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Editor's Note

Social science research has been undergoing substantial transformation for some time, some of the changes are crucial for the serious and the curious minds. One important aspect of this is the narrowing down of boundaries between various social science disciplines advancing healthy interdisciplinary dialogues and common platforms of methodological perspectives. Anthropology has become the hub of social science research, promoting search for data from the 'field' and for various kinds of tools of oral/visual communications. The increasing interest in presentism, manifested through various means, such as, for instance, a concern for cultural studies – perceiving cultural symbols as extant images of traditions – as well as a tendency to view the past through the present eye, makes everyday experiences and memories useful devices for academic inquiry. Even in history, which is heavily oriented towards the past, there has been a growing interest in the study of the recent, instead of the remote, past as well as an overt drive to assess the past from the present predicaments.

If these kinds of developments are, to a great extent, positive and are greatly welcomed, there are certain other things which are highly disappointing. Notwithstanding the growing interest in research, increasing methodological sophistication, and the resultant passion for publication, appended by a flood of journals, both in print and online, there is very little improvement in terms of quality – to be frank, it is declining day by day. We have long been talking about such a debacle but the situation continues to worsen – which, however, does not hinder the true intelligentsia to articulate themselves. The unscrupulous race for API scores, anticipating placements and promotions, supported by policies leading to liberalization in higher education, has transformed the field of publication into a lucrative market in which even foreign publishers are potent competitors. The UGC is now an ardent supporter of the policy of pay-and-publish, as is evidenced by its list of approved journals, which is framed by including a sizable number of poor and substandard journals, ignoring the numerous, highly placed, reputed, publications of the print world. This has in fact become a vicious circle in which ambitious and unscrupulous investors seek out substantial

source of income exploiting the callous and lethargic attitude of the amateur researchers who are keen to identify a space for themselves in the world of letters through the backdoors. Reports have now started coming out on Indian higher education as being caught up in the web of fake journals ready to publish anything on payment; 'pay and publish' is the emerging culture of the academic-publishing sphere.

Amidst these conflicting tendencies, there are further developments which certainly bewilder us – the gradual eclipse of the print media and the colossal growth of the online world. Among the western countries the web world has almost replaced the print media and a similar trend is sweeping the Indian scene, the impact of which will soon be visible. Journals like Social Orbit are also compelled to conform to this inevitable transition. In the west, however, serious research and reading continues to dominate the academia, even in its online incarnation, but in India while lay people of all hues are caught up in the whatts app mania, the educated are fascinated by the Wikipedia culture – lowering the intellectual standards to the bottommost level. Reading as a habit is declining among students and teachers and so the developing online culture seems to eliminate even the existing class of scholarly genre. This ongoing leveling process would make us dependents of the west in academic matters. Thus, we are moving towards a quandary in which a deteriorating quality of research and publication proceed along with a progressively declining size of the reading community.

Barring these grave concerns, a seriously edited journal, or a well written volume too, has its own space in the academy and could do something substantial in promoting ideas and attitudes. Social Orbit has been uncompromising in keeping up this spirit – right from the point of selection of articles, through revising, and till accepting/rejecting. Cultivating a research culture is very difficult in the context of an affiliated college; but as an ideal, we have been striving hard to achieve it. The nature and content of the articles of the present volume would reveal how they reflect the aforesaid concerns; they are from the best scholars in diverse disciplines and are the products of meticulous research. We feel proud of being placed within the bounds of a true academic culture.

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Globalization and Indian Higher Education[1]

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Abstract

This article argues that the recent measures adopted by the Government of India towards globalizing the higher education sector is actually a move intended to accelerate the process of privatization, in accordance with the interests of global capital. It would eventually undermine the autonomy of public universities and lead to their gradual decline. It would also jeopardize the federal structure of the nation. In the social plane, it would help reproduce the backwardness of the socially deprived groups by derailing the existing reservation norms.

Keywords: Globalization, Higher Education, commoditization, homogenization, hegemonization, Hindutva nationalism, intellectual parasitism.

The recent attempts to undermine the autonomy of the universities has developed into a matter of deep concern for all of us in India. This question should be discussed in the context of political economy, the context of the changes that has occured in society at large, and its implications on higher education. Let me begin by referring to Gandhiji. At the time of the Civil Disobedience Movement, when Gandhiji asked students to abandon educational institutions – their colleges, Universities and so on – he had a correspondence with the God. God asked him whether this is a country having so few educated people, and as a result instead of promoting that few who were getting educated, asking them to continue with this education, you are asking them to leave their universities and colleges; this is something which does not make any sense. Gandhiji's reply was interesting. He said that the persons who were getting education in India were getting educated in order to become basically servitors of the British Raj. What we want in India is not that kind of education, but of a different kind. There are two prepositions in Gandhiji's remark which are particularly import-

[1] This article is the transcribed and edited version of the speech delivered by Prof. Prabhat Patnaik in the national seminar on Federalism and Democracy in Indian Higher Education in the Context of the Scrapping of UGC organized under the auspices of E.K. Nayanar Chair for Parliamentary Affairs, Kannur University, on 10th October, 2018.

ant. The first is that the kind of education we get is not independent of the objective of the education system, of the structure of the education system, within which this education is being imparted. In other words, Education is not some kind of a homogeneous thing which can be imparted by a private institution, public institution, or by any kind of institution, be it foreign universities, it is not as if it is a homogeneous thing and as a matter of fact the objective of the education system, the structure of the education system and the kind of education that had been imparted, they all constitute one interrelated whole, which can be in the interests of the people of the country. And of course the second proposition which Gandhiji actually implied is that the kind of education that had been introduced in British India is not in the interest of the people; that it would be better for those who get this kind of education should abandon their institutions and come out in the streets and participate in the movement. For those people Gandhiji set up a whole lot of specific institutions like the Kasi Vidyapeet and Gujarat Vidyapeet which were trying to develop a very different, alternate, system of education.

After independence there were many things wrong happened in our education system; we know that our public education system has for quite some time been in tattles. We know a large number of unfilled positions in public universities; we know that state governments for instance have been extremely starved of funds; so much so that sometimes posts remaining unfilled is a deliberate decision on the part of the state governments in order to save their budgetary resources. Once I was in the UGC committee, dealing with the requirements of various Economics departments, Head of one of the publicly funded University Departments told us that they actually have only three faculty members to run the Department – with MA, MPhil and PhD programmes – and they normally ask students to read on their own. Sometimes universities carry their programmes through the system of appointing temporary ad-hoc faculties, which is now very common, and which is a way of saving budgetary resources, but in fact it is a violation of the principle of equal pay for equal work. This has been going on in public Universities now and this is developing as a real crisis in the public education system. But the problem with such a crisis needs to be resolved within the system and, the alternative is, quoting Gandhiji again, implies shifting the nature of the education system itself. In other words, compared to the post-independence period, the objective of the education system, its structure and orientation, would be geared towards providing, in the words of the organic intellectuals, fodder to globalized capital. Now in the more recent period we have been moving to an education system which provides fodder for globalized capital but that fodder is filled with ideas of Hindutva. We have in fact a Hindutva infused commodity being produced through the education system which would be of use to globalized capital.

This does not mean that the entire set of products of the education system that exists or is moving towards one in which all are going to be employed by globalized capital. No such possibility exists. But the point is that this is the kind of vision which trends home our education system now and there is no conflict between that vision on the one hand and putting all kinds of ideas of Hindutva nationalism into the minds of the same students on the other. I would come back to this question of nationalism later on and the kind of nationalism that is being imparted, the kind of nationalism for instance which underlies in the directives to the universities by the MHRD that they must all celebrate the surgical strike deal, that kind of nationalism is completely compatible with the production of products as commodities in this new education system which is informed by the requirements of globalized capital which does not of course mean that all these products are going to be employed by this globalized capital. But, none the less, the education system that is being fashioned is one which is informed by that kind of concoctors.

What are the implications of this kind of objective fashioning of education system and how does it contrast with the previous system? The first thing of course is that if you have the education system been geared towards producing fodders to globalised capital, in that case this fodder is producing in the form of commodities. That education system is one that is going to produce people who look at their value, who look at their achievements, in terms of the amount of money they command in the market. A commodity has a very specific meaning and that meaning is that the commodity, for the producer of this commodity, for the seller of this commodity, only that presents a certain amount of money. The person who owns Walmart is interested only in the amount of money that Walmart is earning; as a result, production of students, the production of the education system as commodities, basically means converting them into beings who look at their self world, their achievements, in terms of money that they command; this is something which we see in our daily life, in newspaper reports, of how a fresh IIT graduate or a IIM graduate has landed a job with one and a half crores of annual salary. This is supposed to be a tremendous achievement, an achievement of that institution, that it actually produced somebody who could grab a job with one and half crores. That is what I really mean by the production of commodities, and that is held up as a model for a glorious achievement; that an actual producer has a commodity which has such a high value. Now, interestingly, we get an idea of the education system which is to produce people who are commodities in that sense and thus one of the first implications of an education system geared towards producing for the globalised capital.

The second thing of course is that there has to be a homogenization. Globalised capital is globalized. So it would like those com-

modities being produced by the Indian education system would be no different from the commodity being produced, let's say, by the Belgian education system or the Chinese education system, or some other so that they can be compared in terms of a very homogeneous set of persons, who have not identical kinds of faces; being put into their world, they have identical set of ideas and identical set of notions, and then globalised capital can choose from among them. If we have all persons with their own kind of uses, in that case they are not commoditized in the sense that globalized capital would like to do. Therefore this homogenization becomes extremely important. This is not happening now; this has been happening for sometime. Sometime ago, I know from experience, the UGC was asked to set up a set of really 'good' Universities; the idea was to ask Oxford to set up a university here like the Oxford, Cambridge University to set up one here as well as Harvard to do so. In other words, these are universities which are supposed to be clones, carbon copies, as their original, without knowing that carbon copies will never be as good as the original, and hence could not exist at all. They would be having curriculum, syllabi and course content very much similar to that being taught outside. So this homogenization is a very important feature and this homogenization also occurs within the country where we have very different course structure like say, that of the MG University in Kerala. The idea increasingly is that even at the level of state universities, there should be a homogenization so that basically more or less all students are passing through the same will and they would be built up and evaluated by globalised capital and its offshoots. Some who are supposedly have a better fortune, would be paid by higher salaries; all of them can then be brought into a connection with the amount of money that they reserve in command.

But what does homogenization actually imply? Speaking about my own subject Economics, I believe an Indian student of Economics must know with the impact of British Colonial rule on India. If you want to know the impact of British Colonial rule on India then you must know about the drain of surplus from India about which people like Dadabhi Naoroji and Romesh Chandra Dutt wrote about. Therefore I believe that an Indian student of Economics must have familiarity with the writings of Naoroji, Dutt and others as part of the kind of training that an Indian student must have if that Indian student is going to serve the people of the country as an organic intellectual of the Indian nation. But on the other hand, nobody in Harvard or Cambridge has heard about Naoroji or Dutt; except those who have specialized on Indian economic history but otherwise so if you are going to take the Economics syllabus of Cambridge or Oxford or Harvard and applied in these universities, you are effectively shutting your students off from a knowledge of their home societies, from the history of their own societies and you are really producing second rate clones of the

kind of product that Harvard or Cambridge or Oxford people would be producing. So this homogenization is the next important implication of history.

If these students are produced as homogeneous commodities in that case ideally such commodity would be produced in private, commercial, money making establishments. As a matter of fact even the public universities become imitative; the argument I continuously come across in the JNU and elsewhere is that if our students earn so much then why doesn't the university also charge higher fees. So higher fees become justified; the University itself then internalizes the task of producing commodities; a student who gets one and a half crore must be really very proud of that. So commoditization affects not just profit making institutions; they of course make profit because their whole objective is to produce students who get one and a half crore to one crore; but even public universities, government says, why take money from the budget. Why don't you charge higher fees? So even public universities become imitative of this particular task; they abandon the idea of serving the people of the country through the education system but instead get drawn into the sole objective of producing for the globalised capital.

And, of course, one very important implication of this development, very important characteristic, is centralization. If public universities are going to produce such products, such commodities, private universities are introduced to produce such commodities, then naturally they say homogenization become very important. In this case the scope for state universities, like for example MG University or the autonomous Abul Kalam University of Delhi, which could try different kinds of things, that scope must be restricted. Therefore centralization as a question of the powers of the state, and therefore the powers of state universities, is part of this very process. Now this separation is of course had been going on for sometime; we know that there is a centralization of resources at the decision making which is going on for a very long time; the GST is in fact an addition to that because of the power of the state governments over direct taxes virtually disappear because everything is outside the hands of the state government now. So this centralization of power in decision making, and of resources, is in effect crippling the state universities and now that crippling effect is further reinforced by a lot of institutional changes that are taking place. After all, we know that as per the Indian Constitution, the capacity of the centre to raise resources is much greater than the responsibilities given to the center; the capacity of the states to make resources much less than the responsibilities given to the states. So periodically, every five years, we have a finance commission and the finance commission decides on the allocation of resources, the evolution of resources from

the centre to the state. Many people would say that, recently, the last finance commission recommended a substantial increase in the evolution of resources, which the central government has accepted; then how can you say that states have been starved of funds and this is an argument of people forwarded including by the union Finance Minister. But what is missed in this argument is that from the centre to the states the evolution of financial resources occurs through a number of channels; one channel is the finance commission, another channel is the plan grant which is used to be given, and a third one is various Ministries discretionally transferred.

If you look at the total grant from the centre to the state, even in the year in which the centre accepted the finance commission recommendations and therefore make a larger proportion of the divisible pool over the finance commission's jurisdiction applies, the total resources made available to the states are falling as a proportion of their population. In other words, the basic kind of discrepancy between the states' responsibilities and the states' finances is something which continues, that is actually getting aggravated notwithstanding what the centre has done over the finance commission recommendations. It follows therefore that the financial stranglehold that exist for a state university is a concern and, in addition, now there are various kinds of administrative efforts to homogenize it in a way where the federal structure of the Constitution is being undermined. Education, which was a part of the states list, was put into the concurrent list sometime ago; even within the concurrent list now the kind of areas over which the centre take decisions is increasing. For instance is the scrapping of the UGC; UGC is a body used to hand over resources to all kinds of universities including the state universities; now it is the case that the UGC is scrapped and the MHRD is given charge. MHRD is just a ministry of the centre. Now, it is put in charge of the evolution of funds to state universities and it itself is a very serious encroachment on the federal principle. These are some of the characteristics which are actually come through the commoditization, therefore commercialization, therefore hegemonization and therefore centralization of higher education that is taking place. But then a question can be legitimately asked, what is so wrong, what is so specifically disturbing, is that the new education system that has been introduced is something which has certain disturbing implications and let me turn to these implications next.

One implication which everybody has talked about at some length is the fact that it excludes people; that one of the things which has happened in the public universities is that there were reservations for people from socially deprived backgrounds. If you have private system, in the private system there is no need to have any reservations and no compulsion to implement them. As a result private institutions

would violate such reservations. As a matter of fact now even public institutions are violating these reservations from being implemented. And of course the fees structure, not quite apart from the reservations are not there, large number of the students get excluded. Well, when this argument is presented, there is the counter argument. When I was a member of the planning commission, I used to raise this issue. The Deputy Chairman of the commission consoled me that there is no scope for worries; even if the fees are high these students could run their education through student loans and can pay back their loans once they get jobs and in that case there is no exclusion on economic grounds. This argument might make some sense in a world in which there is complete, full employment and everybody is assured of a job at the end of their education so that through job you will have enough money and you can pay back the loans from the banks or wherever you have taken such loans. But obviously we live in a world of enormous amount of educated unemployment and as a result many people who take such loans cannot pay them back and as a result many of them would be driven to such a 'safe' position where a lot of peasants in the country commit mass suicides; and this fear of being pushed to the wall because of the inability to pay back loans would prevent many students from actually taking such loans anyway. One of the things we must not forget about the public education system, amidst all its failures, is that it has actually produced in public universities a large numbers of extra ordinarily articulate, intelligent and dynamic students from socially and economically deprived backgrounds. This is something which is really a remarkable feature of central universities where you can take variety of students like Rohit Vemula from HCU or Kanayya Kumar from JNU. Large number of students who have come up from socially and economically deprived backgrounds, through the system of public education, would be completely wiped out, obliterated, through privatization and they still exist because of the fact that until now universities like JNU still have not charged higher fees. Once that happens, then that entire set would no longer be able to enter universities. So exclusion is one very important part of the new system of education that we are introducing.

The second part of it is that when you are looking at a commodity, when you are actually producing a product, which is ideally suited to be in the market, which globalized capital will have a demand. The whole idea is that if you are somebody who is staring up this air, trying to question, trying to worry about things, trying to dig deep into an issue, such a person is not a very marketable commodity; in order to be marketable you must necessarily absolve a capsule called higher education and then produce that capsule whenever you are in an interview situation or whenever someone is asking you a question or so. That may be very good for 'still' development but that is not good for edu-

cation because fundamentally education requires questioning. Unless you question you are not really getting an education, your purpose of education must be to make you questioning, and the purpose of education that turns out commodities is to prevent you from questioning, and if that happens the originality goes, as well as the whole kind of idea of thinking of your own, because the idea of producing people who are both excited by the world of grand ideas and who wants to be a part of it, and who wants to push front years of knowledge, who are sufficiently confused and therefore questioning in order to do so, that kind of production ceases. As a result, this kind of an education system really destroys creativity. At the same time, when you add to it the kind of Hindutva nationalism that has been imparted this Hindutva Nationalism additionally does reap with the concept of rationality in the sense that mythology and history, fact and fiction, science and prejudice are not distinguished between, and therefore what it does is a set of destructional reason which takes place in the University set up. Now a very important implication of this is of course that you cease to be the progenitors of new ideas, you get a capsule produced in Harvard, Columbia, or Princeton, and therefore you become intellectual parasites. And intellectual parasitism is something which basically implies that the real freedom consists above all, or begins above all, with freedom of thought. If you are intellectually parasites on the metropolis in that case ultimately that is something that undermines, subverts, your real freedom to the service of the metropolis. So the cultivation of intellectual parasitism, the cultivation of the destruction of creativity, all these are the central features of exactly the kind of education system we are moving into.

And this is obviously visible, that in universities where the students who are questioning, students who are agitated about the world around them, instead of celebrating that agitation, instead of being happy that we have a young generation of students that is questioning, by suppressing that agitation and suppressing that questioning, we are actually making them into disciplined foot soldiers who actually swallows these capsules and thereby train themselves to become ideal fodder for globalized capital and its various offshoots. In the context of the notion of Hindutva nationalism being imparted, many people would say this is the kind of nationalism Gandhiji was talking about, that he was propagating; but there is in fact a fundamental difference between the two very different concepts of nationalisms – the western concept of nationalism which began with the Westphalian peace treaties in the 17th century, was a concept of nation, nation-state, nationalism – all of which many people knew as a way to sustain the divine rights of the kings which existed earlier, which presented the king as the representative of god. People started questioning the divine right of kings and therefore, in some centres, the new concept of nationalism was a way

of sustaining kingship without the divine rights of kings because now the king was the repository of the nation and nationalism, the representative of the nation.

This kind of nationalism was characterized by three important features. One was that there was always an enemy within; the Jews everywhere in Europe, the Catholics in northern Europe, the Protestants in southern Europe; they were all enemy within. Secondly, nationalism was necessarily having an imperialist counterpart; it always was aggressive, expansionary; not within Europe where they had reached some kind of agreement on the treaties of Westphalia, but all over the third world. As a matter of fact, Cromwell's conquest of Ireland, which was the first conquest of imperialism of a colony, was made shortly a few months after the Westphalian peace treaties. The third feature, which I think is the most important, is the notion of nationalism – when the nation was seen to be above the people, the people were supposed to serve the nation, to work for the nation but the nation itself was above the people. Now, that basically meant that whether the nation was carrying out imperial projects, people will have to serve that, and if you did not then you are anti-national. As opposed to this, the nationalism was the anti-colonial struggle; the nationalism that Gandhiji stood for was a kind of nationalism that first was inclusive of every Indian irrespective of religion; the nation was constituted, constructed, as an inclusive entity; it was not imperialist because you had good relation with all the other neighbouring countries and so on otherwise you cannot fight the British – above all, the idea of the nation was that the nation was consisted of people. That serving the nation meant serving the people. Gandhiji's idea that the tears must be wiped out from the eyes of every Indian was really what the Nation was supposed to be; the whole purpose of the Indian nation was to achieve that the Nation was not separated from the people. What we have now is a revival of the kind of the post-Westphalian-European aggressive, aggrandizing nationalism in which the nation is supposed to be above the people and anybody who would fight for the people and therefore agitate against some economic project being undertaken or against the overall economic strategy being undertaken, or even against the education system that is being altered, would be considered anti-national. So the whole idea of calling people, calling fighters against injustices to the people anti-national follows such a notion of nationalism in which the nation is supposed to stand independent of the people and that what is at good of the nation is high GDP growth rate, substantial increases in wealth, but the point is that the GDP growth rate we achieve at the expense of the people, that is something which you are not supposed to worry about, because the nation is becoming better off while the people are becoming worst off. This idea of nationalism which the Hindutva ideologues have brought in now is really the diametrical op-

posite of Gandhiji's idea of nationalism. And, therefore, universities now, in addition to producing commodities, are supposed to produce commodities of minds filled with that notion of nationalism; there you actually have not the panacea for nation-building but a panacea for national destruction. In fact the third world is full of examples where the nation building project is something which has run the ground full of examples of 'failed nation states' and if our education system is not rectified, we would also be moving in the same direction of the failed nation states.

It is extremely important for us because the higher education commission which is being brought out now is really pushing this tendency further forward to oppose it. All the features of the new education system – centralization, commoditization, homogenization – all of them are now going to be further carried forward by the HECI. Why? Just consider commoditization. The Higher Education Commission was first mooted for instance by the Yashpal committee and why it was mooted, one of the ideas was that large number of private universities are coming up; they actually need some kind of an implementor, they need approval for these universities which necessitates a new commission, the UGC cannot manage it; the higher education commission is set up for getting quick approval for private universities. It is actually carrying forward the task of privatization; the whole range of private universities can then actually come and do on their own and the whole idea is that if you have financial autonomy in that case you can do whatever you like and you can engage in the task of producing commodities as your educational products. Centralization again basically is a kind of intervention which the HECI is going to do which is much greater than what the UGC ever did. The kind of micro intervention in the course structure of government funded universities that the HECI proposed to do is actually far more serious and intense than anything that the UGC had done. The composition of the HECI council is such that academics are really largely out, there will be two professors and all the rest of the 12 member committee are bureaucrats of various styles and regarding the Vice Chancellors, who may have been academics to start with, but now are fine bureaucratic or of official positions and consequently they will also be more or less going ahead with the views of the government. So this is basically a government controlled education system where academics are out and the little voice they had earlier they would no longer have. Also you have commoditization taking place, you have centralization taking place; you have a further body of academics from this whole process of higher education all of which carries on all work the agenda I was talking about; the agenda that underlines the paradigm shift in higher education sector taking place at the moment in our country. So it is very important for us to actually raise our voices against this and to fight for an alternative education

system. Fortunately not all the whole system is destroyed; substantial amount of it remains is most important. I had the chance to go to lots of universities and talk to the student community. Everywhere I find among the students a kind of anger, commitment and passion which I have not seen for decades. In fact, students are becoming deeply concerned about the direction the country is taking in a very big way and that's a very positive sign for the future.

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Standing on the Shoulders of Giants: Robert McCormick Adams and the World's First Cities

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Abstract

This article is an obituary to Robert McCormick Adams, the great archaeologist. His study, The Evolution of Urban Society, was a path breaker on Mesopotamian archaeology. He discussed the historical processes behind the transitions to urban life and class stratification in which technology and "surplus" played significant roles. Adams was a great inspiration for later generation of archeologists researching on Mesopotamia.
Keywords: *Robert McCormick Adams, Mesopotamia, Gordon Childe, surplus, cities.*

Robert McCormick Adams died, in his late 90s, on 27 January 2018. He was the author of *The Evolution of Urban Society* (1966) which is on the reading lists of history courses of several universities, even those that do not have Mesopotamian or Mexican archaeology in their curricula. What is so important about this book? [1]

A specialist on Mesopotamian archaeology, in *The Evolution of Urban Society* Adams discusses the development of its first cities and states (the earliest in the world) in a controlled comparison with urban development in central (highland) Mexico, which had no historical connection with early Iraq. The point was to find structural similarities between the historical processes of two separate societies that had made similar transitions to urban life and class stratification (to form pristine states). In other words the aim was to delineate "independently occurring" "cause-and-effect regularities" (p. 20). It was desired to find those laws of socio-cultural development that were valid cross-culturally. And in this, *Evolution* was a path breaker. There were unique aspects of these two civilizations, as well as recurrent aspects. Quoting Julian Steward, Adams writes (p.37), "anthropology explicitly recognizes that a legitimate and ultimate objective is to see through the differences of cultures to the similarities…." Somewhat paradoxically, however, the validity of Adams' controlled comparison recognized, it is southern Mesopotamia on which this book is considered authoritative, as certain later discoveries cast doubt on some part of the discussion on Mexico. However, the comparative approach stands vindicated.

Amongst the old world river valley civilizations, Mesopotamia is unique not only in the richness of its archaeological and written sources, but also in its exceptional agricultural productivity, with which aspect I shall begin. Because academic work draws on previously formulated ideas and theories (hence the title of my piece), I first refer to what V. Gordon Childe had to say on agricultural prosperity, in 'The Urban Revolution', in *Town Planning Review* (21.1, 1950:3-17), and 'The Bronze Age', in *Past and Present* (12, 1957: 2-15), the latter published posthumously. Adams does not seem to be aware of the second of these papers, but refers (1966:10–12) to the first somewhat dismissively.

For Childe, in general, an upsurge in the carrying capacity of land led to an increase in population density. Food producers harvested more food than was necessary for their own consumption, he said, in the first of these papers (Childe 1950: 6), although in his posthumous piece he corrected himself to say (1957:6), "peasants would have been disinclined to produce regularly more than was needed to support themselves and their dependents; to obtain a surplus regularly some inducement or pressure would be needed." Thus surplus production is not an independent variable. Attributing this to Childe was quite unnecessary. Adams' held (1966: 45) that the production of plenty could not itself "engender the ideologies and institutional contexts required to mobilise that surplus"; and that there could not have been an inherent tendency to maximize grain production. More important is his observation that the costs of grain transportation (for subsequent reallocation) should count, as also the production of milk, meat, fish, dates and other food, in the case of southern Mesopotamia. Ultimately, it was the thousands of cuneiform ration lists, worked on by I. J. Gelb, recording the amounts of grain disbursed to individuals, that speak of the importance of "surplus" (Ibid:50).

It is interesting to trace scholarly views since the 1960s on the part played by high subsistence productivity in the emergence of densely inhabited cities and surplus extracting elites. In *Heartland of Cities* Adams went on to ask how and why Iraq is now desolate whereas it was once the "heartland of the oldest urban, literate civilization in the world". There was a "precocious" early development of social and economic institutions, but centuries later, after say, 1100 AD, there was a "catastrophic decline and outright abandonment". The answer could lie, partly, in diminishing natural fertility –especially the rising salinity of the soil—and also in human action, namely the irrigation of the fields by canals. Irrigation in southern Mesopotamia did not necessitate huge dams and canals but instead local earthworks, which village communities could dig and maintain on their own. So there was no question of a managerial class emerging as the rulers of urban centres.

With markedly seasonal rainfall, the root zone of crop plants could be adversely affected if fields [2] were not left fallow every alternate year,

to recoup under certain useful weeds so that the level of the ground water fell, and also to receive the fertilizing manure of goats and sheep grazing on weeds and stubble. Irrigation by inundation canal however had a potentially destabilizing effect on the ecology (1966: 53-56). Potential conflict between villages of a tribe or confederation of tribes lay in the fact that the upstream users of canals may have required irrigation water at times and in amounts that conflicted with the needs of those whose fields lay downstream (69-70, 130).[3]

As regards agricultural potential, Henry Wright found that in the south with alternate-year follows, 6 ha of land could suffice a family, half the land lying fallow each year, the other half producing 450 kg barley (1969:13-14, 21). Wright also notes, importantly, that in Iraq it is the harvest season that requires the greatest labour on the fields (a hectare requires two man-days of labour) so that it is the harvest that laid the limits on the area sown—a "single laborer can cultivate and harvest up to 6.0 hectares." (Ibid:22). These are impressive figures for productivity.

Even so, as the site surveys reported in Heartland showed, Uruk (Warka), the premier city of Sumer, grew enormously in size perhaps partly due to settlement shifts from the Nippur and Adab region to the north and partly due to the sedentarization of mobile sheep, goat, and cattle herders. Some degree of coercion may also lie behind this population aggregation within the shelter of a city wall. Adams had (1966: 59) referred to "prolonged and bitter intercommunity struggles" to which rural irrigation systems could give rise. Together with the rise in population, the city saw the building of several temples in innovative techniques, some with their own storehouses, and also the flowering of stone carving and seal carving, metallurgy, and writing. The demand for emerging crafts and techniques was "concentrated" in the early city. Writing meant that the meanings of visible signs could be read/understood the same way by all those who received a written message. (The rich cultural life of the earliest cities is a point to which this essay will revert.)

However, some centuries later (in the later Early Dynastic period and subsequently) the built-up area of Uruk city shrank in size. Very much later, under oppressive Sassanian and Abbassid taxation, the cultivated area of central Iraq shrank (1981:186-210). It is said that the Abbasid period being the area of quite another historical specialization, it is not given detailed attention in Heartland. Without wishing to point a finger I would ask whether this reflects the norm in western archaeology: scholars of ancient civilization shrug off the Islamic period as irrelevant.

As remarkable as is Adams' synthesis of the process of development in Iraq (the big picture), is his explication of the methods by which he derived his survey data and constructed his maps.

If sites of the same archaeological period fell into a linear pattern, he inferred that a river course or canal carried water in that period. He used air photographs, on which some water courses were visible as faint discolorations. Surface pottery on surveyed mounds helped decide their period of occupation. Maps from various sources and of varying detail were also used together with KLM air photos and the very beginnings of LANDSAT imagery. The text in *Heartland* (e.g., pp.28-38) conveys detailed cautions of how the mapping could go wrong, and what corrective measures could be used. This is an object lesson in presenting the findings of a survey in an honest manner, without covering up gaps or unknown or hypothetical contents, which is all too common these days as field workers scramble for funds from various agencies not themselves equipped to evaluate archaeological field survey work.

My paper began with the work of Gordon Childe. It is important to appreciate the fact that for Childe the earliest Bronze Age cities experienced the emergence of several specializations in crafts and metallurgical technology. By definition then, city dwellers had diverse professions supplying smelted, cast, or alloyed copper, rotary wheels for transportation of bulk goods, water transportation, and quarrying also. One can realize that such specialization was feasible when there was food grain produced by others to feed craftsmen, transporters, miners, and others. So surplus production and full-time specialization were interlinked in Childe's theory, as was the ability to raise truly monumental buildings. The place for writing was, in Childe's theory, necessary for newly formed administration systems to keep records and issue memoranda, and devise calendars for following time schedules. This in total was truly a profound change in culture, and it was perhaps unfair of Adams to allege that Childe had suggested "a mixed bag of characteristics" with only assumed connections (Adams 1966:10)—in fact there were necessary connections between several of Childe's "ten". Many building, warring, and craft technologies, for instance, depended on copper or bronze tools or weapons. Impersonal communication, record keeping, and the administrative control of the state all depended on writing. Ration lists written in cuneiform indicate that a palace could hand out grain to reed weavers, leather workers, stone cutters, etc. as Adams himself has said (1966: 143). In summary, and most importantly, Childe had concluded that it was only to the [newly formed] city that craftsmen, especially hitherto peripatetic metalsmiths, could belong .[4]

Evolution went beyond the Childe framework in Adams' third chapter, "Kin and Class". It is by now well understood that the emergence of social stratification did not mean that kinship was no longer relevant. Kinship amongst occupation groups and rural communities continued to be important. A ruler's temple building project may arrange for different clans or lineages to report for corvee work, or

large tracts of agricultural land might be sold by several joint holders, united by descent from a few men. Later investigations into kinship institutions have pointed out that it is when a state or government does not have the capacity to organize a certain sphere of activity, that kin groups become relevant.

Did Adams' work sow seeds for the younger generation to tend where he had left off?

In *Ancient Mesopotamia at the Dawn of Civilization* (2008), G. Algaze, though in a somewhat different framework and giving due attention to third-millennium BC evidence for transport, the textile industry, trade overseas and by river, etc., suggested that the characteristics we see in a city during its formative period can be clues about its formative factors—such is the movements of people into newly walled towns, so that Uruk was less than 100 ha in the Early Uruk period, but 250 ha in the Late Uruk, and even larger in the Early Dynastic period. We must thus contend with conflict between agrarian communities, and look for elements that disrupt stability in the rural economy and cause population movements (mentioned by Adams). The importance of trade in textiles, minerals and mineral products, grain, etc. is part of the causation package. Algaze gave emphasis to the mobilization of labour and to innovations in the ways of organizing labour. He finds that population increase goes in tandem with the expansion of managerial institutions, so that scribal activity increases in leaps and bounds. Apropos of the many innovations seen in the new city of Uruk, he says, "Borrowing a page from V. Gordon Childe we may use the term 'labour revolution'" to describe the new ways of commodity production (p.128). "Writing was a key component of the labour revolution" (p.138).

Sensitive archaeologists engaging in the early river valley civilizations have been aware that the subject has, to all intents and purposes, been appropriated by scholars trained in and working with the western tradition. Therefore it has been rewarding to find a paper with one author who is Iraqi. This is 'Traditional Dam Construction in Modern Iraq' by Stephanie Rost and Abdulhamir Hamdani, published in *Iraq* vol LXXIII, 2011, pp. 201-220. This valuable paper gives information on village-level constructions of dams and canals, organized by local tribal leaders, that were not available in the book by R. A. Fernea mentioned above. Hamdani has firsthand experience of canal digging and 'dam' construction by group initiative and local organization. The largest canals were 10 to 12 m wide and ran for about 15 km. Essential for the head dams across these were the trunks of date palms, same brickwork, and earth, topped by two or three terracotta pipes, arrangements that could last for about three years. A host of fascinating other details are given in this paper. One can only hope that more space will

be given to non- Europeans and non-Americans to publish their work on Mesopotamia.

If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants – Isaac Newton 1676.

We are like dwarfs on the shoulders of giants, so that we can see more than they, and things at a greater distance, not by virtue of any sharpness of sight on our part…but because we are carried high and raised up by their giant size. (Bernard of Chartres c 1130)

Notes

1. Actually I would suggest that his *Heartland of Cities: Surveys of Ancient Settlement and Land Use on the Central Floodplain of the Euphrates* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1981) is the greater contribution, as it gives a synthesis of the historical sequence in pre-modern Iraq and utilizes the surveys that Adams himself had made over several seasons of field work. It is however more difficult reading for scholars engaged in research outside western Asia.

2. Especially fields at the tail ends of canals

3. Robert A. Fernea's study of the ethnography of the El Shabana tribe and its mode of irrigation is the basic source archaeologists and anthropologists have used for self-help irrigation work in central Iraq under Ottoman rule. (*Shaykh and Effendi*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1970).

4. In his 1957 paper, thus, Childe asserted that this was a Bronze Age when bronze came into regular use for weaponry and the tools of production.

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Historic Landscapes:
From Habitat to Monument

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Abstract

When the Archaeological Survey of India was instituted in 1861, historic buildings, some deserted and some functioning, were designated as 'monuments'. From 1958 the responsibility for these was shared between the ASI and the Departments of Archaeology in different states. The Indian National Trust for Architectural and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), set up in 1984, listed many more buildings, most of them still in use, which are called 'heritage buildings'. The maintenance and viewing of our historic architecture should engender a sense of ownership, responsibility and affection. This paper argues that, sadly, there is a growing alienation from and indifference to these buildings. The boundaries of most ASI properties are not demarcated. The rules governing 'monuments' are clear, those about 'heritage buildings' have not been worked out. There is no cadre of trained heritage managers to co-ordinate the work of the ASI and conservation architects, and no trained heritage interpreters to help generate affection and respect for the structures from neighbourhood communities and visitors. We need to seriously discuss how this can be done.
Keywords: Heritage, monuments, ASI, architecture, conservation, community.

Modern Urbanisation and Historic Architecture

In the last 20 years, land in India is being converted increasingly into built form. This is most obviously visible in the expansion of urban settlements. The peaceful little town of Thrissur in the 1950s had remained a cherished video in my mind, and I could not recognise the large city it has become in the 21st century. All of us have similar tales to tell. Expanding towns are obliterating fields, forests, hillsides, beaches, and older buildings. In the area of Delhi it has been a stop-go process since the destruction of the Khandava forest to establish the city of Indraprastha till the massacre of trees to build high-rise government flats in south Delhi over the last year. The *process* is not new, the *rate* is.

90% of present-day towns in South Asia are built over older settlements, some sections of which have been modified or erased. The sub-continent has a five millennia-long history of urbanism. Because

baked clay is non-degradable, potsherds have been often the first clue to a buried settlement. More recently, in the past millennium, the use of stone has left for us clues for an architectural history. But potsherds or stone rubble is often cleared away. It takes a trained or sensitive mind to see these as clues to concealed or buried structures. It would be distressing but pointless to speculate on how many urban traces have been destroyed. The nineteenth century is replete with stories of people making their way through dense jungle and chancing upon a temple or caves veiled by trees and creepers. Some sites have returned to rural or barren land, and there are remains of deserted towns in the Rajasthan desert. But most of them have continued to be favoured sites over a long period of time. The history of Indian urban places is based on what has survived.

Once mapped, it is easy to recognise the logic of establishing settlements at cross-roads, at the foot of hills, at points where a river was easy to cross. With the establishment of politically-unified kingdoms, towns were set up to commemorate a ruler or a victory. Large 'cathedral' temples grew into townships. Inland market-towns and ports thrived as links were forged with other regions of the world. Flat landscapes were favourable to a few big cities, undulating land (as in Kerala, Saurashtra and the North East) to numerous smaller towns.

Identifying and Protecting 'Heritage'

Many earlier official record and travelogues have descriptions of individual towns, but a sense of the subcontinent's urban centres came in the nineteenth century. Surveying and classifying was a major project of the British in India, even when 'the British' meant just a commercial company. The all-embracing Survey of India set up in 1767[1] was supplemented by the Archaeological Survey a century later, in 1861[2]. The ASI, starting with a limited agenda of surveying archaeological sites in north India, went on to list not only sites but also historic architecture, aided by the pioneering historicising work of James Fergusson (1876)[3]. Meanwhile the princely states also began to work on their own documentation. The past and the present were being clearly distinguished. Architecture was being historicised and classified.

More than 40 years later, Viceroy Curzon, who was passionately concerned that India's historic architecture should recover its original beauty, took a far-sighted decision. Listing was not enough, protection was needed. The ASI was given a new role as custodian of monuments, which thereby could be 'protected'. This was by the historic Act of 1904[4], which essentially is still in operation, with amendments in 1958 and 2010[5]. Coincidentally, similar fears that industrialisation would erase historic landscapes led to the National Trust being established in England in 1895[6], and the National Park Service in the USA in 1916[7]. But there is a difference – the English and American institutions

became landowners. In the case of the ASI, while 'protection' was extended in a general way to land around monuments, *these were not demarcated*. The reason was that at that time most monuments were in open areas, at a distance from modern settlements. That this was not done at the time each monument was listed as 'protected' was to prove a fatal flaw.

In the wondrous land-mass of India, there are three categories of land which are defined and 'protected' – 26 geological monuments[8], 98 designated national parks (out of 166 authorised)[9], the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ)[10] , and 3686 archaeological sites and architectural monuments protected by the ASI, and an unspecified number held by state departments of archaeology[11] . Monuments have to be at least 100 years old before they can be taken under protection. In another eleven years Rashtrapati Bhavan and the Secretariat buildings in New Delhi will come under ASI protection. (I will not go now into the appropriateness of the word 'Archaeological' when so much is 'architectural'). About 50,000 sites and buildings less than 100 years old have been listed as 'heritage buildings' by INTACH over the last 25 years. Only a few of these have been 'notified' by municipalities (towns in Maharashtra, and Goa, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Delhi). Even for these, the by-laws for conserving them are not very clear.

Visiting and viewing historic architecture – by pilgrims, men of business, state guests, congregations, or for entertainment or relaxation, has been happening for centuries. Visits by large numbers of people only for the purpose of viewing them has happened since the end of the 20th century[12] . Tours are old, tourism is new. And a large part of what tourists pay to see are monuments.

The ambit of the ASI increases daily, the pressure on the structures increases daily. Increases daily is the gap between eloquent speeches about 'Indian culture' and the day-to-day challenge of keeping the exemplars of that culture in good condition.

The Crisis

The ASI's properties, the most permanent part of India's cultural heritage, include some of the greatest works of architecture and design in the world[13] . But, incrementally, our monuments are losing their contexts. This has been happening over a long time – as towns got deserted, they returned to field, and often the fields in turn were converted to neighbourhoods. With these transformations, the historic buildings which survive often look as lost as objects in museums. But unlike objects in museums which are not deteriorating, even if they are not very imaginatively displayed, our historic buildings are suffering – how often have we read the adjective 'neglected' appended to the word 'monument'. There is a strong sense that they are part of the sarkari world, swaddled in layers of regulations which do not re-

cognise or encourage continuous and devoted maintenance[14]. Are they protected or orphaned?

Also, many are appreciated as sacred homes of deities (and others as locales of popular film scenes!), or remembered for the patron. This would be like remembering Pope Julius II in connection with the Vatican ceiling, and forgetting Michelangelo! It is the specialised skills and refined aesthetics of the architect and craftspeople that should be admired[15]. If we forget this, our monuments lose their 4-dimensional quality.

They are today in a state of serious crisis.

The crisis can be understood by looking at three areas - the state of the *discipline* of archaeology, the *agencies* for monument and heritage site management, and the links with local *communities*.

The Discipline

Thousands of students graduate in history every year. To them historic architecture appears either as achievement or as megalomania. But the history of monuments is more than an aspect of political power, symbols of extravagance, or simply ringing in new styles. They had context, located as they were in towns that had different functions - they were not only *rajdhanis*, but *pattanams*, *puras, qasbas* or *thirthas*. They are not random either in their location or design[16] . Even now there is native wisdoms from different regions that are sensitive to climate needs, landscape, vegetation, water-courses, local resources, and aesthetics. The intangible is tied up with the tangible, the natural with the manmade. But the links are being obliterated. What the Europeans did to many habitats of the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas and Australia is happening in India[17]. And there is no body of art historians to intervene. The only debates on monuments deemed to be media-worthy are those of a sectarian nature[18.]

Who becomes an archaeologist or an architectural historian? Have we ever stopped to think that most children, before they are distracted by school curricula, are natural archaeologists and architects? They are nearer the earth's surface, left to themselves, they sift sand and gravel through their hands, they build houses and castles. They are fascinated by the mixture of water and earth, dig channels, plant miniature gardens with pathways. Then they are imprisoned for twelve years in school, where their hands are trained to write, sometimes to draw, but not to design or build.

At 18 they have a chance to use their hands again – to become archaeologists, engineers, architects. The last two are possible, there are many colleges for them.

Archaeology is not. It is an 'adults only' subject in India. By con-

trast, in Britain there are about 40 universities that offer undergraduate courses in archaeology.

At the post-graduate level, in India less than 20 universities (most of them, I am afraid, not highly-rated) teach archaeology and in 10 of them it is in tandem with Ancient Indian History, which means they relate only to part of the holdings of the ASI. A relatively recent course in a few institutions is "Heritage Management", a hotch-potch of courses from different fields[19] To take it further - at the age of 22, if you have completed an MA specialising in ancient or medieval Indian history (not social sciences, pure sciences, or modern history – no matter that the ASI protects many sites of the 'modern' centuries) you may sit for an all-India exam, from which 15 students are selected for a 2-year diploma course in archaeology at the ASI. A student selected for this 2-year diploma in archaeology gets a munificent Rs.1,500 a month, his classmate who opted to do research and qualified for the Junior Research Fellowship from the UGC gets Rs 30,000 a month. The diploma in Archaeology (or a university M Phil) does not ensure that they will get jobs in the ASI. A Chennai newspaper referred to 150 students with M Phil degrees in archaeology who had not been able to get jobs.

Why is it not possible to make Archaeology a five-year professional course, as with Law, Engineering or Architecture? If a minimum of five years' study of history can qualify one for a job teaching history or to do research in history, why cannot a 5-year course be developed as a minimum condition for writing reports on excavations or articles on archaeology? Why is there no link between universities and the ASI? Why cannot some of the best students be encouraged to study archaeology? Why is there no specialisation in conservation or epigraphy?

I would like to cite the parallel of another subject which, like Archaeology, has both a humanities and a practical aspect – Law. Not so long ago Law was an add-on course of 2 years, like Archaeology is today. Contrast that with the very competitive 5-year course it is now. If this is seen as a response to globalisation, can't a cadre of archaeologists be seen as an answer to increasing tourism, also a product of globalisation? A strong course will help the management of monuments. In this, in addition to courses on excavation and epigraphy, there will be others on urban and rural development, on law specially focussed on land-control, and architectural and art history. As for writing skills - if lawyers are taught public speaking, and sent to 'moots', aspiring archaeologists should be taught to analyse excavations and write vigorous reports. Promising students should be encouraged to travel abroad and understand how archaeology is practised in other countries. Senior officers should accept that it is far more important for junior employees to attend seminars than for older ones. Otherwise the dead wood in the

ASI will become a fossil-forest!

An aside on architectural history which is closely connected with archaeology. This is taught to students of architecture, but its place in the curriculum is very small, because the Council of Architecture does not see it as significant[20]. Also, students are not encouraged to stop and stare – to marvel at examples of older architecture, which can inspire them even when they are working with different materials and designs. They cannot visualise or find the language for different landscapes [21]. So architectural history falls into the crevice between the cliffs of history and that of architecture, instead of being a bridge between them.

A course which is given short shrift is tourism. Most people's sense of history is what they remember from middle-school history lessons, TV channels, and what the guides at monuments tell us. Whether it is groups of Cox and Kings tourists, or the busloads from Panicker's Tours, it is the guides who control what people should see, and what they should hear about what they see. What power they have! But no-one bothers to ensure quality[22] - Indian tourist-guides are launched after a minimal one-year 'training' programme, and most of them happily mix fact and fiction. Contrast Egypt where there is a rigorous college course of five years to qualify as guides.

The ASI was one of the finest departments of government in earlier days. Today, it has to deal with many more issues. The diploma in archaeology does not create a cadre which can take on all these - of ensuring the upkeep of monuments and preventing encroachment, being knowledgeable about the historic landscapes in which they were located, and having the confidence to present them with the respect they deserve. At the same time, the number of organisations to monitor and 'protect' them keeps increasing! Our monuments suffer more than any other category of artistic heritage because of overlapping jurisdictions – the Department of Culture, the Ministry of Urban Development, the state governments, committees and commissions, not clear of the others' areas of control or, when they are aware of them, choosing to ignore them[23]. The land, not the monuments, is what is seen as valuable. It is unbelievable that the ASI admitted in 2013 that it did not have figures for the number of centrally-protected monuments (92 were said to have 'gone missing'!) but in 2018 the Minister of Culture confidently gave the figure of 3686, and said they were all well-maintained!

