Map 1.1: Kēraḷa - Political Map
Map 1.2: Kēraḷa - Physical Map
Map 1.3: Kēraḷa – Map of forest cover
Map 1.4: Kēraḷa – Map of Rivers and Lakes
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

All forms of art springs from inner impulses of human. Expression of these inner impulses could be in the form of varied arts – performing and visual. Paintings and sculptures were the earliest of visual arts. The life force of every art is the underlying concepts of nature and human interface with his environment. India has earliest paintings evidenced from prehistoric rock shelters and sculptures from the earliest civilization dating from middle of 3rd millennium BC. Nature played a predominant role behind faiths and believes of early human beings. The fear of nature’s extreme actions became the objects and concepts of worship. Though Indus valley civilization displays all elements of organized civic life, conclusive interpretations are yet to be reached regarding religious ideologies of its people. Ṛg Vēdic period is the earliest period in history of India which has definite information on religious ideas. Dated to the middle of second millennium BC, the Ṛg Vēda speaks of numerous gods, who were the personification of whatever was noble, splendid and striking in nature, like sky (Dyuh), earth (Pṛthvi), sky god (Varuṇa), god of thunder storm (Indra), morning and evening stars (Aśvini) and goddess of dawn (Uṣas) and fire (Agni). These gods possessed powers to do both and god and evil and they have to be kept satisfied with offerings of food and drink, not only to avoid wrath of their fury, but also to avail
boons. The worship consisted of ceremonies called yajñas. Fire (Agni) sacrifice played a pivotal role in this worship. The gods were functional and their functions were reactions to the actions of devotee. The action - reaction equation between the devotee and deity was so perfect that the deity was left choiceless.

Elaboration of sacrifices and ritual involving more priests succeeded the Ṛg Vēdic period. New deities like Rudra and Viṣṇu became prominent and deities like Varuṇa and Prthvi were sidelined. Various sacrifices dominated the worship of this period. The doctrines of Karma, Māya, transmigration, identity of individual soul with the universal soul and Mukti find their first expression in the Upaniṣads. These later Vēdic texts represent the early phase in origin and development of religio-metaphysical concepts.

By the middle first millennium BC India witnessed emergence of heterodox religious sects, prominent among them were Buddhism, Jainism, and Ājīvikism. These religions were more or less of an ethical character and they refused the infallibility and super natural origin of the Vēdas. They did not encourage abstruse enquiries about god and soul and thus were not theistic creeds in the beginning. These religions received patronage hugely from trading communities.

As result of contemporary socio-political and economic transformations in the post Maurya period religious scenario witnessed great changes. Worship of Āgamic deities was the foremost change which necessitated a new space for worship. Thus by the Gupta period Brāhmaṇical temples were built in India.
The Gupta period (319 to 550 AD) witnessed remarkable transformation in different aspects of social life. Very remarkable change was in the field of religion where prominence of worship of Āgamic deities namely Śiva and Viṣṇu was accorded. This was a result of the changed social, political and economic scenario and a necessity for the allied Bhakti ideologies. In this backdrop developed in India temple building, dedicated to either of the Āgamic deity. This religious activity received immense patronage from the royalty too. Temples functioned as the link between the temporal world of man and that of the gods. Rise of the sectarian cults of Hinduism gave a great impetus to the progress of religious architecture.

Human endeavor to find his true origin and self resulted in the evolution of religion and philosophy which guided his religious practices. How a place becomes sacred or what determines the location of a temple is also significant. Midst of jungles, top of hills, bank of rivers, sea shores and slope of hills are considered ideal location for temple building. Trees, water bodies etc. are also revered sacred at certain places. These sthalavṛkṣas (sacred tree) like peepal tree and tīrtham like sacred tanks make a place sacred. Eventually associated structures and temples are built around and idols were consecrated for worship. In case of many historically significant temples, their location is either in the midst of human settlement or in hearts of the political capital of territories. Because temples were not only places of worship, but also a community center which cared for the ideal
socio-economic life of the community. Its functions expanded over every aspect of social life.

