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Ph.D. Dissertation

History Writing and Global Encounters in Sixteenth-Century Kerala

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Abstract

This thesis studies history-writing practices and global encounters in sixteenth-century Kerala. Specifically, it explores the encounters between the Zamorins of Kozhikode, the Māppila Muslims, and the Portuguese traders in Kerala through a parallel reading of Malayalam, Arabic and Portuguese records.

Modes of vernacular history writing in India have posed a problem for historians trained in Western historiographical modes due to particularities in the way that facts, myths, and legends are recorded and sometimes combined. Some historians have detected a 'silence' on the Portuguese in these records, which reveals the negligible impact that the Portuguese had on Indians. Rather than dismissing their relevance as non-historical, this thesis takes these vernacular stories as legitimate sites of enquiry.

Based on these stories, this thesis develops a territorial model of Kerala against which the aspirations of and conflicts between maritime groups – such as the Muslims and the Portuguese – can be compared. It focuses on the way in which origin stories about founder-heroes were appropriated and transformed by various socio-political groups over centuries, to legitimize their claim to the region and to resolve tensions with other groups. This process, it is argued, constituted the land of Kerala. An examination of the focus on land in the Malayalam records reveals that maritime groups like the Muslims and the Portuguese played the role of bridging the gap between the land and the sea. I conclude that, looking at these processes in the context of the Indian Ocean world reveals a land-sea division in Malayalam and Arabic history writing, and consequently, in the way in which the Zamorins and the Māppilas responded to the arrival of the Portuguese.

Resumo

Esta tese estuda práticas de escrita de história e encontros globais em Kerala no século XVI. Especificamente, explora os encontros entre os samorins de Kozhikode, os Māppila muçulmanos, e os comerciantes portugueses, em Kerala, por meio de uma leitura paralela de registos em malaiálim, árabe e português.

Os modos de escrever história na Índia constituem um problema para historiadores treinados nos modos historiográficos ocidentais, devido às particularidades na forma como os factos, mitos e lendas são registados e por vezes combinados. Alguns historiadores detectaram um 'silêncio' sobre os portugueses nesses registos, o que revela o impacto diminuto que os portugueses tiveram sobre os índios. Em vez de descartar a sua relevância como não histórica, esta tese considera essas histórias como legítimos universos de investigação.

Com base nessas histórias, esta tese desenvolve um modelo territorial de Kerala face ao qual as aspirações e conflitos entre grupos marítimos – como os muçulmanos e os portugueses – podem ser comparados. Discute a forma como as histórias centradas nos heróis-fundadores foram apropriadas e transformadas por vários grupos sociopolíticos, ao longo dos séculos, para legitimar a sua reivindicação à região e para resolver tensões com outros grupos. Este processo, argumenta-se, constituiu a base de identificação da terra de Kerala. Um exame do foco na terra nos registos em malaiálim revela que grupos marítimos como os muçulmanos e os portugueses desempenharam um papel importante no preenchimento da lacuna identificada entre a terra e o mar. Concluo que olhar estes processos no contexto do mundo do oceano Índico revela uma divisão entre terra e mar na escrita da história malaiala e árabe e, consequentemente, na forma como os samorins e os Māppila responderam à chegada dos portugueses.

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Glossary

Working definitions of terms used in this thesis can be found below:

Arakkal – Muslim-ruled kingdom based in Kannur

Bania – Hindu merchant caste from Gujarat

baudhas – followers of Buddhism or Islam

bhakti – devotion to god

Brahmin – priestly, scholarly caste, considered the highest in the *varna* system

Estado da Índia – the Portuguese state in India

Calicut – port city on the Malabar Coast

cartaz – passport or licence

casado – married man

chakravarti, *sakravriti* – Sanskrit/Malayalam term for emperor

chāvēr – suicide force in the military, constituted by Nairs

Chetti – Hindu merchant caste from the Coromandel Coast

dār al-Islām – the land of Muslims

dharma – moral duty or obligation

Grantha – modern Malayalam script

hajj – Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca

Hijri – Islamic calendar (622 CE)

itihāsa – Sanskrit literary/historical tradition

jihad – holy war

kāfir – infidel, non-Muslim

Kannur – port city on the Malabar Coast

Kōlathunād – Hindu-ruled kingdom based in Kannur; ruled by Kōlathiri

Kollam – Malayalam calendar (25 August 824 CE); a port city on the Malabar Coast

Kozhikode – Hindu-ruled kingdom based in Calicut; ruled by the Zamorin

Kshatriya – ruling or warrior caste

Malabar – Arabic term for Kerala

Māmānkam – festival held every twelve years at Tirunāvāyi until 1743

Māppila – Muslim of Arab lineage from Kerala

Marakkār – Muslim of Arab lineage from the Coromandel Coast

Nāir – a matrilineal caste group from Kerala; classified as Sudra in the *varna* system

Nambūdiri – a caste group of Brahmins from Kerala

paradēsi – foreigner

paranki – Malayalam variation of *firangi*, meaning Portuguese or foreigner

pāttu – song

Perumal – great one; Chera ruler

Perumbadappu – Hindu-ruled kingdom based in Kochi

purāna – Sanskrit literary/historical tradition

qādi – a Muslim judge

qissa – Arabic word for story

Rājāh – king

Sufi – Muslim mystic or mendicant

swarūpam – political house

ulama – scholars and officiants of Islam

varna – caste hierarchy based in the Sanskrit Vedas

Vēnād – Hindu-ruled kingdom based in Kollam

Zamorin, Tamuri, Samoothiri – variations of the title of the ruler of Calicut

List of Illustrations

Introduction

Fig. 1. Veloso Salgado, *Vasco da Gama Perante o Samorim de Calecute*, *Museu da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa,* 1898.
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vasco_da_Gama_perante_o_Samorim_de_Calecute.png]

The painting by Veloso Salgado (shown above) adorns the entry hall of the *Museu da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa*. It won a national contest in Portugal, organized as part of the *4° Centenário do Descoberta do Caminho Maritimo para a Índia* in 1898 to commemorate the four-hundredth anniversary of the 'discovery of a maritime route to India'. Two years later, in 1900, the painting was brought to wider attention in Europe when it was

exhibited at the Universal Exhibition in Paris, where it won a gold medal.[1] As the subject of his painting, the painter chooses an event of extraordinary importance in the Portuguese historical tradition: Vasco da Gama's first encounter with an Indian ruler, the Zamorin of Calicut. Salgado dramatizes this encounter by positioning the Zamorin and his courtiers on the left-hand side of the canvas and the Portuguese mariners bearing the flag of Portugal on the right-hand side, with Gama occupying the centre. He offsets the turbaned, half-clad, bejewelled Indian men against the fully clad, grave-looking Portuguese. He further accentuates the wealth and splendour of the Indian court through a wall poster of a tiger, painted carpets, and engravings on the walls and the pillars. Salgado sets this courtly encounter against the backdrop of the coast and the sea, visible through the palace window. Imagined in the painting as an intimate event, the Portuguese captain on his first ever visit to Calicut sidesteps any kind of mediation and directly addresses the royal ensemble. Standing erect amidst a crowd of rapt and stooped listeners, Gama gestures with his hands, perhaps in the direction of his own country; he is clearly the only man speaking.[2]

Salgado's painting was most likely based on the sixteenth-century poem *Os Lusíadas* (*The Lusíads*) by Luis Vaz de Camões, which in turn derived much of its historical content from a ship-journal maintained by Gama's scribe, titled *Roteiro da Primeira Viagem de Vasco da Gama à Índia* (*Journal of the First Voyage of Vasco da Gama to India*). Written during Gama's voyage from

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[1] Michel Chencelier, 'Un artiste portugais a Montgeron: Jose Velloso Salgado 1888', in *Póvoa de Varzim Boletim Cultural* (Póvoa de Varzim: Câmara Municipal, 2005), XL, 101–6.
[2] In his book on the De Bry Collection, Michiel van Groesen discusses human body posture as one of the aspects that appeared in European representations of the overseas world. He writes: 'An erect position was regarded as a sign of civility, whereas, by contrast, violently swirling or stooping human bodies indicated an overall lack of composure'. See Michiel van Groesen, *The Representations of the Overseas World in the De Bry Collection of Voyages (1590-1634)* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), p. 205.

Lisbon around the Cape of Good Hope to the Indian Ocean and back (1497-99), the journal describes the encounter between the Portuguese captain and the Zamorin in detail. Significantly, the journal records that on his first meeting with the Zamorin, Gama turned down the Zamorin's invitation to address his court and instead requested a private meeting with the king. Moreover, according to the journal, the meeting turned hostile when it became known that Gama failed to bring adequate gifts for the Zamorin. By the journal's own admission, the meeting did not achieve much in terms of trade or diplomacy.[3]

Deviating from this witness report, however, Camões portrays Gama as confidently addressing the Zamorin and his courtiers:

> Then, speaking from a wise heart
> In a voice whose grave authority
> Straightway impressed the king and all the court
> The captain spoke the message he had brought.[4]

In his award-winning painting, Salgado adheres to Camões' poetic rendition of Gama's grand address, portraying an audience that looks 'impressed' by the 'grave authority' in Gama's speech. In the stanzas that follow the above passage, Gama proceeds to deliver King Manuel I's message to the court, conveying Manuel's desire to enter into a treaty of friendship with the Zamorin. Gama

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[3] *Roteiro da Primeira Viagem de Vasco da Gama à Índia, 1497-1499/Journal of the First Voyage of Vasco da Gama to India, 1497-1499*, ed. by Luís Fernando de Sá Fardilha and Maria de Lurdes Correia Fernandes (Porto: Câmara Municipal do Porto, 2016), pp. 149 & 151.
[4] Luis Vaz de Camões, *The Lusíads*, trans. by Landeg White (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 150 (Canto 7, Stanza 59).
In the Portuguese edition:
'*Lançando a grave voz do sábio peito,*
Que grande autoridade logo aquista
Na opinião do Rei e do povo todo,
O Capitão lhe fala deste modo'. Luís Vaz de Camões, *Os Lusíadas*, ed. by Helder Guégués (Lisboa: Guerra e Paz, 2016), p. 209.

assures the Zamorin that the treaty will bring him profit and glory to the king of Portugal.[5] At the conclusion of this speech, 'the Hindu king replied' ('*o Rei gentio respondia*') that he would give Gama's dispatch 'due reflection' and 'a happy response'.[6] This friendly repartee between the Zamorin and Gama thus unfolds almost entirely in Camões' imagination.

Almost a century after the original encounter, Camões' retelling of the first encounter between Gama and the Zamorin had propelled Gama to the status of a national hero in Portugal. By basing his painting on *The Lusíads*, Salgado takes part in this project of national mythmaking – a project which continues today. In post-colonial India, by contrast, the figure of Gama has become almost synonymous with the idea of European colonization of India, understood in popular imagination to have begun in 1498 and ended in 1947 (the date of Indian Independence from the British Empire). In some contemporary Indian art and cinema, the hero of Portugal has come to play the role of the villain. Other works seek to complicate the dominant narrative through different modes such as ironic mockery.

The vilification of Gama is at the heart of a recent Malayalam movie, *Urumi* (Curling Sword). It centres on a fictional hero from Kerala who vows to kill Gama to avenge the death of his family at the hands of the captain during the infamous burning of the *Miri* ship in 1502. The English caption on the film poster reads: 'The boy who wanted to kill Vasco da Gama'.[7] More recently, Gama

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[5] Camões, trans. by White, p. 151 (Canto 7, Stanza 62).
[6] Camões, trans. by White, pp. 151-52 (Canto 7, Stanzas 64 & 65); Camões, ed. by Guégués, p. 210
[7] Santosh Sivan, *Urumi [Curling Sword]* (August Cinema, 2011).

again takes a leading role in the Indian artist N. Pushpamala's photographic tableau titled 'The Arrival of Vasco da Gama', commissioned by the Kochi Muziris Biennale 2014. The tableau recreated Salgado's painting with the stated aim of 'returning what is a work of imagination that has over time gained a degree of historical legitimacy, to the space of fiction and masquerade'.[8] Rather than vilify Gama, here Pushpamala mocks the grandiose pose struck by Gama in the painting.[9] In the tableau, Pushpamala herself masquerades as Gama, while her artist friends take on the other roles.

Fig. 2. N. Pushpamala, 'The Arrival of Vasco da Gama', 2014.
[http://www.pushpamala.com/projects/the-arrival-of-vasco-da-gama/]
Reproduced here with permission from N. Pushpamala.

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[8] N. Pushpamala, 'The Arrival of Vasco Da Gama', *Pushpamala N*, 2014 <http://www.pushpamala.com/projects/the-arrival-of-vasco-da-gama/> [accessed 21 September 2020].

[9] Vasco da Gama's name is often invoked in a comical sense to give weight to otherwise commonplace objects. For example, in a recent Malayalam comedy web series, an antique shop owner from Kochi claims to have in his possession the handkerchief on which Vasco da Gama had blown his nose. See Jeevan Stephan, 'Ulkka', *Karikku*, 2020 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSV3AYHTecw&t=347s> [accessed 8 October 2020].

Though such attempts at vilification and mockery perform a vital role toward subverting the so-called heroes of colonialism, they also pose the danger of solidifying received narratives based on Portuguese historiography.[10] Here, it is important to ask: How was Gama's arrival in Calicut perceived by the Zamorin? Was the event as important for the people of Calicut as it was for the Portuguese? To answer these questions, I turn attention away from Portuguese historiography to prevalent modes of history writing in Calicut and the wider region of Kerala (also known as Malabar) situated on the south-west coast of India (or the Malabar Coast).[11]

Research Method

Historiography on the Portuguese presence in India and the Indian Ocean tends to rely heavily on Portuguese and other European sources. Against the vast repertoire of Portuguese sources, historians looking for an indigenous perspective on the Portuguese have primarily relied on a sixteenth-century Arabic record from Kerala, *Tuhfat al-Mujahidin* (*The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*).[12] A few more Arabic records have become known recently,

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[10] There is also another, perhaps less popular, engagement with Vasco da Gama by the Anglo-Indians of Portuguese lineage from Kerala. I was fortunate to attend a book launch organized by the Anglo-Indian community in Kochi in August 2017, where some speakers voiced their criticism of attempts by the popular media to vilify Vasco da Gama who, they claimed, was the forefather of the community.

[11] In Arabic and European literature, the region of Kerala is referred to as Malabar, a word of Arabic origin, coined from the Tamil/Malayalam word *malai*, meaning 'mountain', and the Arabic word *barr* meaning 'land'. See Frank S. Fanselow, 'Muslim Society in Tamil Nadu (India): An Historical Perspective', *Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 10.1 (1989), 264–89 (p. 266).
In Malayalam literature, the region is referred to variously as 'Malayalam', 'Keralam', 'Malanādu' etc. See Hermann Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', in *Kerala Pazhama, Keralolpathy, Ayirathirunooru Pazhanchol* (Kottayam: Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society & State Bank of Travancore, 2014), pp. 111-65.
The present-day Kerala State of the Indian Union was formed in 1956 by combining the British-ruled Malabar District (which included territories ruled by the Zamorin) with the Hindu-ruled states of Kochi and Travancore.

[12] First published in Arabic in Zainuddin Makhdum, *Historia dos Portugueses no Malabar por Zinadím*, trans. by David Lopes (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1898).

broadening the scope for understanding the indigenous Muslim perspective on the Portuguese. However, Indian vernacular records continue to remain on the margins of this historiography. Some scholars have justified this neglect by arguing that Indian vernacular records were in fact silent on the whole presence of the Portuguese in India and the Indian Ocean.

Drawing from the work of historians in the field of Indian historiography, I draw attention to some of the roadblocks that history writing in Kerala poses for historians trained in Western historiographical modes, namely, its use of origin stories, featuring founder-heroes, to construct a past and make sense of the present. Instead of dismissing the historical relevance of these stories, I take them as legitimate sites of enquiry, arguing that they encode the thoughts and aspirations of various socio-political groups – in particular, their conceptions and sense of belonging to the land, and competing claims to the land. Through these stories, I develop a territorial model against which I then compare the land-based aspirations of and contestations between maritime groups such as the Muslims and the Portuguese. Using this model, I also illuminate some of the dominant Hindu attitudes to the sea and the seafaring populations in Kerala.

To bring out a layered perspective on the Portuguese, I focus on historical records produced in Malayalam by the ruling Hindu elite and documents written in Arabic by their Muslim subjects. The primary sources include palace records (*granthāvaris*) produced by the ruling houses in Kozhikode, such as the *Keralolpatti* (*The Origin of Kerala*) and the *Kerala Varthamanam* (*The News*

First published in English in Zainuddin Makhdum, *Tohfut-Ul Mujahideen, an Historical Work in the Arabic Language*., trans. by M. J. Rowlandson (London: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1833).

of Kerala), and records produced by the Arabic-literate Muslim scholars from Kerala, which include *Qissat Shakarwati Farmad* (*The Story of Emperor Perumal*), *Tuhfat al-Mujahidin* (*The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*) by Zainuddin Makhdum II (Zainuddin II), *Fath al-Mubin* (*The Manifest Conquest*) by Qadi Muhammad, and *Tahrid Ahlil Iman* (*Instigating the Believers*) by Zainuddin Makhdum I (Zainuddin I).[13] To study the impact of the Portuguese on the region of Kerala, I examine both pre-Portuguese-era records and records produced in the context of the Portuguese arrival, such as the Arabic works from the sixteenth century that expound the cause of *jihad* against the Portuguese. This broad temporal approach is also necessitated by some of the Malayalam sources in which the record of events spans many centuries, both before and after the arrival of the Portuguese. The last chapter explores the impact of local historical traditions on the Portuguese settlers in Kerala using records produced by scribes who either accompanied Crown officials to Kerala or served in a fort/factory on the Malabar Coast, including *Roteiro da Primeira Viagem de Vasco da Gama à Índia* (*Journal of Vasco da Gama*), the chronicle of Duarte

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[13] Gundert, 'Keralolpathy'; *Gundert: Keralolpatti [The Origin of Kerala]*, trans. by T. Madhava Menon (Thiruvanathapuram: International School of Dravidian Linguistics, 2003).
'Kerala Varthamanam - Oru Vamozhi Charithra Rekha [The News of Kerala - An Oral Historical Record]', in *Tuhfat al-Mujahidin*, ed. by K. K. N. Kurup and K Vijayakumar, trans. by C. Hamza (Calicut: Alhuda Book Stall, 1995), pp. 163–73; 'Kerala Varthamanam or The News of Kerala', in *India's Naval Traditions: The Role of Kunhali Marakkkars*, ed. by K. K. N. Kurup, trans. by K Vijayakumar (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 1997), pp. 96–103.
'Translation of the Narrative ['Qissat']', in *Narrating Community: The Qissat Shakarwati Farmad and Accounts of Origin in Kerala and around the Indian Ocean*, trans. by Scott Kugle and Roxani Eleni Margariti (Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient, 2017), pp. 349–63.
Makhdum, *Historia dos Portugueses no Malabar por Zinadím*; Zainuddin Makhdum, *Tuhfat Al-Mujahidin: A Historical Epic of the Sixteenth Century*, trans. by S. M. H. Nainar (Selangor, Malaysia: Islamic Book Trust, 2009).
Qadi Muhammad, *Fat'h al-Mubin: A Contemporary Account of the Portuguese Invasion on Malabar in Arabic Verse*, ed. by K. S. Shameer (Calicut: Other Books, 2015).
Sheikh Zainuddin Ibn Ali, *Tahrid Ahlil Iman Ala Jihadi Abdati Sulban [Instigating the Believers for Jihad against the Worshippers of the Cross]*, trans. by K. M. Mohamed (Calicut: Other Books, 2012).

Barbosa (*The Book of Barbosa*), and *Os Lusíadas* (*The Lusíads*).[14]

In order to answer the question raised earlier about the Indian perspective on the Portuguese, in this thesis I ask three central questions, each of which I aim to answer by analysing selected records in Malayalam, Arabic, and Portuguese, respectively:

1. What was the scope of the Zamorins' power on land and sea, and what kind of impact did the Portuguese have on the existing pattern of interaction between the rulers and the maritime traders?

2. How did the Māppila Muslim maritime group define their relationship to the land of Kerala and what impact did the Portuguese arrival have on their sense of territorial belonging?

3. How did the Portuguese orient themselves in the land of Kerala and how did their pattern of settlement compare with that of the Māppila Muslims?

My focus will be on the way origin myths were used by the ruling Hindu elite in Kerala, the Māppila Muslims, and the Portuguese to bring about these historical processes. By taking these stories as legitimate sites of enquiry, I hope to rectify the neglect of myths and legends in the study of history and to make a case for their relevance in historical research.

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[14] Fardilha and Fernandes; Duarte Barbosa, *Livro: Em que dá relação do que viu e ouviu no Oriente [Book: In which I relate what I saw and heard in the Orient]*, ed. by Augusto Reis Machado (Lisboa: Divisão de publicações e Biblioteca Agência Geral das Colónias, 1944) (trans. by Dames, 1921); Luís Vaz de Camões (trans. by White, 1997).

Thesis Structure

This thesis takes the Indian Ocean as the larger setting of the encounters between various groups in sixteenth-century Kerala. **Chapter One** therefore begins with a review of some of the literature on the Indian Ocean that is relevant for this study. In particular, I address the problem of what scholars like Michael Pearson have termed the 'silence' of the Indian vernacular records on the Portuguese. To address this problem, I draw from the work of historians in the field of Indian historiography as a direction forward for this thesis.

Taking Malayalam historical traditions as the point of departure, Chapters Two to Four focus on the Malayalam palace records (known as *granthāvaris*) produced by the ruling houses in the Kozhikode kingdom. Though most of these records originated from the Kozhikode kingdom and present the views of the ruling elites from that kingdom, their scope (and, consequently the scope of this thesis) is not restricted to Kozhikode but encompasses the entire region of Kerala. For my analysis of the Malayalam and Arabic sources I use two temporal markers of historical importance: the Chera period, which lasted from the ninth century to the twelfth century, and the post-Chera period.

Chapter Two delineates some of the characteristics of the *granthāvari* mode of history writing and distinguishes this mode from Arabic modes of history writing. In this chapter, I introduce my primary sources in Arabic and in Malayalam and discuss in detail the provenances of two palace records – *The Origin of Kerala* and *The News of Kerala*. The chapter also engages with the current debate on the provenance of *The News of Kerala*, and whether it is a

granthāvari source or based on the Arabic *Tribute to the Holy Warriors*.

An important constituent of the palace *granthāvari*s are origin stories about various founder-heroes. These heroes range from *purānic* heroes based in the Sanskrit traditions to figures based in history. **Chapter Three** examines the roles of three founder-heroes from the Malayalam historical traditions – Parasurāman, Cheraman Perumal, and Sankaracharya – based on *The Origin of Kerala* from Kozhikode. My aim in this chapter is to explore the role played by each of these heroes in defining the contours of the land of Kerala. Based on these origin stories, this chapter develops a territorial model, which will form the basis for elucidating the land-based aspirations and contestations of the Māppila Muslims and the Portuguese in the later chapters.

Continuing from the earlier chapter, **Chapter Four** looks at the history of the Kozhikode kingdom based on origin stories of the kingdom found in records like *The Origin of Kerala*. In this chapter, I explore the significance of Cheraman Perumal as a founder-hero in local historical imagination. My aim in this chapter is to bring out some of the dominant attitudes to the sea and the maritime population in Kerala, which will form the basis of my enquiry into how the Zamorins responded to the Portuguese arrival.

Chapters Five and Six focus on the Arabic records. Like the *granthāvari* records, origin stories – centred on various founder-heroes – form an important constituent of the Arabic traditions. **Chapter Five**, like Chapter Three, examines the roles of three founder-heroes from the Arabic historical traditions – Prophet Muhammad, Cheraman Perumal, and Malik bin Dinar – based on the

Arabic record *The Story of Emperor Perumal*. One of the aims of this chapter is to explore the significance of the local founder-hero, Cheraman Perumal, in this story. A second aim is to explore the relevance of this story for sixteenth-century Muslim authors, writing in the context of the Portuguese arrival.

Continuing from the earlier chapter, **Chapter Six** explores the Portuguese-Muslim conflict on the Malabar Coast through a study of the literature on *jihad* produced by the Muslims of the Kozhikode kingdom in the context of the Portuguese arrival. In particular, I investigate the deployment of the concept of *jihad* as a tool for mobilizing a global Muslim resistance against the Portuguese in *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*. My aim in this chapter is to consider if and how the writings on *jihad* influenced the local Māppila Muslim response to the Portuguese and impacted the sense of territorial belonging of Māppilas in Kerala.

Chapter Seven explores the Portuguese reception of origin stories and their encounters with the caste order of Kerala. It looks at transfers of knowledge about the land of Kerala between the locals and the Portuguese based on records such as the *Journal of Vasco da Gama*, *The Book of Barbosa*, and *The Lusíads*. The chapter explores the extent to which the knowledge of origin stories influenced the Portuguese pattern of settlement in Kerala, comparing their patterns of settlement with existing maritime settlements, especially that of the Māppila Muslims from Kozhikode.

Chapter One:
Indian Ocean and Indian Historiography:
Literature Review

In 1887, William Logan, a colonial-era historian and the revenue collector of British-ruled Malabar District, published his two-volume work *Malabar*, which he claimed to be a 'descriptive and historical account of the Malayali race'.[15] The Malayali race, wrote Logan, 'has produced no historians simply because there was little or no history in one sense to record'.[16] In the place of 'real history', he found a 'farrago of legendary nonsense'.[17] Against this context, he saw his own role, and that of other European scholars and a handful of native scholars to be filling a great void in history writing:

> The true ancient history of Southern India, almost unrecorded by its own people in anything worthy of the name of history, appears as yet only as a faint outline on canvas. Thanks to the untiring labours of European scholars and of one or two native scholars these faint outlines are gradually assuming more distinct lines.[18]

Hence, to write a descriptive history of the Malayali race, he relied on what he regarded as credible sources such as royal inscriptions, royal land grants, and foreign travel accounts.

Logan's statement represents some of the challenges posed by Indian vernacular writing to historians trained in Western historiographical modes due to its reliance on myths and legends to construct a past. This facet of Indian history

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[15] William Logan, *Malabar*, 2 vols (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1951), I, p. v.
[16] Logan, *Malabar* (vol. 1), p. vii.
[17] Logan, *Malabar* (vol. 1), p. 244.
[18] Logan, *Malabar* (vol. 1), p. 254.

writing also poses a problem for modern scholars studying the Portuguese impact on India and the Indian Ocean, which is apparent in their neglect of Indian vernacular sources. Rather than dismiss myths and legends as 'legendary nonsense', this thesis takes them as important sites of enquiry for the study of global encounters in sixteenth-century Kerala.

This thesis situates the sixteenth-century encounters between the Zamorins, the Māppilas, and the Portuguese within the larger setting of the Indian Ocean. The present chapter therefore begins by laying out the Indian Ocean context of the encounters. I then review some of the literature on the Indian Ocean, dealing with current debates on the continuities and ruptures between pre-Portuguese-era groups and the Portuguese. In particular, I compare the views of Michael Pearson and Sebastian Prange on the involvement (or lack thereof) of Asian states in maritime politics. Second, I address the problem of what scholars like Pearson have termed the 'silence' of the Indian vernacular records on the Portuguese presence in India, comparing the positions of different historians, such as Prange, Mahmood Kooria, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, on this idea. Finally, I introduce some of the critical insights on Indian history writing offered by Velcheru Narayana Rao, Subrahmanyam, and David Schulman in their work *Textures of Time* and by Romila Thapar in her work 'The Tradition of Historical Writing in India' as a direction forward for this thesis.

1.1. The Larger Setting of the Indian Ocean

Seeking a larger perspective, in this thesis, I situate both the region of Kerala and the Estado da Índia (the Portuguese state in India established in the early sixteenth century) within the setting of the Indian Ocean. This shared context of

the Indian Ocean is important for two reasons. First, the region of Kerala, owing to its unique location – flanked by the mountain range of the Western Ghats on one side and the Arabian Sea on the other – had for centuries served as an entrepôt for the global flow of goods, people, and ideas in the Indian Ocean, long before the arrival of the Portuguese, which, in turn, had a significant impact on the region. Second, the political limits of the Estado were not limited to conquered territories in India but encompassed the world of the Indian Ocean. As Michael Pearson and others have noted, the Portuguese empire in Asia was a maritime one, extending very little distance into the hinterland.[19] When compared to the other maritime groups operating in the Indian Ocean, the Portuguese were also, in Pearson's words, 'much more littoral, perhaps most purely of all, even if not by design', since they were dependent on the sea for communication, livelihood, and a means of escape.[20] According to A. R. Disney, the Portuguese adopted a 'less seaborne, more landbound approach' in the second half of the sixteenth century, especially with regard to the Estado's capital in Goa.[21] However, Pearson claims, the early empire of the first half of the sixteenth century was 'oriented much more to the sea than the land'.[22]

The arrival of the Portuguese captain Vasco da Gama in Calicut in 1498 marked the beginning of the Portuguese overseas expansion in the Indian Ocean. Following the success of this expedition, King Manuel I of Portugal

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[19] Michael N. Pearson, 'India and the Indian Ocean in the Sixteenth Century', in *India and the Indian Ocean, 1500-1800*, ed. by Ashin Das Gupta and Michael N. Pearson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 71–93 (p. 72).
[20] Michael N. Pearson, 'Littoral Society: The Case for the Coast', *The Great Circle*, 7.1 (1985), 1–8 (p. 4).
[21] A. R. Disney, 'The Portuguese Empire in India c. 1550-1650: Some Suggestions for a Less Seaborne, More Landbound Approach to Its Socio-Economic History', in *Indo-Portuguese History: Sources and Problems* (Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 148–62.
[22] Pearson, 'The Case for the Coast', p. 3.

commissioned a series of maritime expeditions, which culminated in the establishment of the Estado da Índia in 1505, with its first capital in Kochi.[23] Characterized by a centralized system of administration, the Estado was represented at the top of the hierarchy by the king of Portugal, at the intermediate levels by a viceroy or a governor who took up residence at the Estado's capital in Kochi (later Goa), and at the lowest rung by a captain in charge of a fort.[24] In accordance with a Papal Bull, dated to 1497, Manuel assumed sovereignty and dominion over the newly discovered lands and adopted the title of 'King of Portugal and of the Algarves on this side and beyond the sea in Africa, Lord of Guinea and Lord of Conquest, Navigation and Commerce, of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia and India' in 1499.[25] As lords of the sea, the Crown claimed monopoly over the spice trade in the Indian Ocean and implemented the *'cartaz-armada-cafila*' system. This system involved the issuing of passes (*cartazes*) to cargo ships, purportedly to ensure their safe passage, then backed up by armadas and protected by an escort fleet (*cafila*). A series of forts built on the Indian Ocean littoral served as bureaus from where passes were issued to ships plying the ocean.[26] After his appointment as the Governor and Captain General of the Estado on 5th November 1509, Afonso de Albuquerque (in office, 1509-1515) took further steps toward controlling the sea lanes through his conquests of the port cities of Goa (1510), Malacca (1511), and Hormuz (1515), which together defined the territorial limits of the Portuguese power in the Indian Ocean (see fig. 5, p. 258).[27]

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[23] Michael N. Pearson, *The Portuguese in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 30.
[24] Pearson, *The Portuguese in India*, p. 35.
[25] Malyn Newitt, *A History of Portuguese Overseas Expansion, 1400-1668* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 68.
[26] Pearson, *The Portuguese in India*, p. 38.
[27] Pius Malekandathil, *Maritime India: Trade, Religion and Polity in the Indian Ocean* (New Delhi: Primus Books, 2013), p. 89.