Heritage Management

That old landscapes would be threatened by new structures was understood a century ago. To illustrate this point, let me give the example of the city I know best, Delhi. Seven years after the 1904 Act, Delhi to its own surprise had the honour of the capital of British India thrust on it, and on the site selected there were many monuments as well as ruins and graves. The nationalist movement was at this time

becoming more persistent, and anything could escalate into an agitation. The government, anxious to ensure that the building of the new city should not be stalled, did things thoroughly. The ASI was asked to make a comprehensive list of old structures, and then grade them so that the less significant ones could be sacrificed, after getting permission from the custodians[24]. The efficiency with which this was done meant that there was not a single provocation for popular protest.

What we inherited from Maulvi Zafar Hasan's amazingly comprehensive survey was 174 blue boards indicating protected sites and buildings. But while the blue boards were fine as a starting-point, they are no longer adequate. Apart from the sins of commission specified in them – defacing or mutilating the monuments – there are many equally serious indirect sins, like building close to the monument, blocking the entrance, drawing away subsoil water, or building a towering structure near it. It is strange that a government which was obsessed with measuring land for revenue purposes, did not measure out the territories of the ASI properties. An example from Karnataka, a state richly-endowed with historic architecture - as late as 2012 only 31 of 763 ASI monuments were fenced.

Delhi is a particularly complicated case. Not only is it the capital, but its population has increased from 2 lakhs in 1901 to 20 million today, and it has over 160 centrally-protected monuments. The absence of careful demarcation in Delhi at the time of protection in the 1910s and 1920s can be explained by the dominant preoccupation then – of which grade to assign to monuments. 20 years later, the crisis of Partition further blurred the issue, because many monuments in Delhi were occupied by refugees, and when they were asked to leave, they huddled near the monument, on what was vaguely called ASI land. But the ASI could not make a case in a court without a map and measurements. The 'violations' were not only by the poor. It was even more visible when perpetrated by the rich and powerful (compare the Daniells' painting of the Jantar Mantar with today's view, where the monuments are welled in by tall buildings; the monuments at Hauz Khas are blocked by the congestion of boutiques and eateries in Hauz Khas 'Village'[25]

In June 1992 (6 months before the Babri Masjid demolition) the ASI went into overdrive, and announced regulations to *prohibit* construction 100m beyond the protected (areas of) monuments, and to *regulate* the height of buildings in a wider circle of another 200m. But till today, it has not been able to prepare professionally-executed maps to indicate the controlled areas. The circles of 'protection' drawn by a compass around monuments do not correspond to the geography of the site. Nature is charmingly asymmetric, so the line has to be a flexible one. There is often a frightening mindlessness to implementing the rule – 100 metres around an *underground monument* are kept zealously

clear, 100 metres around a graveyard are carefully measured. In the case of a low-rise Kerala temple, a barren 100m area all round looks depressing. Surely in such a case, height control is all that should be ensured. Has anyone thought to ask why the prohibition, why the control – to enable a good view? To keep a distance between present-day life and the vestiges of the past? To enable the construction of a fence and a locked gate?

An Act in 2010 incorporated the 1992 Regulations into the Act of 1958. It also set up a new body - the National Monuments Authority – charged with the task of preparing 'templates' for bye-laws under the 1992 rules. Its Director has a position equivalent to the Director-General of the ASI, and the division of responsibilities between the two are somewhat blurred. The NMA has got mired in dealing with endless applications from individuals whose properties are adjacent to protected monuments[26]

Town-planners are not taught to appreciate historic landscapes when they design wide roads and innumerable flyovers. They use Google Earth images, where the world is flat. The link between settlements, topography, water-channels and water-bodies, and monuments is not studied or incorporated. Delhi is criss-crossed with the channels of canals going back to the fourteenth century. The Delhi Government publicised its plans to make Delhi 'a Venice of the East' (the first time this term was used for an Indian town was when Viceroy Curzon used it to describe Alappuzha!), but all they did was to remove the shacks of poor families who lived along the canal. The channels were then roofed and made into car-parks[27.]

What is needed is to do what the charismatic sociologist Patrick Geddes[28] would have advised – identify the silhouette of the monument, see it in relation to the surrounding area, and make it a harmonious part of it, not separated by a *cordon sanitaire*. In Delhi, there was a proposal to surround the Jama Masjid with a wide lawn – a design that goes against the spirit of a masjid, which is to be in the midst of a busy town, not to be distanced from it or seen as a picnic spot! Not very far from the Jama Masjid are some older buildings, now enclosed in a large park. Lodi Garden (described by *TIME Magazine* as the most beautiful public space in Asia) veils a long history – from dispersed 15th-century garden pavilions to the village of Khairpur, near a canal linked to the Yamuna. Then, with the village relocated, back to being a garden, a buffer between official New Delhi and privately-built neighbourhoods. It is very different from the 15th-century gardens; it is landscaped in British 'picturesque' style, with a mixture of Japanese. The link between water and land is not evident now. In southwest Delhi, a section of the Ridge, which for centuries protected Delhi from the march of the Rajasthan desert, was hastily 'protected' by the Forest

Department in 1997, by which time most of it had been flattened by quarrying and by building large structures.

In response to a requirement of UNESCO, the ASI has been commissioning conservation architects to prepare management plans for the 37 World Heritage Sites. This highly competitive exercise, hamstrung by the official practice of calling for bids, is followed by a quantum of expenditure which must leave ASI employees goggle-eyed. But there is a real weakness in the practice - *there is no time-line, no monitoring of the follow-up action on the recommendations*. The exercise could be made to generate a continuous and satisfying synergy between academic historians, trained ASI personnel, conservation architects and urban geographers, which alone can revive a sense of the successive historic landscapes and settlement patterns. Conservation architects refer to the need to establish 'authenticity', but soon find it is not all that easy. A village near a 600 year-old monument is assumed to be of the same vintage, though what is much more likely is that the city to which the monument belonged became deserted, and a long time later, a few families settled down to occupy the ruins. To understand the changes in this historic landscape, the ASI should have a permanent research wing. This research activity should continuously connect with the interpretation of the monument to visitors. Why is there no literature available at most sites – not expensive books behind glass, but simple flyers and books for children? Recognition creates respect, even affection, but anonymity encourages vandalism.

Today, research, such as there is, is communicated through seminars and conferences. These do not result in any plan of action or policy change for the monuments. Much more worthwhile would be to send maintenance staff at least once in their lifetimes for a workshop abroad, where they will also be shown best examples of conservation, gardens, visitor centres. One could also give awards – there are prizes for architects, for public gardens, why not for ASI properties and for the junior staff who have worked on them?

There is a frustrating lack of concern with both archaeologists and architectural conservationists of the sense of a need for archives, and process-documentation. The annual reports of the ASI are far from up-to-date. Particularly for the last 70 years or so, it is often difficult to know exactly when a certain intervention occurred; it is as though one is functioning in a bubble where time and place do not matter. Nowhere is there a record of the number of monuments destroyed between the Act of 1958 and that of 2010, of the number of sites where the ASI has lost land to other land-controllers, or of the number of sites which do have clearly defined boundaries. History departments in universities could help with the construction of archives.

There are two levels of historic landscapes – the spacious ones

around World Heritage Sites, where what is now called 'footfalls' is high. And then there are the smaller ones, most of them short of funds and staff. World Heritage Sites are the objects of management plans, but it is the smaller ones that often offer greater scope for recovering forgotten topographies or intangible heritages. These can be integrated into the adjacent areas and create islands of beauty. And is it not possible to give a sense of dignity to the vestiges of the past – do they have to be manned by guards and governed by prohibitions only, and can't they be more welcoming?

Communities

As towns expand, and enclave adjacent villages, the bond of monuments with neighbouring communities gets eroded. This is a danger-point. Another is when neighbouring communities are confronted by ASI officials, guards and by-laws, and seen as potential threats. Surely if the monument needs to be 'protected' by the ASI against the people who live near it, there is something wrong? The story of K.K. Muhammed enlisting the help of the Chambal dacoits to restore Bateshwar Temple, should be the template the officials are looking for[29]

Apart from the local community, there are people who have been inspired by visits, study, or even lectures and films to want to join in caring for historic sites. The classic example is the very close relation Hampi has with the architect-author George Michell and archaeologist John Fritz. This kind of bond can generate a deep sense of satisfaction. At another level, we should look at the example of western countries, where institutions have networks of members or volunteers, with clearly defined roles and privileges. Think of 100 'Friends' for each monument – this gives us some lakhs of people. Isn't that infinitely better than a situation when the ASI has to have lathi-armed chowkidars to enforce the by-laws at monuments? It should also be possible to have 'virtual' historic landscapes created at sites, as well as tours of the site for those who are not strong enough to walk, and to afford views of areas one cannot go into. This is done very effectively in the Skellig Islands in Ireland.

Our monuments were public spaces, places of congregation - palace, fort, place of worship, step-well or tank. Today they are by definition public spaces. But public spaces do not have to be uninhabited. This is to break the link between the monument and the community (A similar flaw is the vast emptiness of the Place de la Bastille in Paris, where it is impossible to imagine the drama of 14 July 1789!). In Wazirabad, in north Delhi, an expensive 'signature bridge' is being constructed across a sorry stream called the Yamuna (not long ago a healthy river), but what of the protected Ferozeshahi bridge and mosque near it? In 2005 the ASI pointed out that the government-sponsored Bridge was within the prohibited 100m zone. This was ignored.

Many visitors would approve of having the 'monument' hived off, and 100 metres around it clear of building and all activity other than tourist movement! This can be because of a cultivated admiration for classical architecture (as distinct from folk), or of a distaste for the monument's environment, human and physical – either because they are degraded or because they have become heavily built-up. Another way in which the middle-class 'appreciates' monuments is to build a restaurant right up against a monument and tall enough to afford a view, no matter that the 100 metre regulation is being flouted. But at the same time the hares and the peacocks, for whom the area was habitat, have been frightened away[30]

The attitudes of communities living nearby varies. Some, like the villagers of Delhi, do not relate to the monuments because they are recent immigrants who have no sense of the area's past; there are others who are proud to talk about them, as the people of Bishnupur in Bengal do, about the terracotta temples; some are bored and impatient with them, like the inhabitants who walk past the painted havelis of Shekhavati every day. There are ways of reviving or generating a bond - why can't monuments be the fulcrums for teaching geography or history or art? Why can't listing of heritage properties or precincts be shared with the community, as was done in a limited way in Rajasthan[31]?

The shopkeepers of Chandni Chowk see opportunity in their street being given heritage status – can't this be made an occasion for creating an interest in history (i.e. to give a shape to the vague agenda of 'raising awareness'?)[32] .

In conclusion –The different age-cohorts in India's steadily swelling urban populations need nourishing public areas - shops, parks, auditoria, restaurants, libraries. Can't some of these be in or part of monument sites? It's saddening to see the crowds at the malls and the loneliness of monuments. The sunrise-to-sunset rules of the ASI was made in a pre-electricity era. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the exception made for occasional dance performances at Konark and Khajuraho, or music at the Qutb, was extended – say, once a week – for activities at monuments; what of calligraphy or art workshops, neighbourhood libraries and book discussions, poetry recitals, lectures ? As Naman Ahuja asked, why can't monuments become part of our communities, part of our habitats, once again?[33]

Notes

1. The Survey of India, set up in 1767, is an engineering agency which surveys and maps territories. Its greatest achievement was the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India begun in 1802 and completed 50 years later.

2. The Archaeological Survey of India was set up by the Viceroy in 1861, some years after it was suggested by Alexander Cunningham, an army

engineer, whose personal interest had led to the excavation of many Buddhist sites.

3. James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* in 2 vols. (1876)

4. The Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, 1904 (Act No. VII of 1904)

5. The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 (No 24 of 1958); the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act 2010

6. The National Trust in England, a non-governmental body, was founded by 3 individuals in 1895, to preserve areas of beautiful landscape and private houses, threatened by the expansion of towns and the spread of industrial areas. It is the largest private landowner in England, and its properties are looked after by 70,000 volunteers. It has 5 million members today.

7. The National Park Service of the USA, founded in 1916, is an official body which manages National Parks (areas of great scenic beauty) and national monuments.

8. The Geological Survey of India was established in 1851 as part of the search for coal belts in British India. In 2016 it published a list of 32 of geo-heritage sites for protection.

9. The National Parks started with one in 1936, to 103 today. The expansion was chiefly from the 1970s, when 'Project Tiger' called for protection of the natural habitat of tigers.

10. In 1991 the Government of India notified Coastal Regulation Zones, prohibiting building along the shore for a specified distance. In 2018 a notification has been drafted which seeks to reduce the width of the prohibited stretch.

11. 'Living' monuments are not under the ASI, though the ASI might lend its expertise to conserving them. The state departments of archaeology can decide to protect a site/monument, usually ones that are smaller or less distinctive than a national one. For the nineteenth century many grandiose buildings which the ASI takes over are often being used as offices or residents.

12. The expansion of railway-lines, and, more recently, the coming of long-distance has made for a quantum increase in the numbers going on vacation or pilgrimage.

13. India bestirred itself a little belatedly about nominating sites for World Heritage status from UNESCO, but now has a tally of 38, with many others lined up to be considered.

14. One notable exception to the official control of monuments is the World Heritage Site of Humayun's Tomb in Delhi, where the ASI, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, and the community work in partnership. This should be seen as a template for other sites.

15. Monuments are presented in terms of *function*, and of *style*. We have to go deeper, and see them in terms of individual *form*. For instance, many

churches, masajid and mandirs have family resemblances. The art historian's skill is to tease out the *specificities* of each, in terms of material, design and iconography. This will restore the spirit of architecture, where all the smiths – the panchalas – worked together, not discretely.

16. *Vastu-shastra* and *Shilpa-shastra* are classified as canonical Sanskrit literature. Actually they are region-specific building and engineering handbooks, that supplement the oral transmission of these skills. Such handbooks, written   from the 3rd CE to the 19th CE, in different Indian languages, are known. There must have been many more. Only a few have been translated into English. Ideally they should be compiled by date and region, to educate today's builders and to build up an art history which makes connections and highlights innovations.

17. The European immigrants in America and Australia not only massacred many local inhabitants but destroyed their sacred sites and ignored their cultures. Only from the mid-twentieth century in north America, and from the 1970s in Australia were markers of their tangible and intangible cultures given some recognition. The written histories of the USA and Australia start with their 'discoveries', thus seeing them only in relation to European migrations. In India we are fortunate in still having with us a large population of communities who live close to nature and possess a wealth of knowledge of botany, ecology, medicine and zoology, as well as crafts where oral and material traditions are bound together. These peoples and their habitats are increasingly threatened by technologically advanced techniques of mining.

18. Monuments by default feed into communitarian anger, and are made sites of easily-generated 'debates' (which for most part have archaeological fact on one side, and unscientific conjecture on the other)

19. Heritage Management is a 'subject' taught in some institutes and universities. So far it has been cobbled together from courses of history, tourism and hotel management.

20. A college of architecture which tried to break the mould of the curriculum prepared by the Council of Architecture was the Tulsi Vidya Bharati School of Habitat Studies in Delhi (1990-2007) by 2 deviations – one, by offering modules on architectural history every year through the five-year course; two, by allowing students from the social sciences to apply for the architecture course. The Council of Architecture took objection and asked it to follow the standard curriculum they had drawn up.

21. A recent conservation proposal had a reference to Daryaganj, in Delhi. This was described as having been a 'leisure mall'! Its history had been obliterated. It was a riverside market in the fourteenth century. 200 years later (in the reign of Shahjahan), rajas built palaces there; still later, a British cantonment was set up.

22. Academic snobbery is partly to blame for this. College teachers think it is below their dignity to conduct courses for aspiring guides.

23. The ASI is part of the Department of Culture, which is sometimes independent, sometimes a partner of the Department of Tourism. In the last 20 years, the Ministry of Urban Development presides over 'heritage' – Her-

itage Conservation Committees, 'Heritage Cities' are under this Ministry, when logically they should be under the same ministry as the ASI.

24. What are popularly called 'The Zafar Hasan volumes' are officially four volumes: J.A.Page, *List of Muhammadan and Hindu Monuments*, *Delhi Zail* (Calcutta, 1916, 1919, 1922)

25. Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters :Dress and Identity in India* (Delhi, 1996). The Hauz Khas monuments were inhabited by farming families, who were asked to move out when the Archaeological Survey extended 'protection' to the monuments in the 1930s. In 1987 the villagers began to rent their premises to shop-owners, and today its lanes are crowded with glitzy high-end shops and eateries. Many other Delhi villages, enclaved in the growing metropolis, have followed this strategy and become prosperous rentiers.

26. Of the 3686 centrally-protected monuments in India, the National Monuments Authority since its establishment in 2010 has prepared by-laws only for six !

27. Delhi's canals (nahar), built in the 13th, 14th and 17th centuries for the fields and orchards around the forts, and for transporting heavy goods, became rainwater drains (nallah) in the 20th century. Just before the Commonwealth Games in 2010, many of them were covered and cemented to become car-parks. The process continues.

28. Patrick Geddes, a scholar who is claimed by various disciplines, moved the word 'ecology' from being a subset of 'biology' to being under 'sociology'. All the 30-odd reports he wrote on Indian towns between 1914 and 1924 – ranging from 2 volumes on Indore to 2 pages on Lucknow - are sensitive and perceptive, and well worth studying afresh.

29. KK Muhammed of the Archaeological Survey of India achieved a remarkable feat of restoring many temples in the Bateshwar Complex in the Chambal Valley of Madhya Pradesh, negotiating a perilous line between the dangers posed by the mining interests and the dacoits, winning the latter over to his side. https://www.thehindu.com/features/metroplus/society/the-temple.../article4397093.ece

30. As in Hauz Khas Village (see note xxv above)

31. Rajasthan has been through many phases of 'heritage-ification'. In a sense it was 'created' as a romantic landscape by the chronicler James Tod in the mid-19th century, after which the various rival kingdoms were brought together to form 'Rajputana'. From the 1970s, after the abolition of the rajas' privy purses, many royal palaces and forts were developed as hotels and tourist destinations. In the last 20 years, 'heritage' has covered the performing arts, textiles, cuisine and 'desert tourism', bringing rural areas into the fold.

32. Chandni Chowk, a wide street running north from the Mughal fort at Delhi (the 'Red Fort') was actually the name of an opening in the street, marked by a pool. It has been a popular street-market for over 350 years, and branches off into lanes again lined with shops. The upper floors, originally dwellings, are getting converted into shops, offices and hotels.

There is much room for making it more attractive, by having the owners, conservationists and designers working together. There are many European examples which can suggest how this can be done.

33. Professor Naman Ahuja, art historian, School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University.

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Textual Crossroads and Transregional Encounters Jewish Networks in Kerala, 900s-1600s

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Abstract

A Hebrew letter sent from Cochin to Alexandria sometime between 1520 and 1560 sought legal advice on intra-communal conflicts between a minority group of impoverished but "pure" Jews, who "out of jealousy and hatred" outcaste the majority of Cochin Jews on grounds of non-Jewish slave origins. Similar allegations are recorded much later in 1687 by a Dutch Jewish trader, Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva, in his "Notisias dos Judeos de Cochim". This second time the allegations are embedded in a legend of a lost Jewish kingdom in Cranganore (Kodungallur). The lost kingdom is mentioned in several Hebrew texts composed in Europe since the 1500s, contrasting it with Calicut. Recorded exclusively by European Jews and missionaries, the legend emerges as a narrative countering Arab-Muslim dominance over the Indian Ocean trade networks and acting upon the realignment of Jewish networks with the growing influence of Christian Europe in maritime South Asia. Centuries-old business partnerships with Arab Muslims and local Māppila merchants are gradually suppressed in Cochin, giving way to new alliances with European—Jewish and Christian—traders. These new alliances are not merely reflected in narrations of an imagined Jewish history in Malabar, they are also shaped by the same narrations. The legends of a glorious Jewish past and unfortunate destruction are woven into interreligious textual networks across regions. By contextualizing these Hebrew texts in maritime Malabar, this paper presents a historical analysis of intra- and inter-communal conflicts and exchanges at the maritime crossroads of early modern Cochin.

Keywords: Cochin, Calicut, Shingly, Jews, Hebrew Cosmopolis, textual networks

Textual Networks and the "Hebrew Cosmopolis"

The notion of a language cosmopolis was first formulated by Sheldon Pollock (1995) in relation to Sanskrit in South Asia. Pollock's notion of the Sanskrit cosmopolis was extended to Arabic (Ricci, 2011:1–23) and to Pāli (Frasch, 2017) in relation to literary production across vast regions in South and Southeast Asia, where Muslim and Buddhist communities sought social and political alliances with their co-religionists overseas. Mahmood Kooria (2016) extends Ronit Ricci's notion of an Arabic cosmopolis based on the circulation of literary texts to the notion of a cosmopolis of legal texts connecting Muslim communities in South and Southeast Asia with West

Asia and the Western Mediterranean. The notion of textual networks and language cosmopolis deserves more attention than I am able to give it here. For the present discussion I suggest that textual networks emerge through various media, not necessarily written, and in different genres, not necessarily literary or narratival. Moreover, the notion of an Arabic or a Sanskrit Cosmopolis is closely related to the notion of vernacularization (Pollock, 1998), a phenomenon that from a linguistic, rather than literary, point of view underlies the emergence of religiolects (Hary and Wein 2013).

Networking strategies relying on the circulation of texts and the emergence of religiolects (or cosmopolitan vernaculars) can be attributed to the Jewish diaspora in Malabar and its connections with Jews in West Asia and, from the early modern period onwards, with Jews in Europe. Admittedly, to speak of a Hebrew cosmopolis in South Asia is somewhat inadequate, though it is reasonable to consider Malabar as the easternmost outpost of a Eurasian Hebrew cosmopolis connected with the Jewish Diaspora in Asia and Europe through the Hebrew script and Jewish texts. While Hebrew literary and textual production over two millennia and across the world is well known and well-studied, the concept of Hebrew textual networks, let alone a "Hebrew cosmopolis" is not acknowledged in Jewish studies, as far as I am aware of. However, applying these analytic categories—language cosmopolis and literary/textual networks—to Malabar Jewry is certainly in place. For the present discussion and for the sake of simplicity, I focus on Hebrew textual networks, as these are not only readily traceable in Jewish history in Malabar but are also telling of historical processes that contextualize Malabar Jews in Indian Ocean history and in the history of global trade.

Roughly speaking, the early modern period witnesses a shift in the Hebrew textual networks, at least as far as the evidence for the premodern period goes. Whereas the Hebrew sources produced in or in relation to Malabar before the sixteenth century are primarily of a documentary—rather than literary—nature, Hebrew and Jewish literature from or on Malabar emerge in growing quantity and volume from the sixteenth century onwards. This Jewish literary production is of two major types, poetry in Hebrew and in Jewish Malayalam, and origin myths dealing with the origins of Jews in Kerala. Curiously enough, the origin myths, or pseudo-historical accounts, emerge first in the Western Mediterranean during the first decades of the sixteenth century, before being documented in Cochin in the late seventeenth century. Contrarily, the earliest Hebrew poems emerge in Cochin towards the end of the sixteenth century, and Jewish Malayalam poetry possibly precedes it by a few decades at least.[2] Thus, Hebrew and Jewish literature dealing with or composed in Malabar during the early sixteenth century constitute textual crossroads between two types of transregional encounters of Malabar Jews with their coreligionists from overseas. The first type of transreg-

ional encounters is that between Malabar Jews and Arabic-speaking Jews and Muslims represented by legal and documentary texts. Contrarily, the second type is that between Malabar Jews and European Jews and Christians represented by pseudo-historical narratives. The emergence of Hebrew poetry is related to both types of transregional encounters, discussed in the conclusion, while Jewish Malayalam literature is, naturally, related to local, regional networking strategies. For demonstrating the shift from the Arabic Jewish textual networks to the European, I focus below on two texts composed in Malabar as anchors, so to speak, in the wider Jewish textual networks demonstrating, in my opinion, the intersecting transregional encounters in sixteenth century Cochin.

The first "anchoring" text is a legal correspondence, *the Cochin Responsum* (Qastro,1783:Responsum 99), composed in Hebrew by an anonymous Jew in Cochin and sent to Alexandria sometime during the first decades of the sixteenth century (Segal,1983: 230–32; cf. Fischel,1967:232).The financial and legal matters it deals with can be traced back to eleventh-century Jewish traders commuting between Aden and the Malabar Coast. The second anchoring text is in Portuguese dated 1687 and bearing the title *Notisias dos Judeos de Cochim* (henceforth *the Notisias*). The *Notisias* was written by a Jewish trader from Amsterdam, Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva, who visited Cochin in November 1686.Though not composed in Hebrew, the origin myth included in it can be traced back to Hebrew literary production in Florence in 1503, as demonstrated below. The Notisias, therefore, signifies the culmination of Judeo-Christian ideologies forged in the Western Mediterranean and in Europe. Contrarily, *the Cochin Responsum* as a legal document signifies a watershed moment in the social history of Malabar Jews in particular, and of Jewish networks in Indian Ocean history in general. Historical records in Hebrew predating *the Cochin Responsum* demonstrate the largely legal and documentary nature of the use of Hebrew in maritime Malabar surveyed in the following section dealing with the history of Hebrew in premodern Malabar.

Hebrew in Premodern Malabar

The Hebrew script, even if not necessarily representing the Hebrew language, is attested in legal documents related to Malabar since the mid-ninth century. These documents, listed here in chronological order, are evidence for centuries-old transregional networks of Jews operating in maritime trade across the Arabian Sea.

849: Kollam (Quilon): Tarisāppaḷḷi Inscription

The Tarisāppaḷḷi inscription is engraved in the *vatteluttu* script on copper plates, documenting a land grant (along with tenants) and regulating trade rights and land revenue benefits. The inscription concludes with signatures in Kufic (Arabic), Pahlavi (early middle Persian) and Hebrew (Judeo-Persian). It contains at least three terms in Early Middle Persian: the name of the main beneficiary, Maruvān Sapīr Iśo, a Nestorian Chris-

tian; the name of the place granted, Tarisāppaḷḷi claimed unanimously by scholars to be the earliest church in India; and the name of a West Asian trade guild, Añcuvannam, known from other inscriptions found along the West Coast of South India.[2] Leaving aside the significance of this inscription to a broad set of historical issues, its significance to the history of Jewish networks in Malabar is in its attestation of contacts between West Asian traders—Persian Jews, Zoroastrians, and Christians, and Arabs (probably with a majority of Muslims)—on the one hand, and Malayali Hindus (possibly also Jains) that constitute land owners, village officials and royal authorities, on the other hand. This inscription contains the earliest evidence for the use of the Hebrew script in the region. Notably, the language attested is not Hebrew, but rather Persian, or as Judaists would have it, a religiolect called Judeo-Persian (Borjian, 2016:239–61). The following centuries see a rise in using the Hebrew script in and about Malabar. However, the religiolect mostly used later on is Judeo-Arabic, namely, Arabic written in the Hebrew script. The Tarisāppaḷḷi inscription is the only instance, to the best of my knowledge, of Judeo-Persian documented in Malabar.

1100s-1200s: Aden, Mangalore, Jurfattan (Kannur)

Letters in Judeo-Arabic dealing with Indian Ocean trade mention several places along the Malabar Coast from Surat in the Bay of Cambay to Kollam near the southernmost tip of the subcontinent (Goitein and Friedman 2008). The letters include Indian names and terms, and quite a few Dravidian words, mainly names of products, people, coins and measurement terms (Lambourn, 2014; Gamliel, 2018c). These documents attest to growing contacts between Arabic-speaking Jews and Indian traders and to various types of local people, mainly Malayalam and Tulu speakers, from upper-class officials to lower-class laborers and slaves (Ghosh, 2002; Gamliel, 2018b). As the script is Hebrew and the language is Arabic, these documents are significant for defining and analyzing the nature of the Hebrew textual networks of Jews engaged in Indian Ocean trade. Generally speaking, in this period the texts utilized in the Jewish networking system were dealing with practical and legal issues related to finance, travel and, to a certain extent, legal and interpersonal issues as well.

1132-1149: Abraham Ben Yijū's Documents

Among the Judeo-Arabic Geniza documents, those related to Abraham Ben Yijū are of particular interest to Jewish history in premodern Malabar. Ben Yijū's network in the region was based to a large extent on kinship alliance through his consort Aśu, whose brother, referred to by Ben Yijū as Nāyar, was his business associate (Gamliel, 2018b). Ben Yijū spent close to seventeen years in the region, with his business activities extending from Mangalore in the Tulu-speaking region to Dahfattan, near Mt. Hīli (Ezhimala) (Goitein and Friedman, 2008:57). Several names mentioned in his business correspondences and documents reveal the supra-regional extent of his Indian connections, while his own biography demonstrates the

extent of the transregional networking system he was involved in. Born in Tunisia, Ben Yijū migrated with his family to Egypt, and like many Jewish traders of his time, he based his Jewish and Muslim maritime trade partnerships in Aden, before establishing his Indian business network in Malabar.

Of particular interest to Ben Yijū's transregional networking strategies are the names of three merchants mentioned in passing in a letter addressed to him by his Yemenite Jewish business associate, Madmūn Ben Hasan. The names are Kinābti, Sūs (or, perhaps, Som) Sitti, and Yishaq al-Bānyān; the first name depicts a merchant from Cambay (Khambhāt), the second a Jain or a Hindu of the merchant caste Chetti (possibly a South Indian), and the third is combined of a Semitic name (Isaac) and a Hindu or Jain merchant caste name, later known as Bania (Habib, 1990; Findly, 1997:289). This latter name obviously refers to a person born to a family (or a couple) of mixed Indo-Arab origins.

Documents as rich and informative as the Geniza letters have not emerged so far to account for the Jewish networks in Malabar between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. However, important albeit scarce evidence for the continuity of the use of the Hebrew script in Malabar exists, attesting to an ongoing Jewish networking system in the region.

1269: Chendamangalam Tombstone

This tombstone is the oldest surviving Hebrew inscription on the Malabar Coast. It states as follows:

> Blessed be the Judge of Truth, the Granite of Perfect Deeds. This grave is of Sarah Bat Israel. May God's Spirit guide us!1581 according to the Era of Contracts (*minyān šətarot*), 23rd day of the month of Kislev (20/12/1269).[3]

The name engraved on the tombstone is of a woman, Sarah Bat Israel. She must have been important enough for her Jewish descendants to preserve her tombstone, the oldest Hebrew inscription in Malabar.[4] The importance attached to the commemoration of a matriarch as well as the appellation "daughter (*bat*) of Israel" highlight the likelihood of Sarah Bat Israel being a convert of a matrilineal household, with whom a thirteenth century Jewish merchant aligned in intermarriage to establish or to expand a trade community in Malabar, like Abraham Ben Yijū 137 years earlier. In the context of legal networks, the Chendamangalam tombstone is complementary to the deed of manumission used in the conversion of Aśu, Abraham Ben Yijū's Nāyar consort (Gamliel 2018b), documented some 400 km up north along the coast. Both women are attested in legal documents in Hebrew, and both attest to matriarchs as instrumental in forging transregional alliances with Jewish merchants.

1344: Katavumbhāgam-Cochin Synagogue Inscription

This inscription is urrently attached to the compound wall of the Paradeśi synagogue in Cochin, though it was initially found at the etic of

the Katavumbhāgam-Cochin synagogue (Bar-Giora,1958:223). According to Sassoon (1932:225), it belonged to a synagogue in Kochangady that was presumably destroyed by Tipu Sultan in 1789 (Bar-Giora1958, 223). Bar-Giora, unlike Sassoon, assumes that the inscription must have belonged to the synagogue where it was found, namely, Kat avumbhāgam-Cochin *(ibid.*, 225 and fn. 61), an assumption that makes better sense in my opinion. Except for hearsay repeated by scholars, there is no concrete historical evidence for a synagogue by the name Kochangady ever constructed in Cochin, let alone destroyed by Tipu Sultan.[5] In any case, the inscription clearly attests the use of Hebrew in a legal document and, consequently, is evidence for Hebrew usage among Jews in premodern Malabar. The inscription reads as follows:

We did build a temple for Thee,

A place for Thee to dwell in for eternity[6]
In the year "let the honor of this abode be great" (1344),

The last from the first to creation today,

In the Third of Sabbath, Kislev Fill /11), with God's help, Amen[7]

Notably, the calendar era used in this inscription adheres to the Jewish epoch at the year of creation (Anno Mundi), rather than the "Era of contracts" (Seleucid Era) as in the Chendamangalam inscription. The choice of calendric era implies legal affiliation, as discussed below.

1489: Tekkumbhāgam-Cochin Synagogue Inscription

This inscription is lost, but a transcription of a somewhat corrupt text, is found in Ha-Cohen (1889:77) and in Sassoon (1932: 577). Since a coherent text cannot be reconstructed without consulting the original inscription, I offer here a tentative, rough translation:

The work was completed by Ya'aqov Qasti'el Junior

On the second of the month of Iyar in the year

Indeed You will rebuild the wall [1489 CE] around the Holy of Holies,

And increase Your mercy upon us.

He whose reputation rose up to the Holy of Holies,

[…?] that low pitch is followed by high pitch,

And that the innocent shall not be despised by the mighty.

Open the gates, so that the righteous, trustworthy nation will enter! [Isiah : 26, 2]

The black on the white in memory of the destruction [of ancient Jerusalem],

Thus he left a blank spot in all new buildings

In commemoration of the destruction of [our] holy temple.[8]

Besides the poetic and somewhat incoherent content, the date of the inscription and the donor's name are clear. The inscription states that the "work"—the construction of the synagogue or its renovation—was completed by a Castilian Jew named Ya'aqov in April 3 1489.[9] Notably, the Hebrew date is according to the Seleucid Era (Era of Contracts) as in the

Chendamangalam tombstone and contrary to the earlier synagogue inscription of 1344. It is also interesting to note that the Castilian Jew is settled in Cochin at least a few years prior to the final wave of expulsion of Jews from Spain (1492) and Portugal (1497) and, perhaps more importantly, prior to the arrival of the Portuguese to the Malabar Coast (1498). This is remarkable, for the conventional notion reiterated in studies of Kerala Jews is that the Paradeśi (the so-called White) Jewish community in Cochin originated in Sephardic Jews fleeing Spain to India via the Portuguese newly-found maritime route to Malabar, even as (or among) New Christians.

Additionally, Yaʿaqov Qasti'el's descendants are mentioned in various documents and records from Cochin and Parur all through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Upon examination of the records listing the names of Jews in Cochin since the seventeenth century, there is in fact not even a single family in the Paradeśi community that can be traced back to Spain, except for the Qasti'el family. Since they are attested in Kerala prior to the expulsion from Spain, the theory of the Sephardic origin of the "White Jews" is significantly weakened (Daniel and Johnson, 1996: 10; Segal, 1993:21; cf. Tavim, 2010). That the end of the fifteenth century saw the arrival of the Qasti'el's to Cochin is further supported by the list of households of Paradeśi Jews in Cochin in 1686 recorded by Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva in *the Notisias* (see below). Two men by the name Qasti'el are mentioned, with an editor's note that their great-great-great-grandfather migrated from Spain. This means that the lineage goes five generations back. With the average life expectancy in sixteenth-century Cochin estimated for mature males at forty years of age (cf. Griffin, 2008), the first Qasti'el to settle in Malabar migrated sometime during the late fifteenth century. The date on the inscription is, therefore, reasonably plausible.

Besides these few Hebrew verses in inscriptions, premodern Malabar Jewry produced texts that were primarily of a documentary (administrative or legal) nature. One exception, though, is the often-quoted reference to Kerala Jews in the travelogue of Benjamin of Tudela (ca. twelfth century), who is unlikely to have actually been to the region. However, his reference to Jews in Kollam, even if originating in hearsay or some maritime traders' stories, can be corroborated by Geniza documents, as Kollam is a port town visited by Jewish traders of his time. Besides Benjamin of Tudela, there are no literary references directly referring to Malabar in medieval Hebrew literature.[10]

These synagogue inscriptions of the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries performed at least two administrative functions: 1) recording the date of construction, and 2) specifying the transregional affiliation by the choice of calendar era–Anno Mundi versus Seleucid Era. While Jewish communities in the Islamic world retained the Seleucid Era count until the sixteenth century, Anno mundi count was replacing it much earlier in

European Jewish communities. Particularly Yemenite Jews continued using Seleucid Era as late as the twentieth century (Goldberg, 2000:275–6; Tobi, 2002: 299 fn. 9). Interestingly, the earlier inscription represents a shift to Anno Mundi calendar, while the Qasti'el inscription shifts back to the Yemenite Seleucid Era. It is only in the early seventeenth century that the Anno Mundi count is again favoured, in a synagogue inscription in Parur ascribed to a descendant of the Qasti'el family (1616). This stands in contrast to legal affiliation with Egypt and Yemen, already attested as early as the twelfth century (cf. Goitein and Friedman, 2008: 633–4; Gamliel, 2018b: 220–1), and reiterated by *the Cochin Responsum* of the early sixteenth century in addressing the Rabbinate in Alexandria and relating to Yemen as one of the places of Kerala Jewish origins.

Notably, the 1344 inscription contains the earliest attempt at literary style in paraphrasing Biblical verses. This attempt to literalize is developed further, until its culmination in the Parur inscription with the acrostic signed by the poet Eliya Ha-'Adani ("Elijah the Adenite"). Thus, in 1616, a full-fledged Hebrew culture – an amalgamation of Sephardic, Yemenite, and Egyptian administratie, legal, and literary traditions – was engraved in stone. But the documented history of the Yemenite/Egyptian Jewish networks in the Malabar Coast is soon to be forgotten, leaving only traces in legends. The prestige of Yemenite Jewry, probably resulting from medieval Jewish maritime trade in the region, fades out by the late seventeenth century, giving way to a somewhat blurred Sephardic "identity" of "white" Jews constructed against a local, "slave-descendant", "black" Jewish identity (cf. Schorsch, 2008). The earliest document attesting this process is *the Cochin Responsum*.

The Cochin Responsum

The Cochin Responsum is undated, though it can be safely estimated to have been composed sometime between the 1520s and the 1560s.[11] This Hebrew text is of the documentary genres (of the legal type in this case); it marks the turn from Jewish alliances embedded in Arab-Muslim maritime trade networks to business enterprises and transregional partnerships embedded in the emerging Portuguese India and, later on, in the European East Indies companies. The document explicates a social and legal dispute between two parties of Jews in Cochin, a minority of self-proclaimed Jews of pedigree (məyuhasim) as opposed to a majority of Jews, labelled as descendants of slaves. The fact that it was sent to Alexandria shows that, at the time, Egyptian Jewry was still considered as a legal authority, which, alongside Yemenite Jewry, had been the traditional authoritative legal affiliation of Malabar Jews.

Though the author of *the Cochin Responsum* is anonymous, it is plausible that he was an Arabic speaker. This can be deduced from his reference to Persia by its Arabic name, al-ʿAgām (ʾl ʿg'm). Considering the affiliation of the author of the document with Egyptian Jewry and with Ar-

abic language, it is sensible to locate this document at the heart of the centuries-old Arab-Jewish networks in Malabar. For the purpose of the present discussion, a translation of an excerpt of the text is offered as follows:

A query from India from the Island Cochi (*qwgy*), where there are some nine-hundred householders; one hundred Jews of pedigree (mǝyuhasim) and roots and the rest are sons of slaves and slave-girls, wealthy, observant and givers of charity. Those of pedigree do not marry them calling them slaves, and they endlessly quarrel over the issue. Those wealthy ones called slaves are mixed; some of them came there as merchants from Turkey (*twgrmh*), from the Land of Aden and Yemen, and from Persia (al- ʿAgām) and they bought slave-girls and had sons and daughters born to them [...].[12] And all those partly idol worshippers intermarried, preserved the religion of Israel [Judaism] and became a large community, *scholars of Torah, wealthy and related to the royalty and the government. They are the main negotiators for the merchants.* The Jews of pedigree are, on the contrary, *few and poor, so they label the others offspring of slaves due to jealousy and hatred,* and there is no one who can inquire whether [the others] are indeed slaves.[13]

The author of *the Cochin Responsum* voices his own dilemma; on the one hand, he acknowledges the doubts regarding the legality of ad-hoc conversions. On the other hand, he doubts the motives of the so-called Jews of pedigree, speculating that they resent the others due to an inferior position in the local social, economic, and political milieu of Cochin at the time. The author further adds that those labelled as slave descendants are the main negotiators for the merchants, suggestive of his own implicit socioeconomic interest, perhaps extending to his target audience in Egypt.

The bone of contention from the "legal" perspective is clear; the Jews of pedigree refuse to marry those whom they label as slave descendants. In other words, they deny the legitimacy of conversions of local women networking with West Asian Jewish traders, either as domestic workers or as free women belonging to local trading communities. Intermarriage with women converts has its antecedences in the cases of Abraham Ben Yijū's consort Aśu, and possibly also Sarah Bat Israel, whose tombstone remains as a silent witness to the thirteenth-century matriarch's social status. For sure, Jewish traders, as was customary all through the long-distance trade history, cohabitated low-class women (Friedman, 1986:292–6; Frenkel, 2011). However, the high social, economic, and political status of their descendants as described in *the Cochin Responsum* cannot be but the result of kinship alliances, at least to some extent, with matrilineal upper-class families.

Hebrew Poetry

Literature is an important tool in networking strategies within localities and across regions, languages, and religions, as demonstrated by Pollock (1995, 1998) Ricci (2010, 2011), and others. For the sake of brevity and clarity, I am obliged to leave out of the present discussion a detailed histor-

ical and literary survey of Malabar Jewish poetic production, and to focus on the implications of indigenous Hebrew poetry on the transregional crossroads between Jewish Malabar, Muslim West Asia, and Christian Europe.

The century and a half following *the Cochin Responsum* sees a growing production of Jewish literature in both Hebrew and Malayalam. In the context of networking strategies, the evolution of Jewish Malayalam literature can be compared to the evolution of Arabic Malayalam literature, though its emergence probably predates the latter.[14] Both Arabic Malayalam and Jewish Malayalam literatures emerge during the period of growing contacts with European traders and missionaries. The vernacularization of the Arabic and Hebrew textual traditions can be attributed to sociopolitical concerns for inclusiveness within the Malayalam-speaking regional identity. In the case of Malabar Jewry, the concern for transregional connectivity is evidenced by the increased production of Hebrew poetry during the sixteenth century following the emergence of Jewish Malayalam literature (and probably reshaping it as well). Hebrew poetry must have been produced in Cochin prior to the sixteenth century as is evident in the poetically stylized verses engraved on the stone inscriptions predating the sixteenth century. Though it is difficult to assess the extent of indigenous Hebrew poetry before the 1600s, I believe it was rather limited in scope at the time. To the best of my knowledge, no Hebrew poems other than those inscribed on the synagogue inscriptions survived from the period preceding the sixteenth century.

Two Hebrew poets are known to have been active in Cochin of the mid-sixteenth century. One is Nāmya Motta, or Nehemya the Elder, and the other is Eliya Ha-ʿAdani, or Elijah the Adenite.[15] The poems of Nāmya Motta have become so popular, that they are still performed during Jewish holidays even in the synagogues and homes of Malayali Jews in Israel. Moreover, Nāmya Motta was elevated to the status of a saint, though it is unclear when exactly. Currently, his tomb is the only surviving remnant of a once extensive Jewish cemetery in Cochin. A stupa-like structure was built over it, including a stylized inscription praising him as a divine mystic who died in 1616 (Sassoon,1932:547).The letters of the inscription are in the relief style, rather than incised in it as in all Kerala synagogue inscriptions. Remarkably, the famous synagogue inscription from Parur dated to the same year, 1616, has the letters incised in the stone. This difference in scribal style suggests that the Nāmya Motta tomb inscription postdates the actual date of burial, perhaps by more than a century. A material examination of sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth-centuries Hebrew inscriptions from Kerala might reveal the historical layers underlying the stylistic features of the grave-shrine and, consequently, shed light on the process that turned a poet's grave into a saint shrine.

Nāmya Motta's contemporary Eliya Ha-ʿAdani too left a rich poetic legacy in the repertoire of Kerala Jews, including the poem consti-

tuting the Parur synagogue inscription of 1616, the year in which Nāmya Motta died. Though Ha-ʿAdani was not elevated to the position of a saint, a collection of his poems is the earliest printed book belonging to the Cochin Jewish tradition. The book was printed in Amsterdam in 1688, and it thus signifies the advent of a new type of Jewish textual networks between Cochin and Amsterdam with printing books being at its core. The importance of the printed-text network can be substantiated by the correspondence between a Yemenite Rabbi Yihya Sālih (1713–1805) and David Rahabi, the leader (*mutaliyār*) of the Paradeśi Jews in Cochin at the time. Rabbi Sālih corresponded for over five years (1779–1784) with Rahabi seeking his assistance in printing his essays in Amsterdam. The essays remained in a manuscript form, apparently because David Rahabi failed to keep his promise to send the manuscript to the publisher in Amsterdam (Ratzabi 1989), to the dismay of Rabbi Sālih. This incident poignantly points at the dramatic effects that the shift in transregional alliances had on the lives of individuals during the time. The Yemenite scholar expected the Cochini trader to help him in connecting with the center of print technology in Amsterdam and with the Jewish community there. The lack of interest on the part of the Cochini trader speaks volumes of the dwindling influence of Yemenite Jewry in the transregional networks between West Asia and Malabar during the seventeenth century.

It thus seems that contrarily to the accepted notion of anti-Jewish hostile Portuguese, Jewish cultural life in Cochin during the Portuguese period seems to have fared well, with new synagogues built or old ones being renovated, and with Hebrew poetry composed, as well as Jewish Malayalam literature. Yemenite Jewry had the most direct influence over the Jews of Kerala during that time, as is evidenced by the creative activity of the two Yemenite poets and by other historical visitors from Yemen to Cochin, such as the merchant-traveler Zacharia al-Dahari, who mentions Sephardic Jews in mid-sixteenth century Cochin (Schorsch, 2008:66). It is likely, though, that the mention of Sephardic Jews is for poetic reasons, as al-Dahari's composition is metrical and rhyming, namely, of the poetic, rather than the documentary, genre.

It is during the Dutch period that evidence for a drastic change in the textual networks emerges, depictive of a new type of alliance based on origin myths and on contacts with European Jewish merchants and Christian missionaries. Though the earliest text of this sort is composed in Portuguese (rather than Hebrew), it is based on an account told by Cochin Jews. Therefore, I turn to it first for tracing the history of Jewish networks in Malabar.

Notisias Dos Judeos de Cochim

In 1686, a Dutch Jewish merchant by the name Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva traveled to Surat on a business trip. His ancestors settled in Amsterdam after the expulsion of Jews from Portugal in 1497, and his family became rich and influential. One of them was deeply involved in the mes-

sianic movement of the mystic Shabbatai Zevi (Kaplan,1995: 242–3), an involvement that is echoed in questions about Shabbatai Zevi that Pereyra de Paiva poses before his Jewish hosts in Cochin (Pereyra de Paiva, 1923 [1687]:9). Pereyra de Paiva traveled to Surat along with two other merchants for trading in gems (Schorsch, 2008:79–80). They proceeded to Cochin on the invitation of the Dutch governor Gelmer Vosburgh and stayed in his house for a few days in late November. They met with Paradeśi Jews in Cochin and paid a visit to the Malabari Jews in Ernakulam, on the other side of the backwaters separating Cochin from the mainland. Pereyra de Paiva wrote an emotional narrative describing the visit and the Jews of Cochin, and reproducing the story he had heard from them about their origin in Kerala. He refers to his Jewish hosts in Cochin as "Our Brethren", whom he lists in detail for their names and ancestry. Based on the list, it is clear that his hosts were the Paradeśi Jews of Cochin. He contrasts them with the Jews of all other communities (nine synagogues), whom he refers to by the term "Malabaree". The stories he recorded in *the Notisias* are telling in regard of the early modern alliances between Jews in Malabar and European Jews and Christian traders and missionaries.

