
Epigraphic Insights into Medieval Kerala: Unveiling the Kulasekhara Era

Suresh J.¹

¹. Department of History, University College, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala – 695 034, India (Email: drsureshhistory@gmail.com)

Received: 19 July 2023; Revised: 25 October 2023; Accepted: 06 December 2023

Heritage: Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies in Archaeology 11.1 (2023-24): 902-913

Abstract: *The Kulasekhara period of Kerala history is very rich in epigraphic records, and together they give us an overview of the social, cultural, political, and religious life that prevailed during the period. The article discusses broad trends from the main findings of some important inscriptions like Vazhapalli Inscription, Tarisapalli Copper Plate Inscription, Hajur Inscription, Chokkur Inscription, and Mampalli Copper Plate. Historians have determined the date of the Vazhapalli Inscription as AD 832 and thus regarded it as the first recorded instance of Malayalam writing in Kerala. This inscription speaks about the kings based on the Chera line. Tarisapalli Copper Plate Inscription details the setting up of a church in Kollam and how it mixed with the local rulers during the Onam festival. The inscriptions at one glance help us visualize the past of Kerala. They fill up the lacunae in history and provide the starting point to study more about the cultural heritage of Kerala.*

Keywords: Inscriptions, Epigraphy, Kerala, History, Archaeology, Language, Kulasekhara Period

Introduction

Inscriptions, often engraved on stone, metal, or any other hard substance, are tangible peepholes to the past that take one back to times bygone. Often, they fall outside the purview of popular historical accounts but stand as important pieces of evidence to add to the available understanding in respect to ancient civilizations and their complexities. These, therefore, through the study of inscriptions, give historians and archaeologists the capability to strip off the cloak of time that has concealed information regarding rulers, religious practices, economic transactions, social norms, and instances of cultural exchange, which may not be noted in either written texts or oral traditions. Moreover, very often, inscriptions complement other sources of historical information and sometimes even challenge them, offering another perspective or additional context in understanding complex historical phenomena. They record an amazing variety of human activities and relations: royal decrees and religious endowments, trade agreements, communal regulations. The inscriptions supply information about the rulers and their dynasties, their ambitions and conquests, the administrative policies. Religious inscriptions, for instance, enshrined in temples

and churches, shed light on the beliefs and rituals of the people, functions various faiths play in everyday life. Economic inscriptions—these are trade agreements or grants of land—describe patterns of commerce, taxation, and agriculture. Social inscriptions, among which are official decrees on caste or community governance, indicate how society had been structured and what norms were experienced. The rich complexity of human history is not only reflected in the decipherment of ancient languages and scripts but also in piecing together the intricate puzzle formed by inscriptions. Each inscription constitutes a piece in the puzzle, which enables providing an overall understanding of historical processes and transformations if carefully taken up and put back into its proper context. New ways of deciphering or interpreting inscriptions keep developing with technological innovation, allowing deeper insight and more accurate reconstructions.

The first inscription he deciphered was the Brahmi inscription of the Ashoka period. In Kerala, it was in 1894 that Manonmaniam Sundaram Pillai read many inscriptions. This helped in a better understanding of periods of history. Examples of this are the mention of Kerala in the Ashoka Stone Edict as *Cheralam* and Kerala in the second and thirteen edicts from *Girnar*, Gujarat. Stone inscriptions dating back to the 9th century AD have been found. Inscriptions are important historical documents that can be relied upon to study the period of the *Perumals*. In 1894 Professor Sundaram Pillai studied and described the rock inscriptions and subsequently published the *Travancore Archaeological Series* from 1910 under the Travancore Archaeological Department. Scholars such as Sewell and Babington gave importance to the study of inscriptions in Malabar and thus gave more publicity to the study of lithic history in Kerala as a whole. *Kalivarsha* and *Sakavarsha* are used to mark timing in Kerala (different periods). *Vazhapalli* inscription is considered as the earliest epigraphical record. It is clear from the evidence so far that the edicts were propagated more by the *Kulasekhara* kings. Edicts have helped in the study and development of Malayalam literature.

