

SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AHMEDABAD 380 009
RELATED STUDY PROGRAMME, 1982

REPORT ON THE STUDY OF VADAKKUNATHAN TEMPLE.
TRICHUR TOWN, KERALA STATE

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C O N T E N T S

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I Background of the Study and Programme.

The building example for study is one of the ancient and important of the Hindu Temples in Kerala. The traditional Construction of the Kerala Temples is in Stone and Timber. The team undertook to study Vadakkunāthan temple (also known as Thenkailāsam) in Trichur town. The work undertaken was assigned to groups classified under -

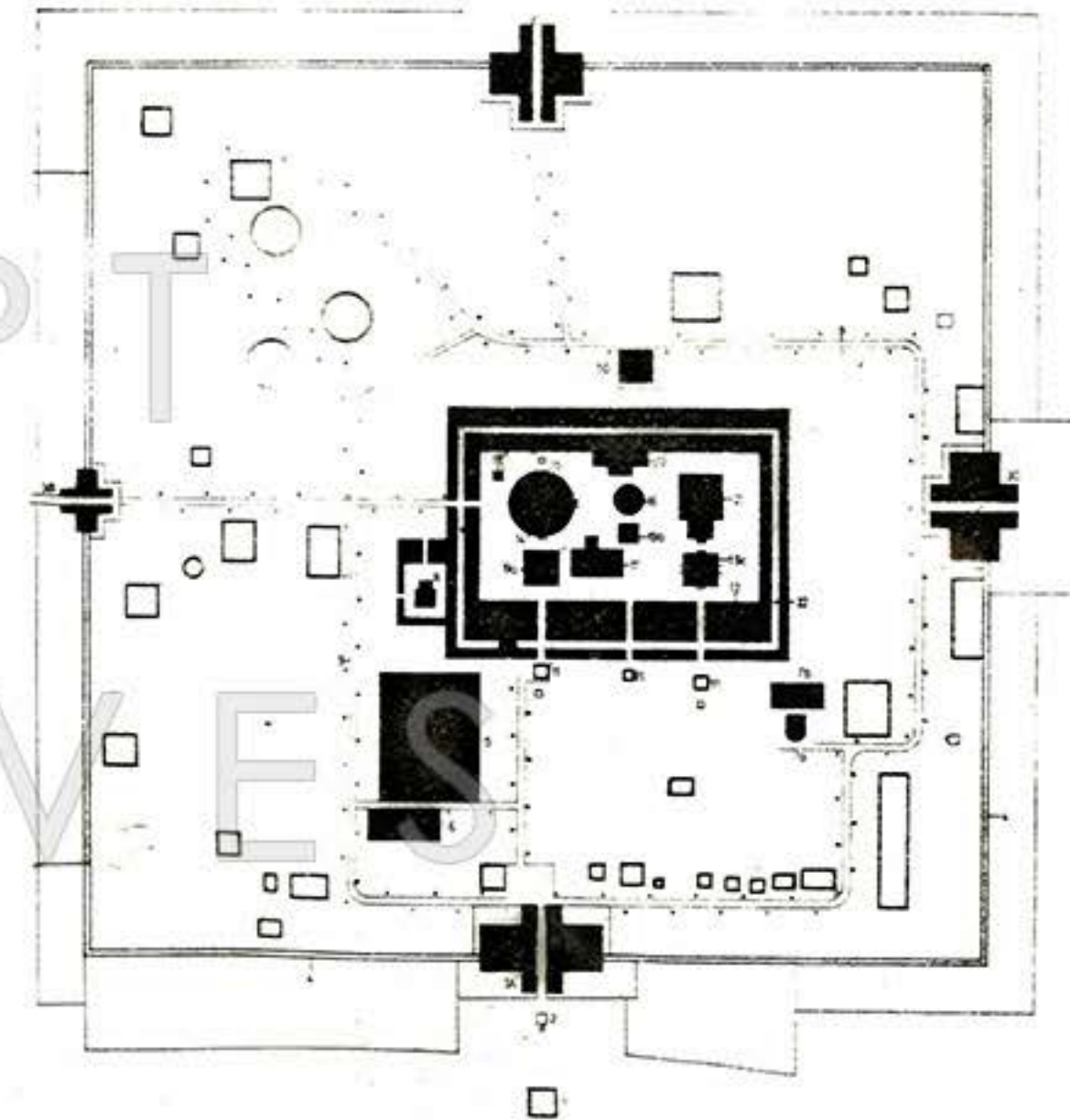
- a Preparation of the layout plan of Vadakkunāthan temple Complex and mapping the surroundings.
- b Study of Gōpurams and measured drawing of the main Gōpuram on the west side.
- c Study of the inner enclave along with the shrines for Nandi and Narasimhan.
- d Study of the three main shrines in the inner precincts for Shiva, Rāma and SankaraNārāyana.
- e Study of the three Namaskāra Mandapas for the Shrines of Shiva, Rama and SankaraNārāyana, and the Ganesh Shrine.

Natyashāla which is located outside the Dīpa-Māla is not included in the present study, as the same has been studied earlier under the Related Study Programme. So also, are the Shrines of Krishna and Ayyappan. Each of the topic, as classified above, was studied by a group of 3 or 4 students.

II Cultural Heritage of Kerala.

Kerala occupies a narrow strip of land, on the western sea-board of peninsular India, roughly between the latitudes of $8^{\circ}17'$ and $12^{\circ}47'$ N. washed by the Arabian sea on the west and the hill ranges of the western ghats on the East, it has a maximum width of only 120 kms length. In ancient times, the country was known as Kerala or alternatively, as the land of the Chēras. of the origins of Kerala, there is a charming myth: Parashurama, the avatār of Vishnu performed penances to stone for his sin in having killed his mother and the great god rewarded the devotee for his austerities by reclaiming Kerala from the depths of the sea.

The rich fruits of the earth brought successive infiltrations from the Aryan North and the Dravidian South, and the land was divided among the chieftains and their families. The basic culture was



VADAKKUNĀTHAN TEMPLE COMPLEX



and 579 kms
in

of the Dravidians, but the Aryanisation by the Brahmins proceeded as a parallel strain, until the upper Castes prevailed through alliance with the chieftains. Though traditionally the family structure was matriarchal, Kerala population accepted the patriarchal influences of the North for all practical purposes.

The chēra (2nd to 8th century A - D) and Kulashekara (8th to 11th Century A - D) dynasties developed unique patterns of Government and an architectural tradition that belongs to Kerala alone. The uniting of the former princely states of Cochin and Travancore with the district of Malabar in 1956 created a political entity that is remarkable for many things, including its temple and palace design.

The earlier shaivism was merged into vaishnavism. In the 8th century A D, the young sage of the village Kaladi, Shankara rationalised Brahminism with his commentaries on the Vedānta and propounded a monism by asserting the one supreme God, of whom all other incarnations in the Gods, men, animals, worms, germs are illusions, the Māya of the reality.

The fervorous imagination of passionate saints, poets and people created a rich heritage of unique temples, built like domestic houses, with ample courtyards and tiled roofs. The accompanying ritualistic arts of dance-drama, such as Kathakali, Kūdiyattam, Mōhiniattam and the folk styles were rehearsed generation after generation. The close of the 18th century A D and the beginning of 19th century witnessed a remarkable activity in the renovation and reconstruction of temples in North Kerala which were subjected to spoliation and desecration, consequent on the invasion and vandalism of Tippu Sultan, who had demolished and pulled down many of the old and attractive structures of various temples, including Vadakkunāthan Temple at Trichur.



II Components and Organisation of Kerala Temples

(a) Components of Kerala Temples

Temple style is not completely homogeneous throughout Kerala. This overview ranges from Cannanore and Kozhikode districts in the North through Malappuram, Palaghat, Trichur, Ernakulam and Kottayam districts, and further along the Arabian sea to Alleppey, Quilon and Trivandrum districts in the South. South Kerala reveals such such an overlap and integration with designs of Tamil Nadu Temples, that its art is no longer unique to Kerala. Even Padmnābhaswāmi Temple in Trivandrum is essentially foreign in the grandeur of its Gopura towers. It is marvellous, even awe-inspiring and thus it is quite unlike the more humble and more integrated temple monuments of Kerala, buildings that have been called 'homely' and 'almost dateless'.

Local terms for various components of the Kerala Temples (in Malayālam) are explained below with illustrations -

Adhishthāna : Basement of a temple, pillared hall or similar religious structure. It consists of moulded tiers, each tier having a distinct name like upāna, Jagati, Kumuda, Kantha, Pattika and so on.

Balipītha : Platform on which an oblation is placed. In Kerala Temples there is one principal bali-pītha in front of the main temple-entrance.

Dīpa - Stambha : Pillar for lamp or lamps, of brass or bronze.

Dhvaja - Stambha : Flag staff, of metal oftengold-plated.

Garba-griha : Shrine proper, Sanctum Sanctorum.

