

MODERN KERALA



Iron Age and Early historical society and Sources

Archaeological evidences

Archaeology which is called **“the handmaid of history”** is often a reliable guide to the historian. The archaeological sources of Kerala history may be broadly classified into three sections

1. monuments

2. Coins

3. Inscriptions

Monuments



- In the first may be included material remains like the megaliths, stone images, temples, Churches, mosques, synagogues, palaces, forts and historical sites.
- The megalithic monuments such as **dolmens, menhirs, stone images, porthole cits, Kudakallus or umbrella stones, Topikallus or hat stones and rock -cut caves discovered from places like the Anjanad Valley, Trichur, Porkalam, Eyyal Cheramanangad, Kattakampal, Taliparamba, Edakkal, etc help to throw light on the pre- historic culture of Kerala.**
- The earliest of the temples of Kerala are the rock-cut temples seen at Vizhinjam, Madavurpara, Kottukal, Trikkakudi, Kallil, Trikkur, Irunilamcode and Tiruvegapura. Some writers ascribe a Buddhist or Jaina origin to these temples.
- They have been assigned to the period from the 8 th to the 10 th century AD. The stone sculptures are Chera carvings and they represent a local branch of the pallava school.

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- The figure of a bearded Rishi carved out in stone at Trikkakudi resembles the Rishi in the Descent of the Ganges at Mamallapuram.
- The rock-cut reliefs at Vizhinjam show traces of the influence of the later Pallava style. The rock cut temple at Kottukal contains a sculptural representation the like of which is not seen anywhere else in India. The Nandi -Monkey episode of the puranas is represented here.
- The origin of the structural temples in Kerala may be traced to the beginning of the 9th century A D. A Study of the stylistic evidence revealed by them helps to throw considerable light on the evolution of Kerala art, architecture and sculpture.
- The vast majority of the Kerala temples have been built in Kerala style with its characteristic Sri Kovil and predominance of wood architecture.
- There are also certain unique structures of archaeological interest in the Kerala temples such as the Koothambalam in the Haripad temple and the Garuda Mandapam at Sri Vallabha temple, Tiruvalla.
- Some of the churches and mosques of Kerala are also of historical and archaeological interest.
- According to tradition prevalent in Kerala the churches at Palayur, Pallipuram, Kottakkavu etc, are among the seven ancient churches and mosques of Kerala are also of historical and archaeological interest.
- The Kerala churches bear evidence of the influence of the indigenous as well as foreign architectural styles. A study of the location of some of the temples, churches, mosques is a special interest to the historian of Kerala.

Coins



- A study of the coins is of some value in the reconstruction of the history of Kerala. The coins of some value in the reconstruction of the history of Kerala.
- The coins contain dates, symbols and legends which furnish valuable clues to the historian.
- A large number of coins, foreign and indigenous, have been in circulation in Kerala from very early days. The coins minted by the local rulers have been in circulation in Kerala from very early days.
- A study of the coins is of some value in the reconstruction of the history of Kerala. The coins contain dates, symbols and legends which furnish valuable clues to the historian.
- A large number of coins, foreign and indigenous, have been in circulation in Kerala from very early days. The earliest of the foreign coins discovered are the Roman coins, sometimes referred to in Chera and Chola inscriptions as '**Pazhankasu**'.
- In 1851 a find of Roman coins was made at Cannanore and not less than 5 headloads were unearthed on that occasion.
- **Roman coins** have been discovered from **Eyyal** in the Trichur district and from some other parts of the State.
- **The Eyyal collection** contained 13 gold coins and 71 Roman denarius covering a period of 240 years of Roman history from 117 B.C to 123 A.D.
- The **Vazhappally inscription of Rajasekhara** (820- 844) makes specific mention of the dinarius. Roman coins have been discovered also from such places as Valluvally (near Paravur), Punjar, Edamaruku and Niranam.

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- On the basis of available evidence it may be safely assumed that Roman coins were in wide circulation in Kerala in the ancient period. Arabic and Ceylonese coins have also been present here at various periods.
- **Four gold coins** which formed part of a find in the Kothamangalam village came into the hands of the State Archaeology Department in 1960-'61 and they have been identified as the coins issued by the Umayyad Caliph rulers (661-750 A.D.).
- Another foreign coin in circulation in Kerala in the early period was a Ceylonese coin called **Ezhakasu**. In the days of the Portuguese and the Dutch the Venetian sequins, the Moorish ducats and Spanish reals were in vogue.
- A large number of coins, non-Kerala but Indian, have also been discovered from different parts of the State, the earliest among them being the punch marked coins which were current even in the time of the Buddha.
- Two hoards of such coins numbering in all 218 were discovered in 1946 from Nellikulangara (Kottayam district) and Eyyal (Trichur district.)
- Three coins discovered from Paravur with the symbols, among others, of the elephant and the bow and arrow, have been identified in the Travancore
- Archaeological Series as Chera coins of the 9th or 10th century,² but from the appearance and serial order of the other symbols in the coins they seem to be punch-marked coins.
- It is possible that the symbols of the elephant and bow and arrow, typical of the Chera kings, were stamped on them at the time of their circulation in Kerala.
- The coins of the Chola, Pandya and other South Indian powers were also in circulation in Kerala in the early period.
- The **Anaiachu**, a Chola gold coin, was introduced about 1200 A.D. while the Tulukkakasu of the Madurai Sultans came into circulation in the

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second half of the 14th The Unniaticharitam composed in the 14th century refers to the latter coin.

- The coins minted by the local rulers have been in circulation in Kerala from very early days.
- **Rasi**, the gold coin alleged to have been introduced by Parasurama, is said to be the oldest indigenous coin currently in Kerala.
- The coin next in age was the Kaliyugarajan or Kalingarayan Panama. W. Elliot has expressed the view that it was at one time current all over Kerala.
- Such coins as **Pon, Achu, Panam, Kasu, Azhakachu, Tiramam**, etc. were current in Kerala during the period from the 9th to the 13th century.
- A collection of 31 silver coins bearing the name of a Kerala king called **Vira Kerala** was discovered from Vaigaikulam village in the Sankarankovil taluk of Tirunelveli in 1944.
- It contains the symbol of an elephant-goad on one side and a legend 'Sri **Gandiramkussaya**' (Elephant-goad to the heroes) on the other.
- The identification of Vira Kerala of these coins has not been done conclusively, but a writer in the Journal of the Numismatic Society of India identifies him with the Venad king Vira Kerala of the Cholapuram Inscription (1127 AD.)

