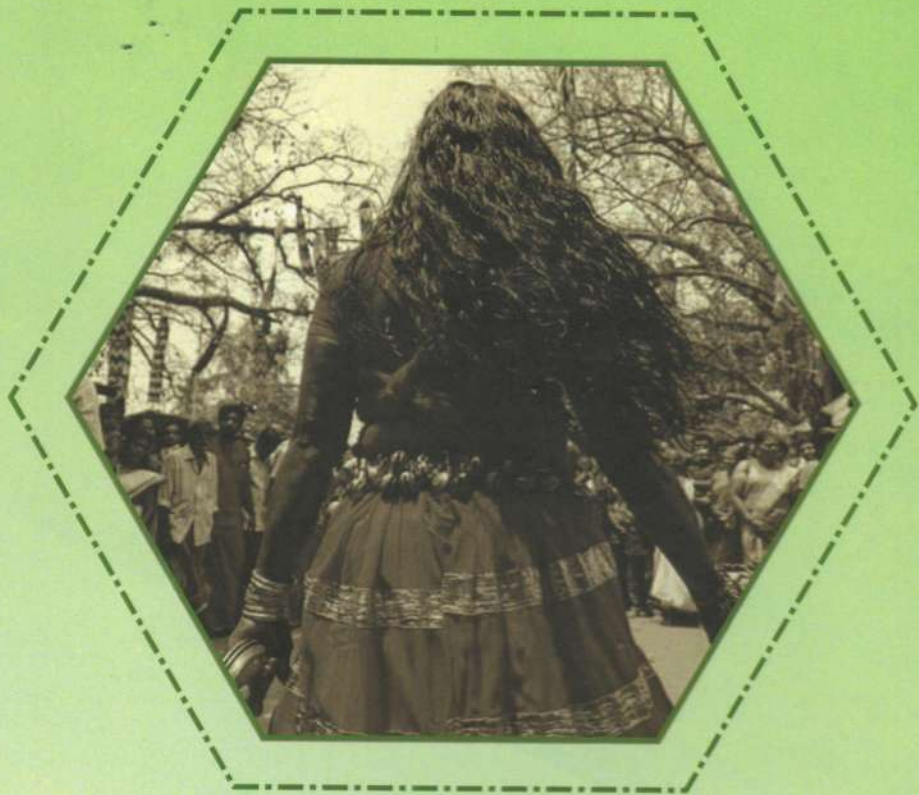


*Zooming In:
Historicizing the Religious
Spaces of
Women in Keralam*



Editor
P S Manoj Kumar
Sandhya M Unnikrishnan

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ISBN : 978-93-85957-45-1
First Published 2019
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Published by
Meena Book Publications

Regd. Office:
H.N.140, Street No. 9C, Prem Nagar,
Karawal Nagar, Delhi - 110094 (India)
Mobile : +91-9868280998

Sales Office:
21/4648, Ansari Road,
Daryaganj, New Delhi - 110002 (India)
Tel. : 011-23277141, 9899953194
E-Mail: meenabookpublications@gmail.com

Laser Typesetting by
G9 Graphics
Darya Ganj, New Delhi-110002

Printed in India

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Fall From Grace: Gender And Community Formation Among The Syrian Christians

5 |
-Susan Thomas

■ Introduction

Modern period, in Europe saw socio-economic transformation that led to the redrawing of familial relationships and gender roles. Nuclear families that emerged during the period were finally shaped by Victorian codes and values. These were then transmitted on to the colonial societies where colonial modernity led to the reconstitution of communities and its practices. Kerala too was no exception; the colonial period saw the process of community formations that still form the basis of our contemporary society today in which defining gender was crucial.

This paper explores how in the modern period, gender formations that were perceived as 'Christian' were formulated as part of community formations and how sexual deviances were dealt with by the church. Thus, while it is the regulation and punishment of deviant sexuality that forms the main focus of enquiry in the paper, there is also the attempt to look at marriages and its regulation by the church. For this the main source are 19th century palm leaves discovered in the St. Mary's Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church at Nadama, Thripunithura. These palm leaves deal with the instance of adultery and the response of the *palliyogam*² to it. Out of the four leaves that have been discovered two *ottollakaranams*³ were written by the man and the woman who were involved in the same case are also analysed. To understand the punishment meted out we will have to look at the provisions of the regulations passed by the church called *Sabhaniyamangal* of 1853. We also get similar references of the punishments being meted out in such cases from the palm leaves of St. Mary's Jacobite Church at Kuruppampady and also the instances

of regulation of marriage
this article.

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