



**Research Paper**

## Earlier works on Pallavas

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The Pallava dynasty, which ruled a significant portion of South India from the 3rd to the 9th century CE, has been a subject of fascination for scholars and historians for centuries. The early works on the Pallavas, written by pioneering scholars, laid the foundation for our understanding of this ancient civilization. These groundbreaking studies, published in the early 20th century, drew upon a range of sources, including inscriptions, architectural remains, and literary works, to reconstruct the history and culture of the Pallavas.

These early works, characterized by meticulous research and scholarly rigor, explored various aspects of Pallava society, including their political structures, administrative systems, religious beliefs, artistic achievements, and economic practices. By examining the primary sources and piecing together the fragments of the past, these scholars helped to create a comprehensive narrative of the Pallavas' rise, growth, and eventual decline.

This introduction sets the stage for a deeper exploration of the early works on the Pallavas, highlighting the significance of these pioneering studies and their enduring contributions to our understanding of this ancient Indian dynasty.

### EARLIER WORKS

The earlier works on the Pallavas are enormous, over the time various scholars have furnished evidential record in understanding the longer historical past of the Pallavas. Which can be classified into following categories - Political and Administration, Socio-cultural, religious and economic, Epigraphical, Architectural and sculptural studies including painting. Mostly scholars have exclusively been taken assistance from inscriptions, architectural and sculptural remains to understand numerous process involved in shaping the history of Pallavas. The later discussion focuses upon the previous works are conducted related to the Pallavas period.

Looking back to earliest work on the history of the Pallavas period, is the description of the monuments at Malappuram. We get such reference from the travelogue of early voyagers, firstly Italian traveler Gasparo Balbi<sup>14</sup>, and his description of Seven Pagodas. Then from 1772 – 1776 A.D, William Chambers conducted insightful study of monuments at Mamallapuram. He provides description of monuments in his paper includes two of five rathas, Ganesha ratha, Bhagi ratha, Mahishasuramardhini mandapa and Lion throne and Draupadi's bath, further discusses about the Mahabharata story depicted in Bhagirathi's panel. Whereas, John Goldingham has also given description of monuments at Mamallapuram in his paper published in 1798. Then, Kavali Lakshmayya, the assistant of Colonel Colin Mackenzie, to have attempted in describing various monuments of Mamallapuram and identified the large bas-relief panel as Arjuna's Penance and the panel on the rear wall of the garbhagriha in the Shore temple depicting Parvati, Paramesvara and the child Subrahmanyaasvami.

In 1828 Benjamin Guy Babington presented a paper in Royal Asiatic Society of London entitled "An account of the Sculptures and Inscriptions at Mahamalaipur", he put forwarded his systematic study of alphabets from the inscriptions in Mamallapuram later in 1830 it was published in the Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society<sup>17</sup>. The most acclaimed work was done by James Fergusson, he furnished the detailed explanation of monuments of Mamallapuram in his book "The Cave Temples of India". In 1844 the first guide book based on

Mamallapuram was published by Lieut. John Braddock with the assistance of Rev. William Taylor, Sir Walter Elliot and Rev. G. W. Mahon . Towards the second half of the nineteenth century, numerous works were published respectively centered around the copper plate, stone inscription, architectural and sculptural pattern prevailed under Pallavas. Initially, Sir John Fleet compiled all available inscriptional sources and published a comprehensive account on history of Pallavas titled as “Dynasties of Kanarese District” in Bombay District Gazetteer. R. B. Branfill (1882) studied epigraphical sources found from Mamallapuram and described about Olakkanesvara temple<sup>19</sup> . Furthermore, some scholars which include Buhler, Hultzsch, Venkayya, Keilhorn, Lewis Rice, H.Krishna Sastri, T.A Gopinathan Rao and C.R Krishnamacharlu have critically studied all the inscriptions and was published in the volumes of Epigraphia Indica, South Indian Inscription and Indian Antiquary. Then R.B.V Venkayya has evaluated the question of origination and the historical background of Pallavas, in his paper published in ASI (Annual report 1906-07), where he explains Pallavas, the rulers in North-Western part of India might have been ancestors of Pallavas.

In 1909, Alexander Rea joined as Superintendent of the Archaeological Survey Department, Southern Circle, he extensively worked on the Pallava architecture of Kanchipuram, which gives a broader understanding of historical, artistic and architectural aspects along with ground plan and sketches of the Kailasanatha, Vaikunthaperumal, Matangesvara, Muktesvara, Tripurantakesvara and Airavatesvara temples at Kanchipuram and Peruma temple of Kuram<sup>20</sup> . In 1914 J. W. Coombes published a book titled The Seven Pagodas, and J. Ph. Vogel published a paper titled Iconographical notes on the Seven Pagodas in the ASI ( - Annual Report) and subsequently in 1931 he published another research paper Head offerings to the Goddess in Pallava Sculptures in the Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies. Both the scholars remuneratively discussed about the religious and social significance of Pallava period.