The Notisias is often quoted for being the earliest reference to (and "translation" of) the famous Jewish Copper Plates and for containing a detailed list Jewish householders of the Paradeśi community on the one hand, and a more general list of all other communities of the Malabar Jews on the other hand. Pereyra de Paiva lists twenty-three Paradeśi households; he names the male family heads, the country of origin of their ancestors (often grandfather or great grandfather), and marks twelve families as *branco*, literally, "white", leaving the remaining households unmarked. Strangely enough, the list of *brancos* is a mixture of families from West Asia, a family from Germany, and a family originating in Kerala. Those unmarked as *branco* are of a similar multi-ethnic mixture, including members of the Qasti'el family. Clearly, the label *branco* has nothing to do with ethnicity, and, consequently, it is unrelated to color or to Jewish pedigree (cf. Segal, 1983:237; Schorsch, 2008: 71–2). To complicate the matter even further, the communities of Malabaree Jews too are marked; there are *acomodada*, "wealthy", communities as opposed to *pobre*, "poor", and three communities unmarked as either (Pereyra de Paiva, 1923 [1687]:7). Apparently, the Portuguese Jewish merchants hosted by the Dutch governor were more interested in the socioeconomic status of the local Jews than in their ethnicity or "color", an issue that was of Portuguese concerns (Tavim, 2010) and that later came to permeate reports on and studies of Kerala Jews to this day.[16] When precisely Jews begin to be self-differentiated on the basis of color in Kerala is unclear. It is however clear that the label "*branco*" does not denote race or ethnicity in *the Notisias*.

The interest of the Dutch Jewish merchants in the socioeconomic conditions of Malabar Jewry is closely intertwined with an eagerness to incor-

porate the history of the community in messianic Judeo-Christian history replete with traditions of the ten lost tribes and forgotten Jewish kingdoms. The story recorded by Pereyra de Paiva addresses such concerns. More importantly, it points at geopolitical alliances and rivalries while labelling the majority of Malabar Jewry as an estranged Other. That "othering" is presented under the same pretext given in *the Cochin Responsum*: Jewish pedigree contrasted with slave origins. Whereas in *the Cochin Responsum* the slave labelling is formulated as a legal query, in *the Notisias* it is presented as a pseudo-historical narrative. Below are narratival excerpts from *the Notisias* demonstrating the pseudo-historical dimension of the slave labelling.[17]

> The origins of these Malabarees arose from the fact that the Jews of Cranganore had great wealth including a number of slaves. One among them who was learned in the law, powerful and respected, taught Judaism to twenty-five of his slaves and gave them liberty and one synagogue. After sometime, the masters of these slaves died and were reduced in numbers; the slaves united with their equals and were increased in the manner seen today. (Fegueirdo, 1968: 34)

This narration strikingly contrasts with *the Cochin Responsum*, where the so-called "slave descendants" are not only numerically superior, but also excel in their financial and political status. Whereas *the Cochin Responsum* attributes the allegations against the "slave descendants" to "jealousy and hatred", *the Notisias* attributes the conflict to decline in offspring, hinting that the root cause for decline is the difficulty to find prestigious "equals" to "unite" with.

The narration then proceeds to tell a fantastic story regarding the origins of those "Jews of Cranganore", beginning with exile and captivity, and culminating in claiming a golden era, when Jews had their own king, Joseph Rabban. On their way to glory and sovereignty, the Jews are patronized by a mighty king, the famous Ceramān Perumāḷ

> In the year 4130 (370 ce) […] there arrived on the Coast of Malabar 70–80,000 souls (Israelites) from Mayorca, whereto their forefathers were carried as captives […] this multitude found favour in the eyes of the king Cheram Perumal (his kingdom extended from Goa to Colombo) […] he gave to Joseph Rabban the city of Cranganore (this city is 4 leagues from Cochin). They settled down with 15,000 souls of royal descent with their king in Cranaganore; famous Rabbis, men with means and others settled down in Madayi, Peryapatnam, [18] and Cherigandaram,[19] and in the last named place, the tomb of Rabbi Samuel [read: Shmu'el] Ha-Levi is seen even today. (Feguierdo, 1968: 38)

As is typical of Jewish origin myths, the history of Cochin Jews as narrated in *the Notisias* begins with exile and captivity. Less typically, though, the narration proceeds to praise a gentile king, who gave the Jewish refugees the city of Cranganore not only to settle in, but also to rule over it. That king is so mighty that he rules from Goa to Colombo, parallel the southeastern

coastlines of the Arabian Sea all dotted with port towns that were, at the time, hubs of international long-distance trade en route Southeast Asia.

The king-patron of the Jews, according to *the Notisias*, is a character well known from Islamic traditions as the Hindu king who converted to Islam and ordered to divide his country into twelve parts and to build a mosque in each region, including Madayi and Kodungallur. This tradition definitely predates *the Notisias*, and it is highly likely to have been appropriated by Cochin Jews, with some adjustments.[20] One such adjustment is important for the present discussion; the Jewish version drops out the motif of conversion in relation to the king. Conversion in the socioeconomic context of Cochin Jews is reserved for "slaves" for reasons partially due to Jewish inheritance laws (Gamliel, 2018b: 210–21). Therefore, in the context of the Cochin Jews' origin myth and against the backdrop of *the Cochin Responsum*, conversion would be unbefitting of a king. Nevertheless, perhaps to complement for distancing royalty from Jewishness, the Cochin Jewish origin myth creates a Jewish king, whose kingdom is destined to be destroyed by internal dissent, resonating the Jewish account of the destruction of Jerusalem traditionally attributed to inter-communal conflicts.

Importantly, besides Cranganore (a.k.a. Kodungallur), other towns are mentioned, with Chendamangalam the only one to have a visible relic for a Jewish past (the 1269 tombstone of Sarah Bat Israel)[21]. According to *the Notisias*, it is in Chendamangalam that a tombstone stands as a witness to the Glorious Jewish past symbolized by the figure of the famous Sephardic poet, Rabbi Shmu'el Ha-Levi, who is allegedly buried there. Ironically, the only historical tombstone found in Chendamangalam is of a woman, most probably a convert woman, as stated above. It is this tombstone that *the Notisias* must be referring to, obviously without the author actually visiting the place and reading the inscription. As for Periyapattanam, to the best of my knowledge, *the Notisias* is the only Jewish text that even mentions it as a dwelling place of Jews. Periyapattanam is better known as a Muslim maritime trade town. It is located on the eastern coast of South India, in a region known to Arab-Muslim traders by the name Ma'abar. While Ma'abar, or Tamilnadu, is known to the Arab Jews of the Geniza period, it was considered a less appealing destination than the port towns of the Malabar Coast. Similarly, also Mallorca, *the Notisias*' professed origin of Cranganore Jews, is unknown to have had any significance in Kerala Jewish history. Mallorca being in the Iberian Peninsula and Periyapattanam on the east coast of India rather signifies an aspiration to ascribe to Cochin Jews historical connections to an international, long-distance, maritime trade network.

Similarly, Kodungallur too seems to signify contemporaneous aspirations of the story tellers rather than suggest any actual historical significance for premodern Malabar Jews. Notably, it is not mentioned even once as a port of destination in the Geniza records published so far

(Goitein and Friedman, 2008, 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2013). If indeed there was a Jewish settlement there in medieval times, it must have been insignificant as it is of no concern for medieval Jewish traders. Even the often-quoted travelogue by Benjamin of Tudela seems to be ignorant of Kudungallur, while mentioning Kollam and the cities around it as the seat of some hundred Jews (Gamliel, 2018a: 61). Moreover, no material or textual evidence exists to substantiate the claims for an important Jewish community ever settled there, besides a faint memory of a Jewish population implicit in a reference to a Jewish pond *jūtakkulam*[22]

Interestingly, a faded memory of a Jewish pond, or *jūtakkulam*, exists also among the people currently residing in Madayi. The so-called Jewish pond is a large, rectangular reservoir carved into the laterite stone ground of the Madayi plateau (mātāyippara), some 12 km southeast of Ezhimala. This "Jewish pond" is quite remarkable, as it seems to be an abandoned quarry, possibly transformed over time to serve as a water tank for cattle. The size and shape of the pond rule out the possibility that it was used as a *miqveh*, a pool constructed to serve for the Jewish purification bath. Moreover, Malabar Jews had no need in an artificial *miqveh*, for the Halakhic regulations permit using an open water source such as the sea or rivers, so abundant in Malabar. Kesavan Veluthat suggested that the term might be derived from *jūtakkulam* "Jewish neighborhood".[23] Unlike Kodungallur, Madayi is situated in a region amply mentioned in the Geniza records (e.g. Jurfatan, Dahfatan). Furthermore, the family name Madayi that is still in use by Kerala Jews in Israel also appears on a notebook of Jewish Malayalam songs dated to 1876, and starting with a series of biblical ballads in the Old Malayalam *pāttə* style, resembling the *Payyannūrpāttu* (Gamliel, 2018a: 56–8; cf. Zacharia and Antony, 1996). Taking all these bits and pieces of evidence into account, it seems plausible that indeed Jews settled in that a rea at some point in history and to some extent. Compared with and weighed against the evidence cited in reference to Kodungallur, the case of Madayi is better supported by textual evidence found in the Geniza, while Kodungallur is better supported by evidence from the Portuguese period onward (cf. Tavim, 2010).

Besides the mixture of facts and fiction in *the Notisias,* the immediate association that comes to mind upon reading the list of localities is of a map of international trade connections beginning with the Iberian Peninsula, covering all the Malabar Coast and beyond reaching as far as the easternmost outpost, Periyapattanam, towards Southeast Asia. This region, we should recall, was taken over by the Dutch from the Portuguese merely two decades prior to the visit reported in *the Notisias*. And here lies the gist of the matter, as becomes evident toward the conclusion of the origin myth: there is a "good" king, favoring the Jews, there are good and "pure" Jewish refugee-migrants since the late biblical period (ca. 70 CE, after the destruction of the second Jewish temple), there is a Jewish king, and, finally,

there is a "bad" king responsible for the decline of the Jewish kingdom.

The "bad" king appears in *the Notisias* after an episode narrating family feuds within the royal house of the "Jewish" king, Joseph Rabban. The story culminates in royal fratricide and in rivalry over the Jewish throne, which is followed by the ultimate destruction of the town sacked by the "bad" king, the Zamorin (Fuguierdo,1968:38–9):

> Since this event [the murder of the last Jewish king], the throne became a bone of contention between two parties until both asked for help from the Zamorin, the King of Calicut. At this time, the Malabaree Jews became bold and demanded marital union with the daughters and granddaughters of their masters. The masters resented the impudence of their slaves and rejected their demand. This enraged the slaves and they also appealed to the Zamorin advising him to pretend to support one party against the other or cheat both. They also promised to show the weakest parts of the place. The Zamorin attacked the town on a Sabbath midnight when the innocent people were all asleep. The Zamorin sacked the town and caused great destruction. (ibid, 39)

This story can be corroborated by a reference in the late-sixteenth century Arabic treatise Tuḥfat al-Mujāhidīn (1583) by Zainuddīn Makhdūm (Nainar 2006), relating violent riots in Kodungallur's market town between Jews and Muslims in 1524. Moreover, the Zamorin and his Muslim allies were targeting the local ruler and his Christian allies who were collaborating with the Portuguese in their attempts to monopolize the pepper trade (Malekandathil, 2001: 242–43). It is unlikely though that the Zamorin had any involvement with Jews, whereas it is likely that Cochin Jews were involved in trade with the Portuguese at the time (Ibid.). Clearly, the conflation of historical facts and fanciful story-telling is at play in *the Notisias*; rather than attempting to prove or refute the narrative, the challenge is to evaluate the underlying agenda of the story-tellers and their audience, a Portuguese Jewish merchant networking with the Dutch governor.

The mention of the "bad" Zamorin as opposed to a "good" patron king suggests that the perspective of the story-tellers is historically aligned with that of the Portuguese. The motif of a lost Jewish kingdom against this backdrop shows that the story is rooted in Hebrew textual networks that began to circulate elsewhere, away from Malabar. A similar story of a "bad" Zamorin contrasted with a "good" gentile king and a long forgotten Jewish kingdom emerges some 170 years earlier in the town of Florence, Italy. Remarkably, in *the Notisias*, this Jewish kingdom is Cranganore, whereas in the Hebrew texts produced in Italy, the kingdom is called Shingly. This name becomes associated with Cranganore and embraced by Paradeśi Jews only later, sometime after *the Notisias* and before it appears in print in mid-eighteenth century Amsterdam (Qasti'el,1756:1). To understand the role of the Zamorin in the Notisias, a close reading of the earliest mentions of Shingly is in place.

The Messianic Yohanan Alemano, Florence 1498-1503

The story of Shingly, a Jewish kingdom in Malabar, is first attested in notebooks written between 1498 and 1503 by an Italian Jewish scholar, Yohanan Alemano (Lelli, 2011). Alemano lived in an age saturated with messianic aspirations among both Jews and Christians. Like many Jewish and Christian intellectuals of his time, he was engaged in anticipating the arrival of the Messiah. Jews and Christians in Europe at the time shared common tropes regarding the Messianic era, among them the myths of the ten lost tribes, and of isolated and hidden Jewish or Christian kingdoms beyond the frontiers of the familiar world, somewhere in Ethiopia or India. Fabrizio Lelli (2011: 192–5) ties these tropes to the Age of Discoveries and to the growing knowledge of the world geography. He views Alemano's messianic fervor as directly related to commercial interests bearing on his own social position under the patronage of Jewish businessmen in Florence and serving as a tutor for their children.

According to Lelli, Alemano's knowledge of Jews in distant lands as well as of the geographical discoveries of those lands relied on a mixture of traditional accounts (such as Benjamin of Tudela's travelogue) and contemporaneous oral or written accounts provided by his Italian contacts mainly from Palestine (*ibid*.,197). What is striking about Alemano's accounts of Malabar is the recurring motif of a "good" king in favor of the Jews as opposed to the "bad" king perceived as hostile. This motif seems to have been transposed to the story told in *the Notisias*, hence my assumption that *the Notisias* records a tradition that, rather than originating in Cochin it was transmitted to it via traders until finally adapted by the Jews hosting Pereyra de Paiva. Arguably, the origins of the pseudo-historical accounts of Cochin Jews, as well as their adaptation and circulation, constitute networking strategies of Jews and Christians interested in Indian Ocean maritime trade, which by the early 1600s was dominated by Arab Muslims.

Alemano's account of Jews in Malabar attests the shift from Arab Jewish-Muslim trade networks to European Jewish-Christian alliances. This becomes apparent as one reads the two accounts, of which abstracts are given below. The first is presented as an eyewitness account, and the second is presented as a first-hand account by the Jews of Shingly, portrayed as descendants of the Biblical Israelite exiled by the Assyrian king (2 Kings 17:6), at long last discovered at the easternmost frontier of the newly-paved Portuguese trade routes. The narration, starting with the Portuguese discovery of the Indian Ocean maritime routes, is titled as "good news from a distant land that the seed of Israel has not perished". What follows is a brief itinerary from Africa to the Persian Gulf, toward the Indian Ocean (*yam hodu*). The translation below is an excerpt of the text that follows (omitted phrases are marked by three dots in square brackets):

When they [the Portuguese] travelled across the Indian Ocean, they

found places full of Ishmaelites (Muslims). One is a big city called Calicut (*Qlygwty'*) and its ruler is very great. Another nearby kingdom is called Cochin (*Qwgyn*). Near Cochin there's a country extending 15-days walk. It is all populated by Jews. The king is called Joseph and his capital is called Shingly. […] They are black and white like the Indians […] and they are free of all tax. They are of the tribes of Judea and Benjamin […]. All the pepper comes from that country. The Jews gather and sell it mostly in Cochin and especially to four mighty Ishmaelite merchants, who are settled there and who pay taxes to the king so that no man could buy from the Jews except for them in Cochin. And they sell it to the Portuguese.

In this excerpt, the Indian Ocean routes are depicted as a discovery of the Portuguese, and yet, they abound in Muslim (Ishmaelite) populations. One of those Muslim places is Calicut, ruled by a mighty king whose name or religious affiliation remains unmentioned. Note the uncommon spelling of the name Calicut with a /g/ instead of /q/ or /k/. This spelling reflects the Yemenite pronunciation of /q/ (cf. Morag,1963:18–19).[24] The neighboring kingdom is Cochin, whose name is spelled as in *the Cochin Responsum* discussed above, except for an additional /n/, probably reflecting the Portuguese pronunciation of the name with a nasal sound added to the final vowel. The narration proceeds to describe the Jewish kingdom, Shingly, populated by Jews (tribes of Judea and Benjamin) and ruled by a king, whose name, Joseph, strengthens the Messianic aspirations of Alemano.[25]

This narration is the earliest to categorize Jews into groups of color, black and white, though the narrator echoes an earlier account by Benjamin of Tudela in stating that the Jews are like the Indians, suggesting that the Indians too are differentiated by color. The account ends with the most important piece of news: The Jews of Shingly are pepper merchants, but no one can buy it directly from them; there are four Muslim traders, who buy all the pepper from the Jews and pay taxes to the king of Cochin. This information, above all, reflects the Portuguese frustration in monopolizing the pepper trade in Malabar (Frenz, 2003:68–70; cf. Malekandathil, 2001:241–3; Tavim, 2010:9–10). The Portuguese geopolitical interest becomes even more apparent in the section immediately following:

All this was told by the above-mentioned Portuguese [Jew], Hayim Franco, who talked with two rabbis who boarded the ship […] with a venerable Jew, one of the servants of King Joseph, a messenger sent to the four Ishmaelite pepper merchants, to deposit 10,000 ducats with the shipmaster for ensuring that this Hayim will return to the ship after meeting King Joseph. But Hayim refused, for he feared for his life, and he did not talk to them being afraid of the ship master.

Arthur Lesley (2002) presents this text as a first-hand witness account of the Jews of the kingdom of Shingly, and as external evidence supporting the various legends recorded (and even prompted) solely by European Jews and Christian missionaries from the late seventeenth cen-

tury onwards (Gamliel, 2018a).This is a somewhat naïve assumption; Alemano's text is anything but a first-hand account. The account must have been transmitted via a chain of transmissions by travelers along the routes extending from Portuguese ships to the Eastern Mediterranean until finally reaching Florence, where Alemano was relentlessly searching for signs heralding the Messiah. Whether a Hayim Franco did sail to Malabar aboard a Portuguese ship cannot be verified. However, this account probably relies on historical occurrences involving Portuguese Jews (besides New Christians) in the Portuguese international networking strategies (Tavim, 2009). Moreover, even according to this account, Franco did not come into direct contact with the Jews of Cochin (or Shingly, as it is called in the story). While the preceding account provides various details about the "Shingly" Jews (some of them are obviously fanciful), the "first-hand witness" avoided any contact with them fearing for his life. Why was Hayim Franco afraid of the shipmaster? The narration remains silent on the reason. It is clear, though, that there was no direct interaction between that Hayim Franco and the "Shingly" Jews. Under these circumstances, how can this be a first-hand witness of the kingdom of Shingly? It may very well be an appropriation of a hearsay account, elaborated with imaginative details to fit into the messianic ideology of the author, Yohanan Alemano.

Notwithstanding the shaky and less than reliable evidence that Alemano's account provides, it provides an important geopolitical perspective; the "Shingly" Jews operate in a negotiation zone demarcated by the Muslim merchants of Cochin on the one hand and by the seafaring Portuguese on the other hand. Rather than "proving" that any Jewish kingdom or a self-governed city ever existed in Malabar, let alone in the early modern period, the account reveals the networking strategies adapted by Mediterranean Jews to align with the emerging Portuguese maritime power seeking domination over Indian Ocean trade, and soon to be followed by other European trade companies.

Similarly, a supposedly first-hand account of the Jews of Shingly is found in a record attributed to one Rabbi Moshe Ben Aba Mori, possibly a Yemenite Jew (Mori is a common term used by Yemenite Jews to denote a Torah teacher of children). This time, the account is addressed in the first person, in the voice of the "Shingly Jews" themselves.

Before the destruction of the first temple during the time of king Yerovʿam Ben Nabat, nine tribes had settled in Kush (Ethiopia). We who are settled in the land of Shingly are of the tribe of Judea and Benjamin. After the destruction of the second temple, Shmu'el Ha-Levi, Israelites, and kohens (priests) came like primordial water to the land of Malibar and the name of their city is Shingly.

The Messianic overtones of this excerpt are clear. It is also clear that the account underlines the "Shingly" Jews as part and parcel of the wider Jewish Diaspora, descendants of the tribes of Judea and Benjamin,

even though they migrated "before the destruction of the first temple".

Notably, this last short excerpt also mentions a name that is reiterated 170 years later in *the Notisias*, Shmu'el Ha-Levi, who is supposed to be buried in Chendamangalam. This detail shows above all that the legends of a Jewish Kingdom and of ancient lost Jews circulated around the Mediterranean all through the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, until they finally reached "back home" to the Jews actually settled on the Malabar Coast. The Paradeśi Jews in Cochin simply echoed the legend, eager to provide the rich European Jewish merchant, well networked with the Dutch VOC, precisely what he was yearning to hear. Interestingly, they do not mention Shingly at all. The place they refer to is Cranganore, a place that stands not only at the center of origin myths of diverse communities (possibly since the time of the Cilappatikāram), but also one of the strongholds of Portuguese pepper trade (Frenz, 2003:68–70).

The Judeo-Christian Messianic networks engendered references to Malabar in several other Hebrew texts that deserve more consideration than I am able to give here. Before concluding, one last piece of textual evidence for the geopolitical alliance with the Portuguese is in place. This evidence for the European origins of the Shingly myth is found in the journal (*sippur*) of the messianic and self-appointed diplomat, David Ha-Re'uveni.

The Messianic David Ha-Re'uveni, Lisbon 1525

David Ha-Re'uveni was a dubious character, who appeared in Italy in the early 1520s with a mission to align with the Portuguese against the Muslims in order to conquer Jeddah, a strategic node in the Indian Ocean port-town network. By this, he sought to have Jews and Christians collaborating on influencing the anticipated arrival of the Messiah. Ha-Re'uveni presented himself as the brother of a king called Joseph, ruling over a sovereign Jewish kingdom called Habor equipped with military forces and located three to ten days journey from Jeddah. Ha-Re'uveni presented himself and the Jews living in his imaginary Arabian-Jewish kingdom as descendants of the ten lost tribes, a key term in messianic textual traditions. Moreover, he sought to convince the king of Portugal to align with Habor as well as with the kingdom of Prester John, another key term connoting Judeo-Christian messianic aspirations. Ha-Re'uveni managed to convince the Pope in Rome to recommend him for an interview with King Manuel I, which indeed was granted in 1525 (Benmelech, 2011:35–6). It is during that interview that Ha-Re'uveni mentions Calicut and Shingly, of which he hears from the captain of a Portuguese ship:

> Thereafter they served different kinds of sweets, various matters, and they removed the tablecloth and [cleared] the table. The king stood by the table, and the Christian priests were greeting him, and all the people bowed down [before him]. Then the king entered followed by the queen, and I followed him in with my servants and with an Arab speaker. As for the captain who was captured in India, they brought

him before the king that day. I was standing before the king. The captain was standing before the king. The king asked him: "The land of India and Calicut—are there Jews there?" The captain replied: "There are so many Jews that they cannot be numbered. They are in Shingoli, ten-day walking distance from Calicut. Then he told the king many awesome, important, and great things about the Jews who are in Shinogli. The king further asked, "Have you heard whether the Jews have kings?"And he replied to the king that the Jews have, and are ruled over by, kings. And the servants before me, and the Jews, as well as the Arabic speaker—they heard all these things and they told [i.e. translated for] me.[26]

Ha-Re'uveni was an Arabic speaker (Benmelech, 2011:35), therefore he mentions an Arabic-speaking companion, evidently his interpreter at the Portuguese court. Notably, there were also Jews at the court, who could also speak directly with the Arab-speaking Jew, possibly in Hebrew.

Recall that Ha-Re'uveni was negotiating an imaginary Jewish geopolitical power between the Arab-Muslim world and Christian Europe, which retained loose and, at the same time, continuous contacts with the "South Asian Frontier", to use Stephen Dale's expression in relation to the Muslim world (Dale, 1980). In many respects, the Malabar Coast was the easternmost frontier for Arabic speaking Jews, from Yemen, to Persia, to Turkey, and to Alexandria, as attested in *the Cochin Responsum*. But Ha-Re'uveni first hears of Shingly and the Jewish kingdom in India, from a captain captured in India,[27] which is contrasted here with Calicut, the trade emporium that the Portuguese at the time were striving to take over, either by diplomacy or by force (cf. Subrahmanyam, 2012:99). This is the same Calicut that Alemano's accounts contrast with Cochin and describe as populated by Ishmaelites, hostile to a place that is not only populated by Jews but also governed by them, the mythical Shingly.

As with Alemano, Ha-Re'uveni's journal is written at a time of geopolitical transformations and new models of Judeo-Christian interactions, such as the Hebraist Renaissance in Italy (Lelli,2011), wherefrom Ha-Re'uveni sets forth on his mission. (Moti Benmelech (2011:47—8) explains the mission of Ha-Re'uveni as "historical messianism":

The arena where the messianic drama is to take place according to this conception is in historical and geopolitical reality, and the approach or advancement of redemption will be accomplished by creating a historical and political situation to serve as background for the messianic event, and by shaping it according to the messianic scenario. […] Martin Jacobs recently claimed that historical events such as rivalry between Christian Europe and the Muslim Ottoman Empire, and the struggle over the spice trade in particular, fed Jewish messianic hopes in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and that Ha-Reuveni's story is an expression of a Jewish perspective on this power struggle. I suggest that Ha-Reuveni's activities reflect an attempt to affect and design the historical events, and not merely passively watch and interpret them.

Viewed from the Malabar Coast, I would argue, messianic hopes meant an alliance with the emerging dominance of Christian Europe over maritime trade in the Indian Ocean, and the growing interest of European Jews in the imaginary glorious Jewish kingdom meant much more than a Jewish interpretation of power struggles between super powers; it meant an active involvement in forming religion-based alliances, a new type of network, that the Arab Jew David Ha-Re'uveni was striving to align with, albeit in an eccentric and haphazard manner that finally led to his incarceration and execution.

To conclude, *the Notisias'* account of a lost Jewish kingdom in Kodungallur a.k.a. Cranganore echoes a Judeo-Christian messianic ideology. The fact that its earliest record appears in a late-seventeenth century account of a Portuguese Jewish merchant hosted by the Dutch governor of Cochin speaks volumes. Following *the Notisias,* several accounts in Hebrew and in various European languages were circulating among missionaries and Jewish scholars, with sincere attempts to verify the historical facts supposedly expressed in the story in its various incarnations. It is not my intention here to refute the origin myth as a fanciful story and nothing more, but rather to relocate its historical origins in the early modern Western Mediterranean. Consequently, its emergence as the origin myth of Paradeśi Jews in late-seventeenth century Cochin is evidence for an attempt, clearly a successful one, to align with the Judeo-Christian ideology as a networking strategy in the international trade arena. David Ha-Re'uveni first hears of Shingly at the court of the Portuguese king, with whom he tries to forge an alliance against Muslims, who are perceived in the various versions of the origin myth, whether in Italy or in Cochin, as hostile rivals to Jews and to their patron king in Cochin. It should come as no surprise therefore, that soon after *the Notisias* begins to circulate in Europe the messianic ideology finds its expression among Cochin Jews as well. The next section deals with the Messianic Age and its expression in Cochin.

The Messianic Age in Cochin

In 1692, six years after Pereyra de Paiva visited Cochin, an anonymous poet composed a Jewish Malayalam song referring to the Hebrew year, 5452 (Anno Mundi), spelled in Malayalam words in the first two lines of the song (Gamliel, 2009:437–8). Contrarily to the information provided in *the Notisias*, (Fegueiredo, 1968:38) stating that Cochin Jews have not heard of Shabbatai Zevi, the song contains a typical messianic message in what later becomes a recurring "redemption motif" in Jewish Malayalam literature *(ibid.,* 213–22). It is difficult to tell whether this is the earliest occurrence of the "redemption motif" in Jewish Malayalam literature, but it is clear that around the time of the composition of *the Notisias,* messianism was already introduced in Cochin. The song was probably intended to be performed in a life-cycle event, for the third verse describes a ceremonious drinking of wine by two named individuals, "Give the wine

of the well-preserved fruit to David. When he drinks it, join in Meir son of Abraham".[28] The verb "join in" (*kūtt-*) suggests that the event in question is a Bar Mitzva, for in Jewish Malayalam it is called "joining in the quorum" (*miniyānkūttalə*) (Gamliel, 2013: 143).The third line mentions a "man born on the day the temple was destroyed",[29] namely, the ninth day of month of Ab. With the Hebrew year mentioned in the previous verse, the date would be 22 July 1692, probably referring to the person "joining in [the quorum]", Meir son of Abraham, mentioned in the third verse.

Leaving aside the speculations regarding the circumstances implied by the song, the redemption motif is evident albeit scattered between lines and only loosely resembling what later becomes a constantly repeated verse of redemption in more or less fixed formulaic expressions. Thus, the first line of the second verse is a condensed prayer for redemption, "scatter the unholy nation, and redeem the holy nation",[30] alluding to the anticipated gathering of the scattered Jews, including the "ten lost tribes". The third line of the second verse mentions Gog and Magog, a term closely linked to the notion of apocalypse and, as a consequence, the messianic era: "surrender Gog and Magog in to the hands of King David".[31] The fact that this song is dated to the end of the seventeenth century, and that it mentions names of, most probably, community members present on the occasion of composition, makes it historically significant to the evolution of messianic ideology among Malabar Jewry. Interestingly, a milestone in the formation of textual networks connected to European Jews is reached four years earlier—the printing of Eliya Ha-ʿAdani's collection of Hebrew poems in Amsterdam (1688).[32] The last page of this publication bears an image of a ship sailing towards a bulky cloud, with the sails fully blown as if to push the ship eastwards. The image is possibly a printer's mark (typographorum emblemata), stamped at the end of the book, though it is unclear whether it contains letters as would be expected of a printer's mark. In any case, the image highlights the close affinities between the circulation of Hebrew texts and the aspirations to board the VOC ships sailing eastward.

Similarly, another song, *the Ten Songs of Solomon*, states the year 1761, and contains the redemption motif. The song has ten verses, each of which, except for the last one, refers to a biblical poem or poetic verse and to the biblical character that composed it, from Adam to King Solomon (Gamliel, 2009: 464–67). The tenth verse explicitly anticipates the arrival of the Messiah:

The tenth is the song that the Jewish nation is ordained to sing.

Five thousand and five hundred and twenty one [years] have elapsed.

Bring the Messiah! Gather the people from the scattered directions!

Order and bring the Messiah for hearing the songs![33]

This year too is the fourth year after printing in Amsterdam a collection of Hebrew poems compiled by David Qasti'el (1757).[34] The printed text is the earliest source from Cochin where the name Shingly

is mentioned, possibly reflecting the adaptation to the Hebrew repertoire of Cochin Jews of a poem composed by a Turkish poet called Nissim Ben Sanji (Gamliel, 2018a: 63–4). With this, a process of diffusion of ideas and trends originating in Christian Europe of the early modern period reaches its culmination: Jewish Malayalam messianism and the adaptation of the term Shingly by the community in Cochin.

Conclusion

This paper surveyed documents and texts of a small-scale "Hebrew cosmopolis" embedded in Indian Ocean maritime trade networks since the ninth century and up to the eighteenth century. This rather brief survey, though far from being exhaustive in relation to the sixteenth century onwards, treated sources in Hebrew and Jewish languages affiliated with Jewish history in the Indian Ocean as strategic tools for networking across regions and communities. Whereas in the premodern period networking texts had a legal or documentary character, the early modern period introduced a new model of networking strategy relying on the circulation of messianic texts and Judeo-Christian tropes.

A close reading of selected sources from both periods reveals evolving and changing strategies of networking across regions and, at the same time, locally as well. Thus, the legal and documentary character of Jewish sources since the premodern period begins to change during the early modern period as messianic traditions related to Malabar and its Jews emerge in the Eastern Mediterranean. These messianic aspirations are intertwined with a shifting orientation from Arab Jewish-Muslim trade networks to European Jewish-Christian alliances. By the late seventeenth century, the Judeo-Christian messianic alliances find their full-fledged expression in Cochin, voiced by the Paradeśi informants of Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva. At the same time, the contacts with Jews in the Arab world, especially in Yemen, that were established in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, continue to evolve into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as evidenced by *the Cochin Responsum* and by the literary creativity of Nāmya Motta and Eliya Ha-ʿAdani. But these older legalistic and administrative alliances with Jews of the Islamic world shift and reorient first towards Sephardic Jewry, relying, on the one hand, on actual historical contacts formed *before* the arrival of the Portuguese, while, on the other hand, forging imaginary connections with the Iberian Peninsula by claiming Mallorcan origins and contacts with famous Sephardic poets and scholars.

By the late eighteenth century, the Paradeśi community is well connected with Jews in Western Europe, and its leaders continue to interact with Judeo-Christian messianic networks through the production and circulation of texts such as the apocalyptic text *The Words of Gad the Prophet* (cf. Bar-Ilan, 2007). The textual networks of that later period remain to be examined in future studies. It is, however, reasonable to conclude at this stage that textual networks were connecting Jews

in Malabar with Jews in the West since the ninth century CE, and that an older system of legal and administrative connection embodied in the Hebrew language and script was gradually overlapped, if not completely replaced, by a network based on intra-religious and inter-religious exchange. Whereas the older system was typical of Jewish networks connected with Jews in the Islamic world, the early modern and modern systems were oriented towards European Jews and aligned with Judeo-Christian messianic ideology as well as shared financial and geopolitical interests.

Notes

1. The periodization of Hebrew texts and manuscripts is relatively straightforward and will be justified in the following sections. The periodization of Jewish Malayalam literature is based on linguistic and textual analysis evaluated against the history of Malayalam literature in general (Gamliel, 2016 :505–7).

2. M. G. S. Narayanan (1972) was the first to introduce a text-based study of the inscription. Recently, a new study of the inscription with fresh insights and analysis was published by Raghava Varier and Kesavan Veluthat (2013). For studies on the trade guilds mentioned in the inscription, see Abraham 1988; Subbarayalu 2009. For a study of the inscription in comparison with Geniza documents, see Gamliel 2018c.

3. All translations are mine unless otherwise mentioned. /ברוך דיין/ אמת הצור/ תמים פעלו [.]/ זה הקבר שרה/ בת ישראל/ ר[י]ת בשנת [.]/ אתקפ'א לש'/ כ[ג] יומ[י] כסליו /בי[רח] For a high resolution image, see: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chendamangalam_Synagogue_05.jpg (last accessed on 23/08/2018).

4. Several scholars assume that the tombstone was brought from Kodungallur to Chendamangalam, though none provides any evidence for this assumption (Segal, 1983:229; Katz, 2000: 37).

5. According to Elieen W. Erlanson Macfarlane (1937:7), the Kochangady synagogue was simply "dismantled".

6. This is a slightly revised quote from I Kings, 8:13.

7. בנה בנינו בית זבול לך מכון לשבתך/ עולמים שנת ג'ד'ו'ל' י'ה'י'ה' כ'ב'ו'ד' הבית/ הזה האחרון מן הראשון ליצירה היום/ בשלישי בשבת חמשה לכסלו בה''א

8. This is the copy of the inscription as appears in Ha-Cohen (1889: 77) and in Sassoon (1932: 577):ותשלם המלאכה על יד הצעיר יעקב קשטיאל/ ביום ב לירח אייר בשנת: א'ם ת'שוב ת'בנה גדר/ לדביר: אשר עלה/ בשם בגבול בדביר: והיה בשכר ושה כי אחרי/ דרגא תביר: ולא ימאס תם אל כביר: פתחו שערים/ ויבוא גוי צדיק שומר אמונים שחור על הלבן/ זכר לחרבן עשה לו בהרת בכל בנין חדשות היא להנכרת (!) חרבן בית המקדש

9. Bar-Giora (1958: 228 and fn. 91), apparently erroneously, dates this inscription to 1687, in reference to Sassoon (see previous footnote), who explicitly gives the date 1489 (let alone that the date 1800 Seleucid Era can only be matched with 1489). He is also wrong in stating that Yaʿaqov Qasti'el who is mentioned in the inscription was lived in 1687, for the three Qasti'els that lived in Cochin at the time are known by their names: Elia, David, and Shemtob (the latter moved to Parur). Therefore, it is

highly likely that the mentioned Yaʿaqov Qastiʾel belonged to a much earlier generation.

10. There are general and stereotypical references to India in Medieval Hebrew literature, but nothing that can prove Jewish presence in or direct contacts with Malabar (see Melamed, 2006; cf. Weinstein, 2000).

11. B. J. Segal (1983: 231–2) roughly dates it to the 1520s, while Walter J. Fischel (1967: 232) estimates the 1540s as the probable time of composition. The Cochin Responsum was published in Ohale Yaʿaqov (Qastro, 1783), a collection of responsa addressed to and answered by Rabbi Yaʿaqov Qastro (1525–1610). His reply appears along with the text, stating that the same responsum was already sent to and answered in the past by his predecessor Rabbi David Salomon Ibn Zimra (ca. 1479–1573), who was the chief rabbi of Alexandria between the 1520s and the 1560s. Hence, The Cochin Responsum must have been sent from Cochin sometime between the 1520s and the 1560s.

12. At this point, the author describes various circumstances of ad-hoc conversions and mixed origins, which are left out for the sake of brevity.

13. Qastro 1783, responsum 99; my emphasis.

14. For Jewish Malayalam literature in Malayalam texts and Hebrew translations, see Zacharia and Gamliel, 2005. The reason for evaluating the emergence of Jewish Malayalam literature as predating Arabic Malayalam literature is based on the style and language of a relatively large collection of songs composed in the Old Malayalam *pāttə* style (Gamliel, 2018a: 56–8). A comparative analysis of both Jewish and Arabic Malayalam literature in view of Syriac Malayalam literature is currently underway in collaboration with Istvàn Perczel and Radu Mustaţă. We might derive a better evaluation of the periods of composition once dated compositions of the literatures in the Semitic religiolects are compared to each other and to contemporaneous *manipravālam* and Malayalam compositions.

15. Motta is derived from Malayalam *muttan,* ʿan old man' (മുത്തൻ).Nāmya is the Malayalam pronunciation of the Hebrew name Nehemya.

16. Examples for studies focusing on the black-white Jewish distinction are Mandelbaum, 1975; Segal, 1983; Schorsch, 2008. Contrarily, Kerala Jews define their communal identities based on their synagogue community affiliation, except for the Paradeśi, a term reserved in early modern Kerala to foreign, itinerant merchants, mostly from West Asia, similar to the distinction between Paradeśi and Māppiḷa among Muslims of Malabar (Dale,1980: 23–4).

17. All the excerpts from *the Notisias* are translated by Fegueirdo, 1968.

18. Periyapattanam

19. Chendamangalam

20. The origin myth of Malabar Muslims attributing the advent of Islam to the region under the patronage of Ceramān Perumāl is attested for its popularity in Zainuddin Makhdum's Tuhfat al-Mujāhidīn (Nainar, 2006) and it is believed to have been composed no later than 1583 (Friedman, 1975), close to a century earlier than *the Notisias*. The Tuhfa, as well

as the Muslim origin myth, both claim that Jews and Christians were settled in Malabar before the Muslims. Christians too attribute the advent of Christianity to the region to the same Ceramān Perumāl in their origin myths. The treatment of the intertextual affinities between the three traditions of origin and the variations and versions within each is a matter for a future study.

21. Contrarily, while Jews are known to inhabit Kodungallur and Madayi in the past, no evidence of a Jewish synagogue ever being built in those towns is available.The attributives Tekkumbhāgam and Katavumbhāgam of two synagogues in Cochin and two in Ernakulam are often cited as proof of the historical location of two Kodungallur synagogues before the "exile" from the place (Bar-Giora, 1958: 214; Johnson, 1975: 146–47; Segal, 1993:20). As far as I can see, this might simply be an anachronism based on the origin myth told in *the Notisias*. Other explanations should, and could, be suggested (Daniel and Johnson, 1995: 129; Gamliel, 2018a:68–9).

22. One might argue that the famous Jewish copper plates are evidence that there were Jews living in Kodungallur. However, the copper plates as transcribed and translated by M. G. S. Narayanan (1972) contain no evidence for the beneficiary being a Jew (e.g. by a Hebrew signature as in the Kollam copper plates). Neither does the inscription grant land to the West Asian merchant to settle in. Moreover, the town mentioned in the inscription is Muyirikkōtə (Muziris), which albeit being associated with Kodungallur its identification has not been firmly established so far (Selvakumar, 2006:426–30).

23. In a personal communication, 20/04/2017; compare with *jūtakkambōlam*, "Jewish Bazaar", a term still used by Jewish Malayalam speakers in Israel to denote their old residence quarters in Ernakulam, Parur, and Chendamangalam.

24. The spelling *qlygwty'* might reflect an actual pronunciation Qaligutin. A thorough examination of the various spellings of Calicut (and other place names in Malabar) in Arabic and Hebrew might provide linguistic evidence for the routes of geographical knowledge exchange from the medieval to the early modern.

25. According to Jewish traditions, the messiah is a son of David, whose arrival is to be introduced by a son of Joseph (*see* Lelli, 2011:195 fn. 13).

26. The Hebrew text is in Cahana, 1922: 73–4: עניינים, עניינים מתוקים, מיני מתוקים ואחרי כן נתנו
הרבה, ואח״כ הסירו המפות והשלחן. ועמד המלך על רגליו בשלחן, והגלחים מברכים
אותו, ומשתחוים כל העם. ואח״כ נכנס המלך לפני המלכה אשתו ונכנסתי אני אחריו עם
המשרתים שלי ועם בעל לשון ערב. והשרים הגדולים נכנסו גם כן אחרי לפני המלכה.
ואת הקאפיטאניא שהיה תפוס מאינדיאה הביאו אותו לפני המלך ביום ההוא. ואני עומד
לפני המלך. ועמד הקאפיטאניא בפני המלך. ושאל אותו המלך בפני ואמר לו: ארץ אינדיא
וקאליקוט אם יש יהודים שם?'' והשיב הקאפיטאניא אל המלך: ''יש יהודים רבים אשר לא
יספרו מרוב בשינגולי רחוק מקאליקוט מהלך עשרה ימים''. ודבר למלך דברים נוראים
נכבדים וגדולים מאת היהודים אשר הם בשינגולי. ושאל לו המלך גם כן: ''אם שמעת שיש
ליהודים מלכים?'' והשיב למלך כי יש עליהם ולהם מלכים. והמשרתים אשר היו בפני,
היהודים וגם בעל לשון ערב, שמעו כל אלה הדברים, והם דברו לי הכל.

27. In which language did he speak? Clearly it was not Arabic, as the interpreter translated the conversation for Ha-Re'uveni. Being a captive from India, the captain is labelled as foreign to the Portuguese, so he was probably not a Portuguese either. He might have been an Indian or a Turk, therefore.

28. കാത്തുവെച്ച പഴത്തിന്റെ യായിൻ (wine, Hebrew) /ദാവീദിന്റെ കൈവിൽ കൊടുക്കവെണം//അപ്പൊൾ   അതു കുടിക്കുന്ന നെരത്തു/അബ്രാകിന്റെ മകൻ മെയിര്ന കൂട്ടണം//

29. അഴിഞ്ഞ മീകദാശിന്റെ (temple, Hebrew) നാളിൽ പെറുന്ന പുരുശന പെരയവെണം

30. അശുധമായ ഗൊലത്തിന ചെതറെയും വെണം/ശുദ്ധമായ ഗുലത്തിന മീതുവെണം// (The verb മീഴ്-, and its Jewish Malayalam variant മീത്- is the Malayalam verb used for translating the Hebrew word *ge'ulah*, namely, redemption of Israel.)

31. ഗൊഗുമാകൊഗിന വഴങ്ങെണം/അരശൻ ദാവീദിന്റെ കൈമേലും//

32. The first page reads: "Anthology of ʾ*azharot* (Hebrew sacred poems) according to the custom of the people of the land of India of the holy congregation in Cochin [performed] at the second day of the ʾ *atzeret* festival (the last day of the High Holidays) sent to us by the scholar Rabbi Levi Belilya from whose hand the excellent young man Mosseh Pereyra, may God protect him and keep him alive, took [them] for print. Here, the Holy Congregation of Amsterdam, [they] were printed by the legislator, the excellent gentleman, the scholar and rabbi, the honorable teacher our master rabbi, Aharon Ha-Levi, at his house, Tuesday, first of the month of Adar II, [5]448 Anno Mundi." סדר אזהרות לרבי אליה העדני כמנהג אנשי ארץ
הודו בק״ק קוגין ביום שני חג עצרת אשר שלח אלינו החכם רבי לוי בליליא ועל ידו החזיק
הבחור הנעלה משה פרירה יצ״ו להדפיסם. פה ק״ק אמשטירלדאם נדפסו על ידי המחוקק
הגביר הנעלה החכ״ר אורי כמהר״ר אהרן הלוי זלצ״ה ה בביתו יום ג׳ א׳ דר״ח אדר שני
תמ״ח לפ״ק.

33. പത്താമത പാടുവാൻ കല്പന ആയൊരി ജൂതർ ഗൊലവും ഇതൊന്നും/ കാലമെ കഴിഞ്ഞട്ടു അയ്യായിരത്തുമ്മെ അഞ്ഞൂറിരുപതും ഒന്നും//മാശ്യ വരത്തെണം ഗൊലത്തിന കൂട്ടെണം ചിതറിയ ദിക്കുളിന്നു/കല്പിച്ച മാശ്യന വരത്തെണം പാട്ടുകൾ കെൾപ്പാൻ തന്നെ//

34. The first page reads: "Prayers, praises, and poems for the days of Simhat Torah, weddings, circumcision of male boys, and slaves and converts, and purificatory bath [for slaves and converts], for Purim festival days, for the High Holidays, and the Day of Atonement—all are collected and gathered according to the custom of the people of Shingly, may God protect and redeem them, and the holy congregation in Cochin, may God protect and redeem them, printed in Amsterdam at the home of the brothers: the venerable Rabbi Yosef, the venerable Rabbi Yaʿaqov, and the venerable Rabbi Avraham, may God protect and redeem them, sons of the late venerable Rabbi Shlomo Props, a Cohen, blessed be his memory, sellers and printers of books [1757]." תפלות שבחות ושירים לימי שמחה תורה
וחופת חתנים ולזמן מילת זכרים וסדר מילה וטבילת עבדים וגרים ולשמחת ימי הפורים
תקיעה ושברים ולסליחת עון ביום הכפורים המה יחד מצומדים ומחוברים   ויום תרועה
כפי מנהגי אנשי שינגילי יצ״ו וקהל קדוש בקוגין השם ישמרם ויצילם נדפס באמשטרדם

בבית האחים כהר״ר יוסף, כהר״ר יעקב וכהר״ר אברהם יצ״ו בני המנוח כהר״ר שלמה
פרופס כ״ץ זצ״ל מוכרי ומדפיסי ספרים.