The śrāmanic religion had their centers of worship in the form of Stūpa and Caityagrha. They have employed both rock cut and structural methods of construction. Even though structural temples could have had their beginning in late Kuśāna period, evidences are available from the Gupta period only and it took a definite form also at the same period. The period of Guptas marked great development in different fields of human knowledge and one among them was Vāstu Vidya or Architecture. Some of the earliest texts which directly or incidentally deal with architecture like Matsya Purāṇa and Bṛhat Samhita are compositions of this period.

During this period temples were built on a simple two unit division of plan (garbhagṛha and maṇḍapa) and elevation. Examples of such temples are seen at Sanchi, Bhumara, Nachna Kuthara, Deogar and Bhitargaon etc. distributed in Madhya Pradesh and Utter Pradesh. A contemporary development is seen at Deccan region, under the patronage of Chalukyas of Badami. Ladkhan temple (5th c. AD) and Durga temple at Aihole (6th c. AD) in Karnataka are the evidences of this development. Stone masonry was employed both by Guptas and Chalukyas to express their religions ideal.

The division of temples into Nāgara, Drāviḍa and Vēsara are known from different texts like Viśva Karma Prakāśika, Bṛhat Samhita, Matsya Purāṇa, Agni
Purāṇa, Samarāṅaṅa Sūtradhāra etc. These divisions, as generally understood, was not originally based on only shape of temple, its plan and structure, but on stylistic differences according to localities i.e. they were really geographic division⁸. Earliest known orders of Indian architecture were only two, Nāgara of North India and Drāviḍa of Deccan and south India. The Vēsara might or might not originally refer to an order or style of architecture. With passage of time and as architecture developed in different localities, different local styles with distinctive features began to arise. It is certain that from the 6th to 10th century AD almost of all known Indian styles of architecture and methods of classification of temples had grown up in India⁹. Temples of different types of external form seem to have originated independently in different parts of India¹⁰.

It was post Gupta period that Indian architectural treatises of all schools became further developed and all extent books may be said to have practically belonged to this period. Evidence of temples was not found in pre 4th century AD. It is discernible that there was a coeval development and growth of actual architecture and treatises written on the subject¹¹.

In the case of south India, Drāviḍa School of Vāstu Vidya existed from a very early time, prior to 6th century AD. But the earliest of the extent temples of Drāviḍa style could not have been built before 6th century AD, though proto types of them might have existed¹². Important treatises on the south Indian architecture are the Āgamas, Mayamata, Iśāna Śiva Gurudēva Paddhati, Śilparatna,
Tantrasamuccaya etc. Temples were built following the guidelines and set framework laid out in these texts. These texts served as guide books than rule books which need to be followed meticulously. Scholars like Adam Hardy dismisses the claims of the Śāstras as the explicatory guide to temple architecture, and argues that the temples themselves reveal principles of their design, that their external wall can be read as a kind of grammar for their own interpretation. Accordingly, a set of building blocks and principles of composition are the factors behind the complexity and diversity of temple forms, a good grasp of which will enable one to classify or predict any given example, the process of multiplication by which constituent parts increase is a process of emanation of forms emerging from within others.

South Indian temples have evolved from simple unostentatious beginnings to agglomeration of structures through centuries. Various components of structure served functional utility and architectural and decorative value. These complex structures were developed by addition to the main shrine through stages. The additions sub served the requirements of elaborate ritual. Elaboration of structure was in conformity to the demands of the community in which the temple exist. In a sense Pallavas laid the real foundation of the Drāviḍa architecture as evident from Mahabalipuram. The monolithic rock-cut Rathas and Shore temple at Mahabalipuram, Kailāsnath and Vaikunṭha Perumāḷ temples at Kanchipuram are examples of their architectural activities. Vaikunṭha Perumāḷ temple, being the
later among the group, display more refinement and its principal parts make an
organic composition. The Pallava builders paved the way for a great movement in
temple architecture which in subsequent centuries produced some of the most
imposing edifices to be found anywhere in India and finally culminated in the
Vijaynagara period\textsuperscript{14}.