Objectives of Research

The study of *Kulashekhara* inscriptions helps rebuild Kerala's past pinpointing when key events happened, who ruled, and what significant things took place. It digs up info on the political scene looking at who was in charge how they ran things where their power reached, and what battles they fought based on the details furnished in the inscription. The research details the picture of how society worked back then with its pecking order, what different groups did, and what rules they lived by, all gleaned from these old writings. The inscriptions also tell us about economic factors like trade, farming, and business giving us a clear view of life under *Kulashekhara*'s rule. They shed light on religious stuff too showing us about temples, rituals, and those who supported and the way by which faith played out. The language writing styles, and types of literature we find in these inscriptions point to what was cool culture-wise back then. Legal texts and government records help us figure out how they ran things and dealt with law and order. Kerala's ties to the wider world through mentions of deals, friendships, and trade details can be unearthed by deciphering inscriptions of

that period. These inscriptions give the lowdown on art and building trends when it comes to temples. These inscriptions contain information about the genealogy of rulers and their religion. We can see also how language and writing changed in medieval Kerala. These inscriptions give details about how the government worked, the economy, and how different cultures mixed during the Kulasekhara period.

Review of Literature

Scholars and archaeologists shed light on the Kulasekhara period in Kerala through their works and findings through analysing evidences from inscriptions. As recently as 2018, Kesavan Veluthat in "History and historiography in constituting a region: The case of Kerala" shows how inscriptions help to shape regional ideas and the political changes of this era. Some careful examinations are made on archaeological discoveries and epigraphic studies in "Indian Archaeology 2010–2011 – A Review" (2016). It reveals urban settlements, trade networks, and functioning under the Kulasekharas. Reported by Abdul Latheef Naha, a 2011 article in "The Hindu," a fresh look at old inscriptions may bring to light new perspectives on Chera history. It exposes political alliances and religious patronage. Veluthat and Donald R. Davis Jr.'s entry into "Irreverent History: Essays for M.G.S. Narayanan," 2014, studies changes in land relationships with the decline of the Chera state. The work informs the reader about farming policies and social as well as economic implications. For that reason, in today's context, M.G.S. Narayanan's "Index to Chera Inscriptions," is a catalogue which shows readers the names of Chera's kings, their administrative webs and cultural dispositions from 2013. This list gives us a background of the change about the time. T. A. Gopinatha Rao's valuable contribution to the "Mamballi Plates of Srivallavangodai" in 1907-08 provides elaborate data on legal institutions, administrative grades, social and religious institutions under the Kulasekharas. These works thus present a complex picture of Kerala's past in the Kulasekhara period. They throw light on political situations, social and cultural changes, economic life, and religious conditions that gave medieval Kerala the particular stamp. The science of inscriptions still remains the master-key to discover and interpret this significant period. It opens up new ways and avenues to probe research into various fields and move toward drawing a meaningful history of Kerala.

Research Methodology

The research methodology to be used to study the Kulasekhara period through inscriptions is historical in design, solely focused on the critical analysis of the principal data sources, especially inscriptions constituting medieval Kerala. In the presentation of this period, sources from archaeology, epigraphy, history, and cultural studies have been consolidated and integrated. The recorded primary sources of data are inscriptions, charters, and other archaeological sources of the Kulasekhara period which have been documented and brought under various collection processes by many scholars such as Kesavan Veluthat, M.G.S. Narayanan and T.A. Gopinatha Rao. Secondary sources come in the form of academic articles, and books offer contextual

information as well as interpretations on the period. Detailed epigraphical studies are conducted as a data collection method, among other areas. This investigates inscriptions' content on political events, administrative practices, socio-economic conditions, religious practices, and cultural aspects. Reviewing is conducted of published data on archaeological surveys, reported material culture on urban settlements, and trade routes by Indian sources of the Department of Archaeology in "Indian Archaeology 2010-2011 – A Review."

Classification and interpretation of inscriptions and other archaeological findings are made under such important themes as political governance, economic structures, religious patronage, and cultural expressions while using content analytical techniques. Ethical concerns pertain to the preservation and ethical treatment of historical artifacts and inscriptions in accordance with the standards on preservation used while collecting data. Intellectual integrity is ensured through critical assessment of the sources of information, identification of contribution to scholarship, and avoidance of biases in interpretation.

It does recognize some fundamental constraints, such as fragmentary inscriptions and historical records that may be biased; therefore, the problems in interpreting ancient texts due to linguistic nuances and ever-evolving research methodologies cannot be undermined. Its learned contribution would primarily be through the augmentation of knowledge concerning the Kulasekhara period and insight into governance, society, economy, and culture that medieval Kerala offered. Its main scholarly contribution would be the augmentation of knowledge about the Kulasekhara period and insights into governance, society, economy, and culture that medieval Kerala offers. The approach adopted here is toward gaining a deeper understanding of the Kulasekhara period, with insights gained in relation to Kerala's medieval history and its wider significance for regional studies in South India.