Inscriptions



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- Inscriptions from an authentic source of information for the early history of Kerala.
- They furnish valuable material for the reconstruction of the dynastic history of the various kingdoms and also throw light on the political, social and cultural life of the people in different periods.
- There are few temple records of general interest to the student of Kerala epigraphy.
- Among them the **Tiruvalla Copper Plates**, the Vadakkumnathan temple records and Pattazhi Copper Scroll deserves notice.
- The Tiruvalla Copper Plates form a voluminous document and they have been assigned to the 12th century A D.
- The churches, mosques and Synagogues of Kerala have also been found to contain inscriptions of historical value.
- Among the epigraphical records obtained from mosques, special mention may be made of the Arabic inscription in Madayi or Pazhangadi mosque which commemorates its erection in Hijra 580.
- The **Mampilly Plate** of Sri Vallabhan Kotha of Venad (974 A.D.) is the first available record dated in the Kollam era (149).
- It is also the earliest record in which the Panamkavil palace of the Venad kings is specifically referred to. It also helps in determining the dates of Indukotha (944-962), Bhaskara Ravi I (962-1019), etc., the rulers of Mahodayapuram.
- **The Cholapuram and Suchindram inscriptions** of Kotha Kerala Varma (1125-1155 AD.), the Kilimanoor records of Aditya Varma (1165-1175 AD.) and other kings of the 12th century, the Vellayani inscription of Vira Ravi Varma (1195-1205 AD.), the Manalikara inscription of Ravi Kerala Varma (1215-1240 AD.) etc., are some of the other inscriptions of the early Venad rulers which help in the reconstruction of Venad history.
- **The Kandiur inscription** of 1218 is important in so far as it mentions Ravi Kerala Varma (1215-1240 AD.) and his wife Unniachi and the renovation of

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the Kandiyur temple by the Odanad king Kotha Varma at the instance of the Venad king

- . An inscription of Ravi Varma Kulasekhara (1299–1314 AD.) is found in the Siva temple at **Salaigramam in Trivandrum**.
- It enumerates the birudas of Ravi Varma. It is written in Grandha characters and all the birudas are in Sanskrit language but the last six lines are in Tamil.
- The inscriptions of Ravi Varma discovered from Kancipuram, Tiruvati, Srirangam and Poonamallee in Tamil Nadu also throw light on his conquests and achievements.
- An important Sanskrit inscription of **Aditya Varma Sarvanganatha** (1376–1383 A.D.) of Venad found in the Krishnaswami shrine of the Sri Padmanabhaswamy temple at Trivandrum is in Grandha characters and it records the repair of the shrine by this illustrious king.
- The **Trikkanamkudi Bell inscription** of Aditya Varma (1469–1484 A.D.) is an important record. Several records of Bhutala Vira Udaya Marthanda Varma (1516–1535 A.D.) discovered from Kanyakumari and Tirunelveli districts show his solicitude for other religionists like the Jains and the Christians.
- The inscriptions of **Marthanda Varma** (1729–1758 A.D.) found in the Sri Padmanabhaswamy temple are in Sanskrit and they record the story of the reconstruction of the temple by Marthanda Varma in the first half of the 18th century.

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- **There are a few temple records** of general interest to the student of Kerala epigraphy.
- Among them the **Tiruvalla Copper Plates, the Vadakkumnathan temple records and the Pattazhi Copper Scroll** deserves notice.
- The Tiruvalla Copper Plates form a voluminous document and they have been assigned to the 12th century A.D.
- The record mentions several institutions, customs etc., of Kerala which are of sociological interest. Three inscriptions are found in the Vadakkunnathan temple at Trichur and they have been roughly assigned to the 12th century A.D.
- Their historical value lies in the fact that they mention the Kottuvayiraveli Kacham which testifies to the ascendancy of the Namboothiri Brahmins who framed regulations in regard to the rights of the tenants, menials etc. who were subordinate to the Vadakkunnathan temple.
- This is the only Kacham which contains provisions for controlling the rights of the tenants in Kerala.
- **The Pattazhi Copper Scroll** dated Kollam era 971 (1796 A.D.) received from the Bhagavathi temple at Pattazhi in the Kottarakkara taluk relates to the Prayaschitta or expiation in the form of a monetary fine of hundred Rasis which the Karakkur connected with the Bhagavathi temple were forced to pay at the instance of the Namboothiripad of Akavur for having defied the authority of the Kampithan who was in sole charge of the administration of the temple properties.
- The inscription throws light on the relations between the Uralar and the Karalar in regard to matters of temple administration in the 18th century. The churches, mosques and synagogues of Kerala have also been found to contain inscriptions of historical value.
- One of the most interesting inscriptions is the **Pahlavi Cross inscription** discovered from the **Orthodox Syrian church at Kadamattom**.
- It is engraved on a tablet measuring 13" x 20" and resembles the St. Thomas Mount Cross.

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- **The Valiyapally in Thazhathangadi**, Kottayam, belonging to the Knanaya Orthodox Syrians which was set up in 1550 in the days of the Thekkumkoor Rajas is also famous for its Persian Cross and the Pahlavi inscription on it.
- Several churches such as those of **Udayamperoor, Kandanad, Kothamangalam, Ankamali, Parur, Varapuzha etc.**, contain epigraphs of historical value.

Palaces



- The most important of the palaces is the one at Padmanabhapuram which is now in the Kanyakumari district, but is still under the control of the Government of Kerala.
- The palace embodies the indigenous architectural features of Kerala in its gabled roofs and carved wooden pillars. One of the rooms in the palace contains some of the best preserved mural paintings in the country.
- The '**Dutch Palace**' at Mattancherry built by the Portuguese about 1555 A.D. and presented to the then ruler of Cochin, Vira Kerala Varma, is one of the oldest buildings built by the Europeans in India in the predominantly Kerala style.
- It contains about 45 mural paintings representing the story of the Hindu epic Ramayana and according to some critics of art they show traces of

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the influence of **“the Buddhist painting that links the art of Kerala with that of Ajanta and Bagh”**.

- These murals have been attributed to the 17th century. Another important palace is the **Krishnapuram palace, near Kayamkulam**.
- It was built by Marthanda Varma (1729-1758) after the conquest of the Kayamkulam kingdom and is a typical example of the Kerala style of architecture. The largest of the mural paintings so far discovered in Kerala is in this palace. It occupies a wall space of 154 sq. feet and depicts the puranic **story of Gajendramoksha**

Forts



- The most important of the forts are situated in **Anjengo, Pallipuram (Vypin island), Kottapuram, Palghat, Tellicherry, Cannanore, Bekal, Kalnad, Hosdurg and Kumbha**.
- The Anjengo fort, a square structure, built by the English in 1695 may be seen in a fairly good state even today.
- The Pallipuram fort which is hexagonal in shape and is known also as Ayakotta or Azhikotta is perhaps the oldest European structure extant in India. Built by the Portuguese in 1503, it is preserved as a protected monument by the Archaeology Department of the State.
- **The Kottapuram fort** was built by the Portuguese in 1523 when they thought of making Cranganore the seat of their chief power in Malabar.