Prof. G. Jouveau Dubreuil discussed the origin, chronology, genealogy, art and architecture of the Pallavas in four volumes later those books were translated in English by V.S. Swaminadha Dikshitar. Those entitled as Pallava Antiquities, Vol. I (1916) and Vol. II (1918), the Pallavas (1917) and Ancient History of the Deccan (1920). He further reported various inscriptions, monuments and proposed a theory that is Roman origin of the Pallava art<sup>21</sup> .

Additionally, Dr. S. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar in 1923 claimed the indigenous origin of Pallavas and furnished his research paper on the Origin and Early History of the Pallavas, he presented that paper in the Indian History Congress held at Allahabad and later that paper was published in the Journal of Indian History. Then, R. Saraswati has also produced well regarded research work on Pallavas in his paper titled as The Literary History of the Pallava Age, published in the Journal of the Mythic Society. Nevertheless, the exhaustive comprehension of the history of Pallavas based upon the available inscriptional and monumental data was produced by R. Gopalan in his book History of the Pallavas of Kanchi, where he dealt with numerous problematic questions which existed over the time related to the Pallavas historicity. He was a trained scholar in the Department of Indian History and Archaeology, University of Madras, he produced such excellent work under the guidance of Prof. S. Krishnaswami Aiyanger. His worked still remained one of the classical work in the sphere of the Pallava’s Historiography.

Furthermore, A. H. Longhurst being a Superintendent, Archaeological Survey, Southern circle has published three volumes pertaining to the significance of Pallavas architecture. While in 1926 H. Krishna Sastri identified two panels of royal portrait from Adivaraha cave temples of Mahendravarman I and Narasimhavarman I and discussed the inscriptions engraved inside the cave temple, one of such inscription explains about the ten incarnations of Vishnu<sup>23</sup> .

Later, A. G. Aravamudhan in his two books South Indian Portraits in Stone and Metal (1930) and Portrait Sculpture in South India (1931), explains his identification of two portraits one is of Simhavishnu and his son Mahendravarman I, then he also added that Adivaraha cave temple, Dharmarajamandapa and Kotikalmandapa are mainly build by Mahendravarman I<sup>24</sup> . Alongside this Rev. H. Heras has also worked on Pallava genealogy and published his collection of research work in Studies in Pallava History (1933). Dr. C. Minakshi was awarded doctorate degree in March 1936 by the University of Madras for her Ph.D. thesis entitled as Administration and Social life under the Pallavas and then it was published by the university in 1938. In 1941 Archaeological Survey of India published a monograph of a monograph of her, entitled as The Historical Sculptures of the Vaikunthaperumal temple, Kanchi, those were part of her research work. Those works are extraordinary in their nature which elaboratively discussed administration and social life under the Pallavas and also interpret the historical panels of the Vaikunthaperumal temple at Kanchipuram. She then proceeds to explain the religious policy of Nandivarman II and Pallavamalla and the status of Education under Pallavas. Further published various research papers like The Khatvanga of the Pallavas<sup>25</sup> , Buddhism in South India<sup>26</sup> , and also contributed into the understanding of architecture and iconography of the Kailasanatha temple at Kanchipuram<sup>27</sup> .

T. N. Ramachandran's monograph *The Kiratarjuniyam or Arjuna's Penance in Indian Art* (1951) elaborates the large bas-relief panel at Mamallapuram is to be identified with the Arjuna's Penance and such thematic expression is taken from Bharavi's *Kiratarjuniyam*<sup>28</sup> .

O. C. Ganguly's work *The Art of the Pallavas* (1957), where he traces the point of origination of Pallava art then examines the potential relationship between the Vishnukundins and Salankayanas with the Pallavas. Then V.M Narasimhan has identified two temples of Pallava built in the Rajasimha style (690 - 800 A.D.) viz., the Piravatanes`vara and the Iravatanes`vara. The architectural and sculptural structures of these two temples were labelled in his article entitled as *Two Pallava temples in Rajasimha style* and in another article on *Some Pallava icons*, he brings together some more bronze icons of the Pallava period from Perunthotam, Srirangam and Edayarpakkam and also rare sculptures of stone from Tirunagari, Srivilliputtur and Perangur.

In addition to that the contribution of Dr. K. R. Srinivasan in constructing the cultural history of Pallava period is immense, especially while serving as a superintendent archaeologist in Temple survey project under Archaeological Survey of India. He extensively performed systematic survey into the various rockcut and structural temples belong to Pallava period. The product of such extensive survey can be recognized from his research paper *The Pallava Architecture of South India* (1958)<sup>31</sup> and book *Cave Temples of the Pallavas* (1964). Then in another book entitled as *Temples of South India* (1972) he described in detail about the origin of temple and its development under Pallava period<sup>32</sup> . Moreover, Dr.K.V. Soundara Rajan's paper, *Rajasimha's Temples in Tondaimandalam*, published in the *Transactions of the Archaeological Society of South India*, this paper has drawn the substantial influence of Badami and Mahakutesvar had over the architectural pattern of Mamallapuram and explanation on various cults in Pallava period and agamic influence.