Significance of Study

The present epigraphic research into the Kulasekhara period falls into principal dimensions that were important not only for reconstructing medieval Kerala history but also for general implications. It looks at political structures, systems of governance, including royal decrees, administrative methods, territorial expansions, and regional alliances reflected in the inscriptions. The socioeconomic conditions are explored with land-tenure systems, agriculture, trade networks, urban settlements, and economic policies brought out from inscriptions and archaeological findings. The same is worked out through the patronage of religious and cultural practices, temple endowments, rituals, and cultural exchanges to invite light on values of society and the modes of interaction. The legal and administrative frameworks get gleaned from the legal texts and administrative decrees in inscriptions. Interdisciplinary methods that knit archaeology, epigraphy, and history provide the said reconstruction of socio-political and cultural dynamics. Comparative analysis across periods and regions brings to light the continuities, transformations, and peculiar features of the Kulasekhara epoch in the

stream of South Indian History. Larger contextualization of history embrace regional interactions, cultural exchanges, and socio-political developments that shaped the evolution of the kingdom. On the basis of careful analyses of inscriptional and archaeological data, the present study proposes nuanced understandings of Kerala's historical trajectory to influence contemporary discourse on regional identity, cultural heritage, and governance in South India.

Vazhapalli Inscription - 832 CE

The Vazhapalli inscription begins with Namashivaya, as found in Changanassery Thalavana illam of Kottayam district. Gopinatha Rao has interpreted it based on the model of Vattezuthu script and Grandha script. The biggest feature of the Vazhapally edict is that it is the first edict to use the Malayalam script. This edict can give a clear description of Kerala in 832 CE. The Vazhapalli inscription is the first edict found in Kerala related to the Chera kings. In this edict we find that the king is described as "Parameshwara Bhattaraka" (T A Gopinath Rao 1992; 14). Another peculiarity of this edict is that it is written in the Pallava Grantha script. This is the oldest edict ever found. The dinar is a Roman coin recorded in the Vazhapalli edict. It can be seen in the Vazhapalli edict that if the rituals of the temple Thiruvatuva is interrupted, 100 dinars should be paid instead. There is also mention of a king named Rajasekhara Varman who ruled from 820 to 844. The Vazhapalli inscription is a document that clearly spells out the early stages of Malayalam becoming an independent language. This edict has a special place in the history of Kerala. The genealogy and agricultural details of the Chera Perumals are clear to us from the inscriptions of the Vazhapalli edict. The Sanskrit wording of the Vazhapalli edict indicates that it was written after the Brahmin dominance in Kerala.

Tarisapalli Copper Plate Inscription - 849 CE

This edict begins with Swasti Sri. It was issued by the then Venad ruler named Ayyanatikal Tiruvatikal in the fifth regnal year of Sthanu Ravi who is the king of Mahodayapuram (T A Gopinath Rao 1992; 61). The Tarisapalli copper plate is an edict found to belong to the Venad kings. This is the first edict to be precisely dated. This inscription is based on the permission given to build a Christian Church at Kurakkeni Kollam to Mar Sapir Iso, a Christian merchant. This inscription talks about Christians in Kerala and the Onam festival. The grant is dated to the 5th regnal year of King Sthanu Ravi, 849-50 CE (old Malayalam: Ko Tanu Ravi). It was drafted in the presence of Chera Perumal prince Vijayaraga, Venad chieftain Ayyan Adikal Thiruvadikal, junior chieftain Rama Thiruvadikal, other important officers of the chieftdom (the *adhikarar*, the *prakrithi*, the *punnathala padi*, and the *pulakkudi padi*), and the representatives of merchant guilds *anjuvannam* and *manigramam*.

