

History of the Church of Ollur

Project submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfillment for
the requirements for the award of the degree of

Bachelor of Arts

in

English and History

By

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Declaration

I, Preciousborn William, hereby declare that this project entitled **History of the Church of Ollur**, submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the **Degree of Bachelor of Arts in English and History**, is a bonafide record of original research work carried out by me under the supervision and guidance of Dr. George Alex, Coordinator, Department of B.A. English & History (Double Main) Christ College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda.

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Certificate

This is to certify that this project entitled **History of the Church of Ollur** is a bonafide research work carried out by **Ms. Preciousborn William** under my supervision and guidance in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Bachelor of Arts in English and History** submitted to the University of Calicut.

Dr. George Alex

Dr. George Alex

Coordinator

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Contents

Chapter Number	Contents	Page No.
	Introduction	1 – 3
Chapter 1	History of the Church	4 – 8
Chapter 2	Architecture of the Church	9 – 16
Chapter 3	Social and Economic Relevance of Church	17 – 24
	Conclusion	25
	Works Cited	26
	Appendix	27 – 29

Introduction

Local history is the study of history in a geographically context and it often concentrates on the local community. Local history is often documented by local historical societies or groups that form to preserve a local historic building or other historic site. Local history is the study of history in a geographically local context and it often concentrates on the local community. It incorporates cultural and social aspects of history. Many works of local history are compiled by amateur historians working independently or archivists employed by various organizations.

Local history contains a wealth of details and stories that help reveal how societal changes impacted the lives of ordinary people .By investigating local history, you can find documents such as accounts of the first cars in a town, what people thought of them, and how they changed the lives of the community. Local history is the study of the everyday struggles and triumphs of ordinary people. The study of local topics allows for in-depth research to connect the past with the present, which is done more simply and with more meaning than studying the national, faceless masses.

Ollur is a major suburban area and an old commercial town in the city of Thrissur of Kerala state, South India. It is situated about 5 km away from Swaraj Round on old National Highway 47 (India) towards Kochi. From ancient time onwards, Ollur was a major business centre in Thrissur district. Now, this geographical area is part of Thrissur Municipal Corporation. It is situated between Kuriachira and Thalore on the National Highway. However, a specific identity for this geographical region is still there due to the urban setting of this region and its important religious institutions.

The St. Antony's Syro-Malabar Catholic Forane Church is located at Ollur, Thrissur city in Kerala. The church belongs to Syro-Malabar Catholic Archdiocese of Thrissur. According to rough figures there are around 4,000 Christian families in the parish. Because of the huge presence of Christian people in Ollur, with its religious, educational, medical, social-service, and secular organization and institution, Ollur has been called as *Chinna Roma* (Small Rome). The church is constructed on a hill-top which is the highest location in the area. The church is surrounded by a huge protective compound wall called Elephant Wall (*Aana Mathil*). When Thrissur Vicariate Apostolic was erected in 1887, Ollur was the richest, most populous, and influential parish, so much that the Vicar of the Ollur parish were included in Adolph Medlycott's four-member diocesan apex council.

Scope

The study of historical background of St Antony's forane church Ollur. This study also include history, architecture, social and economic relevance of church.

Sources

The primary and secondary sources are used to complete this study. The oral evidence is the main source for the present study among the sources. The other sources for this study were the books, magazines, souvenir, interview etc. Other informations are collected from various websites also.

Methodology

Historical methodology is used to in this study. It is mainly based on historical analysis of data. This work is based on primary records and further mentioned by

various secondary sources. The technique and methodology of oral history and local history has been used for this study.

Chapterisation

This study is divided in to five parts including introduction and conclusion. The introduction includes the aim and importance of the study, the scope of the subject matter, and sources etc. The first chapter comprises the history of church, the second chapter denotes architecture of the church. And the third chapter is about social and economic relevance of church.

Chapter 1

History of the church

The St. Anthony's Forane Church, Ollur, was built by the resident Christian families of Ollur under the leadership of Chiramel Chakoru Palu, a resident of Ollur, who got the permission from the Raja of Cochin. The foundation stone of the church was laid by Rev. Marottical Poulose. The church was built in typical Kerala Vaastushilpa architectural style in the period 1883-1893. The Ollur Forane church is one of the best models of Christian architecture in India. The Ollur church is one of the wealthiest in the whole of Kerala.