At the time of Gama's arrival, the Kerala region was formed of various independent kingdoms, which came into prominence after the collapse of the Chera kingdom in the early twelfth century. The more prominent among the post-Chera kingdoms were Kōlathunād and Kozhikode in the north, and Kochi and Vēnād in the south, each centred respectively on the port cities of Kannur, Calicut, Kochi, and Kollam (see fig. 6, p. 259). In the pre-Portuguese era, maritime groups like the Arab Muslims, Jews, and St. Thomas Christians (Syrian Christians) dominated each of these port cities. The port-based kingdoms also hosted traders from China, Arabia, Persia, Gujarat, Konkan, the Coromandel Coast, and Africa, and received travellers from around the world, including Europe. The maritime groups who were settled on the coastal belt of the kingdoms (the Malabar Coast) carried pepper and other spices produced in the region to various parts of the Indian Ocean world, including the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea areas, from where they reached the Mediterranean Sea and Europe.

During the course of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese Crown officials received land grants from the local rulers to build a series of forts along the Malabar Coast, in Kochi (1503), Kannur (1505), Calicut (1513), Kollam (1519), Chaliyam (1531), and Kodungallor (1536) (see fig. 8, p. 261, for locations of these forts).[28] The Crown followed distinct policies of 'friendship' (*amizade*) or 'indirect submission' (*vassalagem*) with each kingdom, which shifted and

[28] Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, pp. 69–70; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p. 85.

evolved over time.[29] By the latter half of the sixteenth century, conflicts with the Zamorin and his Muslim allies led to the eviction of the Portuguese from both their forts in the Kozhikode kingdom; from Calicut in 1525 and from Chaliyam in 1571. And, by the latter half of the seventeenth century, conflicts with the Kochi royal family led to the eviction of the Portuguese from their fort in Kochi, and eventually from all the remaining forts on the Malabar Coast. Even after their expulsion from Kerala, however, the linguistic and religious networks set up by the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean world continued to have a strong impact on the people of Kerala.

1.2. Asian States and the Indian Ocean

Some historians consider the ocean to be a thing that can be studied and analyzed 'just like a state or a city or a famous person'.[30] For Michael Pearson, the term 'Indian Ocean World' implies 'some unity, some connections'.[31] He sets the limits of this world between the Cape of Good Hope, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf areas in the west, Antarctica in the south, the coasts of South Asia in the north, and Indonesia and the Philippines in the east (some of these locations are shown in fig. 5, p. 258).[32] He identifies some of its key unifying factors in the time period between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries as: climate, specifically the monsoon winds, which determined both trade and travel in the ocean; heterogeneity of the port-cities; the types of ships,

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[29] Zoltán Biedermann, 'Portuguese Diplomacy in Asia in the Sixteenth Century: A Preliminary Overview', *Itinerario*, xxix.2 (2005), 13–37 (p. 13).
[30] Michael N. Pearson, 'Introduction: Maritime History and the Indian Ocean World', in *Trade, Circulation, and Flow in the Indian Ocean World*, ed. by Michael N. Pearson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 1–14 (p. 2).
[31] Pearson, 'Introduction: Maritime History and the Indian Ocean World', p. 2.
[32] Michael N. Pearson, 'Introduction: The Subject', in *India and the Indian Ocean, 1500-1800*, ed. by Ashin Das Gupta and Michael N. Pearson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 1–24 (pp. 10–11).

navigational tools, and the constitution of ship people; long-distance trade, dominated by Muslims, and later by the Portuguese; religious networks, based in Islam in the pre-Portuguese era and in Catholicism from the sixteenth century onward; linguistic networks, based in Arabic, Persian, and later, Portuguese; and finally, the presence of the Portuguese empire with its network of forts along the Indian Ocean littoral.[33] At the same time, the world of the Indian Ocean was quite diverse; more diverse than the Atlantic or the Mediterranean, 'with greater variations in languages, cultures, geography, and political units in the countries spread around its littoral from South Africa to Indonesia and China'.[34]

In scholarship centred on India and the Indian Ocean, historians have proposed a division between 'maritime India' and 'terrestrial India', classifying the port-based kingdoms on the Malabar Coast as part of 'maritime India'.[35] In his book *Maritime India*, Pius Malekandathil defines 'maritime India' as 'the sea-oriented segment', constituted by the 'long stretch of littoral India'. This segment, he argues, was 'unique and different from its land-locked counterpart in its social, economic and political processes'.[36] Further, he distinguishes 'maritime India' as possessing a 'maritime consciousness' constituted out of a wide variety of activities such as

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[33] Pearson, 'The Subject', pp. 12–20.
[34] Pearson, 'Introduction: Maritime History and the Indian Ocean World', p. 3.
[35] Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, p. 83
In her doctoral thesis, Manya Rathore has attempted to challenge the proposed division between 'maritime India' and 'terrestrial India' by exploring the 'maritime consciousness' of the Mughal emperors, focusing on Mughal responses to coastal and maritime challenges posed by the Portuguese empire. Situating the Mughal empire within a continuum 'between the court and the coast', she has argued that the 'Mughals' major maritime interest was located in expanding and controlling the maritime outlets along the littoral of Mughal empire'. See Manya Rathore, 'Between Court and Coast: Tracing the Layers of Mughal-Portuguese Relations (1570-1627)' (unpublished PhD, University of Vienna, 2018), p. 23.
[36] Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, p. xi.

> the economic linkages with the sea-borne trade, the political processes based on the gains from sea-borne commerce, the cultural and religious processes entering through the channels of seas, social formation based on maritime circulatory processes, *etc.*[37]

In his essays on the concept of 'littoral society', Pearson proposes a similar distinction between maritime India and terrestrial India. According to Pearson, the littoral people are distinct from their inland neighbours with regard to their food habits (comprising seafood), their houses, their familiarity with languages such as Arabic or Portuguese or English, and their inclination to convert to religions such as Islam or Christianity. Thus, littoral people 'lived in a more cosmopolitan environment', had concerns that were 'usually quite different from those of peasants or pastoralists inland', and littoral societies 'have more in common with other littoral societies than they do with their inland neighbours'. Pearson argues that port cities such as Surat and Mombasa have more in common with each other than they do with inland cities such as Ahmadabad or Nairobi.[38] Some of his other works like *India and the Indian Ocean*, edited along with Ashin Das Gupta, and more recently, *Malabar in the Indian Ocean*, co-edited with Mahmood Kooria, explore other such connections across the Indian Ocean world.[39]

By centring their works on the Indian Ocean, historians offer an alternative to the nationalist paradigm used by scholars like K. M. Panikkar in their previous

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[37] Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, p. xiii.
[38] Michael N. Pearson, 'Littoral Society: The Concept and the Problems', *Journal of World History*, 17.4 (2006), 353–73 (pp. 353–54 & 366).
[39] *India and the Indian Ocean, 1500-1800*, ed. by Ashin Das Gupta and Michael N. Pearson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); *Malabar in the Indian Ocean: Cosmopolitanism in a Maritime Historical Region*, ed. by Mahmood Kooria and Michael N. Pearson (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018).

studies of sixteenth-century Malabar. Writing in the wake of the Indian Independence from the British Empire, Panikkar characterized the period extending from 1498 (the year of the arrival of Vasco da Gama in Calicut) to the disappearance of European political authority from Asia in 1945 as the 'Vasco da Gama Epoch of Asian history'.[40] In one of the more recent rebuttals of this paradigm, Prange has argued against both the division of the history of the Indian Ocean into pre-European and European periods and the subdivision of the European period into Portuguese, Dutch and English periods. He writes that such divisions reflect a Eurocentric standpoint, based 'almost exclusively on European sources'.[41] Against this nationalist trend in historiography, most historians of the ocean demarcate the Portuguese activities in the Indian Ocean from the British Empire, locating the former in what they call the 'pre-colonial' period, understood as the period before British colonialism.

Situating the arrival of the Portuguese within the history of the Indian Ocean, historians have looked for continuities and ruptures in the existing structures, both before and after the advent of the Portuguese. One question that is currently a subject of debate is whether the pre-Portuguese-era Indian Ocean was a *mare liberum* (open sea) before the arrival of the Portuguese. There are at least two opposing views on this question.

Representing the first view, Pearson argues that, before the arrival of the Portuguese, the Indian Ocean was 'genuinely a mare liberum [*sic*] where no

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[40] K. M. Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance: A Survey of the Vasco Da Gama Epoch of Asian History, 1498-1945* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1953).
[41] Sebastian R. Prange, 'Scholars and the Sea: A Historiography of the Indian Ocean', *History Compass*, 6.5 (2008), 1382–93 (p. 1385).

state tried to control maritime matters'. There is no evidence, he writes, 'of any use of force at all'. Even after the arrival of the Portuguese, all the major Indian states, including the Mughal empire in the north and the Deccan Sultanates in the south, remained uninterested in maritime affairs; none of them had navies comparable to the Portuguese, undertook coastal patrolling, equipped their ships with cannons, nor forced traders to call on their ports. Instead of engaging in coercive tactics, these states owed the success of their ports to 'location, good facilities for visiting merchants, in some cases productive hinterlands'.[42] By contrast, the so-called 'seaborne states', centred on particular port cities on the Malabar Coast, were oriented to sea matters, deriving both direct and indirect profits from sea trade, which in turn formed a major part of the states' income. However, these states also followed the pattern of the land-oriented Muslim states in adopting a passive role in maritime matters, deriving their profit through custom duties, port charges, and land taxes on areas producing pepper.[43]

Disputing Pearson's *mare liberum* hypothesis, Prange has argued in a recent essay that, long before the arrival of European fleets, the Asian rulers *did* 'perceive, exploit, and regulate the ocean as part of their sovereign realms and hegemonic ambitions'.[44] In the essay, Prange includes case studies of some of the coastal polities to substantiate the use of maritime violence by Asian rulers to control sea lanes and sea trade, which include the Barkur kingdom on the Malabar Coast; the south Indian Chola empire under the reign of Rajendra I;

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[42] Pearson, 'Indian Ocean in the Sixteenth Century', p. 83.
[43] Pearson, 'Indian Ocean in the Sixteenth Century', pp. 80–81.
[44] Sebastian R. Prange, 'The Contested Sea: Regimes of Maritime Violence in the Pre-Modern Indian Ocean', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 17 (2013), 9–33 (p. 12).

Makran, Qays, Aden (under Rasulids) in the Persian Gulf region; and the sultanate of Meleka or Malacca in southeast Asia (see fig. 5, p. 258). Prange thus makes a case for shifting attention away from Asia's agrarian empires to the coastal powers on the Indian Ocean littoral to really gain insights into Asian attitudes toward sea power.

Through his case studies, Prange proposes the view that the coastal powers on the Indian Ocean littoral of the period before the Portuguese arrival were actively contesting the sea space, much like the Portuguese and the other European maritime powers in the later centuries. He, therefore, sees a continuity in maritime violence in the Indian Ocean from the pre-Portuguese era to the sixteenth century. However, his case studies raise some points of divergence with the Portuguese empire which he fails to address. First, excepting the case of the Rasulids and the Chola emperor, Prange's other examples, by his own admission, were quite localized in their manifestation of sea power. Even the activities of the Rasulids and the Chola emperor appear to have been limited to the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal respectively, and hence were not as expansive as the Indian Ocean operations of the Portuguese during the sixteenth century. Second, in the case of both the Rasulids and the Chola emperor, maritime violence was part of the policies of certain rulers, and thus, were limited to their reigns. This is not unlike the involvement of the Chinese imperial state in the Indian Ocean trade for a brief period during the reign of Cheng Ho (1371-1433).[45] Finally, Prange's case studies do not factor in the role of caste in determining Indian social attitudes toward the sea.

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[45] Though not included among his case studies, Prange refers to the naval expeditions sent by the Ming emperors Yongle (1402-24) and Xuande (1425-1435) as examples of pre-Portuguese-era maritime politics in the Indian Ocean. Though these expeditions did not look to conquer

This brings us to the question of how the Hindu rulers of Kerala, and the Zamorins in particular, conducted their maritime affairs, both before and after the arrival of the Portuguese. Current literature on the Indian Ocean suggests that all the port-based kingdoms in Kerala were more sea-oriented than the kingdoms and empires from the north, such as the Deccan Sultanates and the Mughal empire. What can history writing in Kerala tell us about the maritime policies of the Zamorins? Indigenous records, however, remain on the margins of modern historiography. Some historians have justified this neglect by arguing that indigenous historians, writing in Indian vernacular languages, were silent on (and thus indifferent to) the Portuguese presence in India and the Indian Ocean, an argument I will consider next.

1.3. Indian 'Silence' on the Portuguese

Michael Pearson was perhaps the first historian to make a note of the remarkable 'silence of Indian records on the whole presence of the Portuguese'. He interprets this silence to mean that the Portuguese did not have as great an impact on India as they claimed. Factoring in the Indian 'silence', he discounts 'large claims made then and now by Portuguese and other European authors'. This evaluation goes hand in hand with Pearson's 'positive' approach to Portuguese imperial effort during the 'pre-colonial' phase – a term that he

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territories or monopolize sea lanes, Prange argues that they aimed to incorporate the countries on the maritime rim into the tribute system of the empire. See Prange, 'Contested Sea', p. 29. Agreeing with Prange's comparison, Malekandathil argues that the seven naval voyages headed by Cheng Ho (1371-1433) under the aegis of the Ming empire were the 'first state-sponsored naval voyages and explorative ventures in the Indian Ocean', which, more than a century later, the Portuguese emulated. However, he makes a crucial distinction: while the Chinese expeditions ended after Cheng Ho's reign, 'the Portuguese managed to establish hegemony over the waters of India for more than a century'. See Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, p. 63.

borrows from Jan Kieniewicz.[46] During that phase, Pearson argues, there was 'much more co-operation and interaction than dominance' in comparison to the 'later complete achievement of the British'.[47] Pearson thus considers Indian 'silence' to be a sign and an outcome of the negligible impact that the Portuguese empire had on India.

In his assessment of the Portuguese phase in the Indian Ocean, Prange too arrives at the conclusion that the Portuguese impact on the Indian Ocean world was minor; characterized much more 'by cooperation and interaction than by dominance'.[48] However, Prange disagrees with Pearson's understanding of an Indian 'silence' on the Portuguese. In his view, it is 'the dearth of South Indian sources' that scholars like Pearson have misconstrued as 'silence' on the Portuguese. To counter this understanding, Prange considers European travel accounts and chronicles on the record-keeping practices prevalent in the Kozhikode kingdom during the sixteenth and the seventeenth century. These sources tell us that palace officials used to keep a systematic record of every event related to their kingdom. Had the records survived, Prange argues, they would have formed by themselves a vast archive of written records on the

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[46] Elaborating on this terminology, Kieniewicz argues that the Portuguese and the Estado only managed to 'overwhelm' the Indian Ocean societies and not 'transform' them, despite the use of organized force to wield benefits from the Indian Ocean trade. Against Portuguese attempts to wield control over oceanic trade, the Indian Ocean societies, which he characterizes as 'stationary states', remained structurally stable. These societies absorbed the newly arrived European expansionists into existing structures, manifesting their ability to both protect and defend against foreign elements. This was more so in the case of societies which had the highest level of social organization such as Kerala, where the Portuguese had the lowest chance of success. By contrast, the 'colonial phase' only began in the eighteenth century when the British involvement in the country trade brought about a change in the nature of the expansion. This phase was governed by a policy of conquest which was in no way foreshadowed by previous events and was 'something quite different' to the way the Portuguese and the Dutch impacted the Indian Ocean World-System and the societies that took part in it. See Jan Kieniewicz, 'Contact and Transformation: The European Pre-Colonial Expansion in the Indian Ocean World-System in the 16th - 17th Centuries', *Itinerario*, viii.2 (1984), 45–58 (p. 52).
[47] Pearson, *The Portuguese in India*, pp. 2–3.
[48] Prange, 'Scholars and the Sea: A Historiography of the Indian Ocean', p. 1386.

Portuguese. Prange identifies two factors as leading to the loss of this archive: first, 'the vicissitudes of time and the ravages of man', such as the 'internecine conflicts, Portuguese bombardments, and later invasions'; and second, the nature of the palm-leaf material used for writing, the preservation of which required cyclical copying, which was again interrupted by the first factor, i.e. by political upheavals.[49]

In his essay titled 'The Pagan King Replies: An Indian Perspective on the Portuguese Arrival in India' (2017), Prange brings to light an English manuscript from the British Library, containing a translation of a Malayalam palm-leaf document presented to John William Wye, the translator, by the Venkatykōtta *Rājāh* of the Kozhikode royal family. According to Prange, the Wye manuscript disproves the understanding of an Indian 'silence' on the Portuguese since it offers the perspective of an Indian ruler, specifically the Zamorin, on the Portuguese arrival. Indeed, he emphasizes the breaking of the silence in the title of his essay, describing the manuscript as the 'reply' of the 'Pagan King'.[50]

In bringing the Wye manuscript into wider scholarly attention, Prange joins the ranks of other historians who have recovered hitherto unknown Kerala-related manuscripts from archives around the world, and by their efforts, opened up new areas for enquiry. For example, Hermann Gundert's personal archive in Germany has attracted much attention from scholars in recent years. A colonial-era missionary and an avid collector of Malayalam manuscripts, Gundert (1814-

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[49] Sebastian R. Prange, 'The Pagan King Replies: An Indian Perspective on the Portuguese Arrival in India', *Itinerario*, 41.1 (2017), 151–73 (p. 154).
[50] Prange, 'The Pagan King Replies'.

1893) transferred the bulk of his collection to his hometown in Calw, Germany, the manuscripts later being acquired by the Tübingen University. This collection served as a source for Gundert's own publications on Kerala-related subjects during the nineteenth century.[51] According to a recent estimate, the palm-leaf manuscripts in this collection are equivalent to about forty-two thousand pages, which could take many years of research to decipher.[52]

However, Prange's finding has come under criticism in a recent essay titled 'Does the Pagan King Reply? Malayalam Documents on the Portuguese Arrival in India' (2019) by Mahmood Kooria. In the essay, Kooria traces the origin of the Wye manuscript to an eighteenth-century manuscript titled *Kerala Varthamanam* (*The News of Kerala*), which, he argues, is a Malayalam rendering of the Arabic work *Tuhfat al-Mujahidin* (*The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*). This provenance, he claims, proves that the Wye manuscript represents the views of the Muslims from Kozhikode rather than the 'pagan king' (the Hindu Zamorin), as Prange claims.[53] In disputing Prange's view, Kooria's assessment of the Wye manuscript brings us back to the problem of Indian 'silence' as far as vernacular Malayalam records are concerned.

Kooria finds the paucity of Malayalam records quite remarkable considering the strong response that the Portuguese presence elicited from the Muslim literati from the same region, *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* being one example.

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[51] Three of his publications can be found in: Hermann Gundert, *Kerala Pazhama, Keralolpathy, Ayirathirunooru Pazhanchol* (Kottayam: Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society & State Bank of Travancore, 2014).
[52] Sabloo Thomas, 'How Gundert Saved Malayalam', *Deccan Chronicle* (Thiruvananthapuram, 5 July 2017) <https://www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/in-other-news/050717/how-gundert-saved-malayalam.html>.
[53] Mahmood Kooria, 'Does the Pagan King Reply? Malayalam Documents on the Portuguese Arrival in India', *Itinerario*, 43.3 (2019), 423–42.

Kooria brings out this distinction more clearly in another essay where he writes:

> [Malayalam] was accepted as an independent language in the fifteenth century itself. Poets like Tunchath Ezhuthachan, Melpatthur Bhattathirippad and Poonthanam Namboothiri were writing frequently in the sixteenth century while the Portuguese interventions were in its full swing. But all of them wrote only on spiritual themes; not on social or political issues. While there are many Arabic writings in the Early Modern Malabar on colonial intrusions, there is no such work in Malayalam [...] This fact leads us to raise interesting questions about the divisions of the perspectives on and concerns about the Portuguese intrusions: does that mean that the Malayali public sphere had a soft-corner of the colonial interventions in contrast to the Arabic public sphere of Kerala? What does this absence or silence of the Malayalam writers on Portuguese political tenures exactly indicate?[54]

In these lines, Kooria cites three Malayalam poets who were associated with the *Bhakti* genre of poetry, marked by a devotion to personal gods.[55] He argues that, by contrast, the Arabic/Muslim literati wrote prolifically on the colonial intrusions by the Portuguese. He interprets this distinction to mean that the 'Malayalam public sphere' was more concerned with spiritual matters and the Arabic/Muslim literati with political matters. Furthermore, he suggests that this 'absence or silence' on the Portuguese of Malayalam records could even indicate a 'soft-corner' on the part of the Hindu/Malayalam literati for the Portuguese. While highlighting the disparity between the Malayalam and Arabic responses

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[54] Mahmood Kooria, 'Tahrid Ahlil Iman: An Indigenous Account Against Early Modern European Interventions in Indian Ocean World', in *Tahrid Ahlil Iman Ala Jihadi Abdati Sulban*, trans. by K. M. Mohamed (Calicut: Other Books, 2012), pp. 19–48 (pp. 35–36).

[55] John Stratton Hawley traces the origin of the Sanskrit noun *bhakti* to the verb *bhaj* which means 'to share' or 'to possess'. He elaborates the concept as an aspect of Indian religion in which 'the devotee's personal engagement with a divinity constitutes the core of religious life'. Though, as he notes, the concept has its origins in early Tamil culture between the sixth and the tenth centuries, he finds continuities in all geographical and historical stages of what is known as the '*bhakti* movement', especially in 'the singing of devotional songs composed in vernacular language by 'poet-saints' and in 'the consideration of both sexes and all social strata as potential devotees'. These characteristics, Hawley notes, form a contrast to the Vedic ritualistic traditions and the differential social distinctions that lie at the core of the Hindu religion. See John Stratton Hawley, 'Bhakti', in *Key Concepts in Modern Indian Studies*, ed. by Gita Dharampal-Frick and others (New York: NYU Press, 2016), pp. 24–26.

to the Portuguese, he draws attention to the abundance of non-vernacular Arabic records on the subject. Kooria has himself brought to light a few Arabic records from Kerala that hold registers of the Portuguese in his many publications.[56]

Sanjay Subrahmanyam makes a comparable point on non-vernacular sources written in Persian which he finds relevant for studying the Portuguese presence in India. In his essay 'On Indian Views of the Portuguese in Asia', he delineates a typology of sources available in Persian from the Mughal empire and the Deccan kingdoms, which together ruled most parts of India from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Albeit indirectly, Subrahmanyam engages with the problem of Indian 'silence' on the Portuguese, which he attributes to the neglect of Asian sources in much of the historiography on the Portuguese presence in Asia. According to him, this neglect has less to do with the availability of sources (as Prange contends) and more to do with 'the assumption that what Asians had to say on the Portuguese presence was not of particular interest or relevance'. He traces the roots of this prejudice to Western insistence that historiography separate its present time from the past. History writing in parts of Asia did not follow 'a break between a present and a past', and, instead, organized descriptive materials within 'timeless' and 'unchanging' frameworks. As a result, historical materials from those places did not lend themselves easily to historical analysis undertaken by modern historians trained in Western historiographical modes. Subrahmanyam argues that Asian sources are

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[56] See, for example, his English translation of a sixteenth-century Arabic record, Mahmood Kooria, 'Khutbat Al-Jihādiyya: A Sixteenth-Century Anti-Portuguese Sermon', in *Malabar in the Indian Ocean: Cosmopolitanism in a Maritime Historical Region*, ed. by Mahmood Kooria and Michael N. Pearson (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018).

indispensable for any comprehensive history of the place of 'mentalities' in Luso-Asian interactions, regardless of whether they hold any direct references to the Portuguese.[57]

From the above discussion on the question of Indian 'silence' on the Portuguese, two distinct positions emerge: the first, represented by Pearson and Kooria, which accepts the 'silence' hypothesis, and the latter represented by Prange and Subrahmanyam, which challenges the very idea of a 'silence'. The interpretations vary in each case. If, for Pearson, the silence of the vernacular Indian records was a sign of co-operation and interaction between the Portuguese and the Indians, for Kooria, it was a sign of the Hindu/Malayalam literati's indifference to political matters. Disputing the idea of a deliberate silence, Prange argues that it is actually the dearth of vernacular sources that has been misconstrued as silence. Finally, Subrahmanyam raises the problem of neglect of available Asian sources caused, at least partly, by the modern historian's disconnect with pre-colonial texts.

How can we make sense of pre-colonial vernacular sources and incorporate them into a study of global encounters in the Indian Ocean, if, as Subrahmanyam notes, Indian historians had a different understanding of time and space? Velcheru Narayana Rao, Subrahmanyam, and David Schulman answer this question in their co-authored book *Textures of Time*, in which they also propose a new way of reading pre-colonial Indian texts.

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[57] Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'On Indian Views of the Portuguese in Asia, 1500-1700', in *From the Tagus to the Ganges: Explorations in Connected History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 17–44 (pp. 19–20 & 22).

1.4. History and 'Non-History': Reading Pre-Colonial Records

In *Textures of Time*, Rao et. al. examine the impact of nineteenth-century Western positivist historiography on the practice of history writing in South India, specifically in Tamil, Marathi, and Telugu:

> It was in fact difficult to extricate Tamil, Marathi and Telugu historians of the pre-colonial centuries from their literary modes and to make them write boring prose. However, the descendants of these same historians were convinced by nineteenth-century historiography that literary texts are not acceptable as historical evidence. Unfortunately, both medieval kings and the poets who wrote about these kings were notorious for not dating their works. So literary-historical scholars became epigraphists overnight, deciphering illegible scripts. Chronology became the *sine qua non* of history writing. It was here that inscriptions helped. Historians were busy reconstructing dynastic chronologies, determining who ruled where when. Literary historians followed their footsteps. The fact that royal inscriptions themselves, at least the major ones, were written like literary texts was conveniently overlooked.[58]

In the above lines, Rao et al. signal a gradual shift over a century from pre-colonial modes of history writing toward a new mode, influenced by the nineteenth-century Western historiographical practice of separating literary modes from the historical. Historians working in this new mode could not accept literary texts as historical evidence, which resulted in much of the historical material from the pre-colonial centuries not qualifying as history. History itself was understood by these historians as an 'alien' import introduced by colonial rule.[59]

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[58] Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Dean Schulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India, 1600-1800*, e-edition (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2013) (Introduction, Section 2: Matters of Fact).
[59] Narayana Rao, Schulman, and Subrahmanyam (Introduction, Section 1: Listening for History).

In the light of the above shift in historical consciousness brought about by colonial rule, Rao et. al.'s book aims to recover pre-colonial Indian historiographical modes from the lingering notion that 'pre-colonial India had no historical consciousness, and that what do exist are myths, legends, literature, puranic [*sic*] stories, folklore, and phantasmagoria of various types and forms'.[60] In this sense, their work is consciously positioned against postmodernist attempts to blur the distinctions between history and literature. The result of such attempts, they argue, is the loss of an 'immense historical literature from pre-colonial India'.[61] It is 'the history of the loser that becomes mere literature in the eyes of the victor', the fate suffered by much of South Asia's pre-colonial historiography.[62] Instead, they argue for the existence of 'powerful forms and modes of history writing in South India in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – before any clear form of colonial rule'.[63]

With the above aim in mind, Rao et al. make a distinction between the practice of history writing in India and the West. In Western Europe, history emerged as a 'relatively fixed and stable genre', set out in prose and practised by professional historians, even before 'the positivist-turn of the nineteenth century'. By contrast, in pre-colonial South India, they argue, history did not function as a genre by itself, and the choice of genre for writing history shifted from time to time. As a result of such genre-migrations, in any given genre – be it the *purāna* (legend), the *kavya* (poetry), or prose narratives – history came to

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[60] Narayana Rao, Schulman, and Subrahmanyam (Introduction, Section 1: Listening for History).
[61] Narayana Rao, Schulman, and Subrahmanyam (Introduction: Section 2: Matters of Fact).
[62] Narayana Rao, Schulman, and Subrahmanyam (Conclusion, Section 2: Mistaken Identity).
[63] Narayana Rao, Schulman, and Subrahmanyam (Introduction, Section 3: Letters Traced on Paper).

co-exist with what they call 'non-history'. They argue that the two modes were nevertheless readily discernible to the teller/writer as well as the hearer/reader. However, they note that the 'violence' inflicted upon Indian texts by Western historiographical models broke down the integrity of the relationship that had previously existed between the teller/writer and the audience and led to the displacement of texts into a new mode and a new audience, generating confusions about the dating and the authorship of the texts.[64]

Rao et al. historicize the division between 'history' and 'non-history' by drawing comparisons between Thucydides and Herodotus, the two 'major exemplars' and 'inventors' of the two modes, who, in their view, continue to hold sway over the practice of history. They note that while Thucydides insisted on an empirical, critical, and positivist mode of writing history, his predecessor, Herodotus, remained open to mythical patterns in the unfolding of events and maintained a lyrical and epic approach to history. It is this 'openness to myth' that Rao et al. define as the 'non-historical mode'. They equate the 'non-historical mode' with the Sanskrit term *aitihya*, which, they say, is present in much of the *itihāsa-purāna* literature. In South India, they argue, the mythic *aitihya* mode co-existed in rich interaction with factually oriented history in a range of media and forms.[65]

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[64] Narayana Rao, Schulman, and Subrahmanyam (Introduction, Section 1: Listening for History).

[65] Narayana Rao, Schulman, and Subrahmanyam (Introduction, Section 2: Matters of Fact). In his dictionary entry on the term *aitihya*, Apte gives the meaning 'traditional instruction' or 'legendary account'. See Vaman Shivram Apte, 'Aitihyam', *Revised and Enlarged Edition of Prin. V. S. Apte's The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Poona: Prasad Prakashan, 1957), p. 503 <https://dsal.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/app/apte_query.py?qs=aitihyam&matchtype=default> [accessed 3 June 2020].
The Sanskrit term *itihāsa* literally means 'thus indeed it was' (*iti-ha-asa*). According to Thapar, the term refers to 'legend, traditional narratives, events from the past, and particularly those connected with past heroes'. *Itihāsa* is frequently associated with the term *purāna*, meaning 'belonging to times past,' and the two terms are often linked as a compound term, *itihāsa-purāna*. The *Purānas*, according to Thapar, took the form of texts recited initially by

In the absence of stable generic markers for history and the erosion of an Indian sensibility toward pre-colonial historical modes, Rao et al. propose 'texture' as a new way of reading Indian texts. They argue that if the reader is alive to 'texture', it is possible to resolve the tension between the text and its context, and at the same time make critical categorical decisions about the text.[66] They add that 'texture' can help the reader in distinguishing between 'history' and 'non-history' within any given genre through the following textual considerations:

> [M]arkers, shifters, syntax, lexical choices, evidentials, density and intensity of expression, structured gaps and silences, metrical devices, various phono-aesthetic indicators, and finely calibrated suggestions of the domain of a statement's intended application and potential meaning.[67]

The textual considerations listed above clearly demand the 'natural sensitivity' of a reader or a listener.[68]

The criterion of 'texture' has the potential for changing the way we read pre-

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the *suta* or 'bard' and later by the Brahmin priests. At the core of the *itihāsa-purāna* tradition was a specifically historical segment, *Vamshanucharita*, constituted by dynastic lists of ruling families which traced back to ancient heroes of the solar and lunar lineages. This segment was also borrowed by the Buddhist and Jaina historical traditions. In the post-Gupta period (from 550 CE), genealogies began to serve the more secular function of legitimizing ruling families across South Asia. See her entry on the concept of *itihāsa* in Thapar, 'Itihasa', in Romila Thapar, 'Itihasa', in *Key Concepts in Modern Indian Studies*, ed. by Gita Dharampal-Frick and others (New York: NYU Press, 2016), pp. 126–28.

[66] Narayana Rao, Schulman, and Subrahmanyam (Introduction, Section 1: Listening for History).

[67] Narayana Rao, Schulman, and Subrahmanyam (Introduction, Section 1: Listening for History).

[68] Narayana Rao, Schulman, and Subrahmanyam (Introduction, Section 1: Listening for History).

