

Vallavāl, the Sacred Abode of Viṣṇu

Formation and Transformation

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Abstract

Temples in Kēraḷa have not formed part of serious studies, the pioneering works excluded, e.g. Stella KRAMRISCH and H. SARKAR and brief notes in Partha MITTER. Some scholars have concentrated on rituals (S. JAYASHANKER), and the *bhakti* hymns of the Ālvārs (Francis CLOONEY). The architecture and iconography of the temples are not thoroughly documented but for some sporadic case studies (cf. RAJARAJAN 2015). The present article is the outcome of casual field work in the Kuṭṭanāḍu region of Kēraḷa that hopes to present a copious picture of the architectural heritage of the Vallavāl temple. A thorough summary of the Tamil *bhakti* hymns of the Ālvārs, bearing on the venue is presented to obtain a picture of the temple at its formative stage nearly a millennium ago. The field data has enabled to obtain a better picture of the temple today as it stands transformed. The data presented is supported by unreported photographic documentation. What is recommended is intensive field documentation to present a better picture of the temples of Kēraḷa.

Keywords

Vallavāl/Vallā; Ālvārs; Nammālvār; temple architecture, iconography.

Vallavāl is a *divyadeśa* (Sacred Abode of Viṣṇu) in the 'Kuṭṭanāḍu' (lowland) zone of central Kēraḷa, noted for its enchanting landscape and lush-green interlaced with backwaters. The land is rich in water and evergreen plants, and the paddy fields in certain locations are below sea level as one finds these if cruised from Ālappuḷa (Deep River) to Kocci. Ceṅkuṇṇūr (Ceṅkuṇṇūr in Ālvārs' literature) is a township in the Ālappuḷa district, deep-rooted in the history of Viṣṇuism since the eighth century CE. Six *divyadeśas* are centered round Ceṅkuṇṇūr.¹ Totally thirteen are identified in Kēraḷa (Map Fig. 1) that provided the subject-matter for hymns of

¹ Six are located round Ceṅkuṇṇūr/Ceṅkaṇṇūr; Ceṅkaṇ "Red-eyed" is the ancient name of Viṣṇu (KALIDOS 2016: 5, RAJARAJAN et al. 2017a: 244-46, "prefix of names" SUBRAHMANIAN 1990: 379); others are Puliyūr, Kaṭittāṇam, Vallavāl, Vāraṇvīlai and Vaṇvaṇṭūr (RAJARAJAN 2013a: 49).

the Ālvārs;² mostly Nammālvār (c. eighth century CE); Kulacēkarar/Kulaśekhara³ and Tirumaṅkai (ninth century CE).⁴ The popularization of these venues was mainly due to the inspired works of Nammālvār. The present article examines the facets of the venue and its temple identified in hymns of the Ālvārs, its formation, and transformation through the ages reaching crystallization as it stands today. The paper may be useful to pragmatic scholars interested in Viṣṇuism studies (cf. GONDA 1970) that aspire for more about the religious network, and cultural reorientation of the temples in Kēraḷa.⁵ Earlier scholars (KRAMRISCH 1970, SARKAR 1973 & 1976, NOBLE 1981, PILLAI 1986, CLOONEY 1991, cf. JAYASHANKER 1997) could not amply illustrate architecture and iconography mainly due to the conservatism dormant in the Kēraḷite temple-culture till the recent past. I do not know whether western scholars are permitted entry into the inner parts of the temple. Pioneers have presented sketches of the temples based on literature and mythology. Field-based data is desiderative.⁶ The scope of the present article is to bring Vallavāl to the limelight in eyefuls, and that way hinting at the changing facets of the temple, i.e., “transformation”. The article includes Roman transcription of the Ālvārs’ hymns, and a brief summary (see Appendices) that reflect the *divyadeśa* in its formative stage. The transcription in Roman letters may generate a dialogue on Vallavāl from the view point of temple architecture, and the present and past rituals.

- ² Other venues among the thirteen are Nāvāy, Vittuvakkōṭu, Kāṭkarai, Mūlikkaḷam, Anantapuram, Vaṭṭāru “Circular River” and Vanparicāram (Map Fig. 1). The *divyadeśas* are 108 spread over the length and breadth of South Asia, including Śālagrāma in Nepāḷa (RAJARAJAN 2013a). The Mūrtis in Malaināḍu *divyadeśas* take fascinating names; cf. Kuṣaḷappan/Vāmana (Vāraṇvīlai) and Imaiavarappan (Ceṅkuṅṅūr). Imaiavarappan (cf. Imaiavarappan or Vāṇavarappan “dear to the gods” in *Patirrupattu* 2nd Ten ‘Patikam’ l. 13, 6th Ten ‘Patikam’ l. 6, MARR 1985: 324), a title of the Cēra kings, supposed to be coined on the model of Aśoka’s *biruda*, ‘Devānampriyasa Piyadasino’ (MOOKERJI 1972: 223).
- ³ Kulaśekhara is identified with a post-Cēra king Kulaśekaravarman c. 800-820 (SARKAR 1978: 21). His successor, Rājaśekaravarman is identified with Cēramāṇ Perumāḷ Nāyaṇar, contemporary of Saint Cuntarar. Tiruvañcaikkaḷam (Vañci of *Cilappatikāram* fame and the venue, Koṭuṅkallūr; cf. GENTES 1992) appears in the hymns of Cuntarar (*Tēvāram* 7.4.1-10, for Roman transcription and summary see RAJARAJAN 2015: 142-45).
- ⁴ The total hymns on Malaināḍu (Hill Country, Kēraḷa) are 134; Nam 101, Maṅkai 23 and Kulacēkarar 10.
- ⁵ Photography was strictly prohibited within the four wall of a temple in Kēraḷa. Women were not permitted in the Vallavāl temple for *darśana*. Now, the scenario has completely changed when we visited (early 2004). See women in the inner part of the temple (Fig. 18).
- ⁶ Palatial churches, roadside basilicas (Fig. 21), *masjids* and *dargaḥs* are a common sight wherever one turns his face (REITZ 2000: 415-36). Many of these roadside monuments seem to be of recent origin (RAJARAJAN 2016: Fig. 57).

Pillai Perumāḷ Aiyaṅkar (c. seventeenth century) in an anthology of hymns called ‘Aṣṭaprabandham/Aṭṭappirapantam’ has composed 6+108 hymns on *nūrreṭṭut-tiruppati-antāti*. The hymns are in praise of the 108 *divyadeśas* (v. 66 on Vallavāḷ). The hymn adds the Lord of ‘Tiruvallā’⁷ is visible to devotees and invisible to unbelievers. He is *rūpa* “(with a) form” and *arūpa* “formless”. He is of “light-form” to mystics. He is *sthānaka*, *ninrāṇ* (cf. *Tiruvāymoli* 5.9.2). The original is worth citing:

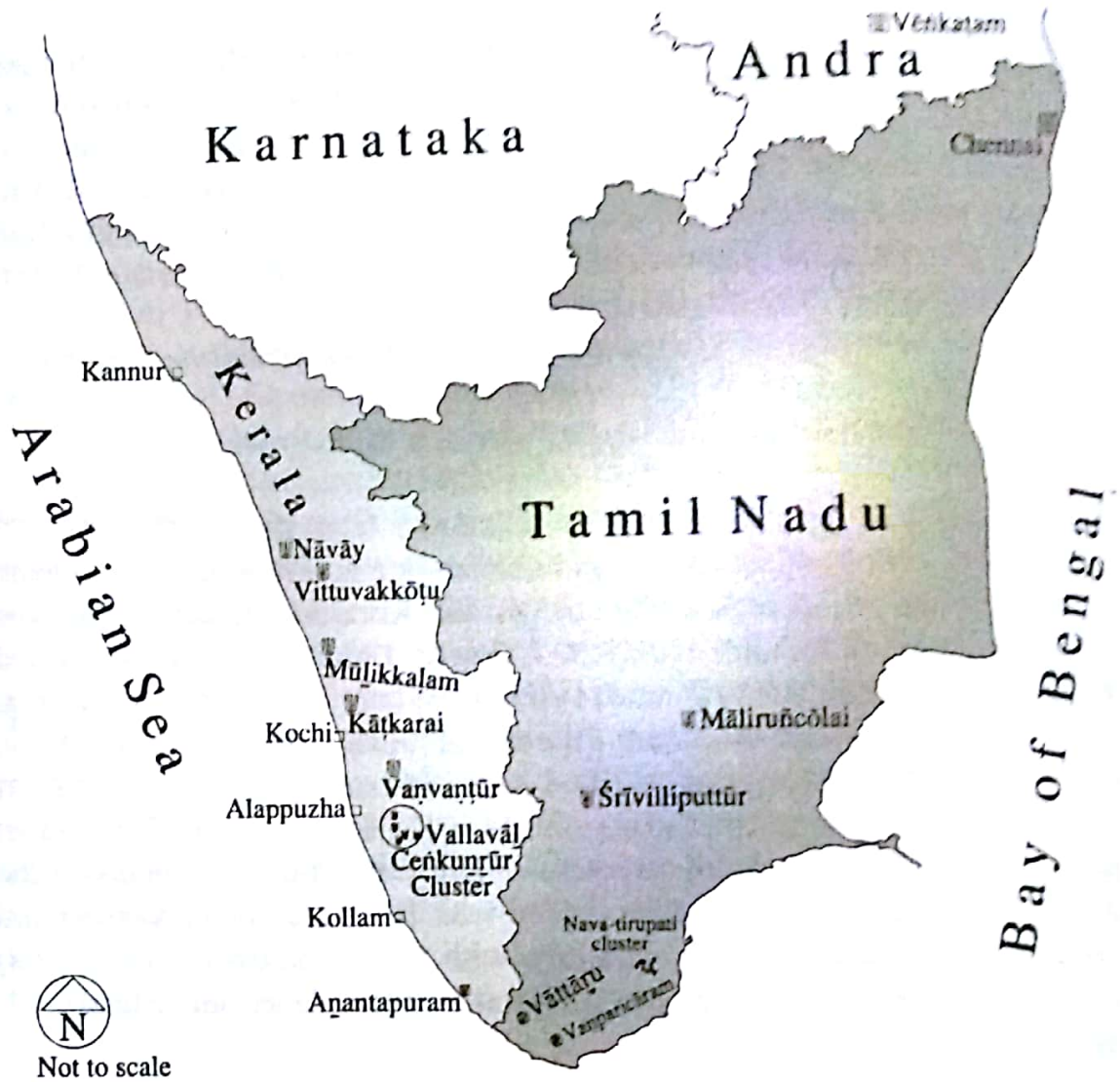
*ukantārkkku eññānrum uḷāṇāy ukavātu/ ikantārkkku eññānrum ilāṇāy -
tikaḷntiṭṭu*