Throughout India structural temple architecture was preceded by a period
of rock-cut architecture. This method was adopted by both Śrāmaṇic and
Brāhmaṇic religion. Earliest date of rock cut architecture goes back to period of
Maurya and continued to be in practice in 9\textsuperscript{th} century AD simultaneously with
structural temple movement. These caves were carved into the natural living rock
formations. Rock-cut movement came to a virtual end by the 9\textsuperscript{th} century AD
owing primarily to the changed religious ideas, the Āgamic mode of worship
necessitated different sort of space and structure. Secondly the temples were
steadily becoming socially important and economically resourceful institution,
which could not be contained in rock-cut cave. Finally and most importantly the
temples were mainly centered in agrarian settlements. The coterminous status of
temple with agrarian settlements proved that plains and fertile tracts and not the
rocky mountain were the suitable centers for large scale architectural activity\textsuperscript{15}.  

\textsuperscript{14} Vijaynagara

\textsuperscript{15} CVS
The course of architectural activity in Kērala was also the same. Rock-cut caves mark the beginning of religious architecture. They are distributed on the extreme south and south central parts of Kērala. The caves at Chitral (near Kanyakumari), Kallil (near Perambavur, Erṇākuḻam District) were dedicated to the Jaina religion. Brāhmaṇical rock cut caves are those at Vilinjam, Kottukal, Kaviyur, Tirunandikkara, Bhutapandi, Tuvarankad, Shivagiri and Alagiapandipuram forming the southern group and those at Trikkur and Irunnilamkod in Trśśūr and Bharantanpara forming the northern group. Rock cut method of architecture give way to structural temple architecture due to the reason mentioned in the forgoing. By the 9th century AD, spread of Āgamic religions under the efforts of Bhakti saints and the reciprocal relation between political and religious establishments led to the great movement of structural temple building throughout Kērala mainly in agrarian settlements. The political patrons during this period were Āys in the south and Cēras or Kulaśēkharas of Mahōdayapuram in the central and north Kērala. Under the influence of Bhakti ideologies of south India and the architectural development in the east coast of south India, temple building gained a steady progress in Kērala from 9th century onwards. After Kulaśēkharas, the movement gained further acceleration under the patronage of rulers of Kochi, Malabār and Vēṇāḍu. Local chieftains were also patrons of the movement.
1.1 Problems of dating:

Determining, or even understanding, the antiquity of temples in Kērala is a complicated issue. The seed of the problem lies in the tradition that the Epic sage Paraśurāma created the land of Kērala from Arabian Sea, brought Brāhmins from northern region and settled them in 64 grāmas, 32 in present Kērala and 32 in Tulu region in present day Karnataka and consecration of 108 Durga temples along coastline and 108 Śāsta temples in the hill range of the land he created. There are another group of 108 Śiva temples, believed to be consecrated by Ceramān Perumāl. The verse enlists the 108 Śivālayās. The 108 Durgālayās too are enlisted in a verse. But to spot the 108 Śāsta temples are yet to be successful. Again the problem is complicated by the traditions of association with sage Paraśurāma and Ādi Śankarācārya, claimed by many temples other than the listed 108. Partial legendary- partial historic figures like Vilvamangalam Swāmi also find links with many temples. Perumtacchan, the master architect and carpenter, is another notable figure. There are many temples ascribed to him. The problem lies in fixing an accurate date for these historic and legendary figures. These are questions paused by the traditions.

Another obstacle in dating is the concept of Dēvacaitnayam or Divine presence in the idol. The Dēvapraśnam is used in temples to trace the history of divine presence of deity, the temple and many more ritualistic predictions. Many a times the predictions reveal divine presence from more than 2000 years. This
certainly does not mean existence of temple installed with the said deity in that remote past. Calculating date of temple accordingly, thus, does not make sense in an academic research.

Another problem of dating is paused by the constant renovation, reconstruction and modification of the temples from time to time. This was mainly due to the perishable nature of materials used for construction. Evidently, wood was the popular choice of builders for the super structure, stone being only the second choice. This had many reasons as well, such as availability of the materials, comfort of the builder and financial ability of the patron etc. Most of the temple buildings are not more than 200 years old, except a few which are mostly the Mahākṣēṭrams.

