INQUIRIES INTO THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROCESSES BEHIND THE REGIONAL IDENTITY OF KERALA TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE IN MEDIEVAL KERALA

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DECLARATION

Certified that dissertation entitled 'INQUIRIES INTO THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROCESSES BEHIND THE REGIONAL IDENTITY OF KERALA TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE IN MEDIEVAL KERALA' submitted by Premjish in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of this University is an original work and has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university.

(PREMJISH)

CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

(Dean)

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Introductory Remarks

Please note that all the Malayalam words have been Saskritised in this dissertation. All Indian language words are therefore transliterated in this study in the standard format of diacritics used for the Romanisation of Sanskrit. However, I have not chosen to transliterate common place names such as Kerala to avoid unnecessary sophistication for a smooth reading. A glossary is not provided enumerating the meaning of vernacular words. It is assumed that the reader is acquainted with the meanings of these words. Nevertheless English translation of the architectural terminologies in Malayalam is provided in brackets near the word. All citations and bibliographic references follow the Chicago Manual of Style Sixteenth Edition.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Chapter 1

Introduction

The recent 'discovery' of the vaulted treasures from Śrī Padmanābhaswāmy Temple has drawn global attention to this prominent Vaiṣṇavite shrine from Kerala believed to have its origins in the 8th c.AD. (Fig. 1) Media reports (print, online and broadcast) in its usual ways have been trying to exoticise the issue by comparing the speculative monetary value of the treasure which exceeds one lakh crore rupees with the stereotypical allusions of Indiana Jones and 'The Temple of Doom' and also drawing on the legal tussle about the ownership, the mysterious death of the litigant T. P. Sunder Rajan Iyengar, etc.[1] A section of the right wing parties and cultural groups have questioned the credentials of a secular government controlling Hindu temples while giving complete autonomy to churches and mosques, thus raising issues pertaining to the contentious terrain of belief and antiquity. Demands to nationalize the wealth are raised from many sides. Amidst all this turbulence historians and art historians are also articulating their concerns to situate temples in its cultural, economic and social contexts by stressing on the temple culture and its importance in Kerala society. Responses from scholars like M.G.S. Narayanan, Rajan Gurukkal, Beena Sarasa, etc. have brought back the emphasis on the multifunctional nature of temples and its hegemonic nature in the society.[2] These are very much the same concerns which I am trying to historicize in this dissertation which will take us to the roots of the cultural significance of the temples.

The objective of this research is to understand the economic and social processes behind the regional style formation of the Kerala temple architecture in the fourteenth century A.D. Temples in Kerala display an unprecedented horizontal structural

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[1] Aseem Shukla, "A Hindu Temple Treasure Dilemma: Answers From The Ancients," *Washington Post*, July 11, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/guest-voices/post/a-hindu-temple-treasure-dilemma-answers-from-the-ancients/2011/07/11/gIQAbHfu8H_blog.html. and "Litigant's Family May Pursue Case," *Deccan Chronicle*, July 18, 2011, http://www.deccanchronicle.com/channels/cities/kochi/litigant%E2%80%99s-family-may-pursue-temple-case-408.

[2] M.G.S. Narayanan, "God's Own Kingodm," *Indian Express*, July 09, 2011, http://www.indianexpress.com/news/gods-own-kingdom/815016/0 and Beena Sarasa, "Tales That The Fabulous Collections In The Vaults Tell," *The Hindu*, 20 July, 2011, http://www.thehindu.com/arts/magazine/article2232922.ece

expansion from this period which was very distinct from the monumental vertical expansion visible in the neighboring regions. This architectural phenomenon was accompanied by the political fragmentation of the state resulting in the advent of minor principalities, localization and diversification of agricultural products, individual landlordism and an indigenization of arts and literature. Therefore this study is not restricted to the examination of the changes in the architectural style/form but it entails a cohesive understanding of the economic situation; social organization of the temples and temple culture making it an interdisciplinary study using the framework of social history of art. With the historical materials available for this study being mainly inscriptions of temples and survey of religious monuments the scope of the study goes beyond the understanding of temple as a religious institution. With the large amount of studies available on the epigraphs, the economic nature of the temple, its social character, and art historical analysis, the challenge before us is to assimilate this information together and formulate a unified approach to understand temples. This will open up a new range of questions, perspectives and possibilities which would help the scholarship to alter the present view on temples. In order to understand these issues I have posited some conceptual and research questions which are: What are the changes in temple architecture happening from the fourteenth century? Could pañcaprakāra scheme of temple making be called as the advent of the Kerala style? Could these changes combined with the developments in literature, arts, performing arts, etc., together known as temple culture which were disseminated from the temple, be seen as a 'religious process' in the creation of a local identity? Could these processes be seen as part of a conscious creation of vernacular forms of identity? Event though the study focus on the fourteenth century developments it is also highly invested in the economic, social and cultural institutions incepted in the early period from ninth century onwards. This enables us to see the changes in the fourteenth century as part of a historic process rather than an event. Further this research is also interested to know the antecedents of the evolution of the socio-economic context in which the temples became the nerve-centre and gained institutional authority. What were the functions of the temple in the socio-economic life of the medieval Kerala? What were the temple's multi dimensional social relations and its political functions? What were the conditions of production and reception of these temples and its relationship with the artist, patron, and devotee? What were the various approaches in trying to understand stylistic and formalistic

changes in architecture and what were the shortcomings of these approaches? The research also tries to problematize how previous scholarship has dealt with these issues and questions by providing a historiography of the works which has used temples of Kerala as frames of reference to study architecture, religion, economy, society, culture and polity. Also analyzing the larger context of the study of temple architecture situating it in art historical domain this work will delineate the problems and merits of the important approaches.

1.1 Reviewing Dominant Narratives: Dismantling Conventional Histories

In the following sections I will deal with the historiography of works dealt with temples in Kerala. This historiographic exercise is done with the following intentions; firstly to 'assess and pay homage to the great contributions of previous scholars, and to realize that whatever scholarly edifices we build now would be hardly possible without the foundations laid by the early pioneers.'[3] Secondly this will allow us to notice the discrepancies in the facts and methods which have crept into the discipline. It will also help us to address the larger issues raised by the scholarship and will enable us to evaluate our own methods. Sumit Sarkar's valuable comment on historiographies is worth quoting here.

"Our historiographical essays tend to become bibliographies, surveys of trends or movements within the academic guild. They turn around debates about assumptions, methods, and ideological positions. Through these historians get pigeon-holed into slots: Neo-Colonial, Nationalist, Communal, Marxist, and Subaltern. The existence of not one but many levels of historical awareness attracts much less attention."[4]

Sarkar is here trying to highlight the necessity of a social history of historiography which will address the neglected questions of production and reception of academic knowledge. Following is a review of historiographies bracketed in various slots which looks for the existence of many levels of historical awareness and at the same time attempts to comprehend the discrepancies present in them. The historians mentioned below are important for their contributions made in the areas of inscriptional studies

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[3] Pramod Chandra, On The Study of Indian Art, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Asia Scoiety/Harvard University Press 1983), 3.
[4] Sumit Sarkar, The Many Worlds of Indian History in *Writing Social History*. (Calcutta, Chennai, Mumbai: Oxford University Press 1997), 1.

related to temples, elucidating a socio-economic picture of the nature of temple corporations and documenting the architectural evolution of Kerala temples.

1.1.1 *Colonial historiography: Introduction of the Survey and Historiographic Modalities*

Apart from restructuring the economic sphere, Colonialism was also responsible for transforming the cultural forms in societies, which were newly classified as 'traditional', by reconstructing them and this created new categories and oppositions between colonizers and colonized. Colonial conquest was made possible through such cultural technologies. According to Nicholas Dirks, Colonialism was itself a cultural project.[5] Cohn's anthropological enquiries into the British India delineate the institutional contexts in which colonial knowledge and colonial power were arranged. Dirks observe that 'the colonial state is seen as a theater for state experimentation, where historiography, documentation, certification, and representation were all state modalities that transformed knowledge into power.'[6] In this section I will deal with the survey modality and historigraphic modality of the Colonialism in Kerala in order to codify, control, and represent the past.[7] For the educated Englishman the world he perceived was only known through his senses which could record the experience of the natural world which he used to govern the world. This experience was presumed to be revealed only through empirical knowledge and was constituted of the sciences. This particular construction of history was carried out through the introduction of two modalities: historiographic and survey modality.[8]

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[5] Nicholas Dirks, Foreword in Bernard S. Cohn, Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1996), p ix.

[6] Nicholas Dirks, Forms of Knowledge, xi.

[7] Bernard Cohn observes that from the eighteenth century onward, European states resorted to an increasing display of their power. This was enacted not only through previous dramatic display and ritual performances but also through gradually extending the 'officialising' process. Thus the modern state took control of by defining and classifying spaces, making distinctions between private and public spheres, documenting sales transactions, classifying populations, replacing religious institutions as the registrar of births, deaths and marriages etc. and by standardizing languages and scripts. Bernard Cohn, Forms of Knowledge, 3.

[8] The historiographic modality is the most sophisticated, pervasive and powerful one underlying the other modalities. For the British, history provided the ontological power in providing the assumptions on how the social and natural worlds were constituted. This is manifested in three stages. Primarily, history as a zone of debate for the ends and means of their domination in India by understanding the history and practice of the native for better control and sustaining the colonial state. Secondly, the ideological construction of the Indian civilization characterized by a civilizing mission in the writings

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William Logan's 'Malabar Manual' is worth mentioning since it deploys both modalities effectively. Logan was a staunch critic of 'traditional' forms of history writing especially 'Kēralōlpatti' and replaced it with his scientific enquiries and surveys on the Malabar district to write a history of Kerala. His writings are characterized by a repudiation of traditional forms of history writing and knowledge. Kesavan Veluthat notes that Logan 'pooh-poohs' the Kēralōlpatti as a 'farrago of legendary nonsense'. But Logan also leans heavily on Kēralōlpatti for his own reconstructions of the history of Kerala. This vehement disdain for the traditional forms of history and then falling back on the tales and myths of this land to write its history was so typical of the colonial scholarship. This practice is seen in the writings of Francis Day and Rev. Samuel Mateer, two Christian missionaries. Veluthat calls this as the 'publicised rejection of the 'native' tradition' which was secretively used'.[9] Henceforth the rejection of the pre-colonial historiography was the first step in the creation of asserting the knowledge created by the masters on their colonial subjects. This new tradition of historical enquiry elevated 'facts' as sacred than anything else and thus archival tradition became the cornerstone of historical writing. This resulted in the search for contemporary sources which was found in the well preserved inscriptions on stone slabs, copper plates, etc. Second volume of Logan's Malabar consists of commendable information on a number of monuments, relics and inscriptions from the northern region.[10] It became the source for historical reconstruction complemented by a study of monuments and artifacts of the antiquity. Meanwhile the Judaic and Christian tradition of Kerala got exaggerated with the studies on the two famous available inscriptions: the Syrian Christian Copper Plates

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of James Mill, James Tod, Alexander Dow, Robert Orme, etc. Finally, the histories of British in India which were the study of representations of specific events in England or India regarded as 'popular' histories. The popular ones were the story of Black Hole of Calcutta, the defeat of Tipu Sultan, or the siege of Lucknow by creating a binary of hero and villain and of individuals and types. The survey modality in the colonial context means the exploration of the natural and social landscape. The word survey means a wide range of activities, for example to look over or examine something, to measure land for the purpose of establishing boundaries, and to supervise or keep a watch over persons or place. But it was the survey of the natural and social landscape which equipped the British with adequate knowledge of this country for better administration. This entails a wide range of practices, 'from the mapping of India to collecting botanical specimens, to the recording of architectural and archaeological sites of historic significance, or the most minute measuring of a peasant's field. Cohn states that this started beginning by the 'enquiries', a list of specific questions to which they sought answers about how the revenue was collected and assessed, which subsequently paved way for the more detailed survey of the settlement patterns produced on district by district basis. Bernard Cohn, Forms of Knowledge, 5-7.

[9] Kesavan Veluthat, The Early Medieval in South India (New Delhi: Oxford University Press), 148.
[10] William Logan, Malabar Manual Vol. II (Madras: 1951), Appendix XXI

and the Jewish Copper Plates. Missionaries like Rev. George Mathen and Rev. Herman Gundert and scholars like A.C. Burnell worked on them and tried to decipher their chronology and political nature. But it was William Logan who proposed a new chronological scheme. He also delineated the privileges granted to the petty suzerains of this country.[11] Logan's observations had a profound impact on the history writing of Kerala for many years to come, despite the availability of abundant discoveries of inscriptions followed by deciphering and publishing.

It was during late nineteenth century when certain writers on Kerala also began to seriously work on an official compilation of the Kerala history. These early writings displayed an inclination to a mythic past by tracing the origin of Kerala with the Paraśurāma legend. This tradition of history writing continued till the latter half of the twentieth century until a serious study on the socio-political conditions and economic life of Kerala replaced it, with the help of new discoveries of epigraphs. The earliest attempt towards this approach was initiated by K.P. Padmanabha Menon and his famous magnum opus 'History of Kerala'. Even though his works are characterized by an inclination for scientific analysis and sharp observations, his writings came at a time when the major chunk of epigraphic discoveries were still to be made. However, he set an example unlike his predecessors in collecting and collating the result of previous research in the field. He was writing history when the discipline in Kerala was at an infant stage with the history of Kerala displaying a chronological mess.[12] Incidentally, the Department of Epigraphy, Government of Madras published its first annual report in the same year when Logan's Malabar was released. The head of the department, E Hultzsch, played a significant role in systematizing epigraphy in the

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[11] Logan in his Malabar Manual adopts the chronology by placing each of the Copper Plates in a particular historical juncture. The Jewish Copper Plates belonged to the end of the seventh or the beginning of eighth century; the Syrian Christian Copper Plates during Vīra Rāghava's time in AD 774; and The Syrian Christian Copper Plates of Sthāṇu Ravi Guptan during AD 824. Kesavan Veluthat, Early Medival, 150. Also William Logan, Malabar Manual Vol 1 (Madras: 1951), 266.

[12] Menon's report on 'Marumakkattāayam' (matrilineal system of inheritance) is the pioneering scholarship on the social history of Kerala. His 'History of Cochin' in two volumes extended till the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British periods. 'History of Kerala' was published in four volumes posthumously, which were written as a series of notes and commentaries on Canter Visscher's letters. The original title of the notes was 'Notes on Visscher's Letters from Malabar', but the new pompous name was the result of the over enthusiastic editor of this publication. Rajan Gurukkal, The Kerala Temple and Early Medieval Agrarian System (Sukapuram: Vallathol Vidyapeetham 1992), 1 and M.G.S. Narayanan, Perumals of Kerala: Political and Social Conditions of Kerala Under the Cera Perumals of Makotai (c. 800 A.D. – 1124 A.D.) (Calicut: Xavier Press 1996), 3.

Presidency. He also deciphered the Jewish Copper Plates by rectifying the earlier mistakes.[13]

William Logan's Manual was emulated by the princely states of Travancore and Cochin and they started preparing their manuals. Since these were commissioned by the royal families, these manuals displayed a royalist and parochial spirit. Nagam Aiya's *State Manual of Travancore* (1906), C. Achutha Menon's *State Manual of Cochin* (1911) provided some valuable information on possible new sources.[14] This was followed by a spirited exploration by different government agencies yielding good results which were reflected in the annual reports of the archaeological departments of Madras, Cochin and Travancore. M.G.S. Narayanan notes that apart from the occasional scholarly papers appearing in publications like the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, the *Indian Antiquary*, and the *Epigraphia Indica* there was no determined initiative to introduce the historical records of Kerala. Scholars like F. W. Ellis, L. A. Cammiade, F. Keilhorn, Robert Sewell, Kukkil Kelu Nair and others played significant role in either publishing new discoveries in the aforementioned journals or helped in dating and interpretation.[15]

An important step was taken in this regard with the Government of Travancore's decision to publish the historical *Travancore Archaeological Series* (1910-1938) comprising of texts and studies of ancient inscriptions, literary works, and photographs of the monuments, translations and descriptive and analytical notes. The first two volumes were edited by the famous epigraphist and Indologist, T. A. Gopinatha Rao, who worked as the Superintendent of Archaeology in Travancore followed by K.V Subrahmanya Aiyar, editor of the next two volumes and A.S. Ramanatha Ayyar, editor of the remaining three volumes.[16]

Rama Varma Research Institute, which was established in 1925, came up with the *Bulletins of the Rama Varma Research Institute* from 1930 onwards. It was able to bring together distinguished scholars like P. K. Anujan Achan, K .R. Pisharodi, T. K. Krishna Menon, V. K. R. Menon et al. This league of scholars published some significant inscriptions from Cochin of Cēra period and also reconstructed the Cēra

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[13] Kesavan Veluthat, Early Medieval, 151.
[14] M.G.S. Narayanan, Perumals of Kerala, 3.
[15] Kesavan Veluthat, Early Medieval, 151.
[16] M.G.S. Narayanan, Perumals of Kerala, 4.

history with the available evidence. *The Kerala Society Papers* (1928-1932), edited by T.K. Joseph produced some significant discoveries with the help of scholars like K. G. Sesha Aiyar, Desivinayagom Pillai, K. V. Krishna Aiyar, Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyar and L. A. Ravi Varma and some foreign experts on Kerala history and culture. They contributed in the elaborate analysis of the early Christian crosses and copper plates of Kerala.[17]

So the formative years of Kerala history was marked by an extensive discovery of the inscriptions. But the early historians fell into the trap of situating them in the Tamilakam context or trying to work on the chronology of ancient and medieval Kerala. A serious attempt to study the socio-economic dimensions of these inscriptions and the monuments is yet to come. The scholarship was entangled in an attempt to date the second Cēra dynasty, identify the various kings and prepare a political history. The ubiquity and similarities of the inscriptions pertaining to land grants, donations, and codes of conducts did not catch much attention of the scholarship and many of them lamented on this fact stating that 'the great bulk of the inscriptions consists of grants to tanks and temples which are of no interest whatever.'[18] This period was also characterized by frantic attempts for the discovery and publication of epigraphical data pertaining to the history of Kerala. Thus the framework of Logan and his orientalist tendencies haunted the historiography for many years to come. Veluthat notes that two ideas related to Kerala are very noteworthy from this period: 'a) the anarchic and chaotic political condition of Kerala and b) the rather primitive and therefore obnoxious institutions of Kerala.'[19] It was only during the second half of the twentieth century that this example was challenged and the importance of temples in Kerala society got established.

1.1.2 *The Nationalist Overture and Elamkulam Kunhan Pillai: Identifying the Role of Temples*

The arrival of Prof. Elamkulam Kunhan Pillai and his commendable erudition bought a drastic change in the historiographical outlook and a refinement in the earlier

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[17] M.G.S. Narayanan, Perumals of Kerala, 5.

[18] These comments were made by Butterworth and Chetty in *A Collection of Inscriptions on Copper Plates and Stones in the Nellore District.* Veluthat sees this comment as unlikely with the amount of inscriptional data available. He notes that new dimensions on the social and economic aspects of the past were deduced from these inscriptions especially in South India. Kesavan Veluthat, Early Medieval, 277.

[19] Ibid, 153-4.

scholarship. Also his contribution lies in the analysis of the socio-economic conditions of the medieval and modern Kerala characterized by the polarization of wealth in the hands of few. Elamkulam Pillai played an important role in fixing the chronology of the early medieval rulers and instituted them with the *Cēra* dynasty. He identified the period from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries A.D. with a centralized administration led by *Cēras* and of burgeoning temple-centered brahmana settlements. The inscriptions mentioning land grants and gold donations to the temple by donors with apparent non brahmana names led him to conclude that the ownership of the lands was with the *pulayas, iḷayas, velas* and *villavas* and other indigenous agricultural groups before the advent of the brahmanas. He argued that the process of this accumulation happened in two ways i.e. as the property of the temple and as their own private holdings. His understanding on temples and its socio economic and institutional nature are spanned in an array of voluminous works titled *Studies in Kerala History, Keralacharithrathile Iruladanja Edukal,* and *Chila Kerala Charithra Prashnangal.* His *Janmisampradayam Keralathil* is an extensive study of the role of temples in perpetrating brahmanical hegemony and landlordism in Kerala. Thus he situated temple as a dominant institution in medieval Kerala. For him temples were the lifeline of the medieval society which was the center of various villages and towns. Pillai connected this advent with the institutions of matrilineal inheritance, and importantly with landlordism. [20] He notes that with the consolidation of temples many of the indigenous cults and worshipping patterns like *kāvu* or sacred groves and *tiṇai* deities got sidelined. Buddhist centers were destroyed or converted into Hindu temples. Also the role of the temple in nurturing art, scholarship and religious merit was highlighted by him. He pointed out the importance of the administrative body called *sabha* which managed the administration of the temples and the brahmana villages in the contemporary society. Kunhan Pillai drew attention towards the codes of conducts or *kaccams* comprising of punitive clauses prescribing severe punishment for *ūrāḷar* from obstructing the *kārāḷar*.[21] He identified the famous *Mūḷikkaḷam kaccam* as the dominant and standardized codes of regulation followed in majority of the temples in Kerala.

[20] Kunhan Pillai, Janmisampradayam Keralathil, *Studies in Kerala History,* (Kottayam: 1970) 593
[21] Rajan Gurukkal, The Kerala Temple, 2-3. Kunhan Pillai's observations on *Mūḷikkaḷam kaccam* and many other *kaccams* are delineated in Janmisampradayam Keralthil, 605-606.

Underlying all these concerns of Kunhan Pillai was an historic urge to situate the political history of Kerala within the larger context of South India. His assumption of Kerala as a single political unit under the 'Kulaśēkhara Empire' challenged the earlier assertions of anarchy and lawlessness in the Kerala history. This argument was also coeval with the united Kerala movement. Kunhan Pillai's identification of the dynasty as the *Cēra* dynasty thus proved to be the legitimate successors of the ancient *Cēras* and also placed them as contemporaries to well known *Pāṇḍyās* and *Cōḷas* of the Tamilakam region. He deliberately asserted on the political relations between these dynasties to highlight the fact that the history of Kerala is part of the history of South India.[22] However the details of these constructions were quite exaggerated and problematic especially his version of 'the Hundred Years' War', which was fought between *Cōḷas* and *Cēras*, in which he, failed to realize the unequal status of both kingdoms. Kunhan Pillai's prominent arguments on temples, economy, society, and polity were based on the premise of this magnified war.[23] This particular assertion reveals the nationalist agenda of his writings which tries to bring order, affluence, and political vibrancy in contrast to the claims of anarchy and confusion propagated by the colonial scholarship. The projection of a centralized kingdom and other elements with which nationalist golden ages are constructed like lavish cultural patronage of the Sanskritic nature were deployed in his writings.[24] Śankara was pictured as the intellectual icon of the age and the efficient local administrative bodies also added sheen to this Golden Age.[25] It is significant to know that his writings were also posited as a challenge to the imperialist scholarship represented by Logan. Characteristics of nationalist historiography, especially Kerala nationalism are reflected in his writings through his candid anti-colonial sentiments.[26] He assumed that the members of the temple committees were non- Brāhmaṇa, since their names did not carry their caste titles, prior to the epic 'Hundred Years' War'. This led to his famous misconception of *brāhmaṇa* acquisition of land during the war. He was also

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[22] Kesavan Veluthat, Early Medieval, 154-155.

[23] Ibid, 154. Kunhan Pillai, identifies this war as the transition period of a state to individual landlordism and brahmanical hegemony in which the shrewd brahmanas acquitted the lands donated as temple properties. Kunhan Pillai, Janmisampradayam, 613-4.

[24] Kesavan Veluthat, Early Medieval, 155.

[25] Veluthat notes that Kunhan Pillai recognized these bodies as the basic units of economic relations, since the inscriptions related to them were majorly temple inscriptions pertaining to land transactions. Based on these inscriptions Elamkulam was the first historian to draw attention to the agrarian relations in Kerala. He also identified these bodies as landed magnates. Ibid, 156.

[26] Ibid,157.

bewildered by the licentiousness of the upper castes and the sexuality of the medieval centuries. His observations and ideological preoccupation invited the scorn of brahmana scholars. Notwithstanding this, his main contribution lies in the proposition of the system of landlordism in Kerala which was sidelined by the earlier scholarship.[27]

Kunhan Pillai's proficiency in Sanskrit, Malayalam and Dravidian linguistics proved extremely useful in these research works. Gurukkal observes that a notable amount of his discoveries were incidental to the course of his researches on the evolution of Malayalam language and the problems of Dravidian linguistics. Pointing out Kunhan Pillai's methodological limitations he highlights the lack of a focus on a specific problem in Kerala history, instead of which there is an addressing of a range of concerns on Kerala history. But Pillai is pardoned because,

"...*keeping in view of the fact that for the period under review he had practically nothing except the confusion of K. P. Padmanabha Menon and the conjectures of T. A. Gopinatha Rao, K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar and others to depend upon, his crucial role in the reconstruction of the socio-political history of Kerala in a systematic chronological sequential frame-work can never be exaggerated.*"[28]

1.1.3 *The Advent of M.G.S. Narayanan and Further Shifts: Marxian and Marxist Traditions*

Kunhan Pillai set the ground for another brilliant scholar, M.G.S. Narayanan, who provided a breakthrough of great academic magnitude in Kerala history through his unpublished doctoral thesis *Political and Social Conditions of Kerala under the Kulasekhara Empire, c 800-1124 A.D.*, which is famously known as the *Perumals of Kerala*. In his introductory remarks he states that he is undertaking a two-fold task of reconstructing *Cēra* history from 9th-11th centuries and interpreting it against the socio-political developments in South India.[29] The research also successfully tackles the scholarly mistakes of Elamkulam Kunhan Pillai. He challenged Kunhan Pillai's assumption that the brahmana influx to Tulu and later on to Kerala was mainly due to

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[27] Kunhan Pillai rejects the etymology of the word to Sanskrit *dhatu* of *jalma* which became *janma* and argues that it does not denote anything to do with land lord. He states that there was an intermediary period where the land rights were granted for life (janmam). It is from these rights for life (janmam) the word *janmi* was coined. Kunhan Pillai, Janmisampradayam, 621-2.

[28] Rajan Gurukkal, The Kerala Temple, 4.

[29] M.G.S. Narayanan, Perumals of Kerala, v.

the Arab invasion in the north during the early eighth century A.D. Narayanan understood it as the result of the extension of royal patronage owing to their textual authority, expertise in solar calendar, ayurvedic medicine and above all their comprehension of agrarian management inviting royal grants across India.[30] His important contribution lies in his refining the chronology proposed by Kunhan Pillai and also stating that 'Kulaśēkhara Empire' is a misnomer leading to the rejection of title of the label 'Kulaśēkhara' for the dynasty.[31] Narayanan criticized the exaggerations of Kunhan Pillai in calling this dynasty as an 'empire'. Importantly he stressed upon the connection between the temple-centered agrarian corporations, controlled by Brahmana landlords, and the social organization. Moreover, he did not shy away from producing an art historical study of the temple architecture and sculptures of the *Cēra* dynasty.

In his observations on the style and form of the temple architecture during the *Cēra* dynasty Narayanan raises many interesting developments and provokes astute conclusions, characteristic of his research. After exploring the various ground plans displayed by the temples of the *Cēra* period he questions the antiquity of the circular shape and its inspiration from the indigenous huts of the primitive tribes like *Uḷḷāḍar* and *Malapaṇḍāram*. He rejects the proposition of looking for indigenous roots for an imported style. He also notes that the formal qualities displayed in this period do not merit much discussion on *Cēra* style of temple architecture because of its precedence in other regions of south India. He undermines Kerala's role as an important player in this matter and positions it as a follower of what was happening in the other Southern states. Narayanan also dismisses Stella Kramrisch's categorization of temples from Kerala into Drāviḍa style and stated that an indigenous Kerala style is non applicable for *Cēra* period.[32] An elaborate discussion on these aspects will be presented in the second chapter.

Veluthat pours out lavish praises on the significant change in the methodology brought about by M.G.S. Narayanan, by also integrating evidences from traditions, both literary and oral with inscriptions. For example, Narayanan does not accept documents like *Kēralōlpatti* as the source of traditional history and rejects it

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[30] Rajan Grukkal, The Kerala Temple, 5.

[31] Narayanan found that rulers used various titles like Rājaśēkhara, Kulaśēkhara, Vijayarāga, Kērala Kēsari, Manukulāditya, Rājasimha, Raṇāditya, etc. Kesavan Veluthat, Early Medieval, 158.

[32] M.G.S. Narayanan, Perumals Of Kerala, 203.

completely calling it a mélange of legendary gibberish.[33] Narayanan's observations clearly reflects his awareness of the historical methods active in the larger context practiced by D.D. Kosambi and R.S. Sharma. Using inscriptions, a methodology typical of Kerala historians, he analyzed and produced the whole scenario of the social and political relations active in the Kerala region based upon the mode of production paradigm. He is not only very vocal about his Marxian scholarship given in many interviews, but also critical of the Communist parties and Classical Marxist tendencies. Thus the historiography of Kerala made a giant leap from the 1970s through the works of Narayanan marked by a meticulous and expressive comprehension of the society and politics.

