of the ritual, which includes mythology, belief systems, traditional knowledge systems, and traditional cultural expressions, is documented.

Following the UNESCO (2013) guidelines for documenting and inventorying intangible cultural heritage, the following things are top priorities.

- Which forms of intangible cultural heritage should be researched and documented?  
All five domains of ICH, namely oral tradition, performing arts, social practices, knowledge systems, and traditional craftsmanship, are documented.
- How should communities be involved in the process? What is the role of each community in the ritual, and how are they recorded through the above-mentioned methods?
- What kinds of information about intangible cultural heritage should be gathered?
- How can appropriate forms of media be determined for documentation of ICH?  
Audio, video, and photo documentation are adopted here.

- What kinds of permissions should be obtained at the time of documentation? - Getting permission is critical here. Even if Kalamezhuth Paatt is an art form, it is ritualistic in nature. In the case of temples, many of the rituals are happening inside the temple, where photography and videography are prohibited in some cases. So, visual documentation and observation were taken as the tools in these cases.
- How might these permissions change over time? During the Covid-19 situation, some venues were not accessible due to the restrictions in public gathering.

Apart from this, tangible cultural heritage was also documented. Built heritage associated with the ritual was documented using measured drawings and photographic documentation techniques. This documentation is also significant in understanding the role of cultural spaces in the ritual. Thus, Kalamezhuth Paatt of three different venues was documented; two of these are included in photo essays in chapter 5, while the ritual at the third venue was recorded in the form of short movies. These files are published privately on YouTube and the links to 18 short videos are included in Appendix 3.

### **Mapping the Results Using GIS to Interpret the Ritualistic Landscape.**

The pilot study conducted earlier by the author reveals that mapping has a great role in this project as it is closely related to geography. As the previous study was applicable only to a small area, and now the area is taken as the entire state, GIS is taken as a tool to map and extract plenty of analysis from the process. As a first step, an extensive list of venues including temples and houses where Kalamezhuth Paatt happens regularly is prepared based on the interviews of the artists. All these places were mapped in Google Earth to ensure precision and then converted as KML file. Distributions of these venues are then compared with the present-day boundaries of districts and the boundaries of old Malabar district obtained from archival maps. In addition to district and state boundaries, the base map incorporates the biophysical context of the region, which includes water bodies and vegetation, to illustrate how the sites relate to the surrounding geography. This exercise helped to understand how the venues of different artists are spread across the state of Kerala and the density of the rituals in each district.

### 3.5 Ethics Process

The ethics of research in any discipline, especially in the humanities, is important as it involves the personal data of people and their viewpoints. Bryman (2012) says that the particular concern revolves around two main questions: how we should treat the people on whom we conduct research and are there activities in which we should or should not engage in our relations with them. Furthermore, according to article 1 of the research ethics documents of Department of Archaeology, York University, 'research or research-related activity involving humans, including through participation, observation and/or the collection/use of personal data (e.g. in relation to lifestyle, housing, working environment, attitudes and preferences), including images'. The ethics process also follows the guidelines from the UK GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) of York University, and the research is undertaken where ethical approval has been obtained, where there is a clear public interest, and where appropriate safeguards have been put in place to protect data. As the university seeks to advance learning and knowledge through teaching and research, personal data collected is processed for research purposes under Article 6(1)(e) of the GDPR (University of York, 2018).

Prior to commencing data collection, it was necessary to submit the interview questionnaire and other relevant documentation to the ethics committee of the Department of Archaeology for approval. Interviews were performed solely upon obtaining authorization. An additional intricacy in the ethics procedure arose in relation to the presence of various languages. The research participants were only acquainted with the regional language, therefore necessitating the translation of the permissions into Malayalam. The process helped the artists to understand the advantages and disadvantages associated with their involvement in the research. Prior to commencing the interview, formal consent papers, signed by all study participants, are diligently obtained. Although I was already familiar with most of the artists, this ethical approach served as an important step in the research. This also shows a shift from a participant of the ritual to a researcher. After the thesis is submitted, the interview recordings, additional video material, and audio recordings will be retained for a maximum of 10 years. The ethics documents including the information sheet and consent forms are included in appendix 1.

### 3.6 Summary

The UNESCO ICH Convention of 2013 advised that cultural heritage can be interpreted as the indicators of the ways of living that a community developed, which are inherited from previous generations. This definition itself is the basis of this thesis. Kalamezhuth Paatt is ultimately an art form that demonstrates tangible, intangible, and natural heritage. The methodology designed here is a combination of different methods of interviews, documentation, observation, and mapping, where all of them have equal roles. The different steps involved in the process of finding a solution for the research problem are as follows.

- i) Literature review and non-participant observation to nurture the background.
- ii) Refine objectives based on these.
- iii) Ethics approval for collecting data.
- iv) Pilot study to test the interview methodology.
- v) Rearrange the questionnaire to proceed to the next set of interviews.
- vi) Transcribe the interviews simultaneously.
- vii) Documentation of ritual.
- viii) Analysis of the data gathered.
- ix) Map the results.
- x) Write the thesis.

To sum up, it is an interdisciplinary attempt, where the core subject is heritage and conservation. Different principles of conservation, like authenticity, integrity, and value-based approaches, are extremely significant here. Since the study is dealing with a group of people and an art form, both of which are highly indigenous in nature, the methodology has been designed in such a way that it can embrace all these facts. As the foundation of the thesis has been laid down through literature and various methods have been selected, the next chapter introduces the context of Kerala and the art form of Kalamezhuth Paatt.

## **Chapter 4 - Kalamezhuth Paatt, a Unique Art Form of Kerala**

### **Important non-English Words Used in the Chapter.**

Ashtadikpalaka - Gods who protects a land from all four cardinal directions and four corners.

Churika - A small sword with two sharp edges

Edakka - A small percussion instrument. Use only one stick and it is the only percussion instrument which can produce saphthaswara, seven basic notes of music.

Illam - House of Kerala Brahmins.

Kazhakam - A community who provide flowers and garlands to temples and places of worship

Koora - The short name of kodi koora and it a piece of black/red coloured sacred silk cloth.

Kurumbranad – A local kingdom or principality in the northern Kerala

Mahavishnu - One of the three major gods as per Hindu mythology

Namaskara Pattar - A designation given to a Tamil Brahmin in Balussery kotta temple

Namboothiri - A caste group in Kerala, belongs to the class 'Brahmins'.

Paattumandapam - A pavilion with four vertical poles connected with horizontal reapers to conduct kalamezhuth paatt.

Pashupathasthra - A powerful and irresistible arrow of Lord Shiva

Peedham - A traditional timber stool

Prasada - Gracious gift offered from temple as flowers and sandal paste as part of worship. Another meaning is temple.

Sapthamathrikkal - Seven sacred mothers in Hindu mythology

Thanthri - Chief priest

Thekkini - Southern block of traditional courtyard house.

Thottam - Thottam in folklore studies is song or hymn praising the deity.

Vasthusasthra - The traditional building science of India

Veena - A string instrument

### **4.1 Introduction**

Following a discussion of the concept of cultural landscapes in the Indian context and the methodology framing this research, this chapter is on Kerala and Kalamezhuth Paatt. Because this ritual art is unique to Kerala, it is necessary to conduct a contextual study of the state before considering the nuances of the art form. As a result, the chapter begins with a brief overview of Kerala, its history, and its geographical features. The chapter then

focuses on the arts, culture, and architecture of the area, providing a brief overview of Kerala's cultural environment. Following an introduction to several ritual arts that are still practiced in the state, the rest of the chapter explores Kalamezhuth Paatt. To justify why Kalamezhuth Paatt dedicated to Vettakkorumakan is taken as the case example and to highlight the differences and similarities in the overall structure and concept, it explains different types of Kalamezhuth performed by different communities and then focuses on the ritual dedicated to Lord Vettakkorumakan. The chapter further elaborates on the succession of sub-rituals included in Vettakkorumakan's Kalamezhuth Paat, as well as the purpose and procedure of each ritual. This section is critical to the whole thesis as it tries to find the response to the second objective, which is to document the cultural heritage of Kalamezhuth Paatt of Vettakkorumakan. The first parts of the chapter are based on the literature, whereas the rest of the chapter is totally based on nonparticipant observation and recording.

## **4.2 Contextual Studies**

### **History and Geography**

Kerala is the southernmost state of India. According to mythology, Saint Parasurama, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, retrieved a strip of land from the Arabian Sea by throwing his axe, and the land was later known as Keralam or Kerala. The etymology of Kerala has it that *Chera alam* means the land of Tamil rulers Chera. Another one came from combining two words: *keram* (coconut palm tree) and *alam* (place or land). The first one is related to history, and the second might have derived from geographical features. The earliest surviving attestation of the name Kerala is in the 3rd century BC by Emperor Ashoka in the form of a rock inscription mentioning people of Kerala as '*Keralaputhra*' (Menon, 2007). Later, the land became a favourite trade centre for Greeks, Arabs, and Romans. The *Sangam* age (the period of history particular to Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Sri Lanka), which comprised the first five centuries of CE, was the formative period of Kerala history. Kerala was under the rule of the Chera kings for a long time in the early Christian era. The Namboothiris of Kerala had supreme power as they were at the top of the societal hierarchy, and they were the landlords of most of the land. There were 64 villages in Kerala, and each village was controlled by Namboothiri families. They were not directly involved in ruling the country,

but they gave advice to the Kshathriyas, the royal class in the hierarchy (Ezhuthachan, 1868). By the beginning of the second millennium, there were three significant warlords in Kerala. The northern area was controlled by the Samuthiri or Zamorins; the central area of the state was ruled by the Perimpadappu dynasty; and the southern area was under the control of the chieftains of Kollam (Menon, 2007). There were many small local kingdoms or principalities from the southern tip of Trivandrum to the northern tip of Kasaragod under this three-power triangle. One of these, Kurumbranadu, is highly significant in this study. Later, the spices of Kerala became the point of attraction for Europeans in the 15th century AD. Kerala was under the rule of the Portuguese, Dutch, and British, respectively, from 1498 to 1947. Even after independence, Kerala was split into two provinces, Travancore and Cochin, for administrative purposes. Later, Kerala as a state was formed only in 1956. Currently, it has fourteen districts, with Trivandrum being the state capital. The Census of India collects demographic data every ten years, and the last version occurred in 2011. According to the Census of India (2011), the total population of Kerala is 3.34 million, and the total literacy rate of the state is 94%. Regarding the religion, 54.7% people are Hindus, 25.5% are Muslims, and 18% of the total population is Christian.

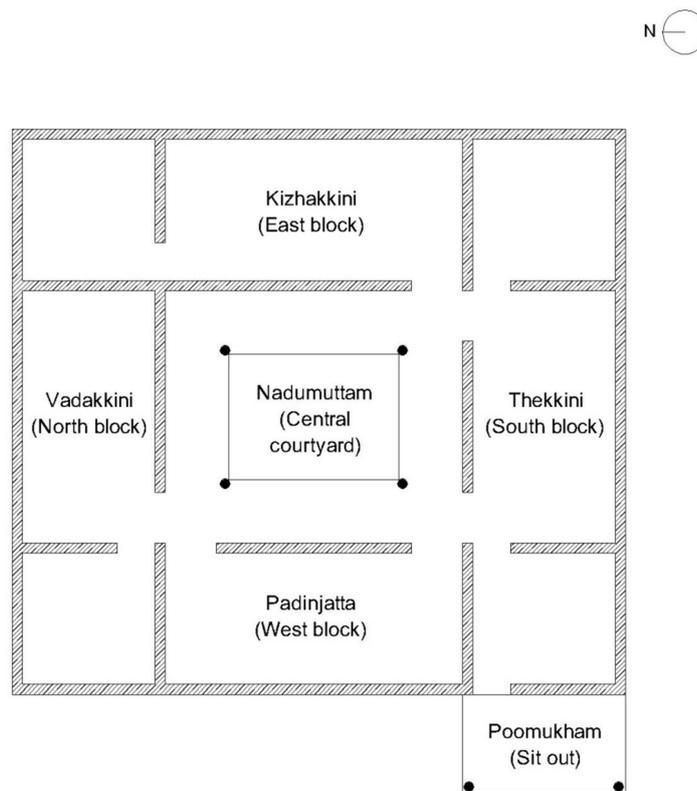
Regarding the geography of the state, Kerala is linear in shape, with a total length of 580 kilometres and a width ranging from 32 to 120 kilometres. The land of Kerala is divided into three parts: highland, midland, and lowland. The presence of 44 rivers across the state contributes to the geographical diversity of the region. The Western Ghats, which run through the east of the state are responsible for maintaining a healthy monsoon system. Moreover, Western Ghats have an exceptionally high level of biological diversity. This is why it was identified as a World Heritage site (UNESCO WHC, 1992–2024) in 2012. It is mainly due to these natural mountain strips that Kerala developed distinctive arts, politics, and culture, as Kerala was always somewhat separate from the northern part of the country (Padmanabhan, 2008).

### **Architecture**

The traditional architecture of the region also plays a role in this study, as it represents the cultural spaces for the performance of rituals. Like everywhere on the globe, the architecture of the region is shaped by many factors like climate, geography, socio-cultural,

and socio-political aspects. As mentioned above, the presence of the Western Ghats is a major factor in shaping the architecture. The heavy monsoon season also has a major role in determining the architecture of Kerala. The houses of Kerala have some distinct spatial characteristics, which give importance to women, kitchens, water bodies, and agricultural-related structures such as granaries and cattle sheds. The traditional architecture of the region can be divided into two categories: residential and religious. Residential architecture is a distinct genre owing to the fact that Hindus' secular lives were moulded by daily rituals and the prescriptive rules of a rigorous caste structure (Desai, 2018). The socio-cultural complexities of Hindu, Muslim, and Christian cultures demonstrate the diversity of architecture, which spans from utilitarian to highly expressive. However, Desai (2018) observes that the Hindu house is a prototype of the typical Kerala house due to the real spread and strength of Hindu influence in the region. A typical Hindu house consists of a *padippura* (entrance gate), an outhouse for guests to sit in, a room for worship and cooking, a women's room for those menstruating, and an ancillary space in the kitchen such as a storeroom and a room for servants. The residential architecture is based on the 17th-century AD scientific text *Manushyalaya Chandrika*. It includes clauses regarding site selection, position and orientation of rooms, measurement systems, dimensions of spaces, and various rituals to be carried out during the construction. The typology of residential buildings varies from single-blocked houses to multi-blocked houses with or without courtyards. They are *Ekasala*, or a single block or unit house; *Dwisala*, or a 'L'-shaped house with two blocks; *Thrissala*, or a 'C'-shaped house with three blocks; and finally, *Chathussala*, or *nalukettu* (Figure -1), a house with four blocks designed on all sides of a central courtyard. Each block has a different function. The east block, or *kizhakkini*, is meant for cooking or worship; the south block, or *thekkini*, is for storage and recreation; and the west block, or *padinjattini*, is for worship, sleeping, and storage and the north block, or *vadakkini*, is for cooking and for conducting religious rituals. Further, the combination of building units designed around a central courtyard has multiple dimensions. It can be 8 *kettu*, which means eight units placed around two courtyards, 12 *kettu*, with 12 units around three courtyards, or 16 *kettu*, with 16 building units designed around four connected courtyards. The progression from single blocked house to large bungalows is also associated with the socio-cultural aspects (Thampuran, 2001). People belonging to lower

strata of the society owned single blocked houses or *ekasalas*. The rulers and priests (Kerala Brahmins, Namboodiri) and some well-off families own *nalukettu* houses.



TYPICAL PLAN OF A NALUKETTU  
(house with a central courtyard)

*Figure 1 Typical plan of a nalukettu of Kerala - a house with a central courtyard and rooms placed around that, drawn by the author*

Temple architecture in the region is based on the texts of *Thanthrasamuchaya* from the 15<sup>th</sup> century AD and *Silparathna* from the 16<sup>th</sup> century AD. These are, of course, derived texts, as the temples existed in the region long before the 15<sup>th</sup> century AD. Even though temples existed in Kerala from the pre-Christian era, evidence is available only from the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD onwards. Jayashanker (1997), through an extensive survey of temples, tried to classify the temples of Kerala into three phases: the early phase (800–1000 D), the middle phase (1001–1300 AD), and the late phase (1301–1800 AD). These three phases illustrate the development of a temple from a simple shrine to a large temple complex with ancillary spaces like space for performing temple arts, worship, dining, etc. This history of temples in Kerala is significant in interpreting the evolution of the ritual of *Kalamezhuth Paatt*, and this will be explored in the next chapter.

## Art and Culture

Even though the population of Kerala maintained political isolation from north India, they accepted the cultural and religious contributions of the north and incorporated them with Kerala tradition to create a separate subculture. Later, the Vedic culture, Buddhism, and Jainism arrived in Kerala from north of India (Padmanabhan, 2008). Apart from this, Hindu, Muslim, and Christian religions are common in the region, as mentioned before. The settlements of tribes that still maintain the traditional culture are distributed in various parts of the state, mainly in Wayanad, Idukki, Malappuram, and Palakkad districts. The system of castes and communities is another characteristic of the Indian peninsula and of Kerala as well. Since many of the art forms are propagated through this system of caste, sub-caste, and community, their characteristics are also bound to their culture and belief system.

The performing arts indicate the rich cultural heritage of any region. According to the classification done by the State Department of Cultural Affairs (2021), there are five types of art forms: classical art forms, traditional folk arts, martial arts, tribal arts, and ritual arts. The diverse art forms relate to the culture of the region and are merged with the people's lives; the art forms arose from Kerala's rich culture (Department of Cultural Affairs, 2021). Classical art forms are distinct in their concentration on rhythmic motions. The basic guidelines must be rigorously observed, which necessitates comprehensive and methodical practice. Some of the examples are Kathakali, Krishnattam, Mohiniyattam, and Koodiyattam, of which the last is included in the UNESCO ICH list.

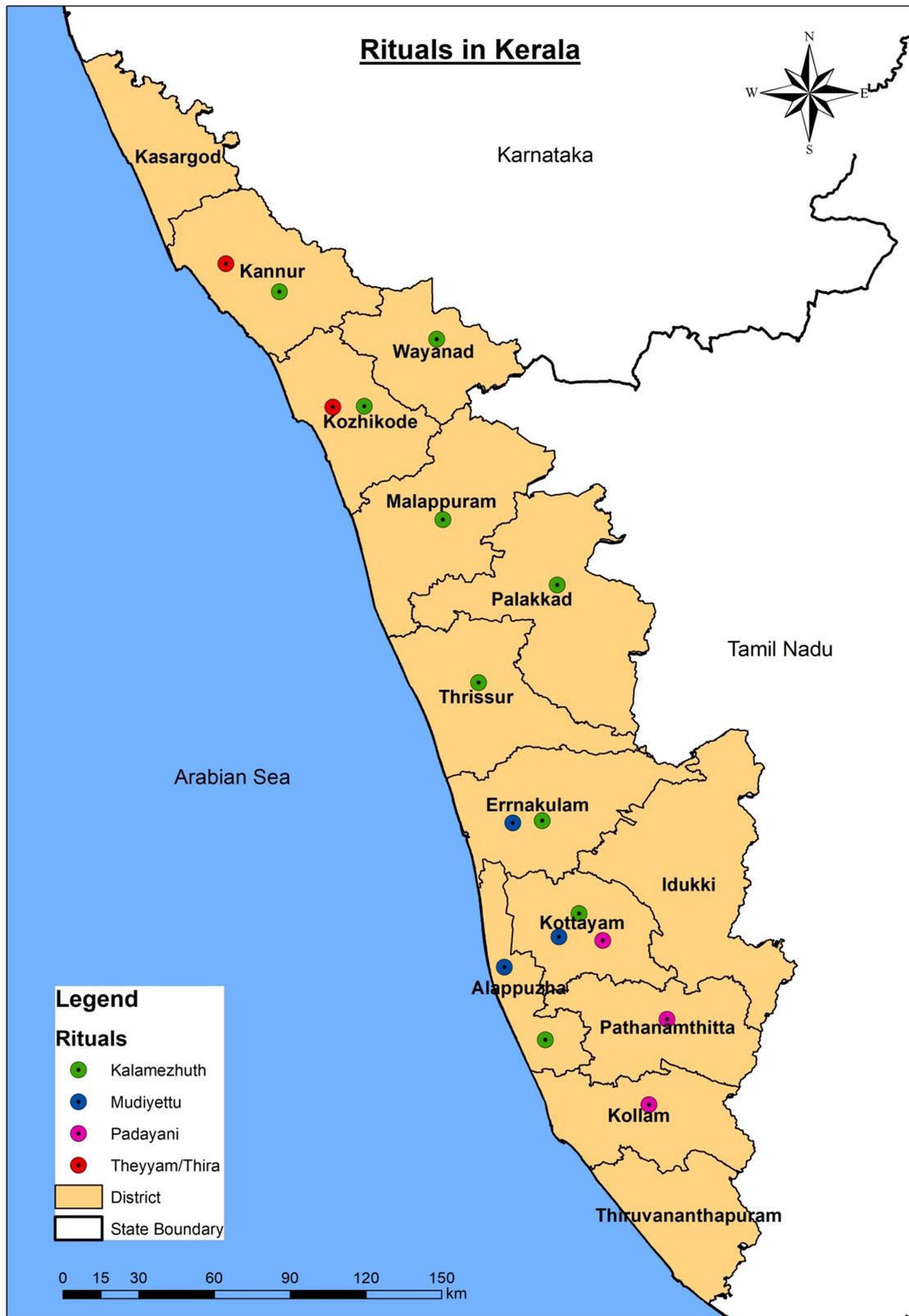
The traditional folk-art forms evolved from the real lives of the people. Some of them are religious in nature; for instance, *Adichuthurapattu* (songs presented in connection with the wedding of the Knanaya Catholic community of Kerala) and *Chavittu Natakam* (a colourful theatre, the costumes resemble those of Roman and Greek soldiers) are related to Christians, whereas *Oppana* (performed by women especially during the wedding) and *Mappilappattu* (represents a poetic genre composed in Arabic-Malayalam, popular in northern Kerala) are specific to the Muslim community. *Parichamuttukali* (a dance performance evolved from martial arts), *Kolkali* (a group of 10 to 16 people moving in a circle with some dance steps, striking small sticks), and *Kathaprasangam* (a story-telling art form that is a combination of songs and speech) are secular in nature. Kalarippayattu is an

example of the traditional martial arts of Kerala. But the techniques of aggressive body movements and weaponry skills are applied in other art forms, for example, *Theyyam* (an art with vigorous body movements and ritual dance performances), *Kathakali*, and *Kalamezhuth Paatt*. Tribal art forms are practiced by the indigenous people living in the mountains and forests of Western Ghats. Some of them are *Gadhika* (a healing ritual art prominent in the Adiya tribal community of north Kerala), the dance and songs of the Irular community, and *Kaanipattu* (songs and rituals of the Kanikar community of south Kerala).

On the other hand, ritual art forms are founded on religious or societal beliefs. Ritual art forms are done for specific purposes, such as obtaining prosperity, removing bad possessions and sicknesses, or appeasing a god. Many of these art forms are known for their dances and songs, which are accompanied by traditional musical instruments, as well as their colourful ritual paintings and indigenous decorations (Department of Cultural Affairs, 2021). Ritual arts include a number of art forms, for instance, *Tholpavakoothu* (shadow puppetry), *Duffumuttu* (an art form prominent in the Muslim community that involves singing songs and beating Duff, a small percussion instrument), *Theyyam* and *Thira* (a ritual art seen in northern Kerala, dedicated to various gods and goddesses), *Padayani* (a ritual dance dedicated to goddess Bhadrakali where the artist wears a huge mask prepared using natural materials), *Mudiyettu* (another art form that is inscribed in the UNESCO ICH list, which is about the war between goddess Bhadrakali and a demon called Darika) and *Kalamezhuth Paatt*. Though these are different from one another in the way they are practiced, communities involved in the performance, duration, etc., they are categorised as ritual arts because of the presence of strong beliefs, purpose, and ritualistic nature.

Apart from the above-mentioned art forms, secular festivals like *Onam*, the national festival of Kerala, also contribute to the cultural heritage of the state. These art forms are the real components of the cultural landscape of Kerala. It shows how different communities have developed their own art forms. It also demonstrates how diverse art forms are spread across the state. Even though classical art forms are performed everywhere in the state, many of the ritual art forms are specific to some regions of the state. For instance, *Theyyam* and *Thira* are prominent in northern Kerala, whereas *Padayani* and *Mudiyettu* are performed in the central and southern districts of Kerala. However, it is evident that the ritual art of

*Kalamezhuth* is performed in every part of Kerala, but with regional variation (Map 1). The next section focuses on the ritual art of *Kalamezhuth Paatt*.



Map 1 Distribution of selected rituals in Kerala. These rituals are prominent in different parts/districts

### 4.3 Kalamezhuth Paatt, the Powder Drawing Ritual

Traditional paintings have an important role in many of the ritual arts explained above. For instance, in *Padayani*, face masks are prepared using areca palm leaves, which are painted with rice paste. In *Theyyam* and *Thira*, body painting is an important element. They use black, yellow, white, and red colours on the face as well as some parts of the body. Similarly, floral drawing is the major element in the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt. It involves the preparation of various drawings on the floor using natural powders. Kalamezhuth can be classified into figurative and non-figurative approaches according to the content of the drawing. In figurative *kalam*, people draw the forms of deities to whom they are worshipping, whereas in non-figurative type, it is about the drawings of geometric forms and patterns. The purpose of preparing *kalam* varies from tantric to exorcism, worship, and ritualistic (Kallatt, 2021). Different communities conduct Kalamezhuth Paatt across the whole state of Kerala; based on its characteristics and purpose, it can be divided into three categories: *Kalamezhuth* of Brahmins, *Kalamezhuth* of lower castes, and *Kalamezhuth* performed by people belonging to the middle caste (Mundekkad, 2002). This classification by Mundekkad is based on the caste system because this is the best way to organise different types of *Kalamezhuth*.

#### Kalamezhuth of Different Caste Groups

Brahmins are at the top of the social strata, according to the Indian caste system. Kalamezhuth of Brahmins is known as *padmam*, and this means seat of the deity. So, the *padmam* itself is considered the deity here. They only make geometric forms varying from *swasthika padmam* (*swasthika* means conducive to wellbeing; the drawing has a *swasthika* symbol in the centre) using white and yellow to complicated *chakrabja padmam* (dedicated to Lord Mahavishnu; the drawing starts with a circle in the centre and ends in a square) using five colours - white, yellow, green, red and black. These are examples of non-figurative *kalams*. *Ashtadalapadmam* (a floral drawing with 8 petals in the centre) is another variant used for all deities (figure 2). They draw the *kalam*, pay offerings to the deity, but do not erase it after the worship. Instead of *thottam*, they use hymns. The size may vary from a square foot to ten square feet approximately.



Figure 2 an example of Ashtadalapadmam done by Brahmins. Here, square shaped Ashtadalapadmam which is seen in the centre is decorated with prabhamandalam or aura. This is drawn by the author at a temple near Kozhikode to worship mother goddess as part of annual festival.

Exorcism and treatment of some diseases are the main purposes of *Kalamezhuth* practiced by lower castes. People belonging to the lower caste and tribal communities draw the form of their favourite deity and worship them for safe pregnancy, black magic, etc. Some of the communities and the *Kalamezhuth* performed by them are *Kenthron paatt* (*Kenthron* is the colloquial use of the *Gandharva*, who belongs to a class of celestial beings) and *Kurunthini paatt* (*Kurunthini* is a wild goddess) by the Vannan community, *Malayan kettu* (*Malayan* is a hunter god) by the Malayan community, *Balikkalam* (a *kalam* prepared in connection with sacrifice) by the Munnoottan community. These are usually figurative *kalam*s, but in some cases they use non-figurative *kalam*s of geometric forms as well.

Similarly, *Kalamezhuth* of the middle class includes the rituals practiced by communities belonging to the caste between Namboodiri Brahmins and other lower castes. Some of the community based *kalamezhuth* are *Bhadrakalai theyyatt* (*Badrakali* or *Kali* is a cult common to all parts of India, and *theyyatt* is another art form similar to *Kalamezhuth Paatt*) practiced

by the Theeyattunni group, Ayyappan *theeyatt* (a type of Kalamezhuth Paatt dedicated to Lord Ayyappan) performed by Theeyadi Nambiar, *kalamezhuth* of Theyyampadi Nambiar (Theyyampadi Nambiar is a community similar to Kurup but prominent in Kannur and Kasaragod districts) and Kurup. Even though all the above-mentioned people prepare *kalam*, that practiced by the Kurup community is better in colour combination, proportion, and totality (Mundekkad, 2002), and they make attractive floor drawings.

### **Kalamezhuth Paatt Practice by Kurup**

Kallatta Kurup and Theyyampadi Kurup are two major sub-castes of Kurup, whose ancestral job is to practice Kalamezhuth Paatt. The first one is spread over the districts of Thrissur, Ernakulam and Malappuram whereas the second subgroup is prominent in the northern districts, namely: Kozhikode, Wynadu, Malappuram, and Palakkad. According to mythology, the goddess Bhadrakali only gave them the right to draw the *kalam* of the deity and to do the worship. They draw the *kalam* of the following eighteen deities (Mundekkad, 2002; Kallatt, 2021).

Sl. No	Name of the deity	Description of posture
1	Bhadrakali (figure 3)	Female figure, seating posture of goddess Bhadrakali with four or eight hands is depicted in the <i>kalam</i> . It is the most common <i>kalam</i> in the state. There are temples where Kalamezhuth Paatt is conducted in 365 days. Kalikavu temple near Manjeri is an example.
2	Vettakkorumakan (figure 4)	Male figure, standing posture of the deity with a bow and arrow on one hand and sword on the other hand is drawn.
3	Ayyappan (figure 5)	Male figure, the Lord who is getting ready to go hunting with bow and arrow can be seen in this <i>kalam</i> . Sometimes, a horse is also drawn along with the deity.
4	Brahmarakshasan	Male figure with three faces and four hands.
5	Kshethrapalan	At first glance, it resembles Vettakkorumakan, but doesn't have a bow and arrow, but holds a sword on the raised right hand.
6	Thripuranthakan (figure 6)	Includes three figures. Thripuranthakan, the main deity is a male figure, believed as another form of Lord Shiva who killed a demon called Thripurasura.
7	Karumakan	Male figure, believed to be the form of Lord Shiva along with the spirit of Lord Vishnu.

8	Enranjipuram	Another form of Lord Shiva with three eyes and a weapon on the right hand intertwined with a snake.
9	Paranam	Male figure with three eyes, bow and arrow.
10	Anthimahakalan	Similar to Paranam but holds bow and arrow in the right hand and sword in the left hand.
11	Gandharvan	Male figure, represents celestial beings, the colour of the body is red.
12	Veerabhadran	Male figure, incisor and angelate in the hand are highlights.
13	Kuruthiraman	Include one male and female forms.
14	Rudhiramahakali	It also has two forms, but female deity is prominent.
15	Neelavattari	Similar to Rudhiramahakali, two forms are there in this kalam.
16	Asuramahakalan	Another form of Lord Shiva, but it has three figures. Main deity is standing in the centre, his disciple Nandi is on the right side and a female figure of Rudhirabhayankari on the left side.
17	Anthimalayar	Another <i>kalam</i> with three figures, but the centre one is a female deity accompanied by two small figures on both sides.
18	Arinambi	Another form of Lord Shiva accompanied by two small female figures in left and right side.

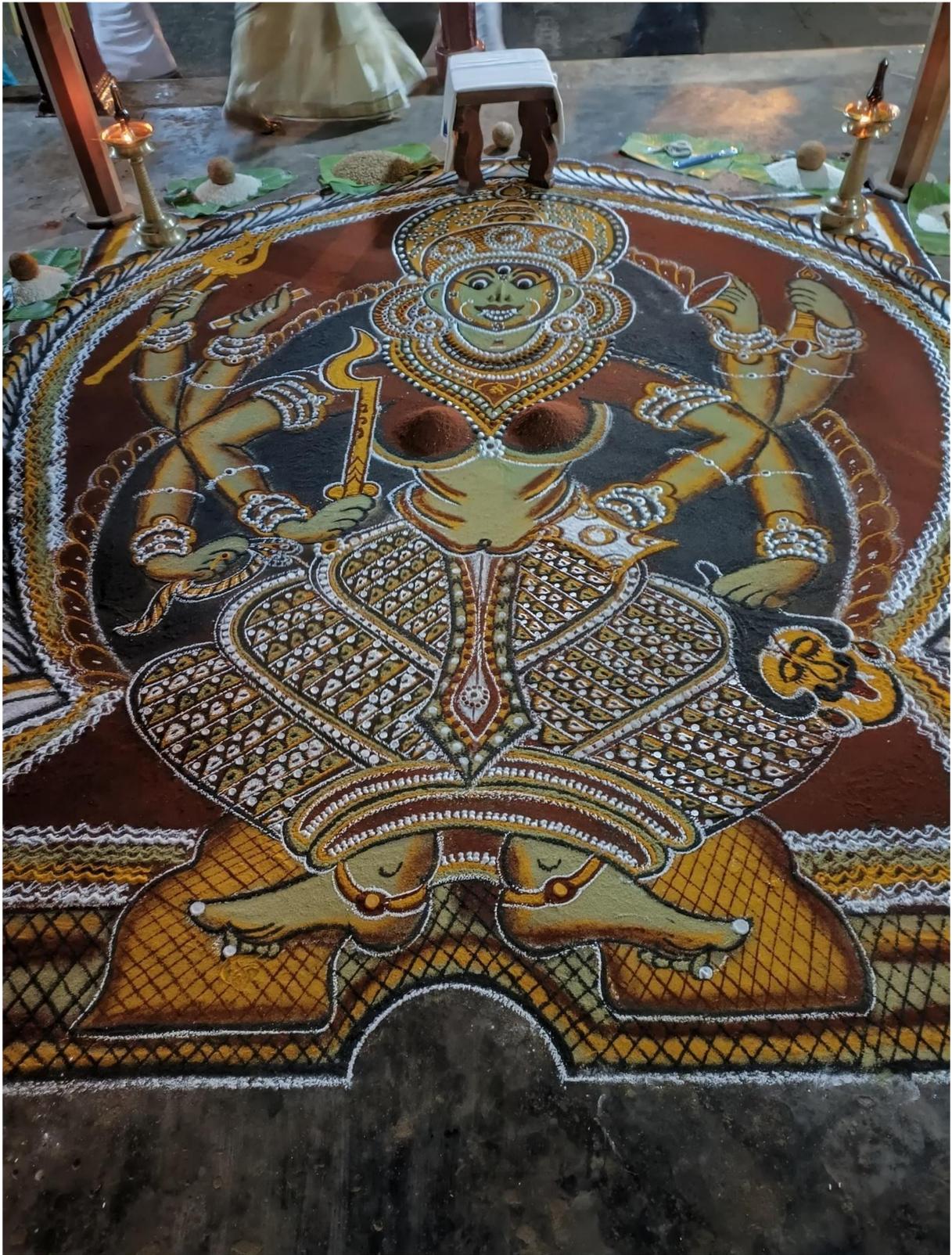
Table 4 Details of *kalam*s drawn by Kurup community. The table lists 18 types of *kalam* drawn by Kurup and its characteristics. Prepared based on Mundekkad (2022) and Kallatta (2021).

All the above deities are related to or different forms of Lord Shiva. The number of figures depicted in the *kalam* varies from one to three. The colour of the body can be green, yellow, or red based on the emotion of the deity. In addition to the above, the Kurup community draws *kalam*s dedicated to serpent gods. However, the first three on the list (Bhadrakali, Vettakkorumakan, and Ayyappan) are most common in the region. Kalamezhuth Paatt of Vettakkorumakan is different from other deities because of the extensive structure of the ritual, the involvement of different communities, and their relationship with the spaces. As mentioned in the introduction, due to these unique characteristics, Vettakkorumakan's Kalamezhuth Paatt is taken as a case example.

#### 4.4 Kalamezhuth Paatt of Vettakkorumakan

Being a member of the family that conducts the Kalamezhuth Paatt of Vettakkorumakan annually, I am familiar with the ritual from my childhood. Nevertheless, for the purpose of

this research, I changed my perspective from a patron to a researcher and attended 30 rituals during the last three and a half years (see methodology). The narration of the ritual in the coming section is an outcome of the non-participant observation as well as the audio, video and photo documentation conducted in these venues.



*Figure 3 Bhadrakali Kalam drawn at Balussery Kotta temple– in seating poster with eight hands holding various weapons.*



Figure 4 Vettakkorumakan Kalam drawn at Balussery Kotta temple – in standing poster, holds a sword in the right hand and a bow and an arrow in the left hand.



Figure 5 Ayyappan Kalam drawn at Cherupalathu kavu temple – in standing poster, holds an arrow in the right hand and a bow in the left hand.



Figure 6 Thripuranthakan Kalam, a rare typology, drawn at Pookkottur temple - includes three figures.

The semi-structured qualitative interviews also helped to analyse the ritual more technically. I also documented *thottam*, the oral tradition associated with the ritual, and translated it into English. Word-for-word translation and finding the exact meaning of many words were not possible as the *thottam* was composed in old Malayalam. However, the sense of *thottam* is included here to understand the context. Artists draw the form of the deity based on mythology and belief systems. So, the mythology associated with the deity is the key factor in the structure of the ritual and the posture of the deity in the *kalam*. Kalamezhuth Paatt of Vettakkorumakan is different from other deities mainly because of his mythological background.

### Mythology

The story of Vettakkorumakan is related to Arjuna's penance, which is extracted from Mahabharatha, one of the epics of India. Arjuna, third among the *Pandavas* (the term refers to the five legendary brothers) decides to start penance to get the powerful arrow, *Pashupathasthra*, from Lord Shiva and thereby his blessings. Shiva, along with his wife Parvathy both in the attire of hunters, started from *Kailasa* (a mountain where Shiva resides) to bless Arjuna and to reduce his arrogance as well. Upon reducing Arjuna's arrogance, Shiva and Parvathy happily gift *Pashupathasthra* to Arjuna. This small episode

from Mahabharatha is popular in most of the parts of the country. However, the next section of the story is common only in Kerala.

After blessing Arjuna, the hunter couples spend some time in the forest and make love. Parvathy gives divine birth to a baby, and they leave the new-born in the dense forest. The baby grows up and becomes a powerful warrior known as Vettakkorumakan. He creates trouble for saints, demons, gods, and all others in the region with his bow and arrow. The helpless gods approach Shiva for a solution, but he refuses to help, knowing the undoubted power of his son, and sends them to Lord Mahavishnu. Mahavishnu, in the form of a Brahmin boy holding a golden *churika* (a small sword) meets Vettakkorumakan. He becomes fascinated by the beautiful *churika*. Mahavishnu agreed to give the *churika* to Vettakkorumakan on the condition that once it is received; it can be handed over to no one or placed anywhere. Vettakkorumakan takes the challenge, transfers the bow and arrow to the left hand, and receives the new weapon from Mahavishnu. After holding the *churika* in the right hand, he turns his head back to see Vishnu, but he cannot find anyone there. Kurups in fact, depicts this scene in the *kalam*. Shiva then asks his son to go to Nambumala, a place near present-day Gudallur in Tamil Nadu state. Vettakkorumakan reaches the location and creates his own regiment there. He stays there for a long time as a protector of the indigenous people of Nambumala.

The next stage of the story uncovers the relationship between Vettakkorumakan and the Kurumbranadu Kingdom. The King of Kurumbranadu was in a pathetic condition after successive defeats from neighbouring rulers. With the advice of a saint, the king asks Vettakkorumakan to help him defeat others and regain his power. Vettakkorumakan accepted the request on the condition that he may come to the palace any day in any form. He also asked the king to start giving alms to poor people. On the way from Nambumala, he meets a man who is collecting *karamullu*, a type of thorn, and asks for the way to Balussery. With his help, Vettakkorumakan reaches Balussery fort, one of the principal centres of the Kurumbranadu kingdom, in the form of a beggar. As nobody recognised his identity, he left the place in anger. The King asks one of his subordinates to pacify and bring Vettakkorumakan back. While going from Balussery, Vettakkorumakan reaches Panniamvalli Illam, a Brahmin house, and asks for something to drink. The lady gives a jugful of milk. By this time, the subordinate of the King meets Vettakkorumakan and lies down on his feet for

forgiveness. Vettakkorumakan becomes happy with his action and agrees to come back to Balussery. He then helps the king fight against his enemies. It is also believed that Vettakorumakan disappeared on the wall of *Thekkini*, the southern block of Balussery Fort. However, after this incident, Vettakorumakan became the protective god of the Kurumbranad Kingdom. Later, the people of Kurumbranad started the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt dedicated to Lord Vettakorumakan, where the person who directed Vettakorumakan to Balussery became the *Komaram*, the men from Panniamvalli Illam became the chief priests, and the subordinate who brought back to Balussery Fort became *Namaskara Pattar*, another priest. This is the mythological background of Vettakkorumakan. I will come back to this aspect and discuss the myths and realities of this story in the later part of the thesis.

### **Kalamezhuth Paatt of Vettakkorumakan – Series of Rituals**

Kalamezhuth Paatt is a day-long ritual that comprises a series of rituals. The current chapter presents the process, the purpose, and the meaning of each ritual. To support this description, two photo essays are provided in the coming chapter. The photo essays also follow the same chronological order of rituals presented here. Additionally, video recordings of Kalamezhuth Paatt are uploaded to YouTube, and links to the short videos are provided in Appendix 3. To begin with, the first step in conducting a Kalamezhuth Paatt is to find a suitable date. Some of the venues are following a fixed date in the calendar; this can be the birthday of family members, the anniversary of the installation of a deity in the temple, or just a random day. The organisers or patrons approach the core artists: *Komaram*, the ritual dancer; Kurup, the painter and singer; and Marar, the percussionist. The team together finalises a date. Meanwhile, they inform *Thanthri*, the chief priest; *Kazhakam*, the one who provides garlands; and invite friends and family members.

### **Preparations**

At least one week before the event, organisers start the preparations. The focus is on preparing the venue and constructing *paattumandapam*. The venue can be a permanent *pavilion* or a block inside the house, or even outside the house or temple in a temporary shed. *Paattumandapam* is basically a pavilion having four poles made up of strong wood like teak, jack tree or areca palm trunk connected with two reapers in an east-west direction and two or four reapers in a north-south direction. Mostly, it is done by a carpenter or a

skilled labourer. These poles are erected either by digging a small hole in the floor or by the help of timber bases. The size of the pavilion is according to the dimensions prescribed in the *vasthusasthra*, the traditional building knowledge of India. Usually it is rectangular in plan, with a longer side in the east-west direction. After creating the *paattumandapam*, people prepare the floor using a mix of cow dung, burned coconut husk, and fine powdered earth. In the case of a permanent venue, the pavilion will usually be there throughout the year. So, the steps involved in the preparation of *paattumandapam* can be saved. By the day before the ritual, most of the materials will be in place. Powders required to draw the *kalam* are either prepared at the venue or obtained from the market. Coconut, tender coconut, yellow palm leaves of coconut, areca nut, areca nut flower, banana leaves, rice, paddy, flowers, etc. are the materials usually available from the surroundings. Materials that are not available on the property, such as camphor, incense sticks, gingelly oil to lighten lamps, and cloths, are obtained from the nearest market.

On the day of the event, there will be special worship in the early morning. The system of worship followed in Kerala has three *poojas* or services a day: morning, noon, and night, and it starts with *Ganapathihomam*, fire sacrifice worship to Lord Ganapathy. Worship during the morning, noon, and evening involves pleasing the deity by offering specially cooked food and fruits. The exclusive rituals of Kalamezhuth Paatt start with *Uchappaat*.

*Uchappatt*- ritual at noon

The word has two meanings: *ucha* means noon; hence, a *paatt* performed at noon is called *uchappatt*. Another meaning is that *uchappatt* is a song sung loudly (*uchathil* means loudly). Both are relevant here, as it is performed at noon and the song is usually sung loudly by Kurup. Before starting the ritual, Kurup decorates the *paattumandapam*. Normally, a minimum of two Kurups will be there to conduct a *paatt*, though one is also enough. They cover the ceiling and poles of the *paattumandapam* with white cloth, then place *peedham* (a traditional timber stool) and two oil lamps under the pavilion. Once the venue is ready, the owner hands over *koora*, a piece of red or black silk, to Kurup. Marar blows *shangh*, a conch shell, to show the auspiciousness of the ritual, and Kurup spreads the *koora* under the ceiling of the pavilion. Usually, the idols that are installed in the temple are not taken outside. So, the priest symbolically imports the strength of the deity from the idol through a handful of flowers to a sword or to a *valkkannady* (a metal mirror) decorated with a garland

and takes it to the *paattumandapam* and holds it on the top of the *peedham*, which is also covered with a piece of silk or white cloth. The priest pays an offering to the deity, sitting on the floor of Paattumanadam facing east, and Marar plays *chenda* (the traditional drum of Kerala) standing outside the pavilion. As soon as Marar stops beating *Chenda*, Kurup starts singing *thottam*. While singing, the main Kurup plays a stringed instrument called '*Nanthuni*' and the assistant creates beats on a small cymbal-like instrument known as a *kuzhithalam*. There are two sets of *thottam* in *uchappatt*. According to the Hindu belief system, Lord Ganapathy is the god of beginnings. So, the *thottam* starts with praising Lord Ganapathy for the good conduct of the whole ritual, and then praises the goddess Saraswathy, Lord Krishna, and finally Shiva. The second set of *thottam* is specific to the deity to whom the ritual is dedicated, so here it is to Vettakkorumakan, and the meaning of the song is given below. As mentioned, this is not a word-by-word translation but demonstrates the context and overall meaning of the lines. All songs are given a code number and will be cross-referenced in the discussion chapter.

Thottam 01:

*'Oh, Lord Vettakkorumakan, who came from the tamarind tree shades of Nambumala to Balussery with his subordinates, whose presence is there in the entrance gate of Ullur temple, who is wearing the red silk of ballad to go hunting, and who also exists in Thrikkalangottur.'*

*'Please listen to our prayers and appear here, my dear god Vettakkorumakan, who is in the form of a hunter, heading a group of 16,000 warriors, including people from communities namely Vedar, Kanavar, Puliyaar, Kuruvar, etc.'*

Kurup then elaborates the journey of Lord Vettakkorumakan from Nambumala temple to Thrikkalangode temple via Balussery kotta temple. All the places mentioned in this *thottam* are tabulated in chapter 8. Kurup also describes the decorations and specifications of paattumanadapam here.

As Kurup stops singing *thottam*, Marar beats *chenda*, and the priest takes the sword back to the sanctum. That marks the end of the first ritual, *uchappatt*. The duration is generally half an hour. Once this ritual is performed, it is believed that the Kalamezhuth Paatt must be completed at the venue at any cost. It is the combined responsibility of all those who took

part in the *uchappatt* to complete the whole ritual without failure. Understanding the serious consequences of not completing the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt, the core group consisting of Kurup, Marar, Komaram, *Kazhakam*, and the priest work towards the successful completion of the ritual. After *uchappatt*, Kurup decorates the *paattumanadam* with tender coconut leaves, then either they break for lunch or right away start drawing the *kalam* ([Appendix 3.1](#)).

*Kalam Varakkal* - preparing the drawing.

Before drawing, Kurup pays an offering to Lord Ganapathy, as he is the god of beginnings. The main Kurup starts preparing the single line drawing with white powder. He marks the boundary and then draws a straight line in the east-west direction. He starts the single line drawing from the head portion, which is in the east and ends with legs, which are in the west side ([Appendix 3.2](#)). Once the single line drawing is completed, other Kurups join the team and they complete the *kalam* by rendering each part of the body ([Appendix 3.3](#)). The details of the different stages included are given in the photo essays.

It takes three to four hours to complete the *kalam*. After completion, Kurup places *vellari* (rice and coconuts in banana leaves) along the periphery of the *kalam*, eight on each side and three at the bottom. It is believed that these are offerings for the subordinates of Vettakkorumakan. However, after the ritual, these rice and coconuts are taken by Kurup, Marar, Komaram, and the chief priest. To add decoration, *Kazhakam* hangs garlands on the coconut leaves on all four sides. This is a major stage in the whole process, as it denotes the creation phase. Those who are preparing the *kalam* know that it is going to be erased within a few hours, but they still ritualistically create, putting maximum effort into adding beauty to the drawing and exhibiting their creativity.

*Sandhyavela and Thayambaka* – performance using drums.

These are not rituals in fact but performed as part of the event. While the *kalam* is getting ready, there won't be many activities in the venue. So, to entertain the people gathered in the venue, Marar and the team present performances. An act which is carried out at dusk is known as *sandhyavela*; it also shows the auspiciousness of the time ([Appendix 3.4](#)). This will be followed by *thayambaka*, which can be called a concert in *Chenda*; others create a semi-circle, making him in the centre. It may last for half an hour to one or two hours, depending

on the number of supporting artists and the audience ([Appendix 3.5](#)). Sometimes, there will be solo performances on wind instruments like *kombu* and *kuzhal*. These activities fall under the category of performing arts but are carried out in a ritualistic manner.

*Mullakkal Paatt* - the outdoor ritual.

As the creation is completed, the next phase is the state of existence. In this stage, devotees come and appreciate the form of their favourite deity in Kalam with reverence. They pray for the fulfilment of their wishes and express gratitude for what they achieved in the previous year. The next ritual in the series is to take the deity outside the temple for the outdoor process called *mullakkal paatt*. *Mulla* means jasmine, so the etymology can be a *paat* conducted near a jasmine tree. Usually, jasmine trees are seen outside the house, so the place can be an open space.

The priest takes flowers and sandalwood paste in his hand, cuts it three times across the idol, and imports the power of the deity to the sword, similar to *uchappatt*, and takes it to a predetermined area, mostly in an open space ([Appendix 3.6](#)). The sword will be decorated with garlands and *thiruvudayada*, a cloth pleated in a semi-circular shape. *Kazhakam* holds *kuthuvilakku*, a lamp with a leg, and Marar beats *chenda*. The process is like *uchappatt*, but Kurup sings the same *thottam* at a much lower pace ([Appendix 3.7](#)). After completion, *Komaram* enters the scene. The attire of the *Komaram* resembles that in the *Kalam*. He drapes a long white cloth and wears a red silk over it. Once he receives the sword from the priest, he is considered the personification of Lord Vettakkorumakan. The duration of *mullakkal paatt* is around 30 minutes. The ritual of *mullakkal paatt* is significant since it is the only day on which the deity comes out of the temple to see the devotees. Moreover, it is believed that *mullakkal paatt* is an event where Lord Vettakkorumakan is prepared to go hunting.

*Thirich ezhunnallath* - grand return.

The entire team comes back to the main venue with a *chenda* ensemble led by Marar. This is known as *thirich ezhunnallath*, means grand return. Sometimes the procession will be accompanied by ladies holding plates filled with rice, a small lamp, and incense sticks. This is to show respect to the deity and to receive him back to the temple. The procession follows a specific order: ensemble of musicians in the front, *Komaram* and the man holding a lamp

behind the musicians, and finally Kazhakam and the priest who carry the deity. *Melam* (the orchestra) may go long for two to three hours in some cases ([Appendix 3.8](#)).

#### *Eedum Koorum Chavittal* – ritual dance

This is a ritualistic dance performance carried out after the grand orchestra in front of the temple. Marar plays *chenda*, and *Komaram* dances according to the beats. *Eedu* is at a slow pace, whereas the second set of beats, *Kooru*, is much faster. This ritualistic dance is believed to reflect Lord Shiva's dance in joy. Here, *Komaram* represents Lord Shiva and Marar, and the percussionist represents Nandikeswara, Lord Shiva's first assistant, who is also an expert in percussion. At the end of this process, *Komaram* gradually goes into a trance ([Appendix 3.9](#)).

#### *Kalapradakshinam* – ritual dance around the *kalam*

The procession ends with the completion of the previous ritual. The priest takes the sword inside the temple, and Marar and *Komaram* reach the *paattumandapam*. *Kalapradakshinam* means circumambulation of the *kalam*. Here, *Komaram* circumambulates the *kalam* with specific dance steps, and Marar and his team create background music according to his dance steps ([Appendix 3.10](#)). It is an opportunity for *Komaram* to show his abilities as a dancer. He makes at least three rounds; it may go up, and it is always an odd number. *Kalapradakshinam* can also be compared to the *thandavam* (dance of Lord Shiva in fury). *Komaram* completes the last round at the utmost pace and leaves the venue to take a rest.

#### *Kalam Pooja* - worship

This is the worship done by the chief priest to the deity in the form of *kalam*. Going back and referring to the mythology, Panniamvalli Bhattathiri is the chief priest of Vettakkorumakan; however, in his absence, any other priest can also do this worship. The priest sits on the west side of the *kalam* facing east and does the worship ([Appendix 3.11](#)). Marar plays either the *chenda* or the *edakka* (another traditional percussion instrument of Kerala, smaller than the *chenda*). On completion of this, all devotees come and pay respect to the deity. The duration of this ritual is also around half an hour.

#### *Thottam* - the songs

The next item is *thottam* by Kurup. They sit on the floor either on the left or right side of the *kalam*, as in the *uchppaatt*, where the main Kurup plays *nanthuni* and the assistant creates beats in *kuzhithalam* ([Appendix 3.12](#)). Here they also sing two sets of *thottam*; the first is known as *ammanachaya*; the title has no clear meaning. The meaning of the *thottam* is interpreted as follows:

Thottam 02:

*'Lord Ganapathy, long live, please give strength to me to sing the play they have staged.'*

*'We revere Lord Vettakkorumakan, who came to Balussery Fort to protect the land as per the request of the Kurumbranad king. Having heard the sound of a song, Karakura Nair possessed as oracle, sat on the stool, and dragged across the kalam. We revere Vettakkorumakan, whose presence is there in Kavil Mandapam.'*

In some places inside Kozhikode district, Kurup used to sing another set of *thottam* called *padappaatt*, or war song. This is composed in such a way that somebody is asking a bird about the happenings in Kozhikode, the meaning of which is as follows:

Thottam 03:

*'Hey golden swan, please recite the updates from Kozhikode.'*

*'All male members of Kozhikode joined Zamorin's army for a war against the Portuguese. The Portuguese armada fired the cannon towards the fort; the outer wall collapsed. Zamorin's soldiers tried to resist it with timber, but it was in vain. By that time, the Portuguese had sent a letter to Kochi, Kodungallur, Kollam, Goa, and Mangalore. Finally, they captured Kozhikode and started trading. Within three years, they smuggled most of the wealth of Kozhikode. Mangattachan, the commander in chief of Zamorin, became unhappy with the matter and rushed into the house of the Portuguese, killing as many people as possible. Ponds and wells became filled with dead bodies.'*

This is an interesting part of the *thottam*, as people like Marar also join Kurup and the team, and they keep asking what happened next, which makes the scene dramatic. If *padappatt* is not rendered, then they sing the last *thottam* of that set.

Thottam 04:

*'Oh Lord, who is the son of Shiva, who hunts wild animals please protect us who live in Velliyarkulangara, who arrive with sound that trembles inside, who are accompanied by a golden umbrella and beautiful canopy, torches, and hand lamps, and who reach this paattumandapam.'*

Kurup takes around 10 to 15 minutes to render these two sets of *thottam*. At the end of this, Marar plays *chenda* in a special way as a sign that the *thottam* is over.

*Thiri uzhichil* - offerings for subordinates.