arualla vāḷuruvam alla eṇa ninrāṇ/ tiruvalla vāḷuraiyum tē.⁸

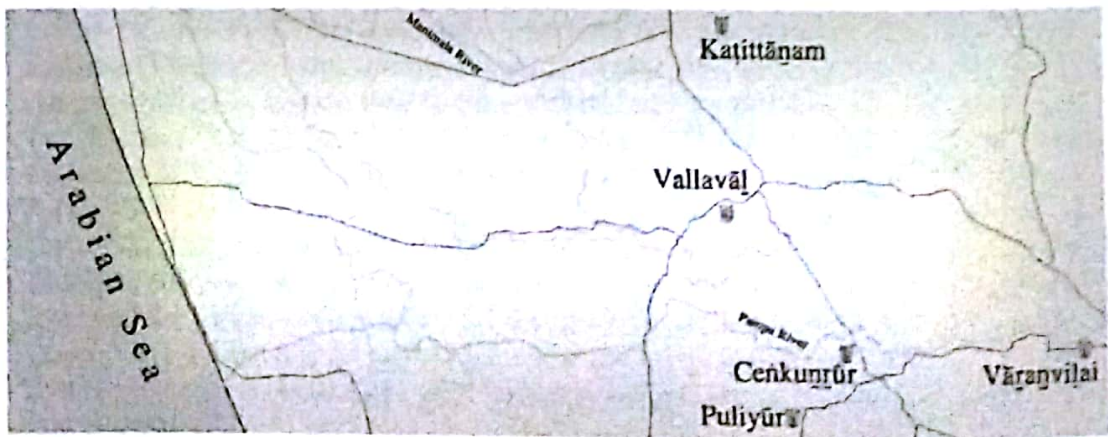
The temple must have undergone modifications from the 8th-9th to the 17th century CE. Structural additions, and dismantling and rebuilding had taken place since the Vijayanagara-Nāyaka period. Kēraḷite interaction with the Tamil country (cf. PANIKKAR 1959: 6-7, AYYAR 1966: 92-93) is vouchsafed by inscriptional evidences at the far end of the later Pāṇḍya Empire II; e.g. Ravivarmaṇ-*caturvedimaṅgalam* (Śrīraṅgam ARE 1936-37, nos. 38-39, 41). Twenty-three inscriptions of Ravi Kēraḷavarma of Vēnāḍu (first half of 14th century CE) are noted (KRISHNAMĀCĀRYA 2008: 367, see TLT1). It must have been originally a small structure suited to the hilly environment; the *garbhagrha*, and *mukhamaṇḍapa*, added with *balipīṭha*, *dhvajstambha* and *mahādvāra* (*gopura*). It may acquiesce with what FERGUSSON (1972: 368) guessed c. 1876 in case of the macro-Śrīraṅgam temple as “an ordinary village temple” at the early stage.

⁷ Tiruvallavāḷ or Vallavāḷ in the Ālvārs’ hymns is ‘Tiruvallā’ in Malaiyāḷam.

⁸ *Tiruvalla...tē* means “God...who excels Tiru/Śrī”; the Lord who excels Śrī in auspiciousness (cf. KALIDOS 2006a: 143). In Śrī-Viṣṇuism the Lord’s mind is full of the presence of Śrī; cf. the Śrīraṅgam temple tradition and Ardhanaṛīśvata (cf. RAJARAJAN 2012a).



1. Map: Malaināḍu divyadeśas

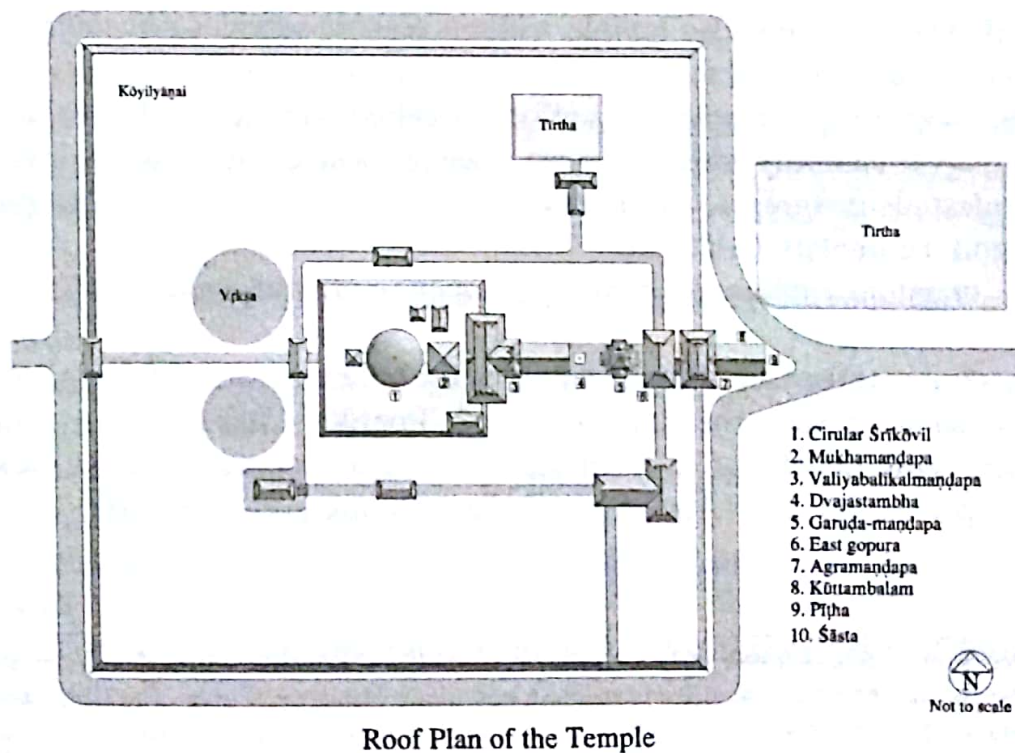


1(a). Map: Ceṅkunrūr divyadeśa cluster

(Debenham n. d.: Maps 24, 68; Hardy 2014: Map 3), based on Google Maps by R. K. Parthiban

Formation

Vallavāḷ emerges as a recognizable center of Viṣṇuism by about the eighth century (Map Fig. 1a). The hymns of the Ālvārs are categorical in affirming they loved the bounty of nature and cherished the setting of landscape, and wanted to find their God in paradise; cf. KRAMRISCH (1980: 2) citing the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*, dated 500-1200 CE (O'FLAHERTY 1994: 17): "The gods always play where groves (Māḷiruñcōlai) are near rivers (Vittuvakkōṭu), mountains (Śālagrāma) and springs (Allikkēṇi), and in towns (Kūṭal/Maturai) with pleasure gardens" (parentheses mine). Remarkably rivers, mountains, springs and gardens harmoniously meet in Vallavāḷ. Tirumaṅkai finds the Lord an abstraction of the *pañcabhūtas*. His consort, Lakṣmī's mien is smeared with sandal-paste.⁹



Roof Plan of the Temple

Fig. 2 Plan based on Google Maps by R. K. Parthiban

⁹ Kēraḷa is the land noted for sandal-wood, Tamil *cantaṇam* (cf. *Periya Tirumōḷi* 9.7.8). It commands therapy-value, and is the main *prasādam* in temples of Kēraḷa that one is expected to paste on forehead.