In his review of *Textures of Time*, Pollock critiques this 'privileged access to the truth' and asks if it is possible for any reader, even a native speaker, to reconstruct the 'cultural ecology' of a pre-colonial' text. See Sheldon Pollock, 'Pretextures of Time', *History and Theory*, 46.3 (2007), 366–83 (p. 375).

colonial Indian texts and for incorporating historical texts that have hitherto remained on the margins of modern historiography simply because of their coexistence with 'non-history'. My own criticism of the book is that the authors seem to privilege history over 'non-history', which becomes clear from their classification of the *aitihya* (a major constituent of pre-colonial texts) as 'non-history', i.e. as the negative of history. However, as I will show in forthcoming chapters, the so-called 'non-history' or *aitihya* component is key to gaining insights into how the ruling powers in Kerala constructed their past, defined their relationship to the land of Kerala, and negotiated their relationship with the sea.

Romila Thapar offers a model which is useful for understanding some of the characteristics and aims of 'non-history' in Indian historical traditions. Dealing mainly with the period between the seventh and twelfth centuries CE, during which 'the *itihāsa-purāna* tradition underwent a process of enlargement' in India, Thapar identifies three main constituents of the Indian historical traditions: mythology, genealogy, and historical narrative.[69] These three constituents, she argues, can be related to a 'sense of history', which she defines as follows:

> A sense of history can be defined as a consciousness of past events, which events are relevant to a particular society, seen in a chronological framework and expressed in a form which meets the needs of that society.[70]

According to Thapar, the core of the historical tradition was formed by

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[69] Romila Thapar, 'The Tradition of Historical Writing in Early India', in *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1978), pp. 268–93 (p. 274).
[70] Thapar, 'Tradition of Historical Writing', p. 268.

genealogical records in which the more remote history was embedded in mythology, while the more recent history was fact-oriented and could therefore constitute historical narrative. The mythological sections derived its content from the *itihāsa-purāna* literature, which allowed newly ascended political groups from small, regional kingdoms across India to both define their locality and trace their lineage to important *purānic* figures.[71]

Thapar's model is useful for understanding the key place occupied by genealogies in Indian historical traditions. It is in relation to this component that the other two components – mythology and historical narrative, comparable to 'non-history' and 'history' – become important. Mythology or 'non-history' is therefore critical to understanding which *purānic* figures were deemed important for particular socio-political status groups and what aims those figures served in relation to the locality where the groups had come to enjoy political power.

Conclusions

This chapter has reviewed some of the literature on Indian Ocean and covered two important topics in Indian Ocean scholarship: the first on the involvement of Asian states in maritime politics in the pre-Portuguese-era Indian Ocean and second, the debate on the idea of 'silence'. Chapter Four will further engage with the first topic by examining the case of the Zamorin and his involvement in maritime politics in the light of origin stories from the Kozhikode kingdom. The debate on the idea of 'silence' highlights some of the problems posed by Indian vernacular writing to historians trained in Western modes of history writing. To

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[71] Thapar, 'Tradition of Historical Writing', pp. 278–81.

address this problem, I reviewed some of the relevant literature in the field of Indian historiography. Rao et. al. argue for the need to be alive to the 'texture' of Indian vernacular records to make a distinction between 'history' and 'non-history' or *aitihya*. This chapter argues that this component in history writing is significant for incorporating vernacular sources into a study of global encounters.

Though the works by Rao et. al. and Thapar relate specifically to vernacular historical traditions in India, they also have some bearing on the Arabic historical traditions. Chapter Five explores how Muslim writers borrowed and transformed myths and legends from Malayalam traditions to legitimize the place of Islam and its adherents in Kerala. As we will see in Chapter Seven, even the Portuguese understanding of the land of Kerala was mediated through these myths and legends. Before delving into these exchanges, it is important to define the modes of history writing in Kerala. This will be the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Two:
The *Granthāvari* Mode of History Writing

The robust history-recording practices in the Kozhikode kingdom were described by two separate European travellers to Kerala, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, respectively. The first account is by the Portuguese chronicler Duarte Barbosa, who also lived in Calicut in the early decades of the sixteenth century:

> The King of Calicut continually keeps a multitude of writers in his palace, who sit in a corner far from him; they write upon a raised platform, everything connected with the King's Exchequer and with the justice and governance of the realm [...] And there are seven or eight more, the King's private writers, men held in great esteem, who stand always before the King with their styles in their hands, and the bundle of leaves under their arms. Each one of them has a number of these leaves in blank, sealed by the King at the top. And when the King desires to give or to do anything as to which he has to provide he tells his wishes to each of these men and they write it down from the Royal seal to the bottom, and thus the order is given to whomsoever it concerns.[72]

Further on in the chronicle, Barbosa notes that the Zamorin assigned a '*Chatim* clerk' (*'escrivão chatim*') to keep the accounts and look after the affairs of the Muslims traders in the port cities.[73]

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[72] Duarte Barbosa, *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, trans. by Mansel Longworth Dames, 2 vols (London: Hakluyt Society, 1921), II, pp. 18–19.
In the Portuguese edition: *'El-rei de Calecut tem contìnuamente em seus paços muitos escrivães, que estão assentados a um canto longe dele; escrevem estes sobre um poio todas as cousas assim da fazenda del-rei, como da justiça e governança do reino* [...] *Há aí sete ou oito escrivães mais privados del-rei, que são homens mui honrados, e estão sempre diante del-rei com as penas na mão, e molho de folhas em branco, assinadas por el-rei nos começos, o qual quando quer dar ou fazer alguma cousa de que se há-de fazer provisão diz a cada um destes sua tenção, e eles a escrevem, começando do sinal del-rei para baixo, e, assim dá o alvará a cujo é.*' (ed. by Machado, p. 126)

[73] Barbosa, trans. by Dames (vol. 2) p. 77; Barbosa, ed. by Machado, p. 161.
In both the Portuguese edition and in the English translation, the clerk or '*escrivão*' is indicated to be a Chatim. It appears from other secondary sources that Chatims were a sea-trading community from the Konkan area on the Malabar Coast, perhaps belonging to the Bania or Vania caste, and hence not native to the Kerala region. Michael N. Pearson, 'Indian Seafarers in the Sixteenth Century', in *Coastal Western India: Studies from the Portuguese Records*, pp. 116–44 (pp. 122 & 126).

François Pyard Laval, a Frenchman who travelled to India aboard the exploration ship *Croissant* and lived in Calicut for a period of eight months in the year 1607, makes a similar note on the system of collecting and storing information in the kingdom:

> Hard by there [the palace] is a block of buildings allotted to the secretary and clerk to the king, for keeping all the registers. The order and system is most admirable herein, and I have ofttimes wondered to see the great number of men with no other duty or work all day but writing and registering. These posts are of much honour; the clerks all reside in the palace, but in different apartments, and they have different duties. Some make entry of all goods arriving for the king; others, the dues and taxes paid day by day; others, the expenditure of the king's household; others, the most notable incidents of each day, both what happens at court and in the rest of the kingdom; in short, all news, for he has everything registered; and each clerk has his separate room. They keep also a register of all strangers who come there, taking their names and nationalities, the time of their arrival, and the business that has brought them, and so they did with us. It is a wonderous thing to observe their number and the perfect order that exists among them, and how fast they write on their palm-leaves, as described…The king hath the like writers in all towns, ports, harbours, and frontier passages of his kingdom, who render account to those of the palace, all being well organised and in obedience one to another, each having his proper superior. Throughout the whole Malabar coast there is the same manner of writing and the same ordering thereof.[74]

Laval's description points to the presence of an archive where all relevant information of the kingdom was stored. The fate of this archive remains unknown. It is possible that the archive was destroyed, and its contents dispersed or lost during the period of contact with various European powers, as Sebastian Prange has suggested.[75] Had the archive survived, we could expect to

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[74] François Pyard of Laval, *The Voyage of François Pyard of Laval*, trans. by Albert Gray, 2 vols (London: Hakluyt Society, 1887), I, pp. 412–13.
[75] Prange, 'The Pagan King Replies', p. 154.

find a number of records on a range of subject matter, perhaps even relating to the activities of the Portuguese, from the Kozhikode kingdom. This raises the question of how we use vernacular mode of history writing to explore global encounters in sixteenth-century Kerala.[76]

A sizable number of published and unpublished historical records from Kerala bear the descriptor *granthāvari* in their titles.[77] Taking this descriptor as an entry point into vernacular history writing, the present chapter identifies some of the chief characteristics of the *granthāvari* mode. I take two published *granthāvari*s from Kochi as exemplars of the mode – *Perumbadappugrandhavari* (*Perumbadappu* in future mentions) and the *Patappattu* (*War Song*), both dealing with events from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[78] I then compare this mode with the history-writing

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[76] In their works on the history of various ruling houses in Kerala, Panikkar, Ayyar, and Haridas have made use of various palace records produced by those houses.
Panikkar has referred to palace records from Kochi, copies of which were made available to him by Rama Varma Appan Thampuran of the Kochi royal family, to write, K. M. Panikkar, *Malabar and the Portuguese: Being a History of the Relations of the Portuguese with Malabar from 1500 to 1663*. (Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Co., 1929).
Similarly, Ayyar has accessed the palace records of the Kozhikode royal family to write his book, K. V. Krishna Ayyar, *The Zamorins of Calicut: From the Earliest Times down to A. D. 1806* (Calicut: Norman Printing Bureau, 1938).
Haridas has revisited Ayyar's sources in his works, V. V. Haridas, 'Political Culture of Kozhikode: Exploring Perspectives beyond the Zamorins of Calicut' (presented at the K. V. Krishna Ayyar Endowment Lecture-II, Calicut University, Kozhikode, 2015); V. V. Haridas, *Zamorins and the Political Culture of Medieval Kerala* (New Delhi: Orient Black Swan, 2016). He has identified these sources as the *Kozhikodan Granthavari*, a collection of palm-leaf manuscripts, currently located at Vallathol Vidyapeetham in Edappal, Kerala State.

[77] These titles include: *Perumbadappugrandhavari: A Translation of a Record-Grandhavari in The State of Archives*, ed. by S. Raimon (Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala State Archives Department, Government of Kerala, 2005); M.G. S. Narayanan, *Vanjeri Granthavari* (Calicut: University of Calicut, 1987); *Koodali Granthavari*, ed. by K. K. N. Kurup (Calicut: University of Calicut, 1995); M. R. Raghava Varier, *Keralolpathi Grandhavari: Traditional History*, 2016 (second) (Kottayam: Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society & State Bank of Travancore, 2013).

[78] The manuscript copy of the *Perumbadappu* was found among the palace records of the Kochi State. It was first published in 1916 by the Kochi State. In 1973, the Malayalam manuscript was published again with its English translation. The source consulted in this thesis is a 2005 reprint of the 1973 publication, Raimon, *Perumbadappu*.
The anonymous *War Song* was found in 1924 and published the same year by Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyyar. The source consulted in this thesis is a reprint from 2016, Ulloor S.

practices of the Māppila Muslims, especially their writing of *jihad* in the sixteenth century. In the last two sections of this chapter, I introduce two Malayalam records from Kozhikode, *The Origin of Kerala* and *The News of Kerala*, which are both available in print and in English translation. I discuss the provenance of these records and underline their relevance for the present study as *granthāvari* sources from Kozhikode. The last section also contributes to the current debate on whether *The News of Kerala* is a *granthāvari* source or merely a translation of the Arabic *Tribute to the Holy Warriors*.

2.1. Defining the *Granthāvari* Mode

Most of the extant *granthāvaris*, including *Perumbadappu*, were found among palace records, which affirm their association with royal institutions. However, *granthāvaris* were also produced by religious institutions – mainly by temples, but perhaps even by churches and mosques – to serve as directories for the performances of religious ceremonies. Even landed households kept a record of their lands, tenants, rent etc in the form of *granthāvaris*.[79] Palace records, which I will refer to in future mentions as 'palace *granthāvari*s', are distinguishable from the other kinds of *granthāvaris*; they themselves generally

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Parameswara Iyyar, *Patappattu* (Kottayam: Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society & State Bank of Travancore, 2016).
A partial English translation of the *War Song* was published recently by Kooria in, Mahmood Kooria, 'Patappattu, A Malayalam War-Song on the Portuguese-Dutch Battle in Cochin', in *Malabar in the Indian Ocean: Cosmopolitanism in a Maritime Historical Region* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 141–71.

[79] S. Raimon, 'Preface to the Translation of a Grandhavari', in *A Translation of a Record-Grandhavari in The State of Archives*, ed. by S Raimon (Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala State Archives Department, Government of Kerala, 2005), pp. i–viii (p. i); M. R. Raghava Varier, 'Malayali Charithrabodham Kolanivazhchayku Munpu/The Historical Sensibility of the Malayali before the Colonial Period', in *Patappattu* (Kottayam: Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society & State Bank of Travancore, 2016) (see last section on the granthāvari).
In his dictionary entry, Gundert defines *granthāvari* as a 'register of agreements kept by the *Janmi* [landlord], Hermann Gundert, 'Grathidam', *A Malayalam and English Dictionary* (Mangalore, London: C. Stolz, 1872), p. 336 <https://dsalsrv04.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/app/gundert_query.py?page=336> [accessed 21 August 2019].

mark their association to specific 'political houses' ('*swarūpam*') at the opening of the record.[80] For instance, *Perumbadappu* marks its association to the Kochi royal family in its opening lines:

> The Elaya Tavazhi of the Perumbadappu Swarupam became important or acquired prominence on the day of the *Kaliyuga* denoted by the cryptogram 'Shodasangam Surajyam' the day on which Cheraman Perumal partitioned his kingdom into 34 Amsams or divisions, 17 to the north and 17 to the south of Neeleeswaram, and invested the grantees of the free gift thereof with the silk and the sword.[81]

These lines indicate that the *granthāvari* was composed on behalf of the *elaya tāvazhi* – the younger matrilineal branch of the Perumbadappu *swarūpam*.[82]

Fig. 3. *Mantravāda*, Palm leaf manuscript, Tübingen University, MS Ma l 279. [https://www.gundert-portal.de]

Six characteristics define the *granthāvari* mode of history writing. The first

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[80] The word *swarūpam* literally translates as 'self-figure or self-form'. Binu John interprets it as 'political house'. All the major post-Chera kingdoms in Kerala are known by this title: Kōlaswarūpam (Kannur), Nediyiruppu Swarūpam (Calicut), Perumbadappu Swarūpam (Kochi), Vēnād Swarūpam (Kollam) etc. See Binu Mailaparambil John, 'The Ali Rajas of Cannanore: Status and Identity at the Interface of Commercial and Political Expansion, 1663-1723' (unpublished PhD, University of Leiden, 2007), pp. 33–35.

[81] Raimon, *Perumbadappu*, p. 1.

[82] According to Raimon, the Kochi kingdom is known after the village of Perumbadappunād in the Ponnani Taluk of British Malabar, which was the original seat of the royal family and the site where coronation ceremonies were held until the middle of the seventeenth century. Raimon, *Perumbadappu*, p. 1.

characteristic relates to its script. The word *granthāvari* originates from the Sanskrit word *grantha*, meaning 'book'.[83] In Malayalam, the word *grantha* also denotes the Grantha script in which the language is currently written (see fig. 3, shown above). The Nambudiri Brahmins adopted the Grantha script as early as the ninth century to compose works in Sanskrit. They formulated the script by adding *grantha* characters derived from the north Indian Devanagari script to the older *vattezhuttu* (or *kolezhuttu*) script associated with ancient Tamil. Non-Brahmin literati then popularized the script when they used it to render Sanskrit works into Malayalam. The script achieved its present form by the sixteenth century.[84] Since most Malayalam texts produced in the pre-colonial era are extant in the Grantha script, this feature can be regarded as a broad characteristic of the *granthāvari* mode.

The second characteristic has to do with the writing material used. In the preface to the *Perumbadappu*, S. Raimon identifies the palm-leaf material as one of the defining features of the *granthāvari* (see fig. 3, above).[85] The leaf of the Palmyra palm (*ola* in Malayalam) was the writing material commonly used in Kerala until the early part of the twentieth century, by which time it was largely replaced by paper. The palm-leaves were held together by a thread inserted through a hole at one end and bound together by pegs of wood or iron, giving it the shape of a hard-bound book or a *grantha*.[86] Like the Grantha script, the palm-leaf material is a broad characteristic that defines many of the

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[83] Hermann Gundert, 'Grathidam', *A Malayalam and English Dictionary* (Mangalore, London: C. Stolz, 1872), p. 336 <https://dsalsrv04.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/app/gundert_query.py?page=336> [accessed 21 August 2019].
[84] Kathleen Gough, 'Literacy in Kerala', in *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, ed. by Jack Goody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 132–61 (p. 135).
[85] Raimon, 'Preface', p. i.
[86] Gough, 'Literacy', p. 135.

Malayalam works produced before the twentieth century.

Third, palace *granthāvari*s contain a genealogical history of the rulers. For example, brief notes regarding the death of a ruler, the ascension to the throne of a new ruler, or the adoption of a prince from another *swarūpam*, can be found inserted between entries on the Dutch presence in Kochi in the *Perumbadappu*. These notes serve as a genealogy of the Kochi rulers.

Origin stories form the fourth distinguishing feature of a *granthāvari*. The opening lines of the *Perumbadappu* (quoted above) narrate the origin story of the kingdom. In it, the origin of the Perumbadappu *swarūpam* is traced to the day when Cheraman Perumal, an ancient ruler, partitioned his kingdom into thirty-four divisions, granting Perumbadappu to the 'younger matrilineal branch' (*elaya tāvazhi*). The date of this event is marked using the Sanskrit (*Kali yuga*) cryptogram '*Shodasangam Surajyam*', which, according to Raimon, corresponds to 385 CE.[87] Origin stories of the kind given above are a characteristic of palace *granthāvari*s from the other kingdoms as well, making them a part of a unique literary tradition dating back to the Perumal. These stories constitute what Rao et. al. have termed 'non-history' or *aitihya*, and what Thapar has identified as 'mythology'. Further, these stories serve as the point of origin for the genealogy of the rulers; this is also the case with the *Perumbadappu*.

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[87] Raimon, *Perumbadappu*, p. 1.
According to Raimon, 'The *Kalis* or cryptograms are astronomical or astrological words, phrases or sentences used to indicate the date of some important event. Very often they signify at the same time the events themselves, which are intended to be dated.' He offers a meaning of the cryptogram given above as follows: 'A good State is made up of 16 (indispensable) constituent parts.'

The fifth characteristic relates to the dating of the *granthāvaris*. The date of composition of the *granthāvaris* proves to be a challenge for historians since the *granthāvaris* rarely incorporate such information. Moreover, the events recorded by the *granthāvari*s tend to span several centuries. For instance, in the *Perumbadappu*, the earliest event relating to the Perumal (quoted above) is marked using the Sanskrit cryptogram known as *Kali yuga*, which dates to the fourth century, while the latest event is dated in accordance to the Malayalam calendar (Kollam) to the eighteenth century. Furthermore, the dates are drawn from different calendar systems such as the Sanskrit *Kali yuga*, the Kollam calendar named after the port city of Kollam, and the Malayalam *Puduvaippu Era* named after Puduvaippu or the Vaipin island, situated close to the port town of Kochi.[88] Raimon also voices other difficulties related to dating:

> [T]he narrative is unchronological in some places and inaccurate in others. In several places, it skips over the history of several years and begins abruptly by picking up some important event. It is suffused with perplexing repetitions and disjointed references.[89]

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[88] Raimon, 'Preface', p. ix.
Kali yuga, named after the demon Kali, is the fourth era (*yuga*) in the quaternary time cycle of Hinduism, the other three being, *Satya yuga*, *Treta yuga*, and *Dvapara yuga*. As Samira Sheikh has noted, *Kali yuga* 'represents our own time, one that signifies decline, corruption, and moral crisis.' The concept of the four declining ages, according to her, first appeared in the Sanskrit epic *Mahabharata* and in the *puranic* literature and was developed between the fourth century BCE and fourth century CE. The degenerate *Kali yuga*, she adds, is also the age in which *bhakti* or personal devotion to gods offers the greatest potential for salvation. See Samira Sheikh, 'Kaliyuga', in *Key Concepts in Modern Indian Studies*, ed. by Gita Dharampal-Frick and others (New York: NYU Press, 2016), pp. 130–31.
The Malayalam calendar known as Kollam commenced on the day corresponding to August 25, 824 CE. According to one tradition, it was inaugurated by King Udaya Martanda Varma of the Travancore kingdom at his capital city of Kollam. Other traditions have variously attributed its initiation to the Vedanta philosopher Sankaracharya and to the Islamic conversion of the last Chera ruler, Cheraman Perumal. See K. V. Sarma, 'Kollam Era', *Indian Journal of History of Science*, 31.1 (1996), 93–99.
[89] Raimon, 'Preface', p. ii.

In these lines, he emphasizes issues related to linearity, accuracy, continuity, and the overlap of information. However, the more recent events and genealogies offer a way out of this conundrum since, as Thapar has argued, recent events tended to be more accurate compared to the more remote ones.[90] In the *Perumbadappu*, the more recent events include the Mysore invasion of Kochi in the late eighteenth century, suggesting that the *granthāvari* was prepared around that time.

The problem with dating draws attention to a second problem: the authorship of the *granthāvaris*, which forms the sixth and final characteristic feature. In the absence of a consistent style and a linear structure, Raimon concludes, 'it is highly probable that it is a mere compilation by one man of what was recorded at different times by different persons'.[91] Issues with dating and authorship played a role in the dismissal of Malayalam *granthāvaris* as historical sources during the colonial era. Raimon concurs with such dismissals and states that the *granthāvaris* were 'rightly characterized' by the colonial-era official William Logan as 'a farrago of legendary nonsense'.[92] Considering that the difficulty of dating and authorship of palace *granthāvaris* is a common and persistent problem, these issues could be regarded as features of the *granthāvari* mode of writing history. As Raimon suggests, the compilation of various *granthāvari* sources at various times might have contributed to the development of these features.

It is possible, however, to narrow the authorship of the *granthāvari*s to specific

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[90] Thapar, 'Tradition of Historical Writing', pp. 268–93.
[91] Raimon, *Perumbadappu*, p. i.
[92] Raimon, 'Preface', p. ii.

caste groups in Kerala. According to Kathleen Gough, Nambudiri Brahmins, who ranked highest in literacy among the various caste groups in pre-colonial Kerala, authored much of the literature produced in Kerala.[93] However, in 'traditional Kerala,' denoting the period between mid-fifteenth to mid-eighteenth century, a sub-caste of the Nāir caste group served as scribes in the royal palaces or the households of lesser princes. Ranked below the Brahmins in the caste hierarchy, the literacy of the Nāirs pertained, in the words of Gough, 'chiefly to royal government, politically administered trade, and the feudal administration of fiefs and villages'. She notes that in the Kozhikode kingdom, the palace scribes took the title 'Menon' after their personal names and commanded great respect in the kingdom.[94] Thus, the evidence presented by Gough suggests that even before the arrival of the Portuguese, the Nāir caste group had emerged as a powerful literate group in Kerala with close ties to the royalty.

Among the published *granthāvari*s, it is possible to find both prose and poetic records. The poetic records, known as *pāttu* (song), are characterized by the *kilippāttu* style, a poetic style in which a parrot served as the narrative voice. M. R. Raghava Varier associates the *pāttu* genre with the principal palace establishments (*swarūpam*s) in Kerala: Kōla *swarūpam* (Kōlathunad, centred at Kannur), Nediyiruppu *swarūpam* (Kozhikode), Perumbadappu *swarūpam* (Kochi), and Vēnād *swarūpam* (Kollam). According to Varier, the *pāttu* genre focused on historical events or heroic figures. Works in this genre extolled the virtues of warriors martyred in battles fought either internally within a

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[93] Gough, 'Literacy', p. 143.
[94] Gough, 'Literacy', p. 147.

swarūpam (between various matrilineal groups or *tāvazhi*s over issues of succession) or externally between different *swarūpam*s over the issue of overlordship (*mēlkōyma*) throughout Kerala.[95]

Varier identifies four main categories of the *pāttu* genre, written in the *kilippāttu* style: *Māmānkam pāttu*, *pata pāttu*, *chāvēr pāttu*, and *vātha pāttu*. *Māmānkam pāttu* or Māmānkam songs celebrated the festival of Māmānkam, held every twelve years at Tirunāvāyi, near Ponnani.[96] The Zamorin seized control of the festival in the twelfth or the thirteenth century from the neighbouring Valluvanād rulers and presided over it until 1743, shortly before the Mysore invasion of the Zamorin's territories.[97] Popular in northern Kerala, the Māmānkam songs served to legitimize the Nediyiruppu *swarūpam*'s (Kozhikode) conquest of Tirunāvāyi in which they took control of the Māmānkam festival. The *pata pāttu* or the *war song* describes the infighting between matrilineal groups within a *swarūpam* and the wars fought between *swarūpam*s. Varier cites the example of the *War Song* from Kochi, which describes the fight over royal succession in the Perumbadappu *swarūpam*, involving the participation of both the Portuguese and the Dutch, each supporting the royal claims of different matrilineal groups.[98]

The third category of *pattu*, *chāvēr* songs, celebrates the figure of the *chāvēr*, usually a Nāir, who was chosen to undertake suicide missions on behalf of a prominent leader to whom he had pledged his allegiance. The Māmānkam

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[95] Varier, 'The Historical Sensibility of the Malayali'.
[96] Varier, 'The Historical Sensibility of the Malayali' (Section 1: Kilippāttu vazhi).
[97] Logan, *Malabar* (vol. 1.), p. 165.
[98] Varier, 'The Historical Sensibility of the Malayali' (Section 2: Patappāttu).

festival was one occasion which routinely saw the participation of the *chāvēr* sent by the rulers of Valluvanād to exact revenge on the Zamorins for seizing the festival from them.[99] The final category of *vātha* songs were sung in praise of warriors who died in wars but were thought to have returned to the earth as *vātha* (*batha* or souls). Popular in southern Travancore, some of the *vātha* songs also described the succession wars between various matrilineal households of the Vēnād *swarūpam*.[100]

In their book *Textures of Time*, Rao et. al. observe that the choice of battle scenes and heroic figures was typical of South Indian modes of history writing. In their view, this choice is suggestive of a historical imagination that was 'preoccupied with such moments of constitutive violence'.[101] In the specific context of Kerala, the focus on violent encounters in the *pāttu* categories can also be read as a sign of the prominent position occupied by the military caste of Nāirs. The men of this caste were removed from their ancestral homes and were trained at an early age to fight in the royal army or to die in *chāvēr* (suicide) missions for the king or other leaders.[102] In the caste hierarchy of pre-colonial Kerala, the military Nāirs enjoyed a high status, next to Nambudiri Brahmins and kings, and above the various Nāir sub-castes.[103]

Varier defines the *granthāvari* as a parallel mode of history writing that, like

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[99] Varier, 'The Historical Sensibility of the Malayali' (Section 3: Chāvēr pāttukal).
[100] Varier, 'The Historical Sensibility of the Malayali' (Section 6: Vāthapāttu vazhi).
[101] Narayana Rao, Schulman, and Subrahmanyam (Introduction, Section 3, Letters Traced on Paper).
[102] Kathleen Gough, 'Changing Kinship Usages in the Setting of Political and Economic Change Among the Nayars of Malabar', *Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 82.1 (1952), 71–88 (p. 76).
[103] Eric J. Miller, 'Caste and Territory in Malabar', *American Anthropologist*, 56.3 (1954), 410–20 (p. 411).

the *pāttu*, was commissioned by palace establishments, included overlapping information on historical events, and made a contemporary record of events.[104] However, there are also several important differences which justify making a distinction between the two modes. Unlike *pāttu*, which likely served the purpose of regaling a public audience, a *granthāvari* such as the *Perumbadappu* seems to have served as an institutional record of major events, unhindered either by style or by a wider target audience. In other words, what is distinctive about the *granthāvari* is the absence of a proper 'narrative' with a 'well-marked beginning, middle, and end'.[105] The palace *granthāvari*s do have a beginning, as they typically open with the origin story of the kingdom, which can by itself be treated as a narrative. However, the rest of the *granthāvari* is formed of disjointed and overlapping accounts of events which could span centuries. The *granthāvari*s are also open-ended, ending abruptly on a certain date and an event. By contrast, the various *pāttu* categories seem to focus on a single event. For example, the *War Song* from Kochi focuses on the Portuguese-Dutch war fought in 1663.

Though distinct in form (verse) and scope (limited to an event), the *pāttu* genre shares some of the broad characteristics of the *granthāvari* mode such as the palm-leaf material and the Grantha script. Origin stories are also integral to the *pāttu* genre. For example, the *War Song* from Kochi opens with the origin story of the Kochi kingdom.[106] The *War Song* also incorporates a wealth of historical data that usually formed a part of the palace *granthāvari*s. This suggests an

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[104] Varier, 'The Historical Sensibility of the Malayali' (Section 10: Granthāvari vazhi).
[105] Hayden White, 'The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality', *Critical Inquiry*, 7.1 (1980), 5–27 (p. 6).
[106] Iyyar, p. 58.

exchange of information between the two modes. In the light of this, the *pāttu* genre can be seen not just as a parallel mode of history writing but as a mode of writing based on the *granthāvari*s preserved by the royal institutions. The Malayalam and the Arabic records consulted in this thesis share some or most of the characteristics of the *granthāvari* mode. In the next section, I will examine the history writing practices of the maritime groups in Kerala, focusing in particular on the Arabic modes of writing, with the aim of stressing their similarities and differences with the *granthāvari* mode. This section will also introduce all the Arabic records consulted in this thesis, including the literature on *jihad* produced by the Muslim *ulama* during the sixteenth century.

2.2. Arabic Modes of History Writing

Pre-colonial Kerala was home to traders of diverse geographical origins who introduced their own distinctive linguistic and literary traditions to the region. While Arab Muslims dominated the Indian Ocean trade in Kozhikode and Kōlathunād, Syrian Christians (St. Thomas Christians) and Jews dominated the trade in Kochi and Vēnād. The trading groups considered Arabic, Syriac, and Hebrew to be sacred languages.[107] Similar to how Sanskrit and Malayalam interacted to form the modern Grantha script, the intersection of Arabic, Syriac, and Hebrew with Malayalam produced some hybrid variations. The Malayalam texts produced by Syrian Christians were written in the Garshuni (or Karshon) script, which combined the Syriac alphabet with Malayalam letters.[108] Jewish Malayalam literature comprised both Hebrew texts written in the Malayalam

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[107] Gough, 'Literacy', p. 136.
[108] On the use of Syriac and Garshuni Malayalam among the Syrian Christians, see István Persczel, 'Garshuni Malayalam: A Witness to an Early Stage of Indian Christian Literature', *Journal of Syriac Studies*, 17.2 (2014), 263–323.

script and Malayalam works written in the Hebrew script.[109] Muslims wrote in the *Arabi*-Malayalam script, which combined Arabic script and Malayalam vocables.[110] *Arabi*-Malayalam developed in the pattern of *arwi* (Arabic-Tamil) on the south-eastern coast of India, and *jawi* (Arabic-Malay) and *pégon* (Arabic-Javanese) in Indonesia.[111] Maritime groups also shared a knowledge of the local Malayalam tongue, and some were proficient enough to read and write in it.[112] Rather than the palm-leaf material commonly used by the palace scribes, maritime traders like the Muslims of Arab origin had access to and wrote on paper.[113] Muslims also continued the use of the older *vattezhuttu* script to write in Malayalam instead of the modern Grantha script used by the palace scribes.[114]

Most Muslims received no more than a basic training in Arabic from the *ulama* ('scholars and officiants of Islam'), who were generally the ones accomplished in the language.[115] Visiting a mosque in Ezhimala (Hili), the Moroccan traveller Ibn Battuta found that the *ulama* trained students in the writing of Arabic and in the reading of the Quran.[116] *Qissat Shakarwati Farmad* (*The Story of Emperor Perumal*) is an early example of Arabic writing from Kerala, variously dated to the twelfth or thirteenth century and the sixteenth century by different

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[109] On Jewish Malayalam language and literature, see Ophira Gamliel, 'Voices Yet to Be Heard: On Listening to the Last Speakers of Jewish Malayalam', *Journal of Jewish Languages*, 2013, 135–67.
[110] Ronald E. Miller, *Mappila Muslim Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), p. 323.
[111] Ronit Ricci, 'Citing as a Site: Translation and Circulation in Muslim South and Southeast Asia', *Modern Asian Studies*, 46.2 (2012), 331–53 (pp. 340–41).
[112] Gough, 'Literacy', p. 137.
[113] Kooria, 'Does the Pagan King Reply?', p. 431.
[114] Gough, 'Literacy', p. 138.
[115] Gough, 'Literacy', 138.
[116] Ibn Battuta, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta in the Near East, Asia and Africa, 1325-1354*, trans. by Samuel Lee, e-edition (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2004) (Ch. XVIII).

scholars.[117] The *ulama* also played a large role in promoting works written in the *Arabi*-Malayalam script. Qadi Muhammad (who served as a *qādi* or judge in the port town of Calicut) is credited with the composition of the earliest known *Arabi*-Malayalam poem, *Moideen Mala* (1607), written in praise of Abd al-Qadir (1077-1166), a preacher who lived in Baghdad.[118] Among the more indigenised Muslims of Kerala (Māppila Muslims), an oral literary culture constituted by songs (*Māppila pāttu*) developed in tandem to the Malayalam *pāttu* traditions. Ronald E. Miller has identified at least three different categories of *Māppila pāttu*: *Mala* (garland), comprising songs of praise and prayer, to which Qadi Muhammad's *Moideen Mala* belongs; *Khissa* or song-stories, under which Miller includes another category of songs known as *pata pāttu* or war songs; and miscellaneous songs, such as wedding songs (*kalyāna pāttu*), teaching refrains, and modern lyrics.[119]

In the context of Portuguese incursions on Muslim lands, trade, and property in the sixteenth century, the *ulama* inaugurated a genre of writing centred on the concept of *jihad*, comprising sermons, poems, and prose histories. Works like *Tahrid Ahlil Iman* (*Instigating the Believers*) by Zainuddin Makhdum I (Zainuddin I); *Tuhfat al-Mujahidin* (*The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*) by his grandson, Zainuddin Makhdum II (Zainuddin II); and *Fath al-Mubin* (*The Manifest Conquest*) by Qadi Muhammad belong to this genre.[120] The influence of the Malayalam *pāttu* tradition on Arabic history writing is clear from the *ulama*'s choice of poetry as the form for composing works on *jihad*. In Qadi

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[117] Kugle and Margariti, 'Qissat'.
[118] Miller, *Mappila Muslim Culture*, p. 323.
[119] Miller, *Mappila Muslim Culture*, p. 303.
[120] Ali; Muhammad, *Fat'h al-Mubin*; Makhdum, trans. by Nainar.