If *kalam pooja* is the worship done by the priest, then *thiri uzhichil* are the rights carried out by Kurup, but they are not offered to Vettakkorumakan but to *sapthamathrikkal*, seven mothers. *Thiri* means cotton wick, and *uzhichil* means waving. Kurup makes a long wick of length around two feet using cotton cloth, soaked in gingelly oil, lightens it, and puts it on all sides of the *kalam*. After paying rights to seven mothers, Kurup pays offerings to *Ashtadikapalaka*, the protectors of eight sides of an area, by putting lit wicks in all four sides and all four corners ([Appendix 3.13](#)). Until this point, the *kalam* is in a state of existence. Kurup kickstarts the destruction phase by erasing a tiny portion of the bottom part of the *kalam* using coconut leaves and garlands. After completing the process, Kurup goes back to the place and waits for *Komaram* to come to the venue. This step also takes around 10 to 15 minutes.

*Kalathilattam* – ritual dance inside the pavilion.

Once the ritual of *thiri uzhichil* is accomplished, Marar gives a hint to *Komaram*, and then he comes to *Paattumandapam*. He enters the *kalam* and performs a ritual dance inside the *kalam* ([Appendix 3.14](#)). Kurup sings two sets of *thottam* here. The meaning of the first *thottam* is as follows:

Thottam 05:

*'Oh Lord, Vettakkorumakan, please protect us forever who arrived at this paattumanadapam. Who is the son of Lord Shiva, whose attire is made of shining silk and wearable, including rings, chains with precious pearls, a golden wristlet, and a waste belt.'*

This *thottam* is also known as *villinmel nritham*, which means dance on the bow. *Komaram* usually performs dance steps over the bow for this *thottam*. For the next *thottam*, he moves to the bottom portion of the *kalam*, and Kurup renders the second set of *thottam*.

Thottam 06:

*'We salute the garlands and golden chains, the sounds of veena, kuzhal, and all types of music, the beats of joy and the hands with sandal paste, hands holding the sword, ritual dance of the oracle in translation, sacred attic of Thrikkalangottur and the warrior's powerful hands.'*

*Komaram* goes to take a bath after these steps, and as he initiates the destruction phase by dancing over the *kalam*, the person holding the oil lamp also accompanies him. Kurup continues singing *thottam*, praising Vettakkorumakan, until he comes back.

*Kalam Maykkal* – erasing the *kalam*.

*Komaram* comes back to the *kalam*, cuts the coconut leaves with his sword, erases the *kalam* with his feet, and Marar plays *chenda* in a particular rhythm ([Appendix 3.15](#)). This action symbolises the hunting of Vettakkorumakan and killing enemies. After cutting down all the leaves, he sits over the *peedham* in the *kalam*, and Kurup sings a *thottam* known as *Niram*. There are four such types of *thottam*; between each *thottam*, Marar plays *chenda*, and *Komaram* erases the *kalam* by ritual dance steps. The meaning of four *niram* is as follows:

Thottam 07:

*'Oh, Lord Vettakkorumakan, we salute you without guilt, who is friendly and made hundreds of devotees in a temple called Kavil mandapam, who stood with us with his sharp arrows when warriors with a great army attacked us, who used fire to reduce the length of the silk and wore the same silk to become a fighter.'*

Thottam 08:

*'Oh, Lord Vettakkorumakan, please govern us in all fourteen worlds, who exist over the attic, upstairs, in the sanctum, in the sacred pillar, over the stool, or with the great army, whose impact is spread in all fourteen worlds and who also reside at Thrikkuttissery.'*

Thottam 09:

*'Dear Lord, we have only one request to you: who broke all the coconuts in the coconut mountain and who is housed in Balussery Kotta temple, Please protect us forever from all adversity.'*

Thottam 10:

*'Oh Vettakkorumakan, we visualise you through Karakura Oracle, who is the hero of Balussery; please protect us.'*

*Thenga Eriyal* – breaking coconuts

After the second *niram* (Thottam 08), the team comes outside the *paattumandapam* to perform the ritual of breaking coconuts. The number of coconuts varies from 3 to 12,000. The number of coconuts depends upon the financial condition of the patron; some people offer 108 coconuts, some people provide 1008 coconuts for breaking, and sometimes there will be some random numbers also. However, three coconuts are the bare minimum. Breaking 12,000 is considered to be the biggest offering to Vettakkorumakan, and it takes around three hours to break all those coconuts. Before breaking the coconuts, *Komaram* gifts coconuts to the artists and outsiders who assembled to take part in Kalamezhuth Paatt as a token of honour. *Komaram* sits on three coconuts, breaks coconuts one by one with both hands throwing on a granite stone block, Marar creates beats in *Chenda* ([Appendix 3.16](#)). Tender coconut water is considered one of the best natural drinks to reduce thirst and anger. This symbolises how the subordinates of Vettakkorumakan treated him with coconut water to reduce his thirst and anger after hunting. The meaning of the ritual of *Thenga Eriyal* is in line with this story.

After breaking coconuts, *Komaram* runs back to the venue, and Kurup sings the third and fourth *niram* (Thottam 09 and Thottam 10). Although *Komaram* erases the rest of the *kalam* with feet, the upper body, including the chest and the face of the deity, is erased with coconut leaves to show respect to the deity even in destruction.

*Kalpana, Koora Valikkal* – closing ritual.

By the time *Komaram* will be completely possessed by the spirit of Lord Vettakkorumakan, he delivers the thoughts and predictions as if he were Lord Vettakkorumakan itself

([Appendix 3.17](#)). This is known as *Kalpana*. Then he distributes the powder as a *prasada*, or gracious gift, to the devotees and takes the sword back to the temple. Marar blows the conch three times, Kurup removes the *koora* from the *paattumandapam*, and it returns to the owner ([Appendix 3.18](#)). This is known as *koora valikkal*, and it marks the end of the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt. The time taken for the steps from *Eedum koorum chavittal* until the end of the ritual is two to two and a half hours in most cases.

After the ritual

The owner distributes honorariums to all artists. Currently approximately INR 40,000 is required to conduct this ritual with a minimum number of people from each core group and close relatives. This is inclusive of materials, honorarium and food expenses. Kurup, *Komaram*, Marar, and the chief priest take the rice and coconuts placed around the *kalam* home. On the next day, the owner, with or without the help of servants, removes the cut coconut leaves and powders, dismantles the *paattumandapam* if it is temporary, and cleans the entire area. Some places maintain the venue as it is for three days, as it is believed by devotees that the spirit of the ritual will be there for at least three days.

#### **4.5 Summary**

The main intention of the chapter was to introduce the context of Kerala through the lenses of art and culture. The chapter also explained how extensive the Kalamezhuth Paatt dedicated to Vettakkorumakan is and comprehensively presented various steps or sub-rituals involved in the Kalamezhuth Paatt dedicated to Vettakkorumakan. These are the general steps involved in the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt dedicated to Vettakkorumakan. However, there are some minor changes in the sequence, duration, or number of people who attended. Various case studies are presented in the form of a photo essay in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 5 – Photo Essay**

### **Important Non-English Words Used in the Chapter.**

Kazhakam – A community of temple servants who provides flowers and garlands to temples and places of worship.

Kizhakkini – Eastern block of traditional courtyard house.

Komaram – Oracle, considered as the representative or personification of the deity. Another word is Velichappad.

Koora – The short name of kodi koora, it a piece of black/red coloured sacred silk cloth spread under the ritual pavilion of Kalamezhuth Paatt.

Kurup – A caste group in Kerala. Some sub castes of this group, Kallatta Kurup and Theyyampadi Kurup practice the ritual art of kalamezhuth.

Marar – A caste group whose ancestral job is to perform percussion instruments.

Melam – an ensemble of musicians playing drums, cymbals, and wind instruments.

Paattumandapam – A pavilion with four vertical poles connected with horizontal reapers to conduct kalamezhuth paatt.

Paattupura – Pura means house, so paattupura is an independent structure only to conduct Kalamezhuth Paatt.

Padinjatta – Western block of traditional courtyard house.

Peedham – A traditional timber stool.

Thanthri – Chief priest

Thottam – Thottam in folklore studies is song or hymn praising the deity. Practice of thottam can be seen in many art forms like theyyam, theyyatt etc

### **5.1 Introduction**

Even though the previous chapter elaborated on the various rituals involved in Vettakkorumakan's Kalamezhuth Paatt, there may be some regional variations. It can be in terms of the scale of the ritual, the number of artists and attendees, and the timing of the rituals. The two photo essays included in this chapter aim to demonstrate these variations

and the photos are presented in chronological order of the activities described on the day of the ritual. It also gives an understanding of built heritage and the spatiality of the ritual, which means how the existing spaces are utilised to conduct Kalamezhuth Paatt. Photographs of each ritual are taken using a mobile phone camera; videos are captured wherever necessary; and measured drawings of cultural spaces are prepared. Ultimately, the current chapter is the result of this documentation.

## 5.2 Photo Essay -1

Kalamezhuth Paatt, Swarnathu Mana, Pazhamthottam (26<sup>th</sup> March 2022, Saturday)

Swarnathu *mana*, aka Punnorkottu *mana* (*mana* or *illam* denotes the houses of Namboodiri Brahmins), is a thousand-year-old ancestral house located in Pazhamthottam village of Eranaikulam district (Figure 7). This courtyard house, designed on a plot of sixteen acres, is a classic example of the traditional architecture of Kerala. According to oral stories, the name of the house is associated with the legend of Shankaracharya, who lived in the 9th century AD. One day, when Shankara was an ascetic, he reached Punnorkkottu Mana to get alms. There was only a Brahmin lady at the house. Despite their extreme poverty, she managed to give him a gooseberry as alms. Understanding the situation, little Shankara penned *Kanakadharasthavam*, a prayer to the goddess of wealth, Mahalakshmi. Having been impressed by this, goddess Mahalakshmi blessed the family with a rain of golden gooseberries. After this incident, the old house became known as Swarnathu *Mana*, which means golden house.



*Figure 7 Swarnathu Mana. It shows front portion of the traditional house, a portion of the outhouse and a concrete bridge which connects these structures.*

The planning and architecture of the house is according to *Vasthusathra*, the traditional building knowledge of India. It has several rooms constructed around three inner courtyards. This typology is called 12 *kettu*, which means 12 blocks or rooms around three courtyards. Each room has its own functions, ranging from recreation, worship, cooking, gathering, and sleeping (Figure 9). The house has intricate timber carving on the ceiling, walls, and openings. It also has an ancillary structure, namely a huge granary, or *pathayappura*, an entrance pavilion, or *padippura*, and three large ponds with a covered space to bathe. In general, the ancestral house has a great role in the arts, cultural, and architectural landscape of Kerala.

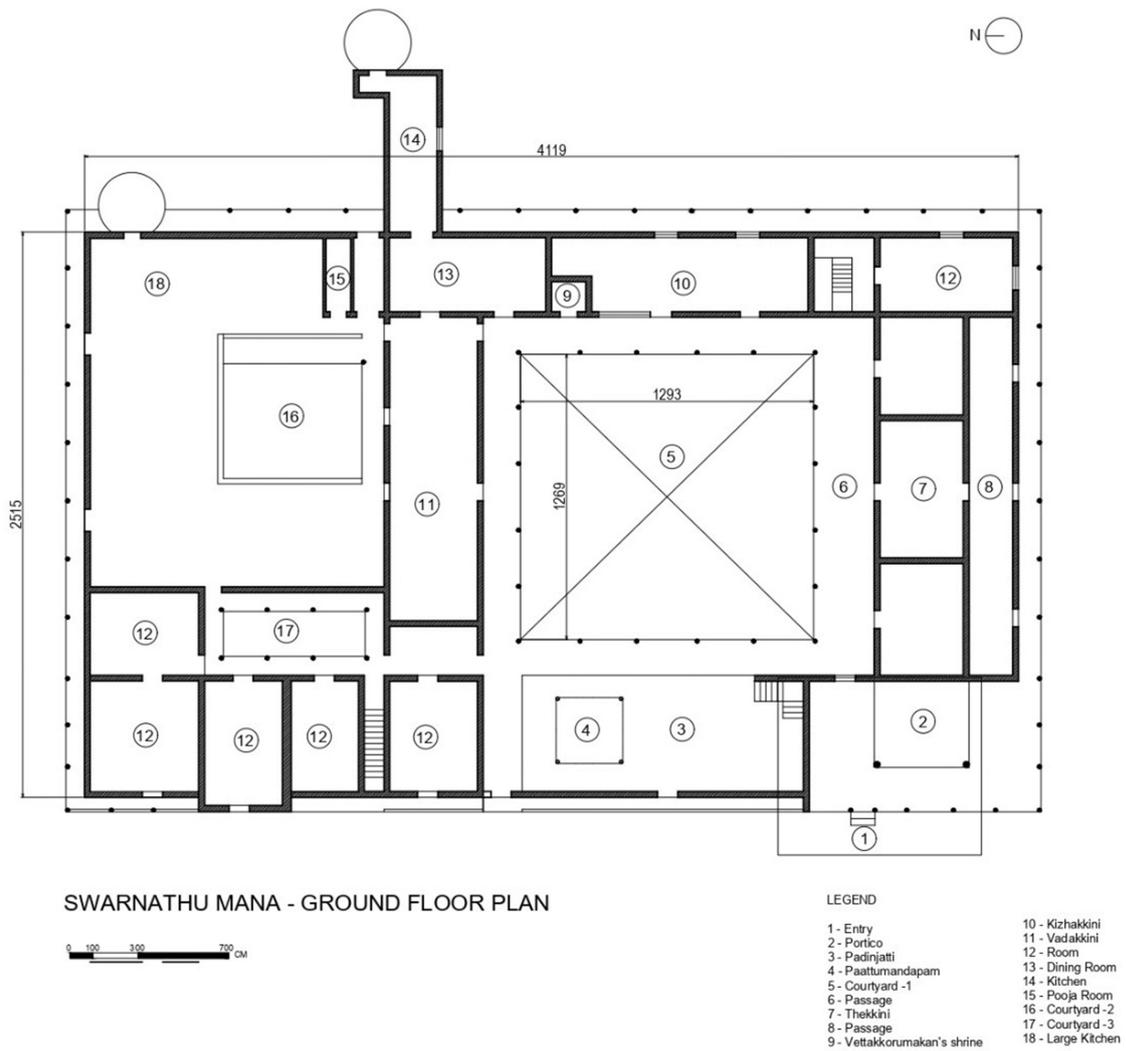


Figure 8 Floor Plan of Swarnathu mana, with three internal courtyards.

Many people used to come to the mana to enjoy the architecture and to appreciate cultural activities, such as Kathakali that was conducted there regularly.

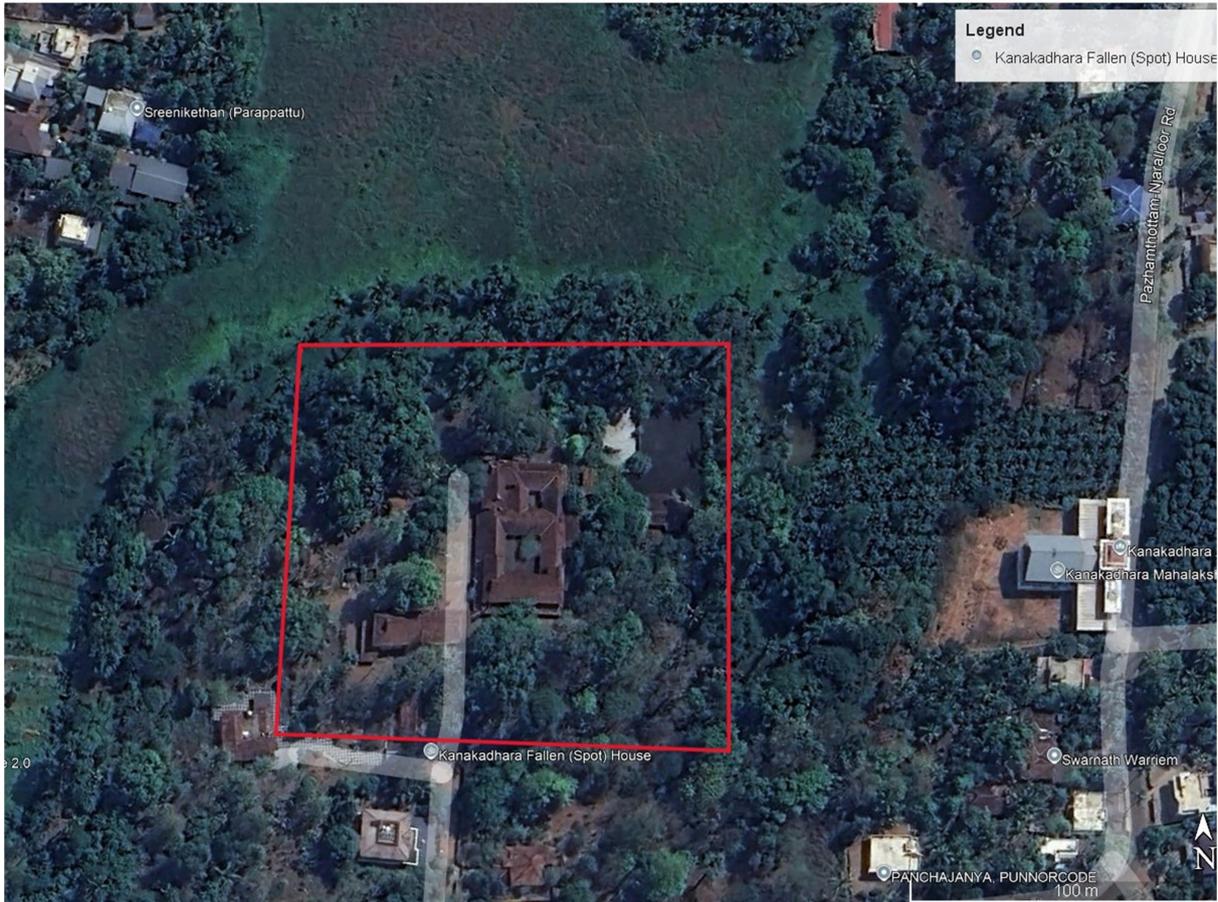


Figure 9 Context of Swarnathu Mana, Source: Google earth

### Documentation of Kalamezhuth Paatt

Swarnathu *mana's* family deities are Lord Vettakkorumakan and Goddess Bhadrakali. Every year, the residents used to conduct Kalamezhuth Paatt for Vettakkorumakan and Bhadrakali; for a variety of reasons, it was discontinued 50 years ago. However, they restarted conducting the ritual regularly from 2008 onwards. Now, each year, they conduct Kalamezhuth Paatt for both of these deities. The first day is dedicated to Bhadrakali, and the second day is dedicated to Vettakkorumakan at the same venue. There is no fixed date for the ritual, but it falls in the month of March or April. The patron and the artists jointly decide the dates, and in 2022, it was on March 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> for Badrakali and Vettakkorumakan, respectively.

### Preparations

Once the date is finalised, the organisers start the preparations. They invite their friends and relatives in advance. Since no one is staying inside the ancestral house until one week

before the ritual, they clean the venue and the surroundings and carry out some minimal maintenance of the structure. This includes lime washing and painting the venue, cleaning the floor, and finishing the flooring using cow dung paste wherever necessary. Here the venue is in *Padinjatti*, the western block of courtyard 1. They have a well-designed *paattumandapam* with jackfruit tree pole and base. It is assembled on the day before the ritual. Here, the *paattumandapam* is square in plan, with 294cm on one side. The height is 174cm. The materials for worship -vegetables and grocery items for food- are procured from the nearby market. Materials like coconut, tender coconut, coconut palm leaves, areca nuts, baby areca nuts, banana leaves, and flowers are collected from the property itself. So, throughout the day before the ritual, they become mentally and physically prepared to conduct Kalamezhuth Paatt.

### **On the day of the ritual**

The artists reach the venue in the morning. After taking a dip in the pond, Kurups start preparing the venue. By this time, the priest has completed the morning worship. Kurups tie the rope on the crossbars of *pattumandapam*, then covers four poles and the ceiling with white cloth. Since there was a Kalamezhuth Paatt dedicated to Bhadrakali on the previous day, the venue was fully prepared, and these steps were not at all repeated for the Vettakkorumakan Paatt.

The team in total is 16. This includes:

Kurup – three (K1, K2 and K3 ), Marar or musicians – nine (three *melachenda* – drums which makes treble, two *veekkan chenda* - drums which makes bass, two *ilathalam* – cymbal like instrument, one *kombu* and one *kurumkuzhal* – wind instruments), *Komaram* – K1 (here *Komaram* and main Kurup are same) , Priest – one and *Kazhakam* – one.

After paying morning and noon worship to the deity, *uchappatt* the first ritual of Vettakkorumakan paatt is performed.

*Uchappatt* : 9.30am

After decorating the *paattumandapam* with white cloths, Kurup placed two oil lamps and a wooden stool called *peedham* under the *mandapam*. *Kazhakam* lightens the lamp, and then Kurup receives the *koora*, a piece of silk, from the patron. With the consent of the patrons

and others assembled there, he spreads the *koora* under the ceiling of the *paattumandapam*. Marar blows the conch three times to show the graciousness of the process. The priest then takes the sanctified sword from the shrine, which is in *kizhakkini*, to the *paattumandapam*, where Marar plays *chenda*. The priest evokes the presence of the deity in the *paattumandapam*. Kurups sing the first set of *thottam*, where leading Kurup, K1 plays *Nanduni* and the K2 plays *Kuzhithalam*. They salute Lord Ganapathy, Saraswathy, Sreekrishna, and Shiva here. After that, they sing *thottam* praising Lord Vettakkorumakan (Thottam 01, refer to the previous chapter). By the time, the priest completes the worship and then takes the sword back to the sanctum. *Kazhakam* cleans the *paattumandapam*; Kurup cuts the coconut palm leaves and decorates the *paattumandapam*.



Figure 10 Paattumandapam after uchappatt. Intricate carving in column and roof members can be seen

*Kalam Kurikkal: 11am*



*Figure 11 K1 starts single line drawing*

K2 and K3 help K1 by filling the bowl with powders -white, black, yellow, green, and red. Here, Kurup only brought all the powders required for drawing the *kalam*. Before starting drawing, all Kurups pray to Lord Ganapathy for uninterrupted and successful completion of the ritual in front of the lamp in the north-east corner of the *kalam*. K1, then prepare the single line drawing of the deity with white powder. It takes only 15 minutes to complete the single-line drawing.



Figure 12 Single line drawing completed.

11.20 am:

K2 joins the team by pouring black powder around and inside the single-line drawing. K1 takes a break, while K2 details out the girdle. K3 joins the team and competes in the bottom portion of the *kalam*. After pouring powder into the bottom portion of the figure, he starts detailing the right hand and its ornamentations. Parallel to this, K2 completes rendering the left half of *Veeralippatt*, the dress.



*Figure 13 Kalam on progress.*

K1 joins back after the break and renders the face, earrings, and necklaces, but not the eyes. K2 and K3 interchange the sides, i.e., K2 completes the right side of clothing and K3 finishes the left hand and its detailing. Having completed that much, the team breaks for lunch at 1 p.m.

Afternoon session 4.00 pm



Figure 14 Kalam almost completed.

Now, K1 gives life to the *kalam* by completing the eyes and then moves to the crown portion; K2 draws the bow and arrow in the left hand; and simultaneously, K3 draws the background and then decorates the base of the *kalam*. Finally, K2 and K3 together design and complete *Prabhamandalam*, the outer decorative portion of the *kalam*.

Decorations 5.00 pm



Figure 15 Kalam after completion.

After completing the *kalam*, Kurup starts decorating the *paattumandapam* by arranging *vellari* around the *kalam* and placing colourful *thiruvudayada* and *valkkannadi* on a stool over the upper portion of the *prabhamandalam*. *Kazhakam* then hangs garlands in the coconut leaves on the four sides of the *kalam*.

*Sandhyavela and Thayambaka: 5.30 pm*



*Figure 16 Thayambaka.*

While the *kalam* is getting ready, the main Marar starts *thayambaka*, a performance on *chenda*. Other artists support him with *chenda* and *ilathalam*. The venue of *thayambaka* is the large central courtyard. It is followed by *kombupatt* and *kuzhalpatt*, solo performances on wind instruments, namely *kombu* and *kuzhal*.

*Mullakkalpaatt*: 7.30pm

After completing *kalam*, Kurup takes a rest for a while, bathes and then gets ready in the attire of *Komaram*. Being offered the night worship, the priest takes out the sanctified sword from sanctum for *mullakkal paatt*, the outdoor process.



Figure 17 *Mullakkalpaatt*.

*Kazhakam* holds a *kuthuvilakku*, an oil lamp with a long handle to hold. *Marar* plays *Chenda*, and the patron also accompanies the priest. The team reaches the venue in the front courtyard, and the priest keeps the sword on a piece of timber plank. Like *uchappaatt*, priests do the worship, Kurups sing *thottam*, and *Marar* beats *chenda* occasionally. After completion of this, *Komaram* reaches the venue of *mullakkalpaatt* and receives a garland and a sword from the priest.

Thirich Ezhunnallath 8.00 pm



Figure 18 Thirichezhunnallath.

The entire team came back to the venue after performing the outdoor process. The order of the procession is that grand orchestra or *melam* in the front, *Komaram* with his assistant holding *kuthuvilakku* behind the *melam*, and at the end, the priest holding the sanctified sword, accompanied by *Kazhakam* holding another *kuthuvilkku*. The team slowly reach inside the house and enter the central courtyard, where they finish the performance.

Eedum Koorum Chvittal 8.40 pm



Figure 19 Eedum koorum chavittal.

Marar plays some specific rhythm on the *chenda*, while others support it with *ilathalam*, *kombu*, and *kuzhal*, and the *Komaram* dances according to the rhythm. The beat at the slow pace is called *eedu*. Marar gradually increases the tempo and plays another two or three rounds of different rhythms called *kooru*. Concurrently, *Komaram* reaches a semi-trance mood.

*Kalapradakshinam 8.50 pm*



*Figure 20 Kalapradakshinam.*

*Komaram* circumambulates the *kalam* in a clockwise direction with ritual dance steps, holding a sword in the right hand. Marar and his team create background music according to the steps. The first round is in *chembada*, a rhythm with eight beats. The second round with a beat of three units. After the completion of each round, *Komaram* gradually increases the pace. *Komaram* reaches trans mood and wraps up the *kalapradakshinam* after the ninth round.

*Kalampooja* 9.10 pm



*Figure 21 Chief priest completes kalampooja.*

The priest pays offerings to Vettakkorumakan, sitting in front of the *kalam*. All family members were present at that time. After offering ambrosia to the deity, Marar starts playing *edakka*. He also sings some songs praising the deity, but they are not similar to *thottam*. On completion of *kalampooja*, camphor is lit, and all family members circumambulate the *kalam* and pray for the fulfilment of wishes.

*Thottam* 9.40 pm

Kurups sing *thottam*, sitting on the left-hand side of the deity. K2 plays *Nanthuni*, and K3 the assistant plays *Kuzhithalam*. This particular *thottam* is known as *Ammanachaya* (Thottam 02). After that, they sing another set of *thottam* (Thottam 03).

*Thiri Uzhichil* 9.50 pm



*Figure 22 Kurup performing thiriuzhichil.*

Kurup pays offering to the subordinates of Vettakkorumakan. He puts a lit wick, throws rice and flowers on all four cardinal directions and four corners of the *kalam*. Then shows the lit wick to the deity in the sanctum, the *Komaram* and the devotees who are assembled there. Kurup comes back to the *kalam*, removes a bunch of coconut leaves from the *paattumandapam* and puts that on the lower portion of the *kalam*.

*Kalathilattam* 10.00 pm

*Komaram*, who was taking rest after the tedious *kalapradakshinam*, comes back to the venue with his *churika* after *thiri uzhichil*. He enters the *kalam* through the southeast corner and dances over the bow with some specific steps parallel to Kurup's *thottam* (Thottam 05). During the next set of *thottam* (Thottam 06), he holds the *churika* in the right hand and the *kaduthila* in the left hand. After these, he takes a leave from *Kalam*.

*Kalam Maykkal* 10.10 pm

*Komaram* comes back to the *kalam* after cleaning his body, removes some coconut leaves and put over the upper part of the *kalam*, cuts all the coconut leaves, and erases the *kalam* using his feet along with the background beats of *chenda*.



Figure 23 *Komaram* dances inside the *kalam*.

Kurup sings the third set of *thottam* (Thottam 07) and *Komaram* sits on the stool and drags the stool from north to south. *Komaram* again performs some ritual dances in the *paattumandapam* according to the rhythm played by Marar on *chenda*. After that, Kurup sings the fourth set of *thottam* (Thottam 08).

*Thenga eriyal 10.20 pm*



*Figure 24 Komaram preparing to break coconuts.*

*Komaram* comes to the central courtyard to break the coconuts. They circumambulate the coconut mountain thrice. *Komaram* gives coconut to the priest, Marar, Kurup, and other invitees as a token of honour. He then sits on three coconuts and starts breaking the coconuts one by one with both hands, throwing on a piece of stone. Kurup assists the *Komaram* and Marars create synchronised beats.

Kalpana 10.40 pm



Figure 25 Komaram collects powder from kalam to distribute to devotees.

After breaking all the coconuts, except a few, *Komaram* runs back to the *paattumandapam* and erases the rest of the *kalam*. Kurups sing the fifth *thottam* (Thottam 09), and *Komaram* dances inside the *kalam*. Kurups sing the sixth and final *thottam* (Thottam 10), *Komaram* dances at the utmost speed and attains the high trance mood, delivering *Kalpana*, the insightful counsel to the devotees. He then distributes the mix of five powders of kalam to devotees as *prasadam*. *Komaram* takes the *churika* and *kaduthila* back to the sanctum.

*Koora Valikkal 10.45pm*



*Figure 26 Kurup removes koora.*

Marar blows the conch three times, and Kurup removes *Koora*, the piece of silk from the ceiling of *Paattumandapam*, and returns it to the patron. That marks the end of the ritual.

After the ritual

People in the core groups -Kurup, *Komaram*, Marar and Priest- take the rice and coconut placed around the *kalam*. Patrons give honorariums to all artists; after having dinner, they leave the venue. On the next day, servants remove all leftovers of the ritual, such as powders, coconut leaves, and flowers, and throw them away. Though this case is an example of Vettakkorumakan's Kalamezhuth Paatt from central Kerala, not much deviation can be seen from the basic framework that was explained in the previous chapter. This shall be critically analysed after presenting the next photo essay.

## 5.3 Photo Essay 2

### **Kalamezhuth Paatt with breaking 12000 coconuts ceremony**

8<sup>th</sup> April 2023

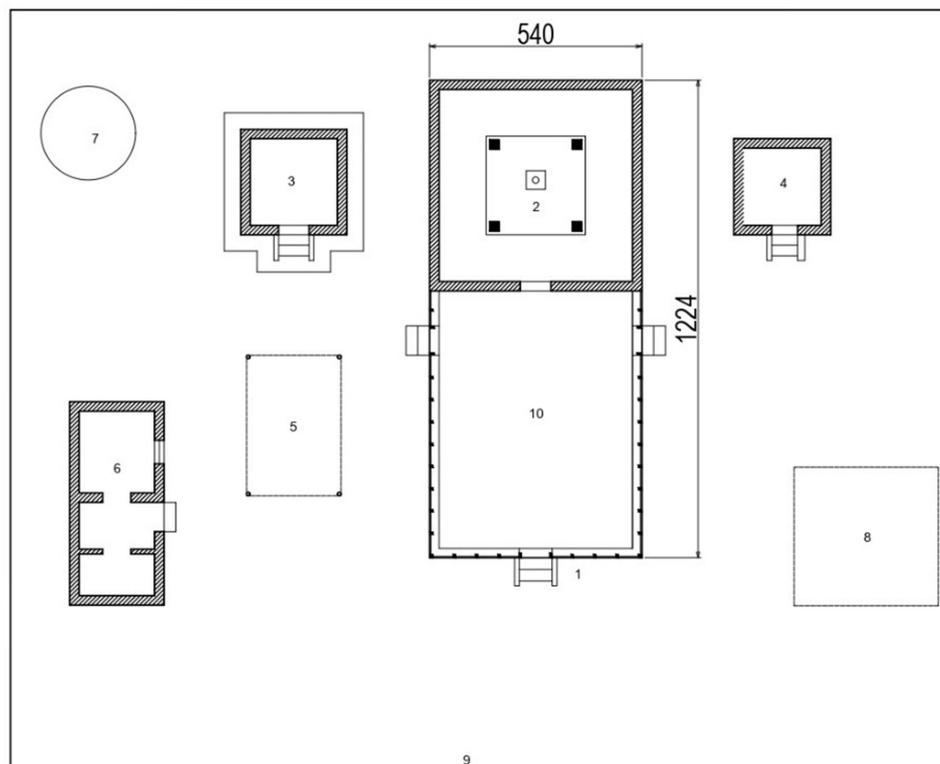
In order to comprehend the regional variances in the ritual, an example from Northern Kerala is chosen as the background of this photo essay. The type of venue is also different, as the former is a private ancestral house, whereas this is a temple. This case also helps to show the festivity of the ritual. Since the venue had the additional ritual of breaking 12,000 coconuts, the focus of this case is on festivity and the special rituals conducted because of the coconut breaking ceremony.

Kannippoyil Paikkattukotta Vettakkorumakan Temple is believed to be an ancient temple, the exact age of which is unknown. The meaning of the name is that Kannippoyil denotes the name of the land, while Paikkattukotta denotes a forest land or a sacred grove. So once, the place might have been a sacred grove. It is situated in a rural area called Kannankara, 10 kilometres from Kozhikode city. The temple was abandoned for a long time. Since the structure was not in a good enough condition to be used, and based on the recommendation from *Devaprashna*, an astrological process, it was reconstructed two years ago. Only the plinth was in good condition; the superstructure was about to collapse. So, based on the existing dimensions, the temple was completely reconstructed using laterite blocks, timber, and clay tiles. Currently, the temple is run by a committee constituted by devotees of the area. This shows the politics of a religious institute, as everything related to the temple is done on the basis of a collective decision, whereas the previous example was more domestic in nature and the decision was made by the head of the family. However, a notion of publicness can be seen in this property, provided only Hindus are allowed to enter the temple compound.

#### **Architecture of the temple**

The main temple dedicated to Vettakkorumakan is in the form of *Pattupura* facing the west, (Figure 27). Access to the temple from the main road is through a narrow walkway. The temple lies on a slightly elevated platform. Right next to the *pattupura* is a small square

shrine dedicated to Lord Ayyappa, or Shastha. A well and a small building block, which include an office room and kitchen space for cooking *prasada*, the divine food, can be seen adjacent to the second shrine. Left of the *paattupura* is another square shrine dedicated to the goddess Bhadrakali. Even if the temple is recently reconstructed, it is done completely in line with the



SITE LAYOUT - KANNIPPOYIL TEMPLE

LEGEND

- 1 - Pattupura
- 2 - Vettakkorumakan shrine
- 3 - Bhagavathy shrine
- 4 - Ayyappan shrine
- 5 - Paattumandapam
- 6 - Kitchen
- 7 - Well
- 8 - Place to break coconuts
- 9 - Entry
- 10 - Space for pattumandapam

Figure 27 Site plan of Kannippoil temple. Main shrine of Vettakkorumakan is in the middle, in the form of *paattupura*

traditional architectural style of Kerala. The proportions and dimensions of the temple are according to *vasthusasthra*, the traditional building science of India. A rectangular *paattupura* measuring 540 cm x 1244 cm has three doors: the main door from the west and two subsidiary doors from the south and north. The front portion of the *paattupura* has a wooden lattice on all three sides. Entry to the *paattupura* is restricted; usually priests and other temple servants have access inside and only the priest enters the inner shrine.

Devotees pay worship only from outside *paattupura*. The entire structure is covered by a sloped roof with clay tile resting on timber framework.

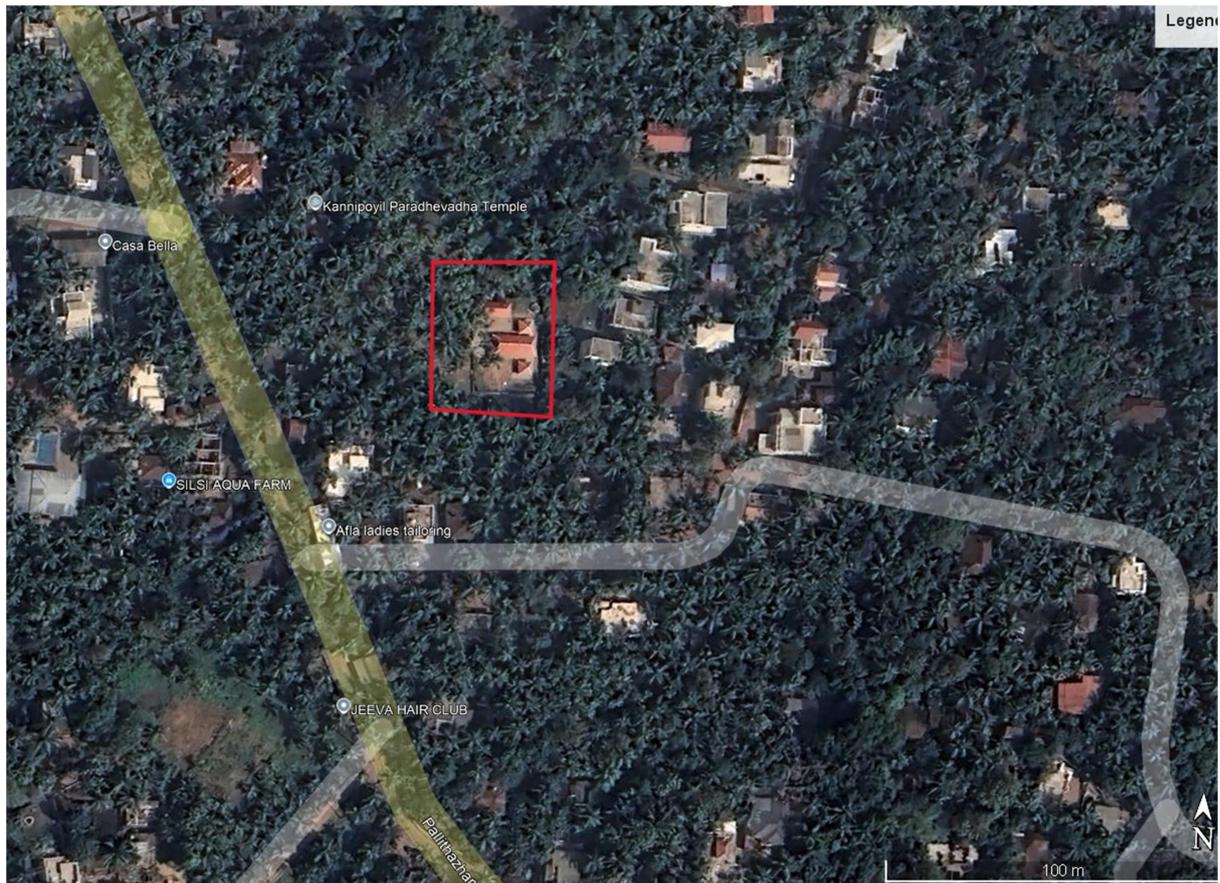


Figure 28 Context of Kannippoyil temple, source: Google earth

### Preparations for Kalamezhuth Paatt

Traces of earlier festivals were absent since the temple was reconstructed in 2022. However, the temple committee chose to perform the Kalamezhuth Paatt ceremony as part of the annual festival after receiving consent through an astrological procedure. The head priest, *Komaram*, Marar, and Kurup's availability helped choose the dates. They began the

preparations two months before the event because of the scale of the ceremony, which involved cracking 12,000 coconuts. Part of the preparations included gathering offerings from devotees in the form of cash and coconuts. Cleaning the site and area for dining, as well as the procurement of supplies, are among the last event preparations that are made the week before the ritual. In 2023, they conducted Kalamezhuth Paatt, dedicated not only to Vettakkorumakan but also to Lord Ayyappa and Goddess Bhadrakalai on April 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>,

and 8th, respectively. Even though *Paattupura* has enough space inside to draw the *kalam*, the committee took a stand to erect *Paattumandapam* outside *Paattupura*, in front of Ayyappa's shrine. This move helped the devotees watch the ritual without any restriction. Since *paattumandapam* was outside the structure and temporary in nature, they had to prepare the floor to draw *kalam*. The traditional methods of preparation included loosening the soil, removing big stones, mixing the earth with water, and ramming it appropriately. On top of the rammed earth, they applied a mixture made by combining burned coconut husk and cow dung. Since square-based, black-painted iron pipes were used to construct the *paattumandapam*, it was easy to assemble and remove the whole pavillion

### **On the day of the Ritual**

Representatives of all core groups were present in the morning around 8 itself. The details of artists are as follows.

*Kurup* - Five (K1, K2, K3, K4 and K5), *Komaram* - One, Marar or musicians - 16 (*chenda* -8, *ilathalam* -3, *kombu* -2, *kuzhal* -2, *madhalam* -1), *Kazhakam* – 2, *Thanthri* or the chief priest - 1 and *Shanthi* or Priests -3.

There are designated spaces for these artists to rest and have food. Apart from the sub-rituals of Kalamezhuth Paatt, there were special offerings to Vettakkorumakan and the other two deities in the early morning itself. Marar and their team created background music for this worship. However, the first ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt started at noon only.

*Uchappaatt* – 12.00pm



*Figure 29 Uchappaatt.*

The ritual of *koora idal*, spreading a piece of silk, is not performed here, as it was already there as a part of the previous day's ritual. So, the priest brings the sanctified sword from Vettakkorumakan's shrine and keeps it on top of *Peedham*. Kurups start singing *thottam* (Thottam 01) and after that, Marar plays *chenda*. Once the priest completes the offering, he takes the sword back to the shrine.

*Thenga Koottal (piling coconuts)– 12.30 pm*



*Figure 30 Komaram places coconut.*

This ritual is performed only when the Kalamezhuth Paattu is followed by the breaking of 12,000 coconuts. Following the completion of *uchappaattu*, *Kazhakam* lights an oil lamp placed in the designated area where the coconuts are to be piled. *Komaram* leads a procession from the main temple that includes representatives from all primary groups and devotees. The procession makes a full circle of the main temple before arriving at the location where the coconuts will be mounted. 12 coconuts are placed there by *Komaram*, and one or two coconuts by others.



*Figure 31 Mount of coconuts.*

The remaining coconuts are then arranged by the devotees to form a tiny mountain. A strong granite slab is placed in front of the coconut mount, with a gentle slope towards the east. After this, all artists and devotees have lunch.

*Kalam Kurikkal – 2.40pm*



*Figure 32 Kurup worshipping Lord Ganapathy before starting the drawing.*

After resting for a while, Kurups regroup in the *paattumandapam* to start drawing. It's not the senior most Kurup who led the drawing part here; instead, K3 took charge of preparing the single line drawing and leadership in completing the *kalam*. K3 pays respect to Lord Ganapathy near the northeast corner lamp for the unobstructed completion of the process and then starts with a single line drawing. Within 20 minutes, he completes the initial structure of the *kalam*. After that, K1, K2, and K4 join the team to render each part of the body one by one.



Figure 33 Structure of the kalam completed.

Kalam completes – 6.40pm



Figure 34 Kalam after completion.

It took four hours to complete the *kalam*. After that, *Kurups* place *vellari*, that is, rice, coconuts, betel leaves, and areca seeds around the *kalam*, and *Kazhakam* hangs garlands on the coconut leaves.

*Sandhyavela – 7.00pm*



*Figure 35 Sandhyavela.*

Marar and team perform this after dusk in front of the main shrine, facing to the north. An oil lamp is placed in front of the team during the performance to show its auspiciousness.

Thayambaka – 7.05pm



Figure 36 Thayambaka.

Main Marar leads this unique performance on *chenda*, standing in the centre, while others support him on *chenda* and *ilathalam*, creating a semi-circle. Meanwhile, devotees come and pay respect to Vettakkorumakan who is in the form of *Kalam*. Those who are interested in percussion will enjoy the performance standing or sitting in front of the ensemble. Taking the audience to a higher level of appreciation, Marar finishes *thayambaka*.

Keli – 8.00 pm



Figure 37 Keli.

Another type of performance, where *Madhalam*, a percussion instrument plays a key role.

Patt – 8.15pm



Figure 38 Kombu pattu.

Performances on wind instruments namely *kombu* and *kuzhal*.

Mullakkal Paatt – 8.45 pm



Figure 39 Mullakkal Paatt.

All artists take a rest for a while after the above performances, then proceed to the outdoor ritual. The venue is near the main road, 100 metres away from the temple. The priest takes the sanctified sword to the venue; the chief priest, Kurup, Marar, and committee members accompany the team. A process similar to *uchappaatt* repeats here: at the end of the ritual, *Komaram* reaches the venue and receives the garland and *kaduthila*, the weapon.

Thiruch Ezhunnallath with Melam – 9.00 pm



Figure 40 Grand return.

The grand return after *mullakkal paattu* includes Marar and team performing *melam*, an ensemble of Musicians, to receive Vettakkorumakan, who is in the form of *Komaram*. *Kazhakam* and designated people hold oil lamps in front of *Komaram* and the priest who is holding the sword.

Eedum Koorum chavittal – 10.10pm



Figure 41 Ritual dance - Eedum koorum chavittal.

The whole team comes back to the venue, encircles the temple, and then finishes the *melam* at the utmost tempo in a grand manner. This is followed by a ritual dance by *Komaram*, where *Marar* creates some specific rhythms, synchronising the dance steps, in front of the main shrine.



Figure 42 Ritual dance - kalapradakshinam.

The priest takes back the sword inside the shrine. *Komaram* circumambulates the kalam with some specific ritualistic dance steps, and Marar creates background music for the dance. *Komaram* increases the speed after each round, gradually becoming possessed by the spirit of the Lord, and finishes the dance at the utmost speed after seven rounds of circumambulation.

Kalam Pooja – 10.40pm



Figure 43 Chief priest performs Kalam Pooja.

The Chief priest pays worship to Vettakkorumakan who is the *kalam*, by sitting at the bottom of the drawing, facing east. Marar plays *Idakka*, another percussion instrument.

*Thottam – 11.10 pm*



*Figure 44 Kurups sing thottam.*

*Kurups* praise the deity in the *kalam* by singing *thottam*, K3 plays *Nanthuni* and another *Kurup* K2 plays *kuzhithalam*. They sit on the south side of the *kalam*, facing north.

Thiri Uzhichil – 11.20pm



Figure 45 Thiri uzhichil.

Now Kurup pays an offering to Vettakkorumakan and his subordinates, who protect the *kalam* from all four sides and all four corners. He offers lit cotton wicks, flowers, garlands, and rice. He then symbolically erases the bottom portion of the *kalam* using tender coconut leaves.

Kalathilattam – 11.30pm



Figure 46 Ritual dance inside the kalam.

*Marar* produces a specific rhythm on *chenda* when *thiri uzhuchil* is completed; hearing this, *Komaram* turns up in the *paattumandapam*. *Kurups* sing two sets of *thottam* (Thottam 05 and Thottam 06), *Komaram* performs a special ritual dance standing on the *kalam* and leaves the venue to take a bath.



Figure 47 Komaram erases kalam.

Since the Kalamezhuth Paatt is followed by breaking 12,000 coconuts, *Komaram* elaborately cleans the body, changes the attire with new clothes, and comes back to the *paattumandapam*. He then puts a bunch of coconut leaves on the face of the deity, erases other parts of the *kalam* with his feet using some dance steps, and the Marar plays *chenda*. *Kurups* sing two more sets of songs (Thottam 07 and Thottam 08); during this, *Komaram* sits on a *peedham*, a wooden seat, and drags the *peedham* from north to south and then west to east.



Figure 48 Komaram breaking coconuts.

The team arrives at the place where the coconuts are piled up. They encircle the coconuts three times, and *Komaram* purifies the coconuts by sprinkling holy water. He gives coconuts to all artists, priests, and chief priests as a sign of blessing. Then he starts breaking coconuts, sitting on a small pile of coconuts and throwing them one by one with his left and right hands alternatively on a granite slab. Kurups helps him take the coconuts. Meanwhile, Marar and the team produce beats, which help the *Komaram* find a rhythm in the process. Gradually, he increases the speed and breaks all the coconuts except the pile on which he is sitting. It took only 2 hours and 5 minutes to complete the task.

Kalpana and Samapanam– 2.10am



Figure 49 Conclusion- kalam completely erased.

The whole team comes back to *Paattumandapam*, Kurups sing two more sets of *thottam* (Thottam 09 and Thottam 10), *Komaram* erases the rest of the *kalam*, and the face portion is erased by coconut leaves. By the time he becomes completely possessed by the spirit of *Vettakkorumakan*, he blesses the devotees and delivers predictions. As a token of blessing, *Komaram* distributes powder taken from the *kalam* to all devotees.

*Koora Valikkal*, 2.20 a.m.

*Marar* blows the conch, *Kurup* removes *koora*, the piece of silk spread on the ceiling of the *paattumandapam* and returns it to the patron or the committee secretary. That marks the end of the ritual.

Post-ritual processes.

On the next day of the ritual, the chief priest performs special rites to purify the entire area. *Komaram* takes home the pile of coconuts on which he sat while breaking coconuts. Volunteers remove all broken coconuts and clean the entire area. During the next few days, they sun-dry all the coconuts and sell them, this will add to the profit of the temple and the temple functions regularly from the next day onwards.

#### 5.4 Comparison of Case Studies and Summary

Apart from the two cases elaborated here, three more rituals were completely documented. All these examples represent different contexts. The following table shows the timetable, nature of the venue, purpose, and number of artists involved in the ritual in five case studies. I have included Kalamzhuth Paatt conducted at Thenchery Illam, my ancestral house, twice, but in different years. This is to demonstrate how the behaviour of parameters like scale and timing of the ritual are changing in different years. Moreover, the one that was conducted on May 5, 2021, was during the most extreme COVID restrictions.

Name of the property	Thenchery Illam	Karumala Temple	Swarnathu mana	Thenchery Illam	Kannippoyil Paikkattukotta temple
Place	Kakkur, Kozhikode	Balusseri, Kozhikode	Aluva, Ernakulam	Kakkur, Kozhikode	Kannankara, Kozhikode
Type of building	Ancestral house	Temple	Ancestral house	Ancestral house	Temple
Date	01.05.2021	03.11.2021	26.03.2022	01.05.2022	08.04.2023
Purpose	Special offering with breaking 12000 coconuts	Special offering	Annual ceremony	Special offering	Annual festival with breaking 12000 coconuts

Venue	In modern paattupura	Traditional paattupura	Padinjatti, in the courtyard hose	In modern paatupura	Outside paattupura
Size of the <i>kalam</i>	296cm x 222cm	296cm x 222cm	296cm x 296cm	296cm x 222cm	
<i>Uchappaatt</i>	11.00am	10.00am	9.30am	12.30pm	12 pm
<i>Kalam Varakkal</i>	12.00pm to 1.30pm, 3.00pm to 4.30pm	3.00pm to 6.00pm	11am to 1pm, 4pm to 5.30pm	3pm to 6.30pm	2.40pm to 6.40pm
<i>Sandhyavela and Thayambaka</i>	4.00pm to 4.20pm	6.30pm to 6.40pm (sandhyavela only)	5.30pm to 6.30pm	5.15pm to 6.45pm	7pm to 8pm
<i>Keli</i>	NA	NA	NA	NA	8pm to 8.15pm
<i>Kombu patt, kuzhal patt</i>	4.20pm to 4.30pm	NA	NA	6.45pm-7.00pm	8.15pm to 8.25pm
<i>Mullakkal paatt</i>	5.40 to 6.10pm	6.50pm to 7.15pm	7.30pm to 8pm	7.45pm to 8.15pm	8.35pm to 9pm
<i>Melam</i>	6.10pm to 6.30pm	7.15pm to 7.30pm	8pm to 8.40pm	8.15pm to 9.30pm	9pm to 10.10pm
<i>Eedum Koorum</i>	6.30pm to 6.40pm	7.30pm to 7.40pm	8.40pm to 8.50pm	9.30pm to 9.45pm	10.10pm to 10.25pm
<i>Kalapradakshinam</i>	6.40pm to 6.55pm	7.45pm to 7.55pm	8.50pm to 9.10pm	10.00pm to 10.20pm	10.25pm to 10.40pm
<i>Kalam pooja</i>	7.00pm to 7.15pm	8.00pm to 8.15pm	9.10pm to 9.40pm	10.30pm to 11.00pm	10.40pm to 11.10pm
<i>Thottam</i>	7.20pm to 7.30pm	8.15pm to 8.25pm	9.40pm to 9.50pm	11.10pm to 11.30pm	11.10pm to 11.20m
<i>Thiri uzichil</i>	7.30pm to 7.40pm	8.25pm to 8.35 pm	9.50pm to 10.00pm	11.30pm to 11.40pm	11.20pm to 11.30pm
<i>Kalathilattam</i>	7.40pm to 7.45pm	8.35pm to 8.40pm	10.00pm to 10.05pm	11.40pm to 11.45pm	11.30pm to 11.35pm
<i>Kalam maykkal</i>	8.15pm to 8.25pm	8.45pm to 8.50pm	10.10pm to 10.20pm	11.50 pm to 12.00 am	11.35pm to 11.50pm
<i>Thenga eriyal</i>	8.30pm to	8.50pm	10.20pm to	12.00am to	12am to 2am

	11.40pm		10.30pm	12.10am	
<i>Koora valikkal</i>	11.50pm	9.00pm	10.40pm	12.20am	2.10am
Number of Kurups	6	2	3	3	4
Number of Marars	4	5	9	27	16
Approximate number of total people attended	35	40	50	250	1000

*Table 5 Comparison of cases – summarises selected case examples of Kalamezhuth Paatt of different context.*

It can be observed from the table that the number of Kurup and Marar vary from case to case, the duration of the *melam* also varies, and the number of coconuts broken also varies, but the sequence of rituals is the same in all cases.

Further, the documentation helped to understand the role of the community in the ceremony. The ritual in photo essay 1 was a private affair, whereas the ritual presented in photo essay 2 was more of public in nature. Even though people other than Hindus are not allowed inside the temple property, there was participation from other religions such as procuring materials and raising funds to conduct the festival. Moreover, the exercise of documentation also shed lights on the ethnography of the ritual. Since Kalamezhuth Paatt is conducted by a Namboodiri family in the first example, and since they are familiar with the overall structure of the ritual, one priest was enough to do the ritual and family members also helped them do the worship. At the same time, in the second example, there were three priests to help the chief priest. There was a clear hierarchy of jobs among those people, similar to other communities as well. Further, these photo essays presented here give a clear understanding of the quantity and quality of spaces and the traditional way of preparing the floor to draw the *kalam*. Following on from the documentation of the ritual, the next chapter tries to establish Kalamezhuth Paatt as a cultural phenomenon.

## **Chapter 6 - Kalamezhuth Paatt, a Cultural Phenomenon**

### **Important non-English Words Used in the Chapter.**

Chathusala - Traditional courtyard houses, having a central courtyard and rooms around four sides also known as nalukettu.

Chenda - traditional drums of Kerala, which have two heads.

Churika - A small sword with two sharp edges.

Dwisala - house with two blocks, usually in 'L' shape

Ekasala - single block house

Kizhakini - Eastern block of traditional courtyard house.

Komaram - Oracle, considered as the representative or personification of the deity.

Paattumandapam - a pavilion to conduct kalamezhuth paatt.

Paattupura - an independent structure only to conduct Kalamezhuth Paatt.

Padinjatta - Western block of traditional courtyard house.

Thekkini - Southern block of traditional courtyard house.