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Reciprocity of Interests in Spice Route: Chinese - Malabar Shared Heritages and Cultural Legacies

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Abstract

Malabar was a strategic point for international trade and commerce, from where spices, timber and other valuable forest products were exported to various port towns of the Roman Empire, Arabia, Africa and China. This article explores Chinese traders' influence in the region before and after Zheng He, who sailed to Malabar seven times and died in Calicut in his seventh voyage. Chinese relations contributed much to Malabar and helped to develop a cultural legacy and shared heritage in many fields, specifically in the wide use of Chinese gadgets in traditional work, including potteries, traditional snake boats, fishing nets etc. I could identify three mosques with Chinese names and a protected Chinese Shrine adjacent to a mosque in Puthiyangadi, Calicut, where ceremonial tributes were observed every year in respect of the dignitary, Sheikh Sheeni (Sheikh from China). The Chinese had a number of settlements on the Malabar coast (Kozhikode Puthiyangadi, Panthalayani Kollam, Vadakara, Ezhimala,etc) and the progenies of early Chinese settlers, during my field study, explained the nostalgic family legacy of old Chinese tradition and tried clarify their similar physical appearances.
Keywords: *Malabar, China, Zheng He, shared heritage, cultural legacy.*

Introduction

A Nation Floating on the Water,

Bringing a Country to the Other,

With Thirty Thousand People,

Three Hundred Ships,

When it Reached Calicut Port.

(Description on Armada of Zheng He)

Malabar ports were premeditated points for Chinese traders as their second home, for being the most famous, as well secure, port-towns of the world. In that era, for the overall development of trading, a peaceful life was very important, and for that reason travellers and traders liked Malabar very much. The testimony of personalities like Marco Polo (1254-1324 CE), Ibn Battuta (1304-1377 CE), and Abd

al-Razzaq (1413-1482) provided a detailed picture on trade, travel and traditions of Malabar. Ibn Battuta, who visited Malabar in the fourteenth century, called this area 'Mulaibar' and undoubtedly depicted the security he enjoyed in Calicut area in the following words: 'I have never seen a safer road than this' (Gibb, 200:44). Ibn Battuta, who reached Calicut for fetching his ship to China, confirmed Calicut as one of the biggest ports of the world, confirming that Malabar was such an important place in that period. He, during his visit, had observed more than hundred ships at Calicut port and among them thirteen were from China. 'Thence we travelled to the city of Qaliqut (Calicut), which is one of the chief ports in Mulaibar (Malabar) and one of the largest harbours in the world. It is visited by men from China, Sumatra, Ceylon, Maldives, Yemen and Fars, and in it gather merchants from all quarters' (Ibid: 234).

Ibn Battuta noted this remarkable strength of the Malabar shoreline where Hindu King Zamorin gave much respect and consideration to local as well as foreign traders and even provided great positions in the country. He mentioned in his travelogue the names of Chiefs of Calicut and Kollam ports, Ibrahim Shaha Bandar and Ala al- Din al Awaji, respectively (Ibid: 89, 100). Then he brought out the story of famous ship owner 'Mithqal', who possessed vast wealth and many ships for trading with China and Yemen. Ibn Battuta, who stayed in Calicut for three months waiting for his ship to China, also commemorated the celebrity welcome he received in Calicut (Ibid: 235). Ibn Battuta's Calicut stories are amazingly linked with his Chinese travel, which was before the expedition of Zheng He (1371-1433). Moroccan traveller had lodged all his fellow travellers in a Chinese ship before the Friday prayer, unfortunately he had lost his crew, including his wife in a massive shipwreck which happened at Calicut port.[1] Most of the documents on Chinese history are yet to be brought to English. Chinese geographers' reports on Malabar are found in the *Tao-i chih-liieh*, the *I-yiichih* and in the *I-yiit'uchih*. Wang Ta-yiian's *Tao-i chih-liieh* provide a better picture of Calicut port exactly as "the most important harbour in the 'Western Ocean'" and as "the meeting point of all foreign merchants".[2] These important writings categorically prove that Chinese traders were much accustomed with Malabar.

Early Trade Relations

Indian Ocean traders widely connected many Afro-Eurasian societies since ancient times. Researches on the geographic knowledge of Indian Ocean examined pre-modern geographic and cartographic advancements in different periods of time and showcased the Indian Ocean connections of Chinese traders and travellers (Harley and Woodward, 1987). Ancient Greeks and Romans were counted as the first to document the geography of the Indian Ocean as an unbroken aquatic

unit.[3] The classical resources of Strabo (c64 BCE- 24 CE) and Pliny (23 – 79 CE) had brought out activities of merchants and maritime performances (Constantine, 1896). Various ports of Malabar in the Indian Ocean rim, from this ancient time, were crossing stations between the East and the West. *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* estimated to be written in 1st century CE by an anonymous author provided more details on the regional port towns of the South Indian shoreline. It was literally meant the Red Sea, but this name was used to denote larger parts of Indian Ocean comprising the Arabian Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Bay of Bengal in the early Roman period. Though Chinese ports were not mentioned in these documents, Chinese silks were a known commodity of the time. The inland place Thina (China) from where the silks floss, yarn, cloths were carried by land via Bactria[4] to Barygaza[5] and through Ganges River back to Limyrike.[6] Only a few merchants directly reached China, and most of the Greek traders depended on Indian ports for Chinese commodities in the early time. In later centuries the travel routes developed and Chinese trade developed directly between the Arab, African and Asian countries (Gungwu, 2003).

There were a number of reasons for the advancement of maritime trade channels and relations, indicating that the traders and travellers had realized the difficulties of other routes from their early experience. It was significant to overcome the mistrust of the bristly tribes and countries in the West Region to the Han Dynasty (202 BCE- 9CE) and also the geographical danger of travelling over the Pamirs[7], known as ''the Roof of the world''. The father of Chinese history, Sima Qian (c145-86BCE)[8] praised Zhang Qian (164-113BCE), an explorer at the time, who had opened up the route to the West Regions.[9]Another reason was that the envoys returned with tributes to the Han Dynasty that strengthened the relationship between the governments of the Han Dynasty and the western world.[10] Chinese traders took the lead to get rid of the overland traffic from East Asia to the West Asia under the Han Dynasty.[11] This is an odd reversal when today the Chinese are again constructing routes through the mountains in order to avoid the pirate-infested seas!

The Indian Ocean developed as an eventful water of maritime traffic under the Tang Dynasty (618- 907CE), and became as popular as 'the Silk Road'. This famous maritime route for trade was as important as the overland Silk Road and was predominantly called the Spice Route. Arabs also depended on Chinese ships to do business in India and China.[12] Merchant Suleiman wrote about the trade between India and China, named the Chain of History (Silsilah al - Tawarih) in 851 A.D. He narrated what he personally experienced as an Arab merchant in the ninth century, after his travel to China and India. The materials on the maritime route in Merchant Suleiman's book provided proof of

the trade between the East and the West. Merchant Suleiman wrote a book after he returned home from China and India where he did business for many years. This book recorded the route sailing east from Oman to China, starting from the Gulf, passing by the Arabian Sea, the Malabar coast, going through the Bay of Bengal, the Malacca Strait, the South China sea, and then arriving in Guangzhou.[13]

Under the Song Dynasty (960-1279CE), China's ocean-going merchant ships popularized the 'Spice Route', which was from Guangzhou, proceeding across the Indian Ocean taking advantage of the monsoon in the Indian Ocean. In this oceanic way, the time could be shortened by more than one third [14.] In his book *Golden Grasslands and Gem Mining*, Abu al-Hasan' Alīibn al-Husaynibn 'Alī al-Mas'ūdī (c. 896–956CE), an Arab historian and geographer who travelled to China also recorded that Chinese merchant ships regularly visited the Gulf, and could directly reach Oman, Bahrain, Basra and other places-and vice versa.[15]

In the Indian Subcontinent, Malabar, Ma'bar (Coromandel)[16] were the ports much connected with Chinese trade during the Sung dynasty between 967-1279CE. The Mao K'un map, in the Shun-fenghsiang-sung, also depicted the Indian Ocean coastal lines as important trading stations.[17] The magnitude of this region was also mentioned in the copy of microfilm preserved in Cambridge.[18] There are references to these ports by *Ling-waitai-ta* and the Chu-fan chi, who provided details on the journey to early ports like Ch'iian-chou over forty days to reach Lambri -Sumatra, where they spent the winter time and then they further travelled another month to the famous port Quilon.[19] Yaqut al Hamawi (1179–1229), an Arab geologist, specifically mentioned the importance of regional port towns in his work. China was evidently very active in sailing on the Indian Ocean. The traces of Chinese vessels were seen at the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea and even on the East African coast.[20]

In 1279 CE Kublai Khan overthrew the Southern Song Dynasty and established the Great Yuan Empire. Mongols paid much attention to the establishment of the post system in various places for the protection of traffic between the East and the West. During more than one thousand years since the Han Dynasty till then, traffic both on the sea and land was always blocked due to the political turbulences. After a long residence of the Arabs and other peoples from the West Regions in China, their intermarriage with Chinese women and bearing their own children, they gradually formed a new populace of China - the Hui people. By the Ming Dynasty, the Hui people became a member of the multi-ethnic Chinese nation.

In the early days of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE), the government laid stress on the contacts with foreign countries. Zheng He

was the admiral, who led amazing maritime expeditions during early Ming Dynasty. During his missions, Zheng He had Ma Huan (c.1380–1460CE)[21], Fei Xin (c.1385 –1436CE)[22] and Gong Zhen [23] with him, who knew Arabic. In this way, he obtained more first-hand materials of the Arabian Peninsula by going to these places personally without language barriers. These data recorded what these travellers saw, heard, experienced and understood during their mission, which would indeed be valuable for posterity.

Zheng He's Voyage to Malabar

Zheng He's expedition fleet started out from China and arrived in Malabar Coast seven times between 1405 to 1433. The first three times, he stopped at port towns of Kollam, Cochin and Calicut and in his fourth voyage, he advanced to Africa after a break in Calicut. Chinese official visits contributed much to Malabar and helped to develop cultural legacy and shared heritage in many fields, especially in the wide use of Chinese gadgets in traditional works, including potteries, traditional snake boats and fishing nets.

In Malabar, traders were given freedom to conduct their business, typically enjoying the pleasure of semi-autonomy from administrative obstruction and public compliance. This tremendous attitude of the Malabar rulers helped much to inculcate a spirit of harmony and co-existence in the trading community of Malabar. Chinese leaders like Zheng He were a symbol of harmony and they also promoted coherence among the communities. It is important that there were no clashes with the rulers or trading communities in the region, though Zheng He came with hundreds of ships and thousands of traders. The attitude of the rulers and of the traders helped much to develop such a conducive atmosphere. The economic and social institutions, which were directly involved in early Malabar trade were interpreted as primarily designed to establish the trustworthiness of business partners and agents and to commit them to cooperation. The role of Chinese traders, who took a better position in the community, was also very important in the development of an amicable relationship between various communities of Malabar.

When Zheng He came to Malabar, the Chiefs of the Ports were Muslims and they could easily communicate in Arabic. The Chinese traders and travellers who settled in the region had also kept their faith, which not only entails certain religious beliefs but also a comprehensive legal system that prescribes social, economic, and political norms for its adherents. The many commercial precepts, as happened in other important trading ports of the world, were included in traditional and transnational commercial law that prompted the characterization of the international ports (Bernstein, 2008:16). The early trading organizations and business centres focused in particular on the roles of the

ship-owners and merchant representatives.

Amazingly trading relations were the key position in all historical changes and developments that happened in the Indian Ocean coast of Malabar. If we take the opinion of Adam Smith, as in other parts of the world the human propensity in Malabar was also the same, namely to barter, and to exchange one thing for another as underlying any form of economic progress that later reached the peak of international trade and commerce (Smith, 1852:6). Trading facilitated the development of the nation and society, moreover it brought religions and cultures along with technological, demographic exchanges. Malabar trading relations with Zheng He also match with the points of P.D. Curtin, who brought out the theme of business beyond economic prosperity, depicting the trading community, thriving costal and interior markets as an idea for the flourishing of the nation and humanity (Curtin, 1984: 12-14)

Nature of Port Towns

Zheng He frequently visited three Malabar port towns, Kollam, Cochin and Calicut, which were the prominent ports of the region. The history of trade in Malabar was notably based on the gradually expanding commerce, which reached its peak with the help of Chinese as well as Arab merchants.[24] Various port towns of Malabar became outstanding in different centuries for excellent working strategies of rulers towards foreign traders (Sidebotham, 2011:191). Muziris, Nelcynda, Naura and Tyndis were the early ports whose references date back from the Greco-Roman period, an era between 332- 395 CE, when Romans had control over the Red Sea coast of Egypt and the Indian Ocean circumference.

Muziris, Nelcynda, Naura and Tyndis were ancient seaport and urban centres in Limyrike (Tamilakam). The name and fame of the early ports were described in the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* and they flourished and prospered with cargo ships (Scoff, 2011:44). Muziris was called Muciri in Tamil and was mentioned in the old Sangam literature (Sastri, 1955:330-5).[25]An enticing description of Muziris is seen in *Akananuru*,[26] (poem number 149.7-11) an anthology of early Tamil poems in Ettuttokai.[27] Researchers profusely quoted this work in their study on the early history of India (Kulke & Rothermund, 1998:119). The Muziris port city was much praised for its beautiful vessels and was most fascinating for westerners. The *Purananuru*[28] also mentioned the name of Muziris as a busy and active port city from where commodities were exported to various countries and precious gold was imported. Peter Francis in his study on Asian maritime trade has also analyzed these ancient works in his book.[29]

Nelcynda is also an ancient port town described by Pliny in his famous classical work The *Natural History* and in *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*. Nelcynda was also described by a number of authors in

different styles, like Melkunda by Ptolemy. Pliny the Elder introduced it as the port Neacyndi in his book *Naturalis Historia*. Another two famous ports were Naura and Tyndis in Limyrike. Tyndis was identified and introduced in the Kingdom of Cerobothra. Periplus also mentioned the distance between these old towns. When we consider the distance of five hundred stadia, Tyndis is modern Kadalundi, near Calicut. The distances of Nelcynda from Muziris by river and sea also specifically narrated in the text as about five hundred stadia and are stated as part of another Kingdom, called Pandian.

As exchanging ports of Chinese commodities, the port cities of this region became very prominent, because traders comfortably approached these important ports to collect Roman commodities, which were accepted through a barter system, the popular method in that era for trading transactions. The large settlement and its prosperity and richness were attained through foreign trade and commerce. Producers brought heaps of black pepper from the hills and middle managers largely stacked this in warehouses near the ports. Raoul McLaughlin, in his book, *Rome and the Distant East: Trade Routes to the Ancient Lands of Arabia*, *India and China*, which is based on a doctoral thesis completed at Queen's University Belfast in 2006, described these features of Indian Ocean port towns (Raoul, 2010: 48-50). Though the Roman trade declined from the 5th century AD, various port towns of the Indian Ocean rim continued to attract the attention of other nationalities, particularly the Chinese and the Arabs.

In the Malabar region the trading stations were changed from time to time for political and commercial reasons. Once it was started in Muziris, then gradually it shifted to other ports and finally they depended on Kozhikode- The big bazaar[30] near to the Calicut beach reverberated with multiple languages of a crowded public consisting of so many races. Nairs, Tamil Chettiars, white & black Jews, Arabs, Persians, Syrians, Christians, Chinese, Italians and many more nationalities were peacefully involved in foreign trade, communicating in different languages and dialects, often interpreted by Arab-speaking Malabaris. This diversity of people can be traced from the Cairo Genizah records, which depicted the various Jewish Merchants, the writings of Ibn Battuta, who narrated the nature and style of Muslim settlers, scholars and merchants and Ma Huan, who also narrated the religion and caste of the traders and officials at Calicut.[31]

Over time, Kozhikode advanced into a major trading centre where the Middle-Eastern and Chinese traders and travellers exchanged their products. Wang Ta-yuan[32] described the pepper trade in Kozhikode in *Tao-i-Chih*. Kozhikode had developed international relations and used to send diplomats to various regions. The Zamorin entrusted envoys to the Timurid court of Mirza Shahrukh[33] at Herat[34] and in return their

officials reached Kozhikode. Abd al-Razzaq, who was assigned to Kozhikode between November 1442 and April 1443, brought precious presents including a horse, head-dress, and ceremonial robes.[35]

Among the later Malabar ports, Ponnani[36] was one of the strategic ports utilised by Zamorin. Beypore[37] and Chaliyam were also port towns that developed and flourished on both sides of the river Chaliyar.[38] These strategic port cities were places where Zheng He's ships attracted traders and Chinese merchants spent months to collect commodities. They also repaired their merchant ships called Chunks[39] in the traditional workshops of the region, where artisans were experts in building wooden ships, called *Dhows or Urus*.[40]

The Chinese rose dramatically owing to the visits by Zheng He in the 14th & 15th century strong and cordial diplomatic relations were maintained between Calicut[41] and Ming China. Early in the 15th century Calicut was visited by Nicolo de Conti,[42] whose narrator, Poggio Bracciolini [43], described the city as a 'maritime city'.[44] According to Das Gupta, Arabs had better control over the sea lines of Malabar, for this was a connecting line between the east and the west, especially given the good presence of Chinese merchants in the region (Gupta, 1982:411). Chinese traders, who were also integral part in the growth and development of Malabar ports, contributed much to the development of Calicut. The foreign presence and influence were much visible in Malabar region in general, and particularly in Calicut (Barbosa, 1921:74-5). As far as Chinese traders are concerned, Ku-hi-fo was the most important maritime town of Malabar region (Sastri, 1939: 295). Ludovico Varthema[45] has explained this scenario in the following words: "There were fifteen thousand foreign traders in Calicut port".[46]

Silk Street of Calicut, the North-west quarter, was the designated trading area, where the Chinese community had also set up their business ventures. Kozhikode was built as a model city based on Hindu Vastu Shastra. The derivation of the name Kozhikode, sheds light on the pattern of a structured city. This is clear from the existing old structures of the city, especially the Thali Temple and the Brahmin settlement around it, the traditional temple pond, the old mosques of Kuttichira etc. The Silk Street of Calicut got its name from the Chinese silk traders who had merchandised silk in that particular zone. The Chinese had their worshipping place in Calicut and various settlements inside, as well as in the outskirts of the city, including half status progeny.[47]

In the first sighting of the Ming fleet lead by Zheng He, this was like a country floating on the water. When it reached the city, it was just bringing a nation to another with 30,000 people and hundreds of ships. The Armada of Zheng He had amazingly expanded across miles of the Indian Ocean. China and India together accounted for more than half of the world's volume in the time of Zheng He's naval expedition. In

the east, Chinese records regarding the frequency and composition of diplomatic and trade missions from Malabar provide important evidence for the trans-oceanic spice trade. These sources also highlight the role of maritime Southeast Asia as trans-shipment point and trading partner for Malabar Merchants. Catalogues of foreign places and trade goods, such as the *Chu-fan-shi* by Chau-Ju-Kua, the customs inspector at Quanzhou, add to this picture. Other sources indicate that Malabar merchants had also imported various products from other countries, for example rice from the Coromandel coast, horses and frankincense from Arabia and Persia, fine spices like cloves, nutmeg and mace from Southeast Asia, and ceramics, silks and other textiles from China.[48] Most of these items were re-exported from Malabar, except rice, because it was the major item consumed by inhabitants of the region. This trans-shipment brought much fame and money to Malabar along with the goodwill that the place surely acquired for collecting any items as an international market. The huge scope of trans-shipping enjoyed by merchants made Malabar one of the notable places with number prominent port towns and a wide variety of merchandise.[49] Indian Ocean trade relations with Chinese extended over a long period of 1500 years from the Han Dynasty to the Ming Dynasty. Though there were trading relations between Malabar and China from an early time, this relation got gorgeous colours after the consecutive voyages of Zheng He to Malabar.

Cultural Legacy and Shared Heritage

There are a number of cultural legacies, which are still respectfully maintained as shared heritages of Chinese Malabar relations. Chinese fishing nets are popular in Malabar and were introduced by Chinese during various expeditions to Malabar region. Chinese fishing nets, called Cheena-Vala in the vernacular are popular and are seen well-displayed in mid-air upright in line in tourist areas of the state. Chinese fishing nets are shore-operated lift nets, which normally abide by land installations for fishing. In the evening scene usually nets are silhouetted against the sunset. Chinese nets and their beautiful evening pictures are wonderfully depicted in tourism billboards and commercials of Modern Kerala. This shows how Chinese-shared heritages are connected with Malabar and are merged with the beauty and legacy of the shoreline. The Chinese nets from Malabar coastline are traditionally made of teakwood and bamboo poles, based on the principle of balance. The net operations are based on counterweights, generally stones about 30 cm in diameter, tied to ropes of different lengths, which support the smooth and worthwhile functioning. These attractive structures are strategically fixed on the shore projecting to the river or backwater. Often supplementary traditional lights fixed on the teak posts are suspended above the net to attract fish. More than

four fishermen engage in the operation of the fishing nets. Because it is set up in a special way, the whole weight of the one person walking on the main plank will be enough to cause the equipment to be pulled down into the water. Using this special net, normal fishing time will be in the early morning and evening before sunset. The net is sloped fully into the water and then raised carefully by tugging on the ropes. The wonderful balancing of the net, unity and togetherness in keeping the rhythm of the workers are fascinating to viewers.

There were Chinese people in the army of Zamorin and some of the ships used by admiral Kunhali were similar to the Chinese ships, which could lead sudden attacks against the Portuguese on the east coast as a retaliation to their atrocities. These ships carried out a daring raid against captured Portuguese Ceylon, and attacked a large convoy straggler discouraging trial. The Chinese were part of the community and they wholeheartedly had expressed willingness to help the Zamorin by extending their naval supports. Chinese also worked in the Army of the Zamorin and sacrificed their lives for the protection of the Malabar coast and to maintain peace in the seafaring activities. When admiral Kunhali IV was captured, the Chinese soldier's dedication created bewilderment in the King Zamorin and Portuguese, which was a unique incident of love and affection in the maritime history of Malabar. This is the story of Chinale, who was rescued from the enslavement of the Portuguese by Kunhali and given all freedom. But the Portuguese considered him as a fanatic for keeping courtesy to Kunhali. It was a sign of the bond between the Chinese and other trading communities before the Portuguese invasion.[50] The shared heritage is very much obvious in the structure of traditional boats, especially snake boats used for traditional competitions. Some of these boats got the semi structure of a dragon craft and the traditional boat race Vallam Kali[51], which is still observed at the time of Onam, the official festival of Kerala. Chinese traders were part of the community of Malabar, where they could develop a mixed culture incorporating their traditional values. The descendents of these centuries old generations were identified in Panthalayani Kollam and Vadakara.[52]A number of Chinese mosques in Calicut and nearby towns are preserved and maintained by the locals without altering the Chinese names. *Cheenedathu Palli* of Calicut and *Cheenam Veedu Palli* of Vadakara, *Cheenapalli* of Panthalayani Kollam are some of the evidences for the shared heritage of the Chinese Muslim communities in the region.[53] Chinese traders had received much respect in the Calicut region. The Chinese had been invited to the swearing-in ceremonies and other special occasions of conferring various statuses, grades and privileges to competent personalities and authorities by the Calicut King. A number of ceremonies were held under the kingdom for the coronation of various chiefs in

position as well as coordination of small local power positions in the kingdom. *Udaval Anakkal* [54] is a ceremony to bestow power to junior representatives of the royal family of *Nadiyirippu Swarupam*,[55] which had a number of *Sthanam*[56] to assign duties and obligations to royal members considering their status and positions. This was a very important function which directly bestowed portfolios over the juniors of the ruling family in key positions. *Valum Pudavayum*[57] was the name of another coronation ceremony in the country and *Talekkettu*[58] and *Peruvili*[59] and *Kuttuvilakku*[60] were famous investiture ceremonies held under the Calicut kingdom of Zamorin, where Chinese traders and settlers were also invited. It is found that Zheng He was asked to dispense an imperial mandate, which can be taken as one of the early models of foreign representation in the formal investiture ceremonies of Kozhikode King (Dreyer, 2017).

During the return journey official representatives of Kozhikode and other states accompanied the Chinese fleet with royal presents to Nanking in 1407 (Ibid). The representatives from the second voyage carried out the official investiture of the King Zamorin. A plaque of memoire was formally founded in Kozhikode to venerate the coronation. The Zamorin was bestowed with Chinese entitlement and souvenirs. That fleet stayed from December 1408 to April 1409. The third (1409–1411) and fourth (1413–1415) expeditions also visited Kozhikode. A number of tribute delegations in 1421, 1423 and 1433, among others, were dispatched by the Kozhikode rulers to Nanking and Peking. Presents from Kozhikode included horses, special cloths and black pepper. Some representatives of the Kozhikode court reached the Ming court in the years 1403–1433. Various dynasties kept good bilateral relations and a number of official diplomats and emissaries were sent from China to Malabar and in return from various Malabar kingdoms to Chinese Rulers.[61] The Zamorin had also given better gifts to the Emperor of China through Zheng He. It was specially made by royal weavers and was specially ordered by royal craftsmen. A particular gift was made using fifty ounces of gold into hair-like fine threads, and weaved them into ribbons to make a gold girdle embedded with pearls and precious stones of all sort of colours,[62] and then sent his envoy to present the gold girdle to the Ming emperor as tribute. Zheng He was also deputed by the Chinese emperor to handover a shipload of remarkable presents. Brocades of several types were presented to some of the Kozhikode envoys.[63]

Contribution to Historiography

Zheng He's cultural legacy was also notably reflected in the historiography of Malabar through the pen of Ma Huan (1380-1460), who narrated the nature of business, ways of dealing with foreign traders,

good account on the chief of the port and other prominent personalities.[64] Zheng He's contribution is also obvious in the historiography of Malabar, especially regarding trans-national trading and the cultural relations. In Malabar international trading was the process of exchange shaped by the social and political systems of different civilizations and their attitudes towards one another (Chaudhuri, 1985:222). The contribution of Chinese travellers and traders are unique and we need more studies in the field with experts from Chinese language backgrounds. Good examples for early trading systems and community relations are available in the writings of Ma Huan, who described the role of community leaders through his narrations that the king had entrusted the charge of assessing the imported goods in the port to the Muslim Chief of the port along with a Chetti Merchant. They both cross-checked the account book in the official bureau, especially to evaluate and analyze the goods that came to Calicut port. He wrote that if a treasure ship reached the port, it was left entirely to these two men to supervise the transactions. And a higher officer, the commander of the ships, would negotiate a certain day for fixation of prices. The Muslim Chief of the port and the Chetti Merchant together would then fix the rate of the silk items and discuss the variants one by one, when it had been fixed. Then they normally prepared an agreement stating the amount of the commodity and the agreement was then retained by these two personalities.[65] This is the report on the chief of the port, [66] and thereupon they collected tax and sent it to the authority. Ma Huan describes that the Muslim Chief of the port was entrusted with the official duty by the king. This was also an incident which showcased the harmonious atmosphere of the Calicut port, showing the responsibility of the Muslim chief of the port to keep the situation comfortable with a better outlook of intercultural coexistence in an internationally acclaimed multi-religious community. Ma Huan also stated the political role of Malabar Muslims that the king had two great Muslim Chiefs, who used to administrate the affairs of the country.[67]

Zheng He's Sad Demise

It was amazing that Zheng He reached with marvellous fleet of three hundred ships, almost thirty thousand people, their personal baggage, official commodities and supplies. He made seven frequent voyages that touched upon Quilon, Cochin and Calicut between 1405 and 1433. Multi-lateral trade prospered and formal relations between the Ming dynasty and several Indian, Middle Eastern and South East Asian countries were established. As mentioned, Zheng He during the seventh voyage died at Calicut in the year 1433. Chinese scholars believe that Zheng He's dead body was buried in the sea near Calicut. When we consider his high position, close diplomatic relation and long term connection with the Calicut King, the dead body should have been

brought to the land. There is no other possibility when we consider the bond Zheng He maintained with the king of Calicut. The second reason to believe that there was a burial in the land of Calicut is that under the Shafi denomination of Islamic law, the body has to be brought to the shore, if there is any possibility to carry it safely back.[68]

I could identify the mosque, Cheenedathu Palli [69] in the Puthiyangadi area of Calicut, with the tomb of the great Chinese leader and scholar, called Sheikh Seeni.[70] The caretaker of the mosque reconfirmed that it was a much-respected tomb from time immemorial and people from all walks of life irrespective of their religion and caste came to pay their respect. But nobody knows the exact name of the person buried in this tomb, but they call him Sheikh Seeni. Still the committee preserves the tomb respectfully and observes very big yearly ritualistic respect on him, attended by hundreds of people from all walks of life.

I was wondering who called this special name to the tomb and searched for the derivation. Finally I got a reply from the editor of the souvenir, which was published in conjunction with the inaugural day of the renovated tomb and the adjacent mosque that he just provided the Arabic name for the Sheikh from China. The secretary of the mosque revealed the secrets of the developmental activities around the shrine, which means that they receive necessary money from the holy shrine to run the madrassa and the mosque. Once it was just five thousand Rupees, then the religious school catered to a larger group of students and the expenses of the mosque went higher, but the revenue from the shrine also favourably rocketed.

I got a wonderful chance to do research in the particular site along with two Chinese scholars, Haiyun Maa, a Chinese historian from Frostburg State University, USA, and Shaojin Chai, from Ministry of Culture, United Arab Emirates. The mosque committee supported very much the project to uncover the erected holy canopy of the tomb. No inscriptions were left over the tomb stone underneath of the respectfully erected wooden structure, which was covered neatly with beautifully decorated cloths. The official committee members of the mosque along with the Imam helped us very much during this search. The other three mosques with Chinese names also provided a clear picture on the early Chinese settlements in the region. There are families, who were direct progenies of the intercultural marriages with Chinese trading communities in the region. The Chinese had a number of settlements in Malabar coastal region[72] and some their learned new generations could explain the nostalgic cultural legacy of centuries old Chinese tradition. More archaeological excavations should be done in the region to unearth the old Chinese shared heritages and archaeological remains from the land.

Conclusion

During this research, I could consult many Chinese scholars, well versed in their vernacular and proficient in Chinese history. The fieldwork and exploration in various parts of the Malabar region also provided a better outlook on Chinese relations, hegemony and heritage. Zheng He's expedition manifestly contributed much to the intercultural coexistence of Malabar helping to develop cultural legacy and shared heritage in many fields, especially in the wide use of Chinese gadgets in traditional works, including ceramics, porcelains, pots, earthenware, traditional snake boats and fishing nets.

Under the semi-autonomous administrative structure of Calicut, the remarkable cultures of harmony and coexistence were strengthened with wholehearted support of the trading communities. Zheng He himself was a symbol of harmony, who promoted consistency and unity among the societies in the neighbourhood and there were seldom clashes between trading societies in the Malabar region. The cultural legacies and shared heritages of Chinese Malabar relations are still a popular theme in Malabar. Even Chinese people are enthusiastic to learn about the attention that Malabar rendered in preserving this wonderful heritage and transferring basic workable knowledge of traditional items in the era of technological advancement. Chinese people of the Calicut Army, the ships similar to Chinese ships, the matching structure of traditional boats, snake boats of conventional competitions, Chinese nets, and especially Chinese mosques were part of a remarkable integration in the distant past. The Chinese cultural legacy was also notably reflected in the historiography of Malabar through the pen of Ma Huan, who showcased the harmonious ambiance of Malabar port towns and peoples' responsibility of intercultural coexistence. It is stunning to realize how the Chinese became part of the integrated community and the country without keeping much trace of their belief and vernacular, save the traditions and interrelated popular cultures. In transnational cultures the relations extended beyond language and religion, traces of cultural heritage were lingering on the lineage, and the inherited memory of the living descendants of these early traders contributed to highly composite community.

Notes

1. Some paintings are available depicting the shipwreck at Calicut, based on the direct narrations of Ibn Battuta.

2. Tao-i chih-liiehchiao-shih, by Wang Ta-yiian, ed. by Su Chi-ch'ing (Peking, 1981;Chung- waichiao-t'ung shih-chits'ung-k'an), pp. 325-330; Hsi-yulu, by Yeh-lii Ch'u-ts'ai, ed. by Hsiang Ta, and I-yiichih, by Chou Chih-chung, ed. by Lu Chin-ling, two texts in one vol. (Peking, 1981; Chung-waichiao-t'ung shih-chi ts'ung-k'an), pp. 23-24.

3. Graham Shioley, translated, Pseudo Skylax's Periplous: the Circum navigation of the inhabited Wold: Text, Translation, and commentary, Exeter,

England: Bristol Phoenix Press 2011.

4. Bactria was a place in Central Asia, north of the Hindu Kush mountain range and south of the Amu Darya river, the area of modern-day Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

5. It is the Greek name of Bharuch, formerly known as Broach, or Bhrugukachchh a city at the mouth of the river Narmada in Gujarat.

6. An ancient name of the Malabar Coast mentioned in the ancient Greco-Roman texts. The *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* describes Limyrike from Naura (Narath- Kannur) and Tyndis (Kadalundi). Ptolemy noted the beginning inTyndis near Calicut.

7. Pamir is known as mountain range in Himalayas.

8. He is a Chinese historian of the early Han Dynasty and considered as the father of Chinese historiography.

9. Sima Qian, Historical Records, Biography of Zhang Qian.

10. The Chronicles of the Later Han Dynasty, Biography of the West Regions. Vol.118.

11. Fan Ye, The History of Late Han Dynasty is a classic of block-printed edition, finished in 28th year of Jiajing Reign, Ming Dynasty(1549), noted by Li Xian (in Tang Dynasty and recorded by Sima Biao).

12. Su, New history of the Tang Dynasty: Records of the geography. G.& Zhang, J. & Qiu, Y, 2011.

13. Sulaiman al Tajir, Akhbar al-Sin wa-al Hind - M Sauvaget (ed), Paris: Belles Letters 1948.

14. The History of Song Dynasty, written by TuoTuo (Yuan Dynasty)etc., was carved by Ming Nanjing and revised by Ming Qingdi.

15. Masʿūdī, Abuʾul-HasanʿAlīIbn al-HusaynIbnʿAlī al-”. *Dictionary of Scientific Biography.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1970, *Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems*, an English translation of the *Muruj al-dhahab* by AloysSprenger, London 1841

16. The land of the Chola King, which later became famous for being much nearer to the South East Asian area.

17. The Mao K'un map is in ch. 240 of Wupeichih. Calicut is shown on p. 10215 (20a) there. For the bibliographical data, see under WPC in the list of references to Calicut (after n. 6 in text). For the Shun-fenghsiang-sung, see Hsiang Ta. (ed.), Liang chunghai-taochen-ching (Peking, 1982; Chung-waichiao-t'ung shih-chi ts'ung-k'an), esp. pp. 41, 78-81

18. Anonymous, Microfilm at Cambridge, 24b. For a description of the I-yiit'u-chih, see A. C. Moule, "An introduction to the I Yu T'uChih or 'Pictures and Descriptions of Strange Nations' in the Wade Collection at Cambridge," ToungPao 27 (1930), pp. 179-188.

19. See Friedrich Hirth and W. W. Rockhill, ChauJu-Kua: His Work on the Chinese and Arab Trade in the twelfth and thirteenth Centuries, entitled Chu-fan-chi'(rpt. Taipei, 1970), p. 89

20. Yaqut al Hamawiis well known for his encyclopaedic book, *Mu'jam al-Buldan,* Dictionary of Countries, which he started writing in 1224 and

finished in 1228, one year before he died.

21. Ma Huan, also known as Zongdao, pen name Mountain-woodcutter, was a Chinese traveller and writer who accompanied Admiral Zheng to Malabar.

22. FeiXin is famous as the author of the book *Xinhua* (*Description of the Starry Raft*; preface dated 1436), which recorded his 4 voyages to the southern seas

23. Gong Zhen was a translator and writer travelled with the admiral Zheng He and worked. He composed *Xiyang FanguoZhi* (The Annals of Foreign Nations in the Western Ocean) in 1434.

24. G. Haurani, *Arab Seafaring in Indian Ocean in Ancient and early mediaeval time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 83.

25. Sangam period is the period in the history of ancient southern India (known as the Tamilakam) spanning from 300 BCE and 300 CE. This collection contains 2381 poems composed by 473 poets, some 102 of whom remain anonymous.

26. Akananuru is a classical Tamil poetic work from the seventh book in the anthology of Sangam literature namely Ettuthokai. It comprises 400 *Akam* (subjective) poems dealing with love and separation.

27. Ettuthokai means 'The Eight Anthologies', which is the oldest Classical Tamil poetic work, part of the Pathinenmaelkanakku anthology series of the Sangam Literature.

28. The Purananuru is a work of Tamil poetry from the *Eṭṭuttokai*, one of the eighteen *melkanakkunoolgal*. It is a treatise on kingship, which refers to the various activities of a king and the nature of expected behaviour like what a king should be, how he should act, how he should treat his subjects and how he should show generosity and mercy towards the people.

29. Peter Francis. *Asia's Maritime Bead Trade*: *300 B.C. to the Present*(Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2002) 120 .

30. Traditional Valiyangadi of Calicut, which had the special trading area for various merchant communities from all around the world.

31. Goitein, S.D., and M. Friedman, eds. and trans., India Traders of the Middle Ages: Documents from the Cairo Geniza ("India Book") Brill, Leiden, 2008. Ma Huan'syingyai Sheng-lan, the overall survey of Ocean shores. Cambridge,1970.

32. Wang Dayuan was a traveller from Quanzhou, China during the Mongol Yuan Dynasty in 1328–1339. He sailed through the Indian Ocean to Southeast Asia , South Asia, north Africa and East Africa.

33. Shah Rukh was the fourth and youngest son of Central Asian emperor Timur.

34. Third largest city of Afghanistan and capital of Herat Province.

35. Abd al-Razzaq Samarqandi, Dastan-I safa-I Hindustan washarh-I 'ajaib-I an, Tashkent 1960; MuzaffarAlam, Sanjay Subrahmanyam. "Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries, 1400–1800". Cambridge University Press, 2007

36. It is believed as port Tyndis, introduced by the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*. The port is situated at the mouth of Bharathappuzha, which is also famous as Nila River and is bounded by the Arabian Sea on the west.

37. Beypore, an ancient port town, now part of the Kozhikode district of Kerala, is famous for traditional wooden ships building.

38. Chaliyar is the fourth longest river in Kerala with 169 kilometre length.

39. This also called Junk, the typical traditional Chinese sailing ship. The term is derived from the Chinese word Chuan, which means boat.

40. Uru is an ancient merchant ship with traditional wooden design.

41. Chinese called this as Kuli and the name KaliKut was derived from the name 'Koyil Kota'. Koyil means 'Royal Palace' and 'Kota' means Fort.

42. Niccolò de' Conti (1395–1469) was a Venetian merchant and explorer, who travelled to Malabar and Southeast Asia, and possibly to Southern China, during the early 15th century.

43. Poggio Bracciolini (1380– 1459) is one of the more interesting of the early Italian humanists and historians.

44. R.H. Major (ed,) India in Fifteenth Century, London: 1857) part II, 20.

45. Ludovico di Varthema (c.1470 – 1517), was an Italian traveller, who had spent time in Calicut, where came across two Italians - Varthema gives their names as Pier'Antonio and Gian'Maria, and identifies them as Milanese, who were military engineers that the Zamorin had hired to cast European-style artillery to fight the Portuguese. Varthema had witnessed the naval battle of Cannanore between Zamorin's fleet and the Portuguese fleet of Lourenço de Almeida, which he describes in some detail. Shortly after, Varthema was hired by the Portuguese in Cannanore to help the Portuguese authorities enforce their strict new shipping restrictions on the Malabar.

46. Lodovico de Varthema, John Winter Jones, Richard Carnac Temple, *Itinerary of Ludovico Di Varthema of Bologna from 1502 to 1508*.(New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1997) See also Lodovico de Varthema; Edited by George Percy Badger Translated by John Winter Jones., *The Travels of Ludovico di Varthema in Egypt, Syria, Arabia Deserta and Arabia Felix, in Persia, India, and Ethiopia, A.D. 1503 to 1508* (London: the Hakluyt Society, London in 1863)

47. I could meet and interview families from Kozhikode district, who relentlessly claimed Chinese lineage and family traditions, showing their basic appearance like body structure, shape of the eyes, nose etc

48. W.B. Greenlee, trans., The Voyage of Pedro Álvares Cabral to Brazil and India (London: Hakluyt 1938), 82.

49. R.S. Lopez, "The Trade of Medieval Europe: the South", in M.M. Postan and E. Miller, eds., The Cambridge Economic History of Europe, vol. 2: Trade and Industry in the Middle Ages (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd ed., 1987), 349

50. Francois Pyrard, Pierre de Bergeron, Jerome Bignon, the voyage of Francois Pyrard of Laval to the East Indues, the Maldives, Moluccas, and

Brazil Issue 80 Volume 2 Part 2. Whiting and Co, London 1890. Tien Hsia Monthly, Sun YatSen Institute, Volume 9, page 456. 1939.

51. It is called 'Boat Play' and observed as festival of the land.

52. I could interview some of the families who keep the Chinese structure in Nature.

53. The author had visited these mosques and examined the existing structures and tries to find the people with Chinese structure in the locality.

54. Literary means sharpening the sword.

55. In the era when Chera King divided kingdom into different sovereigns, The Eranad Udaiyavar a provincial governor, established a sovereign kingdom based on Nediyiruppu which was titled 'Nediyiruppu Swaroopam'. The king, entitle 'Mootha Eradi of Nediyiruppu, controlled the Eranad area parts of the present Malappuram district for centuries from Nediyiruppu, which was capital for this kingdom.

56. Official positions under the kingdom.

57. Conferring of the sword and ceremonial dress.

58. The ceremony in which the coronation of naval chieftains of Zamorin was held.

59. Entitling names related to the power and position in the kingdom

60. *kuttuvilakku* was ceremonial swearing-in conducted by Zamorin of Calicut.

61. Huang Da-Show, "An outline of China's contact with South India in the early fifteenth century," in R. E. Asher (ed.)

62. Traditional Ponnada, which is still garlanded as a respect and appreciation

63. Chan, Hok-lam (1998). "The Chien-wen, Yung-lo, Hung-hsi, and Hsüante reigns, 1399–1435". *The Cambridge History of China*, Volume 7: The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644, Part 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

64. John King Fairbank, Denis Crispin Twitchett, Frederick W. Mote. The Cambridge History of China, Volume 7, Part 1.Cambridge University Press, 1978.pp 233-36,Ma Huan's Ying-yai Sheng-lan: 'The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores' [1433]. Translated and Edited by J. V. G. Mills. Cambridge University Press for the Hakluyt Society (1970).

65. J. V. G. Mills (tr.). Ma Huan: The overall survey of the ocean's shores' (1433), translated from the Chinese text edited by FengCh'eng-chün. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970). 140

66. This means Shaha Bandar of the port.

67. Mills, trans, Ma Huan, 141

68. Sheikh Zainudheen Maqdhum 11, *Fathul Mueen*, Manuscripts, 221,

69. This literally means Chinese Mosque.

70. Sheikh from China

71. Panthalayani Kollam, Vadakara , Kozhikode Puthiyangadi, etc.

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A Backgrounder to the Religio-Cultural Context of the West Asian Trading Groups Mentioned in the Tarisāppaḷḷi Copper Plate Grant

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Abstract

The Tarisāppaḷḷi grant of 849 C. E. which is inscribed on copper plates detail the grant of land, privileges and serfs at Kollam to a group of foreign Christian traders led by Maruvan Sāpir Īśō by the governor of Venatu. The names of the witnesses mentioned in the Tarisāppaḷḷi grant refer to the main West Asian trading groups who were involved in the maritime trade of early medieval Kerala. The very nature of the transnational trade networks based on religious identity that linked co-religionists of West Asia and Kerala makes it imperative to study the West Asian religious and cultural backgrounds of these networks in order to understand their impact on early medieval Kerala. The West Asian trading groups include East Syriac Christians popularly known as Nestorian Christians, Persian Jews, Arab Muslims and Zoroastrians. The Christians and Jews were already major trading groups involved in Indian Ocean maritime trade during the time of the Sasānian Empire (224 C. E. – 651 C. E.). The pre-Islamic Arabs who followed varied belief systems were also part of these trading ventures. These same groups continued to be involved in maritime trade even after the advent of Islam. By the time of the early ‘Abbāsid Caliphate and the beginning of the second Chēra kingdom of Kerala to which period the Tarisāppaḷḷi grant is dated to, the Arabs had mainly converted to Islam and the Zoroastrians also joined the group of West Asian traders involved in maritime trade with Kerala. The socio-religious and political contexts of the West Asian trading groups also had an impact on the development of the communities of their co-religionists in Kerala.
Keywords: *East Syriac Christians, St. Thomas Christians, Persian Jews, Arab Muslims, Sasānians, Kollam, Chēramān Perumāl.*

Introduction

The early medieval period witnessed two major developments in the history of the western Indian Ocean littoral which were to later link up and lead to the renewal of the trade in spices from Kerala. One was the emergence of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula, the defeat of the Sasānid Persians by early Arab Islamic armies and adding of the territories of the former Sasānids to the Early Islamic Caliphate. The second development was the migration of Brāhmins from the northern regions of India along the western Indian coast to Kerala and the establishment of thirty-two Nambudiri Brāhmin settlements in Kerala. These Brāh-

mins then dominated the social and political aspects of Kerala society by building a highly stratified caste-based social structure, introducing wet rice cultivation and establishing a temple-based administrative structure. The support of the Brāhmins then led to the emergence of the second Chēra kingdom in the ninth century C.E. The establishment of political stability resulted in the revival of commercial activities in Kerala. The Early Islamic Caliphate was succeeded by the Ummayad Caliphate and the 'Abbāsid Caliphate after that. The 'Abbāsids shifted the capital from Damascus to Iraq and later Baghdad so that they could more efficiently partake of the maritime trade activities of the Indian Ocean. This led to greater involvement of the West Asians in the trade in pepper and other condiments from Kerala leading to the rejuvenation and expansion of pepper trade in Kerala in the ninth century C.E.

The main focus of this paper is to provide a backgrounder to the religious and cultural context of the West Asian trading groups which are mentioned in the *Tarisāppaḷḷi* copper grant which is the most important source on trade in early medieval Kerala. One of the hindrances to further research in academia in Kerala on the nature of Kerala's maritime trade during the early medieval period is a lack of understanding about the religious and cultural context of West Asian trading groups who were active in the western Indian Ocean during this period. This is due to the very nature of the academic structure in Kerala with almost no departments focusing on the history of a region like West Asia which is very vital to research on the history of Kerala. Another challenge is the reluctance to engage with the latest findings from archaeological excavations in countries that form the littoral of the western Indian Ocean which should then be ideally scrutinized to see if this knowledge can help us improve our understanding about Kerala's extensive maritime relations and their resultant impact on its society. The very nature of the transnational trade networks based on religious identity that linked co-religionists of West Asia and Kerala makes it imperative to understand the West Asian religious and cultural context of the traders from that region so that their impact on Kerala during this period can be understood. While this is the focus on the West Asian context of these networks, with regard to the other end of these networks i.e. in Kerala, the attention will be on trying to identify the sects or factions within the larger West Asian religious trading community who would have arrived in Kerala during this period. The paper will then try to raise certain issues which have to be further explored with regard to the history of the religious communities in Kerala like the Christians and Muslims who are linked to these West Asian trade networks.