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- It is now in ruins, but the remnants of a portion of the old wall and a few barracks are still seen there and they are preserved by the Archaeology Department.
- **The Palghat fort** built in 1766 by Haider Ali is square in shape with thick walls and strong bastions at the four corners and in the center and it is still in good state of preservation.
- **The Tellicherry fort** built by the English in the 18th century is also a square structure built of laterite and is distinguished by its massive and lofty loop-holed walls and strong flanking bastions.
- **The fort St. Angelo** in Cannanore town built by the Portuguese early in the 16th century is a massive triangular structure built of laterite. It is now practically deserted, half of its buildings having tumbled down.
- **The Bekal fort** believed to have been built by Sivappa Nayaka of Bednore in the 17th century is the largest and best preserved in the whole State.
- **The forts at Hosdurg, Kumbala and Chandragiri** (Kalnad) were also built by the Bednore Nayaks, though large portions of these are now in ruins.
- The ruins of several minor forts and redoubts belonging to various epochs of Kerala history may be seen scattered all over the State.
- The ruins of the **Nedumkotta or the 'Travancore Lines'** built by the Dharma Raja (1758-1798) to ward off Tipu's attacks may be seen at Kottamuri, about a mile to the interior to the east of the Chalakudi-Anjal Road.
- Ruins of old forts may be seen at Chettuva, Trichur, Chaliyam, Badagara, Kottakkal, Mullurkara, Enamakkal, Kuthuparamba and Karikode. The ruins of the famous Vaipicotta Seminary and Jesuit College at Pallipuram may also be seen even today. There are also a few historical sites which are of interest to students of Kerala history.
- The most important of these is the **Cheraman Parambu** situated near the ancient temple of Tiruvanchikulam in Cranganore. It is supposed to have been the place from where the Chera Emperors ruled over Kerala. In the trial excavations conducted at the place by the Cochin State

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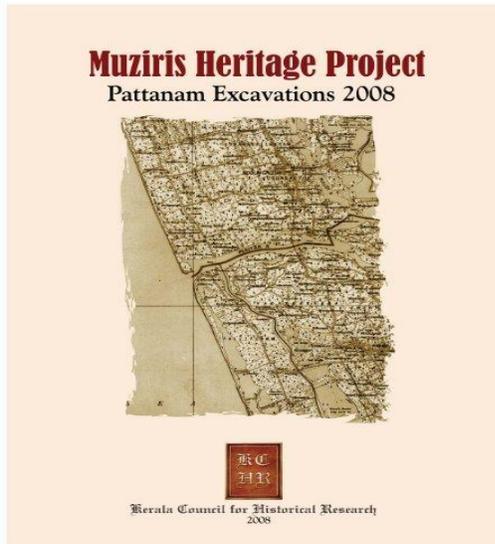
Archaeology Department in 1945-'46 more than thousand relics were discovered. Trikanamatilakam and Karurpadanna, situated only a few miles from Tiruvanchikulam, are also places of historical importance.

- There are practically no relics in these places today to proclaim their ancient historical greatness, but the former was in ancient days a great center of learning and culture and the latter might have been Karur, the celebrated capital of the first Chera Empire.
- **Karikode** (near Thodupuzha), the capital of the former principality of Kizhumalainad, is an interesting historical site. In addition to the ruins of forts, there is the Annamalai temple here which shows traces of the influence of Tamilian architecture. It contains a collection of stone and bronze images and puja utensils like lamps and bells which have been assigned to the period between the 14th and 16th centuries.
- The locality known as Kottaparambu lying to the south-east of the old Collectorate in Calicut was the ancient seat of the Zamorins, the Mutalakulam being his kitchen tank and Mananchira his bathing tank.
- The memorial pillar with the inscription **“Vasco da Gama landed here Kappa Kadavu in the year 1498”** on the Kappad beach off Calicut proclaims the historical importance of the place from where started the story of European expansion in India

Pattanam Excavations

Pattanam excavations were the first ever multi- disciplinary excavations undertaken in Kerala state.

The main objective of the excavation was to search for archaeological evidence that would help to locate an early historic urban settlement and the ancient Indo-Roman port of Muziris or Musiri on the Malabar coast.



Many important findings were obtained like human bones, storage jars, gold ornaments, glass beads, stone beads, utilitarian objects made stone, upper and Iron, typical pottery, early Chera coins, brick wall, brick platform, ring well, wharf with bollards and six meter long wooden canoe parallel to the wharf structure about 2.5m below surface level The structures indicate a vast urban settlement .

Greek and Roman literature

- ❖ The Greeks and the Romans of those days carried on extensive trade with Kerala. Cardamom, Cinnamon, ginger, turmeric and pepper are among the spices mentioned by Discordies, the Greek physician and contemporary of Pliny, in his *Materia Medico*, as possessing medicinal virtues.
- ❖ Philological evidence has been deduced to prove Greek commercial contacts with Kerala. During the first three centuries of the Christian era the trade between the Roman Empire and the East became quite extensive both by land and water.
- ❖ In fact Roman gold and silver were steadily drained into South India in exchange not only for spices, but also muslin , silk and other costly

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luxuries. The discovery of Roman coins in many parts of Kerala testifies to the wide dispersion of Roman trade contacts.

- ❖ Pepper formed the bulk of the west bound cargo from Kerala. It was valued by the Romans as highly as gold and silver and hence the name Yavana Priya was given to it by Sanskrit writers.
- ❖ At the Roman customs House in Alexandria imported spices were scrutinized and taxed. The direct trade between Kerala and Rome declined with effect from the 3rd century AD.
- ❖ when military anarchy reigned in Rome, but spices continued to have a good market. When Constantinople became the capital of the Roman empire in 330 A D that city developed into a center of trade in orient spices.
- ❖ Indigenous Maritime Tradition In the preceding sections only the trade contacts of the foreign powers with the Kerala coast on their own initiative have been dealt with.
- ❖ The early sangam works also contain references to the voyages of the people of Kerala to foreign countries. In the 6th decade of pattupattu the poetess Kakkai School of Patiniyar refers to the Chera ships plying the ocean to procure wealth from foreign countries.



- ❖ A very brief sketch of the development of Kerala historiography is attempted here as a prelude to the detailed analysis of the sources of Kerala history.
- ❖ '**Ancient India**', it is said, produced no Herodotus or Thucydides, no Livy or **Tacitus**'.
- ❖ This oft quoted statement is generally true of ancient Kerala as well.
- ❖ Though historiography in the modern sense of the term is of relatively recent origin in Kerala, it cannot be said that there was the complete absence of the historiographic tradition in early or medieval Kerala.
- ❖ The **Mushakavamsa, a Mahakavya** in Sanskrit, composed about 1100 AD. by Atula, the court poet of the Mushaka king Srikantha, bears evidence of the historiographic tradition which prevailed in an embryonic form in the early period of Kerala history.
- ❖ It may be noted that this work is anterior to the Rajatarangini of Kalhana believed to have been composed in 1149 A.D.
- ❖ In so far as it deals with the history of the Mushaka kingdom of Kolathunadu, it provides the first independent dynastic history available in the whole range of Sanskrit literature.
- ❖ The historiographic tradition as evidenced by the **Mushika Vamsa** remained dormant during the succeeding centuries. It registered a significant revival in the sixteenth century with the composition of the **Tuhfat-ul-Mujahideen** by Sheikh Zainuddin, the noted Arabic scholar who lived at Ponnani.