Thottam - song or hymn praising the deity.

Thrisala - house with three blocks, in 'U' shape

Vadakkini- Northern block of traditional courtyard house.

### **6.1 Introduction**

Having explained Kalamezhuth Paatt as a series of sub rituals, this part of the thesis explores Kalamezhuth Paatt as a cultural phenomenon. Through the previous chapters it is understood that mythology and belief systems play a major role in shaping the ritual. So, this chapter starts with the discussion on other forms of ICH such as oral tradition, performing arts and social practices. The next section focuses on the tangible cultural heritage associated with the ritual. It includes built heritage such as *paattupura*, semi-open spaces such as pavilions, and open spaces like pathways. A discussion on natural heritage such as water bodies and agricultural fields is also included here, as it has a significant role

in the ritual. The chapter is based on non-participant observation and the documentation of the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt.

## 6.2 Intangible Cultural Heritage of Kalamezhuth Paatt

Kalamezhuth Paatt as an art form, a festival, and a ritual can be assessed using the UNESCO ICH criteria. To begin with, oral traditions and expressions include a variety of spoken forms, including proverbs, riddles, tales, nursery rhymes, legends, myths, epic songs and poems, charms, prayers, chants, songs, dramatic performances, and more (UNESCO, 2022). These are used to pass on knowledge, cultural and social values, and collective memory. One of the major components of Kalamezhuth Paatt is *thottam*, the song by Kurup which is considered an oral tradition. Kurup sings *thottam* on four occasions, namely *uchappatt*, *mullakkal paatt*, after *kalam pooja*, and finally during the erasing of the *kalam*. Meanings of all these thottams are given in chapter 4. Based on their content, *thottam* can be divided, as explained below:

Places and routes: During *uchappatt* and *mullakkal paatt*, *thottam* contains the route taken by Vettakkorumakan from Nambumala temple to Balussery Temple and other places he visited during his journey (refer to Thottam 01).

Hero worship: the heroism of Vettakkorumakan is depicted through *thottam*, mainly during the erasing of the *kalam* (Thottam 07 to Thottam 10). It also gives a clue about the hunting culture and touches the memory of the people creating an image of a protector.

Description of the posture: the *thottam* sung during *kalaathilattam* (Thottam 06) appreciates the attire and posture of the deity in *kalam*. It also contains descriptions of the outfits and ornaments used in each part of the body.

Praising and praying: Kurup praises Vettakkorumakan as a protector of Kurumbranadu kingdom and prays for good things. *Thottam* sung during *uchappatt* (Thottam 01) and after *kalam pooja* (Thottam 04) starts with praying deities other than Vettakkorumakan.

Description of an event: *padappatt* (Thottam 05), a special type of *thottam* that is performed in the Malabar region, especially in Kozhikode district. This type of *thottam* is based on the war between the Portuguese and Zamorins, the local king.

These *thottams* are composed in *ragas* or tunes that are derived from Carnatic music, a system of music popular in South India, but in folklore style (Mundekkad, 2002). The language of the *thottam* is not a developed Malayalam, and the influence of the Tamil language is also evident. It is also significant that these are transmitted from generation to generation orally, and written documents are sparse on *thottam*. However, *thottam* of Kalamezhuth Paatt is a way of telling stories of deities or legends mixed with myths and reality, it is an example of oral tradition as it holds memories of the people, social values, and heritage of the region. Another form of oral tradition related to Kalamezhuth Paatt is the syllables of percussion. Each dance step performed by *Komaram* is linked to the rhythm produced by Marar on *chenda*, and these rhythms are conveyed orally and are known as *vaythari*, or syllables. This is the base of ritual dance; Marar and *Komaram* are the users of this oral tradition. They use this oral tradition of syllables as a tool while planning new rhythms and transmitting the knowledge to the next generation.

### **Performing Arts**

The ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt is organised in such a way that the performing arts play an important part. Ritual dances, namely *eedum koorum chavittal* and *kalapradakshinam*, are examples of performing arts in this ritual. When these dances are staged, the entire environment becomes dramatic. Although performed in a highly ritualistic manner, *Komaram's* circumambulation of the *kalam* in the background soundtrack elevates followers to a higher level of appreciation. As a result, it does more than just perform dance steps or rhythmic motions; it also instills a sense of sacredness and reverence in the minds of devotees and even in the minds of viewers other than believers. *Thayambaka*, *Keli*, and *Melam* are the performances set out by Marar and his team on instruments, namely *chenda*, *ilathalam*, *madhalam*, *kombu*, and *kuzhal*. Since these events are usually conducted outside the *paattupura* or the main venue, more people can watch the performances. In the same token, traditional art forms of Kerala such as *Kathakali*, *Ottan thullal*, and *Thiruvathirakkali* are performed in some temples and even houses during Kalamezhuth Paatt. Even though these art forms are common in the system of Kerala temples and not specific to the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt, they are also contributing to the domain of performing arts.

## **Social Practices**

Another important form of ICH of Kalamezhuth Paatt is social practices. According to UNESCO (2022), social practices, rituals, and festive events are customary activities that form the lives of communities and groups and that are shared by and relevant to many of their members. As mentioned in earlier chapters, Kalamezhuth Paatt is a mode of worship. It is a ritual art that is also observed as an annual festival in temples and ancestral houses. Kalamezhuth Paatt at some of the major temples, such as Balussery Kotta, Nilambur Kovilakam, and Thrikkalangott Temple, has its own place in the festival calendar of Kerala. Moreover, there is a saying called '*oottum paattum*' which means feeding the people on the day of the ritual. Feeding is believed to be one of the favourite offerings of Vettakkorumakan. Because of this, hundreds of people gather to take part in the event. For example, during the festival at Balussery Kotta Temple, one can see a long queue of people, including students from nearby schools, to have lunch. Nevertheless, Kalamezhuth Paatt as a social practice helps different communities to reiterate their role in society as ritual or social practitioners. These gatherings help the communities create memories and reinforce their relationships.

## **Knowledge and Practices**

Multiple activities are happening behind the scenes in Kalamezhuth Paatt as a system of worship, which includes preparing powders, making and maintaining instruments, and transferring and practicing the knowledge from generation to generation. These all fall under the domain of knowledge and practices.

The five coloured powders made from natural objects add beauty and perfection to the *kalam*. But it takes one or two days to prepare these powders. It is done mainly by the female members of the family or servants, but red powder is prepared by Kurup on the day of the ritual. The consistency of the rice (white) powder, i.e., the size of the particle, is important. If the particles are too fine, it is too powdery, or if it is too coarse with bigger particles, it affects the integrity of the *kalam*. Similarly, while making the green powder, extra care should be taken while plucking the leaves of the cassia or red sandalwood tree; they should not be tender. It should not be dried on an extra sunny day; otherwise, the colour will fade. Black powder is made by burning the husk of paddy seed. If it is burnt the

quantity and quality will be reduced. Yellow powder is made by boiling, drying and then powdering turmeric. These kinds of knowledge are obtained only through observation and experience. Usually, the powders are prepared by a group of female members of the family or servants who are closely associated with the temple or the houses. The information is passed down from one generation to another primarily via careful observation and ongoing practices, which are carried out with great reverence and devotion. This is an example of traditional knowledge. Kurup and Marar use instruments, namely *nanduni*, *kuzhithalama*, *chenda*, *ilathalam*, *madhalam*, *idakka*, *kombu*, *kuzhal*, and *shangh*. They are handling these instruments because of their regular practice, but only highly skilled people can make these instruments. All the above instruments are considered sacred, of which *nanduni* is most important and it is used mainly in this ritual. It is also known as *nathathanthrini*, which means strings producing sound. *Nanduni* is a small string instrument made up of *kumizh* or beachwood, as it is light in weight and easy to mould. The lower part of the *nanduni* has a hollow cavity, and the upper portion has keys to hold the strings. Kurup plays *nanduni* using a piece of wood called a *vayana* (Kurup, 2021). The length of the instrument varies from 60 to 100 centimetres. Even though it is made by the carpenters, it is carried out under the close supervision of Kurup.

*Chenda*, *madhalam*, and *idakka* are percussion instruments common at temple festivals in Kerala. Though all three have two sides or heads, the way of producing sounds and making the instrument is different. The heads of these instruments are made up of the dried skin of cattle, and the trunk is made up of jackfruit trees. *Chenda* and *madhalam* are heavy instruments due to the weight of the trunk, whereas *idakka* is light in weight. In the case of *chenda*, two heads are connected by ropes, and it can produce heavy sounds as sticks made up of *pathimukham*, East Indian rosewood, *mandaram*, or dwarf white bauhinia are used to create sound. Buffalo bull skin is used as strings to connect the heads of *madhalam*; artists produce sound without any sticks. *Idakka* is considered the divine instrument among these traditional instruments as it symbolically represents the *Vedas* and arts. There are four sticks affixed to the trunk between the strings, which stand in for the four *Vedas* and the 64 decorative cotton balls represent the 64 traditional arts of India (Department of Cultural Affairs, Kerala, 2022).

Apart from the instruments, the making of artefacts like traditional brass vessels used for worship and weapons, for instance, *churika* and *kaduthila*, is also significant here. These are different forms of swords; the *churika* is a straight one, whereas the latter is slightly curved. There are communities in Kerala that specialise in making these instruments, and they transmit the traditional knowledge to the next generation ritualistically. Even though the above instruments are not specific to the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt, they all have a specific role in the ritual.

### **Traditional Craftsmanship**

The skill of making instruments is an example of traditional craftsmanship, but the real craftsmanship associated with Kalamezhuth Paatt lies in drawing the *kalam* itself. *Kalamezhuth* is considered a craft that requires lots of skill, patience, and knowledge of drawing and colour combinations. Even though some communities use techniques like coconut shell or bamboo with holes to make patterns in the *kalam*, Kurup doesn't use any of these. For them, the fingers are more than enough to draw any form of *kalam*. They use their thumb and index finger to draw straight lines and curves. Using all five fingers, they pour down and fill up the colours. They hold the powder in their folded fingers and push it with their thumb to create a small series of projections. This technique is mainly used while rendering the ornaments and crown. They also use the technique of shading in *kalamezhuth*, especially in the face, hands, and legs. It is done by sprinkling the powder on the desired area. In the case of Vettakkorumakan *kalam*, the colour of the body is green, and shading is done using *shyamalam*, a colour obtained by mixing green with black. The colour combination is another important factor which gives attraction to the *kalam*. It is interesting to observe the skills shown by Kurup in using various colours. They use black and red near white; use yellow, green, and white near black; red and green near yellow; white and yellow near red; yellow and black near green. This knowledge is obtained through years of experience. During the early days of an artist, he is not allowed to render any portion of the *kalam*; instead, he will be asked to observe all the complex systems behind the creation of the *kalam*.

## Traditional Management System

The traditional management system plays a major role in the sustenance of the ritual arts, as in the case of Kalamezhuth Paatt. The system can be explained with the example of Kalamezhuth Paatt at Thenchery Illam, author's ancestral house. With reference to my grandfather's and father's diaries and account books, the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt has been conducted annually at our homestead since the 1950's. My grandfather had four brothers staying in three different houses on nearby properties. According to the partition deed document (a legal instrument that transfers the ownership of a property from one person to another) dated 15<sup>th</sup> February 1963, it is the responsibility of these three families to conduct Kalamezhuth Paatt of Vettakkorumakan each year. So, each family takes the lead and bears the expenses once every three years. In case any difficulty arises for a family, the other two families should help financially to conduct that year's ritual. When the joint family system diminished in the last couple of decades, the three families became six families. So, as of now, each family has to take on the lead role once every six years. Though the members conduct the ritual annually due to their belief in the deity, the deed document plays a key role in ensuring the regular conduct of the ritual without failure, and this is the base of the management system.

The system is different in the case of temples. With respect to the management system, temples in Kerala are of different types: temples owned by government bodies (for example, Malabar *Devaswom* Board and Thiruvithamkur *Devaswom* Board, socio-religious bodies constituted jointly by government and community), temples run by a committee constituted by devotees, and temples managed by a set of families (Jayashanker, 1997). The first two cases are mostly public in nature, and the annual festivals like Kalamezhuth Paatt are conducted using money collected from the devotees. The last type is mostly private in nature, with only invited friends and relatives attending the rituals. The families who are responsible for running the temple and conducting annual festivals are known as *Oorala* (people who own the land or place), and they are the real patrons of the rituals. This traditional management system is also a part of the ICH of Kalamezhuth Paatt, as it is interwoven with the memory of organising and conducting the ritual and belief systems of the people.

### 6.3 Tangible Cultural Heritage

The tangible heritage associated with Kalamezhuth Paatt is as important as the intangible. Major components falling under this category are the building typology called *paattupura* to conduct the ritual, portions of traditional houses, and the unbuilt spaces to perform the outdoor rituals, especially *mullakkal paatt*.

#### Paattupura

The meaning of the Malayalam term *pura* is simply a house or a hut. So *paattupura* is a building meant to conduct *paatt*, the short form of Kalamezhuth Paatt. It is rectangular in plan, with the longer side oriented in an east-west direction. It has mainly two parts: one is the sanctum of the deity, and the other is the area to draw *kalam*. Usually, these two areas are separated with a blind wall or with a horizontal wooden lattice. *Paattupura* faces either east or west but in both cases, the position of the sanctum is the same, i.e., in the back portion. Hence the entry is from the front portion, through a set of steps called *sopanam*, which is a common element of Kerala temples. The sanctum is square in plan, and it stands on another plinth, the access to which is through another *sopanam* in granite, laterite masonry or brick. The steps are protected with highly ornamented bannisters on both sides in the shape of an elephant's trunk or a lion's head with long, rolled tongues. There will be spaces around the sanctum for circumambulation. Generally, the sanctum is accessed by priests only, but in some cases, it is occupied by the *Kazhakam* to prepare garlands during Kalamezhuth Paatt and other festivals. The deity is installed on a slightly elevated base in the centre of the sanctum. The idol can be of three types: *kannadi bimbam* (an idol in the form of a traditional mirror with a tail and an aura) made of metal or granite; *vigraham* (a sculpture of the deity made of metal or wood); and *peedham* (a traditional stool) made up of granite or timber. Even though the sanctum is placed under the roof of the *paattupura*, it is covered with a false ceiling.

The front part of the *paattupura* is completely dedicated to drawing *kalam*. The facades are treated in different ways: with blind walls, horizontal wooden trellis, or with columns. A half wall is also seen in some cases so that the viewers can sit on it to watch the ritual. The interior is usually plain, without any columns, so that the *paattumandapam* can be erected comfortably. The *paattumandapam* is basically a pavilion with four poles connected with

horizontal cross bars in both directions. It is also rectangular in shape, though for Bhagavathy Kalamezhuth Paatt, a square *paattumandapam* is preferred. The dimensions of the *paattumandapam* are developed according to *vasthusathra* where, the key measurements are the perimeter and height. So, the carpenters make sure that these prime dimensions are auspicious as per *Vasthusathra*. Carpenters also take it as a chance to showcase their creativity by adding beautiful mouldings and carvings to the base and head of the poles (Figure 50). Finally, the entire structure is covered with a single sloping roof.



Figure 50 Paattumandapam of Vilayil Thencheri Illam. This dismantlable pavilion is erected inside a traditional courtyard house.

In contrast, there are some *pattupuras* that do not follow the above spatial organisation. In this case, the sanctum and the space for the performance stand as two independent buildings, either close to each other or far away. Melpally Mana, near Narikkuni in Kozhikode district, is a traditional house with a central courtyard. The family conducts Vettakkorumakan's Kalamezhuth Paatt every year. The sanctum of Vettakkorumakan is outside this traditional house. The sanctum stands on a high plinth, and it is facing west (Figure 51). *Paattumandapam* can be seen just in front of this sanctum, constructed as a

different building. The distance between two buildings is too small, so the projections meet almost in the same line. The devotees can watch Kalamezhuth Paatt by sitting in the *thalam* (patio) or verandah of the house. Another example in this category is Chekra *Illam*, near Chelannur, Kozhikode. Here, both the buildings, the *paattupura* and the sanctum, do not face each other nor stand closer. The sanctum of Vettakkorumakan is facing east, and the *paattupura* is on the northwest corner, 50 metres away from the sanctum, facing west. Nevertheless, these examples are only typological variations and represent the built heritage of Kalamezhuth Paatt.



*Figure 51 Paattumandapam of Melpally mana. Temple of Vettakkorumakan can be seen behind the pavilion.*

The typological characteristics, including spatiality, materiality, and aesthetic senses, can be explained through the example of *paattupura* at Nagathingal *Illam*, near Nanmanda in Kozhikode district. Vettakkorumakan is the supreme deity of their family. The ancestral house of Nagathingal is a hundred-year-old building with inner courtyards. The *paattupura* stands south of this traditional house, facing the west side. As usual, it is rectangular in plan but comparatively larger in size, with measurements of 1422 cm x 600 cm (figure 52).

*Pattupura* is built on a high plinth of height 108cm, which has two parts: the *upapeedha*, or subsidiary plinth, and the *adhishtana*, the main plinth. The main plinth is decorated with a series of horizontal bands.

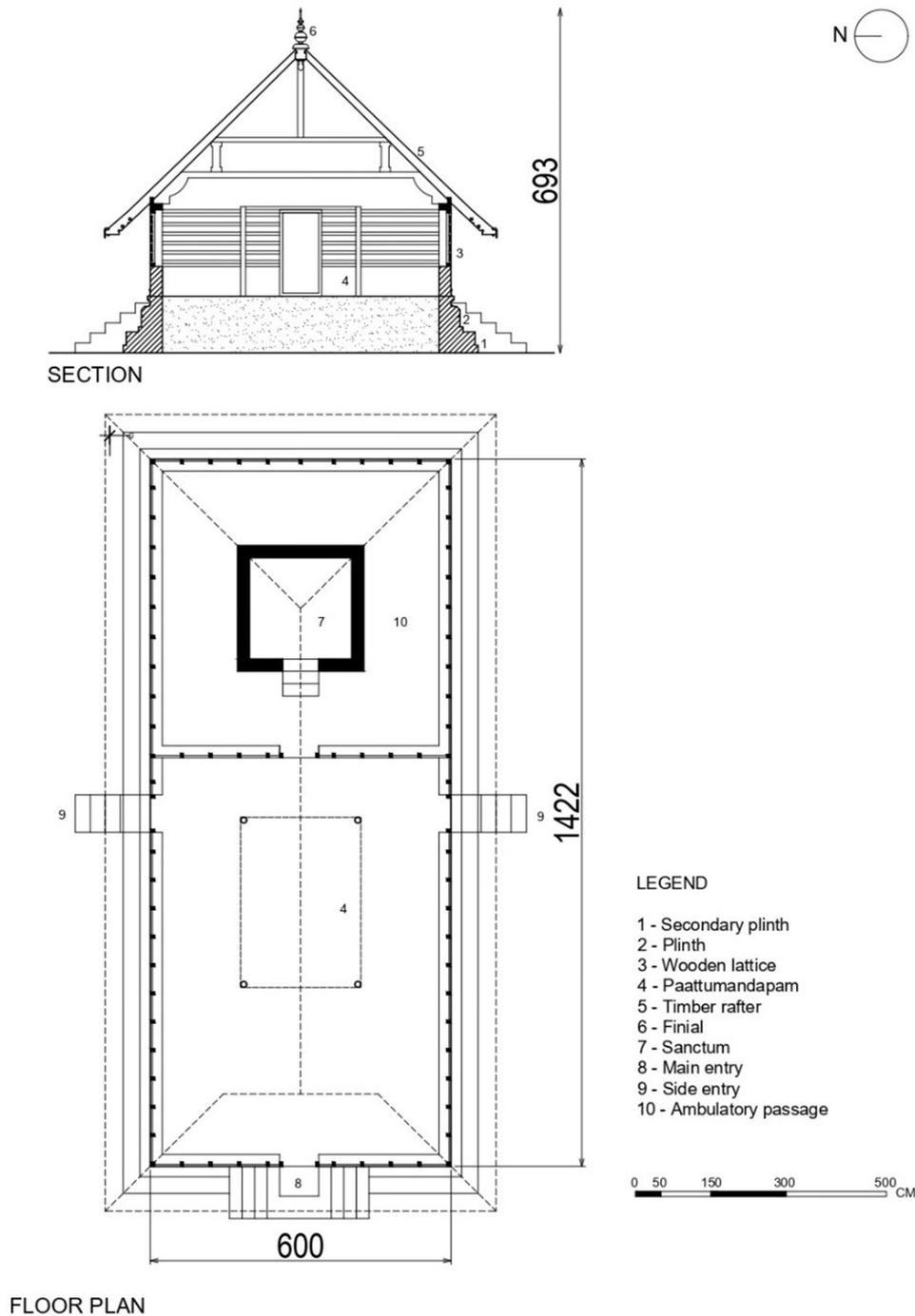


Figure 52 Paattupura of Nagathingal Illam – it is a typical example of a traditional paattupura with wooden lattice work on all four sides. Outer dimension of the structure is 1422 cm x 600 cm. The front part of the paattupura is free of columns and it ho

The entry is from the west through two sets of steps from the north and south, which is known as *parwasopana* (a series of steps parallel to the outer wall instead of perpendicular). The horizontal planks are placed in such a way that they allow only ventilation. The pavilion erected in the front part is constructed from iron pipes. The flooring is finished with red oxide, the semi-rough texture which is to help the Kurup draw the *kalam*. The free span of the hall is achieved by providing three timber trusses. At the eastern end of the hall, there are doors on each side. The sanctum of Vettakkorumakan is square in plan, with an outside dimension of 246cm. The plinth height is 48 cm, with minimal decoration. The raised sanctum is accessed by two steps, without the decorative banister. The installation of the deity is in the centre of the sanctum on a small granite block.

Even though the deity is represented by a small piece of stone, on special occasions, it is covered with *thirumukham*, a silver mask showing the face of Vettakkorumakan. Only oil lamps are used to lighten the inside of the sanctum, which adds a glow to the silver mask. There is a circumambulatory space of width 120cm throughout the sanctum. During Kalamezhuth Paatt, *Komaram* occupies this space to get ready for the ritual and to take rest. The entire area is covered by a 45-degree-sloping roof. The western side of the roof has a well-decorated dormer, which is welcoming and adds an elegant look to the building. Even though there are no windows or openings in this portion, the interior is cool mainly because of the exposed laterite wall and Mangalore tile roofing.

According to the traditional measurement system, the perimeter of this *paattupura* is 56 *kole 08 angulam* (one *kole* = 72cm, one *angulam* = 3cm) which is an auspicious dimension. Likewise, the perimeter of the *paatumandapam*, 16 *kole 08 angulam*, is also a good dimension as per the *vasthusastra*. This implies that the architects or carpenters were strictly following the traditional measurement system to construct *paattupura*. Though archaeological evidence is missing, the owner notes, the building is as old as the house, ie. more than a hundred years. The *paatumandapam* made up of iron pipes is a later addition and the previous one might have been lost or destroyed. However, the heritage value embedded in this *paattupura* is significant and is a good example in terms of proportion, functional aspects, and aesthetics.

## Houses of Kerala as Built Heritage of Kalamezhuth Paatt

The tangible cultural heritage of Kalamezhuth Paatt is closely related to the residential architecture of Kerala. The regional house type of Kerala is sustained by the vernacular, traditional, and folk architecture that represents the attitude of the local lifestyle. For a traditional society, the socio-cultural aspect is one of the primary factors that generate the house form. Here the focus is on the spaces that are used to conduct the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt.

Traditional house forms in Kerala are mainly of four types. Houses with one, two, or three units or blocks, namely *ekasala*, *dwisala*, and *thrissala*, and finally *chathussala* or *nalukettu*, a house with four blocks designed on all sides of a central courtyard. However, *ekasala* and *dwisala* are comparatively small and usually owned by families who are at the bottom of social strata. Whereas the latter two represent the houses owned by people in the upper social strata, namely Brahmins and Kshathriyas, who are considered the patrons of the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt and other art forms. This is not strictly followed everywhere, so there are cases where upper caste groups own *ekasala* and *dwisala*, where the scale of the building will be larger. The spatial organisation of these traditional houses is adapted in different ways to conduct the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt. In the case of *ekasala* and *dwisala*, Kalamezhuth Paatt is usually conducted outside the house since the spaces are less inside the house. This can be inside a temporary *paattupura* or a well-planned *paattupura*. Since *thrissala* and *chathussala* have more spaces to satisfy different requirements, Kalamezhuth Paatt is usually conducted inside the house only. The quality and quantity of the spaces with respect to the conduct of the ritual can be illustrated through examples.

Kanjilassery Puthussery *illam*, near Koyilandy in Kozhikode district, is a house designed in typical *Nalukettu* style. Namboodiri Brahmins stay here, and Vettakkorumakan is the supreme deity of the family. The house is facing east, and the entry is through a sitting area. The main door leads to *thekkini*, a large hall, which is south to a small central courtyard. *Kizhakkini*, the block east of the courtyard, houses the sanctum of Vettakkorumakan. Rooms on the west side are for sleeping, and the north block is used for dining as well as cooking. In general, *thekkini* and *kizhakkini* will be transformed into cultural spaces to conduct the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt annually. It is also observed that only family members and close relatives used to attend this ritual.

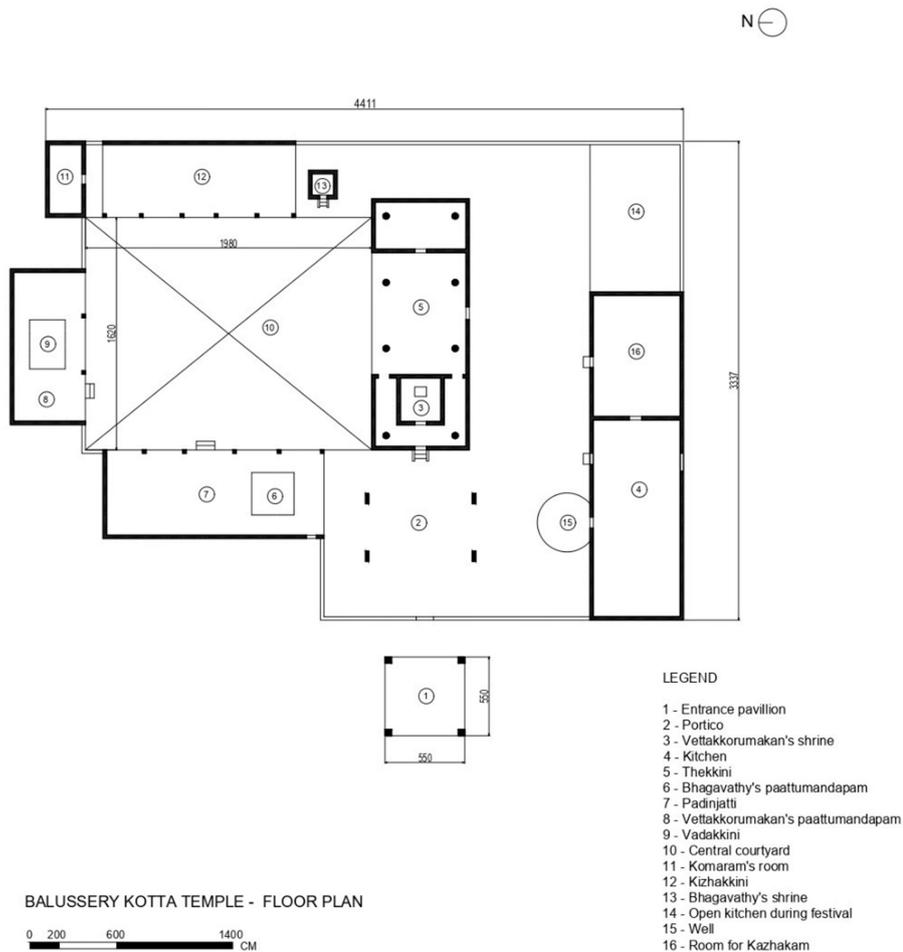


Figure 53 Floor plan – Balussery Kotta temple. Example of an amalgamation of traditional courtyard house and temple architecture. Paattumandapam of Vettakkorumakan is on the northern block of central courtyard.

*Paattumandapam*, made up of timber poles and reapers, is erected on the day of ritual in *Thekkini*. People occupy the space along the edges of the courtyard to attend the ritual. Since the scale of the ritual is small in terms of the number of users, this arrangement is convenient for the owners to conduct the ritual. Another example is the Vayappuram *illam* in Kozhikode, where the *kalam* is drawn in the southern block of a traditional courtyard house, but the arrangement of the *paattumandapam* is different; it is inverted. Rather than using four poles, they hang four reapers from the timber rafters and connect these reapers with wooden cross bars to construct the ceiling of the *paattumandapam*. Since the width of the hall is smaller, this arrangement helps to save space. During normal days, they can use the space even without dismantling the *paattumandapam*.

Another example that shows the adaptation of residential architecture is the Balussery Kotta temple. Even though it is a temple, the planning is not like typical temples in Kerala; rather, it is in the form of a courtyard house (Figure 53, 54 & 64).



Figure 54 Central courtyard of Balussery Kotta temple. Paattumandapam of Vettakkorumankan is situated in the building in the left hand side.

It was once the military camp of the Kurumbranad kingdom during 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century CE (Logan, 1887) and later the camp was demolished. A large central courtyard measuring approximately 19 metres x 16 metres is partially enclosed by building blocks on all four sides. The sanctum of Vettakkorumakan, which faces west, occupies a portion of the southern block, whereas the northern block is used for drawing the *kalam* during the ritual. A linear building block seen on the southern side of the sanctum is for the priest to cook divine food and to store materials and vessels. The central courtyard is used for performances such as *thayambaka* and *sandhyavela*, as well as a gathering space for devotees during the ritual. The northern block, or *vadakkini*, is large enough to draw the *kalam* and is also used by Marar and their team as a resting space.

The spatiality and functionality of built spaces in Swarnathu Mana, Ernakulam District, with respect to Kalamezhuth Paatt is also significant (photo essay 1). Swarnathu mana is an extended version of *Nalukettu* with one large central courtyard and two small courtyards. This is an example of 12-kettu typology, that means 12 blocks or rooms placed around 3 inner courtyards. The sanctum of Vettakkorumakan is in the eastern block of the main courtyard, and the venue for Kalamezhuth Paatt is opposite this in the western block. Unlike the previous cases, it has a long veranda with timber columns on all four sides of the central courtyard. The large central courtyard becomes the venue for performances like *sandhyavela*, *thayambaka*, rituals, namely *eedum koorum chavittal*, and for breaking coconuts. People use the veranda to sit and watch these rituals and performances.

All the above cases utilise the spaces and blocks around the courtyard for Kalamezhuth Paatt. But it doesn't mean that Kalamezhuth Paatt can be conducted inside a courtyard house only as the entrance portico is used in many cases to draw the *kalam*. *Adukkam Illam*, near Narikkuni in Kozhikode district, is another example of this category. As such it is clear that the planning and architecture of traditional houses in Kerala is closely related to the Kalamezhuth Paatt rituals.

### **Unbuilt Spaces**

Unbuilt spaces, including open spaces, front yards, and avenues, play a vital role as cultural spaces in Kalamezhuth Paatt. Kalamezhuth Paatt, effectively utilises the spaces around the temples and houses for outdoor rituals such as *mullakkal paatt*, procession, and the ritual dance of *eedum koorum chavittal*. The utilisation of spaces varies from case to case, so the unbuilt spaces as a piece of heritage can also be explained through examples.

At Balussery Kotta Temple the outdoor process of *mullakkal paatt* is performed in an open space near a banyan tree, which is 100 metres west of the temple. These two points are connected by an avenue with a width of 12 meters (Figure 55). After performing the *mullakkal paatt*, this avenue becomes the space for the grand procession. The avenue is wide enough to fit four elephants, and there will be three to four elephants during the procession. Both sides of the avenue are on a higher level of 3 meters. The devotees and visitors use this elevated space to enjoy the spectacle of the procession with music and elephants. Furthermore, the procession circumambulates the entire temple complex three

times before entering the venue of Kalamezhuth inside the temple. Since Kalamezhuth Paatt at Balussery Kotta is a local festival, many people attend. The size of the crowd ranges from 3000 to 4000.



*Figure 55 Long pathway of Balussery Kotta that connects the temple complex and the banyan tree.*

The peak time is at noon due to sacred offerings of food and during the evening until night due to cultural events like classical dance and music. The large open space east of the temple becomes the venue for these two activities. This also turns out to be the venue for the breaking of 12,000 coconuts. However, every space in and around the temple is sacred and has its own role in the ritual.

#### **6.4 Natural Heritage**

Continuing the discussion, natural elements such as trees and water bodies around the temple or houses also contribute to the totality of the ritual. For instance, *mullakkal paatt* is performed under a banyan tree in Balussery Kotta temple. According to the Hindu belief system, the banyan tree is an auspicious element. A small stream also runs along the

boundary of the property. *Komaram* uses the bank of this stream to dress up and get ready for the ritual and visitors to the temple also use this stream to clean their feet before entering the temple property. Another water body, a tank situated to the east of the temple, is mainly used by the priests and other artists to take baths. However, along with built and open spaces, these natural elements also have a vital role in the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt.

The agricultural lands and properties around the temple or house also become the silent partners of the ritual. For example, coconut trees are an integral part of the ritual, with many products of coconut trees, such as palm leaves, coconuts, and tender coconuts. *Komaram* drinks tender coconut's water after performing ritual dances. The nuts and tender flowers of areca nut trees are also used. Another important natural or agricultural product is paddy - the husk, raw paddy seed, and rice are unavoidable materials in the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt. The cow is an indispensable component of agricultural heritage. Cow dung is regarded as effective manure. Nevertheless, within the framework of the ritual, the majority of dairy products are essential. Combining urine, milk, curd, butter, and cow dung, a mix called *panchagavyam* is prepared, which is used to cleanse the idol. Moreover, cow dung is used to prepare the drawing surface for the *kalam*. *Paattumandapam* is decorated with the fruits and nuts such as baby jack fruit, areca nuts, banana, mango tree leaves, and tender coconuts. So, a close examination of the list shows that most of the materials used are abundantly available in the locality.

## **6.5 Summary**

Components of tangible, intangible, and natural heritage are equally distributed in the ritual. The chapter demonstrated various typologies of paattumandapam the ritual pavilion inside which the *kalam* is drawn. It utilises the entire existing built heritage of residential and religious buildings and modifies some of these according to the need. Kalamezhuth Paatt represents all five domains of UNESCO ICH as well as the traditional system of management. The next chapter discusses various communities involved in and their role in the ritual.

## **Chapter 7 - Kalamezhuth Paatt, a Community Affair**

### **Important Non-English Words Used in the Chapter.**

*Adiyanthira kurup – the prime Kurup who is responsible for conducting Kalamezhuth Paatt in a venue.*

*Adiyanthira marar – the prime Marar who is responsible for conducting Kalamezhuth Paatt or any similar rituals in a venue.*

*Brahmin – a caste as per Hindu religion, their position is on top of all other castes in the society and represents the priestly class.*

*Keralolpathi – means the origin of Kerala, a book on history of Kerala blended with mythology.*

*Koil Thampuran – a term used to denote a landlord or those who rule, coming under the category Kshathriya*

*Komaram – Oracle, considered as the representative or personification of the deity. Another word is Velichappad.*

*Kshathriya – a larger caste group, positioned below Brahmins in the society who are rulers or warriors.*

*Maharaja – the king*

*Shabdatharavali – An authentic dictionary in Malayalam, regional language of Kerala*

*Shudra – Lower caste in the society, includes artisans and labourers serving the upper caste groups.*

*Thampan – a subcaste of Kshathriya but who may not be a ruler.*

*Thirumandhamkunnu – an area in North Kerala, famous due to the presence of a temple dedicated to the mother goddess.*

*Thiruvithamkur – A local kingdom in Southern Kerala.*

*Vaisya – an intermediate group of people in society below Kshathriyas, mainly traders.*

*Zamorins – Kings of Calicut or Kozhikode, known as Zamorins or Samuthiri*

## 7.1 Introduction

Cultural heritage is a creation of the people, and it is for the people (Court & Wijesuriya, 2015). This chapter focuses on the role of people or groups of people in Kalamezhuth Paatt. and examines the social system of Kerala which is significant as it creates a basic understanding of the social structures of the region. Then it explores different groups, their origin, and their role in the ritual, the mode of training, and the transmission of knowledge to the next generation, who are closely related to Kalamezhuth Paatt. The data presented in this section is mainly collected through research interviews. This deals with the core groups of Kalamezhuth Paatt, namely Kurup, *Komaram*, and Marar, and also touches on the other communities that have less responsibility for the ritual.

## 7.2 The Social System of Kerala

The social system of Kerala has evolved over a period of time, and it is closely related to the history of Kerala. *Keralolpathy*, a 19th-century work by Ezhuthachan (1868) is considered a good resource to understand the history of Kerala, especially the role of Brahmins in shaping the region. This literary work is a mix of mythological narrations, history and facts. Even though it is written in the old Malayalam language, scholars such as Logan (1887) and Desai (2018), respected the content of the book. A rock-cut edifice built by Emperor Asoka in the third century BCE provides the earliest mention of Kerala. Early foreign travellers such as Pliny and Ptolemy in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries CE, respectively, also wrote about Kerala's people and their trade links with the Arabs, Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, and Israelites (Menon, 2007). Jainism and Buddhism reached Kerala in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, whereas Christianity, Judaism, and Islam reached Kerala in the 1st century CE and Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. Kerala was the first area in the country where the popularity of both Christianity and Islam spread. The Dravidian kings ruled over the southern areas of India for a very long time with their formative period in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries CE (Menon, 2007). The absence of a rigorous caste system is particularly significant because social equality and freedom were the guiding ideals of society's structure during the periods of Dravidian rulers (Desai, 2018).

The post-Sangam period, from 500 to 800 CE, is referred to as Kerala's "dark age" since intellectual pursuits seem to have disappeared during this time. Dravidian rulers re-

established their kingdom in Kerala through Chera rulers at the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE. The state also saw the birth of Shankaracharya, a famous philosopher and scholar who advocated for social reform. His name was already mentioned as a component of the mythology of *Swarnathu Mana*, Eranakulam (Photo Essay 1). During this phase, Brahmanisation became powerful by establishing 64 villages, with its agricultural land around it, consisting of just Brahmins, who ultimately asserted their social dominance over the land (Ezhuthachan, 1868). The 9<sup>th</sup> century also saw the construction of temples across Kerala. Desai (2018) observes that the Kerala Brahmins, known as *Namboothiris*, eventually used the Hindu caste system as power to maintain their dominance and long-lasting superiority in society.

Further, the influence of the four-tier hierarchical caste system, which was predominant in other parts of India, also spread in Kerala's Hindu society. Brahmins, or priests; *Kshathriyas*, or warriors; *Vaisyas*, or merchants; and *Sudras*, or workers were the four classes. Kerala Brahmins known as *Namboothiris* hold the uppermost position in the caste system, they were landlords, patrons of temples and were the advisers of the kings. *Kshathriyas* of Kerala were either rulers or chieftains associated with the ruling family. Different classes, namely *Maharaja*, *Koil Thampuran*, and *Thampan*, also come under this category. Nairs are another important caste group, who were traditional feudal landlords and warriors. Desai (2018) rightly points out that it is difficult to understand the complex caste system of India, especially in Kerala. This may be because the four-tier system of caste is only one way of classifying people according to class and power. Inside each caste, there will be sub-castes with a hierarchy. The caste structure contributed to the inhumane practice of untouchability, which was prevalent in Kerala as it was in the rest of India. The practice of untouchability is known as an act of excluding a set of people who are considered permanently impure from religious or social activities (Cháirez-Garza, 2022). The influence of this caste system is visible in the art and culture of the region, as in the case of Kalamezhuth Paatt it is performed by different communities and caste groups. Since religious rituals such as Kalamezhuth of the upper caste were not accessible to the bottom of society, lower caste people adopted the practices in their own way. However, as mentioned in the introduction, the study is limited to Kalamezhth Paatt dedicated only to

Vettakkorumakan, and the current discussion is limited to the groups that are closely associated with it.

### **7.3 Kurup in the Ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt**

The name Kurup represents a group of people whose position is between *Kshathriyas* and *Shudras*. Military chieftains of local kings and martial arts experts of Malabar were also known as Kurup (Logan, 1887). However, in Vettakkorumakan Kalamezhuth Paatt, they play the role of painter and singer. In some places they also play the role of ritual dancer or *komaram*. Similar groups of people who have the same responsibility are Kallatta Kurup in the Central and Southern districts of Kerala, namely Thrissur and Ernakulam; Theyyampadi Kurup, or simply Kurup, in the Malabar area, including Kozhikode, Malappuram, and Wayanad districts; and Theyyampadi Nambiar in the North Malabar region, which consists of Kannur and Kasaragod districts. The story behind the evolution of the community is related to an incident in Thirumandhamkunnu, a famous temple dedicated to Goddess Bhadrakali in Malappuram district.

Saint Mandhathavu was doing penance at a location in the present Thirumandhamkunnu temple. After accomplishing the penance, the saint handed over a Shivalinga, an idol of Lord Shiva, to two Namboothiris. After the saint's death, they started worshipping the Shivalinga and the goddess Bhadrakali. One day, a Nair who used to escort them during the worship overheard the conversation of Namboothiris regarding the form of Goddess Bhadrakali. With the help of a laterite stone, that assistant recreated a beautiful picture of the deity on a rock. '*Kurichavan*' means the one who draws or writes, hence the name Kurup coined after this incident. Previous works done by Mundekkad (2002) and Kallatt (2021) support this argument about the origin of the ritual of *Kalamezhuth* dedicated to Goddess Bhagavathy and the Kurup community. According to Kallatt (2021), another story that gives clues about the origin of the group Kurup is related to an incident that occurred in Kailasa Mountain, the abode of Lord Shiva. Once, one of his subordinates drew a picture of Shiva on the floor using some powder. Even though Shiva reached Kailasa, his assistant refused to show his creativity to Shiva due to fear. Upon viewing the beautiful picture, Shiva became happy but cursed him to go down to earth and asked him to use his skill in drawing as a livelihood. The prefix Kallatta might have evolved from Kailasa later.

Kurup plays a crucial role in the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt, all respondents to the research interviews agree that Kurups are the first-hand group responsible for coordinating the entire event and this is considered the first part of the research. This is mainly because *kalam*, or the floor drawing prepared by Kurup, is the major attraction and component of the ritual. Kurup creates the form of the favourite deity of devotees through their creativity. Kurup sings songs or *thottam* praising the deity and creates a sense of memory and reverence in the mind of people. It is ironic that they only start the destruction phase by erasing the *Kalam*. Finally, they carry the majority of the rice and coconuts placed around the *kalam* home and consume them as a blessing from the Lord.

### **Training**

One of my childhood memories includes a scene from the training of Kurups, I got a chance to accompany my father to watch Kurup's training in ritual dancing. A group of six or seven boys, aged 10 to 15 were undergoing training by an experienced Marar and a senior Kurup. Senior Kurup demonstrated each step according to the beats created by Marar. We left the place after spending some time there. It is interesting that all boys of that cohort are now in their 40's and they are experts conducting Kalamezhuth Paatt at any scale. Even though none of them were interviewed as part of the research, I got a chance to interact with them during documentation and observation of the ritual from many venues. However, to understand the role of Kurup in Kalamezhuth Paatt, this research collected data from interviews with three artists from 3 different districts (Refer to map 3) - Kozhikode district (Ku01), Thrissur district (Ku02), and Kannur district (Ku03). It is observed that they follow the religion and rituals strictly, worship their favourite and family deity, and are mostly vegetarians. This community generally follows a matriarchal system of inheritance, which means the maternal uncle takes on the responsibility of growing the family. Even though female members are powerful in this system, only male members of the Kurup community practice *Kalamezhuth*. Along with the formal schooling, boys in the family start accompanying the elders to *Kalamezhuth* venues at the age of five or six. They play with friends, make interesting toys with palm leaves of coconut, enjoy the beats of the drums, and closely watch how the senior members of the family are preparing the drawing on the floor. According to Ku03,

*"I used to go to various places with my maternal grandfather from my childhood itself to see Kalamezhuth Paatt, even at the age of five. Though my teacher was my grandfather, the learning in Kalamezhuth happened mainly from venues and observations. Later, I got proper training in ritual dancing from a Namboodiri." (Appendix 2.9)*

Ku03 belongs to the Kurup community, but his teacher in ritual dancing was a member of another group. Hence, it is interesting to note from the above statement that cross-community associations are common. Similarly, Ko02 revealed that a few people from the Kurup community approached him to get training for ritual dancing. This is indeed a sign that people respect the skill set and values of transmitting knowledge. Moreover, there is a conscious attempt by elder members of Kurup families to make the young ones interested in Kalamezhuth Paatt. This is the first step towards ensuring the continuity of the tradition. Many of the Kurup boys study the first lessons through these observations. Some of them directly opt for the hereditary job after schooling; some people continue formal education and choose other career options. Ku03 is an example of the first category, whereas Ku01 falls within the latter type. Even though Ku01 received training in *Kalamezhuth* from his seniors when he was around 15, he didn't enter the hereditary job immediately after learning the basics. Ku01 was working in a factory for six years, and at the age of 21, some family circumstances made him go back to the hereditary profession of Kalamezhuth Paatt. He reflects upon the training periods:

*For practice sessions, we don't take fair powder. We use white ash for white, burned husk for black, powdered laterite stone for red and yellow, and powdered leaf for green. The focus was on basic colour combinations and proportions. Apart from that, the beats and steps of ritual dances were also taught. But I haven't gotten any special training for thottam; I learned the lines and tunes of thottam only during the rituals. (Appendix 2.3)*

It is worthwhile to note that even during the practice sessions, they use colours. However, in terms of age, below 10 years, Kurup boys observe the rituals; between 10 and 15, they undergo training; and between 15 and 20, they select the profession.

Even though Kalamezhuth Paatt is a ritual art form, institutional training is provided in some areas of the state. Guruvayur temple is one of the old and busy pilgrimage centres of Kerala. The temple authority set up a centre for temple arts in an effort to preserve and

reinvigorate art forms related to temples and temple festivals. Kalamezhuth Paatt is regarded as a significant art form. Ku02 is an alumnus of this school, similar to other Kurup boys, he used to go to *Kalamezhuth* venues with his father and grandfather. Later, at the age of 13, he joined the Guruvayur Centre for temple arts. Since it followed residential schooling, students and teachers used to stay in the institute itself. According to Ku02, the routine at Guruvayur School was interesting as well as rigorous. During the interview, he recollected:

*Wake-up time was 4.30 a.m. There were sessions on music, literature of thottam, drawing, etc. till night. We used to draw the kalam on an actual scale using powders. The first year's focus was on drawing the single line of the kalam. Teachers draw the lines or curves first, and then we students overdraw on those lines. Gradually, without the guidelines, we were able to draw lines and curvy-linear forms. From the second year on, I started using colours. To get acquainted with colours, for practical sessions also, we used to use original powders like rice powder and turmeric powder. The third year was for getting more practical experience. (Appendix 2.6)*

Ku02 added that even if the course duration was 3 years, after successful completion, with the advice of his teachers, he continued there for another 3 years. During that period, his role was something like that of a teaching assistant. He used to help his teachers to train new students. However, Ku02 sadly recollects that, due to poor response in terms of the number of admissions, the temple authority was forced to shut down the school in the 1990's.

Furthermore, a Kurup gets training in singing *thottam*, drawing *kalam* and in ritual dancing. As the training in ritual dancing includes the basics of dance steps and beats, the presence of a senior Marar is also necessary. So, it is a combined effort of elders in Kurup and Marar community to train the younger ones in the Kurup community. The duration of the formal training varies according to the speed of acquisition. Though Ku01 took only one month to learn the basics of *kalamezhuth*, he reveals that he didn't receive proper training in singing *thottam*; rather, it was experiential learning. According to Ku01:

*After my debut, I started going with my father to different temples and other venues. I learned a lot from observing how seniors are doing the rituals. So, it took a long time to become independent. (appendix 2.3)*

Becoming independent in the case of a Kurup is significant, they should be able to draw the entire *kalam* alone or with minimal help from other Kurups, memorise the lyrics and sequence of the *thottam*, sing without any failure, and take a lead role in all rituals. Even though Ku01 didn't mention the exact time to become an independent artist, it is understood that this needs around 10 years of solid experience.

A clear progression can be seen in both systems of training, the initial aim is to make the new generation interested in *Kalamezhuth*. In the next stage, they are allowed to explore the use of different powders so that they can become familiar with the colour combination and texture of various natural powders. The creation of mental images of the deity and transferring them into the form of floor drawings is a major task in the next stage. This may consume more time, and before doing it in the venue, they undertake many practice sessions. They also follow a system to memorise the posture and form of each deity. For example, Vettakkorumakan is memorised as the colour green, with a big beard and moustache; the left hand is raised with a bow and arrow; and the right hand is down with the sword. Ku02 explained that they used to have drawing classes to become familiar with the scale, proportion, and structure of different deities. Once they learn the basics of drawing and the ritual dance, they get a chance for a proper debut. Aside from the formality of drawing, the rest of the elements of the *Kalamezhuth Paatt* ritual are learned through experience, which is covered in the coming section.

### **Responsibilities of Kurup in Kalamezhuth Paatt**

There are several distinctions between participating in the process and watching it from the outside. That means, from an aesthetic perspective, *Kalamezhuth Paatt* is just an art form and the livelihood of some artists. But from an evolutionary viewpoint, it's not just a hereditary job for them but something that is close to their lives. According to all interviewees, stage fright is the main issue and the only way to overcome this is to gain the maximum practical experience. Kurup as a community follows a hierarchy of roles in the ritual of *Kalamezhuth Paatt*. The one who is responsible for conducting the whole ritual and

the first point of contact is known as *adiyanthira kurup*. Following the instructions from the owner or patron who is conducting the ritual, this main Kurup brings enough people to the smooth conduct of the ritual. The main Kurup's duty starts when he collects *koora*, a piece of silk, from the owner and spreads it under the *paattumandapam*. The hierarchy of jobs can be seen from this ritual itself. The main Kurup coordinates with other artists and assigns works. In fact, he is the supervisor. Ku01 explains that the one who is preparing the single-line drawing of the deity is considered to be the lead in preparing *kalam*. Once the single-line drawing is prepared, the main Kurup focuses on the most important parts: the face, headgear, and neck. Simultaneously, others help this Kurup to complete other parts of the drawing (refer to photo essay 1 for detailed steps involved in completing *kalam*). Junior artists are supposed to render only hands, legs, and outer decorative elements of the drawing. According to Ku01, there used to be many artists to draw the *kalam*, especially in major venues like Balussery Kotta Temple. So, juniors or trainees had to sit to watch how the experienced Kurup were rendering the *kalam*. He remembers:

*In the case of drawing kalam, we generally follow a pattern to distribute the work among ourselves. One person draws the outline of the figure; after completing that, others also join. One renders the bottom portion, while the other draws the clothes. Expert Kurup focuses on the face and other important portions. I remember that some of my ancestors were known for rendering different parts of the kalam. P Kurup was an expert in drawing faces and necklaces. He used to bring life to the kalam (appendix 2.3).*

A healthy competition is also seen among the artists in this case, which means each one of them takes maximum effort to draw the part assigned to them in the most attractive manner. Still, there is a clear understanding among the artists about completing the *kalam* and it is their combined responsibility to make it perfect. However, there are also cases where a single artist draws the whole *kalam*. In that case, the detailed rendering of ornaments, crowns, and *prabhamandalam*, the aura, or outer decorative part, will be minimal. But all the necessary parts will be depicted. Reducing the number of Kurups is a measure to cut down on the cost and scale of the ritual.

Similarly, this hierarchy can be observed while singing *thottam*. According to Ku01, the senior artist is known as *Ponnani*, and the assistant is called *Shinkidi*. *Ponnani* plays *nanthuni*, a string instrument, and *Shinkidi* produces beats on *kuzhithalam*, a small cymbal.

If there are more than two people, others support the main artists like a chorus. The responsibility of Kurup is not limited to drawing *kalam* and singing *thottam*. *Thiri uzichil* is the worship performed by Kurup to the subordinates of the main deity in the *kalam* and other deities who protect the place. This shows the high-level involvement of Kurup in the ritual, this is usually carried out by a senior Kurup other than the chief. They are also supposed to help the *Komaram* during the ritual of breaking coconuts. It is ironic that they become the silent witnesses in erasing the drawing. The Kurup's duty ends when he removes the *koora* from the *paattumandapam* and returns it to the owner. Finally, they take most of the rice and coconuts placed around the drawing as a gesture of blessings from Lord Vettakkorumakan.

It is understood from the interviews that though Kurup plays a crucial role in Kalamezhuth Paatt, many of them don't know the symbolism behind the ritual or the meaning of *thottam*. Ku01 says:

*Apart from strictly following what my teachers told me, I haven't thought much about the meaning of the rituals. But it is said that thiri uzichil is an important ritual. Kurup has to chant some hymns and then pay an offering to the subordinates of the main deity. Any mistake in this ritual may cause many troubles. So, I am doing everything with full heart and with dedication to God. (appendix 2.3)*

According to the response from Ku02, *thottam* is composed in a much older version of Malayalam, the regional language. *Thottam* of the goddess Bhagavathy and Nagam, the serpent god, is written in an older language, but that of Vettakkorumakan is in a later version of Malayalam. This statement gives light to the origin of the ritual dedicated to Vettakkorumakan; a detailed discussion is included in the next chapter. Even though the critical thinking ability regarding the purpose and in depth meaning of each ritual is missing in the Kurup community, they take the effort to transmit the knowledge to the next generation.