Kesavan Veluthat is a scholar worth mentioning after Narayanan and over the years he has achieved a cohesive understanding of the social, economic and cultural processes operating in tandem with the rise of temples and its consolidation in Kerala. His earlier works especially his dissertation titled *Brahman Settlements in Kerala AD 1100 to 1500* analysed the history of early brahmana settlements of Kerala by identifying the traditional brahmana settlements and inscriptional evidences brought fresh evidences on the brahmana villages. His later writings provide an all encompassing *tour de force* on the various aspects of early medieval and medieval Kerala and temple as a prominent institution. Interestingly he has closely worked with Narayanan in certain occasions and both have produced together path-breaking scholarship on the ideological, economic and cultural functions of the temple. Veluthat moves beyond the conventional understanding of temple as a religious institution towards the multifunctional authority of temples which wielded enormous power in the medieval society. His essays on various aspects of medieval Kerala like landlordism, land rights, medieval temples, concept of *nāḍu*, post colonial concerns etc are brilliantly compiled in his new book titled *The Early Medieval in South India*. He tries to address these issues by falling back to the old and now outmoded questions of the nature and function of state and economy, the role of landed aristocracy and temple corporations. He emphasizes on the migration of brahmanas, from the *Tulu* region, and their strong presence in the matters of administration as the major factor behind the cultural expressions of the successive centuries. Subsequent expansion of agrarian activities and a redistributive economy led to the transformation of a pre-state

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[33] KesavanVeluthat, Early Medieval, 160.

into monarchy. This was a complete *brāhmaṇa* state where the *brāhmaṇas* were deigned as the owners of the huge tracts of land and possessed enormous judicial and administrative powers unlike the neighboring Tamilakam region. Veluthat has rightly pointed out the role of temples, agrarian corporations, land-grants and subsequent culture of landlordism in the medieval period.

Among the contemporary scholars Rajan Gurukkal merits a detailed mention here. Rajan Gurukkal's remarkable dissertation is published and available as *The Kerala Temple and The Early Medieval Agrarian System* apart from his other important works like Cultural History of Kerala co-written with Raghava Varrier and his numerous other contributions in journals and edited volumes on state formation, historiography, social formation, land control, iconography, etc. According to Gurukkal and Varrier the Historical Materialism of Marx, with all its demerits of being a grand evolutionary narrative of massive transformation through various modes of production, provides a compact theory of 'enormous rigorous instrument of micro level social analysis.'[34] They also privilege the historical materialism approach by arguing that it is the only theory of history without any successful alternatives. They propound a flexible historical materialism which is reconstructed through critical theory and which is not burdened with the requirement of the mode of production for every epoch. In their writings it is understood as a social formation with layers of forms of subsistence and an epoch.[35] In his *The Kerala Temple* Gurukkal is completely dependent on epigraphical evidence and has refrained from architectural analysis of the temples. He used these inscriptions to throw light on the social formations of eighth to twelfth century A.D. evolved with the advent of temple centered agrarian corporations. Gurukkal is highly critical of the sociological models propounded by scholars of interdisciplinary school because he argues that these models are not adequate enough to explain the processes behind the socio-political structures and their transformations. [36]

Finally in the conclusion of this section I would like to mention some important foreign scholars who have come up with interesting works on medieval temples, agrarian corporations and historiography. Scholars like Burton Stein, Noburu

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[34] Rajan Gurukkal and M. R. Raghava Varrier (ed.) "Perspectives" in *Cultural history of Kerala Vol-1.* (Thiruvananthapuram: Department of Cultural Publications 1999), 5.
[35] Rajan Gurukkal and M. R. Raghava Varrier. Perspectives, 28.
[36] Rajan Gurukkal. The Kerala Temple, 8.

Karashima, Clarence Maloney, C. A. Breckenridge and Kathleen Gough's name is worth mentioning in the contributions for the aforementioned areas. They deploy an interdisciplinary approach using anthropological and sociological concepts. After the list of historians I will now move on to the art historians who have produced seminal works on temple architecture.

1.1.4 Art Historical Encounters: Questions of Style, Form and Origins.

A brief and hasty survey on temples of Travancore region was started by Stella Kramrsich in the 1950s resulting in her famous monograph *Dravida and Kerala: In the Art of Travancore*. This opened up many questions, which were not addressed by the previous surveys and individual documentations, like the origins of the Kerala style, stylistic similarities of the peculiar architectural form of Kerala with Sri Lanka and Himalayan regions, and the comparison with secular forms of construction especially Nair houses. The historiography of Kerala temple architecture is dominated by a discourse on the origins of the architecture and its stylistic affiliation towards various regions. This 'origin of Kerala temple' debate is still a controversial issue among scholars. Besides Stella Kramrisch, scholars like H. Sarkar, Soundara Rajan, and Ronald Bernier were actively involved in this debate and have made remarkable contribution towards this question. Before elaborating on my analysis on their works let me briefly state their respective stands. H. Sarkar's work '*Monuments of Kerala*' provides a detailed account of the various temples in Kerala. He provides the evidence that the southern part of Kerala where Buddhism had a strong hold shows comparatively large number of circular temples and affirms on the Buddhist origins of circular temples.[37] Stella Kramrisch through her '*Dravida and Kerala: In the Art of Travancore*' and '*Arts and crafts of Kerala*' holds the view of indigenous origin of the circular temples in the latter and pursues a stylistic classification of the temples of Travancore into Drāviḍa and Kerala style in the former.[38] K.V. Soundara Rajan in his '*Temple Architecture in Kerala*' provides a detailed study of the origins, influences, and correspondence between texts and monuments in Kerala temple architecture. On the basis of structural analysis he affirms that Kerala temples are local adaptations of the south Indian temple architectural tradition, and the divergences in the structural

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[37] H. Sarkar, Monuments of Kerala (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India 1973), 27.

[38] Stella Kramrisch, Dravida and Kerala: In the Arts of Travancore. *Artibus Asiae. Supplementum* Vol. 11 (1970): 5-10.

form were introduced primarily to counteract the heavy rainfall of the region.[39] Bernier affirms the argument of Kramrisch and tries to draw parallel stylistic examples from indigenous secular architecture.[40]

Soundara Rajan in his book, *The Art of South India: Tamil Nadu and Kerala*, has dealt with the issues of form, style and its evolution of the temples from both regions. The chapters are divided addressing various issues such as forms and norms, models, and canons. Nevertheless, in front of the aesthetic grandeur of Cōḷa, and Pāṇḍya styles the Kerala School does not get the due mention. References are made occasionally in one or two paragraphs while the main focus always remains on the Tamil Nadu region. Kerala is shown as a subsidiary region of Tamil Nadu where nothing much is happening. He holds the view that Kerala temples are local adaptations of the south Indian temple architectural tradition. He also draws the origin of Kerala temple's style to once existed Buddhist and Jain structures. He argues that the Buddhist traces in Kerala at present confined to the images of the Buddha which is dated between 7th-9th centuries A.D. found from Karumadi, Mavelikkara, Bharanikkavu, and Pallikkal in the Aleppey and Quilon districts of the state. According to him the Buddha of Marudur Kulangara near Trivandrum can be inspired from Ceylonese tradition. Furthermore he states on the prominence of Jainism over Buddhism and drawing examples from various sites like Godapuram, Perumbavur, etc. traces the stylistic origin of structural temples of the Hindus.[41] Interestingly, Soundara Rajan dedicates commendable mention to artist guilds, emergence of *śāstras*, advent of indigenous style, role of the architect, etc. but does not elaborate on it much more.[42]

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[39] K.V. Soundara Rajan, The Art of South India: Tamil Nadu and Kerala (Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan 1978).

[40] Ronald M Bernier, Temple Arts of Kerala (New Delhi S. Chand and Co.1982), 25. Also Ronald M. Bernier, Splendours of Kerala (Bombay: Marg Publications1983).

[41] The Jaina monuments at Chitaral are datable to8[th] c. A. D. the above mentioned by Ay king's time. The natural rock cavern near Perumbavur is perhaps datable to the Kerala cave art tradition in its Mahavira image. The Sakkiyar Bhagavati structural shrine ruins at Godapuram, near Palghat, not far from Alattur had produced some sculptures of Mahavira and Parsvanatha, now in Trichur Museum. The ruined Jaina basti at Sultan Battery of the medieval times, more akin to similar temples from coastal south Kanara completes the list. K.V. Soundara Rajan, The Art of South India, 36.

[42] He argues that the northern temples are exclusively influenced by the Karnataka coastal architecture in its plan and elevation and also in its sculptural legacy. Further, he observes that, except for the northern part the rest of the state was executing a common idiom in architecture initiated about the 12th-13th when the state underwent a political revival arising out of a typical indigenization of its art idioms. He also articulates on the advent of *Silparatna*, and *Tantrasamucchaya* and the arrival of *panchaprakara* style of temples. Ibid, 118-119.

H. Sarkar also holds the view of the Buddhist origin of the circular plan. In his *Monuments of Kerala* he provides the evidence that the southern part of Kerala where Buddhism had a strong hold shows comparatively large number of circular temples. Sarkar is of the view that Kerala temples are local adaptations of the south Indian temple architectural tradition, and the divergences in the structural form were introduced primarily to counteract the heavy rainfall of the region.[43] He is also credited for stratifying the history of temple tradition in Kerala into three phases. Sarkar's views on textual sources are also superficial. He articulates in his work *Some Aspects of Shastric Tradition in the Architecture of Kerala* the architectural conventions found in *Tantrasamuccaya* and *Śilparatna*, and *Manuṣyālaycandrika* of Kerala but remains silent about the practice of these texts and the socio-economic significance of these texts.[44]

Bernier has travelled across Kerala and his works reflect the extensive amount of field work he has done with reference to myriad known and unknown temples. Stylistically he traces Kerala temple architecture with Pallava, Pāṇḍya, Cōḷa, Nāyaka and Cālukya influences respectively in column and *taranga* roll ornaments, carved stone designs, design motifs.[45] He is inclined towards the argument of Stella Kramrisch that domestic architecture is of important reference in temple design. The earliest studies of Kerala temples and palaces include references to houses with Kramrisch pointing out that secular structure played an important role in the advent of temples.[46] He also tries to draw a parallel to the circular north Indian temples with the temples of Kerala.[47] There is nothing original in the writings of Bernier as he is simply reiterating Kramrisch's arguments. So it will be better to look into her observations.

Kramrisch has delineated on the stylistic and formalistic origins and has tried to make a stylistic analysis of two simultaneously existing schools- Dravida and Kerala- in Travancore region in her work *Dravida and Kerala: In the Arts of Travancore.*

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[43] H. Sarkar, Monuments of Kerala, 21.

[44] H. Sarkar, Some Aspects of Shastric Traditions in the Architecture of Kerala in Anna Libera Dallapiccola (ed) *Shastric Traditions in Indian Arts*; Vol.1(Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH 1989) 208.

[45] Ronald M. Bernier, Splendours, 7.

[46] Ibid. p 9.

[47] He states by quoting Kramrisch that temples of circular plan are of greater significance and beauty than those built on a square plan, and their origin may be put as early as the 6th c AD. Examples outside Kerala are rare, although the Sudama cave in the Barabar Hills takes the form back to the 3rd c BC. Ronald M. Bernier, Temple Arts, 13.

Kramrisch observes that the origins of indigenous architecture may be in the tribal forms. She mentions that the prototype of the circular temples has been seen in the circular huts set up by some of the primitive people of Kerala. She points out two instances in this regard. The tribe known as *Malampaṇḍāram* lives in circular or conical huts, and the tribe known as *Ullāḍars* set up circular structures for ritual occasions.

These arguments are highly controversial and are contested at various levels by different scholars. A positivist study to assert and to provide counter claims is highly challenging since temples dating from 8th-9th centuries A.D., some with original *adisthāna*, have considerably renovated superstructures, and as a result do not reveal much of their original forms. Moreover, the inscriptions in Kerala temples are often restricted only to the plinth of the temples. This is so because the very format of the temples largely using laterite, stucco and timber prevents the epigraph from being engraved in the body of the temple. Thus, absence of any clear cut date of the subsequent renovations largely diminishes their use a historiographic material. So an important shortcoming is that such claims are made in the absence of empirical evidence. Hence, the analysis of Soundara Rajan, Kramrisch, and Bernier proves to be a superficial one in terms of depth and insight.

1.2 Re-Thinking Art History: A Return to the Social

In this section I would like to address the problems in art history as a discipline which was termed by Preziosi as the 'crisis in or of art history'. This will enable us to understand the methodological discrepancies and help us to rethink on this predicament. This will be followed by a historical enquiry on the various approaches used to study temple architecture/monuments in India. The attempt is to problematize the various approaches and their attempts to generate a past out of the monument by elevating it to the status of evidence.

Donald Preziosi in his seminal essay 'Art History: Making the Visible Legible' institutes a historiographic enquiry into the discipline since its formalisation in

Germany in the 1840s.[48] Also his *A Crisis in, or of, Art History?* recounts an instance which was to become the cornerstone in the attempts to radicalize the conventional discipline of art history. He talks about the 1982 winter issue of *Art Journal* which was dedicated to the theme of "The Crisis in the Discipline". After a profound evaluation of the collection of short essays received, the editor, Heinri Zerner, finalized two concerns as especially important: 'the need to rethink the "object" of art history, and the "profound contradiction" embodied by a "history of style"... [as] the attempt to establish a narrative or causal chain within the assumed autonomy of art.'[49] Preziosi whose ideas have stirred the conventional pedagogy and outlook of art history formulated his ideas using Foucauldian approach. He was extremely critical of the shared logic and complementary disciplinary practices of Archaeology-Museology-Art History which emerged during the period of high nationalism in Europe under the guidance of J.J. Wincklemann[50] and traces the genesis of the crisis in the discipline. This essay also provides critical insights to the fundamental philosophical discrepancies in/of the discipline. Preziosi observes that *causality* became the main concern of the discipline from the beginning. Thus individual works of art were seen as evidential in nature. An artwork was seen as 'reflective, emblematic, or generally representative' of its historic location while neglecting production and reception. This status of artwork as a historic document was based on two factors: that it supplies us with revealing characteristic features of a historical past, nation and civilization and that the object of study is the product of historical context. This aspect was fore grounded by neglecting the various social, cultural, political, economic, philosophical or religious forces behind art. Devangana Desai wrote, 'Art activity is a social process in which the artist, the work of art and the art

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[48] Donald Preziosi, 'Art History: Making the Visible Legible', in Donald Preziosi (ed.) *The Art of Art History*, (New York: Oxford University Press 2009), 7.

[49] Donald Preziosi; A Crisis in, or of Art History? in Donald Preziosi (ed.) *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science*; (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1989) 2.

[50] Modern German interest in ancient Greece was sparked by the work of Wincklemann who became the greatest contemporary European expert on Classical Art. His exuberance in phil-Hellenism was conveyed to many others including Goethe, Lessing and Schiller. His work *History of the Art of Antiquity* revolutionized and gave a new impetus to art historical and archaeological studies. Wincklemann became an internationally acclaimed writer on art and the foremost antiquarian scholar of his day, one who radically redefined this specialist field of enquiry to make it central to late Enlightenment speculation about the history of ancient and modern culture. His work was seen as foundational text at a time when art history and classical archaeology were being established as modern academic disciplines. For further readings on Wincklemann's impact on German archaeology and phil-Hellenism see Suzanne L. Marchand, Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Phil-Hellenism in Germany, 1750-1950(Princeton: Princeton University Press 1996).

public are interacting elements. The social history of art explores the dynamics of relationship between the patron/public, the artist and the work of art in the context of the social formation of a given period of history.'[51] Conventional art historical discourses treat art objects as symptoms of the historical context of their production and the hermeneutics is limited to the work's relationship with a stylistic evolution displayed by the individual artist or an aesthetic school or movement. In the Indian context the categories of dynasty or provincial appellations like Gupta style, Shunga style, Chola style, Rajput school, etc. ossified and were disseminated as self-evident and uncontested Indian art history which is synonymous to the nationalist art history.

Another area of concern is art history's object domain which according to Preziosi, is limited to 'traditional luxury items comprising the 'fine arts' of painting and sculpture and the architecture of the ruling classes or hegemonic institutions.'[52] This bias towards a special domain excluded the greater mass of images, objects, and buildings produced by the societies to justify an evolutionary nature of style and form.[53] Thus changes in form and style were concluded as indicative of a unilinear evolution of progress; 'an evolution or overall direction in mentality which might be materially charted in stylistic changes over time and space.'[54] In this framework, the art object was conceived as a 'vehicle' which can be used to comprehend the 'intentions, values, attitudes, ideas, political, or other messages or the emotional state of the artists' and their social and historical contexts. Also the role of an art object in this conventional framework was bifurcated as catalyst for social and cultural change or as the products of these changes.[55]

Art history's function of constructing a nation's past was achieved through a systematic archiving to construct a historical narrative of a golden age or a hegemonic narratives social, cultural and intellectual evolution. Central to this fabrication is the emergence of museums and their construction of a hegemonic, universally extendable, centralized data base. Any study of art history cannot bypass its connection with Museology through which, according to Preziosi, 'the fabrication of elaborate typological orders of 'specimens' of artistic activity linked by multiple chains of

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[51], Devangana Desai, Social Dimensions of Art in Early India, *Social Scientist* Vol.18 No.3 (1990) 3.

[52] Donald Preziosi, Making the Visible Legible, 8.

[53] See Naman P. Ahuja's essays and visual archives on minor antiquities challenging the conventional understanding of the origins of Indian iconography. http://indianiconography.info

[54] Donald Preziosi, Making the Visible Legible, 9.

[55] Ibid, p 9.

causality and influence over time and space and across the kaleidoscope of cultures[56] is effected. This centralized archive legitimized the modern nation state's quest for a homogeneous, unilinear, progressive past and present. Tapati Guha-Thakurta in *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Post Colonial India* provides a compelling study of the practices of the production of the lost histories in modern India, history which was imagined and reclaimed and constructed around monuments, archaeological sites, and artifacts. She states that the model for the museums in British India was based on a well established European model of state institutions for the collection of historical, scientific or artistic artifacts. In fact both the museum and archaeology came to the colony as established pedagogy and praxis.[57] One of the main knowledge-producing institutions of the empire, museums, played the role of an epistemological complex and a universally extendable three dimensional Imperial archive.[58] Also, according to Guha-Thakurta 'The beginning of new Western scholarship is also about the launch of first institutional claims for the care, conservation, and custodianship of Indian antiquities.'[59] The origins of Indian art history are thus rooted in these claims and it got formalized with the transition of individual explorations to individual survey with the advent of Archaeological Survey of India.

A study of the foundational moments of Indian art history cannot bypass the contributions of James Fergusson and his pioneering role in creating a textual and visual archive to study Indian architecture.[60] By using the 'picturesque' as a dominant technological tool to document the monuments, Fergusson used architecture as a mirror to reflect history, civilization, and morals and also to propound decay and degeneration of the present civilization compared to its ancient past. Indian architecture emerged on the world map and caught the attention of Europe replacing Egypt as the 'cradle of civilization'. Nevertheless, this advent required a universal

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[56] Preziosi notes that in a Foucauldian sense this disciplinary archive becomes a self-evident artifact offering a systematic, panoptic epistemological technology for justifying the variation in continuity giving rise to the social and political formation of the modern nation-state. Donald Preziosi, Making the Visible Legible, 10.

[57] Tapati Guha-Thakurta, Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Post-Colonial India (Columbia University Press 2004), 44-5.

[58] Tim Barringer, Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum, (Routledge 1998).

[59] Tapati Guha-Thakurta, Monuments, Objects, Histories, 4.

[60] Tapati by quoting Pramod Chandra on Fergusson adequately puts his role as historian of architectural forms. The quote reflects Fergusson as a "one man architectural survey...drawing making plans, taking careful notes, and above all, doing some very hard thinking." Ibid, 5.

comparative scale to study the contrasting characteristics, and this was done by comparing it with the architecture of the West. Thus making the "Christian" style as the standard and photographic images as a tool, Fergusson extracted history from the architectures of India and also conceived a history for it.[61] Thus architecture became evidentiary in nature as mentioned by Preziosi.

These discoveries were often accomplished with the help of native Sanskrit scholars for philological assistance and draughtsman to document the monument. Thus 'pandit' and the draftsman played a paramount role in early European surveys and assistance for scholars. Parker also mentions about the monumental task of interpreting *śāstras* undertaken by native scholars especially the intervention of a Native Magistrate Ram Raz (Ram Raja). His *Essay on the architecture of Hindu*, 1834, was published under the auspices of Oriental Translation Fund of the Royal Aisatic Society. Guha-Thakurta sees this as the first textual turn within the discipline where a 'native' expert is commissioned to write on ancient Indian architecture via translating an old architectural treatise. This would become one of the dominant methodologies of studying Indian architecture in the twentieth century by art historians.

Ram Raz enjoyed the support of his British patron, Richard Clarke. But interestingly the fluency and intelligence in the language proved to be inadequate for him to translate and find the meanings for the technical terms deployed in the text. In his letters to Clarke he criticizes the practitioners, for hiding the sacred volumes which they have inherited. Ram Raz takes the assistance of a sculptor of the Cammata tribe of Viśvakarma caste in Tanjore, in solving the problems in translation and trying to relate the terms with monuments. Parker draws our attention towards Ram Raz's inability to translate these texts into English 'because the things of which they speak are alien to the categories and neutralized metaphors of European languages.'[62] Interestingly, for us Ram Raz's efforts made it clear that these sacred and mysterious texts are inadequate to provide us with a historical or biographical narrative that would have helped us to write a South Asian art history following the models of Western art history. Ram Raz's *Essay on the Architecture of the Hindus* stands as a

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[61] Tapati Guha-Thakurta, Monuments, Objects, Histories, p 20.
[62] Samuel K. Parker, Text and Practice in South Asian Art: An Ethnographic Perspective, *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. 63, No. 1(2003): 6.

testimony for his inadequacy to translate the technical texts into English. The prime reason for this was the dissimilarity of the categories and naturalized metaphors of European languages. His description of the *śikhara*, in a South-Indian temple amply illustrates this shortcoming of his work. He says, 'the *sic'hara* (cupola) being divided into thirty-two parts, three to be given to the *lupa mula* [here a footnote defines the lupa mula as "a sloping and projecting member of the entablature, representing a continued pent roof. It is made below the cupola, and its ends are placed as it were suspended from the architrave, and reaching the stalk of the lotus below"], two to the *adhopadma* (the lower cima recta), one to the *malabadd'ha* (the fillet ornamented with a wreath), two to the *urdd'hvapadma* (the upper cima), sixteen to the *sic'hara* (dome), one to the *malabadd'ha,* two to the *chandrahnila* [here a footnote defines the term as "a horizontal moulding over the *sic'hara* and below the base of the pinnacle"], five to the *mahapadma* (the great lotus)'[63]

Thus this particular methodology devoid of any historical details could not gain much currency till the advent of Gabriel Joveau-Dubriel, a French scholar. P.K. Acharya, following the methodology of Dubriel engaged in the translation of *Manasara* and with the help of M.H. Krishna to prepare illustrations of the examples of sculptures given in the text. Failing to find an expert practitioner they requested the service of Silpa Siddhanti Sivayogi Sri Siddhalingaswamy, head of the Jagadguru Nagalingaswamy monastery, to prepare the aforementioned illustrations. This practice was a perfect example of the study and translation of an art and architectural treatise devoid of its social and practical uses.

They are not elaborated with discussions on particular monuments, artists, patrons, or historical events. They are more like grammars of form, proportion, iconography, and ritual, and they seem to take as their central problem the auspicious matching of all these elements to parallel taxonomies of persons and aims.

Many art historians have tried to apply *śāstric* rules to actual works of art and the results have not been satisfactory. Adalbert Gail was not able to find a single correspondence between image and *śāstric* text in an attempt to relate *śāstric* prescriptions concerning the iconography of *Varāhamūrti.* John Mosteller also found

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[63] Samuel K. Parker, Text and Practice, 6.

a similar discrepancy while applying computer analysis of *śāstric* systems of proportion (*tāḷamāna*) to image-making. While the former observed that the *śāstras* were probably written by Brahmin scholars, who were familiar with image-making but were not in a position to determine them and the latter concluded that *śāstras* do not provide an adequate basis for image-making.[64]

According to Parker *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture* avoids these discrepancies and focus on abstracting both terms and referents from specific texts and, more importantly, from their social lives. Parker observes that *Encyclopaedia* approaches texts and terminology with disciplinary rigor, precision, and standardization. One has to understand that texts and formalized practices can be characterized as ritual modes of production, viz; they must be adaptable, fluid, generalized, imprecise, and above all improvisational if they are to be continuous and important. Also the local practices of *śāstra* are typically marked by this improvisation, diversity and change while the *śāstric* expression may seem to insist on a timeless, static, and fixed order.[65]

The contemporary mind will perceive *Śilpaśāstras* as recipe books: codified collection of strict rules and regulations governing the production process. The patrons, the priests, and the artists will assert on the claim that these rules are strictly followed. But on the contrary observations of actual practice reveal that *Śilpaśāstras* play a marginal role in the technical production and helps in fabricating identity, authority, and respected social standing.

Parker has made an important observation about the problems of the various approaches in the study of *śāstra* and *prayōga*. Parker remarks,

'*since the eighteenth century Western scholars have studied the śāstras as if they were material objects - "books" - and hence primarily the preserve of textual scholarship. This is not a problem so long as one scrupulously remembers that the śilpasāstrās are only "books" in a metaphorical sense. After all, people always confront, and invent for themselves, a knowledge of other cultures through metaphorical extensions of their own, but if those metaphors become reified, they can become as much an obstacle to knowledge as a useful vehicle. Contemporary academic conventions are descended from medieval European*

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[64] Samuel Parker, Text and Practise, 5.
[65] Ibid, 8.

scholasticism. For Christians the category "book," (i.e. "bible") carries, among other things, a halo of fetishized connotations regarding authorship, intended-meanings, and authority, in both divine and heroic/secular modes, that are not entirely applicable to the word śāstra.[66] *Because in the Indian context and daily use śāstra does not mean a written book but it connote "bodies of knowledge".*

Scholars like Vaijayanti Shete offer a respite through her *The Socio-Economics of Art in the Silpa-Sastras*. Her essay foregrounds the various socio-economic relationships between the artisans, the architects and the craftsmen and the royal/religious patrons of art in ancient India.[67] She observes that many studies in the past have focused on the iconography and stylistic analysis (like that of H. Sarkar) of ancient Indian art, no comprehensive discussion of the various economic distribution systems and networks binding artists among themselves and with their patrons in a complex hierarchy. A close observation of these texts will reveal that they are a rich source of information on economic rules and regulations including the whole issue of payment to all classes and creeds, traders and officials, etc. She cites that the voluminous work *Aparājitaprcca* is very vocal regarding the city planning. The very text points out an active role of the patrons as well as artist. The text refers to goldsmiths, perfumers, ivory-workers, garland-makers, metal-workers, weavers, leather workers and *sthapati* or *sūtradhāra* in relation with the existing social hierarchies between the castes. The *Māyamatam*, a South Indian text on art, architecture, sculpture, draws attention to the houses for other classes. Amidst the description of the houses of the potters, barbers, fishermen, oil makers and so on, the dwelling of *sthapati* is recommended at a distance from the village, to the south-east o to the north-east of it. By the time of the medieval period artists are turned into outcasts. And thus it explains why the *Sūdras* are settled on the periphery of the village, a little further away from other classes.[68]

Mosteller is also highly critical of stylistic analysis developed to pursue art historical enquiry. He believes that the conception, method and use of stylistic analysis, in the western context, are the presence of both written history and signed or attributable works of art. But in the context of Indian history which is marked by an absence of

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[66] Samuel K. Parker, Text and Practise, 9-10.
[67] Vaijayanti Shete, The Socio-Economics of Art in the Silpa-Sastras in Shivaji K. Panikker, Parul Dave Mukherji and Deeptha Achar (eds.) *Towards a New Art History: Studies in Indian Art*(New Delhi: D.K.Printworld 2003) 142.
[68] These passages can be found in Aparajitaprcca, 72.41.48 and Mayamatam Vol I. Vaijayanti Shete, The Socio-Economics of Art, 143.

written history, and artworks are nearly impossible to attribute to known artists, the execution of western models posits a challenge and therefore the methodologies of art historical analysis has to be redefined.[69] Mosteller argues that his approach offers an analytical paradigm, access to a vast amount of significant information previously unavailable, and a radical improvement in the quality of both our data and interpretations. He defines this new approach as a method to analyze the form or morphology of an image (i.e. its style) through the analysis of its method. Definitely Mosteller offers a new approach but he also resorts for the stylistic paradigm and offers nothing new to the social conditions of art making.