East Syriac Christians

We know that the *Tarisāppaḷḷi* grant dated to 849 C.E. contains

signatures of West Asian traders in three languages, namely in Sasāni-an-Pahlavi or Middle Persian, Judeo-Persian and Arabic in Kufic script. On the basis of the languages, the signatories have been respectively described as East Syriac Christians, Persian Jews and Arab Muslims with the exception of three signatories in Sasānian-Pahlavi language who have been described as Zoroastrian. Who were the foreign Christian traders led by Maruvan Sāpir Īśō who were granted land, privileges and serfs at Kollam to built a church and conduct trade by the governor of Venatu. During the time of the Persian Sasānid Empire (third century C.E. to the seventh century C.E.), the East Syriac Christians known more popularly as Nestorian Christians were the major trading community of the empire involved in long-distance maritime trade. It is important to understand the history and structure of this church in order to understand how ethnicity and language were important identity markers even in a seemingly united church.

The origins of Christianity in Persia can actually be traced to the adjacent Aramaic-speaking region of northern Mesopotamia in the city of Edessa, the capital of the small kingdom of Osrhoëne. Osrhoëne was one of the string of buffer states that separated the Roman and Parthian empires in the first centuries C.E. Edessa is today called Urfa and is located in south-eastern Turkey. While the Persian-speaking regions during this period comprise present-day Iran, politically Persia under both the Parthians and the Sasānians consisted also of the Aramaic-speaking territory of Mesopotamia (Buck, 1996: 56-57). Therefore, religious and cultural influences in Mesopotamia also spread to Persia over a period of time. It is considered possible that Christianity had spread from Mesopotamia to Persia even before the end of Parthian rule in 224 C. E (Moffett, 2006: 79). Syriac, a dialect of Aramaic began to be used by the Aramaic-speaking people of Mesopotamia and Syria who converted to Christianity. Their Christian rites, rituals, practices and beliefs began to be collectively termed as Syriac Christianity.

While the kingdom of Osrhoëne was conquered by the Romans in about 214 C. E., Edessa continued to be the centre of Syriac Christians both in the Roman and Parthian empires (Moffett, 2006: 94). Information on links between the Syriac church in Mesopotamia and Persia on the one side and the Christians in India on the other dating to the beginning of the fourth century C. E. are mentioned in historical sources. It is mentioned in the Chronicle of Seert that in about 300 C. E. David, the bishop of Baṣra left his see or ecclesiastical jurisdiction and departed for India where he converted a large number of people. In the list of bishops who signed the creed of the Council of Nicaea in 325 included the name and title, "John the Persian, of the churches of the whole of Persia and in the great India". Some scholars believe that he was the bishop of Rēv Ardashīr, the ranking see of the province of Fārs

in southeastern Persia. According to Mingana, by the year 340 C. E. the route from Mesopotamia and Persia to India through the Gulf and the western Indian Ocean including the island of Socotra was strewn with bishoprics and monasteries (Moffett, 2006: 100-101).

From about the fourth century C. E. the Syriac church in Mesopotamia and Persia moved towards greater centralization. Though these efforts were not completely successful the bishopric in the Sasānian capital city of Seleucia-Ctesiphon was given primary position among the other Christian centers in Mesopotamia and Persia in the early fourth century C. E. The persecutions conducted by Shāpūr II, the Sasānian emperor from 339 C. E. to 369 C. E. disrupted the plans to build a centralized structure for the church. The beginning of the fourth century C. E. also saw the conversion of Persian Zoroastrians to the Christian religion which created problems for these Christians during the persecution as Zoroastrianism was the state religion of Persia during the Sasānian period. The Persian converts to Christians were therefore specifically targeted during the persecution by the state authorities.

It has to be particularly noted that there are oral traditions in Kerala mentioning the arrival of a Syriac Christian merchant, Thomas of Cana at Kodungaloor along with a group of people including seventy-two Christian families, deacons, priests and a bishop in 345 C. E. They were recognized and given high caste status by the local Indian ruler in Malabar (Mundadan, 1972: 31-42; Moraes, 1964: 61-70; Mingana, 1926: 42-45). There is a debate among scholars on period of arrival of the group led by Thomas of Cana in Kerala. While some scholars support the traditional account of arrival in the fourth century C. E. there are others who state that the ninth century C. E. is the likely period of arrival. Those who support the traditional account state that the date 345 C. E. falls in the early years of the Persian persecution of Christians during the time of Shāpūr II probably leading to Christian refugees seeking shelter in Kerala (Malekandathil, 2010: 2; Kollaparampil, 1986: iii; Vellian, 2001: 1; Narayanan, 2013: 284).

After the persecution ended, the Syriac church called the Church of the East once again engaged in creating a centralized organization for the church. The bishop of Seleucia-Ctesiphon was recognized as the head or patriarch (also known as Catholicos) of the Church of the East during the gathering of all of the bishops of the church at the Synod of Mār Ishāq in 410 C. E. (Moffett, 2006: 152). Therefore, Seleucia-Ctesiphon was raised to the level of a patriarchate. A synod is gathering of church officials held at different levels of the church hierarchy and may or may not include the laity in order to take important decisions and issue important decrees proclaiming the same. In the Synod of Dādīšō held in 424 C. E. it was proclaimed that the Church of the East

was separate from the western church with its centre in Rome (Moffett, 2006: 162; Buck, 1996: 60).

Very soon, the Church of the East was hit by a theological controversy on the true nature of Christ. The roots of the controversy lay in the theological rivalry between the theological schools of the two great patriarchates, Alexandria and Antioch. The Nicene Creed that had been established during the First Council of Nicaea in 325 C. E. had stated that Christ is God and that he is also man. There was a dispute on which element was more strongly represented in the person of Christ. The Alexandrian school laid stress on the divinity of Christ but the Antiochene school laid insistence on the historic, human Christ. Nestorius was a monk from Antioch who was made the patriarch of Constantinople. In one of his sermons there he referred to a dispute between two parties of people on what title should be used to address Mary, the mother of Jesus. One group called Mary, the "Mother of God" and the other party called her "Mother of man". In Alexandria, the tile that was used was "Mother of God" or *Theotokos*. Nestorius stated that he preferred the title "Mother of Christ" as it combined both aspects of Mary. Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria used this opportunity to attack Nestorius because of the earlier theological rivalry. Cyril denounced Nestorius as a heretic. The Council of Ephesus of 431 C. E. was called by the Byzantine emperor to settle the dispute. But it only led to the worsening of the dispute. The council led to the excommunication of Nestorius (Moffett, 2006: 170-175).

In reality, Nestorius's position is not very different from the orthodox position of both Rome and Constantinople who supported both the divine and human attributes of Christ combined in one person. But his choice of words made it very convenient for his opponents to interpret his position as that of putting forward the idea that Christ existed as two persons, one with a human nature and the other with the divine characteristics. Because Nestorius favoured the title "Mother of Christ", he and his followers were accused by opponents like Cyril and the Alexandrian theological school of giving more importance to the human nature of Christ, were called Nestorians and were falsely accused of denying the divinity of Christ. In reality, the title Nestorianism does not fit the East Syriac Church or the Assyrian Church of the East as Nestorius' views were derived from Theodore, the bishop of Mopsuestia who was his mentor at the Antiochene theological school. The correct terminology for describing the theology of the East Syriac Church is Dyophysitism because of their stress on the two natures of Christ. The accusations and campaign of Cyril and his supporters were successful in that they managed to bring about a break between Nestorius and his supporters on the one side and the orthodoxy represented by Rome and Constantinople on the other despite the fact that in

reality the position of the latter two groups were the same[1.]

The followers of Cyril who promoted the divinity of Christ were called Monophysites. The Monophysites began to adopt a more extreme position on the divinity of Christ as opposed to the more orthodox position of both Rome and Constantinople. The Monophysites argued that there were no separate human and divine natures in Christ and that the two were combined in the person of Christ. The church as a whole was moving towards a tripartite contest between the Orthodox, Monophysites and the Dyophysites. While the Monophysites were dominant in church politics at the expense of both the Orthodox and Dyophysite factions for a period of time, at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 C. E., the Orthodox position secured its dominant position and declared Monophysitism as a heresy (Moffett, 2006: 177-80). The Monophysites later came to be called the West Syriac Church as they also used Syraic for their liturgy like the East Syriac Church. The West Syriac Church is more popularly known as the Syrian Oriental Orthodox Church.[2] The churches and the Christians under the orthodox centres of Rome and Constantinople were called Chalcedonians after the Council of Chalcedon but they were also called Melkites. This continued till the split between Rome which became the centre of Catholic Church and Constantinople which became the centre of Greek Orthodox Church in the eleventh century C. E.

While the Council of Chalcedon united the churches of the west under the leadership of Rome, the western church lost control of vast regions of Asia and Africa. The Syriac church of Mesopotamia and Persia because of its geographical position away from the main centres of the dispute like Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople and Rome were initially not affected by the theological dispute. But it finally arrived in Persia through its links with the mother church of Edessa. Persian theological students who later rose to high positions in the clergy of the Syriac church of Mesopotamia and Persia were influenced by the pro-Dyophysite position of the School of the Persians, the theological school they went to in Edessa for their learning (Moffett, 2006: 188-89). The result was a rise in the influence of Dyophysitism in Persia and finally the Church of the East adopted the Dyophysite theology in the Fifth General Synod of the East Syriac Church in 497 C. E. (Moffett, 204). On the other side, Syria under Antioch, which was the centre of Dyophysite theology, drifted towards Monophysitism because of political developments.

With regard to the relations of the East Syriac church with India, in about 410 or 420 C. E. the bishopric of Rēv Ardashīr was elevated to a metropolitanate (archbishopric) and was given jurisdiction over relations with the churches of the Indian subcontinent. The East Syriac Church exercised its ecclesiastical authority over India through Rēv Ar-

dashīr as it was strategically located on the direct sea route to India. The Indian Christians sent their priests to Persia for study (Moffett, 2006: 336). The influence of Persian Christians in India is proved through the discovery of Persian stone crosses in India from Mylapore in Chennai; Anuradhapuram in Sri Lanka; and Goa dating to the sixth century C. E. but will not be discussed here in detail as it has been referred to in other works (Malekandathil, 2006: 5-6; Cereti et al., 2002: 289-93;). In Persia, Ishōᶜyahb II, the patriarch of the Church of the East was the leader of the East Syriac Christians when the Arab Muslims captured Persia and he negotiated for his Christians a peaceful settlement of relationship with the new occupiers. The Arab Muslim rulers did not require the Christians and the Jews to convert to Islam. The second caliph of the Rāshidūn Caliphate, Umar concluded peace treaties with the Christians (Moffett, 2006: 336). The Christians and Jews were classified as *dhimmi* or religious minorities.

To prevent the possible influence of other religions on the nomadic Arab tribes who had accepted Islam not so long ago, the Arab Muslim rulers adopted a combination of strategies. The threat was real as the non-Muslims of the former Byzantine and Sasānid empires were more civilized than the nomadic Arabs. The Christian population formed the majority in regions like Syria. The Arab Muslim fighters shunned the cities and settled in the camps which later became garrison cities like Kūfa and Baṣra. The non-Muslim religious communities were grouped into religiously segregated enclaves and their political rights were limited to the bounds of their communities. Service in the army was forbidden to them. But Christians and Jews continued to dominate professions like medicine and trade as they had during the Sasānid period. Christians were highly valued in the administrative system as most of the records were in Greek, Persian and Coptic (Moffet, 2006: 338-39).

The Ummayad period (661-750 C. E.) was one of tolerance for the Christians as it was characterized by the secularizing and Arabizing of Islam. At the same time, non-Muslims had to pay taxes or tributes and as time went on the taxes grew heavier. Marwan II, the last ruler of the Ummayad dynasty recognized John II as Jacobite patriarch of Antioch with authority over the Monophysite churches in Asia.[3] The ‘Abbāsid dynasty who replaced the Ummayads were more orthodox in matters of religion and the situation became more difficult for the Christians. The ‘Abbāsids, as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter shifted the capital from Damascus to Iraq and later to Baghdad not far away from Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the former capital of the Sasānids in 762 C. E. This fostered greater trade and cultural relations with the east as far away as China. Accordingly, the seat of the East Syriac patriarchate was shifted from Seleucia-Ctesiphon to Baghdad in 775 C. E. In the beginning, relations between the ‘Abbāsid rulers and the Christians

were not adverse as proved by the debate between the third 'Abbāsid caliph Mahdī and Timothy I, the Nestorian patriarch which was conducted in a cordial manner in 781 C. E. Nevertheless, oppressive and discriminatory practices against Christians prevailed throughout the rule of the 'Abbāsids though persecution was rarer. But the tenth 'Abbāsid caliph, Mutawakkil (847-861) adopted a rigid Sunni orthodoxy and it soon turned to persecution of Christians (Baumer, 2006: 152; Moffett, 2006: 355-56).

The relations between the East Syriac Church and the St. Thomas Christians of South India were affected by the diversity that was prevalent in the Syriac church. In the earliest period immediately after the centralization of the East Syriac Church, the patriarch or head of the church ordained all the bishops of Asia which included the island of Socotra in the Arabian Sea and South India after 420 C.E. But from 554 C.E. to 790 C.E. the churches of Malabar were ecclesiastically under the Persian metropolitan or archbishop of Fārs province seated at Rēv Ardashīr on the Bushire peninsula which itself was under the patriarchate at Seleucia-Ctesiphon. There were differences among churches in Mesopotamia and Persia on monasticism, ordination of the bishops and on use of language, Syriac was used in Mesopotamia and Sasānian-Pahlavi was used in Fārs. The Bible was translated into Persian in Iran and the language was also adopted for conducting church services in place of Syriac which was the language used in Mesopotamia (Malekandathil, 2010: 7-8; Buck, 1996: 54). Later, Arabic replaced Syriac as the vernacular language of the East Syriac Christians of Mesopotamia during the time of Patriarch Saliba Zakha who was in office from 714 – 728 C.E. (Baumer, 2006:154).

The process of the changing of power from the Sasānian to Arab Islamic lasted for more than a century creating difficulties to the Nestorian church. Seleucia-Ctesiphon fell to the Arab Muslims in 637 C. E., but the province of Fārs fell only in 649 C.E. The patriarch lost contact with and control over southern Iran who traditionally sought independence. Even after the re-establishment of imperial unity, the metropolitan of Rēv Ardashīr refused to accept the authority of the Patriarch. But the patriarch Timothy I enjoyed the support of the Arabs and he removed India from the ecclesiastical control of the metropolitan of Rēv Ardashīr (Baumer, 2006: 153). Timothy appointed what is considered as the first known metropolitan in India in 790 C. E. and forced the rebellious bishops to surrender. Despite such attempts, Pahlavi continued to be used in South India till 1040-50 when the Metropolitan of Rēv Ardashīr was finally extinguished due to the rise of the Seljuk rulers in Iran. It is highly probable that Syriac came to be used as a liturgical and ecclesiastical language in Malabar only after these developments in the eleventh century, when the church of Kerala got directly linked with the seat of the East Syrian Church. This answers the question on

the identity of the East Syriac traders who arrived in Kollam under Maruvan Sāpir Īśō in the early ninth century C. E. They were likely to be Persian Christians as is proved in the use of Sasānian-Pahlavi in the *Tarisāppaḻḻi* copper plate grant and the Persian stone crosses discovered in Mylpore, near Chennai; Anuradhapuram in Sri Lanka; and in Goa dating even earlier to the sixth century C. E. (Mingana, 1926: 467; Malekandathil, 2010: 7-8).

The members of the East Syriac Church, including the laity and the clergy were heavily involved in both overland trade connecting Mesopotamia and Persia with China through Central Asia and the maritime trade of the Indian Ocean again extending all the way to China as both merchants and sailors (Carter, 2008: 105). In fact, Syriac Christianity – not Zoroastrianism – was officially regarded by the Tang Chinese Empire (617 C. E. – 907 C. E.) as the 'The Persian Religion' (Godwin, 2018: 15). Evidence for involvement of the church in maritime trade is available in the *Tarisāppaḻḻi* grant of Kollam in 849 C. E. The Sasānian rulers had already established a system whereby only traders from recognised religions such as East Syriac Christianity would be allowed to partake of long-distance maritime trade activities in the Indian Ocean completely excluding the many heretical sects of West Asia. The situation was different during the Parthian and earliest period of the Sasānian Empire. For example, Samuel N. C. Lieu in his work on Manichaeism quotes from the Cologne Mani-Codex pointing out that Mani, the founder of Manichaeism had left for India from the Gulf port of Forat and arrived at Deb one of the important ports of the Indus Delta in the third century C. E. to spread his new belief system during the last years of Ardashīr I. In later periods, it became much more difficult for Manichaean missionaries to use the maritime route from Forat because of the East Syriac Christian control over the maritime activities (Lieu, 1985: 55-56, 58). But even in the later Sasānian, early Islamic and early 'Abbāsid periods, monitoring the overland trade routes were not so easy. During the 'Abbāsid period the Manichaeans were persecuted and many fled to Central Asia where they were favoured by the Uighur Turks (Lieu, 1985: 83-84).

The maritime contacts of the East Syriac Church with South India were conducted through a network of Christian settlements in the Gulf region. Most of these settlements included churches and some also had monasteries. Archaeological excavations have been conducted in many of these sites and they can provide information on the nature of the relations between the church in Persia and the Thomas Christians in south India. The locations of the Christian sites in the Gulf are Khārg island off the coast of Iran; al-Qusur on the island of Failaka and another site on the island of Akkaz, both in Kuwait; Jubayl and Thaj in Saudi Arabia; Sir Bani Yas Island in the territory of Abu Dhabi, United

Arab Emirates (Carter, 2008: 71). Because of historical textual evidence for the presence of Christianity in the Gulf between the fourth century C. E. and 676 C. E. (Seray, 1996: 316-321), the excavators of these sites had dated these sites to this time frame (Carter, 2008: 72). But a re-evaluation of archaeological evidence from sites by Derek Kennet and Robert Carter has led to a revised chronological sequence.

While these sites including East Syriac Christian churches and monasteries were earlier dated to the late Sasānian period, they are now thought to be from the Early Islamic and Early 'Abbāsid periods. It is now understood that the Sasānians effectively diverted all long-distance trade in the Gulf towards the Persian coast, especially Fārs region and away from the Arabian side (Ulrich, 2011: 382). The heyday of the Arabian side of the Gulf region began only with the advent of Islam in the seventh century A. D. The early Muslim rulers did not interfere with the Christian-dominated pearl trade of the Gulf, but rather taxed it. It encouraged the survival of Christian communities in remote areas of the Gulf like Bani Yas. In the same way that Christian monasteries in inland Arabia had functioned as caravanserais so did the monastery at Sir Bani Yas Island act as a maritime staging post. This situation led to a burst of Christian activity in the Gulf in the latter part of the seventh century. But the most mature phase of the missionary activity of the East Syraic Church was during the later eighth and early ninth centuries C. E., under the patriarch Timothy I coinciding with the date of the *Tarisāppaḷḷi* grant (Carter, 2008: 105).

What is the significance of the re-evaluation of the dating of these sites for understanding the nature of the relations between the church in Persia and the Thomas Christians of South India? The extensive monastic complex on the island of Khārg off the coast of Iran was earlier dated to the fifth-sixth century C. E. But now it is dated to the ninth century C. E. on the basis of a more detailed study of the available archaeological evidence (Kennet, 2007: 92). The island also had commercial significance as it was well known for its pearls (Carter, 2008: 104-105). It is understood that the Khārg monastery could accommodate one hundred persons at a time most of whom were sent to India for missionary activities (Whitehouse and Williamson, 1973: 43).

The ninth century saw the establishment of St. Thomas Christian settlements in Kerala like Kāyamkuḷam, Athirampuzha and Kottayam as part of the expanding pepper trade. The next century witnessed the emergence of even larger number of Christian settlements such as Nāgapuzha, Manjapṛa, Māvelikara, Pazhuvil, Arakuzha, Nediaśāla, Kadamattom, Kaṭatturutti Cheriapaḷḷy and Kunnamkuḷam (Malekandathil, 2010: 45). This was also the period in which the society in Kerala was undergoing transformation as part of the establishment of caste hierarchy under the influence of the dominant Nambudiri Brāhmins.

Buddhist and Jain trading groups were being pushed back from their dominant status in trade and Christians and Jews were increasingly being promoted to replace them. The St. Thomas Christians did not have the institutional capabilities or the resources for organizing proselytization at a large scale. The evidence from Khārg could point out to an expansion of Christian proselytes in Kerala from the indigenous society who joined the St. Thomas Christians to overcome the loss of social status and limiting of access to economic resources because of their former religious beliefs.

Kollam and the Thomas Traditions

Christianity in the south Indian state of Kerala is widely believed by the St. Thomas Christians of Kerala to have originated with the apostolic mission of Judas Thomas, the apostle of Jesus Christ in the first century C. E. Most of these traditions are today preserved in the form of collections of songs titled Rambānpāttu and Mārgam-kali-pāttu. According to the Rambānpāttu, Thomas arrived in Kerala in 50 C. E (Nedungatt, 2008: 361) and converted some among the indigenous population including from among the highest priestly caste of the Vedic religion, the Brāhmins to Christianity. The Mārgam-kali-pāttu mentions that the apostle established seven crosses (and not churches as is widely thought) in seven locations in Kerala one of which was at Kollam (Nedungatt, 2008: 357). The claim that the Apostle Thomas converted Nambudiri Brāhmins to Christianity is questioned by historians because the period of establishment of settlements by these Brāhmins is much later than the first century C. E.

According to Kesavan Veluthat, the earliest settlement of the Nambudiri Brāhmins was established in northern Kerala in between the end of the Saṇgam period in the third century C. E and the seventh century C. E. (Veluthat, 2013: 23-24). Subsequently, settlements were established in a southwards direction until there were thirty-two Nambudiri Brāhmin settlements from north to south Kerala only by the time of the eighth century C. E. There was no way that there was a Brāhmin settlement in central Kerala in the first century C. E.[4] But Brāhmin families who faced ostracism and were expelled from the community would have to join the St. Thomas Christians who were placed in an intermediary position in the caste hierarchy to gain a modicum of respect and recognition.[5] This is what is likely to have been the basis for the traditions on conversion of Nambudiri Brāhmans by Apostle Thomas to Christianity at Pālayūr and other settlements mentioned in the Thomas traditions.

Likewise, there are no references to Kollam, one of the seven settlements supposedly established by Thomas before the ninth century C. E. The settlement of Kollam was first mentioned in historical sources in the Arabic work of Suleiman titled *Salsalat-al-Taverika* dated to 841

C. E. where Kollam was referred to as Koulam Mali. No references to Kollam can be found before this period (Malekandathil, 2010: 43).[6] Foreign Christian traders from the Middle East who were concentrated in the coastal regions of Kerala were allowed to establish trade settlements by the rulers of the second Cēra dynasty or their governors. Kollam is an example of such a trade settlement whose leader, Maruvan Sāpir Īśō was given rights and privileges to maintain the church and trade settlement as documented in the *Tarisāppaḷḷi* copper plates in 849 C. E. by the local governor of the Cēras. What emerges is that the Thomas traditions in their present form were developed in medieval Kerala by adding on to existing traditions by three sections of Christians in Kerala including prominent indigenous St. Thomas Christian trading settlements involved in the spice trade, settlements of newly converted St. Thomas Christians from the Nambudiri Brāhmin community and the foreign West Asia Christian traders of the settlement of Kollam. By this effort, they were able to claim legitimacy and antiquity among the larger St. Thomas Christian community of Kerala.[7]

There are also examples of how other traditions were added on or altered to confirm the Thomas tradition of the establishment of seven churches by the Apostle Thomas in the first century C. E. One of the challenges with regard to Kollam in this regard is the fact that the settlement would have been well known especially in the context of the *Tarisāppaḷḷi* grant and the origin of the Christian settlement there in the ninth century C. E. There was the need to create a tradition linking Kollam with the account of the first century C. E. arrival of Apostle Thomas. There is a tradition that the church established by Thomas was situated on a promontory just outside the city of Kollam. That church is said to have been rebuilt and enlarged in the third century. It was favoured by several royal grants. At the end of the eighth century C. E. it fell victim to the erosion by the Arabian Sea (Nedungatt, 2008: 351). This tradition conveniently covers the gap between the first century C. E. and the beginning of the ninth century C. E. An archaeological excavation at the said location and also further research on historical written and oral accounts will help clarify lingering questions on this matter.

Persian Jews

Another trading group that was involved in maritime trade with Kerala during the Sasānian period were the Persian Jews. Here, the term Persian Jews is used to describe Jews from both Mesopotamia and Persia. The Jews who had been brought as exiles from the southern kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians had been settled in huge numbers in Babylonia i.e. in the land between the Euphrates and Tigris in southern Mesopotamia. While some of them returned to establish the Second Temple of Jerusalem and settle in Judaea after the Achae-

menid Persians freed them, the vast majority chose to remain in Babylonia. Large number of Jews began to settle in Persia as well including Iṣfāhān. During the time of the Arab Muslim invasion, many of Jews were still present in Babylonia. A large number of Jews lived in the vicinity of Sūra, the location of one of two great Babylonian Talmudic academies.

There was a sizeable Jewish population at Hīra, which was formerly the capital of the Arab Lakhmid kingdom controlled by the Banu Lakhm tribe. Hīra was close to Nehardeᶜa which was major centre of Babylonian Judaism and seat of the exilarch of the Jews. Another major Jewish centre was al-Anbār which was close to Pumbedita (now the city of Fallujah in western Iraq) the latter being the seat of the other great Babylonian Talmudic academy (Gil, 2004: 58). While the Persian Jews had used Babylonian Aramaic, they shifted to writing in the Persian language in Hebrew script known as Judaeo-Persian a change that occurred due to the rise of the Sasānians who began promoting Persian religion and culture as opposed to the earlier Parthians of nomadic origin who drew from various influences such as Hellenic, Babylonian and Persian. Judeao-Persian is the language used by the Jewish signatories of the *Tarisāppaḷḷi* grant.

During the Sasānian period, the Jews were in a much more favourable position with the Sasānian rulers in comparison to the Christians (Daryaee, 2006: 497-98; Moffett :128-29). The Jews could have been the most important source of the transmission of knowledge about the Achaemenids to the Sasanians (Daryaee, 2006: 498). The Achaemenids were a previous Persian dynasty that ruled from the sixth century B. C.E. to the beginning of the fourth century B. C. E. when the last Achaemenid ruler was deposed by Alexander. The Achaemenids policy of freeing the Jews from the slavery imposed on them by the former Babylonian rulers in the sixth century is mentioned in the Bible. By reminding the Sasānid rulers that they were treated well by the Achaemenids, the Jews ensured a favourable position during Sasānian rule.

The leader of the Jewish community in Sasānian Persia was the exilarch who was recognized by the Sasānian state. He was usually allowed to govern the Jews through his own system of administration (Morony, 1974: 117). By the time of the late Sasānian period, the Jews were organized into a very well developed community complete with a system of religious law, urban institutions, schools and synagogues. The religious scholars of the community produced the Babylonian Talmud, a written collection of civil and ceremonial law. These scholars who produced the Talmud were able to apply the religious law to the life of the community including the lay followers through various institutional means (Morony, 1974: 114).

After the Arab Muslim conquest, the Jews and Christians were allowed to follow their religious laws and the religious and social regulations of the Qur'ān were not imposed on them. The situation favoured the continued communal development of both Jews and Christians which led to an increase in religious authority and to the division in the Jewish community between religious and secular powers in the Umayyad period. The split was between the rabbis or religious scholars represented by the Gaonim (singular gaon) or the leaders of Babylonian Talmudic academies including the two great academies of Sūra and Pumbedita on the one side and the family of the exilarchs on the other. The Ummayad rulers recognised the right of the exilarch to appoint judges and heads of the Rabbinate schools but the right to interpret the law was reserved for the rabbis. But this situation changed even further turning the office of the exilarch into merely that of a ceremonial character.

In 730 C. E. the division between the religious and secular powers in the Jewish community and dual rule of exilarch and gaon (head of the school of Sūra which became the most prominent academy by then) was regarded as established. Judges for the rabbinic courts were appointed jointly by the exilarch and gaon while each gaon had the right of judicial review over the judges under his jurisdiction. The exilarch's revenues were limited to districts and towns designated by the state, and he lost his claim to religious authority and his jurisdiction over criminal cases. By the time of the eighth century, dynastic succession to the position of exilarch was being undermined by concept of election. The Gaonim held the deciding voice in the choice of a successor from the family of the exilarch (Morony, 1974: 122-24).

Unfortunately, there is very less information on the exact nature of the relations between the Persian Jews and the indigenous Jews of Kerala, the Malabāri Jews. But a useful model that can be applied here to understand the possible nature of the relationship between the two groups especially in the area of trade is the concept of trade diaspora used by Philip D. Curtin. Curtin refers to traders who would remove themselves physically from their home community and go to live as aliens in another town important in the life of the host community. There, the stranger merchants could settle down and learn the language, the customs, and the commercial ways of their hosts forming a trade diaspora in the host society. They could then serve as cross-cultural brokers, helping and encouraging trade between the host society and people of their own origin who moved along the trade routes. At this stage, a distinction appeared between the merchants who moved and settled and those who continued to move back and forth (Curtin, 1984: 3).

The possibility of the situation in the context of the Persian Jew's

trade activities in Kerala confirming exactly to Curtin's trade diaspora model is less as there is no evidence as yet available of Persian Jews having formed permanent settlements in Kerala. In such a context the section who would act as cross-cultural brokers between the Persian Jews and indigenous society in Kerala would not be members of the Persian Jewish trading community itself but could instead be the Malabāri Jews. There is evidence of Persian Jewish influence on the Malabāri Jews. The twelfth century C. E. Jewish traveller Benjamin of Tudela in his account on Kollam mentions that the indigenous Jews of Kollam were familiar with the Talmud (Adler, 1907: 92). The decline of trade relations between Persia and the Gulf region on the one side and Kerala on the other is likely to have led to the replacement of foreign Jewish merchants from the former region with Jews from Fātimid Egypt who traded with Kerala in later times.

Arab Muslims

Historical sources begin referring to the role of the pre-Islamic Arabs in trade since the late centuries B. C. E. The Nabataean kingdom located in present day Jordan was involved in the incense trade transporting the frankincense and myrrh from southern Arabia to ports in the Mediterranean Sea (Young, 2001: 97). The settlement of Gerrha on the north-eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula and the south Arabian kingdoms of present day Yemen had been involved in maritime trade with India even before the first century B.C.E (Kennet, 2007: 109; Forbes, 1981: 64). The pre-Islamic Arabs were famed as mariners and for their knowledge of navigation. The major sites of pre-Islamic Arabs in India were Chaul, Kalyān, Sopara and the coast of Kerala (Shah, 1975: 2). With the discovery of the use of the monsoon wind system to cross the mid-ocean and the knowledge about latitudes from the first century C. E. onwards, there would have been Arab seamen and traders who would have arrived in Kerala using the maritime trade routes linking southern Arabia with other parts of the Indian Ocean littoral. Andrew Forbes in his paper on Southern Arabia and the spread of Islam in the central Indian Ocean archipelagos has stated that the Arab traders had established colonies at various points on the Indian Ocean littoral, notably in East Africa, Southeast Asia and on the Malabar Coast.[8] These traders and sailors intermarried with the local womenfolk resulting in the emergence of new ethnic and cultural groups like the Swāhili in East Africa and the Māpillā on the Malabar Coast. The fact that these areas are today linked by their common acceptance of the Shāfi'ī legal school or madhhab of Sunni Islam which is prevalent in Yemen is cited by Forbes as proof that these regions of the Indian Ocean littoral were connected in the pre-Islamic period itself (Forbes, 1981: 66-67).

The Sasānians had made efforts to bring regions of al-'Umān and al-Bahrayn in the Gulf under their dominance during some phases[9] . In

an effort to boost Persia's maritime trade activities with India, King Ardashīr I (225-241 C. E.) who founded the Sasānian Empire transplanted members of the Azd 'Umān tribal confederation of al-'Umān to Fārs and the Kirmān-Makrān coast (Malekandathil, 2010: 2). Information contained in an inscription of Shāpūr I (241-272 C. E.) discovered at Naqsh-I Rustan shows that Sasānian relations with the al-'Umān and al-Bahrayn went back to the Empire's early history (al-Naboodah, 1992: 81). Many of the Azdī Arabs of al-'Umān became Persianized and adopted the Zoroastrian religion (Hourani, 1951: 45). During the Sasānian period, the two major centers of maritime trade in al-'Umān were Ṣuhār and Dibā which used to receive and dispatch cargoes from ships to and from India and China (al-Naboodah, 1992: 82). Ibn Habīb (d. 860 A. D.) mentioned in his work, *Kitāb al-muhabbar* (Book of Refinement) that merchants from Sind, India and China visited Dibā, the port located at the foot of the Ruus al-Jibal of the Musandam Peninsula during periodic fairs and markets that were held in the sixth and seventh century C. E. (Agius, 2008: 54).

The pre-Islamic Arabs of the Gulf littoral who were involved in maritime activities in general were heavily influenced by Persian culture. As mentioned earlier, during the late Sasānian period, most of the trade was diverted away from the Arabian coast to Persia. But a recent discovery has confirmed that 'Umān was part of the late Sasānian military and commercial networks as it could not be avoided due to geographical reasons (al-Jahwari et al., 2018: 736).[10] This means that the pre-Islamic Arabs who were involved in maritime trade with India would have been Persianised Arabs from the Persian coast and Oman and also Arabs from ports in southern Arabia which had been occupied by the Persians in the last stage of the Sasānian Empire.[11] The region of al-Bahrayn would not have been part of these interactions with India in the late Sasānian period.

There was a period of instability during the early Islamic military campaigns and especially the Riddah wars following the death of the Prophet Muhammad, when many Arab tribes of the Peninsula who had earlier accepted Islam renounced the religion. The Arab Muslims waged a series of campaigns to bring back these rebellious tribes to the fold of Islam. This disrupted the economy of the Gulf region. It was only during the late Rāshidūn, i.e. rule of the first four 'rightly-guided' Caliphs after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, and early Ummayad periods that Gulf commercial centres began to recover and trade started to thrive again. 'Umānī relations with India and Africa began to expand during the Umayyad period and by the eighth century C. E., a group of 'Umānī merchants established a trading post in Ceylon. This revival after the decline during the early days of Islam, led to the creation of a great Muslim maritime trade in the Indian Ocean from which the

ports of both al-ʿUmān and al-Bahrayn benefitted. The importance of al-ʿUmān as a commercial centre increased during the Abbāsid period as it located at the entrance to the Gulf.

Besides al-ʿUmān, al-Bahrayn was the other region in the Gulf which had good maritime trade relations with India and Sri Lanka during this period. The end of the Sasānian period and the revival of trade under a unified Arab Muslim empire meant that the entire Gulf including al-Bahrayn benefitted from the new developments. The situation of the late Sasānian period when al-Bahrayn was kept out of the trade networks as part of Sasānian policy was reversed. The merchants of Dārīn which was an important trade centre in al-Bahrayn for at least three or four generations after Islam, monopolised the Indian perfume trade and were the main suppliers of musk to Arabia. Other important commercial centres in al-Bahrayn during the rise of Islam were Hajar and al-Mushaqqar. Arabs would come from various regions in the Peninsula to its markets- supervised by a Persian agent named al-Mundhir bin Sāwā – buying Indian and Chinese products that arrived via the major coastal ports of al-Bahrayn namely Dārīn, Qaṭīf and ʿUqayr. During this period, the coastal region of al-Bahrayn known as al-Khaṭṭ which contained the prominent ports like Dārīn and Qaṭīf had a population consisting of several races, namely Persians, Indians and Sinhalese as well as Arabs. They continued to maintain contact with their respective mother countries ((al-Naboodah, 1992: 83-85).

Despite the transition from Sasānian to Islamic rule, there was not much change in the nature of the maritime trade that was conducted from the region with India or in the cultural background of the trading groups. Persian traders including East Syriac Christians continued their trade with India, China and Africa under their new Muslim masters. The situation was not very different in the case of the Arab Muslims as well. With the exception of traders from al-Bahrayn who re-entered the long-distance trade circuits after the end of the Sasānian period, it was mostly Arabs who were active in trade during the Sasānid period who continued to be involved in such activities in the Early Islamic period under the guise of a new identity as Muslims. After the Islamic conquest, for the Arabs there was no choice between idolatrous polytheism and Islam. Arabs must be Muslim or die. There was no possibility of evading the death penalty by payment of taxes (Moffett, 336-37).

This meant that the Persianised Arabs like the Azdī and other such groups from eastern Arabia would have had to convert to Islam and that too mainly the Sunni branch of Islam. The nomadic *(badu)* and the sedentary *(hadr)* tribes of Central Arabia and the borderlands of Syria and Mesopotamia who formed most of the recruits for the early Arab-Islamic armies did not enter into trade or other professions leaving the army. The Arab Islamic armies established garrison towns like

Kūfa and Başra in southern Mesopotamia in the seventh century C.E. The Arab Muslim commanders and soldiers who settled in Mesopotamia and Persia did not involve in other economic activities as they acted as military and administrative elites. Therefore the earlier arrangements of trade under other religious communities continued.

Even the Ummayad Caliphate was characterized by an Arab spirit. The early 'Abbāsids on the other hand were more internationally oriented which led to certain developments and the entry of the Arabs who settled in Mesopotamia and Persia into long-distance maritime trade. From the ninth century, Turkish slaves swarmed into Baghdad. Since the policy of territorial expansion had ended, the Arabs gave up their military careers under the command of the Caliph and joined other ethnic groups to pursue administrative, commercial, scholarly and religious careers (Liu, 1996: 172). Therefore the earliest Arab Muslims who would have arrived in Kerala for trade purposes would not have been from the tribes of Central Arabia and the borderlands of Syria and Mesopotamia but Arab Muslims from the Persian coast, al-Bahrayn, al 'Umān and Yemen.[12] But a recent discovery in a mosque in Kerala could provide proof of an exception to this general tendency especially with regard to the region of Hejaz. It will be discussed in detail later on in this chapter. Arab Muslims from mainland Persia and Mesopotamia would have begun involving in trade with Kerala only from the ninth century onwards C. E. Another development during the 'Abbāsid period was the fast spreading conversion of ethnic Persians including Persian Christians to the Sunni branch of Islam (Buck, 1996: 70). It was only later during the sixteenth century that Persians converted to the Shia branch of Islam after the Safavid rulers officially recognised Shia Islam as the state religion. This paper is not looking into the very prominent role of the Persian Muslims in Indian Ocean trade as they are not mentioned in the *Tarisāppaḷḷi* copper plate grant.

A word needs to be mentioned of the Ibādiyya sect of Oman. This sect is different from both the Sunni and Shia sects of Islam. They believe that the leader of the Muslims should be a worthy Imām elected by the notables of the community including the *ulamā* or clergy, tribal leaders and the elders. This is different from the political structure of the Sunnis who were initially ruled by the leading family of the Quraysh tribe and later by other dynasties and from the Shias who believed that the rulers should be the descendents of Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet. In terms of ideology they are related to the Khārijite, the first faction which separated from the main body of Muslims. But they rejected the extremism and violence of the Khārijites. The Ibādiyya first emerged in Başra and mostly consisted of mawālī or non-Arab clients of Arab tribes and that too of humble origin. But it soon gained support from a section of the traders of Başra. The Ibādiyya were also

in an alliance with the Muhallabids, a family belonging to the Azd ʿUmān tribal confederation and who had influence in the province of Khurāsān as governors. But both groups were persecuted by al-Hajjāj, the governor of Iraq during Umayyad rule in the late seventh century C. E. and early eighth century C. E. and many Ibādīs were exiled to al ʿUman. The Ibādī traders of Azdi origin from Başra also carried the Ibādī ideology to al ʿUmān from where the Azd ʿUmān originated. Al ʿUmān developed a strong Ibādī base. (Savage, 1990: 7-11). They managed to establish a short-lived Ibādī Imāmate in ʿUmān (745-49 C. E.)

The onset of the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate improved the conditions of both the Ibādiyya and the Muhallabids. The Ibādīs established a second Ibādī Imāmate in ʿUmān (793-893 C. E.). While the ʿUmāni coast including Şuhār was controlled by the ʿAbbāsids, the interior was held by the Ibādī Imāmate. The later turn towards Sunni orthodoxy by the ʿAbbāsids meant that the Ibādiyya were not as tolerated as they had been previously under the early ʿAbbāsids. The Ibādīs in turn adopted a stance called taqiyya or kitmān by which they hid their religious allegiance from non- Ibādī Muslims or ruling class. This was sanctioned in Ibādī practice. For example, two secret Ibādī sympathizers functioned as the first ʿAbbāsid governors in ʿUmān. What is the significance of the Ibādiyya in understanding the role of Arab Muslims in the maritime trade of Kerala during the early medieval period? While the Ibādī Imāmate was located in interior ʿUmān they certainly had influence among traders and in Şuhār. It should be remembered that Ibādī Islam spread to ʿUmān through the network of traders including Azdī Arabs. So it can be expected that the Ibādīs did form an important group among the Arab Muslims who traded with Kerala. There is evidence of the role of the Ibādī Imāmate in maritime trade and its role in preserving ʿUmān's prosperity. The Ibādī Imām Ghassān bin ʿAbd Allāh (r. 807-822 C. E.) rid the ʿUmān coast of pirates, ʿAbd al-Malik bin Hamīd's reign (r. 822-841) is described as one of prosperity and al-Muhannā bin Jayfar (r. 841-851) enjoyed stability during the beginning of his rule (Gaiser, 2010: 185). There is no evidence of the sectarian influence of the Ibādiyya among the Muslims of Kerala. This can be attributed to a number of factors. These include the non-existence of an aggressive proselytizing tendency on behalf of the Ibādīs, the exclusive Arab tribal nature adopted by the Ibādiyya after its spread among the tribes in northern Oman and finally the decline of Persia, Iraq and the Gulf region after the Mongol invasion of the mid-thirteenth century and their replacement by Mameluke Egypt in dominating West Asia's trade with Kerala.

Advent of Islam in Kerala

The advent of Islam in Kerala is traced to the conversion of the last Chēra ruler of the second Chēra dynasty the rulers of which used

to hold the title Chēramān Perumāḷ. This tradition is narrated in an Arabic manuscript titled *Qiṣṣat Shakarwatī Farmād* written by an anonymous author. The tradition in brief is that the last Chēramān Perumāḷ witnessed in Kerala a miracle of the splitting of the moon performed by the Prophet Muhammad in Arabia. The king was astonished about the occurrence but did not get a satisfactory explanation from his astronomers. The Prophet then appeared to him in a dream and told him that he himself performed the miracle. The king then desired to embrace Islam. A few years later, a group of dervishes one of whom was a renowned Sheikh came to India on their way to visit the footprint of Adam in Ceylon. The king confirmed from them that it was the Prophet who had performed the miracle. On their way back to Arabia the last Chēramān Perumāḷ accompanied them before which he divided his kingdom between several persons.

The king met the Prophet at Jidda in Arabia and converted to Islam. The members of the family of Habīb bin Mālik, a notable of the tribe of Quraysh to which the Prophet belonged agreed to accompany the Chēramān back to Kerala to propagate Islam. These family members included Mālik bin Dīnar[13], Sharaf al-Dīn bin Malik and others. On their return journey, the king fell ill in al-Shihr, a port city in Yemen. Realising that he would not be able to make back to Kerala he wrote a letter of introduction for his companions to be given to the rulers in Kerala and provided advice to them on what they should do in Kerala. After the Chēramān passed away, the remaining party reached Koduṅgallūr and gave the letter of the Chēramān to the ruler of the city after which they were welcomed and provided houses and agricultural land. The story then goes on to describe the establishment of the first mosques in ten locations in Kerala and in the southern part of neighbouring state of Karnataka namely, Kollam, Koduṅgallūr, Cāliyath, Fandārina, Darmafatan, Jarfattan, Haylī, Kāñjirakkūttu, Manjarūr and Fakanūr [14] (Friedmann, 1975: 235-39).

The famous Muslim scholar of Kerala of the sixteenth century Zayn al-Dīn al-Malbarī al-Malabarī mentions the conversion of the Chēramān Perumāḷ to Islam in his famous work *Tuhfat al-Mujāhidīn fi bad Akhbār al-Purtuqāliyyīn*. According to Zayn al-Dīn the conversion of Chēramān Perumāḷ took place only in the first half of the ninth century C. E. and he ruled out the possibility of the king meeting the Prophet (Makhdum, 2006: 33). There is mention of this tradition also in the Brāhminical text *Kēralōlpathi* where it confuses various rulers who abandoned deference to the Brāhmins by adopting Buddhism, Shaivite renunciation or Islam. It mentions that Buddhists tell of a king who left for Mecca, a king who was not the great Chēramān Perumāḷ but one who ruled after the Chēra dynasty decayed and who should be called properly Kerala Rāja (King of Kerala). This source points out

the popular conflation of early Buddhists and Jains with later Muslims (Kugle and Margariti, 2017: 346, n. 26). According to M. G. S. Narayanan the Chēra ruler who converted to Islam was the last Chēramān Perumāḷ or the last ruler of second Chēra dynasty. He quotes from the second volume of William Logan's work *Malabar* which states that the date mentioned in the foundation plaque at the mosque of Mādāyi is 1124 C. E. This according to Narayanan is a copper plate inscription and is evidence for his argument that it was the last Chēramān Perumāl who converted to Islam as according to him the last known date of the last Chēramān is 1122 C. E. and it was friends of this last Chēramān who established the first ten mosques of the south-west coast of India including Mādāyi (Narayanan, 2013: 485, Index B. 25).

A recent critical review of Narayanan's view regarding the advent of Islam has questioned the assumption that there is a copper plate inscription at the Mādāyi mosque with the date 1124 C. E. Instead, Abdullah Anjilath has referred to an inscription on a wooden plank which merely mentions that it was written in the fifth year meaning the fifth year of the Islamic calendar i.e. Hijra 5 or 627 C. E. as the foundation year of the mosque. Anjilath also states that there is no copper plate inscription bearing the date 1124 C. E. in the mosque. He attributes the mistaken notion that there is an inscription in Mādāyi mosque referring to 1124 C. E. to the colonial historian Robert Sewell (Sewell, 1882: 242) whose version was then repeated by the scholars who followed including Logan and M. G. S. Narayanan who did not verify this information. Narayanan's argument that the last Chēramān Perumāl's conversion to Islam ended the second Chēra dynasty is based on the inscription at the Mādāyi mosque (Anjilath, 2018: 75-76). But the inscription referring to the fifth year of the Islamic calendar at Mādāyi mosque was published in the 1928-29 Annual Report of South Indian Epigraphy (ARSIE) (Anjilath, 2015: 40-42).

