

From the point of view of military medical history, the description of the EEF's anti-malaria campaign in the Jordan Valley and on the Sharon Plain during the summer of 1918 is worthy of closest attention. Already during the war, British strategy had been affected by this 'cursed fever': in Macedonia during the spring of 1917, British offensive initiatives had been cancelled owing to huge losses of manpower caused by malaria. Allenby's response to the potentially catastrophic malarial problem was based on swift diagnosis: six Malarial Diagnosis Stations and three military laboratories were formed. Since the use of quinine was disputed, it was preferred to try and control the mosquito's breeding. This meant clearing areas of any standing water, including ponds, marshes, swamps and even shell holes. Reeds and weeds were removed from the fast flowing Jordan River's tributaries. Every brigade had its own malaria officer and there were between six and 13 anti-malarial squads in every regiment, whose job it was to locate potential mosquito breeding grounds. In total, the anti-malaria campaign lasted six months and consumed 222,840 man days (although work groups were reinforced by thousands of Egyptian labourers). Despite these efforts and the introduction of rest stations well away from the front line where troops were sent after four to six weeks service in the Valley, still approximately two per cent of troops had to be evacuated every week suffering from malaria. This figure, however, was deemed a considerable success: most of the new cases were in soldiers who had been engaged in military activity at or near the front line; that is, having been bitten by mosquitoes in un-cleared enemy territory. The incidence of new cases in soldiers in the rear units was far lower. It is also worth noting the regional prevalence of malaria: on taking Jerusalem the previous winter, 27.3 per cent of schoolchildren were diagnosed with the disease.

The final offensive of the EEF meant advancing into territory where no anti-malaria operations had been conducted. The effects of new cases of malaria on the attacking force were severe: the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, for example, became immobilised at Baalbek. To make matters worse, the influenza pandemic reached Damascus on 6 October 1918, just as the advancing troops began to suffer from malaria. During October and November 1918, more than four times the number of Desert Mounted Corps soldiers died from disease than were killed in action since the offensive began. Dolev describes the medical services' conduct at this time as one of their finest hours.

Dolev quotes from the memoirs of Dr James Abraham, a surgeon and member of the EEF, to summarise the medical relevance of the campaign for future operations. Lessons learnt which were then forgotten until World War II, Abraham claims, included the benefit of having Field Ambulances advance with the troops, the use of aeromedical evacuation, the value of having a major surgery capability at the front, and the swift diagnosis of malaria. Dolev meanwhile chooses to conclude *Allenby's Military Medicine* with the following exhortation: "Good military medicine on the battlefield should always be performed in the tradition of the Palestine campaigns, where devotion, dedication, and professional excellence were its hallmarks".

JOHN BURMAN  
*University of Cambridge*

HEAVEN ON EARTH. THE UNIVERSE OF KERALA'S GURUVAYUR TEMPLE. By PEPITA SETH. pp. 316. New Delhi, Niyogi Books 2009.

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For the non-Hindu visitors to Kerala, temples are strictly off limits: it is only possible to catch a tantalising glimpse of their austere architecture from the outside. In the light of this, it is, indeed, 'a real miracle' to quote her own words (p. 8) that Pepita Seth was not only officially permitted to enter

Kerala's temples in 1981, but also able to photograph the ceremonies taking place in them. The author has been working in Kerala since 1979, documenting and photographing the rituals of the Kerala Hindu, focusing on the Theyyams of Malabar. Eventually, this work became too strenuous, and in 2001, encouraged by the temple authorities, she commenced her research on Guruvayur, one of the most important Vaishnava temples of the subcontinent. This labour of love and devotion culminated in this tersely written, splendidly illustrated, and very well produced book.

The work contains a brief introduction, seventeen chapters and last but not least a carefully compiled glossary – a great help for the reader not conversant with the Malayalam words which are used in the text. The author has to be complimented on the glossary, which, for once, not only contains all the terminology used in the volume, but also precise explanations of the occasional very complex philosophical concept.

The first two chapters are particularly relevant as they discuss the layout of the temple, and its historical background. The temple was completely reconstructed after a fire destroyed the original building in 1970. In the intervening years, and even now, the temple is undergoing constant alterations due to various factors such as the ever-increasing number of pilgrims, the necessity of catering to their needs, issues of security, etc.