The Ollur forane church, founded in 1718 and dedicated to St Anthony, also houses a famous Shrine of Raphael the Archangel. This is one of the oldest churches built in 18th-century Kerala. The festival, held on 23 and 24 October of each year, is one of the most important Christian festivals in Kerala. The history of St. Antony's Forane Church begins in June 13 1718 CE when a temporary church was constructed of the religious and first mass was conducted. The Church was blessed on June 13, 1722 CE by Mar Antony Pimentel who was then Bishop of Kodungallur along with Johann Ernst Hanxelton, famously known as Arnos Paathiri.

Previously, the Ollur Christian population went to Mass in Puzuvial church. One day one of the women of the Chiramel family missed Mass in Puzuvial church. Disappointed, she told this to her son and asked him to construct a church in Ollur. The authorities permission was required to setup a church in ollur, Which was densely populated by Hindus and housed two temples dedicated to Lord bhagavathi and Lord shiva , so it was not easy. Malaekal Karthakal was a true symbol of human unity and religious harmony in those days. He came out publicly with the promise of

support for the establishment of the church. After this, land donated by Malaekal Karthakal was used for building a new church in Ollur. According to church records, in 1718 a temporary church was constructed and the first Mass was conducted. The church was blessed on 13 June 1722, by the Mar Antony Pimentel, known Metropolitan and Gate of All India or Bishop of kodungallur along with Johann Ernst Hanxelton famously known as Arnos Paathiri. It is said that a small ivory statue of St. Antony, where donated by metropolitan Thirumeni to the church.

In 1750 started celebrating the feast of St Sebastian in the month of January and is the second major festival in the parish. Saint Sebastian (c. AD 256 – 288) was an early Christian saint and martyr. According to traditional belief, he was killed during the Roman emperor Diocletian's persecution of Christians. The Ollur Church was erected. Many families from different part of the country began to flock to Ollur. But this did not last long. In 1790, Tipu Sultan set fire to church. The burning of the church shocked the Christians, even though they had been exterminated. Then After short long time ollur reborn, history has moved on again, Ollur has regained its strength as Christian center.

Neither the king nor the rulers nor the army were allowed to exercise any authority over those who sought refuge and protection with in the church walls. It should also be on the basis of that recognition that the ollur church should be considered to have been built on an Elephantwall (Aana mathil) around the vast expanse. Construction of wall around the church was completed on 1814 .Before the renovation of the Natashala, the church had a tower door (Aana vathil) and the complex was called as “sanctuary”.

The Festival of Angel Rapheal of Ollur parish began to be celebrated as a

community of love and happiness , beginning with the historical records. Such a simple celebration began in 1839, and for sometime we celebrated the day with enthusiasm and the responsibilities of the devotees. Meanwhile the number of people seeking the angels intercession with various requests and petition gradually increased. Due to the large number of pilgrims , the festival was later celebrated in the church itself, not in the vicinity of the feast of the angel Raphael , but also in neighbouring states. During that time not only Keralites but also konkini people, Tamil people and parangi people where use to visit church to celebrate feast of St Rapheal. In the time of limited transport , bullock carts were used by families and neighbours , and bullock carts lined the streets of the church. In order to celebrate feast of 2 or 3 days ,rice and other ingrediants brought for cooking and eating on those days , even when the food is cooked on the sidewalks and in empty spaces . For them the festival was not only a joyous occasion but also sacrificial pilgrimage.

In 1845 small church (vadakubagam palli) was built on north side in the name of angel St Raphael. The façade of this small church is oldest Surviving facades in kerala, accurately reflecting the Portuguese style and architecture . Thus began the burial of the dead in this small church, which stands as a symbol of ancient traditions (Beginning to be used as cemetery) The bodies of the priest were buried in tombs infront of the altar at the eastern end.

Beautiful Altar was built in 1870 at ollur church. The Erathazhu Which is made entirely of wood behind the altar, is almost a fascinating work of art. You can see that the roof of the altar is covered with mud and some greens leaves. This is to prevent it from bending. On August 27, 1911 the main altar of the church was declared as “swayamvarabalipeedam” Most of the wooden altars are decorated with

flowers, plants, vines and leaves. Pillars and false pillars are also carved in the wood. The altars of Kerala are adorned with many special carvings made of wood. Golden paint mixed with real gold and other pigments have been used for the paintings. In addition to vines and plants, angels, apostles, and saints can be easily seen on the other side. Carved candles for the permanent decoration of the altar are also used to proclaim the art.