Besides this inscription, Anjilath also points out to two other inscriptions, one at the mosque at Kasargode dated to Hijra 22 or 643 C. E. and the inscription at the Mālik bin Dīnar mosque at Sreekandāpuram dated to Hijra 74 or 693 C. E.[15] Anjilath states that the dating of these inscriptions in the three mosques is proof of the presence of Arabs in Kerala in the pre-Islamic period itself and that the conversion of the last Chēramān Perumāl to Islam does not have any historical veracity (Anjilath, 2015: 45). But that raises the tantalizing question about the possibility of the message of Islam being transmitted from Medina through Indian Ocean trade routes to Arab traders at Mādāyi in Kerala. The inscription at Mādāyi is written in the calligraphic style and sentence structure that prevailed in Hejaz during the early years of Islam (Anjilath, 2018: 76). Medina at that time was the sole centre of Islam in Hejaz during its contest with Mecca from where the Prophet and his

followers had been forced to leave. This means that pre-Islamic Arabs, including from Hijaz and not just 'Umān and Yemen, would have developed regular trade relations with Kerala in the immediate period before the advent of Islam without which a mosque would not have been established at Mādāyi at this point of time. Such issues have to be explored more deeply before a formal conclusion can be arrived at on this matter.

It was not just Arab Muslim traders who would have arrived in Kerala at this time. There also would have been other categories of Arab Muslims who arrived through maritime routes to Kerala. An oral tradition of Muslims of Sri Lanka and south India mentions the arrival of some Muslims of peninsular Arabia who were dissatisfied with the policies of the Ummayad caliph 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān in the eighth century C. E. They decided to leave the land proceeding from the Euphrates southward and made settlements on the Konkan coast and further in south India, Sri Lanka and at Malacca (Mahroof, 1993: 172). It is well known that there was political strife and violent clashes among Muslims even during the time of the Rāshidūn caliphate. It is very much possible that groups who dissented with the Muslim ruler would have left the land using the trade routes for places where their own Arab brethren had already settled like south India or Sri Lanka. It is also stated that an Arab missionary and scholar, al-Hājj 'Abd Allāh ibn Anwar came to Trichi, when the Cholas were in power and he built a mosque there in 738 C. E. (Mahroof, 1993: 173).

Friedman has mentioned in his commentary on *Qiṣat Shakarwatī Farmād* that the tradition of the conversion of a Chēra ruler to Islam provided legitimacy and respect to the Māpillā Muslim community of Kerala among whom the tradition is very popular (Friedmann, 1975: 244). This has very strong parallels with the Thomas traditions of St. Thomas Christians of Kerala. Both these traditions point out to the conversion of an individual or group belonging to political or socio-cultural elite with the Chēramān Perumāl in the case of the Muslims and Nambudiri Brāhmins in the case of the Christians providing legitimacy and status to both these communities in a highly stratified caste-based social structure. When it is proven that it is historically untenable for the said event to have occurred during the time mentioned in the tradition; the entire tradition is rejected out of hand. Such a position does not take into account the manner in which these traditions are constructed. A traditional account is often constructed over a long period of time with each generation adding on to what had been originally stated either in oral or written form forming layers of tradition in one single account. In most instances, these traditions reflect the views and interests of the elites both religious and secular of the religious community under concern. For example, the elites of a dominant trade settlements might add

the name of their settlements to the already existing list of the earliest settlements of a community preserved in an origin tradition. The case of the St. Thomas Christians has been already mentioned. In the case of the Muslims, a text named *Rihalathulmulk* written by 'Umar bin Muhammad Suhrawardi mentions eighteen original settlements of the Muslims of Kerala, adding eight more to the original ten (Bahawudeen, 2004: 40-41; Randathani, 2007: 35-36).

In fact, the very practice of mentioning a list of original settlements of a West Asian religious community could have been a practice which emerged in early medieval Kerala especially if the memory of the earliest settlements in the case of Christians and Jews had been lost. The West Asian religious communities might have been influenced by each other with regard to this practice adopting certain elements or features from each other's traditions. If an event occurred later on whereby an individual or group from the elite sections of indigenous society converted to the West Asian religious community it is then described as having occurred as part of the events that led to the origin of the community to enhance the overall prestige and legitimacy of the community. It also has to be noticed that the event of the conversion of the elite itself is embellished with additions or borrowings from other traditions of sections of the religious community to which she has converted located in some other region or part of the globe. This is possible because these traditions have been transmitted through trade and commercial networks that bound communities belonging to the same religion spread out across a continent or even continents. For example Friedman refers to similarities in the tradition of the conversion of Chēramān Perumāl to the conversion of Sheikh Ratan and that of King Bhoja of Ujjain (Friedmann, 1975: 242-243). This means that historical-critical methods need to be employed in the efforts to separate the layers of tradition hidden within a single origin account. In this effort the earliest events pertaining to the origin of a religious community can be separated from events that occurred later on. It might also turn out that certain events or individuals mentioned in a tradition were purely imaginary.

Zoroastrians

Three names in the list of Sasānian-Pahlavi names are introduced by the term *az weh-dēnān* meaning 'among those of the Good Religion'. In a paper jointly published by Carlo G. Cereti, Luca M. Olivieri and Joseph Vazhuthanapally in 2002 in the journal *East and West,* it has been pointed out that these are Zoroastrian names and refers to traders belonging to that religion who were active in Kollam during this period. This is important for the history of the Zoroastrian community in India. It can be an important reference point for studying the involvement of this community in Indian Ocean maritime trade. This has to be studied

in conjunction with Sasānian inscriptions in the Buddhist cave complex at Kanheri on the northern outskirts of the city of Mumbai dated to the eleventh century C. E. engraved by some Zoroastrian traders who visited the complex (Cereti et al., 2002: 293, 301-302).

Before the Sasānian period, Zoroastrianism was the religion of the Achaemenid Persian Empire that lasted from the sixth century B. C. E. to the end of the fourth century B. C. E. But the faith that was practised at that time was not as centralised as it was to become during the Sasānian period. The Greek/Macedonian Seleucids and the Parthian rulers from Central Asia who followed the Achaemenids did not promote Zoroastrianism as a state religion. The basic concept of Zoroastrianism is cosmological dualism of two warring gods in eternal conflict. Good people are supposed to follow the good god, Ahura-Mazda or Ormuzd and worship in fire. The evil god is Ahirman.

It is believed that a lot of changes occurred to Zoroastrianism by the time of the Sasānians. Additions included astrology, practice of exposing the dead to the sun and the birds and rituals of magic. Village priests called the *mobeds* also called *magi* by the Greeks and Romans burned and tended the sacred fires the Zoroastrian temples. Above the village *mobeds* there was a network of higher-ranking regional mobeds like bishops, and the whole was headed by a chief priest titled *mobadan-mobed* or *archimagus*. It was Tansar, the *mobadan-mobed* or chief priest of the first Sasānian ruler Ardashīr who urged the centralisation of all the empire's fire temples under the authority of the central "royal fire" temple of Işṭakhr in Fārs province which was the homeland of the Sasānian dynasty, and the prohibition of independent temples. But in the beginning, the Sasānian rulers did not impose an intolerant version of Zoroastrianism on the population as they were not strictly orthodox. They favoured a variant cult within Zoroastrianism called Zurvanism which laid emphasis on monotheism which undermined the radical dualism of orthodox Zoroastrianism. But the second chief priest Kartīr was more intolerant and it led to a crackdown by the state on non-orthodox Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian religions and sects (Moffett, 2006: 106-109).

There is evidence for the involvement of ethnic Persian Zoroastrian trading community in the overland trade routes connecting West Asia with Central Asia and China during the Sasānid period. But in the realm of maritime trade there is lesser evidence for Zoroastrian involvement. As mentioned earlier "Persian traders" in the context of maritime trade at this time referred to mostly East Syriac Christians and Persian Jews. But the advent of Islam brought about a change in the situation. Under the Arab rulers, the more privileged category of religions were categorised as "People of the Book". This included Islam, Christianity and Judaism. The next category was the pagans. The Zoroastrians came to

be considered as on a higher plane than idolators but they were more repressed than the Christians and there were large-scale conversion of ethnic Persians to Islam (Moffett, 2006: 336). It is in this context that Zoroastrians begin to be identified as distinctive group of traders in the Indian Ocean maritime exchanges and the settlement of Zoroastrian refugees in India who came to be known as Parsīs took place.

Conclusion

The names of the witnesses mentioned in the *Tarisāppaḷḷi* grant of 849 C. E. refer to the main West Asian trading groups who were involved in the maritime trade of early medieval Kerala. These include East Syriac Christians popularly known as Nestorian Christians, Persian Jews, Arab Muslims and Zoroastrians. The Christians and Jews were already major trading groups involved in Indian Ocean maritime trade during the time of the Sasānian Empire (224 C. E. – 651 C. E.) consisting of Persia and Mesopotamia. The pre-Islamic Arabs many of whom were Persianised also followed other belief systems such as paganism, Christianity, their own version of Judaism and monotheism were also part of these trading ventures. These same groups continued to be involved in maritime trade even after the advent of Islam. By the time of the early 'Abbāsid Caliphate and the beginning of the second Chēra kingdom of Kerala to which period the *Tarisāppaḷḷi* grant is dated to, the Arabs had mainly converted to Islam and the Zoroastrians also joined the group of West Asian traders involved in maritime trade with Kerala. While Syriac Christianity first emerged in the Aramaic-speaking region of northern Mesopotamia it soon spread to the Persian-speaking areas. This resulted in two ethnic and linguistic groups being part of the East Syriac Church who were mainly Syriac (a dialect of Aramaic) –speaking Christians and Persian-speaking Christians.

The church went through several phases of persecution, re-structuring and theological controversy before it emerged as a strong nation-wide religion within the Sasānian Empire. By the time of the late Sasānians, the East Syriac Church was heavily involved in overland and maritime trade networks extending all the way to China. The transition from Sasānian to Islamic rule resulted in a dispute between the patriarch of the church located in Seleucia-Ctesiphon and the metropolitan of Rēv Ardashīr who was supposed to be ecclesiastically under the patriarch over the matter of control of churches in the Gulf, Socotra Island and India. The issue was finally resolved ecclesiastically in favour of the patriarch but the metropolitan of Rēv Ardashīr continued to have influence over the Christians of south India on the matter of rituals and use of liturgical language until the evangelical province of Rēv Ardashīr was extinguished in the eleventh century C. E. The East Syriac Church conducted its maritime trade with south India and Sri

Lanka through a network of churches and monasteries located in the Gulf which were earlier dated to the late Sasānian period. But recent reviews of such archaeological evidence have led to a revised chronological sequence and these sites have now been dated to the early Islamic and early 'Abbāsid periods. This dating has to be studied closer as it has repercussions for studies on expansion of St. Thomas Christian settlements in Kerala. The beginning of the Christian settlement of Kollam which is described as having been established by the Apostle Thomas in the first century C. E. should instead be placed in the beginning of the ninth century C. E. as there is no historical evidence for the existence of Kollam during this period.

The Persian Jews situation was much more favourable than that of the Christians because of the relationship they had with the previous Achaemenid Persian dynasty. The development of the institutional structure of the Persian Jews later led to a split between the religious and secular authorities within the Jewish community during the Ummayad Caliphate. The Persian Jews would have developed relations with the indigenous Malabāri Jews of Kerala for purposes of trade. During the Sasānian period, it was mainly Persianised Arabs from the Fārs and the Kirmān-Makrān coast of Persia and al-'Umān; and Arabs belonging to other belief systems from Yemen who would have been involved in maritime trade with Kerala. The region of al-Bahrayn was excluded from these transactions as the Sasānians tried to divert trade away from the Arabian coast to Persia. al-'Umān could not be avoided because of geographical and strategic reasons. With the advent of Islam these same groups continued to be involved with maritime trade along with the addition of Arab Muslims from al-Bahrayn. The tribes of Central Arabia and the borderlands of Syria and Mesopotamia who formed the rank and file of early Arab Islamic armies would join trade activities only in the ninth century C. E. after the policy of the territorial expansion of the Islamic Empire came to an end. An exception to this could have been the region of Hejaz which could have had maritime relations with Kerala in the earliest period of Islam evidence for which was obtained from the mosque at Mādāyi. The Ibādī Arab Muslims of al-'Umān would have been an important group engaged in trade with Kerala.

The advent of Islam in Kerala has been traditionally attributed to the conversion of the last Chēra ruler or Chēramān Perumāl to Islam during the time of the Prophet Muhammad. He is believed to have gone to Mecca, personally met the Prophet and converted to Islam. The companions of the last Chēramān Perumāl led by Mālik bin Dīnar is supposed to have come back and established ten mosques in Kerala and southern Karnataka. M . G. S. Narayanan had stated in his work that the last Chēramān Perumāl converted to Islam in 1122 C.

E. based on an inscription at Mādāyi mosque dated to 1124 C. E. He suggests that the companions of the last ruler would have established the mosques including the one at Mādāyi in 1124 C. E. But a recent critical review of this view has pointed out that there is no such inscription at the Mādāyi mosque instead there is a wooden plank with an inscription dated to Hijra 5 or 627 C. E. pointing out to the year of the foundation of the mosque. This mistake has been attributed to the colonial historian Robert Sewell whose views were then repeated by later historians without verification. The recent reviewer Abdullah Anjilath has also pointed out the inscriptions at the mosques at Kasargode and Sreekandāpuram also dated to the first century of the Islamic calendar and that the last Chēramān Perumāl's conversion has no historical veracity. This is presented as evidence for the presence of pre-Islamic Arabs in Kerala who would have converted to Islam at a very early period. Christian and Muslim origin traditions of Kerala have to be studied using historical-critical methods as layers of traditions belonging to different time periods could have been coalesced into a unified narrative for purposes of cohesion and providing legitimacy to the community concerned. Zoroastrianism assumed a more unified and centralised structure during the Sasānian Empire as it was accepted by the rulers as the state religion. There is evidence for the involvement of ethnic Persian Zoroastrian trading community in the overland trade routes connecting West Asia with Central Asia and China during the Sasānid period. But in the realm of maritime trade there is lesser evidence for Zoroastrian involvement. The advent of Islam brought about a change in the situation of the Zoroastrians as they began to be persecuted by the Muslim rulers. This also signalled the emergence of the ethnic Persian Zoroastrians as traders in the maritime trade of the Indian Ocean and settlements of this community in India who were called Parsīs.

Notes

1. The church representing the East Syriac Church in Kerala today is the Chaldean-Syrian Church of Thrissur town and its environs and its members are called 'Surāis' by other Christians such as the Syrian Catholics who form the majority Christian denomination in Thrissur referring to the liturgical language used by the Chaldean-Syrians. Surāi means Syriac in Malayalam.

2. The two factions in Kerala representing this tradition are the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church. The two factions split when the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church refused to accept the ecclesiastical authority of the Syrian Oriental Orthodox Church with its headquarters in Damascus, Syria.

3. Monophysyte Christians had migrated to Persia when they faced persecution from the Byzantine Empire whose official faith was Melkite Christianity.

4. This is mentioned in M. G. S. Narayanan's introduction to George Menachery's book. See Menachery 2005: 10.

5. The arguments in favour of this thesis will be elaborated in detail in a forthcoming paper of the author on the Pālayūr tradition.

6. Cosmas Indicopleustes in the sixth century C. E. work titled *Christian Topography* mentions a place named Male where pepper is grown in abundance with a strong presence of Christians. See McCrindle, 2010: 119, 366. K. P. Padmanabha Menon in the work *A History of Kerala: Vol. I* mentions that Male refers to Kollam on the basis of Suleiman's mention of Koulam Mali in the ninth century C. E. See Menon 1924: 271. But it is not possible to prove if Cosmas's reference was to Kollam or not. Rather, Male refers to a region where pepper was grown and not a specific location. Cosmas specifically mentions that there were five ports in the region of Male which export pepper namely Parti, Mangarouth, Salopatana, Nalopatana and Poudopatana. While the other ports are not identified, Mangarouth has been identified with Mangalore. See McCrindle, 2010: 366-67. Therefore, only the eighth century reference can be taken as the first reference to Kollam.

7. This does not mean that the possibility of the Apostle Thomas coming to Kerala can be ruled out as this could be part of the older traditions to which newer ones regarding the seven churches were added on at a later period in time.

8. The Muslims of the Lakshwadeep or Laccadive islands believe that Islam was brought to the area by Ubaidullah in 644 C. E. which led to the conversion of the people of these islands to the new religion. Ubaidulah's tomb is located on Andrott or Androth Island. See Bahawudeen, 2004: 37.

9. Al-'Umān and Al-Bahrain here does not merely mean the modern day nation-states Oman and Bahrain. In earlier periods, the terms al-'Umān and al-Bahrain referred to much larger geographical areas. The term al-'Umān meant the present day United Arab Emirates and the northern portion of modern day Oman while al-Bahrain refers to present day island-nation of Bahrain, Kuwait, the north-eastern coastal tract of Saudi Arabia and the Qatar peninsula.

10. A portion of the Omani coast extends very close to the Iranian coast forming a strategically important choke point called the Strait of Hormuz. It lies at the entrance to the Gulf and any power which wishes to militarily and economically dominate the Gulf has to have domination over the Strait of Hormuz and this particular portion of the Omani coast. Regarding the view that there is no archaeological evidence of late Sasānian presence in the famous northern Oman port city of Ṣuhār confirming the historical references to such an influence it is pointed out that large-scale excavation at Ṣuhār is impossible due to the present state of urban development. Also centuries of development of palm gardens surrounding the city have destroyed many areas from an archaeological perspective. So it is not possible to completely rule out the possibility of Sasānian presence in Ṣuhār See Ulrich, 2011: 380.

11. The Persianised Arabs of the pre-Islamic period would have been from Fārs and the Kirmān-Makrān coast of Persia and al-'Umān. But there were pre-Islamic Arabs mainly in Yemen who also followed other belief systems such as paganism, Christianity, their own version of Judaism and also a group called

the Hanīf who practiced a pre-Islamic mode of monotheism and rejected id-olatry.

12. Yemen's maritime trade would have suffered during the Riddah wars just as in eastern Arabia but would have recovered and prospered from the time of the late Rāshidūn Caliphate.

13. It is now understood that Mālik bn Dīnar was the prominent historical personality who was associated with the founding of the earliest mosques in Kerala and southern Karnataka. He was from Baṣra and is believed to be of Iranian origin rather than Arab. He was a disciple of the famous Sufi Hasan of Baṣra who died in 744 C. E. After his mission to Kerala he went to Khurāsān where he died. See Randathani, 2007: 28. The attempt to add Mālik bn Dīnar to the event of the conversion of Chēramān Perumāl and present him as a member the tribe of the Prophet was to link-up historical and mythical elements to give coherence to the origin account of the Muslims of Kerala which also had the intention of gaining legitimacy for the community. This was by portray-ing the conversion of the main ruler of the land and also linking that event directly with the Prophet and his tribe, the Quraysh. For the purpose of this study it has to be noted that Mālik bn Dīnar was associated with those groups who were already involved in Indian Ocean trade rather than the tribes of Central Arabia and the borderlands of Syria and Mesopotamia who joined these activities only at a later stage.

14. Fakanūr (Barakūr) and Manjarūr (Mangalore) are in Karnataka. Kāñjirakkūttu is probably Kasargode. Haylī is the present Mādāyi. Jarfattan may be identi-fied as Kharapaṭṭaṇa now known as Karipātt. Dahfattan may be Dharmapṭṭaṇa, now known as Dharmaṭam. Fandārina is Pantalāyini Kollam. Chāliyath is Chāliyam near Beypore. See Naryanan, 2013: 345.

15. Information on the three inscriptions was also provided in a Malayalam work published in 2004 which itself has quoted from another work titled *History of Muslims* by V. A. Ahamadul Kabir which the author does not have access to. See Bahawudeen, 2004: 41. The date of Ahamdul Kabir's work is also not provided.

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Owning Muthappan:
The Lumpen Thiyya and Negotiations of Modernity

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Abstract

The historicized Thiyyas of North Malabar are elite, English educated and beneficiaries of British patronage in various ways. This paper argues how such a homogenized concept of Thiyya community is part of a mainstream discourse of modernity which is modeled on colonial concepts of progress, belief and rationality. It tries to look at how the community of devouts of Muthappan Theyyam, especially in Parassini Madappura, facilitates an understanding of the lumpen sections of the Thiyya community. This community of Thiyyas have been absent in the discourses of modernity of nationalism as well as the Ezhava community exhorted by Narayana Guru. Muthappan, the deity of several communities was appropriated by the lumpen sections of the Thiyya community as part of social mobility. The communist movement of the 1930s appropriated the Thiyya Muthappan as Communist Deivam, through which it legitimized Thiyya Muthappan as the real Muthappan. The desire for mobility of a caste community is made possible, but at the cost of other lower caste/tribe histories and presents.
Keywords: Muthappan, Theyyam, Community of Devouts, lumpen Thiyyas, Narayana Guru, Nationalist movement, Communist movement, Modernity.

Introduction

Muthappan Theyyam has been integral to the economic and social mobility of the Thiyya backward caste community in North Malabar.[1] Muthappan was co-opted by the lumpen sections of the Thiyya community, who quite different from the elite Thiyya subject of the discourse of modernity, resorted to believe in Theyyam rather than forms of worship legitimized and disseminated by Narayana guru, which was pivotal to guru's concept of a modern caste community. The Thiyya community which finds mention in various studies pertaining to the modernity of Thiyyas in/and North Malabar is quite often the elite sections of the respective community who benefited from modern education and British patronage. This section of Thiyyas became the representatives of the Thiyya caste and the proponents of a modern backward caste community as defined by Narayana guru. Theyyam, according to guru's philosophy, was one of the various symbols of primitiveness which ought to be eschewed for a caste community's transition to modernity. Muthappan Theyyam and the community of Thiyyas which evolved in and around Parassini Madappura, the

abode of Thiyya Muthappan, hence, is suggestive of an alternative, lumpen community of Thiyyas, which ought to be historicized. This paper would attempt to problematise the historicization of Thiyyas of North Malabar as a homogenous entity in the various studies pertaining to caste, class and modernity in North Malabar. It would look at how the Thiyya community in Parassinikadavu,[2] co-opted Muthappan, who is claimed ownership by other caste communities like Adiyas and Vannans, as part of its mobility towards a modern, secular, communist, backward, caste-community.

Theyyam, Muthappan and the Lumpen Thiyyas of North Malabar

Theyyam, is a ritualistic form of worship, where the elaborately costumed *kolakkaran* (the one who plays the *kolam or Theyyam*) moves into a trance, accompanied by music, whereby he (there is only one Theyyam, Deivakoothu, which is performed by women) is supposed to be transformed into a deity and an object of worship by all, irrespective of caste or religion. This form of worship is popular and distinctive to Northern Kerala, especially North Malabar. Starting from *Thulam pathu* (10th of the Malayalam month *Thulam*), or the months of October or November to May, North Malabar witnesses its Theyyam season. Gods are believed to appear on earth in and through Theyyams in ancestral homes, *kaavus* (shrines) and temples and bless the people out of their miseries. Among the hundreds of Theyyam performed in North Malabar, the Muthappan Theyyam stands apart for the various ways in which it transcends the spatial and temporal constrictions usually associated with Theyyam performances. Muthappan Theyyam, quite often performed by people belonging to the lower caste Vannan community in North Malabar, is worshipped as a secular and subaltern deity who eats fried fish, drinks toddy, is accessible to all, irrespective of their caste and religious affiliations and is performed in public and political platforms, be it bus stands, railway stations or even a political procession of the atheist CPI(M).[3]

> Unlike other Teyyams, Muthappan does not operate through a medieval imaginary of an order built around caste, power, rank or status. He does not demand any prescribed services denoting hierarchy: no blacksmith is required to sharpen his weapons (his sword is blunt); a launderer is not needed to supply clean clothes; a village astrologer does not have to set an auspicious time for the performance of his rite; a carpenter is not required to make a sacred stool (Vadakkiniyil, 2010:136).

Y.V. Kannan states that Muthappan Theyyam, along with Puthiyabhagavathy Theyyam were the only two Theyyams who could be performed on any day, "be it the coronation day or the death day of the *naaduvazhi*" (Kannan, 2007:18).

There are various narratives associated with Muthappan, derived from his *vachal* (utterances) as well as orally and textually transmitted myths. However all these narratives are unanimous in the way they refer

to the suabalternity of Muthappan's life and how he stood and fought for the rights of the tribals and the lower caste communities. Y.V. Kannan's book *Muthappan Puravritham* elaborates on the socio political dimensions of Muthappan *vachals* which, according to him, reproduces (hi)stories of protest, especially during the rule of the Kottayam rajas in North Malabar. The book discusses how Muthappan could have been a tribal leader or who fulfills the desire for a tribal leader who maneuvered a tribal resistance against brahminism. By the thirteenth century, North Malabar including Wayanad had come under the control of the Kottayam kings. The Kottayam dynasty, also known as *Puranadu Rajavamsham*, was Brahminical in nature. As part of wielding their power effectively over the people, the Kottayam kings reinforced the hegemony of the Kshatriyas. This had a telling influence on the lives of the Adivasis in particular. During the reign of Harishchandra Perumal, the Adivasis had to bear untold miseries and discriminations. The rulers adopted a divide and rule policy whereby they created a hiatus between the villagers whose major source of income came from collecting wax, honey etc and the forest tribes who depended on the forest resources for their livelihood. Under the Kottayam kings, the forest tribes began to be denied basic amenities and services (Ibid: 20-27). The moment required a leader who would stand with the oppressed tribal communities and co-ordinate their resistance against the men in power. Muthappan, or the concept of Muthappan, fulfills this desire for resistance and revolt.

The *vachals* of Muthappan describe similar narratives of solidarity and compassion as Muthappan becomes one among the tribes and fought with them against an autocratic reign. There are *vachals* which describe how he became the midwife of an Adiya [4] woman who was denied help because of being a tribal, how he became their doctor and treated poisoning, how he maneuvered an army of the dispossessed and led them in their fight against their despotic rulers, and conquered Harishchandra *Kotta* (fort) and helped take over the granaries and distribute food among the needy (Ibid: 20-27). Muthappan, as per this narrative stood for the tribal communities, and with them to fight for their rights to the land and resources which were seized from them.

Oral and printed myths on Muthappan reproduces (t)his subaltern and rebellious nature in various ways. A predominant narrative which has been reproduced in booklets, histories, devotional songs and Television serials associated with Muthappan describes him as a lost and found child who was bought up by a Namboothiri family. [5] Muthappan was found abandoned on a holy rock (*Thirunettikallu*) in Thiruvanchira river by the childless Padikuttiyama, the wife of Ayyankara Nambuthiri, when she was going for a bath. She took the child home where he grew up as their child. However his camaraderie with those below his caste status becomes a matter of resentment among many in the family including the foster par-

ents, especially the father. Eventually Muthappan leaves home. He reaches Kunnathurpady, [6] makes himself visible before an Adiya couple, Chandan and his wife. Muthappan was believed to have stayed in a cave in Padi, for over thirty five years. Meanwhile he worked relentlessly for the upliftment of the oppressed communities, and stood for their rights whenever they had to face brutalities from the upper caste landlords. From there, Muthappan went to Wayanad where again he spent a few years in Nambolakaadu where he met Nambolakaadu Muthappan and together they worked for the hill dwellers in Nambola kaadu, Cheronkaadu and Munnadu. (Nair, 1996: 245).

Parassinikadavu in Kannur was Muthappan's next halt where he appeared before Thaliyil *Peruvannan* in the form of a fish caught in the Peruvannan's fish hook. (There are alternate narratives regarding how Muthappan appeared in Parassinikadavu – like the one which mentions an *ambu* (arrow) that was aimed from Kannapuram which went and struck itself near a Kanjhiramaram in Parassinikadavu and another one that mentions a ponvigraham (golden idol) that got caught in the hook of the Peruvannan who was fishing on the banks of Valapattanam river to quench his hunger). While looking for ways to cook the fish, Peruvannan saw a streak of smoke some feet away. He fries the fish on the burning coals and before having it, offers a portion as well as the toddy that he had with him, to Muthappan. This became a routine. Eventually, the routine assumed dimensions of a rite which, when the Peruvannan could no longer afford to continue, was bequeathed to the Kunnumel Thiyya family. Members of this family used to provide the toddy required to offer Muthappan (Ibid: 235-56). Later on, they became the overseers and owners of the place and came to be called Parassini Madappurayil family, the owners of Parassini Madappura, the Madappura of Thiyya Muthappan. Parassini Madappura is presently one of the most income-gathering temples of North Kerala as well as the most popular abode of (Thiyya) Muthappan.

We would now look at how a community of the devout consisting of lumpen Thiyyas (along with a public of other lower castes and religions) evolved around Parassinikadavu, a community which does not find mention in the histories of the backward caste community of the region. Such an absence is part of a casteist historical perspective which presents a homogenized Thiyya community, modeled on a Hinduised nationalist discourse on the one hand and an Ezhava-ised or Narayana guru exhorted community discourse on the other, as the subject of modernity.

Madappuras and Temples: The Historicized Elite Thiyyas of North Malabar

Thiyyas are a prominent backward caste community in North Malabar, numerically, culturally and politically. Considering them an avarna community in Kerala, the mobility that they have achieved in the various indices of modernity is noteworthy and of interest to the historians. However the historicization of Thiyyas in various texts tends to document

the caste community as a homogenized entity, a community of people who were economically, socially and culturally well off compared to the Ezhavas of South Kerala. C. Kesavan, the Ezhava chief minister of Kerala from 1950 to 1952, after travelling to Malabar and meeting the Thiyyas there, asserted:

> Ezhava bourgeoisie, then, were more in Malabar. Seeing the condition of Malabar, it is my firm conviction that if there is the support of the ruling class, any community has only such weaknesses as would disappear soon.(2010: 171-173).

This observation taking into consideration the elite Thiyyas, made Kesavan conclude that the distinction between the Ezhava and Thiyya communities was more or less economic in nature.

Bhagyasheelan Chalad, in his *Kannurinde Kalvilakkukal*, enumerates the contributions of the Thiyya elite to the social and cultural modernization of North Malabar. The book gives details about the Thiyyas who were proficient in Sanskrit, Ayurveda and Astrology, writers like Potheri Kunjambu, who wrote the novel *Saraswathy Vijayam*; 'Uruvancheri Gurunadanmar' viz, Punathoor Raman Gurukal, Madai Mandan Gurukal, and Kakkuzhi Kunhappa Gurukkal who were wealthy enough to own schools; Ayurvedic scholars like Uppot Kannan, who translated the Ayurvedic text *Ashtangahredayam* into Malayalam; Keeleri Kunhikannan, considered to be the father of Indian circus, as well as the various other Thiyyas who contributed to the educational, administrative, medical and scientific realms of North Malabar as early as the twentieth century. (2009: 27-41) Majority of the Thiyyas who are featured in this book as the lamps of Kannur are those who owned land, educated in English and patronized by the British.

The assumption that the Thiyyas of North Malabar were a single homogenous group of elite backward caste was the main reason for the initial skepticism of Narayana Guru regarding the need for a temple for Thiyyas in North Malabar. When Varathur Kaniyil Kunjhikannan approached Narayana Guru to construct a temple for Thiyyas in North Malabar, Guru shared his doubts about the need for such a temple as the Thiyyas there had English education and were well versed in Sanskrit, many being Vedantis and Brahmasamajis (Smaranika, 2016: 32). "Wouldn't they ridicule me telling that someone came from somewhere and dug a stone there?" (*Smaranika, 2016: 32*).

Dilip M. Menon's *Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South Kerala, Malabar 1900-1948*, is a prominent study which attempted to construct the rise of the elite, middle class Thiyya community of North Malabar. Menon describes how a new elite was born out of the colonial and missionary presence in North Malabar.

The Basel Evangelical Mission, established in Switzerland in 1815, began its activities in north Malabar a quarter of a century later, establishing a network of elementary and high schools by the end of the nineteenth century. The Tiyyas were among the first to join these institutions and a significant minority had subsequently worked their way into the colonial administration as tehsildars, lawyers, pleaders, sub-judges and up to the ranks of deputy collectors (1994: 64).

Thiyya families dominated entrepreneurships, banking, toddy and arrack business, weaving and tile factories etc (64-65). Menon's "community of worship" was "a religious culture shared by both upper and lower castes but understood and appropriated differently" and "was composed of dominant Nayar and Tiyya tharavadus and the other castes who lived around the shrine and worked on the lands of the tharavadus or performed specialised services for them" (40).

Based on such a concept of religious culture, Menon describes three different notions of community formed around sites of worship:

> First, there were festivals centered on the tharavadu-shrine complex, which emphasized interdependence and obligations. Secondly, there were pilgrimages to shrines which emphasized the possibility of interaction as equals despite differences in caste status. In the third form of worship, there was a direct recognition of the skewed balance of the relations of power between tharavadu and cultivators. Lower caste victims of upper caste authority were deified in certain shrines and thus,

the limits of authority were defined to an extent (1994: 41).

However, Parassini Madappura, or Madappuras, controlled by Thiyya families, where a community of devouts, consisting of a lumpen majority, was formed around the worship of Muthappan Theyyam, do not find mention in this community of temples and shrines.

Madappuras are the sites of worship of Muthappan Theyyam where the rituals are officiated by Thiyyas. [7] In other words "temples that worship Muthappan came to be called Madappuras" (Nair, 1996: 237). The term Madappura is associated with mada (cave). "The first such home (pura) was the one built aside the mada in Kunnathur Padi where Muthappan is supposed to have sat in meditation for several years" (Kannan, 2007: 86). (Pura is the term used by Thiyya caste and certain other OBC communities including the Muslims in Pazhayangadi to refer to their homes). Although Kunnathur Padi is considered to be the first Madappura of Muthappan, Parassini Madappura has developed to become the most popular, most visited and most income gathering Madappuras of Muthappan. There are more than hundred such Madappuras in North Malabar (Ibid: 116), which includes railway madappuras and fisheries madappuras, where Muthappan is the presiding Theyya kolam and Thiyyas, the madayans. Chirakkal T. Balakrishnan describes these Madappuras, as "the sites of worship which

are not dominated by Brahmins" and states how the majority of backward caste communities in Malabar have some kind of a relation to Madappuras and Podikalams [8] (Balakrishnan, 1996: 254). The study of Madappuras and the community of devouts formed in these spaces are quite important in understanding the history of mobilization and modernity of the Thiyya backward caste community in North Malabar, as well as that of the region, North Malabar.

However this lumpen community of devouts has often been over-looked in the histories of modernity of the Thiyya community (and) of North Malabar. The community of devouts refers to the lumpen public of devotees formed as part of the worship of a Theyyam in Muthappan Madappuras, a mode of worship considered primitive and uncivilized. It refers to a public which was not considered modern enough to be enumerated as a Thiyya community in/by the discourses of modernity of the caste community or the region of North Malabar. It was a community which was not conjunctural but consequential, inscribed as it was in the philosophy of Muthappan myth. Muthappan symbolizes the desire to uphold solidarities and disturb tyranny:

> He has the ability to unite people as a class or …. He is a being of the moment, of the event, of the situation, of the ongoing and multi-linear flux of existence, overcoming any boundary, hierarchizing, starting force or potency that might rise up in his path (Vadakkiniyil, 2010: 146).

While historicizing the Thiyyas of North Malabar as a heterogenous community, we can document them as a lumpen community whose modernity was prompted through a pattern of worship judged primitive and uncivilized by mainstream discourses of modernity.

Mainstream Discourses of Modernity and the Absent Lumpen Thiyya Community

The historicization of the elite Thiyya as the representatives of the community in North Malabar may be seen in relation to two mainstream discourses of modernity – the Ezhava community reform movement headed by Narayana guru and the nationalist movement during the early twentieth century. For Narayana Guru, progress ought to be modeled on the English (cited in Methala, 2015: 148). Temples ought to propagate such a philosophy:

> Those who go to temple would bathe and become clean. They would think about God. They would breathe fresh air. By practicing bhajan and fasting, some would purify their body and soul. For some, their beliefs would even cure diseases. If all these are possible how can I say that temples are not required?" (Ibid: 136).

For Guru, toddy, opium, marijuana, tobacco etc led to inebriation and thereby belonged to the category of alcohol. (*Smaranika, 2016: 208*).

For Narayana Guru, temples were meant for the holistic development and progress of people, especially those who were kept away from temples because of having born in an avarna community and hence impacting their very sense of self respect. Dr. Palpu describes the purpose of temple construction in Guru's philosophy:

> Temples and Mutts have been of great help for the progress of this (Thiyya) community. Such institutions have not only catered to the religious needs of the people, but they also have enthused them in many kinds of good deeds. Through their help, people differing in social position and character have become united with a sense of equality. Thus feelings of brotherhood and mutual love have been engendered in them. Temples have been helpful in making ordinary people act with rectitude and a sense of morality. These are verily institutions, which propagate religion as well as moral conduct. They are also intended to give craft based and specialized kind of education and training. The community's resources are conserved by them to be utilized for its well being as well as progress. These institutions owned by them have become the means to assert the self-respect of this community, which has been thoroughly ruined by long years of social persecution. These temples are intended to be accessible to members of all castes, lower as well as higher. (Sreenivasan, 1989: 65-66.)

In the pre independence period, castes from the Thiyyas downwards were barred from going to temples in North Malabar. However the presence of Madappuras and *Kavus* facilitated unrestricted pathways as spaces of worship. It is in such a context that Parassini Madappura ought to be seen. The Madappura was there in Parassinikadavu before the project of constructing temples for Thiyyas in Malabar like the Jagannatha temple (in 1908) and Sundereshwara temple (in 1916) in Thalassery and Kannur respectively as part of moderinizing the caste community. Parassini Madappura in that sense might have been a temple belonging to a lumpen Thiyya community who were not as visible as the Thiyyas, modernized as an outcome of colonial modernity.

Narayana Guru's activities aimed at reformation of a caste based society and his consecration of Ezhava Shiva was based on his experience of the not-yet-enlightened primitive Ezhava communities whom he was familiar with in the princely states of Thiru-Cochi. They were incapable of thinking of self respect considering the kind of caste based discriminations they had to go through. According to Y.V. Kannan, in a region under direct British rule, the folk mode of worship called Theyyam had led to a different social formation of backward caste community. Probably the rituals associated with Theyyam might have looked primitive for a person like Narayana guru prompting him to introduce a different form and structure of worship in Kannur (Kannan, 2007: 82).

> When it was decided that temples be built for the avarnas and pujas done by avarna pujaris and that one should maintain personal hy-

giene it was forgotten that in the *thanams, palliyaras and kazhakams* (Non- brahmanical spaces of worship) of the avarnas, they themselves performed the pujas and that the *kolakkaran, anthithiriyan, velichappadan* and the *koottayikaran* maintained personal hygiene not only in *Palliyaras* but also in homes and other public spaces" (Ibid: 82).

Taking all these into consideration Y.V. Kannan describes Muthappan as a social reformer whose resistance against Brahmanism and casteist discriminations had started decades before the reformist movements of Narayana guru (Ibid).

Varathoor Kaniyil Kunjikannan, who was instrumental in bringing Guru to Kannur in order to construct a temple, had to convince him that the community as a whole was not as modern as Guru thought them to be, "consisting of Sanskrist scholars, English educated members etc." He describes about the not yet civilized Thiyyas in their community:

Swamin! Despite Vedanta and Brahmasamajam no one has been able to save or stop those believers who still follow the devilish and detestable worship rites. The community still lies oppressed in drinking, animal sacrifice and primitive idol worship. If there was at least one temple, with the satvika form of worship, people could go there freely, bathe, enter the temple and pray (*Smaranika, 2016: 33*).

When Guru expressed his surprise at the presence of such primitive worship patterns in such a "civilized rajyam ruled by the Whites," Kunjikannan continues, "Yes Swami…the queen has declared they wouldn't interfere in religious matters. Since the savarnas expect to see the others continue to degrade themselves through such forms of worship, they encourage such worship patterns of the avarnas" (*Smaranika, 2016: 33*). Hearing this, Narayana Guru gives in to Kunjikannan's request for a Thiyya temple in Kannur.

The need for a temple for the community is raised despite the existence of Parassini Madappura, managed by a trust consisting of Thiyya families. Interestingly the Madappura is less than twenty kilometers from Pallikunnu in Kannur, where the new Thiyya temple was to come up. References to processions from Parassini Madappura to Sundereshwara temple during its opening in 1916 [9] and to Kottiyur temple prove that the Madappura existed before any idea about constructing modern temples for Thiyyas. Mukundan P.M., former Madayan of Parassini Madappura, while talking about the secular public in the Madappura refers to the eight hundred year old egalitarian tradition of the Madappura which the Madayans are very particular about even today. [10]

However, normative standards of progress and modernity must have prevented Parassini Madappura from qualifying as a temple of Thiyyas. This includes the idea about Theyyam as a primitive form of worship. Its interpretation as a devil dance by orientalist scholars was reproduced by native discourses of modernity, be it the nationalist movement or the

Ezhava communitarian movement. The worship of a Theyya kolam, the rituals of the Madappura, which included giving toddy as prasadam [11] to the devotees etc, were irrational, unscientific and superstitious to the spokespersons of Western models of progress and modernity. Dilip Menon quotes how Kottieth Krishnan, K. Chanthan and a few others associated with the new Tiyya temples, founded the Kerala Labour Union in 1918 for toddy tappers who had decided to give up their profession, how the Jagannatha temple became the centre of rehabilitation activities and how the Union explored the possibility of setting up a business for dealing in jiggery made from sweet toddy (1994: 76). Needless to say, it was the Guru's model of temple and modern forms of worship that found support from the nationalist Congress movement, for whom the temple entry movement was not just a way to forge "a consolidated Hindu identity and to discourage conversions which was engendered by disabilities enforced by the caste system," but more importantly to recover from the loss of image that associations with the Malabar rebellion of 1921 had bought in its wake (Manmathan, 2013:65). Theyyam, as a form of worship wouldn't have qualified as a modern form of worship as per Western notions of modernity, neither would it have been benefited a nationalist movement which was bent on validating Hinduism as the standard religion of modernity.

Parassini Madappura, Thiyya Muthappan and the Mobility of the Lumpen Thiyya Community

Parassini Madappura and Muthappan have been integral to the making of a modern community of lumpen Thiyyas, for whom Theyyam worship was not a primitive mode of worship but a means for upward mobility. Parassini Madappura, the most popular of Thiyya Muthappan Madappuras, is often cited as an exemplary space of secularism by providing an abode of worship to people irrespective of caste or religion. The temple is also popular for the food which is served to any number of devotees who visit the temple, on a daily basis, free of cost and irrespective of caste and religion. Free meals, served twice a day, apart from the tea and prasadam consisting of green gram and coconut pieces are major attractions of the place. The Muthappan Theyyam, like several other Theyyams, is not a vegetarian but rather is quite particular about being offered toddy and fried fish. Before the taxation policies tightened their grip over toddy sales, toddy was given as prasadm to the devotees. The Madayan, the eldest Thiyya member of the Parassini Madappurayil family, officiates over a set of rituals which incorporates people belonging to various lower caste communities (like Vannans who performs the Muthappan kolam and Malayas who are entrusted with the music which accompanies the Theyyam performance). A Muslim family in Mattool and a Dalit family in Morazha were/are entrusted with traditional rights like bringing the groceries and paddy respectively to be used for the annual Puthari Maholsavam. Fish was supposed to be bought by a family belonging to the Valluva community. These are suggestive of imagining a republic of bahujan Muslim communities in and through

these Madappuras which goes along with the egalitarian philosophy of Muthappan myth.

This paper does not intend to establish Thiyya community or Parassini Madappura as a timeless abode of classless, casteless secular republic. On the contrary it attempts to historicize the modernization of the lumpen community of Thiyyas around Parassini Madappura in accordance with the socio political developments in the region. Although the emergent community of Thiyyas in Parassinikadavu had resisted Ezhavisation through its distinctive community built around the worship of Muthappan Theyyam, the implications of this resistance have undergone transformations, assuming Brahminical dimensions as well.

The demand for a separate identity from the Ezhava backward caste community has been a persisting one for the Thiyya community. Sreebitha notes that the Kochi Ezhava Samajam was renamed as Thiyyar Mahasabha in the yogam held in Palluruthi in 1927 on the request of one C. Krishnan, a Thiyya (2018: 148). From the Thiyyar Mahasabha to the non political Thiyya Mahasabha, formed recently (in 2010), for the protection of the rights of the Thiyyas and its separate caste identity, there has been a growing sense of dissatisfaction on the part of the Thiyya community for being counted along with the Ezhava community. [12] Several groups which had been formed like Uthara Kerala Thiyyar Sabha in Cheruvathur in the 1930s, Thiyya Mahasabha in Calicut in the 1980s etc were engaged in activities related to the welfare of the community. The community of devouts of Muthappn theyyam, by its very practice of rites judged as primitive, steers away from the frames of a modern Ezhava community (as well as that of the modern Thiyya community of North Malabar). It asserts its distinctive Thiyya identity by virtue of its worship of Muthappan theyyam. However this assertion of distinctive identity has transformed into an assertion of caste superiority, especially over the lower caste communities. This may be seen in the present discourses around Muthappan. Muthppan, from being an icon of Thiyya mobility has now become one for asserting Thiyya superiority.

This accounts for the way in which Muthappan is being reproduced and legitimized as Thiyya Muthappan, and Parassini Madappura the real abode of Muthappan.[13] Wikipedia, for instance describes Muthappan as Sree Muthappan, a Malabar Thiyya deity commonly worshipped in the North Malabar region of Kerala and Coorg region of Karnataka, India. Muthappan is the principal diety in the ritualistic Theyyam dance (Muthappan Theyyam) performed in the famous Parassinikadavu Temple. The ritual performer of Muthappan Theyyam belongs to the Vannan community while the puja rituals and rites for Muthappan are performed by the Thiyya community. [14]

There are around twenty five Muthappan community group pages in the Facebook. Almost twenty of them are Parassini Muthappan pages.

And in pages named Muthappan, what is described are rituals associated with Parassinikadavu. Kunnathoor Pady, despite being the *aaroodam* of Muthappan is not a page one often comes across. Several Muthappan organizations outside Kerala are associated with Parassini Muthappan. For instance, the Pisri Sri Muthappan Charitable Foundation in Pune annually celebrates Parassinikadavu Sri Muthappan Vellatta Mahotsavam. Sree Muthappan Seva Samithi Ajman Indian Association organizes Puthari Maholsavams from 2015. This is how the story of Muthappan is given in their site"The traditional story of Parassinikadavu Muthappan describes the background of the deity." [15] Muthappan becomes synonymous with Parassinikadavu Muthappan. The very concept of Railway Muthappan evolved in relation to Parassini Muthappan. The labourers who were expelled from their jobs go to Parassini and pray to the Muthappan there following which their prayers are heard and their jobs reinstated. In return they construct a Muthappan temple near Kannur railway station. [16] Muthappan becomes reincarnated as Parassinikadavu Muthappan and the principal deity of the Thiyya community.