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- ❖ Though this work deals mainly with the political history of the Portuguese period from 1498 to 1583, it also throws light on the social customs of medieval Malabar.
- ❖ The accounts of the **Portuguese, Dutch and English** writers kept the historiographic tradition alive and provided much useful information on the political and social history of Kerala for the period after the advent of the European powers.
- ❖ The names of Duarte Barbosa, Canter Visscher, Dr. Hermann Gundert and Samuel Mateer deserve mention in this context.
- ❖ The compilation of the Malabar Manual (1887) by Logan on the basis of the historical material available at the time was a landmark in Kerala historiography.
- ❖ It inspired the compilation of the State Manuals of Travancore and Cochin by native scholars in later years.
- ❖ The native scholars of the age who wrote works on the early history of Kerala were preoccupied with political history.
- ❖ The emphasis on social or cultural history was missing in their works. The contents of the **Thiruvithamkoor Charithram** (1868) by Pachu Muthatu and the History of Travancore (1878) by P. Shungoonny Menon bears evidence to this lacuna.
- ❖ The first native historian who grasped the importance of the social aspects of Kerala history was K.P. Padmanabha Menon (1857–1919).
- ❖ His **Kochi Rajya Charithram** (Malayalam) published in 1912 and History of Kerala (English Vols I–IV) published posthumously between 1924 and 1937 give considerable attention to social history. This represented a new and welcome trend in Kerala historiography.
- ❖ But **Padmanabha Menon** wrote at a time when the implications of the Tamil Sangam works for the study of early Kerala history had not been grasped by scholars. Nor had archaeological or epigraphical studies made much progress.

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- ❖ His work, therefore, suffered from obvious limitations. **KM. Panikkar**, another Kerala historian of repute, who dealt with the history of the Portuguese and Dutch periods and Mysore-Kerala relations, had also his main focus on political history in his works.
- ❖ The eminent anthropologists, **L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer** and his son L.A. Krishna Iyer, undertook detailed studies on the castes and tribes of Kerala.
- ❖ Though these studies were a distinct contribution to the social history of Kerala, their method of analysis was more anthropological than historical.
- ❖ A later work of L.A. Krishna Iyer entitled Social History of Kerala published in two volumes in 1968 and 1972 respectively also contains more of anthropology than history.
- ❖ All these works have their intrinsic limitations as works of history. It was left to Prof. Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai (1904-1973) to provide new horizons to Kerala historiography.
- ❖ What was conceived of and written till then as Kerala history of the ancient and early medieval periods was nothing but a string of legends, superstitions and fictions and had not had much of basis in fact.
- ❖ Prof. Elamkulam undertook a systematic study of early inscriptions and Tamil and Malayalam literary works and reconstructed the early history of Kerala, thereby enabling us to get a continuous and connected history from the Sangam age to the Portuguese period.
- ❖ He provided a definite chronological framework to the political history of Kerala during the prePortuguese period by bringing to light the history of the Ay kingdom of South Kerala, the Ezhimala kingdom of North Kerala and the Second Chera Empire (800-1102 AD).

The study of social history also got a boost as a result of his labors, for he dealt in detail with such topics of sociological interest as

Marumakkathayam, Janmi system, caste, landlord—tenant relationship, Devadasi system etc. Prof. M.G.S.Narayanan lent further dimensions to the historiography of Kerala pertaining to the same period.

- He too focused his attention on the study of inscriptions and worked out his own genealogy and chronology of the rulers of the Second Chera Empire.
- His study of the history of Kerala during the 9th to the 12th centuries also throws light on several aspects of social and cultural history and supplements that of Prof. Elamkulam, in spite of some of the differences in their perceptions and conclusions,
- The study of such subjects as art and literature was also pursued simultaneously by other groups of scholars, thereby widening the horizons of the cultural history of Kerala.
- Western scholars like Dr. Cousins and Stella Kramrisch studied, in collaboration with R.V. Poduval, Superintendent of
- **The Keralaolpathi** which gives imaginary names of various Perumals of old also refers to the invasion of Kerala by Krishnadeva Raya (1509-1530) and to such foreign powers as the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English.
- This is positive proof of the fact that the work was composed only sometime in the British period.
- Archaeology in erstwhile Travancore, such aspects of Kerala history and culture as arts, architecture, sculpture and painting. The works on the temples of Kerala published in more recent times by K.V. Soundararajan and H. Sarkar of the Archaeological Survey of India also deserves mention in this context.
- The murals of Kerala have come in for special study at the hands of **M.G. Sasibhooshan.**
- The work of compiling detailed histories of Malayalam language and literature was undertaken by scholars like P. Govinda Pillai, R. Narayana Panikkar and Ullur S. Parameswara Iyer and of Sanskrit language and literature in Kerala by Vadakkumkur Raja Raja Varma and Dr. K.K. Raja.

- In recent times the various aspects of Kerala studies — political, social, economic and cultural — have attracted the attention of western scholars and quite a few works have come out as products of their labors.
- George Woodcock’s Kerala-A Portrait of the Malabar Coast, R.C. Bristow’s Cochin Saga, Robin Jeffrey’s The Decline of Nayar Dominance, Rolland E. Miller’s Mappila Muslims of Malabar etc. deserve mention in this context.
- Dr. Nossiter of the London School of Economics has come out with his studies on the political and constitutional developments in modern Kerala. What is given above is only a very brief sketch of the development of Kerala historiography.
- More details on this subject can be had from the following sections of this chapter and the section on Historical Works in Chapter XXX.

Malayalam Works



- **Malayalam emerged as a language distinct from Tamil in the 9th century A.D.**, but literary works of historical value in this language are available only from the 12th or 13th century.
- Many of these works were composed under the patronage of the rulers of local dynasties exercising sway in the different parts of Kerala and hence they have to be used with considerable caution.
- Their direct contribution to historical knowledge is very little but their indirect value to the historian is considerable.
- The **Unniachcharitam and Unnichirutevicharitam** composed in the latter half of the 13th century A.D. are among the earliest Malayalam works of value to the historian.
- They are devoted to detailed accounts of the Devadasis who had attained fame in those days, but they also throw light on certain aspects of the political and social life of North Kerala in the 13th century A.D. The Anantapuravarnana written in the first half of the 14th century contains a good description of Trivandrum of the time.
- Another important Malayalam source is the celebrated **Unnulisandesam**, written in the latter half of the 14th century by an anonymous author. The date of its composition has been assigned to 1350- 1365 A.D.
- The Unnulisandesam, throws light on the achievements of the Venad rulers Iravi Iravi Varman (1350-1376) and Aditya Varma Sarvanganatha (1376-1383) in the realms of war and peace. It narrates the story of a message sent by a lover from Trivandrum to his lady love at **Kaduthuruthy**, the messenger

himself being Aditya Varma Sarvanganatha, the brother of Iravi Iravi Varman.

- The work contains valuable information regarding the political geography of the region from **Trivandrum to Kaduthuruthy**. Its references to the local kingdoms of Venad, Odanad, Tekkumkur and Vadakkumkur enrich our historical knowledge.
- The Unniaticharitam composed by the end of the 14th century throws light on the early history of the **Perumpadappu Swarupam** and its relations with the kingdom of Kodanad. The Kokasandesam composed about 1400 A.D. also furnishes useful historical material. Its reference to the swan passing through Kunaka (Trikanamathilakam) and Vanchi before it reaches Tiruvanchikulam (Tiruvanchikalam) provides a valuable piece of evidence in identifying Vanchimutur, the original capital of the first Chera Empire.
- **The Chandrolsavam**, a Malayalam poem of exquisite charm composed by a Namboothiri scholar in the first half of the 16th century, has for its scene of action Chittilappalli in Trichur district and it throws light on the social and cultural life of age.
- Some of the Malayalam Champus like **Rajaratnavaliyam** (16th century) throw light on certain aspects of the history of Cochin. The Rajaratnavaliyam was written by Narayana, the most famous of the Mahisha mangalam poets, in praise of Kesava Rama Varma (1565-1601).
- The Kandiyyur-Mattam Patapattu written by Nilakanta of Cheppad towards the close of the 16th century contains references to Manigramam, Onathallu, the Chiravai family, the Venad ruler, etc. The Patapattu (war song) written by

an anonymous author during the Dutch period describes the political developments in the Perumpadappu Swaroopam from 1646 to 1670 A.D.