The charter grants land to Mar Sapir Iso, the founder of the Kollam trading city (the *nagara*), to build the Church of Tarisa at Kollam. The land, evidently a large settlement with its occupants, is donated as an "*attipperu*" by Ayyan Adikal (IllamKulam KunjanPillai 2005:709). Sapir Iso also recruited two merchant guilds (the *anjuvannam*

and the manigramam) as the tenants of the nagara (the karanmai). The Six Hundred of Venad, the militia of the chiefdom, was entrusted with the protection of the nagara and the church. The charter also granted serfs to the nagara and the church. This included personnel like agricultural labourers (the vellalars), carpenters (the thachar), traders (the ezhavar), and salt-makers (the eruviyar). The charter granted Sapir Iso several titles, rights, and aristocratic privileges. All revenues from the donated land and its occupants were 'exempted,' which perhaps meant that these were to be made over to the church. It deals with Al Kashu, a slave system that existed in Kerala. This edict also describes Christianity and Islam. The first indication of the royal system that prevailed in Kerala comes from the Tharisapalli edict. It can be seen that this edict discusses the monarchy and the local rulers under it, which helps to understand the social and political conditions at that time.

Hajur Inscription - 866 CE

This inscription is dated based on the Kali age. The Ay king Karunantatakan has issued the Hajur inscription. This is an edict dealing with ancient schools. The inscription is typically written in Old Malayalam, Tamil, or Sanskrit, using the Vatteluttu script or the Grantha script. These scripts were commonly used in the region during the medieval period. This edict deals with the opening of Parthivapuram Patashala which is an educational institution and a Vishnu Temple. It is recorded in the Hajoer edict that a Vishnu temple was established at a place called Vizhakudi, and a Vedic school was established in connection with that, 95 students were provided with the opportunity to stay and study in that Vedic school and it was a school modeled after the Kanthallur shaala.

Chokur Inscription - 923 CE

The Chokkur Inscription, which dates back to around 920 AD, is a significant historical artefact discovered in the Keralan hamlet of Chokkur, which is close to Koduvally. It is inscribed on a large granite slab located in the now mostly-ruined temple courtyard. This edict was issued by Goda Ravivarman. This edict gives references about the Devadasi system. This edict was issued in the fifteenth regnal year of the Kulasekhara king Goda Ravivarman. It is also called as Kadam Katkukacham Avittathur inscription. In this edict we can see the details such as full protection of those who take temple land for cultivation and the indications for properly doing the worship in the temples. It stipulates severe punishment for breaking the law to preserve the social order.

This inscription is like a message from the past, telling us about the person who started the temple, Karkodupurathu Kadamba Kumara. The inscription is found in Chokkur, a village near Koduvally in Kerala. It's carved on a single piece of granite, still standing in what's left of the Chokkur Temple's courtyard. This inscription was made way back in 920/21 AD, during the early medieval times in Kerala. It tells us that Karkodupurathu Kadamba Kumara was the person who donated to build this temple and had this inscription made to remember it. This inscription mentions something very old called the 'Agreement of Muzhikkulam,' which is the first time we know

about it from writings. This agreement, which demonstrated how people agreed on crucial issues regarding the management of major locations, such as temples, was a huge event back then.

A separate text on the other side of the stone refers to a "nangaiyar," which appears to be a term for a lady who is revered. This implies that women played a significant role in the society or temple during that time. This inscription not only reveals the creator of the temple but also provides insight into the inner workings of ancient civilization. Also discussed is the significant "Agreement of Muzhikkulam," which makes clear how people founded their temples and villages. Even while we're not quite sure what women accomplished, the mention of "nangaiyar" indicates that they had significant positions in the temple or community. This inscription aids in our documentation of Kerala's historical events, even if the temple is now largely in ruins. Scholars and specialists examine these texts to gain further insights on the lifestyles and ideologies of those living during that era. A priceless relic from Kerala is the Chokkur Inscription.

Mampalli Inscription - 974 CE

It is the first inscription in Kerala which is recorded based on the Kollam era by the Venad ruler Sri Vallabham Kota. This edict mentions the palace of Panamkavil. This edict helps to trace the time of Kulasekhara kings like the Bhaskara Ravi Varma and Indu Kota Varma. It was issued in the Kollam year 149. The Mampalli Sasanam is founded from the Mampalli madam at Keezhattingal, Attingal. The edict states that a person named Chatanchadayan received the property donated for Thiru Chengannur Temple at Panamkavil Palace, Kollam.