Nammālvār is dedicated to the aesthetics of nature. He loves the *kamuku* (Areca catechu), *mallikai* (jasmine),¹⁰ *punnai* (Calophyllum inophyllum), *makilam* (Mimusops elengi), *teṅku* (Cocos nucifera), *vālai* (Musa paradisiaca), *tāmarai* (Nelumbium speciosum), *ceṅkaḷunīr* (Nymphaea stellata), *cennel* (paddy, *Oryza sativa*), sweet *karumpu* (sugarcane, *Saccharum officinarum*) and other flowering and fruit-yielding trees and plants flourishing in abundance. The venue was full of the presence of *paccilai* (ever-green plants of medicinal value),¹¹ gardens and fertile fields. The rhythm generated by the humming bees is compared to the reverberation of the *Vedas* that were recited to melodious modulation by the *brāhmaṇas*.¹² The venue was close to the sea; being littoral an aromatic breeze swept across the entire landscape, *teṅṅal maṇaṅkamalaḷum*. Added to these were the towering buildings that were pointers of urban status of the venue.

Four vital factors are recognized in the identification of a sacred center of worship in case of South Asian temples. They are *mūrti*, *sthala*, *tīrtha* and *vr̥kṣa* (SOUNDARARAJAN 1993-95: 9-10), and later *pūjās* and *utsavas* were added. There could be no temple without regular services *nityapūjā* or *nityotsava* and periodical festivals, *saṃvatsarotsava* or *Brahmotsava* (KALIDOS 1989: chap. IX). The *sthala* is uniformly called *Vallavāl* or *Tiruvallavāl*.¹³ Nammālvār candidly adds the venue is sacred where the earthly beings and the celestials congregate to offer worship. The homage is to the holy-land first and the tutelary God next:

... maṅṅum viṅṅum toḷa ninra tiru-nakaram (*Tiruvāymoḷi* 5.9.10)

This is because the sacred venue is holy of the holies on earth (cf. NOBLE 1981: 1), the equal of Meru the Axis mundi: cf. 'Poṅṅikal Citterakṭap-poruppu...' (Golden-Hill, the Meru Citterakūṭam/Tillai); Anantapuram is 'Āṭaka-malai', 'Āṭakap-poruppu' and 'Āṭakap-potu' (*Peruñcollakarāti*, II, 67-68).

¹⁰ See SUBRAHMANIAN 1990: 653. Some consider *mullai* (*Jasminum officinale*) as "jasmine" (SESHADRI 1990: 487); *mallikai* is bulbous and *mullai* slender and long. The Hindu divinities are fond of flowers. Śiva's favorite is *koṅṅrai* (*Cassia fistula*, *Tēvāram* 4.35.3). He is fond of *aṭṭamāmalar* "eight great flowers" (*Tēvāram* 5.129.3, KALIDOS 2006: II, 72-73).

¹¹ For ethnomedical values of *sthalavṛkṣas* in Tamilnadu temples, see GUNASEKARAN & BALASUBRAMANIAN (2012: 253-268).

¹² The Tamil mystics' love for nature and the flora and fauna is inborn (cf. RAJARAJAN & JEYAPRIYA 2013: chaps. I & II). Periyālvār in context of the *divyadeśa*-Māliṅcōlai inventively adds: "the six-legged stripped-bees sing the 1000-names/*sahasranāma* early in the morning" *aruḷāḷ varivaṅṅukaḷ āyiranāmañcolli ciṅṅkālāip pāṭum* (*Tirumoḷi* 4.2.8).

¹³ The Malayāḷi way of enquiring a visitor's nativity is: *sthalam eto* (where are you from); the Tamil way is; *uṅkal ūr etu* (what is your place). In Tamil tradition, sacred centers of worship are *sthala* whereas in Malayāḷam all places are *sthalas*.

The Lord is Nārāyaṇa (*Tiruvāymoḷi* 5.9.10). In Tamil tradition, the Lord is Māyaṇ (*Periya Tirumoḷi* 9.7.7), the most popular epithets being Māl or Tirumāl (RAJARAJAN et al. 2017a: 713-15, 810-11). The 1,000 epithets, *nāmaṅkaḷāyiram/sahasranāma* (*Tiruvāymoḷi* 5.9.10) were regularly recited. The *mūrti* is Vallaiyāy,¹⁴ the Able or Skillful Master-[craftsman]. Popular epithets appearing in the hymns are Kōṇār¹⁵ “Esteemed King”, Nampirāṇ “My Lord” (cf. Jehovah or Yaweh) or Pirāṇ, Nātaṇ/Nātha “Lord”, Cakkarap-perumāṇ “Lord Disc” (cf. JEYAPRIYA 2004: 291-300, RAJARAJAN 2013: 68-76), Āti/Ādi “the Primeval”, Āyan/Gopa “Cowboy”, and so on.¹⁶ The Lord is mostly identified with the *avatāras*, particularly Kṛṣṇa and Vāmana;¹⁷ in the *Periya Tirumoli* and other Texts, as we can see form expressions and epithets such as the following:

‘pañcavarkkāki mun tūtu cenra’ (*Periya Tirumoḷi* 9.7.2) Pāṇḍava-dūta
‘veṅkaṭaivāṇar’ (ibid. 9.7.3) the learned *brahmacāri*, Vāmana holding
a white umbrella

‘vēṅkaṭattulār’ (ibid. 9.7.4) Veṅkaṭeśvara, the presiding God of Vēn-
kaṭam Hills

‘nañcunōy koṅkai’ (ibid. 9.7.5) Poisonous breast of the ogress, Pūtanā;
cf. ‘Pūtanājīvitahara’ (*Kṛṣṇāṣṭottaram*, epithet 17)

‘māmunīr amutu tanta vallalār’ (ibid. 9.7.9), Patron that gave the am-
brosia, Mohinī

‘kuraḷ kōlappirāṇ’ (*Tiruvāymoḷi* 5.9.6) Vāmana, the ceremonial Lord
Dwarf

‘ñālamuṅṭa nampiran’ (ibid. 5.9.7) Lord who gulped the worlds, Viś-
varūpa

‘nilantāviya nīḷkaḷal’ (ibid. 5.9.8), His ankle leaped up above the sky,
Trivikrama

‘cakkarapperumāṇ’ (ibid. 5.9.9) Personified Lord Disc (RAJARAJAN
2013)

‘nappinnai maṅāḷar’ (*Periya Tirumaḷal* l. 236) Bridegroom of Nap-
pinnai

¹⁴ The current names are Kōlappirāṇ (cf. ‘Pirāṇ’ and ‘Kōlappirāṇ’ in *Tiruvāymoḷi* 5.9.3, 6), Śrīvallabha, and Tiruvālmārpaṇ (Śrī resides in his mind).

¹⁵ The pastoral community or caste in Tamilnadu is popularly known as *kōṇār*, equated with *yādava*.

¹⁶ To locate these epithets and the mythologies see Appendices (RAJARAJAN 2017a, the terms arranged in alphabetical order, e. g. Vāmana [pp.] 1541-42, Vēṅkaṭam 1599-1600, Viś-varūpa 1657-58).

¹⁷ Temples dedicated to Vāmana are found in Kēraḷa and Khajurāho (SRIVASTAVA 1994: fig. 216 illustrate the *mūlabera* of Vāmana). The apsidal temple at Kīlavellūr (SARKAR 1973: 38) and the *divyadeśa* Āraṇmūḷa are for Vāmana.

'pīpāpīli' (ibid. 1. 236) Birthless, *Saṅgamāhā*

The Lord for the *Āhāris* is the most precious gem, *Mūrti* (முருதி). *Periyālvār* addresses *Kṛṣṇa* with the filial term *Kuṇṇai* (*Tirumoli* 1.7.10) "laddie" (*Tamil Lexicon* II, 960), the dear-most grandster. He is at the same time *cīnkam* "lion" (ibid. 1.4.8) or *ilaṅcīnkam* "lion's young/lion" (*Tiruppāvai* 1). *Nam* views 'Valluṅṇai' as *kaṅṅāṅkaṅṅai* "lump of sugar", *kaṅṅai* "fruit", *iṅṅamutu* "ambrosia" and above all *Cūtu* "Light" (*Tiruvāymoli* 5.9.5, cf. Kalides 2006: 141); cf. *Tiruppāvai* (17) *aṅṅuram* "appeared (to put on)", and *uṅṅai* "water (to drink)" *cūṅṅai* "rice (to eat)". The Lord is an abstraction of these elements.

The *sthālapīkṣa* may be 150-100 years old and the *āṅṅa* is the River *Pampā*. These are not annotated in the hymns. The *mūṭṭhara* in the present temple is *saṅṅāṅṅa-sthānaka*.¹⁸ The Lord is *Mūṭṭhara* *Sthānaka* *Mūrti* (*Tiruvāymoli* 5.9.2). The Lord's reclining form, *Śeṣaśayī* is entitled: *Nāccaravin anaimēl nampirāṅ* (ibid. 5.9.4) "Our Lord reclining on the poisonous snake"¹⁹ (cf. Figs. 11-12).