Muhammad's case, this choice is explicitly stated in *The Manifest Conquest*: 'Changing prose (*nasir*) into poetry (*nazim*) is like changing silver (*fiza*) into gold (*nazir*) / Writing poetry for the benefit of knowledge is equal to worship of God.'[121] *The Manifest Conquest* was written in the context of the historical battle between the Zamorin (Manavikrama, r. 1562-1574) and the Portuguese in 1571.[122] It parallels the *pata pāttu* (war song) genre in Malayalam, which recounts stories of major battles between various *swarūpam*s in Kerala. Attesting to this parallel, Qadi Muhammad introduces *The Manifest Conquest* as a 'wonderous tale (*khissa*) which describes a battle (*harb*) strange in its own way'.[123] The poem's commemoration of Muslim warriors (*mujahid*) and martyrs (*shahid*) also resonates with the Malayalam *chāvēr pāttu* (*chāvēr* songs), written in praise of the *chāvēr* who undertook suicide missions on behalf of the ruler.

Since its emergence in the pre-Islamic period, the Arabic poetic style known as *Qasīda* was, according to Ayal Amer, 'concerned mainly with the themes of love and panegyrics'. 'It was an uncommon practice 'to write the history of the past' using *Qasīda*. Therefore, Qadi Muhammad's choice of poetry reflects 'a practice of history writing in local languages – a practice which was common in many south Indian vernacular languages'.[124] Amer argues that this signifies 'a new development of historical consciousness' among the Muslim *ulama*, which consciously attempted to diverge from the traditional annalistic form of writing

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[121] Muhammad, *Fat'h al-Mubin*, p. 18 (verses 10-11).
[122] The available names and periods of reign of the different Zamorins in this thesis are taken from, Ayyar, *The Zamorins of Calicut*, pp. 334-39.
[123] Muhammad, *Fat'h al-Mubin*, p. 18 (verse 7).
[124] Ayal Amer, 'The Rise of Jihādic Sentiments and the Writing of History in Sixteenth-Century Kerala', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 53.3 (2016), 297–319 (p. 315).

history practiced by historians and chroniclers across the Muslim world. In contrast to Qadi Muhammad's adoption of the localized form of poetry, Amer finds Zainuddin II's historical account of Kerala to be 'inherently Islamic' in its 'orientation, depicting the long history of Muslims in Kerala and the central role they played in the struggle against the Portuguese'.[125] This implies that it was removed from indigenous modes of history writing. However, Zainuddin II's style does not appear to be too different from the prose *granthāvari*s produced by the Hindu ruling houses. As I will show in a following section, it is possible that he based his history of Kerala on local *granthāvari*s. Hence, it is likely that his style too had some local influences.

The Malayalam and the Arabic modes of history writing diverge in some areas. First, the *ulama* wrote in Arabic, the then lingua-franca of the Indian Ocean world. This broadened the scope of their texts beyond Kerala. The *ulama* intended their records to circulate among an Arabic-literate audience in the Indian Ocean world. Works like *Instigating the Believers* and *The Manifest Conquest* were meant to be read by audiences in Iraq and in Syria, while *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* was dedicated to the Bijapur Sultan Ali Adil Shah. In 1609, Mahodem Kasim Hindu Shah Ferishta, a chronicler of the Bijapur court, translated *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* into Persian and incorporated it as a chapter in his chronicle *Tarikh-i-Firishta*, which tells the history of Muslim dynasties in India. Ferishta acknowledges his source in the text, which has been translated into English as: 'All the materials of the history of the Mahomedans of the Malabar coast that I have been able to collect are

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[125] Amer, p. 316.

derived from the Tohfut-ool-Mujahi-deen.'[126]

The second difference between the two modes is that, while Malayalam works were heavily influenced by Sanskrit traditions, Arabic works were influenced by Islamic traditions. The works on *jihad*, for example, draw heavily from the Quran and the Hadith (Prophetic traditions). Third, when compared to the palace scribes, the *ulama* had better insights into events at sea, which is clear in their record of the Portuguese activities in the Indian Ocean. This can be attributed to their participation in the established commercial and religious networks in the Indian Ocean. By contrast, the Malayalam palace *granthāvari*s rarely included any information on Portuguese activities beyond the land of Kerala. This division implies that, unlike the *ulama*, the palace scribes were indifferent to events at sea. This can then be considered as another feature of the *granthāvari*s mode. In the next two sections, I will discuss the provenance of two Malayalam records from Kozhikode, *The Origin of Kerala* and *The News of Kerala*, with the aim of establishing their relevance for the present study as *granthāvari* sources.

2.3. The Provenance of *The Origin of Kerala*

Several recensions and copies of *The Origin of Kerala* are extant in manuscript form.[127] However, until recently, only a version from Kozhikode was available to

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[126] Mahomed Kasim Ferishta, 'Some Account of the Mahomedans in Malabar', in *History of the Rise of the Mahomedan Power in India*, trans. by John Briggs, 4 vols (Calcutta: R. Cambray & Co., 1908), IV, 531–41.

[127] The Government Oriental Manuscripts Library in Chennai (Tamil Nadu) claims to have in its possession eleven copies of *The Origin of Kerala*. See P. P. Subrahmanya Sastri, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Malayalam Manuscripts in the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras* (Madras: Superintendent Government Press, 1940), I.
According to Veluthat, one or more copies of *The Origin of Kerala* were preserved by the ruling families, local landlords, and chieftains of Kerala. Kesavan Veluthat, 'The Kēralōlpatti as

the wider public, published in 1843 by the German missionary Hermann Gundert.[128] In the final line of his publication, Gundert acknowledges that the text is a condensed version of *Keralanatakam* authored by the Malayalam poet Thunchath Ramanujan Ezhuthachan, who is believed to have lived between the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries in the Kozhikode kingdom.[129] According to Kesaven Veluthat, the attribution of the authorship of *The Origin of Kerala* to Ezhuthachan is a standard feature found in most extant copies.[130] In his recent publication of *Keralanatakam*, M. Sreenathan argues that the *Keralanatakam* manuscript is not only a handwritten copy by Gundert but was in all likelihood authored by him. He claims that Gundert's acknowledgement of Ezhuthachan as the author of *Keralanatakam* in both his publication of *The Origin of Kerala* and in the *Keralanatakam* manuscript is a 'writing trick' ('*rachanathanthram*'), aimed at giving both records 'authenticity' ('*pramanikathvam*'). However, he admits that *Keralanatakam* reproduces most of the content of *The Origin of Kerala*, implying it is yet another version of *The Origin of Kerala*.[131] In the paragraphs below, I investigate the provenance

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History', in *The Early Medieval in South India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 129–46 (p. 146).
Skaria Zacharia found four different versions of *The Origin of Kerala* at the Tübingen University, three in palm-leaf format and one on paper, each bearing a different title: *Keralacharasamkshepam*, *Keralanatakam*, *Keralamahatmyam*, and *Keralavilasam*. Hermann Gundert, *Keralanatakam*, ed. by M. Sreenathan (Tirur: Malayalam University, 2016).

[128] The version that I consult in this thesis is a 2014 reprint of the second edition (1868) of the original publication from 1843.

[129] Ezhuthachan is credited with popularizing the modern Grantha script through his renditions of Sanskrit works, including the epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, into Malayalam. He composed his works in the *kilippāttu* (parrot-song) style, which characterized much of the poetic works (*pāttu*) produced in pre-colonial Kerala between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries. Alongside poets like Melpatthur Bhattathirippad (1560-1646) and Poonthanam Namboothiri (1547-1640), Ezhuthachan was a prominent exponent of the *Bhakti* (devotional) genre of poetry, marked by a devotion to personal Hindu gods. Hailing from Tirur, that was part of the Kozhikode kingdom, Ezhuthachan is known to have received the patronage of the Zamorins. See A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, e-edition (Kottayam: D C Books, 2016) (Ch. XXX, Section: Bhakti Poetry).

[130] Veluthat, 'Kēralolpatti as History', p. 132

[131] Gundert, *Keralanatakam*. Sreenathan found this manuscript in Gundert's collection of Malayalam manuscripts, held at Tübingen University.

of this record based on its contents to establish its relevance for the present study as a *granthāvari* source.

The Origin of Kerala is broadly divided into three sections, each representing an important period in the history of Kerala: The Age of Parasurama (*Parasurāmante kālam*), The Age of the Perumals (*Perumākkanmārude kālam*), and The Period of the Kings (*Tampurākkanmārude kālam*). The first section narrates the founding of the land of Kerala by Lord Parasurāman (an avatar of the Hindu Lord Vishnu) and the settlement of 'foreign' (*paradēsi*) Brahmins and other caste groups on the land. The second section deals with the era of kings – each king addressed by the title Perumal ('the Great one') – and ends with the partition of the land by the last king Cheraman Perumal. The final section, 'The Period of the Kings', focuses on the kingdom of Kozhikode founded by the last Perumal and ruled by the 'Tamupurans' ('lords') bearing the title Zamorin. The second and third sections are divided into many sub-sections. Brief references to the Portuguese appear in a sub-section under the second section with the title 'Social order prescribed by Sankaracharya', and in a sub-section under the final section, 'How the Portuguese arrived and alliance with Kurumbiatiri [the Zamorin].'[132]

Various scholars have credited the indigenous Nambudiri Brahmins with the authorship of *The Origin of Kerala*. They have substantiated this on the grounds that the first two sections of *The Origin of Kerala* glorify that caste group – in the first section, as recipients of the land from Parasurāman, and in

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[132] In the sub-section, however, there are only one or two direct references made to the Portuguese.

the second section, as the principal councillors to the kings. It is probable that this view took root during the colonial period in statements such as the following made by Logan, that '[w]hat is substituted for the real history of this period in these traditions is a farrago of legendary nonsense, having for definite aim the securing to the Brahman caste of unbounded power and influence in the country.'[133] Echoing Logan, Elamkulam P. N. Kunjan Pillai argues that *The Origin of Kerala* contains 'stories concocted by a Nambudiri on a fine morning with a view to supporting the story of Parasurama'.[134] However, the contents of *The Origin of Kerala* do not entirely support this view. Though it is probable that the first two sections of *The Origin of Kerala* were composed by the indigenous Brahmins, a notable shift in style and content in the third section, coupled with parallel historical developments in society, point in the direction of a Nāir authorship for the later parts of the text.

In his study of *The Origin of Kerala*, Veluthat draws attention to correspondences between the broad time periods highlighted in the text and the historical transformations actually taking place in Kerala. 'The Age of the Perumals' corresponds to the historical period extending from the ninth century to the twelfth century when the Chera dynasty ruled over Kerala from their capital at Makotai (Mahodayapuram/Kodungallor). 'The 'Period of the Kings' parallels the post-Chera period in Kerala, from the twelfth century up to the arrival of different European powers in Kerala. Whereas the Perumal age reflects the proximity between Brahmins and kings, the period of kings reflects the emergence of a new form of kingship assisted by Nāirs and by foreign

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[133] Logan, *Malabar* (vol. 1), p. 244.
[134] Veluthat, 'Kēralōlpatti as History', p. 144.

trading groups such as the Arab Muslims. Veluthat attributes the diminished presence of Brahmins in the last section of *The Origin of Kerala* to the limited control exerted by that caste group on agricultural lands in the Kozhikode kingdom.[135] From the different temporalities assigned to the text by Veluthat, it follows that, while the first and second sections of the text deal with the Chera period, the last section concerns the post-Chera period and is, therefore, more relevant for the present study.

The various sections of *The Origin of Kerala* also diverge in their geographical scope. Whereas the first two sections represent the wider domain of Kerala, founded by Parasurāman and ruled by the Chera kings (addressed as Perumals), the final section has a narrow focus on the Kozhikode kingdom. This focus signals the divergence of this version of *The Origin of Kerala* from other versions associated with the other kingdoms in Kerala. Veluthat writes that 'the variations in the different versions are largely related to the last period, i.e. the age of the Tampurans, namely the period of the petty locality chieftains in the post-twelfth century period of Kerala history'.[136] This implies that the last section of *The Origin of Kerala* in particular carries the perspective of the Zamorin, and is again highly relevant for the present study.

The three sections of *The Origin of Kerala* also follow distinct styles of history writing. The first section relates to the creation of Kerala by Parasurāman, a character drawn from the Sanskrit *itihāsa-purāna* traditions. This section forms what Thapar has termed 'mythology' and Rao et. al. have termed 'non-

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[135] Veluthat, 'Kēralōlpatti as History', p. 139.
[136] Veluthat, 'Kēralōlpatti as History', p. 134.

history' or *aitihya* in their studies on Indian historiography. By contrast, the second section contains a genealogical history of the Perumals, which ends with an account of the reign of the last Perumal and his division of the kingdom between various kings. Drawing from Thapar's study, this section forms the genealogical component, which, in her view, constitutes the core segment of Indian historical traditions. Shifting from the genealogical mode, the third section narrates the history of the Kozhikode kingdom and its rise to prominence among all the kingdoms founded by the last Perumal. This section comes closest to historical facts and forms what Thapar terms 'historical narrative'.

The prominent role played by Nāirs in the Kozhikode kingdom indicate a Nāir authorship for the more recent events recorded in *The Origin of Kerala*. The possibility of a Nāir authorship is further supported by Gough's observation that in 'traditional Kerala' the royal institutions in Kozhikode were served by Nāir scribes who lived in close proximity to the palace.[137] Moreover, Gundert tells us that *The Origin of Kerala* was based on a work by Ezhuthachan, whose Nāir identity is evidence for the participation of that caste group in Malayalam history writing. In the *granthāvari* mode of routine copying and compilation of palm-leaf manuscripts, it is probable that the Nāir scribes appended contemporary historical accounts to texts previously composed by Brahmins. As M. G. S. Narayanan argues, 'it is probable that the nucleus of such a work existed much earlier and was copied with additions, and probably also interpolations in favour of special interests, from time to time'.[138] Here, the later

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[137] Gough, 'Literacy', p. 147.
[138] M. G. S. Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala: Brahmin Oligarchy and Ritual Monarchy* (Thrissur: Cosmo Books, 2018), p. 53.

interpolations to *The Origin of Kerala* may be the contribution of Nāir scribes employed by the Zamorin. Thus, *The Origin of Kerala* can be said to represent the interests of various socio-political groups, including the Brahmins, the Zamorins, and the Nāirs, and suggest a close connection between these groups.

It must be emphasized at this point that *The Origin of Kerala* does not entirely support a linear structure as suggested by Veluthat. For instance, a sub-section under the second section, 'Social order prescribed by Sankaracharya', includes references to the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French, and the English. These references could only have been included in the sixteenth or the seventeenth century, during or after the arrival of those groups. Hence, their insertion in a section of the text that broadly represents the Chera period – from the ninth century to the twelfth century – and in a sub-section attributed to the Vedanta philosopher Sankaracharya (788-820 CE) is not only anachronistic but defies the linear structure proposed by scholars like Veluthat.[139] Such anachronisms are present throughout the text and could be either a product of the frequent copying and compilations that characterize the *granthāvari*s or part of a deliberate attempt to attribute new social realities to established founder-heroes.[140] In the latter case, it is possible that the mythical role of founder-heroes took precedence over chronological accuracy – a point discussed in more

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[139] Born in Kaladi, Sankaracharya was a Nambudiri Brahmin and a proponent of the Advaita Vedanta philosophy based in the Sanskrit *Bhagavat Gita* and the *Upanishads*. He is known to have entered into philosophical combats with Buddhist scholars, while also coming under the influence of the Buddhist faith. During his travels throughout India, he established four Hindu monasteries on the four corners of Indian subcontinent, which, according to Menon, was modelled after the Buddhist ideal of monasticism. The popularization of Sankaracharya's philosophy through the *Bhakti* movement eventually led to the decline of Buddhism and Jainism in Kerala. See Menon, *Survey of Kerala History* (Ch. X, Section: Sankaracharya).

[140] Another notable anachronism in the text relates to the conflict between the Vijayanagara ruler Krishna rayar and Cheraman Perumal. While Krishnarayar ruled in the seventeenth century, Cheraman Perumal is believed to have ruled in the twelfth century.

detail in the next chapter. *The Origin of Kerala*, therefore, demands to be read with an openness to such oddities and deliberations.

Since texts written in the *granthāvari* mode tend to combine accounts of events both recent and in the remote past, *The Origin of Kerala* also needs to be read as reflecting not just the era to which the published copy is dated, i.e. the seventeenth century, but as combining different temporalities, geographies, history writing modes, and caste interests. In other words, *The Origin of Kerala* is relevant for studying both the Chera period and the post-Chera period, and specifically the sixteenth century. In the next section, I will undertake a study of the provenance of *The News of Kerala* to investigate whether it can be considered a *granthāvari* source similar to *The Origin of Kerala*.

2.4. *The News of Kerala*: A Māppila Record or a *Granthāvari*?

Compared to *The Origin of Kerala*, *The News of Kerala* has only become known in the recent decades, after K. K. N. Kurup's discovery of the source palm-leaf manuscript in the British Library (London) in 1979. He published the manuscript more than a decade later, in 1995, as an appendix to the Malayalam translation of *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*.[141] Two years later, an English translation of *The News of Kerala* by Vijayakumar appeared, again as an appendix, in a book edited by Kurup called *India's Naval Traditions: The Role of Kunhali Marakkars*.[142] Both these publications add very little information which can serve to establish the provenance of the palm-leaf.

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[141] Kurup and Vijayakumar, pp. 163-73.
[142] Vijayakumar, pp. 96-103.

In the article 'The Pagan King Replies: An Indian perspective on the Portuguese Arrival in India', Prange brought to light an English manuscript attributed to John William Wye with the title 'A Translation of a History of the Portuguese Landing in India, written on the leaves of the Brab tree (called Ola) in the Malabar language'.[143] The contents of this manuscript, published by Prange in his article, correspond to that of *The News of Kerala*. However, Prange does not make a connection between the two manuscripts. Based on Wye's statement that the English manuscript was based on a Malayalam palm-leaf that was 'presented' to him by the Vencatycotta *Rājāh* of the Zamorin's family, Prange arrives at the conclusion that Wye's source text was likely written 'in the form of a traditional *granthavari*'.[144] Taking this line of argument forward, he considers the source palm-leaf to be 'an extension to the traditional *Keralolpatti* [*The Origin of Kerala*], bringing it up to date with the momentous events set in motion by Vasco da Gama's landing on Indian soil'.[145]

In Prange's view, the perspective of the Wye manuscript is different from that of European sources which have dominated studies of early Portuguese presence in India. It is also different, he says, from the Arabic sources, significantly the sixteenth-century *Tribute to the Holy Warriors*. Contrasting the Wye manuscript and *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*, he argues that the latter represented the 'priorities of Malabar's Muslim elite' and was addressed to Muslim rulers rather than the Hindu natives of Malabar.[146] On the question of

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[143] John William Wye, 'Translation of a History of the Portuguese Landing in India, Written on the Leaves of the Brab Tree (Called Ola) in the Malabar Language.' (London), British Library, MSS Eur B19-20, India Office Records and Private Papers.
[144] Prange, 'The Pagan King Replies', p. 156.
Vencatycotta corresponds to modern Kōttakkal. Prange, 155.
[145] Prange, 'The Pagan King Replies', p. 157.
[146] Prange, 'The Pagan King Replies', p. 152.

the relationship between the Wye's source text and *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*, Prange suggests the possibility of both records drawing on a store of popular accounts of some of the more significant events. In particular, he underlines the similarity in their descriptions of the construction of the Portuguese fort in Chaliyam in 1531 CE. He also considers the prospect of a Muslim informant or a collaborator working alongside the 'Brahmin' composer of Wye's source text.[147] Situating the source text almost conclusively in the *granthāvari* tradition, Prange thus claims to have at last found an Indian perspective on the Portuguese – indicated by the title of his essay, 'The Pagan King Replies'.

In 'Does the Pagan King Reply? Malayalam Documents on the Portuguese Arrival in India,' Kooria has argued for a connection between the Wye manuscript and *The News of Kerala*, contending that the former is an English translation of the latter. He disputes Prange's evaluation that the Wye's palm-leaf source (i.e. *The News of Kerala*) belonged to the *granthāvari* tradition. Instead, he argues that it was based on *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* and hence belonged to the Arabic tradition. Kooria, thus, answers his own question, posed in the title of his essay, in the negative: the pagan king, according to him, does *not* reply through Wye's source text (i.e. *The News of Kerala*).[148]

The Provenance of *The News of Kerala*

The News of Kerala is catalogued alongside sixty-six Malayalam manuscripts in

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[147] Prange, 'The Pagan King Replies', p. 161.
[148] Though not explicitly stated, Kurup seems to be suggesting this connection by publishing *The News of Kerala* as an appendix to the Malayalam translation of *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*.

the *Catalogue of the Malayalam Manuscripts in the India Office Library*. The cataloguer C. A. Menon ascribes the title *Kerala-vartamānam* (*The News of Kerala*) to the palm-leaf. This title appears to be a misnomer since the word 'Kerala' does not appear in the manuscript.[149] Instead, the text consistently uses the word 'Malayalam' to refer to the geographical region of Kerala, a word now used exclusively to the main language spoken in the region.[150] On the provenance of the palm-leaf, Menon writes that it is 'obviously based on Moslem records', without elaborating further.[151]

Among the sixty-seven Malayalam manuscripts held at the British Library, sixty-five, including *The News of Kerala*, are extant in palm-leaf form, while the remaining two are extant in gold and silver strips and relate to treaties contracted between the Dutch East India Company and the Zamorin in 1691 and 1710. In the *Catalogue*, Menon classifies the Malayalam manuscripts under five sections: Architecture, History, Poetry, Medicine, and Religion. The majority of the manuscripts belong to the Poetry section (fifty manuscripts), while *The News of Kerala* and the two metal strips are categorized under the History section. Menon uses the descriptors 'purchased' or presented' to signal the mode of acquisition of some of the Malayalam manuscripts. However, he does not offer any such descriptors for *The News of Kerala*.

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[149] It is possible that Menon formulated the title from the first line of the palm-leaf – '*Hari: Malayalathile vartamanangal iniyum parayunnu*' ('Hari: The following is an account of the news of Malayalam country') – by substituting 'Malayalam' with 'Kerala' but retaining the word *vartamanam* (News).

[150] Apart from Malayalam *granthāvari* records, the word also appears as a geographical marker for the Kerala region in a letter written by an East India Company officer named W. Meadows to the Zamorin. Dated 14th October, 1793, the letter talks of 'certain adjacent countries of Malayalam' that are English possessions. See the entry for William Logan, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Other Papers of Importance Relating to British Affairs in Malabar*, 2nd edn (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1951), pp. 87–88 (Part 1: XCVII).

[151] Chelnat Achyuta Menon, *Catalogue of the Malayalam Manuscripts in the India Office Library* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 6.

On the surface, *The News of Kerala* shares some characteristics associated with traditional *granthāvari* sources: it is written in the modern Grantha script and on the palm-leaf material, comprising twenty-nine leaves, each ten inches to one inch in size, with five lines to a page.[152] The leaves of the palm-leaf are written on both sides, held together by a single thread inserted on the left-hand side, and bound by wooden pegs on both ends, giving it the shape of a book or *grantha*. Malayalam numerals inserted on the left-hand side of the palm-leaf signal the order of the leaves.

On closer look, a mix of characteristics drawn from both the Malayalam and the Arabic traditions begin to appear. The contents of the palm-leaf (hereafter referred to as 'deep content') are bracketed within opening and closing Hindu prayers.[153] The deep content pertains to a series of encounters between the Zamorins and the Portuguese, beginning in 1498 and ending in 1588, each event marked using both the Malayalam (Kollam) and the Arabic (Hijri) calendars. The date and place of composition of the palm-leaf are marked in the last lines of the palm-leaf, right after the closing Hindu prayer, as follows:

> These are the news about the Portuguese and the Zamorin. Sree Gurubhyo Nama: Subhamastu. This news is dictated and written down in M. E. 967 on Sunday 25th of the month of Karkataka, from the 'Kassa' of the Kathriyar (Khasi) of Kozhikode.[154]

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[152] Menon, *Catalogue*, p. 6.
[153] The opening prayer *Hari* is a shortened version of *Hari Ganapathaye Nama Avignamasthu* (Let there be no hurdles Lord Hari!), which appears more commonly in some of the other palm-leaf manuscripts in the Library collection. Similarly, the closing prayer – *Sree Gurubhyo Nama Subhamasthu* (Let it end well Lord Guru!) – appears either in the same form or with slight variations in the other manuscripts. The words *Hari* and *Guru* invoke the Hindu Lord Vishnu and his various manifestations. *Guru* also carries the meaning of 'teacher'. The shortened *Hari* is used as an opening device in the *Perumbadappu* as well. However, this manuscript is incomplete and therefore does not carry the closing prayer.
[154] Vijayakumar, p. 103.

Here, the date of composition of the palm-leaf is marked solely in accordance to the Malayalam calendar as Sunday, the twenty-fifth day of the Malayalam month of *Karkataka* in the Kollam year 967 (corresponding to 20 August 1792 CE). In the same line, it is also indicated that the author received the deep content from the 'Kathriyar's Khissa' in Kozhikode, signalling its origins in the Arabic tradition. A word of Arabic origin, *khissa* or *qissa* refers to a 'story, narrative, account or tale'.[155] The word 'Khatriyar,' on the other hand, might refer to a *qādi*, a Muslim judge.[156] The acknowledgement therefore suggests that the deep content was received from a *qādi* of Kozhikode in 1792 CE.

The year 1792 was a watershed year in the history of the Kozhikode kingdom. On 22nd February of that year, the English East India Company entered into a treaty with Tipu Sultan of Mysore (in present-day Karnataka State).[157] According to the terms of the treaty, territories that were previously under Mysore rule – including the Zamorin's territories – were ceded to the Company. The Company assumed control over those territories and passed a decree that gave it 'full powers to make the collections, administer justice and all other right ceded by the Tipoo Sultan' and ordered the Zamorin to pay a sum 'to the

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Kurup's publication of the palm-leaf in 1995 does not accurately reproduce the dates. The following lines are, therefore, taken from the original manuscript held at the British Library: '*Ram vartamanam kollam 967 aamathu karkkitaka njayar 25 kozhikootta kathriyarude kissavil ninnu paranju ezhuthipathathra*.' See the microfilm version of the palm leaf, 'Kerala-Vartamanam', Malayalam MS 14. India Office Library.

[155] Kooria, 'Does the Pagan King Reply?', p. 425.

[156] Kooria, 'Does the Pagan King Reply?', p. 430.
Though Kooria says this word is uncommon in a Malayalam text, it can be found in *The Origin of Kerala* in the phrase 'Jonakar like Katiyar' (*katiyar muthalaya jonakar*). See Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', p. 145, and Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 67.

[157] On this date, a preliminary treaty was signed between the Company and Tippoo Sultan. See the first entry in, Logan, *A Collection of Treaties*, p. 138 (Part II).
Logan, in fact, uses this treaty to divide his book into two parts, constituting, respectively, the Company engagements with the local powers before and after the annexation of Malabar.

Honourable Company by the hands of such persons as they may appoint'.[158] Under the same decree, the Zamorin's territories – including Vengatty Cotta (Venkatykōtta), which Wye acknowledges as the place of origin of his palm-leaf – were now leased out to the Zamorin by the Company.[159] The preparation of the palm-leaf in August 1792, therefore, immediately follows a momentous event in the history of the Kozhikode kingdom, namely, its colonization by the East India Company. This suggests that Wye, who began his career in Malabar in 1792, acquired his source palm-leaf, likely *The News of Kerala*, soon after taking office. A brief look at Wye's career can shed some more light on this transfer.

Wye's career in Company-ruled Malabar began immediately after the Company's takeover in early 1792. The same year he was appointed as assistant surgeon to the Bombay Presidency and was posted to Malabar.[160] In 1795, his name appears as 'Malayalam Translator' in some of the Company letters, which confirms his knowledge of Malayalam and his competence to translate *The News of Kerala* into English.[161] In 1800, he was appointed as 'Collector and Local Magistrate' of 'Vellatre, Chernad, Betutnad and Parapanad' in which capacity he was given a monthly allowance and a percentage of his 'gross collections'.[162] While serving as a Collector in Malabar, Wye kept a diary which reveals that he endeavoured to curtail the power of the local rulers over the inhabitants and suppress any attempts made by the people to rebel against the

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[158] See the entry in Logan, *A Collection of Treaties*, p. 162 (Part II: XVI).
[159] See the entry in Logan, *A Collection of Treaties*, p. 164 (Part II: XVI).
[160] Prange, 'The Pagan King Replies', p. 155.
[161] See the entries in Logan, *A Collection of Treaties*, pp. 230, 231, 251-252 (Part II: LXXXVIII, XC, CXIII).
[162] See the entry in Logan, *A Collection of Treaties*, p. 336 (Part II: CCXV).

Company.[163] It is also apparent from the diary entries that the prospects of the ruling families depended on the kind of relationship they had previously shared with Tipu Sultan who was deemed an enemy of the Company and killed by Company forces in 1798.[164] Considering the authority wielded by Wye in Malabar, it is possible that the palm-leaf was commissioned by him rather than offered to him, as Wye claims, as a present by the Venkatykōtta *Rājāh* of the Zamorin's family. The archival of both *The News of Kerala* and the Wye manuscript in the British Library and a comparison of their contents confirm Kooria's argument that the latter is a translation of the former.

The News of Kerala and the Wye Manuscript

Among the sixty-seven Malayalam manuscripts held at the British Library, Menon cross-references only two of them to their corresponding English translations (also found in the British Library).[165] He does not, however, offer such references for *The News of Kerala*. This means that at the time of the preparation of the *Catalogue*, Menon was unaware of the existence of the Wye manuscript in the British Library.