- **The Mamamkam Kilipattu** written by Katancherri Namboothiri, a courtier of Bharani Tirunal Manavikrama (1684-1705), the great Zamorin, is one of the most important sources of the later history of Calicut. It describes some of the Zamorins of the 17th century and gives detailed descriptions of the Thai Puyam celebration of 1693 and the two Mamamkams of 1694 and 1695 A.D.
- In addition, there are several Chaver poems like Kandar Menon Pattu (1683), Ramacha Panikkar Pattu (17th century) etc., dealing with the exploits of heroes who died in the periodical Mamamkam fights.
- The **Kuchelavritam and Bhashashtapadi of Ramapurathu Warriar and Marthanda mahatmyam** by an anonymous author written in the first half of the 18th century are useful for the reconstruction of the history of the reign of Marthanda Varma (1729- 1758).
- **The Tullal works of Kunjan Nambiar** allude to several customs prevalent in Kerala in the 18th century. In addition to the literary works mentioned above, there are also some miscellaneous works in Malayalam which are of indirect historical value.
- **The Sthalapuranas, local ballads or Pattukal and Grandhavaris** belong to this category. The Sthala Puranas are temple chronicles or records dealing mainly with the origin and early history of the temples.
- They contain several exaggerations and distortions and have therefore to be used with considerable caution. Apart from the Sthala Puranas, the temples have also preserved some records of historical value.

- For example, the **Guruvayur temple** has in its possession records which prove that Hairdos Kutti Muppan who was in charge of the place made under orders from Tipu Sultan an annual grant to the temple for the conduct of daily pujas. The records in the Kumaranellur temple show that the Uralar had even the power to inflict capital punishment (Kollum Kolayum) on the tenants.
- The local ballads which suffer from the same defect as the Sthala Puranas are also not unimpeachable sources of history. Nevertheless, they also yield some useful historical information.
- One of the important historical ballads is the **Iravikutti Pillai Pattu** which describes the exploits of Iravikutti Pillai who fought valiantly against the forces of Tirumala Nayak and met with heroic death in the battle of Kaniyakulam (1634 A.D.).
- The Putuvatapattu about Kottayam Kerala Varma, the Valia Tampi Kunchu Thambi Kathai about the conflict between Marthanda Varma and his cousins and the Diwanvetti about Raja Kesavadas are some other ballads of historical value.
- The **Vadakkan Pattukal or Northern Ballads** are the most valuable of the local ballads. Composed mainly in the 17th or 18th century they deal with the exploits of medieval heroes or heroines.
- **The Tacholi Ballads** describe the fortunes of Thacholi Meppayil Kunji Othenan, the celebrated Nair hero of the 16th century.
- The group of songs known as the Puthuram Pattukal relate to the family of Aromal Chevakar, the famous Tiyya hero assigned to the 17th century A.D.

There are also ballads which describe the exploits of the Kunjali Marakkars, the rebellion of Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja and the events connected with Tipu's invasions.

- **The Northern Ballads** give us interesting glimpses of the social customs and institutions of North Kerala during the period prior to the establishment of British supremacy.
- The **Margam Kali Pattu, Kalyana Pattukal, Pallipattukal**, etc. The Syrian Christians and the Mappila Pattukal of the Malabar Muslims will also yield much historical material, if studied properly.
- Then there are the Grandhavaris which are mainly cadjan leaf documents or chronicles preserved in the archives of the various palaces. Many of them deal with dynastic history and the political events of the states over which the dynasties exercised sway.
- The **Mathilakam Grandhavari** (Records) at Trivandrum and the Grandhavari of the Zamorins of Calicut deserve special mention in this context. The Mathilakam Records originally belonged to the temple of Sri Padmanabha, the tutelary deity of the royal house of Travancore, but they now form part of the collection of cadjan (palm leaf) manuscripts (churunas) in the possession of the Central Archives of the State Government at Trivandrum.
- Composed originally of 3500 churunas, each churuna consisting of 1000 cadjan leaves on an average, the Mathilakam Grandhavari constitutes perhaps the largest hoard of cadjan records in the whole of India.

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- As the **Grandhavaris** were invariably compiled by panegyrists or Prasasti writers employed in the service of the rulers they contain several exaggerated statements and have therefore to be utilized with great care.
- The records preserved by some private families are also valuable as source material. The manuscripts preserved by **the Perivattu Mudaliar** (Mudaliar Manuscripts) are among the earliest records to prove the invasion of South Travancore by Tirumala Nayak (1634).
- The records of the Paliyam family at Chendamangalam have also supplied similar records of historical value. They are preserved in the Regional Archives, Ernakulam

Prehistoric Cultures



Prehistory comprises the various Stone Ages when man was a nomadic hunter. The prehistory of Kerala is shrouded in obscurity. H.D. Sankalia, the eminent archaeologist, excludes Kerala from the Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age) map of India because quartzite out of which the vast majority of the paleolithic antiquities were made was scarce in this area.

The Palaeolithic man could not have lived here also because there were thick forests which he could hardly have explored with his crude primitive stone implements.

As an explanation for the absence of the Paleolithic in Kerala, H.D. Sankalia suggests that the State has **“so far not yielded any paleolithic, probably because no search has been made”**. He adds further, “But it is likely that here there are ancient sea beaches, as there are further up near Bombay, which on examination might be found to be implementiferous.

Or it may be that the coastal belt is of recent growth. Thus the reasons for the absence of paleolithic might be truly geographical.”

Though paleolithic are believed to be absent in Kerala, the plentiful availability in the coast of traprock which determined the settlements of Neolithic (New Stone Age) man is said to suggest that the State might have become the abode of man in the Neolithic age.

It may also be mentioned here that Microliths regarded by some scholars as belonging to a Mesolithic state of culture, between the Palaeolithic and Neolithic ages, were collected by K.R.H. Todd at Calicut.

Megalithic Culture

- Megalithic monuments may be seen all over the State.
- The term **‘Megalith’** (mega = great and litho = stone) means monuments erected out of large blocks of stones, as funerary edifices, either sepulchral or commemorative.
- The megaliths of Kerala belong to the megalithic complex common to South India and are associated with the cult of the dead.
- It had been the custom in ancient days either to burn or to expose dead bodies to the elements and intern specific bones such as the skull and long bones collected there from.
- This custom known to archaeologists as **‘fractional burial’** was generally in vogue in South India and it was widely prevalent in Kerala also.