#### **7.4 Komaram**

*Komaram*, or oracle, also known as *Velichappadu*, is not a community; rather, they are the representative figures of the deity itself. *Shabdatharavali*, a Malayalam dictionary, suggests the meaning of the word *Komaram* is the incarnation, teacher, or God itself, and

*velichappaad* means those who undertake the ritual dance after getting possessed or one who is famous due to being possessed (Pilla, 1898). *Komaram* has a major role in Hindu religious ritual life of Kerala. The practice is common mainly in the northern districts of Kerala, namely Kozhikode, Palakkad, and Thrissur. Most of the family temples will have a person assigned as the *Komaram*, who turn up during the monthly ritual or annual ritual, after getting possessed wear a red or black silk, hold a sword, wear a garland, and do ritual dances and give predictions as if he/she is the deity itself. Usually, male members of some families get possessed by the deity irrespective of the gender of the deity. In some temples, for instance, Kodungallur temple which is dedicated to the mother goddess, one can witness hundreds of *Komarams*, including male and female, dancing after being possessed by the spirit or strength of the deity. Once they start enacting this, it may last for one or two hours. So, a *Komaram* may represent a male god or a female goddess. The gender considerations and the play of emotions in the life of a *Komaram* are important. According to Balu (2022), the act of negotiation in the process of the possessed gives information regarding non-homogeneous *Velichappads* and how the socioeconomic conditions are affected in the realm of the possessed. Though the act of possession makes *Velichappad* or *Komaram* a divine embodiment, there is a conscious attempt by them to be a social being. Balu (2022) notes that divinity of the possessed and non-divinity of the everyday cannot be separated as they are intertwined. Though Balu's observation pertains to *Velichappad* in general, it is applicable to *Komaram* of Kalamezhuth Paatt as well. They become the deity or the embodiment of the deity only after possessing it. In *Kalamezhuth*, this act of possessing occurs only for a short duration, mainly towards the end of ritual dances of *eedum koorum chaavittal* and *kalapradakshinam* and while giving predictions after breaking coconuts and erasing the *kalam*. So, this makes the *Komaram* of Kalamezhuth Paatt different from the general scenario explained above. *Komaram* plays some special roles within the context of Kalamezhuth Paatt. Unlike Kurup and Marar, this part is performed by just one person. Even though it is stated that *Komaram* is not a community, only members of certain caste groups are allowed to work in this position. In Kalamezhuth Paatt dedicated to Vettakkorumakan, *Komaram* is the ambassador or representative of Lord Vettakkorumakan. Though specific texts or information regarding the origin of *Komaram* are not available, according to mythology, Lord Vettakkorumakan only appointed Karakoora Nair, a caste group, as his

representative, aka *Komaram*. Thereafter, the male members of the Karakoora family became the oracle in Vettakkorumakan Kalamezhuth Paatt. According to Ko05,

*The actual origin of the Karakura family is near Balussery, Kozhikode. One day, Karakura Nair attended a Kalamezhuth Paatt at Thiruvithamkur Kingdom, who was the enemy of Kurumbranad King. As a result of that, the Kurumbranad king expelled us from the country. The females of the family decide to meet the Thiruvithamkur King for a solution. So, he sent one lady to North Paravur and asked her to take care of the Kalamezhuth Paatt happening in the southern part of the state with her children. Likewise, he sent another lady to Chundal and advised her to take care of the Kalamezhuth Paatt happening in the northern part of the state with her children. This made the Kurumbranad king recruit an efficient gentleman from his army family called Ettuveetil Panikker as Komaram. His predecessors are known as Karakura Panikker. Later, the last one in the family transferred the knowledge to some Namboodiris, who were experts in Panemkali. Thus, Namboodiri Brahmins also became eligible for the position of Komaram in Kalamezhuth Paatt. (appendix 2.8)*

The expressions of Ko05 show the conflict between the local rulers. The story is not only significant in establishing the role of Karakoora Nair as *Komaram* in Kalamezhuth Paatt of Vettakkorumakan, but it also leads to some clues about the social system prevailing in Kerala. Many communities and caste groups are prominent in Kerala, as discussed in the previous chapter. Still, the role of *Komaram* has been transferred to Namboodiris only, mainly because of the power of the Namboodiri community in society. According to the reactions of Ko02, as Karakura Panikker failed to find predecessors at some point, he decided to hand over the duty of *Komaram* to people from some Namboodiri families. Panemkali, mentioned by Ko02, is an art form prevalent in the Namboodiri community. A detailed discussion of this art form and its role will be discussed in the next chapter. Recently, people from the Kurup community also started becoming the *Komaram* of Vettakkorumakan. In general, people from the Karakoora Nair family, some from the Namboodiri family, and some from the Kurup family are playing the role of *Komaram* in Vettakkorumakan Kalamezhuth Paatt. To understand their responsibilities, skills, and training, six research interviews were conducted, four from Kozhikode district (Ko01, Ko02, Ko03, and Ko04), one each from Thrissur district (Ko05), and Palakkad district (Ko06). These six artists are from different caste groups, different age groups, and different regions of

Kerala. Apart from the interviews, I had informal interactions with these artists at different venues for the ritual. The following section discusses various observations from the interviews.

### **Responsibilities of *Komaram* in Kalamezhuth Paatt**

Unlike Kurup and Marar, *Komaram* do not have full-time engagement in the ritual. Through the interviews, it was understood that the duties and responsibilities of *Komaram* are the same in all parts of the state. They need to reach the venue by the evening only if the ritual doesn't involve breaking 12,000 coconuts. In that case, *Komaram* reaches a day before the ritual, and some of them prefer to conduct another Kalamezhuth Paatt on the previous day (Ko02 and Ko06). Before the outdoor ritual of *mullakkal paatt*, *Komaram* prepare the costumes, arrives at the venue, and receives the sanctified sword and garland from the priest. After that, he performs the ritual dance of *eedum koorum chavittal* and *kalapradakshinam*, the circumambulation of the drawing. After taking a rest for a while, he comes back to the venue, starts erasing the drawing, breaks coconuts, and finally delivers the predictions and blessings in trance. Even though his engagement is shorter in terms of time, the impact created in the minds of devotees is much greater, as *Komaram* is considered the representative of the deity.

### **Training**

As the position of *Komaram* is inherited through generations, the training also aligns with the principles of the ancestors. Unlike Kurup, the young members of the family used to accompany the *Komaram* only after learning the basics and after the debut, but it is their choice whether they need to take up the hereditary job or any other one. Ko02 mentions:

*My elder brother died at a young age. Others were not interested in learning and practicing Komaram, as income was low and responsibility was high. I was just 15 at that time. My father inquired through my mother whether I could help him. I was learning some martial arts at that time, I didn't refuse the proposal. (appendix 2.2)*

The patriarchal system of inheritance is followed in Namboodiri caste groups, whereas the matriarchal system is predominant in Karakoora and Kurup communities. Socio-economic conditions were different in different families, but all of the interviewees opted for the job

of *Komaram* out of interest. Training for a *komaram* has two parts, one for the ritual dances and the other for the basic things to be taken care of during the ritual such as draping the cloths, erasing the drawing and giving predictions. The first part is jointly accomplished by a Marar and the *Komaram*, who are transferring knowledge and thereby their duties. Marar teaches the basic rhythm and steps involved in the ritual dances of *eedum koorum* and *kalapradakshinam*. Ko03 reflects:

*The first step was to become familiar with the rhythm, and it was the duty of the Marar to teach that. After that, our father taught us the different steps involved in the ritual dance. My debut was at the Ilayidam Paradevatha temple, and it was only a chuttuvilakku, not Kalamezhuth Paatt.* (appendix 2.4)

Marar's duty is only to introduce the different systems of rhythm that are common in Kalamezhuth Paatt. Ko03's point about his debut is also significant due to his usage of the term *chuttuvilakku*, another ritual similar to Kalamezhuth Paatt, without drawing the picture and singing *thottam*. But the ritual dance of *eedum koorum chavittal* and symbolic representation of *kalapradakshinam*, circumambulation without *kalam*, will be there. So, for a *Komaram*, the duties are almost the same except for erasing the *kalam*. However, during the second part of the training, the senior *Komaram*, usually the father or maternal uncle in the case of Karakoora Nair disseminates knowledge regarding the duties and responsibilities of a *Komaram* in the ritual. It includes the attire, how to drape the cloth and silk to get ready for the performance, how to erase the *kalam*, and how to conclude the ritual. Ko02 notes:

*According to my father, the ritual dance in Kalamezhuth Paatt is not our ancestral job, as it has a lot of side effects. So, I have been asked to worship Lord Vettakkorumakan blindly. That's the only way to reduce the impacts on predecessors. Apart from this, there is advice on the makeup and attire, erasing the kalam, dragging the stool during erasing the kalam, body movements during erasing the kalam, blessing the devotees, etc.* (appendix 2.2).

The term side effects mentioned here means the impacts of the ritual and consequences of not doing the ritual properly. *Komarams* are considered the embodiment of Lord Vettakkorumakan, they erase the drawing with their feet. Interview respondents believe that it causes impotency and other health issues. To reduce these impacts, *Komaram* shows complete dedication and thoroughly worships Vettakkorumakan. However, it is mainly

through observations and experience those younger members get to know about the style of ritual dances. Each *Komaram* deliberately or unknowingly develops their own style and mannerism in ritual dancing and body language, a large portion of which is usually inherited from the ancestors. Ko06 is an exception to this, as he was trained by a senior drummer, or Marar. Since he gained knowledge about both dance steps and rhythm from an outsider of the family, he didn't have much influence from his ancestors. Thus, the cross-community association mentioned in the case of Kurup is also seen here. However, it may take two to three weeks to learn the basics, but the real learning starts only after the debut, the experiential kind of learning.

The observations so far made on the training and the initial days of a Kurup's or *Komaram*'s career relate to the studies of apprenticeship at Djenne (Marchand, 2009). Marchand explained how a set of apprentices, including him, was moulded by Baba, the chief mason, and his brother. After successful completion, an apprentice will be declared as 'mason'. Marchand (2009) further states that in the initial stages of his professional career, a novice mason will collaborate closely with either his master or a more experienced mason. Through this process, apprentices refine their abilities and acquire new ones via mentoring. Similarly, it is the senior Kurup or *Komaram* who train the next generation, though the term 'apprenticeship' or 'training' is not used widely. Marchand reflects on the intense social and professional relationship in the mason's community at Djenne and this can be compared to the scenario of Kalamezhuthu Paatt. Even though more than one community is involved in the ritual, during the ritual all of them act as a single unit to uphold the professional relationship.

### **Becoming an Expert**

After the nervous early days and debut, a *Komaram* gradually starts building up his position as an independent artist and practitioner. Ko01 recalls that his father, Marar, and Kurup used to help him during the initial phase of his career. It takes around four to five years to become confident about the customs, order, and process of basic rituals. Then, according to the creativity level of the *Komaram*, he may start experimenting with new dance steps. Usually, the improvisations and experiments brought in by *Komaram* are highly appreciated by the devotees. Ko01 explains:

*After gaining the basics from my teacher, I started learning a lot from the venues. My father helped me a lot, and in fact, I became moulded by his style or school. Gradually, I started with some experiments, for example, some steps in Kalapradakshinam. My father used to criticise those moves, and that motivated me to do more experiments. (appendix 2.1).*

Furthermore, Ko01 explained that since his family had the tradition of holding the position of *Komaram* of Vettakkorumakan, his style of dancing and mannerism are exactly like those of his father. The mannerisms include the way a *Komaram* holds a sword in the right hand, how they drape the red silk around their waist, and how they position the left hand while dancing. Some *Komaram*, for instance, Ko03, keep the left hand in a position as if they are holding a bow and arrow in the left hand. Whereas Ko02 holds the sword with both hands. Apart from all these factors, the position of *Komaram* requires a lot of physical activity. To maintain this, they used to undergo ayurvedic treatment annually. Understanding among the core artists -Kurup, *Komaram*, and Marar- is also essential for becoming an expert in the ritual. According to the reflections of Ko02:

*There will be a mutual understanding between Marar and Komaram in eedum koorum chavittal and kalapradakshinam. Marar decides which rhythms are to be played for the eedum koorum chavittal, and before changing each rhythm, he usually gives a hint to the Komaram about the next rhythm. It is the opposite in the case of kalapradakshinam. Komaram has the leading role in this. Similarly, there should also be coordination between Kurup and Komaram during erasing the kalam. (appendix 2.2).*

Nevertheless, the non-verbal interactions between all the artists are interesting and highly significant. Viewers may not understand the meaning of all these communications, but an expert *Komaram* or a Marar can act accordingly. According to the response from Ko01, an example of nonverbal communication is seen during the ritual of *mullakkal paatt*, which is also an outdoor process. *Komaram* has to arrive at the venue of *mullakkal paatt* by the end of the ritual. As the process nears its conclusion, Marar creates a particular rhythm on *chenda*; hearing the beats, *Komaram* arrives at the place. Marar employs the same strategy when informing *Komaram* that it is time to come to the place to erase the *kalam*. Nevertheless, these kinds of interactions are good examples of nonverbal communication, which is part of the traditional knowledge system.

Breaking 12,000 coconuts in a single stretch is the biggest and favourite offering of Lord Vettakkorumakan. A Vettakkorumakan *Komaram's* level of competence is also determined by the time and precision with which he smashes the coconuts. Breaking the coconuts synchronised with the beats produced by Marar in *Chenda* is a spectacle, and it needs lots of energy. Ko01 elaborates upon his experience with the ritual of breaking 12,000 coconuts by saying:

*The number 12,000 has plenty of significance. It represents 12 months and 12 suns. Moreover, 12 is an auspicious number as per Hindu mythology. While breaking each coconut, the water sprinkles in the form of rays of sun. Through breaking the coconut, the high energy embedded in the coconut will be released in that place. It is also believed that tender coconut is the nectar of the earth. (appendix 2.1).*

Ko01's words not only show his dedication to the Lord but also his deep understanding of the ritual. The invisible part behind this ritual, according to all interview respondents, is the strong worship and belief in Lord Vettakkorumakan. According to their response, they receive a supernatural power while breaking the coconuts. For Ko01, it is coming in the form of a slight dizziness, and he normally reaches a trance mood after that point.

It is good to hear that all the interviewees have more than one disciple, and all of them except Ko01 and Ko04 have already transferred the knowledge to the next generation and their young children have made their debut in the field. To sum up, the factors behind the success of a *Komaram* are the traditional knowledge inherited from the previous generation, the worship and belief in the deity, the continuous trial to do experiments and improvisations, and the hard work.

#### **7.4 Marar**

The hereditary job of the Marar community is to play musical instruments in temples. According to Pilla (1898), Marar denotes a caste group that plays musical instruments such as *chenda* and *idakka* and sings devotional songs known as *sopanasangeetham* in temples. They are also coming under the category of temple servants; they are vegetarians and follow a matriarchal system of job inheritance. The presence of Marar is a must at most of the temple festivals in Kerala. Poduval is another community similar to Marar that is prominent in Thrissur and Palakkad districts. *Vadyakkar* is the local term for a group of

people who create instrumental music for rituals and festivals. Many of the famous and large temples, such as Guruvayur Temple, have full-time Marars to play drums during daily rituals.

At least one Marar is required for the conduct of Kalamezhuth Paatt. As in the case of Kurup, Marar who are responsible for conducting the ritual at a venue are known as *Adiyanthira Marar*, which means essential drummer. According to the demand and the financial status of the owner, the main Marar brings a team of musicians. It is understood from other interviews and observations of rituals that a Marar's engagement starts from the morning of the day of the ritual till the end. According to interviews with other communities and non-participant observation, the duty of a Marar includes creating instrumental music during all special rites in the temple, blowing conch when Kurup spreads *koora*, a piece of silk under the *paattumandapam* (the pavilion), and creating background music for all ritual dances. As explained by Ko01, Marar has a crucial role in giving timely hints to *Komaram* by producing different beats in different locations; he also gets nearly half of the rice and coconuts placed around the *kalam*. Hence, Marar as a community also plays a significant part in the ritual.

## 7.5 Other Communities

Apart from the three core groups, there are more communities or skill-based groups whose contributions are inevitable in the ritual. *Thanthri* or the chief priest is the one who installs the deity or the idol in a temple. According to mythology, Panniamvalli Bhattathippad is the *Thanthri* of Vettakkorumakan. His prime responsibility is to perform the noon worship in the sanctum and the *kalam pooja*—the worship of the deity in the form of *kalam* in the night. It would be the priest in the temple who performs other rituals, namely *uchappatt* and *mullakkal paatt*. *Kazhakam* is the local term for a group of people who provide flowers and garlands in a temple and clean the surroundings and vessels used for rituals. Caste groups such as Varrier, Nambeesan, or Pisharadi play this role in temples. They also have some roles in Kalamezhuth Paatt. While the priest takes the sanctified sword outside the temple for *uchappatt* and *mullakkal paatt*, the outdoor process, a *Kazhakam* should accompany the priest with an oil lamp. Apart from this, *Kazhakam* makes garlands to decorate the idol or

deity inside the temple and decorates the *paatumandapam* by hanging garlands on the coconut leaves.

The laundryman who supplies cloths for covering the *paattumandapam* and clothes for the *Komaram*, Kurup, and priests is known as *Veluthedan*. In some parts of the state, while returning after the outdoor process, the priest wears a cone-shaped hat. It is also the *Veluthedan's* duty to provide cloth for making these hats. They make the cloth stiff by applying rice starch. They also provide another piece of starched cloth to make *thiruvudayada*, a decorative element made by folding the cloth in a semicircular shape. As a token of appreciation, they get a portion of rice and coconut to do this. Another important person in Vettakkorumakan Kalamezhuth Paatt is the assistant of *Komaram*. He generally accompanies *Komaram* with an oil lamp for most of the time. Usually, this position is held by a Nair. Besides these communities, there are more groups of people who have some specific roles in some temples, for instance Balussery Kotta and Nilambur Kovilakam temple. There are people from specific communities who provide traditional baskets and mats at Nilambur Temple. The duties and hierarchy of the different communities involved in Kalamezhuth Paatt of Vettakkorumakan are summarised in Table 6. It also shows how different groups are eligible for the rice and coconut put around the *kalam*.

Sl. No	Name of Community	Hierarchy	Role in the ritual	Division of Vellari (Rice and coconut)
1	<i>Kurup</i>	<i>Adiyanthiram</i> (main)	Kickstart the ritual by putting <i>koora</i> , assign duties to assistants, be present in the venue till the end of the ritual,	9 portions
		Assistant	Assist the main Kurup in drawing the <i>kalam</i> and singing <i>thottam</i>	-
2	<i>Komaram</i>	-	Ritual dancer	2 portions
3	<i>Marar</i>	<i>Adiyanthiram</i> (main drummer)	Be present in the venue till the end of the ritual, use <i>chenda</i> , <i>edakka</i> and <i>shankh</i> whenever necessary, assign duties to assistants	7 portions
		Assistant	Create background music for all special rituals,	1 portion ( for

		(those who handle drums, cymbal, and wind instruments)	perform special programs like <i>thayambaka</i> and <i>keli</i> , grand return after outdoor process and ritual dances.	playing <i>kuzhal</i> , wind instrument)
4	Priest	<i>Thanthri</i> (chief priest)	Perform <i>uchhapooja</i> , the noon ritual and <i>kalam pooja</i> .	1 portion
		<i>Shanthe</i> (priest)	Perform special worship in the temple on the day of Kalamezhuth Paatt, <i>uchappatt</i> – the first ritual, take the sanctified sword/idle for outdoor process and assist chief priest	1 portion
5	<i>Kazhakam</i>	-	Hold the oil lamp during <i>uchappatt</i> , <i>mullakkal paatt</i> and grand return thereafter and; provide garlands and flowers	-
6	<i>Veluthedan</i>	-	Provide cloths required to cover the <i>paattumandapam</i> and for Kurup, <i>Komaram</i> and priests to change their dress.	1 portion
7	<i>Kaivilakku</i>	-	To accompany <i>Komaram</i> all the time with an oil lamp	-
8	<i>Adichuthali</i>	-	To clean the surroundings, prepare the floor with cow dung and charcoal to draw <i>kalam</i> , prepare the powders to draw <i>kalam</i> and wash oil lamps and clean the venue after the ritual.	1 coconut

Table 6 Duties and responsibilities of artists – summarises the hierarchy, role and rights of people belonging to various community.

\*One portion of *vellari* consists of 2.5 *nazhi* (1kg) rice and one coconut.

## 7.6 Summary

It can be summarised from the chapter that the hierarchy of jobs, the transmission of knowledge, nonverbal communication, and experiential learning in the community affair of Kalamezhuth Paatt. All these factors are leading to different aspects of intangible cultural heritage associated with Kalamezhuth Paatt. The hierarchy of jobs exists within a community and among the different communities involved in the ritual and the artists never cross their boundaries. This mutual respect reinforces the notion of Kalamezhuth Paatt as a community affair. After completing initial learning from the teacher, the rest of the

knowledge is built by the artists through experience only. It can be underlined based on the interviews that a sense of identity is present in every artist in the ritual art of Kalamezhuth Paatt. For them, it's a part of their life, they believe in the deity; its worship rather than a job. The inter-community association is highly evident in the ritual as a system. The next chapter focuses mainly on the origin and transformation of the ritual and the spaces.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Origin and Transformation of the Ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt**

## 8.1 Introduction

Having explained the present-day ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt and its uniqueness in the last chapter, this section aims to focus on the ritual in history. So far, previous chapters have been based on various series of rituals, including their meaning, different communities, and their roles in the ritual. The chapter explores whether the pattern is the same as the origin itself. *Thottam*, the oral tradition associated with Kalamezhuth Paatt, is considered a good resource. Interpreting the *thottam* will provide an idea about different places, temples, and ancestral houses. Another important discussion is the origin of cultural spaces, including both built and unbuilt spaces. Through this exercise, it can be discussed whether the rituals were shaped by the spaces or whether the spaces were shaped by the ritual. The influence of similar art forms is also evident in the present-day ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt. So, a part of the chapter is dedicated to this inquiry. According to UNESCO (2023), different generations of a community continuously create and modify intangible cultural heritage. Transformations that happened in both ritual and cultural spaces are mentioned here because they are equally applicable in the case of Kalamezhuth Paatt. The chapter ends with some critical discussion on recent developments in the field due to the advancement in technology and the impacts of natural calamities and unprecedented situations created due to COVID-19. Like the previous chapter, this is also based on qualitative research interviews, non-participant observation, and some archival data in terms of old photographs and reports related to the conduct of Kalamezhuth Paatt.

## 8.2 Interpretation of *Thottam*, the Oral Tradition

*Thottam* is not merely a song; it has some meaning; it talks about history; it contains descriptions of processes; it depicts some incidents; and sometimes it creates a plot for hero worship. Words heard when set in the forms of art are oral literature; words seen when set in the forms of art are written in literature (Lord 1991). *Thottam* can also be considered oral literature. As suggested in the previous chapters, *thottam* is the common term that denotes the oral tradition associated with many ritual arts in Kerala. This is like a ballad, which narrates stories and small incidents transmitted orally from generation to generation. In Kalamezhuth Paatt, dedicated to Vettakkorumakan, Kurup's song is known as *thottam*. Though the meaning of each *thottam* has been discussed earlier, this chapter particularly

focuses on the different places mentioned and various occasions or actions described in the *thottam* and tries to interpret these in its own way.

Kurup sings *thottam* on four occasions, during *uchappaatt*, the noon ritual; *mullakkal paatt*-the outdoor ritual, after *kalam pooja* - the night worship; and in-between erasing the *kalam*. The first two sets of songs are mainly based on the journey of Vettakkorumakan from Nambumala, his abode, to Balussery Kotta. The places mentioned in the *thottam* are critically examined here to understand their role in the evolution of the ritual

### The Trail of Vettakkorumakan

Mythology says that Nambumala Kotta is the abode of Vettakkorumakan; from there, he started his journey to Balussery Kotta. The meaning of Nambumala Kotta is a fort, namely Nambumala on a hill and local people call it *Nambola Kottai* or *Nambalkot* in Tamil. The temple is said to be from the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE, though written evidence is missing. The temple is dedicated to Lord Vettakkorumakan and is situated in a forest area called Gudalur in Tamil Nadu, a neighbouring state of Kerala.



Figure 56 Nambumala Kotta Vettakkorumakan temple. Even though this temple is situated in Tamil Nadu, the neighbouring state of Kerala, the architecture of the temple is in a typical Kerala style.

Even if Nambumala is presently in the state of Tamilnadu, as Jayashanker (2002) notes, Nambalkot was part of the Wayanad taluk, and it was transferred to the Nilgiri district of Tamilnadu in 1877.

For the community in Nambumala Kotta, Vettakkorumakan is a protector, and they call him *Betaraya Swami*, which means the Lord for hunting. The shrine of Vettakkorumakan is located at the base of a hill (Figure 56). According to the chief priest of the temple, Arjuna conducted the penance on this hill only. Referring to the mythology explained earlier Vettakkorumakan, a son for hunting, was born to Lord Shiva and Parvathy and then left at this place called Nambumala. He organised an army with the help of 16,000 local tribal people, including Vedar, Kanavar, Puliyaar, and Karuvar. According to the tribal welfare department in Tamil Nadu (2023), there are scheduled tribes like the ones mentioned in the *thottam*. Vedar in the *thottam* represents the Malaivedar community. Similarly, Kanavar stands for Kanikar tribes, Puliyaar is for Paniyaar tribes, and Karuvar represents Kuruman tribes. Predecessors of these tribal communities still come to this temple to attend the annual festival and to worship Lord Vettakkorumakan. It is also noted that the annual festival of this temple is not Kalamezhuth Paatt, rather the communities that believe in the spirit of Vettakkorumakan as a protector organise a get-together on the day and celebrate the festival of installation day by arranging a procession and playing drums. According to the *thottam*, Vettakkorumakan started his journey to Balussery from Nambumala via Wayanad, a high area of the Western Ghats. In reality, the best way to reach Balussery from Gudallur is through the mountain ways of Wayanad. Moreover, the clues given in *thottam* regarding the distances also seem to be truthful. According to Kurup's *thottam*, Vettakkorumakan travelled around 5 *katham* to reach Wayanad. 1 *katham* is roughly 4 miles (Pilla, 1898), which is equal to 6.4 kilometres. So, the total distance walked to reach Wayanad is approximately 32 kilometres (map 2).

Further, Vettakkorumakan continued walking to reach Balussery Kotta, the capital of the Kurumbranad kingdom. Here, Kurup sings that Vettakkorumakan had travelled around 36 *katham* distance, which is approximately 230 kilometres. This is only possible if Vettakkorumakan takes the long route through the boundary of the kingdom rather than the straight way. It can also be interpreted that before going to the capital to meet the king, Vettakkorumakan might have wanted to see the whole kingdom to see if the king really

deserved help. After meeting Kurumbiathiri, the King of Kurumbranad, Vettakkorumakan shared his divine power at Balussery Kotta and continued his journey.



Map 2 Trail of Vettakkorumakan, recreated based on thottam, the oral tradition. All major places mentioned in the thottam are sited in the present-day map.

Though the exact age of the temple is unknown, the state department of archaeology on conservation of mural paintings at Balussery Kotta (2012) identified three sets of paintings, the oldest belonging to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century CE (Figure 57).

Vettakkorumakan's next destination was another temple in Balussery namely Chala, where he paid respect to the mother goddess. To remember this event, on the day of the Balussery Kotta temple festival, devotees conduct a procession from Chala temple to Kotta temple. *Thottam* also mentioned Balussery Market. According to the *thottam*, Vettakkorumakan



Figure 57 The mural painting of Vettakkorumakan belongs to the 17th century CE, found at the southern block of Balussery Kotta Temple.

visited the market and bought *kalabham*, a special sandalwood paste, and *kasthuri*, or musk. After applying all these, he headed further west and reached a place called Ullur.

Going back to the interviews, Ko01 explains that Vettakkorumakan's presence is in the *padippura*, or the entrance gateway of Ulloor *padippura* temple. Kalamezhuth Paatt is conducted as part of the annual festival during February. Here, the shrine of Vettakkorumakan is in the *padippura*, or the entrance gateway itself, and the *paattupura*, the hall to perform Kalamezhuth Paatt, is constructed attached to the *padippura* (figure 58).

The next place mentioned in the *thottam* is Panniamvalli Illam, which is a Namboodiri house in Nanminda. Vettakkorumakan had a conversation with the people of that house and appointed the elder male member of the family as his chief priest. Kalamezhuth Paatt is the annual festival of the family temple of Panniamvalli, which falls on March 15.



Figure 58 Ullur Padippura Vettakkorumaka temple, *paattupura* which is in the left-hand side of the image is an extension of *padippura*, the entrance gateway.

Vettakkorumaka thereafter visited Muchukunnu Kotta, another temple north of Panniamvalli *Illam*, approximately 25 kilometres away. The temple is dedicated to Vathilkappavar, a form of Lord Shiva. Though the physical presence of Vettakkorumakan can't be found here, Kalamezhuth Paatt is conducted here annually and is dedicated to Lord Shiva (Vettakkorumakan's father). From there, Vettakkorumakan headed south towards

Calicut and reached Bilathikulam, which according to Jayashanker (2002) is a 13th-century temple. This temple has multiple shrines dedicated to Lord Shiva and Vettakkorumakan. Kalamezhuth Paatt is the annual festival at Bilathikulam Temple and is conducted in the second week of April. Then Vettakkorumakan visited Ambaresan kett, a palatial building in Calicut, and halted at Ambadi *Kovilakam*, a palace named Ambadi, which is one of the two early palaces constructed by Manavikraman, the Zamorins of Calicut. Ambadi kovilakam played a role in the history of Zamorins and Kozhikode as it was constructed for the female members of the family. Though the exact date of the erection of the palace is unknown, according to Ayyar (1929), in 1607, Frenchman Pyrad De Loyal described the lives of people at Ambadi *Kovilakam*. So, it can be assumed that the palace was there in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century CE. The next two places mentioned in the *thottam* are Thali temple and Valayanadu temple. Thali is believed to be a 14th-century CE temple, and it can be called the source of energy, protector, and backbone of Zamorin, the local king (Ayyar, 1929). It is an example of a temple complex with multiple shrines dedicated to Lord Shiva and Krishna. However, a small temple outside the complex, on the southeast side, dedicated to Vettakkorumakan can be interpreted as a later addition. This assumption is based on the style of construction and the extent of detailing seen in the temple. Kalamezhuth Paatt is the annual festival here, and it falls on the third week of April.

After visiting major temples in Kozhikode, Vettakkorumakan moved in the southeast direction and reached Thrikkalangottur or Thrikkalangode temples by dusk. Though written documents about the age of the temple are unavailable, it is believed that Vettakkorumakan's spirit is there in the attic of the entrance building, or *padippura* of the temple. Kalamezhuth Paatt is the major festival of this temple. It occurs in the month of November or December for seven days. Because of this belief, *mullakkal paatt*, the outdoor ritual at Thrikkalangode, is conducted on the top of *maadam*, or the attic (Figure 59). *Thottam* further references a large water tank in front of this temple and the temple complex of Thrikkalangode. Though there are mentions of some Namboodiri houses, namely Eranjimannara *illam* and Punnonna *illam*, physical evidence on the properties is not available. Another significant observation is the importance of the rituals throughout the day: the morning ritual at Nambumala Kotta is important, the noon ritual at Balussery kotta is believed to be auspicious, and the evening or night ritual at Thrikkalangode temple is

considered significant. So, the trail by Vettakkorumakan can also be considered a cyclic event from dawn to dusk.



*Figure 59 Attic space of Thrikkalangode temple, the only temple where mullakkal paatt occurs on a higher level, in all other cases it happens either in an open space or in ground level.*

The places mentioned in the *vazhinada thottam*, or the trail of Vettakkorumakan, reveal that the places are spread through three present-day districts, namely Kozhikode, Wayanad, and Malappuram. Going back to the history of Kerala, north Kerala was known as the Malabar district, the central portion as Kochi, and the south of Kerala as Travancore (Figure 60). The trail of Vettakkorumakan was through four such principalities, namely Wayanad, Nedyirippu or Calicut, Kurumbranad, and Ernad. There used to be wars and conflicts between these local kingdoms. According to the mythology explained earlier, Vettakkorumakan became the protector of the Kurumbranad king, and the king started worshipping him as the family deity. Ezhuthachan (1868) mentions in *Keralolpathy* that, due to the support of Vettakkorumakan, the Kurumbranad king became undefeatable by other local kings. Once, Zamorin, the king of Calicut, requested that the Kurumbranad king help them fight against the Portuguese army. Because of the timely action of the Kurumbranad king, Zamorins were able to fight and win against the Portuguese. This provides some clues regarding the evolution of the ritual.

Historical records note that Portuguese explorer Vasco de Gama reached Calicut in 1498 CE. Zamorins refused to have a pact with the Portuguese regarding trading, but the Portuguese came back again in 1502, and at that point, they were completely prepared for conflict. Zamorin's armada was powerful and defeated the Portuguese, so they travelled further south to reach Kochi. The King of Kochi received them and helped them in numerous ways to establish their trade in Kerala. Their influence was there in Kerala until they lost a war in 1630 with the Dutch army (Ayyar, 1929; Menon, 2007).

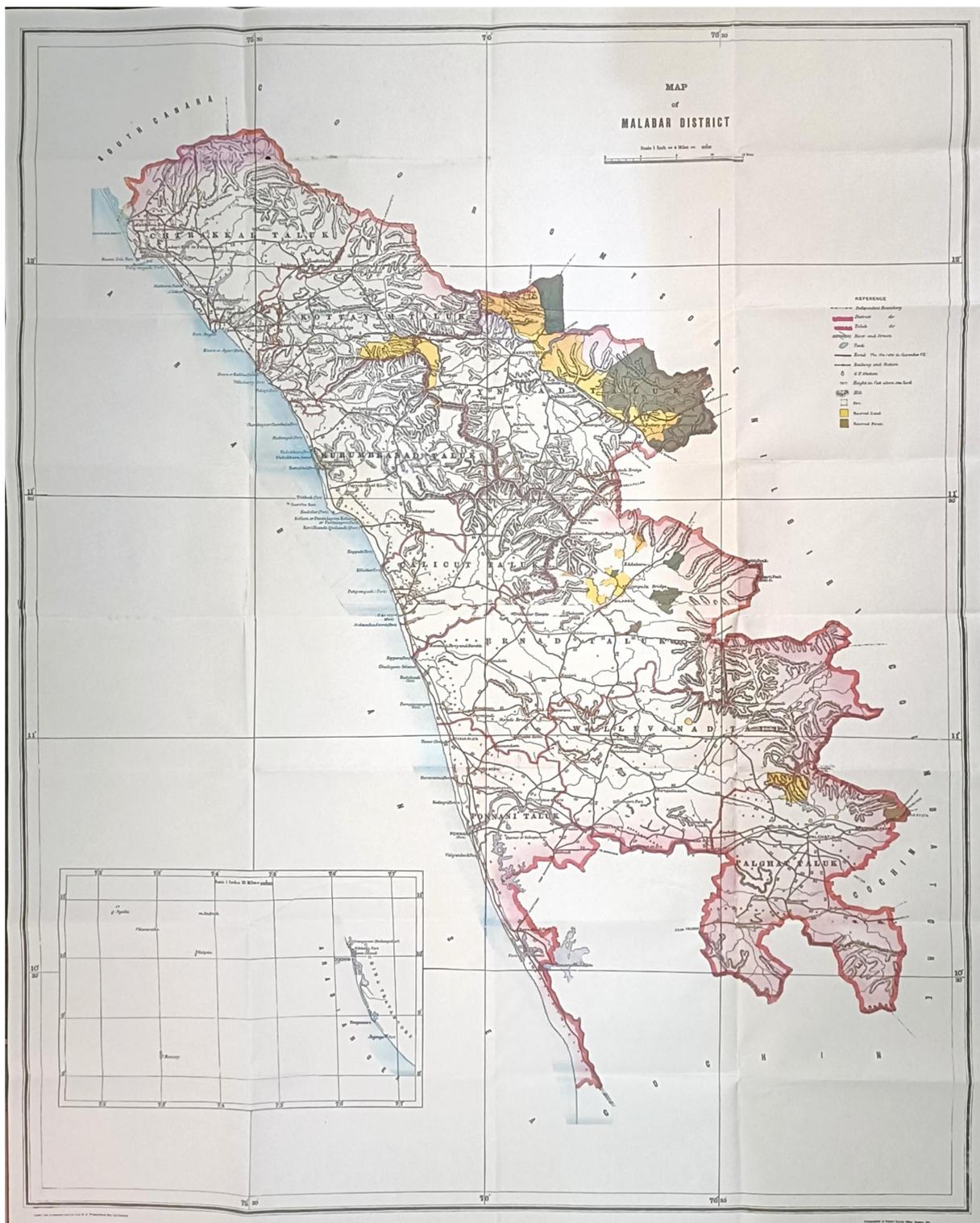


Figure 60 Map of old Malabar district showing different Taluks, Kurumbranad being one among them. Source – Logan (1887).

Even though this history doesn't mention the name of Vettakkorumakan, it can be interpreted that the Zamorins might have gotten help from the Kurumbranad king in this

war. Ezhuthachan (1868) rightly points out that after this incident, Zamorins received the king of Kurumbrand with lots of money, gold, and wealth as a token of appreciation and became devotees of Vettakkorumakan.

Along with Thali temple and Valayanadu temple, Zamorins started worshipping Vettakkorumakan in temples and *Kovilakam*, the palaces of their kingdom. The name mentioned in the thottam, 'Mankavu *kovilakam*' is one of them. The different places mentioned in the journey of Vettakkorumakan, their authenticity, and dates of the annual festival give insight into the origin and further expansion of the ritual (Table 7).

Name of temple / house	Current status	Age	Annual Festival	Date of festival
Nambumala Kotta	existing	8 <sup>th</sup> century CE	Installation anniversary	March/April
Balusseri Kotta	existing	Before late 17 <sup>th</sup> century CE	Kalamezhuth Paatt	January 11
Ulloor Padippura	existing	Unknown	Kalamezhuth Paatt	February 4
Panniamvalli Illam	existing	Unknown	Kalamezhuth Paatt	March 15
Muchukunnu Kotta	existing	Unknown	Installation anniversary	March
Bilathikulam temple	existing	13 <sup>th</sup> century CE	Kalamezhuth Paatt	April 2 <sup>nd</sup> week
Thali temple	existing	14 <sup>th</sup> century CE	Kalamezhuth Paatt	April 3 <sup>rd</sup> week
Ambadi Kovilakam/Mankavu Kovilakam	existing	Before 17 <sup>th</sup> century CE	Kalamezhuth Paatt	November/ December
Thrikkalangode	existing	Unknown	Kalamezhuth Paatt	November/ December
Punnonna Ara illam	No traces available	Unknown	-	-
Edakkara ara illam	No traces available	Unknown	-	-

*Table 7 List of important Vettakkorumakan temples and places mentioned in the thottam and the historical/textual references to show the age.*

### 8.3 Origin of Kalamezhuth Paatt of Vettakkorumakan

The evolution of Kalamezhuth Paatt has not been traced successfully to date. Alcorta & Sosis (2005) tried to correlate the origin of rituals to music and the arts with reference to ethno-archaeological evidence. According to them, even though it is difficult to trace the ritual's evolution to a symbolic signalling system, distinguishing features of rituals, for instance, chanting, music, and dance, can provide important clues. *Thottam*, the oral tradition, is giving clues, as discussed above. Looking at the language and style of the *thottam* of other deities, for instance, Bhadrakali, the mother goddess and serpent god, Kalamezhuth Paatt dedicated to these deities have evolved much before. Mundekkad (2002) also supported this statement, remarking that the Kalamezhuth Paatt of serpent gods evolved first, followed by those dedicated to mother goddesses. Ku02 noted:

*Though we have been practicing this ritual for generations, I can't specify the evolution of the ritual, but one thing is sure: the origin of Kalamezhuth Paatt is connected to the worship system established by the great Shankaracharya. (Appendix 2.6).*

Shankaracharya was a great philosopher and scholar who lived in Kerala in the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE. As the intent of this section is to discuss the evolution of Kalamezhuth Paatt dedicated to Vettakkorumakan, further discussions are based on evidence and interpretation of those indications.

In relation to the linguistics of *thottam*, as mentioned above, *thottam* is composed in old Malayalam. But the *thottam* of Vettakkorumakan is found to be much more advanced than that of the mother goddess and serpent gods. So Kalamezhtu Paatt of Vettakkorumakan might have evolved in the later stage of the evolution of Kalamezhuth Paatt.

Another indicator is the content of the *thottam* and the age of the buildings. Balussery Kotta, the most important temple dedicated to Vettakkorumakan, might have been built before the late 17<sup>th</sup> century CE, other buildings, Thali Temple, 14<sup>th</sup> century CE, and Bilathikulam Temple, 13<sup>th</sup> century CE, are older than Balussery Kotta.

The iconography of Vettakkorumakan also sheds light on the evolution of the ritual. Kumbhodharan and Preeta (2020) mention that the sculpture of Vettakkorumakan is seen on the brackets of some temples and in some museum collections. One of the oldest sculptures is found at the Pazhassi Raja Museum in Calicut, the sculpture is made up of

wood and was found in Kalpathur and dates to the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century CE (Figure 61). It is clear that the posture of Vettakkorumakan in sculpture closely resembles the posture of the deity in the *kalam*. Vettakkorumakan holds a *churika* in his right hand and a bow and arrow in his left hand. Even though it is a small sculpture of only one foot, it has some minute details such as pleats in the garments, earrings, other ornaments and *prabhamandalam* the aura.



Figure 61 Wooden sculpture of Vettakkorumakan of 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century CE found from Kalpathur temple. Photo captured from Pazhassi Raja museum, Kozhikode, Accession number 2018.883.

While talking about the changes in the ritual and spaces, Ko01 mentioned that:

*It is heard that the long vista and the spaces around the Banyan tree at Balussery Kotta were envisaged by the Thambran, or ruler of Kurumbranad, who died in the 888 Malayalam Era. (Appendix 2.1).*

That means the space to perform *melam* or grand return after *mullakkal paatt* was modified by the king, who died in 888 ME, which corresponds to 1713 CE.

The war between the Zamorins and Portuguese also sheds light to the origin of the ritual. As mentioned by Ezhuthachan (1868), Zamorins requested help from the Kurumbranad king to fight against the Portuguese in the first decade of the 16th century CE. Vettakkorumakan can be known as the key man behind Zamorins victory in that war and can be called either a myth or a reality. Vettakkorumakan can be considered a legendary hunter who first protected a group of tribal people at Nambumala and then became the protector of the entire kingdom of Kurumbranad. These actions might have created a strong memory in the minds of people. This relates to Ingold's comment regarding memory:

*'If culture is taken to consist of a body of acquired information that is available for transmission independently of the contexts of its application in the world, then memory must be something like an inner cabinet of the mind in which this information is stored and preserved from the vagaries of everyday life. Whatever people do or wherever they go, they carry the contents of memory with them.'* (Ingold, 2000, 138)

Similarly, memory of Vettakkorumakan acts as a repository where cultural knowledge is kept intact. Divinity might have been imposed on Vettakkorumakan during a later period or after his death. In that case, Vettakkorumakan, the hero's life period can be between the late 15<sup>th</sup> century and the 16<sup>th</sup> century CE. Connecting all the above indications together, it can be concluded that Kalamezhuth Paatt, dedicated to Vettakkorumakan, evolved between the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the late 17<sup>th</sup> century CE. The repeated mentions of Vettakkorumakan and Balussery Kotta in *thottam* again strengthen the notion that the Kalamezhuth Paatt

dedicated to Vettakkorumakan has evolved from the Balussery Kotta temple only. The worship of Vettakkorumakan and the special ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt dedicated to the

Lord might have spread to other parts of the state through people's memories and belief systems, particularly those who married into other kingdoms from Kurumbranad. This will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

#### **8.4 Origin of Cultural Spaces**

In terms of the evolution of built heritage or spaces, *Pattupura*, the built typology meant to conduct Kalamezhuth Paatt plays a significant role. When the design and architecture of *Paattupura* are compared, they bear a striking resemblance to those of *Koothambalam*, Kerala's temple theatre, and are an example of traditional architecture. *Koothambalam* is the built typology inside a temple complex to perform *Koodiyattam*, an ancient Sanskrit drama. Goverdhan Panchal has undertaken extensive research over the art form *Koodiyattam* and the built heritage *Koothambalam*. According to Panchal (1984), based on the epigraphical evidence, *kooth* and *koodiyattam* evolved during the first century CE. The earliest form of *Koothambalam* is known as *natakasalai*, meaning a building to perform drama. Epigraphical reference to *Koothambalam* is sparse, but stone inscriptions in the existing *Koothambalams* reveal that the earlier forms of the typology must have been in existence from the time of Kulasekhara Varman, Chera emperor of Mahodayapuram in the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE (Panchal, 1984, 31). Moreover, the guidelines for planning and constructing *Koothambalam* are mentioned in the traditional 15th century architecture text of *Thanthrasamuchayam*.

The evolution of *paattupura* as a typology from *Koothambalam* is the subject of investigation here. In vertical composition, *Koothambalam* has three parts: a stone plinth or socle, a superstructure, and a steep roof. It is rectangular in plan, always in east-west orientation. The auditorium, or so-called temple theatre, is planned in such a way that half of the portion is dedicated to the artist, which consists of a *nepathye*, or green room, and a stage to perform. The performance space, or stage, is slightly raised and has another pyramidal or flat roof under the main roof. The second half of the *koothambalam* is for the audience. It has one or two rows of timber columns on all four sides. It doesn't have an outer wall but is covered with a beautiful wooden lattice and sometimes with brackets (Figure 62). As explained in photo essay 2 and chapter 5, *paattupura* also has two parts: one

is the sanctum sanctorum of the deity, and the second part is the performance space for Kalammezhuth Paatt.

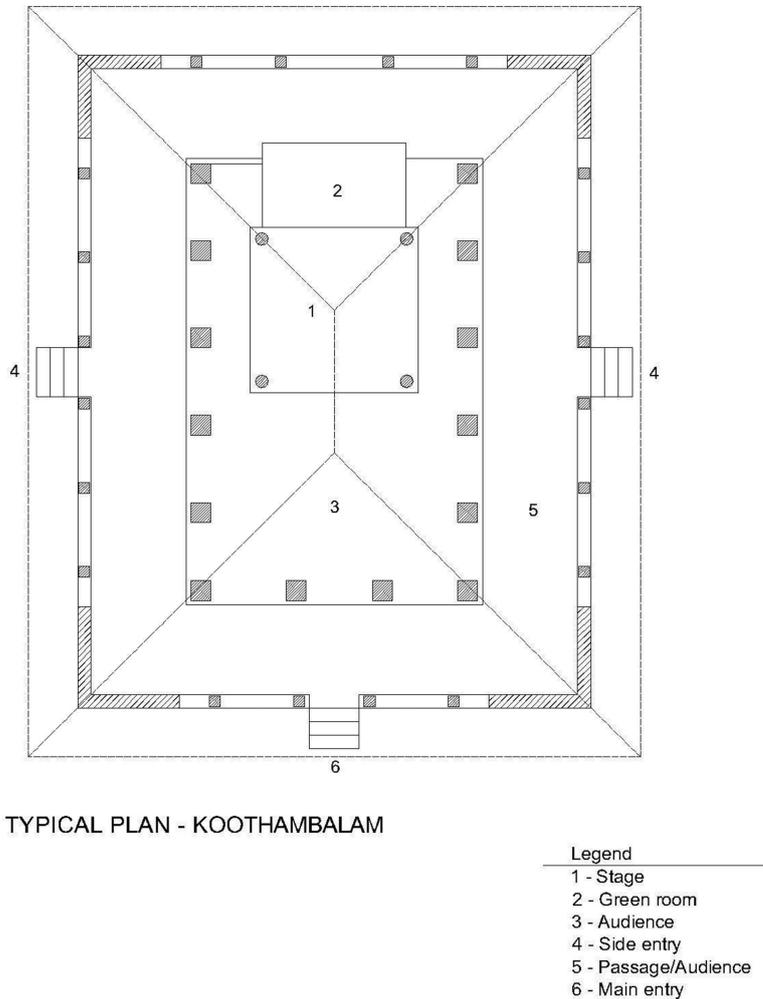


Figure 62 Typical plan of a Koothambalam, traditional temple theatre of Kerala.

Since it is already established early in this chapter that the evolution of Kalamezhuth Paatt dedicated to Vettakkorumakan is somewhere between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, there is a high possibility of the influence of *koothambalam* in the origin of *paattupura*. Furthermore, from the non-participant observations, it is noted that, similar to *koothambalam*, most of the old *paattupuras* are covered with wooden grills on three sides and have three entries, one from the front and the rest from two sides. However, the scale of the *paattupura* is much smaller than that of the *koothambalam* and the intricacy of timber carving and detailing is also less in the *paattupura*.

As the origin of Kalamezhuth Paatt dedicated to Vettakkorumakan is attributed to Balussery Kotta Temple, it should be assumed that the available resources in terms of spaces might have been used to conduct the rituals. Balussery Kotta is built in the *nalukettu* style, which features a central courtyard and four building blocks on each side (see Chapter 4). The Sanctum of Vettakkorumakan is in the southern block, and *Kalamezhuth* is conducted in the north block. However, this observation leads into another discussion on rituals and cultural spaces.

### **Spaces Shaped by the Ritual or Rituals Shaped by the Spaces?**

Associated cultural spaces are important to any rituals. As far as Kalamezhuth Paatt is concerned, spaces to draw the kalam, a place to conduct the outdoor ritual of mullakkal paatt, and pathways for the grand return after mullakkal paatt are important. Since the origin of Vettakkorumakan Kalamezhuth Paatt is at Balusseruy Kotta temple, it is for sure that the architects of the ritual have utilised the existing spaces to conduct the ritual. So, they might have used the southern block of the building for drawing the *kalam* and the space near the banyan tree for the outdoor process. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the king of Kurumbranad modified the narrow pathway that connects these two spaces to an elegant avenue. The spaces in Balussery Kotta Temple are designed in such a way that 3 elephants can occupy them. The land on both sides of the avenue is at a higher level of 3 metres, so this gives an enclosed feeling. Moreover, devotees can enjoy the spectacle of the grand return by sitting on both sides of the avenue. Here, the spaces are influenced by the ritual and shaped by the power of the ruler. As pointed out by Alcorta and Sosis (2005), some elements of rituals such as chanting, music and dancing give vital insights to trace the origin of a ritual. Here, the king of Kurumbranad enhanced the scope of instrumental music and integrated it into the space and system of Kalamezhuth Paatt and achieved the spatial quality through the intervention. The built typology of *paattupura* might have originated during the next phase of the development of Kalamezhuth Paatt. The reason behind the origin of *paattupura* might be a strong intention to create an independent structure to conduct Kalamezhuth Paatt. Again, the space is said to be shaped by the ritual.

However, the possibility should also be explored of how the ritual is shaped by the spaces. Due to the space constraints, some components of Kalamezhuth Paatt are compromised in some venues. For instance, the *pattumandapam* and pavilion to conduct *kalamezhuth* have four posts. These poles covered with white cloth and then decorated with tender coconut and plantain trees are an integral part of the rituals, and they enhance the aesthetics of the settings as well. But due to the limitations of the space, these poles are omitted in some venues, and the ceiling of the *paattumandapam* is suspended from the top of the roof. According to the interview with Ko02, Vayappuram illam in Kozhikode district falls under this category. Here, Kalamezhuth Paattu of Vettakkorumakan is conducted in *thekkini*, the southern block in the courtyard house. If the poles are erected on four sides of the *kalam*, there won't be enough space for circulation around the *kalam*, so they hang the ceiling of the *paattumandam* from the roof. Even though it doesn't have any direct impact on the ritual, the totality of the venue is reduced in these cases.

Thrikkalangode temple, located in Malappuram district, is also an important case where the existing rituals or the settings are slightly different based on the available spaces. According to Ko01, who has held the position of *Komaram* at this temple for the past four decades:

*Kalamezhuth Paatt at Thrikkalangode Temple has lots of specialties. Kalam is drawn in the vathilmadam, a hall in front of the temple dedicated to Lord Shiva, on an elevated plinth. The Sanctum of Vettakkorumakan is also on this vathilmadam, facing south and kalam is drawn in front of this sanctum. The chief priest performs kalampooja, an offering facing north rather than east. Moreover, Paattumandapam has only two vertical posts instead of four. These two poles are actually the existing wooden pillars of the vathilmadam. (Appendix 2.1)*

Another example of how Kalamezhuth Paatt is influenced by spaces is related to the ritual of taking a dip in the tank before erasing the *kalam*. *Komaram*, the ritual dancer, after performing first set of dances over the *kalam*, takes a bath in the pond. According to Ko01,

*The concept behind taking a bath after seeing the kalam is to attain salvation. It is believed that Komaram is taking a bath in the holy water, and after this, he completely gets the identity of the deity. (Appendix 2.1).*

It is understood from the interviews that some of the venues don't have water tanks, and if present, some of them are out of use. So instead of taking a dip in the tank, *Komaram* takes a quick bath in the bathroom. Ku01 mentioned during the interview that even though he had a habit of taking a bath only from the pond or stream, he had to take a bath from bathrooms in many venues, for instance, Kuniyadi temple in Kozhikode district. Taking a bath in a tank or in running water such as a stream or canal was a part of ritualised life and the concept of purity and sacredness. But these adaptations can be seen as a result of the cultural shift and an example of how the available spaces are shaping or gradually changing the ritual.

### **8.5 Transformations of the Rituals**

Any form of intangible cultural heritage is created, recreated, and continuously modified by the people who practice it. In the case of *Kalamezhuth Paatt*, several layers of changes can be seen in the form of spaces, materials, and organisation. The changes can be over a period of time or even on the same day during the ritual. This discussion below is based on my observations during the study, supported by the data collected through interviews.

#### **Transformation of Spaces**

Major cultural spaces associated with *kalamezhuth* are the covered spaces to draw the *kalam*. Ko01's response regarding the changes in the ritual space is vital here. According to him:

*The basic rituals are the same everywhere. In kalam, the head will be in the east. The chief priest's offering occurs in the bottom portion, facing east. Kurup sits on the south side, facing north. But in some cases, some changes can be seen. For example, in Balussery Kotta, Kurup sits on the north side to sing a song. As you know, Balussery Kotta Temple falls under the typology of nalukettu, which means a central courtyard surrounded by halls on four sides. I remember that previously, Kalamezhuth Paatt used to occur in the southern block of the courtyard. Around 40 years ago, it was shifted to the north block, and the position of the Kurup was also changed as per the convenience of the audience. Regarding the spaces, the location of mullakkal paatt gets changed in some venues. These decisions are taken by the temple authorities or house owners for their convenience (Appendix 2.1).*

The shift of performance space from the interior of the traditional house to a dedicated building to conduct Kalamezhuth Paatt can be considered a growth of the ritual as well as a transformation. The detail of this is provided by the insight into the spaces from my family's involvement and patronage with Kalamezhuth Paatt. My father reported that Kalamezhuth Paatt at my family used to be conducted inside the house, but at some point, it shifted to outside. At that time, the sanctum was a permanent structure constructed of traditional materials such as laterite blocks, lime mortar, timber and clay tile. But the *paattupura* was temporary. Later in 1990, a new *pattupura* was constructed on the same site using new building materials, including reinforced concrete. So, this is another layer of change in the quality of spaces, that is, from traditional to modern. In the next stage of change, recent patrons started shifting the *pattumandapam* from *paattupura* to outside. This is mainly because of the inaccessibility of common devotees, as according to the unwritten rules, only temple servants are permitted inside the *paattupura* to maintain purity and sanctity. Moreover, all three sides of the *paattupura* are usually covered with closely placed timber lattice, reducing visibility from outside. However, as a part of popularising the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt, more people wanted to witness the ritual, hence the shift of venue.

### **Transformation in the System**

These transformations are happening mainly due to the changes in society and the impact is mostly on the social system of the ritual. As discussed in Chapter 6, Kalamezhuth Paatt can be considered a community affair as each community holds some specific role in the ritual. However, some circumstances force the communities involved in the ritual to take on the extra duty of other groups or let some new groups be a part of the system. Ko02, during the interview, explains how Namboodiri Brahmins became involved in the ritual. According to his observation:

*Years ago, a community called Karora Panicker had the right to become Komaram of Vettakkorumakan. Unni Panicker and Kutta Panicker, who were sons of a Namboodiri of Kozhikode, used to do the ritual dancing. Since they failed to transfer the tradition to the next generation, it was decided to give the right to Namboodiri Brahmins. (Appendix 2.2)*

In fact, Namboodiris took up this role to preserve the ritual art. Not every Namboodiri family was eligible to become the oracle. Panemkali, or Sanghakali, is a ritualistic art that was

popular among the Namboodiri families. A particular group of people used to perform this art form in connection with ceremonies like weddings and birthdays (Namboothiri, 2018) and there were different groups in different regions of the state. In Kozhikode, six Namboodiri families were involved in conducting this art form. Later, the position of *Komaram* in Vettakkorumakan Paatt was taken up by these six families. Based on the data collected through interviews, it can be determined that this development might have occurred in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century CE. Nevertheless, recent trends show that to manage the increased number of venues, the Kurup community has also started taking up the duty of *Komaram*. According to Kuo2:

*As per the mythology, Karakoora Nair is the authoritative Komaram of Vettakkorumakan, and Panniamvalli Bhattathirippad is the chief priest. As I told you, previously, the number of rituals in a year was too low. As it increased, Namboodiri Brahmins started taking up the role of Komaram. Recently, people from our community also opted for the position of Komaram in Vettakkorumakan Paatt. I consider it an action to protect and expand the scope of the ritual art of Kalamezhuth. Around twenty people from our community play the role of Komaram in different parts of the state. (Appendix 2.6)*

Since Karakoora Nair is the official *Komaram* of Vettakkorumakan, members of some patron families are not fully receptive to these sociological changes. Nevertheless, this is a positive change. Apart from the changes mentioned above, the impact of rapid economic growth can also be seen in Kalamezhuth Paatt. This is mainly in terms of timing, according to Ko05:

*The basics are almost the same. But there may be some changes in the timing. For example, all artists used to reach the venue in the morning of the day of the ritual; they started their work only after taking a dip in the tank. It was more of a dedication than a job. Nowadays, most of the artists have their own vehicles, so they reach the venue on time and leave the place immediately after the completion of the ritual (Appendix 2.8).*

This is an indicator of how the ritual is transforming with respect to the changes in society. The following table is prepared based on my father's accounts of Kalamezhuth Paatt conducted for the last fifty years.