Catalogued among the India Office records, the Wye manuscript consists of two documents, each an English translation of a Malayalam text – first, by John

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[163] Logan has reproduced four diary entries in his *Collection of Treaties*. Among these, one letter was received by Wye from the inhabitants of Vellatre, another was addressed to him by Hay Clepane, Secretary to the Company, and the last two are orders issued by Wye to the inhabitants of Parapanād and Vellātre, respectively. See the entries in Logan, *A Collection of Treaties*, pp. 337, 338, 342, 342-343 (Part II: CCXVI, CCXVIII, CCXXVI, and CCXXVII).

[164] In a letter written by Hay Clepane to Wye, concerning the distribution of the Parapanād revenues among the local ruling families, a special mention is made of a man who resisted conversion by Tipu Sultan, who is therefore directed to receive a considerable portion of the revenues. See the entry for Logan, *A Collection of Treaties*, p. 338 (Part II: CCXVIII).

[165] The two metal strips are cross-referenced by Menon to their English translations, preserved in manuscript form, at the same library. See Menon, *Catalogue*, p. 7.

William Wye from 1800 and second, a 'Copy made in the Hon.ble Company's Library from Mr. Wye's original translation' in 1804.[166] The original translation from 1800 therefore appears only a few years after the preparation of *The News of Kerala* in 1792 CE. The title of the Wye manuscript indicates that the source on which it was based was written on the leaves of the Brab tree (Palmyra palm) that was called 'Ola' in the 'Malabar language'.

Except for a few lines, Wye's translation almost accurately follows the contents of *The News of Kerala* and even reproduces the exact style in which the dates are marked. Starkly missing from his translation, however, are the opening and closing Hindu prayers and the final acknowledgement, which includes the date and the place of its composition. It is possible that Wye omitted the Hindu prayers, considering them to be peripheral to the deep content of the palm-leaf, which pertained to the Portuguese presence in Kerala. However, his exclusion of the final line, if deliberate, appears to be a serious oversight, effectively erasing an important stage in the provenance of the palm-leaf.

Throughout his translation, Wye adheres to Malayalam usages of titles and place names, giving their anglicized versions in footnotes. Malayalam expressions like *Tamuri* (for the Zamorin), *Rājāh* (for the King), *Korikote* (for Calicut), *Karrigars* (for Ministers), *Kowlgum* (for Palace), *Pally* (for Mosque), *Mappillas* (for the descendants of Arabs who settled in Malabar), and *Moopanmar* (for Principal persons) are maintained in his translation and correspond to those found in *The News of Kerala*. Wye also introduces certain words that are distinct from those given in the palm-leaf, but, in fact,

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[166] Wye, MSS Eur B 19-20, British Library, London.

correspond to early nineteenth-century colonial usages borrowed from Arabic/Persian terminologies. For instance, instead of the word 'Malayalam,' used in the palm-leaf to signify its geographical location, Wye uses the Persian/Arabic-derived colonial descriptor 'Malabar' all through his translation.[167] Similarly, he marks the Malayalam calendar years as 'Malabar Style' (or MS).[168] He substitutes the Malayalam descriptor *paranki* (denoting the Portuguese) with its Persian root *Fringy*.[169] He also replaces the Malayalam word *pandaram*, meaning 'treasury', with the Persian word *sircar*, signifying 'treasury' or 'government'.[170] *Sircar* was commonly used by colonial officials to address the East India Company as well as the local ruling houses.[171]

Wye's acknowledgement that he received the palm-leaf (likely *The News of Kerala)* from the Venkatykōtta *Rājāh* of the Zamorin's family gives credence to Prange's argument that the source text was a palace *granthāvari*. However, this association is complicated by the fact that the *qādi* of Calicut is acknowledged as the source in *The News of Kerala*. Wye's omission of the final line of *The News of Kerala*, bearing the date, the place, and the source of the deep content, hinders Prange from appreciating the significance of the eighteenth-century

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[167] In the colonial period, the term 'Malabar' or Malabar District signified the northern parts of Kerala, including Kozhikode kingdom, which came under direct colonial rule of the British in 1792. See the various entries in Logan, *A Collection of Treaties*.
[168] Letters written by English East India Company officials commonly used MS to refer to Malayalam calendar dates. See the various entries in Logan, *A Collection of Treaties*.
[169] In a footnote, Wye describes this word as 'a vulgar name for a European chiefly confined to the Portuguese'. 'Translation of a History of the Portuguese Landing in India Written on the Leaves of the Brab Tree (Called Ola) in the Malabar Language', in *The Pagan King Replies: An Indian Perspective on the Portuguese Arrival in India*, ed. by Sebastian R. Prange, trans. by John William Wye (Leiden: Research Institute for History, Leiden University, 2017), 41:1, 162–68 (p. 164).
[170] Hermann Gundert, 'Pandāram', *A Malayalam and English Dictionary* (Mangalore, London: C. Stolz, 1872), p. 604 <https://dsalsrv04.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/app/gundert_query.py?qs=പണ്ടാരം&searchhws=yes> [accessed 25 August 2019].
[171] 'Sirkar, n.', *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford University Press, 1911) <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/180395?redirectedFrom=sirkar#eid> [accessed 13 May 2017].

provenance of the palm-leaf, nor that of the mediation of its contents by the *qādi* of Calicut. On the other hand, this mediation achieves great significance in Kooria's article, where he argues that *The News of Kerala* was merely a Malayalam translation of the Arabic *Tribute to the Holy Warriors*.

The News of Kerala and *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*

In its latest translation by S. M. H. Nainar, *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* comprises an introduction and four sections. The first section gives the religious decrees (*ahkam*) pertaining to the necessity of *jihad*. The second section concerns the advent and spread of Islam in Malabar (*Malibar*). The third section describes the strange customs of the 'infidels' (*kuffar*) of Malabar. The fourth and last section, which is divided into fourteen chapters, deals with one event or a set of events related to the advent of the Portuguese (*al-ifranj*) in Malabar and the atrocities they are alleged to have committed, beginning in 904 Hijri (1498 CE) and ending in 992 Hijri (1583 CE).[172] According to Zainuddin II, the book was a compilation (*majmou*), and its four sections were assembled to provide a historical background for organizing a holy war against the Portuguese: 'I have composed this with the intention of giving inspiration to the believers to wage war (*jihad*) against the cross-worshipping Portuguese.'[173]

For the purpose of comparison, the deep content of *The News of Kerala* can be divided into two parts. The first part relates to the founding of the Kozhikode

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[172] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, pp. 7-9.
In comparison to Nainar's translation, Rowlandson divides *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* into four chapters and subdivides the fourth chapter into fourteen sections. See Makhdum, trans. by Rowlandson.
[173] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 5.

kingdom by Cheraman Perumal. The second part is a chronological account of the activities of the Portuguese in the kingdom from their first landing in 904 Hijri, 672 Kollam, 6th day of *Karkataka* (1498 CE) to 998 Hijri, 766 Kollam (1588 CE). The contents of the first part of *The News of Kerala* correspond almost verbatim to the contents of the second section of *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*, which recounts the history of the advent of Islam in Malabar. Consider, for instance, how the two records describe the extent and strength of each of the kingdoms in Kerala:

> The kings included those having one katham (approx. 16 km.) of territory or more. There were rulers with forces consisting of 100, 200, 300, 1,000, 10,000, 30,000, 100,000 and even more soldiers. Some kingdoms were ruled jointly by two kings while some others by three or more kings.[174] (*The News of Kerala*)

> There are in Malabar chieftains whose territories do not exceed one parasang (about three and a half square miles or less than that), while others have powers over more extensive territories. Of these some have at their command one hundred soldiers or less, or two hundred to three hundred, thousand, five thousand, ten thousand, thirty thousand, hundred thousand and more, and so on. Some territories join in league and are governed by two or three persons together.[175] (*The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*)

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[174] Vijayakumar, p. 97.
Interestingly, both Wye's translation from 1800 and Vijayakumar's translation from 1997 (given in the text above) do not enter the gradation of numbers accurately. Wye omits the number 30,000 while Vijayakumar omits the number 5000. However, the original manuscript as well as its publication from 1995 accurately follows the numbers produced in *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*.
In the Malayalam publication from 1995, presented here in transliterated form: '*Aa rajakkanmarkka oru katham rajyam ullavarum athil ettam ullavarum unda. Avarkku noora aalu ullavarum irunoora aalu ullavarum munnoora aalu ullavarum aayiram aalu ullavarum ayyayiratholam aalu ullavarum pathinayiram aalu* [*aalukal*] *ullavarum muppathinayiram aalu ullavarum noorayiram aalu ullavarum athil appuram aalu ullavarum unda. Chila naattil randa rajakkanmara koorayittakoodi ulla rajyangalam unda. Oru rajyatha moonna rajakkanmarum athil ettam ulla rajakkanmarum unda.*' See *Kerala Varthamanam*, ed. by Kurup, p. 164.
[175] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 34.
In his translation, Rowlandson skips the gradations and, instead, offers an estimate between 200 to 100,000 men in the armies. See Makhdum, trans. by Rowlandson, p. 58.

Each record uses a gradation of numbers to represent the military strength of each of the kingdoms, moving in ascending order from hundred to one hundred thousand. The use of the same numbers in both texts suggests a correspondence in both style and content.

In a similar vein, the contents of the second part of *The News of Kerala* exactly reproduce the contents of the fourth and last section of *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*. A case in point is the entry found in each record on the arrival of the Portuguese in Kozhikode in the year 1498:

> In Kollam era 672 on the day 6th of Karkkatakam and the Hijira [*taliha*] 904, three Portuguese ships reached Pantalayani Kollam and anchored there due to unfavourable weather and came to Kozhikode and gathered information about Malayalam. They did not engage in trade during that visit and returned to their native country Porathikkavu (Portugal). Pepper was the major attraction for the Portuguese to visit Malabar.[176] (*The News of Kerala*)

> It was in the year 904 AH (1498 AD) the Portuguese made their first appearance in Malabar. They arrived at Pantalayani in three ships. By then the trade season through sea routes was almost over. From Pantalayani they moved to Calicut by land, stayed in the town for few months and returned to their homeland after collecting information about the conditions of Malabar. The main purpose of their trip to Malabar, according to their own accounts, was to seek information about the pepper-land and to

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[176] Vijayakumar, pp. 97-98.
In the lines quoted above, Vijayakumar reverses the order in which the dates are presented. In the original manuscript, as well as in Wye's translation from 1800, the Hijri calendar date appears first, followed by the Kollam calendar date. On the other hand, Kurup's publication from 1995 does not produce either Kollam or the Hijri dates. Instead, he marks the events using the Gregorian calendar throughout his publication.
As some of the lines are missing from Kurup's 1995 publication, the following lines are taken from the original manuscript at the British Library: '*Malayalathil paranki vanna varthamanam taliha thollayirathanaalamathil kollam arunoottaezhupatharandamath karkkitakom aaram thiyyathinnal pantharani kollatha parunkide moonna kappala vanna mosham thettuka konda avide nrithi karekka erangi kozhikotta vanna malayalathile varthamanangal okkeyum aranja anna kachodangal onnum chayyathe kanda avarude rajyam porankikaavilekka pokayum cheythu paranki malayalathilekka varuvan hethu mulaka niroopichitta athre aakunnatha*.' See the microfilm of the palm leaf, 'Kerala-Vartamanam', MS 14, British Library, London.

> establish trade in that commodity, for at that time they were buying pepper from other traders who export pepper from Malabar.[177] (*The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*)

The entries quoted above correspond in minute details such as the date of the arrival of the Portuguese (904 AH), the number of ships in the Portuguese fleet (three), the name of the town where the Portuguese first landed (Pantalayani Kollam), the season of their arrival (monsoon), and the purpose of their visit (to collect information about pepper). Apart from the content and the style of narration, the two records also correspond in chronology, principally for the events between 1498 CE and 1583 CE (the last year entered in *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*). When combined with *The News of Kerala*'s usage of the Islamic calendar and its acknowledgement of the *qāḍi* of Calicut as the source of its contents, these factors suggests a close relationship between *The News of Kerala* and *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*. Since *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* pre-dated *The News of Kerala* by at least two centuries, there is a strong possibility that a copy of *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* served as a source for *The News of Kerala*; an argument also made by Kooria.

Notwithstanding its close relationship to *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*, there are still some grounds for treating *The News of Kerala* as distinct from its probable source, seeing it instead as a record that holds the views of the Hindu royal family that commissioned it and transferred it to Wye. While *The News of Kerala* closely parallels the contents of *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*, the opposite does not hold true. This suggests a selection and organization of the

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[177] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 49.

contents of *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* by the author of *The News of Kerala*. For example, the first section that pertains to Islamic decrees on *jihad* and the third section that describes the 'strange' customs of the Hindu *kuffar* (infidels) are unique to *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*. Similarly, the fourth section of *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*, formed of fourteen chapters, holds a wealth of information on the Portuguese activities in the Indian Ocean, which is not present in *The News of Kerala*. Portions that are starkly missing from *The News of Kerala* include a description of the Portuguese system of issuing passes for ships (Ch. 1); the chapter on the 'shameful deeds of the Portuguese' against Muslims around the Indian Ocean World (Ch. 2); an account of a civil war between Muslims and Jews of Kodungallor (Ch. 4); references to attempts made by the Zamorin to forge alliances with Muslim Sultans from the Indian Ocean world against the Portuguese (Ch. 1 & 3); and entries on the wars fought between the Portuguese and the Muslim Sultans (Ch. 1, 3, 4, 5 & 6). In short, the missing portions pertain to the Portuguese-Muslim conflict in the wider Indian Ocean world. Also missing from *The News of Kerala* is the rhetoric of *jihad* which animates the historical content of *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* and gives meaning to its chronological ordering of events. In the absence of an organizing principle such as *jihad*, *The News of Kerala* resembles other *granthāvari*s from Kerala, which similarly lack a proper narrative structure. The chronology of *The News of Kerala* also extends to 1588, which goes beyond the last date (1583) marked in *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*. This suggests that its author consulted a source other than *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* to make a record of some of the later events.

It is possible that in selecting the deep content, possibly from *The Tribute to the*

Holy Warriors as well as other sources, its author considered the interests of the royal family who commissioned the palm-leaf and later 'presented' it to Wye. The selected events relate to the Portuguese activities in Kerala and their encounters with both the Zamorin and the Māppila Muslims from Kozhikode. The selected contents are, moreover, framed in the traditional *granthāvari* form. The palm-leaf also replicates some of the characteristic features associated with the *granthāvari* mode, including the Grantha script; the palm-leaf material; the opening and closing Hindu prayers; the insertion of the origin story of the kingdom at the beginning of the record; and the invocation of Cheraman Perumal, the founder-hero of the Kozhikode kingdom.

A closer look at the historical content of *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* suggests that Zainuddin II might have at least partly relied on a traditional *granthāvari* source. This would ultimately make *The News of Kerala* a *granthāvari*-based source. For example, the first entry on the Portuguese (reproduced above) reflects the kind of information that, according to Laval, was typically collected by palace scribes from foreigners ('estrangers') who regularly disembarked on the shores of Kozhikode, including their names, their country of origin, the time of their arrival, and their purpose of visiting the kingdom. The contents of both records also point specifically to the involvement of a palace accountant, whom Barbosa had found in the service of foreign traders in Kozhikode. Some of the entries register the exact number of Portuguese ships that arrived in Kozhikode and in the nearby ports, of fighting men in the Zamorin's army, of casualties on both the Zamorin's side and the Portuguese side, as well as a clear accounting of the losses suffered by the Māppilas at the hands of the Portuguese. Hence, it is possible that Zainuddin II

relied on a palace *granthāvari* to write at least parts of *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* relating to Malabar and for other parts, used different material related to the Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I identified some of the chief characteristics of the *granthāvari* mode of history writing such as the Grantha script, the palm-leaf material, Brahmin or Nair authorship, and a broad temporal scope spanning centuries. Seen in the light of these characteristics, records like *The Origin of Kerala, The News of Kerala*, and even *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* to some extent, can be seen influenced by the *granthāvari* mode. I argue that because of their broad temporal scope, the Malayalam *granthāvari* records are useful for studying periods in history that predate their completion.

As a crucial distinguishing factor, it is important to note here that the *granthāvari* records almost exclusively focus on the *land* of Kerala as opposed to the sea surrounding it. This is a factor that also distinguishes a record like *The News of Kerala* from *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*. The implication of this land-sea division is that the Portuguese activities in the Indian Ocean was of little interest to the Hindu ruling elites of Kerala. As we will see in the coming chapters, this distinction also played a role in the different ways in which the Zamorins and the Māppilas responded to the arrival of the Portuguese. In the next chapter, I will focus on the way in which the *granthāvari* records, specifically *The Origin of Kerala*, imagine the land of Kerala through origin stories centred around various founder-heroes.

Chapter Three:
Origin Stories and Founder-Heroes:
The Land of Kerala in the *Granthāvari Tradition*

In 1572, Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg published an atlas of Calicut in the first volume of *Civitates Oribis Terrarum*.

Fig. 4. Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg, *Calechut Celeberrimum Indiae Emporium*, *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, 1572. [https://pt.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ficheiro:Calicut_1572.jpg]

The atlas gives a perspective of the city from the vantage point of the sea; the city forms part of the background surrounded by hills, while the sea and the beach are in the forefront, bustling with mundane activities of trade, ship-building, and fishing. The presence of men carrying a palanquin and a man riding an elephant add an exotic flavour to this portrait. *Civitates* also contains atlases of other port cities from India, especially those controlled by the Portuguese, such as Kannur, Goa, and Diu, which indicates that they were all based on Portuguese sources.[178]

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[178] See the other atlases on http://historic-cities.huji.ac.il/asia/asia.html

Against this European maritime perspective on Calicut, this chapter explores how the Hindu ruling elites of Kerala imagined their land through origin stories about founder-heroes. Taking these stories as primary sites of enquiry, I shall develop a territorial model of Kerala, which will lay the ground for my analysis of the Arabic and Portuguese records in the coming chapters. The chapter is divided into three sections, each focusing on one of the three founder-heroes of Kerala: Parasurāman, Cheraman Perumal, and Sankaracharya. To understand the narrative logic of these stories, the political aims served by these heroes, and the connections between the heroes, I draw from the work of Romila Thapar and Alan Strathern on origin myths from South Asia and from around the world, which I will introduce in the first section on Parasurāman. *Keralolpatti* (*The Origin of Kerala*), the palace *granthāvari* from Kozhikode, forms the basis for my study, in particular, the first two sections of the text, 'The Age of Parasurama' and 'The Age of the Perumals'.

3.1. Parasurāman: The Creator of the Land of Kerala

The first founder-hero, Parasurāman, is named after his weapon of choice *parasu*, or axe. Early references to Parasurāman can be found in the Rig Veda, the *Mahabharata*, the Buddhist *Jataka* stories, and the *purānas*.[179] Parasurāman is also a part of the living traditions associated with various temples and pilgrimage sites located across India, in places such as Udayapur,

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[179] M. R. Raghava Varier, 'Parasuramakatha: Oru Veekshanam/The Story of Parasurama: An Analysis', in *Keralolpathi Grandhavari: Traditional History*, 2016 (second) (Kottayam: Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society & State Bank of Travancore, 2013), pp. 17–31. A detailed bibliography of the different versions of the Parasurāman myth can be found in, Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, p. 285.

Punjab, Bijapur, Gokarnam and Kanyakumari.[180] In the eighteenth-century Tamil poem *Kanchipuranam*, the poet links Parasurāman to a temple in Kanchi (in present-day Tamil Nadu).[181] The first identification of Parasurāman as the founder-hero of Kerala seems to be in the *Kerala Mahatmyam* [The Glory of Kerala], composed in Sanskrit by the indigenous Nambudiri Brahmins of Kerala.[182] The first section of *The Origin of Kerala*, 'The Age of Parasurama', contains a story similar to the one in the *Kerala Mahatmyam*.

Origin Myths and the 'Stranger-King' Model of Kingship

In her essay 'Origin Myth and the Early Indian Historical Tradition', Romila Thapar examines origin myths from the Sanskrit *itihāsa-purāna* tradition and the Buddhist historical tradition, focusing on the core element of these traditions, namely the 'genealogical sections' ('*vamsanucarita*') related to kingship. In the *itihāsa-purāna* tradition, writes Thapar, origins of kingship are traced back to the Flood. In the oldest version of this myth, Manu, the primeval man, escapes the Flood with the help of a fish. Being the sole survivor, he conducts sacrifices to the gods, yielding a woman named Ida (or Illa). In some versions, Ida is born out of Manu; she is a hermaphrodite who can shift forms from man to woman. The incestual union between Manu and Ida then produces two sons who found two royal dynasties known as Chandravamsa and Suryavamsa, named after the Moon and the Sun respectively, who are regarded as 'legitimate *kshatriya*s'.[183] Thapar draws attention to two key aspects of the

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[180] Varier, 'Parasuramakatha', pp. 24–25.
[181] David Dean Schulman, *The King and the Clown in South Indian Myth and Poetry* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 120–24.
[182] Translated from Sanskrit into Malayalam in, *Kerala Mahatmyam [The Glory of Kerala]*, trans. by V. Rajeev (Kottayam: Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society, 2012).
[183] Romila Thapar, 'Origin Myths and the Early Indian Historical Tradition', in *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1978), pp. 294–325 (pp. 297–99).

myth of Manu: first, the flood, 'a primary precondition of water from out of which the known creation arises', and second, an emphasis on the purity of lineage through the element of incest between Manu and Ida.[184]

From the Buddhist tradition, Thapar draws the example of the Vijaya origin myth of Sri Lanka, recorded in the Buddhist chronicle *Mahavamsa*.[185] The Vijaya myth emphasizes purity of lineage through the incestual union between Vijaya's father and mother. Vijaya's 'long distance travel to an island inhabited by demons' is explained through the story of his exile from India .[186] The Vijaya myth makes several references to the Buddha – Buddha's visit to Ceylon, emperor Asoka's conversion to Buddhism, and Vijaya's arrival on the island on the auspicious day of the Buddha's *parinirvana*.[187] Ultimately, Thapar argues, origin myths in the Buddhist tradition served the same aim as those in the *itihāsa-purāna* tradition: both sought validation of the Kshatriya status of the rulers by tracing their lineage to the Sun or the Moon dynasty.[188] As Thapar discusses in more detail in another essay, the mythological sections allowed

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According to Thapar, origin myths of king-creation circulated orally, in association with rituals and ceremonies and through recitations at royal courts by professional bards and chroniclers. They gained prominence during the period of Buddhism and Vaishnavism owing to their religious role among the masses. By about the first millennium CE, the origin myths were compiled and edited and by the mid-first millennium CE the genealogical sections of the *itihāsa-purāna* served the more secular purpose of providing lineage links and genealogical connections for the families which gave rise to multiple royal dynasties in South Asia.

[184] Thapar, 'Origin Myths', p. 300.

[185] Regarded as the 'national' chronicle of Sri Lanka, *Mahavamsa* was set down in Pali by Buddhist monks during the late fifth or the early sixth century CE.

[186] Thapar, 'Origin Myths', p. 319.

[187] Thapar, 'Origin Myths', p. 319-20.

[188] Thapar, 'Origin Myths', p. 321.
In the classical *varna* model, Kshatriyas (warriors and kings) are ranked below the highest category of Brahmin priests. See Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchichus: The Caste System and Its Implications*, trans. by Mark Sainsbury, Louis Dumont, and Basia Gulati (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1970).

newly ascended socio-political groups to also define their locality – an aspect which I shall explore further in my analysis of origin stories from Kerala.[189]

Alan Strathern critiques Thapar's analysis in a more recent analysis of *Mahavamsa*. He points out that only a few details in the Vijaya story pertain to the validation of the Sri Lankan Buddhist monarchy's Kshatriya status; thus, he argues this cannot be the overarching aim of the myth. He also argues against the importance Thapar places on the element of incest: unlike in other myths, where this element appears at the beginning to denote the purity of royal lineages, it appears only at a later stage in the Vijaya story – in the section related to the founder-hero, Pandukabhaya.[190] The crux of Strathern's critique of Thapar, however, lies in her failure to address 'the quite new symbolic repertoire loaded with other items of transgression which the narrative deploys for king-creation'.[191] He emphasizes three other elements of the myth: bestiality, in the conception of Simhabahu (Vijaya's father) through the union of a lion and a princess; parricide, when Simhabahu murders his lion father; and avunculicide, in Panukabhaya's killing of eight maternal uncles before acceding to the throne.[192]

Drawing from the works of Marshall Sahlins, Strathern proposes the 'stranger-king' model of kingship as a framework for examining origin myths within the

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[189] Thapar, 'Tradition of Historical Writing', pp. 278-81.
[190] On both his maternal and his paternal side, Pandukabhaya traces his ancestry to the Sakya clan to which both the Buddha and the ruler Asoka (304-232 BCE) belonged. Pandukabhaya, as Strathern notes, was also a great grandnephew of the Buddha. See Alan Strathern, 'Vijaya and Romulus: Interpreting the Origin Myths of Sri Lanka and Rome', *JRAS*, 3, 24.1 (2014), 51–73 (p. 64).
[191] Strathern, 'Vijaya and Romulus', p. 60.
[192] Strathern, 'Vijaya and Romulus', pp. 55-56.

broader context of society-creation, as opposed to the framework of king-creation offered by Thapar. Strathern describes the 'stranger-king' model in the following words:

> The king is an outsider, often an immigrant warrior prince whose father is a god or a king of his native land. But, exiled by his own love of power or banished for a murder, the hero is unable to succeed there. Instead he takes power in another place, and through a woman: princess of the native people whom he gains by a miraculous exploit involving feats of strength, ruse, rape, athletic prowess, and/or the murder of his predecessor.[193]

According to Strathern, the theme of transgression around which the narrative of Vijaya and other founder-heroes of *Mahavamsa* revolve can only be explained by the symbolic logic of the 'stranger-king', found in origin stories and kingship rituals of diverse societies around the world. 'Stranger-king' stories can be told about many kinds of monarchies as well as about founder-heroes of societies without kings. Explaining the founding of a royal dynasty forms only one of the functions of such stories. In the light of this model, Strathern views the Lankan origin myth as a 'stranger-king' story that is not only concerned with the founding of a Sinhala Buddhist royal dynasty but also with explaining the collective origins of a Sinhala Buddhist civilization.[194]

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[193] Alan Strathern, 'The Vijaya Origin Myth of Sri Lanka and the Strangeness of Kingship', *Past and Present*, 203 (2009), 3–28 (p. 8).
[194] Strathern, 'Vijaya Origin Myth', p. 19.
Strathern is critical of R. A. L. H. Gunawardhan's Marxian approach to the Vijaya myth. In Gunawardhan's view, the origins of an ethnic consciousness among the Sinhalese can only be traced to the British period and not before. Challenging this approach, Strathern argues that the myth, in at least one stage of its murky genesis and evolution, made no distinction between explaining the founding of a dynastic line and explaining the founding of a whole society. See Strathern, 'Vijaya Origin Myth', p. 8.

'Stanger-king' stories in general do not depict a break with existing power structures; rather, they seek continuity with pre-stranger indigenes and indigenous centres of power. However, in the case of the Vijaya myth, Strathern notes that the pre-stranger indigenes of Sri Lanka (represented as demons or '*yakkhas*') play no active part in the founding of the new civilization. Upon his arrival, Vijaya sets about suppressing the demons. In Strathern's analysis, this privileging of the outsider's view constitutes both a switch in perspective from the 'stranger-king' stories and a discontinuity with the pre-stranger indigenes.[195] Hence, the mythmakers seem to promote 'a colonizers' view of their encounters with the locals'. Strathern reads this as a reflection of actual migrations from India to places like Sri Lanka and the resultant 'linguistic, religious and cultural colonization from India'.[196] He also cites the absolutist tendencies of Buddhism as a factor that might have caused a rupture between the 'stranger-king' and the indigenes. Before the arrival of Vijaya, it is the Buddha who effects absolute dominion over the indigenes, and imposes a kind of sovereignty over the island, operating 'as a terrible sort of stranger-king'.[197] This description also holds true for the Parasurāman myth, as I shall show.

Parasurāman as a 'Stranger-King' Figure

The traditional myths on the Parasurāman figure generally agree on the following details: Parasurāman was born to the Kshatriya princess Renuka and

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[195] A similar rupture between the 'stranger-king' and the pre-stranger indigenes characterizes the origin myth of the Fu-nan dynasty in Cambodia. The myth traces the dynastic origin as well as the origin of the Fu-nan civilization to a Brahmin called Kaundinya who purportedly sailed from India to Cambodia bearing a magical weapon. With the aid of this weapon, the Brahmin defeated the native princess named Soma, the daughter of the Naga ('serpent') king. In Strathern's reading of this myth, the overpowering of the bestial autochthon signifies its identification with an outsider perspective. See Strathern, 'Vijaya Origin Myth', p. 14.
[196] Strathern, 'Vijaya Origin Myth', p. 13
[197] Strathern, 'Vijaya Origin Myth', p. 21.

the Brahmin sage Jamadagni. His mother's lineage, which descended from the Moon dynasty (Chandravamsa), serves to validate his Kshatriya status.[198] He was banished by his father to Mahendragiri, a mountain range located in Gokarnam (in present-day Karnataka), which explains his relocation to South India, specifically the northern limits of pre-colonial Kerala.[199] He created the land of Kerala by parting the sea with his axe, emphasizing the importance of the water motif. He is known to have committed at least three different acts of violence, one or all of which resulted in his banishment or his renunciation and pilgrimage. These acts include matricide under the order of his father, the slaying of King Kartavirya for stealing a magical cow that belonged to Parasurāman's father, and the destruction of Kshatriyas for vindicating his father's killing by Kartavirya's sons.[200] Seen in the light of the 'stranger-king' model, these violent acts underline the theme of transgression which Strathern identifies as an integral element in society-creation and king-creation in 'stranger-king' stories worldwide.