The main wall on the north wall of the church was completed in 1874. The chapel on which worship, spirituality, devotion and holiness are based, is an indescribable atmosphere for human beings ; For the inner eye of spirituality, the bliss of heavenly bliss is a combination. In the cage above the beautiful altar are statues of the sacred heart of Jesus and in the cages on either side are statues of Christ the King and Unni Messiah. Upstairs are depicted angels singing with various musical instruments. On the surrounding wall, the Biblical events-wedding at Cana, Appammurikal, the Last Supper, the sacrifice on the cross, Emmaus, Abel's sacrifice, The birds giving bread to Elijah, Abraham's sacrifice and manna from heaven are depicted. The top of the chapel was covered with copper plate. In 1951 they were completely replaced due to damage and the asbestos sheets were replaced.

The seven storey Belfry or Bell tower (Manimaliga) took ten long years from 1883 to 1892. The porch of the church was modernized in 1949 and the roof of the crucifix at the top of the bell tower was replaced with a redesigned terrace. The huge statue of Christ the King, with both arms stretched to embrace and bless everyone, is placed on a high pedestal in the middle of the terrace. Anyone can see the King of Christ outstretched arms from anywhere. On the top seventh floor are three large bells made in France.

To the right door of chapel is a special cage dedicated to St Anthony on basis of his 800th birthday anniversary on August 15 1996 . Since then has been seeking the intercession of the Saint and Novena also Started. (Every Friday after mass at 6pm and novena and ladeen at 7 .45pm). The Altar on right side of the chapel is completely made up of wood, On that Statue of St Theresa, St Vincent de paul, St Francis of assisi , St Evuphrasia and chavara are installed.

Ollur Church history

1718 June 13 - Started celebrating holy mass

1722 – The church was blessed. Murals on the *Madbaha* and artworks in wood were done Based on the life and history of St Antony.

1750 - Started celebrating the feast of St. Sebastian.

1790 - Relived the attack on the church by Tipu's army.

1814 - Construction of the giant wall around the church was completed.

1839 - Started the feast of St Raphael which was among the three most famous church festivals in the kingdom of Kochi.

1845 - A small church alongside the cemetery was constructed on the northern side of the church.

1870 - The main altar covered with gold was constructed.

1874 - The divine mercy chapel was constructed inside the church

1883 - The seven storey bell tower was reconstructed with three bells producing 3 different sounds installed. The bells had the images of 3 saints engraved on it.

1996 - The 800th birth anniversary of St Antony was celebrated and Statue of St Antony was installed.

Chapter 2

Architecture of the Church

If there is any church in Kerala which can be compared with Sistine Chapel in the Vatican City, that is St. Anthony's Forane Church in Ollur. Every inch of space in the church is decorated, under both western and indigenous influences, with the highest achievements of the painter, the sculptor, the ceramics worker, the carpenter, the goldsmith, the bronze artisan, or the architect - using every media known or imaginable like gold, silver, iron, bronze, wood, ivory, stone - including laterite, granite, and precious stones. here there are large numbers of frescoes, murals - both Kerala and western style murals, woodwork, metalwork, ivory work. Of course, Ollur's other name *Chinna Roma* (Small Rome) is quite appropriate for this and many other reasons. If any church in Kerala deserves to be named a basilica (a minor basilica, that is) it is undoubtedly this great church. If any church is to be made a key attraction for tourists, Indian or international, the first consideration must be given to this church.¹

A unique feature of the church is the number and variety of the angel images in the church. There are more than five thousand images of angels in the church, in fresco, mural, wood, plaster, stone, metal and ivory. The paintings of the church cover an area of thousands of square feet and are considered one of the most beautiful ones in entire Kerala. At one time, especially in the 19th century and the first three quarters of the 20th century there were only three Christian festivals in the erstwhile Cochin State which used to attract countrywide attention. One was the Kanjoor festival of St. Sebastian, another was the celebration in honour of the Koratti Muthy.

¹ Menachery Prof. Dr. George, *The Great Church of Ollur and The Angel Raphael*.