The institutionalization of style is a major concern underlying the works of many contemporary art historians. A genealogical study of this fixation will help the discipline redeem itself from the clutches of conventional scholarship. Indian art history has been very similar to Western art history. It has engaged in excavations for a glorious past. Moreover, the discipline was formed by western scholars. Fergusson, Burgess, Cunningham and Marshall initiated the history of the discipline as a developmental evolution, within a Hegelian, historicist framework. Fergusson also resorted to religious categorization of art by introducing titles like 'Hindu', 'Buddhist', 'Jain' and 'Muslim' art.

These assumptions were carried forward by Coomaraswamy, Kramrisch, and et al. during the period of high nationalism. Post-independence the same logic continued to operate within a statist framework. As a result, the emphasis of conventional art history as pedagogy and as praxis has been on a stylistic analysis of Indian art, attribution of works to schools, etc. The scholarship privileged research in the 'origin of Buddha image', existence of 'fine arts' and 'naturalism' in India, etc. and in these questions the issues of production and reception of the artworks are sidelined. In summary, art history as a discipline got engaged with making the visible legible and these 'legibles' were institutionalized and became a medium for fabricating, sustaining and transforming the history of individuals and nations. A critical study of the existing histories of art reveal an inclination for the biographical accounts of influential professionals, narrative accounts charting evolution of art.

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[69] John F. Mosteller, A New Approach for the Study of Indian Art, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 107, No.1 (1987): 55. For a detailed reading on his studies read John F. Mosteller, The Measure of Form: A New Approach for the Study of Indian Sculpture (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications 1991).

Another predominant approach in the study of architecture centers on the study of the form of temple architecture and its dynamic movement. Rudolf Arnheim has addressed the aspect of movement in western architecture. In the Indian context Stella Kramrsich has emphasized on the dynamics of Indian sculpture and temple by privileging the notion of dynamic force. She focuses on the devotee using the finished building and to some extent the point of view of the *śilpi* or *sthapati* who is responsible for its construction.[70] The latter approach also helps to understand whether there is any deviation from the prescriptive canons of traditional Indian art. Indorf stresses on two important aspects as paramount to comprehend the conceptualization of the architectural form as applied to the building of a new Hindu temple. 'These are 1) the notion of the temple as a form expanding outward and upward from its center (sanctum), and 2) the importance of proportionate measurement.'[71] Arnheim emphasise on a dynamic form which is a perceived movement as a result of the play of the eye over the form. Proportion here is experienced as a rhythmic movement. According to Indorf, Hindu architecture, employ proportion systematically but the fundamental conception of the form is that of a dynamic moving body. It has to be seen as an aggregation of living bodies. To experience the form more than a theoretical approach, it is important to reconsider the form as a living dynamic body, the parts of which grow and move. George Michell and Adam Hardy have followed Kramrisch's concpetualisation of temple expansion as gnomonic growth. Michell illustrated expansion from the centre outward to the cardinal directions. Hardy using temples in Karnataka explained the dynamics of the temple form in which the movement is defined as directed down along the exterior of the form, following the centerline and corners. Interestingly, nothing in *Vāstuśāstras* specify a downward movement in the architecture. Kramrisch has noted the inherent and central problem of understanding the Hindu temple is that the structure is conceptualized from the inside, yet visualized from the outside.

1.3 Framework of Research: Perspectives

This section will delineate the larger theoretical framework of this research. It will encompass a broad range of issues, concerns and debates pertaining to art history,

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[70] Indorf emphasise on this approach. Pina Indorf, Intepreting the Hindu Temple, Artibus Asiae, Vol. 64, No. 2 (2004): 177.

[71] Pina Indorf, Intepreting the Hindu Temple, 178.

social history, gender, caste etc. One of the main influences behind this work was the important historic intervention brought by Arnold Hauser's social history approach. It is important to mention the merits and demerits of this work at the outset and then moving on to the Indian scenario.

Arnold Hauser's *The Social History of Art*, published in 1951, offered a path breaking scholarship to the field of Art History. Steeped in Marxist principles of historical studies – the centrality of class and class struggle, the social and cultural role of ideologies, and the determining influence of modes of economic production on art— Hauser liberated the discipline of art history from the clutches of elitist British university departments. Nevertheless, during the 1960s, Hauser's affiliation towards Marxism and his highly conventional studies and selection of artifacts came under heavy criticism. The anti-Communist backlash during the Cold War in Britain and America also played an important role in the marginalization of Hauser and his works.[72] With the emergence of Post-Marxism, affiliated with feminist, structuralist and psychoanalytic themes and perspectives and also with the advent of cultural theorists such as Edward Said, Raymond Williams, Pierre Bourdieu, and T.J. Clark, Hauser's works were again branded as crude, orthodox and reactionary.

Even though, social history of art remains as an important paradigm to explore and examine works of art. Over these years Hauser's text itself has achieved historical significance. Jonathan Harris observes that, 'Reading Hauser may also inform us about the current terrain of the discipline of art history, and enable us to register and evaluate, through a process of systematic comparison, the continuities and ruptures in the post-war development and present configuration of the subject.'[73] Hauser's Eurocentric approach in the selection of artifacts has come under much criticism. Also the dictatorial tone in which he writes and the absence of clarifications, aims, objectives etc. are very disturbing. With the emergence of New Art History Hauser's works were judged reactionary, sexist, racist and elitist. Harris argues that,

'although The Social History of Art cannot—should not—be used as the basis for teaching the subject; it can provide many valuable insights and observations. These may be used to support the interests of feminists, scholars concerned with non-Western culture, and gay or lesbian revisionists, as well as those of the dwindling ranks of Marxists still haunting

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[72] Jonathan Harris, General Introduction, in Arnold Hauser (ed.) The Social History of Art Vol I: From Pre Historic Times to the Middle Ages (London and New York: Routledge 2005) p xii.
[73] Jonathan Harris, General Introduction, xv.

universities—those largely forgotten within the New Art History now, who can similarly integrate some of Hauser's valuable work into their own studies. But the radical fragmentation of the discipline's theoretical bases, along with the loss of faith in Marxism, both as a superior intellectual system, and as a practical means of transforming capitalist societies, has an ambiguous legacy when it comes to assessing Hauser's study.[74]

D. D. Kosambi, Romila Thapar and R.S. Sharma revolutionized Indian history by their emphasis on the socio-economic paradigm approach. Uma Chakrawarti observes that Kosambi's most enduring legacy is the centrality of the Marxist approach in all his writings without being dogmatic about it. Using a range of sources and disciplines including anthropology, archaeology, numismatics, textual studies and even cultural studies Kosambi contributed to the scholarship with his astute analysis of particular issues, themes and texts. Moreover Kosambi was not alone in raising these concerns. He was part of a critical moment when a paradigmatic shift happened in the Indian history writing which approached the past dispassionately and sensitively at the same time. This was followed by R.S. Sharma and D.R. Chanana's works on *śūdras* and Indian underclass of early India.[75] The 1960s and 70s also witnessed the social formations approach in history, when art history was still in isolation. Chakravarti remarks that this approach has been very useful and imperative, and has produced a significant rubric of work that has enriched the ancient Indian history, also enabling the sidelined regional histories of early India. Many art historians also followed this model for e.g. Ratan Parimoo, M. A. Dhaky, R. N. Misra, Devangana Desai were able to reconstruct ancient Indian art history through this interdisciplinary approach. For Desai art activity has to be seen as a social process in which the artist, the work of art and the art public are interacting elements. Thus the social history of art explores the dynamics of relationship between the patron/public, the artist and the work of art in the context of the social formation of a given period of history.[76]

Desai notes that one of the pioneering works in the field of social history of art is Prof. Niharranjan Ray's *Maurya and Post-Maurya Art*, published in 1945, which was lauded as the first sociological study of the two important phases of Indian art.[77] Ray's valuable collection of essays on Indian art and architecture and its ethno-social

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[74] Jonathan Harris, General Introduction, xix.
[75] Uma Chakrawarti, 'History as Practice' in *Everyday Lives, Everyday Histories: Beyond the Kings and Brahmanas of Ancient India* (New Delhi: Tulika Books 2006), xx.
[76] Devangana Desai, Social Dimensions of Art , 3.
[77] Devangana Desai, Social Dimensions of Art , 4.

background in *An Approach to Indian Art* presented a fresh perspective towards Indian art history. Pertaining to the social base and social character of Indian religious architecture, Ray suggests that an art historian working on the same has to familiarize with 'the evolution of different religions, their cults and sects, their ritualistic and congregational, their priestly, monastic and pilgrim needs and requirements as of the planning, designing, and constructional problems involved in the making of every single edifice and the total complex of edifices.' Because he believes that religions are social institutions which reflect the collective social ethos and therefore the religious architecture has to be studied as documents of social life and social values of a given time and space.[78]

Ray gives us an incisive description about the expansion in medieval temple architecture. He states that temples become elaborate and complex both in plan and elevation, by about tenth and eleventh centuries. With additions of new subsidiary shrines and other structures the sanctum has to be now approached through an elaborate temple complex with *mandapas*. Ray's analysis of this period and insightful comments on this phenomenon is remarkable. He understands temple or temple complex as the most important centre of local social life. By emphasizing on its social and economic functions he observes that it acted as the main marketing centre as well as the place for public gathering. Most importantly it served as a bank and treasure-vault for the community's valuable belongings. This was useful during the times of civil war, political upheavals, and military invasions acting as the securest fort. Finally, being the centre of learning, performing arts, and intellectual pursuits it was the institution of contemporary social life.[79] His privileging of the socio-cultural character and ethnic background of Indian art has been a major influence behind this research. According to him,

"The size, extent and nature of a religious establishment architecturally speaking, depended first on the system of relative values which a given society extended to the prevailing religious cults and sects and their gods and goddesses, their myths and legends; secondly, on the financial patronage and social prestige which a given social economy could provide; and thirdly, on the strength of the clientele it would expect to command by its religious appeal and social functioning. The balance, proportion, rhythm and harmony of a single part or section

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[78] Niharranjan Ray, Social Base and Social Character of Indian Art in *Approach to Indian Art* (Chandigarh: Panjab University), 252.
[79] Niharranjan Ray, Social Base and Social Character, 256-7.

with another and of the whole sections which culminate in the total aesthetic effect of a temple complex also depend on the technical or engineering skills of the workers."[80]

Thus stressing on the importance of religion, patronage, patron and artist he offers a sophisticated and composite methodology to study temple architecture.

While emphasizing on the relevance of studying the social economy of the temple it becomes an imperative to understand the role of endowments and land grants. Is it possible to study these forms of economic transaction under the purview of modern legal parlance? Also is it possible to have a unified perspective to study south Indian temples amidst the existing corpus of separate scholarships on temple architecture, ritual and administration? At present what we have is a scholarship characterized by incongruent perspectives. What is absent is the aforementioned unified perspective to understand the abundance of empirical data.

Arjun Appadurai and Carol Appadurai Breckenbridge in their article *The South Indian Temple: Authority, Honour and Redistribution* discuss these issues. They argue that the economic foundation of the temple have much in common with the ideas of gift and land tenure in other South Indian contexts. They also highlight the redistributive and developmental functions which was co-existent with the political system by providing us the links between caste and lineage organization, and regional/territorial segmentation.[81] To understand these processes it is important for us to know that the deity in an Indian temple in general is conceived as a corporeal person and acts as the centre of the moral, economic, and iconographic dimensions of the south Indian temple. The sanctity of this deity is sustained through various rituals and ceremonies like daily anointments, adornments, processions, feeding etc. collectively known as puja. Gunther-Dietz Sontheimer has addressed the legal questions pertaining to the idol turning into a person by engaging with epics, purāṇas, śāstras, medieval legal writers, western and Muslim concepts, etc. He concludes by saying that 'neither the ancient discussions of the *Mīmāmsakas* nor the modern doctrines based in part on Western models are apt for the situations we have been discussion.'[82] Anglo-Indian

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[80] Niharranjan Ray, Social Base and Social Character, Ibid, 259.

[81] Arjun Appadurai and Carol Appadurai Breckenbridge, The South Indian Temple: Authority, Honour and Redistribution, *Contributions to Indian Sociology* Vol. 10 (1976): 188.

[82] Gunther-Dietz Sontheimer, 'Religious Endowments in India: The Juristic Personality of Hindu Deities' in Heidun Bruckner, Anne Feldhaus, Aditya Malik, (eds) *Essays on Religion, Literature and Law* (New Delhi: IGNCA in association with Manohar Publishers 2004), 15-58.

courts have desperately attempted to standardize and codify a legal approach to study endowments and all temple disputes. But Appadurai and Breckenbridge argue that to view the temple endowments as trusts is not an ideal approach in the South Indian context. Temple endowments are special kind of trusts which mobilize, organize, and utilize the resources used in temples. Endowments can be understood also as '1) which permits the entry and incorporation of corporate units into the temple either as temple servants or as donors, 2)which offers complete and partial support to the deity which is managed by the donor, 3) which generates one or more ritual contexts in which to distribute and to receive honors.'[83] Henceforth it can be argued that temple has to be conceived as a complex and decentralized institution in which endowments sustains the means to link the temple to its agrarian hinterland or urban context. It also links the temple to corporate units in society.[84]

The various academic debates pertaining to early medieval and medieval India remains a murky terrain. Hermann Kulke asserts this by stating that that the study of pre-modern Indian state especially medieval India is a complicated terrain. Various scholars and 'schools' have formulated approaches and methodologies to study the medieval state and its characteristic features. For example, 'the degree of central authority and/or local autonomy; and the role of religious institutions (e.g. *agrahāra* Brahmin villages and temples) as indicators of political fragmentation and segmentation, or as instruments of the extension of central political authority.'[85]

Burton Stein's observations on the formation of the social relations due to the brahmana and peasants involving the land define a lot about the character of the medieval period. He identifies four basic types of land tenures in the medieval South India and according to him all four were granted to the temple. The four forms of tenure are: '(i) crown lands (*bhaṇḍāravāda*) which were under the direct revenue administration of the imperial government and from which the government received

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[83] Endowments also facilitated festivals which were followed with numerous rituals. Each ritual was sponsored by separate donor. Importantly, 'the ritual formation of ritual contexts in which honours are generated and moved leads to the third aspect of endowments, namely the entry and incorporation of corporate units in the redistributive process of the temple. The donor of an endowment generally if not always, represents a social and economic unit. Such units might be a family, a monastery, a sect, a kingdom, a guild, or more recently, a collection of workers.' Appadurai and Breckenbridge, The South Indian Temple, 191-203.

[84] Ibid, 202.

[85] Hermann Kulke, Introduction: The Study of State in Pre-Modern India, in *The State in India 1000-1700* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press 1995).

an important part of its revenues; (2) lands held on military service tenure (*amaram*) by local chieftains and tributary rulers (*nāyakas*), who sent part of the income of their *amaram* villages to the imperial treasury and retained part to defray the costs of maintaining a body of soldiers, (3) lands held on eleemosynary tenure by Brahmans (*brahmadēya*) temples (*dēvadāna*), and traditional educational institutions, or *mathas* (*mathapura*).'[86] According to him these land grants enabled temples with a consistent source of income.

Another important lack in the conventional discipline of history and art history is the question of caste. Therefore caste becomes a challenge to the writing and teaching of history. It is intriguing to know how caste as a category was elusive to history as an academic discipline. With the advent of the history as an academic discipline past was conceived as a monolithic entity called nation. Past became a singular narrative and was consumed in its totalized form without any objection. Studying caste became a problem to this totalized form differentiating category was posited as a threat which will break the unity and coherence of nation's story.[87] Nevertheless, the acknowledgment of caste into the discipline was accompanied through subordination. Importantly, caste was attributed as a 'social' category very different from political categories like the nation and class in Marxist tradition.[88] This dichotomy between the social and political, produced by the nationalist discourse was institutionalised in academic domains. Henceforth, in post independent India the study of caste came under the discipline of 'sociology'. History was entangled with political categories like state and with political economic categories like class and modes of production. Art history with style, form, symbolism, etc. So the categories, like terms which could only be explained in terms of customs and culture fell in the domain of the social.[89]

An important scholar whom I would like to mention at this point is R.N. Misra, who has offered a genealogical study of the status of the *śilpi* in ancient India. He believes

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[86] Burton Stein, The Economic Function of a Medieval South Indian Temple, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (1991): 164-5.

[87] Banerjee argues that the upper caste/class hegemony in the history writing sidelined the category of caste and sometimes acknowledges it as a convenient way to order the society, rational division of labour, spiritual hierarchy and also as a threat preenting the national unity. Prathama Banerjee, Caste and Writing in History in Imtiaz Ahmad and Shashi Bhushan Upadhyay (eds.), *Dalit Assertion in Society, Literature and History*, (Delhi: Orient Blackswan 2010), 216-7

[88] Ambedkar-Gandhi debate was on this very pertinent question of Gandhi reducing the issues of caste to issues of social reform and thus preventing it from entering the political society. Prathama Banerjee, Caste and Writing, 218.

[89] Prathama Banerjee, Caste and Writing, p 218.

that the diversity or the similarity in the artistic nuances of Indian sculpture and architecture in different regions and their evolution has been an important poser to the art-historians. The early studies were mostly dependent on field-studies. But with the progress of studies in this field the canons on *śilpa* also came to light gradually, so the vast material thus made available was sought to be related to the extant remains of architecture and sculpture. The synchronization of iconic or architectural tradition has helped in establishing the *śilpa* tradition on more formal and temporal basis but it has also failed to comprehend the role of artisans in the realm of art-activity.[90] Art historians have always ignored the extent of artisan's participation in the evolution of such provincial styles. This problem has to be overcome by acknowledging 'region' as a crucial location for historical studies. The region becomes a crucial location for historical and art historical studies. The region becomes more important then and different from merely a geographical or cultural unit of national territoriality.[91]

Another important question is whether to understand caste as a religious phenomenon or as a socio political phenomenon? How could we restore materiality to this category of caste in Indian society? Because in the conventional modern history writing, in fact social sciences in general, materiality is understood primarily in the form of economic interest in the language of hunger and its satisfaction, disease and its remedy, and debt and its remittance. This is not merely the local problem of materialist/Marxist schools of thought, which have constantly come under scanner for its economistic and reductionistic understanding of social reality. This is a far more generalized position shared across ideological divided, which understands materiality as a domain in which the human body becomes the locus of the actions of larger historical forces.[92] Hence she states that, "This understanding of the human body as irrelevant, except in biographical intimacy of disease, death, sex, and hunger, is something that fails to make sense of the material experiences of caste and above all of untouchability-wherein matters of touch, sex, food, filth, flesh, skin, work, worship, bondage, and mobility all come together to produce the socio-political realm via deployment of the

[90] R.N.Misra, Ancient Artists and Art-Activity, (Simla: IIAS 1975), V.
[91] Prathama Banerjee, Caste and Writing, 219.
[92] Banerjee here propounds that the body-whether starved, bonded, sick or violated-becomes proof and product of material processes. The body is recognized precisely because it carries the mark of such material histories. By itself, however, the body is seen as bare life, biology, opaque, merely a receptacle and therefore not quite themtisable trough history. Ibid, 227.

body, and above all, the body."[93] Hence, the material and bodily practices becomes an important domain to explore under the social history and social formations approach.

The 1960s and 70s witnessed the advent of social formation approach exploring the history of the 'margins'. R.S. Sharma's 'Indian Feudalism' and 'Material Cultures and Social Formations' examined these questions. According to Uma Chakravarti social formation has been both useful and necessary, and has created a rubric of scholarship contributing to the development of ancient Indian history, precisely for the development of regional histories.[94] But these works were not enough to reflect on the conditions of women and failed to acquire gender as an analytical category. Chakravarti observes that this male-centered paradigm of knowledge was dismantled with the coming of 'second wave' feminism accompanied by a passionate women's movement in India.[95] Subsequently with the coming of various political and identity based movements like Naxalite movements, women's movement, student's movement, peasant movements, etc. in the 1970s trying to resist the inequalities in Indian society, social history made its return in the academic world. The 1980s was characterized by the origins of subaltern school of history concentrating on the subalterns. Feminists did not find subaltern histories emancipatory and empowering, so they had to resort to the old social history approach to study gender as an analytical category. Chakravarti observes that the 'problem' with the framework of social history and the history of social formation is the underlying assumption to equate men's history with women. The attempts were limited to link modes of production with social and political institutions instead of linking it with gender structures, ideologies, and social and economic power structures intersect. She cites Kumkum Roy's 'Emergence of Monarchy in North India' as a breakthrough in this regard. In this book Roy explores the advent of hierarchies in North India which were legitimized by brahmanical rituals.[96] Feminist scholarship also foregrounded the issue of sexuality. Historians have had addressed this aspect in the gambit of normative

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[93] Prathama Banerjee, Caste and Writing, 227.

[94] Uma Chakravarti, History as Practice, xxi.

[95] Uma Chakravrti calls such histories as the un-gendered social formations approach. Also these movements were marked by the return of the women's question complemented with the advent of a active women's movement. There was an academic urgency to conceptualise the experience of patriarchy in the Indian context. Ibid, xxiii-xxiv.

[96] Once this structure was in place king became the controller of the productive and reproductive resources of the region. The *yajamāna* who was the beneficiary of the rituals became the controller of the productive and reproductive resources of the house. Ibid, xxvi-xxvii.

standards of sexuality which was challenged by this new corpus of scholarship. Their studies were broadened by studying sexuality in the context of caste and gender structures.[97]

This is the broader framework in which I would like to examine my research topic in the following pages. In the following chapters I would be attempting to find answers to my research questions through three chapters: Chapter 2) Historical Evolution of Kerala Temple Architecture till Fourteenth Century: The Advent of *Pañcaprakāra* Scheme of Temple-Making; Chapter 3) Exploring the Economic and Social Nature of Medieval Kerala Temple: The Formation of a Regional Identity; and Chapter 4) Conclusion.

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[97]Uma Chakravarti, History as Practice, xxvii.

Chapter 2

The Advent of Temple Complexes in the Fourteenth Century and the Historical Background of this Evolution

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The Advent of Temple Complexes in the Fourteenth Century and the Historical Background of this Evolution

Fourteenth century A.D. is regarded as a defining moment in the development of a regional style of temple architecture in Kerala. This chapter will analyse the *pañcaprakāra* scheme of temples and the various components of architecture contributing to this scheme of temple making. This formal analysis will permit the social history to be tangibly located within the context of the development of temple architecture. Since the inextricable link between formal analysis and social history is the leitmotif of this study such an exercise will open up new possibilities and alter the framework of the available studies.

Late Phase (A.D. 1300-1800)

The centralized authority of the Kulaśēkhara Empire came to an end till the late 12th century and several minor principalities and chieftains rose to prominence. Through the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the state underwent a political revival, which led to the conscious adaptation of technical indigenisation of its art idioms. This political revival led to the emergence of three dominant principalities and the localization of agricultural surplus, allowing greater resource control by temples. The developments which took place in the earlier periods got further elaborated and enriched. This research work tries to understand the changes in temple architecture which occurred during this period. The significant development in this period was the advent of the *pañcaprakāra* scheme of temple making visible in the expansion of temples into temple complexes. The model developed in this period was adapted as the accepted regional style in the Kerala region. This period also witnessed the emergence of composite shrines which means dedicating one complex to more than one god. Significant developments were made in the area of murals and wooden carvings. Since sculpture is not an area of enquiry in this study it would not be covered in this section but it is important to note that wooden carvings, bronze and stone sculptures witnessed a new visual style distinct from the Cōḷa and Hoysala styleduring this period known as 'Kerala style'.[98] The outer shrine walls of temples

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[98] Coffman observes that these bodies are radically different from the earlier periods characterized by broad, robust bodies and the girth emphasized by elaborate ornament and spreading drapery. Mary

were covered with carved wooden panels of images of this style. Could this regional expression of style be seen as a part of the local construction to create a distinct visual idiom? The answer lies in understanding this development in temple architecture and visual arts as part of a larger cultural development which created a shared language and style in the fourteenth century. The following section would outline the features of the architectural scheme known as *pañcaprakāra*. This will enable to comprehend the architectural details. of the development in this period compared to monumental structures in the neighbouring regions.

2.4 What are *Pañcaprakāras*?

The Kerala style temple from the fourteenth century shows more elaboration in the layout (*pañcaprakāra* scheme). (Fig. 2) No further developments happen in terms of individual shrines but the layout of the entire temple complex acquires greater complexity and elaboration. *Prakāra* means enclosure or limit and therefore *pañcaprakāras* denote five enclosures around the *srīkōvil* or the sanctum sanctorum. They are

- *Akate-balivaṭṭom (Antaramaṇḍalam)*
- *Cuṭṭambalam Nālambalam (Antahara)*
- *Vilakkumadam (Madhya-hara)*
- *Sīvēlippura (Bahya-hara)*
- *Puram-matil (Maryada)*

Tantrasamucaya, a fifteenth century treatise on temple construction, states that the distance of each *prakāra* from the *srīkōvil* is taken from a specified measuring point i.e., either from *pāduka* or *kumuda* or *uttara*. Furthermore, in some temples prominently in South Kerala, there is another pillared structure, the *balikkalmaṇḍapam* (altar stone hall) in front of the *valiyambalam* (main temple) providing the main entrance into the temple proper.[99] In front of the *balikkalmaṇḍapam* in some cases the *dhvajastambham* (flag staff) and *dīpstambham* (lamp pillar) also can be seen. The *kūttambalam* (dance hall) meant for the performance of visual arts also can be seen in some large temple complexes.

Beth Coffman Heston, Powerful Bodies: "Kerala Style" Bronzes and Thinking about a Regional Style, *Archives of Asian Art* Vol. 54 (2004): 63-93.
[99] S. Jayashanker, Temples of Kerala, 41. A *dēvanāgari* version of *Tantrasamuccaya* downloaded from a blog was used to verify this fact. But its source could not be found.

It is also important to elaborate the important constituents of *pañcaprakāras* to understand the changes in the last phase.

Akate Balivaṭṭom

The main constituent parts of *akate balivaṭṭom* are the *śrīkōvil*, the *antar maṇḍapa*, *namaskāra maṇḍapa*, shrines of subsidiary deities, etc. Among these the *garbha griha* is the most important. The *śrīkōvil* is surrounded at the outside by an imaginary square known as *antar maṇḍala* where the *bali pīṭas* (oblation stones) are installed at cardinal directions of east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, north and north-east representing the *Dikpālas*. *Śrīkōvils* are built on five types of ground plans square, rectangular, circular, elliptical and apsidal. Located at the corners of the orients and cardinal points of the *antar maṇḍalas* are *aṣṭa dik pālas* and other *Dēvatas*.[100]

Cuṭṭambalam or Nālambalam

Anta-hara is a separate structure and contains *valiambalam*, *thidapaḷḷi*,(kitchen) *mūlayara*, (special kitchen) sub-shrines, store, etc. Both sides of the main entrance of the *nālambalam* are known as *valiambalam*. *Mūlayara*, which is located in the north or north-east, is an important part of the nālambalam. This place is used during *ulsava bali* to germinate specified cereals after tantric rites.

Vilakkumadom

It is a structure with columns (pillars) affixed with a galaxy of lamps fixed on it. (Fig. 3) It is located ½ or 1 *daṇḍ* from inner side of the wall of *nālambalam*. Interestingly, the outer limit of the *madhyahara* is up to the tip of the flame of the lamps. Also in between the wall of *nālambalam* and the structure of the *vilakkumadom* there is space for circumambulation, the width of which ranges between 1 and 2 *kōles (unit)*. Moreover, *vilakkumadom* is not generally seen in all temples though galaxy of lamps is fixed on *daṇḍikas* (pillars) and *aḷis* (bars) on the walls of the *cuṭṭambalam*.

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[100] S. Jayashanker says that two principals have to be clearly understood and followed in the installation of these *bali-pīṭas* (oblation stones): firstly their within the *antar maṇḍala* and secondly the direction to which the *Dēvatas* invoke in these *balikkals* face. These *balikkals* are made up of granite or in some case with laterite. Some are carved with beautiful lotuses and they are attached with great sanctity. The *aṣṭadikpālas* are Indra (East), *Agni* (South-east), *Yama* (South), *Nirthi* (South-west), *Varuṇa* (West), *Vāyu* (North-West), *Soma* (North, West), *Isana* (North-east). S. Jayashanker, Temples of Kerala, 81-3.