In comparison to other founder-heroes based in the Sanskrit traditions, who either belong to the Brahmin (priest) or the Kshatriya (warrior/king) category, Parasurāman's mixed lineage makes him a figure of contradictions. As David Schulman has noted in his study of this figure, Parasurāman oscillates between a peaceful, ideal Brahmanical persona and a violent, Kshatriya-like identity. This paradox, in his view, adumbrates the epic conflict between the violent side

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[198] For a discussion of Parasurāman's Kshatriya lineage, see Thapar, 'Origin Myths', p. 305; Schulman, pp. 110-129; Varier, 'Parasuramakatha', pp. 17-31.
[199] According to the *Purānas*, Parasurāman atoned for his sins by relinquishing the conquered lands to Kashyapa, who then exiled him to Mahendragiri. In the view of Varier, this signals a shift from *Godanam* (donation of cows) to *Bhoodanam* (donation of lands), and the transition from a pastoral economy to an agricultural economy. See Varier, 'Parasuramakatha', p. 22.
[200] The various misdeeds of Parasurāman are discussed in Schulman, pp. 110-29.

of royal *dharma* and the universalistic drive for renunciation.[201] In the light of the 'stranger-king' model, this paradox can also be seen as reflecting the founder-hero's potential for both destruction and creation. The Buddhist ruler Asoka (304-232 BCE), for example, traverses a bloody path, slaughtering ninety-nine stepbrothers and an elder brother to ascend to the throne and establish his sovereignty over India. According to Strathern, the story of Asoka's conversion to Buddhism emphasizes the 'bloody sins of "Asoka the wicked" before the monumental ethics of "Asoka the righteous."'[202]

In the Parasurāman myth found in *The Origin of Kerala*, Parasurāman's propensity for violence is contained before his act of creation could begin. In his transformed role as the creator of Kerala, his Brahmin identity supersedes his Kshatriya identity. The origin story of Kerala begins at Gokarnam while Parasurāman is doing his penance for killing Kshatriyas:

> Sri Parasuraman, after having killed generations of kshatriya twenty one times over, decided that the sin of having killed heroes should be got rid of, and to perform the required rites, proceeded to Gokarnam, sat on the great mountain there, worshipped and did penance to Varuna, had the waters pushed back; bowed to Goddess Earth, created 110 katam-s of land; and for the Malayalam land (thus created), deciding that protection was needed, installed 108 deities.[203]

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[201] Schulman, p. 119.
On their entry on the concept of '*dharma*', Purushottama Bilimoria and Lyka Sethi note that the concept has no direct English translation. They write that 'it is a broad concept that establishes individual duties, obligations, and place within society and on earth'. An individual's *dharma*, they add, is dependent on his or her *varna* (the Hindu social order) and *ashrama* ('stage of life'). They cite the Hindu epics *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, especially the *Bhagavad Gita* section in the *Mahabharata*, as paradigmatic models of *dharma* as they explore the ethical conflicts faced by warriors, kings, and gods. See Purushottama Bilimoria and Lyka Sethi, 'Dharma in the Hindu Epics', in *Key Concepts in Modern Indian Studies*, ed. by Gita Dharampal-Frick and others (New York: NYU Press, 2016), pp. 65–67.
[202] Strathern, 'Vijaya Origin Myth', p. 20.
[203] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 27.
In the Malayalam edition: '*Sree Parasuraman irupathonnu vattam mudi kshatriyare konna shesham veerahatyadosham pokkenam ennu kalpichu, karmam chayyanthakkavannam gokarnam pukku, kanmalayil irunnu, varunane sevichu thapassu cheythu, vaaraannidhiye*

Like Vijaya from Sri Lanka, Parasurāman does not set up a Kshatriya lineage in Kerala. Instead, he populates the land with Arya Brahmins brought from foreign parts and entrusts them with the protection and administration of the land of Kerala. He then returns to Mahendragiri in Gokarnam to resume his 'austerities' ('*tapasya*').[204]

In the first section of *The Origin of Kerala*, 'The Age of Parasurama', some of the most distinctive features of the Kerala region are attributed to Parasurāman. First, the text claims that the land created by Parasurāman extended between Gokarnam (in present-day Karnataka State) in the north and Kanyakumari (in present-day Tamil Nadu State) in the south. This land is demarcated from other regions, which are referred to as *paradēsam* ('foreign land').[205] Throughout the text, various descriptors like *Kēralam*, *Malanādu*, and *Chēraman nādu* (the land of *Chēraman*) are used to denote the land created by Parasurāman.[206] As Kesavan Veluthat notes, the geographical limits set by Parasurāman correspond to the domain ruled by the Chera kings from their capital in Makotai (800-1122 CE), during which period Kerala emerged as a distinct geographical and political entity (see fig. 6, p. 259). In that period, the word Kerala (derived from the word Chera) came into circulation as a word that signified both the Chera lineage as well as the Chera domain. With the exception of regions situated on the extreme ends, such as Gokarnam and Kanyakumari (which currently fall

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neekkam cheythu, bhoomi deviye vandichu, noottarupathu katham bhoomiye undakki, malayalabhoomikku raksha venam ennu kalpichu, 108 iswaraprathishta cheythu.' See Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', p. 111.

[204] Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', p. 115; Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 31.

[205] Hermann Gundert, 'Paradesam', *A Malayalam and English Dictionary* (Mangalore, London: C. Stolz, 1872), p. 617 <https://dsalsrv04.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/app/gundert_query.py?page=617> [accessed 3 May 2019].

[206] Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', pp. 118 & 143.

within the limits of the neighbouring states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu respectively), the modern Kerala State of the Indian Union corresponds to the land created by Parasurāman.[207]

Second, the text validates Brahmin ownership of lands in Kerala by claiming that Parasurāman offered sixty-four villages as a 'gift' ('*dānam*') to the Brahmins as a form of penance.[208] According to Veluthat, this claim originated in the Chera period (800-1122 CE), after sixty-four Brahmin settlements had been established throughout Kerala.[209] The existence of such settlements is attested to by a number of inscriptions dated to the time period between the third and eighth centuries CE, bearing records of land grants received by the Brahmins from local rulers.[210] Veluthat attributes the revival of the Chera rule in 800 CE, centred at Mahodayapuram (Makotai), to these settlements. The Brahmin settlements were involved in royal governance and represented at the Chera royal court through the king's council (*Nādu Tali*). The rulers were in turn represented at the temple committees that managed each of the Brahmin settlements.[211] Although the Chera kingdom collapsed in the early twelfth century, the network of Brahmin settlements 'acted as one of the unifying forces in Kerala in the post-Cera [*sic*] period'.[212]

A third feature that the text associates with Parasurāman is matriliny, which is legitimized as a custom introduced by Parasurāman to atone for his sin of

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[207] Kesavan Veluthat, 'History and Historiography in Constituting a Region: The Case of Kerala', *Studies in People's History*, 5.1 (2018), 13–31 (p. 16).
[208] Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', p. 115.
[209] Kesavan Veluthat, *Brahman Settlements in Kerala: Historical Studies* (Thrissur: Cosmo Books, 2013), p. 32.
[210] Veluthat, *Brahman Settlements*, p, 24.
[211] Veluthat, *Brahman Settlements*, p, 26.
[212] Veluthat, *Brahman Settlements*, p, 29.

matricide. This feature differs from the patrilineal form of succession and inheritance adhered to by the indigenous Nambudiri Brahmins of Kerala. The text tells us that the Brahmin settlers resisted the imposition of this custom, leading Parasurāman to make the custom obligatory among non-Brahmins.[213] As Kathleen Gough notes in her study of matriliny in Kerala, the custom was prevalent among the ruling families, the upper caste military Nāirs, some of the lower castes, and maritime groups like the Muslim Māppilas. Nāir matriliny, with its peculiar features of matrilocal residence, polyandrous and polygynous 'marriage', and the negation of paternity, was consistent with the military occupation of the Nāirs in the service of the king. It was customary, she says, for the eldest member of the Brahmin family to follow the patrilineal system and marry from within the caste, while the younger men of the family were free to have polygamous relations with Nāir women or royal women who were ranked below the Brahmins in the caste hierarchy.[214] Since matriliny likely predated the arrival of Arya Brahmins, its incorporation into the origin myth and its validation through Parasurāman suggest the accommodation of an indigenous custom by the *puranic* myth.

Finally, the text incorporates serpent-worship, another distinctive feature of Kerala, into the Parasurāman myth. In his study of the folk culture of Kerala, T. P. Gopala Panikkar describes serpent-worship as a form of 'primitive worship'

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[213] Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', p. 30.
[214] Gough, ‘Changing Kinship Usages’, pp. 75–77.
Gough's study mainly deals with the period between mid-fifteenth century and 1792, which she calls the traditional period of economic and political organization in contrast to the period of British rule from 1792 to Indian Independence in 1947. Gough clarifies that she called the institution of polyandrous and polygynous mating between different castes 'marriage' because 'it is not certain that mating was entirely promiscuous, even within the local sub-caste group'. According to her, 'marriage was the slenderest of ties, while as a social concept fatherhood scarcely existed'. See Gough, 'Changing Kinship Usages', pp. 73-74.

which involved the worship of serpents as family deities in shrines built adjacent to the houses.[215] The incorporation of serpent-worship into everyday life went as far as to include the family deity in the deeds of the sale of the house. In ceremonies officiated by Nambudiri Brahmins, the serpents were converted into guardian angels of the households. It was considered a sin to kill the deified creatures, especially the cobra. According to *The Origin of Kerala*, serpents ('*sarpam*') posed the greatest challenge for the settlement of Brahmins on the land, halting the first wave of Brahmin migrations to Kerala. This challenge, the story goes, prompted Parasurāman to order the consecration of serpents as family deities and mandate the Brahmins to offer the serpents a share of everything that belonged to them in serpent-worship.[216]

These textual details and contextual clues show that the Parasurāman myth served to underscore the power of Arya Brahmins as owners, protectors, and administers of the land of Kerala.[217] The parallels in the origin stories from Sri Lanka and Kerala show that newly-emerging socio-political groups defined their locality and status by reference to *puranic* heroes. The Parasurāman tradition,

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[215] T. K. Gopala Panikkar, 'Serpent-Worship in Malabar', in *Malabar and Its Folk* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1995), pp. 145–51 (p. 151).
[216] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 28.
[217] According to Veluthat, the term 'Arya' in the text signified groups of people, comprising traders, chieftains, missionaries and practitioners of heterodox sects like Jainism and Buddhism, who came from North India and brought along with them the Sanskrit/Prakrit language and the Sanskrit ways of life. See Veluthat, *Brahman Settlements*, pp. 21-22. Elaborating on this term, Madhav M. Deshpande writes that in the Hindu religious-legal tradition (*dharmashastra*), *arya* referred to the three higher groups of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas, as well as, occasionally, to *arya* languages and modes of behaviour. Deshpande also writes about the 'linguistic and cultural Aryanization of the originally non-Aryan communities, and a localization of the original Aryan communities by incorporation of the others' linguistic and cultural traits'. In his entry on the concept, Deshpande also warns of the 'uncritical equation of language and race' between the Aryan race and the Aryan or Indo-European languages since the nineteenth century, and at the hands of western colonial administrators, historians, and politicians, particularly the Nazis, which continues to have an impact on both white supremacist groups around the world and the Hindu nationalist groups in India. See Madhav M. Deshpande, 'Aryan', in *Key Concepts in Modern Indian Studies*, ed. by Gita Dharampal-Frick and others (New York: NYU Press, 2016), pp. 11–13.

in particular, can be found in other parts of India, notably on the central and north-west coast of India. In Gujarat, Saurashtra, Konkan, and Karnataka, distinct groups of Brahmin settlers have claimed that the lands they settled were created by Parasurāman.[218] There are, however, some variations in the details of the story. Whereas in Kerala and the Konkan regions, it was an axe that Parasurāman was believed to have thrown into the sea to reclaim the land, in Gujarat, the legends have him throwing a *shoorpam* (*muram*, 'a fan or winnow to sift grain') instead.[219] Parasurāman's role as the donor of lands to Brahmins is also unique to the land of Kerala. Veluthat attributes this to the extensive control of lands that the Brahmin settlers historically exerted in Kerala in contrast to the other regions.[220] Thus, the Parasurāman myth primarily serves to legitimize Brahmin ownership of lands in Kerala.

The Origin of Kerala claims that Parasurāman brought the Arya Brahmins from *paradēsam*, which underlines their status as migrants from foreign parts. As Strathern argues in his analysis of the Vijaya myth, this privileging of an outsider perspective signifies a break from the 'stranger-king' stories. In the light of the 'stranger-king' model, the serpents that inhabited the land of Kerala before the arrival of Arya Brahmins may be said to represent the 'pre-stranger indigenes'. Like the Vijaya myth, the Parasurāman myth casts the 'pre-stranger indigenes' as non-human and brutish. However, unlike the suppression of the 'demons' of Sri Lanka by the Buddha and Vijaya, the indigenous elements in Kerala are venerated through serpent-worship. This could be a sign of Arya

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[218] Veluthat, *Brahman Settlements*, p. 25.
[219] Hermann Gundert, 'Muram', *A Malayalam and English Dictionary* (Mangalore, London: C. Stolz, 1872), p. 840 <https://dsalsrv04.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/app/gundert_query.py?page=840> [accessed 4 January 2020].
[220] Veluthat, 'History and Historiography', p. 24.

Brahmins adapting to local customs, which is also reflected in their acceptance of matrilineal customs by non-Brahmin communities in Kerala.

Though Parasurāman does not introduce a Kshatriya lineage in Kerala, the political elite in Kerala have used Parasurāman's identity as a slayer of Kshatriya rulers to legitimize their own Kshatriya status. A case in point is the eleventh-century royal dynastic chronicle of the Mushikas who ruled the Kōlathunād region in the Chera period. The chronicle, *Mushikavamsam* (Mushika dynasty), tells us that the founder of the Mushika dynasty, Ramakadamushakan, was born to a Kshatriya princess of the Haihaya and Yadava lineage (Moon dynasty). The princess was forced to flee her kingdom and go to Kerala after Parasurāman had set upon killing Kshatriyas all around India. The chronicle thus invokes Parasurāman's revenge upon Kshatriyas to explain the distance separating the Mushika province from the *puranic* centres in the north and to legitimize the Kshatriya status of the Mushikas.[221] In a similar pattern, chieftains from the regions of Payannur and Tirur in northern Kerala asserted their Kshatriya status by refraining from entering those shrines dedicated to Parasurāman, citing the reason that Parasurāman was a slayer of kings and Kshatriyas.[222] Thus, rather circuitously, Parasurāman fulfils one of the main functions of origin myths based in the Sanskrit and Buddhist traditions – the validation of Kshatriya kingship.[223] As the following sections will show, a

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[221] Varier, 'Parasuramakatha', p. 27.
[222] Varier, 'Parasuramakatha', p. 29.
[223] A recent newspaper article reports the invocation of Parasruaman status as a slayer of Kshatriyas by opposition leaders in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India, 'to woo the Brahmin community that is frustrated with the government of Kshatriya leader Yogi Adityanath'. The report says that the Samajwadi Party offered to install statues of Parasurāman in all seventy-five districts of Uttar Pradesh. This 'newfound love for Parashuram', writes the reporter, 'reflects an effort to counter the mileage the BJP is likely to gain from its Ram temple push in Ayodhya'. See the article in Piyush Srivastava, 'Samajwadis and Mayawati Resurrect Axe-Wielding Brahmin to Counter Yogi', *The Telegraph Online* (Lucknow, 10 August 2020)

second founder-hero, named Cheraman Perumal, who was reportedly of pure Kshatriya lineage, carried out this function in a more direct fashion.

3.2. Cheraman Perumal: The Founder-Hero of Post-Chera Kingdoms

The second section of *The Origin of Kerala*, 'The Age of the Perumals', presents a new conception of land and privileges a new socio-political group. Though this conception of land maintains the boundaries set by Parasurāman, it privileges the rulers as opposed to the Brahmins. This implies a non-Brahmin authorship for this section, likely the Nāir caste group who were traditionally involved in royal governance.

Moving the story forward in a linear fashion, the text tells us that the Brahmins took over the reins of administration in the land after Parasurāman's return to Gokarnam. However, they soon realized the need for a king: 'All joined together in deciding that, in future, if the Brahmins ruled over the land, there would be no law and order in the country. A king is required to rule'.[224] The story goes that the Brahmins went abroad (*paradēsam*) to invite a Kshatriya ruler called the Perumal to rule over Kerala: 'Then, all of them together went off outside Keralam to 'make' (find) a king'.[225] This set in motion the tradition of inviting foreign rulers – all addressed as Perumal – to rule Kerala for a mandated period of twelve years.

<https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/samajwadis-and-mayawati-resurrect-axe-wielding-brahmin-to-counter-yogi/cid/1788707?fbclid=IwAR2ceIS6_cTULdlO5kuhB1NxbaArNtoyFlcgM3mMQxxTlgTtxQSKdkjcKUU> [accessed 10 August 2020].

[224] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 35.

[225] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 36.
In the Malayalam edition: '*Anantaram rajaavine undakkuvaan avar okkathakka paradesathu chennu*'. See Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', p. 118.

It appears from the story that the different Perumals bore no kinship connection to each other. After completing the reign for the mandated period of twelve years, each Perumal is said to have returned to his native place.[226] The only exception to this was the last Perumal, named Cheraman Perumal, who prolonged his mandated reigning period to rule for thirty-six years owing to his 'merits' ('*gunādhikyam*').[227] During the last Perumal's extended reign, the Brahmins reportedly ended foreign rule and conferred the title of the 'sole emperor' ('*ekachatrādhipathi*') of Kerala on Cheraman Perumal.[228] The land is referred to thereafter as 'the land of the Cheraman' ('*Cheramannad*'), after the last Perumal.[229]

Reminiscent of 'stranger-king' stories, the last Perumal's role as a founder-hero begins with an act of transgression: the wrongful sentencing of his guard Patamala Nayar to death on the false advice of his queen.[230] The text tells us that the queen poisoned the mind of the Perumal after her advances were rejected by the Nāir guard with whom she had fallen in love. On realizing his error, the Perumal sought a solution from his Brahmin councillors, who advised him to adopt the path of the *baudhas* (possibly Islam) to expiate his sin at least in half

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[226] According to Thapar, contractual kingship is a facet of the Buddhist tradition. This could be a sign of the influence of Buddhist traditions on kingship in Kerala. Thapar, 'Tradition of Historical Writing', p. 290.
[227] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 52; Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', p. 132.
[228] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 52; Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', p. 132.
[229] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 65; Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', p. 143.
This established, what Veluthat has referred to as, the 'Cakravartin (imperial) model of kingship' in Kerala. See Veluthat, *Brahman Settlements*, p. 31.
This model appears to have had some parallels with Sri Lankan kingship. See Biedermann, 'Portuguese Diplomacy', p. 438.
[230] The error committed by the king is popular in the song (*pāttu*) traditions of Kerala and is the source of the Malayalam saying 'പെഞ്ഞാല്ലുകേട്ട പെരുമാൾ'/The Perumal who heeded the woman (My translation). See Varier, *Keralolpathi Grandhavari*, p. 107.

measure since a compensation could not be found in either the six Hindu *sastras* (scriptures) or the three Vedas.[231]

The story of the Perumal's error shares some parallels with the renowned Tamil epic *Shilappadikaram* ('The Ankle Bracelet'), dated to fifth or sixth century CE.[232] In the poem, a Pantiyan king dies of a broken heart ('fainted and fell') after realizing his mistake of sentencing an innocent merchant to death after he was accused of stealing the Queen's anklet.[233] The 'royal error' not only demotes the king – 'a human-divine' – into a mortal deserving of death for perverting the course of justice but also results in the complete destruction of the king's capital in Maturai (in present-day Tamil Nadu) by the merchant's wife Kannaki.[234] The parallels in this story suggest that the Perumal's error could be seen as a serious crisis in kingship. However, in contrast to the Pantiyan king, who embraces death following the Vedic principle: 'To those who do wrong, *dharma* is Death', the Perumal is presented with an alternate option of conversion (possibly to Islam) instead of death.[235] When compared with *Silappadikaram*, *The Origin of Kerala* might reflect a change in what David Schulman has described as 'the obsessive or "neurotic" aspect of South Indian kingship – the appallingly severe standards constantly invoked for the king's conduct', which is symbolized by the Pantiyan king's broken heart.[236] In any case, the Perumal is compelled by

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[231] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 64.
[232] Ilango Adigal, *Shilappadikaram [The Ankle Bracelet]*, trans. by Alain Daniélou (New York: New Directions, 1965).
[233] Schulman, p. 60.
[234] Schulman, p. 61.
Kannaki is seen as an avenging goddess and worshipped in several south Indian temples. See K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India from Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp. 362–63.
[235] Schulman, p. 62.
[236] Schulman, p. 63.

Brahmins to abdicate on account of his error, which speaks to the importance of *dharma* (moral duty) in Malayalam history writing.

The Historical Perumal

Unlike Parasurāman, who was a mythical figure drawn from the *itihāsa-purāna* tradition, the last Perumal has been identified with a historical figure from the Chera period in Kerala. With the support of literary and epigraphic evidence, M. G. S. Narayanan has argued that the last Perumal is historically analogous to Rama Kulasekhara (1089-1122 CE), styled '*Chakravartikal*' (emperor), the last of the Chera sovereigns who ruled from the Chera capital in Makotai.[237] In a Tamil poem, *Periyapuranam*, the court-poet of Kulottinga I (1070-1130 CE) writes that the last Perumal was the son of Sengorporayan, the King of Makotai.[238] This lends credence to Narayanan's conclusion that Kulasekhara was the last ruler born in the Chera lineage.

Historical evidence suggests that Kulasekhara's rule ended with the disintegration of the Chera kingdom, after which several independent kingdoms such as Kōlathunād, Eranād (Kozhikode), Pōlanād, Valluvanād, and Vēnād rose to power. Narayanan identifies several internal and external factors for the collapse of the kingdom: the constant defensive wars against the neighbouring Chola empire, the consequent release of new social forces such as the military class of Nāirs, increased dependence on foreign groups for financial and military assistance, and internal assertions of independence of district governors. With the support of an inscription from 1122 CE of Vikrama Chola,

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[237] Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, p. 73.
[238] Ayyar, p. 75.

Narayanan theorizes that Kulasekhara likely fled the country by sea with the aid of Arab-Muslim traders.[239] The post-Chera kingdoms are understood to have risen to prominence independently, following the 'disappearance' of the last Chera king.[240] However, the post-Chera period had many continuities with the Chera period rather than representing a total break with it: the newly ascended rulers were former district governors of the Chera kingdom, and both the borders and military strength of the various kingdoms corresponded to the former Chera districts (*nādu*).[241] The governorship of some of the districts, including Eranād (Kozhikode), Kōlathunād, Vēnād and Valluvanād, were hereditary, while the governors of the other districts were nominated.[242] These are all details we can glean from historical study, but it is important to consider the many mythical features to the figure of the Perumal as well.

The Mythical Perumal

The Perumal myth found in *The Origin of Kerala* differs from the historical evidence presented above on at least three grounds. First, the Brahmin settlers are said to have brought all eighteen Perumals from foreign lands ('*paradēsam*') to rule over Kerala.[243] Notwithstanding the extended reign of the last Perumal and his consecration as the 'emperor' of Kerala by the Brahmins, it is important to ask why the text qualifies him as a 'foreign' ('*paradēsi*') ruler against both literary and epigraphic evidence confirming his Chera lineage in Kerala.

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[239] Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, p. 129.
The inscription reads, 'the Celiyar (Pandyas) took to the Ghats, the Ceralar took to the sea, the Simhalar got frightened, the Gangar offered tribute, the Kannadar turned their backs and the Kongar became submissive' Here, 'the Ceralar took to the sea' implies that the Chera king fled from his country by embarking on a sea voyage, possibly in the company of Arab-Muslim traders.
[240] Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, p. 132.
[241] Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, p. 177.
[242] Haridas, *Zamorins and the Political Culture*, p. 24.
[243] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 36; Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', p. 118.

Considering that even the Brahmins are classified as *paradēsi*, the Perumal's foreign origin might signify yet another attempt by indigenous historians to equate foreignness with a superior culture brought from the outside, reminiscent of the 'stranger-king' model. This becomes clear in one of Perumal's final acts before his abdication, in which he brings Kshatriyas and Samantas from several countries and grants them lands in Kerala, with the apparent aim of introducing 'pure' Kshatriya and Samanta lineages in the country.[244] The Perumal, unlike Parasurāman, also plays a role in installing a Kshatriya lineage in Kerala as it is through him, rather than through Parasurāman, that the post-Chera rulers claimed their Kshatriya ancestry.

Second, *The Origin of Kerala* ascribes mythical qualities to the Perumal giving him a founding role in important historical events that both predate and postdate Kulasekhara's reign. According to the text, the Perumal played a founding role in the establishment of two dynasties in the Kōlathunād region: the Mushika dynasty, which predated the reign of Kulasekhara; and the Arakkal dynasty, the only Muslim-ruled kingdom in Kerala, which rose to prominence in the sixteenth century. In the case of the Mushika dynasty, the text claims that the last Perumal brought a Kshatriya princess from abroad and gave her in marriage to a Brahmin, thereby founding a Kshatriya lineage in the Mushika province.[245] With regard to the Ali Rājās of the Arakkal kingdom, the text states that the Perumal brought a Muslim man ('*jonaka*') and his wife from 'Aryapuram' to rule over the port city of Kannur and improve its overseas trade.[246] The Perumal then makes the Muslim man the 'king of the seas'

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[244] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 45.
[245] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 52.
[246] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 53; Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', p. 133.

('*azhirājāvu*') and his wife the 'mother' ('*umma*') of the port city.[247] The coronation ceremony of the Muslim man and his wife follow the pattern of Hindu royal coronation ceremonies, involving the ritual of showering rice grains over their head.[248] The anachronistic association of the Perumal with far-flung historical events effectively transforms him into a timeless hero like Parasurāman. The crucial distinction here is that the Perumal has a stronger basis in history when compared to Parasurāman, a figure drawn from the Sanskrit *itihāsa-purāna* tradition.

Finally, and more importantly, the Perumal's departure from Kerala does not lead to a fragmentation of the Chera domain, as implied by historical evidence. For the post-Chera polities, the last Perumal was not a ruler who fled his country. Instead, he was a figure who, like Parasurāman, unified Kerala. The rulers of each major post-Chera kingdom, including Kozhikode and Kochi, regarded the Perumal as their founder-hero.

The Perumal's unifying role in the context of a disintegrating kingdom is comparable to other historical figures from India, who have performed a similar role in the face of political calamities. In a recent essay, Prithvi Datta Chandra Shobhi explores the unifying role played by Basavanna, a treasury official of the Cālukyas who ruled parts of South India from their capital in Kalyāna. The Cālukya kingdom underwent a political crisis when Basavanna and his followers led an uprising against their rulers. Although the rulers suppressed the uprising and expelled the agitators from the city, they themselves later abandoned the

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[247] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 53; Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', pp. 133-34.
[248] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 53.

city, leading to the collapse of the Cālukya kingdom in the twelfth century. After the dissolution of the kingdom, the Saiva (of Lord Shiva) devotees began composing poetic sayings, known as *vacanas*, about the wrecked city of Kalyāna. Shobhi argues that even as the historical Kalyāna receded from popular memory, a new poetic city appeared in its place through the *vacanas*. In a sign of how poetry could shape history, Shobhi points to the way in which the Lingayat community in present-day Karnataka State founded a new city called Basavakalyana, fashioned after the poetic city of the *vacanas*. In the model of the Abrahamic religions, Lingayats have claimed a separate religious status, with Basavanna as their spiritual founder, the *vacanas* as their sacred texts, and Basavakalyana as their sacred city.[249]

The palace *granthāvari*s from Kerala could be seen performing a role similar to that of the *vacanas* in creating the image of a land unified by the Perumal and the mythical Parasuraman. While the Parasurāman myth served to legitimize Brahmin ownership of lands in Kerala, the Perumal myth served to legitimize Kshatriya dominion over the same lands. Apart from Parasurāman and Cheraman Perumal, *The Origin of Kerala* presents a third founder-hero, named

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[249] Prithvi Datta Chandra Shobhi, 'Kalyāna Is Wrecked: The Remaking of a Medieval Capital in Popular Imagination', *South Asian Studies*, 32.1 (2016), 90–98.
According to Shobhi, around twenty thousand *vacanas* have been published until now. The *vacanas* and the figure of Basavanna continue to remain relevant both within and outside the Lingayat community. For instance, in the context of the recent COVID-19 outbreak, and the ensuing border dispute between the neighbouring states of Kerala and Karnataka, the Chief Minister of Kerala, Pinarayi Vijayan (since 2016), tweeted Basava Jayanti greetings and a *vacana* saying to his counterpart in Karnataka, B. S. Yediyurappa (since 2019), who belongs to the Lingayat community. The tweet in Kannada read *'Ivanaarava Ivanaarava Ivanaaravanendu Enisadirayya; Iva Nammava Iva Nammava Ivanammavanendu Enisayya*.' ('Don't ask who is he who is he; Consider him as one among us one among us'). The tweet was accompanied by an English text, which read: 'Let the great Basavanna be our guide to transcend our differences. We will not win the battle against the pandemic by being divided. It takes all of us to win this'. See Onmanorama Staff, 'Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan's Kannada Tweet on Basava Jayanti Wins Hearts', *Onmanorama*, 26 April 2020 <https://www.onmanorama.com/news/kerala/2020/04/26/kerala-cm-pinarayi-vijayan-kannada-tweet-on-basava-jayanti-raise.html> [accessed 26 April 2020].

Sankaracharya, who also played a pivotal role in defining the contours of the land of Kerala and its customs.

3.3. Sankaracharya and the Caste Order of Kerala

Described as a 'divine person' ('*divyan*'), born out of the union between a Brahmin woman and Lord Siva (Sri Mahadeva), Sankaracharya is credited with instituting the 'caste order' ('*kulakramam*') in Kerala.[250] *The Origin of Kerala* includes a description of this order in a sub-section of 'The Age of the Perumals', with the title 'Social order prescribed by Sankaracharya' (*'Sankaracharyar kalppicha kulakrama vivaram*').[251]

Historians of Kerala attribute the origins of the caste system in the region to the settlement of immigrant Brahmins on lands granted by the local rulers, in the period between the third and eighth centuries CE.[252] According to Veluthat, the sixty-four Brahmin settlements in Kerala were built on fertile plains on the banks of rivers and later developed as agricultural units. He describes each settlement unit being centred around a temple and managed by a temple committee. Veluthat claims that these Brahmin settlements 'reoriented the semi-tribal, semi-nomadic society into a temple-centred, agrarian, caste society'.[253] After the collapse of the Chera kingdom in the early twelfth century, the Brahmin settlements spread across Kerala ensured the uniformity of caste in Kerala.[254] There were also other factors that contributed to the uniformity of

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[250] Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', p. 137.
[251] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 57; Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', pp. 137-42.
[252] Veluthat, 'History and Historiography', p. 18; Veluthat, *Brahman Settlements*, p. 24.
[253] Veluthat, *Brahman Settlements*, p. 27.
The Portuguese were the first to employ the word 'caste' (*casta*) to refer to the Indian concept of *jāti*. The word *casta* originated from the Latin word *castus*, meaning 'chaste', and was used by the Portuguese as well as the Spaniards used the word in the sense of race. See Dumont, p. 22.
[254] Veluthat, *Brahman Settlements*, p. 29.

caste throughout Kerala. For instance, Eric J. Miller underlines the role of the Māmānkam festival, held every twelve years in Tirunāvāyi, which served as an occasion for diverse caste groups from across Kerala to come together.[255]

The agrarian economy played a vital role in deciding one's rank in the caste hierarchy. According to Miller, it was rice cultivation, rather than the lucrative spice trade, that was the basis of the local economy before the colonization of Malabar by the British in the late eighteenth century.[256] The difference in the relationship of the various caste groups to agricultural land established a caste pattern in which the Brahmins occupied the superior position as feudal landlords (*jenmi*). Brahmins were not the only hand-holders, however; the royalty, the chieftains, and the local magnates also owned vast stretches of land.[257] In fact, the royalty derived a major part of their revenue from lands owned by them as well as by others.[258] Among the sixty-four Brahmin settlements, only four fell within the territories controlled by the Zamorin. Thus, non-Brahmins – especially the Zamorins – owned most of the lands in that kingdom. The Zamorin also came to enjoy greater freedom from the Brahmins in matters of political administration when compared to the other monarchs in Kerala.[259] The upper caste military Nāirs typically worked as tenants (*kanankkaran*) on lands owned by the Brahmins and the ruling powers. The

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[255] Miller, 'Caste and Territory', p. 416.
[256] Miller, 'Caste and Territory', p. 412.
[257] Haridas, *Zamorins and the Political Culture*, p. 32.
[258] Veluthat, *Brahman Settlements*, p. 28; Haridas, *Zamorins and the Political Culture*, p. 33. As Miller notes, although trade in pepper and ginger brought some money into circulation, it was limited to the coastal regions. See Miller, 'Caste and Territory', p. 412.
Instead, the payment of services in the rural land-based economy was largely made through agricultural products such as paddy or coconuts. See Gough, 'Changing Kinship Usages', p. 75.
[259] Haridas, *Zamorins and the Political Culture*, p. 37.

caste groups below the Nāirs traditionally cultivated the lands owned by the upper caste groups.[260]

Even though caste formed the basis of social organization throughout Kerala, the social relations between different caste groups were restricted to smaller territorial units. Miller identifies the units of 'village' (*dēsam*) and 'chiefdom' (*nādu*) as fundamental to the traditional organization of castes in Malabar (Kerala) during the 'relatively static' period between the twelfth and eighteenth centuries. While the lower ranks remained socially and physically circumscribed at the level of the village, the upper castes, including the military Nāirs and the chieftain castes of Samantas and Kshatriyas, enjoyed greater mobility at the level of chiefdom. According to Miller, such restrictions applied to indigenous Muslims and Christians as well, preventing the development of religious solidarity among caste groups distributed across chiefdoms. On the other hand, the highest caste of Brahmins, formed of indigenous Nambudiris and immigrant Brahmins, remained superior to such territorial divisions and could move freely throughout Kerala. This freedom, as Miller writes, allowed them to officiate at the coronation ceremonies of different warring chieftains. The chieftains in turn enlisted the Brahmins to work as ambassadors or as spies.[261]

Returning to the figure of Sankaracharya, the origin story associated with this figure fulfils several of the criteria associated with 'stranger-king' stories. It is written in *The Origin of Kerala* that Sankaracharya's widowed mother was accused of infidelity and forced to live in an outhouse, where she begot the child

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[260] Gough, 'Changing Kinship Usages', p. 75.
[261] Miller, 'Caste and Territory', p. 415.

of Lord Siva (Sri Mahadeva).[262] Through these divine origins, which also include the essential element of transgression, Shankaracharya's journey is reminiscent of those of other stranger-kings in moving 'from strangeness to domesticity, from the wild, liminal, supernatural, non-human zone to the heart of human society'.[263] Sankaracharya's transgressive origins also serve to unify the Brahmin and the Sudra castes in Kerala. *The Origin of Kerala* describes how Sankaracharya's mother died while he was acquiring his learning in Sringeri. Since Brahmins refused to perform her funeral rites, Sankaracharya invited Sudras to perform the rituals, a tradition which then became the norm in Kerala.[264]

According to *The Origin of Kerala*, Sankaracharya codified the conditions prevalent in Kerala into a *grantha* (book), formed of twenty-four thousand palm-leaves. The *grantha*, the story goes, was presented at the Māmānkam festival, in the presence of the Perumal, the chieftains of seventeen principalities, Brahmins from sixty-four village settlements, and members of all the caste groups. It prescribed,

> *atukku* (order) and *niti* (conduct), *nila* (status) and *kula bheda* (distinctions among castes), *maryada* (customary conduct) and *yadhakramam* (due orders of precedence), *echil* (polluted objects) and *vilpu* (unclean cloth), *tindal* (touch pollution) and *kuli* (ceremonial bath), and how to draw water from consecrated circles, and how to consecrate cooking vessels, and the due duties, customs, modes of speech and address, and languages and speech forms, appropriate to each caste, community and lineage. He subdivided the four varnas into 18 *kula*-s, and the permutations yielded 68 *kula-varnas* and 72(new) *kulas*.[265] (my italics)

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[262] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 57.
[263] Strathern, 'Vijaya and Romulus', p. 55.
[264] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 57.
[265] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, pp. 62-63.