The author, commenting on the lack of a cohesive architectural style within the new complex, qualifies her statement with a very important observation, which is true of many refurbished temples: "... despite the unprepossessing structure that replaced the temple's once serene and understated architectural beauty, the intangible quality of people's faith and devotion has remained unaffected by either fire or its aftermath" (p. 11). However, fire, reconstruction works and continuous changes notwithstanding, the layout of the temple conforms to the directives given in the sacred texts. The sanctuary dates only from 1638, and it is maintained that the image of Guruvayurappan enshrined at the centre of the temple has been there since time immemorial, despite a legend that states that the deity of the original temple was a goddess. Interestingly, the goddess at Guruvayur has a very telling name: Edathariyathukavil Bhagavati, i.e. the goddess 'who moved to the left', a reminder of her giving her sanctuary to Guruvayurappan. Chapter 15, one of the most fascinating of this book, is devoted to the Bhagavati, her forceful personality and her role at Guruvayur. The image enshrined (Chapter 6) represents Vishnu, despite the fact that Guruvayurappan is meant to be Krishna in the form of a playful boy. This has a reason in the conviction that anyone who is born as a human must die and thus can never be God, as God is immortal. Thus Krishna "despite being considered divine the most perfect among the *avatars* – is not generally worshipped in Kerala temples with rituals and *poojas* specific to Him, but with those which are directed to Vishnu" (pp. 64–65).

A number of mythical personalities, deities and epic heroes, and events are connected to the founding of the temple. From the thirteenth century, with the rise to power of the Zamorins, Guruvayur begins not only to appear in official records but also to play a part in the history of the region. Since then it has been intimately connected with the rise and vicissitudes of the Zamorins. The Zamorins were staunch devotees of Guruvayurappan and thus instrumental in the extraordinary rise in the temple's fortune in the sixteenth century. In the following centuries, however, the temple was raided first by the Dutch, then by the troops of Tipu Sultan and eventually in 1800 the British declared Malabar to be a part of the Madras Presidency. It is at this juncture that the temple was saved from total ruin by the intervention of the Ullanat Panickers, one of the most illustrious Kerala families, who from 1825 to 1900 supported the temple ensuring that the daily routine and the annual festival were not disrupted.

The following chapters, 3 and 5, concentrate on the administrative set up of the temple and on the priestly hierarchy in charge of the administration and daily running of the temple. Chapter 4, 'The Idol', focuses on the image enshrined in the sanctuary discussing its deep symbolism and meaning, as

well as the material out of which it is fashioned and the repairs which were undertaken during the course of time.

Chapter 7 and 8 are devoted to a painstakingly precise description of the five daily *pujas* and the complex ‘dawn-to-dusk’ *puja*. All phases of the action and their symbolic and philosophical meaning are clearly explained.

Chapter 9 gives a fascinating insight in what happens ‘behind the scenes’: it is one of the most felicitous chapters in this fascinating narrative, full of interesting details on the families of craftsmen and musicians who have been in the service of the temple for generations. The smooth running of all rituals depend on the unstinting dedication of the ‘servants of the Lord’ who provide flowers, garlands, make wicks, light lamps, craftsmen in charge of fashioning containers, spoons, lamps etc., goldsmiths, musicians, and all the kitchen personnel – the temple caters for thousands of pilgrims every day – and their helpers, and, of course, troops of sweepers: the steady preoccupation with cleanliness and purity comes here to the fore, more than ever.

The temple has been popular with pilgrims from the fourteenth century, however until some sixty years ago, the lack of travel facilities and, most importantly, until 1947, except for Ekadasi, the day before and after it, only the higher castes were allowed to enter the temple premises. Since then, the number of visitors not only from India but also from overseas has dramatically increased. The temple’s patronage of the arts is discussed in detail in Chapter 11, and Chapter 12 is a charming excursus on the temple elephants and their carers.

The following chapters describe the festivals on Ekadasi, during the whole year cycle, culminating in the ten-day long Guruvayur *utsavam*, the Lord’s festival.

This book, with its detailed information, is of pivotal importance for the understanding and appreciation of Kerala’s cultural and religious life as expressed in the “universe of Guruvayur”, where all aspects of life, even the most trivial, find a place. With the help of outstanding photographs, some of which were no doubt taken under the most difficult conditions, the reader is suddenly transported in a world apart. Metaphorically speaking, he/she is taken by the hand by the author through a maze of complex philosophical concepts governing the temple’s hierarchical structure and its complex rituals. Apart from revealing the profound knowledge of the author, to whom we must be thankful for this outstanding research, this work is an expression of her dedication and love for her subject.

A.L. DALLAPICCOLA  
University of Edinburgh

DIVINES RICHESSES RELIGION ET ECONOMIE EN MONDE MARCHAND INDIEN (Etudes thématiques 21). Edited by PIERRE LACHAÏER and CATHERINE CLEMENTIN-OJHA. pp. xx, 238. Paris, Ecole française d’Extrême-Orient, 2008.

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This volume is all the more welcome as it deals with a topic rarely studied as far as the Indian sub-continent is concerned: the relationship between communities of traders and their religious affiliations and activities. The interpenetration of the religious and the economic domains is the subject dealt with by the writers of these essays. The volume contains nine articles with two in English and the others in French. Short abstracts in both languages are given at the end of the volume, and each paper is followed by its bibliography. Though most of the studies deal with Hinduism there is one about Jainism, one about a denomination of South Indian Christians and one about the Shia Muslims