The various histories of subaltern resistances and victories associated with Muthappan are sidelined and invalidated as part of this co-option. The narrative of resistance against Kshatriya dominance of the Kottayam kings by Adivasis, exhorted by Muthappan, which is described by Y.V. Kannan as "the earliest of Nelleduppu protests" (2007: 28) in Kerala, narratives that describe Muthappan as a Parayan chini, an Adivasi leader with evidences based on the symbols of Theyyam according to Vadakkiniyil Dinesan (2014: 114), stories of how Muthappan was the kuladeivam of Vannan community and how Muthappan appeared to the Peruvannan as a Ponvigraham (golden idol) that got hooked in his fishing rod as a means to help his family from dire poverty, [17] are narratives that are sidelined and are under threat of being branded as not authenticate enough. The threat of inauthentication, has also led to certain tribes having to legally prove their tribal identity as may be seen in the case of the Adiya tribe in Kunnathurpady.

Recently KIRTADS (Kerala Institute for Research Training and Development Studies of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) denied caste certificates to the Adiya tribe of Kunnathurpady, on the grounds that they worship Muthappan Theyyam, who is the deity of Thiyyas. Since they perform/worship Muthappan Theyyam they are Thiyyas and hence cannot be issued the Adiya tribe certificate the argument put forward by KIRTADS. The Adiya tribe has been stripped off their constitutional privileges and are waiting to be proved by KIRTADS that they are actually tribes and don't belong to the Thiyya community.[18] The Adiyas are the tribes living in Kunnathurpady, described in the Vachals as the *aaroodam* of Muthappan before he went to Wayanad or Parassinikadavu. The Muthappan performed/worshipped in Kunnathurpady has its own regional specificities. It is for instance the only place where an Adiya male accompanies the Muthappan

kolam as komaram. Pady, similarly is one of the very few places where women belonging to the Adiya community are allowed to be part of performing puja for a deity. The 1950 presidential order conferred scheduled tribe status to Adiya community and became mandatory that Adiyas have to be included in the Scheduled tribe list irrespective of the place they live anywhere in Kerala.[19] However a study by a KIRTADS official in 2012, it was established that Adiya community exists only in Wayanad and hence the tribe with the same name in Kannur was not authentic. Also they worshipped Muthappan, who is the deity of Thiyyas and hence cannot be conferred ST status. This denial of tribal identity to a community on the basis that they worship Muthappan who is a Thiyya deity is one of the various ways in which the co option of a deity by a backward caste community can lead to the erasure or invalidation of other lower caste/tribal community histories, pasts and presents.

The claiming of Muthappan as a Thiyya deity has other consequences which relates to the rights taken away from the person or community who performs Muthappan. Balakrishnan Peruvannan, who belongs to the Kandathil tharavadu and who has been performing Muthappan kolam for forty five years in Parassinikadavu tells [20] that there have been various changes and restrictions imposed on him as a kolam performer as well as a person belonging to a Vannan community who had been conferred certain rights in Parassini Madappura. The family of the Peruvannan who performs Muthappan is entitled to be provided with all things except water in the occasion of events like marriage happening in the family. Nobody remembers this anymore. After the Thiruvappana a certain proportion of money that is offered by the devotees, that is one of three kindis of offering from the bandaram, is entitled for the Vannan who performs the kolam which is not followed now. The secular philosophy inscribed in the myth of Muthappan has been interrupted and intervened in by the modernized Thiyya community in various ways.

The legitimization of Thiyya Muthappan of Parassini Madappura as the real Muthappan may also be attributed to the secularizing drive on the part of the communist movement in Kerala. As far as the Communist movement, which began to assert itself in North Malabar in the 1930s, was concerned, Theyyam, especially Muthappan Theyyam, was not something that could be ignored. Theyyam was the form of worship for a majority of the lumpen communities of the region, the mobilization of whom was indispensible for the insipient political movement. The appropriation of Muthappan Theyyam as an embodiment of socialist values by the communist movement of the region ought to be seen in such a context. In fact Parassini Madappura and Parassinikadavu served as major extended centres for disseminating and establishing communist ideology.

In his book *Kannur Kotta,* K. Balakrishnan points out the significance of the Parassini Madappura family Vaddakkayil thravadu in es-

tablishing the progressive movement in Parassinikadavu. In the chapter "The Story of How Kannur Turned Red?" Balakrishnan talks about the forming of left movements in North Malabar and the role of the Thiyya families in it. From serving as the best hide out spots for the communists who had to be hidden away from the MSPs to the formation of cultural associations like the Parassinimuthappan Nadaka Sangham, Sri Muthappan Kathakali Sangham, Poorakali Sangham etc through which communist thoughts were disseminated to the rest of Kannur, Kerala as well as to various other Indian states, the Thiyya families, who were also the trustees of the temple had played a definitive role (Balakrishnan, 2008: 67-72). However along with the dissemination of communist ideology, what also got circulated and marketed through these cultural organizations was the idea that the real, socialist Muthappan, was the Thiyya Muthappan of Parassini Madappura. Thiyya Muthappan became synonymous with the socialist Communist deivam or vice versa, reproducing and validating the identity of Muthappan as Thiyya. Reproducing Thiyya Muthappan as a socialist Communist deivam conveniently helps to forward the class-ist form of communism (Shyma, 2014) [21], which doesn't address the issue of caste. Moreover it guarantees maximum membership and participation (as cadres if not leaders) from the lumpen Thiyya community (numerically the largest caste community in North Malabar) in the communist party (CPIM) in Kerala.

Conclusion

Muthappan Theyyam, and its worship have been consequential to the social, economic and political mobilization of the lumpen Thiyya community of North Malabar. However the modern Thiyya community that has evolved in and around Parassini Madappura may be seen to be an extension of a larger globalised, Brahminical society, despite claims to an egalitarian, secular community of devouts. The appropriation of Thiyya Muthappan as Communist deivam makes the Thiyya community complicit in a discourse of class-ist communism which considers it inconsequential to address caste and religious lives. The legitimization accorded by a class-ist discourse helps the backward caste community's appropriation of Muthappan assume a casteist dimension, which may be seen in a way in which various histories and presents of lower caste/tribal communities have been erased or misrepresented.

Notes

1. North Malabar, along with South Malabar was an administrative unit of British India under Madras Presidency till 1947 and later a part of Madras State till 1956. On 1st November 1956, following the States Re-organization Act, the region, along with the Kasaragod taluk of South Kanara district was merged with the erstwhile princely states of Cochin and Travancore to form the modern state of Kerala. Today, North Malabar refers to a region in Kerala, covering the districts of Kasargode, Kannur,

Mananthavady taluk of Wayanad district, Koyilandy, Vatakara taluks of Kozhikode district and Mahe.

2. Parassinikadavu is a town in Anthoor Municipality, Kannur. A much sought after tourist destination in North Malabar, the town is known for its Parassini Madappura, Snake park and Vismaya amusement park.

3. Muthappan Theyyam is fondly referred to as the communist *deivam* (god), and is used in the various political platforms of the professedly atheist CPIM (Communist Party of India- Marxist) in Kerala, as an embodiment of the values of socialism and a classless society.

4. A tribal community in north Kerala.

5. Although different texts have narrated the Muthappan myth with variations of various kinds, in relation to his travels, his friendship with Chandan, his stay in Kunnathurpadi, how he appears in Parassinikadavu etc, they remain unanimous about one detail, which is regarding Muthappan's birth. The anonymity associated with Muthappan's birth remains the same in the majority of these texts. Probably it was because there was no need for clarity. In other words, this anonymity is quite significant considering that it helps retain Muthappan as a *deivasankalpam* which no one community can claim and one which includes the unity and resilience of many caste communities.

6. The first *Madappura* of Muthappan is supposed to be in Kunnathoor Padi, Kannur district. It is the Adiya tribal community who worship Muthappan here.

7. Madayans, belonging to the Thiyya community, are entrusted with the rights to officiate over the major rites associated with Muthappan Theyyam, except that of *Thalikkal* or the cleansing ceremony for which the services of the Namboothiris are taken.

8. A place where Muthappan can be performed. A podikalam qualifies to become a Madappura after 12 years, after the required rituals are performed.

9. A souvenir published by Sundereshwara Kshetram (Kannur Sundareshwara Kshetra Mahotsavam, 2016) mentions about a *kazhcha* (a procession) that came from Parassini Madappura in the occasion of the inauguration of the temple in 1916.

10. An interview with P.M. Mukundan Madayan; https://youtu.be/pCNXGK8NlxQ; accessed on 15/11/2018.

11. A devotee remembered his father telling him that toddy used to be given as *prasadam*, a practice which was stopped after the revision of tax policies on toddy.

12. http://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2018/apr/12/resentment brews - as - thiyya - community - of - kerala - demand - distinct - identity-1800262.html; accessed for information on Thiyya Mahasabha.

13. Another narrative that is frequently being revisited to assert Thiyya superiority is the history associated with the Thiyya royal dynasty in Eruvassery in North Kerala. Kambil Anandan, in his "Kerala Charithra Niroopanam: Athava Thiyyarude Pauranikathvam," claims that Thiyyas are not a community who have come from Srilanka or those who have a

Buddhist past as described by various other historians. Rather, Thiyyas belong to the Adidravida community, a community consisting of several migrant communities who have come to live in the geographical region which was later on linguistically reorganized as Kerala. This theory along with the history of royal ancestry attributed to the Thiyya community makes Anandan an oft quoted historian by Thiyyas in facebook pages on Thiyya.

14. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muthappan; accessed on 14/04/2018 for details regarding the online representation of Muthappan.

15. http://www.sreemuthappansevasamithi.com/aboutus.php; accessed on 14/04/2018 for details regarding Muthappan performances abroad. .

16. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3rdbjXu0gE;accessed on 13/04/2018 for details regarding railway Muthappan.

17. Kannettan, from the Vannan family Thaliyil Tharavadu, says that the story of the arrow is false and in reality it is the place where Muthappan had appeared as ponvigraham to solve the problems of starvation and poverty of Thaliyil Peruvannan and his family. According to Kannettan this place was later on transformed into the place for Madappura and the place that was rightfully theirs was occupied by the Thiyya family who were only given the Madayasthanam. The kula deivam of Vannan community, Muthappan, was later on appropriated by the Thiyyas. Kannettan says and adds that the place for the madappura determined by his grandfather remains to this day unchanged. Interview with Kannettan. 12/05/2018.

18. As per a highcourt ruling, they are being issued certificates until the KIRTADS study gets completed.

19. Dhanya K.R. "How KIRTADS Erased Adiyas by Confering Muthappan to Thiyyas." https://www.azhimukham.com/offbeat-how-kirtads-ousted-adiyan-tribe-from-st-schedule-report-by-kr-dhanya/ .

20. Based on conversations with Sri Balakrishnan Peruvannan, Parassinikadavu. 11/05/2018.

21. A communism that was based on class identity at the cost of caste and religious communitarian identity, which ultimately led to the highjacking of the communist movement by Nairs and Nambuthiris while the lower castes were used as stooges as well as to fill in the martyr slots.

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Engaging with Culture:
Experiences of Early Communist Movement and Vimochana Samaram in Kerala

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Abstract

This paper attempts to look into two important periods in the history of Communist Party in Kerala and how the tool of arts and culture was used by two opposing groups in both these situations. The first period is the formative years of the Communist movement in Kerala, where the leaders used the tool of culture to educate and politicize workers and agricultural laborers, whereas in the second situation, i.e in the Vimochana Samaram, the same tool was used by the Catholic Church and other key players of the movement as a propaganda material against the Communists. Countering the Communist Cultural bloc, the establishment of a cultural wing of the anti-Communist bloc was the tactic applied by the advocates of the Vimochana Samaram, by which the anti-Communist ideas could get a wider outreach.
Keywords: Communist Party, Vimochana Samaram, Catholic Church, Kerala, culture, propaganda.

Introduction

The origin and development of the Communist Party in Kerala coincided with a revival in the realms of culture and literature, which resulted in a largescale engaging of socially relevant themes in these fields. From the initial stage of its development, the leaders understood the potential of traditional arts in propagating the comparatively alien ideology to the common masses, a large chunk of them being illiterate. The Communists were in search of new forms of propaganda that could communicate more effectively with the masses as well as create a sense of cultural unity among them. The Communists succeeded to a large extent in their attempt to impart political education to the working class in Kerala through the medium of art. Literature also grew simultaneously along with these new developments to supplement to this cause.

But an interesting turn of events happened after the Communist ascension to power in Kerala in 1957; in which the same cultural tools the communists used to propagate their ideology among the masses, was used by the anti-communist bloc, led primarily by the Catholic Church, to mobilize people against the Communist government in power. The various

art forms like plays, katha prasangams etc and a mass of anti-communist literature were used to instill resentment against the Communist Government. Interestingly enough, an angle of faith was used in these modes of propaganda, thereby creating a legitimacy to the struggle and in a way elevating it to a level of a 'crusade'. But before getting into how the tool of culture was resorted to during the Vimochana samram, it is necessary to have an idea about the course of the movement.

The Communist ascendancy to power in Kerala attracted worldwide attention in the backdrop of the Cold War scenario. Many a newspaper and political analyst has wondered over the fact that the state of Kerala, which has the most number of Christians in India, has witnessed this kind of development. Also, the Communist capturing of power through democratic means seemed a paradoxical situation to many. The period from April 5, 1957 to July 31, 1959 witnessed the brewing of a movement against the Government which found its culmination in the *Vimochana Samaram* in 1959 and the subsequent dismissal of the Government by the Indian President. The ministry, within a short span of its tenure, could take important decisions on a variety of issues, which largely favored the working class. The Government by and large, adhered to the election manifesto by giving due importance to popular co-operation, anti-eviction proceedings, land reform, protection of workers' rights etc.

Though the legislations which sparked the *Vimochana Samaram* were the Education Bill and the Agrarian Relations Bill, there were some other important enactments by the Communist Government like the Police reforms and the reforms in the financial sector.

The Police was ripped off their erstwhile duty of crushing labor disputes on behalf of the wealthy class. Now onwards, Police would not interfere in the labor disputes, which considerably increased the bargaining position of the labor unions and enabled them to demand wage hikes. Apart from that, the Government proposed to form co-operative units in the industrial sector, giving more space to micro-level entrepreneurs. A whole new range of administrative reforms were implemented. The Kerala University was set up for consolidating higher education in Kerala.

The real problem began when the Government introduced the Education bill. Even before the introduction of the bill in the Assembly, there was largescale apprehension about the bill among the Catholic Church, and a rumor about the Communists changing the syllabi of the schools in Kerala to indoctrinate communist, atheistic ideas to children had been clubbed to the fears.The private school managers, which were largely under the Catholic Church, were unhappy with the clauses of the bill which proposed the appointment of teachers in accordance with the list prepared by the Government, and the equalization of the salary and privileges of the high school teachers to that of the Government school teachers.

The introduction of the Agrarian Relations bill added fuel to the fire. The decision to set ceiling to the landholdings irked the landowning class, and dragged the initially supportive Nairs to raise their voice against the Government. The grievances about those two bills ultimately transformed into a movement which led to the dismissal of the Government.

The Vimochana Samaram happened primarily in two fronts – the first one being the Church-NSS consolidation and the other one was the uniting of political parties like Congress, Muslim League, PSP and RSP against the Communist Government. As stated earlier, the last two months was really crucial in the course of the movement, for this phase witnessed the heating up of the movement followed by immense level of propaganda. The action committee decided to close down the schools from June onwards, picketing of Government offices and schools, and stalling the functioning of every possible government machinery.

The attempt here is to make a comparative analysis of how these two situations made use of culture as a tool to propagate their own ideologies among the people – one occasion had seen the origin and growth of Communism and their engagement with the cultural sphere for propagation purpose, while the second scenario was dominated by the Catholic Church, exhorting the laity as well as the other sections to rise in revolt against the ministry, by characterizing it as a holy war against the atheist communists.

Art as a Tool of Initial Communist Expansion in Kerala

The use of arts as a tool in propagating Communist ideology was a clever move from the part of the Communist Party, since the medium of arts proved to be attractive and more comprehensible to the working population, a large chunk of them being illiterate. Communist Party is also credited with redefining the traditional dictum of 'arts for art's sake' into the new notion of 'arts for society's sake', thereby writing and incorporating a huge mass of literature which primarily revolves around various social issues.

The communists altered the social consciousness of the masses through their sustained campaigns in the cultural sphere. A new genre of songs, and popular theatre was born and it borrowed from folk culture (Mannathukkaren, 2013:495).The folk songs recounted the injustices of colonialism, drew contrasts between the luxurious life style of the Viceroy with the miserable existence of the peasants, the burden of indebtedness, the illegal exactions of the lords, the greatness of the reading rooms and libraries and the need for children's unions (Ibid:497). Equally important were the revolutionary songs, most of which were introduced as a prelude before the staging of the dramas. Songs such as the "Red Flag Song" written by T. S. Thirumumbu became very popular. The red flag became a new symbol of liberation and captured the imagination of the workers (Ibid:497).

Coming up of Theatre and Literary Movements

The introduction of a whole new genre of theatre in Kerala had a significant impact. Even though the dramas by the Communist Party were primarily for the spreading of their ideology and imparting education on the prevalent socio-political issues, this genre of theatre had its own impact on the working class. An unconscious juxtaposition of the notion of 'popular theatre' was happening during this time, and Communists were primarily responsible for adopting this notion to a whole new landscape. According to Augusto Boal, the high apostle of popular theatre, 'the advantage of the people's theatre lies in the element of interaction it initiates with the audience and the level of political education that takes place in this process and contrary to the bourgeois code of manners, the people's code allows and encourages the spectator to ask questions, to dialogue, to participate' (Boal,1979:143-55). Such an interaction between the theatre and the audience was gradually happening in Kerala, and soon, the workers themselves started writing and directing plays on various social issues. Early political theatrical movements started with very small presentations of revolutionary ideas among the workers. These presentations were organized during the labor union meetings. These small plays were written, directed and performed by the workers themselves. These performances and get-togethers enhanced the spirit of the working class (Eldose, 2014:139). An interesting development was the Communist's enhanced association with the local temples and shrines. The shrine festivals were used to propagate the ideology of communism. Ottan thullals were also used for the same purpose (Mannathukkaren: 498).

K. Damodaran's plays like '*Pattabakki*' (Rental Arrears) and '*Rakthapanam*' (Blood Drinking) were significant in this regard. Considered as the first political play in Malayalam, Pattabakki installed an anti-feudal consciousness among the people. It manifests the struggle of the peasants against feudal landlords supported by the British regime. A new structure of human experience intermixed with the socio-political reality created a political drama which is capable of challenging the hegemonic ideology of the time (Eldose:132).

The initiation of *Jeeval Sahithya Prasthanam* in the field of literature in Kerala was a breakthrough in many respects. A major role in the foundation of *Jeeval Sahithya Prasthanam* was played by K. Damodaran, by modelling it after the Indian Progressive Writers Association. His enthusiasm resulted in the first 'Jeeval Sahithya Sammelanam', held in Thrissur on 8 May 1937. The meeting renounced the age old dictum of 'art for art's sake' and adopted the new slogan of 'art for society's sake'. This meeting further exhorted for a relentless fight against Landlordism and Capitalism (Jayashankar, 2013:27). By 1942, Jeeval Sahithya Prasthanam was deep rooted in Kerala Society under the leadership of EMS, K. Damodaran, and Prof. M.P Paul. The movement underwent a transformation soon and

changed its name into '*Purogamana Sahithya Prasthanam*', with its scope widening from a pure Communist platform to a wider one, by adding many of the other literary figures into its fold (Ibid:29).

Ridiculing the Jeeval Sahithya Prasthanam and their ideology, Sanjayan, the famous satirist of that time came into the forefront. He was instrumental in creating a *Chaval Sahithya Prasthanam*, literally meaning 'the dead literature movement' as a counterpoise to the *Jeeval Sahithya Prasthanam*, and ridiculed the Communists through his works namely *Okkaana Prasthanam* (the Vomiting Movement), *Sakahavinte Bleach* (Comrade's Bleach), *Communisa Plague* (The plague called Communism) etc (Ibid:28).

The Aikya Kerala Movement was characterized by a cultural awakening,which is largely reflected in the field of literature and fine arts. In literature, many poems and stories were written, which portrayed the social realities of that period like the Jenmi system, caste system, national movement, Communism etc. This sort of a '*cultural avant garde*', enriched Malayalam literature by making it a socially responsible enterprise, which was earlier largely under the influence of romanticist tendencies brought forth by poets like Changampuzha Krishna Pillai and Idappalli Raghavan Pillai.

Kerala Peoples Arts Club (KPAC), formed in the early 1950s was a theatrical organization which brought about a paradigm shift in the popular perception of culture and theatre and made the medium of theatre the best method of disseminating political ideas and reflecting the existing grave realities of the then Kerala. Even after Kerala got freed from British control, the predominant system of landlordism combined with the evils of the caste system actually hindered the development of society as a whole. The situation was not different either in the British ruled Malabar or the Princely states of Travancore and Cochin.

KPAC's magnum opus, *Ningalenne Communistakki* appeared in Kerala's socio-political venue with a new discourse and still remains an initiator of many other discourses (Eldose: 133).The play basically depicts the cruelties of Zamindari system and the changes in the socio-political environment with the gradual infiltration of Communist ideas against the backdrop of a decadent Nair family. It portrayed the transition of an elderly man from a conservative Nair family, named Paramu Pillai into a Communist, convinced by his experiences that there is no future in the exploitative system of Zamindari. Paramu Pillai, who was cross with his son's Communist leanings ultimately gets convinced by it and transforms into a communist. The play ends with Paramu Pillai saying '*hand me that red flag, my daughter...I want to hold it… you made me a Communist…!!*' (Bhasi:140). According to Robin Jeffrey, *You made me a Communist* both symbolized and extended Kerala's changing political culture. The fact that audiences responded so enthusiastically indicated that they sympathized

with the ideas of equality and struggle that the playsought to convey.' (Jeffrey, 1993:143)

The Communist experiments in the cultural milieu of Kerala produced favorable results, the most significant among them being their interventions in the field of drama. The Communist Party and the KPAC are largely responsible in starting a theatre culture in Kerala, and thereby making, popularizing and improving the notion of 'people's theatre'.

Culture in the 'Crusade' - Church, NSS and their Campaign

Interestingly enough, the movement against the Communist ministry resorted to the same methods in propagating anti-Communist tenets during the *Vimochana Samaram* period. Of course, this phenomenon was not new; it had a comparatively earlier origin. Anti-Communist literature were in plenty in Kerala even before the genesis of Communist Party in the state. Many of them were translations of the anti-Communist treatises from Italy and other European countries.

Anti-Communist literature got a further impetus with the coming up of the ACF organized by Fr. Vadakkan in the early 1950s. He was instrumental in forming a parallel cultural group vis-à-vis the Communist cultural front. Many of the prominent literary figures like C.J. Thomas, Keshava Dev etc effectively made use of this platform for expressing their differences with the Communist ideology. Even the Opposition parties composed songs like 'the corruption stories by the Communists' and sold at a rate of 10 paise (Philip, 2010:51).

Drama as a Medium for Anti-Communist Campaign

The *Vimochana Samaram* witnessed the rejuvenation of the anti-Communist cultural front. Apart from the literary pieces, this period was characterized by the extension of anti-communist propaganda into the field of performing arts, mainly plays, under the patronage of the Catholic Church and later by the *Vimochana Samara Samiti*. These plays, lacked any quality or aesthetics as plays, and were simply tools of vigorous anti-Communist propaganda and it did not matter to the writers or organizers whether the plays had any aesthetic appeal. K.M. Chummar, the famous political writer and the chronicler of the history of the Congress Party in Kerala, testifies that many of the plays were filled with abuses, and were thoroughly obscene in nature (Interview, Chummar, 06-04-2016).

As mentioned earlier, the wide acclaim garnered by *Ningalenne Communistakki* was unprecedented in the history of Kerala. Interestingly enough, this play became a reference point for many of the later anti-communist plays, most of them being parodies of the former one, ridiculing the play and Communism in general. Hence a number of plays were produced modelled on *Ningalenne Communistakki* as the source play, and the later imitations were *Njanippo Communist Aavum* (I Will Become a Communist Now, 1953) by Kesava Dev, *Vishavriksham* (Poisonous Tree,

1958) by C.J. Thomas and *Ningalaare Communistakki* (Whom Did You Make a Communist, 1995) by Civic Chandran (Eldose:133). These are the counter plays, which can be defined as the deconstruction of a play for creating a counter study, which differs from its basic purpose of production, by placing it face to face with itself while retaining its own characters and theme (Ibid:134).

Keshava Dev, an erstwhile Communist sympathizer and a member of the *Jeeval Sahithya Prasthanam* during the 1940s, later became a hardcore opponent of the Communist movement in Kerala to the extent of becoming the chief editor of the Congress Party mouthpiece *Janapadham*. The preface of his *Novel, Aarkku Vendi* (For Whom) which primarily criticized Communism, was bulk-printed and distributed by Congressmen during the general election of 1952 (Jayashankar: 29). Dev was an ardent supporter of the Vimochana Samaram, and opined that 'if this struggle is in vain, then we will have to accept slavery as a blessing' (Kurupp, 1994:411).

Keshava Dev's retort to KPAC's famous play *Ningalenne Communistakki*, was a satirical counter play named '*Njanippo Communistavum*' (I will become a Communist Now). Through the satirical dialogues the playwright tries to prove that Communism is an unattainable goal in the context of Kerala (Eldose:135). The play portrays a confused protagonist named Rajagopalan Nair, (Paramu Pillai in Bhasi's play) wondering whether to join the Congress bloc or the Communist bloc, who finally decides to join the Congress side declaring that it is the better party. The characterization of this play is interesting, where the erstwhile ideal Communists in Thoppil Bhasi's original play are presented in a thoroughly new light, appearing as power mongers. The fact that it gives an impression of being a sequel to Bhasi's original play, which in the first place gives a certain benefit to Dev's play, the replication of the characters adding to that effect. Through such a tactic, the authors are benefitting from a historical link, which in a way would make the audience take the gist of the play home. Other political plays by Dev like *Mazhayangum Kudaingum* (The rain is there and the Umbrella is here) (1956), *Chinave* (1960) etc too criticized the Kerala communists (Ibid:140).

Similarly, C.J. Thomas was another example of a literary figure with erstwhile Communist leanings later becoming an active patron of the Anti-Communist bloc in Kerala. After the schism in the *Jeeval Sahithya Prasthanam*, he devoted his literary skills to oppose and ridicule the Communist movement in Kerala.His statement on the hardships suffered by Boris Pasternak under the Soviet regime, signed by more than 80 Malayalam authors, was a prelude to his involvement in the final struggle against the Communist Government (Issac, 2008:152). C.J, while working with the Weekly Kerala, Voice of Kerala and Democratic Theatres, made effective use of these platforms in giving expression to his anti-Communist sentiments. A number of pamphlets were published by him during this time

under the banner of Democratic Publications and Voice of Kerala, namely 'The Red Spies', 'Is it necessary to kill people, Comrade?', 'The Gospel of Comrade Damodaran' etc (Jayashankar:270). He, along with M.Govindan was instrumental in forming a counter-literary bloc against the Communists, which consisted of literary giants of that time including M.V. Devan, A.P. Udayabhanu, Sukumar Azheekkod, M.K. Sanu etc (Issac:153).

The Democratic Theatre, a counter theatre group to KPAC was founded due to the enthusiastic efforts of C.J. Thomas (Jayashankar:271). A significant work of C.J. in this regard was the play '*Visha Vriksham*'. Literally meaning 'the poisonous tree', the play was staged initially in 1958 i.e. one year after the ascending to power of the first Communist ministry through ballot in Kerala. The play recreates characters from 'You Made Me a Communist'. The plot is all about the changes which take place in the communist characters in the source play after they get power (Eldose:134). Thomas argues that communism, the ideology propagated by the source play, is a kind of poisonous tree that took deep roots in the political soil of Kerala. In the case of 'Poisonous Tree' there are many indirect references to the Liberation Struggle. The anti-communist ambience prevailing in Kerala during 1958-59 is the basic impetus of the play.

The introduction of the character 'S.S Pachonth' is an artistic example of C. J's satirical writing. Pachonth (literally, chameleon) symbolizes someone who changes his allegiance according to the situation. He stands with the communists when they are in power and moves to the other side when power changes. This character was created to portray a blind follower of Communism, who writes ballads praising China and Russia (Jayashankar:271).

A number of *Katha Prasangams*, an art form which is a way of telling a story accompanied by intermittent songs, sprang up during this period. The most popular among them was named as '*Bhagawan Macaroni*' (Lord Macaroni), ridiculing the Food Policy of the Communist Government, and blaming at for being modelled after Russia [1]. The Communist Government's decision to encourage macaroni was sometimes dubbed as similar to the controversial statement of 'Let them eat cake' by Marie Antoinette of France.

The 1950s were the heydays of the Anti-Communist theatre in Kerala. There were a number of plays staged, mainly under the patronage of the Church and the Vimochana Samara Samiti. These plays were often staged on the Church premises. Prominent among them are the plays of Changanassery Geedha Theatres, namely *Naadunarunnu* (The land awakens), *Kurukkan Rajavayi* (The fox became the king) and *Samaram Kazhinjilla* (The strike hasn't finished yet). The other plays were '*Moscowil Ninnu Manaykkalekk*' (From Moscow to the Namboodiri Household) by N.N. Pillai, Flory by P.T. George, *Nooru Pookkal Viriyatte* (Let a hundred flowers bloom) and *Aikya Munnani* (Joint Front) by Kottayam

Santhosh Dramatic Club, *Nira Thokk* (The Loaded Gun) by Angamaly Bhavana Theatres and *Itha oru Manushyan* (Here is a Man) by Cherthala Southern Theatres (Jayashankar:272; Issac:154).

Many of the literary works in Malayalam during that time reflected the political developments happening in Kerala. Significant in this respect is the poem called *Anthya Malyam* (The Funeral Garland), written by G.Shankara Kurupp about the death of Flory in the Cheriya Thura Police Firing. The poem addresses the baby she was carrying in her womb, saying that 'the heinous sin committed by this land were the reasons for your untimely death' (Kurup:727).

The *Vimochana Samaram* was characterized by the strengthening of anti-Communist propaganda in all possible forms, and the medium of arts was made use of to this end. Significant was the role of plays and Katha Prasangams in this regard. The public performances of these plays were organized by the Church authorities on the Church premises and Maidans. The best aspect of the plays and *Katha Prasangams* were the live experiences of storytelling, which the spectators can also be an active part of.

Conclusion

These two situations clearly show an example of how the tool of culture is used by two rival forces in two different occasions in the political history of Kerala. The former occasion witnesses the using of culture to educate the masses and to assemble them under the banner of Communist Party in Kerala, while the latter one being an upsurge against the Communist regime, primarily against its educational policy. The major themes the Communist Party used was the exploitative nature of the existing socio-economic structure of the state. The modes they resorted to disseminate their ideology were mainly traditional arts and a new genre of drama which inaugurated a new trend by incorporating the working class as actors and writers as well as making a direct conversation with the audience while the play is being staged. On the contrary, culture in the hands of an anti-communist wing was basically for attaining an immediate goal, ie, to expel the Communist government in power. The prominent themes they picked up for cultural performances was the Communist violence in their strongholds, especially against the church, and thereby reminding the laity to rise in revolt to defend their faith. The communist attack on the aspect of faith was a recurring theme in these modes of propaganda, which was strewn with religious allegories. The cultural and print modes of propaganda tried to characterize the whole struggle as a 'crusade' and the martyrs of it became icons. Though both the Communist and the anti-communist wings did not care much of the aesthetics of their cultural and literary contributions, we can see the latter heralded a positive social change in the long run, and a cultural renaissance has been inaugurated in this regard. On the flipside, the works by the Anti Communist Front and other paraphernalia, apart from serving the purpose of imparting anti-communist ideas, could not leave a lasting impression, and were generally obscene in nature.

Notes

1. The severe food crisis in Kerala compelled the ministry to borrow food grains under the PL-480 food scheme. Subsequently, the Food Minister KC George advised the people to increase the use of Macaroni, which was distributed at lower costs.

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Human Development in Lakshadweep Islands: Household based HDI Approach

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Abstract

The study looks into the human development scenario at household level in Lakshadweep adopting Household Human Development Index (HHDI) approach and found that the human development scenario is not very dismal and not outstanding in Lakshadweep Island, it is almost moderate. 58 per cent household has achieved high level of human development. Moderate level of human development is attained by 42 per cent. The study also found that the gap between two extreme households in respect of HDI and three dimensional indices is comparably low and the inter-household variation in the level of human development in Lakshadweep islands very low.
Keywords: Development, Household HDI, Lakshadweep, Education, Health and Asset

Introduction

Emphasis on human development and the construction of human development index (HDI) have been the most important contribution of the development economists to economic literature. It has shifted the attention from 'quantity of growth' to the 'quality and structure of growth'. The success of economic growth nowadays is judged in terms of its real contribution to the quality of life. The World Bank has been ranking countries in the world in to developed, developing and under developed countries on the basis of percapita income. The development economist attacked the concept of using percapita income as a measure of development by viewing its serious limitations and shortcomings. One of the most important among was services of household is not taken in to consideration and it silent mode about the distribution of national income. The limitations of using percapita income as a measure of development forced to search for a novel comprehensive measure that would capture the various dimension of human development. This has first led to the formation of PQLI and then to the definition and construction of human development Index under the stewardship of Mahbub-ul-Haq in 1990. This Index, normally call HDI is a composite index comprising three distinct elements namely life expectancy at birth, adult literacy and school enrolment ration and real GDP percapita. The most striking achievement of this HDI is that, it could overcome the inadequate weights assigned to the health related factors of PQLI

formed by Morris. The UNDP then introduced the Gender related Development Index (GRDI) in order to measure the wellbeing of the males and females separately. But HDI is still acting as a standard measure of wellbeing of the people and countries.

Human development Index is the best indicator of human wellbeing as it is accepted since 1990 when the first Human Development Report was presented by UNDP. The base of human development lies in recognizing the improvement in living standard of all persons in the society. There has been always a critical trade-off between the growth of material resources and human resources in most of the countries. This Human Development Indicator is an alternative measure of several essential facilities. It considers three important aspects of wellbeing i.e. life expectancy, literacy and income. The idea behind this HDI is to obtain a comprehensive picture as possible for all aspects of human development. Human development as defined by UNDP is a process of enlarging people's choice, including to live a 'long and healthy life', to be educated and not to have access to resources needed for a decent living standard. In fact, human development has two sides, one is the formation of human capabilities-such as improved health, knowledge of skills and the other is to use people acquiring their capabilities for productive purposes. If the scales of human development do not finally balance the two sides, frustration may occur among people. Thus, the concept of human development includes development of human beings by considering improvement of economic, social, educational, health and cultural condition of human beings of a state.

It is worldwide accepted notion that as economic growth in essential for human development, human development is also necessary to economic growth. Thus, the links between human development and economic growth make them mutually reinforcing. Stronger links, they contribute to each other. But when links are weak, they become mutually stifling as any deficiency in one affects adversely to other. Today, the HDI is widely used in academia, the media and in policy circles to measure and compare progress in human development between countries and over time. Since the evolution of the human development index in 1990 there has been a lively debate on measurement and related issues of quality of human life among the nations. There have been various studies concerning with the calculation of Human Development Index. Anand and Sen (1992) and Ranis, Stewart and Samman (2006) pointed out several other dimensions of human wellbeing, such as security, political participation and human rights. Hicks (1997), Foster et al (2005) and Seth (2009) were concerned about the fact that the current HDI presents averages and thus conceals wide disparities in distribution of human development in overall population. UNDP based HDI is that it only looks at average achievements and thus, does not take into account the distribution of human development within a country or population subgroup (Sagar and Najam, 1998). It throws light

on human development issue only at macro level but remains silent about household based human development (Harttgen and Klasen, 2010). Harrttege and Klasen (2010) and Torre and Moreno (2010) provided a method for calculating household level human development index.

Statement of the problem

It is a universal thought that human development is indispensable for economic growth and development. In recent years the development economists attached more attention and emphasis on human development in describing the theories of economic growth. The issue of this work has derived from the limitation of HDI to analyze the position of household in human development. The study also realized that the average is a statistical tool and it doesn't have the power to demonstrate the real situation. It is a confirmed fact that the current HDI presents averages and thus conceals wide disparities in distribution of human development in overall population and does not take into account the distribution of human development within a population subgroup. As Harttgen and Klasen pointed out HDI concentrates only at macro level but remains silent about household based human.

There are enormous studies focusing on HDI, its methodology and limitations. But the study on Household Level Human Development Index based on household level data is not that much available. Thus a need was felt to calculate an alternative based on household level data which will present grass root level scenario of wellbeing. Since the total number of household in Lakshadweep is nearly 10000, the population are 64000 and variations in all economic indicators and economic inequality are very less, the study understand that it is better to appreciate a household based human development rather than aggregate based human development index. To get a real insight of human development, the study has made an attempt to construct a HDI for the households. This study helps to identify the exact condition of household human development in Lakshadweep. The findings from this study may helpful to the Government to improve both the quality and quantity in terms of facilities extended by the government.

Objectives

1) To look into human development scenario at household level in Lakshadweep.
2) To examine the inter-Island variations in human development.

Review of Literature

Anand and Sen (1992) in their study pointed out certain limitation of human development index. Their main argument was, HDI is based on three indicators such as education, health and income, there are large number of other factors also affecting the human development, and all these factors are needed to be considered in the construction of HDI. Ranis,

Stewart and Samman (2006) pointed out several other dimensions of human well being, such as security, political participation and human rights. Hicks (1997), Foster et al 2005 and Seth 2009 were concerned about the fact that the current HDI presents averages and thus conceals wide disparities in distribution of human development in overall population. They also suggest inequality adjustments to the HDI. Sagar and Najam (1998) focused on the most serious weakness in the HDI that it only looks at average achievements and does not take into account the distribution of human development within a country or population subgroup. Torre and Moreno (2010) provide method for calculating household level human development index. Proposed HDI at household level and individual level allows analyzing development levels for subgroups of population either by age, ethnic condition, sex and income or HDI deciles across time.

Harttgen and Klasen (2010) has addressed the issue of HHDI for 15 developing countries where they have constructed Household based Human Development Index for all those countries based on the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data. The work of Harttgen and Klasen, however, suffers from the limitation that it does not look into the issue separately for urban and rural households. It is quite comprehensible that the indicators affecting various dimensions of human development are bound to be different for urban and rural households as there is a great divide between rural and urban structure.

Alok Kumar Pandey and Annapurna Dixit (2012) constructed three indices such as Life expectancy index at household level, Education index at household level and Expenditure Index at household level and made an attempt to calculate HHDI for region wise, religion wise and social group wise using NSSO 63rd round unit level consumption expenditure survey data. Their study found that, expenditure index for all the states and union territories as lowest in comparison with life index and education index and the performance of UT of Lakshadweep is better than the national averages. Lakshadweep adjudged 0.682, 0.649 and 0.456 in Life Expectancy index, Education Index and Expenditure Index respectively, while national average were only 0.677, 0.499 and 0.416

Manash Roy and Rajumandal (2012) constructed a household development index to study household based human development in rural areas of Assam by utilizing the method of purposive sampling technique and taking 90 household primary data. The major aim of this study was to examine human development situation at household level in Nitai Nagar village of Hilakandi district of Assam. The study found that only one per cent household has achieved high level of human development, moderate level of human development is attained by 23 per cent households while the rest 76 per cent account for low level of human development. The study also revealed that a higher amount of inter household variation in the level of human development in Nitai Nagar village and high disparity

among households in the village is high in respect of asset while it is relatively low in case of health and education

Methodology

The present study is based up on a survey carried out in the entire Island except Minicoy. The study carried out entirely based on primary data which are collected from 255 household in Lakshadweep. The study adopted the sampling technique of 'purposive sampling' and selected 30 households from each island except Bitra. A pre-tested schedule was used for the purpose of data collection. The data collected were analysed with the help of simple statistical techniques such as percentages, averages, ratios etc. Further diagram and other statistical tools were also used in the analysis.

The Human Development is the process of enlarging human choices in three basic and critical dimensions of life viz., health, education and standard of living. The indicators or variables used in this study are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Indicators for Various Dimensions of Household based Human Development

Dimensions	Indicators
Health	1. Access to Safe Drinking Water
	2. Access to Ideal Toilet Facility
	3. Access to Primary Health Centres
Education	1. Educational Status of the Adult Members of the Rural Households
	2.Educational Status of the Non-Adult Members of the Rural Households
	Asset Holdings of the Rural Households
Asset	1. Cultivable Land (in hectare) 2. Housing Condition 3. Livestock 4. Vehicle 5. Financial Access of the Households

To look into our objective, the study has adopted a modified version of Human Development Index constructed by Manash Roy and Raju Mandal. The construction of the said index involves the following three steps.

Step 1: First some scores will be assigned to the various indicators based on self-selection approach and value judgment. The scoring procedure of the study is as follows:

Table 2: Scoring Procedure Adopted

Scoring of Accessibility to Safe Drinking Water	
Source of Drinking Water	Score
public authority Supply Water using by boiling or filtering	4
public authority Supply Water using without boiling or filtering	3
Water from tube well/hand pump by boiling or filtering	2
Water from tube well/hand pump without boiling or filtering	1
Water from pond/well with boiled or not boiled	0

Scoring of Accessibility to Ideal Toilet Facility	
Type of Toilet	Score
Modern well equipped	3
Slab used latrine	2
Bamboo made latrine	1
In open air	0

Scoring of Accessibility to Primary Health Centres	
Access to Primary Health Centres	Score
Good access	3
Average access	2
Bad access	1
No access	0

Scoring of Educational Status of the Adult Members of the Households	
Educational Status of the Adults	Score
Post graduate or above	7
Graduate	6
HS pass	5
HSLC pass	4
High school	3
Primary pass (5 to 7)	2
Below primary level	1
Illiterate	0

Scoring of Educational Status of the Non-Adult Members of the Households	
Educational Status of the Non – Adults	Score
Continuing education	12
Dropout after passing SSLC	11
Dropout after class ten	10
Dropout after class nine	9
Dropout after class eight	8

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Dropout after class seven	7
Dropout after class six	6
Dropout after class five	5
Dropout after class four	4
Dropout after class three	3
Dropout after class two	2
Dropout after class one	1
Illiterate	0

Scoring of Cultivable Land Area	
Type of Cultivable Land	Score
Large	5
Medium	4
Semi medium	3
Small	2
Marginal	1
No cultivable land	0

Scoring of Housing Condition	
Type of House	Score
Concrete	4
Semi concrete	3
Tiled	2
Semi tiled	1
Thatched and scientifically not ideal for living	0

Scoring of Livestock	
Livestock	Score
Cattle/buffalo	3
Goat/sheep	2
Hen/duck/dove	1
No livestock	0

Scoring of Vehicle	
Vehicle	Score
Bus/car/truck	5
Auto rickshaw/ power tiller	4
Two wheeler	3
Rickshaw/thela	2
Bicycle	1
No vehicle	0

Scoring of Financial Accessibility of the Households	
Type of Financial Access	Score
Having bank/post office savings account plus other investment policies	3
Having only bank/ post office savings account	2
SHG membership	1
No formal financial access [1]	0

Step 2: For all the indicators/variables an index will be constructed by following the UNDP's Max-Min approach i.e.

Variable index = $\dfrac{X_{ij} - X_{min}}{X_{max} - X_{min}}$; $0 \leq$ Variable Index ≤ 1

Where X_{ij} = Value of the jth variable for the ith household

X_{min} = Minimum value of the jth variable

X_{max} = Maximum value of the jth variable.

All the dimensional indices will lie between 0 and 1.

Step 3: The simple average of dimensional indices will give us Human Development Index for rural households (HDI ^{RH}).

HDI ^{RH} = $\dfrac{Health\ Index + Education\ Index + Asset\ Index}{3}$; $0 \leq$ HDI $^{RH} \leq 1$

Table 3: Criteria for Examining the Status of Human Development for the Households

HDI ^{RH}	Nature of Human Development
HDI ^{RH} = 0.9 to 1	Highest
$0.7 \leq$ HDI $^{RH} \leq 0.89$	High
$0.5 \leq$ HDI $^{RH} \leq 0.69$	Moderate
$0.1 \leq$ HDI $^{RH} \leq 0.49$	Low
HDI ^{RH} = 0	Lowest

Analysis of the data

Table 4: Nature of human development in Lakshadweep

Highest	High	Moderate	Low	Lowest
0	146 (57.2%)	109 (42.8%)	0	0

It is clearly evident from the table 4 that Lakshadweep enjoys high human development. No household has achieved highest development in human development index and none of household lags behind in HHDI. 57.2 per cent household has achieved high level of human development. Moderate level of human development is attained by 42.8 percent.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics

Statistics	Health Index	Education Index	Asset Index	HHDI
Mean	0.693529412	0.718194771	0.71418902	0.708637734
Standard Deviation	0.125968534	0.10160598	0.096768295	0.070858345
Kurtosis	1.48350241	0.221012347	0.813363797	0.1474993
Skewness	1.50400640	0.171989767	0.98641723	0.358959168
Range	0.46666666	0.531333333	0.488	0.335711111
Minimum	0.53333333	0.42	0.404	0.5474
Maximum	1	0.951333333	0.892	0.883111111

`   Table 5 shows the various descriptive statistics of the components of human development. The values of range indicates that the gap between two extreme household in respect of HDI and three dimensional indices is comparably low. But in the case of health and educational index, the gap is moderate.

HDI with mean value of 0.70 shows that the level of human development in Lakshadweep, on an average is high. It means that Lakshadweep people enjoys good standard of living and better human development. The mean educational and asset index is also high,which consistent with the fact of high literacy rate and low and equi-holding of land and other asset. Whereas the health index is moderate which is also consistent with the reality of low health infrastructure of Lakshadweep.

The lower rate if SD (0.07) indicates a lower amount of inter-household variations in human development in Lakshadweep. The inter-household variation is asset is low followed by education and high in the case of health. This means that the disparity among households in the island is high in respect of health and education and low in asset holding.

Table 6: Household based Development Scenario in Lakshadweep islands (in %)

Islands with high HDI (in %)			
Sl No	Island	Moderate	High	High HDI in %
1	Agati	0	30	100
2	Kavaratti	1	29	96.66667
3	Kalpeni	4	26	86.66667
4	Kadmat	13	17	56.66667
5	Kilthan	15	15	50
6	Androth	17	13	43.33333
7	Chethlath	21	9	30
8	Amini	23	7	77.77778
9	Bitra	15	0	0

The table 6 shows that Agati Island possess large number of households with high human development followed by kavaratti and Kalpeni. This is mainly because both the Island Agati and Kavaratti have a good drinking water (NIOT) and good health care institution. Bitra Island stand last as it doesn't have proper drinking water, bank facilities, health care and educational institution.

Table 7: Correlation coefficient between different indices

Indexes	Health Index	Education Index	Asset Index
Health Index	1		
Education Index	0.128103108	1	
Asset Index	0.018590067	0.300021031	1

Table 7 gives the correlation among the variables. As expected, all the indices have the positive correlation. Health index, education index and asset index are positively correlated with each other and thus supporting the theory but the degree of association is not that strong among them. Health index has a low correlation with asset index. However the correlation between education index and asset and health and education index is moderate.