A vast majority belongs to another category which originally had the simple structure without much architectural embellishments and been extended, modified or rebuilt from time to time. It is a difficult task to identify the additions and their chronological order.

Taking all these factors into consideration assigning a date is difficult. Hence, only relative and tentative dates are considered for study. Only in the cases of concrete evidence such as inscriptions or other attested valid literary sources exact dates are arrived in certain cases. As a matter of fact, the earliest temples in this region of Kēraḷa state belong to a period between 8\textsuperscript{th} and 12\textsuperscript{th} centuries A.D. which corresponds to the rule of Kulaśēkhara of Mahōdayapuram (800-1124 AD). There have been many factors contributing to the enhancement of temple building
activity in the period. The changed socio-political and economic milieu and the widespread Bhakti movement could be named as the major propagators of Āgamic religions and the establishment of temple institution in this period. The reciprocal relationship shared by the state and the religious institution was a major phenomenon to be underlined. The royal patronage shifted from Vaiśṇavism to Śaivism and in vice versa among the rulers from time to time. Again, the rulers were not the sole patrons, the well-to-do merchants, local chiefs etc. also became a major hand in this process.

1.2 Nomenclature of Temple:

A notable aspect about Hindu temples is that same deity could be worshipped in different forms for example; Śakti is worshipped as Dēvi, Bhagavati, and Rājarājēśvari etc. Viṣṇu is worshipped as Vāmanamūrti, Narasimhamūrti, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa etc. Same is the case with the forms of Śiva who is worshipped as Dakṣiṇāmūrti, Naṭarāja etc.

The names used to denote temples in Kēraḷa need some explanation. Usually the names are related to various manifestations of the principal deity (example Dakṣiṇāmūrti temple), in some cases the temple’s name is derived from its locality (example Nedumbrayur Tali Śiva temple). But it is difficult to ascertain whether the place derived the name from the temple or the temple derived the
name from the place (example Tiru Nettoor Trikkayil Mahādēva temple at Nettor).
The names with suffixes like Taḷi (eg. Tirumattali, Kitaḷi etc.) denote the tradition that Taḷi was earlier used as synonym to temple as seen in inscriptions, it also denote the authority and hierarchical position of the temple in the Kulaśēkhara period. Thus using the suffix ‘Tali’ with the name is the continuation of the Kulaśēkhara period tradition, even if the temple belongs to a later period. Another suffix popularly used is Trikkovil (Ekadasi Perumtrikkovil, Jayanta Trikkov, Putrikkovil, Putiyatrikkovil etc.). The term ‘Kovil’ is also used as a synonym to ‘Ambalam’ and ‘Kṣētram’ in Malayāḷam, meaning temple. ‘Tri’ or ‘Tr’ is prefixed to express the reverence which is the shortened form of ‘Tiru’. The suffix of ‘Kāvu’ is also common in Kēraḷa (Ayyappan Kāvu, Iringol Kāvu, Palliyarakkāvu etc.) Kāvu were originally the sacred groves where nature and animal worship, especially serpent worship, used to take place. Over time the term has been used to denote temples dedicated to forms of Śakti, Ayyappan and Śāsta also. However, ‘Kāvu’ is not suffixed with Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava temples (the Āgamic based belief system). The term is also used to refer to sacrifices which used to be a part of the worship at these groves. In some cases the temple names are derived out of some stories related to the temple (example Potiyil Kṛṣṇa temple, Urakattamma Tiruvati temple, Chattakutam Śāsta temple, Tiruvellamantulli Vatakunnathan temple etc.) Another factor behind the names is affinity of principal deity with another deity. There are many Śakti temples with the sankalpa as the sisters of Bhagavati of Kodungallur temple; such temples located at other places also get the name
Kodungallur Bhagavati temple. Same way Pazhayannur Bhagavati temples are seen at Trissur and Mattancheri.

1.3 Geographical Background:

Kērala is located on the west coast of south India. It is bordered on west by Arabian Sea, on south Indian Ocean, on east and north respectively by Tamil Nadu and Karnataka states. The place has hilly region, plains and coastal belt. Present study focuses on the central districts of Kērala, viz., Ernakulam and Trissur.