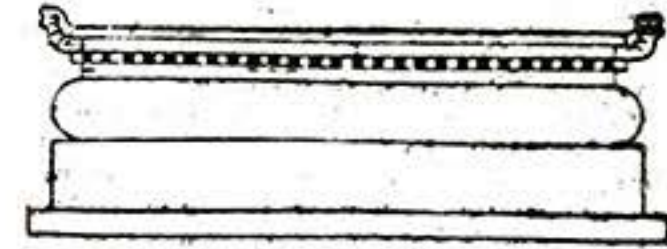
Gōpuram : a gateway with a tower above, for a temple, palace or city.

Kalasa : Wide - mouthed stoned, brick or metal pitcher used as the crowning member of a temple. The fixing up of the Kalasa Constitutes the last ceremony for the construction of a temple, either newly-built or renovated.

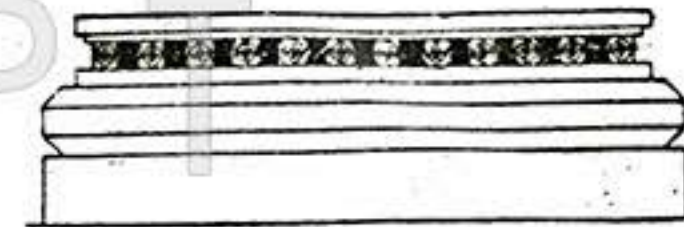
Kūtas : Shrine of square or circular plan with a pyramidal or conical roof pinnacled by one stupi.

Kūthambalam : a building within a temple complex where dance, music and other recitals take place.

Nālabalam : Also called chuttambalam, which literally means cloister around the ambulatory. According to the Kerala temple tradition, it is one of the five prakaras or enclaves.



ADHISHTHĀNA



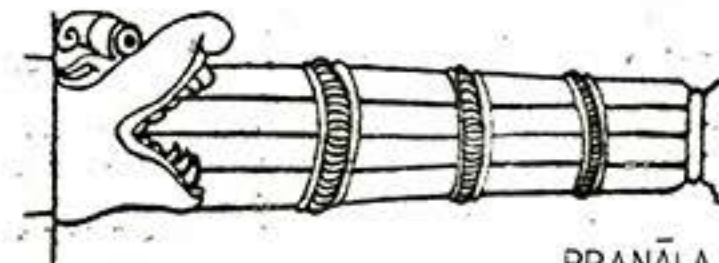
ADHISHTHĀNA



BALI PĪTHA



DHVAJA-STAMBHA



PRANĀLA

Namaskāra Mandapa : Also called archanā-Mandapa. Intended for congregation, it is detached from the temple and is square on plan with a pyramidal roof.

Pattanīpuram ; Building outside the Bahya-bhitti and a part of the temple complex used in the olden times, by people for fasting, as a show of resentment.

Pradakshinā-Patha : Circumambulatory Path.

Suttunādi ; Circumambulatory passage adjacent to or within a structure.

Prākāra : enclosure wall or an enclave.

Pranāla : water-chute or the projecting gargoyle-like spout for letting out the abhishēka (lavation) water. Always located on the Northern side of the shrine.

Sikhara : Spire or roof of a temple.

Srī - Kōvil ; the shrine proper in Kerala temples.

Stūpi ; Final, the uppermost member of a temple or gopura.

Valiambalam ; a Malayalam term ; in sanskrit it is called sahaa.

Vilakkumā dam (Dīpa-Māla) ; literally means 'Lamp-house'. It is a structure next to Nālambalam and is generally fixed with row of lamps.

Vimāna ; an entire temple from adishithāna to stūpi; used generally to denote south Indian temples.

Uttapura ; in the Nālambalam where feeding takes place.

Moolasthānam ; A sacred place with a pipal tree on a platform in front of the Gopura. Also called āltara.

Ardha-mandapa ; A hall immediately preceding the shrine.

Bāhya - Bhitti ; The outer most wall of the shrine of the temple complex.

Sālās ; Shrines of oblong plan.

Panjarās ; Shrine of aspidal plan (Hasti-Prastha)

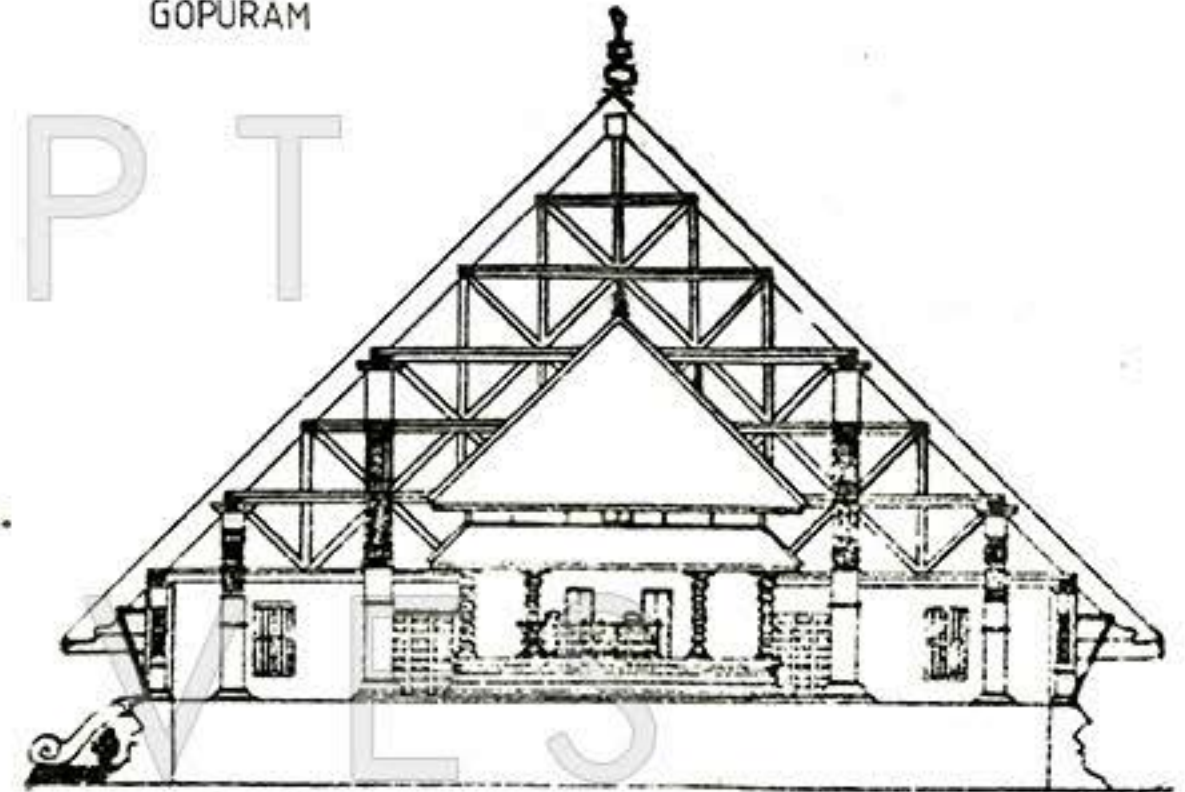
Teppakkulam ; Temple tank where floating festival of a deity takes place.

Upapītha ; Sub-basement, an additional member below

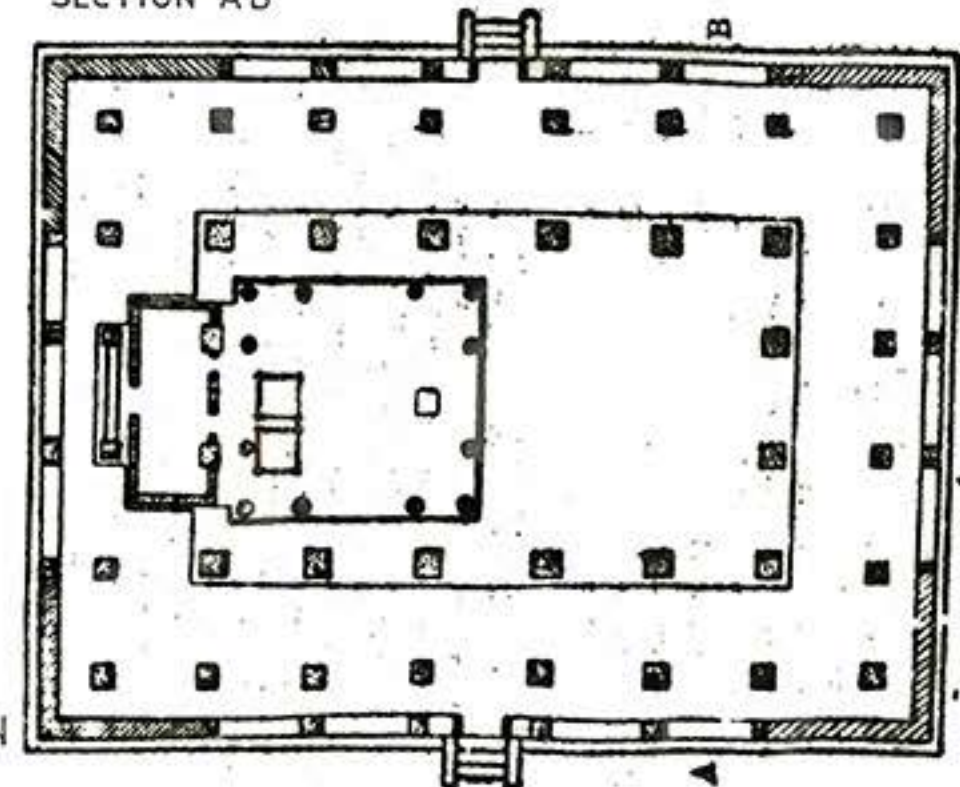
Adishithāna, with mouldings often similar to those of adishithāna.