The Mampalli Copper Plate, also known as Mamballi, is an important historical record from 974 AD that describes a donation to the Chengannur Temple given by the chief family of Venad, an area in present-day Kerala. Being the earliest reference to the Kollam Era in epigraphical records—more precisely, the Kollan-Tonri Era, 149—this inscription is very noteworthy. On both sides of a single copper plate, the document is written in Grantha characters in Vattezhuthu, an ancient form of Malayalam. The plate is presently on display at the Padmanabhapuram Museum. It was formerly held by Mampalli Madhom, which is located close to Trivandrum. In addition, Mampalli Madhom has another plate that is from around the same time period and functions as a companion piece to the first. The Venad royal family is documented in two noteworthy royal deeds by the Mampalli Copper Plate. The first action, called "attipperu," tells of a meeting between the chieftain of Venad, Srivallavan Kotai, and the committee of Brahmin village elders of Chengannur, known as Tiruchenkunrur Parutai Perumakkal, at Panainkavil Palace in Kollam. Srivallavan Kotai gave Tirukkalaipayuram Aditya Umayamma the only ownership rights to the Ayirur Temple's deity, the pattaraka, as well as the land that belonged to the temple, at this conference.

The second deed, called "kizhitu," records Aditya Umayamma's later gift to the Chengannur Temple of the Ayirur Temple's landed property and proprietary rights,

identifying it as a subordinate property. This agreement includes clauses for regular expenses as well as the payment of rakshabhoga, or protection money, to the potuvals, or village assembly secretaries. In exchange for their security of the Ayirur Temple and its belongings, the potuvals were given 200 para (a unit of measurement) of rice annually. Additionally, the inscription stipulates a fee for any transgressions of the contract, including impeding farming or seizing property within the kizhitu.. Penalties for violators and their cohorts included a 200 kalanju (a unit of measurement) gold payment. Several prominent people, including Punalur Iravi Parantavan, Kutakottur Parantavan Kandan, Itaiyamanam Cannaran Kandan, Manalmukku Kantan Tomataran, and Murunkaiyur Tevan Pavittiran, observed the transaction that is documented on the Mampalli Copper Plate. Chengannur's secretary (potuval), Chattan Chataiyan, was the scribe in charge of recording the transaction. This inscription, which depicts the complex interactions between temple officials, local chieftains, and the Brahmin village assembly, offers priceless insights into the administrative and social activities of mediaeval Kerala. The importance of temple endowments and the organised government that ruled the area at this time is highlighted by the painstaking record-keeping and the comprehensive protection and penalty laws. Understanding Kerala's historical and cultural legacy requires an appreciation of the Mampalli Copper Plate, which is still an important artefact.

Paliyam Inscription - 925 CE

This is an edict issued by Ay King Vikramaditya Varaguna. It was issued in the eighth year of his reign. It is also known as srimoolavasam cheppedukal. The Ay king Vikramaditya Varagunan issued the Paliyam copper plates in the fifteenth year of his reign. The land grant to Thirumoolavadam (Sreemoolavasam), a Buddhist institution, is the subject of the plates. The inscription describes Varagunan as a devotee of Buddha and as "vrishnikulajathan" in the outset. T. A. Gopinatha Rao made the discovery of the plates. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai claims that the plates (Makaram 7, Kollavarsham 104), are from AD 929. However, there is greater validity to M.G.S. Narayanan's discovery that these originate from AD 898. The inscription claims that the Sreemoolavasam received a sizable donation of land. During Veerakotha Kulasekhara's reign, Prince Indukotha, the successor to the throne, is said to have been given responsibility for the maintenance of the estates. The plates bear an inscription honouring Buddha, dharma, and sangha, written in mangalacharana. The invasion on Kerala by Paranthaka Chola is also mentioned.

Jewish Copper Plate Inscription – 1000 CE

The Jewish Edict is an edict by Bhaskara Ravivarman I authorizing the Jewish chief Joseph Rabban to collect taxes with 72 rights and to use palanquins used by kings. It is dated on 1000 AD. It is called the Magna Carta of the Jews. This inscription grants 'Anchuvannam' to Joseph Rabban. The Jewish Copper Plates represent one of the key historical documents dated to circa 1000 CE, issued by the Chera Perumal king Bhaskara Ravi varman of Kerala in South India to Joseph Rabban, a Jewish merchant

of prominence from Kodungallur (Cranganore) near Cochin. The plates are in Vattezhuthu script with Grantha characters, describing a type of royal grant awarding certain rights to Joseph Rabban. This includes exemption from local taxes and the perpetuation of this privilege to his descendants. This proves a reasonable period on the part of the Jewish community to live and build themselves into an integral part of the Malabar Coast.