Ernakulam district is divided into three well defined parts-highland, midland and the lowland consisting of hills and forests, plains and the seaboard respectively. The hilly or eastern portion is formed by a section of the Western Ghats. Muvattupuzha, Kothamangalam and Aluva can be called the hilly taluks. The midland consists mainly of plain land having natural facilities of drainage via backwaters and canals. Cochin taluk is divided into two blocks by the Cochin Azhi, viz., Vaipinkara Island on the northern side and the southern portion from Fort Cochin to Chellanam surrounded on three sides by water. The western portion and part of the southern side of the Kanayannur taluk are divided by backwaters. The Paravur taluk lies in the flat delta region of the Periyar River and cut by several canals, which have resulted in the formation of many islands.
Periyar and Muvattupuzha are the main rivers of the district of which the former flows through Thodupuzha, Muvattupuzha, Aluva, Kunnathunadu and Parur taluks. The Chalakudi river which flows through north of Aluva also joins Periyar at Alanthikara. The rivers Thodupuzha, Kallai and Kothamangalam join together to form Muvattupuzha River. During rainy season these rivers are full and the low-lying areas on the banks are flooded, but in the summer season they generally go dry and narrow.

Trššūr district is bounded on the north by Malappuram and Palakkad districts, on the east by Palakkad district of Kēraḷa and Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu on the south by Kottayam and Erṇākuḷam districts and on the west by Arabian Sea. It lies between north latitude 10° 11' and 10° 47' and east longitude 75° 55' and 76° 54'. The district has five Taluk, Talappilly, Trššūr, Chavakkadu, Kodungallur and Mukundapuram. The area of the district is 3032 sq. km. Descending from the heights of the Western Ghats in the east, the land slopes towards the west forming three distinct natural divisions - the highlands, the plains and the sea board.

The Periyar, the Chalakudy, the Karuvannur, and the Ponnani (Bharatha Puzha) are the main river systems in the district. They take their origin from the mountains on the east, and flow westward and discharge into the Arabian Sea. There are a number of tributaries also joining these main rivers.
1.4 Historiographical Review:

Kēraḷa history has fascinated academicians from the colonial period itself. Pioneering works in the field are those of P Sangoony Menon, P. N. Kunjan Pillai, and K. P. Padmanabha Menon. More methodical and theoretical based approach was applied by Dr. Rajan Gurukkal and Dr. Raghava Varier. Both these scholars are specialized in early history and study of primary sources with a material-cultural development approach. M. G. S. Narayanan brought new light into Kēraḷa history with his benchmark studies on Perumals of Mahodayapuram. Dr. Kesavan Veluthat approached the early medieval of Kēraḷa history with well defined structure. Specialized study on religious history and temples of Kēraḷa was taken up by very few scholars.

The pioneering work on temples of Kerala is ‘Arts and crafts of Travancore’ jointly authored by Stella Kramrisch, J. H. Cousens and R. V. Poduval first published in 1948, revised in 1970 and reprinted in 1999. This book has three sections, each on Architecture, sculpture and paintings. Stella elaborates the temple architecture, its principles and features in the first section. The section on bronze sculpture is the work of R. V. Poduval and J. H. Cousens mainly focus on murals and paintings of Kēraḷa. This is the first analytical and methodic work on the architecture, sculpture and paintings of Kēraḷa. It brought new light on the subject and shown way for further studies.
In 1953 Stella Kramrisch authored ‘Dravida and Kerala in the art of Travancore’. The book deals with temple architecture of Travancore and also analyses the palace and residential architecture. She uses the term ‘Kerala-Dravida’ to denote the indigenous temple architecture style of Kēraḷa.

In 1969 Cochin Devaswom Board published ‘The Secret Chamber’ authored by V. T. Induchudan. The book gives historical background of temples in Kēraḷa and presents description of select temples with traditions associated with them. The other work by the same author and publisher is ‘The Golden Tower’. The two books are successful efforts towards understanding Kēraḷa temples.