GÖPURAM



SECTION-AB



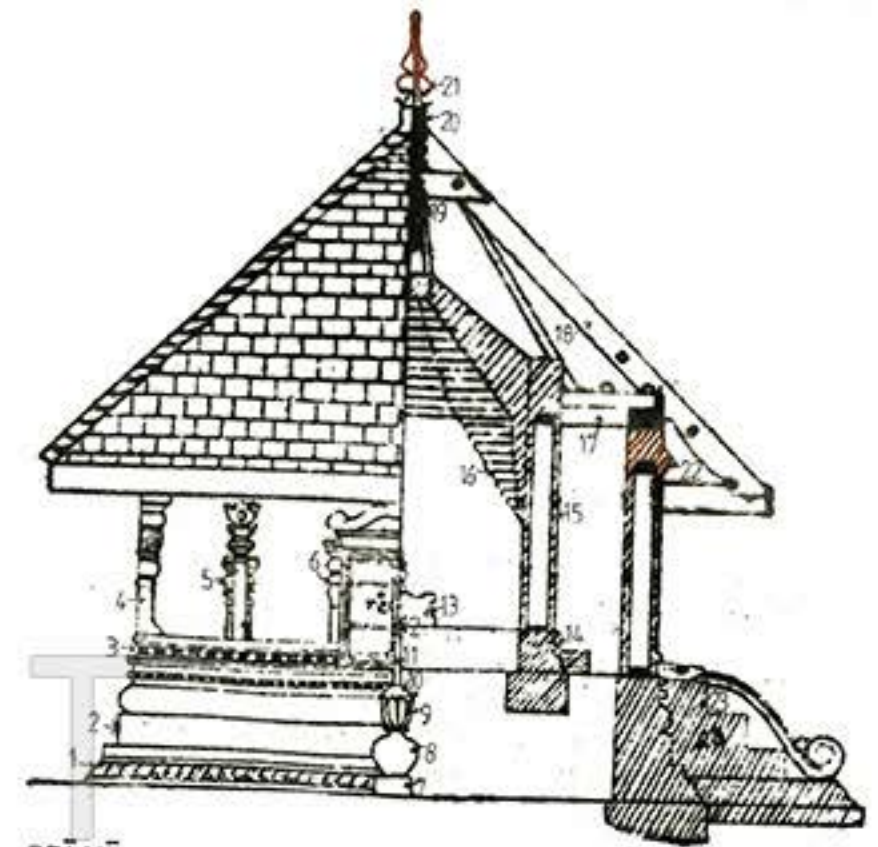
KÜTTAMBALAM-PLAN

(b) Organisation of Kerala Temples

The ideal organization of Kerala Temples is one defined by the Pancha-Prākāra or five successive enclosures. These are known locally as the kätte, Baliyattam, Nālabalam, Vilakkumādam and the Shivelippura as processional path around the Sanctum Sanctorum. Circular movement is around all borders with the series of enclosing prākāras: But the most sacred ground is that which surrounds the sri-kōvil within cloistered walls.

A classic Kerala Temple, called ambalam or Kashētram, sometimes tali, has the sri-kōvil (shrine) as its heart. The Sri-kōvil pān may be round (vrittam), square (chathuram), rectangular (chathurbhujam), apsidal (bhashti-prashtham), or oval but the Garbha-griha, however, is always square. The temple normally faces East or West. The structure above the adhisthāna (base) is termed the vimāna from plinth to spire. Within this, the ādītala is the ground floor. Some buildings are small and single-storeyed, called alpavimāna or ēktala vimāna, while others reach heights of many roofs and accordingly classified as dwitala or tritala vimānas. It is important to note, however, that the upper levels of the sri-kōvil are not functional; their role is to give the building visual prominence and increased preciousness.

Emphasis upon the roof is common to every study of Kerala art. As R V Poduval points out, the components of a Kerala Temple listed from the bottom up are (i) Upapītha (pedestal) (ii) Adhishthāna (base) (iii) Stambha [pilaster] (iv) prastāra (entablature) (v) Grīva (neck) or the roof (vi) Shikhara (cupola) and (vii) stūpi (pinnacle). Differences from Dravidian Architecture in general are found only above the prastāra. So striking is Kerala roof design, that comparisons are often sought very far away from Kerala. Percy Brown searches for links to Kathiawar and Kashmir temples. While James Ferguson sought connections to Nepal. These questions are not entirely answered. It is possible, however, that climate is the best clue to explain the appearance of steeply roofed 'pagoda' temples, roofs keep rain out; they are very noticeable: they are like a crown for the inner room. It is the profuse use of wood in superstructures and the sloping roofs that have lent a distinct individuality to



SRI-KÖVIL-ELEVATION AND SECTION

- ① PADMA PĀDUKUM ② TARA ③ VĒDIKA ④ BITTIKAL ⑤ PANJARAM ⑥ GHANADWĀRAM
- ⑦ ĀDHĀRA SILA ⑧ MOHIKUMBHAM ⑨ PADMAM ⑩ KŪRMAM ⑪ YŪGANĀLAM
- ⑫ NAPUMSAKA SILA ⑬ PĪTHAM ⑭ GARBHAGRIHA TARA ⑮ GARBHAGRIHA BITTI
- ⑯ TORAVU ⑰ VĀROTARAM ⑱ KAZHUKŪL ⑲ KOODAM ⑳ AVASĀNA PHALAKA
- ㉑ TĀZHĪKA KUDAM ㉒ KALUTARAM ㉓ SŌPĀNAM



SŌPĀNAM-KAVARI KAL

the Kerala Temples.

In the layout of Kerala Temples, the *Srī-kōvil* forms the nucleus, while the other components like the open-air *pradakshinā-patha*, the cloistered *nālabalam*, the *Vilakkumādam* affixed with a galaxy of lamps, paved *pradakshināvazhi* and *prākāra* or *prākāras* are aligned in orderly succession centering the main shrine or shrines. Though the *sri-kovil* may variously be square, rectangular, apsidal, circular or elliptical, the arrangements of other components follow invariably a concentric rectangular alignment. Within the *sri-kovil* is the *Garbhagriha*, the cell where the image of the deity is placed. In front of the Central Shrine is situated the *Namaskāra Mandapa* (hall for prostration), square in plan with a pyramidal roof. Surrounding the Shrine or often several shrines which house the main deities, is a corridor or pillared-hall known as *Nālabalam* or *chuttambalam*. In front of the doors in the *Nālabalam* leading to enclosure of shrines is the *Bali-vēdi* or alter with a *Dhwajastambha* or flag staff in front of it. The outer face of the *Nālabalam* over a masonry base and wall is fixed a wooden framework which contains rows of metallic *dīpas* and is called the *vilakkumādam*.

In the case of large and important temples, one finds a large edifice known as the *kūttambalam* or the *Nātyasāla*, for dance, musical performances and other recitals. This structure is generally located on the right hand side of the main shrine, along the central axis. Smaller shrines dedicated to other deities are also found in each temple

portions in and they are even located outside the *Nālabalam*, are used for the *Nālabalam* cooking (*Agrasāla* or *Ma dapalli*), for feeding Brahmins and for storage.

The Temple Complex is enclosed by high walls, rectangular or square, in the Centre of each side of which is located the *Gopura* or entrance facing the four cardinal points, the largest one facing the main shrine. Main entrance is known by the location of the *Dhwajastambha*. This area at the entrance which is known as *Moolasthānam*, is a *Dīpal* tree platform, the *āltara*. Another small structure which is located near the main entrance is *Pattanipuram*, a place which was used by the people to conduct fasts in protest for a cause.

Kerala Temples - Historical and Religious, Significance.