The venue seems to have been a flourishing *agrakūṭa* or *caturvedīmāṅṅalam* in those times. The recital and cultivation of the *Ṛg-Vedas* and the six-*Vedāṅṅas*, and the five sacrifices, *pañcayajñas* and the five fires, *pañcāgnis* are apparently vouchsafed in the *Paripā* *Tirumoli* (8.7.6). The *Tiruvāymoli* (5.9.5) adds that the recital of the *Vedas* exceed the furors of the roaring sea:²⁰ 'vāṅṅevoli paravai tiripēl mūṅṅai' (ibid.) *Nammālvār* says the smoke rising from the sacrificial pits, *vāṅṅamūṅṅas* of the *amūṅṅa* *brāhṅṅas* moves up above the skies (ibid. 5.9.5, 5). These are clearly the early rituals that seem to have been nurtured in the temple and *agrakūṭas* (cf. Fig. 3) during the time of *Maṅṅai* and *Nam* (down to the early ninth century CE). *Nammālvār* adds that 1,000 priests were in service of the Lord: ... *mūṅṅarū āyirevar nalan ēntum* (*Tiruvāymoli* 5.9.10). This may number him as the 1,000 *brāhṅṅas* (cf. the *Tillai* "Mūṅṅayirevar" in *Kaṅṅares* 1997a: 20 citing *Perumāl* *Tirumoli* 3.2.8). Devotees are to visit the temples regularly, *mūṅṅaram* (*Tiruvāymoli* 5.9.7) and offer homage to the *Mūrti* with folded hands, *kaṅṅoṅṅu* (ibid. 5.9.9). The mode of prayer was to utter the *Śrīraṅṅamūṅṅa* (*śrīraṅṅamūṅṅa* sacred to *Viṣṅṅu* (ibid. 5.9.10-11). Scriptures other than those of *Viṣṅṅu* are

¹⁸ A stone image of the *mūṭṭhara* (cult image in the *paribhāṅṅṅa*) appears at the top of the *agrakūṭa*. It is model for *āṅṅama* of those that could not get into the temple.

¹⁹ A wood-carved image of *Śeṣaśayī* appears on the *prastāra* of the *mūṭṭhara* (*agrakūṭa*) that falls within its inner cloister of the temple (Fig. 11-12).

²⁰ The *Māṅṅarāyiravam* (Canto VIII) of *Caṅṅāṅṅai* (fourteenth century CE) confirms the *agrakūṭas* were busy with the performance of Vedic sacrifices; desecrated with the coming of *Muṅṅamādians* (*Dotson* 2008: 19-20).

'Kaḷḷanūl' (i.e. Satanic Verses) of the Buddhists, Jains and Pāśupatas (*Periya Tirumōḷi* 9.7.9).



Fig. 3 *Brāhmaṇa*'s house in south *agrahāra*, Periyakuḷam

The testimony of the Āḷvārs is strong evidence for the flourishing status of the temple around the 8th-9th century CE at Vallavāl. However, nothing regarding the architectural type (cf. FERGUSSON 1972: figs. pp. 310-406, HARDY 2012: figs. 1-22) or integral parts of the temple is intelligible from the hymns and there is no mention of specialties like *śrīkōvil* (Malaiyāḷam *śrīkōvil*),²¹ *nāḷambalam*, *vaḷiyambalam*, *kūttambalam*, *valiyabalikkal* and so on (SARKAR 1973: 73-74). A rare hint at the *nāgara* form (*Tiruvāymoḷi* 5.9.10) is discerned, *tirunakaram* "sacred *nakaram*" or *nāgara*? The *nāgara-vimānas* are square (GRAVELY & RAMACHANDRAN 1977: 1-26, cf. KALIDOS 1989: 419 diagram, HARDY 2012: figs). The present *vimāna* is circular, i.e. *veśara*, and was probably restructured later.

In course of time mythologies were added that are not discernible in the hymns of the Āḷvārs. These are supposed to be told in the *Matsya*- and *Garuda purāṇas* (ETIRAJAN 2006: 13), dated during 250 to 900 CE (O'FLAHERTY 1994: 18). These myths deal with the miracles of the Lord of the venue

²¹ SARKAR (1978: 276) employs *śrīkōvil* and JAYASHAKER (1997: 42, 397) *śrīkōvil* (*moola-praasaada/mūlaprāsāda*) to denote the *vimāna*.

performed to attract devotees, and do not have anything to do with technical aspects such as architecture and ritual (JEYAPRIYA 2001: 612-15).

Transformation

The present temple (Plan Fig. 2) is enclosed within an expansive space and broad *nāḷambalam*.²² It is in two *prākāras* and faces the east. Few recent additions are found opposite the *mahādvāra/gopura* that is called *kūttambalam* (cf. MOACANIN 2000: 121-31) of the temple. There is a *tuḷacimātam*-like *pīṭha* in Malayāḷam (cf. RAJARAJAN 2006: pl. 164) and a hall (Fig. 4). This *ambalam* (Tamil *ampalam*, e.g. Ciṅṅampalam of Tillai-Citamparam) falls in between the *tuḷacipīṭha* and *gopura* that accommodates visitors, and musical or dance performances (Fig. 5). Presentation of *kathakali* recital is almost a routine ritual (PILLAI 1986: 168). The tower-top of the *mandapa* accommodates a stucco image of Vallabhasvāmi, a replica of the *mūlabera* (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4 *Kūttambalam*, Vallavāḷ

²² Tirumaṅkai Ālvār was a professional *kaḷḷan* (of the robber caste). Mythology adds he resorted to robbery to build the *tirumattil* of the Śrīraṅgam temple (*Āṟāyirappaṭi-G*, pp. 76-78).



Fig. 5 Drum-players in the traditional style, *Kūttambalam*, Vallavāḷ

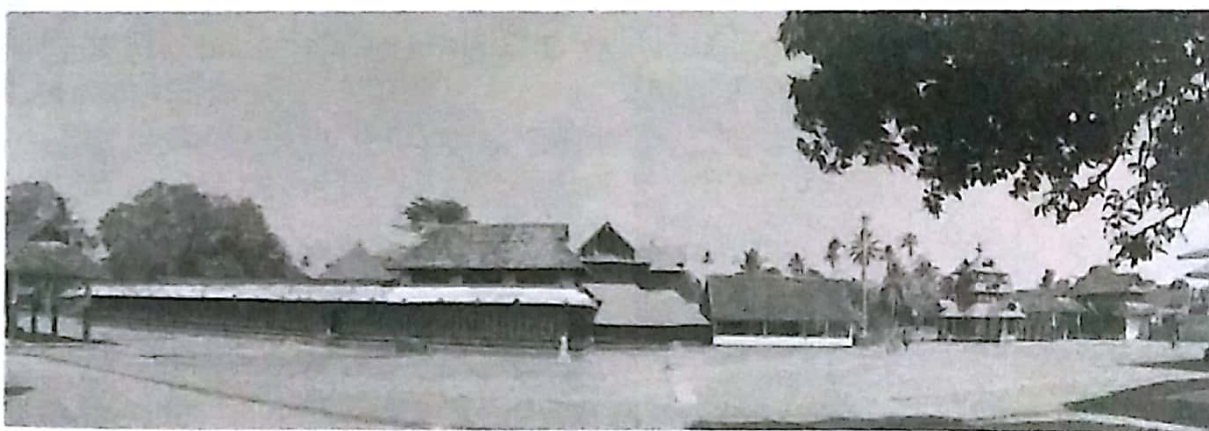


Fig. 6 View of the Temple, Vallavāḷ

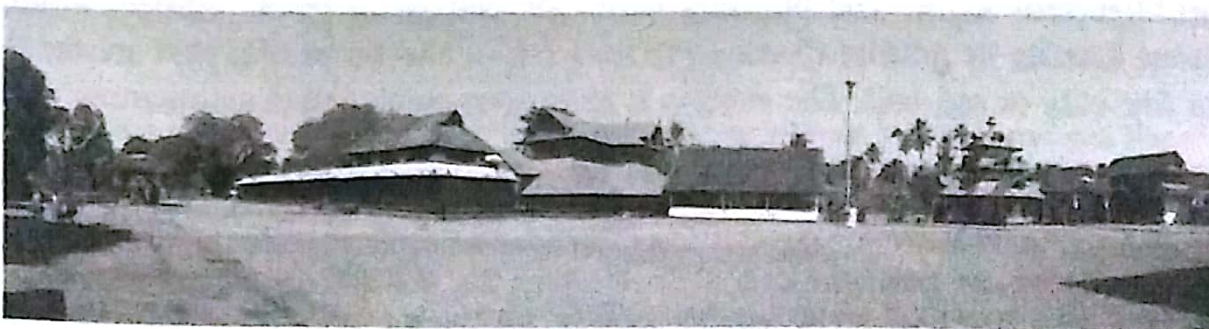


Fig. 7. Close up of fig. 6 from the south, Vallavāḷ

The *nāḷambalam* is fitted with a *gopura* in the east; see the *sālapañjara* tower at the right end in figure 7. The outer *prākāra* inside the wall is open (Figs. 6-7) and provides mainly for the axially aligned *Garuda-maṇḍapa* (Fig. 13), *dvajastambha* (Fig. 15) and *balikkal-maṇḍapa* (Fig. 10). To the southwest is a chapel for Śāstā (Fig. 17). The *sthalavṛkṣa* is on the northwest and the temple-elephant, *kōyilyāṇi* is stationed here (Fig. 20). Few stray images are found in the northeast. Pilgrims take time to come around the spacious *prākāra* in circumambulation initiating their ritual worship.