‘Temple Architecture in Kerala’ by K. V. Soundara Rajan, published in 1974 is detailed attempt towards identifying characteristic features of Kerala temple architecture. ‘Splendors of Kerala’, ‘Art and Architecture of Tamil Nadu and Kerala’ are other works by the same author published in seventies. These books deal temple architecture from a technical perspective and hence are very important contribution to the subject.

In 1978 Archaeological Survey of India published an ‘Architectural survey of Temples of Kerala’ authored by H. Sarkar. This book was a result of a detailed survey conducted by the author in this region as part of the temple survey project of Archaeological Survey of India. The book presents a more systematic approach and chronology based method to understand the Kerala temple architecture. Greatest contribution of this volume is the chronological division of temple in to
three phases. These classifications remain the accepted standard for all further studies in the subject. With description of selected examples, the book set methodology of presentation and analyses to study Kerala temples. H. Sarkar has also published a number of articles related to architecture of Kerala temples in the seventies.

‘Encyclopedia of Indian Temple Architecture’ volume I, first published in 1984 has four parts dedicated to south Indian architecture. Among these the part 1 and 2 deals with the early and late phase in upper Drāviḍadēśa and in Part 3 and 4 deals with lower Drāviḍadēśa covering Kēraḷa and Tamil Nadu. These massive volumes are benchmark studies in the subject.

‘Temple Culture of South India’ by V. R. Parameshwaran Pillai (1986) studies various aspects related to Kerala temples like its historical background architectural style, belief system, inscriptions and temple arts. As it deals with many areas, the book gives an outline of these aspects rather than an in-depth approach to any specific issue.

‘Arts of Kēraḷa Ksetram’ by Kapila Vatsyayan published in 1989 is also an attempt to comprehend the various aspects of Kēraḷa temple. ‘The Kovils of Kēraḷa’ by K. K. Murti was published in 1991. This book attempts to study Kēraḷa temple and its various aspects including architecture.
Directorate of Census of India published *Temples of Kerala* in 1999 authored by S.Jayashanker. This book gives an introduction to temple architecture, allied concepts and rituals of Kēraḷa. Mainly drawing information from field survey, the monograph is a ready to refer handbook.

‘Kēralathile Ksetrangalum Ksetracarangalum’ (Malayalam) by P. K. J. Karta (2006) elaborates the rituals followed in Kēraḷa temples. ‘Ksetracarangal’ (Malayalam) by Kanippayur Sankaran Nambutirippat is another work on rituals and the reasons behind the rituals to be followed. The book is a good manual for temple visitors.

District wise companion volumes to *Temples of Kerala* was published by Directorate of Census of India and authored by S.Jayashanker. *Temples of Thrissur* (2007) and *Temples of Ernakulam* (2011) are volumes related to the research area of the present research. These books are based on extensive date collected from vast field work. These books have descriptions of selected temples of the region and in the appendix are given complete data of number of temples, its geographical location, deity worshipped, shape of temple etc in table. These two volumes serve as ready to refer handbooks on temples of the two districts.

A very useful book for students on traditional architecture is written by Sudheesh Namboodiri titled ‘Tantra Nikhandu’ (Malayalam) published in 2007. This book is dictionary on Tāntric and architectural terms.
A well studied scholarly work on traditional Kērala mural painting was brought out by renowned academician M. G. Sasibhooshan under the title ‘Kēralathile Chuvarchitrangal’ (Malayalam) in 2000. The book elaborates the mural painting idioms, seen at temples, churches and palaces. This scholarly volume is of great help to understand the indigenous murals, its techniques and concepts.

Epigraphic studies have attracted the attention of scholars from the colonial period itself. The Travancore government had set up a department of archaeology in 1910. Work of the department was concentrated on inscriptive studies. Their findings and studies were published in *Travancore Archaeological series*. The first three volumes were edited by T. A. Gopinatha Rao. Fourth volume was edited by K. V. Subrahmanya Aiyar and fifth, sixth and seventh volumes were edited by A. S. Ramanatha Ayyar. These seven volumes are magnum opus on Kērala’s epigraphy. These are the most authentic and original works done on inscriptions of Kērala.