In T. V. Mahalingam's book *Kancheepuram in Early South Indian History*, he provides detail history of Kachipuram during pallava period and argued that Mamallapuram could have been served as port city before Narashimavarman I, further he stated that Vaishnavite literature suggests Mallai, Mallapurai and Kadalmlai names for Mahabalipuram and the hymns of Bhutalya also refers Mahabalipuram as Mallai, thus it is not possible to state that it was founded by Mamalla<sup>34</sup> . He has also arranged a corpus of Pallava inscriptions and published with the title *Inscriptions of the Pallavas* (1988). In N. S. Ramaswami's books *Seven Pagodas and Mamallapuram* discuss the development of art and history in Mamallapuram. The origin of Pallava art has seriously remained a matter of debate amongst the scholars from long time as M.S Mate in his work *Origin of Pallava Art: The Undavalli caves*<sup>35</sup> , argues that Undavalli caves was an inspiring source from where Mahendravarman had opted the technique temple out of a live rock. Moreover, with time scholars have also taken interest in describing the cultural elements reflects through Pallava sculpture, such as Gift Siromoney,

Michael Lockwood and P Dayanandan. It is also important to mention some essential research works of Gift Siromoney in the field of Pallava culture constructed from sculptural remains which include *Some New Light on Stringed Instruments of the Ancient Tamil Country*<sup>36</sup> , *Mahabalipuram: costumes and jewellery*<sup>37</sup> , *Thondaimandalam: Costumes and Jewellery*<sup>38</sup> , *Depiction of Animals in Mahabalipuram Sculptures*<sup>39</sup> and *Musical Instruments from Pallava Sculpture*<sup>40</sup> . Indeed he has also immensely contributed in the study of Iconometry and Iconography of Pallavas, which includes *An Iconometric study of Pallava sculptures*<sup>41</sup> and *Iconometric analysis of the sculptures of the Dharmaraja Ratha*<sup>42</sup> . There are certainly some doctoral researches which shed light into the development of Pallava period starting from Dr. C. R. Srinivasan's thesis entitled as *Kancheepuram through the ages*, which explains the various stages of historical events encountered by Kancheepuram being a capital city. While, Stephen Markel's research work titled *An Iconographical Assesment of the Great Relief at Mamallapuram* (1980) submitted to University of Michigan then S. Govindaraju's doctoral thesis on *Computer Analysis of Measurements of the Pallava Sculptures of South India* (1982) submitted to the University of Madras. Then Michael D. Rabe doctoral thesis titled as *The Monolithic Temples of the Pallava Dynasty: A Chronology*, by the University of Minnesota. He then also developed a new chronology by closely examining the sculptures. Which he discussed in his paper *The Great Relief at Mahabalipuram: Arjuna's Penance after All*<sup>43</sup> , *The Mamallapuram Prasasti: A Panegyric in Figures*<sup>44</sup> . Including D. R. Rajeswari's research work entitled *The Pallava Sculpture*, where she addresses the stylistic variation, aesthetic and thematic features of the sculptures created in this period. As many research works are continuously conducted related to the field of Pallava Art. Some of the scholars who has continued the process of reconstruction of Pallava History are Iravatham Mahadevan<sup>45</sup> , Susan L. Huntington<sup>46</sup> , Padma Kaimal<sup>47</sup> , Sharada Srinivasan<sup>48</sup> , Vidya Dehejia<sup>49</sup> , and Valerie Gillet<sup>50</sup> . With retrospection of earlier work we can progressively stand in a situation from where making the conclusive understanding of the historicity of Pallavas would be favorable. Most of the earlier works are based on both primary and secondary data set.

*Bharatada Modala Doregalu* by M. Nanjundaswami IPS, Published by the Malava Philological Academy, Bangalore (2011). This is a Kannada book dealing with a detailed study of the ancient tribes of India and the present dravidian races that have scattered all over the Indian Sub-continent. In the book the author evidently talks about the origin of the Pallavas and their present day descendants. I would utilise the information given in the book for profiling the origin of the Pallavas.

Holayaru-Madaru-Rajaru by M. Nanjundaswami IPS Published by the Malava Philological Academy, Bangalore(2012).This is a Kannada book dealing with a detailed study of the ancient tribes of India and the present dravidian races that have scattered all over the Indian Sub-continent. In the book the author evidently talks about the origin of the Pallavas and their present day descendants. I would utilise the information given in the book for profiling the origin of the Pallavas.

In conclusion, the early works on the Pallavas, written by visionary scholars, have left an indelible mark on our understanding of this ancient Indian dynasty. Through their meticulous research, rigorous analysis, and scholarly dedication, these pioneers have helped to Reconstruct the political, social, and cultural landscape of the Pallavas,Illuminate the significance of Pallava art, architecture, and literature Shed light on the economic and administrative systems of the Pallavas Provide a nuanced understanding of the Pallavas' rise, growth, and decline.

These early works have not only shaped our understanding of the Pallavas but have also laid the foundation for future research, inspiring generations of scholars to continue exploring the complexities of this fascinating dynasty. As we build upon the knowledge and insights gained from these early works, we honor the legacy of these pioneering scholars and move closer to a deeper understanding of India's rich cultural heritage.This conclusion summarizes the significance of the early works on the Pallavas, highlighting their contributions, impact, and enduring legacy.

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