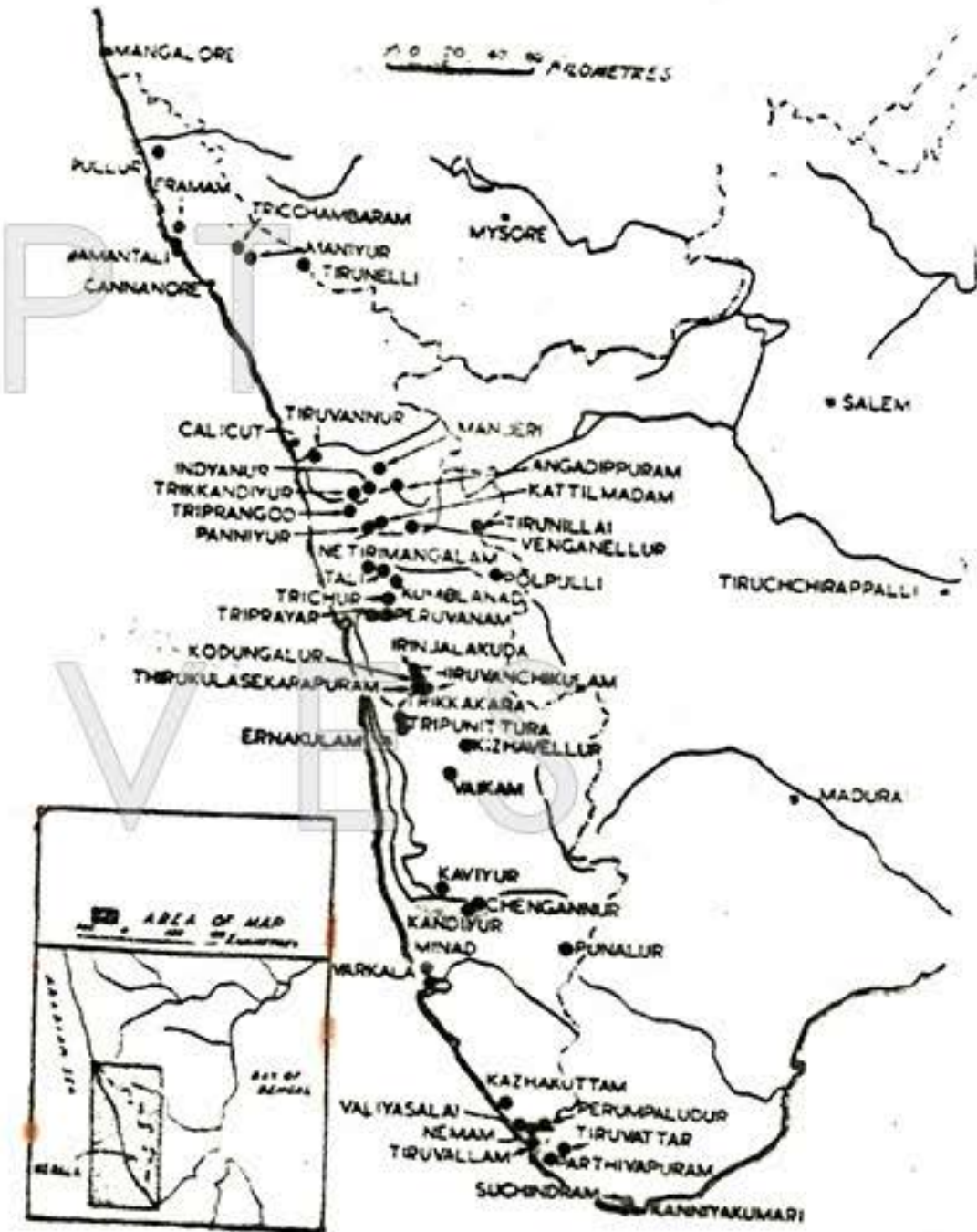
a History of Kerala Temples :

The Construction of the Structural temples in Kerala which ^{began} in the 8th century A D received a fillip during the reign of Kulasekharas. The people and the rulers got together helping in the construction as well as maintenance of temples. The flow of wealth arising from Kerala's prosperous overseas trades had brought into existence an affluent mercantile community, temples became the nerve centres of all activities. The age of the Kulesekharas also saw remarkable progress in the fields of education and learning. Vedic schools attached to the temples developed in different parts of Kerala. The kings like Kulasekhara Alwar (late 9th century A D or early 10th century A D) helped this activity vigorously.

In spite of the closed-door traditions of the Brahminical orthodoxy, the participating people seem to have brought their impulses to bear. May be the Brahmins were more rigid in their exclusiveness when the priests of the other faiths came into Kerala, but chieftains seem to have been more accepting. So that when the Christians came with St. Thomas and the Jews proclated, and the Muslim Arabs arrived in the 7th century, or the Chinese visited the ports, the chiefs welcomed them and gave them asylum. Thus the Christian churches, the Jewish synagogues and the Muslim Mosques have all co-existed with Hindu Temples in Kerala.

Temples of Kerala have a special place in history, for it was in Kerala that an important inroad was made into the traditional caste system. Experiences of the physical and spiritual realms of the temple were opened to all Hindus during the Indian movement towards modernity and social equality.

The monarch and the small hierarchy of nobles, though self-contained in the cultivation of the arts of the imagination, had to rely on the folk for the enactment of the ritual of the spiritual life - the making of the temples, the fetching and carrying, and the communion. Therefore, the folk introduced their own hand work and their vital flows in to the so-called classical cultures. There was, therefore, continued departure from the original traditions, in spite of the resistances of orthodoxy.



TEMPLES IN KERALA

(b) Religious Significance

There are mentions of the existence of 'temple-States' or "Grāma Kshētras" in the old manuscripts of Kerala. These grāma-Kshētras were supposedly sixty four in numbers, each with a diety. Each grāma Kshētra was looked after by Āryaputra, who belonged to the upper caste of Namboodiris. Under the Āryaputras were several chieftains belonging to the Nāir community. Because of the strong traditional caste system that prevailed in the earlier times, access to the main diety of the grāma Kshētra was restricted to the Namboodiries. Hence started the proliferation of temples in Kerala, each temple being built for the worship of a particular caste or even accessible only to members of a single family, which explains for the innumerable number of temples that dot the state of Kerala.

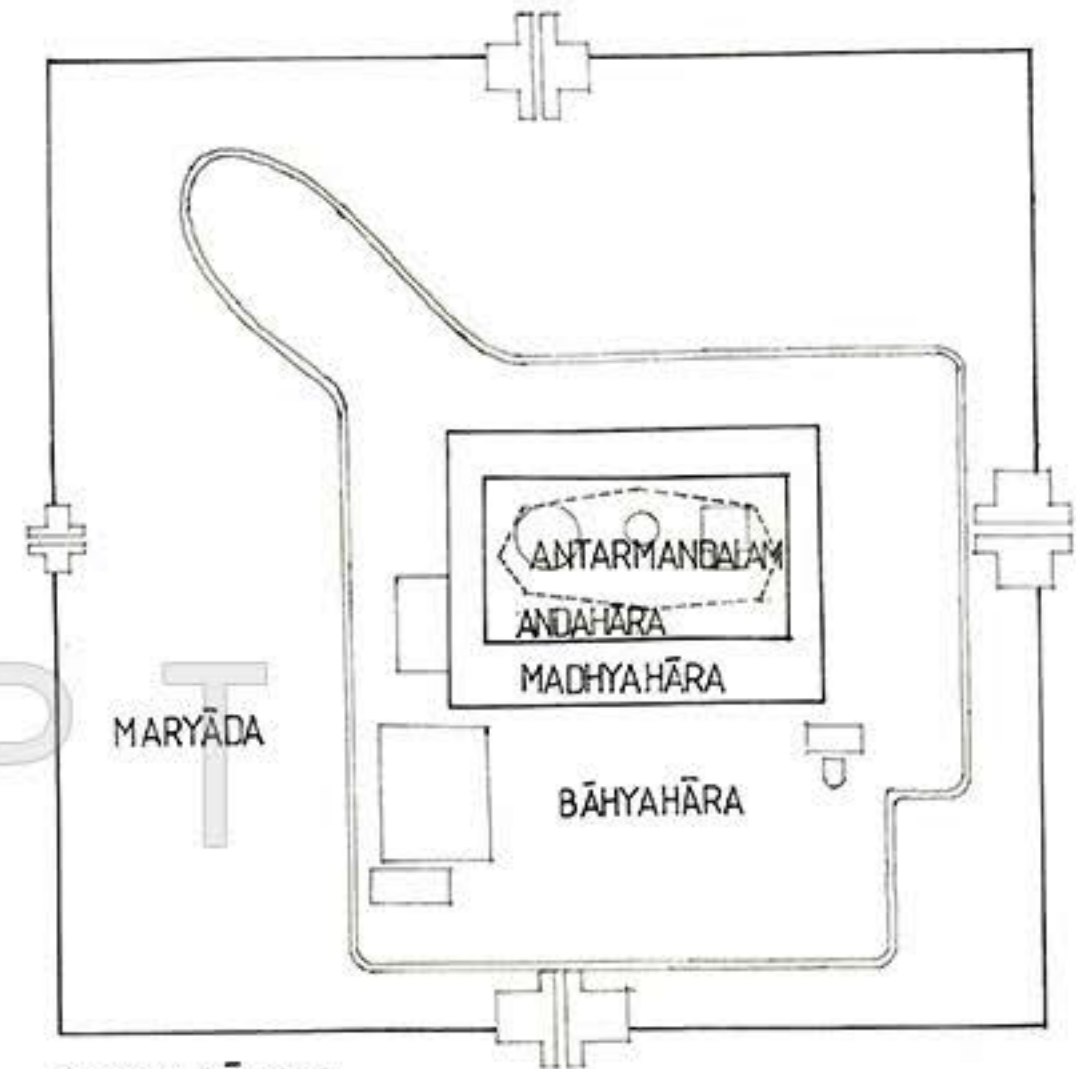
Kerala temples by themselves, seem to symbolise the human body as referred to in the Gita - 'Itham Sareeram Kaunthēya, Kshētram ithy-abhidheeyathe' (This body, Arjuna, thus it be called the temple). To explain the symbolization of human body in the planning of Kerala Temples, reference may be made to the Hindu Practice of Kundalinī. According to the Kundalinī, the human body from the torso to the head (signifying Ātma and Paramātmā) is divided into five sections across the body and six sections from the bottom to top, the former called the Panchakōshas, and the latter known as the Shathchakras. The replication of the Panchakōshas in the organisation of Kerala Temple is in the formation of five enclaves correspondingly. They are as under -