M. G. S. Narayanan’s ‘Index to Chera Inscriptions’ included in ‘The Perumals of Kērala: Political and Social Conditions of Kērala under the Cera Perumals of Makotai (C. AD 800-1124)’ 1987 is a compilation of Cera inscriptions based on thorough analysis.

and breadth of Travancore its exact find spot, date and author. This is a helpful handbook on Travancore inscriptions.

The *Tamilian Antiquary* edited by Pandit D. Savariroyan is also a helpful work about the sources to Kēraḷa history.

Some analytical works in the field of Kēraḷa epigraphy were published in Malayalam language also. V. R. Parameswaran Pilla’s ‘*Sila likhita Vijnaniyam*’ (Malayalam) and ‘*Pracina likhitangal*’ (Malayalam) were published in late 1970s. ‘*Lipikalum Manava Samskaravum*’ (Malayalam) by K. A. Jaleel, 2006 deals with fundamentals of epigraphy and origin of Brāhmi, Vatteluttu and Koleluttu scripts.

E. V. N. Namboodiri’s ‘*A Biref History of Malayalam Language*’, published in 2004 analyze the development of the Malayalam language from a linguistic perspective. The book uses inscriptions to trace the evolution and developmental stages of the languages. This book is a valuable supplement to the study of Kēraḷa epigraphy.

### 1.5 Research Area:

The present research focuses on the architecture of temples located in Kēraḷa. The area of study is Erṇākuḷam and Trṣṣūr districts, which constitutes the central Kēraḷa and also form the nucleus of erstwhile Kulaśēkhara and Cochin kingdoms. The period of study is from pre-Kulasekhara period to 1700 AD which
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marks the end of traditional temple building activity in the area. For comprehensive understanding of this topic, present research covers the origin and evolutionary process and development stages of temples. The focus region is central Kēraḷa comprising Erṇākuḷam and Tṛśūr districts. This region was identified for study considering its religious and political significance at different periods in the past, along with the availability of sufficient sources for research. Mahōdayapuram, the capital of Kulaśēkharas, is identified with Kodungallur in Tṛśūr district. Some of the ancient Brāhmin settlements are also located in this district. Being the most politically significant place and rich with natural resources, many temples emerged in this part of Kēraḷa by 8th c. AD. Some of these temples, though in modified form, are still available for study. Erṇākuḷam has some of the Brāhmin settlements like Paravur, Muzhikkulam etc. and it rose to political significance in the post- Kulaśēkharas period with the establishment of rule by Kochi Rajas. The district holds temples from the Kulaśēkharas period associated with Brāhmin settlements and temples from post Kulaśēkharas period in large numbers. This study covers from pre- Kulaśēkharas period with cave temples and extends till 1700 AD which marks the end of traditional temple building in Kēraḷa with the prominence of Semitic religions and European influences. Thus the time and space limit of the study is Erṇākuḷam and Tṛśūr, up to 1700 AD.

Study of these marvelous monuments not only enables one to appreciate its beauty but also the building techniques and understand the progress of the science of architecture.
• Objectives of the research is
  o to find out the characteristic features of the Kēraḷa temple architecture
  o to find out the essence and style of temple architecture in Kēraḷa
  o to find out how Kēraḷa temples are affiliated to or separate from Drāviḍa style
  o to identify the formulating factors behind the structure and character of these temples
  o To figure out the processes of change and development it underwent to become a wonderful architectural creation.

Present research has vast scope, primarily due to the lack of adequate previous study in the field. The previous studies in the subject were from traditional or conventional point of view, which lacked academic approach and methodical presentation. Present research also attempts to bring Kēraḷa temple to the understanding of common man.

1.6 Methodology:

Methodology adopted in this work is combined of both analytical and descriptive method. It depends upon primary and secondary sources for data. Primary sources were collected in field visit. Temples of Trissur and Ernakulam
districts were visited personally to collect information. The temples were
documented textually and visually at the field itself. Temple authorities, traditional
trusties, hereditary temple staff and other local resource persons were consulted
during field visit, information was collected and documented. Wherever
photography was allowed and possible, visual data also was collected. This
documented information was integrated with historical and epigraphical data.

Published literary works were used to understand historical background and
antiquity of temple. The suggested dates by earlier authors with help of
epigraphical works are generally followed in the present study.