The third festival of State significance which used to attract tens of thousands of devotees was the St. Raphael's festival of Ollur popularly known as *Malakhayude Perunnal*.

St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Catholic Church located at Palayur in Thrissur district is considered the earliest church in Kerala. It is claimed to have been established in 52 AD by St Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ. There are many other old churches such as Thazhaekadu palli, Kokkode church, Mattom, that bear the pride of antiquity in this region. In the same district of Thrissur is located the St. Antony's Forane Church in Ollur, which is the only church in Kerala that can be compared with the Sistine Chapel in Vatican city, for it encapsulates the flavour of indigenous and western art and architecture. Ollur church is famous for the large number of exquisitely carved sacred images in wood. According to Kuriappan Kattookkaran's book on the church, written a century ago, there were seventy-three statues in the church and as many festivals. Even today some of the best-carved statues of Kerala are to be found in this church.

The history of St. Antony's Forane Church begins in 1718 when a temporary church was constructed for the religious and it was blessed on June 13, 1722 by Mar Antony Pimentel who was then Bishop of kodungallur along with Johann Ernst, famously known as Arnos Paathiri. History also records that this church was set on fire by Tipu Sultan in 1790 during his attacks on Kerala, but only the facade got burnt.

The earliest pictorial documentation available of this church is that of 1904, when it was photographed by H C Q Brownrigg. A 1938 photograph of the church published in the Cochin Government Royal War Efforts Souvenir clearly displays the pomp and glory of the building. The cruciform structure of the church is covered by a

three-tier gabled indigenous roof structure proclaiming the architectural excellence of the carpenters who built it to this scale and grandeur.

As is the case with most churches in Kerala the St. Anthony's Forane Church of Ollur also is constructed on a hill-top which is the highest location in the vicinity. Earlier people must have reached the church climbing the steep slopes. But today there are large flights of steps leading to the church from various directions in addition to the sloping roads for vehicular traffic.

Rockcross (*Nasrani Sthambam*)

A Large stone cross (Nasrani pillar) stands high in the courtyard of the church in front of the *mukhamandapam*. This cross is made up of single stone, as a symbol of salvation. This type of Cross is very rare in the courtyard of church. A little further up the steps, you can see a Metal flagpole. The Nazraney sthamba is a direct descendant of the obelisk.,and much closer to it than the other Indian pillars - in shape, method of construction and transportation, method of erection, function, and solar symbolism. The Roman obelisk, bearing crosses today, have been converted to Christianity, while Kerala's cross-shaped obelisks were born Christian. The obelisk and the double-dagger reference marks in printing may be profitably recalled here.

The three-tier gabled indigenous architecture of Kerala churches, which lacked facades until the coming of the Portuguese, immensely gains in richness, symmetry, and beauty because of the open-air rock crosses, some of them more than 30 feet in height including the intricately carved pedestals, and monolithic shafts. No other community in Kerala has such a huge monumental stone structure, and no other Christianity has such a universal and huge emblem in front of the churches.

The indoor counterparts of these crosses have the earliest carvings in Kerala of the national flower lotus and the national bird peacock. Perhaps even the national animal tiger is first depicted in Kerala art in church sculpture. There was no rock carving in South India prior to the period of these indoor crosses. The motifs, message, and images on these crosses and their pedestals display a remarkable degree of Indianness and Malayalee Thanima or identity.

Porch of the church (*Poomuga Mugavaram*)

The porch was completely renovated on April 8, 1949 as the golden jubilee monument of pope pius XII. The walls and top of façade are made entirely of granite. The porch and façade are beautifully carved in granite designs. The artistry says that poetry is written in granite is evident here. The craftsmanship of the sculptors is immense. In the cage in the middle of the façade are statue of Christ king, and in the cage on either side are statues of St. Antony and St Raphael.

Nadashala and Stambhas

The church is one of the oldest churches in Thrissur Corporation area and one of the grandest in the Trichur Archdiocese. Despite its antiquity and historical importance, there have been attempts to demolish the 120-ft long ‘Nadashala’ adorned with 24 sthampas and mukhavaram (frontal façade), another remains of Greco-Roman architecture. The nadashala and stambhas bear testimony to the tradition of the system followed by Indian building to cater to alternate typology of buildings. In the name of reconstruction, addition and renovation, insensitive acts have already happened to the historic fabric of heritage churches in Kerala. Let St. Antony’s Forane Church not be the next one to be brutally destroyed, forgoing its historicity. Objects with such

historical value should not be demolished or tampered with insensitively. Instead, they should be protected by giving due reverence and need to be conserved for posterity.