The plates are well preserved in an iron box called Pandeal in the Paradesi Synagogue at Mattancherry, Cochin. It shows the close relationship between the Jewish community and Kerala societies from these plates. It would have, in turn, meant an economic and probably military alliance in the prevailing geopolitical circumstances, which were quite necessary for both parties, such as the rising Chola Empire during the reign of Bhaskara Ravi Varman. Scholars have generally focused on dating these plates to 1000 CE during the reign of Bhaskara Ravi Varman, although there has always been a fierce academic debate that has placed these plates at dates ranging from the 4th to the 11th century CE. This period thus corresponds to regional political dynamics, with the Chola invasions just beginning to pick up, perhaps strategically securing support from the Jewish community when external threats loomed large over the respective kingdom.

These plates are preserved and commemorated in the form of memory by the Cochin Jews, otherwise known also as the "Black Jews" and "White Jews." Modern replicas serve as a form of diplomatic gift that symbolizes historical and cultural meaning between India and Israel. It not only brings to the fore the quantum of legal and economic rights given to Joseph Rabban and his descendants but lays bare the multi-cultural fibre of medieval Kerala and the religious tolerance inside a society wherein lay an integral part diverse communities like Jewish merchants. The strategic importance of issuing these copper plates to Joseph Rabban lies in the fact that they could financial backing or military aid from the prosperous Jewish community along the Malabar Coast. This was quite vital to defend themselves against Chola incursions and ensure stability within the kingdom. But the use of the Vattezhuthu script with Grantha characters only goes on to underline the formal recognition that the Chera king gave to this, making explicit a collaborative relationship between the ruling dynasty and the diverse communities that included the Jews.

On a broader historical note, the Chera interaction with neighboring powers and dependence on maritime trade routes locates the role of the Jewish community within the framework of regionalism. The coastal geography of Kerala and its relation to international trade routes provided greater opportunities for the cosmopolitan environment to flourish in which the communities of varying backgrounds succeeded through trade and cultural exchange. The Jewish copper plates of the Jews throw some light on the Cultural and economic position of medieval Kerala's Jewish community. They open up before us one of the hitherto dark chapters in the history of the Chera dynasty. Indeed, they shed light upon the diplomatic strategies and relations with

different merchant communities at a time of regional geopolitical flux, reflecting the complicated ties between rulers and local communities in ancient South India.

Thazhekad Church Inscription

This edict is from Raja Simhan, who ruled between 1028 and 1043 AD and was found at Iringalakuda, Thrissur, in the church of Thazhekad. It marks certain privileges to the Christian merchants Iravi Chathan and Chathan Vadakan, who were also members of the 'manigramam'.

Kurumathur Inscription

The Kurumathur inscription (871 AD) is a mid-9th century inscription from Kurumathur, near Areacode in Kerala, south India. It is also romanized as Kurumattur. A loose granite block from the Kurumathoor Vishnu temple bears an inscription in Sanskrit written in Pallava Grantha script. One of the uncommon Sanskrit inscriptions from Kerala is this one.

The inscription describes the reign of north-central Kerala's Chera Perumal monarch, Rama Rajasekhara, in the ninth century AD. It is a Kali Day chronogram, dated to May 24, 871 AD. The three-stanza inscription, written in Sanskrit in shardula-vikridita metre, claims that the monarch Rajasekhara was a member of the legendary Ikshvaku dynasty of the deity Rama. It hopes that the splendour of King Rajasekhara would be felt all throughout the world. He is praised for having governed the nation justly and without ever straying from the Manu Laws. Twelve Brahmanas built a temple pond and placed an idol of the deity Vishnu within the temple during his reign. In February 2011, during renovations at Kurumathoor Vishnu temple, the document was unearthed. The inscription was found, and M. R. Raghava Varier reported on it.

Chengama Inscription

Vidugadalagiya Perumal in the Tirumalai inscription is referred to in the Chengama inscription of Kulothunga Chola III as the Pirantha Perumal, or "the born Perumal," son of one Rajaraja. "The Perumal whose abode is at the sea" is how one may understand the word "Vidugadalagiya (Vidukadalakiya) Perumal." "Agiya" or "akkiya" means "befitted," "kadal" implies sea, and "vidu" indicates place of habitation in Tamil-Malayalam. His position in the line of Perumals of Makotha is further cemented by the addition of the surname "Perumal" his name. His father Rajaraja Chera and their ancestor Yavanika, also known as Cheran Chenguttuvan, are mentioned in the Tirumalai inscription, which helps to bridge the gap between the ancient and mediaeval Cheras.