Name of the property	Thenchery Illam	
Place	Kakkur, Kozhikode	
Date	Before 2000 (timings are approximate)	Recently conducted (01.05.2022)
<i>Uchappaatt</i>	12.30pm	12.30pm
<i>Kalam Varakkal</i>	4pm to 8pm	3pm to 6.30pm
<i>Sandhyavela and Thayambaka</i>	7pm to 10.00pm	5.15pm to 6.45pm
<i>Kombu patt, kuzhal patt</i>	10pm to 10.15pm	6.45pm to 7.00pm
<i>Mullakkal paatt</i>	11.30pm to 12am	7.45pm to 8.15pm
<i>Ezhunnallath</i>	12pm to 1.30am	8.15pm to 9.30pm
<i>Eedum Koorum</i>	1.30am to 1.45am	9.30pm to 9.45pm
<i>Kalapradakshinam</i>	1.45am to 2.15am	10.00pm to 10.20pm
<i>Kalam pooja</i>	2.15am to 2.45am	10.30pm to 11.00pm
<i>Thottam</i>	2.45am to 3.15am (including <i>padappatt</i> , the war song)	11.10pm to 11.30pm
<i>Thiri uzhichil</i>	3.15am to 3.30am	11.30pm to 11.40pm
<i>Kalathilattam</i>	3.30am to 3.35am	11.40pm to 11.45pm
<i>Kalam maykkal</i>	4am to 4.10am	11.50pm to 12.00am
<i>Thenga eriyal</i>	4.10am to 4.30am	12.00am to 12.10am
<i>Koora valiikkal</i>	5.00am*  *Many times, it went on till 6 am.	12.20am

*Table 8 Transformation of the ritual in terms of time, this summary is drawn out by comparing kalamezhuth paatt that was conducted before 2000's and after 2020's at Thenchery Illam, a Namboodiri house in Kozhikode.*

It is clear from the table that no rituals were compromised in the whole process; however, a big shift is visible at the end of the ritual. According to Ko01's memories about Kalamezhuth Paatt when he was young, there was not much public transport or access to private vehicles. So, artists in small and large groups used to walk from one venue to another; they reached the venue a day before the ritual and stayed at the patron's house or temple and the group used to stay back one or two days after the ritual for no reason. Another important

observation made is in the case of preparation of powders to draw the *kalam*. Previously, all powders were prepared in the venue itself; there were a specific set of people to do this job. The group, which was called *adichuthali*, or cleaners, used to do the job of preparing the powders and cleaning the venue. However, it is not surprising that the powders to draw the *kalam* are available in some specific markets and the shops are known as *pooja* stores. All five powders are easily available in most of the *pooja* stores, which are located in all cities and even villages. These stores supply all materials required not only for Kalamezhuth Patt but also for the Hindu worship system, including rice, coconut, cloth, and flowers. The present-day ritual hasn't transformed a huge amount, but the rapid growth of technology and the economy has largely affected the bonding between the artists and the patrons.

### **Transformation in the Form of Materials**

Materiality is also an important entity as far as transformation is considered, and the cultural shift has also affected the materiality of Kalamezhuth Paatt. From the interviews, it is understood that the floor to draw the *kalam* was prepared by applying a paste of cow dung and the burnt outer husk of coconut. The black surface and the texture created by this paste not only act as an underlay for the *kalam* but also help the Kurup draw the *kalam* perfectly. But recent developments show that very few venues follow this traditional method for preparing the floor. Recently, traditional earth flooring was replaced by new materials such as cement flooring, ceramic tiles, granite, or marble in many venues. The artists during the interview mentioned that even if the modern flooring looks good, it doesn't function well in the case of Kalamezhuth Paatt. If oil or water is splashed on these floors by mistake, it may be difficult for *Komaram* to do the ritual dance. Moreover, reflection from the glossy surface makes it difficult to draw the *kalam*.

*Kurup* used to make some beautiful containers using banana leaves to put these powders while drawing the *kalam* but the use of plastic containers made their job easier, and nobody uses banana leaves now. Finally, the materials used to make the *paattumandapam* have also changed, industrialization made the patrons use steel, PVC pipes, and other durable metals to construct *paattumandapam*, and the one shown in photo essay 2 is made up of black painted iron pipes. The perception of less maintenance and long durability are the positive aspects of this change to the materiality of the structures associated with the ritual.

However, the use of synthetic materials and the overpowering of technology are points of concern in this regard.

### **8.6 Role of Authenticity in the Transformation of the Ritual**

The recommendations of the Nara document (1994) are important as Kalamezhuth Paatt is a cultural heritage property. Article 4 of the document states:

*In a world that is increasingly subject to the forces of globalization and homogenization, and in a world in which the search for cultural identity is sometimes pursued through aggressive nationalism and the suppression of the cultures of minorities, the essential contribution made by the consideration of authenticity in conservation practice is to clarify and illuminate the collective memory of humanity. (ICOMOS, 1994).*

Here, cultural identity, collective memory, and authenticity are critical. Changes in terms of materials as well as the organisation of the ritual can be considered a by-product of industrialization and economic growth. As all of the interview respondents clearly mentioned that the system of the ritual is not deviating from the basic structure, it can be said that authenticity is not lost. However, some aspects are lost, especially in terms of *thottam*, as two types of *thottam* are barely practiced nowadays - the *padappatt*, or war songs in Malabar region and *katha*, the story of the birth of Vettakkorumakan. This is, of course, affecting the integrity of the ritual. Further, the impact of information technology on the ritual can be illustrated by live streaming of the ritual at some temples, for instance, Thottam *Mana*, Thrissur District. Kalamezhuth Paatt is a week-long festival at this temple and more than 2400 people watched the streaming of 2023's ritual and the cultural programs conducted in connection with the festival (Kshethra media, 2023).

### **8.7 Summary**

The main conclusion of this chapter is that Kalamezhuth Paatt, devoted to Vettakkorumakan, emerged from Balussery Kotta Temple during the 16th and 17th centuries and this is based on historical, literary, and archaeological evidence. Later, the ritual was expanded to other parts of the kingdom of Kurumbranad. Until the mid-20th century, *Kovilakam*, a few temples, and certain Namboodiri houses were the principal locations where the rituals were performed. People began doing Kalamezhuth Paatt as an

offering after receiving their wishes and for the welfare of the family, as it has become more well known. Thus, the number of locations has nearly doubled in the past two decades. Even outside of the state, for example, in Tamil Nadu, the neighbouring state, it became popular. It is positive that communities engaged in the ritual are able to face challenges and maintain the significance of the ritual, adapting physically (through spaces and materials) and to sustain Kalamezhuth Paatt as a part of the collective identity and memory. Based on the interviews, it can be concluded that the core idea of present-day ritual has not deviated much from the beginning, and hence authenticity is not lost. The next chapter is on the landscape shaped by Kalamezhuth Paatt.

**Chapter 9 –**  
**The Landscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt**

## 9.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt from a much wider perspective focusing on the landscape aspects of the ritual. It interprets the landscape shaped by the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt at three levels, namely the microlevel, macrolevel, and regional level. The landscape is composed of various components at each level. This includes the settlement of different communities involved in the ritual, temples and houses where Kalamezhuth Paatt occurs, and various natural elements such as rivers, tanks, and trees. Mapping is an important tool in this chapter, as the results are presented spatially to aid their interpretation. One of the major questions in the research interview concerned the places where the artist conducts the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt. All these places/venues are listed and mapped to show the formation and continuation of the landscape. The expansion of the landscape is also an important point of interest in this chapter. However, this section of the thesis emphasises the final objective, i.e., to define the ritualistic landscape shaped by Kalamezhuth Paatt dedicated to Lord Vettakkorumakan and identify and map the components and boundaries of the landscape. The chapter ends with a discussion on the impact of external factors like COVID-19 on the Kalamezhuth Paatt.

Before delving into the details of the landscape of the ritual at the micro level, it will be worthwhile to rethink the suitability of the term landscape in this context. This is mainly because of the notion of landscape put forward by Ingold (1993), who notes that landscape is not land, not nature, and it is not space. So, to highlight the lived experience and bringing in the dynamic nature, Ingold's *taskscape* (1993) can be considered a concept. Since the concept was criticised for its over focus on people's deliberate action, Ingold (2017) later considered each activity or task in a landscape as a linear line, and different such lines constitute a meshwork.

Integrating the notion of non representational theories in landscape by Thrift (1993) to Ingold's *taskscape* will fill the above mentioned gap. The successful adaptation of *taskscape* by researchers (Äikäs, 2017; Hawley, 2024) shows the credibility of the concept. As pointed out by Herrmans (2020, 769) through the lense of non representational theories (NRT),

*'Understanding how the visible and invisible worlds interact with one another fosters a feeling of oneness between humans and the spirit world, as well as between humans and the material world, where the spirit world is pervasive and fundamental'*

So, Ingold's notion of taskscape can be seen as a combination of tangible and intangible aspects, where temporality, human and non human agencies and physical features are key players. This is equally applicable in the case of Kalamezhuth Paatt, which is a system of ritual, consisting of a series of sub-rituals. These sub-rituals can be considered various tasks to be accomplished by the different communities, devotees, or in general by the users. Time is also a major factor here, where these tasks or activities are to be completed on time, thus introducing the concept of 'temporality'. Hence, considering the critical role of time, activities and experiential aspects in the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt, the settings created by the ritual at the micro level can be called taskscapes rather than landscapes. How this becomes the smallest unit of the ritualist landscape is another query, and it will be answered by the end of this chapter.

## **9.2 Taskscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt**

Ingold (1993, 195) defines a task as any practical operation carried out by a skilled agent in an environment as part of his or her normal business of life, and every task takes meaning from its position within an ensemble of tasks, performed in series or parallel, and usually by many people working together. If landscape is an array of related features, then taskscape is an array of related activities. Similarly, four important aspects of non representational theory (Thrift, 1993) in landscape are space-time, practice, subject and agency. Even though different activities or rituals involved in Kalamezhuth Paatt were listed and discussed before, all those activities are reinterpreted here based on the theoretical framework of taskscape. Here, the skilled agents or agency mentioned in the definition of task are skill-based communities that have defined roles in the ritual, for instance, Kurup communities' business is to draw the form of the deity on the floor and to sing songs, and the ultimate duty of *Komaram* is to represent the deity itself. Likewise, the term environment mentioned in the definition stands for the entire context. Further, practices, in this context, refer to the rituals associated with the belief system of Lord Vettakkorumakan. These practices and beliefs are not parallel, but rather interconnected. The belief system cannot exist independently; it is

intertwined with the ancestral roles or jobs of the community, and both elements play a role in the rituals. The tangible components of the rituals (such as material objects) are the physical manifestations of these intangible beliefs and traditions. The concept of taskscape as a meshwork (Ingold, 2017) can be interpreted in this way also. So broadly, it can be said that the components of the taskscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt are the physical settings or context, the people or skilled agents, and the series of tasks accomplished by both of these entities.

### **Components of Taskscapes**

The physical settings or context to conduct Kalamezhuth Paatt essentially include a permanent or temporary building called *paattupura* to house the *paattumandapam* and the sanctum of the deity, a space in front of or near this to perform the ritual dance of *eedum koorum*, and a space, preferably an open space, to conduct the outdoor ritual of *mullakkal paatt*. All these spaces become sacred when particular tasks are imposed on them. As discussed in the previous chapters, each ritual has a meaning and a way of doing it. The skill-based communities use belief systems as a tool to influence the minds of other users, especially devotees. Temporality also plays a major role in the taskscape. One of the major tasks or components of the ritual is to draw the form of the deity on the floor. Analysing this process through Ingold's theory of the temporality of the taskscape provides useful insight. There is no doubt that the act of preparing the drawing is highly temporal, as movements are happening inside the *paattumandapam*, even if it is a small space. Cognitive processes, in terms of creativity, are happening in this task of drawing the *kalam*. The devotees are seeing only the final product of the *kalam*, which is static, and paying offerings to their favourite deity. Hence, the actual task of preparing the drawing is subordinated to the final product of the finished and decorated *kalam*.

Another important component that creates temporality in the ritual is music. Here, music can be in the form of the instrument music created by *Marar* on *chenda* for the ritual dance and the song sung by Kurup. While introducing the concept of taskscape, Ingold (1993) rightly points out that music can exist only when it is performed; it does not pre-exist. Moreover, the temporality of the taskscape created by music is social. That means the people around or the devotees also participate in the performance, not directly but by

giving their reflections as an expression of appreciation. During the grand return to the venue after the outdoor ritual of *mullakkal paatt*, Marar and the team perform *melam*, a special instrumental music. The task can be completed successfully not only because of the performance of drummers but also because of the involvement of the audience by waving their hands and shaking heads in rhythm. So, there is an absolute mutual tuning-in relationship, and these movements and resonance are becoming a part of the taskscape. Furthermore, the movements and ritualistic dance steps of *Komaram* are also a part of the taskscape. Here, there is no resonance from the audience; rather a feeling of reverence is created. The interactions in terms of non-verbal communication happening between Marar and *Komaram*, and Kurup and *Komaram* also play a vital role in completing the task and thereby creating a taskscape. However, the intention of this section on the interpretation of taskscape is not to overlook the scope of landscape but to emphasise the notion of temporality in the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt.

The various rituals involved in Kalamezhuth Paatt can be divided into four ensembles of tasks.

Task 1: Prepare the venue physically and spiritually, which starts with the ritual of *uchappatt*.

Task 2: Prepare the drawing of the deity on the floor, which consists of the systematic completion of the *kalam*.

Task 3: Create an ambiance for devotees to pay respect to the deity who is in the form of *kalam*, which consists of sub-rituals and performances including *thayambaka*, *mullakkal paatt*, grand return, *eedum koorum chavittal*, *kalapradakshinam*, *kalam pooja*, and *thottam*. This particular task seems to be longer because it is responsible for giving festivity to the entire process.

Task 4: erase the *kalam* and complete the process, which includes *kalam maykkal* and *thenga eriyal*.

These tasks evolved from the concepts of *sristhi*, *sthithi*, and *samhara*, which mean creation, existence, and destruction, respectively. This concept can be explored through the example of Balussery Kotta Temple, whose layout can be classified into four zones (Figure 63).

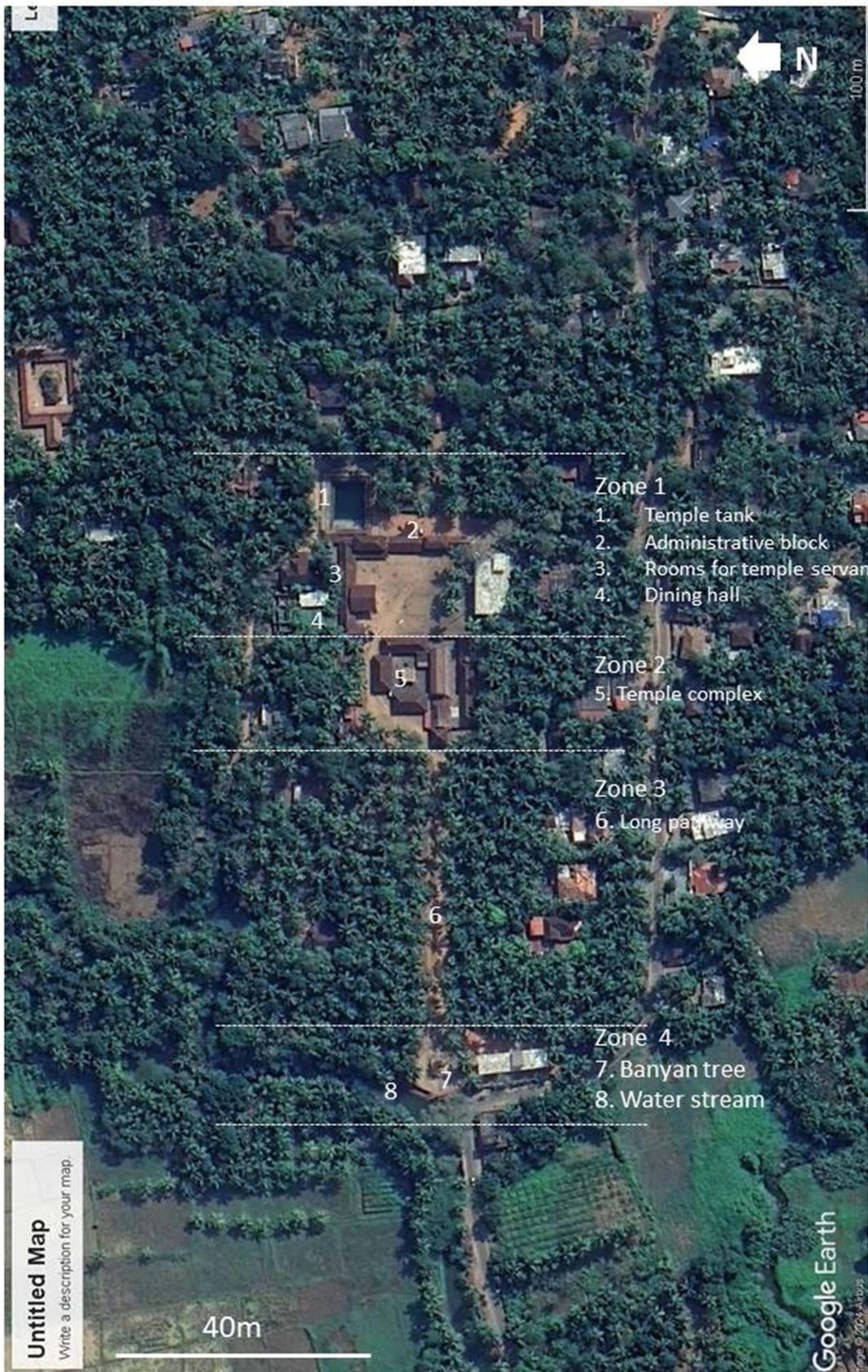


Figure 63 Layout plan of Balussery Kotta temple, most famous temple dedicated to Lord Vettakkorumakan. It also shows how the entire layout can be divided into various zones based on the activities happening in the cultural spaces.

Starting from the top portion of the layout,

Zone 1: temple tank, administrative area, rooms for temple servants, and dining hall

Zone 2: temple in the structure of a courtyard building, which also includes *paattumandapam*

Zone 3: the long pathway

Zone 4: a banyan tree and a stream

Here, tasks 1, 2, and 3 are performed in zone 2, whereas task 3 happens in zone 3, and supporting events happen in parallel in zones 1, 2, and 4. Various tasks mentioned above remain the same in all venues, but there may be some changes in the physical settings in terms of scale. The distance between *Paatumandapam* and the venue of *Mullakkal Paatt* will be a varying factor. It is observed that, in many cases, it is near the boundary of the plot, near a water body, or under a tree. In general, the carrying capacity of these cultural spaces should be enough for a team consisting of the core community and the devotees. However, components of the taskscape are almost the same in all venues, which are distributed in all parts of the state.

### **9.3 Settlement of Communities**

Having established the scope of the taskscape in Kalamezhuth Paatt, this section focuses on the settlement of different core communities or people involved in the ritual. Nevertheless, from this point onwards, the discussion will be on the concept of landscape rather than taskscape. These communities represent skilled agents who complete each task in Kalamezhuth Paatt of Vettakkorumakan. The two major groups considered here are Kurup and *Komaram*. Though the involvement of other groups, namely Marar, *Thanthri*, and *Kazhakam*, is also present in the ritual, their hereditary job is not limited to the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt. Hence, this section focuses on the settlements of Kurup and *Komaram*. The source of information is mainly interviews, supported by specific points from a literature review.

## Settlement of Kurup Communities

Much of the information regarding the Kurup community, for instance, history, training and role in the ritual, is detailed in Chapter 6 but the location of their places of residence is considered by Ku01:

*Balusseri is the prime centre of Kurup in this region. There are three families, namely Kizhakke Veedu, Padinjare Veedu, and Kocharukandi, who take on the responsibility of conducting Vettakkorumakan paatt in this region. Apart from that, one family is there in Kottur, namely Pattamadakkal. Another group of people is staying in a place called Cherukara in Wayanad. Their family name is also Kizhakkuveedu. Another family is settled near the Nerumkaitha Kotta temple. The rest of the people are mainly staying in Thrissur district. (Appendix 2.3)*

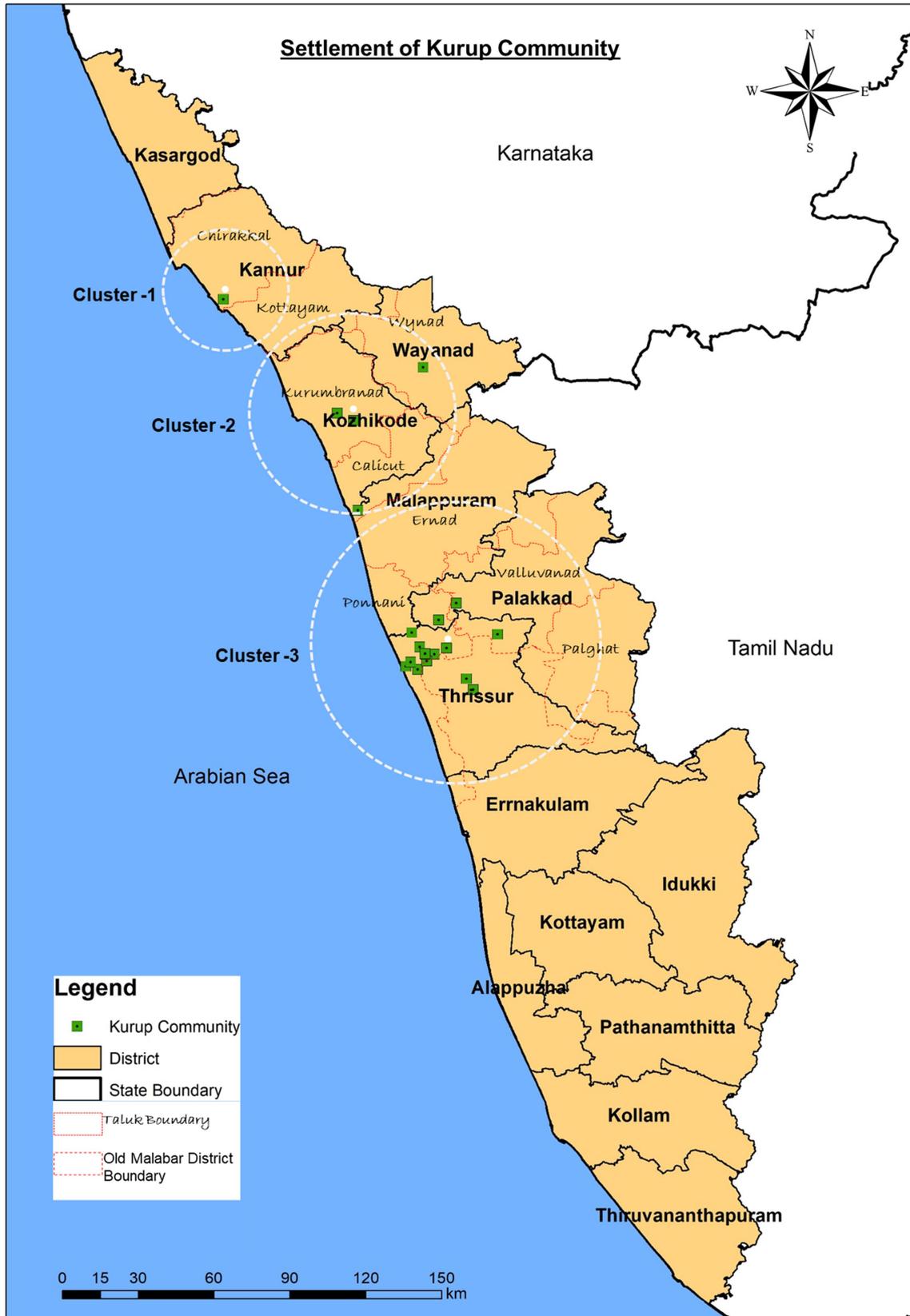
The term region mentioned here denotes a geographical area constituted by Kozhikode, Wayanad, and a portion of Malappuram districts. Three Kurup families stay close to Balusseri Kotta temple. These three families divided the areas around Balusseri Kotta Temple and shared the responsibility of doing Kalamezhuth Paatt. To elaborate, if a venue is under the responsibility of Kizhakkeveedu, then the other two families, Padinjareveedu and Kocharukandi, help the former to conduct the ritual, and likewise in other ways too. According to Ku01, even though there used to be some conflicts between the families regarding the division of venues, the seniors and elders could solve the issues, and all male members of the three families used to attend Kalamezhuth Paatt at Balusseri Kotta Temple. They were following a joint family system and used to stay in their ancestral home. Now that the system has changed, all stay in independent houses in the same locality. Similarly, one family is staying in a place called Kottur, which is 10 kilometres from Balusseri Kotta, and one family is staying in Wayanad and Malappuram districts. So, basically, those who have been involved in the Kalamezhuth Paatt of Kozhikode and Wayanadu and a portion of Malappuram districts originate from six ancestral houses. Those who are doing Kalamezhuth Paatt in Kannur and Kasargod are known as Theyyampadi Nambiars, unfortunately, only one family exists now.

Furthermore, another set of families involved in the drawing and singing of Kalamezhuth Paatt is known as Kallatta Kurup. Around 15 families are staying in and around Guruvayur, a

place in Thrissur district (Map 3). Mundekkad (2002) has listed all the names, and they are as follows:

1. Thiruvenkilam Kallatt in Guruvayur
2. Orumanayur Kallatt in Chavakkad
3. Pannissery Kallatt in Choondal
4. Payyur Kallatt in Choondal
5. Aloor Kallatt in Mattam
6. Kakkassery Kallatt in Pavaratty
7. Kanippayyur Kallatt in Kunnamkulam
8. Chiranellur Kallatt in Kecheri
9. Attur Kallatt in Chelakkara
10. Kirathanellur Kallatt in Velur
11. Perumudiyur Kallatt in Pattambi
12. Kuttur Kallatt in Thrissur
13. Mundathikkode Kallatt in Kuttanellur
14. Kavungal Kallatt in Kattakambal
15. Kavil Kallatt in Nagalassery

People belonging to these families are responsible for conducting Kalamezhuth Paatt in Thrissur, Palakkad, a portion of Malappuram, and Ernakulam districts. Even though these 15 families have their ancestral houses in and around Guruvayur, they have moved to different places in the four districts mentioned above due to various reasons. Current Situation of Settlements So far, the discussion is on the settlement of Kurup communities in the present-day situation. But it is interesting to think about the distribution of these settlements with reference to the old kingdoms. Overlaying the map of the old Malabar district on the present-day map, it can be found that three families around Balussery Kotta and the one in Kottur belong to the Kurumbranad kingdom. Cherukara Kizhakkuveedu is in the Wynad kingdom; Nadoraveedu is in the Kottayam kingdom; and likewise, Nerumkaithakotta is in the Eranad kingdom. On the other hand, the Kallatta families mentioned above are coming under the old Venad kingdom. These settlements can again be interpreted as three clusters (map 3).



Map 3 Settlement of Kurup community in Kerala. Group 1 is in Kannur, has only one family. Group 2 has 6 families with Balussery Kotta as the centre. Group 3 consists of all 15 Kallatta families with Guruvayur as the centre. Taluk boundaries of old Malabar district.

Group 1- North Malabar, Kannur as the centre - has only one family.

Group 2 - Central Malabar, with Balussery Kotta as the focal point - consists of six families.

Group 3 - South Malabar and Cochin, with Guruvayur as the focus - includes all Kallatta families.

This clustering plays a major role in creating the landscape shaped by Kalamezhuth Paatt, dedicated to Vettakkorumakan and this aspect will be revisited after explaining the details of *Komaram*.

#### **9.4 Locale of *Komaram***

*Komaram* is not a community, but it is the name of a position that represents the lord itself in the ritual and so only one *Komaram* is required in a venue, unlike Kurup and Marar. That is, two or three people from the *Kurup* community are required to conduct a Kalamezhuth Paatt. So, the number of people who play the role of *Komaram* is less compared to that of *Komaram*. As of now, around 20 people are holding the position of *Komaram* in Kalamezhuth Paatt of Vettakkorumakan and only 9 are interviewed. Due to ethical considerations, as mentioned in the methodology chapter, codes are assigned to all artists.

1. Ko01 - Kozhikode district
2. Ko03 - Kozhikode district
3. Ko05 - Thrissur district
4. Ko06 - Palakkad district
5. Ko02 - Kozhikode district
6. Ko04 - Kozhikode district
7. Ku01 - Kozhikode district
8. Ku02 - Kannur district
9. Ku03 - Thrissur district

Some people from the *Kurup* community are also holding the position of *Komaram*. Ko stands for *Komaram*, and Ku represents Kurup in the above list.



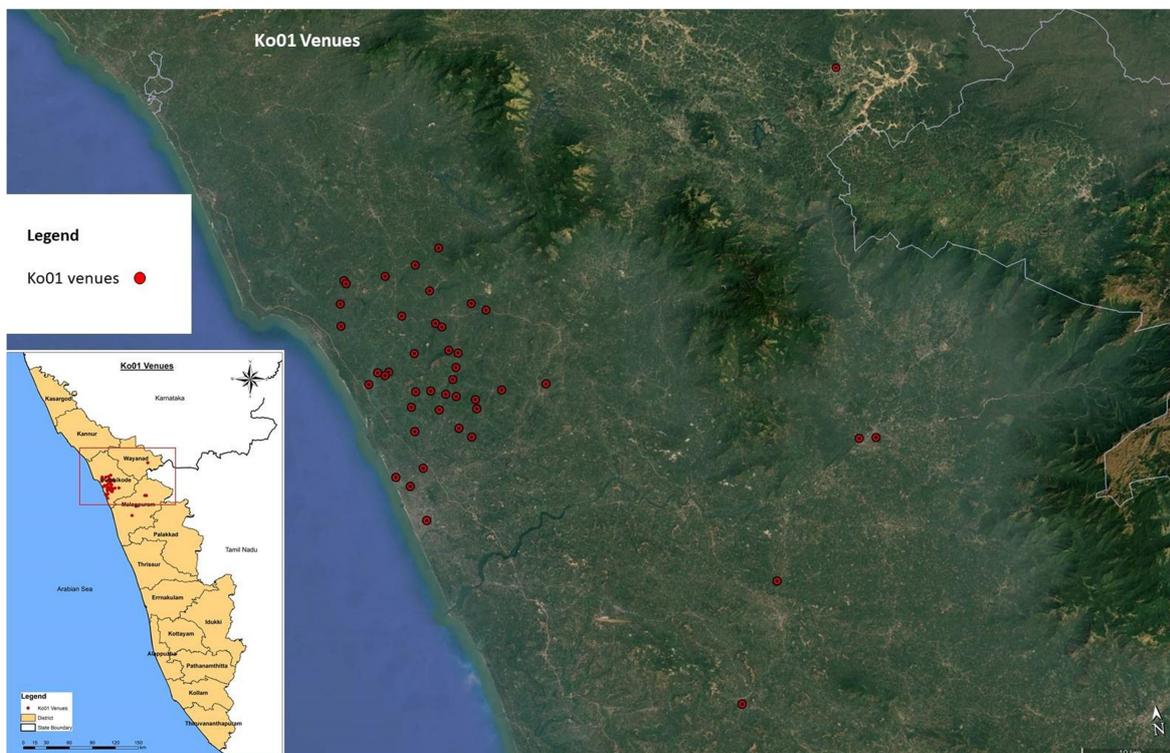
Map 4 Location of Vettakkorumakan Komarams in Kerala, prepared based on the interviews.

Only three of the artists from the *Kurup* community are considered in this research, belonging to three different districts. The role of *Komaram* is inherited from previous generations for all these artists, and according to the interview, their family has been in the

ritual for the last two to three generations. All *Komarams* but Ko01 have at least one disciple, and all of them have debuted in the field recently as *Komarams*, but they are not included here as their responsibility is to help their teachers or to substitute for other *Komarams*. Map 4 shows the location of *Komarams* in the state. It is clear from the map and the listed data that out of 9 artists, five are from the Kozhikode district, two artists from the Thrissur districts, and one each from Kannur and Palakkad districts. It is important to see how different venues are distributed across the state and how these artists are involved in the ritual and the following sections will explain how these skilled artists are managing various venues. This is based on the response to the last prompt in the interview, which are the details of venues undertaken by the artists.

### **Ko01 as *Komaram* in Kalamezhuth Paatt**

Ko01 is 74 years old and belongs to the Namboodiri family. He has been in the profession for the past 57 years, and he is the senior *Komaram* now. He represents the third generation of *Komaram* in his family, but unfortunately, he doesn't have a successor from his family, nor does he have capable disciples to help him and so he is taking care of all the venues alone. Map 5 shows the location of temples and houses where he plays the role of

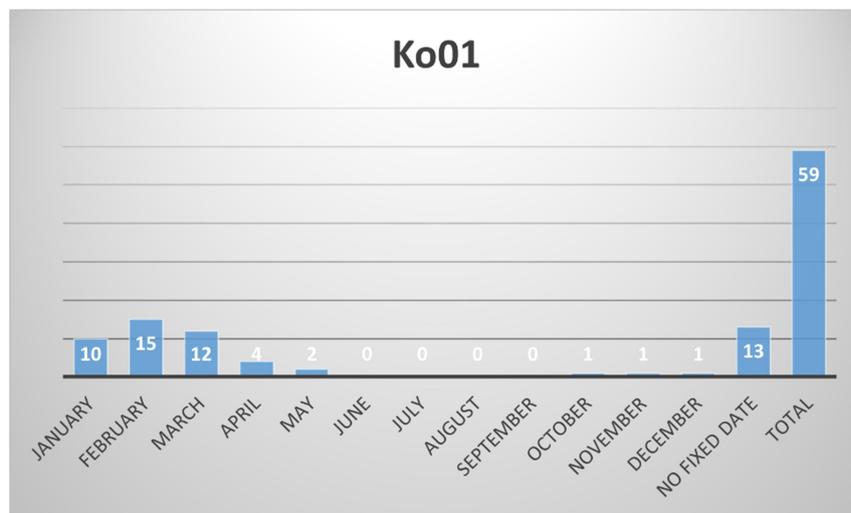


Map 5 Shows the venues where Ko01 holds the position of *Komaram*, mapping is done based on the data collected through the interview.

*Komaram.*

All of the venues except five are in Kozhikode district and that five venues are in the neighbouring districts, Malappuram and Wayanad. Some of the venues, for instance, Thrikkalangode Temple and Nilambur *Kovilakam* Temple, conduct Kalamezhuth Paatt for more than one day. Another important observation is regarding the category of venue. Out of 59 venues, 47 are temples, and the rest of them are *Illam* or Namboodiri houses. Taking the artist's own house as the centre, the majority of the venues are coming inside a circle with a radius of 22 kilometres. Only five temples are left outside this imaginary circle, and the farthest venue is 55 kilometres from his house.

The significance of temporality in the taskscape was already discussed earlier in this chapter. Now, it is good to see how temporality can be reviewed at the landscape level.



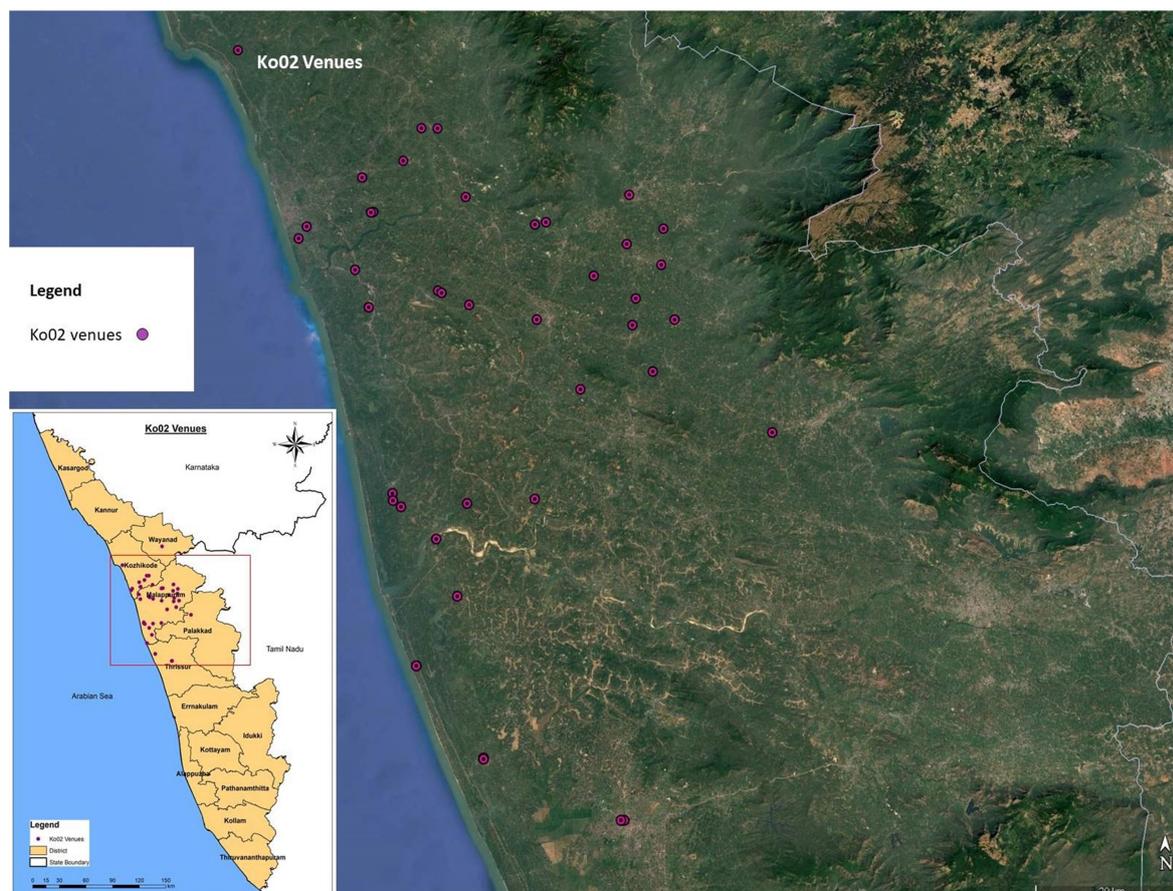
*Chart 1 Distribution of Ko01's venue in a calendar year.*

The distribution of Ko01's venues annually shows his season starts at the end of October and reaches its peak in February, when he has to manage 15 venues (Chart 1). There are cases where he has to perform at two venues on the same day. So, one can imagine the amount of travel to be conducted and the sleepless nights he is having in the busy season. He is travelling approximately 700 kilometres during February, when the average speed of public transport in rural areas is 25 kilometres per hour. The total number of rituals happening during the months of January, February, and March is 37. That means Ko01 has to conduct the ritual once every three days on average. After that, the number is gradually decreasing, and there are no events from June to September. Apart from the venues that

follow a fixed date for the ritual, there are 13 venues where the date of the ritual is random. Ko01 says that he used to use the rainy season from June to September to undergo some traditional body massage every year. This helps him to regain both physical and mental health. However, the above map and the chart indicate how the schedule of an artist is interwoven with the landscape created by Kalamezhuth Paatt.

### **Ko02 as *Komaram* in Kalamezhuth Paatt**

Ko02 also belongs to the Namboodiri family in the Kozhikode district. Ko02 has been playing the role of *Komaram* in Vettakkorumakan Kalamezhuth Paatt for the past 30 years. He is happy that he has many disciples, and one of them is his son. So, the tradition is going on, and Ko02's son represents the fourth generation of his family. The majority of his venues are in the Malappuram district (Map 6). According to Ko02, there is a strong reason for this. Due to declining health and the unavailability of a predecessor from his family, around 15 years ago a senior *Komaram* transferred most of his venues in Malappuram district to Ko02.



Map 6 Shows the venues where Ko02 holds the position of *Komaram*, mapping is done based on the data collected through the interview

Including these, Ko02 holds the position of *Komaram* in 43 places in the district, which contains the venues inherited from his family and those taken up from other *Komaram*.

He has 18 venues in Kozhikode, 6 in Thrissur, 2 in Palakkad, and one venue in Wayanad district. Though he has to travel around 120 kilometres from his house to reach the farthest venue, most of the venues are in a circle of 45 kilometres. It is also noted that 32 of his rituals are happening in temples, 30 are in Namboodiri houses or *illams*, four are in *Kovilakam* or royal houses, and finally one is in a Nair house. Apart from these, he holds the position of *Komaram* for other deities, namely Ayyappan and Karumakan, but is not included in the list as it is excluded from the scope of this research. However, the location of these venues again points towards the importance of the formation of clusters (Chart 2).

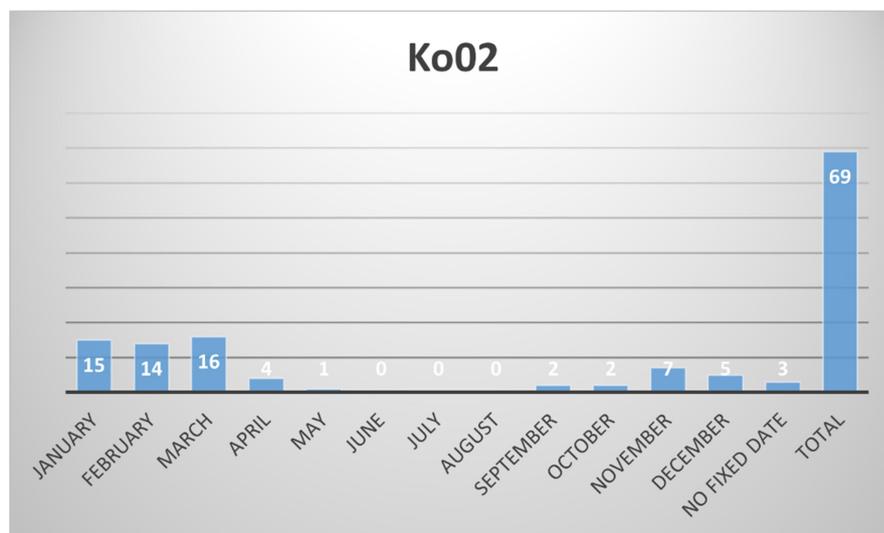


Chart 2 Distribution of Ko02's venues in a calendar year.

Similar to the previous case of Ko01, January to February mark the busy months for Ko02 as well. Of course, the rainy months of June to July are an off-season for him as well. According to Ko02:

*From the beginning of my career itself, to maintain physical fitness, I used to undergo ayurvedic massage every year at Kottakkal Aryavaidyasala. Three weeklong treatments in the monsoon give me a real break from my busy schedule and help me get ready for the next season. (Appendix 2.2)*

After the monsoon, the season gradually starts in September and reaches its peak by January. To establish the common features of the schedule and the distribution of venues in the region, one more example is considered here.

#### **Ko05 as *Komaram* in Kalamezhuth Paatt**

Unlike the *Komarams* mentioned above, Ko05 belongs to a community called Karakoora Nair in Thrissur district. According to mythology, the deity himself appointed a male member of the Karakoora family as the *Komaram* in Vettakkorumakan Kalamezhuth Paatt. 64-year-old Ko05 is the only person in the tradition from his family now. Though two of his nephews have debuted as *Komaram*, they have yet to become active in the profession. It is not surprising that he has venues in nine districts (refer to Map 7), because of the image his family secured as the 'official' *Komaram* of Vettakkorumakan owing to the mythology. He has 7 venues each in Kozhikode and in his home district Thrissur. While he conducts Kalamezhuth Paatt in 5 venues each in Ernakulam and Palakkad, he has 4 venues in Malappuram and Alappuzha. Two clusters of venues can be found in his case, one is in Thrissur district around his house, and another is in Kozhikode district, in and around Balussery Kotta temple.



Map 7 Shows the venues where Ko05 holds the position of Komaram, mapping is done based on the data collected through the interview.

The farthest temple is in Trivandrum which is approximately 300 kilometres away from his home. Regarding the category of venues, 22 are temples, 9 are Namboodiri houses, 4 are *Kovilakams*, or royal houses, and one is a Nair house. It is also interesting to see that one of his venues, the Perumudissery Temple in Malappauram district, has Kalamezhuth Paatt for 60 days in a year. These dates are not fixed, may not be continuous also. The temple authority finalises the dates based on the availability of *Komaram*, Kurup, and Marar.

According to the data collected through the interview, unlike others, he has more programs in the months of January, April, and May. Moreover, he has to conduct 2 rituals in June (Chart 3). Apart from this, more than one Kalamezhuth Paatt used to occur in temples like Balussery Kotta and Perumudissery in a year. Considering all these, Ko05 has the busiest schedule among the *Komarams*, as he has to be a part of more than 100 programmes in a calendar year.

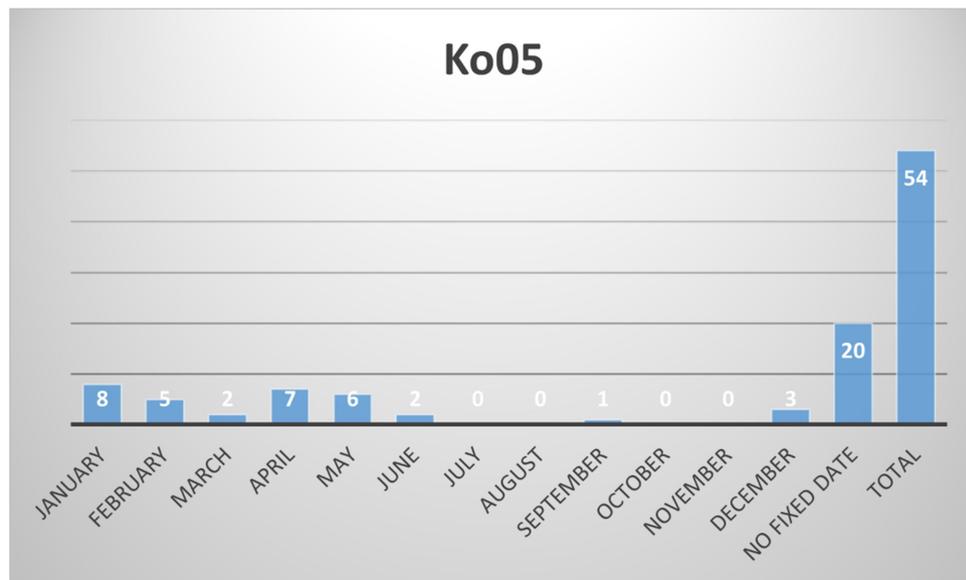


Chart 3 Distribution of Ko05's venues in a calendar year.

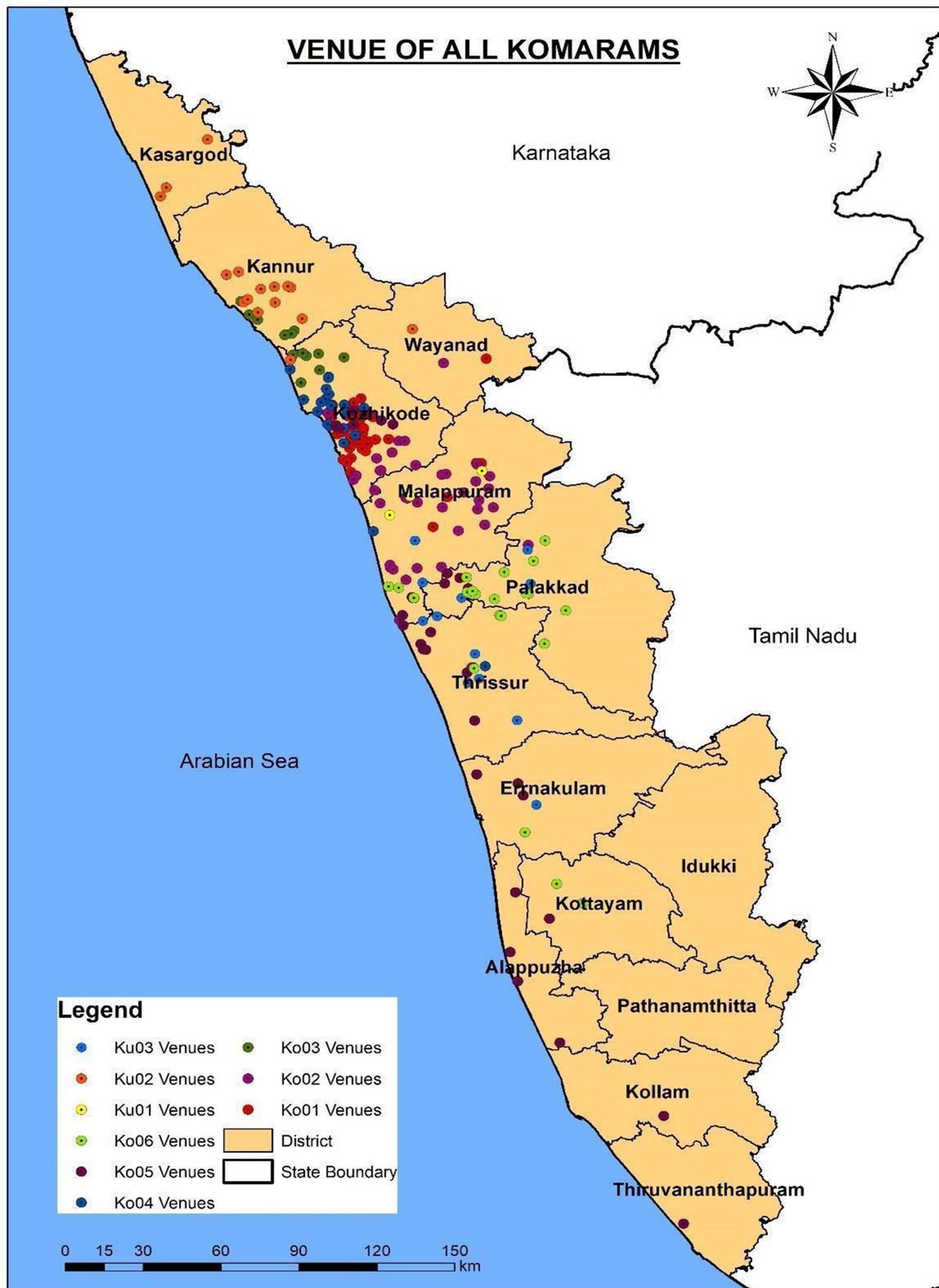
### Role of other *Komarams*

Even though I have conducted interviews with nine *Komaram*, the three artists mentioned here deal with more than 50 venues in a year. Their activities are explained in detail to demonstrate the temporal and spatial aspects of Kalamezhuth Paatt. However, other *Komarams* also have venues mainly around their house (Map 8). It is clear that Kalamezhuth Paatt dedicated to Vettakkorumakan is in all districts except in Idukki. Kozhikode district marks the highest number of rituals, where Kalamezhuth Paatt happens in more than 100 venues in a calendar year. It is also evident from the map that one artist is prominent in each district, for example Ko01 in Kozhikode, Ko02 in Malappuram, Ku03 in Kasargod, and Ko05 in Palakkad. There is a clear distinction between the territory or the area of each *Komaram*. As discussed earlier in the case of Ko01 and Ko02, even though there is overlap between the areas of two *Komarams*, the degree of overlap is very low, and they maintain mutual respect. Apart from the venues marked on the map, there are some more venues

outside

the

state.



Map 8 Location of Kalamezhuth Paatt Venues across the entire state – includes venues of all nine Komarams who have been interviewed.

Since these are not regular venues, i.e., Kalamezhuth Paatt is not being conducted every year, the venues are not mapped.

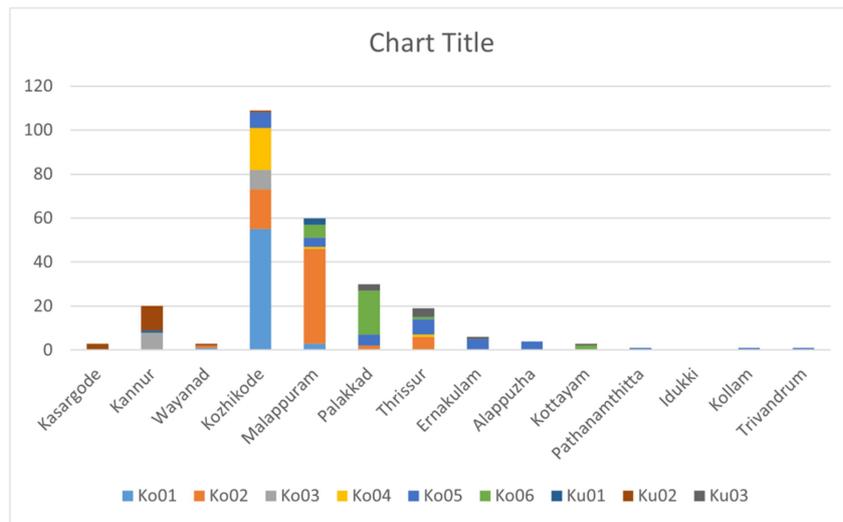


Chart 4 District-wise distribution of Kalamezhuth Paatt venues in Kerala

However, according to the interview with Ku02, he used to be a part of the ritual conducted at Coimbatore in the nearby state of Tamil Nadu. Similarly, Ku03 used to travel to Bangalore and Mumbai to conduct Kalamezhuth Paatt. When conducting the ritual at these special venues, all the artists used to travel together as a team. Further, the number of rituals conducted by each artist according to the months in the year is almost the same in the case of all artists, as the season starts in November or December, reaches its peak between January and March, and gradually declines in the off-season during the monsoon.