Elephant wall (*Aanamathil*)

The church is surrounded by a huge protective compound wall Aana Mathil or (Elephant wall) either because of its elephant like shape (which helps it to guard itself from the heavy monsoon downpours characteristic of the land), or because of its elephantine size, or use (to safeguard the church from the fierce attacks of elephants sent by angry kings), or for a combination of these reasons. These walls enclose in addition to the church itself the inner courtyard also.

Pulpit (*pushpakoodu*)

One of the reputed possessions of the church is the more than thirty-foot tall wooden rostrum or *Pushpakoodu* which soars to a height of more than 39 ft and is adorned with sculpture and relief works of evangelists and saints as one would find in any European church. This is perhaps the tallest rostrum in the whole of Asia. Among other astonishingly artistic wood carvings in the church some are to be found on the three altars, the beams, and in the cupola. *Pushpakoodu* is designed as Starting from the mouth of lion on the bottom wall and blossoming into a flower. As the speakers and the other electronic devices began to reach the audience ear, *pushpakoodu* become unusable. Above the flower –shaped wreath, there are two beautifully designed upper chambers and above it an angel lords and many angels in the wood carving that have been done on the flower.

Sevenstorey Belfry (*Manimaliga*)

The seven storey Belfry or Bell tower (125 feet) of the church is said to be the tallest structure in South India when it was constructed. The huge three bells in the bell tower were imported from Marseilles in France (1883–1892) in 19th century and is one of biggest bells in Kerala. The bells are inscribed with the pictures of Jesus, Saint Joseph, Mary (mother of Jesus), Saint Anthony, Raphael (archangel) and Tobias. The seven-storey-high belfry, was one of the tallest structures of those days. Another unique feature of the church is the variety of images of angels found inside and on the church structure. There are more than 5,000 of these angels in this church, which are sculpted in fresco, mural, wood, plaster, stone, metal, ivory and other media. Their skillful disposition brings the good heavens on to earth for the religious.

Small Altars

As you enter from Madbaha , there are small altars on each side. Behind them there are beautiful ridges (Erathazhu). Like the main altar and lower altar, they are adorned with wood carvings and gold plated paintings. The figure of the Angel Raphael is seen on the north forehead of altar and figure of St Joseph on the south. The Altar on the north side is dedicated to the mother of God, and has a statue. On the South forehead of this altar is the figure of the immaculate.

Granite Sculptures

The church has variety of Granite sculptures . Visitors can see many Round figures, Pillars, Lamps, Lampposts, Baptismal stones, stairways, sidewalks, towers, doorsteps and stone carvings.

Mural painting

The Murals have beautified the entire Interior of the church without leaving any gaps. The Ancient murals are as beautiful as those found in many other ancient churches. The walls, which are two to three centuries old, stand out from the crowd. The glow has not faded. Panels and mats are also used to cover the entire part of the roof. Murals in ollur church are notable. The first sin and sacrifices of the old testament, David, Goliath, Samson, Noah, Moses, scenes from the life of Jesus in the new testament (Fifteen Mysteries) Heaven, Hell and the Last Judgement are all in chepad, piravam, pazhanji, Akapparambu, chathanur, Angamaly, Paliekkara, malayatoor, kanjoor. It is the subject of eight hundred years old murals. All these can be seen in ollur church and chapel. The church is ornated with carvings and the creations of 300 years ago have been retained as such. The organisation and protection of the sculptures reflect a remarkable sense of the value of the old. It has Fresco paintings spanning 4,000 sq. ft. The gold tinted interior of the church resembles an art gallery. The sanctum, the ceiling, the small altars, and the enclosures of the statues, are all picturesque. The Pulpit has three decks, two of which could be used at the same time. The lowest deck has a row of statues, carved out of wood, coming out of a host of flowers. The first deck is supported on a branch coming out of the dragon's mouth. The upper part of this is also rich in carvings. The colour used is a blend of golden and red.