Rajaraja is described as "the foremost on the right path, who came from the Chera family of Vanji," and Yavanika as the extremely devout Chera-Kerala king of Vanji. Yavanika is recognised as the historic Chera family's Kadal Pirakottiya Cheran Chenguttuvan. Rajaraja is really Ravi Rama Rajadithya, also known as Adithyan Kota

Ranaditya, and he belonged to the Chera-Perumal family, a mediaeval dynasty that ruled from Thiruvanchikulam. He must be the same as the Jain inscription found in Kozhikode, Thiruvannur, written by Irai Irayar, also known as Rajaraja. His name is also mentioned in two more local records from Trichambaram in Kannur and Indianur near Malappuram. This emperor is referred to as Chera Mannar Rajaraja Deva in two Chola documents at Mannarkoyil, Tamil Nadu. It is probable that Rama Kulasekhara succeeded Rajaraja. It is unclear, nonetheless, just what the relationship is between Rajaraja and Rama Kulasekhara. It's possible that the former was the latter's brother or son. If this is the case, then Rama Kulasekhara should not be regarded as the last Chera-Perumal; rather, Vidugadalagiya Perumal, son of Rajaraja can be attributed to that status.

Conclusion

Inscriptions are the timeless testaments of human history, and in most instances, carry precious views related to the past that written record books or oral history alone are not equipped to capture. This safari across the canvas of civilizations using inscriptions pieces together stories related to government, religion, commerce, and social dynamics which fit like a jigsaw puzzle to express ancient societies. Every such inscription, carefully made and laboriously preserved for centuries, immediately links the thoughts, activities, and strivings of the minds that have moulded history. Inscriptions decrypt genealogies of rulers, changes in languages and scripts, and discover economic and cultural interchanges that made civilizations what they are today. To that extent, the inscriptions are real confirmations and generally enhance historical discourses with a totally new set of insights and perspectives that further understand the motives and actions of ancient societies.

Apart from just being a source of history, inscriptions have always been the carriers of culture and civilization; therefore, they act as mediums for transferring this repository of heritage and identity from one generation to another. They have remained touchstones of cultural memory, reinforcing traditions and beliefs continued to strike chords in contemporary societies. In making research on such inscriptions and preserving them to do justice to their importance, we really do homage not only to the past but provide a way for future generations to have access to the stories and lessons kept within such ancient texts. Analysis technologies and methodologies related to inscriptions evolve, and with them, progress in the ability to turn up ever more precise details from such artifacts makes itself known, word by word. Advanced imaging techniques, linguistic analyses, interdisciplinary approaches—some among them that keep pushing our knowledge further to the understanding of inscriptions, revealing hidden details and subtleties contributing to a much more circumstantial idea of history. Inscriptions are bridges through time that connect us to the past and point toward the appreciation of a deepened heritage that human civilization has handed down. And so, in inscriptional pursuits, we celebrated the diversity of the human experience and saved cultural heritage to deepen collective understanding about the intricate tapestry that is history.

References

- Aiyer, U. S. P. 1998. *Progress of Travancore under H. H Sreemoolam Tirunal*. Department of Cultural publications. Government of Kerala. Thiruvananthapuram.
- Ayyar, R. N. 1925. (2004). *Travancore Archaeological Series Vol V. (II and III)*. Department of Cultural Publications. Government of Kerala. Trivandrum.
- Chaitanya, K. 1972. *Kerala*. National Book Trust India. New Delhi.
- Cherian, P. J. 1999. *Essays on the Cultural Formation of Kerala. Vol. IV (II)*. Kerala state Gazetteers Department. Thiruvananthapuram.
- Haridas, V. V. 2016. *Zamorins and the Political Culture of Medieval Kerala*. Orient Black Swan Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi.
- Menon, A. S. 1967. *A Survey of Kerala History*. Sahitya Pravarthaka Co- Operative Society. Kottayam.
- Menon, K. P. P. 2001. *History of Kerala. Vol. II*. Asian Educational Services. New Delhi.
- Narayanan, M. G. S. 1996. *Perumals of Kerala*. University of Calicut. Calicut.
- Pillai, E. P. N. K. 2005. *Some Problems in Kerala History*. The Educational Supplies Depot. Thiruvananthapuram.
- Rao, T. A. G. 1908. (1992). *Travancore Archaeological Series Vols. II and III*. Department of Cultural Publications. Government of Kerala. Thiruvananthapuram.