In what seems like a contradiction to the above-listed rules, Sankaracharya reportedly declared: 'God makes no distinction among the castes. There is no pollution ['*theendikuli*'] or caste differentiation ['*ekavarna*'] among the foreign castes'.[266] These lines could be interpreted as an attempt by the ruling powers to permit greater interactions between the locals and the foreigners in the context of the Indian Ocean trade passing through the various kingdoms.

Adhering to the classical *varna* model, Sankaracharya's caste order divides the various foreign and indigenous groups of Kerala into four *varnas*, consisting of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras, and further divides each *varna* into eighteen castes (*kula*/*jāti*).[267] Considering the superior position ascribed to the Brahmins, it is possible that Sankaracharya, like Parasurāman, served the interests of that caste. The various sub-castes of Brahmins include the occupational groups of magicians, astrologers, grammarians, priests, scholars and teachers of Veda, scholars of medicine, householders, sages etc. In the Kshatriya category, the caste order includes all the post-Chera rulers of Kerala and traces their lineage to the Sun and the Moon dynasties, which originated from the union of the primeval man Manu and his progeny, Ida (Ila).[268] Their functions are specified as kingship, king's punishments, and the protection of the people. On the Vaisya category, one finds the following note: 'It is both

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[266] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 63; Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', p. 142.
Menon interprets *paradēsikal* in the original text as foreign lands instead of foreign people. However, foreign people seems more appropriate.
[267] In scholarly literature, *varna* and *jāti* are treated as distinct concepts. According to Louis Dumont, *varna* denotes the traditional hierarchy of the four *varnas* ('colours') or categories, constituted by Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors/kings), Vaishyas (merchants), and Sudras (servants or the have-nots). By contrast, he defines *jāti* as the practice of caste system in India, which is modelled after the classical *varna* system, but is circumscribed geographically and subdivided internally into several castes and sub-castes. See Dumont, pp. 67 & 35.
[268] On Manu and Ila, see Thapar, 'Origin Myths', pp. 299-302.

asserted and denied that there are Vaisyas in Malayalam. It is certain that there are some in Wayanad'.[269] This statement implies that Vaisya merchants were not commonly present in Kerala. The Sudra category includes different sub-castes of Nāirs, engaged in a wide-range of professions such as armed services, hunting, watchmen, bathing the upper castes, lifting the palanquins, carrying goods, cultivating oil seeds, and serving at temples, Brahmin households, and palaces. The four *varna*s also incorporate several intermediate caste groups whose Brahmin status was diminished or who were elevated from Sudra origins, which suggests some degree of vertical mobility within the caste order.[270]

The higher ranks in the caste order, that is, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Sudra Nāirs, broadly represent the political elite and the land-owning groups in Kerala. The occupations listed in the text suggest that these caste groups made their livelihood from the land in some way. Maritime groups, on the other hand, are ranked below the Sudra Nāirs. Their professions are specified as shipping, navigation, and international trade. The sub-categories of traders comprise Chettis (from the Coromandel Coast), '*Chonakar*' (Greek/Muslim), '*Cheenar*' (Chinese), '*Pauravar*' (Persians), '*Kuncharathikkar*' (Gujaratis), *Kongini* (from the Konkan regions), '*Nasrani*' (St. Thomas Christians), '*Parunki*' (Portuguese), '*Lantha*' (Dutch), '*Parinthiris*' (French), and '*Ingiris*' (English).[271]

From these caste names, it is clear that the author employed the criterion of geographical origin rather than religious identity to classify the maritime

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[269] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 59.
[270] The entire description of the caste order can be found in Gundert, trans. by Menon, pp. 57-63; Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', pp. 137-142.
[271] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 60; Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', p. 140.

traders. It is also plain from the list of maritime groups that they were largely of foreign origin. Even the fisherfolk ('Mukkuvar'), who are ranked next to the traders in the caste order, are indicated to have originated from Sri Lanka ('Ezham'), and hence of foreign origin.[272] The ranking of the maritime groups below the Sudra Nāirs suggests that despite their occupation of trading goods, they were not considered as part of the Vaisya category of merchants. The reason for their exclusion from the Vaisya category could be their association, through marriage and conversion, with lower caste groups in Kerala.

The inclusion of European traders in the caste order is anachronistic because Sankaracharya is believed to have lived between 788-820 CE, long before most of these groups arrived in Kerala.[273] However, such anachronisms are common to indigenous modes of history writing due to factors like copying of *granthāvaris* and updating them with more recent events.[274] A case in point is the last Perumal's founding role in events being dated to different time periods. It is probable that the author shoehorned the European traders into an existing caste order at some time between their arrival in Kerala from the late fifteenth century and the time of completion of *The Origin of Kerala* in the seventeenth century. Though their caste names appear alongside other maritime groups, the European traders – including the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French, and the English – are grouped together as a distinct category of 'people who wore round hats' ('*vattathoppikar*').[275] The text indicates that the round-hat wearers occupied various islands, erected forts there, and were conducting trade from

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[272] Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', p. 141.
[273] Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, p. 59.
[274] As mentioned in Chapter Two.
[275] Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', p. 140.

those forts.[276] Thus, the European attire and their manner of conducting trade from within the security of their forts were used to set them apart from the other trading groups.

Sankaracharya's caste order is not restricted to the kingdom of Kozhikode. Instead, it encompasses the entire land of Kerala, whose limits were defined by Parasurāman and the Perumal. The text claims that Sankaracharya declared the caste order in the presence of the Perumal, which indicates its origins in the Chera era when Kerala was still a single political unit.[277] In the Kshatriya category, the caste order includes all the post-Chera rulers of Kerala and not just the Zamorin. Similarly, the categories of maritime traders include groups like the St. Thomas Christians (Syrian Christians) and the Jews, who had a greater presence in the neighbouring kingdoms of Kochi and Vēnād. Further, the caste order confers a rank on all the people of Kerala, regardless of their religious persuasions and geographical origins. Like the origin story associated with the Perumal, which subsumes even the lone Muslim kingdom (Arakkal) within the ambit of the myth, the caste order also assigns a place in society to Muslims, Syrian Christians, Jews, and European Christians.

Conclusions

The origin story of Kerala featuring Parasurāman privileges an outsider perspective, that of the Arya Brahmins, who migrated to Kerala and settled on lands granted to them by the local rulers. Like Parasurāman, Sankaracharya too

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[276] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 60.
[277] The text does not indicate if this was the last Perumal or one of the other Perumals from the Chera period.

privileges the Brahmin caste group and legitimizes their superior position in the caste order. The Perumal story, on the other hand, gives prominence to the ruling classes, specifically the post-Chera rulers who ascended to power following the collapse of the Chera kingdom. The authorship of each of these stories can be attributed to the specific groups whose aims they served.

Though they served distinct functions for different socio-political groups, all three founder-heroes serve a common role in constituting the region of Kerala and defining its contours, set between Gokarnam and Kanyakumari. These contours also serve as the limits of political power in Kerala, the extent of permissible social relations between different caste groups (excepting Brahmins), and, arguably, the boundaries of a Malayali identity distinct from other identity formations in the Indian Ocean world. In setting the limits of the land, the origin stories conjure up a literary map of Kerala which can be translated on to a visual map, which is what Bindu R. B. does in developing her map (fig. 6, p. 259) based on *The Origin of Kerala*.

The figure of the Perumal, more than Parasurāman, becomes important in the post-Chera era as it is through him that other groups like the Māppila Muslims legitimize the place of Islam in the land of Kerala. This figure, as we will see in the next chapter, is also crucial for understanding the scope of the Zamorins' power on land and their attitudes to maritime groups such as the Muslims and the Portuguese.

Chapter Four:
Origin Stories, Maritime Policies, and the Zamorins' Encounters with the Portuguese

Giving a contemporary account of the rise to prominence of the port city of Calicut and its ruler (the Zamorin), Zainuddin II, a Muslim scholar from Kozhikode, states unequivocally that Calicut's power can be attributed to its Muslim traders:

> The Zamorin enjoyed greater power and reputation than the rest [the other Hindu rulers]. He is quite influential among the rest of the kings. The Zamorin came to enjoy this distinction on account of the greatness of Islam.[278]
> [...]
> Muslims enjoyed great respect and regard from the Hindu rulers. The main reason for this is that the construction and development of the country is taking place largely through the Muslims.[279]

Zainuddin II's account largely corresponds to available historical evidence on the emergence of Calicut as a prominent maritime centre in the Indian Ocean. However, as Zainuddin II himself goes on to state, this evidence was refuted by the local Hindu population:

> However, the Hindus believe this to be on account of the greatness of the sword he [the Zamorin] got from [the Perumal]. They claim the sword which is kept preserved in the Zamorin's palace is the same sword. They have great adoration and respect towards that sword. When the Zamorin goes forth to battle or to a big assembly, a servant carrying this sword walks in front.[280]

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[278] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 35
[279] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 45
[280] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 35

Zainuddin II's reference to the Perumal suggests that it is through this founder-hero that the local Hindus traced the origin and growth of the Kozhikode kingdom and its principal port city, Calicut. These origin stories are therefore key to gaining insights into how the Zamorins responded to the Portuguese arrival.

In this chapter, I begin with a historical sketch of the Kozhikode kingdom and its establishment as a conquest state by the thirteenth century. I will then examine the origin stories about the kingdom found in *The Origin of Kerala* and other indigenous Malayalam and Arabic records with a view to understanding how they construct the history of the Kozhikode kingdom. Here, I shall also explore the significance of the Perumal as a founder-hero in the local historical imagination. Third, I will investigate the maritime policies of the Zamorins in the pre-Portuguese period through some of the stories found in *The Origin of Kerala* that recount the arrival of various maritime groups in the kingdom. Finally, the chapter will assess the Zamorins' response to the Portuguese arrival, based on local attitudes toward the sea and toward maritime groups.

4.1. The Historical Origins of Kozhikode

Eranād (Kozhikode) was one of the more important district (*nādu*) units of the Chera kingdom (800-1122 CE). By the end of Chera rule, Eranād became more notable among the Chera districts.[281] The Erādis (ancestors of the Zamorins) were known in literature by various titles such as Punturakkon ('The Lord of Puntura'), Kunnalakkon ('The Lord of Hill and Sea'), and Samutiri

[281] Haridas, *Zamorins and the Political Culture*, p. 27.

(Tamuri/Zamorin); the last title is commonly found in the Arabic and the European sources.[282] The Erādis' names appear as signatories alongside other governors on two land grants made out in copper plates for the Jews and the St. Thomas Christians (Syrian Christians) in 1000 CE and 1225 CE, respectively.[283] The Erādis are acknowledged as the donors of the land on a stone inscription found on a mosque at Kurricira, dated to the thirteenth century, and written in Arabic and old Malayalam (*vattezhuttu*), which confirms their close ties with Muslim traders.[284] After serving as the Samantas ('the chief of a district, a governor') of the Chera Perumals, the Erādis crystallized as a distinctive social group and began to style themselves as Samanta Kshatriyas.[285] They claimed a higher status than the Sudra Nāirs by adopting Brahmanical rituals and by tracing descent from Brahmin men.[286] However, their caste status remained lower in comparison to the rulers of Kōlathunād (Kannur), Vēnād (Kollam), and Perumbadappu (Kochi), who claimed a 'purer' Kshatriya status.[287]

A land-locked kingdom during the Chera period, Eranād found an outlet into the sea after the Erādis adopted a policy of military expansion into the neighbouring kingdoms and began annexing territories that were part of

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[282] Haridas, *Zamorins and the Political Culture*, p. 24.
[283] Haridas, *Zamorins and the Political Culture*, pp. 25-26.
[284] Haridas, *Zamorins and the Political Culture*, p. 27.
[285] Haridas, 'Political Culture of Kozhikode' (Lecture).
Hermann Gundert, 'Sāmandan', *A Malayalam and English Dictionary* (Mangalore, London: C. Stolz, 1872), p. 1053 <https://dsalsrv04.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/app/gundert_query.py?qs=സാമന്തന്%E2%80%8D&searchhws=yes> [accessed 13 January 2020].
[286] Haridas, 'Political Culture of Kozhikode' (Lecture).
[287] Genevieve Bouchon, 'Sixteenth Century Malabar and the Indian Ocean', in *India and the Indian Ocean, 1500-1800*, ed. by Ashin Das Gupta and Michael N. Pearson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 162–84 (p. 165).
According to Bouchon, the Zamorins' low status was likely due to the comparatively recent establishment of the Kozhikode kingdom.

Pōlanād and Valluvanād. Among the conquered territories were Calicut, which later became the capital of the kingdom, and Ponnani, which became the second most important port city after Calicut (see fig. 7, p. 260). The conquests also included Tirunāvāyi (fig. 7, p. 260, next to Ponnani), a place of historical and political importance, renowned in the Sanskrit/Malayalam historical traditions for several reasons. It was the traditional headquarters of the legendary founder-hero Parasurāman where Brahmins assembled and decided to install foreign Perumals to rule over Kerala, the place from where the last Perumal divided his kingdom, and where the pan-Kerala Māmānkam festival was held every twelve years.[288] The conquest of Tirunāvāyi was therefore a crucial step toward the realization of the Zamorins' political ambitions in the erstwhile Chera domain. However, the rulers of Valluvanād challenged this conquest and began sending a *chāvēr* (suicide force) to each Māmānkam festival to assassinate the Zamorin.[289] The Malayalam *pāttu* (song) tradition, specifically the *Māmānkam pāttu* (Māmānkam songs) and the *chāvēr pāttu* (*chāvēr* songs), revolved around the feud between the Zamorin and the rulers of Valluvanād and commemorated the warriors who fought and died in the battles.[290]

Historically, Arab traders played a key role in the growth of Calicut as the principal port city on the Malabar Coast. According to V. V. Haridas, they specifically chose Calicut because other port cities on the coast such as Kodungallor (see fig. 8, p. 261) and Kollam (fig. 8, p. 261) were already occupied

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[288] Ayyar, p. 91; Haridas, *Zamorins and the Political Culture*, pp. 28-30.
[289] The recent Malayalam film *Mamangam* (2019) revolves around this feud and tells the story of the *chāvēr* sent from Valluvanād to kill the Zamorin during the festival. See M. Padmakumar, *Mamangam* (Kavya Film Company, 2019).
[290] As mentioned in Chapter Two.

by Jews and Syrian Christians.[291] In his book *Maritime India*, Pius Malekandathil gives a broader context for the emergence of Calicut as a maritime centre during the thirteenth century: the Mongol attack on the Baghdad Caliphate in 1258 CE and subsequent defeat of Mongols at Ain Jalut in 1260 CE by the Mamluks of Egypt opened up a new international trade route between Cairo and the northern ports of Kerala, including Calicut. The Al-Karimi traders from Cairo then stimulated a Calicut-oriented trade from different port cities in the Red Sea area and gradually settled down in Calicut for the purpose of trade. Due to this 'revitalization of trade' on the Malabar Coast, the Zamorin shifted his capital from his inland agrarian base in Nediyiruppu in Eranād (after which the Kozhikode *swarūpam* is known, see fig. 7, p. 260) to Calicut in the thirteenth century. In addition to contributing to the economic growth of the city, the Al-Karimi traders aided the Zamorin in consolidating his position as the overlord of Kerala by assisting him in his conquests of neighbouring port cities and other culturally significant sites.[292] In the early fifteenth century, the Zamorin and his Muslim allies attacked the port city of Kochi and seized the trading rights of the St. Thomas Christians (Syrian Christians), which he then handed over to the Arab Muslims.[293] At the time of the arrival of the Portuguese, the Zamorin's territories covered a large portion of the erstwhile Chera domain, extending from Putupattanam in the north to Purakkād in the south, bordered on the northern end by the Kōlathunād (Kannur) kingdom and on the southern end by the kingdom of Kochi (see fig. 7, p. 260).

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[291] Haridas, *Zamorins and the Political Culture*, p. 29.
[292] Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, pp. 85-86.
[293] Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, p. 133.

4.2. The Mythical Origins of Kozhikode

The founding myth of the Kozhikode kingdom – narrated in *The Origin of Kerala* – contradicts the historical evidence given above. In the text, the origin of the kingdom is traced to the reign of the last Perumal, specifically to the moment of his abdication of the throne. Before his abdication, the story goes, the Perumal divided his kingdom, extending from Gokarnam to Kanyakumari, into seventeen independent kingdoms. The Erādis, who were away at the time of the division, approached the Perumal right before his departure for a grant of land. Since the kingdom was already divided, the Perumal offered the following gifts to the Erādis:

> [T]he Perumal took some water in a gold conch, and gifted: Kozhikode, the scrub jungle, a passage measuring three-fourths of a mahout's stick; and (some Jonakar like Katiyar, the right to navigate to Mecca, to protect the Mamangam festival – these too were gifted by pouring water over the tip of a sword; along with the permission "Fight and Die and Prevail"; and the blessing "Wisely rule over the whole of Malanadu" [...] They were empowered to [...] be the sole rulers, and in the land surrounded by the sea, from Kanyakumari to Gokarnam, conquer and rule![294]

In these lines, the founding of the kingdom by conquest is justified by invoking the Perumal's dictum 'Fight and Prevail and Die'. The Zamorin is projected as the Perumal's successor in the land extending from Gokarnam to Kanyakumari through the blessing the Perumal is said to have given him, to rule wisely over

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[294] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, pp. 67-68.
In the Malayalam edition: '*Cheraman Perumal* [...] *ponshankhil vellam pakarnnu sheshippundayirunna kozhikkodum chullikkadum aanakkolal mukkol vazhiyum (kathiyar muthalaya jonakareyum makkathe kappal odippanum mamanga vela palippanum valum valinmel neerum pakarnnu koduthu "ningal chathum konnum adakkikolka" ennanjayum "ee mananattil muzhuvanum njaniyayittu melkoyma sthanam nadathikolka* [...] *ekachathradhipatiyayi aazhichoozhum oozhiyinkal kumarigokarnaparyantham adakkivanukolka*.' See Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', pp. 145-146.

the whole of 'Malanādu' (Malayalam country) as its 'sole rulers' ('*ekachatradhipati*'). Despite this, elsewhere in the text, the Zamorin is identified as only one among the three great rulers of Kerala, the others being the rulers of Kōlathunād and Vēnād. In a sub-section 'Conditions in the Rest of Kerala' under the third section 'The Period of the Kings', it is written that the Perumal allowed only the rulers of Kōlathunād, Vēnād, and Eranād to wear the royal head-dress, ride in palanquins, and be showered with rice grains over their heads during coronation ceremonies.[295] Further delimiting the scope of the Zamorin's power, the text states that the Perumal prohibited the Erādis from fighting either Kōlathunād or Vēnād and granted the rulers of Valluvanād control over the Māmānkam festival and a shield with the injunction 'Defend yourself' ('*thaduthuninnu kolka*').[296] It is important to note here that the Arab traders do not occupy a founding role in the origin story of the kingdom. Instead, their presence is acknowledged as a privilege granted by the Perumal to the Zamorin. The founding myth therefore subsumes the maritime history of Kozhikode within a regional matrix of power centred on the Perumal.

K. V. Krishna Ayyar includes a slightly different version of the origin story in his work on the history of the Zamorins based on unpublished palm-leaf manuscripts from the Zamorins' palace. In this version, the Brahmins alert the Perumal to the evils of having many rulers and entreat him to not divide his country. They suggest the appointment of an emperor to reign over all the petty rulers. Heeding their advice, the Perumal permits the Brahmins to crown

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[295] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 91.
[296] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 68; Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', p. 146.

Manavikraman (an ancestor of the Zamorin) as the 'great king' ('*maharājāvu*') of Kerala in an open assembly held in the presence of the Perumal with the consent of all the people of Kerala. This version of the story reveals that the Perumal ordered Manavikraman to rule Kerala in accordance to the principles of *dharma* and with the assistance of all the petty rulers.[297] Thus, in contrast to *The Origin of Kerala*, in which the Erādis gradually established their dominion over Kerala through their possession of the Perumal's sword, this version of the story claims that an ancestor of the Zamorin was anointed as the emperor just before the Perumal's departure from the country. Notwithstanding the variation in the details, both versions agree on the role played by the Perumal in the founding of the kingdom and in the rise of the Zamorin as the most prominent ruler on the Malabar Coast.

The palace *granthāvari*s from the neighbouring kingdoms contradict several aspects of the founding myth of the Kozhikode kingdom and contest the Zamorin's imperial claim over Kerala by making similar assertions about their own rulers. For instance, the *Perumbadappu granthāvari* from Kochi states that the Perumal conferred the 'overlordship' ('*mēlkōyma*') of Kerala to the rulers of Kochi, who, according to this text, were the rightful successors of the Perumal as they were his 'maternal nephews' ('*marumakkal*').[298] The text also calls the Zamorins 'the sons of Cheraman Perumal', a description which questions the legitimacy of their rule under the matrilineal law of kingship.[299] Similarly, in the *War Song* from Kochi, the poet claims that the sovereign of Kerala, Cheraman, gave Perumbadappu (Kochi) to his nephew

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[297] Ayyar, pp. 67-69.
[298] Raimon, *Perumbadappu*, pp. 1-2.
[299] Raimon, *Perumbadappu*, p. 3.

('*marumakan*').[300] The fact that different texts tell different versions of the story, each of which contests the legitimacy of one ruler while bolstering the claims of another, shows that the political ambitions of the post-Chera rulers went beyond the limits of their small kingdoms, and rather, encompassed the entire land of Perumal.

In some of his recent works, Haridas proposes a useful model for understanding the continued relevance of the Perumal in the post-Chera period, up to the sixteenth century. Drawing from the work of Bernard Cohn, Nicholas Dirks, and Margaret Frenz, Haridas employs the model of a 'little kingdom' to discuss the post-Chera kingdoms. He argues that in the absence of a centralized authority in Kerala, the Perumal assumed the role of a 'great king' who united the 'little kings', including the Zamorin and the Kochi *Rājāh*, under his authority. The Perumal also performed this function virtually, since he only existed in the memory of those 'little kings', who themselves aspired to become the 'great king'.[301] This dynamic is clear from the post-Chera rulers' acceptance of the Perumal as the founder-hero of each of their kingdoms as well as from their political contestations over the land of Perumal.

Notwithstanding their contested claims over the land of Perumal, origin stories associated with various palace establishments in Kerala invoke a common political identity. Each story harks back to the Perumal's division of his kingdom

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[300] Iyyar, p. 58.
[301] Haridas, 'Political Culture of Kozhikode' (Lecture); Haridas, *Zamorins and the Political Culture*, pp. 22-51.
The model was suggested by Bernard Cohn in *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays* (New Delhi, 1990), pp. 483-99. It was developed by Nicholas Dirks in *The Hollow Crown* (Bombay, 1989) and by Margret Frenz in *From Contact to Conquest: Transition to British rule in Malabar 1790-1805* (New Delhi, 2003).

upon his decision to abdicate the throne. They acknowledge the founding of each of the kingdoms by the Perumal, reinforce the view that the land of Perumal extended from Gokarnam to Kanyakumari, and invoke similar codes of conduct as the one established by the Perumal for the future rulers of Kerala. The main point of divergence between the origin stories concerns the question of political succession in the wider domain represented by the Perumal, with each text discrediting the claims of the other.

To evaluate the Zamorins' scope of power on land and on sea, before and after the arrival of the Portuguese, it is important to bear in mind the great kingdom that lay beyond the realm of the 'little kingdom', i.e. Kozhikode. The more historical parts of *The Origin of Kerala*, found in its last section, 'The Period of the Kings', suggests that the Zamorin aspired to the role of the 'great king' in the land of Perumal. This section includes detailed descriptions of the Zamorin's military conquests throughout Kerala, corroborating the historical evidence presented earlier in this chapter: it describes 'How the Valluvakōnatiri [ruler of Valluvanād] was vanquished', 'How the Tamutiri conquered Pōlanād' through a strategic alliance with a minister of Poralatiri (the ruler of Pōlanād), how the Zamorin destroyed the Kochi palace after a prince of the Kochi family killed a servant of the Zamorin stationed at the palace, and how the Zamorin exacted the surrender of the rulers of Vēnād, after which they began sending a flag for display at the Mamamkam festival as a token of their submission. Interestingly, this section also makes a reference to a 'circuit of victory' (*digvijayam*) undertaken by one of the Zamorins throughout Kerala to exact the fealty of the rulers. Expressing the Zamorin's aspiration to be the 'great king', the author writes, 'It is an article of faith in Malayalam [Kerala] that king Kunnalakkonatiri

[Zamorin] is Maharaja [the great king]'.[302] It follows that the scope of the Zamorins' power on land stretched throughout the land of Perumal. This appears to have remained the same through the sixteenth century as well.

The founding myth of the Kozhikode kingdom figures prominently in sixteenth-century Malayalam and Arabic records like *The News of Kerala* and *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*. Both these texts give a corresponding account of the Perumal's division of his country and his dictum to the Zamorin to conquer lands with the Perumal's sword:

> The Perumal Sakravrithi divided his kingdom of Malayalam among the concerned regional rulers, as he was preparing to leave for Mecca. At that time the King Tamoothiri (Zamorin) was away and he was not given his due. When the Zamorin came back, Perumal gave his sword of authority to him and asked him to conquer and possess as much land as possible, with that sword.[303] (*The News of Kerala*)
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> It is also well known among them that the king [Perumal] divided and distributed his territory and power; and it is said that the Zamorin, who later became the first king of Calicut, did not get any share as he was not present there at the time of the partition. When he turned up late, the king gave him his sword and said: "Grab power fighting with this." Thus the Zamorin fought and took possession of Calicut.[304] (*The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*)

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[302] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 81; Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', p. 156.
In the Malayalam edition: '*Malayalathil kunnalakkonathirirajavu maharajavu ennu sidhantam.*'
[303] Vijayakumar, p. 96.
In the Malayalam edition: '*Sakravarthi enna perumala makkathekku povan thakkavannam purappadayappol malayalathil thante naadukal okkeyum athathu rajakkanmarkku pakuthukoduthu. Annu Tamoothiri enna rajavu doorathakakonda aa rajavine appol nada koduppan sangati vannathum illa. Pinne tamoothiri enna rajavu vannare perumala tamoothiri rajavin thante mudravaala kodutha rajavinoda paranju. Ramvaalukonda rajyangal vettimadakkikkolukayevendu.*' *Kerala Varthamanam*, ed. by Kurup, pp. 163-64.
The word Mecca may be a reference to the direction West. Its usage in this sense is confirmed by the *Journal of Vasco da Gama*, which gives '*meçache*' (Mecca) as the Malayalam word corresponding to Portuguese word '*loeste*' (West). See Fardilha and Fernandes, pp. 87 & 169.
[304] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, pp. 33-34.

Qadi Muhammad too gives a corresponding account of the founding myth in *The Manifest Conquest*. The Zamorin, according to him,

> [..] (is) heir of the King of Malabar, who gave him the sword and said: 'Take hold of my hand'.
>
> When he [Perumal] came to the Zamorin after his distributing the portions of his kingdom among companions and subordinates.
>
> So he [Zamorin] began to conquer the whole country with the help of that sword, which he will not sheath till the last day.[305]

His account in particular suggests that the Muslims of Kozhikode, who were integral to the political rise of the Zamorin, supported the Zamorin's claim to suzerainty in the land of Cheraman Perumal. Stating this view explicitly, Qadi Muhammad claims that the Zamorin is the 'heir of the King of Malabar' and the 'chief of all rulers in the country of Malabar and monarch of all mountains and the seas'.[306] He attributes the Zamorin's victories in wars, both against his rivals in the country and against the Portuguese, to his possession of the Perumal's sword.[307] Significantly, he qualifies the Perumal as the Zamorin's 'uncle' ('*khāl*'), which lends legitimacy to the Zamorin under the matrilineal law of kingship prevalent in Kerala.[308]

Indigenous records from Kozhikode on the Portuguese arrival offer a perspective that is not limited to the kingdom but encompass the entire land of Perumal. Texts like *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* and *The News of Kerala* register the presence of the Portuguese not just in Kozhikode but also in the

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[305] Muhammad, *Fat'h al-Mubin*, p. 20 (verses 23-25).
[306] Muhammad, *Fat'h al-Mubin*, pp. 19-20 (verses 22-23).
[307] Muhammad, *Fat'h al-Mubin*, p. 20 (verse 23).
[308] Muhammad, *Fat'h al-Mubin*, p. 69 (verse 524).

neighbouring kingdoms of Kōlathunād, Kochi, and Vēnād. Zainuddin II, the author of *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*, acknowledges the growing importance of Kochi following the Portuguese arrival when he writes that the rulers of Malabar belonged to two groups: 'supporters of the Zamorin and supporters of the king of Kochi'.[309] The two texts also record the military invasions led by the Zamorin against those rulers who chose to independently negotiate and ally with the Portuguese. Those wars mainly targeted the Kochi *Rājāh* whose alliance with the Portuguese Crown threatened the Zamorin's suzerainty in Kerala. As we have seen, all the records discussed above define the scope of the Zamorin's power on land as not merely limited to Kozhikode but extending to the entire land of Perumal. Considering the importance of maritime prowess for the Portuguese, the question then becomes whether the scope of the Zamorin's power was restricted to the *land* of Perumal or extended into the sea as well. *The Origin of Kerala* offers some answers.