A book written on the church a century ago by Kuriappan Kattookkaran reveals that there were 73 statues in the church. Even today, some of the best carved statues of Kerala are found in this church alone. There are a number of frescoes and murals both in Kerala and western styles, artefacts made of wood, metal, ivory etc. The gold and silver crosses, the candlesticks, kasa and pilasa, gold censers, bronze vessels, bells, monstrances, tabernacles etc. are some of the artistic works in the church made in various metals, adding to the antiquity of the church. The dynamics of

sculptural architectonics of this church is in contradiction to its purity of indigenous architectural form. The paintings in the church that covers a thousand square feet, are the pride of artists and Kerala. One is left with no doubts why Ollur's nickname once was *Chinna Roma* (small Rome), seeing the similarities in sculptural and architectural detailing found here.

The Ollur church is the oldest church in the Thrissur Corporation area and the grandest church in the Trichur Archdiocese although certain other churches are today able to grab the limelight on account of their location and certain accidental present-day benefits and lucky coincidences.

Chapter 3

Social and Economic Relevance of Church

Liberation struggle (*Vimochana Samaram*)

In 1959 Catholics took to the streets of Kerala to protest against the first Communist Government in the state headed by E. M. S. Namboodiripad. This was known as *Vimochana Samaram* or Liberation Struggle. The confrontation was sparked by a state law that would have effectively taken over Catholic education facilities. In the same year, on 23 July, Kerala Police fired at the St. Anthony's Forane Church on the part of Liberation Struggle. A memorial had been erected at the church courtyard then. The memorial says, *Communist Government fired bullets to the Church here*. The struggle of 1959 had led to the dismissal of the first democratically elect Communist Government in the world.

The church structure as we see today was built in the typical Kerala architectural style during the period 1883-1893. It is conjectured that around 1953 or so, there were modifications done to the main church by the removal of the original facade and addition of a structure to the front portion on the western side. The church also withstood the historical 'Vimochana Samaram' in 1959, when bullets were said to be fired at the church, as mentioned in a plaque put up at the church.

Festivals of St Raphael (Malakhayude Perunnal)

The St. Anthony's Forane Church of Ollur was built by Chiramel Chakoru Palu, a resident of Ollur, who got the permission from Raja of Cochin. The foundation stone of the church was laid by Rev. Marollical Poulose. The church was built in the gothic architecture style in the period 1883-1893. The Ollur Forane Church is one of

the best replicas of Christian architecture in South India. The Ollur Church is one of the wealthiest in the whole of Kerala. Feast of Saint Raphael, Ollur, the Archangel, is the most important festival of Ollur church falling on 23 and 24 October of each year. The festival was started in 1837. Another festival is in honor of Saint Sebastian in the month of January and is the second major festival in the parish. Also, Ollur parish celebrates around 73 feasts and festivals in the calendar year. The Feast of Saint Raphael or MalakhayudePerunnal is an annual festival held in Ollur. It draws thousands of pilgrims. The Ollur forane church, founded in 1718 and dedicated to St Anthony, also houses a famous Shrine of Raphael the Archangel. This is one of the oldest churches built in 18th-century Kerala. The festival starts with the hoisting of the ceremonial flag on 15 October to mark the beginning of the celebrations in the church compound. It is one of half a dozen Christian festivals listed by Kerala Tourism as among the attractions of the state.

Bangle (Vala) procession

Festival related and liturgical processions in Malabar are of at least four kinds: certain pradakshinams or processions starting near the altar end at the mukhamandapam or portico of the church, many others, importantly, enter the courtyard and go round the rock cross, others go round the church, still others wind along the valley-roads surrounding the church-hill, commencing and concluding at the foot of the rock-cross. In the Ollur church we have processions of all these classes. But the most important procession is in connection with this festival of St. Raphael the Archangel. (True, the procession of St. Sebastian goes to many more areas than the Angel's procession which is restricted to the streets or angadies demarcated by the four bridges.) The main attraction of the festival is the Vala (Bangle) procession which is coming from

the six zones of Ollur parish on 23 October. These Valas will conclude at the foot of the rock-cross of the church. The bangle processions are very attractive by glittering chariot, multicoloured Muthukkudas (silk Umbrellas), the many types of Vadyams and Melams, the decorated Roopakkudus carrying the statues of the four angels Saint Raphael, Saint Michael, Saint Gabriel, and the Guardian Angel are some of the attractions of the great bangle procession. The Vedikkettu or fireworks, the hawkers and vendors, the largescale agape or Oottu, are other interesting features of the festival.