Within the first *prākāra* the *garbhagṛha*, called *śrīkōvil* (cf. Tamil *tirut-taḷi* or *tirukkōvil*) occupies the central space (RAJARAJAN 2015: 131). The *garbhagṛha* is circular (Figs. 8-9) with *sāndhāra* passage (width one to two feet), and provides for *pradakṣiṇa* where none could move freely. The *mūlabera* appears on a tall pedestal that is the *adhiṣṭhāna*. This exactly is the *Brahmsthāna*. The devotees and other priests stand on the floor close to the *sopāna* (stepped entrance) during ritual offerings and regular worship.²³ There is no separate chapel for Śrī-Lakṣmī.²⁴



Fig. 8 *Garbhagṛha* within inner wall, Vallavāl



Fig 9 *Garbhagṛha* (detail of fig. 8)

It is imperative to say something regarding the raw materials exploited for architectural work. The building materials consist of brick, plaster, wood, stone laterite or granite (SARKAR 1978: 61-63), and burnt tiles that are made of fine clay or red-soil. The *vimāna* is in various shapes such as square or rec-

²³ The high-priest gets into the *garbhagṛha* for decoration of the *mūlabera* and presents *na-maskāra* early in the morning. All other time none is permitted within the sanctum sanctorum (ETIRAJAN 2006: 414, 417).

²⁴ The only *divyadeśa* to accommodate a chapel for Lakṣmī-Śrī is Nāvāy. Therefore, the ideology of Śrī-Viṣṇuism is under question in the Malaināḍu-*divyadeśas* (ETIRAJAN 2006: 400). When women were not admitted in the Vallavāl temple, where is Śrī-Viṣṇuism? (cf. CLOONEY 1991).

tangle and in many cases circular, and not octagonal meant for Drāviḍadeśa. The popularity of circular temples (SARKAR 1973: pl. III.A; 1978: pls. XX-IIA, XXXVIII, XLIV.B; JAYASHANKER 1997: pls. 4, 41) is typical of Kēraḷa²⁵ when compared with other parts of South Asia. The Vallavāḷ temple follows the circular mode. SARKAR (1973: 326-27, 35) is of the opinion these are modeled on the Buddhist *stūpas* (MITTER 2001: fig. 11); and supposed to be an import of the *īlavas* that migrated from Īlam, Laṅkā. Chinese influence (cf. HUTCHINSON n.d.: I, figs. pp. 86, 99) is noted and doubted (MITTER 2001:71). The basement consists of the *upapīṭha* and *adhiṣṭhāna*, and the *pāḍa* or *bhīṭṭi* is devoid of niches called *devakoṣṭha* (aedicule) in the Tamil tradition (Fig. 9). The *śikhara* is mostly a tiled structure tapering from top to bottom. Such a type of architectural setting was needed to suit the climatology of the land that is drenched during the monsoon,²⁶ and served to wash out the down-pouring water (MITTER 2001: 71). *Drāviḍa-vimānas* move slanting from above the *prastara* level that present a pyramidal elegance, especially in the Cōla-Rājarājeśvarams (SITA-NARASIMHAN 2006: pls. 1-3, 23, 32). Therefore, Kēraḷa temples are *miśra* (mixed type).²⁷ The *adhiṣṭhāna* of the Vallavāḷ *garbhagrha* is in stone, its *bhīṭṭi* of brick and mortar and the *śikhara* of wooden skeleton paved with tiles. The *śikhara* of the temple resembles the roof of a house in an *agrahāra* (Fig. 3), living quarters of the *brāhmaṇas* (cf. LAKSHMI 1996: pl. p. 133).²⁸

The *mahādvāra/gopura* is polygonal in plan, and in two *taḷas*. It consists of tiled roof in two tiers, fitted with a stone basement (Figs. 6-7). Getting into the second *prākāra*, one steps into a tile-roofed *agramaṇḍapa*. This pavilion rests on four round pillars. Its *prastara* is decorated with wood-carved images. Śeṣaśāyī facing east is fitted on the western sector (Figs. 11-12). It is a wood-carved image that may be dated in the 18th century. It includes rare iconographic idioms such as Śrī and Bhūdevī seated near the Lord's head and feet. The Lord finds his right hand extended laterally and placed on the lap of Śrī. Bhū finds the Lord's feet rested on her lap, and massages gently. Toward the right end, Vaikuṇṭhamūrti is seated on a pedestal provided by

²⁵ Circular or oval temples are of different types with or without a *mukhamandapa*. For the different types see JAYASHANKER (1997: figures, p. 51), and the replica in temple cars (KALIDOS 1989: chap. III).

²⁶ Himalayan temples in Nepal are of the same typologies (cf. GAIL 1984: *Tafel* XXVII.1-2); cf. also Chinese temples.

²⁷ ADAM HARDY's (2012: figs. 12, 19; cf. SARKAR 1978: fig. 42, pls. LXXIII, LXXIV, LXXV; JAYASHANKER 1997: fig. 12) illustrations do not include models of the Kēraḷa temple types.

²⁸ Few such houses survive in the 'Terku-akkirakāram' (south *Agrahāra*) of the Varadarājasvāmi temple, Periyakūḷam.

Ādiśeṣa. Nearby, Śiva and *caturmukha*-Brahmā are standing in service of the Lord. A number of *devas* are in attendance.



Fig. 10 *Balipīṭha*, Vallavāl



Fig. 11 Wood-carved image of Śeṣaśāyī

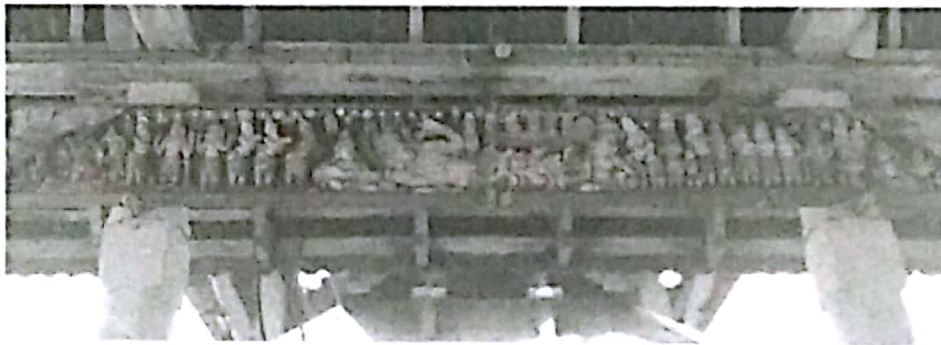


Fig. 12 Detail of fig. 11

The *Garuḍa-maṇḍapa* is a luxurious addition to the temple that one may not find in other parts of South Asia (GAIL 1984: *Tafelteil*). The *maṇḍapa* itself is in three tiers with *bhadra* projection in cardinal directions (Fig. 13). It accommodates a stone *Garuḍa-stambha* (seventeen meters high) jutting above the roof. At the top of the pillar *Garuḍa-puruṣa* bronze (Fig. 14) is seated with wings and hands spread out as though flying.²⁹ The layout of the

²⁹ It is akin to the Jain *mānastambhas* in Sravanabelgola (SETTAR 1986: pls. v, xx, xxxii) and *Garuḍastambhas* found in the Maṅṅārkuḍī and Śrīmuṣṇam temples (RAJARAJAN 2006: pls. 39, 144, 163). Free standing Jayastambhas (Pillar of Victory) appear in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa-Kailāsa, Ellora (RAJARAJAN 2012: fig. 11)). Monolithic pillars, symbolic of the promulgation of the Buddhist *dharma* are found in situ, e.g. Vaiśālī (KALIDOS 2006: III, pl. VIII.2), dated to the time of Aśoka Maurya (c. 230 BCE). One of these pillars was transported to Delhi by Firoz Tughlak (fourteenth century CE; RAJARAJAN ed. 2010: fig. CP X.3, HABIB 2011: fig. 2.4).

maṇḍapa is strange as it is polygon mixed octagon (cf. Kalidos 1989: 491 diagram). The superstructure is in three tiers with abutting projections in eight sides, and is paved with tiles.



Fig. 13 *Garuḍa-maṇḍapa*, Vallavā]



Fig. 14 *Garuḍa* on top of *Garuḍa-maṇḍapa*, Vallavā]



Fig. 15 *Drajastambha*, Vallavā]



Fig. 16 Basement of *dhvajastambha* with images of *daśavatāras* (three pasted views)

The *dhvajastambha* is another landmark. It is taller than the *Garuda*-pillar, and masked in gold (Fig. 15). Several such pillars appear in the Churches of the region that one may not find in other parts of South Asia,³⁰ including Tamilnadu. The basement of the pillar is a square pedestal. The basement as in case of the *balipīṭha* consists of several layers; the *nāla* and *ādhāra-śīla* getting into the earth (JAYASHANKER 1997: fig. 17). The pillar is circular and rests on two inverted and up-looking *padmapīṭhas*. The Vallavāl *dhvajastambha* is unique because the round pillar is added with the images of *daśavatāras* of Viṣṇu in circular *maṇḍala* form; cf. a rectangular-*maṇḍala* on ceiling of the eighth century Pāpanāseśvara temple in Alampūr (KALIDOS 2006: I, 189-90). These bronzes are uniformly seated in *ardhapadmāsana* and carry the *śaṅkha* and the *cakra* in *parahastas*. The *pūrvahastas* are in *abhaya* and *varada* -*mudrās* (Fig. 16). This type of installation of the *avatāra-mūrtis* round the *dhvajastambha* is rare in the art of South Asia (cf. MEVISSSEN 2010: 171-286, KALIDOS 2017).