Śīvēlippura according to *pañcaprakāra* scheme comprises of *agra maṇḍapa* (consisting of *valiabalikkal* or principal *bali pīṭa* along with associated sub-deities of the main deity), outer *pradakṣiṇa vīdhi, dvaja stambha, kṣētrapāla, kūtambalam,* shrines of subsidiary deities, etc. Precisely it spans all the structures between the *vilakkumaḍom* and the outer wall (*maryāda*)- falling in the scheme and those in between *cuṭtambalam* and *maryada* in the case of *catur-prakāra* scheme. The *agra maṇḍapa* is a hall attached to the main entrance to the *valiambalam* which may be pillared or not. Mostly the principal *bali pīḥta* is installed here and in such cases it is known as *valiabalikkal pura* or *valiabalikkal maṇḍapa*. This principal *bali pīṭha* is placed at the front of the main deity, either situated within the *agra maṇḍapa* or outside it. (Fig. 4) Its shape is a facsimile of the *aḍistāna* of the *śrīkōvil* up to the point of *pīṭha* of the deity. Besides the principal *bali pīṭha*s there are seven other *bali pīṭha*s located at cardinal points. At the outside of these *bali- pīṭa*s is the circumambulatory path which is paved with granite slabs in most temples. (Fig. 5) The location of the *dhvaja stambha* is either 12 *dands* or 5-6-7 *uttara dands* from the centre of the *garbha griha*. It is installed in front of the *śrīkōvil* on the *pradakṣiṇa vaḷi* (circumambulatory path) in such a way that the *dhvaja* is confined within the specified limit.[101] (Fig. 6)

The position of *Kūtamablam* meant for the performance of visual arts is located in the front and right side of the principal deity. Finally, dealing with sub-shrines, most temples install *Gaṇapati* as a sub-deity. If space permits this number would increase depending on the legends and initiatives taken by devotees and temple committee. Usually in Śiva temple Pārvati is installed at the rear of the *śrīkōvil*. The other sub-shrines are positioned parallel to the main deity.

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[101] Pillar being one of the prominent structures of worship from the ancient period symbolizes the axis mundi and is an obvious general symbol of support, a sacred axis, emblem of divine power; an axis separating the terrestrial and cosmic worlds. . Here *dvaja* also possess such symbolic and metaphysical qualities and worshipping the *dvaja* is equal to worshipping the main deity of the temple. It is believed that the deity is seated above the vahana of the flag. The structural details of the *dvaja* are also very sophisticated. It comprises of *nāla, aḍistāna, lasoona, mandi-palaka, yashti, veerakantha, paras, valaya, malasthanā,, vahana* and other ornamentations. The *vāhanas* vary from gods to goddesses: for eg. *Garuda* for Viṣṇu, mouse for *Ganapati*, horse for *Ayyappa*, lion for *Bhagavati*, etc.S. Jayashanker, Temples of Kerala, 94-101.

This is the fifth and the last *prakāra* which is the outer wall. Many of the old *maryādas* have fallen or have been removed or destroyed. The other important structures of *maryāda* are *gōpura, ūṭṭu pura*, (dining hall) etc. *Śāstras* prescribe that *gōpuras* can be constructed in *antar maṇḍala, anta hara, madhya hara, bāhya hara*, and *maryada* with each one named as *dvāra śōbha, dvāra śāla, dvāra prāsada, dvāra harmya and dvāra gōpura* respectively. Compared to the lofty *gōpuras* of Tamilnadu, *gōpuras* of Kerala temples are short in height.[102] (Fig. 7) *Ūṭṭupurās* or dining halls with attached kitchens are present in all the old and important temples. Earlier it was used to feed the Brahmins but now they are used as dining halls for marriage ceremonies.

In architectural layout of such an evolved Kerala temple, the *śrīkōvil* forms the nucleus while the other components like the open air *pradakṣiṇapāta*, the *nālambalam*, the *vilakkumaḍom*, the paved outer *pradakṣiṇavaḷy, kūtambalam* and *prakāras* are aligned in orderly succession centering the main shrine.

The few Drāvida temples of this phase also display greater complexity and elaboration following the mainland developments. Stanunāthaswamy temple at Suchīndram of sixteenth century belongs to this period. The temple has monumental enclosures and the *gōpuras* of the later period hide the main temple which is quite characteristic of the Drāvida style. Compared to the Kerala style temples the aforementioned temple has highly ornate *gōpuras*, sculpted corridors and *balikkalmaṇḍapam* giving it certain grandeur.

This section will provide an analysis of the two temples I visited during my field work which follow the *pañcaprakāra* scheme and expand in the medieval period with composite shrines. The two temples are Vadakkumnātha temple at Trissur and Śrī Vallabhasvāmy temple at Tiruvalla. Katakam Ramu observes that a Kerala temple is usually low in profile and is set in a beautiful part of the countryside. Traditionally the building height was not allowed to be higher than a coconut tree as it was intended

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[102] Padmanabhaswamy Temple is an exception to this insignificant height. It has a monumental gōpuram following Drāvida style. S. Jayashanker is very critical of the recent practices of adoring the gōpura structure with motifs of gaṇa dēvatās and bhūta gaṇas. Ibid, 104.

that devotees should not be in awe of the building. Among the temples that break this rule are Peruvanam and Vadakkumnātha temples.[103]

2.5 Vadakkumnātha Temple

It is an excellent example of a *pañcaprakāra*. This triple-shrined temple is situated in the heart of the Trissur city making it an interesting case study. (Fig. 8) Moreover it is an important *Śaivite* centre. The temple is believed to have originated in the ninth century but inscriptional evidences confirm its existence from the eleventh century. Even though it is located in a city in the medieval times it was referred as *grāma kṣētra* maybe because the place was not established as a full fledged town during the aforementioned period. It is the perfect example of the horizontal expansion acquired by the temples during the medieval period with greater complexity. The *śrīkōvil* is dedicated to Śiva which is located on the northern side of the inner court. The complex also has shrines of two sub deities Sankaranārāyaṇa and Rāma enclosed inside the *nālambalam*. The main *śrīkōvil* dedicated to Śiva is circular and the northern most of the row has its *garbhagriha* divided by a transverse diagonal wall. The western half is dedicated to Śiva with a detached *namskāra maṇḍapa*. The eastern half is dedicated to Pārvati with the door opening towards the east.

The Rama shrine is located at the southern most of the group which is square in plan with the door opening on the west and *Karṇakūṭas* are placed in the corners of the corner bays. The inner wall rises up to a further level carrying the *śikhara* covered with metal sheets, with a *stūpa* on the top. The Sankaranārāyaṇa shrine is located in between the Rāma and Śiva temple. It is a two storeyed circular shrine. The walls of the shrine are decorated with murals dating back to the seventeenth century. Located on the southern side of the Śiva shrine, on the floor of the open court paved with granite, is the *spatmātrika* group represented by a row of *padma pīṭās* which is a characteristic feature of the Kerala style temples. There is another stone shrine present inside the cloister dedicated to Gaṇapati standing between Śiva and Sankaranārāyaṇa shrines. Another group of subsidiary deities Krishna, Nandi, Paraśurāma, and Śāsta are located in the outer court. (Fig. 9) The fabulous *kūttambalam* is situated in the

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[103] Ramu Katakam, Glimpses of Architecture in Kerala: Temples and Palaces, (New Delhi: Rupa and Co.) 14.

outer quadrangle for theatre and dance performances. The timber structure is marvelous in scale and the quality of wood work is amazing. The whole complex is surrounded by a massive stone *maryāda* with four *gōpuras* on the four cardinal directions with sloping gable roofs as perfect examples of Kerala style *gōpurams*. (Fig. 10) Thus, Vadakkumnātha temple stands as a perfect example of the *pañcaprakāra* scheme of temple situated at the nerve centre of a city.

2.6 Śrī Vallabhasvāmi Temple

By contrast Śrī Vallabhasvāmi Temple is a perfect example for a temple's relationship to the rural landscape. The temple has to be approached through a network of narrow intertwining roads passing near upper caste Hindu homes. This temple forms an extensive and interesting case study because of its position as a *grāma kṣētram* acting as a temple corporation controlling vast tracts of agricultural land.

Many historians date the temple's origin to 59 B.C. It is one of the eleven *divya dēśams* sacred to the Vaiṣṇavites in the present Kerala state. [104] Also important is the large number of inscriptions found for the temple because of its superior economic and political status enjoyed in the medieval period. The temple has a circular shrine with the main idol of Mahā Viṣṇu facing east while *Sudarśana Cakra* facing west. (Fig. 11) Apart from separate shrines for Gaṇapati and Śāsta outside the *nālambalam*, shrines of minor deities Lakshmi, Varāhmūrti, and Dakṣiṇāmūrti are present in the outer sanctum. Also in front of the eastern and western doors of the outer sanctum there are two square *maṇḍapas* or roofed platforms. The eastern mandapa which is the larger one is roofed with copper plates. Within the *nālampalam* Vishwaksēna form of Viṣṇu is also enshrined inside in a small roofed square shrine. The *balikkal*, which is eight feet tall, is housed inside the *balikkalppura* in front of the central gateway. The most magnificent structure of this temple complex is the granite flagstaff outside the temple. (Fig. 12) It is a round column of black granite about 50 feet high and 2 feet diameter. Interestingly, the length of the buried portion of the temple remains

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[104] There are a total of 108 Vaiṣṇavite shrines or Tirupatis in the country in which 11 divya dēśams exist in Kerala. They are Tirunāvāya of Tirur taluk, Tirumittakkode of Ottappalam taluk, Tirumūzhikkuḷam, of Aluva taluk, Trikkākkara of Kanayannur taluk, Trikkoditānam of Changanachery taluk, Trichitat, Tiru-Puliyūr and Tiruvanvandūr of Chengannur taluk, Tiruvalla of Tiruvalla taluk, Tiru-Āranmuḷa of Kozhenchery taluk and Tiruavnantapuram of Trivandrum taluk. S. Jayashanker, Temples of Kerala, 312.

unknown, but it is believed that the bottom end touches the water level.[105] A *pañcalōha* image of the *Garuḍa* is placed on the top of the flagstaff. Nevertheless, the thick laterite buttresses built against the four sides of the column covers the entire flagstaff allowing only the top end to be visible. The whole structure looks like a three storeyed minaret.

The temple has no theatre or *kūttambalam* now. The former *kūttambalam* situated to the south of the flagstaff collapsed almost a century ago from now. The temple also houses a remarkable underground strong-room with only a single horizontal door opening into it from the south-western portion of the floor of the *nālampalam*. The thick wooden panel of this door was earlier covered with granite slabs, is now armored with iron plates.

Thus both the temples display the characteristic features of the *pañcaprakāra* scheme. Of this Tiruvalla temple is more important since it has yielded many important inscriptions related to land grants, donations, punishments, etc. Both temples display the characteristic features of the scheme with elaborate temple complexes with composite shrines, outer walls and inner walls etc. Unfortunately a proper visual documentation of these temples has yet to be done and they are highly inaccessible for research purposes.

Therefore the expansion of the temples of this period should also be seen as the result of creating an exclusive and secure space for the already accumulated wealth stored in the hidden vaults. Also the sophisticated structure of temple functionaries and rituals has to be seen as the reason for the expansion in such an elaborate manner. These issues will be dealt elaborately in the next chapter. Moreover when such an architectural expansion occurred it is interesting to note that it deviated from the existing patterns available in the South Indian region. It was conceived in a form which was rooted in the cultural, social and economic practices of the Kerala region. While the individual shrine did not undergo much change in elaboration or the ground plan it was ornamented with carved wooden panels with Kerala style images during

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[105] V. Raghavan Nambiar notes that there are no granite rocks within a radius of five or six miles near the temple, the nearest being those in Kaviyūr and Chengannūr. It is surprising how this long, brittle, heavy column was transported from a distance of five-six miles, by land or by river and how it was raised into position. We can only marvel about this amazing engineering feat. V. Raghavan Nambiar Annals and Antiquities of Tiruvalla, *Kerala Society Papers*, Series 2, (Thiruvananthapuram: The State Gazetteers 1997) 68.

this period. (Fig. 13 a,b,c) Another important distinction is the unornamented plain outer walls of these temples. This is quite a minimalistic execution compared to the highly ornamented outer walls of the neighbouring regions.

This regional expression of style has to be seen as part of the local construction to create a distinct visual idiom. We could infer that this development in temple architecture and visual arts was part of a larger cultural development which created a shared language and style in the fourteenth century. It is important in this context to understand why these developments of the origin of a regional style happened so late and also what took the consolidation of Hindu temples so long. The period under consideration is of utmost importance due to various reasons. As discussed earlier the Kerala saw the emergence of decentralized power centers which led to the localization of agrarian surplus and the greater control of *Brāhmaṇās* over these resources. At the political level this was a new development but at the economic, social and cultural fronts this was the continuation of already established processes. These developments are discussed in the next chapter in detail. Hence at the domain of architectural studies it becomes an imperative to look back in the history to examine why these changes are so exclusive and distinct from the early phases of architecture. If the fourteenth century development towards a regional style appeared after a considerable time lag the appearance of structural temples in Kerala was also a late phenomenon starting only in ninth century. This is an important aspect which deserves a proper historical investigation because the Pallavas had already started pursuing the Sanskritisation process and building temples from early seventh century onwards. The vibrant maritime trade relations took these architectural forms and deities to many South East Asian countries and also to Sri Lanka. What is worth looking is why Kerala was resisting these changes for such a long time. What is so important with ninth century that the entry of these temples is permitted at this particular historical juncture? M.G.S. Narayanan's observation that 'the temple as an institution was an Aryan gift to South India'[106] is too simplistic for the understanding of the advent of an alien institution from simple structures to complicated temple complexes. This statement deserves much scrutiny in the light of above raised questions. First of all the category Aryan is too loaded a term highly misplaced to be used in this context. Even if we take it for granted that Narayanan is referring to the arrival of structural temples as an

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[106] M.G.S. Narayanan, Perumals of Kerala, 202.

accompanying process with the arrival of the migrant *brāhmaṇās* there are several historical shortcomings in this statement. Mainly the 'Aryan'/Vedic civilization is well known for its aniconic personal modes of worship unlike the indigenous inhabitants of this country. So it is through a gradual acculturation that the Vedic priestly classes moved towards temples. Therefore fundamentally temple and *pūja* were not 'Aryan' or brāhmaṇic institutions but were the religious expressions of the native population. Nevertheless this raises another important question on whether such structures were present in Kerala before the emergence of Hindu temples. The discoveries of many important Megalithic sites, presence of cave temples and the reference to Buddhist *caitya*s and *stūpa*s attest to this fact. Unfortunately the earlier temples are also not available for analysis since most of them have fallen to ruins or has undergone considerable transformations. What we can infer is that such structures existed before ninth century and the new structures might have been raised on the foundations of the old ones. Present historic scholarship has not attempted to answer these questions citing the absence of evidence as a reason. But absence of evidence cannot be justified for not raising adequate questions. A full fledged archaeological excavation combined with a proper scientific enquiry would unravel important evidences about the period before the ninth century. This crisis of the lack of evidence and inconsistencies in studying temple architecture is well elucidated by K.V. Soundara Rajan in his *The Art of South India, Tamil Nadu and Kerala* where he points towards an important shortcoming in the study of Kerala temple architecture. He writes,

"Notwithstanding acknowledged early origin of good number of Kerala temples, especially those which had the special merit of having been visited and sung by the Vaiṣṇavite hymnist (ālwars) saints of Tamil Nadu, the actual forms of the temples today belie their true antiquity by the renovations and modifications that have taken place from time, that obscure the original format."[107]

Over centuries many temples, mainly with original *aḍisthānās*, dating from eighth-ninth centuries underwent considerable renovation of superstructures and therefore do not offer much to study about their original forms. The inscriptions in Kerala temples are often found only in the plinth of the temples. This is because the temples that

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[107] K.V. Soundara Rajan, The Art of South India: Tamil Nadu and Kerala (Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan), 25.

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depend on laterite, stucco and timber does not allow inscriptions on the body of the temple. Hence, the absence of particular dates of the renovations limits our possibilities to use them as historiographic materials. Inscriptions from the eighth-ninth centuries reveal information about the origin of structural temples in Kerala. Moreover the cave temples from seventh-eighth centuries carved in hard granite medium depicts an inclination with the Tamil region especially the Pāṇḍyās of Madurai. Nevertheless, in the subsequent years it develops its own mannerisms. Shivaji Panickker writes, *"When we view the Kerala tradition of rock-cut architecture in the wider context of the mainland, i.e., in comparison to the rock-cut architecture of Mahābalipuram, Ellora or Elephanta, it is seen that the quantum of its contribution is minimal. This is due to limitation of the very granite medium used. The Kerala temple tradition could, however, overcome this limitation in the subsequent centuries by making use of the indigenous raw materials like timber, brick, stucco, laterite, etc. which formed more versatile media, functionally as well as structurally."*[108]

Therefore it is also important to analyze the existence of temples before the fourteenth century period to get a clear picture of what was happening in this region. Stella Kramrsich was the first art historian to propose the co existence of two styles in Kerala region from ninth century onwards known as Drāviḍa and Kerala styles. Drāviḍa here refers to the architectural convention popular in the Tamilakam region and the Kerala style is the distinct indigenous style of Kerala which originated in ninth century. The classification of this evolution into three phases, comprising of early, middle and late, was proposed by H. Sarkar in his survey titled *Monuments of Kerala*.

Early Phase (A.D. 800 – 1000)

Cēra, Āy and Mūṣaka kings patronized the construction of structural temples from eighth century onwards. This was possible due to the generous endowments from the ruler, local chiefs, and landlords. Also the mercantile community made liberal contributions due to the inflow of wealth from Kerala's prospering trade. A vast majority of the temples we find today had their origin in this period. Temple structures were built on square, circular, apsidal plan. The period is also characterized by the establishment of brāhmaṇic religion under *bhakti* movement and it was

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[108] Shivaji Panikker, Temple Tradition in Kerala in P.J. Cherian (ed.) *Essays on the Cultural Formation of Kerala: Literature, Art, Architecture, Music, Theatre and Cinema* (1999), 304.

patronized by none other than the ruling dynasty of Kulaśēkhara rulers. Karuṇāndaḍakkan (857-884 A.D.) who ruled the Āy kingdom commissioned various śālais (Vēdic Colleges) in the premises of the temples at Pārthivaśēkharapuram and at Kandalūrśāla.[109] These vēdic colleges allowed brahmana students to stay inside the temple premises and learn Vedas, yajñas, tāntric rituals, martial arts etc. free of cost. Another prominent śālai which existed at this time was the one at Śrī Vallabhasvāmi Temple, Tiruvalla. Historians also associate Kulaśēkhara Ālwar with the construction of the Krishna temple at Tirukulaśēkharapuram near Tiruvāñjikuḷam.[110] It is difficult to conceptualise the original structure of these temples due to renovations but the characteristic features of the present structure of these temples are two storeyed *vimānas* consisting of a square *garbhagṛha* with a circumambulatory path all around, an *ardha-maṇḍapa* and a narrow *mahā-maṇḍapa*. Temples on circular ground plans were also found from this period. (Fig. 14) For example a ruined Śiva temple at Pulpally, the Narayankaṇṇu temple at Ramantaḷi,[111] and the Śiva temple in Kaviyūr is built on circular plans. The temple of Ramantaḷi has a circular outer wall enclosing the circular *garbhagṛha* which has been divided internally into a square. The outer wall on sides has functional doors, a characteristic feature of *sarvadobhadra* temples mentioned in Vāstuśāstra. Inscriptional evidence also mentions apsidal temples. The Śiva temple at Trikkaṇḍiyūr and Kālasamhāramūrti temple at Tripaṅgōḍ and Ayyappan shrine in Karikkaḍ have retained their *aḍisthāna* which are now being used as their *upapiṭhas*.

There are few temples which were modeled on the Drāviḍa style found from this period. Drāviḍa temples of this phase are characterized by small shrines, consisting of a cell having a superstructure and sometimes with a porch. Unlike the Kerala style temples these temples built on stone and brick are still preserved. The temple at

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[109] A manuscript obtained from Munchira math mentions the Valiaśāla temple as the Kāntalūr Mahādēva temple. S.Jayashanker, Temples of Kerala. P 12.Travanocre Archaeological Survey II, (1988) 2-6. Inscription of Rajaraja the first from Suchindram, Travancore, TAS, Vol.2, No.1 (1999), 1.

[110] Kulaśēkhara Ālvar, a great *bhakti* saint, is regarded as the founder of the second Cēra empire During his rule Hinduism occupied a prominent position in the society with the *bhakti* movement led by Ālvars and Nāyanārs. There were twelve Ālvars and sixty three Nāyanārs of which Kulaśēkhara Ālvar and Cēraman Perumāḷ Nāyanārs and Viralminda Nāyanār belonged to Kerala. Kulaśēkhara Ālvars Perumal Tirumoḷi in Tamil is part of the Vaiṣṇavite Divya prabandham. Also the inscriptions found in the Krishna Temple of Tirukulaśēkharapuram records about the gifts offered in the 195th year of the construction of the site. Because of this inscription we can date the first construction of the temple during ninth century A.D. S.Jayashanker, Temples of Kerala (Kerala: Directorate of Census), 12.

[111] Two inscriptions are associated with this temple dated to A.D. 928 and A.D. 1132. Shivaji Panicker, Temple Tradition in Kerala, 307.

Viḷiñjam of ninth century is based on a square plan. (Fig. 15) The base, the pilasters, and pillars in the corners, the porch, the entablature and the cornices of this temple are of stone. The superstructure has a square dome shape which has a projected niche in the centre. Guhanāthaswamy temple of tenth century A.D. which is larger and ornate depicts a deviation from the Viḷiñjam style. (Fig. 16) Stella Kramrisch observes that the ground plan shows a difference in its original purpose. While the Viḷiñjam temple houses nothing but a small cubic space, the Guhanāthaswamy temple comprises a hall within an interior, and in its centre is a small sanctuary the superstructure of which is destroyed. This temple is formalistically inclined to hall temples at Pudukōṭṭai and the Śiva temple at Malgudi.[112]

While analyzing the central Kerala group of temples Soundara Rajan finds a strong Pandyan influence in them. He identifies distinctive features linking them closely which are: the carving of ascetic figurines on the side walls of the *mandapa*, compared to that at Tirukkalakudi, Kunnadarkoil and Virasikhamani in Tamil Nadu, the provision of a separate pedestal for the niche carving is however original to Kaviyur.[113]

Stella Kramrisch's categorization of Kerala temples into Drāviḍa and Kerala styles and her explorations for an indigenous origin was accepted without much criticism until Narayanan's less famous art historical intervention. Narayanan writes,

"*It is possible that when the temple concept developed at first it was influenced by the primitive patterns but this happened much earlier in places outside Kerala. Whether it is a circular or square or apsidal shape they were all brought to Kerala as part of a ready-made and full-fledged technique. All these forms have appeared in the Deccan and the East Coast earlier than the 9th century. There may be some truth in Percy Brown's hypothesis regarding the development of the Hindu temple from the Buddhist Caitya with its circular and apsidal forms by a process of evolution. However, this must have taken place during the Gupta age in central India and the Deccan from where it was transmitted to the south.*"[114]

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[112] Stella Kramrisch, Dravida and Kerala: In the Arts of Travancore. *Artibus Asiae. Supplementum* Vol. 11 (1970): 8.

[113] He analyses the *linga* very closely to trace this similarity. He states that the linga is often of the arsha type with a tapering top and the *pitha* is often of the *arsha* type with a tapering top and the *pitha* is of multiple cut stone masonry blocks, which can be seen at Tirunadikkara also. This provision is essentially a 9th c practice of the peripheral regions of Tamil Nadu. K.V. Rajan, Soundara, The Art of South India 95.

[114] M.G.S. Narayanan, Perumals of Kerala, 202.

Thus Narayanan refutes Stella Kramrisch's assertions of an indigenous origin of the temple structure by emphasizing the cultural and stylistic exchanges that happened in this process. He also dismantles the categorization of Dravida and Kerala in this period but does not undermine the possibility of such classifications for the later period. He notes that the relation of the Kerala temple to the imperial Cōla temple is that of the parish church to the imperial cathedral. While the earlier analysis of the sudden disproportionate monumental growth of Cōla architecture and its comparisons to the simple Kerala temples was interpreted as a result of artistic stagnation Narayanan observes that the former's expansion was due to its successful invasions and the material wealth attained through these conquests. While the Cōla temples symbolized such invasions of the sovereign, Kerala which never had such an aggressive history could not produce such lofty monuments because of an average economy. Unlike the royal temples of Tamilakam, temples in Kerala were the nerve centre of brāhmaṇa controlled villages.

2.2 Middle Phase (A.D. 1000-1300)

A hiatus occurs in our historic knowledge when it comes to the study of this phase because of the absence of concrete evidence due to the political turbulence. The much debated 'Hundred Years War' between Cēras and Cōlas is presumed to have taken place in this period. Even if the exaggerated claims of such a war could be criticized it is impossible to negate that there was a political upheaval happening in this period which has brought drastic changes in the history of Medieval Kerala. Many important developments happened during this period in the layout of the structural temple patterns. Kerala temples of this period are a synthesis of two styles – Drāvida and Kerala. The former represented by its miniature *vimāna* form housed inside a Kerala styled temple with sloping roofs, thus, leaving the inner *garbhagrha*, as a separate entity with its own features and with exclusive flight of steps known as *sōpāna*. The miniature Drāvida *vimānas* are either circular or apsidal in plan with an independent *grīva* and *śikhara*, and occasionally it has its own *aḍisthāna* and other components peculiar to a south Indian temple. This type was thus promoted as the most suitable one which basically did not violate the architectural norms of the mainland and is essentially together with the utilitarian indigenous types which is both secular and

religious.[115] Another characteristic feature of this period is the presence of a double *pradakṣiṇapāta* around the *śrīkōvil* distinct from the uncovered one around the *śrīkōvil*. The continuity of *sarvatobhadra* type of *śrīkōvil* is maintained in this phase. Many of the temples which were constructed in the earlier centuries had to be reconstructed or renovated in this phase.

Kerala style temples of this period continued to be built on four sided, circular and apsidal ground plan. The *Subrahmaṇya* shrine in Mañjēri with an inscription of twelfth century A.D. on the base is a double storeyed *vimāna* of the *Sarvatobhadra* type with four functional doors. Śiva temple of Tirunelli of the same period has a circumambulatory path all around. The inside of the *śrīkōvil* is transformed into a square and it has octagonal *grīva* and *śikhara* constructed on corbelled arch. The middle phase also witnessed a spectacular growth in the temple architecture of Kerala. Many new temples were built and many of them, according to inscriptional evidences, underwent renovations. Many important shrines of our times were built during this phase, for example the Vadakkumnātha temple of the Vadakkumnātha temple complex in Trissur and the Iraṭṭayappan temple at Peruvanam were built during this phase. Both are circular shrines with functional doors. By the end of thirteenth century several *dvitala* temples also came into existence like the Siva temple at Tiruvañjikulam with elaborate ornamentations.

One can find few examples of Drāvida style temples during this phase. Nevertheless, they do not show much development from the earlier phase compared to Kerala style temples. The Paraśurāma temple at Tiruvallam with an inscription of thirteenth century A.D. has a circular shrine combined with a rectangular *maṇḍapa*. This temple of granite has renovated superstructure of a later period. Another peculiar Drāvida style temple of this period is the Niramaṇkara temple of eleventh century which is erected on a circular base. Interestingly the inner wall of the inner shrine is of square plan and is surmounted by an octagonal *śikhara*.

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[115] Shivaji Panicker, Temple Tradition in Kerala, 309.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an analysis of the evolution of temple complexes in the fourteenth century A.D. Kerala. The chapter also problematised issues such as the advent of structural temples in Kerala from ninth century and the development of a regional style in the fourteenth century A.D. We could arrive at two possible inferences on these issues. First, that it has to be seen as an imported concept since temples were built after the advent of large scale migrations of brāhmaṇās from the west coast. Second, the temples were modeled on already existing brāhmaṇic temples or Buddhist shrines. Furthermore, the scholarship also has to stop referring to these temples as an 'Aryan institution' because of these possibilities. The analysis was based on H. Sarkar's three phase classification of the evolution and the co existence of the two categories, Drāvida and Kerala, through these phases propounded by Stella Kramrisch. Kramrisch's classification of temples in the early phase as Dravida and Kerala and looking for indigenous secular origins does not hold true for this period because of the similarities between both structures in this phase. This co existence of styles was possible due to the peaceful diplomatic relations between Cēras and Cōlas and their patronage to the *bhakti* movement and artistic interaction. It is also important to note that it was the southern regions of Kerala which witnessed more temples of the Drāvida style due to its proximity with the Tamilakam region. The relationship turned hostile with the thirteenth century and a new political and cultural expression was sought after the disintegration of Cēra dynasty. With the establishment of decentralized principalities the temples gained greater autonomy and more resource control.

The outward expansion of the temples of this period was attained through a dynamic expansion of its outer walls. The space between the outer wall and the inner wall was huge covering a lot of space reflecting the territorial control of the temple. But the most notable distinction of the temples in Kerala region compared to its counterparts is the unornamented plain outer walls of these temples. This is quite a minimalistic execution compared to the highly ornamented outer walls of the neighboring regions. Perhaps the sculptural reliefs from the walls were absent also to avoid 'pollution' from the lower castes in a state where unotuchability was practiced in its strictest forms. Also the outer walls and the approaching roads were also restricted for the mobility of the lower castes. Therefore temple architecture's expansion also had a

functional role in reflecting the gradations in caste system. At the cultural level this expansion was intended to create a regional identity for the temples, at the economic level as mentioned earlier to create an exclusive citadel to secure the enormous wealth and at the social level to expand the temple's ideological domain and also to allow entry for those who are part of this institution and to restrict the mobility of the lower castes who were outside the domain of this institution.