- The internment was done in several ways—in urns or jars, in pits or cysts or in rock-cut caves, along with the most precious possessions of the dead such as weapons and tools, shell ornaments, beads, pots of various sizes and sometimes coins.
- Apart from fractional burial the system of 'primary burial' was also sometimes resorted to. This is also known as extended or stretched burial.
- According to this the complete skeleton or body was buried in full articulation, either under house floors in the habitation site, in shallow pits or in a regular cemetery in specific pit graves.
- The megalithic types found in Kerala are dolmens, both multiple and isolated, port-hole cysts, menhirs, Kudakallus or umbrella stones, Topikallus or cap stones and rock-cut caves. In different parts of Kerala they are known by different local names such, as
- **Natukollu, Patakallu, Pulachikallu (Masatikallu), Pandikuzhi, Pancha Pandava Madhangal, Nannangadi, Muthumakkathazhi,** etc. Dolmens, Costs etc.
- A number of megalithic burial sites have been discovered all over Kerala in recent decades thanks to the labors of archaeologists and anthropologists.
- When the Varkala tunnel was bored several years ago, crude natural and artificial hollows containing old pots, human skeletons etc., came to light. Absence of any implements ordinarily associated with such burial places was considered to be an indication of their great antiquity.
- In the village of Pulimathu, 25 miles north of Trivandrum, a number of underground cellars or cysts were discovered from a long stretch of land some years back.
- Each of them contained a small pot with a little bronze bell and an iron spear head inside. In addition to the cists, several underground jars of baked earth (terra cotta) were also discovered from the site.
- The high ranges of Idukki district abound in megalithic sites.

- At Marayur village in the Anjanad valley of Devikulam taluk may be seen an extensive site consisting of dolmens and cysts.
- At **Kallar Pattom** colony in Udumbanchola taluk have been discovered a few important megalithic burial sites of the cist and menhir type. An excavation at Vandiperiyar a few decades back similarly resulted in the discovery of large dolmens and menhirs.
- **Dolmens** have also been found in the lower elevations of the Malayattur and Ranni Reserves, though they are relatively small in size. An extensive megalithic site was discovered at Pootamkara in Kunnathur taluk in 1960.
- The megalithic monuments seen here were cist-circles. The internal diameter of the circle of these megaliths ranged from 25' to 18' 6". Some relics of megalithic culture were discovered from Kodanad in Kunnathunad taluk in 1963. They include a good number of terracotta figurines, those of the males having beard and some of the other sex in the worshipping posture.
- The discovery of the figurines was a novel feature in these parts. Besides, tusks of elephants and pot sherds with engravings available in megalithic pottery were also unearthed at the site. Some old burial jars, with large granite slabs over them, were unearthed at Kodukulanji in **Chengannur taluk in 1965**.
- On examination they were found to contain broken pieces of jars of 'the black and red' variety. 1. For a detailed study of some of the major pre-historic sites of Kerala the following articles may be referred to :

(1) Megalithic types of South India by V.D. Krishnaswami, Ancient India,

(2) Porkalam, 1948. Excavation of a Megalithic Un-Burial by B.D. Thapar, Ancient India,

(3) Rock-cnt Caves of Cochin by Y.D. Sarma, Ancient India,

The Trichur area of erstwhile Cochin State contains megalithic sites. Multiple dolmens (ie., several within a single stone circle) are found in some of the

mountainous tracts. They occur mostly on the gneissic uplands and are built on bare rock within 3 or 4 feet of each other. Isolated dolmens, some with a port-hole opening, have also been found in some places.

Port-hole cysts are found at Porkalam which is one of the most important megalithic sites of Kerala. The port-hole cost here is allied to another one discovered at Thiruvilwamala which has yielded the red ware, decorated with yellow wavy lines. Menhirs which are conspicuous by their rarity in the hilly areas are found scattered far and wide in the laterite region in this area.

There is a menhir at Anappara which is locally known as Patakallu or Pulachikallu. A group of menhirs of different sizes may be seen at Komalaparathala.

The largest of these is **12'9" high, 7'6" foot and 1' thick at the top.**

Topikal (cap stone) and Kudakkallu (umbrella stone) are sepulchral monuments peculiar to the laterite regions of Trichur.

They comprise outwardly hemispheric blocks of laterite under which there is either a regular rock-out cave monument or burial urn in a pit Twenty-five such monuments were seen at Eyyal.

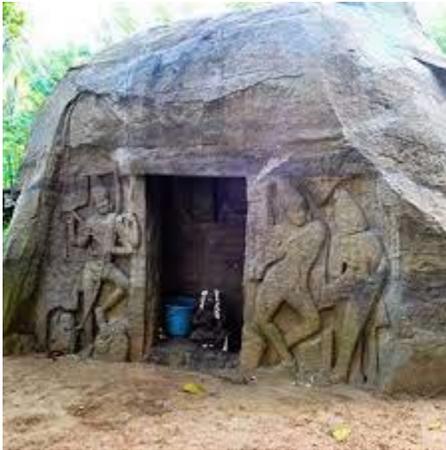
At Ariyannur, 12 miles to the west of Trichur, 7 Topikallus were discovered. The megalithic site of Cheramanangad consists of several Topikallus and Kudakallus which look like a group of giant mushrooms from a distance.

The site is locally known as **Kudakalluparambu, Topikallus and Kudakallus are also found at Porkalam.** In 1966 several burial jars of the megalithic type, globular in shape and of the black and red variety, with beaded ornaments on the neck, were discovered from the heart of Trichur town.

Each of these jars was capable of holding 70 to 80 paras of water. It is believed that-these jars must have been used for the burial of grown-up people in ancient days. The Trichur jars are supposed to be the largest burial jars so far discovered in Kerala. Dolmens, burial stone circles, menhirs and Topikallus, have come to light in different parts of the Malabar area also.

Among the most important of the places may be **Kulukollur, Kodakkal, Iringallur, Chokkur, Manjeri, Nilambur, Sultan's Battery, Muppainad, Puthadi, Taliparamba etc.**

Rock-cut Caves



- Kerala has its innumerable rock-cut caves of the megalithic order. Some of the most impressive are found at such places as **Chovannur, Kandanasseri, Kakkad, Porkalam, Eyyal and Kattakampal** in Trichur district. These caves are characterized by certain general features.
- Rectangular pits of varying depths are sunk into the rock by scooping out the solid mass of laterite.
- A small rectangular entrance is then cut into the vertical face and through this narrow opening the hard laterite is hollowed out and the cave fashioned.
- Access to the floor of the outer court is provided by means of steps cut out of the rock. The floor of the interior of a cave is generally 1 ft. to 2 ft. lower than the floor of its outer court.
- There are in certain cases rock-cut benches, varying in height from 6" to 2' on the sides of the cave. Some have only single benches while others have none.