The inner circuit is open in the east and fitted with a *maṇḍapa* to accommodate the *valiyabalikkal*, i.e., *balipīṭha* (Fig. 10). The ritual orientation of worship in a Viṣṇu temple is to offer worship at the following nodal points: i) the *gopura*, ii) *Garuda*, iii) *balipīṭha*, and iv) *mūlabera* in the *garbhagṛha* and go around in circumambulation. The *balipīṭha* is ± 2 meters high. From the base to the top it is superimposed with various members such as *pāduka*, *jaḡati*, *kumuda*, *galapāda*, *vedika*, *uttara*, *gala*, *valabhi*, *kapota*, *kapotapati* and *padma* (cf. JAYASHANKER 1997: figs. 16-17). The *jaḡati* of the Vallavāl *balipīṭha* is decorated with a row of seated lions. The *gala* (cf. Cōla *galapāda* in the Pullamaṅkai temple; HARLE 1958: 96-108, KALIDOS 1996: 141-53) on

³⁰ Several majestic columns are found in the Roman Churches, including the Grand Square of the Vatican (GALLICO 1999: figs. pp. 3-5, 6, 8).

cardinal directions is fitted with dwarf figures that appear to be guardians of the directions (cf. WESSELS-MEVISSSEN 2001: 2.5). These are Indra (east), Yama (south), Varuṇa (west) and Kubera (north).



Fig. 17 Chapel for Śāstā, Vallavāl



Fig. 18 Women in temple, Vallavāl

An enclosing wall surrounds the inner *prākāra* where the *garbhagṛha* is established. The most sacred part of the temple, the main attraction here is the circular *vimāna* added with an *ardhamanḍapa* and *gopura* axially (Figs. 6-7). It is an *alpa-vimāna* (cf. Fig. 9 with SARKAR 1973: pl. IIIA). The *upapīṭha*

and *adhiṣṭhāna* are circularly fitted with a *sopāna* in the east. The *sopāna* consists of steps to get into the sanctum, and flanked by *curuḷ-yāḷi* (curved dragons), typical of Vijayanagara art (cf. RAJARAJAN 2006: II, pl. 20). Val-labhasvāmī appears within the sacred precincts of the dark chamber. He is unapproachable even to the priests of the temple. It is difficult to obtain an ample *darśana* from a distance of ten meters. The *vimāna* is *sāndhāra* provided with a narrow *pradakṣiṇapāṭha*. The *vimāna* is *sarvatobhadra*. The south, west and north walls are open with a narrow *jālaka* fitted with tiny painted images patched onto the *antarabhiṭṭi*.³¹ The *mūlabera* is *sthānaka* and recalls minding images of Pāṇḍuraṅga (SASTRI 1916: figs. 39-40). Its replica in stucco appears on the acme of the *kūttambalam* (Fig. 4).

The outer *prākāra* in its southwestern corner accommodates a chapel for Śāstā. It is a rectangular chamber with a tile-paved roof (Fig. 17). The cult of Śāstā seems to have been dated in the pre-eighth century period (SARKAR 1973: pl. IX.B).³² Viṣṇu and Śiva temples accommodate chapels for Śāstā because he is considered to be son of Hari/Viṣṇu and Hara/Śiva, i.e., Hari-haraputra.³³ Few stray images are scattered in the northeast corner. One is likely to be Śāstā (c. 17th century CE) housed in a hypaethral chapel (Fig. 19).



Fig 19 Stray image in the temple, Vallavāl



Fig. 20 *Sthalavṛkṣa*, Vallavāl

³¹ Photography is strictly prohibited in this zone. We somehow managed to obtain a photo (Fig. 9).

³² *Trimūrti-maṇḍapa* in Māmallapuram (7th century CE) finds Brahmaśāstā in a shrine chamber (SRINIVASAN 1964: 156-61, 1971: 99; KALIDOS 2006: IV, I, 55; il. 186, pl. XXII.1); cf. the Trimūrti temple in Prāmbanan accommodating Brahmā in the *garbhagṛha*.

³³ The Bhagavati-Kaṇṇaki temple accommodates a temple for Śāstā in its southwestern corner (RAJARAJAN 2016: 118, pl. 48).

Some unique perspectives of ritual values are reported (ETIRAJAN 2006: 414-17). Nammālvār dreams of the day when he should be in Vallavāl to seek solace on surrendering at the feet of the Lord (*Tiruvāymoḷi* 5.9.2-3). Today the *mūlabera* is installed in such a way that none could have a *darśana* of the Lord's feet. This is to suggest such a setting was not to be found in the 8th-9th century CE. None is permitted to ascend the *sopāna* and have a *darśana* of the Lord. It might offer clue to the later origin of the present *vimāna*. In those days women were not permitted within the inner *prākāra*. Today the temple is open to women and their presence felt everywhere in the Vallavāl temple. The *prasāda* is *bhasma* (holy ash) and sandal-paste.³⁴ The *sandhyākāla-pūja* on Saturdays includes a long procedure. There is no separate shrine for Sudarśana-*cakra* but it is established within the inner core of the sanctum sanctorum.³⁵ A special 12,000 banana fruits are offered to the Lord on the fire-altar. It symbolizes the multitude of *puruṣas* "mortals" merging with Puruṣa, the Absolute.



Fig. 21 Roadside Basilica, Ceṅkuṅṅūr

Concluding Remarks

The Vallavāl temple like other temples of the age could have been a temple of the village type as FERGUSSON foresaw in case of Śrīraṅgam. One of the macro-temple of the time of Tirumaṅkai was the Paramēccura-*viṅṅakaram*

³⁴ When we visited the temple in January 2004 sandal-paste was offered. *Bhasma* (sacred ash) is offered in Śiva temples of Tamil Nadu.

³⁵ Chapels of Sudarśana are common in Tamil Nadu (RAJARAJAN 2006: II, Plan II). Separate temples for Cakrapāṇi and Śāraṅgapaṇi are found in Kuṁbhakoṅam (NANDA et al. 1997: fig. 1).

in Kāñci; extolled in the *Periya Tirumoli* (2.9.1-10), and built by Pallavamalla Nandivarman II (Srinivasan 1999: 68-73). The other temples in Kāñci such as Vehkā (earliest notified in *Perumpāṇāruppaṭai* ll. 371-390, dated c. 190-200 CE, ZVELEBIL 1974: 23) and Ūrakam must have been insignificant with regard to their structure.³⁶ The transformation in Vallavāl took place after the sixteenth century as evidenced by the stray images and structural additions. The circular *vimāna* is likely to have been added during the later medieval phase. Neither the *īlavas* nor the Buddhist models seem to have inspired its foundation. No Buddhist temple comparable to Sāñchī and Amarāvātī existed in Kēraḷa (SARKAR 1976: see plates, SHAH 2011: 111-30). A number of Tamil-Malaiyāḷam inscriptions are inscribed on the slabs of the inner wall. Malaiyāḷam emerged as a distinctive language after the fourteenth century (SASTRI 1971: 417-20). Therefore, these inscribed records could be dated in the post-fourteenth century. The study of inscriptions on walls of the temple needs some strain in case of a conservative land such as Kēraḷa.³⁷ The present status is that we are able to identify what Vallavāl was around the 8th-9th century and how it had undergone transformation down to the 16th-17th century on the basis of literary and archaeological evidences. The most recent additions at the façade, *kūttambalam* points out the temple continued to outspread down to the mid-twentieth century. The new-millennium significant drift from the ritual point of view is that women are permitted to enter the inner core and have a *darśana* of the Lord.

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I am thankful to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for offering me a post-doctoral fellowship to work in the Institut für Indische Philologie und Kunstgeschichte der Freien Universität Berlin, Berlin on “*Rāmāyaṇa* Paintings”. I went to Kēraḷa in search of *Rāmāyaṇa* imageries that I found in Vañcaikkuḷam (RAJARAJAN 2015). Vallavāl was a new adventure in the context of our ongoing project on ‘Nālāyiram’ (RAJARAJAN, PARTHIBAN & KALIDOS 2017, 2017a).

³⁶ The *divyadeśas* in Kāñci are fourteen, NAGASWAMY (2011: 7) considers Ūrakam the earliest *divyadeśa*, in Kāñci. It is not. Vehkā is the earliest noted in the *Perumpāṇāruppaṭai* (see above, KALIDOS 2006a: 146, Rajarajan 2007: 30, 34-36).

³⁷ Vittuvakkōṭu (Malaiyāḷam Miṭṭakōḍe; *kōṭu* in Tamil is “hill”, *miṭṭa* in Telugu and Malaiyāḷam is “mound”), another *divyadeśa* in Kēraḷa accommodates 17th century paintings.