Chapter 3

Exploring the Economic Process, Social Character and Cultural Transformations: Regional Identity Formation of Temple Architecture in Medieval Kerala

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It is important to understand the nature of the economy of Kerala temples to understand their acclaimed relevance in the society. An analysis of the economy from pre state to a centrally administered state to decentralized principalities will lead us to comprehend the nature of power occupied by these temples in Kerala. These transformations will help us to understand the reasons behind the expansion and elaboration in temple layout because these structural/formal changes have to be seen as a continuous process. The economic, social and cultural factors going to be discussed in the following sections were the imperative forces that influenced the creation of a regional identity of temple architecture in specific and regional identity of Kerala in general.

3.1 Nature of the Inscriptions

Any research on medieval Kerala history and temples has to deal in detail with the epigraphic inscriptions. An understanding of the nature of the inscriptions also reveal the uniqueness of Kerala among the other south Indian states and also points out the transformation from the early medieval to medieval period in terms of land rights, revenue, administration etc. The inscriptions from Kerala date from ninth century A.D. till the fourteenth century A.D. display a unique Kerala character in it. The inscriptions are largely in *Vaṭṭeḷuttu* instead of Tamil Brahmi or Sanskrit. From this peculiar nature of the language used we can infer that the target of these inscriptions were the local population. It was intended as a message for them to assert the brahmanical rights over lands. The inscriptions found were also largely located in brahmanical temples and were executed on stone, either on free standing slabs or forming a part of the structure on the plinth, door frame, etc. A few of them are on copper plates. It is also important to note that the distinction between copper plates as documents recording grants generally of land and stones as documents of proceedings of bodies of 'public' nature such as village assemblies, urban corporations, etc. Most

of the copper plates from Kerala are documents recording aforementioned proceedings. The script of these recordings is *vaṭṭeḻuttu* or sometimes Grantha characters are used to represent Sanskrit words. Veluthat observes that significantly the majority of these inscriptions is from temples and is related to the Brahmanical groups.[116] It would be interesting to question, why the Brahmanical groups migrated from Tulu-Kannada region. Why did they not use the script which was already developed in Kerala at the time? Also considering that if Tamil Brahmi was a popular and the official script, it becomes interesting to investigate why it was not used in Kerala. The early epigraphists and historians who published and used these documents were working under the assumption that it was Tamil. Wherever the text did not conform to the grammar and structure of Tamil language, they experienced such 'inconsistencies' as a deviation known as '*malaināṭṭu valakkam.*'[117]

One notable feature of these recorded transactions is the repeated use of the phrase 'for as long as the moon and stars endure'. The ubiquity of this phrase emanates from a certain insecurity of the *brāhmaṇa* community deriving from the fact that their position was in a fragile condition in the society where they were still a minority of strangers. It should be also noted that this was a standard procedure used all over India from the Mauryan period onwards. In many regions these inscriptions were inscribed by the images of sun and moon instead of writing the phrase. This was done to establish the eternity of the granted rights and powers. The selection of stone, a non-perishable material, also attests to this same intention. These transactions led to the advent of two classes: a class of intermediaries and the peasants. The emergence of the new intermediary class also led to the advent of new rights and privileges. Henceforth writing down in stone and copper plates was a necessary action to claim and legitimize the new rights and privileges over land. The absence of records pertaining to non *brāhmaṇa* settlements does not qualify the assertion of an absence of non *brāhmaṇa* element in this region. Veluthat argues that the record suggests the

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[116] There are exceptions to this, for example the famous Syrian Christian Copper Plates and the Jewish Copper Plates mention land grants. Paliyam Copper Plates record land grants given to a Buddhist vihara. Nevertheless, there are copper plates like Valapplalli Copper Plate, Tiruvarruvay Copper Plate, Tirunelli Copper Plates, Tiruvalla Copper Plates which mention the names and regnal year of kings which show resemblance to the stone inscriptions as far as their contents are concerned. Kesavan Veluthat, Early Medieval, 170.

[117] Later scholars also carried this assumption forward to observe which Tamil took the trajectory to 'become' Malayalam. Veluthat notes that the early scholars were unwilling to note that these are official documents and it will not carry the language of mundane life. He understands this language and script as a language of the state because the people were mostly illiterate. Ibid, 172.

presence of a prominent section of peasantry with considerable power though not at par with the peasants in neighboring Tamil or Karnataka regions. But they were deliberately absent in the inscriptions because the forces which authored these records thought that they had nothing special to record. Veluthat writes,

"That is 'information', which demanded storage and retrieval did not include that which was related to these sections, however influential they were in society. It was the minority of Brahmanical groups for whom it was necessary to store information in this way, given the nature of society and polity and their own influential but precarious position in it. The difference between the non-brāhmaṇa magnates and the Brahmanical groups lay in this respect: the one found recording of information necessary while the other did not feel the need for it."

By the time we reach the period after the disappearance of the *Cēra* kingdom in the twelfth century we witness a decadent tradition of setting up inscriptions. But Tamil Nadu and Karnataka still continues the tradition of recording.[118] Kerala from fourteenth to sixteenth centuries has very few inscriptions despite the presence of three kingdoms of Cochin, Calicut and Kolattunāḍu ruling simultaneously. There developed an alternative practice of storing information regarding governmental administration and property transactions on palm leaves known as the *granthāvari* or palm leaf documents.[119] This was a quite impressive archive even appreciated by foreign travelers like Duarte Barbosa who observes that the King of Calicut held court to a multitude of writers who sit in a corner away from him on a raised platform. They write upon everything pertaining to the King's treasury, justice and governance. Regarding the palm leaves he says that they write on long and stiff palm leaves, with an iron stylus without ink. Their letters are incised strokes and straight lines. Whereever they go these men carry a sheaf of these written leaves under their arm, and the iron stylus in the hand from which their profession is recognized. The king during a public appearance is accompanied by seven or eight such esteemed writers who record everything which the King wishes to get recorded.[120]

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[118] Veluthat notes that the age of Vijayanagara from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries is characterized by a proliferation of inscriptions which facilitated in the reconstruction of the history of the period. Keśavan Veluthat, Early Medieval, 176.

[119] The examples of this can be seen in the large archives of the Maharaja of Travancore in the famous Matilakam Granthāvari, that of the Zamorin of Calicut in the Kōḷikkōḍan Granthāvari, etc. Ibid, 176.

[120] Ibid, 176-7.

This transformation from inscriptions exhibited in public spaces to palm leaf records stored in the palaces, temples and private families is an interesting topic to work on. The ubiquitous expression of 'as long as the moon and the stars endure' is no more used because by this time they have gained complete control over the lands. The newly risen landed magnates, royal functionaries and military personnel did not require a public spectacle of their rights and privileges. Also this formula of 'moon and stars' were used in mediums like stone and copper which complemented the eternal nature of the statement unlike leaves which is a perishable material. Nevertheless the absence of many of these records and inscriptions presents a challenge before the scholarship to understand the nature of the society, polity and economy of the medieval period.

3.2 The Transition from Pre-State to State Formation in Kerala and the Rise of Temple Land Grants

This section deals with the antecedents of the emergence of temples in Kerala society, which was discussed in the earlier chapter, was also accompanied by the advent of state formation in Kerala. This section will enable us to understand the geographical and cultural position of Kerala in the larger Tamilakam unit while maintaining its own peculiarities. This section will also address the issues of land grants, advent of gift as an institution, and the emergence of temples and powerful *brāhmaṇa* households due to this redistributive process. Exploring the antecedents will help us to understand the transitions in the political, social and economic levels and it will give us a clear understanding of the later developments.

The presence of Black and Red Ware (BRW) tradition in Kerala goes back to the seventh century B.C. This widespread diffusion of Early Historic settlements along with evidence of the nodal character of Kerala as supplier of spices and raw materials is attested by its trading relations with Rome, South East Asia, Arabia and of course the rest of the Indian Subcontinent in Antiquity itself, is ample enough to situate Kerala as a significant part of the Dravidian zone. Historians agree that present day Kerala was an integral part of the socio-cultural unit called Tamilakam in the early historical period. One does not wish to undermine the particularities attached to Kerala region yet one must underscore the aspects of cultural homogeneity shared at the cultural roots of the civilization to be able to bring out its distinctiveness more

clearly. It is assumed that the BRW people were aware of irrigation but there is no excavated material evidence to associate them with agriculture. They are also believed to be the first to clear forests for agrarian settlements. The BRW civilization reflects a semi-tribal setting with a 'rudimentary specialization of crafts and exchange.'[121] Tamil poems also refer to the agrarian classification of land into *vanpulam* (the miscellaneous non-agrarian region) and *menpulam* (the agrarian wet lands). The surplus of *menpulam* was shared by large group of dependents mostly the non-producing peoples of *vanpulam*. Historians consider it as the nerve centre of contemporary economy.[122] The resources of both *vanpulam* and *menpulam* were controlled by the *muventar*, the three main dynasties of Tamilkam, called Cēra, Cōḷa and Pāṇḍya. Gift giving was an established act and it became a prominent institution through which the contemporary society redistributed its resources. Plundering was also resorted to generate adequate resources. In his assessment, Gurukkal characterizes the period by plunder-raids which provided the resources to redistribute it through gifts.[123] Kesavan Veluthat also agrees on this point and states that agriculture occupied a minor position compared to hunting, gathering, fishing, pastoral activities, and plunder. The period is also typical of a hand-to-mouth economy and families were the units of social organizations. The heads of the powerful families commanded authority and took part in plunder and resource distribution. Early Tamil literature provides evidence for the generous gifts to the fighters, the bards, and the *brāhmaṇa* priests. Interestingly, many of these gifts were made in the form of land.[124] There is evidence for fighters demanding the most fertile land in the district from the chief. According to Veluthat the distribution of land as gifts had two effects, firstly; they understood the importance of agriculture and through gifting facilitated its expansion. Secondly; this led to the creation of different kinds of rights over land and also above the actual tiller. By all the available evidences the society shows transformation from a pre-state society to a state society.

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[121] Rajan Gurukkal, The Kerala Temple, 16-18. Tamil anthologies throw light on BRW culture and their lifestyle. Anthologies belonging to second century B.C. to third century A.D. are the Ettuttokai collection excluding Kalitokai and Paripatal. They provide ample information on the socio-economic milieu of the BRW culture of Tamilakam.

[122] Rajan Gurukkal, The Kerala Temple, 18.

[123] Ibid, 21.

[124] Their acts were legitimized through the songs of bards and minstrels who were also dependent on the gifts provided by the chiefs. For example the fifth decad of the Patirrupattu mentions that Paranar, the *brāhmaṇa* poet who sang and also performed a sacrifice for the Cēra hero of the poem, Cenkuṭṭuvan, received a gift of 72000 villages. Another *brāhmaṇa* poet named Kapilār received land that can be seen from the hill of Nanra. Kesavan Veluthat, Early Medieval, 186.

The institutions of gift and redistribution of resources slowly gave rise to many landed households as opposed to communal settlements. This eventually led to the decline of primitive agriculture which denotes a stage of production crisis. During the *Kalabhra* period they targeted the landed households of the *brāhmanas*. Due to this aggression *ekabhōga brahmadēyas* (owners of singular titles on land) lost their privileges and the *brāhmanas* had to flee and take refuge in various states wherever patronage was offered.

The *brāhmana* households of the period in Kerala represented a new mode of agrarian organization. This organization created two antagonistic classes: the landed organizers and the landless cultivators. Gurukkal states that the "integration of landed households into corporate settlements and the formation of a larger agrarian society in Kerala correspond to the emergence of temples."[125] The temples were the institutions to co-ordinate the households into corporate bodies. The proliferation of temples on a large scale happened with the expansion of corporate *brahmadēyas*. Therefore the emergence of temples marked the expansion of agriculture through brahmanical colonization. Brahamanical localities were expanded with the *bhakti* movement. The worshipping patterns, rituals, festivals, etc. propagated the *bhakti* ideology. The imposing structural temple in the centre of a village evoked *bhakti* in the minds of the people. Gurukkal sees this as an evidence 'of the representation of the growing relations of the emerging agrarian society in its ideological superstructure.'[126] Henceforth, a new social formation was consolidated with an agrarian society by the *brāhmanas* and centered on the temple.

Burton Stein also confirms this nexus by stating that *brāhmanas* and peasants formed the core of social relationships involving the land in medieval period. It is this relationship which provides a fundamental defining characteristic of the medieval period. The political state of the medieval Kerala was built on this nexus. If for the entire South Indian region, Pallava period is identified as an important transition period pertaining to society and culture, in Kerala, Cēras of Mahōdyapuram can be seen as responsible for the same. Nevertheless, what are these transitions in which scholars are interested in and what are the ramifications of this transition to the social and cultural formations of Kerala? These transitions are the erection of monumental

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[125] Rajan Gurukkal, The Kerala Temple, p 29.
[126] Ibid, p 31.

buildings, advent of *bhakti*, the assertion of Brahmans as the beholders of Sanskrit learning and culture, and also the 'establishment of kingship based upon the *cakravartin* model of rule over a territory consisting of diverse peoples.'[127]

3.3 Temple and its Economy: Agriculture, Resource Control and Closed Economy

Burton Stein's analysis on the tenure systems and temple lands leads to the observation that land endowments-villages, portions of villages, or plots of cultivated land were the primary resources of the temple. This argument holds true in the case of Kerala temples. Stein remarks that, the land donated to the temple has two important functions: 1) to generate an income with which to sustain the particular ritual services in the name of the donor of the land and 2) to provide a productive place to invest funds granted to the temple for the performance of services in the name of the donor of the money.[128] Even though this particular observation on the land grants by the donor to the temple and using these fertile lands to generate resources was the characteristic feature of temple economy in Kerala and other Southern Indian states, it is not sure about whether these lands were used to continue the rituals in the name of the donor in Kerala's context. We could observe that the powerful temple corporations used these resources to consolidate the political and economic power of the temple emerging as the most powerful institution in Kerala. This is a distinct development compared to other states.

A major contention is Cynthia Talbot's assumption and generalization that temples performed an integrating role in the South Indian society and incorporated members from various strata. She writes, "The foremost reason South Indian temples were able to perform this integrative function was their wide appeal in the society-their ability to incorporate members of different communities into one community of worship. By providing employment to artisans, peasants and shepherds and by lending money to agriculturalists in their vicinities, South Indian temples also redistributed the property of the wealthy to other segments of society".[129] A close observation of the epigraphic study from Kerala talks on the contrary. The evidence draws a picture of a hegemonic

[127] Burton Stein, Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India (Delhi: Oxford University Press), 64-5.
[128] Burton Stein, The Economic Function 164.
[129] Cynthia Talbot, Temples, Donors and Gifts: Patterns of Patronage in Thirteenth Century South India, *The Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 50 No. 2 (1991), 308.

temple corporation surviving on the ideology of *bhakti*, generating resources by acquiring vast tracts of lands by any means. Definitely it was a redistributive economy but one whose benefits were reaped by the upper strata of the *varna* and *jāti* segregations. Moreover Talbot's remark on patronage as a prestigious act to get religious and societal appreciation is also highly contestable. Talbot states that, "Patronage of religious institutions was a crucial source of social prestige and political legitimacy for prominent individuals and was additionally a means for them to allocate surplus resources in the locality to those institutions and social groups that supported them." What if the patronage was an act resulting in the fear of a powerful temple corporation which could ostracise a family or village community that did not make itself part of the temple patronage economy? The temple records need not be naively read as donations of free-will, but could equally be the result of imposing codes of conducts on its devotees. Violation of these codes was equated with *panca maha pātaka* culminating in the confiscation of property, fines and ex-communication. Thus civil offences were converted into moral offences combined with the fear of god in the minds of laity. Or, what if the patronage/donation was a shrewd act to evade the heavy tax of state? History writing must surely be more circumspect than accept its sources at face value. A more critical understanding of the facts is needed than the superficial attempts to read the sources.

Kesavan Veluthat in his 'The Early Medieval in South India' argues that the temples received patronage from various groups including royalty, political chiefs, landlords, trading groups. Temples reciprocated such benefits by legitimizing monarchy and minor chiefs. Landlords were allowed a peaceful integration of the agrarian order by making the peasants and lower sections of the society accept the ideological hegemony of the temple. The traders and artisans too benefited from their relation with the temple as the temple was a major consumer and as the temple provided an occasion and a centre for the coordination of their activities. According to him all this was possible because temple at this period was synonymous with Brahmanical groups controlling vast tracts of land.[130] They efficiently managed this huge resource by clearing forests, expanding agriculture, managing irrigation thus bringing a transformation from the tribal background. Therefore patronage of temples meant

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[130] These lands were known as Dēvadānam (a gift to the god) and Brahmadēyam (a gift to brāhmaṇās), Dēvasvom (god's property), and Brahmasvom (Brāhmaṇa's property). Kesavan Veluthat, Early Medieval 65.

patronage of the powerful Brahmanical groups. If a writing of history from the perspective of the forest-dwelling tribal societies were possible, perhaps a more pernicious reading of the temple's hegemonic power would be evident. Unfortunately the large amounts of sources are on brahmanical land grants and settlements thus making such a history a distant possibility.

Temples emerged as a paramount institution of the socio-religious life in the early medieval period controlled by the Brahman oligarchy. Agricultural resources were the chief resource and huge amounts of agricultural lands were controlled by temples. Temples acted as the headquarters of the agrarian control. All major temples were affluent due to land grants. Rajan Gurukkal observes that the 'localization of agrarian activities under the institutional supervision of the temple resulted in the establishment of a sophisticated agrarian order and further expansion of agriculture.'[131] Because of this affluent resource the temple could organize the society for various activities of better production. The expansion of temple structure also requires various strata of workers, artists, ritual specialists, etc. This led to the emergence of the temple-resident community or *ambalavāsis*. Temple authorities organized work force and divided them into various castes and sub-castes and legitimized its practice. These castes were eventually ordered in the hierarchical *varṇa* system.

By eleventh century A.D. most of the forested valley under the eastern hillocks and the fertile uplands were acquired and were used for cultivation by the temple corporations.[132] There were lots of instances where donation of paddy or rice is made by local chiefs and kings/queens. Gurukkal notes that a passage in Tiruvalla plate refers to *kīḷīḍu* granted by the local ruler of Venpoli nāḍu. The grant included the *kārāṇmai* rights of and eighteen taxes from the village of Kutavūr besides a market of the same village. The temple corporation of Tiruvalla was thus able to collect eighteen *kalañcu* of gold or 360 *para* of paddy as *rakṣābhōga*. An Avttattur inscription of King

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[131] Rajan Gurukkal, The Kerala Temple, 33.

[132] Kilimānūr inscription mentions the clearing of the forest by the servile people and the reclamation of the land. (TAS Vol. V, No 24, p 79 L 7-9). A Trikkākkara inscription of A.D. 859 records that the temple was given complete ownership and rights of land, even including all its grass, stone, shrubs, snakes, etc. owned by Kannan Puaraiyan, the local chief of the Kaalkkarai-natu. Rajan Gurukkal, 35. Kilimanur record of Kollam 343 from Kilimanur, Trivandrum,TAS,Vol.5, No.24.

Kota Ravi from A.D. 903 mentions the grant of certain *cērikal* by the queen as *kīḷidu* to the temple.[133]

Rajan Gurukkal notes that the land endowed to the temples included the crown lands held by the ruling aristocracy, lands owned by the brāhamaṇas, and land held by temple functionaries. The endowment of land as *attippēru, panaya* (mortgage), etc. brought the temple different kinds of land rights. Thus these different land rights enabled the temple to secure land-rights equal to those of an owner, protector with all political rights, and temporary revenue ownership with *kārāṇmai* rights. Appadurai and Appadurai in an astute observation on the economic relationships of the South Indian temples and endowments draw our attention to the active role of the donor's transactional relationship with the deity which culminates in the redistribution of a share of offerings to all those involved in the ritual process comprising of the donor, the temple staff, and the worshippers. Henceforth the role of the donor in sustaining the redistributive system and initiating transactions is very important and he is referred as the *yajamāna*.[134] Moreover, in Kerala temples this elaborate system of distribution and redistribution of land-rights with the temples as it nucleus provided an integrated organization of economic activities.

Kunhan Pillai observes that until thirteenth century A.D state used to levy taxes which was reinstated in eighteenth century after the advent of the Portuguese. He states that by thirteenth century most of the lands were converted to *brahmadēyas* or *dēvadānas* which were exclusive to taxes so the system had to be abolished. When the tax system was active there were lot of landlords and chieftains who donated their lands to the temple to get exemption from state imposed taxes. This led to an extensive gifting of land to the temples. The normal tax was 1/6th of the product was reduced to 1/8th if the land was donated to a temple. Even after donating the owner can still retain his ownership rights.

The major temples were administered by committees known as *sabha* in which the members were elected. These committees were dominated by the *brāhamaṇas*. These

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[133] Rajan Gurukkal, The Kerala Temple, 35.

[134] Appadurai and Appadurai observes that the redistributive model is applicable in two modes of worship, pūja (daily worship) and ulsavam (festival/processional worship), but the third mode of worship, arccanai, which fits the 'reciprocal' model, in which the only the devotee receives the offering after it is offered to the deity. Appadurai and Breckenridge, The South Indian Temple, 197. Also Rajan Gurukkal, The Kerala Temple, 38.

members were empowered with temporary revenue ownership with *kārāṇmai* rights. These *kārāṇmai* rights were distributed to *kārāḷars*. The dues provided from the *kārāḷars* thus provided a definite and regular resource-base for the specified rituals and ceremonies in the temple.[135] Henceforth, it established an obligation of the *kārāḷars* to the temple. They were punished by doubling their dues in case of default and in extreme cases their *kārāṇmai* rights were confiscated. As mentioned earlier the different land rights were passed by the ūr members to *kārāḷars* and from *kārāḷars* to *kuṭikal*. *Kuṭikal* were the tenants of the land. Thus the land rights which were transferred were given to cultivate and right to occupation. Henceforth the temples were giving away only the *kārāṇmai* rights and occupation rights to *kārāḷars* and artisans while retaining the proprietary rights. This complicated system of land rights centered on temple conferred it an utmost importance in the medieval times.[136]

Temples also employed large number of people in its various services on the system of service tenure. This numbers did not match the grandeur of temples in Tamil Nadu. Nevertheless, Kerala temples also had considerable number of employees whose rewards were allotted as shares of land called *virutti* and *jīvitam*. *Virutti* meant the allotment of land with hereditary rights and *jīvitam* the rights for life.

Temple endowments are special kind of trusts which mobilize, organize, and utilize the resources used in temples. According to Appadurai and Appadurai endowments can be also understood as i) which permits the entry and incorporation of corporate units into the temple either as temple servants or as donors, ii) which offers complete and partial support to the deity which is managed by the donor, iii) which generates one or more ritual contexts in which to distribute and to receive honors.[137] Henceforth it can be argued that temple can be viewed as a complex and decentralized institution in which endowments sustain the means to link the temple to its agrarian hinterland or urban context. It also links the temple to the corporate units in society.

It is also important to note that the royal authorities were paid certain dues by the temple corporations to protect temple and temple land. The annual dues were called *aṭṭaikōl*. Furthermore many temples had to pay *rakṣābhōga* to the *nāṭuvāḷis* (local

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[135] Elamkulam Kunhan Pillai, Janmisampradaya, 600. Also Rajan Gurukkal notes that *kārāḷars* were made responsible for providing the requirements of the specified temple rituals, for the maintenance of which the endowments were made. Rajan Gurukkal, The Kerala Temple, 38-39.

[136] Rajan Gurukkal. The Kerala Temple, 38-40

[137] Appadurai and Breckenridge, 201.

chiefs) for the protection offered by the security forces like *munnūṛṛuvar* (the Three Hundred), *añjūṛṛuvar* (the Five Hundred), *eḷunūṛṛuvar* (the Seven Hundred), etc.[138] Kesavan Veluthat identifies these bodies as agents for the administration of revenue and justice. According to him a large number of inscriptions record the proceedings of these temple-centered bodies show the presence of the king himself. There are many instances where these bodies collected the share of *rakṣābhōga* or *aṭṭaikkōl* from the cultivators. There are many inscriptions which mention remissions and exemptions made by the king to the temple and villages form paying dues.[139] Also these village councils looked after administration of justice. They usually resolved to prescribe severe punishments ranging from confiscation of property, loss of membership in the body, forfeiture of certain privileges and ostracism for those who violated the decisions of temple committees or these bodies. These violations were equated with *pañcamahāpātakas* – killing one's father, sleeping with one's mother, killing one's teacher, etc. - For instance an inscription from Tiruvalla can be understood as a *ūrāḷar* who misused the temple property is declared as the one who has killed his father and kept his mother. His land and house is confiscated and added to the expenses of the Lord of Tiruvalla.[140] In Kerala the temple became a 'system-maintaining mechanism of a weekly organized polity'.[141]

The controlling of vast tracts of land led temples to enjoy enormous political power in the locality in which it functioned. This is also visible in the contexts when the monarchy is weak especially after thirteenth century with the disintegration of second *Cēra* Empire. Apart from *nagaram* (trading corporation), Brahmanical corporations also organized around the temple. They enjoyed immense power in the matter of fiscal, judicial and political administration which is the functions of the state. Tiruvalla Copper Plates or the Huzur Office Plates record this development in detail.

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[138] Ibid, 36.

[139] An inscription from Trikkatitānam says that the kōyil adhikārikaḷ, the perumāḷ, fixed the aṭṭaikkōl payable to locality lord of Nanrulaināḍu at twelve *kalams* of paddy and permitted the use of the remaining twenty-four *kalams* for feeding Brāhmaṇas in the temple. Kesavan Veluthat, 201. Tirukkadittanam inscription of Bhaskara Ravivarman from Vishnu temple at Tirukkadithanam, a village situated 2 miles east of Changanāśēri, TAS, Vol.5, No.56, 178.

[140] Elamkulam Kunan Piḷḷai, Janmisampradayam, 610.

[141] Kesavan Veluthat quotes George Spencer here. A statement which has two aspects: one which is directly conveyed and other which is symbolic or metaphorical. The ubiquity of royal inscriptions in the temple premises and the range of activities in the temple, the amount of wealth and other resources which were mobilized points at the importance of this institution. And symbolically the structure of the *vimāna* conceived as *Dakṣiṇamēru* surrounded by shrines of guardian deities of four cardinal directions has to be seen as identifying it with the cosmos itself. Kesavan Veluthat, Early Medieval, 73-4.

There are many examples from Tiruvalla Plates to argue that temples were assigned many functions, which belonged to the state. Collecting the revenue on behalf of the state has been mentioned many times. The plate mentions a very important case of the grant of a village by Iravi Cirikantan who was the chief of Venpolinādu. Kutavūr was a village which was granted to the temple of Tiruvalla. When it was granted 'all the eighteen taxes and the market (duties)' were also given away. The representative of the manager of the temple committee was authorized to collect 360 *paras* of paddy, the *rakṣābhōga* of that village, form the chief himself. In case of any failure in paying the dues, even if the mistake is not of the chief, he was responsible to pay the original due in gold to the temple.[142]

Temples received huge amounts of gold as gifts. Much of it was received as fines. This gold was used to purchase land proving to be an effective form of investment. Gold was given on loan at interest to those who mortgaged their lands to the temple. Thus the gold lending economic activity enabled temples to buy more land to expand its agrarian control. Gurukkal notes that 'through this gold lending and land accumulating process the temple was performing the economic function of resource redistribution.'[143]

With the disintegration of the *Cēra* kingdom in the twelfth century and the consolidation of minor principalities of Cochin, Kōlattunādu and Malabar the economy became more localized. With a weak monarchy the temple committees, *ūrāḷars*, became more powerful. An inscription from 1351 from Sucīndram temple mentions the donation made by Vīrapāṇḍyan to perform the daily *ardhayama pūja*. Kunhan Pillai argues that this donation was misused by the temple committee leading to the stoppage of the *pūja*.[144] The codes of conduct, *kaccams*, which were established to monitor the performance of the temple committees, were neglected from the twelfth century. The stringent punishments of the earlier period for misappropriation of temple resources got diluted in the medieval period. But the punishment for default in paying dues by the *kārāḷars* were increased and were used to disallow the *kārāḷars* from cultivating his land and squeeze out the money and interest by arresting him. The period also witnessed many clashes between *ūrāḷars* and *kārāḷars*. An inscription

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[142] Ibid, 77. Huzur plates of Tiruvalla from Tiruvalla dated c.11th or 12th c C.E, TAS, Vol.2,P.3, 153.
[143] Rajan Gurukkal, The Kerala Temple, 41-5.
[144] Kunhan Pillai, Janmisampradayam, 617-8.

from the thirteenth century mentions that assembling and making noises in temple premises is not allowed. After harvest the temple committee of the sixteen should be informed about it. Villagers should not disrupt the *pūjas* of the temple (*ūrāḷar*), also should not disturb the *kārāḷars* by entering their property. Those who disturb shall be removed from *ūrāṇma* position and also from the positions of Pancayat and *Paṭṭattānam*. They shall also return the property allotted for them. *Sūdras* residing in the *ūr*, if abuses brāhmaṇa shall pay 15 *kāṇam* gold fine. If injured by arrow, then 24 *kāṇam* gold fine. Sūdra assaults another sūdra, 6 *kaḷañju* gold fine, and if kills then 12 *kaḷañju* gold fine.[145]

The temple servants were paid in grain or land except on a few occasions, where the payment was made in the form of gold. This system led to an economically dependent social organization based on ties from the lowlier groups to the higher as a need-satisfying device. Rajan Gurkkal observes that all the artisans and craftsmen or professional castes were settled in the temple-centered village so as to ensure their services to the temple and the village proprietors. The implication is that the temple centered rural society became a relatively self-sufficient local unit. This character of the temple-controlled local economy, the system of service-tenure, the established inter-commodity exchange ratio and this insufficiency of coins indicate the features of a closed economy.[146]

With the disintegration of the *Cēra* dynasty the kingdom of Kozhikode emerged in the northern Kerala. Zamorins, who were the erstwhile feudatories of *Cēras*, claimed the inheritance from perumāls and engaged in an aggressive invasion policy. With the help of such an aggressive expansion Zamorins commanded the allegiance of a large number of local chieftains to the south of Calicut. Gradually this dynasty consolidated its position as the most powerful ruler of Kerala. The next kingdom which occupied an important position in this period was of Kōlattunāḍ based from *Ēlimalai* in the northernmost regions of Kerala. The marine trade got affected due to the disastrous flood and tectonic movements which led to the closure of the port of *Kotunnallur*. A new island was opened in 1341 A.D. to the south known as the *Puduvaippu* (the 'New Formation). Another port was opened in the south known as *koccali* which later on

[145] Kunhan Pillai, Janmisampradayam, 627-8. Also TAS Vol. III 194. An inscription from the Bhagavati temple at Kumaranallur dated 13ᵗʰ c C.E from Kumaranallur, a village in Ettumanur taluk of Kottayam division, Travancore state, TAS, Vol.3, No.49, p.195.

