Man-land relation was a matter of concern of all agrarian societies. The agrarian societies considered land as the most important means of wealth and also a source of power and prestige. This was also the case with early Kerala. The rights on lands were treated as hereditary during the early period. It was the hereditary land owner who ultimately determined the mode of cultivation and all other land based activities. The tenant who worked on the land had no word on the methods of using the land. In course of time, the relations between the landlord and the tenant were subjected to transition due to compulsions of historical development. Tenants wished to get some rights over the land which he cultivated, herein, begins the long history of land tenure systems. The polarization between the landlord and the tenant based on ownership rights continued for centuries.

As a person who grew up in the agrarian background, in the erstwhile Travancore area, I have had direct experience with some of the earlier agrarian related activities and experienced the changes that took place in the agrarian sector. The curiosity in understanding the changes that took place in the field of land relations and the conviction that the land tenure system that had evolved in early Kerala was a major factor in shaping the later land relations
contributed in undertaking a study of land relations of the native States of early Kerala

This study is mainly ventured to understand the nature, evolution and impact of the land tenure systems in Travancore from 1865, the year in which the Pattom Proclamation was made a reality. The study is build up on the effects of the subsequent changes in the land relations in the Princely State of Travancore, integrated Travancore-Cochin State and modern Kerala.

During the course of the research study I came across many Malayalam terms connected with land relations which were in use in early Kerala and I have given equivalent meaning of the same under the Glossary. Geophysical sources have been used for the research study including the official records, reports and maps. Archival studies (mainly the Proclamations of the Sovereigns of Travancore) have been referred to, and selected Proclamations and Acts are incorporated as appendices of the study.