Photography inside the temple is not allowed in Kēraḷa due to the strict
adherence of the temple authorities to conventional ideas. Hence the plates
supplemented herewith are those accessible from outside. The information given
in the present study primarily depends on the observations of the researcher from
the field.

Maps, plan and photographs are used to supplement the textual information.
Ground plans and line drawings relating to each chapter are provided at its end.
Photographs are given in the appendix. Each photograph has a unique number.
Photographs are numbered like 3.5, in which the first number denotes the chapter
and the second number denote the serial number of the photograph in that chapter.
Many Sanskrit and Malayāḷam terms are used in the description of temples. Terms related to architecture and rituals are written with appropriate diacritical marks to denote correct pronunciation. The method followed is according to the transliteration followed in *Epigraphia Indica*. Proper nouns, name of places and persons which are currently in use are written in common characters without diacritical marks. The exceptions however are Kerala, Ernakulam and Thrissur which are written as Kēraḷa, Erṇākuḷam and Tṛśśūr respectively, because these places are the focus area of research. All other proper nouns are written in commonly used spelling. The meaning of Sanskrit and Malayāḷam words used in the text are explained in the glossary, which is provided at the end of thesis.

Due to large number of temples and lack of authentic date of temples, it is very difficult to select the temples. Hence, temples which are architecturally and historically significant with established dates have been selected for the study. Twenty temples have been selected from each district for the study. These temples represent all stages of evolution of temple architecture in Kēraḷa up to 1700 AD. Table containing the list of selected temples of each district are given in the appendix.

The temples are grouped as circular shrines, square shrines and apsidal shrines and under each group temples are described in chronological order. A uniform pattern is followed in description, starting with location of the temple followed by its historical background and architectural details. Sculptures and
paintings form an organic part of architecture and wherever it is found, are explained as part of architecture.

1.7 Plan of the study:

The study is presented in six chapters. Chapter one is introduction to following chapters and to the general subject dealt with in this research.

Chapter two attempts to find out what were the political set up and cultural scenario under which temple building activity emerged in Kēraḷa and how it affected distribution of these religious institutions and what relation did the political economy shared with temples, how political significance impacted on the size and dimension of temple structure etc. along with explaining why Āgamic religions were patronized by the royalty at this specific period of time. It explains the emergence of temple institution and architecture as result of chain of social changes connecting social, political, economic, cultural and religious realms. Here, the temple is viewed as a social institution, performing various social functions beyond religion, towards integration of its society. The temple is identified as a link not only between mortal world of man and immortal divine world but also a link between different strata of its society. The chapter discusses causal relation between elaborations of temple architecture with the social functions it performed.
Third Chapter attempts to give specific introduction to architectural of Kērala temples. For this purpose, different aspects of plan and elevation of Kērala temple are analyzed juxtaposed with Drāviḍa style. The evolution of temple architecture in Kērala is classified under three phases. These are:

- Early phase (800 - 1000 AD)
- Middle Phase (1001 - 1300 AD)
- Late Phase (1301- 1800 AD)

The study draws a clear picture of Kērala temples within the broad area of Drāviḍa style. The reasons behind formulation of the specific form of architecture or the variation from Drāviḍa style are adaptation to native environment, use of different building materials and techniques employed by builders in accordance with the materials. Figures and photographs are used to substantiate explanation.

In chapter four temples of Erṇākuḷam district is discussed in detail. Selected temples with architectural and historical significance are grouped as circular and square shrines and are presented in its chronological order. By analyzing different architectural components of the selected temples, it is attempted to reach some generalizations about temples in this area.

Chapter five follows the same pattern and content as the previous chapter. Here selected temples of Trśṣūr district and their architectural features are figured
out. Selected temples are grouped as circular, square and apsidal shrines and each group is presented in the chronological sequence of the temples.

Chapter six presents the conclusions drawn from the study. Chapter wise summary and findings are given in this part. Findings of the research is listed and explained here.
1.8 Notes and References:

3. Ibid. pp. 48-49
7. Ibid. p. 13
9. Ibid. pp. 158,167,176
12. Ibid. p. 154