Appendices

Hymns bearing on Vallavāl

Cf. ZVELEBIL 1974: 147, CLOONEY 1991: 260-76, RAJARAJAN, PARTHIBAN & KALIDOS 2017. Rajarajan et al. 2017 have presented the 'Nālāyiram' in Roman transcription, *patavurai* (word to word or phrase to phrase English translation) and summary in English. For dictionary see Rajarajan et al. 2017a.

Periya Tirumōḷi (9.7) of Tirumaṅkai

1. tantaitāy makkaḷē curramen rurravar parrininra
panramār vāḷkkaiyai nontunī paḷiyēṅak karutiṅāyēl
antamā yātiyāy ātikkumātiyāy āyaṅāya
maintaṅār vallavāl collumā vallaiyāy³⁸ maruvu neṅcē³⁹
“Thou the Lord of Vallavāl, the Expert, Thou are the resort to those who
are tossed in worldly life thinking of their father, mother, and kith and
kin. When none comes to help, Thou the Antique-Primeval, the *āyan/*
gopa (Cowboy, cf. Deutsche ‘Gute Hirte’) is the only resort”.
* Today called Vallabhasvāmi, the “expert” or “accomplishing”.
** *Maruvu neṅcē* in the following ten hymns means “my mind love (the
Lord)”.
2. minnumā valliyum vaṅciyum veṅra nuṅṅiṅai nuṅṅakum
annameṅ ṅaṅaiyiṅār kalaviyai aruvarut taṅcināyēl
tunnumā maṅimuṅṅip paṅcavarkkāki muntūtu cenra⁴⁰
maṅṅaṅār vallavāl collumā vallaiyāy maruvu neṅcē
“My mind; do you detest the maids that move like swans and entice you
with their glittering mien, the flower-like hips and sexual union? Seek
the resort of the accomplishing Lord who was sent to the Kaurava court
as a *dūta* on behalf of the Paṅca[-Pāṅḍavas]”.
3. pūṅulā meṅmulaip pāvaimār poyiṅai meyyitenru
pēṅuvār pēcumap pēccai nī piḷaiyeṅak karutiṅāyēl
nīnilā veṅkuṅai vāṅṅaṅār vēḷviyil maṅṅiranta
maṅiyār vallavāl cellumā vallaiyāy maruvu neṅcē

³⁸ Today called Vallabhasvāmi, the “expert” or “accomplishing”.

³⁹ *Maruvu neṅcē* in the following ten hymns means “my mind love (the Lord)”

⁴⁰ Kṛṣṇa as *dūta* during the Bhāra War.

“If you trust the words of those that talk high of harlots that conjure with their full breasts decorated with jewels, have the figure of ‘Veṅkuṭai-vāṇar’ (*brahmacāri* holding white umbrella, i.e. Vāmana) imprinted in heart. He is the Māṇiyār⁴¹ (handsome and celibate) that begged a gift of land”.

* *Māṇi* means *brahmacāri*, dwarf, beauty and penis (*Tamil Lexicon V*, 3152). See MANKODI 1991: fig. 72, MEVISSSEN 2010: figs. p. 232. Few in MEVISSSEN (figs. v-24, v-31/1, v-49) are likely to be *digambara*. The presiding God of Vāraṇṇilāi (Malaiyālam Āramulā) in Kēraḷa is Kuṛaḷap-pan, the Dwarf Vāmana.

4. paṇṇulā menmolip pāvaimār paṇaimulai yaṇaitum nāmenru
eṇṇuvār eṇṇam toḷittu nī pilaittuyyak karuti nāyēl
viṇṇulār viṇṇinmī tiyaṇra vēnkaṭattulār vaḷaṅkoḷ munnīr
vaṇṇanār vallavāl collumā vallaiyāy maruvu neñcē
“If you desire to give up the thought of embracing the breasts of women that talk like music, think of the Lord that offers blessings to the celestials at Vēnkaṭam. The ocean-like blue icon of the Lord is present in the fertile venue at Vallavāl. My heart; love him”.

5. mañcutōy veṅkuṭai maṇnarāy vāraṇam cūla vāntār
tuñcinā reṇpatōr collai nī tuyareṇak karutiṇāyēl
nañcunōy koṅkaimēl aṅkaivāy vaittavaḷ nālaiyuṇṭa
maintanār vallavāl collumā vallaiyāy maruvu neñcē
“Great emperors that found their royal parasol moving toward the sky and had commanded mighty elephant forces are dead and gone.⁴² Do not dream vainly (of such glories); think of the Lord that consumed the poisonous milk of breasts of the ogress (Pūtanā). You may find the dexterous at Vallavāl. Love Him”.

* This may be the reason why the Kēraḷaputaras surrendered their kingdom and treasury at the feet of the Lord Padmanābha of Aṇantapuram, senior-Lord among the thirteen in Malaināḍu, i.e. Kēraḷa.

⁴¹ *Māṇi* means *brahmacāri*, dwarf, beauty and penis (*Tamil Lexicon V*, 3152). See MANKODI 1991: fig. 72, MEVISSSEN 2010: figs. p. 232. Few in MEVISSSEN (figs. v-24, v-31/1, v-49) are likely to be *digambara*. The pre-siding God of Vāraṇṇilāi (Malaiyālam Āramulā) in Kēraḷa is Kuṛaḷap-pan, the Dwarf Vāmana.

⁴² This may be the reason why the Kēraḷaputaras surrendered their kingdom and treasury at the feet of the Lord Padmanābha of Aṇantapuram, senior-Lord among the thirteen in Malaināḍu, i.e. Kēraḷa.

6. uruvinār piravicēr ūnpoti naramputōḷ kurampai yuḷpukku
 aruvinōy ceytuniṅru aivartām vālvatarḱu añcināyēḷ
 tiruvinār vētamnāṅku aintutī vēḷviyōṭu añkamārum
 maruvinār vallavāl collumā vallaiyāy maruvu neñcē
 “The hu[wo]man coil is illusionary amalgam of flesh, skin and blood. It is a disturbing factor to the man with five senses. Therefore, reach the venue at Vallavāl where the experts in four-Vedas, six-Vedāṅgas cultivate the five fire sacrifices (*pañcayajñas*) live and maintain the five fires (*pañcāgni*)”.
7. nōyellāmpēyta tōrākkaiyai meyyenak koṅṭu vālā
 pēyartāmpēcum appēccai nī pilaiyēṅaik karutiṅāyēḷ
 tīyulā veṅkatirt tiṅkaḷāy maṅkul vāṅāki niṅra
 māyaṅār vallavāl collumā vallaiyāy maruvu neñcē
 “Do you believe the useless words of those idiots that are infested with ailments all over their wretched bodies? The Lord Māyavaṅ/Māya is the sun and the moon, and the limitless sky. Seek the blessings of the skillful Lord, residing at Vallavāl”.
8. mañcucēr vāṅeri nīrnilamkālivaḷ mayāṅki niṅra
 aṅcu cērākkaiyai araṅamarreṅruyak karutiṅāyēḷ
 cantucēr meṅmulaip poṅmalarp pāvaiyum tāmum nāḷum
 vantucēr vallavāl collumā vallaiyāy maruvu neñcē
 “Do you think this mortal coil is safe for you that consist of the volatile air, ether, fire, earth and water? The Lord is present with his auspicious consort whose chest is smeared with sandal-paste. Love the dexterous”.
9. velliyār piṅṭiyār pōṭiyār eṅrivar oṭukiṅra
 kaḷḷanūḷ taṅṅaiyum karumamaṅ reṅruyyak karutiṅāyēḷ
 telliyār kaitoḷum tēvaṅār māmunīr amutu tanta
 vaḷḷaḷār vallavāl collumā vallaiyāy maruvu neñcē
 “If you consider those false creeds of Śivas, Pāśupatas, Jains and Buddhists useless, think of a way for upliftment. The Great one who obtained the ambrosia from the Ocean of Milk is readily present at Vallavāl to bless you. O mind; Love the Lord”.
10. maraivalār kuṅraivilār uṅraiyumūr vallavāl aṭikaḷṭammai
 ciṅraikulā vaṅṭarai cōlaicūḷ kōlanīḷālināṅṭaṅ
 kaṅraiyulā vēlvalla kaliyaṅ vāyoliyivai karuvallār
 iṅraivarāy irunilam kāvalpūṅṭu iṅpam nankeytuvārē

“Those that have mastered the *Vedas* and those that live in Vallavāl̄ dedicated in their service to the Lord shall be kings of the world if they recite the hymns of Ālināṭan (i.e. Tirumaṅkai) that holds a blood-smeared lance in his hand”.⁴³

In all these hymns the impermanence of worldly life, and the pleasures and pangs of sexual life with which women torment men are emphasized. The devotee is recommended to resort to Vallavāl̄ for redemption. The Lord of Vallavāl̄ is Vallaiyāy (cf. ‘Vallān’ in *Tiruppāvai* 15).

Periyatirumaṭal (II. 235-236) of Tirumaṅkai

The long hymn (296 lines) lists a number of *divyadeśas*, recalling the glories of the Lord in his sacred venues (cf. RAJARAJAN et al. 2017: Vol. IV, 2278-79). The Lord of Vallavāl̄ is the consort of Piṅṅai, and that he has no birth, i.e. *svayambhū*-Mūrti:

... vallavāl̄
piṅṅai maṅḷaṅai pēril pirappiliyai

Tiruvāymoḷi (5.9) of Nammālvār

Nam treads the path of *nāyaka-nayika-bhāva* (RAJARAJAN et al. 2017: II, 656-61) suited to pursue the Lord, a theme that is redundant in the hymns of Kōtai (KALIDOS 1997: 117-38).