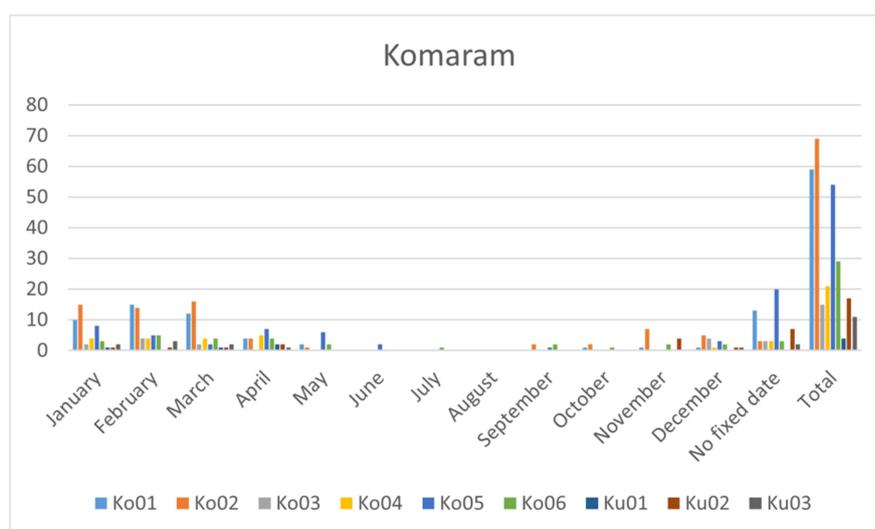
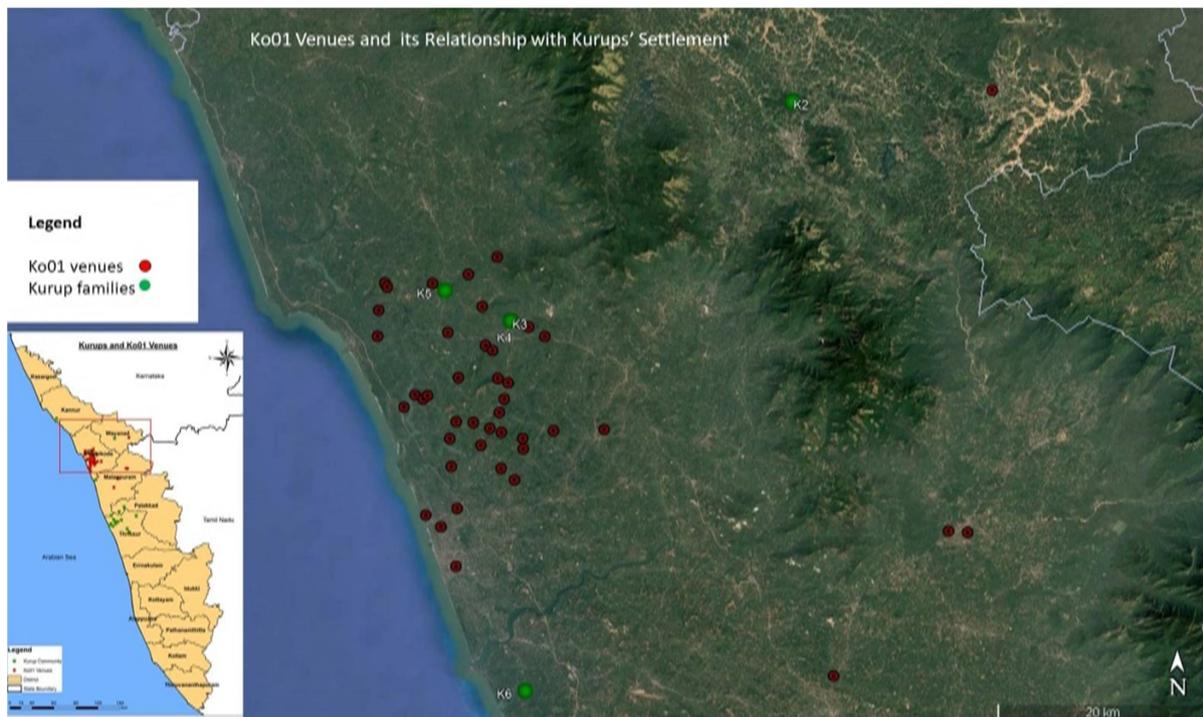


Chart 5 Number of Kalamezhuth Paatt practiced by each Komaram in a calendar year.

During the off-season, most of the artists undergo Ayurvedic treatment which is common practice in Kerala to make the body fit, including body massage with traditionally prepared oil. This may last for two to three weeks, with one or two weeks of complete rest thereafter. Apart from this, many of the artists are usually involved in other activities like farming and other part-time jobs like catering and priestship in temples. However, it is interesting to see how intense the interaction between these artists and the landscape (refer to Map 8) is and how dynamic they are in a year (refer to Chart 5). The next section demonstrates the development of various clusters of artists, which eventually leads to the formation of landscapes at the macro level.

### **9.5 Formation of Clusters with Reference to Geography**

Clustering and cluster sampling are common methods used in research projects to study a large population. But here, the meaning of clusters is different. As discussed earlier, the core group of Kalamezhuth Paatt is constituted by three skilled artists, namely *Komaram*, Kurup, and Marar. As this study is mainly focusing on the venues of *Komaram*, the interpretation of clusters is also *Komaram*-centric, which means the clusters are formed mainly based on the travel and activities of *Komaram*. For example, Map 9 shows the venues of Ko01 and the settlement of Kurups.



Map 9 showing settlement of Kurup family and Ko01's Venues.

It is evident from the comprehensive discourse on the venues of Ko01 that the majority of the venues are situated in the Kozhikode district, bounded by the rivers Korappuzha and Punoorpuzha. Prominent Kurup families in the district are Kizhakkuveedu (KV), Padinjareveedu (PV), and Kocharukandy (KK). As the number of Marar families is high compared to Kurup and Marar is scoped out from the research interviews, it's not listed here. However, to illustrate the formation of clusters, Marars can be named M1, M2, and M3, and the combination of the core team in any of the venues led by Ko01 will be as follows:

Cluster 1 - Ko01+KV+ M1, Ko01+KV+ M2 or Ko01+KV+ M3

Cluster 2 - Ko01+PV+ M1, Ko01+PV+ M2 or Ko01+PV+ M3 and

Cluster 3 - Ko01+KK+ M1, Ko01+KK+ M2 or Ko01+KK+ M3

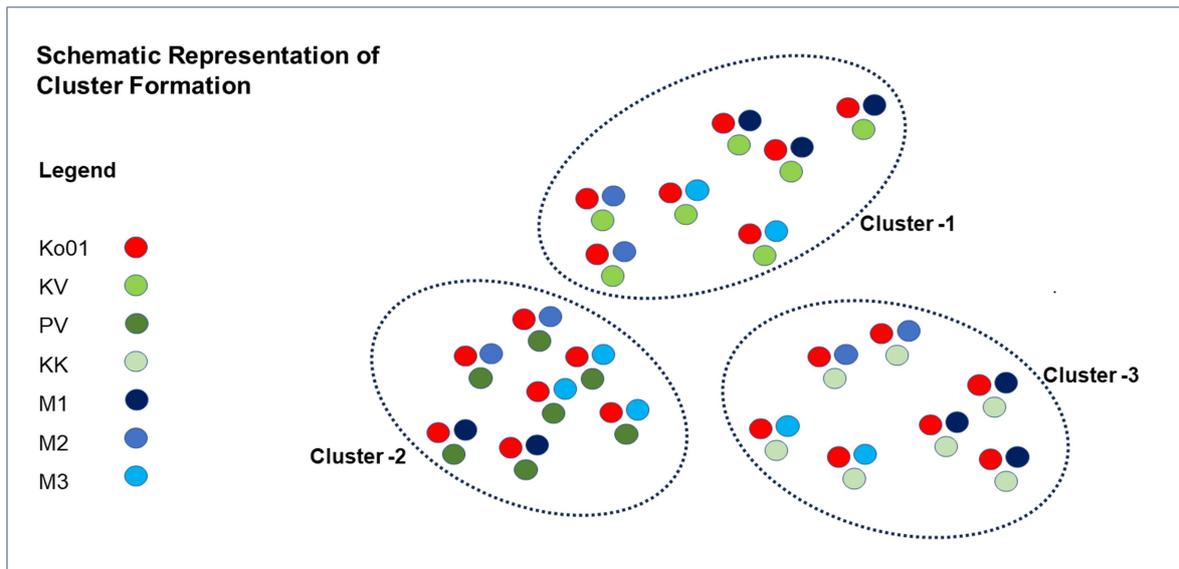


Figure 64 Schematic representation of formation of clusters. Combination of three dots represents a single venue, Ko01 is the Komaram in all three clusters, but Kurup (KV, PV, KK) and Marar (M1, M2, M3) changes.

According to the interview with Ku01, it is the responsibility of three Kurup families in Balussery to conduct Kalamezhuth Paatt in the region. They used to divide the venues according to some geographic features; for instance, those north of Kakkur Canal were under the control of KV, and all other venues south of Kakkur Canal were controlled by PV. Though it has been changed slightly, the above three combinations exist, and they can be called clusters. Four or five decades ago, these core groups used to travel from one venue to another by walking to conduct the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt. Reaching the venue before the ritual and staying back after the ritual shows the emotional attachments between the artists and the patrons. It also underlines the power of patrons and gives glimpses of the feudal system that existed before in Kerala. Though this behaviour of culture has changed over time, the journey, the conduct of the ritual, the sleepless nights, and regaining health during the off-season in the rainy months are part of their lives.

With reference to Bharne's (2022) reflection on the temple urbanism, a Hindu temple is not only a revered architectural structure, but also an integral component of a broader sacred environment including natural components and ecosystems, which symbolizes a profound heritage of sacred urbanism marked by numerous ceremonial landscapes. Here, ritual sites of Kalamezhuth Paatt can't be compared to large sacle temples mentioned by Bharne. However, these sites or venues in the macro level, which I call taskscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt, act as capsules of sacred places and integrating these places create a cluster. Further,

UNESCO (2009) describes the cultural cycle as different stages of the creation and dissemination of culture. It includes five phases: creation, production, dissemination, exhibition/reception/transmission, and consumption/participation. This concept is highly significant, as all the phases can be applied to the communities and therefore the clusters of Kalamezhuth Paatt. Moreover, this cultural cycle acts as the basis of the landscape shaped by the ritual. To elaborate on the concept, the core skill-based communities involved in the ritual are continuously going through the five phases mentioned above. They are the real carriers of the intangible cultural heritage of the ritual art of Kalamezhuth Paatt, which has been transmitted from previous generations. They disseminate knowledge and exhibit the art form. In other words, they create reverence among the devotees through the *kalam*, produce income as the ritual is their livelihood, disseminate the power of the deity through the belief system, transmit the knowledge to the next generation, and knowingly or unknowingly make everyone around the ritual participants. In this cycle, the first three phases are exclusively done by the skilled communities, whereas people outside these communities are involved in the fourth and fifth phases. Moreover, the magnitude of the last two phases, i.e., exhibition/reception/transmission and consumption/participation, varies from case to case. However, this concept of cultural cycle indicates how the ritual is retained and sustained as a system and the role of clusters in it.

As a continuation of the discourse on the cultural cycle, another important fundamental character of these clusters is cultural value. Stephenson (2008) points out that cultural value are seen to be those values held by a group or community or those that are given legitimacy through a socially approved system of value determination, and they are derived from the changing definitions of the terms culture and values. Stephenson (2008) continues that these values do not speak for themselves, as they can only be identified when they are expressed by those who are part of the cultural context or by those who are in a position to observe and understand. The cultural value mentioned here can easily be applied to the Kalamezhuth Paatt and the cluster system. Even though Kalamezhuth Paatt has great cultural value, the ritual does not speak for itself as it is the combined responsibility of all people associated with the ritual to produce a voice for the ritual. If Kalamezhuth Paatt is not conducted in a venue in a year, these people have the right or responsibility to know the reason. The term 'people' stands for the patrons, devotees, and skill-based core

communities that constitute clusters. So, these values are applicable to those who are closely related to the cluster. The values given to the clusters can be of two types: those shared by the artists inside the cluster. For them, the ritual is intimately related to their lives. This value is determined by their approach to the ritual and their sense of ownership. In the case of artists, the values are mainly transferred from previous generations. According to Stephenson's (2008) argument the values that are carried forward from the past are known as embedded values. Apart from this, a cultural property also has a surface value, which stands for the present day. It is clear that Kalamezhuth Paatt has both of these values. The second type of value is given by those who are outside the cluster, for example, experts or researchers. They see the ritual as an art form and assess its value as an outsider. These clusters interact with each other since the ultimate aim of clusters is to conduct the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt. There will be temporal activities like the movement of people, especially patrons and devotees, from one cluster to another to witness the ritual. However, the application of cultural values suggested by Stephenson (2008) strengthens the significance of clusters in the formation of landscapes.

### **9.6 Formation of the Landscape**

Having discussed the significance of clusters and their relationships with geography, this section aims to establish the formation of a landscape shaped by the ritual considering the overall progression is from taskscape to clusters and from clusters to landscape. So far, the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt is interpreted as an ensemble of various tasks. Hence, the next step is to elaborate on the activities or interactions occurring between clusters that cause the formation of landscapes in a larger context.

With reference to the previous chapter, Kalamezhuth Paatt of Vettakkorumakan evolved from Balussery Kotta Temple in Kozhikode district. During the early period, it was happening only at that venue. So, it can be assumed that the pattern of the taskscape also evolved from the same place. The ruler and the architect of the ritual, along with the people in the upper strata of society, say Brahmins, through anthropological interventions, might have assigned different duties to the skill-based communities. Mythology and the existing caste system also played a role in this distribution of jobs. However, in due course, the ritual spread to different parts of the state and the formation of clusters happened at this stage.

The people or the artists belonging to the first taskscape spread not only the basic system of the ritual but also the basic physical structure of the taskscape. This created uniformity in most of the venues. It mainly happened through the interaction between the clusters (Map 10 and Figure 65 shows the clusters led by Ko01, Ko02, and Ko03).

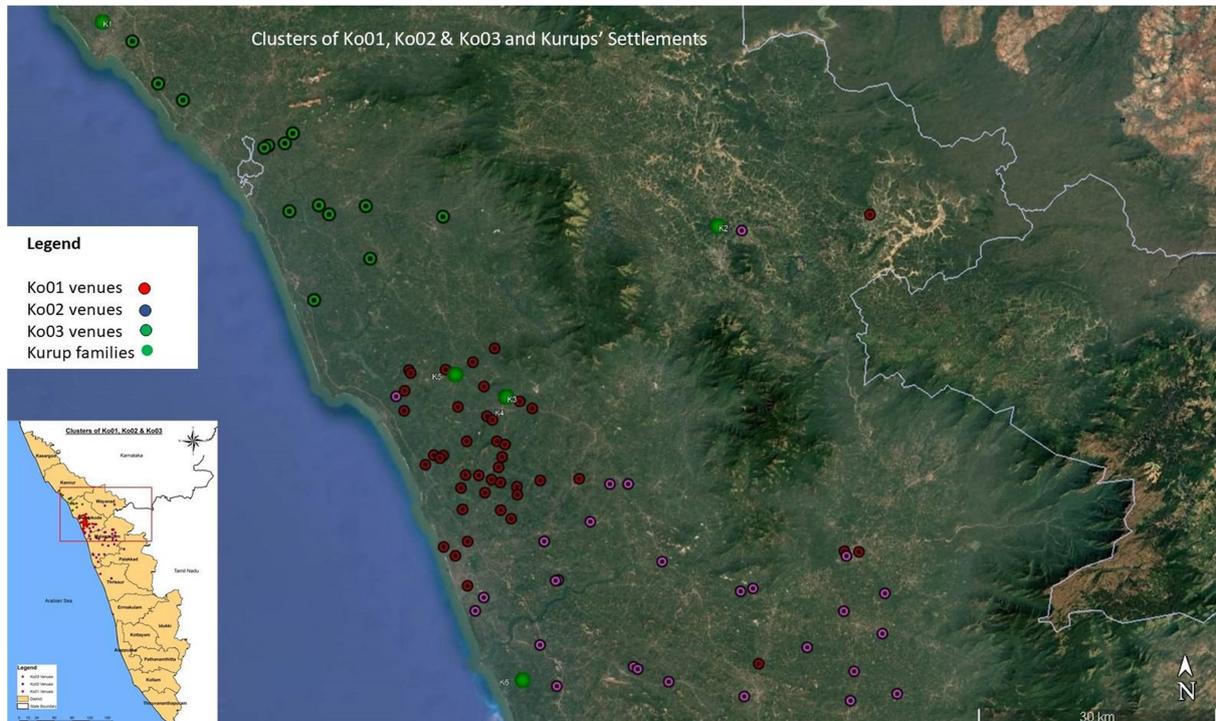
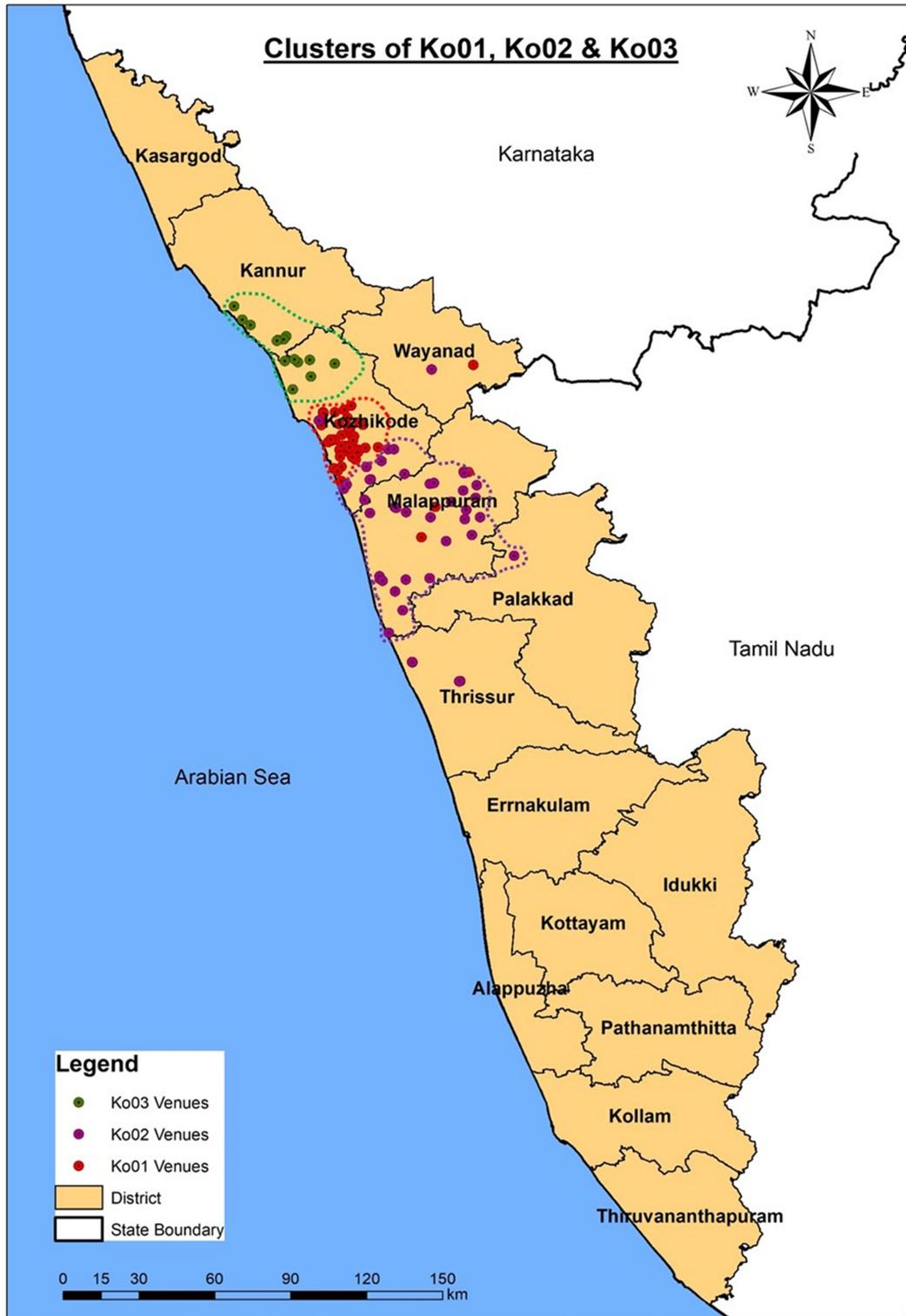


Figure 65 Google Earth map showing the venues of Ko01, Ko02 and Ko03 and Kurups' Settlements

As mentioned earlier, Ko01's venues are mainly concentrated in Kozhikode district, but in the case of some of the venues, Kurup and Marar are from other clusters. So, they travel from one cluster to another to conduct the ritual. Patrons who conduct the ritual invite their friends and relatives who are from the same cluster or from different clusters. The people, including the artists and devotees, engage in casual discussions on the similarities and differences in style and system of the ritual that they experience. Furthermore, the dynamic nature or temporality of the landscape is also determined by some other types of movements. If a *Komaram* is unwell or not in a position to conduct a ritual, he requests help from another *Komaram*, who may be from another cluster. Without any hesitation, they help each other. These interactions cause the propagation of cultural experiences from one venue to another. As discussed in the literature review, 'landscape' means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors (Council of Europe, 2000). Similarly, the landscape created by

Kalamezhuth Paatt is a result of the actions and interactions of humans and nature. But it cannot be compared with regular or usual 'landscape', which is full of manmade structures, waterbodies, pathways, and vegetation.



Map 10 Formation of clusters lead by Ko01, Ko02 and Ko03.

This is mainly because of the presence of ICH in terms of the ritual and its high density in the landscape. Even though the taskscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt has a particular pattern and a specific area at the micro level, this demarcated area is vague at the macro level. Fakiri (2016) pointed out that cultural, social, historical, and economic conditions interact in the landscape, which acts as a system, and it gives an understanding of how these parameters affect the spatiality over time. The different conditions mentioned above are easily applicable to Kalamezhth Paatt. Cultural and social conditions are embedded in the ritual, historical conditions represent the origin and evolution of the ritual, and economic conditions denote the sustainability of the ritual. Looking at how the spaces are evolved or how the existing spaces are modified to perform the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt in a larger context, the system can be called a landscape. The clusters mentioned here have a major role in achieving common characteristics for all small units, say taskscapes. This is the activity happening inside a cluster. Apart from this, the interaction between each cluster ensures that the basic rituals are the same everywhere in a region; different cultural spaces, especially *paattumandapam* and *paattupura*, are almost the same in every venue; and the role of skill-based communities is also the same everywhere. Nevertheless, these clusters can be taken as the key components of the system of landscape shaped by the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt. Further, Fakiri (2016) expresses that landscape as a system deals with landscape as a dynamic ecosystem, and this interpretation focuses on process, synthesis, resilience, and contingency. Similarly, the system of Kalamezhuth Paatt's landscape is based on the process of the ritual, the synthesis or transformation of the ritual, and the resilience performed by the clusters.

Stephenson (2008, 135), argues that 'landscape is created from the dynamic interactions of forms, practices, and relationships that occur over time and that landscape values are contingent on elements from both the past and present'. The application of three fundamental components—forms, relationships, and practices—in Kalamezhuth Paatt explains the integrated understanding of the landscape shaped by Kalamehuth Paatt and its values (Table 9). However, the nature-culture continuum is critical here as it helps to interpret it as a cultural landscape.

Fundamental components	Aspects	Component in the landscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt
Forms	Natural features	Water bodies in terms of temple tanks, small ponds and streams, trees, and vegetation around the venue
	Human interventions or human-made structures	<i>Pattupura</i> – the building typology, <i>Paattumandapam</i> – the pavilion, temporary pavilions in front of the temple or house to occupy the guests and to conduct rituals such as the ritual dance of <i>eedum koorum</i> , pathways and vistas, and designed open spaces such as <i>nadumuttam</i> , or central courtyard.
	Historic elements	Old mural paintings.
	Archaeological features	Artefacts – vessels to do worship, Vettakkorumakan's weapon – sword, <i>Peedham</i> – traditional stool.
Relationships	Spirituality	System of worship
	Symbols and symbolism	Each ritual in Kalamezhuth Paatt is symbolic. For example, <i>kalapradakshinam</i> , the ritual dance around the <i>kalam</i> , is a symbolic dance of joy after hunting.
	Myths and Memories	Myth of Vettakkorumakan and hero worship.
	Sense of space	Shows how people are mentally attached to spaces such as <i>paattupura</i> and how they revisit them even after the ritual and during the off-season.
Practices and processes	Human systems	Settlement of skill-based communities and the clusters formed by them to ensure the conduct of the ritual.
	Human activities	The ritual itself as the activity was designed by and for humans.
	Historic events	War between Zamorins, the king of Calicut, and the Portuguese.
	Ecological processes	Sowing, cultivating, and consuming products such as paddy and coconuts.

Table 9 Components of the landscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt.

UNESCO acknowledges cultural landscapes as 'combined works of nature and humans', the landscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt represents a combined effort of humans and nature. UNESCO (1999) divides cultural landscapes into three categories, the third one is the associative cultural landscape, which consists of religious, artistic, or cultural associations of elements rather than material culture. Kalamezhuth Paatt and its landscape are religious in nature since they are designed in accordance with the Hindu belief system. Arts and aesthetics are an integral part of the ritual. It is expressed in terms of performing arts and powder drawing, so it is also artistic. The people associated with the ritual use these

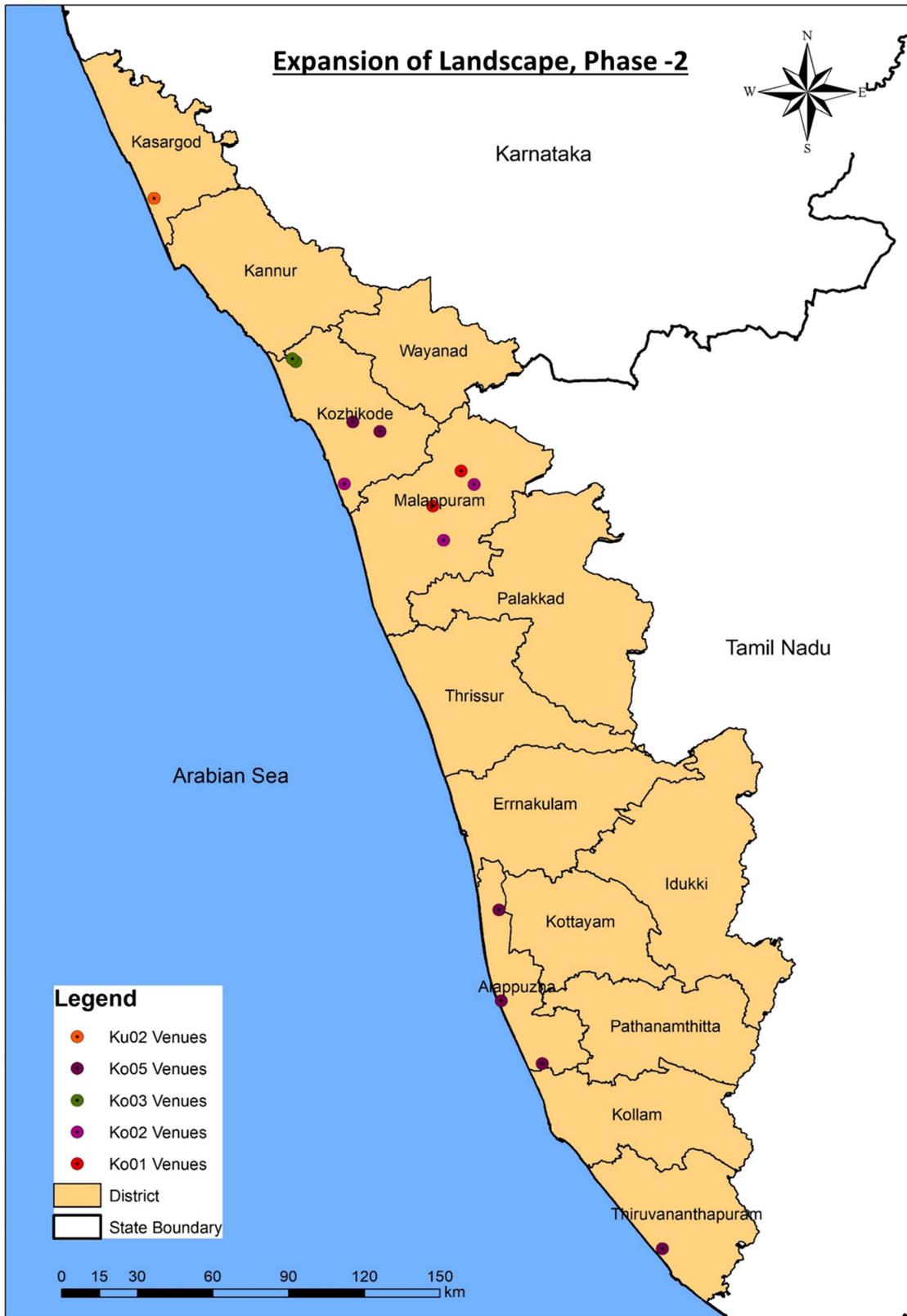
elements as tools to enhance the cultural value of the fabric. However, as the landscape shaped by Kalamezhuth Paatt has all three elements, it can be argued to be an associative cultural landscape. It illustrates how different skill-based communities that play a major role in Kalamezhuth Paatt have evolved over a period of time and how they have become an integral part of the economic and cultural life of society. However, the interactions between the clusters and those with nature can be considered a major cause for the formation of the taskscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt.

### **Sense of expansion**

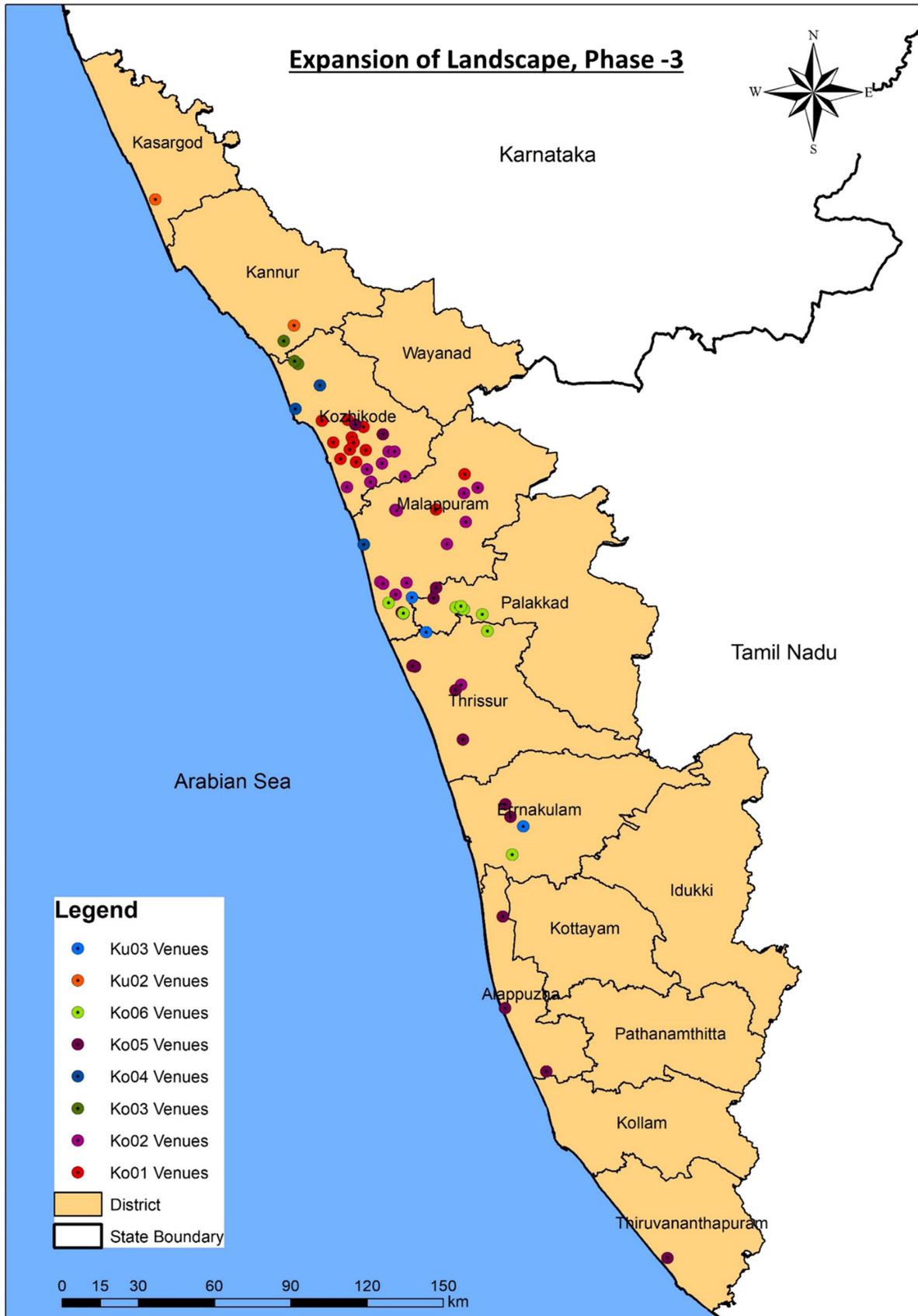
The final objective of this research is to evaluate the boundary of the landscape shaped by Kalamezhuth Paatt of Vettakkorumakan. The expansion of the landscape can be divided into various stages. The first stage is, of course, related to the evolution of the ritual at Balussery Kotta temple in the late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century CE, and later it caused the development of a landscape, or so-called taskscape, at the micro level. The next phase is highly influenced by the myths and belief systems related to Lord Vettakkorumakan. The image of Vettakkorumakan as a protector of the Kurumbranad kingdom led to hero worship, and many other local kingdoms, namely Nilambur, Kayamkulam, Kilimanur, etc., adapted this deity as the *Swarupadevatha*, or protector of the kingdom. The farthest kingdom from Kurumbranad where one can see the influence of Vettakkorumakan is Travancore or Venad, the capital of which is in Trivandrum. Though exact dates are unknown, some of the textual references as well as stories give clues about the spreading of the belief system and thereby the mode of worship of Kalamezhuth Paatt. The Temple of Vettakkorumakan at Trivandrum is situated inside a palace, namely Valiya Koyikkal Palace. Iyer (2003) mentions the construction of this palace by Princes Umayamma in 1680 CE.



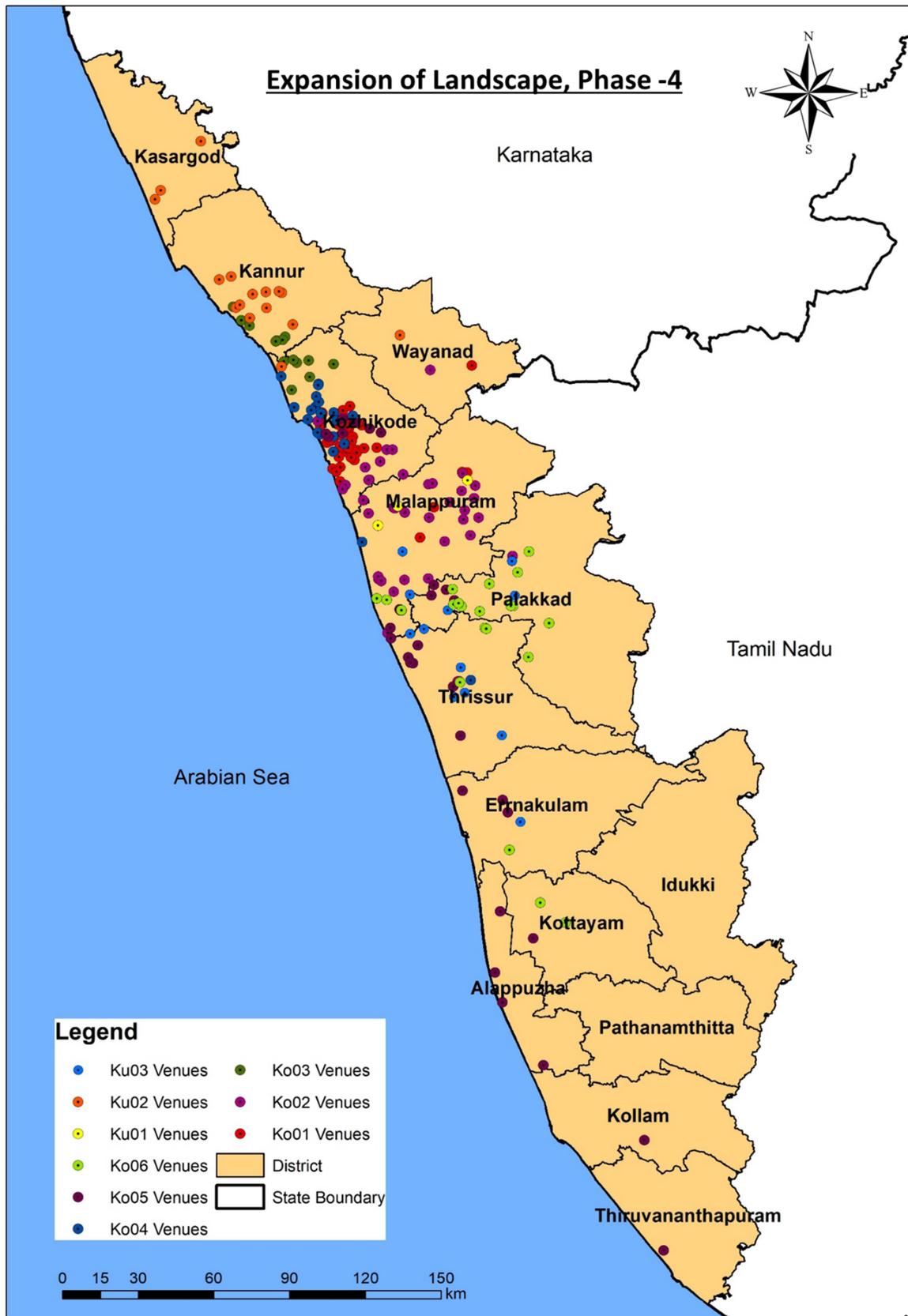
Map 11 Expansion of landscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt - Phase 1, only one venue can be seen in this stage.



Map 12 Expansion of landscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt - Phase 2, venues include some temples and royal houses.



Map 13 Expansion of landscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt - Phase 3, started spreading to other parts of the state and venues include some temples, royal houses and Brahmin houses.



Map 14 Expansion of landscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt - Phase 4 or the current stage. Venues are spread across all districts except Pathanamthittam and Idukki.

Though the construction of the temple is not mentioned by Iyer, later he talks about a massive fire attack that occurred in 1858, when the temple of Vettakkorumakan was also reduced to ashes. So, it can be concluded that the temple was there before the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Nair (2006) reports that Vettakkorumakan's temple was constructed inside Valiya Koyikkal palace to install the idol the king managed to bring from Kayamkulam, another principality. However, Kalamezhuth Paatt is the annual festival of this temple, and all the artists are coming from Northern and Central Kerala to conduct the ritual. So, expansion through different local kingdoms and *kovilakams* marks the second stage in the expansion.

The next stage of expansion in the landscape was through some Namboodiri houses, mainly in Kurumbranad kingdom, and then in Kozhikode, Malppuram, Kannur, Palakkad, and Thrissur districts. The people revered Vettakkorumakan as their *paradevatha*, or family deity. Till this point, the image of Vettakkorumakan and Kalamezhuth Paatt dedicated to the Lord was limited to palatial houses and Brahmin houses. However, the influence of Vettakkorumakan becomes more popular in the fourth stage. Temples under some prominent Nair houses and even other communities also started worshipping Vettakkorumakan and conducting the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt. Since the number of venues increased, most probably at this stage only Namboodiris started becoming the *Komaram* in the ritual. The final stage includes the most recent trends in the ritual, and it has now been conducted outside the state.

Even though the expansion of the landscape is clearly explained, the boundary of the landscape is yet to be demarcated. However, it is not logical to limit the landscape shaped by Kalamezhuth Paatt within a boundary, rather the density of ritual is high in the old Kurumbranad kingdom, as most of the rituals are happening in this region, and it can be considered the core area of the landscape. But many of the important places mentioned in the mythological stories actually fall outside this core area.

### **Impact of External Factors on the Landscape**

Apart from human interactions, the landscape is affected by external factors such as climate change and unprecedented situations such as COVID-19. Although these two subjects have played a substantial role in the recent transformation of rituals, their scope is so extensive that they can be considered research limitations. However, a superficial understanding is

that both factors have a large impact on the ritual. Kalamezhuth Paatt is closely related to agriculture, as most of the materials required to conduct the ritual are taken from the field after harvesting. Due to climate change and transformations in the socio-economic status of society, farming is reduced, and the patrons are now procuring the materials from the market rather than from their own field. Materials such as rice, paddy, or raw materials of powders required to draw *kalam*, areca nuts, coconuts, bananas, flowers for worship, and to prepare garlands and dairy products that were once readily available in patron's houses are now directly brought from the market.

Furthermore, in response to climate change, people expect rain at any time in the year, and drought comes before the summer season as such it becomes hard to sun dry the green leaves to prepare green powder and due to the drought, many people started conducting the ritual early in the season rather than in the summer. All these factors interrupt the schedule of the ritual in a calendar year. Unexpected rain also affects the conduct of the ritual. Ko01 recalled during the interview that once the *kalam* at a venue got washed off due to heavy rain as it rained unexpectedly in the month of February, and the temporary *paattupura* was not well equipped to withstand the rain. After that incident, patrons decided to construct a permanent *paattupura* with modern materials, disturbing the integrity of the ritual. As such climate change is already impacting both the tangible and intangible heritage of Kalamezhuth Paatt.

The 2020 season of the ritual was at its peak when initial restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic were implemented by the government at the beginning of March and the landscape gradually became deserted by the lockdown. When the authorities introduced some relaxations in the restriction during the Onam (regional festival of Kerala) season in August 2020, people started conducting the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt. This relaxation and public gathering caused a considerable hike in the number of COVID-19 cases in the state, and the government again tightened the restrictions. Less than 20 people were allowed to congregate for any purpose, be it religious or secular. Even though the festivity considerably reduced during that time, patrons conducted Kalamezhuth Paatt without compromising any ritual with the bare minimum of artists from core groups (refer to Table 3, Chapter 3). This became a benchmark, and people started thinking of conducting the ritual with the minimum number of artists, that is, with only one member from Kurup, Marar, *Komaram*,

*Kazhakam*, and *Thanthri* and after the pandemic, some patrons continued this pattern to reduce the cost. According to interview respondents, this badly affected the entire group of artists, who are completely dependent on the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt in fact, these artists can be called victims of a peculiar form of disaster capitalism.

During the second season in 2021, from January to March, most of the rituals were conducted, but the festivity was reduced. Some patrons conducted two rituals in a row in 2021 to compensate for the loss of 2020. Following the state legislative assembly election, COVID-19 cases again spiked in April, and the state witnessed another lockdown from the first week of May to the middle of June. In general, two seasons were disturbed due to the lockdown and restrictions thereafter. However, the positive part is that some artists, for instance, Ku03 and Ko02, utilised this situation to transfer knowledge to the next generation. They organised small coaching camps in their houses to give proper training to those who are interested in drawing, singing, and dancing in Kalamezhuth Paatt.

## **9.7 Summary**

The chapter clearly defined the nature of the landscape at the micro and macro levels. On a micro level, the landscape can be called a taskscape (Ingold, 1993, 2017). Whereas at a macro level, different taskscapes or venues, along with settlements of skill-based communities, create clusters. The interactions of these clusters form the landscape in a larger context. The creation of landscapes is a gradual process, and it is still expanding. Different images of Vettakkorumkan as protector, that is, *paradevatha*, or family deity, and *swaroopadevatha*, or deity of the kingdom, also helped to expand the landscape to all parts of the state. It is interpreted as a cultural landscape and the result of the interaction between humans and culture. Due to the high density of rituals in the landscape it could be called a ritual, ritualistic, or Indian ritual landscape, and this will be addressed in the concluding chapter.

## **Chapter10 - Discussion**

## 10.1 Introduction

This chapter includes critical discussion relating to the credibility and existence of the landscape. The first part is an attempt to categorise the landscape and it discusses various possibilities of adapting a title for the landscape formed by Kalamezhuth Paatt shaped by the context set out in the literature review. The second part considers the users of the landscape, which includes discussion on the continuity of the landscape as well. As the study is not limited to and considers the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt as an example, the third part considers how to take this as a model to appreciate the landscape shaped by other rituals from a wider perspective.

## 10.2 Classifying the Landscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt

Many of the aspects of landscape introduced in the literature review, such as components and interpretation of cultural landscapes, gender considerations, materiality, and symbolism of rituals and ritual landscapes, are applicable to Kalamezhuth Paatt. On a microlevel, the spaces shaped by the ritual are highly sacred. The smallest unit of landscape at a micro-level can be called a taskscape and the accumulation of various taskscapes can be considered a sacred landscape. It is clear from the previous chapter that the landscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt is a result of interaction between humans and nature; hence, it can be called a cultural landscape. It can also be considered an associative cultural landscape according to Thakur:

*'Indian cultural landscape can be called intellectual landscape, a collection of religious, cultural, and physical meanings ascribed to geographical components through collective memory, planted on the ground (shaped in real world and real time—the landscape) in active engagement of communities over generations, empowering nature and land from the physical to the metaphysical' (2011, 2).*

The way the landscape shaped by Kalamezhuth Paatt has evolved, developed, and continues reflects Thakur's argument. This research also emphasises the role of ritual and the notions of ritual landscape, ritualistic landscape, and Indian ritual landscape. Ritual landscape is a clearly defined entity that developed as a concept in archaeology in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, this term for a relict landscape is complex in relation to Kalamezhuth Paatt as it is continuously undertaken within the lived landscape. In contrast, to the archaeological definitions in America, ritual landscape is related to sacred places, and the process of

ritualization is continuing mainly through pilgrimage. Since the landscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt is a continuing landscape and not based on any associated pilgrimage, the possibility of aligning this with both European and American concepts can be discounted. Eck's notion of imagined landscape can also be considered here, as Eck (2012, 5) believes that 'local, regional, and transregional practices of pilgrimage in India connect the places together, and the repetition of these places, the creation of clusters and circles of sacred places, etc. creates a clear symbolic landscape called an imagined landscape. Here, the clusters of Kalamezhuth Paatt venues are repeated in the region. However, Kalamezhuth Paatt is not dependent upon any pilgrimage; rather, social cohesion is created because of the interaction between clusters in terms of interdependence. Another possibility is by adding the prefix 'contemporary' for example Virtanen, Lundell, & Honkasalo (2017), consider landscapes of rituals in the present day, recognising power relations, knowledge, emotion, and movement and how human and non-human factors are affecting such landscapes. Even if the term 'contemporary ritual landscape' is not clearly defined, these terms can be relevant in the case of Kalamezhuth Paatt.

Another potential term that can be adopted in this context is ritualistic landscape. The notion of ritualistic is evolved from rituals, and it is closely related to the characteristics of ritualism. Though ritualism is not a defined movement in history, people who are following the rituals and ritual life completely can be called ritualists. There is an excessive density of ritual in the Kalamezhuth Paatt of Vettakkorumakan, especially in the area constituted by Kozhikode, Malappuram, and some parts of Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad, and Kannur districts of Kerala. People associated with the ritual, mainly the skill-based communities, and the patrons are ritualists as far as the conduct of Kalamezhuth Paatt are concerned. The tangible and intangible heritage of the ritual is a significant part of their lives, for patrons, it is not merely a ceremony happening once a year in their house or ancestral temples, and it is not just a job or a way of livelihood for the artists and communities associated with the ritual. In my earlier work I have defined ritualistic landscape as:

*'a type of sacred landscape in which the soul of the landscape will be a ritual, and if this particular ritual is removed from the landscape, the landscape cannot exist'. (Thenchery, 2016, 162)*

In this definition, the role of ritual in the landscape is clear and the ritual is characterised by the tangible and intangible aspects. These are the factors that bind the people together in a particular area and as it is a cultural practice no proper invitation is required to attend a ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt in any venue. If the date is known, anyone can go and be a part of the ritual. Moreover, according to the belief system, Lord Vettakkorumakan's favourite offering is this ritual and feeding the people who attend the ritual. Kalamezhuth Paatt also provided means of living for many people, even though the ritual is seasonal, happening from December to May, most of the artists depend on the income that is generated from Kalamezhuth Paatt. Two to three decades ago, remuneration was not as substantial as today, and a major attraction to the Kalamezhuth Paatt ritual was the 'gifts' from each venue in terms of rice and coconuts. Today artists receive decent remuneration for this hereditary job as the knowledge is inherited from previous generations for most of the artists, so they take it very seriously as a livelihood. In other words, the ritual can be seen as a strong cultural capital that is developed by skilled artists and valued by stakeholders, including patrons and devotees. Kalamezhuth Paatt has a very limited environmental impact and doesn't disturb the environment or ecology, whilst the season of the ritual is closely related to climate and harvesting and all the materials required to conduct the ritual are available locally and are purely natural, whilst only organic waste is produced. Kalamezhuth Paatt also developed from a strong relationship with geography, the formation of clusters of Kalamezhuth Paatt is based on geographic features such as rivers and mountains.

Non-representational theories (NRT) in landscapes (Thrift, 1996; Waterton, 2013) also help to understand the ritualistic landscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt, since the landscape emphasizes experience, lived experience and bodily engagement with the landscape. Furthermore, NRT views the landscape as a dynamic entity, demonstrating this dynamism both during the ritual and over time. As previously discussed, the landscape evokes a sense of emotion and a sense of belonging in people, a characteristic that is also a hallmark of NRT. Most importantly, practices, which are one of the important pillars of NRT (Thrift, 1996), are the key element of the ritualistic landscape. So, the emotional value of Kalamezhuth Paatt is high as people respect the process of ritual, maintain the sacredness of the ritual spaces even if the ritual is not happening, and revere the *Komaram*, who represents the deity. Thus, symbolic and spiritual values are associated with the ritual. The

cultural value of the ritual is closely related to places of archaeological and historic importance, such as Balussery Kotta Temple. *Kalam* also has aesthetic value, and *pattupura*, the building typology, has architectural value, and it also has ecological value. Kalamezhuth Paatt also has economic value and social value, as the ritual is a social event that creates an identity among the people associated with it. Further, the value of a heritage property can be accessed by asking a series of questions such as 'What is important about heritage, and which places or items are important as heritage? What purposes can heritage serve? If heritage conservation is organised to serve society, who does it serve and how well does it serve?' (Avrami et al., 2019; 7). The research so far has considered the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt itself and its allied cultural spaces act as heritage properties. However, based on the above factors, it can be concluded that ritual is an essential part of the landscape. If the ritual of *Kalamezhuth* is not there, the entire context becomes meaningless. The *paattupura* will remain only as a building without any purpose. Skill-based communities and patrons become 'normal' people, and open spaces, walkways, the sacred banyan tree -become meaningless. This is because the ritual is acting as an element of social cohesion and a binding force in connecting both tangible and intangible aspects. Hence, the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt is arguably the soul of the landscape, and the landscape can be named the ritualistic landscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt. Kalamezhuth Paatt is also a cultural phenomenon, and it touches on all aspects of cultural heritage. As such I argue a ritualistic landscape can be defined as a cultural landscape, where the soul of the landscape is a ritual that can act as a cultural phenomenon, and if the particular ritual is removed from the context, the landscape cannot exist.

### **10.3 Ownership of Kalamezhuth Paatt**

The ownership of a landscape revolves around entities like purpose, users, and identity, the landscape of Kalamezhuth was created by the people long before, and it is still used by a set of people. The characteristics of the landscape are transferred from generation to generation, which is interwoven with the belief system in this case. Even though landscape identity is rarely well defined, Stobbelaar & Pedroli (2011) point out that the identity of a landscape is the perceived uniqueness of a place. The identity of Kalamezhuth Paatt is largely influenced by the tangible heritage which includes the built and open spaces and the whole intangible heritage embedded in the ritual. From an emic perspective, that is, as a

person belonging to a patron family, it is observed that the creation of this identity occurs in childhood itself. Later, a sense of identity and a sense of belonging are gradually generated in the users. As elaborated by Stobbelaar & Pedroli (2011), this is done in two ways: personal and social. In the landscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt, both personal and social perceptions will be the same for those who belong to the core community. Further in the definition, the 'uniqueness' is also dependent upon interaction between social factors and spatial factors. Here, the social factors stand for the intangible aspects, and the spatial factors represent tangible aspects in the landscape. However, the identity of the landscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt also fits with the above definition. Further, as pointed out by Macpherson (2010) and Waterton (2013), we can view landscapes and bodies as products of their interaction within non-representational theories. That means, even though the land as the context and humans as bodies are two different entities, in the ritualistic landscape, these two elements are interconnected rather than two separate things, which helps to create identity.

Identity is again dependent on various perceptions. Bender (1993, 2) notes:

*The way in which people understand and engage with their world, anywhere and everywhere, depends on the specific time, place, and historical conditions. People's landscapes will operate on very different spatial scales, whether horizontally across the surface of the world or vertically up to the heavens, down to the depths.*

Bender's idea is related to this research in two ways. For those who do not have an active role in the ritual, understanding the landscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt is temporary, and their engagement in the ritual is optional. It depends on the festivity of the event. They can go and see the ritual even as an outsider, and they can experience the landscape, but the level of experience might be superficial. However, for the core community, their participation is mandatory, as they are the real vehicle of the ritual connecting the intangible to tangible aspects of landscape and place. The usage of 'spatial scale' also denotes the users, where the scale of the landscape is determined by the number of people attending the ritual from various user groups such as skill-based communities, devotees, friends, and relatives. The use of 'people's landscape' also creates a feeling of intimacy. The way the landscape of *Kalamezhuth* spread from a single venue, Balussery Kotta, to nearly 300 venues across Kerala shows the belief of people in the deity and thereby the growth at a horizontal level,

which is attributed to the number of specific users and patrons. Here, the landscape on a micro level is literally owned by patrons. Nevertheless, the landscape exists not only for the patrons who protect the tangible and intangible heritage of Kalamezhuth Paatt by spending money to conduct the ritual annually, but also for the core communities and all other communities involved in the ritual. The sense of ownership is created by the joint action of both of the users, the patrons and the artists. The symbolism behind each ritual also indicates the users of the landscape. The purpose of the ritual is to get blessings from Lord Vettakkorumakan, but if it is observed from another perspective, the ritual stands for all. During the ritual of *thiri uzhichil*, Kurup pays an offering to the subordinates of the deity and those who are protecting the place from all four sides and four corners so, they are considering the entire area. Furthermore, while *Komaram* breaks each coconut, it is believed that the energy embedded in the coconut is spread across the entire area. It also considers the ecosystem to which the landscape at the microlevel belongs. However, this landscape can also be called a people's landscape, where the core users and the stakeholders are the same: patrons and artists.

#### **10.4 Continuity of the Landscape**

It is obvious that continuity and change are fundamental aspects of the functioning of every culture, and the best proponent of cultural continuity is tradition (Falski, 2015). The continuity of the ritualistic landscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt is ensured by memories associated with the ritual and the landscape, as well as the identity of the landscape. As mentioned by Bender (1993, 3),

*'The landscape is never inert; people engage with it, rework it, appropriate it, and contest it. It is part of the way in which identities are created and disputed, whether as individuals, groups, or nation-states'.*

This statement reinforces the role of identity in the continuity of the landscape. The ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt has undergone a layer of transformations, this is mainly due to the continuous engagement of people with the ritual and the spaces associated with the ritual. These interactions are happening mostly because of the sense of identity that the users uphold and considering the intensity of engagements exhibited by the core people in the past and present, the action will surely continue in the future. Bender (1993) considers the

contextualization and continuity of landscape through an example of indigenous belief systems in Australia. This superimposes creation of myths over the land, thereby turning a temporal sequence into a spatial layout or grid and the imaginary mythical grid locates both individuals and groups allowing them to renew their ancestral inheritance. The way the clusters are formed and combined to form the ritualistic landscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt is similar to these practices. The communities associated with Kalamezhuth Paatt are living in the present with a strong mythical background of the ritual inherited from the ancestors. Even though continuity of the landscape is assured due to these connections, identity, and memory, the authenticity of the rituals and settings will be in doubt in the future. Lloyd's observation regarding the conflict of sacred lands in America is relevant here, as the cases involving Native American sacred places often conflict between two fundamental rights: the right to practice one's religion and the right to own one's land - sovereignty is tightly related to land (Lloyd, 2023, 92). For indigenous peoples of America, the fight for land ownership was about cultural identity, exercising their right to self-determination, and ensuring the continuation of their traditional practices. As previously explained, local kings and monarchs governed the Kalamezhuth Paatt ritual and the land through feudal and hierarchical systems. The era of colonialism and feudalism has ended in this landscape. However, the ritual may be influenced by globalisation, and this has already begun.