[146] Rajan Gurkkal, The Kerala Temple, 48.

became the base of the Perumpadappu svarupam of Cochin. Even though these principalities emerged as more powerful than the others they could not enjoy absolute power because of the numerous local nodes of power. These petty chiefs had many villages under their control with self maintained military and they were the bi-products of the agricultural expansion.[147]

Brahmanical villages also continued their dominance with their village assemblies controlling the administration. But also by this period these assemblies became less important paving way for the dominance of individual households. This period is thus characterized by the consolidation of individual landlordism and the existence of multiple political forces. By citing the example of Trikkandiyur temple Veluthat shows this transition of a brahmana settlement coming under the control of a single Brahman household. This led to the emergence of the groups of individual masters known as *sanketams*.[148] This was accompanied by a large scale diversification of agriculture with the cultivation of cash crops like coconut, betel-nut, pepper, cardamom, etc. This diversification invited foreign trade resulting in an unprecedented prosperity. Citing Donald R. Davis, Jr.'s work on medieval Kerala land grants Veluthat observes that land rights during this period were transferred to the individual Brahmana houses, Nair houses and the temples under their control.[149]

Therefore by the medieval period temples lost its corporate character characterized by a dilution in the various proceedings of the *sabha*. 'Non-insistence of full attendance, lack of unanimity in decisions, the practice of attendance by proxy, decrease in the numerical strength of the *sabha*, the domination of certain individuals in it and their exercise of greater powers' were noted in this period.[150] This led to the advent of powerful individual families controlling the properties of the temple apart from their own properties.

Temples thus dismantled the early social formations and led to the emergence of a state society and later on for a decentralized feudal system. Therefore temple played a sophisticated role in medieval south India beyond its usual function as a 'religious institution'. It performed the functions of a social, economic, political and cultural

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[147] Kesavan Veluthat, Early Medieval, 259-262
[148] Ibid, 262.
[149] Ibid, 286.
[150] Ibid, 289.

nature and these were interrelated in a complex way. This has to be understood in its totality to realize why there was a rush to patronize the temple in a desire more than piety. The above section dealt with the economic nature of the temple. In the coming sections I will deal with the social-political and the cultural aspects in detail.

3.4 The Temple Society: Or Who Were In and Out of the Temple Complexes?

From the above analysis on the economy of the temple corporation of the medieval period it is clear that it was an agrarian society in which the relation between the groups of non-cultivating lands holders, mainly *brāhmaṇas* and a group of landless primary producers, the *pulayar* was critical. All arts and crafts were incorporated with this system. The economic processes were a combination of modes of production dominated by agriculture involving specialized arts and crafts, caste based social division of labour, and temple centered redistribution and hierarchical social relations.[151] In this section will analyze the temple-centric social relations and caste based social division of labour.

Bhakti movement in South India was a temple movement, which has a parallel trajectory with the rise and accomplishment of the temple. With this the consolidation of the Hindu Brahmanical religion brought segregation of the society with further gradations through caste hierarchy. Obviously, the land owning upper class/caste accepted this ideology but it was important that it should be propagated among other sections also to maintain the pyramid. Thus temples legitimized the new social order. Historians have proved direct links between the *bhakti* movement and the agricultural expansion in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Kesavan Veluthat notes that with the consolidation of the movement the temple reflected the social organization of the times. Temple was accorded full royal status and the deity was equated with the king. The terms were also used by the local chiefs. Deity was equated with the lord, and the devotee was equated with the vassal. Hence *uḍaiyar or perumāl* was used for both the deity and the king. *Koil* meant both the temple and the palace and the day to day routine of rituals was exactly followed in the services in the palace. Statements like 'devotee of the devotee of the devotee' or 'the servant of the servant of the servant' to

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[151] Rajan Gurukkal, The Kerala Temple, 84.

identify oneself reflected the feudal order in which at every level there was present a lord for his immediate vassal. Henceforth, *Bhakti* movement by creating an illusion of an egalitarian project imposed the acceptance of caste and its ideology.[152]

The presence of the lower caste saints like Nandanar who was a *Paraiya* and Tiruppana Ālvar who was a *Pāna* were seen as ascendancy of these saints in the caste structure, but its real intention was to show where, as a rule, the ordinary *Paraiya* and *Pana* belonged. It was imperative for the movement to validate these structures and temples became the ideal institutions for this purpose. Once this movement was consolidated the symbols derived from them were used to legitimize the ruler himself. Veluthat draws our attention towards the particular historical context in South India in which these systems were institutionalized is highly important. Firstly, the period begins with a complete restructuring of the society on caste lines accepting the *varṇāśramadharma* model as the expression of its religious ideology. Secondly, it saw the formation of a new kind of monarchical state.[153]

Gurukkal observes that the temple's relation with the society was fundamentally the same as that of a landed chief to his landed intermediaries, other subordinates and the tillers. Temple integrated the society and in this process of integration it exerted a great deal of influence in the organizational and institutional aspects of the society.[154]

The temple enjoyed a large number of people in its ritual and other services. They can be grouped into two: the *brāhmaṇa* and the non-*brāhmaṇa* order. AnnaVarghese in her M.Phil. Dissertation titled *Ambalavasi Groups in Ancient and Medieval Kerala* has conducted an extensive taxonomical analysis of the *brāhmaṇa* and non *brāhmaṇa* order known as *ambalavāsis* (temple residing groups) by studying inscriptions and records. Anna Varghese's and Rajan Gurukkal's works on the temple society were extremely useful to understand the segregation, nature of the social order and the modes of payment.

The *bhaṭṭās* and *cāttirār* were the prominent group of scholarly *brāhmaṇa* teachers and students residing in the temples. The *cāttirār* were the *brāhmaṇa* youth enrolled

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[152] Kesavan Veluthat, Early Medeival, 66-7.
[153] Ibid, 72.
[154] Rajan Gurkkal, The Kerala Temple, 50.

in the *śālas* (Vedic cum martial schools) to learn Vedic and military training.[155] But the most important professional caste groups were *tantrikal* (agamaic instructors) and *śānti-adikal* (priests). The *tantrikal* specialized in *agamaic* rituals and they supervised special rituals like *pratiṣṭa*, *kalaśa*, *utsava*, etc. *Śānti-adikal* performs the daily rituals. The chief priest who performed rituals in the central shrine is called *mēlśānti*, a higher position than *śānti*. He is assisted by *kīlsantikal*.[156] *Śāntikkaran* means the officiating priest according to Gundert's 'A Malayalam and English Dictionary'. Varghese notes that the inscriptional evidence of the term *śānti* is available from as early as eighth century A.D. The inscription of Rājaśēkhara of 8th c A.D. mentions the capital being set apart for the *śānti*. There were also rules and regulations delineated for the appointment of the *śānti* and his tenure.[157] From these inscriptions we can assume that the post of the *śānti* was very significant and they were the powerful group among the *ambalavāsi* groups. *Kīlśānti* was rendered to assist the *mēlśānti* in times of festival seasons and during this occasion the posts of *kīlśānti* and *mēlśānti* acquires equal status.[158] The *tantric* and *śānti* were paid by the temple on service tenure known as *virutti*. Lands were set apart for them known as *tantric virutti* and *śāntivirutti*. Certain records also mention *emperumakkal* and *nampi* who were also related with *pūja* services in the temple. Inscriptions refer to *nampi-virutti*, which was the land set apart for the *nampis* as their honorarium.[159]

The Non-Brahman order of the temple included the two important functional categories known as *potuvāl* and *vāriyar*. *Potuvāl* literally means public servant. There are references about various *potuvāls* depending on their functions like akappotuvāl (in charge of the internal affairs of the temple such as daily rituals,

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[155] Inscriptional evidences from Tiruvalla reveal an exaggerated amount of paddy, land and butter for the deity and the students, and other functional groups in the temple. Pillai says that the number of students were so large to consume 35 *para* of rice for one meal. Kunhan Pillai, Janmisampradayam, 600.

[156] Rajan Gurukkal, The Kerala Temple, 52.

[157] Anna Varghese, Ambalavasi Groups in Ancient and Medieval Kerala, (NewDelhi: M.Phil. Dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University 2010), 25.

[158] This was the common practice in the malanāṭṭu dēśams in 11th, 12th centuries A.D. understood from the Tiruvalūr inscription of Kulaśēkhara Perumal, the Tiruvalla Copper Plates, and the Kilimanūr Copper Plates. Tiruvalla Copper Plates mentions about the pantīradi pūja during which both the śāntiadigal and kīlśānti received the same scale of pay - 200 *nāli* of paddy as measured by *idangali*. Interestingly, both of them were subject to same amount of fine – 12 *nāli* of rice in case of failure to perform duties in the stipulated time. Anna Vaghese, p. 26. Tiruvalur Inscription of Kulasekhara-Perumal from Tiruvalūr (modern Tiruvalūr is near Alway, Ernakulam district), TAS, Vol.4, No.39, 145. Kilimanur copper plates of 1168 C.E from Trivandrum, TAS, Vol.5,No.24, 75 Huzur plates of Tiruvalla from Tiruvalla dated c.11th or 12th c C.E, TAS, Vol.2,P.3, 153.

[159] Rajan Gurukkal, The Kerala Temple, 52-3.

ceremonies, etc.), purappotuvāl (in charge of the external affairs of the temple such as revenue, property, etc.), ūrpotuvāl (secretary of the ūr). Rajan Gurukkal says that *Potuvāl* was the man of the temple corporation and acted on behalf of the temple in a managerial and executive capacity.[160] Varghese observes that even minute details of the management of the temples were assigned to them. An inscription from Suchīndram of Vīra Rāmavarman of 1471 A.D. mentions the individual name of the *poduvāl*, Kēśavan, of the temple. The inscription delineates the gist given by the king to Kēśavan as land grants and 400 *paṇam* in exchange of many duties. He was responsible for conducting the morning worship, feed two persons, meet other expenses for the ablution of the god, and to organize festival on the auspicious day.[161] According to Varghese *potuvāl* was also responsible for collecting payment from *jīvitam* lands. They were also responsible for inspecting the *virutti* lands and house-site gardens allotted to various temple servants.[162]

Vāiryar was the member of *vāriyam*, a committee to supervise various tasks like maintaining garden, irrigation, supervise fields, etc. The nature of these committees and their relation to the temple is unclear.[163] Nevertheless we also find inscriptions mentioning them as important signatories. Individual names of the *vāriyar* as the supervisor of the village are also found.[164]

Drummers, dancers and musicians formed a large group of the functional category of the temple drawn from non-brāhmaṇa people. The drummers were known *uvachchan* or *koṭṭikal*. The Huzur office plates mentions musicians as temple servants. The record also mentions about the payment given to these musicians who played with six music instruments. *Ugachchan* used to beat drums during the temple worship proceedings. They were associated on a larger scale with many major temples of *Malaināḍu*. They were appointed for beating drums at the sacred bath of the deity –

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[160] Rajan Gurukkal, The Kerala Temple, 53.

[161] Anna Varghese, Amabalavasi Groups, 43-4.

[162] Ibid, 42.

[163] Varghese notes that the *vāriyar* is often associated with the management of temple affairs. They were rewarded with specific amount of paddy for their services. The Sucīndram inscription of Rājarāja of A.D. 999 mentions the arrangement made by *mahāsabha* of the temple to appoint two *vāriyars* to manage the business of the god. Suchindram Inscription of Rajaraja I from Suchindram, Travancore dated 999 C.E, TAS, Vol.4, No.20, 130.

[164] The inscription from Suchindram of Vira Pandyadeva of 11th or 12th century A.D. mentioning the land grants by the king has the signatures of Narayana Kesavan. Anna Varghese, Amabalavasi Group, 49-50 Inscription of Vīra-Pāndyadeva from Suchindram, Travancore.dated c.11th or 12th c C.E, TAS, Vol.2,No.3, 21.

nīrāttupaḷḷikku koṭṭumavar. The Tiruvalla Copper plate mentions about the drummers who perform during the sacred bath. They had to be five of them above the age of sixteen wearing washed and clean clothes. Also if somebody refrained from performing he was imposed a fine of quarter *kāṇam* of gold each.[165]

Temples also employed dancing girls or courtesans known as *nanna, tēvaticci, and kūttacci*. Rajan Gurukkal says that the earliest available inscription of a nanna is found in the Cokkūr trends of Kota Ravi from A.D. 898. A record of the Nedumpuram taḷi (temple) of A.D. 960 mentions the individual name of a courtesan known as. Merraḷipurattu Cankara nannacci. Another inscription of A.D. 960 of Bhāskara Ravi refers to another individual called Ciritara nannacci with a title of *tiribhuvanasundari* used by South Indian queens. Rajan Gurukkal also points out at the twelfth century panel from Trivikramangalam near Thiruvananthapuram exhibits dancing girls performing accompanied by musicians. It is a representation of the dancing maids of the temple. Compared to South Indian temples, which had hundreds of courtesans, Kerala temples could not match the prosperity of the former. There is also significant difference in the use of the term *tēvaticci* in Kerala and *tēvaratiyal* in Tamil Nadu and its meaning in both states. A Cōlapuram inscription of A.D. 1253 mentions a dancing girl named Kōmalavalli of the temple of *Rājēndraśōḷīśvaramuḍaiya-Nayinar* receiving four *nāḷi* of rice as cooked food on a daily basis and this was continued on a hereditary basis. The interesting revelation about this instance is the role of her brother in this gift. Her brother Rakendraśōḷa Vaisravanan provided 61 *achchu* for 5 *nāḷi* of rice for offerings and vegetables for curry to the deity. For this land was leased out to him from which he produced the exact amount without any default. He was also allowed to consecrate the goddess of the temple. This reflects the subordinate position of the sister/*dēvadāsi* where the brother handled her wealth even though she received patronage from kings and landlords. The rights of hereditary cultivation were occupied by him. The dancing girls received *virutti* rights from temples.[166]

Rajan Gurukkal observes that the role of this temple maid was to allure the rich to the temple. The nanna performed the recreational function for the temple society and was.

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[165] Rajan Gurkkal, The Kerala Temple 54. Anna Varghese, 81-84.

[166] Anna Varghese, Ambalavasi Groups, 100-103. Cholapuram Inscriptions from Cholapuram dated Kollam 428, TAS, Vol.6, No.16, 26.

a source of pleasure for the big merchants and land lords. It attracted the landed aristocracy and mercantile community to the temples.[167] Kunhan Pillai makes a sarcastic remark on this practice by equating temple with a cinema theatre.[168]

The temples had a lot of non specialized workers comprising of *akattatikkumavar* (sweepers), *virakitumavar* (suppliers of firewood), *ilayitumavar* (suppliers of plantain leaves), *vāyirkkalnirkkumavar* (gate keepers), *arikuttumavar* (pounders of rice), and etc. for menial labours. They were entitled to *jīvitam* tenure which sets apart land for life of these workers. The mode of payment through *jīvitam and virutti* mirror the socio-economic status enjoyed by these functional groups. When the *brāhmana* dominated functional group enjoyed huge amount of land grants as *virutti*, the menial servant were allotted only *jīvitam* rights.

Another group which needs mention is the artisan and craftsman community. Few of them were settled in the limits of the temple centered village and were obliged to render their service to the temple. Among the artisan and craftsman community *taccar* (carpenters), *kalavāniyar* (potters), *vāniyar* (oil mongers), *vannar* (washer men), etc. were the prominent groups. These groups settled on the temple lands allotted to them. They enjoyed *virutti* rights.[169] A comparative analysis of the distinction between the allotment of *jivitam* and *virutti* rights would reveal the internal gradations of this system. The higher castes of this pyramid enjoyed virutti rights on land thus making it their hereditary property while the lower castes of the society sustained on mere land rights for life. This created a situation where the tillers had to depend on the mercy of the landlord and was in a position of servitude throughout medieval ages.

Finally I will analyze the actual tillers of the land who were the productive forces behind the temple centered economy. The *pulayar* and the *cerumar* formed the base of this economic mode of production. Their condition was so inferior that most of the times they were also exchanged as goods along with the lands. The Tiruvalla plates refer to some plots of land and *pulayars* attached to it. Certain records mention them as *āl* meaning slave and the Kilimānūr record of A.D. 1168 records the practice of

[167] Rajan Gurukkal, The Kerala Temple, 56.
[168] Kunhan Pillai, The Kerala Temple, 600.
[169] The Kolhurmadom plates refer to the settlement of four families of *vāniyar* and four families if *vellainalar* in the land of Dēvīdēvēsvaran temple. The same plates also mention the *virutti* rights. Rajan Gurukkal, The Kerala Temple, 57-58. KollurMadam plates of Udaiya Marttanda Varman from Kilimanur in Chirayinkil Taluk, Trivandrum,TAS, Vol.4, No.7, 42.

giving pairs of *āl* to each one of the *ūrāḷar* of the temple corporation. In fact this practice can be dated back to the Trikkākkara inscription of A.D. 853 which mentions the land grant along with *pulayar* to the temple by the queen of Makōtai.[170]

Unfortunately, these groups were not even allowed to enter the premises or not even the approaching roads. The expanding temple and its approaching roads prohibited their mobility and pushed them to the peripheries of villages. The *brāhmaṇa* landed aristocracy standardized the injunctions on untouchability. A *pulaya* should maintain a distance of 96 feet from a *brahmana*. *Pulayan* should take bath if he touches a *paraya*. If both groups fail to avoid the main road it is a *Nair's* duty to kill them. According to *brāhmaṇas* the offspring of *paraya* and *pulaya* are apes. Their wives are *parakkaḷḷi* (*paraya* thief) and *pulakkaḷḷi* (*pulaya* thief). *Tīyan* should maintain a distance of 12 feet from *sūdra*. A *sūdra* will attain *swarga* (heaven) if he kills the *tīya* who crosses the 36 feet limit with *brāhmaṇa*. A *Nair* can go near a *brāhmaṇa* but cannot touch him.[171]

In her essay, *Caste and Writing History* Prathama Banerjee quotes M.S.S. Pandian who observes that the 'backward' caste mobilization had also to be articulated on the ground that lower castes were the ones who provided the resource and the labour for the Brahman, the temple and the landlord. In other words, the lower castes were the productive classes of society and their exploitation and subordination was, therefore, really a structural form of resource extraction.[172]

The entire temple functionaries came to be known as *antarāḷar* which later on became an intermediary caste between *brāhmaṇas* and *nairs*. The lucrative *virutti* and *jīvitam* rights culminated in the hereditary inheritance of them in a strategy to retain these rights. The temple functionaries who were labeled with various names according to their jobs later on turned into caste names. The artisans and craftsman were also appropriated into the caste system. The rights of occupying the land led to the localization of their services and thus resulting in an obligatory position with the temple. Subsequently they evolved their own sub castes. Thus the temple corporation catalysed the crystallization of caste-based social stratification. Rajan Gurkkal states that the pattern of division thus emerged were five-fold:

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[170] Rajan Gurukkal, The Kerala Temple, 58.
[171] Kunhan Pillai, Janmisampradayam, 621.
[172] Prathama Banerjee, Caste and Writing, 226.

- 'The *brāhmaṇa* heading the caste hierarchy with their own internal divisions based on ritual and material statutes and the entailing sub-hierarchies,

- the *antarāla jāti*, second in order with the internal sub-hierarchies of ritual and material statutes of their own,

- the warrior cum *kārāḷar* group from whom the *nairs* emerged as the third in order,

- the artisans and craftsman with their internal sub-hierarchies in the fourth and,

- the tillers who formed the base'[173]

Henceforth a social integration was achieved through the *varṇa* system and through internal divisions of *jāti* it maintained asymmetrical relations. The social character developed in the early phase was retained throughout the medieval times. Definitely further gradation happened with the expansion of agricultural expansion and related artisanal activities. The tradition established during the *Cēra* period is continued.

3.5 Temple Culture and the Making of a Regional Identity

At the outset of this chapter I have mentioned that the state was included in its own way in the larger socio-cultural unit called Tamilakam; and it was located within the geographical limits of the subcontinent that goes by the name 'India". Nevertheless, these identities were not static or fixed but were fluid and underwent transformations. These changes were not 'natural' and one can identify forces behind such 'emergences'. Kerala as a term is not found in the early literal sources. The early Tamil literary sources use the term *Cēra/Cēraman* for the dynasty or the ruler. Aśōkan edicts refer to *Keralabotros/Kaelobotros*. These usages do not present Kerala as a geographical unit. Kerala was seen as an integral part of Tamilakam. References on Malayalam language is also absent.[174]

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[173] Rajan Gurukkal, The Kerala Temple, 61-2.

[174] Śļōkas from Kalidasa's 'Raghuvamsa', fourth sarga, describes Raghu's triumph in south India and 'Keralam' region also gets a mention. After crossing Sahya Mountain Raghu reaches Kerala and gets introduced to the legend of the origins of Kerala by Paraśurām. Kālidāsa also describes women of Kerala and Murichi River – the modern Periyar River. This is followed by an erotic description of the geography in which Malaya and Darduram Mountains are equated with breasts smeared with sandal and the Mountain Sahya is mentioned as the derriere of the earth which has come out from the cloth. Then he describes that Raghu's soldier reached Kerala. The soil raised from the soldier's march rested in the hair locks of the scared women. The breeze from Murichi River (Periyar) brought the flower dust and sprinkled it on the soldier's helping them to smell good. Kautilya's 'Arthashastra' also describes Churni River or Periyar. Ashokan edict delineates about his construction of separate hospitals for men

Veluthat notes that the earliest reference to Kerala as a separate geographical entity, with the use of that name, is mentioned in the *'Avatisundarikatha'* of Dandin.[175] *'Ascaryacūdāmani'*, a Sanskrit play written by the dramatist Saktibhadra makes the director speak about the resemblance of it to the pan-Indian Sanskrit world and its distinction from other South Indian texts. By ninth century A.D., Kerala gets mentioned as a geographical unit with definite boundaries. The ninth century king of Kerala, also an author of *Subhadradhanañjaya* and *Tapatisamvarana-* two Sanskrit plays- describes himself with the epithets *Keralakulacūdāmani* and *Keraladhinātha* in Sanskrit plays. Veluthat notes that the peculiar character of Kerala from the rest of the south was due to the rise of Brahmanical settlements in the river valleys of Kerala. He writes, 'Although some Brahmanical presence with the characteristic Paraśurāma tradition of the west coast and a Vedic sacrificial background is noticed in Kerala early in the age of the Tamil anthologies such as *Akanānūru*, the majority of them took shape only in the period of the transition from the early historical to early medieval period.'[176] The much celebrated brahmanical *Paraśurāma* tradition was also shared with their counterparts in the west coast but it was distinct from other parts of the peninsula. The brahmanical practices like known as *anācāras* developed in Kerala helped to make them distinct from the rest of the *brāhmana* counterparts in India. The differences also existed in the settlement patterns and because of this Kerala developed certain unique traits different from the entire region.[177] Nevertheless, they also followed pan-Indian prescriptions of *Dharmaśāstra* tradition in the matters of community organization. One of the important research questions for this work was to understand whether the overall cultural changes happening from fourteenth century A.D. is a process of forming a regional identity. Distinct trends in art, architecture, literature, etc. from the Tamilakam region was thus catalyzed by a religious process headed by *brāhmana* oligarchy controlled temple corporations. But, were these

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and animals. Erumeli Parameshwaran Pilla, 'Malayala Sahityam Kalaghattangalilloode' 21-24, and Kesavan Veltuthat, Early Medieval 296.

[175] Dandin was an eighth century poet from Pallava capital in Kānci. The poet mentions his friends which includes Matrdatta, 'the best of Brahmanas from Kerala'. He uses the word Keralesu which is the plural form revealing the familiarity of the name. Calūkyas, Pallavas and Pāndyās also refer to Kerala as a separate political unit. Cola records certainly refer to the Kerala country and this coincides with the emergence of what is now Kerala. Kesavan Veluthat, Early Medieval, 297-8.

[176] Ibid, 299.

[177] Kesavan Veluthat notes that this brahmanical character with the Paraśurāma stamp on it can be seen from the eleventh century Cōla record, the Tiruvalangadu Copper Plates, describing Kerala as the land created by Rama who takes pleasure in exterminating the Ksatriyas and where good people live with joy. Ibid, 299.

developments part of a second wave of 'religious process'[178] started from the formation of centralized monarchy in Kerala or were they the results of a socio-cultural movement starting in the fourteenth century? Is it possible to understand these changes through the concepts of 'vernacularism and cosmopolitanism' offered by Sheldon Pollock. These issues will be addressed in the following pages.

Kunal Chakrabarti makes an important observation on the recent social science interest in the formation of regional identities and also the lack of a consensus about the definition of the term region. According to him identity is the end product of a long historical process as a result of a consciousness of participating in the culture which endows a group of people with a sense of belonging to a community over and above the differences of caste, class, gender, occupation and other variables. To state it briefly it is a mental construct. Hence, identity formation is the product of a social imagination.[179] Kunal Chakrabarti's and Kesavan Veluthat's astute observations on the brahmanical initiatives in reorganizing the social structure and religious beliefs of the indigenous people through the construction of structural temples and the codification of *purāṇas* during the early medieval period has to be considered as the first systematic attempt to create a cultural tradition transcending local boundaries. The advent of a regional identity was the outcome of this process. According to B.D. Chattopadhyaya the changes occurring in the early medieval period has to be understood as socio-historical processes like 'expansion of state through local state formation, peasantization of tribes and formation of castes, and cult appropriation and integration.'[180]

In Kerala the first step was taken with the introduction of the brahmanical element with the *Paraśurāma* tradition as a departure from the rest of Tamilakam. This tradition eulogized Paraśurāma as the creator of the land and donor to them. This

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[178] Here I am using the concept of 'religious process' from historian Kunal Chakrabarti's seminal work 'Religious Process: The Puranas and the Making of a Regional Tradition'. Kunal Chakrabarti explores what the Bengal Purāṇas reveal about Bengali regional identity, especially as this identity, like other regional identities in India, involves interaction between pan-Indian and local levels. The process by which this occurred, which Chakrabarti terms "the Puranic process," involved both strong affirmation of local customs and practices as well as the preservation and repeated assertion of Vedic authority with the Bengal Purāṇas attempting "to make the two appear consistent" Kunal Chakrabarti, Religious Process: The Puranas and the Making of Religious Tradition (New Delhi: Oxford University Press), 32.
[179] Kunal Chakrabarti, Religious Process, 287.
[180] Chattopadhyaya also acknowledges the centrality of the *brāhmaṇas* in this process, including that of the state formation itself. B.D. Chattopadhyaya, 'Introduction: The Making of Early Medieval India.', *The Making of Early Medieval India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press 2008), 16.