1. māṅēy nōkkunallīr vaikalumviṅṅai yēṅmimeliya
vāṅṅār vaṅkamukum matumallikai yuṅkamaḷum
tēṅṅār cōlaikaḷcūḷ tiruvalla vāḷurāiyum
kōṅṅarai aṭiyēṅ aṭikūṭuvatu eṅṅukolō
“Ye maidens with the gracious look of a gazelle; I am a sinner, transformed into a skeleton. When I am to reach the feet of the Lord residing at Tiruvallavāl̄ “Sacred Vallavāl̄” where soaring areca-nut trees, *kamuku* and honey dripping *mallikai* (jasmine) creepers are abundant”.
2. eṅṅukol tōlimīrkāḷ emmai nīrnalin teṅceytīrō
poṅṅikaḷ puṅṅaimakiḷ putumātavi mīṅṅavi
teṅṅal maṅṅakamaḷum tiruvallavāl̄ nakaruḷ
niṅṅra pirāṅ aṭi nī ṅṅatiyōṅ koṅṅu cūṅṅvatē

⁴³ Suggests Maṅkai Ālvār is *ksatriya*-ugramūrti.

“Girls! What is the use if you take me to task?⁴⁴ I am steeped in thoughts of the Lord of Tiruvallavāḷ to bear his sacred feet on my head. The venue is congested with the blossoming trees of *punṇai*, *maḱilam*, and *mātavi* with the gentle breeze sweeping upon the landscape”.

3. cūṭumalarkkuḷalīr tuyarāṭṭi yēṇaimeliya
pāṭunal vētavoli paravaittiraipōl muḷaṅka
māṭuyart tōmaippukai kamaḷum taṅtiruvallavāḷ
nīṭurai kinrapirāṇ kalal kāṅṭuṅkol niccalumē
“Ye maidens decorated with flowers! I am growing tall and thin (due to separation). When shall the day come I find the Lord in the venue at Tiruvallavāḷ. The sounds of singing the *Vedas* are heard. The *dhūma* “smoke” from the Vedic *yajñas* soars up above the skies. I would like to reach the watery venue”.
4. niccalum tōlimīrkāḷ emmai nīrnalin teṅceytīrō
paccilainīḷ kamukum palavum teṅkum vālaikaḷum
maccāṇi māṭaṅkaḷ mīṭaṇavum taṅtiruvallavāḷ
naccara viṇaṇaimēḷ nampirāṇatu nannalamē
“Comrade-girls; what amusement do you derive by tormenting me? Tiruvallavāḷ is filled with lush green areca trees, coconuts and plantains. It is full of towers. The Lord in an ice-land is recumbent on the snake in order that he may bless us”.
5. nanṇalat tōlimīrkāḷ nalla antaṇar vēḷvippukai
mainnalaṅ koṅṭuyar viṇmaraikkum taṅtiruvallavāḷ
kaṅṇalaṅ kaṭṭitaṅṇaik kaṅiyai yiṅṇamutantaṅṇai
eṅṇalaṅ koḷcuṭarai eṅṅukol kaṅkaḷ kāṅpatuvē
“My maid-friend; the ice-land in Vallavāḷ produces smoke from the sacrificial yard that rise up above the skies and hide the heavens in darkness. The Lord for me is a lump of sugar, delicious fruit and sweet ambrosia. When shall I view the light with my eyefuls?”
6. kāṅpateṅ nāṅṅukolō viṇaiyēṅ kaṅivāy maṭavīr
pāṅkural vaṅṭiṅōṭu pacuntenṅalu mākiyeṅkum
cēṅcilai yōṅkumarac celuṅkāṅal tiruvallavāḷ
māṅkuraḷ kōlappirāṅ malarttāmaraiṅ pāṭaṅkaḷē

⁴⁴ The sad plight of a hero tossed between his mistress and beloved prostitute is pen-pictured in the *Kalittokai*, dated fourth-fifth century (ZVELEBIL 1974: 48, RAJARAJAN 2016a: 192).

“Ye girls with lips resembling the reddish fruit;⁴⁵ Vallavāl is the land full of tall trees with fruits and flowers bees humming round. The lush green is on the sea-shore. The Lord appeared a Dwarf to bless the mass. When shall I have a view of his lotus- feet?”

7. pātaṅkaḷmēlaṅi pūttolakkūṭuṅkol pāvainallīr
otaneṭuntataṭtuḷ uyartāmarai ceṅkaḷunīr
mātarkaḷ vāṅmukamum kaṅṅumēntum tiruvallavāl
nātaniṅ nālamuṅṅa nampirāṅṅannai nāṭorumē
“Dolled up maidens; the Lord of Sacred Vallavāl resembles the wa-
ter-born lotus and red-lily flowers, his mien glitters like the elegance of
shining women and their eyes. When shall I worship the feet of the Lord
that devoured the worlds (Viśvarūpa)?”
8. nāṭorum vīṅṅriyē toḷakkūṭuṅkol naṅṅutalīr
aṭuru tīṅkarumpu viḷaicennēlu mākiyeṅkum
māṭuru pūntaṅṅcēr vayalcūḷ taṅṅtiruvallavāl
nīṅṅuraikinra pirāṅ nilantāviya nīḷkaḷalē
“Maidens with bedecked forehead; Tiruvallavāl is legendary for its ripe
paddy fields, ponds covered with blossoming plants and cold tracts. The
Lord is eternally dwelling, *nityavāsa* at the venue. Is it possible to wor-
ship the feet that elongated up above the earth (Trivikrama)?” (cf. KA-
LIDOS 1983: fig. 4-6).
9. kaḷalvalai pūrippayām kaṅṅukaitoḷak kūṭuṅkolō
kuḷalēṅṅa yāḷumēṅṅak kuḷircōlaiyuḷ tēṅṅarunti
maḷalai varivaṅṅukaḷ icaipāṅṅum tiruvallavāl
cuḷalinmali cakkarap perumāṅṅatu tollaruḷē
“The stripped-bees suck honey from flowers in icy gardens, and hum
about as though the music of harp or flute is tuned. Will not the bangles
drop⁴⁶ if we view the Lord-Disc of Tiruvallavāl who showers limitless
blessings?” (RAJARAJAN 2013).
10. tollaruḷ nalviṅṅaiyāl collakkūṭuṅkol tōḷimīrkāl
tollaruḷ maṅṅum viṅṅum toḷaniṅṅa tirunakaram

⁴⁵ *Kovvai* creeper (common delight on hedges) yielding blood-red edible fruits
(SUBRAHMANIAN 1990: 328).

⁴⁶ The bangles automatically drop when one is love-sick. Nammālṅvār is transformed a wom-
an, Parakalanāyaki or Parāṅkuśanāyaki (vestal virgin).

nallaru ḷāyiravār nalaṅēntum tiruvallavāḷ

nallaruḷ nanperumāṅ nārāyaṅaṅ nāmaṅkaḷē

“Girl-friends; the Lord is perpetually present at Tiruvallavāḷ offered homage by the earthly beings and celestials. The mass in tens of thousands throng to obtain his *darśana* every day. Is it possible to mutter the names of the Lord and cherish his glories?”

11. nāmaṅkaḷāyira muṭaiya namperumāṅaṅimēḷ

cēmaṅkoḷ teṅkurukūr caṭakōpaṅ terinturaitta

nāmaṅkaḷāyirattuḷ ivaipattum tiruvallavāḷ

cēmaṅkoḷ teṅnakarmēḷ ceppuvār ciṅantār piṅantē

“He is the Lord credited with *sahasranāmas*. Teṅkurukūr-Caṭakōpaṅ had presented 1,000 hymns in his honor. Those who recite the hymns shall lead an immaculate life”.

The ecological setting of the venue is cherished in these hymns. Nammāḷvār alias Caṭakōpaṅ hailing from Kurukūr (Ālvārtirunkari in the Tāmiraparaṅi basin, *vide* RAJARAJAN 2011: note 5, Map p. 141) was instrumental in popularizing the *divyadeśas* in Kēraḷa.

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Tirumoli of Periyālvār, see 'Nālāyiram'.

Tiruppāvai of Āṇṭāl, see 'Nālāyiram'.

Tiruvāymoli of Nammālvār, see "Nālāyiram".

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Figures (Figs. 3-21, by R. K. K. Rajarajan)

1. Map: Malaināḍu *divyadeśas* (based on Google Maps by R. K. Parthiban)
- 1a. Location of Vallavāl (R. K. Parthiban)
2. Plan of the Temple (not to scale, R. K. Parthiban)
3. *Brāhmaṇa*'s house in south *Agrahāra*, Periyakuḷam
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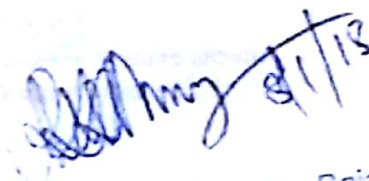
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