Devil dancing (Thullal) and its prohibition

On the eve of the Feast of St Raphael (mostly women and a few men) after the koodthurakal on October 23 at 4pm thullal will start. The jumpers would shake their head as they told the story of devil, which could be heard as story itself. Their belief was that the devil would ward off those who were blown away candles.

Late Mar Joseph Kundukulam the first Archbishop of Thrissur, banned Thullal (Popularly known as Devil dancing) in 1970 through a pastoral letter. There have been at least a few in the Ollur parish community who reacted to this suspension. The miracle of the angel did not inflict any harm on themselves or their powers, forbidding them to indulge in science or belief.²

About St Raphael

St. Raphael is one of the seven Archangels who stand before the throne of the Lord, and one of the only three mentioned by name in the Bible. He appears, by name, only in the Book of Tobit. Raphael's name means "God heals." This identity came

² Porathur, Sri. Paul. *Chinnaromile Palliyum Malakhayude Thirunalum Visudha Evuprasiayum*. Souhrudha Ollur, 2018.

about because of the biblical story that claims he “healed” the earth when it was defiled by the sins of the fallen angels in the apocryphal book of Enoch. Disguised as a human in the Book of Tobit, Raphael refers to himself as “Azarias the son of the great Ananias” and travels alongside Tobit’s son, Tobiah. Once Raphael returns from his journey with Tobiah, he declares to Tobit that he was sent by the Lord to heal his blindness and deliver Sarah, Tobiah’s future wife, from the demon Asmodeus. It is then that his true healing powers are revealed and he makes himself known as “the angel Raphael, one of the seven, who stand before the Lord” Tobit 12:15.

The demon Asmodeus killed every man Sarah married on the night of the wedding, before the marriage could be consummated. Raphael guided Tobias and taught him how to safely enter the marriage with Sarah. Raphael is credited with driving the evil spirit from Sarah and restoring Tobit’s vision, allowing him to see the light of Heaven and for receiving all good things through his intercession. Although only the archangels Gabriel and Michael are mentioned by name in the New Testament, the Gospel of John speaks of the pool at Bethesda, where many ill people rested, awaiting the moving of the water. “An angel of the Lord descended at certain times into the pond; and the water was moved. And he that went down first into the pond after the motion of the water was made whole of whatsoever infirmity he lay under” John 5:1-4. Because of the healing powers often linked to Raphael, the angel spoken of is generally associated with St. Raphael.

Feast of St Sebastian

In 1750 started celebrating the feast of St Sebastian in the month of January and is the second major festival in the parish. Saint Sebastian (c. AD 256 – 288) was an early Christian saint and martyr. According to traditional belief, he was killed

during the Roman emperor Diocletian's persecution of Christians. St. Sebastian is worshipped as the Saint who eliminates the evil spirits that spread communicable diseases such as small-pox. The arrow used for terminating evil spirits is taken out in the procession, which is part of the festival on his Feast day. festival is in honor of Saint Sebastian in the month of January and is the second major festival in the parish. In ollur church , the Malakayude perunal is celebrated in the honor of St Raphael and procession goes only main angadies and streets ; while the procession of St Sebastian reaches every nook and corner of the parish.

The primary reason why it is celebrated during January is that in early days many people were affected by the spread of smallpox and chicken pox. Devotion to St Sebastian was the only preventive and curative remedy for it. In fact , the devotion to the saint become so widespread in kerala and his intercession was considered most efficacious against the pestilence. Devotion to the saint also spread to other countries and cities, and they too were saved from the plague.

About of St Antony

Anthony was born into a wealthy family and was raised in the church. He joined the Augustinian canons in 1210 and probably became a priest. In 1220 he joined the Franciscan order, hoping to preach to the Saracens (Muslims) and be martyred. On his way to Morocco, he became seriously ill and was forced to return home. However, his ship back to Portugal was blown off course and eventually landed in Sicily. Because of his continuing poor health, he was not allowed to pursue his missionary work among the Saracens. Instead, he taught theology at Bologna, Italy, and at Montpellier, Toulouse, and Puy-en-Velay in southern France. He won great admiration as a preacher and was noted for his simple yet profound teaching of the Catholic faith. He died en route to Padua, Italy, where he is buried. Anthony was the

most celebrated of St. Francis of Assisi's followers and had the reputation of a miracle worker. On January 16, 1946, Pope Pius XII declared him a doctor of the church. In art he is shown with a book, a heart, a flame, a lily, or the child Jesus. Among his authentic writings are sermons for Sundays and feast days, published at Padua in three volumes in 1979.