Table 8: Island wise HHDI

Household Based Human Development in Each Islands			
Islands/Statistics	Mean	SD	Range
Kalpeni	0.741311111	0.039217738	0.175555556
Agati	0.829948148	0.043730771	0.134222222
Chetlath	0.681259259	0.044950693	0.173333333
Kilthan	0.692844444	0.03612185	0.134444444
Kadmat	0.711688889	0.064647839	0.212444444
Amini	0.660104	0.046607	0.175333
Androth	0.695096296	0.053134846	0.191777778
Kavarathi	0.708340741	0.047528719	0.235333333
Bitra	0.524489	0.065579	0.226

Table 9: Ranking of Island in terms of Human Development

Ranking Human Development		
Island	Mean	Rank
Agati	0.829948148	1
Kalpeni	0.741311111	2
Kadmat	0.711688889	3
Kavarathi	0.708340741	4

Androth	0.695096296	5
Kilthan	0.692844444	6
Chetlath	0.681259259	7
Amini	0.660103704	8
Bitra	0.524488889	9

The above tables show the various descriptive statistics of different human development indices at island level. The mean value shows, the islands such as Agati, Kalpeni, Kadmat and Kavaratti recorded high human development whereas Androth, Kilthan, Amini, Chethlath and Bitrahas moderately developed. But none of the Island lag behind in the human development.

Table 10: Inter-Island variation in Human Development

Inter-house variation-Lowest in HDI		
Island	SD	Rank
Kilthan	0.036122	1
Kalpeni	0.039218	2
Agati	0.043731	3
Chetlath	0.044951	4
Amini	0.046607	5
Kavarathi	0.047529	6
Androth	0.053135	7
Kadmat	0.064648	8
Bitra	0.065579	9

The lower value of Standard deviation indicate a lower amount of inter-household variation in human development. Inter household variations in human development is very low in Kilthan, followed by Kalpeni and Agati and it is high in Bitra, Kadmat and Androth. But as a whole all the islands have very low disparity among households in the case of human development.

Table 11: Ranking of the Islands in terms of various Index

Islands	Health Index	Rank	Education Index	Rank	Asset Index	Rank
Agati	1	2	0.763977778	1	0.725866667	4
Amini	0.553333333	9	0.710511111	5	0.716466667	7
Androth	0.666666667	6	0.699688889	7	0.718933333	5
Bitra	0.7	4	0.624422222	9	0.492546667	9
Chethlat	0.625	7	0.706111111	6	0.712666667	8
Kadmat	0.666666667	5	0.740666667	3	0.727733333	3
Kalpeni	0.75	3	0.739933333	4	0.734	2

| Kavaratti | 1 | 1 | 0.687488889 | 8 | 0.770866667 | 1 |
| Kilthan | 0.616666667 | 8 | 0.744066667 | 2 | 0.7178 | 6 |

The health index comprises of access to safe drinking water, access to ideal toilet facility and access to health centres. In all these indicators, Kavaratti and Agati stood first followed by Kalpeni and Amini stood as last followed by Kilthan and Cethlath. The educational index comprises of two indicators like educational status of the adult members and non-adult members. In Educational index Agati stood first and Bitra last. The asset index is a combination of many indicators such as cultivable land, housing conditions, livestock, vehicle and financial access. In this regard Kavaratti stood fist and Bitra as least.

Table 12: Human Development Index

Year	HI	EI	YI	HDI	Rank
1996	0.755	0.632	0.671	0.686	5
2006	0.729	0.63	0.73	0.697	10

HI is the Index of 'A long and healthy life' based on Infant Mortality Rate and Life Expectancy at age 1; EdI is the Index of 'Knowledge' based on 7+ Literacy Rate and Mean Years of Education for 15+ age group; YI is the Index of 'A decent standard of living' based on Earned Income and HDI is the 'Human Development Index'.

The second largest losses in rank were happened in the case of Lakshadweep within 10 years. The value of the health index or 'A Long and Healthy Life' Index declined over the decade for Lakshadweep due to worsening of the infant mortality rate in 2006.

The score for the Knowledge Dimension decreased by 0.002 for Lakshadweep. In the case of Gender related HDI also, the largest losers were Lakshadweep. The GDI score declined over the decade by 0.025 points. While gender imbalances exist in all States and UTs, in 2006 the imbalances were higher than the national average of 0.015 in 14 States and UTs. The differentials were largest in Lakshadweep (0.062)

Table. 13: Status of IMR in 1996 and 2006

		2006		1996		
State	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Kerala	14	16	15	13	14	14
Lakshadweep	29	21	25	25.2	5.9	16.3
All India	56	59	57	71	73	72

Table 14: Comparison between HDI and HHDI

Statistics	Health Index	Education Index	Asset Index	HHDI
HHDI	0.69	0.71	0.71	0.708
HDI	0.72	0.63	0.73	0.697
Difference	-0.03	0.08	-0.02	0.011

The above table shows that both HDI and HHDI are giving almost similar results. So in places like Lakshadweep, where limited number of people are living the HHDI method will give you as similar results. HDI is an overall average but HHDI is not purely average, it reflects the conditions of household.

Major Findings

1. Human development scenario is not high in Lakshadweep Island. 57.2 per cent household has achieved high level of human development. Moderate level of human development is attained by 48.8 per cent households. The Lakshadweep people enjoy a good standard of living and better human development

2. The gap between two extreme households in respect of HDI and three dimensional indices is comparably low (0.33), but in the cases of life expectancy and education index the gap is somewhat moderate. The inter-household variation in the level of human development in Lakshadweep Island is relatively low.

3. The disparity among households in the island is high in respect of health while it is relatively low in case of asset and education.

4. HHDI method is giving better and almost similar results as HDI giving. HDI presents over all averages and thus conceals wide disparities in distribution of human development in overall population and does not take into account the distribution of human development within a population subgroup. HHDI is not purely average, it reflects the human development of each of household.

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Kuthuratheeb as a Performance of Sacred Pain: A Sociological Study on a Ritual among the Sunnis of Northern Kerala

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Abstract

Ritual is always a significant element in the understanding of religion and culture. Question on the origin of religion was the primary ground for the discussions on ritual; its definition, content and practice. A ritual can be studied either as a static phenomenon within a context of time and space or from its dynamic characteristics during a period of time. Former explores the symbolic nature of the ritual and the latter analyses the historical dimension to it. The study on Kuthuratheeb, a ritual practiced by the Sunnis of northern Kerala, examines its performance through different stages/acts within a context. The paper details the ritual through its acts, people and materials and discusses how sacredness is evolved through its progression. Through the production, expression, communication and perception of the pain through different bodies of performers and the onlookers, the performance of Kuthuratheebexplains the meaning of sacred pain. Embodiment can be used as a methodological tool to understand the lived experience of the body. As against positions that treat body as either a physical entity or a social product, embodiment as a perspective addresses the complexity of the body and its experience. The paper argues that the presence and absence of pain embodied in this ritual nurtures collective memory and religiosity within the community.
Keywords: *Embodiment, sacred pain, Mappila Muslims, dikr, religiosity.*

Introduction: Ritual Studies; of Self Infliction and Embodiment

Generally, the term ritual is connected with religion and is explained as those practices of religious belief systems. This sacred attribute of ritual is always understood as a means of transcendence for individual or collective. Earlier studies on ritual largely focused on the origin and its formation within different societies. These studies either looked ritual as the causative social factor in the formation of other social systems or discussed about different social determinants of the formation of ritual. The former school, including functionalists like Durkheim (1995) focused on the beginning of rituals and explained its social function as collective effervescence. Studies based on this

understanding explained rituals as social expression. On the other hand, theorists like W. R. Roberton-Smith (1899) and Red cliff Brown (1964) looked at those social factors which determines the formation of rituals. They explained social bonding,ideological factors, ecological requirement (Rappaport, 1967) etc. as social causes which lead to ritual formation at certain point in time.

Apart from these two positions which is basically interested in universalising the origin and formation of rituals and its functions in different social settings, symbolic analysis looks at the content and meaning of the ritual. Here, ritual is addressed as a cultural expression of a particular society. Influenced by structuralist and linguistic studies, symbolic analysis detailed the form, language, meaning, and expression etc. of a ritual. Here, ritual is understood as a social system fixed in a particular time and space. Later studies has shifted the focus to ritual as a phenomenon by itself and engaged with the question of what ritual is meant and constituted.Recent works on ritual expands its identity beyond religious dimension and discusses its relation with social, political, psychological, ecological, and spatial and various other aspects.

Studies on ritual mentioned above can be put together as in its approach to place ritual in a particular period of time and space; either in historic origin or any specific time. Recent ethnographic studies on ritual looked at it from a different point of view. Ritual is approached as a moving or changing social phenomenon which has social, cultural, political, historical and personal dimensions. This shift in anthropology, Turner (1987) called it as a post-modern ethnography where 'processualisation of the space' and its 'temporoalisation' is mode of analysis. Ethnographic studies based on this shift is largely based on understanding the changing character of the ritual tracing its different stages of development along with its engagement in a particular space and time with other social processes. Here, ritual is perceived as a social process and its performance as an engagement with time and space which is at the same time product and producer of time. Turner's (1974) postmodern ethnography on pilgrimage, Maurice Bloch's (1986) historical symbolic analysis on circumcision ritual among Merina people in Madagascar, Whitehead's (2002) cultural ethnography on Kanaima ritual among Amerindian in Guyana Islands and Abedi Fischer's (1990) deconstructive ethnography on Hajj pilgrimage and Shi'a Islam in Iran etc. are some of the examples. These studies elaborate the dynamic nature of different rituals.

The paper details a ritual called *Kuthuratheeb* practiced among Sunni sect of Mappila community in Kerala. For the purpose, *Kuthuratheeb* is contextualised in a single time and space. To elaborate this synchronic approach, the ritual is detailed through its stages of practice/enactment. That is, the ritual is divided in to three phases; pre-

ritual phase, performance phase and post-ritual phase. Pre-ritual phase is the preparative period of defining the purpose of the ritual and arranging both material and non-material requirements for the performance. It asks the questions of why, where and how the ritual is practiced within a specific time and space. It starts with an intention of defining the purpose of the ritual and then different modes of invitation to various actors involved in the ritual. This beginning phase explains different settings and various measures of organising those spaces. Second phase of the ritual details the performance at different levels. This area deals with the question of what is this particular ritual. It discusses the actors involved in the ritual, sartorial and piety materials appear in that space including musical instruments and weapons, textual and non-textual *baithand dikr* recited and finally it explains the order and progression of the performance. And third part of the ritual that is, post-ritual phase focuses on the collective actions followed the ritual within that particular space. It looks at the formation of sacredness to certain materials through the process of ritual performance. This area also analyses the social meanings of the activities of auction, micro financing and creation of local bazar. Thus, these three phases of the ritual elaborate the symbolic meanings of it within a particular context.

Kuthuratheeb: Structure and Context within the Community

Kuthuratheeb is a collective ritual practiced among the Sunni[1] sect of Mappila community in Kerala. The word *Kuthuratheeb* is a combination of *kuthu* which means "to stab" in Malayalam and *ratheeb*-which stands for "regular" in Arabic. *Ratheeb* is a routinized recitation of *dikr* (words of remembrance). Allah, Prophet Muhammad and different Sheikhs[2] are remembered with the recitation of *dikr*. Triningham (1971,194) understands *dikr* as an expression of Qura'nic piety. Based on the differences in the name of Sheikhs commemorated with dikr, there are different types of *ratheeb* like *Rifayiraatheeb, Mohiyudheenratheeb, Shadiliratheeb,* and *Haddadratheeb* to mention a few. *Kuthuratheeb* is the local name used to connote *Rifayiratheeb* which is commemorated in the name of Syed Ahmed al Rifayi (1119 CE) from Egypt. His glory as a Sufi teacher and stories of his *karamath* had travelled to different parts of the world. Glorified stories about the spiritual power of the Sheikh are popular in every Muslim societies in the forms of folk songs, epics, poems etc. *Rifayiratheeb* is the ritual expression of this *karamath* of the particular Sheikh. In this paper, the term *Kuthuratheeb* is used to *Rifayiratheeb* for three reasons. Firstly, the term *Kuthuratheeb* is commonly used by a large number of people to represent the ritual. At the same time different local usages like *Kathi* (knife) *ratheeb*, *Kathi-kuthu* (literally, knife stabbing) *ratheeb* etc. are also popular. *Kathi* is a Malayalam word for any sharp weapon that cuts. But technically *kathi* is not the only weapon used in the performance

and so these particular local terms to represent the ritual are avoided. And finally, at the local level, self-infliction is seen to be practiced in other *ratheeb* performances like *Mohiyudheen ratheeb*. Thus the ritual does not always connote Rifayi Sheikh. So, the word *Kuthuratheeb* is used in the study to represent the ritual.

Kuthuratheeb comes largely under the *nercca*[3] tradition of Sunnis. It is the only *nercca* which involves self-infliction by different kinds of sharp weapons. *Kuthuratheeb* as a ritual can be looked at from its static and dynamic aspects. Static character of a ritual explains its symbolic meaning within a particular time and space. It discusses the form, content and process of a ritual by fixing it in a context. This does not ignore the "processual"[4] behaviour of the ritual, but attempts to describe the symbolic meaning of each act and event of the performance. So, Kuthuratheeb can be studied by pausing it within a context of a certain locality and then analyse its interaction with other social phenomena. On the other hand, the dynamic character of the ritual emphasis its historic development in different socio-political and religious times. In his study on circumcision ritual among Marina people of Madagascar, Bloch points out the importance of looking at historical development of a ritual to understand the change and consistency in its symbolic meaning (1986, 10). Similarly, historic formation and development of *Kuthuratheeb* is analysed to understand the trends in its appearance, disappearance and re-appearance in Malabar region during different periods. This dynamic character of *Kuthuratheeb* is related to the trajectory of Sufi movement in Kerala. Tracing the journey of Sufism and its interaction with local religious belief and practice systems will explain the historic development of *Kuthuratheeb* in that particular region. This dynamic character of the ritual narrates the history of performative tradition, institutionalisation of Sufism and ritualization of practices within a particular locality. Here, the community history, formation and development is explained through the ritual dynamics. But the focus of the paper is to look at the static characteristics of *Kuthuratheeb* by contextualising the performance of this ritual within a particular time and space.

Pre-Ritual Phase

Before describing the details of the performance, the preparatory phase of the ritual needs to be explained. This pre-ritual phase defines the purpose of the ritual. It asks the questions of why, where and how the ritual is practiced within the specific spatio-temporal context. This stage explains different settings of the ritual, various measures used for organising it and different types of invitation used for the networking of different stake holders in the ritual.

Niyath: Purpose of the Ritual

The question of why *Kuthuratheeb* is practiced within the community explains its purpose and meaning. Like any other religious ritual, there is a *niyath* (intention) behind this too. *Niyath* is a religious decision or consciousness taken before every act of religious or non-religious nature in the life of a believer. It can be read as a religio-cognitive agreement of submission to a higher power. It can be a thought or invocation to self which emphasises the religious intention of the actor. For example, *niyath* taken before normative religious practices like fasting during the holy month of *ramzan, zakat* (mandatory charity for every Muslim) and *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) forms the means of asserting one's religious obligation to be part of the larger community. Another type of *niyath* can be preparatory in nature where an intention is made to offer a religious act as a part of making a wish. For example, believers keep a niyath of offering a nerccaof paying a *ziyarath* (religious visit) to a *dargah*(sacred sites of tombs of Sheikh) if any of their particular wish gets fulfilled. Similarly, the performance of *Kuthuratheeb* is conducted with a specific niyath. Here, three major intentions behind the practice of this ritual is discussed. Apart from the peculiarities with respect to the setting of the ritual and the nature of its patrons, *Kuthuratheeb* is unique in relation to its *niyath*.

Remembrance, purification and protection are the major intentions behind this ritual. *Kuthuratheeb* is a ritualistic way of remembrance and display of the *karamath* of Sheikh which instils collective memory and religiosity among the community. It is also a channel of transfer of blessing where Sheikhs mediate between God and the believer. Thus, through the practice of *Kuthuratheeb*, the spiritually exalted position of the Sheikhs and their *karamath* is remembered and is performed.

Purification is another niyathof *Kuthuratheeb*. In Islam, overall cleansing of mind, body, thoughts and actions are conducted through several normative religious procedures like *wuzu* (ablution) for cleansing of certain body parts, *dikr* that purifies thoughts, *zakat* which checks on bad deeds, fasting disciplines and bodily instincts. The idea of *shaitan/ iblees* (Satan) is inherent in the religious imagination where the duty of a believer is to stay away from the influence of evil power and to orient one's existence entirely towards God. That is, the life of believers is based on the purification of the self in every aspect of their life. This *niyath* behind the practice of *Kuthratheeb* is achieved through both material and non-material ways. Material purification is about keeping the surface of the performance clean, burning of *kunthirikkam* (a type of incense) to freshen the air and staying away from any *najas* (religiously impure substances). Non material purification focuses on intensifying the belief systems of an individual believer and

the community by emphasis on moral purity and physical discipline. So, through the conduct of this ritual, both the individual believer and the community is purified.

Kuthuratheeb also performs protective functions for the community. It is one mode of seeking help from the Sheikh by an individual/collective. This ritual acts as a shield against the negative influence of outside forces like diseases, natural calamities, evil eyes and social instabilities. It is believed that the performance of the ritual can save an individual/ family/ locality from their sufferings. It is also a precautious action taken to avoid any further troubles in future. In earlier times, when a locality experienced natural calamities like flood or was afflicted by infectious diseases like Cholera, collective efforts went into conducting *Kuthuratheeb* within that locality. Similarly, for personal problems of financial, mental or familial nature, one offers *Kuthuratheeb* as a *nercca* for a solution. It is believed that after the performance, the negative forces around the person/family will be removed.

Mahal: Locating the Ritual

It is important to know the space where the ritual is performed because it influences other factors like composition of the gathering and time and duration of the performance. How does a space get set for the ritual, what are the different forms of settings used for the performance and how does a space defines the ritual and is decided by it are some of the key questions to be addressed to locate this ritual. *Mahal* as a conceptual category can be used as an entry point to trace those settings. *Mahal* is a religio-geographical point of reference which is based around a mosque and the Muslim community residing close to it. There is no specific criterion for deciding the inclusion of households within the ambit of a single *mahal* but nearest mosque makes them part of it. There is a committee within a particular *mahal* consisting of select male members from the locality which takes decisions on the religious affairs of the community. It administers religious affairs such as the regular conduct of prayer inside the mosque, functioning of the madrasa (religious learning institution), appointment of *ustad* who offers religious instructions in madrasa, arrangement of religious rituals during marriage and death and monitoring the religious life of people within the mahal. So, a *mahal* constitutes a religio-geographical unit where household is the basic unit. The study locates different settings of *Kuthuratheeb* within a *mahal*. This division is not based on the differences in the *niyath* of the ritual; it was observed that even with the same niyath, *Kuthuratheeb* is performed in different settings. This division is based on the nature of the patron of the ritual whether it is conducted by an individual, family, group of families, *mahal* committee or trust of a *dargah*.

Kuthuratheeb performed in individual households could either be organised by a single family for personal reasons or a group of families arranging it as a part of annual nercca at any of their houses. Even though the setting is same in both the cases, they are different in their niyath and composition of people who are gathered. In the first case, niyath of the ritual is personal in that if an individual or his family goes through any unpleasant situation of health, finance or so, they organise *Kuthuratheeb* at their residence with the belief that it will save them from their miseries. *Majlis* (sacred space for religious acts) is arranged in the courtyard or inside the house. People gathered are limited to close relatives and immediate neighbourhood. In the second case where a group of families arrange the setting in any of their house, the *niyath* and composition of the people are different. Since the group organise *Kuthuratheeb* every year as *nercca* in the name of the Sheikh, they take turns in conducting it according to their convenience. At the same time, they share the financial, social and other requirements for the occasion.

Another setting for *Kuthuratheeb* is the *dargah*. *Dargah* becomes the site for the ritual as a part of the annual *nercca* conducted in the memory of a particular Sheikh in the locality or a popular Sheikh of the community. *Ziyarath* to these places is part of the religious life of Sunni *Mappilas*. Since women's entry to mosque for *namaz* is prohibited among Sunni sect, *ziyarath* is the only way for them to access such sacred places. Usually, the annual *nercca* is conducted in the name of Mohiyudheen or Rifayi Sheikh where in the local Sheikhs are also remembered and honoured on the same occasion. This spiritual order is a part of Sufism where a lineage of different saints within a Sufi order is arranged in a hierarchy. Here, commemorating one Sheikh is about remembering the rest of them and showing respect to each. So, when the ritual *Kuthuratheeb* is conducted as part of the *nercca* in a *dargah*, *niyath* is about both commemorating the spiritual leaders and demonstrating their *karamath*. *Kuthuratheeb* is scheduled as the final ritual during one or two days of religious ceremonies. Rituals like Moulid[5], wail (public religious speech), *qur'an* classes, collective prayer and programmes like *Qawali* are some of the common events happening during those days. Even though the niyath of the ritual in every dargahsetting is the same, - that is, to commemorate the Sheikh - the patrons of the ritual vary. They could be a family, *mahal* committee or a religious trust, which are in charge of any particular *dargah*. Another setting for *Kuthuratheeb* is a public place, like a school ground or a hill top. Here, the performance is arranged as an annual *nercca* by a committee formed within that particular locality. Organisers in this setting include members from the particular *mahal* committee and families residing in the locality. Financial and logistic assistance to conduct this programme is arranged by this committee.

Ratheebpura (a house for the recitation of *dikr*) is another setting for *Kuthuratheeb* in some places. *Ratheebpura* is a single-storey building earmarked for the recitation of *dikr*. It is not like a mosque which provides space for *namaz*. Activities in *ratheebpura* do not have associations with the *mahal* in which it is located. *Nercca* is conducted annually in the name of Sheikhs from Lakshwadeep and other popular Sheikhs among the Muslim community where *Kuthuratheeb* is also performed.

Daewa: A Note on Invitation

This section discusses how people are invited to the ritual. It looks at different modes of invitations by examining the composition of the people gathered in the setting. There are three groups of people involved in this ritual: patrons of *Kuthuratheeb*, group of performers of the ritual and the on lookers who participate in the ritual. Variation in the composition of the congregation is attributed to the differences in the *niyath* of the ritual. It is the first group, that is, the patrons including individual, family, *mahal* committee or trust who invite the other two sections of people. The group of performers including *ustad* and his *mureed*/ disciple is directly invited by the patron. The patrons contact the *ustad* and fix the date of performance based on their convenience and priorities. They chose either a group which is familiar to the locality or groups which are known for their performance. This decision is also influenced by the fees charged by the group and their availability. Thus, invitation of performers is done formally and is a matter of choice for the patron.

Different modes of invitations are used for the third group, that is, the onlookers. The means through which they come to know of the ceremony or the manner of their invitation is important to understand different modes of networking among the community. Onlookers are constituted by both men and women (non-menstruating) of any age who are positioned separately in the setting. *Kuthuratheeb* is performed in front of this audience, irrespective of the nature of patronage, niyathof the function or its setting. So their presence and composition is crucial in the design of the entire performance. According to the nature of patronage, the audience are invited differently. It ranges from personal invitation to public call through different means of communication. The following section details this socio-religious interaction occurring within the community in the backdrop of *Kuthuratheeb*.

In the case of *Kuthuratheeb* organised by an individual/family with a *niyath* of solace for their personal problems, the onlookers consists of the family, their relatives and neighbours. They are invited personally by the head of the family. But in some cases, news about the programme is announced in the mosque of their particular *mahal*. This happens when a family member goes to the mosque to invite its *qali*

(religious head) to attend the function. So, if the organiser is willing, then the *qali* will announce it after *Isha namaz* and thus the invitation is extended to the people gathered in the mosque. Here, what makes the invitation closed is due to the personal *niyath* behind the ritual. Social stigma makes the concerned individual/ family to keep their personal problems to themselves. Even if people are invited personally, the purpose of the ritual may not be shared with them.

Invitation for *Kuthuratheeb* which is practiced in the public platform is done in different ways: oral and textual. Oral invitation has a long tradition relating to the culture and everyday life of the community. News about the ritual is spread by word of mouth within a locality and beyond. The knowledge thus disseminated about an annual *nercca* in a particular *dargah* is a public call for the people to participate in it. Except for popular figures within the religious community, there is no personal invitation for the common public in most cases.

Another form of oral invitation is seen in some parts of Malappuram (a district in Kerala) where a group of men performing duff or *arabana* goes to each house in a locality to invite families for the ritual. They include a group of two or three men from the same locality known to people owing to their frequent presence in religious spaces like mosque and madrasa. They usually wear white *mundu* (a long piece of cloth wrapped around waist), shirt and a skull cap which is a common religious attire among Sunni religious practitioners. They play musical instruments like duff or *arabana* and recite *baith* for almost ten to fifteen minutes and then share the details of the time and venue of the ritual, the group of performers and patrons. They engage in short conversations with the family members regarding local affairs. Also people donate some money to them which is a source of income for them. In earlier times, this folk art of going to each house to inform or invite for local programmes was common. But now, this tradition of invitation is fading in many areas. Presently, this type of oral invitation takes the form of public announcements. Announcements are made by a person in a vehicle using a mike and a speaker. It passes through every nook and corner of the locality in the process announcing the details of the entire itinerary surrounding the ritual. This facility is arranged by the organisers during the annual *nercca* in any popular dargah.

Textual invitation is another form of dissemination. Notices detailing the programmes invite the public for the occasion. It is distributed in the mosque which will ensure that it reaches almost every household in the *mahal*. Also, some people who are part of the organising committee go to every house in the neighbourhood to distribute the notices and invite them personally. This is done usually when donation for the programme is collected from these houses. Notices are also distributed in public places such as local bus stands and tea-shops. In some cases,

advertisements are inserted in local newspapers. News about the programme is spread through these different means to invite the general public for the events. Thus we can see that news about *Kuthuratheeb* is circulated through different networks according to the niyath and convenience of the organisers. Since *Kuthuratheeb* is performed as part of annual *nercca* most of the time, different means of popularisation and invitations to the *nercca* resorted to by the organisers are the channels through which information about the performance of *Kuthuratheeb* also reaches the public.

Performance of *Kuthuratheeb*

A sacred space called *majlis* is created to perform the ritual. Majlis is the central stage for performance where religiously important personalities are seated in one corner and weapons for infliction are displayed on another side. It is arranged in a way so that it faces the audience. Before describing the performance, a brief detailing of the group of performers, musical instruments of *duff/arabana* and various weapons used for self-infliction is given in the following section.

1.*Ustad* and *Mureed*: Formation of a Spiritual Order

Any group of performers include an ustadand his *mureed*(s). An *ustad* is an expert in religious knowledge systems who leads his followers. *Ustad*(s) are followers of any Sheikh of their locality or other places from which they get their religious training. *Mureed* is a disciple of the ustad. If someone wants to be a *mureed*, he can approach an *ustad*. Then he has to follow a training session under the *ustad* for around forty days including learning of different types of *dikr* and other religious disciplines. Once this training is completed, he will be awarded bai'at and later on he becomes the *mureed* of that *ustad*. *Bai'at* is a religious degree conferred on a person approving his authority to be a disciple of a particular school of thought/order under an *ustad*.

An *ustad* does not belong to any caste/sect among *Mappila* community. There is no organisational mechanism for them to coordinate their activities. Their activities are based in a particular locality. The ustad, who heads the group of performers, is different from a *qali*. *Qali* is the head of a mosque, and is associated with the activities in the mosque like leading *namaz*, call of *azan* and coordinating madrasa affairs. They are appointed by the *mahal* committee. But the *ustad* mentioned here is not the religious head of a mosque. They are people who lead the group of performers of *Kuthuratheeb*. Apart from this ritual performance, they are involved in other activities in their life. *Mureed* is a disciple of an *ustad.* They belong to the second last ladder of the spiritual hierarchy just above the common believer. Spiritual hierarchy is built upon with believers at the base, the *mureed* occupying the next level who in turn comes under the *ustad*. The Sheikh acts an interme-

diary between the lower strata comprising of the believer, followed by *mureed* and *ustad* and the spiritually higher powers of Prophet Muhammed and then the God, Allah. This idea of spiritual hierarchy is an intrinsic part of Sunni religious imagination and their ritual practices including *Kuthuratheeb*. Now, *mureed*(s) are the chosen people who spread knowledge and wisdom from an *ustad* among common people. Earlier the system of *ustad* and *mureed* was highly functional in both religious and non-religious realms.

2.*Duff and Arabana*: Two Lineages of Folk Art

Duff or *arabana* is a percussion instrument used in *Kuthuratheeb*. *Duff* or *arabana mutt* (*mutt* in Malayalam means to beat) is a folk art form performed as a group. The Arabic *baith* is accompanied by the instrument. The basic form of this instrument is called *duff*; and there are different types of *duff* of which *arabana* is a bigger version of *duff*. It is made of five wooden pieces arranged in a circular frame. Dried goat skin is stretched on one side of the frame. In *arabana*, small holes are made on the wooden frame to attach *chilamb* (a thick anklet that makes loud metallic clatter) on it. Sound is created by tapping one's fingers on the drumhead.

Depending on the type of mutt, there are two forms of arabana: *ratheeb arabana* and *kali mutt*(playful tapping). The style of holding the instrument, the *baith* sung and the setting of performance are some factors deciding the type of *arabana* played by the group. In *ratheeb arabana*, which is a religious art form, *arabana* is held by the left hand and there are eight styles of *mutt* or tapping of the drumhead. The baith recited during the performance lauds Rifayi and Mohiyudheen Sheikh and these are orally transferred across generations. *Kali mutt* is more of a folk art performed during celebratory occasions. Here, *mutt* is made on both inside and outside the drumhead, with fingers, palm, elbow and forehead. Even though there is no specification for the size of arabana, in *ratheeb arabana* each instrument should be of the same size due to the use of more body movements and exchanges between players. *Kali mutt* is more popular in the community that it has become a competitive art form in school and college art festivals in Kerala. The baiths glorify events such as the victory of the battle of *Badr* and the epic love story of BadarulMunir and Husunul Jamal, and are recited in Malayalam and Arabi-Malayalam.[7]

Even though there is a clear difference in these two styles of *mutt*, they get fused in accordance with the setting of *Kuthuratheeb*. The practice of *kali mutt* is mostly seen before and after the main ritual of self infliction especially in the setting of annual *nercca*. It is mandatory to play *ratheebarabana* during the performance of self-infliction in the ritual. Locally influenced improvisation of mutt and use of popular baith creates a celebratory atmosphere. People gathered for the ritual

do participate at this phase by singing along with the *baith* in the same rhythm and with gestures like tapping the fingers on the body and clapping hands. But, when the ustad takes weapons, the recital gets back to ratheebarabana mutt. While playing arabana, performers make sway their bodies towards left and right according to the rhythm of the *mutt*. There will be a main singer who delivers baith and others follow in chorus. Depending on the group, the main singer may be the same person who plays duff or *arabana* or someone specially assigned to sing. The popularity of one instrument in a locality and the tradition of following a single instrument influence a group to opt for that, either duff or arabana. But there are religious disagreements regarding the use of different types of duff where one school considers the use of chilamb in arabana as non-Islamic. These debates focus on unearthing from the religious sources of hadees, historical evidence for the usage of these instruments during and after the life of Prophet Muhammad. These differences in the Islamic jurisprudence do not influence the choices made by performance groups and they have been following their choices for many years. So, the difference in the usage of duff or *arabana* is more cultural than religious.

Another source of difference in the use of these instruments is related to different narrations on the origin and spread of *Kuthuratheeb* in Kerala. There are two local narrations prevalent regarding the source of this ritual in Kerala. One group claims that it has come from Lakshwadeep and the other traces its origin to Yemen. Malabar has a long history of social and religious engagements with Yemen and Lakshwadeep which influenced the community at various levels. Even though there is no historical proof for their claims, it is seen that the use of *duff* is more common among groups who trace the origin of *Kuthuratheeb* to Lakshwadeep and *arabana* among those identifying Yemen as the source of the ritual in Kerala. But this division is not concrete and people are less conscious about the differences in the use of these instruments.

3.Self-Infliction: Tools and Modes

Kuthuratheeb is the only nercca ritual where pain is inflicted on the body of the performer using different sharp weapons. It is believed that Sheikh Rifayi (1119 CE) had practiced the same during his times. Every group of performers possesses the same set of weapons. But the mode of using weapons, the number of people performing self-infliction, duration of the performance and intensity of the act of self hurting varies according to each group. The number of performers and the mode of self infliction is influenced by the nature of the group of performers. Some groups have exclusive members for performing weapons, playing *duff* or *arabana* and singing baith. But in other groups, this form of compartmentalisation of labour is not present.

Every member is involved in all the activities of the group, that is, the person who plays *duff* or *arabana* also does self-infliction. Intensity of the act of infliction also varies according to the group; some are famous for the intense use of weapons but some for their highly professional playing of the *duff* or *arabana*. There are different types of weapons used in *Kuthuratheeb*: knife, needle, sword, axe, *dubbos and kadir*. Each instrument has unique modes of usage and specific areas on the body to be inflicted like stomach, tongue, forehead, cheek, shoulders, hands and dorsal surface of the body. Each group has their own set of weapons which is kept at the *ustad's* house. They are kept along with other sacred texts like Qur'an.

Performance of the Ritual

The performance of *Kuthuratheeb* has four stages: recitation of dikr, playing of *arabana* or *duff* along with the recital of *baith*, self–infliction using different weapons and collective prayer. The first stage of recitation of *dikr* starts with *Fathiha*, first *surat* (chapter) of the Qur'an. Then they recite other important *ayat*(s) (a piece of line in Qur'an) from different surat(s). This is a collective recitation and those who are not familiar with the verses can say amen at the end of each sentence. The next is the main part of the ritual, recitation of *dikr*. *Dikr* consists of words of remembrance of Sheikhs, Prophets and the God. People use different *dikr* according to the particular Sheikh they are commemorating. A general dikrglorifying other popular Sheikhs are also recited on the occasion. At first, the ustadrecites *dikr* and the rest of the group and the audience repeat the same. It goes on for about twenty minutes and then we enter into the second stage comprising of the performance of playing *duff* or *arabana*.

In this stage, the performers assemble in two parallel lines of equal number. They have their own Arabic *baith* to create the rhythm for the performance. Some of the members in the group sing *baith* and the rest accompany in chorus. They sway their bodies according to the rhythm of the *baith*. After some time, the *ustad* enters the *majlis* where *arabana/duff* is being played. He removes his shirt. He starts to move in between the lines of the players in a rhythm. He joins in the recitation of the *baith* in loud voice to encourage the players. It gives a celebratory mood which raises the tempo of the performance. In between they take a break to heat *arabana*. This is because after many rounds of mutt, the leather of the *arabana* loosens and produces softer sounds. So they heat the instrument over fire which made at a distance from the *majlis*. This will fasten the skin and retain the rhythm of *arabana*. Then they come back to the same position and continue to play the instrument. The ustad joins them again in the majlisto elevate the tempo of the performance and after some time he gets back to his seat. This playing of *arabana* goes on for an hour. When they get into *halirbaith*

which registers the presence of Sheikh in the *majlis*, the *ustad* is ready to enter the third stage of the performance, that is, self-infliction using the weapons.

At this point, the *arabana/ duff* players leave ample space between their two lines to allow the ustadto perform self-infliction. The ustad-approaches other religious personalities present in the majlis and hold their hands. It is a way of sharing blessings and getting permission to take weapons for self-infliction which marks the main phase of the ritual. Then he moves towards the *arabana/ duff* players and hold their hands. This shows the collective bonding of performers involved in the entire ritual. The *ustad* wears a white cloth over the *mundu* to avoid shedding of blood on his costume. He takes two *dubbos* (small knife) from the table and moves towards a chair which is kept close to *arabana/duff* players.

Now the *ustad* is positioned at the centre of the *majlis*. He carries another white cotton cloth which he tears into small pieces every time he takes a weapon. He hands it over to an assistant before getting into the act of infliction. When he hands over each weapon after every act of performance, the assistant cleans it with that small piece of cotton cloth. This is done to avoid the weapons from getting rusted with blood stains. Now, the *ustad* bends his head down and protrudes his tongue wide open. He places the knives diagonally upon his tongue and begins to strike it down. He hits with the two knives, one after the other, in accordance with the rhythm of *arabana mutt*. Now the *baith* recital becomes louder and the pace of the *arabana/ arabana mutt* much faster. This act of hurting the tongue goes on for about ten minutes. Then he returns to the table and keeps the *dubbos* in one corner.

Next, the *ustad* takes a knife of the length of one hand. Then he walks towards *arabana/duff* players and moves in forward and backward steps and sways up and down in a rhythm. He keeps doing this for some time along with the loud rendition of *baith*. Then he pauses in the middle of the *arabana/duff* players to perform the next act. He stretches his tongue with left hand and begins to cut it with a knife in his right hand. After around five minutes, he stops the action and returns the knife to the assistant. He fastens the tongue tight with a white cotton cloth for some time. While doing this he, swiftly walks in between the lines. It is believed that holding the injured body parts or touching over it with prayers has the potential to heal those wounds without leaving any marks. This emphasises the *karamath* of the Sheikh.

The *ustad* next takes two sharp knives and moves towards the main area of *majlis*. Now the tempo of *arabana/duff mutt* would have reached its peak. The ustad makes a peculiar body movement by first raising his left leg up and then taking a step back by right leg. This is repeated with the left and right legs in alternating movements. This

brisk back and forth movement in the *majlis* brings the *ustad* to trance who is also loudly singing baith. Then he starts to hit his stomach using the knives. He performs this act for about ten minutes and when he stops, his assistant reaches him and touches his stomach while reciting prayers for recovery. The idea of touch is crucial here. It is through the act of holding hands and touching the wounded body parts that blessings and recovery is passed from the higher spiritual power to the believers.

The next act of infliction is by using long needles. The *ustad* takes a bunch of needles and pierce them into his cheeks, head, forehead and hands. During these acts, he keeps moving and utters "*sheik-ae*" in loud voice which means "*oh sheikh*". It is a local manner of invoking the Sheikh. He raises his voice after every act of piercing upon his body and to every invocation of "*oh sheikh*", the *arabana/duff* players responds with "*raliyallah*", meaning "may he receive God's blessing". With the help of his assistant, the *ustad* slowly removes each needle from different parts of his body. Then the *ustad* moves with two swords in his hands and starts to strike his shoulders and the back of the body. This is done while dancing to the rhythm of *arabana/duff mutt.* He places one sword back on the table and puts the other over his head. The ustadbends his head down and starts to hit the neck as if he is going to cut his head off in sacrifice. This goes for three or four minutes. Then he takes an axe and swirls it over his head while walking around the majlisback and forth. He gets into a dance like movement where he raises his right leg while the left hand holding an axe moves towards it. This is repeated with in alternating movements of limbs for some time. Then he holds the axe with both the hands and begins to hit the back of his body. This continues for about five minutes and the *ustad* returns to the table. While he sits on the chair, his assistant touches his back side of the body. Throughout the performance, the *ustad* raises his eyes up as if he is in communication with a higher power. His assistant cleans up all the weapons with each piece of cotton strips given to him every time the *ustad* takes a weapon. Then the assistant displays the blood stains on each piece of cloth to the audience to ensure the intensity of ustad'sacts of self-infliction. *Arabana/duff mutt* also comes to a close when *ustad* concludes his performance. This marks the end of the acts of self-infliction.

The next stage of the ritual is collective prayer. It happens mostly after dinner. After food, the community gathers in the front yard to offer collective prayer. The *ustad* recites major *swalat* (prayer in the name of prophet Muhammed and Sheikhs) and others join them by responding with "amen". It goes for about an hour. This marks the end of the ritual.

The events of collective *dikr*, playing of *duff or arabana*, performance of self-infliction, community meal and prayer constitute

the major elements of any *Kuthuratheeb* performance. As mentioned earlier, the duration of performance, the number of people involved, baith and *dikr* used may vary with each ritual.

Post-Ritual Phase

Post-ritual stage of *Kuthuratheeb* engages with activities that create an idea of sacredness. Sacredness of *Kuthuratheeb* is based on the belief in the presence of Sheikh in the majlis. Reciting *dikr*, *swalat* and *dua* makes the atmosphere spiritual. Idea of purification is emphasised with the sense of smell. Objects like attar (scent), water, oil, honey and *kunthirikkam* (one type of incense) are common in any *majlis* of *Kuthuratheeb*. Attar is a scent usually pressed on clothes or over body which gives a favoured smell. Using attar during special occasions of Eid and Friday *namaz* is part of aesthetic life of the community. Asking for protection from a Sheikh is one of the major *niyath* of the ritual. It is a form of getting shielded against any attack of an outside force in the form of disease, financial crisis, natural calamities etc. This protection is extended through materials like oil, water and honey which gets sacred value through the ritual. Oil is connected with lighting lamps at *dargah* and during *ziyarath* a spoon of it is given to the believers which is either to be orally taken or to be spread over the head. Water and honey are believed to have medicinal value after it is processed through prayer by *ustad*. Idea of *shifa* (recovery) is a part of Sunni imagination which is based on spiritual hierarchy. *Ustad* and other religious personalities are believed to have this spiritual power to offer *shifa* to believers in pain and it is mostly done by offering sacred water to them. In the *majlis* of *Kuthuratheeb*, bottles of water and honey are kept to elevate them to sacred objects. These are contributed by the onlookers before the programme get started and they collect it back when the ritual is over. These sacred honey and water are consumed by family members in case of health issues. .

Collective Religiosity through Recitation and Feasting

Recitation of *Dikr* is the major part of *ratheeb*. It is considered as the most spiritual way to reach close to God. It is a way of life and part of everyday religious practices. *Dikr* is practiced on every Thursday and Friday among the group of *murid*(s) gathered either at mosque or other social places like *ratheebpura* etc. *Kuthuratheeb* is the extension of this recitation of *dikr* with the performance of *duff* or *arabana* and self-infliction using weapons. During the recitation of *dikr* in the *majlis*, sometimes body also takes part in this. Involvement of body movements while reciting dikr is a common practice in many occasions of the ritual. That is a group of people including ustad, his *mureed*(s) and other important religious personalities of the location stands in a circle on the *majlis*. While reciting dikr, they bend their head down and make a circular movement with head beginning from left to right. This marks

the cleaning of body where the circular movements symbolically starts from heart and ends with the same. This is believed that it purifies the soul of the believer. Thus, a collective religiosity is formed through recitation of dikr.

Communal meal is another important part of the ritual. It is related with the history and practice of *Kuthurath*eeb. In earlier times when a region goes through a scarcity of food, people of the locality conduct *Kuthuratheeb.* During that time people get what-ever food they have in their homes and share it equally with those people gathered for the ritual. Now, serving *nerccachor* (rice as an offering) during every occasion of the ritual has become a mandatory part of the programme. Usually they make plane rice with beef/chicken and serve it for everyone who are gathered in the programme. People contribute for the meal either with money, rice, meat or other ingredients. Collective preparation and serving of it has social dimensions to create bond among the people. If the ritual is happening at a house, women belonging to the family and neighbourhood do the preparation of the meal. If it is conducted as a part of annual *nercca* and thus, due to larger number people gathered organisers assign a local groups to cater the preparation. On some occasions organisers distribute packets of meal to everyone but on another setting, they serve food on table arranged separately for men and women. It is the duty of the organisers to ensure that everyone is fed and if not, it is considered as inauspicious. This community feasting creates a collective religiosity which is based on sharing for the well-being of the community.

Formation of Local Bazar and Micro-Financing
Local bazar are formed around many *dargah*(s) during the occasions of annual *nercca*. It is a local fair created according to the peculiarities of a particular *dargah* and its particular locality. These kind of bazars are formed in different places during annual *nercca*. Annual *nercca* also become a platform for auction of local items like hen, goat, pine apple etc. which constitute a micro-economic transaction within the community. Sacredness is attached to those materials and thus it become a religious desire for the people to collect them. Those who buy through auction consume them with this sacred intention. For example, they will not throw the food items and make sure it is consumed fully. Another form of micro-economic transaction is conducted through micro-financing. It is a way of arranging financial requirements by the organisers to conduct the ritual. How does these micro-economic transactions effect the socio-economic and cultural life of the particular locality is an interesting area which needs to be explored more with primary sources.

Conclusion

Kuthuratheeb is a ritual among the Sunnis of Kerala where pain is inflicted on the body. It is a group performance where pain is experienced and expressed at different levels of presence and absence of it. Through this performance of sacred pain, the community belief on the *karamath* of the Sheikh is recreated, experienced and established. It is through this channel that the blessing of the spiritually higher Sheikhs is transferred to the community. Hence, *Kuthuratheeb* is a performance through which collective memory and religiosity is instilled within the community. But, meaning of *Kuturatheeb* for Sunnis cannot be completely understood through this symbolic analysis of the ritual with in a context. Historic development of the changes in symbolic meaning should also be explored. It demands a keen historic analysis of the socio-political events in the community in the background of the visibility/non-visibility of the ritual. For example, Mujahids, who are called as reformers in Kerala, has created a new religious self against the Sunnis through different embodied practices. This has influenced the disappearance of *Kuthuratheeb* in many localities. But recent re-appearance of the ritual can be read as an identity assertion of Sunnis through their sacred self. Thus, further studies on these historic developments will unfold the changing meaning of the ritual and its importance to Sunnis.

Notes

1. Kerala Muslims are all Sunnis and based on the religious schools of law they are divided into Sunni Mappilas and Mujahid Mappilas. Mujahids are reformative groups influenced by *Wahabi* movement. Even though the basic principles of Islam like belief in Allah, prophet Muhammed, Quran as the sacred text, five time *namaz,* and role of Hajj and practice of Zakat are same for both, they do differ at the level of practice Namely with respect *toshirk* (attribution of partners to God, idolatry), *bidah* (innovation in worship) and *taqliq* (blind following). *Nercca*

2. Religiously higher person who are considered as saints. They are called by different names like *pir* in Northern India or *thangal* in Kerala.

3. *Nercca* is a ritual forcommemorating the spiritually exalted personas who act as the intermediary between a believer and the God. It is a religious act of seeking protection, thanks-giving for expediting wishes, remembering the legacy and lineage of the spiritual order, vowing to the power, prayer for the good etc. It is delivered either individually or collective. *Nercca* by an individual is the delivering of a defined number of *dikr* or recitation of certain *ayat* (chapter) of Qur'an with an intention for something in the future or as a way of acknowledging an already fulfilled need. On the other hand, the collective practice of *nercca* involves the performance of different types of rituals within a particular time and space. *Moulid, Kuthubeeyath, Kuthuratheeb* etc. belong to this category. Some of the *nerccas* in Malabar are known after its location; Kondotty *nercca*, Malappuram *nercca*, Thekkupuram *nercca* and Ponnani *nercca* are some instances.

4. V. Turner (1987) understands ritual both from its social and effectual aspects. This starts from the understanding of society as in a process of becoming and not as a world in being. His study on rituals of Ndembu community in North West Zambia and his anthropology of symbolic meanings of pilgrimage exemplifythis approach.

5. *Moulid* is a ceremonial reading of a short treatise celebrating the birth, life, deeds and words of Prophet Muhammed or popular Sheikhs. An *ustad* or a religious leader is called upon to read the treatise, part of which is in verse. *Mohiyudheen Mala* (verses) composed by Qadi Muhammed al Kalikutti in 1607, which is very popular in Kerala is the *Moulid* of Abdul Qadir al- Jilani.

6. It is a local language used by Mappila Muslims in Kerala. This language uses the Arabic script but the grammar and syntax of Malayalam. Vocabulary is shared by both the languages. This derivate form of language played an important role in the spread of religion and development of vernacular textual forms within the community. This form of language is used in the madrasas of Sunni sect

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