The ritual originated at a single venue and gradually became popular in other parts of the state. The recent trend shows that the ritual is in practice in nearby states of Kerala, namely Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Maharashtra. Since all the artists are coming from Kerala to conduct the ritual, it is difficult to interpret it as a part of local culture and context. For the non-residents of Kerala, it will remain only as an art form rather than a ritual art, as the element of belief system is absent. Even though these performances are rare incidents in the present day, in the future, the number of venues may increase outside the state, but this doesn't mean that the landscape is expanding; rather, it can be considered the popularisation of an art form beyond the context of Kerala. According to clause no. 4 of the Nara document (1994),

*In a world that is increasingly subject to the forces of globalization and homogenization, and in a world in which the search for cultural identity is sometimes pursued through aggressive nationalism and the suppression of the cultures of minorities, the essential contribution*

*made by the consideration of authenticity in conservation practice is to clarify and illuminate the collective memory of humanity.*

The Nara document was written three decades ago but is still relevant as the popularisation of the ritual outside the state of Kerala is a result of globalisation. While performing the ritual in places that are highly different from the traditional cultural spaces and settings of the ritual, the authenticity and integrity of the ritual are questioned. At the same time, as it is organised outside the state by a set of devotees due to the collective memory and identity created long before in their lives, the intention behind the ritual is not at all doubtful. It can also be considered a way of protecting heritage using available resources. However, it can be concluded that memories, identity, and continuity of the landscape are fundamentally connected with the notion of a nature-culture continuum, or the co-existence of natural and cultural heritage in the landscape.

Kalamezhuth Paatt reflects the co-existence of natural and cultural heritage in the landscape with both being critical to the ritualistic landscape. Harrison (2015) argues:

*Heritage is understood here as a series of diplomatic properties that emerge in the dialogue of heterogeneous human and non-human actors who are engaged in practices of caring for and attending to the past in the present. (2015, 24)*

Here, the term 'human' might be understood as pertaining to culture, whereas 'non-human' refers to the natural world. In this case, the term "non-human" becomes significantly more intricate due to its spiritual dimension. Even though 'spiritual' or 'spirituality' is a part of culture, it could be argued that anything non-human should fall under 'natural'. The distinction between nature and culture is more pronounced in Western tradition, but in Indian philosophy, this duality is mostly missing since it aligns with the broader framework of indigenous cultural practices. The Kalamezhuth Paatt ritual is a fusion of cultural and natural heritages, the cultural aspect encompasses both patrons and skill-based communities and the natural component encompasses spirituality, or a belief system centred around Lord Vettakkorumakan, and consists of plants, water bodies, and agricultural land within the micro-level landscape. The ritual may be interpreted as the outcome of the interaction, which in turn contributes to the formation of the cultural landscape.

Lowenthal also suggests:

*Human action has profoundly reshaped all the elements of nature, but we nonetheless consider them quite distinct from our cultural heritage—the buildings and engineering works, arts and crafts, languages, and traditions that humans themselves have created out of nature’s raw materials. Yet our natural and man-made heritages exhibit remarkable parallels along with instructive differences, as do campaigns to conserve nature and preserve remnants of antiquity. (Lowenthal, 2015, 82)*

The Kalamezhuth Paatt ritual is dependent on human agents who initially devised the ritual and subsequently modified or adjusted the surrounding circumstances to engage in the ritual. This framework encompasses both the natural and cultural heritage, but these interventions were never detrimental; instead, they incorporated various covert methods to safeguard the heritage.

### **10.5 Understanding the Ritualistic Landscape.**

One of the major outcomes of this research is the discussion of a definition of the concept of ritualistic landscape. The landscape shaped by Kalamezhuth Paatt reflects the term ritualistic landscape but it is useful to revisit the examples mentioned in the earlier chapter, as the application of the definition to different examples will support the development and understanding of the concept.

The traditional practices of worshipping the sacred sites in Mongolia by some specific communities reflect both tangible and intangible heritage associated with the ritual, and the event can be seen at around 200 sites in the region (UNESCO, 2017). However, apart from the belief system, these sites stand independent, and it is doubtful how these sites are connected to form a landscape in the region. So, rather than calling it a ritualistic landscape, it would be more appropriate to name it a taskscape. People gather once a year in the foothills, construct a stack of stones called *ovoo*, offer meat, worship the spirit, perform dance and other competitions, and disperse on the same day. So, the settings become a taskscape to complete all these steps.

The second example, the Tamboradas drum-playing rituals of Spain, is much more vibrant. The scale of the event is huge, as thousands of drummers from different parts of the

country come to the core of the city, which creates a strong identity and sense of belonging among the communities (UNESCO, 2018). Though it's a week-long ritual or event, the impact lasts for the whole year. It is a cultural phenomenon, and the temporal nature of the events gives temporality to the landscape. Unlike the ritualistic landscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt, this landscape uses the existing infrastructure, and the streets and open spaces become cultural spaces for the event. This can be termed a cultural landscape with temporal ritualistic features.

Another example presented is the rituals and practices associated with Kit Mikayi Shrine, Kenya (UNESCO, 2019). Compared to the above cases, the geographical spread is less as this practice is seen only at one site. This can be referred to as a ritualistic landscape because it is the ritual that gives identity, purpose, and continuity to the landscape. Due to the presence of the ritual, the medicinal garden around Kit Mikayi is also protected. Those who believe in the shrine come here to pay offerings. So, if the ritual is not there, as in the case of Kalamezhuth Paatt, the place around the hill becomes a land with no meanings.

The final example is Yaokwa, the Enawene Nawe people's ritual for the maintenance of social and cosmic order in Brazil (UNESCO, 2011b). This ritual is an integral part of an indigenous community in Brazil. The way in which their lives are interwoven with the ritual and the landscape is phenomenal, as the ritual is a perfect combination of traditional knowledge systems of farming and fishing, belief systems, and performing arts. Moreover, the ritual acts as the soul of the context. This can be called a ritualistic landscape.

Coming to the Indian sub continent, the notion of sacredness is present in the landscape created by pilgrimage and temple towns. As Bharne (2022) pointed out, the ritual landscape of temple can be of three layers - micro, meso and macro levels. However, it doesn't mean that ritual is the soul of the landscape, rather, they are significant components that contribute to the sacredness of the landscapes. This is evident in the temple towns such as Madurai, Tiruchirapalli, Chidambaram, Kumbakonam, Tanjore, and many more (Singal, 2022). The absence of a singular unifying ritual that connects all communities and their belief system together makes it different from a purely ritualistic landscape.

## **Summary**

Kalamezhuth Paatt has constructed a landscape that the patrons and artists are integral parts of, making it what it is: a people's landscape. The identity of the landscape and memories linked to the ritual keep the landscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt alive, even if the ritual has changed throughout the years. This landscape is sacred in nature, as such it can be called a cultural landscape as it is created by the combined effort of human and nature. The most accurate description, nevertheless, would be "ritualistic landscape," as the cultural phenomena known as Kalamezhuth Paatt represents the landscape's essence. The notion of the ritualistic landscape can be used to make sense of landscapes that are influenced by various kinds of rituals across the globe. Following on from this summary of the research, the next chapter will conclude the thesis.

## **Chapter 11 – Conclusion**

### 11.1 Research Responses

This research was an attempt to examine the definition of ritualistic landscape through the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt. The research considered that the landscape shaped by the ritual can be called as taskscapes in micro level, where the landscape acts as an ensemble or meshwork of tasks. Further, various taskscapes in a geographic area creates a cluster and these clusters in the regional level creates ritualistic landscape. The main objectives of the research are as follows.

1. To understand different rituals leading to the formation of ritual landscape through examples from different regions of the world. Given the global setting, this purpose is accomplished through secondary research. Although the study first drew inspiration from Robb's (1998) idea of ritual landscape in archaeology, later it focused on different examples of present-day rituals across the world. The way in which various religious/secular rituals (broadly all intangible cultural heritage) respond to their context, its spatiality and the system is different. It is interesting to observe that the influence of rituals in shaping the landscape differs from one case to another.
2. To critically assess the sociological aspects of the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt and thereby to explore the ritual as a community affair. Nonparticipant observation and documentation of rituals along with interviews of artists reveals Kalamezhuth Paatt serves as a cohesive element that unites communities. The ritual fosters a sense of identity and facilitates the formation of memories among its participants. The phrase 'participants' refers to groups or artists with specific skills, as well as the patrons who conduct the ritual, and the general public or devotees. The presence of these many groups, and both tangible and intangible heritage, contributes to the communal nature of the event.
3. To locate the evolution of the ritual art of Kalamezhuth Paatt, specifically that dedicated to Lord Vettakkorumakan. The research demonstrates that the evolution of the ritual is intricately connected to both mythology and facts. By examining the meaning and lyrics of *thottam* it becomes clear that many of the locations listed in the songs are currently present in and around the former territory of Kurumbranad in northern Kerala. Based on archaeological and historical data, it can be determined

that the Kalamezhuth Paatt ritual dedicated to Lord Vettakkorumakan, originated somewhere between the late 16th and early 17th century CE.

4. To investigate the evolution and transformation of associated cultural spaces; and its role in tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Kalamezhuth Paatt. It is clear from the interviews and the historical evidence that the ritual originated first, and subsequently, pre-existing spaces such as semi-public areas within traditional courtyard dwellings of the region were designated as cultural spaces for conducting the ritual. Over time, the kings and patrons became influenced by architectural typologies like *Koothambalam* and created distinct cultural places namely *Paattupura* specifically for the Kalamezhuth Paatt ritual. However, the triangular relationship between tangible and intangible cultural heritage and the cultural spaces is evident here. That means cultural spaces become a common factor in tangible and intangible cultural heritage.
5. To evaluate the boundaries of the ritualistic landscape shaped by Kalamezhuth Paatt of Vettakkorumakan in the state of Kerala, India. While the presence of the ritualistic landscape of Kalamezhuth Paatt of Vettakkorumakan has been established at several scales, including micro, macro, and regional levels, the study concludes that it is not feasible to precisely define the boundaries of this landscape at the regional level. Rather, the expansion of the landscape from a single venue to over 300 venues is mapped and represented as different layers. Furthermore, the intangible heritage, mainly in terms of belief systems, continues to grow and extend beyond the geographical limits of the state of Kerala.

## **11.2 Summary**

The study originated from my childhood memories and then evolved into a research project. While the result of the postgraduate thesis served as the initial basis for this study, it was insufficient to formulate a topic for a PhD. Given the current trend towards multidisciplinary approaches in the field of conservation studies, this study incorporated many disciplines, including architecture, archaeology, sociology, and anthropology. In order to grasp the concept of a ritualistic landscape, the entire procedure was segmented into three distinct parts. The initial section focused on the available literature; the subsequent section aimed

to present the art form of Kalamezhuth Paatt; and the last section involved the discussion and analysis of specific examples to establish the landscape.

Reflecting on the methodology of the research, the major challenge I faced was my dual role. It can be seen as the strength of the study as well. It took six months to break free from the circle and investigate ideas from the outside. It's natural to have blurry vision of an object when it's very near our eyes. As different communities are involved in the ritual, ethnographic studies played a role in the methodology. Since I belong to a patron family of Kalamezhuth Paatt and most of the interviewees were known before, sometimes the interactions were slightly unapproachable. During non-participant observation I also faced the same problem, such as loss of focus, like what aspect of the ritual was to be studied and to what extent the details of the ritual were to be documented. Further, ethical consideration also played a vital role here. Photography was prohibited inside many of the temples, where I had to recollect everything from my memory. However, the theoretical support of ritualistic landscapes and intangible cultural heritage helped in the later stages to approach the context scientifically, and mapping became a strong tool to represent the results.

Upon reflecting on the research journey, the inclusion of material from different viewpoints facilitated extensive discussion and thus established a solid foundation for the study. The initial chapter in the literature considered the importance of the cultural landscape and posited it as a product of human agency. The detailed discussion focused on UNESCO's contributions to the interpretation and organisation of cultural landscapes. The concept of taskscape, as proposed by Ingold (1993) and later modified by Ingold (2017); and the possibility of applying non representational theories (Thrift, 1993; Waterton, 2018) are also discussed in this part, and it proves to be crucial in understanding the landscape that is formed by the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt at a micro level. Stephenson's (2008) cultural value model helped the categorization of many values inherent in the ritual. A significant discussion also took place on the interconnectedness between the landscape and humanity. The argument gained significance as it investigated the question of whether the landscape exerts influence on humans or if humans exert influence on the landscape. The notion of indigenous sacred places and landscapes introduced in this section (Lloyd, 2023) helped in understanding the value and ownership of landscape shaped by the ritual of Kalamezhuth

Paatt. The chapter ended with a comprehensive list of the many elements that constitute the cultural landscape.

The second and third parts of the literature focused on the concept of ritual landscapes in the world and India, respectively. Through the first half, definitions, evolution, and types of rituals were explained. Perspectives of ritual theorists like Grims (2014) and Bell (1992) were significant in that stage. Critical reviews on materiality, symbolism, and gender consideration in rituals through various examples helped to a great extent to study those aspects of Kalamezhuth Paatt. Gender consideration in Kalamezhuth Paatt is another point of interest, as we can see only male members of the core community at the forefront. It is the senior male member of the patron family who hands over *koora*, a piece of silk, to Kurup to start the ritual. In all other core communities, only male members are involved. However, the role of female members is mainly in the preparatory stage of the ritual, and they observe the whole ritual. Further, the idea of ritual landscape, especially through the viewpoints of Robb (1998), , and the four examples presented in the latter half of the chapter from Europe, Africa, and Asia gave a clear understanding of the importance of rituals and their relationship with spaces and landscapes. The components of ritual landscapes are listed and considered the major outcome of the chapter. The third part was a bridging section between the global context and the Kerala context. Recent discussions on the ritual landscape (Bharne, 2022) and sacred temple towns (Sharma, 2022) helped to understand how the concept of sacredness is celebrated in an Indian context. Though the second part of the research focuses on Kalamezhuth Paatt, it introduced the context of Kerala and its architectural, historic, geographic, and cultural background. Moreover, it introduced the different art forms and different types of *kalamezhuth* being practiced in the state. This showed the huge scope of the study and the rich cultural heritage of the region as well. Systematic narration and documentation of the ritual and its series of sub-rituals was completed through the two photo essays from different contexts. A comparison of various cases and the common and distinct features of Kalamezhuth Paatt established it as a unique ritual. Chapter 6 examined the intangible heritage of the ritual within the framework of UNESCO ICH and outside the scope of UNESCO ICH, such as traditional management systems.. The aforementioned part clearly established that Kalamezhuth Paatt, as a cultural entity, encompasses all five categories and is unquestionably qualified for inclusion as an

element of UNESCO ICH, though there are some draw backs in the system followed by UNESCO. The last part showcased tangible cultural heritage linked to the ritual. Overall, the chapter considered Kalamezhuth Paatt as a cultural phenomenon, playing a crucial role in shaping the ritualistic landscape.

The third section entailed analyses and evaluations of the data presented. The ethnography of the ritual is intricate due to the involvement of several communities and Kalamezhuth Paatt is a community affair that encompasses four essential elements: hierarchy of job, knowledge transfer, nonverbal communication, and experiential learning. The scenario can also be compared to Marchand's (2009) observations on the Masons of Djenné in terms of apprenticeship and workmanship. The study also considered oral tradition as a significant primary source of knowledge. By utilising *thottam* (songs), literary references, and archaeological data, the study traced the ritual's origins and then examined the development and evolution of cultural spaces. The interdependency of rituals and cultural places is clearly evident in Kalamezhuth Paatt. Sometimes, the ritual was influenced by the cultural spaces, while in other situations, the cultural spaces were transformed as a result of the ritual. Furthermore, it enhances the linkage between tangible and intangible cultural heritage via temporal and spatial mapping. Given its temporality, the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt generates a micro-level landscape referred to as a taskscape. In addition, the interactions between different communities resulted in the construction of clusters, which ultimately contributed to the creation of the landscape on a larger scale.

### **11.3 Impact of COVID-19 on the Research**

A qualitative research methodology was adopted for this study and the methods of data collection were semi structured interviews and non-participant observation. The strategy was to gather maximum data through non-participant observation during the first and second year of study, that is during 2020 and 2021 parallel to researching the literature review. This decision was taken because Kalamezhuth Paatt ritual happens mainly during December and May. However, Kerala became the state to report the first case of COVID-19 in India in the beginning of 2020. So, the Government started implementing restrictions from February, when the season of Kalamezhuth Paatt was at its peak. Many people put the conduct of the ritual on hold, whilst some of them conducted the event adhering to the

COVID regulations. As such accessibility to many of the venues was restricted in 2020. Many people started live streaming the ritual for the benefit of devotees, and this is considered an opportunity in this research. The situation was not different in 2021 and the COVID situation became a reason to revise the schedule and start the research interviews. Another lockdown which came in action during 2021 disturbed the revised schedule and all interviews were completed in 2022. Since I had to attend Kalamezhuth Paatt of varying scale and context, I could complete the documentation part only in May 2023. So, for the purpose of research a total of 30 rituals were attended from 2019 to 2023. Twelve of them occurred before the COVID pandemic, seven occurred during the pandemic itself, and eleven occurred after the pandemic (refer table 3). It is evident that COVID-19 has significant impact on the research especially in the data collection phase. It also led to massive disruptions to all aspects of life in Kerala - as such this research documents a ritual that adapted to a pandemic and one that continues to adapt.

#### **11.4 Way Forward**

Cultural landscape reflects various definitions and interpretations. The interpretation of ritualistic landscape has potential as it is a part of the larger theme of cultural landscape. The study presented here can be applied to any context and any scale. Looking at the context of Kerala, Kalamezhuth Paatt of Vettakkorumakan represents a unique art form which has more than 300 types. Moreover, it is one of the prominent ritual arts of the region, the number of Kalamezhuth rituals performed annually is rising, despite the fact that many elements of ICH are declining globally. One of the strengths (and at the same time limitations) of the study is that it dealt with only one art form at a time. It will be good to see how the methodology works with other similar art forms and multiple art forms simultaneously. Documentation of the art form, especially the oral tradition will act as a great repository for the research, though the heritage is not diminishing. More research can be done on the oral traditions and its relationship with literature and music, as well as the ways in which the ritual is resilient, how it adapts (for example through colonisation, independence, shifts in social economics, through global crises such as Covid-19, and through the impact of climate change). Another area for future undertaking can be on the spatial understanding of the cultural spaces, purely focusing on the architecture of the ritual. This may include complete, detailed documentation and analysis of the ritual sites in

micro and meso level and bio-physical and natural landscape in the macro level. Kalamezhuth Paatt and other indigenous art forms serve as archives for traditional knowledge systems. The opportunity for comprehensive research into this indigenous knowledge is significant. In addition, the whole realm is concerned with the fundamental link between the intangible and tangible heritage associated with the ritual. In fact, these two entities are intertwined, as is the nature-culture continuum. However, people continuously interact with each other and with their surroundings, these art forms are results of these interactions, they are not at all static, but they are highly dynamic and temporal as well. By examining Kalamezhuth Paatt in detail this research establishes methods and approaches for future study of culture, nature, ritual, and landscape.

(Total word count: 84744)

## **Appendix -1**

### **Ethics Considerations and Documents in Qualitative Interviews and Documentation**

As explained in session 3.5, the research is undertaken through the University of York's Research Ethics policy. The process follows the guideline from GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) of the University and the research is undertaken where ethical approval has been obtained, where there is a clear public interest and where appropriate safeguards have been put in place to protect data.

This supporting section includes the documents submitted to get approval from the ethics committee of Archaeology department. Though these documents are in English, later it has been translated to Malayalam, the regional language as most of the artists were not acquainted with English. So, following steps are involved in the process.

- Prepare the ethics documents (Information sheet, consent forms and interview questionnaire)
- Submit the documents to the ethics committee.
- Make necessary revisions if required.
- Send out the information sheet to prospective interviewees and get consents.
- Conduct the interviews.
- Translate and transcribe the interviews.
- Deposit the files in the department storage.

## Information Sheet

### The Context

Rituals play a vital role in the life of people, whether it is religious or secular. The current project is on the concept ritualistic landscape. I am trying to define it as a 'type of sacred landscape in which the soul of the landscape will be a ritual and if this particular ritual is removed from the landscape, the landscape cannot exist'.

In order to comprehend this concept, *Kalamezhuth Paatt*, the powder drawing ritual of Kerala (dedicated to Lord Vettakkorumakan) is taken as the case example. Intangible aspects of the ritual including mythology, belief systems, traditional knowledge system, traditional cultural expressions etc. and tangible aspects of the ritual including built heritage and the open spaces have to be documented. Since you are an expert in this area, I would like to know more about the ritual from your perspective.

### About the Researcher

I am an architect, specialised in conservation and traditional architecture; presently working as Associate Professor at MES College of Architecture, Kozhikode, Kerala. After graduating from College of Engineering, Trivandrum in 2007, worked in different firms in India and abroad. The inclination towards Traditional Architecture made me do a PG Diploma in the same, so along with mainstream architecture, I started practice in traditional and temple architecture of Kerala. Subsequently I completed M. Arch in Conservation from SPA Bhopal, with Gold Medal in 2016.

### The Research Project

Apart from teaching, I am pursuing PhD in Conservation Studies at the Department of Archaeology, University of York, UK under the supervision of Dr. Louise Cooke and Dr. Jim Leary. Working title of the project is '**Interpreting Ritualistic Landscape of India; Kalamezhuth Paatt, a Case Example**'. The first phase of the project including the background studies will be completed by September 2020 and the field work and data collection will be executed during the next season of the ritual, from December 2020 to May 2021.

## **Field work and Data collection**

Interview venue and time can be planned according to your convenience. Duration of the interview will be around one hour. As per the regulations of the University, all these data collected are subject to approval from the ethics committee, details of the same are given below.

## **Data Protection**

### **On what basis will you process my data?**

Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the research student must identify a legal basis for processing personal data and, where appropriate, an additional condition for processing special category data. As the University seeks to advance learning and knowledge by teaching and research, the student processes personal data for research purposes under Article 6 (1) (e) of the GDPR:

Processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest  
Special category data is processed under Article 9 (2) (j):

Processing is necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, or scientific and historical research purposes or statistical purposes.

Research will only be undertaken where ethical approval has been obtained, where there is a clear public interest and where appropriate safeguards have been put in place to protect data. In line with ethical expectations and in order to comply with common law duty of confidentiality, we will seek your consent to participate where appropriate. This consent will not, however, be our legal basis for processing your data under the GDPR.

### **What are the possible benefits and risks of taking part?**

The benefits would be an opportunity to express your viewpoints of the ritual in front of a large research audience. Moreover, this will help the ritual of Kalamezhuth Paatt and the communities involved in the ritual to get explored at the international level.

The risks are that your opinions will be seen by those reading the thesis and sometimes it will be impossible to anonymise this data (see note below on data protection). You may not agree with the critique offered in the conclusion or you may feel that decisions taken in the

past are being criticized – this is in the nature of the research. It is conceivable that your data might escape into the public realm through a hack or other data breach. There are processes in place, described below, that aim to prevent that.

**Will participants be paid to take part, or will any expenses be covered?**

No, there will not be any monetary benefit.

**Will participants have access to outputs, and if so how?**

Participants will have access to transcriptions of their interviews, on request, and can add further clarification or correct any errors.

**Why have I been invited to take part?**

You have been invited to take part because you are practicing the ritual art of Kalamezhuth Paatt for more than twenty years and I believe that you can tell comprehensively about various tangible and intangible elements of the ritual.

**Do I have to take part?**

No, participation is optional. If you do decide to take part, you will be given a copy of this information sheet for your records and will be asked to complete a participant information form. If you change your mind at any point during the study, you will be able to withdraw your participation without having to provide a reason. You can do this by notifying the researcher directly by email or by phone or by contacting the supervisors ([louise.cooke@york.ac.uk](mailto:louise.cooke@york.ac.uk) / [jim.leary@york.ac.uk](mailto:jim.leary@york.ac.uk) ) if you are unwilling to contact the researcher directly.

**How will you use my data?**

Data will be processed for the purposes outlined in this notice.

**Will you share my data with 3rd parties?**

Yes. Academic staff and examiners at the University of York will have access to some of the data for the purposes of academic guidance, marking, examining and moderation. A copy of the research output – the dissertation will be retained by the museum library.

**How will you keep my data secure?**

Video and audio recordings of the interviews will be destroyed once the transcription is complete. Information will be treated confidentiality and shared on a need-to-know basis only. The University is committed to the principle of data protection by design and default and the researcher will collect the minimum amount of data necessary for the project.

**Will you transfer my data internationally?**

Yes, as part of the research, the data collected will be transferred internationally.

**Will I be identified in any research outputs?**

A small number of people were involved in each case study project. In the dissertation itself, quotes from and references to the data will be pseudonymised and references will be made to 'respondent 1' for example, rather than by name. But images of the ritual performance may be used in the description of case studies.

**How long will you keep my data?**

Data will be retained in line with legal requirements or where there is a business need. Retention timeframes will be determined in line with the University of York's Records Retention Schedule.

**What rights do I have in relation to my data?**

Under the GDPR, you have a general right of access to your data, a right to rectification, erasure, restriction, objection or portability. You also have a right to withdrawal. Please note, not all rights apply where data is processed purely for research purposes. For further information see,  
<https://www.york.ac.uk/recordsmanagement/generaldataprotectionregulation/individualsrights/>.

**Right to complain**

If you are unhappy with the way in which your personal data is handled, you have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office.

**Questions or concerns**

If you have any questions about this participant information sheet or concerns about how your data is being processed, please contact me in the address given below in the first instance.

Devakumar T

Thenchery Illam, Kakkur Po

Kozhikode, Kerala, India,

Mob. 9745285612,

E mail – dt958@york.ac.uk

## Consent Form

Working title of the project : Interpreting Ritualistic Landscape of India, Kalamezhuth Paatt, a Case Example.

Researcher : Devakumar T

Supervisors : Dr. Louise Cooke, Dr. Jim Leary

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Have you read the information leaflet of the project and understood the main goal of the research? Yes  No

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions about the study? Yes  No

Have you understood that you can withdraw the consent to participate in the research at any stage of the project? Yes  No

Have you understood that the data collected from you will be stored safely in the University maximum for ten years and can be used for future research? Yes  No

Have you understood that in order to comply with the GDPR, confidentiality will be maintained by pseudonymising the data, throughout the process if you wish to do so? Yes  No

Would you like to participate in the research titled 'Interpreting Ritualistic Landscape of India, Kalamezhuth Paatt, a Case Example'? Yes  No

If yes, would you like to give permission for audio visual recording of the interview or the performance of the ritual? Yes  No

Name & Sign :

Address :

Date :

## Consent Form for Audio-Visual Documentation of the Ritual

Working title of the project: Interpreting Ritualistic Landscape of India, Kalamezhuth Paatt, a Case Example.

Researcher : Devakumar T

Supervisors : Dr. Louise Cooke, Dr. Jim Leary

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Have you read the information leaflet of the project and understood the main goal of the research? Yes  No

Have you understood that your participation is voluntary and can withdraw the consent at any stage of the project? Yes  No

Have you understood that the photos, videos and audios collected during the ritual may be published in the thesis and can be used for future research; and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process if you wish to do so? Yes  No

Have you understood the risk and benefit in participating in the research titled 'Interpreting Ritualistic Landscape of India, Kalamezhuth Paatt, a Case Example'? Yes  No

Would you like to give permission for audio visual recording of the ritual art of Kalamezhuth paatt being conducted at your house/ temple? Yes  No

Name & Sign :

Address :

Date :

## Appendix -2

### Qualitative Semi -structured Interviews

#### Methodology

A total of nine interviews were conducted. The first two interviews, held in December 2020 and January 2021, are considered pilot studies. The remaining interviews were streamlined as a result of this. The table below indicates how these interviews were pseudonymized and the transcripts were named. A questionnaire is also provided in both English and Malayalam.

Sl No.	Participant name (code)	Date of Interview	Duration (Minutes)	Transcript
1	VSN	28.12.2020	90	KO01
2	MKK	31.01.2021	88	KO02
3	KRK	13.02.2022	67	KU01
4	CGN	20.02.2022	53	KO03
5	PMI	27.02.2022	35	KO04
6	KSN	09.03.2022	25	KU02
7	MN	12.03.2022	50	KO06
8	KRN	14.03.2022	50	KO05
9	MK	26.03.2022	57	KU03

## Interview Questionnaire for Artists

Working title of the project: Interpreting Ritualistic Landscape of India, Kalamezhuth Paatt, a Case Example.

Researcher : Devakumar T

Supervisors : Dr. Louise Cooke, Dr. Jim Leary

---

Name of the interviewee:

Address :

Age :

Interview Date :

Interview Location :

### 1. The Background

- Is Kalamezhuth Paatt your hereditary job? If no, how and why did you enter into this profession?
- Can you outline the training, the trainer (teacher) and beginning of your career?

### 2. Practice

- How did you become an expert in the ritual art of Kalamezhuth Paatt?
- Is there any hierarchy of artists?
- How will you coordinate with other artists?

### 3. Beyond the livelihood

- Have you thought about the meaning of the rituals involved in Kalamezhuth Paatt, its symbolism and materiality?
- What about the off season, do you have any other jobs?

### 4. Transformations

- Have you noticed any changes in Kalamezhuth Paatt in terms of spaces and performance during your career?
- Have you experimented with any improvisations or modifications of what you learned from ancestors, during the performance?
- Do you think that these improvisations play a vital role in the transformation of the ritual over a period of time?

**5. Quantitative aspects**

- Which are the places where you perform Kalamezhuth Paatt regularly?
- Is it related to any geographical boundaries?
- How many rituals were affected/cancelled because of COVID 19 pandemic?

## **Appendix 2.1, Interview Transcript – KO01**

Name : VSN  
Age : 72  
Interview Date : 28.12.2020.  
Interview Location : Artist's house  
.

Recording Starts...

### **Devakumar Thenchery (DT): (wishing with respect)**

As mentioned in the leaflet, the current project is on the ritualistic landscape of India, with Kalamezhuth Paatt being the case example. I would like to know more about this from you.

Let me start with the background. Is Kalamezhuth Paatt your hereditary job?

**VSN:** Yes, we have been doing this for a long time.

### **DT: So, how did you get into this profession?**

**VSN:** My grandfather used to practice this ritual. I am uncertain about the activities that took place prior to his time. Since our family has a close association with Lord Vettakkorumakan and Balussery Kotta Temple, I should say that our involvement might have started even before that generation.

### **DT: Oh, that's great. Grandfather means—could you please mention the period?**

**VSN:** I am 72 now. So, my grandfather might have been born more than 130 years ago.

### **DT: So, who all were practicing Kalamezhuth Paatt from your family?**

**VSN:** Apart from my grandfather, father, and myself, nobody else was practicing this ritual art in our family, and no one from the new generation is into this tradition.

### **DT: Ok, can you please explain your debut?**

**VSN:** My first programme was at Kuttankulangara *Illam*, near my house; that was not a Kalamezhuth Paatt, but a *Vilakku*. When I was 18, my debut as a *Komaram* in Kalamezhuth Paatt was at Thrikkalangode temple, one of Vettakkorumakan's important temples. My first Kalamezhuth Paatt with breaking 12,000 coconuts was also in the same year and was in the Irattakulangara temple.

**DT: Ok, can you please tell something about the early days of your career?**

**VSN:** I received training from Ravunnikkutty *Asan* at the Balussery Kotta temple. Actually, my intention was to learn *chenda* and *thayambaka*, not the ritual dance. During the day, he taught *chenda*, and then in the evening, other essential lessons for the Marar community. One day he just asked, 'Why don't you try a hand in ritual dance in Kalamezhuth Paatt? After all, your family has tradition in it?'. Since I felt the same, I started learning the basics. After four days, my father joined him, and with his approval, I made my debut.

**DT: After that, did you get plenty of chances?**

**VSN:** Even after my debut, my father only performed a few Kalamezhuth Paatts. However, I used to accompany him to observe the process and learn his style. After four months, he allowed me to complete Kalamezhuth Paatt independently. I managed to get a new sword and sanctify it from Balussery Kotta Temple (recalls the day in detail...), and I am still using the same one. After that, I started the practice of leaving the tool at Balussery Kotta for sanctification for every Kalamezhuth Paatt that accompanied by breaking 12,000 coconuts.

**DT: Let me go to the next set of questions. Please explain how you became an expert in *Komaram* in Kalamezhuth Paatt.**

**VSN:** After acquiring the fundamentals from my teacher, I began to learn a great deal from the environment. My father provided me with a lot of assistance, and in fact, his style and school greatly influenced me. Gradually, I began to experiment with various techniques, such as the steps used in Kalapradakshinam. My father used to criticise those moves, and that motivated me to do more experiments.

**DT: So, what you are following is your father's style, and can it be called 'VSN' style'?**

**VSN:** Yes, of course, this was developed by me and my ancestors. Marar does not have a role in moulding the *Komaram*; he just demonstrates the regular rhythms that they follow

and ensures synchronism between the dance and beats. But Marar can express his thoughts on *Komaram's* performance. Once I was talking to my teacher, and he gave me a clue about a rare rhythm called '*Kumbha thalam*'. *Lakshmithalam* and *Durithasekharam* were my father's masterpieces, and he taught me to do the same. Even I tried the combination of these two rhythms. As a result, I had tried various dance steps with rare beats. But I never deviated from the basics, which I got from my father. I believe that these factors have made me an expert.

**DT: How are you coordinating with other artists like Kurup and Marar in Kalamezhuth Paatt?**

**VSN:** There will be a mutual understanding between Marar and *Komaram* in ritual dances of *Eedum Koorum Chavittal* and *Kalapradakshinam*. For the *Eedum Koorum Chavittal*, Marar selects the rhythms to play, and typically provides a hint to *Komaram* about the next rhythm before switching. In the case of *Kalapradakshinam*, the opposite is true. *Komaram* has the leading role in this. Similarly, there should also be coordination between Kurup and *Komaram* during *Kalam maykkal*. I follow all these unwritten rules during the performance. I usually don't try any of the special steps mentioned above if the Marar doesn't have much calibre. So it's all up to the mutual understanding between artists.

**DT: The next one is in continuation of this discussion: is there any hierarchy of artists in Kalamezhuth Paatt?**

**VSN:** Yes, there is. But more than this, different responsibilities are endorsed by different groups. For example, Marar is responsible for informing *Komaram* that it is time to appear at the venue during *Mullakkal Paatt* and *Kalam maykkal*.

**DT: Let me go to the next set of problems. These are mainly on the meaning and symbolism of KP. To start with, please let me know the evolution of the ritual.**

**VSN:** As we know, evolution is linked to an episode in Mahabharatham. According to mythology, Lord Shiva was impressed by Arjuna's penance, and he and his wife Parvathy went to bless him, both in hunting attire. After gifting *Pashupatha*, the arrow, to Arjuna, they fell in love, and a baby was born to them. They left that baby in the jungle; later, he only became '*Vettakkorumakan*'. It is interesting that he has the strength of all three major

gods, namely Shiva, Vishnu, and Shakthi. In the Kiratham Kathakali, Shiva gifts the arrow and Parvathy giftsthe bow, signifying that he received the blessings of both Shiva and Shakthi.

**DT: So, what about Vaishnava?**

VSN: He got the blessing from Vishnu later, when Vettakkorumakan received *Churika* from a Brahmin boy. Hence, he got the spirit of all three.

**DT: Now, please elaborate on the meaning behind each ritual.**

**VSN:** Okay, I'll start with *Kalapradakshinam*. This ritual symbolically recreates *Sivathandavam*, Lord Shiva's fury dance. It is believed that *Shivathandavam* started with the *Chembada* rhythm and ended in *thipuda*. So *Kalapradakshinam* also starts with the *Chembada* rhythm, and the next round will be in *Thripuda*. Indeed, the Kalamezhuth Paatt ritual embodies a blend of creation, existence, and destruction. Priests use *Uchappatt* to evoke the deity's presence in the venue. Then, with five natural powders, which represent five elements of life, Kurup creates the form of the deity on the floor. White, black, and yellow are basic colours. You can create green by combining white with black, and you can create red by combining yellow with lime. After the completion of the *kalam*, they decorate the venue with *Vellari*. Actually, these are for the deity's followers. After the *Kalampooja*, the chief priest invokes the spirit of the deity back to the idol from *Kalam*. Then Kurup pays worship to these followers by offering *vellari*. This is called '*thiri uzhichil*'. Later, different people involved in Kalamezhuth Paatt distributed these rice and coconuts (not equally) among themselves. *Komaram* and the chief priest get the minimum quantity (those kept at the bottom of the *kalam*), and the rest of the *vallaries* (on both sides of the *kalam*) are for Kurup and Marar. They represent Narada, and Marar represents Nandikeswara, according to Kurup's *thottam*. That's why they get the majority of the materials. Therefore, they have equal responsibilities in Kalamezhuth Paatt, including preparing the venue and conducting Kalamezhuth Paatt. Only after the chief priest and Kurup have worshipped the *kalam*, does *Komaram* touch it. This is because the spirit has already returned to the idol, leaving only the body in the *kalam*.

**DT: Oh, that's an amazing concept!**

**VSN:** Before doing the *thiri uzhichil*, Kurup praises the deity in the *Kalam* only. But after that, they praise the deity, who is in the form of *Komaram*. Between each *thottam*, *Komaram* sits on the stool and drags it through the *kalam*. The order is that he start from the right side of the *kalam*, reach the centre portion, and then turn right towards Kurup. The symbolism of this action is that *Komaram* enters the *kalam* through *ida* and gets out through *pingala*. But, just before breaking the coconut ceremony, *Komaram* drags the stool straight towards the south, stopping at the centre only. Again, during *kalam maykkal*, it was advised not to erase any parts of the body above the navel.

**DT: How do you enter the *kalam* at the first instance, then?**

**VSN:** I usually enter from the south-east corner. Since the deity is holding the bow and arrow in his left hand, symbolically, I cut the bow by drawing a line using the sword.

**DT: What is the purpose of taking a bath in between?**

**VSN:** The concept behind taking a bath after seeing the *kalam* is to attain salvation. If Kalamezhuth Paatt is associated with 12,000 coconuts, bathing is extremely important as it cleanses both the mind and the body. It is believed that *Komaram* is taking a bath in the holy water, and after this, he completely gets the identity of the deity. It is also advisable to refrain from speaking until the ritual concludes after this bath. I usually keep silent, even after receiving the sword from the priest.

**DT: Is there any rule for dragging the stool during each *Niram*, the *thottam*?**

**VSN:** Yes, as explained before, except for the *niram*. Just before breaking coconuts, *Komaram* drags the stool from the deity's right to the left.

Actually, Kurup is praising the Lord, who is in the form of *Komaram*. The *thottam* helps the *Komaram* ignite the *Kundalini*, the invisible energy source, and reach the trans mood. These *thottams* once again act as an energy source, making the *Komaram* capable of breaking coconuts. In my experience, during the breaking of 12,000 coconuts, I usually get unbelievable and divine strength. For me, this comes in the form of sleep. From that point on, my mindset undergoes incredible changes. Otherwise, it is obvious that breaking 12,000 coconuts in a single stretch is an impossible task for common people. I heard that similar things are happening for *Komaram* in other rituals as well.

**DT: Any other advice from Father regarding breaking 12,000 coconuts?**

**VSN:** I was asked to worship Lord Vettakkorumakan. This worship and dedication are the keys to success (give examples to show the importance of dedication in other art forms, like Kathakali). The number 12,000 has plenty of significance. It represents twelve suns. Moreover, 12 is an auspicious number, as per Hindu mythology. While breaking each coconut, the water sprinkles in the form of sun rays. Breaking the coconut releases the high energy it holds in that place. It is also believed that tender coconuts are the earth's nectar.

**DT: So after breaking coconuts, what next?**

**VSN:** I told you that there are five types of life in our bodies. The first four life forms will disappear before the coconut breaks. *Komaram* sent back the last life, namely Dhananjayan, by erasing the face and chest parts of the *kalam* after breaking coconuts. He does this with his hands and coconut leaves, not his feet. By this time, the *Komaram* reaches the high trans mood and completely loses his identity as a human being. At this point, he will only deliver the commands and blessings to the devotees. Later, he will distribute the powder from the upper portion of the *kalam* to the devotees as a token of blessing.

**DT: So far, we have discussed different steps in the ritual. Have you noticed any changes or transformations in the spaces of performance?**

**VSN:** The basic rituals are the same everywhere. In *Kalam*, the head will be in the east. The chief priest's offering occurs in the bottom portion, facing east. Kurup sits on the south side, facing north. However, in certain instances, observable alterations occur. For example, in Balussery Kotta, Kurup sits on the north side to sing a song. As you know, Balussery Kotta Temple falls under the typology of *nalukettu*, which means a central courtyard surrounded by halls on four sides. I remember that previously, *Kalamezhuth Paatt* used to occur in the southern block of the courtyard. About 40 years ago, the venue relocated to the northern block, adjusting the Kurup's position for the audience's convenience. Some venues change the location of *Mullakkal Paatt* based on space considerations. The temple authorities or house owners make these decisions for their convenience. The *Thambran*, or ruler of Kurumbranad, who passed away in the 888 Malayalam Era, reportedly envisioned the long vista and the spaces surrounding the Banyan tree at Balussery Kotta. The long view is still intact.

**DT: What about *Paattupura*?**

**VSN:** In some cases, you can see a shift in the space. As a part of popularising the Kalamezhuth Paatt, some management has taken the decision to conduct the Kalamezhuth Paatt outside the *paattupura* in an open space.

**DT: So have you noticed any changes in the process of ritual?**

**VSN:** Steps are the same everywhere. But the location of *Mullakkal Paatt* may change in some cases.

**DT: Have you experimented with any improvisations in performance?**

**VSN:** Yes, of course. As we discussed earlier, I have tried to introduce new rhythms in *kalapradakshinam*. But the basic things are the same, and I haven't tried to make any changes to that.

**DT: Now I need to know the places where you regularly perform Kalamezhuth Paatt.**

**VSN:** I must recall it and have to refer to my diary also. Anyway, I will provide you with that just after this.

**DT: My final query is related to the present situation. How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect Kalamezhuth Paatt?**

**VSN:** Oh, it was badly affected. Most of the rituals were either postponed or cancelled. I did less than ten KPs during the last ten months.

**DT: I think I got plenty of information from you; I need to transcribe this interview. I need all your blessings from you. Thank you so much for your valuable time.**

**VSN:** Ok, let the Lord Vettakkorumakan bless you. Feel free to contact me at any time for information or clarification.

## List of Places

Sl No.	Place	Temple/ House	District	Month	Date
1	Varakkal,	Temple	Kozhikode	Kanni	Vijayadasami
2	Meppad	Illam	Kozhikode	Thulam	
3	Thrikkalangode, Manjery	Temple	Malappuram	Vrischikam	
4	Kshethrapalan Kotta,	Temple	Kozhikode	Dhanu	
5	Nilambur Kotta	Temple	Malappuram	Dhanu	
6	Mannur , Malappuram	Temple	Malappuram	Dhanu	Revathy star
7	Irattappanachi , Chelannur	Temple	Kozhikode	Makaram	2
8	Karuvissery	Temple	Kozhikode	Makaram	3
9	Kizhakkedath, Atholi	Illam	Kozhikode	Makaram	7
10	Kavilkulangara , Ekarul	Temple	Kozhikode	Makaram	8
11	Cheliya Edamana	Temple	Kozhikode	Makaram	9
12	Kolpram	Illam	Kozhikode	Makaram	10
13	Pattapurakkuzhiyil	Temple	Kozhikode	January	26
14	Nalapurakkal, Atholi	Temple	Kozhikode	Makaram	13
15	Kottukulangara	Temple	Kozhikode	February	2
16	Mangattitam	Temple	Kozhikode	Makaram	20
17	Ullooridam	Temple	Kozhikode	Makaram	23
18	Karumala	Temple	Kozhikode	Makaram	24
19	Kuttikkav, Eravannur	Temple	Kozhikode	Makaram	
20	Manalkulangara, Koyilandy	Temple	Kozhikode	Makaram	30
21	Mammuli, Nilambur	Temple	Malappuram	Makaram	Rohini star
22	Melkadakamvally	Temple	Kozhikode	Kumbham	1
23	Vakamooli, Arikkulam	Temple	Kozhikode	Kumbham	3

24	Kuttamangalam, Ramallur	Illam	Kozhikode	Kumbham	6
25	Thrikkuttisheri	Temple	Kozhikode	Kumbham	Next day of Shivarathri
26	Chinthramangalam	Temple	Kozhikode	Kumbham	7
27	Viraloor	Temple	Kozhikode	Kumbham	Rohini star
28	Kuniyadi	Temple	Kozhikode	Kumbham	16
29	Edaman Kulangara, Arikkulam	Temple	Kozhikode	Kumbham	13
30	Kunnath, Makkada	Illam	Kozhikode	Kumbham	Star
31	Kavilkulangara, Palath	Temple	Kozhikode	Kumbham	Star
32	Vazhoth	Temple	Kozhikode	Kumbham	17
33	Panniamvally, Nanminda	Illam	Kozhikode	March	15
34	Pozhikkavu	Temple	Kozhikode	Meenam	4
35	Irattakulangara	Temple	Kozhikode	Meenam	11
36	Panayidam	Temple	Kozhikode	Meenam	18
37	Keliketta Kavu, Nanminda	Temple	Kozhikode	March	30
38	Kavummandam	Temple	Kozhikode	Meenam	9
39	Narikkuni Edamana, Koyilandy	Illam	Kozhikode	Meenam	Avittam star
40	Puthussery, Kanjilassery	Illam	Kozhikode	Meenam	Karthika star
41	Bilathikulam	Temple	Kozhikode	April	2nd Saturday
42	Thali	Temple	Kozhikode	April	1st Saturday after festival
43	Edavalyam	Illam	Kozhikode	May	24
44	Athyattil	Temple	Kozhikode	Medam	5
45	Poothakandy, Koottalida	Temple	Kozhikode	Medam	16
46	Mokavur	Temple	Kozhikode	No Fixed Date	
47	Cherupalathu Kavu, Kakkur	Temple	Kozhikode		
48	Arumbayil, Ulliyery	Temple	Kozhikode		

49	Kakkattil vaidyasala, Vattoli	Temple	Kozhikode	
50	Koovili, Mokavur	Temple	Kozhikode	
51	Pooprangottukavu	Temple	Kozhikode	
52	Kulathur	Temple	Kozhikode	
53	Bathery Ganapathy	Temple	Kozhikode	
54	Choorakkad, Anavathil	Temple	Kozhikode	
55	Koonathur, Koduvally-Omassery	Temple	Kozhikode	
56	Parol, Mundothpalli	Temple	Kozhikode	
57	Karuthambath	Temple	Kozhikode	
58	Thencheri, Ramallur	Illam	Kozhikode	
59	Chekra, Chelannur	Illam	Kozhikode	
60	Ponnadukkam, Narikkuni	Illam	Kozhikode	

## Appendix 2.2, Interview Transcript – KO02

Name : MKK  
Age : 44  
Interview Date : 31.01.2021  
Interview Location : Artist's house.

Recording Starts...

**Devakumar Thenchery (DT): Good afternoon!**

This interview is in connection with my research project on the ritualistic landscape of India, with Kalamezhuth Paatt being the case example. You have gone through the leaflet and signed the consent form now. Since you are an expert in *Komaram* in this field, I would like to know more about this from you. You may ask to pause the recording anytime in between.

**Let me start with the background. Is *Komaram* in Kalamezhuth Paatt your hereditary job?**

**MKK:** Yes, we have been doing this for the last four generations. In Kalamezhuth Paatt, a community known as Karor Panicker possessed the right to become *Komaram* years ago. This was practiced by Unni Panicker and Kutta Panicker, who were sons of Puzhakkal Kandamangalam Illam, a Namboodiri family. They failed to pass on the tradition to the next generation, leading to the decision to grant the right to Namboodiri Brahmins. It is not appropriate for us, as it requires a high amount of physical work. Moreover, it has plenty of side effects. My ancestors were experts in arts like Kathakali, classical music, and an art form called 'panemkali', which was an indigenous art form by Namboodiris. Vettakkorumakan was also a subject in that art form. This was performed by Muthumana, Kanjirathottam, Kandamangalam, Adukkam, Thamarakkulam, and Vallivattam. Since Kalamezhuth Paatt was on the verge of extinction, my grandfather's brother started learning this from Panickers and started performing.

**DT: Any reference for the time period?**

**MKK:** My grandfather passed away in 1972. So, it might be in the 1950s. Even though it was first practiced by my grandfather's brother, my grandfather only started doing this in a much more developed manner. Then he shared the skills to my father. My elder brother was next to my father.

**DT: So how did you enter this context?**

**MKK:** My elder brother died at a young age. Others were not interested in learning and practicing *Komaram*, as income was low and responsibility was high. I was just 15 at that time. My father asked my mother if I could assist him. I was learning some martial arts at that time. I didn't refuse the proposal. Father was happy and asked to be ready as soon as possible to undergo training. The next day, he invited Perumanna Gopi Marar to teach me. We dedicated the morning to practicing basic rhythm and dance steps. During the daytime, he used to teach *eedum koorum* and, after sunset, other rhythms through oral demonstration. It took him ten days to teach me the basics, and he advised me to practice daily. When the season started, my father asked to accompany him to observe the processes. One day he suddenly asked, 'Toady, is your debut!'. Under pressure but with the blessings of my teachers, I made my first performance.

**DT: Any specific advice you got from your father?**

**MKK:** According to my father, ritual dance in Kalamezhuth Paatt is not our ancestral job, as it has a lot of side effects. Therefore, my father has instructed me to worship Lord Vettakkorumakan without question. That's the only way to reduce the impact on predecessors. In addition to this, there is advice on how to apply makeup and attire, how to erase drawings, how to drag a stool on the *kalam*, how to move your body during erasing the *kalam*, how to bless the devotees, and more.

**DT: Ok, so far, we have discussed the early days of your career. Let me go to the next stage. Please explain how you became an expert.**

**MKK:** After that, I accompanied my father for a full season to temples and houses to observe his style and body language, as well as occasionally to perform. The cooperation of other artists was commendable. Then I used to talk to other *Komarams* in the field and observe their work. Apart from these, hard work also helped me become an expert.

**DT: Is there any particular style you followed after becoming independent?**

**MKK:** Yes, I follow the advice of my teachers and father; my grandfather initiated the Kandamangalam style, which my father then strengthened (explaining their contributions to kalapradakshinam). From the beginning of my career itself, to maintain physical fitness, I used to undergo ayurvedic massage every year at Kottakkal Aryavaidyasala. Three weeklong treatments in the monsoon give me a real break from my busy schedule and help me get ready for the next season.

**DT: As we know, Kalamezhuth Paatt has a series of rituals. Please let me know the meaning of each ritual, your role in each of them, and the possibility of coordination between other artists.**

**MKK:** *Uchappatt* is the first ritual that denotes the beginning of Kalamezhuth Paatt. It is believed that this can be performed only after the arrival of Kurup, Marar, and *Komaram* to ensure the conduct of the ritual. Furthermore, at those times, communication was either direct or through letters. But nowadays, this factor is not important; I usually arrive at the venue only in the evening. After taking an oil bath from there, I do my daily worship. Then it's time to prepare for makeup and dressing. We use two double *mundu*, two *thorthu*, and *veeralippatt*. By this time, the *kalam* will be ready and decorated with *vellari* (nine on one side representing *Navagraha* and seven on the other side representing *saptharshees*), and others might have left for *mullakkal paatt*. It is believed that when he receives the sanctified sword and wears the garland, he becomes Karora Panicker's replacement. After the grand orchestra, the *eedum koorum* ritual dance begins. The Marar, who stands in for Nandikeswara, plays the rhythm as *Komaram* dances here. Whereas, in *kalapradakshinam*, it is the stage for *Komaram* to show his ability and to experiment with improvisations (explains an incident). Others evaluate *Komaram* primarily based on their performance in this ritual dance. *Komaram* takes a rest after this step. By the time the chief priest did the

worship, followed by the praising of Kurup through *thottam*, after *thiriyuzhichil*, *Komaram* enters the *kalam* to begin the destruction, and he completes the process there. We enter the *kalam* by cutting his bow through the deity's left side. Since it is a negative process, *Komaram* has to purify himself, so he takes a bath after this process. Then he came back to the *kalam* and started erasing the picture and cutting down the coconut leaves as if he were a warrior. By this point, he may have transitioned into a transient state. *Komaram* breaks coconuts to reduce heat and anger. It is believed that 16,000 soldiers made Vettakkorumakan bathe in coconut water to make him normal after the war. After this process, *Komaram* removes the remaining portion with coconut leaves and gives the powder as a token of worship.

**DT: So, how's it been concluded?**

**MKK:** *Komaram* bless the devotees and take back the sword to the temple. After blowing conch three times, Kurup removes the *koora* from the *paattumandapam*. Conch is blown to get the notice from all, which means all other deities and other people. This is the end.

**DT: What about the off-season? Do you have any other jobs?**

**MKK:** As Kalamezhuth Paatt is seasonal, I have to find some other jobs during off-hours. I usually have priestship in temples, or else I go for catering jobs during these days. Most of the materials used for Kalamezhuth Paatt are available only during the summer or just after the harvesting in the month of Makaram (mid-January). Coconut is also largely available during this time. Moreover, it requires a good amount of sun to dry the leaves to make green powder. That's why we can say that Kalamezhuth Paatt is seasonal.

**DT: Do you have disciples?**

**MKK:** Yes, I have trained a few people in the ritual dance of Kalamezhuth Paatt, and they are in the field too. I am happy that my son is also my disciple.

**DT: It's great that you are transmitting wisdom to the next generation. One more question regarding the practice. Do you experiment with some improvisations?**

**MKK:** Since I have had the history of interaction with Kathakali artists, I have tried something new in ritual dance. These improvisations helped me to create a unique style. But I never deviated from the basics, which I got from my ancestors.