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legend is seen all over the western sea board in India. In case of south the land mentioned is from Gōkarṇa to Kanyakumari called as the *Paraśurāma-kṣētra*. Later this unit is changed with the addition of Perumpula with Kanyakumari by consciously rejecting the former's affiliation with Tamilakam.[181] This tradition is celebrated in the much controversial book Keralōlpatti because of its anonymous authorship and fluctuating dating among historians.[182]

But the important point to be noticed is the significant difference between the role of the Brahmanical groups in Kerala and the South Canara region. Compared to the *brāhmaṇas* of the Canara region, their counterparts in Kerala enjoyed considerable amount of wealth and control over it. Also the stake in politics and society was higher. This was asserted by invoking Paraśurāma as the creator and the donor of the land. The visible importance was also in the presence of arms-bearing *brāhmaṇas* known as *śāstra- brāhmaṇas* or *cāttirār*. Kunhan Pillai has provided an important analysis on the role of *śālas* as the centre for martial arts training inside the temples and how these *brāhmaṇas* fought the 'hundred year's war'. Thus *a kṣatriya* personified *brāhmaṇa* was invoked to legitimize their claims on an alien land.[183]

The next step in this process was to propagate the new 'religion' by dismantling or appropriating the *tiṇai* deities with the worship of *Agamaic* deities consecrated in temples. This was accentuated by the brahmanical settlements which also functioned as agrarian corporations centered on temples. Thus the native population was appropriated by this hegemonic force. This was also the period of *Bhakti* Movement which enjoyed patronage from the ruling *Cēra* dynasty. Now the gods worshipped by the natives were part of the pan-Indian tradition belonging to the epics and Purāṇas. Sanskrit got a major leverage over Tamil because of this development even though the famous songs and literature of *bhakti* movement were composed in Tamil. The distinction was also featured in the caste system and the relative status of each

[181] Kesavan Veluthat, Early Medieval, 300.
[182] The book opens by giving an account of Paraśurāma's creation of the Kerala (Gōkarṇa-Kanyakumari), by a fling of his axe towards Arabian Sea. After this he brought *brāhmaṇas* from north and settled them sixty four villages in this land of which thirty-two villages in Tuḷunāḍu and the next thirty-two in Kerala. Many of them returned to Ahichchatra because of their fear of snakes. This prompted Paraśurāma to bring a second wave of *brāhmaṇas* and changed their hair style and dress code so that they would not be accepted back. Ibid, 300.
[183] Bringing a Kṣatriya to rule them after realizing that they are not adequate in governance thus establishing the foundations of a state based on *varṇāśramadharma*.

defining the norms of purity and pollution.[184] According to Chakrabarti the brahmanical attempt at social reorganization in the peripheral areas through *varnasamkara*, presided over by the state, was everywhere. But in this case the occupational status of diverse social groups was far more significant in defining the social structure of a given region than the theoretical *varnāśramadharma*. The advent of structural temples in this period is also very critical. The temples from ninth century as mentioned above are divided into two stylistic categories – Kerala and Drāvida. The origins of the Kerala style of temples are much debatable. The two prominent arguments in this regard is made by Stella Kramrisch who remarked that the prototype of the circular temples has to be seen in the circular huts used by the natives and the views expressed by Soundara Rajan and H. Sarkar that the Kerala temples are the local adaptations of the South Indian temples which were structurally demarcated to counter heavy rains. However, the origins can also be attributed to the influence of the ground plan of Buddhist *chaitya* halls. Kerala had an active Buddhist tradition and many of the Buddhist rituals and cults were appropriated in time. Sarkar has propounded this view stating that the Southern part of Kerala where Buddhism had a strong hold shows comparatively large number of shrines. Whether Buddhist origins or secular origins, the Kerala style is the conscious reflection of the indigenous tradition and the minimalist unostentatious structure was its outcome to differ from the mainland. It was the result of its cultural sensibility.

Sanskritic tradition dominated the ideas and institutions of the time and this is reflected in the codes of conducts followed by the socio-political institutions. *Dharmaśāstras* were followed for social conduct and statecraft. Interestingly, Arthaśāstra was used to formulate organization laws of a Christian church at Kurakkēni Kollam. Sculpture, paintings and drama drew heavily on Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata. Mahābhārata *bhattās,* the specialists who articulated Mahābhārata, were appointed. Such attempts were made to propagate epics and purānas. In this process themes from Tamil were deliberately avoided and works from Sanskrit were given more importance. In fact the first literary works in Malayalam are Rāmacarita and a translation of Kautilya's Arthaśāstra.[185] Chakrabarti opines that an important criterion for the formation of regional identity is the development of the literary language of

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[184] Kesavan Veluthat, Early Medieval, 302.
[185] Ibid, 303.

the region. The evolution of a literary language and a corpus of literature which is particular to a region, act as a major factor behind the awareness of cultural homogeneity among the people. Therefore adherence to a particular language can be regarded as a cultural statement. One important feature which has to be mentioned at this point is that the Sanskritic tradition in literature was followed by the production of Sanskrit inscriptions elsewhere, Kerala depicts a deviant process. Kerala has used old Malayalam for inscriptions from the beginning of the ninth century. Surprisingly, only one inscription in Sanskrit is found, that too from extreme south region. This is also a deviant pattern from Sheldon Pollock's proposition of a 'Sanskrit Cosmopolis' affiliating regional cultures to it before the 'vernacular transformation' of regions. Kesavan Veluthat writes,

"Even while inscriptions used the 'vernacular' when a literate tradition emerged there, literature used the Sanskrit language, made use of its rich repertoire and followed the science of its prosody and poetics (alamkārśāstra) that had developed at an all India level."

By pointing out examples from the Sanskrit drama's of Kulaśēkhara and the influence of *dhvani* theory of the Kashmiri writer Anandavardhana he argues that the 'Sanskrit Cosmopolis' did exert its influence on the written literature.[186]

While moving to the medieval period these ideas of unity and identity were carried over and continued in the subsequent ages. This was also retained during the segregation of the state into three minor principalities in the fourteenth century. Kerala was referred to as Cēraman nāḍu or the Land of Cēramans in the post-Cēra literatures. The medieval principalities burdened under the imposing figure of the Perumāḷ and many of these rulers tried to emulate him by claiming to be the overlord of Kerala. The new kingdoms claimed their inheritance from the disintegrated Cēra kingdom rather than tracing back to the neighboring states of Tamil Nadu or Karnataka. Henceforth, the Vēnāḍ in the south and Kōlattunāḍu in the north and the Cochin in the centre all claimed to be part of the same identity and historical tradition.

The medieval texts written in *Maṇipravāḷam* carry references to Kerala. A medieval text mentions the land in reference to its fertility and also as a gift of Paraśurāma. For example the Śukasandēśa which is a work in Sanskrit says, "Now you can see the *brahmakṣatra* land which testifies to the might of Paraśurāma's arms. This country

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[186] Kesavan Veluthat, Early Medieval, 303-4.

rich in pepper, and betel vines growing on tall coconut and areca palms, is celebrated as Kerala.'[187] The Līlātilakam, a medieval manuscript of grammar, prosody and poetics of Maṇipravālam defines the language as a union of *bhāṣa* and Sanskrit where *bhāṣa* stands for Malayalam. Veluthat points another interesting reference from *Śrībhīmēśvarapurāṇamu* of Śrīnātha to state that the name Malayalam was not mentioned at this juncture. Līlātilakam calls the language of Kerala as Tamil, but this Tamil is different from the language used in the Cōḷa country.

It is also at the mid fourteenth century that Kaṇṇaśśans a trio of poets – Mādhavan, Rāman and Śankaran- elevated the indigenous *pāṭṭu* to the level of classics. Madhava Panickar was the first to introduce Bhagavad Gīta into Malayalam and it is the earliest translation of Gīta into any language. With all these developments there was a conscious attempt to continue the participation of Kerala's provenance in the *bhāratavarṣa*. A medieval *Maṇipravālam* text 'Chandrōtsavam' says that 'there are eight other *khaṇḍas* around and that the southern one of Bharata is more charming than them; even in it the Land of Cēramans (is) like the auspicious mark on the forehead of the Goddess of Prosperity.'

Finally focusing on the impact of major temples as cult centres for consolidating regional identity I will enumerate the role of the temples during medieval period. Unlike Orissa which used the religious complex at Puri as a legitimizing agency for the rulers, Kerala does not have any such example to point out. Occasional references are made to Śrī Padmanābha Temple of Tiruvananthapuram. But it witnessed an active temple building tradition from the fourteenth century A.D. in a new elaborate and complex scheme known as *pañcaprakāras*. This particular practice was codified in the subsequent period in the treatises like *Tantrasamuccaya*, *Manusyālyacandrika*, and *Śilparatna*; the first two belonging to the fifteenth century and the latter one from sixteenth century respectively. Moreover this practice was set as a model for the temples after fourteenth century and building temples in Drāvida style was reduced to the southern part of Kerala. This too reduced in the coming periods.

So in the absence of over arching temples to integrate the heterogeneous locals, these temples turned into cult centers. Śrī Vallabhaswāmi Temple and Śrī Padmanābhaswāmi Temple were important cult centers for the Vaiṣṇavites and

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[187] Kesavan Veluthat, Early Medieval, 305.

Vadakkumanātha temple was frequented by Śaivites. Thus the temples built in Kerala style were taken as the visual idiom of the region. It prompted devotees to patronize more of such temples in their localities.

Conclusion

In conclusion I would like to mention that the role of Brahmanism as the determining factor in the process of identity formation in Kerala is very crucial. Kesavan Veluthat's observation that the identity crafted in the early medieval period which was followed in the medieval and late medieval period is of an upper caste, Brahmanical and Sanskritic nature is corroborative of the aforementioned statement.[188] The processes mentioned above in different sections seem to function differently but were controlled and operated by the temple corporations. The advent of temples as a result of the redistributive economy was sustained through a sophisticated social system. The surplus generated in this economy was to sustain the ideology of this institution, which was *bhakti*, through various art, literature and cultural forms known as temple culture. We also saw the functioning of religious institutions as state dispensing judicial and administrative functions. I have tried to understand these processes in its totality but still there are shortcomings at this level because of the sophistication involved in the sustenance of temple corporations. An iconographic study of Kerala's image making tradition in comparison to local purāṇas will also help to understand this process of regional identity formation and has ample scope. Three sections enumerated displays that temples have to be understood as being more than religious institutions showcasing architectural marvel. Kerala's distinct unique character was the result of the diffusion of Brahmanism. The migrant brahmanas enjoyed considerable amount of power in this region compared to the regions they belonged. For this they had to invent unique traditions and customs to subdue the local inhabitants and to maintain a distinct brahmanical identity. These traditions and customs were important in forming the cultural consciousness of the Kerala region. The hierarchy of social system thus formed provided a peculiar character to this identity. The conscious effort behind all this was to create an identity and tradition distinct from the larger Tamilakam region and the west coast region, from where the

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[188] Kesavan Veluthat, Early Medieval, 303.

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brahmanas belonged, by invoking Parasurama as the legitimate authority of all these processes.

Chapter 4
Conclusion

Conclusion

The dissertation *Inquiries into the Social and Economic Processes behind the Regional Identity of Kerala Temple in Medieval Kerala* was an attempt to understand the economic and social processes behind the expansion of temple architecture in the fourteenth century known as the *pañcaprakāra* scheme. Temples underwent remarkable changes in their ground plan by this period by attaining an unprecedented sophistication marked by the construction of temple complexes with composite shrines, theatres, dining hall and altar stone hall which were enclosed inside two walls. Temples in Kerala were more than religious institutions and performed the economic, judicial and administrative functions in the medieval period thus becoming a sophisticated hegemonic institution. So the intention was to study the issue in its totality using a unified approach.

Structural temples started appearing in the ninth century A.D. with the large scale migration of the *brāhmaṇās*. The earlier temples were patronized by the *Āy, Mūṣaka* and *Cēra* dynasty. They were simple structures displaying two formalistic variations modeled on Dravida style with the local features incorporated to counter heavy rain. Kerala style temples which were mostly built on the circular shrines provided an interesting point of comparison with the indigenous huts of the tribals. Thus art historians claimed the origins of these temples lay in indigenous constructions. But we have to understand that the brahmanical temples philosophically and architecturally were imported from the lands were it was already well established. The claims of indigenous origins could be traced outside Kerala in those regions where structural temples originated at first. The already mature forms were brought to Kerala and were modified according to the climatic necessities. A close observation will reveal greater similarities between the Dravida and Kerala style of architecture in this period if the superstructure of the latter is avoided. Or else these structures were following the models of already existing religious monuments present in Kerala of which no remains are available now. Another important point to note is that unlike the Tamilakam region most of these temples were not royal temples and were mainly *grāma kṣētras* enjoying considerable influence over large tracts of agrarian land. The centralized *Cēra* dynasty and its royal patronage to Bhakti movement gave more legitimacy to these temples which gradually sidelined Buddhist, Jain and tiṇai deities. This led to the emergence of a highly systematic and developed form of temple

oriented Hinduism which acted as the centre of religious, social and cultural domains. Kulaśēkhara Ālwār who was the king of the *Cēra* dynasty himself took active interest in propagating *bhakti* movement in Kerala by composing poems in Sanskrit and Tamil. This rise and growth of temples was the most important phenomenon of the early medieval period. The brahmanas who came from the west coast in the process to localize themselves adopted various attributes like maintaining purvasikha (frontal knot of the hair) and customs like *sambandam* (concubinage). This also prevented them from mixing with *brāhmanās* of other regions and to develop more intimacy with the local people. While the *brāhmanās* were patrilineal they insisted others to follow matrilineal system of inheritance thus preventing the partition of their family property. Hence this temple culture and brahmanical customs formed the bedrock of the general regional culture of Kerala. This was sustained through a systematic control of agrarian lands using a hierarchical functional order known as *antarālas* who were placed in the *varna* system between Brāhmanas and Śūdras and tillers comprised of the pulayar. These temples were located in brāhmana settlements which were administered by *Ūr* or *sabha* mentioned in various inscriptions. Interestingly this was only one of the semi-autonomous local bodies which had the rights to collect taxes and judicial powers. There were other such rural and urban bodies which possessed charters of rights for such administrative powers. Various historians have praised *sabhas* for their democratic nature. But this is a misconception because these *ūrs* were feudal oligarchies displaying anti democratic tendencies in which only Brāhmanas were allowed to become members. Land was controlled by two institutions *brahmasvams* and *dēvasvams*, both were under the control of brahmanas. The *ūrālar* who owned the property leased out these rights to *kāralars* and *kāralars* to adiyālars. It was this complicated system of distribution and redistribution which resulted in the prominence of temples in the medieval period. Therefore this localization of agrarian activities under the temples resulted in the huge surplus of resources which enabled the temple to organize society for various functions for better production.

Large numbers of employees were recruited by the temples to sustain this complicated system. They can be categorized into brāhmana and non brāhmana order in which brāhmanas performed the ritual and priestly duties and non brāhmana order performed various functions from supervision of lands, collection of taxes, to menial jobs such as

sweeping, washing, garland making, etc. Apart from these groups, drummers and dancers were also employed by the temples. Dancing girls specialized in attracting the affluent class of the society to temples. They also played a significant role in the patronage to the temples because of their unmarried status. They were paid in *virutti* rights but the land rights were mainly controlled by their guardians which were mostly men. Therefore the dancing girls did not play a remarkable role in the temple centered society. A rigorous and extensive study on the women's histories and the histories of the margins could throw light on the situation of *dēvadāsis*. Another group which has been neglected is the tillers of the agricultural lands known as *pulayars* and *cerumars*. Also along with these lines, a study of important aspects such as women's labour, in production and social reproduction merits the attention of scholarship. The ubiquity of brāhmaṇical inscriptions becomes a hindrance to construct a history of this important section which formed the base of this mode of production. They occupied a servile position in the society without any voice. They were exchanged with land grants and donations. These groups were employed through the *jīvitam* rights which degraded their position in the society. The *brāhmaṇical* social formation placed itself in the top of this hierarchy while relegating the tillers to the lowest position equivalent to a slave. Nevertheless it was this strange *brāhmaṇa-śūdra* alliance which was the cornerstone of Kerala temple society, economy and culture. This systematic stratification of the functional orders based on the production system of a pyramidal structure of who labors and who does not gradually led to the evolution of *jātis*. This kind of asymmetrical relationship was affirmed by the hereditary specialization of professions which led to the advent of groups labeled according to profession who were incorporated into the *brāhmaṇical varṇa-jāti* structure. While accepting the *brāhmaṇical* cultural logic each caste also maintained its own cultural codes thus establishing distinctions between castes and legitimizing the proposed hierarchy.

Therefore the early phase was characterized by the advent of a centralized kingdom and the emergence of structural *brāhmaṇic* temples with bhakti as its ideology. Bhakti movement in the disguise of an egalitarian project allured the laity and stratified them into a new social order legitimized by the *varṇa-jāti* order. Various groups who patronized this project like kings, local chiefs, landlords, trading groups got benefitted from this deal by integrating the agrarian order for their benefits. Thus temples emerged in this period by dismantling the early social formations and disintegrating

the tribal society and reorganizing them into a caste society. The agrarian expansion and the control on the surplus enabled them to organize the temples in a systematic way.

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By fourteenth century the temples in Kerala became elaborate and complex in ground plan and expansion. This growth was accentuated by the addition of subsidiary shrines and other structures. The temple has to be hence approached through a sophisticated temple complex with an outer wall and inner wall protecting the *srīkōvil*. These walled complexes enclosed various structures to carry out rituals, performances, meetings, etc. These temple complexes were built according to the *pancaprakāra* scheme. This particular model became the standard model for temple making in the coming centuries. This regional expression as a result of the localization of indigenous architectural conventions was a part of a larger vernacular project. This was also complemented by the creation of a Kerala style in the sculptures, wooden reliefs, and mural paintings. Moreover changes in visual arts were complemented by the consolidation of a vernacular *bhakti* movement with the proliferation of literature in *Maṇipravālam* language. These changes could also be seen as a 'religious process' resulting in the creation of a Kerala identity while affiliating the practices to the pan-Indian Sanskritic tradition. At the political front the state witnessed the emergence of a decentralized political system with three principalities ruling the region claiming to be the legitimate successors of *Cēras*. It is interesting to note that these principalities were just nominal heads without absolute power. There were various local units of power functioning under local chieftains. The *brāhmaṇa* controlled villages continued in the same way but the village assemblies or *sabha* lost its importance. This resulted in the rise of individual landlordism. Moreover the temples and the land it commanded which were earlier administered by the *ūr* now came to be controlled by individual or few *brāhmaṇa* houses. These groups known as *sanketams* now claimed greater immunity from political masters and were a significant determining force in the society. Later on *sanketams* gave way to brahmanical villages which were approached by the rulers for ritual and political matters. With these brahmanical groups other groups controlled and operated by slightly upper castes called *tara, kaḷakam* were also emerged during

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this period. Nevertheless cultivators were still toiling in their lower status of this hierarchy. They were referred as *āl̤, atiyar* and *kutiyān* and were placed under *Śūdras*. This expansion of the boundaries of temples in this period was also symptomatic of their caste relations. These temple walls acted as the decisive boundaries for the restriction of mobility for the lower castes and pushed them further to the peripheries of the villages and towns. Thus expansion of temples in this scale was reflective of the heirarchichal *varṇa-jāti* order in which only the higher castes enjoyed access to resources. This brutal practice of denying the lower castes their basic rights of practice of religion and freedom of mobility continued till the famous Temple Proclamation of 1930s

The plough agricultural expansion was also accompanied by the diversification of crops which resulted in the control of greater surplus by the temples. Artisanal activities pertaining to temples were also expanded and this paved way for further gradations in the existing caste system controlled by the *brāhmaṇas*. Trade with foreign countries generated prosperous revenues for these groups.

At the religious front the co-existing non- *brāhamaṇic* deities were incorporated into the *brāhamaṇic* fold. Many *tinai* and tribal deities got identified as the sons, daughters and relatives of the *brāhamaṇic* deities as part of this acculturation process. Interestingly most of them were installed as sub-deities in the temple complexes. These changes also created a new *brāhamaṇic* temple culture distinct from other regions. These changes were not natural and the *brāhamaṇic* forces played an important role behind this.

The forms of worship, rituals, administration, arts, literature propagated by the temples can be termed as temple culture. This temple culture had long lasting impact on the regional cultural identity of Kerala. *Maṇipravāḷam* a fusion of *bhāṣa* and Sanskrit emerged as the language of the period. These *maṇipravāḷam* texts mention Kerala as a separate geographical and political unit. They identify it as the land of Parasurama. Furthermore there is also a conscious attempt to situate Kerala in the larger Puranic world. Temple sculptures and paintings drew heavily from *purāṇas* and epics. Mahabharata *bhaṭṭās* were appointed in the temples to recite epics to the devotees. Also the affluent temples needed an exclusive and secure space to store its wealth resulting in this massive expansion of architecture with several walls and

streets. By affirming its multifunctional nature, temples acted as the controllers and propagators of culture. With all these multiple forces operating at different levels but controlled by *brāhamaṇic* temples it accomplished in creating a distinct tradition in the region where they came as migrants during eighth century. They gradually separated Kerala from the influence of Tamilakam, Buddhism, and *saṅgam* culture with the diffusion of Brahmanism. The highly sophisticated temple culture was responsible for these transitions. Also important is to understand the material and bodily practices of the society in terms of its relation to the temple. The social history of art thus allows comprehending the temple as more than a religious institution and unravels its various levels of functions as a social, economic, political and cultural institution. The eclectic approach of this study has tried to address these issues within the structures which they are located but a more serious and coherent study to understand these sophisticated processes have yet to be done.

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List of Illustrations
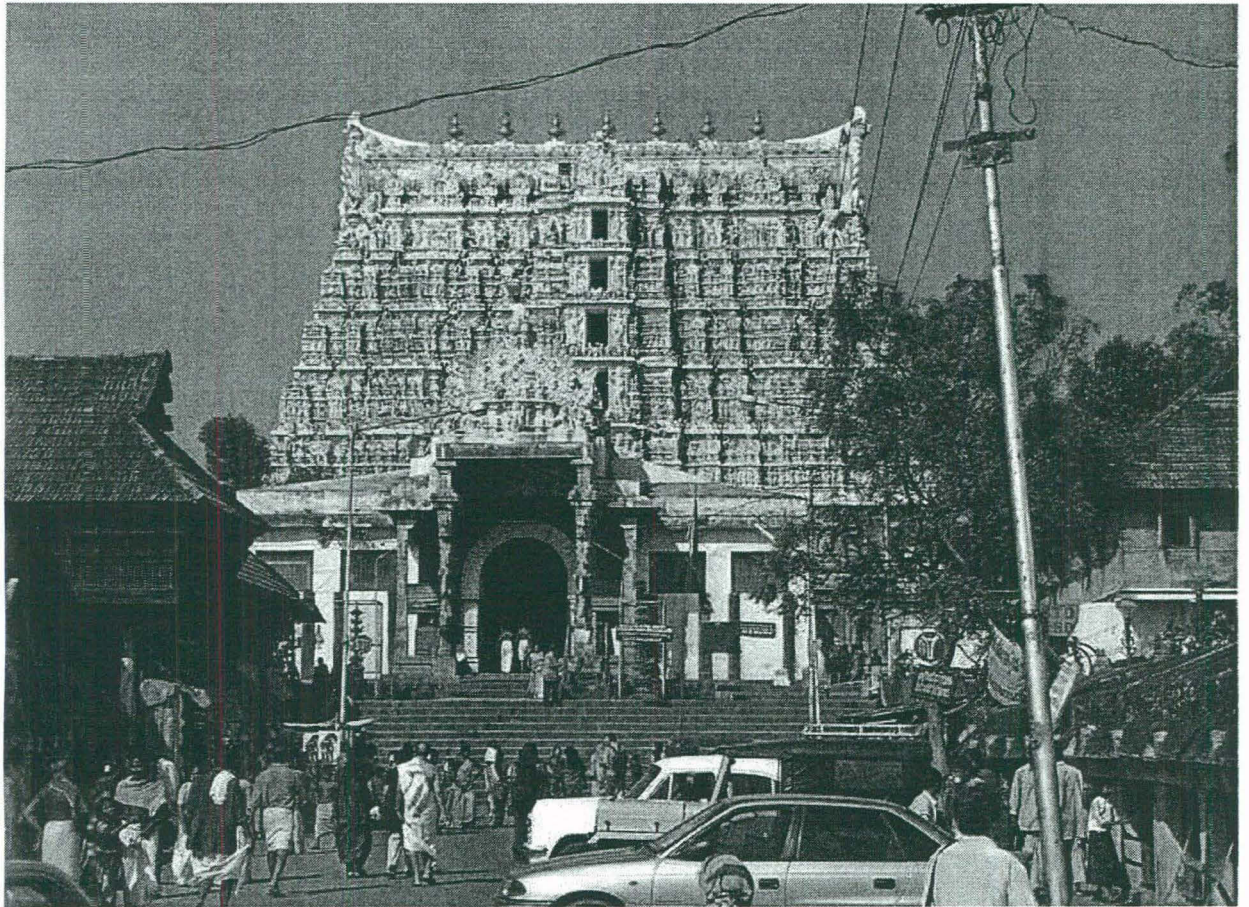
Fig. 1: Sri Padmanabhasvami Temple, 15th-16th century A.D., Thiruvanathapuram, Courtesy: www.wikipedia.org
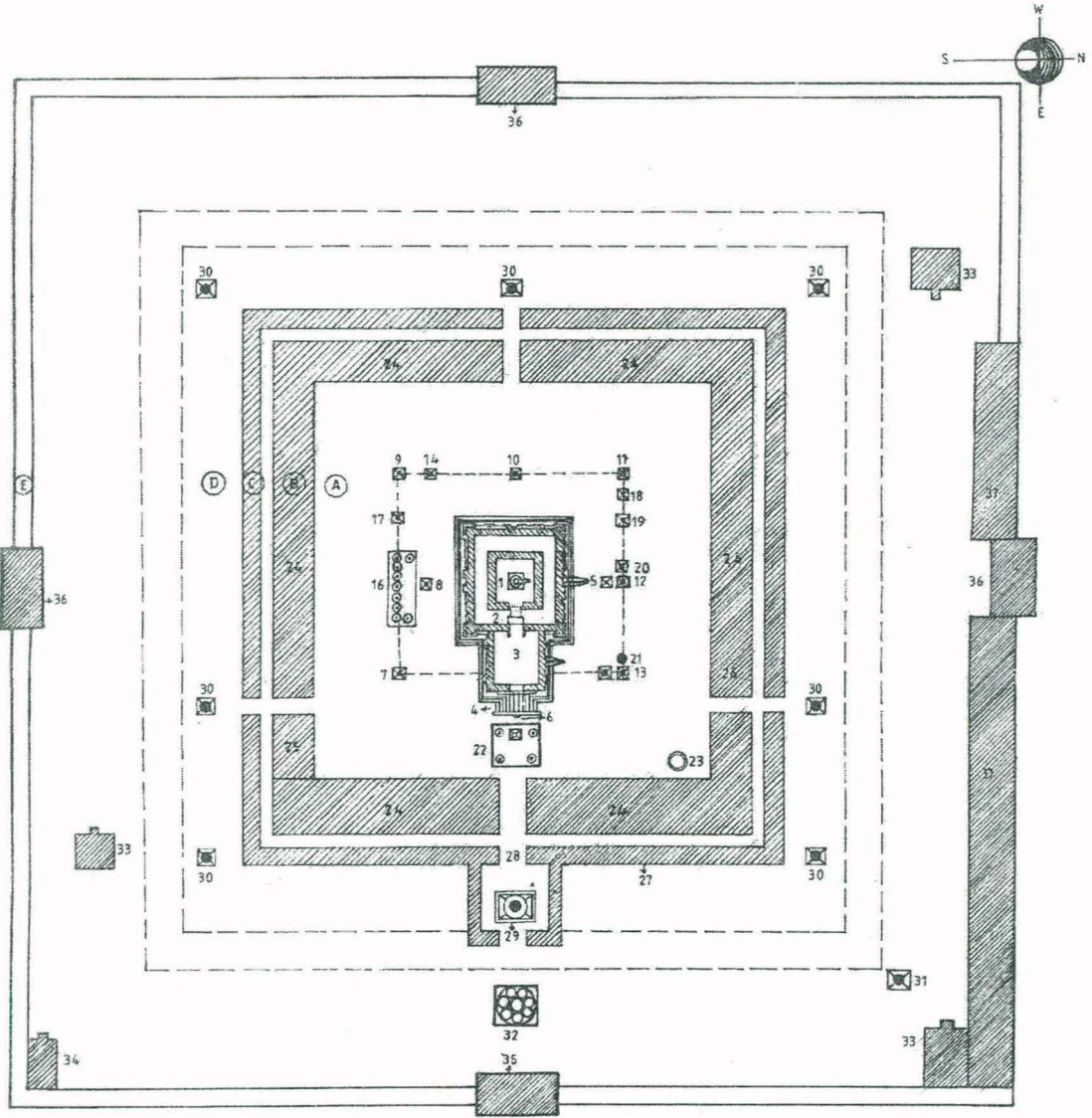
Fig. 2: Layout of a *Pañcaprakāra* scheme. Courtesy: S. Jayashanker.