<u>Panchakōsha</u> according to the <u>Kundalini</u>		<u>Enclaves</u> as in the Kerala Temples.	
1	Annamayakōsha (outermost)	Maryāda	Enclave found between the external wall to the Pradakshinā-Patha.
2	Prānamaya Kōsha	Bāhyāhāra	Enclave formed between the Pradakshinā-patha and the outer edge of the Dīpa-Māla
3	Manōmaya Kōsha	Madhyahāra	Enclave formed between the outer edge of the Dīpa-Māla and the inner edge of the Nālambalam.
4	Vigyānamaya Kōsha	Andahāra	Enclave formed between the inner edge of the Nālambalam and the imaginary line joining all the Bali-Kal or the ashta-dikkukal in the inner quadrangle of the Nālambalam.
5	Ānandamaya Kōsha (innermost)	Antarmandalam	Inner most enclave formed between the imaginary line joining all the bali-kal and the shrine.

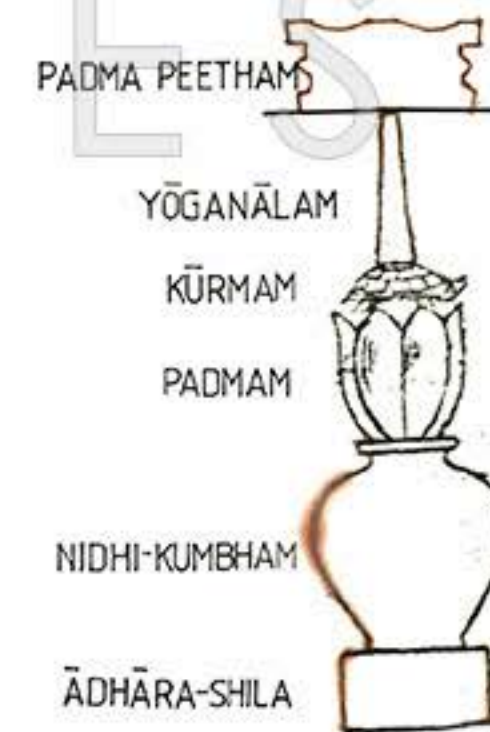
Similarly the six chakras according to the Kundalini correspond to the Shadhādhāram in the shrine. They are six layers of stone in different shapes laid underneath the pratishtā which is the platform for the installation of the bimba (idol) of the deity. They are as follows -

<u>Shatchakras</u> according to the <u>Kundalini</u>		<u>Shadhādhāram</u> as in the Shrines of Kerala Temples
1	Moolādhāram	Ādhārashila
2	Swādhishthānam	Nidhikumbham
3	Manipporakam	Padmam
4	Anāhatam	Koormam
5	Vishuddhā	Yōganālam
6	Agnya	Padmapeetham

The elements mentioned above in the organization of plan of the Kerala Temples and also the stone layers below the bimba are adhered to till today in the construction of traditional temple complexes. This is an underlying phenomenon adopted to replicate the human body.



PANCHA KŌSHAS



SHADHĀDHĀRAM

V. Origin and Development of Kerala Temple Architecture

(a) Origin of Kerala Temple Architecture

The principles to be followed in all buildings and temple buildings in particular, are portrayed in some of the ancient Kerala texts. They are the 'Manushyālaya chandrika', the 'Tantra Samuchchaya', both being of the 15th century A D, and the 'Shilparatna' of Sri Kumara of the 16th Century. All these are peculiar to the Kerala Coast.

The history of the beginnings of the brahminical temples in Kerala is still shrouded in obscurity. During the time of the early chēras, as preferences in the literature show, vedic practices of sacrifice held an exalted position, for many chēra rulers participated in such activities. This may show that there were shrines in the chera country although it is difficult to visualise their structural forms. Even today there are numerous Bhagavati shrines in Kerala (for ex. in Krishna Temple at Guruvāyur) which are open to sky or hypaethral in type.

The bhakti movement created a stir in the South from the 6th to 9th century and it was this movement which provided the real impetus to temple architecture. In the 8th century A D several cave-temples came into existence in Kerala, which must be the outcome of the same religious ferment, Kulasēkhara Ālvār being associated with the construction of Krishna temple at Thirukulasēkarapuram. From an inscription found at the entrance of the present temple, the date of first construction is known to be in the 9th Century. There are a few other temples which are dated to have been built in the 9th century.

Thus temple-architecture in Kerala must have had its beginning at least by the early part of the 9th Century. Perhaps the political revival of the chēras was accompanied by a religious upheaval giving birth to the temples built more or less in some permanent material.

The distribution of various types of temples in the west coast present an interesting picture. There are not only square or rectangular but circular, apsidal and some elliptical temples here. No where in India do the circular shrines constitute such a dominant type as

in Kerala; moreover, this type of ground plan shows a greater preponderance in the Southern half of the state and becomes rarer towards the North. Circular temples show greater incidence in the region once under the Buddhist influence. The apsidal temples occur sporadically all along the west coast, with some concentration in central Kerala and South Kerala.

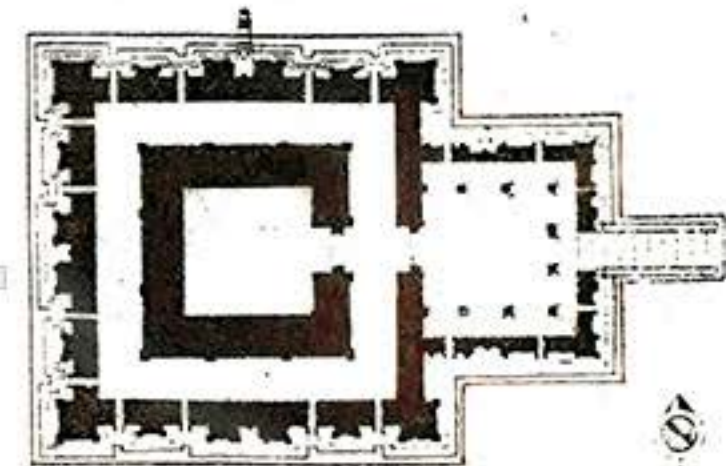
Most of the Kerala Temples have walls made of laterite blocks. But temples made entirely of granite excepting the superstructures are common in the districts of Kottayam, Quilon and Trivandrum. In the districts of Kottayam and Alleppey, however walls are entirely made of wood with carvings.

(b) Developments in Kerala Temple Architecture.

Kerala is a land of temples, there are 2200 in worship. Yet unlike the history of the Chālukyan or pallava traditions, the early structural temples here are not represented by intact monuments. Indeed many of the standing temples here must have had an early beginning but periodical renovations, specially of the wooden superstructure, had removed practically all traces of their earlier forms. It is the sloping roofs, sometimes reduplicated, and the profuse use of wood in superstructures that have lent a distinct individuality to the Kerala temples. The temple-architecture of Kerala passed through three major phases of development, as under.

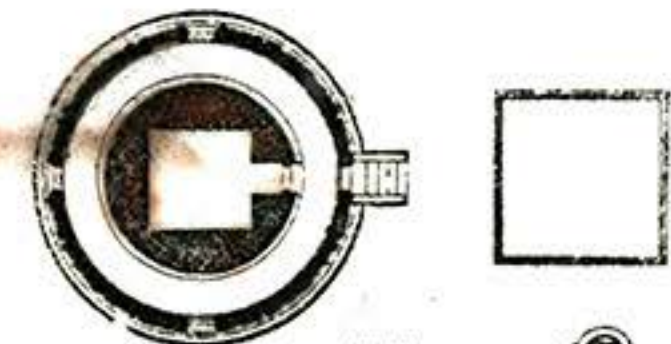
a) Early phase (A D 800-1000): During this phase the temple-architecture was patronised by the chēras, Āys and Mūshikas. Temples during the period were built variously on square, circular and apsidal plans. Generally the main Srī-Kōvil has a detached namaskāramandapa, following a old tradition of Dravidian temples. The temples are invariably cloistered with the Nāmbalam enclosing the Srī-Kōvil and the Namaskāra-Mandapa. The layout of the Kerala Temples assumed more elaboration in subsequent times. The outer wall is pierced on all the four sides by functional doors, a feature shared by a temple-type known in the ancient vāstu-sāstras as the Sarvatōbhadrā temple. This temple is common in the early and middle phases irrespective of the ground plan.