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- The caves have circular or oblong floors and dome-shaped vaults. In some cases a rock-cut pillar, square, rectangular or round, rises to the center of the vault from the middle of the floor and in others it is absent, while in some there is a circular opening in the center of the domed ceiling.
- In the caves at Porkalam and one of the twin caves of Eyyal a rock-cut pillar stands in the middle of the floor rising to the center of the vault.
- But the control pillar is absent in the Chovannur cave. The caves at Kandanassery and Kakkad have circular openings in the center of the domed vaults.
- The cave at Kattakampal is a multi-chambered one. Its distinctive characteristic is that the same outer court leads to different caves in the front and on the sides.
- **At Eyyal** the common court leads to the main chamber and on the right-hand side to a smaller chamber. Pottery and iron implements have been recovered from these underground caves testifying to their sepulchral character.
- The erstwhile Malabar area has also a number of interesting rock-cut caves. In Chevayur (Kozhikode taluk) exists a **sepulchral rock-cut cave** with an erect pillar in the middle of the main chamber. Several pots and parts of a sword were found in it.
- **In Padinhattummuri amsan**, 6 miles north of Calicut, a number of very interesting rock-cut caves containing pottery were excavated by Logan. The articles found in these caves are preserved in the Madras Museum. One of the most interesting of the prehistoric sites in the Malabar area is Chattiparamba near Feroke. A laterite hill at the site contains numerous tombs excavated out of rock. Interesting beads were collected from some of them.

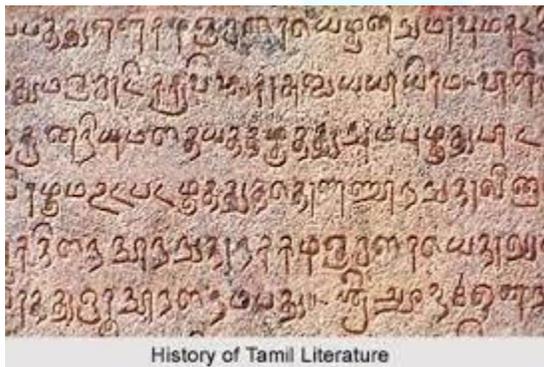
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- Some of the beads were of agate with designs on them. The pottery which was found in abundance in these tombs was of a very varied character.
- The **Edakkal Mala** near Sultan's Battery (South Wayanad) has on its western slope a cave which contains some interesting carvings and inscriptions and a few figures and symbols.
- The carvings depict human and animal figures and objects of human use and symbols.
- The most striking feature of the sculptures is the human figure with a peculiar head-dress.
- The figures of animals are indistinct. The symbols in the engravings include the Swastika in various forms and specimens of the familiar **circular 'sun-symbols'**. There are also some magic squares. Fawcett who has made a detailed study of the rock carvings in the Edakkal cave has expressed the view that they might have been the handiwork of Kurumbaras of a bygone day.
- **Antiquity of the Megalithic Culture** The antiquity of the megalithic culture of Kerala and its relation with cultures elsewhere are questions which have engaged the attention of archaeologists.
- It may be stated at the outset that it had no direct connection with the highly urban Indus Valley civilization or what Indian archaeologists call the **"Harappa Culture"** the approximate age of which in its maturity has been assigned to the period 2500 B.C. -1500 B.C. in the Indus Valley proper. However, urn burials are common to the two cultures and the **"black and redware"** found in the ruins is found contemporary with late Harappan and post-Harappan industries.
- The South Indian megaliths including those of Kerala are not as old as they are generally supposed to be. H.D. Sankalia has expressed the view that they represent "a fairly well-established and prosperous social organization" as is evidenced by the pits prepared for burials, the large slabs of stones enclosing them and the circle of stones surrounding the whole structure.

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- The megalith-builders who chose rocky ground for burials also dug irrigation tanks in the alluvial plains, indicating that they were not only settled people but also practical agriculturists.
- The megalithic monuments of Kerala bear close similarity to the megalithic structures in other parts of the Deccan and Peninsular India.
- **Gordon** suggests for them a time bracket between 700 and 400 B.C. while K. A. Nilakanta Sastri would push the date of the commencement of the culture further back.
- Similarly on the internal evidence furnished by Tamil works the later time limit prescribed for this culture can also be pulled further down by several centuries after the commencement of the Christian era.
- Mention may also be made in this connection of the alleged kinship of the South Indian megaliths to megaliths in other parts of the world, e.g., the lands bordering on the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, in the Caucasus and in Iran.

Tinai and multiple subsistence forms



The main source for Tamilakam is **Sangam literature**. The other sources include archaeological finds gathered from megalithic burials, epigraphic evidence from Tamil Brahmi inscriptions, numismatic evidence in the forms of pre Roman and Roman hoards and accounts by Graeco- Roman navigators and geographers. Sangam literature can be dated at its earliest to the first two centuries.

However the compilation of these works and their classification into eight Tamil anthologies or Ettutokai dates to a much later time period, that is around the 12 th century The word sangam refers to a confluence or academy. The three Sangams were patronized by Pandyan rulers and were called the **Talai Sangam**, Idai Sangam and kodai sangam respectively meaning the beginning, middle and end sangams.

The compositions of the first two sangams are lost. All the texts that make up the Ettuthogai from the kadai or end sangam.

Sangam literature is a rich source because it describes a range of activities that were related to agriculture.

Many secondary production activities that were related to agriculture. Many secondary production activities like the making of sugar from sugarcane, find rich description in sangam literature.

Primary agrarian activities like the cultivation of ragi and sugarcane , the harvesting of grain and smaller activities like the cultivation of ragi and sugarcane the harvesting of grain and smaller activities like the cultivation of ragi and sugarcane , the harvesting of grain and smaller activities like the drying of grain are also described in Sangam literature

Transmarine contacts of Kerala and its impact



Beginnings of the Spice Trade



Ancient Kerala had been famous for its spices and it was her fame as the land of spices that brought foreign peoples and cultures to her shores even from the 3rd millennium B.C., if not earlier.

The Assyrians and the Babylonians whose civilizations flourished in the 3rd and 2nd millennia B.C. in the land of ancient Sumer (Mesopotamia or Iraq)

carried on an extensive trade in cardamom and cinnamon that came from the Kerala coast.

The ancient Egyptians also used spices from Kerala to make 'perfumes, and holy oils and to preserve the dead bodies of their kings and other highly placed persons by a system of mummification. In 1500 B.C the Egyptian Queen Hatshepsut sent an expedition of five ships down the Red Sea to obtain spices from the East.

The great Egyptian city of Alexandria was for long the leading emporium of trade in oriental spices. The women of ancient Egypt are said to have burnt ginger, cinnamon and other spices on a small charcoal set in a hole on the floor to produce scented fumes to bathe their bodies.