Feast of St Antony

The Ollur forane church, founded in 1718 and dedicated to St Anthony, also houses a famous Shrine of Raphael the Archangel. This is one of the oldest churches built in 18th-century Kerala. The history of St. Antony's Forane Church begins in June 13 1718 CE when a temporary church was constructed of the religious and first mass was conducted. The Church was blessed on June 13, 1722 CE by Mar Antony Pimentel who was then Bishop of Kodungallur along with Johann Ernst Hanxelton, famously known as Arnos Paathiri. So every year on June 13 people of ollur celebrate feast of st antony in parish. Novena and ladheen is also conducting on all Fridays. People pray to St Antony to get back lost things. Fisherman keep the picture of St antony in Boats while venturing into the sea. Anthony's Eve (June 12th) is for young people to write letters asking Antonio for help in finding a partner. He is especially invoked in prayer for help in recovering lost items. If there's an Anthony in your life, then there's a special day for him -- June 13, the Feast Day of St. Anthony.

Churches under Ollur Forane

- 1) Ollur
- 2) Ammadam

- 3) Kodannur
- 4) Marathakara
- 5) Padavaratt
- 6) Palackal
- 7) Pallissery
- 8) Perinchery
- 9) Pootharackal
- 10) Pulakkattukara
- 11) Thaikkattussery
- 12) Thalore
- 13) Vallachira
- 14) Venginissery
- 15) Vijayamatha Church Chiyaram
- 16) Angel Nagar Mary Matha Church
- 17) Fathima matha Church Konikkara

Catholic organizations working in the parish

- 1) C.L.C.
- 2) Legion of Mary (Women)
- 3) Legion of Mary (Men)
- 4) Mathrusangam
- 5) K.C.Y.M.
- 6) St. Vincent De Paul Society
- 7) Catholic Union

- 8) Franciscan Sabha
- 9) ABA (Altar Boys Association)

Religious houses in the parish

- 1) St. Mary's Convent
- 2) Our Lady Fathima Matha Convent
- 3) St. Vincent De Paul Convent
- 4) F.C.C. Convent
- 5) Galilee Retreat Centre
- 6) Malabar Missionary Brothers Home
- 7) John Haw Covent
- 8) Sadhu Samrakshana Sangham

Conclusion

This is a study of history of St Antony's Forane Church Ollur, in Thrissur district. The St. Antony's Syro-Malabar Catholic Forane Church is located at Ollur, Thrissur city in Kerala. The church belongs to Syro-Malabar Catholic Archdiocese of Thrissur. Because of the huge presence of Christian people in Ollur, with its religious, educational, medical, social-service, and secular organisations and institution, Ollur has been called as *Chinna Roma* (Small Rome). The St. Anthony's Forane Church, Ollur, was built by the resident Christian families of Ollur under the leadership of Chiramel Chakoru Palu, a resident of Ollur, who got the permission from the Raja of Cochin. The foundation stone of the church was laid by Rev. Marottical Poulouse. If there is any church in Kerala which can be compared with Sistine Chapel in the Vatican City, that is St. Anthony's Forane Church in Ollur.

I got a golden opportunity to study and write history of my church in my home village as a history student. I also got chances to meet different people of my village and from them I got so many ideas about my church. I also got to refer to many magazines and historical books for the purpose of study. The chapters will help to understand about church while going through the project. It discusses about history, architecture and festivals of church. I think this project have covered almost all of historical aspects, events, socio economic relevance and knowledge of Ollur Church.

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Appendix



ST.ANTONY'S FORANE CHURCH, OLLUR



ALTAR OF THE CHURCH



STATUE OF ST. RAPHEL AT CHURCH



PUSHPAKODU OF THE CHURCH



THE SEVEN STOREY BELFRY OT BELL TOWER OF THE CHURCH



MURAL PAINTINGS IN THE CHURCH