TALI (THICHUR):SIVA TEMPLE
DISTRICT TRICHUR
SCALE OF METRES 1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7



PLAN

RAMANTALI:NARASIMHA TEMPLE
DISTRICT CANNANORE
SCALE OF METRES 1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7



PLAN

b) Middle phase (A.D. 1000-1300) : This is characterized by the emergence of Sāndhāra Vimāna, in which the inner wall touches the ceiling similar to that of the outer wall. Secondly a functional circumambulatory path runs around the Garbha - griha (within the outer wall), or even double Circumambulatory paths. Further one notices the emergence of temples with three or even two functional doors. Lastly, the garbha-griha has become completely a separate entity with its own characteristic superstructure and sometimes even exclusive flight of steps.

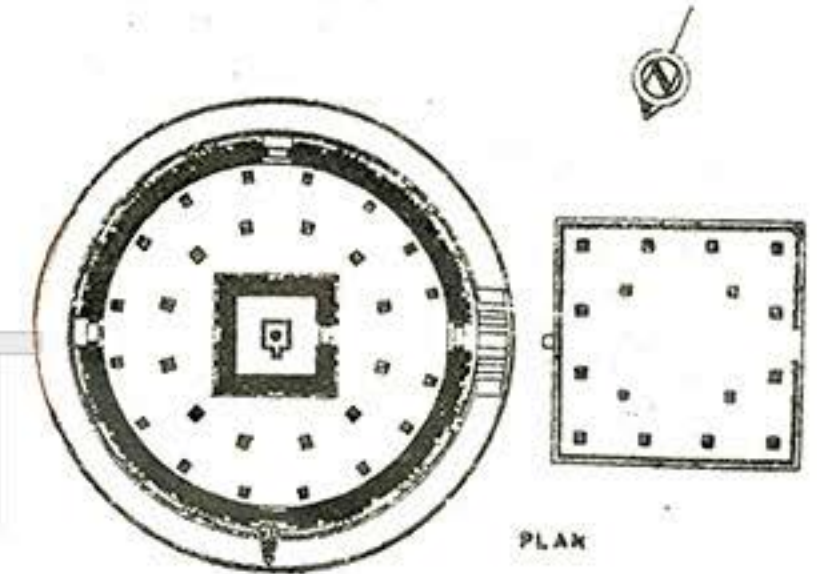
The Middle phase witnessed a spectacular growth when innumerable temples were not only built but many underwent renovation. Many important shrines of today had their beginning in this phase, for ex, vadakkunāthan shrine in the temple complex at Trichur. In this shrine as well as the Irattaiyappan shrine in the Shiva Temple at Peruvanam, a square garbha-griha is enclosed by the circular shrine. In both the cases, the back part of the shrine is meant for the consort of the respective gods. Some of the Shrines built in this phase, have only two functional openings; the other two are in the form of ghara-dvāras or 'false doors', so common in the temple architecture of Kerala.

Alongside the Kerala style of temples were built of few typical South Indian temples, specially in South Kerala. - the all - stone temple, known as Kattilmaḍam.

c) Late phase (A.D. 1300-1800) : A vast majority of the extant temples in Kerala fall in this phase. No further development can be noticed so far as the general plan of the individual shrines are concerned, but the layout of the entire complex developed into greater elaboration. During this phase, the concept of composite shrines as well as the practice of dedicating one complex to more than one god reached the culmination. The Vadakkunāthan temple at Trichur is a multi-shrined complex having three principal shrines, apart from the subsidiary shrines. Sculptural embellishments that developed during this period appear to be incongruous with the general patterns of the Kerala Temples where plastic decorations are confined mainly to balustrades and the pranālas, the latter generally associated with a dwarf figure.

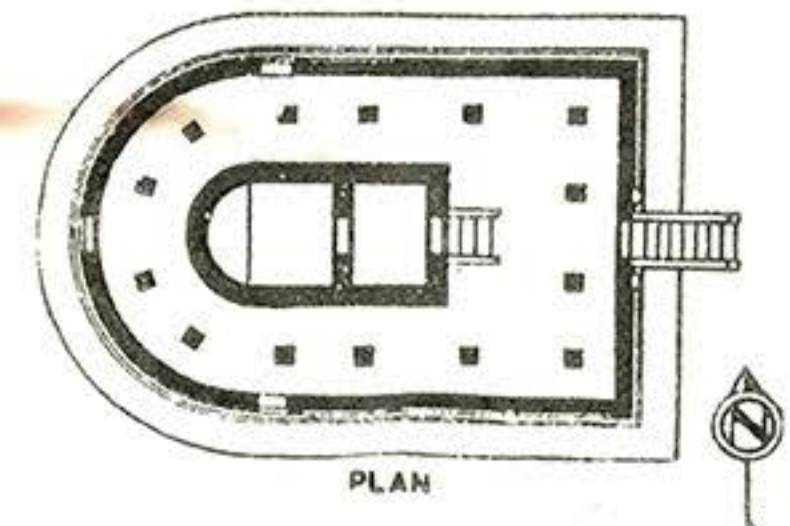
PERUVANAM: ŚIVA TEMPLE
DISTRICT TRICHUR

SCALE OF METRES 1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



KIZHAVELLUR: VĀMANA TEMPLE
DISTRICT KOTTAYAM

SCALE OF METRES 1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



VI Vadakkunāthan Kshētram - General description

The Vadakkunāthan Temple at Trichur, almost in the centre of Kerala state is a multi-shrined complex having three principal shrines and dedicated to vadakkunāthan (also called Then - Kailāsanātha), Sankarānārāyana and Rāma. As to the origin of the name of the temple, there are two explanations offered. Vadakku in Malayalam means North and hence the name, meaning lord of the North, Shiva. According to another explanation, the present name vadakkunathan is a transformation of the earlier name, Edavakkunnunāthan, meaning Vishādhēsvara, the lord of Nandi. From the inscriptions found in the temple, the temple has been in existence from 12th century A D though some of its present edifices are of later construction.

The Temple stands on an elevated ground, overlooking the town of Trichur. It has a vast and spacious enclosure with four lofty gopuras overtopping the Central shrines, the main one on the west side being the tallest. Linking the four gopuras is a quadrangular massive stone wall, forming a strong fortification which gives the temple a unique and magnificent appearance. The large area of level ground contained by the wall contains various kinds of trees, chiefly Raniyan, Anjali, Jack and Mango, with shrines of minor deities. In the middle is a quadrangular building called the Nālambalam. The extensive level ground is paved with stone and this contains the Sri-Kōvils, enshrining the important deities. In the Northern end within the quadrangular Nālambalam, is the circular Sri-Kōvil of Shiva, known as vadakkunāthan facing the West. The shrine of pārvati is situated in the same shrine facing East and just back to Shiva. This shrine is of the vrittam-Ēktala vimāna type. The Shrine is covered by a conical roof. In the southern end within the Nālambalam is located the dvi-tala vimāna Shri-Kōvil of Rāma facing to the west. This is chathuram in plan with a Mukha-Mandapa, the roof is in two-storeys. Between these two Sri-Kōvil of Shiva on the North and Rāma on the South stands a third- Shri-Kōvil, dedicated to Sankaranārāyana facing west. This again is a shrine, vrittam in plan, but the roof is of the dwitala Vimāna type. The Sankaranārāyana shrine has murals of the 17th century, delineating Mahābhārata. Between the Shiva and Sankaranārāyana Sri-Kōvils, the

idol of Ganesha is installed in a small edifice, facing East. Ganesha shrine is chaturam in plan, and the only shrine roofed with stone. The roof is pyramidal. Behind the Ganesha shrine is a rectangular cell, which is said to have been the bhandāra of the temple. The three main shrī-Kovils of Shiva, Rāma and Sankaranārāyan have a Namaskāra Mandapa each, for prostration by the devotees. The namaskāra mandapas are chaturam in plan and the roof is pyramidal. These are attendant pavilions and the flat wooden ceiling underside which gives an intimate scale inside, is exquisitely carved. Large lathe-turned pendants of lacquered polychrome hang all along the roof edges. The four sides of the Mandapa have a wooden framework which gives the structure a kind of transparency. This wooden framework below the griva is slanting towards the outside. All the three Namaskāra mandapas are located on the central axis of the respective Srī-Kōvils, which is also the centre of the three doors in the Nālabalam, to enter the prākāra. The axis of the Shiva Srī-Kōvil is the same as of the main Gopura on the west. The Nālabalam contains areas used for cooking (Agrasāla) for feeding Brahmins (Uttapura) and for different types of storage. Around the Nālabalam is a masonry wall vilakkumādam which has a wooden framework on the external side to which is fitted dīpas, at close intervals. Between the vilakkumādam and the cloistered Nālabalam is a passage, suttu-nādi (open to sky), which presumably was used for circumambulation. At present this is not in use, as the clear passage has been blocked by extending the Nālabalam. Other than these main elements inside the Nālabalam, there is miniature shrine near pārvati Srī-Kōvil which is for the pārvati's dāsi. There are also several pieces of stone in the quadrangle, most of which have been displaced and these stones were originally pointing the eight directions (Ashtadikku-Kal) Also in the paved quadrangle, are intermittently seen stone slabs which depict the devotee in prostration.