Key to Diagram

A. Akathe Balivattam: 1. Garbha-gṛha, 2. Antaraḷa, 3. Mukha-maṇḍapa, 4. Sōpāna, 5. Praṇaḷa, 6. Indra, 7. Agni, 8. Yama, 9. Nṛti, 10. Varuṇa, 11. Vāyu, 12. Sōma, 13. Īśāna, 14. Ananata, 15. Brahma, 16. Balipitha having 9 devatas, 17. Śāsta, 18. Durga, 19. Subrahmaṇya, 20. Kubēra, 21. Namaskara - maṇḍapa, 22. Position of Vāhana, 23. Well

B. Antahāra or Cuttambalam: 24. Valiambalam, 25. Titappalli, 26. Mulayara.

C. Madhyahāra: 27. Vilakkumātam

D. Bahyahāra: 28. Agramandapa, 29. Valiabalikkal, 30. Balipīthas, 31. Kṣētrapāla, 32. Dhvaja sthamba, 33. Srīkovil of minor deities, 34. Kūtambalam

E. Maryada: 35. Main gōpura, 36. Other gōpuras (optional), 37. Ūttupura.
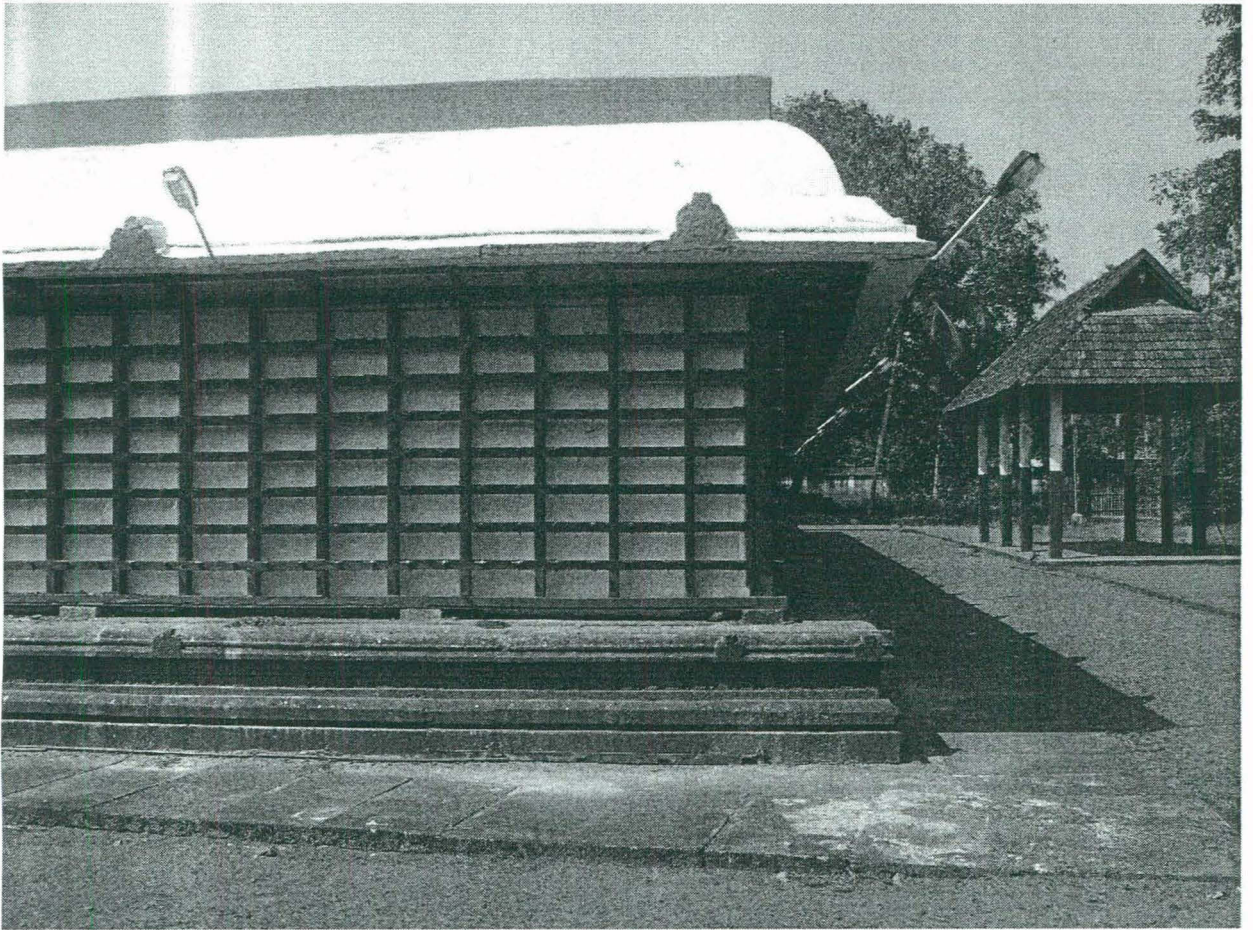
Fig. 3: Vilakkumadam of the Sri Vallabhasvami Temple, Tiruvalla
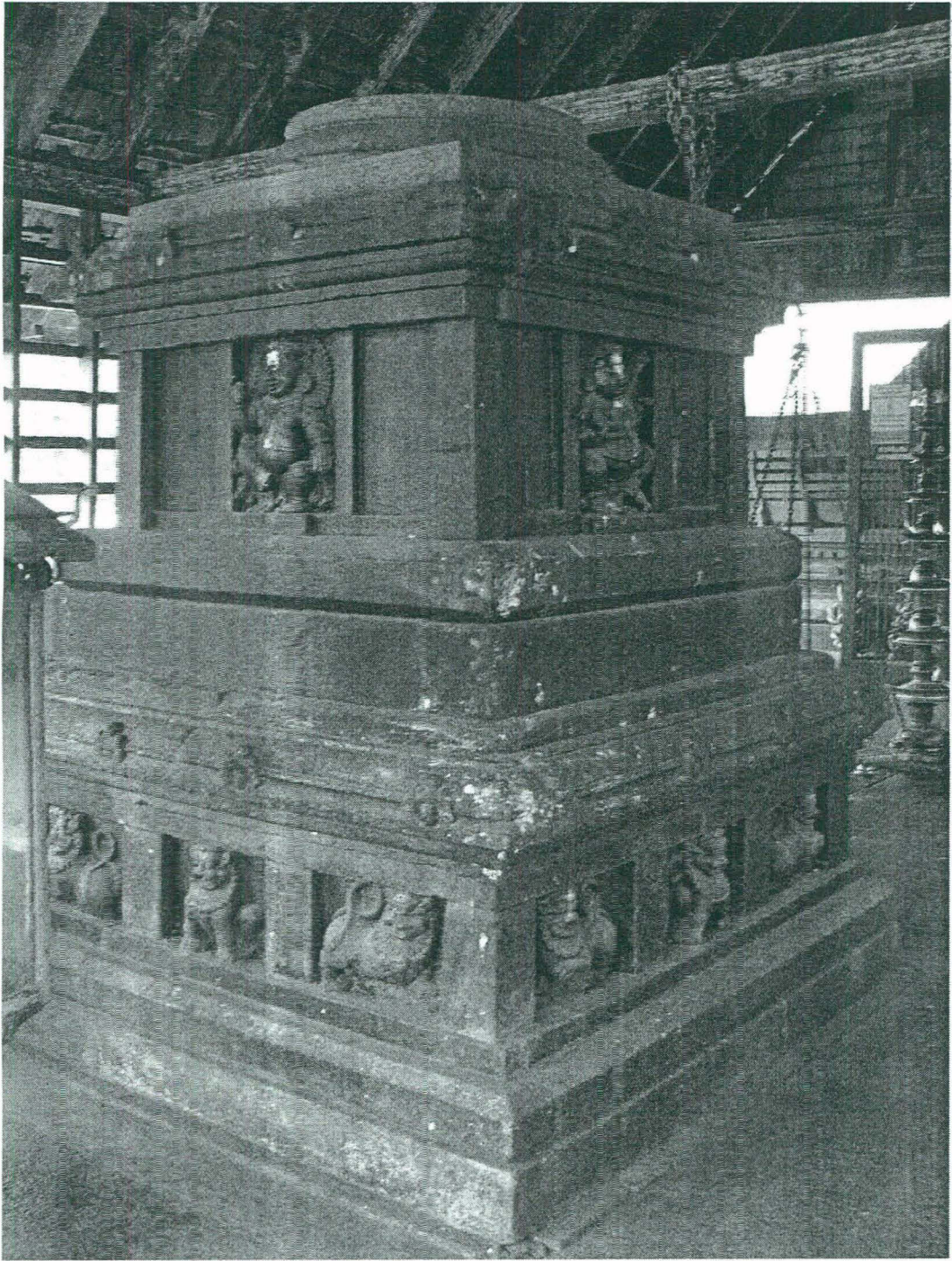
Fig 4: Balikkal mandapam of the Sri Vallabhasvami Temple, Tiruvalla

Fig. 5: Puratte Balivattam of the Vadakkumnatha Temple with the Kootambalam at Left side.

Fig. 6: Dhvaja sthambha of the the Sri Vallabhasvami Temple, Tiruvalla

Fig. 7: Outer Wall of the Sri Vallabhasvami Temple, Tiruvalla

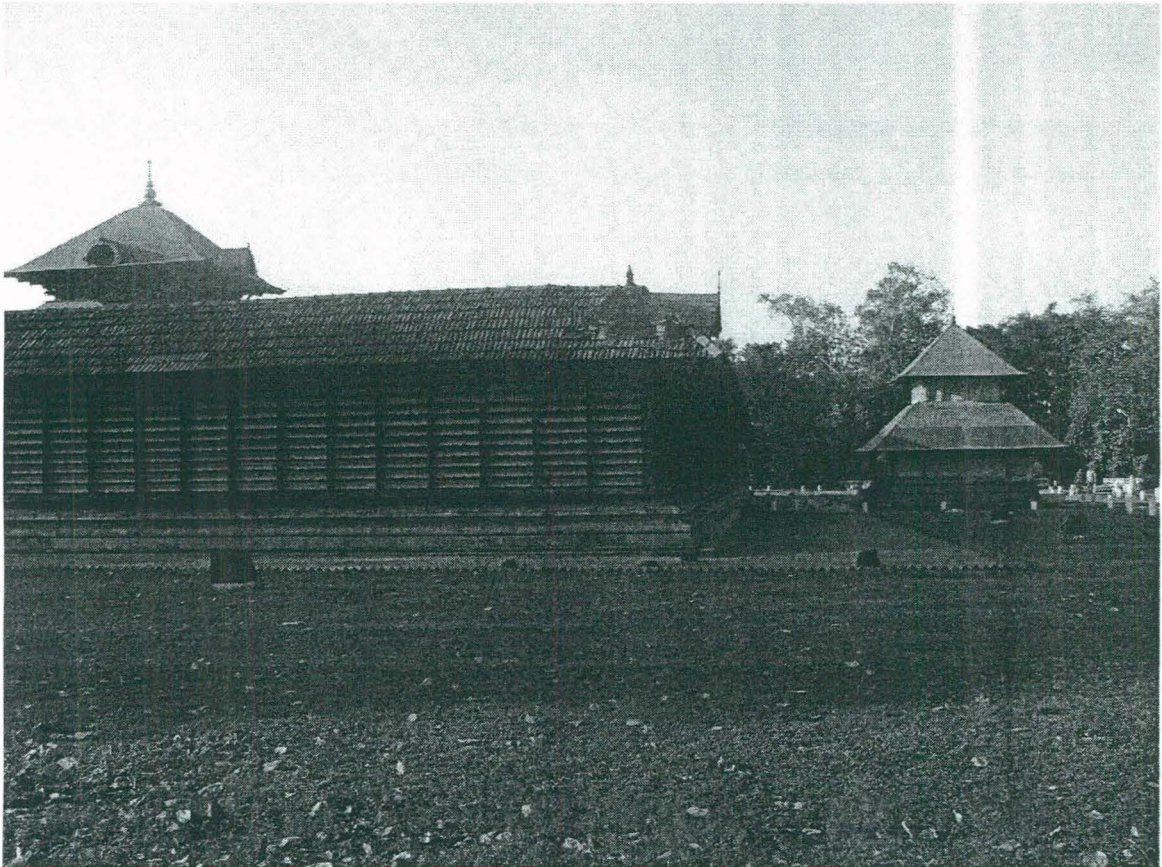Fig. 8: Vadakkumnatha Temple at the center of Trissur town

Fig. 9: Shrine for Sasta, outside the akatte balivattam of Vadakkumnatha Temple, Trichur

Fig. 10: Gopura of the Vadakkumnatha Temple, Trichur
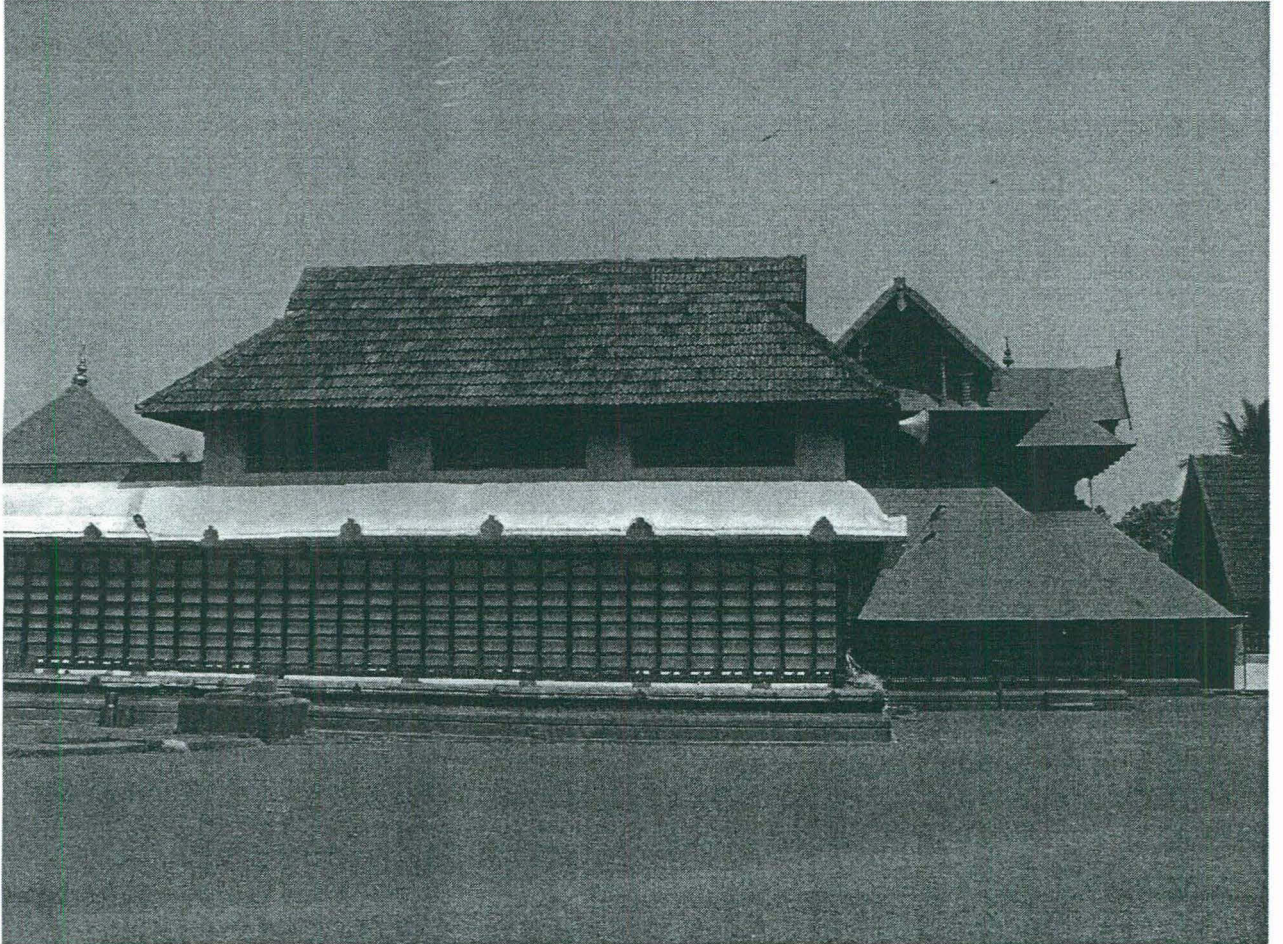
Fig. 11: Sri Vallabhasvami Temple, Tiruvalla

Fig. 12: Granite Flagstaff of the Sri Vallabhasvami Temple, Tiruvalla

Fig. 13a: Dvarapala, 14th-15th century A.D., Wood, Saktankulanagara Narasimha Temple, Chengannur, Courtesy: www.jstor.org
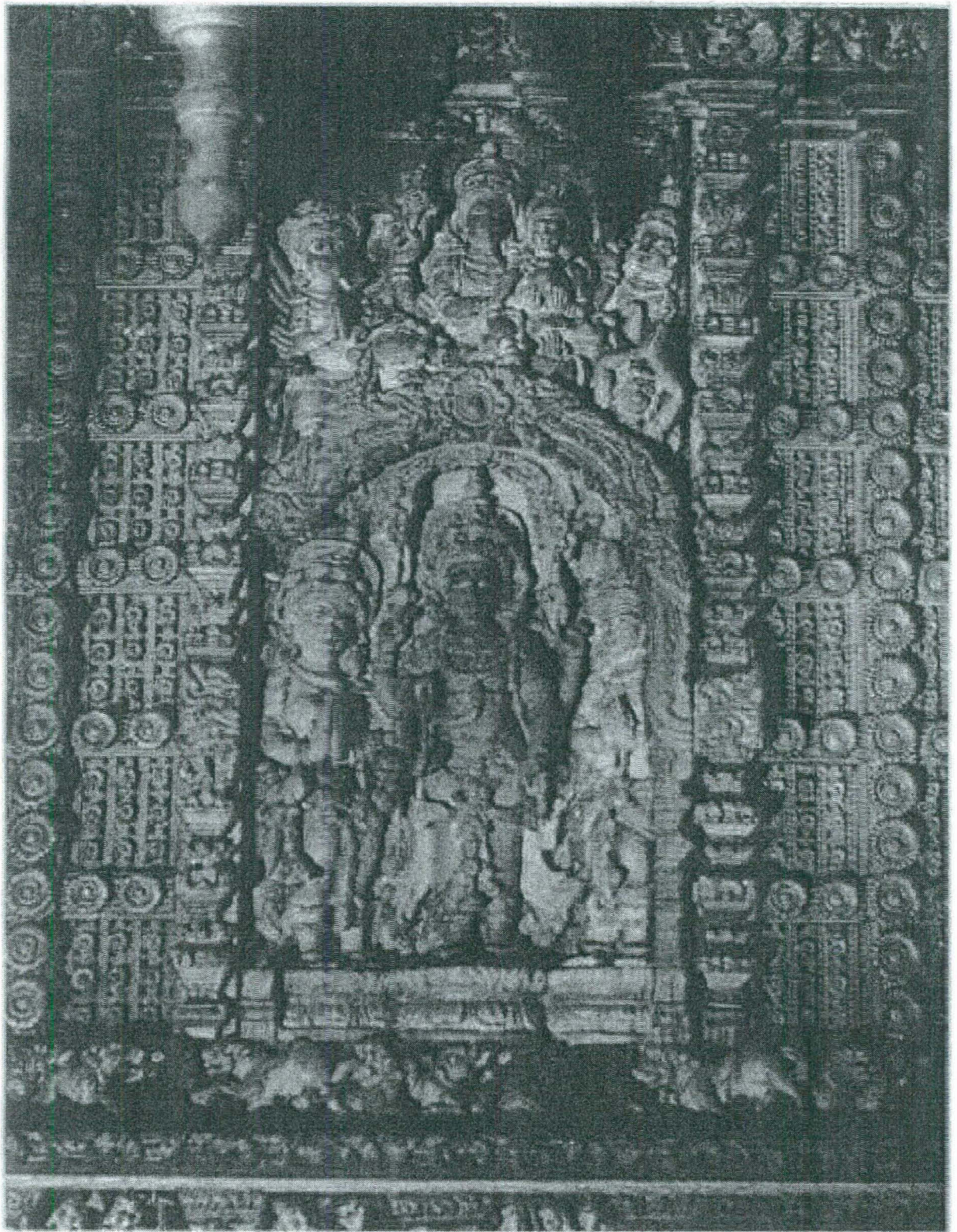
Fig. 13b: Visnu Flanked with Attendants, 1545 A.D., Wood, Siva temple, Ettumanur, Courtesy: www.jstor.org

Fig. 13c: Dvarapala at the Sanka⸱⸱r⸱arayana Shrine, Vadakkumnatha Temple Complex, 16th c. A.D., Courtesy: www.jstor.org
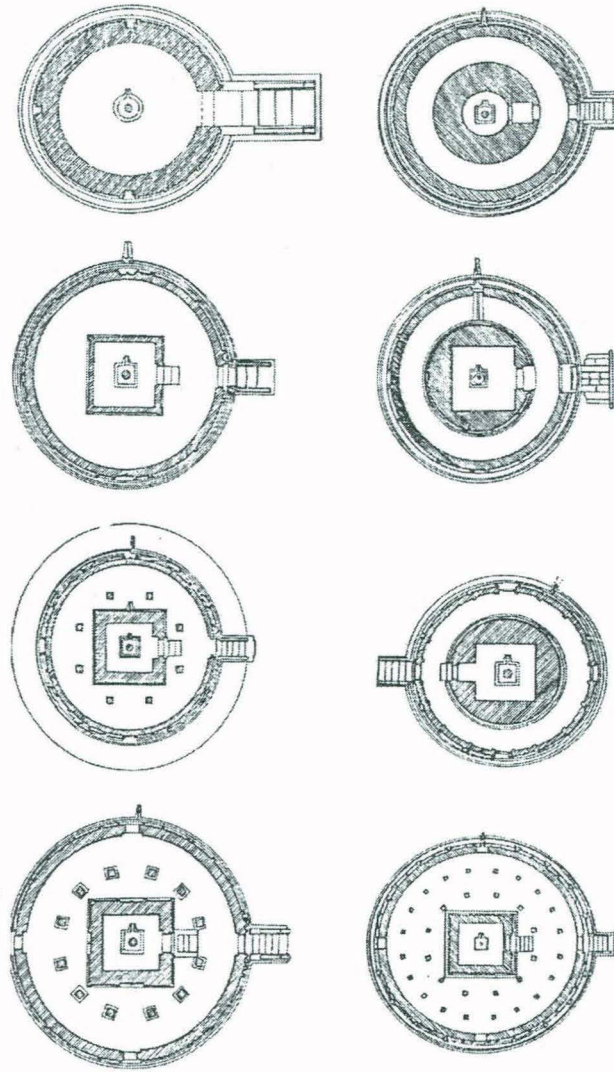
Fig. 14: Circular Ground Plan of Various Srikovils. Courtesy: S. Jayashanker

Names of the temples in each row:

- Sri Siva Temple, Pulpalli
- Sri Valia-Udayeswaram Temple, Trivandrum
- Sri Niramankara Visnu Temple, Nemam
- Sri Subrahmanya Temple, Manjeri

. Sri Siva Temple, Pulpatta

. Sri Siva Temple, Tirunellayi

. Sri Narayana Temple, Kannur
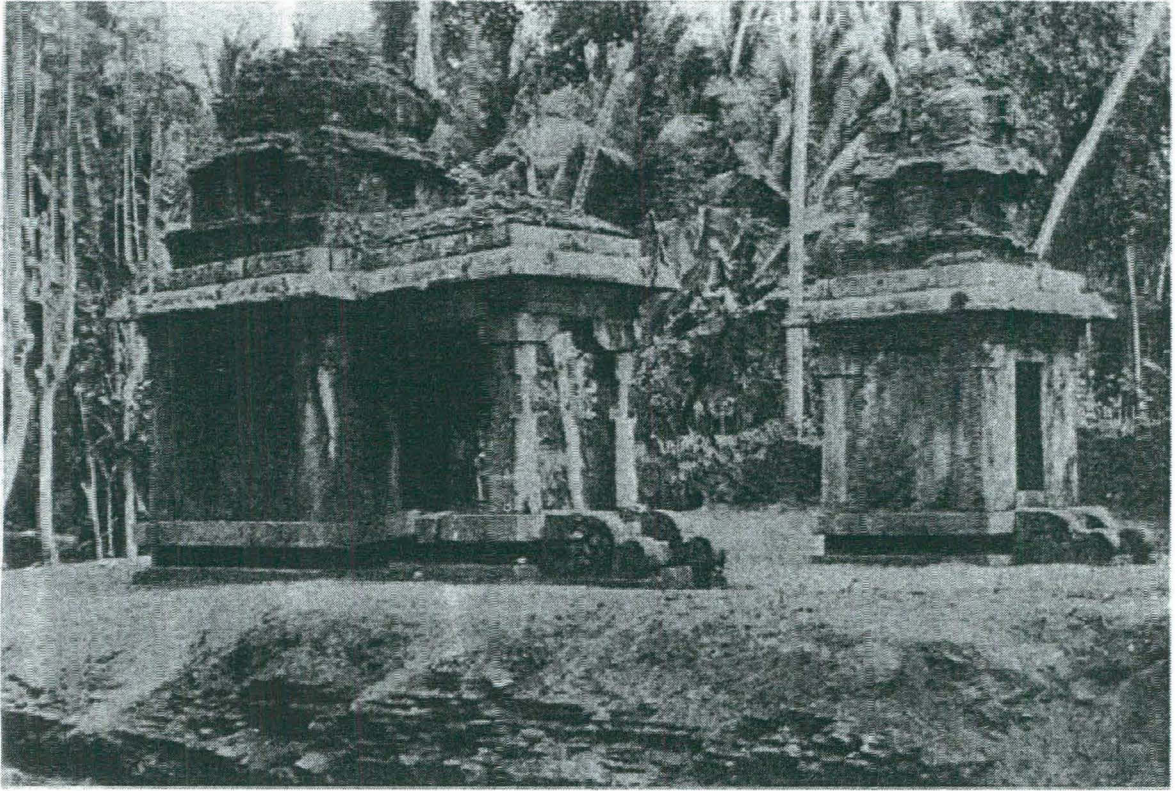
. Sri Triuvembiilappan Temple, Trissur

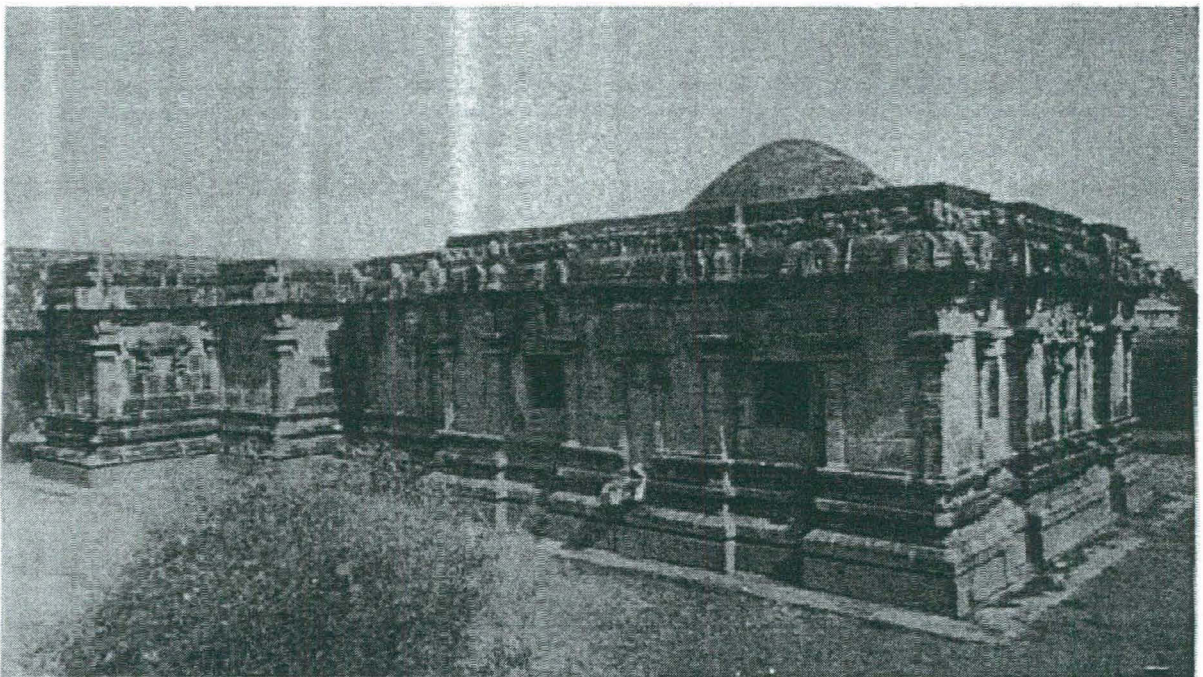Fig. 15: Temples at Vizhinjam, 9th-10th century A.D., Dravida Style. Courtesy: www.jstor.org

Fig. 16: Guhanathasvami Temple, Cape Comorin, 10th-11th century A. D., Dravida Style. Courtesy: www.jstor.org