**DT:** Finally, please list down the places where you conduct Kalamezhuth Paatt.

**MKK:** Sure.

Sl No.	Name	Temple/House	District	Month
1.	SNA	Temple	Thrissur	Chingam
2	Kunnam	Illam	Thrissur	Chingam
3	Keezhedam, Guruvayur	Illam	Thrissur	Kanni
4	Perincheeri, Areekkode	Illam	Malappuram	Kanni
5	Azhvanchery	Illam	Malappuram	Thulam
6	Parappuram, Meenchantha	Temple	Kozhikode	Vrischikam
7	Mankavu	Kovilakam	Kozhikode	
8	Veluthattu, Thirur	Illam	Malappuram	
9	Chathallur, Othayi	Temple	Malappuram	
10	Aryambavu, Mannarkkad	Temple	Palakkad	Dhanu
11	Kottukulangara, Kakkodi	Temple	Kozhikode	Dhanu
12	Kundilkulam, Omassery	Illam	Kozhikode	Dhanu
13	Muthukurissi Kavu	Temple	Palakkad	Dhanu
14	Villunniyal, University	Temple	Malappuram	Dhanu
15	Thiruvalli, Manchery	Temple	Malappuram	Dhanu
16	Morayur	Temple	Malappuram	
17	Vezhakkode, Othayi	Temple	Malappuram	
18	Kottuvatta	Temple	Malappuram	Dhanu 8
19	Thrikkandiyur, Thirur	Temple	Malappuram	Makaram3
20	Thalappana	Illam	Kozhikode	

21	Vayappuram	Illam	Kozhikode	
22	Thuvvur	Temple	Malappuram	Makaram
23	Kadannamanna	Kovilakam	Malappuram	
24	Pandikkad Kalam	Illam	Malappuram	
25	Panthallur	Temple	Malappuram	27
26	Kottiyatt	Temple	Kozhikode	
27	Edakkad, Vellannur	Illam	Kozhikode	
28	Veethanassery, Pandikkad	Temple	Malappuram	26
29	Kuttiyil, Vaniyambalam	Temple	Malappuram	Makaram
30	Amarambalam	Kovilakam	Malappuram	Kumbham
31	Meledam, Vaniyambalam	Temple	Malappuram	
32	Vellambatta, Vaniyambalam	Temple	Malappuram	
33	Pookkottur, Vaniyambalam	Temple	Malappuram	
34	Nadery, Koyilandy	Temple	Kozhikode	
35	Nilambur kurathimala	Temple	Malappuram	Kumbham
36	Edakramanchery	Illam	Kozhikode	
37	Vilayil Thenchery	Illam	Malappuram	
	Thalayilthody, Vilayil	Illam	Malappuram	
38	Thiruvloor	Illam	Malappuram	Kumbham
39	Madhom, Vilayil	Illam	Malappuram	Meenam 4
41	Naduvath Mana, Vandoor	Illam	Malappuram	Meenam
42	Mankavu	Temple	Kozhikode	
43	Pookkattiri	Temple	Malappuram	
44	Vanneeri, Thirur	Illam	Malappuram	March 2
45	Chuzhalippuram	Illam	Malappuram	
46	Thondilakkadavu	Temple	Kozhikode	
47	Uravankulam, Areekkad	Illam	Kozhikode	

48	Thoovakkad, Thirur	Temple	Malappuram	
49	Kundakkassery	Illam	Malappuram	Meenam
50	Pothannur	Illam	Malappuram	
51	Areekkara	Illam	Malappuram	
52	Thottupuram, Thirur	Illam	Malappuram	
53	Edappuliyedathu, Edappal	Illam	Malappuram	
54	Pulparambil, Peruvanpura	Illam	Kozhikode	Kumbham
55	Thavanur Mana	Illam	Malappuram	Meenam
56	Muttill Mahadeva	Temple	Wayanad	Deepavali
57	Palappetty, Thriprayar	Temple	Thrissur	Vrischikam 1
58	Karippala	Illam	Kozhikode	Vrischikam
59	Puthur Muthumana, Omassery	Illam	Kozhikode	Dhanu 24
60	Kottakkal	Kovilakam	Malappuram	Makaram
61	Nakeri, Guruvayur	Illam	Thrissur	Makaram
62	Pariharapuram, Pantheerankavu	Temple	Kozhikode	Makaram
63	Kotuvayur, Airport road	Temple	Kozhikode	Makaram
64	West Chathallur, Othayi	Temple	Malappuram	
65	South Chathallur, Othayi	Temple	Malappuram	
66	Kurassery	Nair house	Malappuram	Meenam
67	Villuth Shiva	Temple	Malappuram	April
68	Karumarappatta, Vandoor	Illam	Malappuram	Meenam
69	Karikkad	Temple	Malappuram	Kumbham 1

**DT: I wish to thank you for the time and effort taken to participate in this interview.**

**Namasthe!**

**MKK: Welcome!**

Recording ends...

### **Appendix 2.3, Interview Transcript – KU01**

Name : KRK  
Age : 69  
Interview Date : 13.02.2022.  
Interview Location : Artist's house

Recording Starts...

**Devakumar Thenchery (DT): Good evening!**

This interview is in connection with my research project on the ritualistic landscape of India, with Kalamezhuth Paatt being the case example. You have gone through the leaflet and signed the consent form now. Since you are an expert in *Komaram* and Kurup, I would like to know more about the ritual from you. You may ask to pause the recording anytime in between.

**Let me start with the background. Is Kalamezhuth your hereditary job?**

**KRK:** Yes. I belong to the caste group 'Theyyampadi Kurup'. My father and grandfather were also practicing *Kalamezhuth*. It was heard that my father was brought up and trained by his elder brothers as my grandfather passed away at his young age.

**DT: Ok. Can you please elaborate about the families involved in *Kalamezhuth* in Balussery?**

**KRK:** There are three families who are conducting *kalamezhuth*. Kizhakkuveedu, Padinjareveedu, and Kocharukandi. Years ago, the majority of rituals were done by Kocharukandi people only, as able members were very few in other families (old stories).

**DT: Oh, that's interesting. Who was your trainer?**

**KRK:** My father is my teacher. After completing schooling, I worked in a factory for six years. Then only I started learning the initial lessons; I was 21 or 22. However, before that, I used to go with my father to different venues just to watch *Kalamezhuth*. One of my uncles and cousins, who were active in *Kalamezhuth*, died unexpectedly. My father was struggling to manage all venues alone, so I started learning to support him in conducting *kalamezhuth*. It took me only one month to complete the initial training, which included ritual dance, *eedum koorum chavittal*, and making the single-line drawings of *kalam - kalam kurikkal*. The rest of the things I learned over the course of time. For the first time, I drew the face of Vettakkorumakan at Balussery Kotta Temple.

**DT: Can you please tell me more about the training?**

**KRK:** Ok. For practice sessions, we don't take fair powder. We use white ash for white, burned husk for black, powdered laterite stone for red and yellow, and powdered leaf for green. The focus was on basic colour combinations and proportions. Apart from that, the beats and steps of ritual dances were also taught. But I haven't gotten any special training for *thottam*; I learned the lines and tunes of *thottam* only during the rituals.

**DT: What about the debut?**

**KRK:** The debut in *Kalamezhuth* was at Balussery Kotta Vettakkorumakan Paatt, and that of *Komaram* was at Kulathur temple for Ayyappan *Vilakku*. It was in 1976, I guess.

**DT: So how did you become an expert?**

**KRK:** After my debut, I started going with my father to different temples and other venues. I learned a lot from observing how seniors are doing the rituals. So, it took a long time to become independent.

**DT: Is there any hierarchy among the artists?**

**KRK:** Yes, Kurup wields the ultimate power in *Kalamezhuth* Paatt. He decorates the *paattumandapam*, creates the figure, and sing songs (*thottam*). Furthermore, rumour has it that he possesses the authority to perform the *pooja*. Later, the responsibility of performing

the pooja was transferred to the priests. During the ritual of breaking 12,000 coconuts, there should be four Kurup, four Marar, and two *Kazhakam* to help the *Komaram*. But nowadays, it's all done by Kurup alone. In general, Kalamezhuth is a real team effort between Kurup, Marar, *Komaram*, *Thanthri*, and *Kazhakam* as a ritual. Each group must do their own duty.

**DT: How are you coordinating with other artists?**

**KRK:** In the case of drawing *kalam*, we generally follow a pattern and distribute the work among ourselves. One person draws the outline of the figure; after completing that, others also join. One renders the bottom portion, while the other draws the cloths. Expert Kurup focuses on the face and like that. I remember that some of my ancestors were known for rendering different parts of the *kalam*. Padmanabha Kurup was an expert in drawing faces and necklaces.

**DT: Can you please tell me more about different Kurup families who have been in the profession for years?**

**KRK:** Yes, Balussery is the prime centre of Kurup, or Theyyampadi Kurup, in this region. There are three families, namely Kizhakke Veedu, Padinjare Veedu, and Kocharukandi, who take on the responsibility of conducting Vettakkorumakan paatt in this region. Apart from that, one family is there in Kottur, namely Pattamadakkal. Another set of people are staying in a place called Cherukara in Wayanad. Their family name is also Kizhakkuveedu. Another family is settled near the Nerumkaitha Kotta temple. The rest of the people are staying in Thrissur and Palakkad district.

**DT: I have seen very few Kurup as the *Komaram* of Vettakkorumakan. How did you enter that field also?**

**KRK:** My family had the responsibility of conducting *kalamezhuth*, including *Komaram*, at Viralur temple, Chelannur. So I became *Komaram* of Vettakkorumakan for the first time at that temple. In our area, Namboodiri and Karora Nair used to be the *Komaram* of Vettakkorumakan. Surprisingly, with the grace of the Lord, I got invitations from many

temples to hold the position of *Komaram*. The most important one was from Eramuttikkavu temple to do the ritual of breaking 12,000 coconuts.

**DT: Have you thought about the meanings and symbolism of the rituals of *Kalamezhuth*?**

**KRK:** Apart from strictly following what my teachers told me, I haven't thought much about the meaning of the rituals. However, *thiri uzhichil* is considered a significant ritual. Kurup has to chant some *manthra* and then pay an offering to the subordinates of the main deity. Any mistake in this ritual may cause many troubles. So I am doing everything with a full heart and with dedication to God.

**DT: Any other jobs other than *Kalamezhuth*?**

**KRK:** Yes, I was a power loom operator at a textile mill for 13 years. When I became fully engaged in *Kalamezhuth*, I stopped doing that job.

**DT: Have you noticed any changes in the form of the ritual in your career?**

**KRK:** Changes as such Yes, some people are doing some research. So, they are trying to make some changes, especially in detailing out some portions of the *kalam*. However, in the Balussery area, we Kurups are trying to follow exactly what we learned from our ancestors. Previously, crowns, necklaces, and cloth were having some common features. One could easily find a correlation between these parts. The design of the silk—*patt*—had only two varieties, patterns in black or red. But now everything has changed. Hari Nagalassery, Haridas Kurup, and Manikanda Kurup are some of the people who are interested in experimenting. However, the sequence of rituals known as Vettakkorumakan Paatt remains consistent throughout Kerala. However, Bhagavathy or Ayyappan may differ from place to place. I am not against these experiments and the changes, but the basic framework should be intact.

**DT: Finally, please let me know the places where you conduct *Kalamezhuth* of Vettakkorumakan regularly. Is it related to any geographical boundaries?**

**KRK:** The majority of the *kalamezhuths* that I perform are dedicated to Vettakkorumakan and Bhagavathy. A couple of decades ago, we Balussery Kurups divided the entire area among ourselves. So, the places north of the Kakkur canal were under the control of Kizhakku Veedu, and those to the south of the canal were under Kocharukandy. Now, we don't follow these geographic boundaries strictly. Moreover, it is patriarchal rather than matriarchal. I will try to list the places. I hope that Vettakkorumakan's is enough.

Sl No.	Name	Temple/House	District	Month
1	Cherumundassery, Ponnani	Temple	Malappuram	Vrischikam
2	Balussery Kotta	Temple	Kozhikode	Dhanu
3	Eravattikkavu	Temple	Kozhikode	Dhanu
4	Kurooli, Koyilandy	Temple	Kozhikode	Makaram
5	Kolpram, Kuruvattur	Illam	Kozhikode	Makaram
6	Malayamma, Karuvisseriy	Illam	Kozhikode	Makaram
7	Thrikkovil	Temple	Kozhikode	Makaram
8	Puthiya kavu, Panangad	Temple	Kozhikode	Kumbham
9	Karumala	Temple	Kozhikode	Kumbham
10	Edavanakulangara, Arikkulam	Temple	Kozhikode	Kumbham
11	Vazhoth	Temple	Kozhikode	Kumbham
12	Shakthankulangara, Koyilandy	Temple	Kozhikode	Kumbham
13	Mandoty, Payyoli	Illam	Kozhikode	Kumbham
14	Chekra, Chelannur	Illam	Kozhikode	Meenam
15	Thenchery, Kakkur	Illam	Kozhikode	Meenam/Medam
16	Panniamvalli, Nanminda	Illam	Kozhikode	Meenam
17	Kariathan kotta	Temple	Malappuram	Meenam
18	Pozhikavu,	Temple	Kozhikode	Meenam

19	Sulthanbathery	Temple	Wynad	Medam
20	Kaippully, Melattur	Temple	Malappuram	Medam
21	Kattekkavu, Vengara	Temple	Malappuram	Medam
22	Kankadath, Kuttiady	Temple	Kozhikode	
23	Arekkulangara	Temple	Kozhikode	Makaram

Apart from the above, I have done the ritual of breaking 12000 coconuts at 27 places.

**(DT): It was great to interact with you, thank you so much for your time and effort to take part in this interview.**

**(MKK):** *Namaskaram!*

Recording ends..

## Appendix 2.4, Interview Transcript – KO03

Name : CGN  
Age : 65  
Interview Date : 20.02.2022.  
Interview Location : Artist's house.

Recording Starts (10.30am).

### **Devakumar Thenchery (DT): Good morning!**

This interview is in connection with my research project on the ritualistic landscape of India, with Kalamezhuthu Paatt being the case example. You have gone through the leaflet and signed the consent form now. Since you are an expert in *Komaram* of Vettakkorumakan, I would like to know more about this from you. You may ask to pause the recording at any time in between.

### **Let me start with the background. Is *Kalamezhuth* your hereditary job?**

**CGN:** Yes, we have been holding the position of *Komaram* for years. My father, Madhavan Namboodiri, and his uncle, Divakaran Namboodiri, were in the field of *Kalammezhuth*. It is said that my great-grandfather was also a well-known *Komaram*.

### **DT: So you are pioneers in Kalamezhuth Paatt? Who was your teacher?**

**CGN:** My father Madhavan Namboodiri, and Kadamery Kunjirama Marar were my teachers.

### **DT: Can you please talk more about your training and first days in the field?**

**CGN:** Ok. When I was 20 years old, I began learning the basics of *Komaram*. My father became old and was too ill to manage all the programs. So, I and my younger brother,

decided to start undergoing training. The first step was to become familiar with the rhythm, and it was the Marar's responsibility to teach that. After that, our father taught us the different steps involved in the ritual dance. My debut was at the Ilayidam Paradevatha temple, and it was only *chuttuvilakku*, not Palamezhuth Paatt. After conducting two or three *vilakku*, I got a chance to become *Komaram* in *Kalamezhuth*. That year, I also made my debut in breaking 12000 coconuts. Ko01 was also there to help me on that day.

**DT: How did you become an expert *Komaram*?**

**CGN:** Expert in the sense that it took a long time. Father became ill, so I and my brother took charge of all *kalamezhuth* and *vilakku* from him. During the busy season, I developed time management skills. I have been practicing this ritual art for the last 45 years, so I believe that the grace of God and the blessings of my teachers helped me to do all these good things. Nowadays, the number of sites is increasing, even receiving offers from other *Komarams*, such as Ko01, to take up their venues. However, we are focusing on the venues inherited from our ancestors.

**DT: Have you tried to do any experiments in Kalamezhuth Paatt?**

**CGN:** No, I am following whatever my father taught me. Because Kalamezhuth Paatt has a framework, there is not much to do apart from that. My father's advice was sufficient for me to become a *Komaram* in Kalamezhuth.

**DT: Ok, do you have any other jobs other than *Komaram*?**

**CGN:** Yes, I was a priest in the Vellikulangara Shiva temple near my house. Successfully managed priestship and *Komaram* for several years. But those restless days and sleepless nights caused a lot of health issues, like low blood pressure. Now retired from the temple, and so getting a minimal pension.

**DT: What about the tools?**

**CGN:** The weapons of Vettakkorumakan are *churika*, bow, and arrow. During my early career, I used to use the sword that was available in the venues. Later, I decided to get my

own tools and managed to make a silver *kaduthila* and brass *churika* for Kalamezhuth Paatt (showing the tools that are kept in the prayer room).

**DT: Oh, that's great. Let me go to the next set of questions. Have you noticed any changes in the rituals of *Kalamezhuth* during your career?**

**CGN:** No, the rituals involved in the Kalamezhuth Paatt of Vettakkorumakan are unchanged. Theyympadi Nambiar is doing *kalam* in Kannur and Kazarkode districts. So, there may be some changes in the presentation, for example, the patterns of *kalam* and the tune of *thottam*. Otherwise, everything is the same.

**DT: Do you have any disciples?**

**CGN:** Only one. My son is around 20 now; he is interested in this, and hopefully he will be my next disciple.

**DT: Now, let me ask the last set of questions. Please list the names of the places where you conduct Kalamezhuth Paatt.**

**CGN:** Ok. We are *Komaram* of Vettakkorumakan in approximately 60 places. I don't remember the names of some of the places, but I will try to list them down.

Sl No.	Name	Type of Venue	Place	District	Month/ Date
1	Kottath	Temple (vilakku only)	Purameri	Kozhikode	Vrischikam
2	Kozhukkannur	Temple (vilakku only)	Purameri	Kozhikode	Vrischikam
3	Vairajathan	Temple (vilakku only)	Kadamery	Kozhikode	Dhanu
4	Edathil,	Temple	Koduvalli, Thalassery	Kannur	Dhanu 7

5	Menappuram	Temple	Thottilpalam	Kozhikode	Dhanu 10
6	Thattarath Paradevatha	Temple	Thalassery	Kannur	Dhanu 14
7	Karuvinchery,	Temple	Ayanchery, Vadakara	Kozhikode	Dhanu 18
8	Parayil Vettakkorumakan	Temple	Kallachi	Kozhikode	Makaram
9	Oorpazhassi,	Temple	Nadal- Thalassery	Kannur	Kumbham (7 days)
10	Poneri	Illam	Panoor	Kannur	
11	Akathoott	Temple	Neeliyath	Kannur	
12	Othayoth	Temple	Vadakara	Kozhikode	
13	Kovilakam	Temple	Purameri	Kozhikode	
14	Illullayil	Temple	Panoor	Kannur	
15	Kootteri	Temple	Panoor	Kannur	
16	Edavana	Temple	Eramala	Kannur	7 days
17	Nalladath Paradevatha	Temple			

These are the places where we annually conduct Kalamezhuth Paatt. Apart from the above, there are some places where it is not happening regularly. Till date, I have broken 12000 coconuts in 35 places.

**DT: Are these places under your responsibility and related to any geographical boundaries?**

**CGN:** I don't know exactly. But these places are coming under the Iruvanad and Kadathanad *desoms*, and most of these places are in the northern Malabar region.

**DT: Is there any impact of COVID on your profession?**

**CGN:** Yes, we were badly affected indirectly by COVID, as most of the Kalamezhuth Paatt in 2020 were cancelled due to lockdown and other restrictions.

**(DT):** **OK. It was great to interact with you. Thank you so much for your time and effort to take part in this interview.**

**(CGN):** *Namasthe!*

Recording ends...

## Appendix 2.5, Interview Transcript -K004

Name : PMI  
Age : 42  
Interview Date : 27.02.2022.  
Interview Location : Artist' house.  
.

Recording Starts (5.15 pm).

**Devakumar Thenchery (DT): Good evening!**

This interview is in connection with my research project on the ritualistic landscape of India, with Kalamezhuthu Paatt being the case example. You have gone through the leaflet and signed the consent form now. Since you are an expert in *Komaram* of Vettakkorumakan, I would like to know more about this from you. You may ask to pause the recording at any time in between.

**Let me start with the background. Is *Kalamezhuth* your hereditary job?**

**PMI:** Yes, it was inherited from my ancestors. My father, Kesavan Namboodiri, was not in the field of *kalamezhuth* as *Komaram*, even though he had studied the basics. But my grandfather was a well-known *Komaram*. Apart from that, my father's elder brothers, Narayanan Namboodiri and Vamanan Namboodiri, were *Komarams*. It is heard that my great-grandfather's younger brother was also there in the profession.

**DT: Oh, you have the tradition of four generations as *Komaram*!**

**Please tell me about your teachers and debut.**

**PMI:** I learned the basics of *Komaram* from Kalassery Madhavan Namboodiri's father. Later, Kalassery Madhavan Namboodiri helped me learn more about *Komaram* in *Kalamezhuth*. Thrikkuttissery Achutha Marar is the one who taught me the basic rhythm of ritual dance. He stayed here for a couple of weeks at my home for that purpose. My debut was in 1991 at Kalassery Illam for a *vilakku*, and that in *Kalamezhuth Paatt* was at Akappuram Illam in 1992. Actually, after completing the schooling, with the advice of only my father, I decided to become *Komaram* to keep the tradition.

**DT: Is anyone else from your family practicing now?**

**PMI:** My cousin just debuted last year. Apart from that, my elder brother's son is also interested in becoming *Komaram* but has yet to start the training.

**DT: How did you become an expert *Komaram*?**

**PMI:** During the early days, the programmes were very few, and my paternal uncles were also active at that time. So I was only a substitute for them during that stage of my career. Kalassery also used to call me if he had to manage more than one venue at a time. Gradually, people started inviting me and gave me more chances.

**DT: Ok, do you have any other jobs other than *Komaram*?**

**PMI:** No full-time engagements. But used to do other hereditary jobs like priesthood during off-season.

**DT: Have you tried to do any improvisations?**

**PMI:** I haven't thought about that. But maybe due to some circumstances, I might have made some deviations. Otherwise, I am trying to follow what I learned from my teachers. Apparently, I learned a lot from experience as well.

**DT: Have you noticed any changes in the rituals of *Kalamezhuth* in the last few years?**

**PMI:** Not really. But there are some regional variations. For instance, after procession, the priest takes the sanctified sword back to the sanctum. But in some places in South Kerala,

the priest keeps the sanctified sword in the *kalam* after the procession, and it's *Komaram* who takes it back to the sanctum after erasing the *kalam*.

**DT: Do you have your own tools?**

**PMI:** Yes, I have a *churika* and a *kaduthila*. *Churika* is too old, and I don't know the age; it is heard that it was even used for *Panem Kali* by my ancestors. But the other one is new.

**DT: Now, please list the names of the places where you conduct Kalamezhuth Paatt. If possible, in a chronological order.**

**PMI:** Ok, I will try to list them down.

Sl No.	Name	Temple/House	Place	District	Month
1	Kuniyil	Temple	Keezhppayyur	Kozhikode	Dhanu
2	Oravil	Temple	Theruvathakadvu	Kozhikode	Dhanu
3	Elambilattidam	Temple	Keezhariyur	Kozhikode	Vrschikam/Dhanu
4	Mangatt	Temple	Meppayyur	Kozhikode	Dhanu
5	Vellikalakangara	Temple	Atholi, Parambath	Kozhikode	Makaram
6	Varoppadi	Temple	Kakkur	Kozhikode	Makaram
7	Maralur	Temple	Muchukunnu	Kozhikode	Dhanu/ Kumbham
8	Kalassery	Illam	Payyoli	Kozhikode	Makaram
9	Nedumbokulangara(daru bimbam)	Temple	Arikkulam	Kozhikode	Makaram
10	Vazhoth	Temple	Naduvannur	Kozhikode	Kumbham 17
11	Punathumpadikkal	Temple	Chemanchery	Kozhikode	Kumbham 18
12	Muchukunnu kotta	Temple	Muchukunnu	Kozhikode	Kumbham 25
13	Chiramangalam	Illam	Parappanangadi	Malappuram	Kumbham
14	Ghorankulangara	Temple	Avala	Kozhikode	Kumbham

15	Ollukkara	Temple	Mannuthi	Thrissur	Medam
16	Avidanallur	Temple	Avidanallur	Kozhikode	Medam
17	Kaiveli	Temple	Vadakara	Kozhikode	Medam
18	Nadukkandi	Temple	Narakkode	Kozhikode	Medam
19	Muthukottil	Temple	Chengottukavu	Kozhikode	
20	Kunnathara	Temple	Atholi	Kozhikode	Not regular
21	Banathur	Illam	Avala	Kozhikode	

These are regular venues. Till date, I have done breaking of 12000 coconuts in 13 places.

**DT: Any relationship to the geographical boundary?**

**PMI:** We have most of the venues in and around Koyilandy Taluk.

**DT: Any Impact of COVID on your profession?**

**PMI:** I don't think so because many of the above places managed to conduct *kalamezhuth paatt*, though the grandeur was less.

**DT: It was great to interact with you, thank you so much for your time and effort to take part in this interview.**

**PMI:** Ok, thank you.

Recording ends (6 pm).

## Appendix 2.6, Interview Transcript -KU02

Name : KSN  
Age : 44  
Interview Date : 09.03.2022.  
Interview Location : Oorpazhassi temple, Kannur  
.

Recording starts at 8.00 p.m.

### **Devakumar Thenchery (DT): Good evening!**

This interview is in connection with my research project on the ritualistic landscape of India, with Kalamezhuthu Paatt being the case example. You have gone through the leaflet and signed the consent form now. Since you are an expert in *Kalamezhuth* and *Komaram* of Vettakkorumakan, I would like to know more about this from you. You may ask to pause the recording at any time in between.

### **Let me start with a prepared set of questions. Is *Kalamezhuth* your hereditary job?**

**KSN:** Yes, it is. My grandfather (my mother's father) only taught me *kalamezhuth*. My father was a government employee, so he was not involved in our hereditary profession. From my childhood on, I used to accompany my grandfather and became interested in klamezhuth.

### **DT: So, your family has a great tradition?**

**KSN:** Yes, we have been practicing this ritual art for a long time. Oral history says that Kalamezhuth Paatt of Karumarath Illam, Kannur, is as old as 850 years. As we are responsible for conducting *kalamezhuth* at Karumarath illam today, it might be our ancestors who did the ritual even 850 years ago. Moreover, we have the recommendation

from the Chirakkal King to practice all types of *kalam*, including that dedicated to serpents, *Nagam*, in this region.

**DT: Which are the different types of kalam you draw?**

**KSN:** We normally do all types of *kalam*, including *Nagam*, Bhadrakali, Vettakkorumakan, Ayyappan, Vairajathan, and Bhagavathy, etc.

**DT: What about your debut?**

**KSN:** I don't remember an event called a debut. As I told you, I used to accompany my grandfather from childhood itself, even at the age of five. Though my grandfather was my teacher, the learning in Kalamezhuth came mainly from venues and observations. However, Rajan Namboodiri, Kumbhan Illam, provided proper training in *eedum koorum chavittal*. He was the only Namboodiri in the region to play the role of *Komaram*. He was my grandfather's disciple, so he was more than happy to teach me the basics of *Komaram*.

**DT: How did you become an expert in Kalamezhuth?**

**KSN:** It comes mainly from experience. I got the chance to help my seniors conduct *kalamezhuth* in this region, but it took a long time to understand the different techniques behind it. Now I am leading the ritual in many places. I understand that, compared to south Kerala, the venues, or *pattarangu*, are not that defined in this region. In the south, the *pattumandapam* adheres to strict dimensions, making it easier to draw *kalam*. But here, it's difficult to manage different venues with different concepts of deities. I am happy that I got much recognition from many organisations for my expertise in *Kalamezhuth*.

**DT: Have you noticed any changes in the rituals of Kalamezhuth in the last few years?**

**KSN:** Changes can be seen in rendering some portions of the *kalam*, like outer decorations, patterns of outfits, etc. Otherwise, the basic framework is the same everywhere. This is mainly because we are following the *dhyanaslokas*, or hymns, of different gods and goddesses to conceptualise the *kalam*. The tunes of *thottam* are different in this region. There are some minor deviations in the content, too.

**DT: Have you tried to do any improvisations?**

**KSN:** Yes, but it is limited to specific areas, as mentioned before.

**DT: As one of the aims of my research is to map, please list the names of the places where you conduct Palamezhuth Paatt.**

**KSN:** Ok. I conduct *kalamezhuth* approximately in 150 places, of which we are *Komaram* at 46 places. This includes *Kalamezhuth*, dedicated to different deities. I, along with my brother and my son, manage all these venues.

Sl No.	Name	Temple/House	Place	District	Month
1	Mavilakkavu	Temple	Peralassery	Kannur	Vrischikam 10
2	Paduvilakkavu	Temple	Ancharakkandy		Vrischikam 7
3	Kappattukavu	Temple	Thezhe Chovva		Vrischikam 15
4	Parakkoth	Temple	Kalyassery		April 4
5	Urumerikottam	Temple	Mattannur		
6	Illamoola	Temple	Mattannur		Vrischikam Uthram
7	Thilanur	Temple	Thazhe Chovva		Meenam Uthram
8	Thirur	Temple	Mattannur		Vrischikam 5
9	Koodali Thazhatthuvedu	Temple	Mattannur		
10	Cheruvanchery	Illam	Panoor		
11	Karakkadidam	Temple	Kunnathur padi		
12	Thonichal	Temple		Wynadu	
13	Manadukka	Temple	Bandadukka	Kasargode	
14	Kovilakam kottam	Temple	Neeleswaram	Kasargode	
15	Vettakkorumakan	Temple	Kanjangad	Kasargode	

16	Kovilakam	Temple	Kilimanoor	Trivandrum	
17	Eramala	Temple	Onchiyam	Kozhikode	

**DT: Is there any relationship to the geographical boundary?**

**KSN:** Nadora, Kottath, Nangolathu, and Puttappilli tharavadu were the four major Nambiar families in the Kannur region who used to practice Kalamezhuth Paatt. These families were responsible for conducting Kalamezhuth Paatt in the following territories: Parayattida *swaroopam* under Kottiyur Perumal, Allada *swaroopam* under Neeleswaram King, Kola *swaroopam* under Chirakkal *Thampuram*, and Chuzhali *swaroopam* under Karakkadidam Nayanars. My family is a later addition to the above list of families. Now that things have changed, people are not strictly following the above division. The festival or temple committee owns the right to decide the artists, whether they are *Komaram*, Kurup, or Nambiar. We don't have any objections to this, as we are getting enough programmes nowadays.

**DT: Is there any impact of COVID on your profession?**

**KSN:** Yes, our profession was badly affected. During lockdown, nothing was happening.

**DT: It was great to interact with you. Thank you so much for your time and effort to take part in this interview.**

**KSN:** *Namasthe!*

Recording ends (8.25pm).

## Appendix 2.7, Interview Transcript – KO06

Name : MN  
Age : 56  
Interview Date : 12.03.2022.  
Interview Location : Artists' house.  
.

Recording Starts (11.40 am).

### **Devakumar Thenchery (DT): Good evening!**

This interview is in connection with my research project on the ritualistic landscape of India, with Kalamezhuthu Paatt being the case example. You have gone through the leaflet and signed the consent form now. Since you are an expert in *Komaram* of Vettakkorumakan, I would like to know more about this from you. You may ask to pause the recording at any time in between.

### **Let me start with a prepared set of questions. Is *Kalamezhuthu* your hereditary job?**

**MN:** Yes, *Komaram* or *Velichappad* is the job inherited from my ancestors. My paternal uncle (my father's younger brother) and grandfather were *Komaram* in Kalamezhuthu Paatt.

### **DT: What made you opt for this profession?**

**MN:** My father didn't show much interest in this, and there was no one available to assume the responsibility when my uncle grew older. So, with Andaladi Namboodiri's push, I decided to enter the field. Thiruvagappura Ramapothuval was my teacher. Now I am transferring the knowledge to my son. He learned the skill not from me, but from a Kurup.

My younger brother also tried to learn but couldn't continue, as it is difficult to undergo training at the age of 30.

**DT: Please tell me more about your early days.**

**MN:** I learned both the dance steps and beats from Thiruvagappura Ramapothuval. He was around 80 at the time, but he was strong enough to teach me all the basics. Uncle also helped with a few steps. I haven't seen my grandfather but have heard about his expertise in *Komaram* and *Panemkali*. My debut was at our homestead only when I was 18 years old. Obviously, I was nervous, but I used to get unbelievable strength during the performance. I remember that it took around five hours to complete my first event by breaking 12,000 coconuts. Now I need only half of that time to break 12,000 coconuts.

**DT: How did you become an expert in Kalamezhuth?**

**MN:** Kalamezhuth Paatt at Andaladi Mana is always special. Eminent percussionists say Sivaramapothuval, Ramapoduval, etc. used to stay there for days. So interactions with those people, different venues, and different circumstances helped me create my own place in the field. Moreover, I was the only *Komaram* for Vettakkorumakan in the Palakkad area. Nowadays, the number of venues has increased, and people from other communities have also started practicing *Komaram*. I believe that whatever I have achieved in my life is only due to the blessings of Lord Vettakkorumakan.

**DT: How about the coordination between other artists?**

**MN:** Most of the people cooperate with each other. During the early days, one of the senior artists, Parameswara Kurup, used to point out my mistake and advise me on how to do things in Kalamezhuth Paatt.

**DT: What about the scope of improvisations?**

**MN:** *Manodharma* (improvisation) has a good role in *Kalamezhuth*. Most of the things I learned were through observation only. I have seen the *Komaram* of many other artists. But I never tried to imitate them. If the percussion team is strong, then the *Komaram* also has

great scope for experimenting with new steps during *kalapradakshinam*. I also used to try new and varied steps on special occasions.

**DT: What are the tools you use?**

**MN:** I have a *churika* and *kaduthila* made of silver. I got it from my uncle, and it is more than 200 years old. Recently, I got another set of tools for my son, made of steel.

**DT: Have you noticed any changes in the ritual over the last few years?**

**MN:** The basics are almost the same. But there may be some changes in the timing. For example, all artists used to reach the venue in the morning of the day of the ritual; they started their work only after taking a dip in the tank. It was more of a dedication than a job. Nowadays, most of the artists have their own vehicles, so they arrive on time and leave the venue immediately after the ritual is over.

**DT: Let me come to the final set of questions. Please list the names of the places where you conduct Kalamezhuth Paatt.**

**MN:** Ok.

Sl No.	Name	Temple/House	Place	Distict	Month
1	Andaladi	Mana	Pattambi	Palakkad	Chingam
2	Aanjam	Mana	Pattambi	Palakkad	
3	Erandappurathukad	Mana	Pattambi	Palakkad	Thulam
4	Chunangad	Temple	Ottappalam	Palakkad	Vrschikam
5	Kottekkavu	Temple	Pattambi	Palakkad	
6	Thekkiniyedath	Mana	Kuthulli	Palakkad	Meenam
7	Kolpuram	Illam	Chunangad	Palakkad	
8	Chunangad	Temple	Chunangad	Palakkad	

9	Kottappuram	Temple	Mannarkkad	Palakkad	
10	Kakkayam	Temple	Ettumanur	Kottayam	
11	Malliyur		Malliyur	Kottayam	
12	Kannampura	Temple	Vadakkanchery	Palakkad	
13	Erayur	Temple	Koppam, Pattambi	Palakkad	
14	Mathur	Mana	Panjai	Palakkad	Karkkidakam
15	Chekur	Mana	Pattambi		
16	Vadakkumnathan	Temple	Thrissur	Thrissur	
17	Karimbuzha	Temple	Cherpulassery	Palakkad	
18	Kottappuramkavu	Temple	Cherpulassery	Palakkad	
19	Vilayur	Temple	Koppam	Palakkad	
20	Erayur	Temple	Koppam	Palakkad	
21	Murthiyedam	Mana	Thrissur-Mannarkkad	Palakkad	
22	Thottam	Mana	Panjai	Palakkad	
23	Vellanchery	Temple		Malappuram	
24	Bhayankavu	Temple	Chamravattam	Malappuram	
25	Mazhavanchery	Illam	Chamravattam	Malappuram	
26	Thavanur	Illam	Thavanur	Malappuram	
27	Pulappatta				
28	Kapra	Illam	Vattamkulam, Edappal	Malappuram	
29	Kuthanur	Temple	Palakkad	Palakkad	

These are regular venues. Till date, I have broken 12000 coconuts in more than 100 places.

**DT:** Is there any relationship to the geographical boundary?

**MN:** I don't think so. But most of my *paatts* are in Palakkad district only.

**DT: Is there any impact of COVID on your profession?**

**MN:** Most of the *paatts* in 2020 and 2021 were cancelled due to COVID. Now everything is almost back to normal.

**DT: It was great to interact with you. Thank you so much for your time and effort to take part in this interview.**

**MN:** Ok, thank you.

The recording ends at 12.30 p.m.

## Appendix 2.8, Interview Transcript -K005

Name : KRN  
Age : 63  
Interview Date : 14.03.2022.  
Interview Location : Thamarassery Kotta Temple  
.

Recording Starts (4.45 pm).

### **Devakumar Thenchery (DT): Good evening!**

This interview is in connection with my research project on the ritualistic landscape of India, where Kalamezhuthu Paatt is taken as a case example. You have gone through the leaflet and signed the consent form now. Since you are an expert in *Komaram* of Vettakkorumakan, I would like to know more about this from you. You may ask to pause the recording at any time in between.

### **Let me start with a prepared set of questions. Is Kalamezhuth your hereditary job?**

**KRN:** Yes, *Komaram* or *Velichappad* is the job inherited from my ancestors. As per the mythology, Lord Vettakkorumakan appointed Nairs of Karakura Madham as his representative, or *Komaram* in *Kalamezhuth*. It is evident in the *thottam* sung by Kurup. But now in this Kaliyuga, many people from other communities are practicing as *Komaram* in Vettakkorumakan Paatt.

### **DT: Ok, any difference between Karakura Nair and Karakura Panikker?**

**KRN:** The actual origin of the Karakura family is near Balussery, Kozhikode. It is said that our ancestors had 9000 acres of land in the Kurumbranad region. One day, Karakura Nair attended a Kalamezhuth Paatt at Thuruvithamkur Kingdom, who was the enemy of

Kurumbranad King. As a result of that, the Kurumbranad king expelled us from the country. The ladies of the family decide to meet the Thiruvithamkur King for a solution. So he sent one lady to North Paravur and asked her to take care of the Kalamezhuth Paatt happening in the southern part of the state with her offspring. Likewise, he sent another lady to Chundal and advised her to take care of the Kalamezhuth Paatt happening in the northern part of the state with her offspring. This made the Kurumbranad king recruit an efficient gentleman from his army family called Ettuveetil Panikker. His predecessors are known as Karakura Panikker. Later, the last one in the family transferred the knowledge to some Namboodiris, who were experts in *Panemkali*. Thus, Namboodiri Brahmins also became eligible for the position of *Komaram* in Kalamezhuth Paatt.

**DT: Who was your teacher? Please let me know about your early days in your career.**

**KRN:** The matriarchal system was prominent during my childhood. Three of my uncles, namely Velayudhan Nair, Kesavan Nair, and Govindan Nair, were famous *Komarams* of Vettakkorumakan. One day, youngest uncle asked me to accompany him for a picnic. I became interested in that and learned the basics from him, mainly through observing his performances; thus, I debuted at the age of 12. It was at the Perumudisery Vettakkorumakan temple, under the control of the local king of Punnathur.

**DT: How did you become an expert in *Kalamezhuth*?**

**KRN:** At the start of the career, chances were very limited. When I was 20, I requested that my uncle give me a chance to do a Kalamezhuth Paatt with 12,000 coconuts broken. But he refused. Later, with Kolady Govinda Menon's recommendation, I got a chance at Poongatt Mana. As my uncle became old, I took up the venues from him and gradually built my career. Till date, I have broken 12000 coconuts in 348 places, of which one was with 24000 coconuts, and managed to engrave my name in the Limca Book of World Records. I strongly believe that all of these good things are happening because of Lord Vettakkorumakan's blessings.

**DT: How about the coordination between other artists?**

**KRN:** Kurup creates the form, the chief priest does the worship, and *Komaram* erases the *kalam*. So this is the combination of *srishti*, *sthithi*, and *samhara*. Each person is fulfilling their own role.

**DT: Have you thought about the meaning of the ritual?**

**KRN:** The first ritual in *Kalamezhuth* is *Uchappaatt*. As the word meaning denotes, the Kurup sings the *thottam* loudly. *Mullakkal paatt* is the preparation for hunting. *Eedum koorum chavittal* symbolises the hunting of wild animals. After *eedum koorum chavittal*, he takes all wild animals inside the *kalam*, and *kalapradakshinam* also involves hunting. After the chief priest's *kalam pooja* and Kurup's *thottam*, *Komaram* enters *kalam* by cutting the bow. The dance followed by that is supposed to be filled with joy. Cutting the coconut leaves and erasing the *kalam* also represent hunting. The *peedham* symbolises the biggest wild animal, and sitting on the *peedham* shows Vettakkorumana's power. The breaking of the coconut is to reduce his anger and thirst.

**DT: What about your disciples?**

**KRN:** I have trained four of my nephews and my son. So I am sure that the tradition will be continued through them.

**DT: Have you noticed any changes in the ritual over the last few years?**

**KRN:** For the last few decades, I have witnessed some changes in the scale of the ritual. Previously, it was happening only in the houses of Brahmins or in some temples. As the number of venues increased, participation from the public also became a major factor. In general, it is becoming more public now.

**DT: What about the scope of improvisations?**

**KRN:** If Marar is a creative person, I used to experiment with new beats and dance steps during *kalaprdakshinam*. Sometimes, I use some additional clothes besides those

prescribed. There is nothing wrong with doing this, keeping the basic framework unchanged.

**DT: Have you noticed any changes in the ritual over the last few years?**

**KRN:** No, I haven't noticed much difference in the ritual. But the decorative parts and grandeur of the ritual might have changed a bit.

**DT: Let me come to the final set of questions. Please list the names of the places where you conduct Kalamezhuth Paatt.**

**KRN:** Ok. I play the role of *Komaram* of Vettakkorumakan Paatt in almost all districts of Kerala, except Wynadu, Kannur, Idukki, and Kasarkode.

Sl No.	Name	Temple/House	Place	Distict	Month
1	Perumudissery	Temple	Ponnani	Malappuram	60 days in a year
2	Kottakkakam	Temple	Trivandrum	Trivandrum	Dhanu
3	Kakkad	Temple	Kunnamkulam	Thrissur	Dhanu
4	Balussery Kotta	Temple	Balussery	Kozhikode	Dhanu 27
5	Olassa	Temple	Kottayam	Kottayam	
6	Thottakkattu	Mana	Thruppunithura	Eranakulam	April 1 <sup>st</sup> Saturday
7	Ambalappuzha	Temple	Kovilakam	Alappuzha	April 2 <sup>nd</sup> Saturday
8	Kayamkulam	Temple	Kovilakam	Alappuzha	April 3 <sup>rd</sup> Saturday
9	Cherthala	Temple	Kovilakam	Alappuzha	May 2 <sup>nd</sup> Saturday
10	Veluthatt	Temple	Paravur	Eranakulam	April
11	Ilaya Thamburattikkavu	Temple	Ranni	Pathanamthitta	
12	Kalathil	Temple	Aluva	Eranakulam	Makaram
13	Chennas	Mana	Aluva	Eranakulam	

14	Paikkatt	Mana	Irinjalakkuda	Thrissur	
15	Paikkatt	Mana	Thrissur	Thrissur	May
16	Periyambalam	Temple	Chavakkad	Thrissur	Edavam
17	Manchara	Mana	Guruvayur	Thrissur	February
18	Punnathurkotta	Temple	Guruvayur	Thrissur	
19	Manikkalath	Nair house	Guruvayur	Thrissur	May
20	Chirankara	Temple	Pattambi	Palakkad	January
21	Melmuri	Temple	Pattambi	Palakkad	
22	Kandanakam	Temple	Edappal	Malappuram	January
23	Narass	Mana	Edappal	Malappuram	May
24	Thamarassery Kotta	Temple	Thamarassery	Kozhikode	March
25	Vakayadu Kotta	Temple	Vakayadu	Kozhikode	Feb
26	Elangattu kavu	Temple	Cheliya	Kozhikode	Feb
27	Kunnimadham	Temple	Pookaad	Kozhikode	
28	Puthiyakavu	Temple	Panangad	Kozhikode	January
29	Poonurkavu	Temple	Poonur	Kozhikode	March
30	Chekur	Mana	Pattambi-Pallipuram	Palakkad	May
31	Moothedath	Mana	Valanchery	Malappuram	Sep
32	Padinjareppatt	Mana	Thiruvegappura	Palakkad	April
33	Thiruvambadi	Temple	Alappuzha	Alappuzha	June
34	Chatayamangalam	Temple	Jadayuppara	Kollam	
35	Velutthatt	Temple	Paravur	Ernakulam	April

These are regular venues. Some of them are very old, and some are new.

**DT: Is there any relationship to the geographical boundary?**

**KRN:** As I mentioned before, Karakura Nair was the *Komaram* of the Kurumbranad Kingdom. Later, it might have expanded to other regions as well.

**DT:** **Is there any impact of COVID on your profession?**

**KRN:** The season in 2020 was completely affected by COVID. 2021 was also similar.

**DT:** **It was great to interact with you. Thank you so much for your time and effort to take part in this interview.**

**MN:** Ok, thank you. Let the Lord Vettakkorumakan bless you!

Recording ends at 5.35 p.m.

## Appendix 2.9, Interview Transcript -KU03

Name : MK  
Age : 50  
Interview Date : 26.03.2022.  
Interview Location : Punnorkottu Mana, Aluva  
.

Recording Starts (11.00 am).

### **Devakumar Thenchery (DT): Good Morning!**

This interview is in connection with my research project on the ritualistic landscape of India, with Kalamezhuthu Paatt being the case example. You have gone through the leaflet and signed the consent form now. Since you are an expert in *Kalamezhuth* and *Komaram* of Vettakkorumakan, I would like to know more about this from you. You may ask to pause the recording at any time in between.

### **Let me start with a prepared set of questions. Is Kalamezhuth your hereditary job?**

**MK:** Yes, *Kalamezhuth* is our hereditary job. We Kallatt are one of the communities that conduct *Kalamezhuth* in Kerala. We prepare the *kalams* of more than 60 deities, including many rare *kalams*. Though we have been practicing this ritual for generations, I can't specify the evolution of the ritual, but one thing is sure: the origin of Kalamezhuth Paatt is connected to the worship system established by the great Shankaracharya.

### **DT: What made you opt for this profession?**

**MK:** Even though it's our profession by birth, many people are reluctant to choose. But my case was different, as I was interested in *Kalamezhuth* from my childhood itself. When I was studying in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, I joined Guruvayur *Kalamezhuth* academy to learn *Kalamezhuth*.

After completing a three-year course, my teachers advised me to continue there for higher studies for another three years. So, in 1992, I completed my training.

**DT: Please tell me more about your training and early days.**

**MK:** Njangattiri Parameswara Kurup and Nelluvai Ravunni Kurup were my teachers. They taught us all aspects of Kalamezhuth Paatt: drawing, singing, and dancing. I used to accompany both before and after my training. The routine at Guruvayur was memorable. Wake-up time was 4.30 a.m. We held sessions on music, *thottam* literature, and drawing until nightfall. We used powders to draw the *kalam* on an actual scale. The first year's focus was on drawing the single line of the *kalam*. Teachers draw the lines or curves first, and then we students overdraw on those lines. Gradually, without the guidelines, we were able to draw lines and curvy-linear forms. From the second year on, I started using colours. To get acquainted with colours, for practical sessions also, we used to use original powders like rice powder and turmeric powder. The third year was for getting more practical experience. After completing the course, I got many chances to do *Kalamezhuth*. But the offseason was terrible; I had to search for other jobs during rainy seasons.

**DT: How did you become an expert in Kalamezhuth?**

**MK:** As mentioned earlier, I got enough chances to accompany my teachers during my training period itself. That helped to strengthen my career. I think that the creative use of colours, especially the combination of different colours, the perception of space available in the venue, and the beats and tunes of *thottam* make a Kurup perfect in Kalamezhuth Paatt. As I got exposure from the training period itself, it didn't take much time for me to acquire these qualities.

**DT: How about the coordination between other artists?**

**MK:** There is a clear hierarchy among the Kurups. In the case of *Kalamezhuth*, the senior artist makes the outline of the figure and completes the face, headgear, or crown. Others coordinate with each other to complete other parts of the *kalam*, namely arms, legs, and cloth. In *thottam*, the senior most artist is known as *Ponnani*, and the assistant is called *Shinkidi*.

**DT: What made you to become a *Komaram* of Vettakkorumakan?**

**MK:** According to mythology, Karakoora Nair is the authoritative *Komaram* of Vettakkorumakan, while Panniamvalli Bhattathirippad is the chief priest. As I told you, the number of venues was too low in old age. As it grew, Nambooiri Brahmins began to take on the role of *Komaram*. Recently, people from our community also opted for the position of *Komaram* in Vettakkorumakan Paatt. I believe it is an action to protect and expand the scope of Kalamezhuth's ritual art. Around twenty people from our community play the role of *Komaram* in different parts of the state.

**DT: Have you thought about the meaning and symbolism of the rituals of *Kalamezhuth*?**

**MK:** Not exactly. But I've written a book on Bhadrakali's Kalamezhuth Paatt. I worked at Kottakkal Aryavaidya Sala for ten years, starting in 2001. Later, when I became busy with *Kalamezhuth*, I resigned from there and spent full time in the field. During the rainy season, I didn't have any jobs. Therefore, we initiated the Kalamaezhuth Research Centre as a small initiative to offer free training to children in Kalamezhuth. So far, I have more than twenty disciples. The field experience and advice from my teachers and well-wishers made me want to write that book.

**DT: Have you noticed any changes in the ritual over the last few years?**

**MK:** Several decades ago, *Kovilakam*, various temples, and some *Illams* were the primary locations for conducting the rituals. Now that it is becoming more public, people have started conducting Kalamezhuth Paatt as an offering after fulfilling their wishes and for the wellbeing of the family. Hence, the number of venues has almost doubled in the last ten to fifteen years. It became popular even outside of the state. Kalamezhuth's techniques are now common in other modes of worship; for example, Brahmins draw deity figures for pooja. Previously, they were using only nonfigurative *padmam* for worship. These are all in favour of the artists in the field. The scope of improvisation also increased. These days, the influence of mural painting is also evident in Kalamezhuth. Also, there are some regional variations. *Padappatt*, a type of *thottam*, is popular in the Kozhikode area, but I haven't

learned this since it is not common in this area. Apart from these, I haven't noticed any changes in the structure of the ritual.

**DT:** Let me come to the final set of questions. Please list the names of the places where you conduct Kalamezhuth Paatt.

**MK:** Ok. In some case, I have the role of *Komaram*; in others, I have the dual roles of Kurup and *Komaram*. Kalamezhuth Paatt is dedicated to various gods and goddesses, including Vettakkorumakan. I will try to list them down.

Sl No.	Name	Temple/House	Place	Distict	Role
1	Ramapuram	Temple	Kattakambal	Thrissur	
2	Kizhkke kovilakam	Temple	Kottakkal	Malappuram	
3	Vishwambhara	Temple	Kottakkal	Malappuram	
4	Ollur	Temple	Ollur	Thrissur	
5	Kodumudikkavu	Temple	Kolazhi	Thrissur	Komaram
6	Punnorkode	Mana	Aluva	Eranakulam	Komaram
7	Kakkad	Mana	Korattikkara	Thrissur	Komaram
8	Godeshwaram	Temple	Chalakkudy	Thrissur	Komaram
9	Mangoth	Mana	Kuttippuram- Kumbidi	Malappuram	Komaram
10	Kullikkiliyad	Temple	Mannarkad	Palakkad	Komaram
11	Erayur	Temple			komaram
12	Njangattiri	Temple	Pattambi	Palakkad	Komaram
13	Pambinkavu	Temple	Perumbilavu	Thrissur	Komaram
14	Kanjirangatukalari	Temple	Ambalappara, Ottappalam	Palakkad	Komaram
15	Kakkayam	Temple	Ettumanur	Kottayam	Komaram

Apart from the above list, we used to conduct Kalamezhuth Paatt of Vettakkorumakan in some temples in Mumbai, Bangalore, and Coimbatore. But these venues are not at all regular, which means they might not conduct the ritual every year.

**DT: Is there any relationship to the geographical boundary?**

**MK:** There are different Kallatta families who do *kalamezhuth*, which are distributed in various parts of the region. We maintain mutual respect among ourselves while conducting *paatt* and even while taking up new venues. So, this distribution and division of venues may be according to a territory or a geographical boundary.

**DT: Is there any impact of COVID on your profession?**

**MN:** All rituals were cancelled during lockdown in 2020. After that, we were not that affected by the COVID situation, as many of the venues became active.

**DT: It was great to interact with you. Thank you so much for your time and effort to take part in this interview.**

**MN:** Ok, thank you.

The recording ends at 3.30 p.m.

### Appendix 3 - Digital appendix

This digital appendix includes YouTube link of 18 short videos, which helps to understand the spatiality of tangible heritage and intensity of intangible heritage. All these videos are 'unlisted' so that it's not public and those who have the link can view the video.

Sl No.	Title of the video	Link
1	<i>Uchappatt</i> - the noon ritual	<a href="https://youtu.be/i-CROk5-Wks">https://youtu.be/i-CROk5-Wks</a>
2	Kurup prepares single line drawing	<a href="https://youtu.be/IQMpWi9mBFE">https://youtu.be/IQMpWi9mBFE</a>
3	<i>Kalam</i> on progress	<a href="https://youtu.be/71JGHQIFC_Q">https://youtu.be/71JGHQIFC_Q</a>
4	<i>Sandhyavela</i>	<a href="https://youtu.be/Rn2En0Muazo">https://youtu.be/Rn2En0Muazo</a>
5	<i>Thayambaka</i> – a concert on traditional drums	<a href="https://youtu.be/c2bdBskofZM">https://youtu.be/c2bdBskofZM</a>
6	Preparing for <i>Mullakkal paatt</i>	<a href="https://youtu.be/pjvvejWoK8w">https://youtu.be/pjvvejWoK8w</a>
7	<i>Mullakkal Paatt</i> , the outdoor process	<a href="https://youtu.be/blZfnp12gUs">https://youtu.be/blZfnp12gUs</a>
8	<i>Thirich ezhunnallath</i> - Grand return with music	<a href="https://youtu.be/iy59QHslrh8">https://youtu.be/iy59QHslrh8</a>
9	<i>Eedum koorum chavittal</i> - Ritual dance	<a href="https://youtu.be/phJGfvtA7s">https://youtu.be/phJGfvtA7s</a>
10	<i>Kalapradakshinam</i> – ritual dance of circumambulating the drawing	<a href="https://youtu.be/5GAVRLAr8Z4">https://youtu.be/5GAVRLAr8Z4</a>
11	<i>Kalam pooja</i> – chief priest's worship	<a href="https://youtu.be/pGgUWymCCKo">https://youtu.be/pGgUWymCCKo</a>
12	<i>Thottam</i> – the song by Kurup	<a href="https://youtu.be/QTncKMw4INk">https://youtu.be/QTncKMw4INk</a>
13	<i>Thiri uzhichil</i> – Kurup' worship	<a href="https://youtu.be/PpApsIOree4">https://youtu.be/PpApsIOree4</a>
14	<i>Kalathilattam</i> - ritual dance inside the pavilion	<a href="https://youtu.be/5nyRqjSgQgl">https://youtu.be/5nyRqjSgQgl</a>
15	<i>Kalam Maykkal</i> – erasing the drawing	<a href="https://youtu.be/-bwTbiWG1uw">https://youtu.be/-bwTbiWG1uw</a>
16	<i>Thenga eityal</i> – breaking the coconuts	<a href="https://youtu.be/gVjectucHyM">https://youtu.be/gVjectucHyM</a>
17	<i>Kalpana</i> - Delivering the predictions	<a href="https://youtu.be/cOAXpF1myw8">https://youtu.be/cOAXpF1myw8</a>
18	<i>Koora valikkal</i> – removing the piece of silk – conclusion	<a href="https://youtu.be/W3nZdtP_TRE">https://youtu.be/W3nZdtP_TRE</a>

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