Outside the Nālabalam there are four more Srī-Kōvils for the upadēvathas. They are aiyappan, Krishna, Nandi and Narasimhan. Of these two are adjoining other structures, while two are isolated. Adjoining the

Northern side of the Nālabalam which has a door is the Srī-Kōvil of Nandi (vettakkorumākan) surrounded by a pradakshinā patha and a cloistered platform. At a distance from the Nālabalam, on the Eastern side is the Srī-Kōvil of Nārasiṃhan. Towards the south west of the Nālabalam is the Shrine of Aiyappan (shashta) with a Namaskāra Mandapa. The shrine is hasti-prashtha (apsidal) in plan. On the right hand side of the main deities and along the main approach from the west Gopura is located an imposing structure, the Nātyasāla or Kūttambalam. Rectangular in plan with a high roof, the structure contains another roofed structure within, which is on a raised platform for the performance of Kūttu. The roofing and ceiling of Kūttambalam display the dexterous skill that had been developed in the timber construction. Adjoining the Kūttambalam on the western side is the srī-Kōvil of Krishna. Outside the Nālabalam, at a distance from it all round is the Pradakshinā vazhi (circumambulatory path). Just outside the western Gopura is the sacred frontage of the temple with paved stones and āltara (pipal tree) called Srīmolasthānam. On the North Eastern corner of the complex, outside the bāhya-bhitti is the place where two temple tanks are located, along with the residences for the pujaries.

VII ANALYSIS OF VADAKKUNATHAN TEMPLE COMPLEX

A brief analysis of the temple is made here regarding following aspects -

- (a) Relationships existing between buildings and cardinal points.
- (b) Sequence of development
- (c) Building forms, Materials and Construction, Decorative elements.

(a) Relationships

The layout plan of the temple complex shown on page 17 indicates the general disposition of the temple with respect to the cardinal points. The East-west and the North-South axii passing through the centres of the gopuram intersect at the centre of the circular Shiva shrine, the main deity of the temple. The structures that are built in the subsequent phases have been governed by the interrelationships between structures. Four distinct types of interrelationships can be discerned -

- (i) Axial and functional
- (ii) Cardinal
- (iii) Hierarchical and
- (iv) Orbital

The structures that have been governed by each of the above relationships are shown symbolically in the layout plan of the temple on page 18.

(b) Sequence

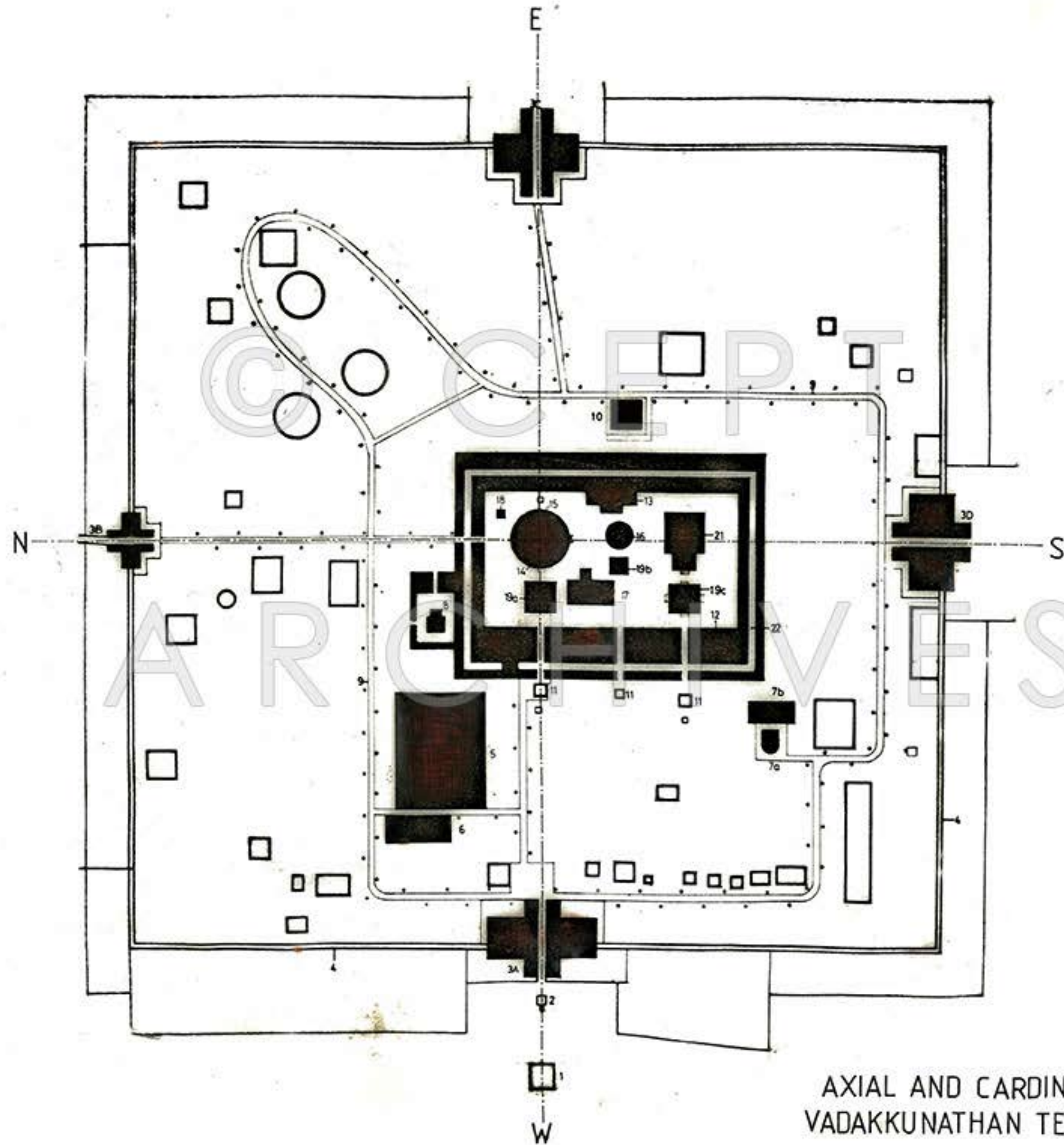
As there are no specific dates known as to when the different structures in the complex have been built, the following indicators are used -

- (i) Historical background
- (ii) Form and Materials of building
- (iii) Location in relation to other buildings, and
- (iv) Continuity in temple expansion

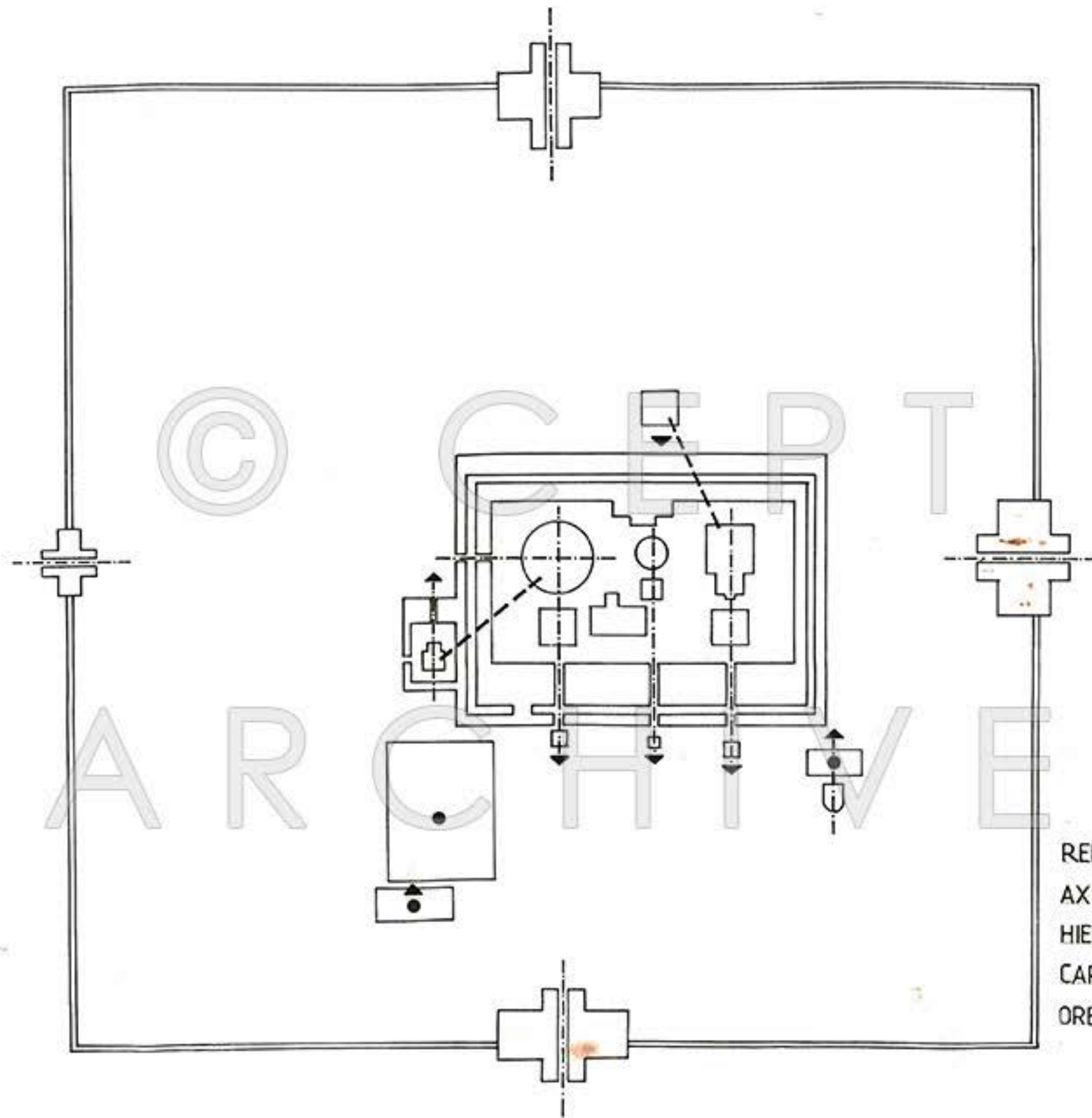
The sequence of developments thus supposed is presented as a chart on page 19.

