Although traditions speak of high antiquity of culture in Kerala, efforts to trace it by field-work and archaeological methods is rather in the early stages. Several scholars in the 19th century and in the present century had carried out their work in various parts of Kerala in the various fields of archaeology. The prominent among them were William Logan, Sewel, Cammiadae, Rea, Buhler, Burnell, Cundert, Gopinath Rao, L.A. Krishna Iyer, Vasudeva Puduval, St.Kramriach, A. Ayyappan, B.K. Thaper and others. Many of these scholars were attracted towards the megaliths which has a fairly wide distribution in Kerala. Although the efforts of these scholars were fruitful, it is found that much further work is needed for filling the up the existing lacuna in the information. This could be done by intensive field work.

With these aims and views, the present work was undertaken to discover more sites and to build up a sequence of cultures upto circa 1500 A.D. by studying the material remains discovered in the explorations and excavations. The explorations for this work were started in 1972 and were concluded in 1973: large parts of the state were covered during this work.
After completing the work of exploration two excavations on megalithic sites were carried out in 1974 to understand the cultures from this area. The materials obtained in this work were analysed in the laboratories of the department and comparative study was carried out. The thesis describes the results of the work. For this purpose, it is divided into ten chapters.

CHAPTER I

This is the introductory chapter that deals with the aim and scope of the study, the sources for the study, the method of work, chronology of cultures and a short summary of the results.

CHAPTER II

This chapter deals with the Geography, Geology, Soils, Hydrology, Climate, Flora and Fauna of the area.

CHAPTER III

This chapter deals with the people and language of Kerala. It is devoted to the discussion of the cultural
tradition of the origin of the land of Kerala and its analysis. The etymology of the names Malabar and Kerala are also considered.

The origin, growth and characters of the important religious sects of Kerala, their festivals and their social systems are discussed. Besides these the tribes of Kerala are also noted.

The language of Kerala, the games and amusements of the people, food and drinks as well as professions such as agriculture trade etc. are also noted here.

CHAPTER IV:

This chapter describes the political history of Kerala where the political conflicts and the success and reverses, rise and fall of dynasties that ruled over different regions of Kerala upto about 15th century are noted. In this discussion the mutual relations of the neighbouring states with Kerala in the political life of the region are analysed.

CHAPTER V:

This chapter deals with the description of 71 explored sites and the antiquities found from them. These sites are
described district wise in alphabetical order.

CHAPTER VI:

This chapter deals with the results of excavations of previous workers and the details of excavations conducted at Machad and Pazhayannur by the author.

CHAPTER VII:

In this chapter antiquities found from the excavations and exploration of the previous workers as well as noted by the author are described. The antiquities studied here include pottery, iron objects, beads etc.

CHAPTER VIII:

This chapter deals with the art and architecture of Kerala. The arts includes sculptures, wood carvings, metal images and paintings as well as Iconography. The architecture deals with religious architecture of Kerala including temples, churches and mosques.
CHAPTER IX:

This chapter deals with the Paleography, Epigraphy and Numismatics. In Paleography, the different varieties of alphabets that were prevalent in Kerala are noted and their origin and development are also discussed.

In Epigraphy, the materials of the inscriptions, the method of writing and the classification of Epigraphs are carried out. It is followed by the description of some of the important varieties of Epigraphs.

In the Numismatics section, description of punch-marked coins, Roman coins, coins of different dynasties of Kerala and other coins are done.

CHAPTER X:

This is the concluding chapter. This chapter deals with the cultures of Kerala upto circa 15th century. Here conclusions are drawn on the basis of the study and an effort is made to put the cultures in relation to those of the neighbouring areas.
STATEMENT I:

The aim of the thesis is to give a systematic account of the culture of Kerala from the pre-historic period to circa 1500 A.D. through archaeological investigations. The new facts brought out by explorations, excavations and other archaeological studies are as follows:

1. Seventy-one new sites were discovered, out of which one is a microlithic site, forty-one are megalithic sites and the remaining twenty-eight are historical sites.

2. The microlithic site at Pallatheri indicates the existence of late stone-age man in central Kerala.

3. This microlithic site shows the southward extension of microlithic site, west of the Ghats.

4. From all these megalithic sites, more than four-hundred and fifty megaliths of different types were found out.

5. The distribution of these sites throughout Kerala indicate the extensive settlements of these megalith builders.
6. From the number and distribution of urn-burials, it can be inferred that urn-burials were the commonest mode of burial in those days.

7. Certain varieties of monuments were constructed at places where raw materials were available and at other sites they were brought from a distance.

8. The megaliths were constructed at places which were usually not very suitable for agriculture.

9. The concentration of megaliths in the Palghat and Trichur districts indicate a possible movement through Palghat gap and a subsequent settlement of the megalith builders.

10. The discovery of a rock cut cave at Thottakad reveals the southward extension of these monuments.

11. The Hero Stones belonging to circa 7th century throw light on the social set up and cultural contacts with ancient Karnataka.

12. A number of sandhara and nirandhara temples with their sculptures are noted.
13. The excavations on transepted-cists revealed new structural patterns in this area.

14. The stratigraphy of these excavated megaliths shows that filling of them were done step by step.

15. In the case of iron objects and beads, new varieties were found out from the excavations.

16. The metal objects originally were about 99% pure.

17. The charred bones discovered from the megaliths indicated that they were constructed as post-cremation ceremonial.

18. The analysis of political history indicates that Kerala became powerful when its neighbouring states in Karnataka and Tamilnad were comparatively weak. When they were strong the independance of Kerala was jeopardised.

19. The study of the art and architecture indicates the common trends as well as the special features.

20. The epigraphs of Kerala are divided and classified on the basis of the purpose of their issue. Most of them are regarding gifts to temples. The distribution of important inscriptions are shown on a map.
STATEMENT II:

Excepting the chapter on explorations, materials for other chapters or for reference, a number of published books and journals in English and Malayalam are utilised. For the first chapter, the works of many scholars like William Logan, T.K. Vellupilla, C. Achuta Menon, and C.A. Innes, in the form of manuals were consulted. The works of Gamble J.S., Francis Dey, C.K. Kareem, S.H. Prater and others were also used. Relevant census reports on Kerala were also utilised. For the chapter on origin of Kerala and the people, works of K.P.P. Menon, Burnell, Caldwell, Sreedhara Menon, Krishna Iyer, Anantha Krishna Iyer, Thurston and Edger and others were consulted. The data on chapter on political history is chiefly drawn from the works of A. Sreedhara Menon, K.P.P. Menon, Elamkulam Kunjanpillai, Krishna Iyyer and a number of other Malayalam works. For the chapter on excavation, and antiquities, the published works on explorations and excavations by different scholars in different journals and the annual reports of Archaeology Dept. of the former Cochin and Travancore and the present Kerala state are used. For the chapter on Paleography Epigraphy and Numismatics, works of Burnell, Buhler, T.A. Gopinath Rao, Subramaniyam, T. Subramaniya Iyer, P.L. Gupta, Walter Elliot and
others are used. The chapter on art and Architecture is mainly drawn from the works of Vasudeva Poduval, St. Kramrisch, J. H. Cousins and H. Sarkar. For the chapter on conclusion general works of many authors regarding various branches of Archaeology and other allied subjects are referred.