- **Indigenous Maritime Tradition** In the preceding sections only the trade contacts of the foreign powers with the Kerala coast on their own initiative have been dealt with. The early Sangam works also contain references to the voyages of the people of Kerala to foreign countries. In the 6th decade of Patittupattu the poetess Kakkai Patiniyar refers to the Chera ships plying the ocean to procure wealth from foreign countries.
- Kerala was, in fact, in the forefront of the oceanic commerce of South India. Parananar, the great poet of the Sangam Age, refers to the huge ships of a chieftain by name Veliyan going abroad to fetch gold



- Another poet alludes to the unchallenged supremacy of the ships of the Chera in the western seas when he states that the ships of other powers could not even think of peeping into those waters (Puram 126).
- Pliny refers to Indian sailors who were cast ashore by storm on the German coast. In the later period, i.e., from the 9th to the 13th centuries there were trade organizations like **Achuvannam, Nanadesikal, and Manigramam which engaged themselves in foreign trade.** Thus though the foreign nationalities played the predominant role in the commerce of Kerala, the part played by the natives is by no means negligible.
- **Ancient Sea-ports** Classical writers like Pliny, the anonymous author of the Periplus and Ptolemy give detailed accounts of the sea-ports through which Kerala kept up her commercial and cultural contacts with foreign countries in the early centuries of the Christian era.
- The most important of these ports were **Muziris, Tyndis, Barace and Nelcynda.** While Muziris has been identified by all scholars with modern Cranganore, there has been no unanimity in the matter of the identification of the other places.
- Among the ports of ancient Kerala mentioned above, Muziris had undoubtedly the place of pride. It is referred to as Murachipattanam in the Valmiki Ramayana, as Muchiri in Tamil works and as Muyirikode in the Jewish Copper Plate of Bhaskara Ravi Varman (1000 A.D.). During the period of the Second Chera Empire (800–1102 A.D) and after it was known as **Makotai, Mahodayapuram and Mahodaya pattanam.**
- Muziris was the gate of ancient India and apart from serving as an emporium of trade for the Phoenicians, the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Romans in turn, it also gave shelter for the first time to the Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities who have enriched the cultural heritage of Kerala.
- As already noted, it was with the epoch-making discovery of the monsoon winds by Hippalus that Muziris acquired importance as the

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emporium of Roman trade. The works of classical geographers and Tamil poets refer in unequivocal terms to the phenomenal prosperity of Muziris in the days of Roman trade.

- Pliny refers to Muziris as the most important port of India (Primum Emporium Indiae). He also says that foreign ships anchored at a distance from the port and that the cargo was taken into it from the shore in Vallams.
- Perhaps, this is a reference to the fact that the mouth of the harbor was not deep enough for ships to anchor. The author of the Periplus and Ptolemy also speak of Muziris as a great emporium.
- The harbor was crowded with ships of all kinds, with large warehouses and extensive bazaars adjoining it and royal mansions and places of worship in the interior. **“Fish is bartered here for paddy which is brought in baskets to the houses”**, says a Tamil poet.
- A verse in the **Agananuru** (149) refers to “the thriving town of Muchiri where the beautiful large ships of the Yavanas bringing gold come, splashing the white foam in the waters of the Periyar which belongs to the Chera and return laden with pepper”.
- Paranar in also refers to the brisk trade in pepper at the port of Muziris **“Sacks of pepper are brought from the houses to the market ; the gold received from ships in exchange for articles sold is brought on shore in barges at Muchiri, where the music of the surging sea never ceases and where Kuttuvan (the Chera king) presents to visitors the rare products of the seas and mountains.”**
- On the evidence of the Peutingeriana Tables it has been stated that there was even a temple of Augustus near Muziris and that a force of 1,200 Roman soldiers was stationed in the town for the protection of Roman commerce.
- During Pliny’s time Barace was a more convenient port for foreign ships to call as, unlike Muziris, it was free from pirates. The author of the Periplus

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refers to the fact that large quantities of pepper were brought down to Barace from the interior which is called Kottanora.

- Several writers are inclined to identify Barace with Purakkad, south of Alleppey and Kottanora (Kuttanad) with the fertile and extensive valley of the Pampa celebrated for its fine pepper.
- Purakkad is also believed by some to be phonetically allied to Barace, the place having been referred to as 'Porca' and 'Porcai' by the Portuguese and Bhrigu Kaccha of Sanskrit literature or modern Broach Dutch writers.
- By all accounts Purakkad seems to have been a port of considerable importance and till the rise of Alleppey (Alappuzha) in the late 18th century it was the principal sea-port between Cochin and Quilon.
- Balita, mentioned by the Periplus as **"the harbor and village on the shore"** situated between Barace and Kumari (Cape Comorin) is sometimes identified with Varkala. It has also been identified by some scholars with Vizhinjam which was the capital of the later Ay Kings.
- An important sea-port, **Vizhinjam** was one of the major scenes of battle during the Chola-Chera war of the 11th century A.D. Rajendra Chola (1012-1044 A.D.) captured the place and named it Rajendra Chola Pattanam.
- Another port referred to in classical works is Naura which was situated north of Muziris. It has sometimes been identified with Cannanore (Kannur).
- Yet another ancient sea port which has since been forgotten and which figures prominently in ancient Tamil works is Mantai.
- Next to Vanchi and Tondi, it was the most important town of ancient Kerala till the 8th century A.D.
- The Tamil works contain beautiful descriptions of the place. It has not been possible to identify the place correctly.
- Two other sea ports on the Malabar coast were Vakai and Pantar. From the reference to the former as Vakai Perumturai in several works it is clear that the place must have been a big harbor in ancient days.

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- The town of Pantar was also an equally thriving sea port town famed for its pearl, as is evidenced by the Patittupattu. The identification of Pantar has also been difficult, though some writers are inclined to identify it with Panthalayani Kollam.
- Most of these ports of the ancient period are no longer important, but they serve to evoke in our minds memories of Kerala's glorious maritime past. Later Ports It would be relevant to the scope of this chapter to refer to some of the other ports of Kerala which came into prominence in later periods.
- The most important of these are **Quilon, Calicut and Cochin**. It is not clear as to when exactly the port of Quilon first came into the lime-light.
- According to some writers the Male referred to by Cosmas (6th century A.D.) and the Mahlai of the Chinese records of the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.) may be identified with Quilon.
- At the time of Sulaiman's visit (851 A.D.) Quilon was the chief center of Chinese trade. The Chinese ships paid a heavy toll of 1,000 dinars each at Quilon.
- The Chinese trade had declined considerably as a result of keen competition from the Arabs at the time of Marco Polo's visit towards the close of the 13th century, but Chinese vessels continued to call at the port. Ibn Batuta, the famous Muslim traveller of the 14th century, has recalled that the Chinese had still Quilon as their chief resort.
- Calicut became an important port only from the 13th or 14th century onwards. Marco Polo who visited the coast towards the end of the 13th century does not mention Calicut.
- With the decline of Cranganore (Muziris) following the floods in the Periyar river in 1341 the importance of Calicut increased considerably.
- Its peculiar geographical position coupled with its status as the headquarters of the Zamorins invested it with added importance.

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- The tolerant policy of the Zamorins and the concessions granted by them to foreign traders made the Chinese and the Arabs gradually prefer Calicut to all other ports on the West Coast.
- Calicut had developed into one of the major ports of Kerala by the time of Vasco Da Gama's landing at the place in 1498. Cochin was the last of the three ports to come into commercial prominence.
- The classical geographers like Pliny and Ptolemy or medieval travelers like Ibn Batuta and Marco Polo do not mention the place.
- It is believed that Cochin port was formed only as late as 1341 when as a result of the heavy floods in the Periyar the mouth of the Cranganore harbor got silted up and the Muziris of old lost its commercial importance. Cochin before long became a serious rival to Cranganore.
- At the time of Ma Huan's visit in 1409 and Nicolo Conti's in 1440 Cochin was already a flourishing center of trade in pepper and spices. The Chinese and the Arabs carried on brisk trade at the port.
- With the coming of the Portuguese towards the end of 15th century Cochin came into greater commercial and political prominence and the later history of the conflict between the European powers in Kerala came to be centered around this port