(c) Building forms, Materials and Construction, Decorative elements.

(i) Building forms - The building forms generally found in the Temple Architecture of Kerala and the phases they have undergone are outlined in the earlier part of the report. As has been brought out, the feature that distinguishes the style of Kerala temples is basically in their roof forms, which have resulted from the materials

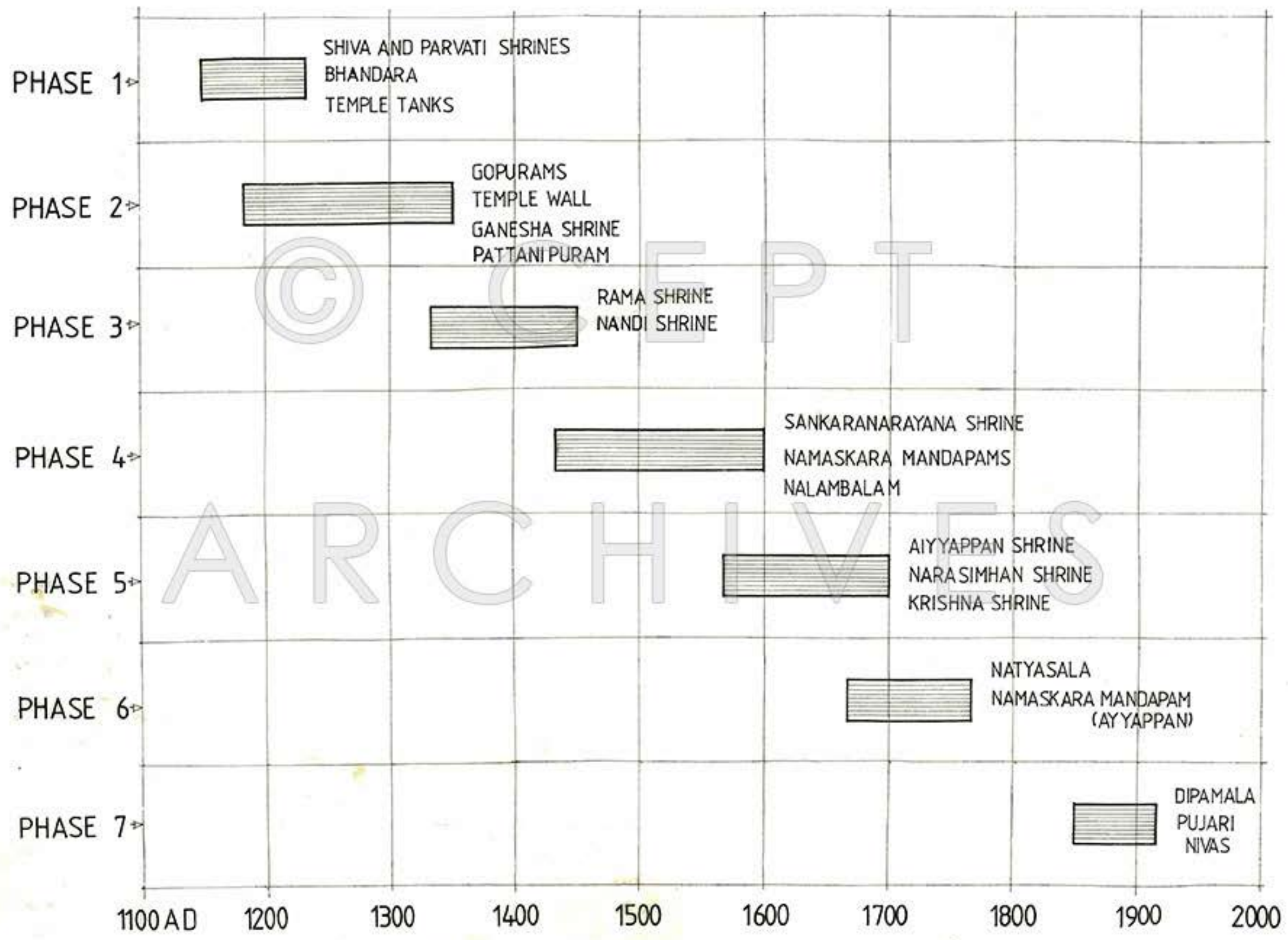


AXIAL AND CARDINAL DISPOSITION -
VADAKKUNATHAN TEMPLE COMPLEX.



RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN BUILDINGS:

- AXIAL ······
- HIERARCHICAL - - - -
- CARDINAL ▶
- ORBITAL ●



SEQUENCE OF DEVELOPMENT-
VADAKKUNATHAN TEMPLE COMPLEX.

that are deployed and their climatic suitability.

In the case of Vadakkunathan temple, each building because of the roof form, it is possible to see each as a volumetric unit rather than a combination of facades. While some of the structures are tall, the visual impact is of horizontality, which lends itself to a human scale in the complex as a whole. This characteristically is in contrast to the South Indian temples, some of which exist in the southern parts of Kerala, the emphasis is on the ground spread and verticality in addition to the decorative carvings to achieve their distinctive character and imposing appearance. On entering the west gopuram, the sanctuary and the shrines begin to impress themselves on the devotees. To enter the sanctuary, one breaks the axial approach and on entering the enclosure, the effect of the significance of the shrine is experienced, where in the small enclosed space, the shrine dominates. The outer wall of the enclosure while containing the shrines inside, defines the sacred area and through a massive structure, the possible dominant effect is negated by the closely spaced wooden framework for the votive lamps.

(ii) Materials and Construction - In considering building materials, it is interesting to note the material in relation to the function of the element where it is used, for ex. the plinths and certain details in areas of importance were constructed of granite which was scarce, while also being held precious. The walls of the shrines were constructed of laterite blocks which was plastered and decorative detailing formed from terracotta sections. Wood used in certain structures, like Natyashala, Namaskara Mandapams and Nalambalam was highly carved. of particular interest are the carved panel ceilings in the Namaskara Mandapams. Roofs were also constructed of wood, supported by carved decorative brackets. Roofs used a complex system of closely spaced rafters, joists and ties which would formerly have been covered by clay tiles, but later replaced by Mangalore tiles and in the case of important structures like the shrines and the Natyashala, by Copper alloy sheeting. Examples of brick construction can be seen in the later buildings, such as the Dipamala. The construction of the buildings is either post and beam in timber or masonry loadbearing walls.

(iii) Decorative elements - It is interesting to note the comparative absence of decorative detailings. They are to be found only on specific structures like Natyasala and Namaskara Mandapams, where wooden brackets and finials are quite elaborately carved. On the roofs of the gopurams, shrines and the Dipamala, one finds gavakshas, which though bearing resemblance to the Buddhist, chaitya windows, are simply decorative. Roofs are terminated by gilded finials and the eave-corners terminated in snake-heads. Other decorative features that are noticed include the stone balustrades at the entrance to the shrine, the stone gorgoyles on the Northern side of the shrine and the stone altars at the three entry points to the sanctuary.

There are interesting frescoes on the three main shrines and the remains of frescoes on the interior walls of Malambalam. These are said to date from the 17th century, but in places it is obvious that alterations have been done at a later date.

To conclude, it is interesting to note that the general structural condition of the complex is sound. The Archaeological Survey of India propose to take over the upkeep of the temple to ensure its preservation and maintenance. So far, they have enclosed one shrine with perspex sheeting to protect the ~~fore~~ frescoes, which is unsympathetic to the serene environment inside. It can only be hoped that this initial step does not set a precedence for future actions.

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