4.3. Maritime Policies of the Zamorins

In the self-imagination of the royalty, Calicut attracted the bulk of the sea trade on the Malabar Coast on account of the trustworthiness of its rulers. *The Origin of Kerala* narrates two events that underline the Zamorin's honest disposition. The first story concerns a Chetti trader named Ambaresan from the Coromandel Coast. Laden with gold, Chetti's ship washes ashore in Calicut, where he leaves some gold in the custody of the then Zamorin. Thereafter, he sails away for a period to sell his remaining goods. On returning to Calicut, the trader, to his surprise, finds his gold intact. As a sign of gratitude, he offers the Zamorin a share of his gold, which the ruler refuses. Impressed by the honesty of the ruler,

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[309] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 39.

he exclaims, 'Never have I seen so truthful a king and lineage' and requests the king for licence to trade from his port.[310] In the second story, a Koya from Muscat sets out on a journey around the Indian Ocean rim to find the most trustworthy ruler. Arriving at Calicut, he brings a box full of gold, labelled as pickles, to the Zamorin at the time. Instead of keeping the box to himself, the king alerts the trader of his error, which convinces the Koya that 'here was a king he could trust.'[311]

The stories narrated above go beyond the experience of individual sailors to serve as the very origin story of Calicut. The first story attributes the construction of the port to the Chetti sailor and indicates that the first street to be built in the city was named 'Chetti street' ('*Chettitheru*') after him.[312] In the second story, the settlement of the first Koya establishes the lineage of the Koyas of Kozhikode, who came to hold the hereditary position of 'Koya of Kozhikode', which Haridas has interpreted as 'the chief of the port' (*shah bandar*) in Calicut.[313] According to *The Origin of Kerala*, it was the first Koya who instigated the Zamorin to launch an attack on the Valluvanād kingdom and take control of the prestigious Māmānkam festival.[314] The Koya lent his services to the ruler by leading the attack from the sea. Following the success in the war, the Zamorin is said to have conferred many privileges on the Koya, including a permanent place next to the king during the Māmānkam festival.

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[310] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 76.
[311] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 78.
[312] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 76; Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', p. 153.
[313] Haridas, *Zamorins and the Political Culture*, p. 174.
[314] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 80.

These stories give us certain insights into the Zamorins' role in maritime affairs. First, they suggest that the rulers saw themselves as assuming a passive role in maritime affairs, attracting traders to their kingdom rather than forcing them to call on their ports. The stories specifically emphasize the importance of trust in the relationship between the king and the merchants.[315] Second, the stories reveal the influence of foreign traders in local territorial conflicts – particularly in the story about the Koya, a foreign Muslim trader, who assisted the Zamorin in the conquest of Tirunāvāyi (an important location, serving as the site of the Māmānkam festival). This suggests that there was possibly a division of roles and mutually beneficial relationship between the land-based ruler and the sea-based trader.

Sankaracharya's caste order, too, raises the possibility of a similar division of roles, having to do with the domains of land and sea. Sankaracharya's caste order ascribes a rank to every maritime group in Kerala, which include groups of West Asian origin like Muslims, Jews, and Syrian Christians; groups of Indian (but non-Malayali) origin like Gujaratis, Konginis, and Chettis; and groups of European origin like the Portuguese, Dutch, French and English.[316] In fact, every maritime group included in the caste order is indicated by their point of origin in a foreign land. Further, the list of occupations specified for each caste group suggests that none of the upper caste groups – neither Brahmins, kings, nor Nāirs – were engaged in sea-based occupations. This presents a

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[315] The role of trust is comparable to the role of 'character', which Gupta has highlighted in his case study of the 'Maritime City' of Surat in the eighteenth century. According to Gupta, in the absence of an impersonal law, merchants often considered the 'character' of the person, especially in money transactions. A similar logic seems to be at play in the above stories, though it concerns the relationship between the king and the merchant. See Ashin Das Gupta, 'The Maritime City', in *Ports and Their Hinterlands in India, 1700-1950*, ed. by Indu Banga (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1992), pp. 359–65 (p. 361).

[316] As mentioned in Chapter Three.

contrast with other parts of India, where upper caste groups like the Gujarati Banias and the Chettis from the Coromandel Coast were involved in sea trade. As Sankaracharya's caste order indicates, these two groups also had a strong presence on the Malabar Coast. This implies that, in contrast to Gujarat and the Coromandel Coast, the attitude of the ruling elites of Kerala to the sea was in tune with the Hindu classical position, marked by a strong aversion to sea travel and sea-based occupations.[317]

Contemporary travel accounts support this reading of a division of roles between the land-based elites and the maritime groups in the indigenous records. During his journey through Kerala in the eleventh century, Marco Polo found that the legal courts in Kerala did not admit testimonies provided by drunken men and sea travellers, implying a distrust of sea travellers among the ruling elites.[318] The aversion to sea travel seems to have persisted during the sixteenth century. The Portuguese traveller Tomé Pires writes that the religion of the Nāir 'forbids him to eat at sea, except by permission of his chief Brahmin in case of dire necessity'. Pires points out that 'the Brahmins go to sea even less'.[319] The Italian traveller Ludovic Varthema, who also visited Kerala in the

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[317] According to Pearson, the classical Hindu policy prohibited sea travel among the first three *varna*s, i.e. Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaisyas, but especially among Brahmins. Through a process of imitation, even the Sudras (the fourth *varna*) had become reluctant to travel or trade by sea in some parts of India. Despite such prohibitions, upper caste Hindus, including Brahmins, are known to have crossed the sea. Pearson proposes three reasons to explain this contradiction. First, the entry of Muslims in the Indian Ocean and their technical superiority in nautical matters caused the displacement of Hindu groups from maritime trade. This contributed to 'an increasingly rigid ban on Hindu travel by sea'. Second, in any given period there would be some gap between theory and practice. Finally, the classical Hindu attitude to sea travel is not universal and there could exist both temporal and regional variations. See Pearson, 'Indian Seafarers', pp. 133–34.

[318] *The Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. by Manuel Komroff, e-edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002) (Book 3, Ch. 16).

[319] Tomé Pires, 'The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires', in *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires and The Book of Francisco Rodrigues*, trans. by Armando Cortesão (London: Hakluyt society, 1944), p. 81.

early sixteenth century, similarly observed that the 'pagans do not navigate much and it is the Moors who carry the merchandise'.[320] These travel records show that travel restrictions not only applied to Brahmins but also to the category of Nāirs who held a rank below the Brahmins and the kings in Sankaracharya's caste order.

The ruling elites' aversion to the sea also becomes clear from their residence pattern in the pre-colonial centuries. Barbosa wrote in his early sixteenth-century chronicle that Moors occupied the coastal zone and Nāirs settled inland, in some port cities.[321] Studying this phenomenon, Malekandathil makes the following observation about the port cities of Kodungallor, Kollam, Calicut, Kochi, and Kannur:

> The contemporary perception of sea as a polluting agency kept the process of urbanization in all these port-cities of Kerala move from the port area towards the hinterland, keeping the upper castes in the hinterland well out of the sight of the inferior castes and the fisher folks of the coast.[322]

According to Malekandathil, the rulers of Kerala also adopted this residence pattern; after shifting his capital from rural Eranād to the urban port city of Calicut, the Zamorin built his palace on the inland side of the city.[323] It is against this context that the role of maritime groups gains significance.

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[320] Ludovico di Varthema, *The Travels of Ludovico Di Varthema*, ed. by George Percy Badger, trans. by John Winter Jones (London: Hakluyt Society, 1863), p. 151.
[321] Barbosa, trans. by Dames (vol. 2), pp. 84-85.
[322] Pius Malekandathil, 'Changing Perceptions of Sea and the Shaping of Urban Space in Medieval Kerala', in *Histories from the Sea: Proceedings of International Conference 30-31 January, 2007* (New Delhi: Centre for French and Francophone Studies, School of Languages, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2009), pp. 50–67 (p. 51).
[323] Malekandathil, 'Changing Perceptions of Sea', p. 55.

Historical evidence suggests that the Zamorins 'pursued a policy of encouraging collective conversions' of the local Mukkuva (fisherfolk) caste to Islam to become part of the expanding navy that was placed under the command of Muslim officers.[324] The Zamorins also encouraged a male member from lower-caste families to be brought up according to the tenets of Islam.[325] Islamic conversion was not only encouraged by the rulers but also tolerated by the Hindu society in general, as Zainuddin II writes in his sixteenth-century work *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*:

> In the case of Hindus embracing Islam, other Hindus do not, as a rule put any impediments, nor do they harm them by any means. On the other hand, they are customarily treated with respect along with the rest of the Muslims, even if they were of the lower caste.[326]

Lower caste converts to Islam and the progeny of intermarriage between foreign traders and native women were addressed by the honorific term 'Māppila'. Their kinship ties to the land of Kerala distinguish the Māppilas from the foreign traders, who the local literature classifies as *paradēsi*. The Zamorins' promotion of conversion among the lower caste groups suggests that the Māppilas were essential for bridging the gap between the land and the sea for the land-based rulers. In this sense, they can be seen as performing the role of a bridge group. This group also provided the necessary link between the native rulers and the *paradēsi* maritime groups. How did the Portuguese arrival impact the existing division of roles between the land-based rulers and the Māppila traders? The

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[324] Fanselow, p. 266.
[325] Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, p. 133.
[326] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 46.

next section looks at this question in the light of both indigenous records and Portuguese sources.

4.4. The Zamorins' Encounters with the Portuguese

The first entry on the Portuguese in *The News of Kerala* contains information typically collected at port cities from newly arrived strangers, including the point of their origin, the time of their arrival, their port of entry into the kingdom, and the purpose of their visit. Along with these mundane details, the scribe also expresses surprise at the Portuguese visit during the monsoon season (Malayalam month of *karkkidakom*), which was not the typical season for trade. He assumes that their ships were lost at sea and accidentally landed at the port town of Pantalayani Kollam, which was controlled by the Zamorin.[327] In stark contrast to this matter-of-fact entry, the *Journal of Vasco da Gama* gives a much more elaborate account of the first encounter between the Zamorin and the Portuguese. In it, the scribe records that the Zamorin's officials received Gama and his crew with great aplomb, describing how they carried Gama on a palanquin, offered a tour of the temple and the palace, and invited him to meet the Zamorin (r. 1495-1500).[328]

Though written from the viewpoint of the Portuguese, the *Journal of Vasco da Gama* could shed some light on the maritime policies of the Zamorins. First, according to the journal, the Portuguese were directed to the port city by fishermen on their arrival near the shores of Calicut, showing that they were not forced to call on the port as was the practice in some other parts of the Indian

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[327] Vijayakumar, pp. 97-98.
Zainuddin II gives a similar account in, Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 49.
[328] Fardilha and Fernandes, pp. 148-49.

Ocean.[329] Second, the journal tells us that the Portuguese found a Tunisian trader named Monsayeed who could understand their language and therefore act as a linguistic mediator, pointing to the permeable boundaries between land and sea in the kingdom.[330] Third, the scribe notes that during their stay in Calicut the Portuguese crew were asked by the Zamorin if they would like to spend the night with Christians or Moors.[331] This suggests that the Zamorin saw the Portuguese not as royal guests but as a potential bridge group, similar in status to that of the Christian and Muslim traders. The courtesies extended to Gama clearly came with an expectation of customary gifts, which Gama was ill-equipped to offer. The first welcome turns hostile at this point, forcing Gama and his crew to flee the kingdom. This sudden turn of events signals the importance of suitable gifts in 'mercantile lobbying' and 'political diplomacy' in Asia, which was in keeping with the Arab and Persian tradition of *nazr*, as Biedermann notes.[332]

The absence of adequate gifts was not the only reason why the new traders did not make an impression on the Zamorin. A more pressing issue was the mounting distrust between Muslims, the traditional allies of the Zamorin, and the newly arrived Portuguese. Gama's scribe, in fact, attributes the turn of

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[329] Fardilha and Fernandes, p. 146.
In one of his case studies, Prange discusses the example of the Hindu ruler of Barkur (in present-day Karnataka State), a kingdom situated on the northernmost part of the Malabar Coast. Prange quotes the following lines from Ibn Battuta's fourteenth-century travel account, which offers insights into the ruler's maritime policies: 'It is a custom of theirs that every ship that passes by a town must anchor at it and give a present to the ruler. This they call the right of the port [*haqq al-bandar*]. If anyone omits to do this, they sail out in pursuit of him, bring him to the port by force, double the tax on him, and prevent him from proceeding on his journey for as long as they wish'. According to Prange, the custom of the 'right of the port' (*haqq al-bandar*) was not unique to Barkur but was a customary privilege claimed by coastal rulers in various parts of the Indian subcontinent. The rulers claimed this right by seizing ships that passed close to the port or accidentally washed ashore. See Prange, 'Contested Sea', p. 25.
[330] Fardilha and Fernandes, p. 146.
[331] Fardilha and Fernandes, p. 150.
[332] Biedermann, 'Portuguese Diplomacy', p. 18.

events in Calicut to the negative counsel received by the Zamorin from his Muslim allies. The hostilities between the old and the new trading group continues in the later expeditions. In a later voyage, undertaken in 1502, Gama exacerbates the ongoing tensions by demanding that the Zamorin (r. 1500-1513) expel all the Muslims from Cairo and the Red Sea from his city.[333] Indigenous records reveal that similar requests were also made to the allies of the Portuguese, notably the Kochi *Rājāh*.[334]

The resistance to such demands, both by the Zamorin and the Kochi *Rājāh*, shows that the native rulers did not seek to replace old traders with new ones but expected the new traders to fit into the existing system. Barros, for example, writes that the Zamorin refused Gama's demand to expel the Muslims from his kingdom on the grounds that the four thousand Muslim households in Calicut lived 'as natives, not as strangers'.[335] Similarly, Zainuddin II reports that the Portuguese demand to expel the Muslims *en masse* from Kochi was refused by its ruler.[336] It seems that even the ruler of Kōlathunād, who eventually allied with the Portuguese against the Zamorin, was not keen on replacing his Māppila subjects with the Portuguese. For instance, in royal communications between the Kōlathiri and the king of Portugal, Kōlathiri frequently refers to Māppilas as his 'vassals' and brings to the king's notice the injuries inflicted by the Portuguese on the trade and property of his Māppila subjects, despite the Māppilas agreeing to carry Portuguese passes.[337]

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[333] In Pearson, *The Portuguese in India*, p. 73 (from Barros, *Da Asia*, 1, vi. 5)
[334] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 58.
[335] In Pearson, *The Portuguese in India*, p. 73 (from Barros, *Da Asia*, 1, vi. 5)
[336] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 58.
[337] See the contents of a letter produced in, Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Letters from Kannur, 1500-50: A Little Explored Aspect of Kerala History', in *Clio and Her Descendants: Essays for Kesavan Veluthat*, ed. by Manu V. Devadevan (New Delhi: Primus Books, 2018), pp. 99–131 (pp. 7–8).

Further evidence from the sixteenth century suggests that the Zamorins regarded the Māppilas as their subjects, attempted to promote their trade in royal treaties signed with the Portuguese, and made an account of their losses at the hands of the Portuguese in the palace *granthāvari*s. For example, in a treaty signed between one of the Zamorins (r. 1513-1522) and the Portuguese in Kollam 689, Hijri 921 (1515 CE), recorded in both *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* and *The News of Kerala*, the Zamorin negotiates on behalf of his Māppila subjects and includes specific clauses to facilitate Māppila trade:

> [The Zamorin] entered into a treaty with the Portuguese by which he permitted the Portuguese to build a fort in Calicut on condition that they allow his Muslim subjects to undertake trade voyages to the Arabian port of Jeddah and Aden in four ships every year.[338] (*The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*)
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> [The Zamorin] too reconciled himself and permitted them [Portuguese] to construct a fort at Kozhikode [Calicut]. This permission was given under the condition that they would not trouble the Muslim settlers of the Zamorin from exporting 4 ships of dried ginger and pepper every year to Mecca.[339] (*The News of Kerala*)

Both *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* and *The News of Kerala* also record damages suffered by the Māppilas to their towns, houses, mosques, ships etc. These records also reveal that the trading prospects of the Māppilas from Kozhikode were subject to the policies of the various Zamorins – whether favourable or antagonistic – toward the Portuguese. Thus, while Māppilas from

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[338] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 59.

[339] Vijayakumar, p. 99.
In the Malayalam publication: '[*T*]*hangalil enangi kozhikotta ora kotta iduvan sammadikkukayum cheythu. Appol prankiyumayitta oru karyam paranja vechittathre sammathicha irikkunatha. Aa karyam nammude kudipathikalayitta ulla Māppilamare kalam thorum nala kappala chukkum mulakum kayatti makkathakka odikkunnatha neeyya virodhikkaruthenna ethe aakunnaththa*.' See Kurup and Vijayakumar, pp. 168-69.

the neighbouring Kōlathunād kingdom benefited from the friendly policies adopted by their king toward the Portuguese and traded in the sea (albeit after carrying Portuguese passes), Māppilas from Kozhikode bore the brunt of the Zamorins' war with the Portuguese owing to their settlements near the sea and their occupations in sea-related matters.

Following maritime policies developed before the Portuguese arrival, the Zamorins continued to use their Māppila Muslim subjects as their main instrument of sea power during the sixteenth century. The Arabic writers from Kerala, in particular, suggest that the Zamorins took advantage of their maritime Muslim connections to entreat foreign Muslim rulers to support them in their war against the Portuguese on the Malabar Coast. For example, in *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*, Zainuddin II discusses the role of one of the Zamorins (r. 1500-1513) in the Mamluk intervention against the Portuguese in 1509.[340] According to Zainuddin II, the Zamorin dispatched letters to various Muslim Sultans entreating them to support him in his war against the Portuguese in Calicut, to which the Sultans of Gujarat, Bijapur, and Egypt responded. The Sultan of Egypt, writes Zainuddin II, sent a fleet led by Amir Husain, while the Zamorin sent a fleet of forty ships from Calicut to join Amir's fleet. In the ensuing naval battle, fought near Diu, the Portuguese fleet led by the Portuguese Governor Francisco de Almeida (in office, 1505-1509) defeated Amir's forces.[341]

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[340] However, in a recent discussion of this event, Subrahmanyam does not address the Zamorin's role in this attack. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'The Birth-Pangs of Portuguese Asia: Revisiting the Fateful "long Decade" 1498-1509', *Journal of Global History*, 2 (2007), 261–80 (pp. 275–79).

[341] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, pp. 52-54.

Qadi Muhammad describes another event which similarly involved a joint intervention led by the Indian Ocean rulers against the Portuguese.[342] He writes that the Zamorin initiated contact with the Sultans of Bijapur and Ahmednagar to launch an orchestrated attack on the Portuguese forts in Chaliyam, Goa, and Chaul, in 1571. While the Zamorin (Manavikrama, r. 1562-1574) went ahead with the siege on the Chaliyam fort, the Deccan Sultans withdrew their attacks on Goa and Chaul after striking independent deals with the Portuguese. Compared to the 1509 maritime venture, which targeted the Portuguese at sea, the 1571 event targeted them within the confines of their fort situated on territory controlled by the Zamorin. In both these ventures, the Māppila Muslims reportedly led the fight from the sea. This again points to a division between the land-based ruling elites and the sea-based Māppilas.

According to K. J. John, the year 1524 was 'a turning point' in Muslim-Portuguese relations.[343] That year, the Marakkār clan shifted their base from Kochi to Kozhikode and pledged their allegiance to the then Zamorin (r. 1522-1529). Like the Māppilas of Kozhikode, the Marakkārs, who originally hailed from the Coromandel Coast, were an indigenized group of Muslims descended from the Arabs. According to Zainuddin II, Portuguese collaborations with the Syrian Christians and the Jews from Kochi motivated the Marakkārs' shift to Kozhikode.[344] After their resettlement, the Marakkārs served as the hereditary admirals of the Zamorins' fleet and adopted the title of 'Kunjāli' (little Ali).[345] They were at the forefront of the Zamorins' naval operations against the

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[342] Zainuddin II gives a similar account in, Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, (Section 4: Ch. 12-14).
[343] K. J. John, 'Kunjali Marakkars: Myth and Reality', *IHC: Proceedings, 58th Session*, 1997, 264–72 (p. 267).
[344] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, pp. 62-63.
[345] Bouchon, 'Sixteenth Century Malabar', p. 175.

Portuguese and played a decisive role in ousting the Portuguese from their forts in Calicut (1525) and in Chaliyam (1571).[346] Like the Portuguese, the Marakkārs undertook regular coastal patrols along the Malabar Coast from Diu to Cape of Comorin.[347] They blockaded and plundered Portuguese vessels in the Indian Ocean with the Zamorins' tacit or explicit support and in turn suffered severe setbacks from the Portuguese, one of which, as Zainuddin II records, involved the loss of forty-two vessels near Kayal Pattanam in 1538.[348] Thus, from 1524 onward, the Marakkārs acted as the Zamorins' instrument of power at sea, engaging in fierce battles at sea against the Portuguese.

The fate of the Marakkārs at the end of the sixteenth century could shed some more light on the division between the land-based rulers and the sea-based traders. As a reward for his role in the expulsion of the Portuguese from the Chaliyam fort, Kunjāli Marakkār III received permission from the then Zamorin to build a fortress in Pudupattanam (Putupattanam, see fig. 7, p. 260), which came to be known as the *Marakkār Kōtta* or Marakkār's Fort.[349] Likely modelled after the Portuguese forts, the *Marakkār Kōtta* was built on the riverfront area and was equipped with cannons. However, Kunjāli Marakkār IV (who succeeded the previous Marakkār) grew in power and became, in the words of Panikkar, 'an overgrown subject'.[350] Projecting himself as a ruler, Marakkār assumed the title of 'King of Malabar Muslims, Lord of the Indian Seas'.[351] According to different sources, the Marakkār offended the Zamorin by

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[346] Bouchon, 'Sixteenth Century Malabar', p. 175; Panikkar, *Malabar and the Portuguese*, p. 136.
[347] Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, p. 142.
[348] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 73.
[349] Panikkar, *Malabar and the Portuguese*, p. 136.
[350] Panikkar, *Malabar and the Portuguese*, p. 140.
[351] Bouchon, 'Sixteenth Century Malabar', p. 180.

either cutting off the tail or the ear of the Zamorin's elephant and/or by castrating a Nāir.[352] To eliminate the threat posed by the Marakkār to his authority, in 1599, the Zamorin (r. 1599-1604) briefly enlisted the help of his long-standing enemy, the Portuguese, to attack the Marakkār Fort from the sea.[353] Besieged from both the land and the sea, the Marakkār surrendered to the Zamorin, who in turn handed him over to the Portuguese. The Portuguese later executed the Marakkār in Goa.[354] By enlisting the help of the Portuguese to evict the Marakkār from his fort, the Zamorin thus maintained the tradition of outsourcing sea-based attacks to maritime groups. Rather than employ his traditional Māppila allies, here he took advantage of the existing rivalry between the Marakkārs and the Portuguese. One reason for this could be to prevent the development of any solidarity between his Muslim subjects, which, from the title assumed by the Marakkār, appears to have been his motive.

The Marakkār's tragic fate shows that while the Hindu rulers quite enthusiastically welcomed new maritime groups to their kingdoms to do the bidding of the land-based rulers in the sea, they remained alert to the political ambitions of those groups on land. This could have also been a factor that led to the eviction of the Portuguese from both their forts in the Kozhikode kingdom in the course of the sixteenth century. The eviction of the Portuguese from Kochi in the mid-seventeenth century paints a comparable picture. Like the Zamorin who recruited the Marakkārs to evict the Portuguese from Kozhikode,

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[352] Bouchon, 'Sixteenth Century Malabar', p. 180; Panikkar, *Malabar and the Portuguese*, p. 140.
[353] Panikkar, *Malabar and the Portuguese*, p. 141.
[354] Panikkar, *Malabar and the Portuguese*, p. 143.

one of the dissenting royal families in Kochi invited the Dutch from Colombo to serve as a naval force to evict the Portuguese from their fort in Kochi.

Conclusions

The important insight that we get from *The Origin of Kerala* and other indigenous records from Kerala is that the scope of the Zamorins' power on land was not limited to their kingdom but extended to the entire land of Perumal, encompassing other rival kingdoms. The records also show that the rulers left matters of the sea to foreign groups and the Māppilas, all of whom they treated as castes.

The Zamorin's engagement with the sea through intermediary groups such as the Māppilas raises important questions about the 'maritime consciousness' of the Malabari rulers. As mentioned in Chapter One, scholars of the Indian Ocean classify the port-based kingdoms on the Malabar Coast as part of 'maritime India', possessing a 'maritime consciousness' distinct from that of their counterparts in northern India. As shown in this chapter, however, it is the Māppilas and other maritime groups who fit the category of 'littoral society' better than the upper caste ruling elite, who were oriented strongly towards the land, and thus lacked the same 'maritime consciousness'. This is observable in the maritime groups' inclination to convert to foreign religions, intermarry foreign traders, and undertake sea-based occupations. It is on this point that Arabic history writing diverges from Malayalam history writing; while the Arabic writers show an awareness of events at sea, the Malayalam writers focus on matters that concern the rulers on land.

The division between the land-based rulers and the sea-based Māppilas also influenced the way in which each group responded to the arrival of the Portuguese. Though the Zamorin welcomed the Portuguese on their arrival in his kingdom, he remained alert to their political ambitions on land and their attempts to curtail the maritime trade of his Māppila subjects. He resisted this challenge by recruiting rival maritime groups such as the Marakkārs, who, for a brief period acted as Zamorins' instrument of sea power. In evicting the Marakkārs from their kingdom, the Zamorins prioritize land authority over control of the Indian Ocean trade. In the process, they lose an important bridge group, who could potentially have served as the Zamorins' instrument of sea power against other European maritime powers. On the other hand, the fate of both the Marakkārs and the Portuguese in Kerala suggest that both these groups attempted to exceed their role as maritime instruments of the land-based rulers to assert dominion over the land. In the next two chapters, I will explore the Arab-Muslim encounters with the land of Kerala, their sense of territorial belonging, and their response to the Portuguese arrival.

Chapter Five:
Founder-Hero as Royal Convert:
Arab-Muslim Encounters with the Land of Kerala

Portuguese and Arabic records from the sixteenth century signal the anxiety of their writers around the subject of religious conversion in Kerala by rival maritime groups. Writing in the early decades of the sixteenth century, Duarte Barbosa expresses his anxiety over the influence wielded by Muslims over the local population since 'the Heathen if displeased at anything become Moors'. For him, the influence was so great that 'if the King of Portugal had not discovered India, Malabar would already have been in the hands of the Moors, and would have had a Moorish king'.[355] Writing against the backdrop of the Zamorin's siege of the Portuguese fort in Chaliyam in 1571, Qadi Muhammad of Calicut mirrors Barbosa's fear when he warns in his poem, *The Manifest Conquest*, that 'if they [the Portuguese] settled here, the whole country [would] turn Christian'.[356] Clearly, such rivalries, based on the intermingling of commercial and religious aims, were not confined to the sixteenth century. The competing claims of conversion of the local founder-hero, the Perumal, is a case in point, revealing the religious rivalries among maritime groups in the pre-Portuguese era.

The Perumal's whereabouts after the division of his country has remained somewhat of a mystery, earning the ruler the epithet of the 'disappearing

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[355] Barbosa, trans. by Dames (vol. 2), p. 74
In the Portuguese edition: '[*S*]*e el-rei de Portugal não descobrira a Índia, já o Malabar fora todo de mouros e tivera rei mouro*.' Barbosa, ed. by Machado, p. 159.
[356] Muhammad, *Fat'h al-Mubin*, p. 28 (verse 98).

king'.[357] The uncertainty about the Perumal's fate introduced an opportunity for various religious groups in Kerala to claim his conversion, and thereby offer an explanation for his disappearance. In the twelfth-century Tamil poem, *Periyapuranam*, the poet claims that the Perumal became a Saiva (follower of Lord Shiva) saint and died at Makotai, the Chera capital.[358] The prevalent tradition among the St. Thomas Christians (Syrian Christians) was that the Perumal converted to Christianity and went on a pilgrimage to Mylapore (in present-day Tamil Nadu).[359] M. S. Dhiraj has found an inscription from Kollam dated to the twelfth century, which indicates that the last Perumal converted to Jainism.[360] The Arabic record *Qissat Shakarwati Farmad* (*The Story of Emperor Perumal*) proposes a different theory, claiming that the Perumal converted to Islam. This chapter focuses on this last story and its claim of Islamic conversion of the Perumal.[361]

Islamic conversion stories, centred around local rulers, were not unique to Kerala but can be found in various parts of the Indian Ocean world. I begin by

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[357] Scott Kugle and Roxani Eleni Margariti, 'Narrating Community: The Qissat Shakarwati Farmad and Accounts of Origin in Kerala and around the Indian Ocean', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 60 (2017), 337–80 (p. 344).
[358] Ayyar, p. 74.
[359] Ayyar, p. 65 (from Diogo de Couto, *Decada* VII, Book X).
[360] M. S. Dhiraj, 'Kollam Pillar Inscription of Rama Kulasekhara: The Last Chera Record of a Jain Perumal of Makothai', *Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies in Archaeology*, 6 (2018), 487–504.
[361] The undated manuscript of this story as well as its copy from 1853 are held at the British Library in London. A synopsis of the account was published in, Y. Friedmann, 'Qissat Shakarwati Farmad: A Tradition Concerning the Introduction of Islām to Malabar', in *Israel Oriental Studies* (Tel Aviv University, 1975), V, 233–58.
Kugle and Margariti have recently published a complete English translation of the account based primarily on the original manuscript in, Kugle and Margariti, 'Qissat'.
Considering that the original manuscript is part of a volume that was previously held at the library of the College of Fort William in Calcutta alongside manuscript versions of two other Arabic manuscripts from Kerala, of *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* and *The Manifest Conquest*, Kugle and Margariti have raised the possibility of the English East India Company acquiring the manuscript either directly from Malabar, which was brought under Company rule in 1792, or from the palace of Mysore ruler Tipu Sultan, which fell to the Company in 1799. See Kugle and Margariti, 'Narrating Community', p. 347.

exploring this wider context, drawing on stories from Indonesia, the Maldives, and Sofala. Second, I examine the historical origins of Islam in Kerala with the aim of elucidating the political aims served by conversion stories in the specific context of Kerala. I will then examine the significance of the Perumal as a royal convert, exploring some of the political aims served by this hero for the Muslims, based on the aforementioned *The Story of Emperor Perumal*. Fourth, I will compare this story with *The Origin of Kerala*'s account of Perumal's conversion to locate points of contact and divergence between the two historical traditions. Finally, I will look at sixteenth-century citations of *The Story of Emperor Perumal* in texts like *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* and *The Manifest Conquest* to understand the relevance of this particular conversion story for Muslims in Kerala in the context of their maritime and religious rivalries with the Portuguese.

5.1. Royal Conversion Myths in the Indian Ocean World

In his study of ten conversion myths found in various indigenous Malay chronicles, Russell Jones emphasizes the way in which these myths nearly always associated the coming of Islam to the various Indonesian kingdoms with the ruler of the state.[362] Jones emphasizes the symbolic association between the ruler and the state in these myths, arguing that they 'conform entirely to the existing Indonesian traditions (insofar as we can discover them) which had grown up around kingship'.[363] He takes the largely Islamic character of these myths to be evidence that they were formulated by non-Indonesian Muslims to

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[362] Russell Jones, 'Ten Conversion Myths from Indonesia', in *Conversion to Islam*, ed. by Nehemia Levtzion (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979), pp. 129–58 (p. 131). In the article, Indonesia is made to stand for the cultural region including the present-day Malay peninsula and the Republic of Indonesia.
[363] Jones, p. 157.

facilitate the acceptance of the Islamic faith propagated by them or their predecessors among the indigenous people. As evidence, he points to the time period in which the myths originate: the time of large-scale conversions that took place in the region, between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. Once Islam has been accepted as a state religion, these myths were then incorporated into official chronicles by Muslim scribes under Muslim patronage.[364]

Jones identifies four features (which he considers to be Islamic in origin) that gave a 'kind of uniformity' to the ten conversion myths:

> (a) The roots of Indonesian Islam are traced back to Mecca in most instances, either directly or indirectly via India, Pasai, West Sumatra, Java, etc. In several, the Prophet appears.
> (b) Miracles and supernatural events play a part.
> (c) There are sudden, unpremeditated conversions to Islam.
> (d) Dreams and visions constitute a means of communication.[365]

Jones notes that the appearance of the Prophet in dreams or visions is also a feature of Sufi hagiographies.[366] This commonality may point to the authors of the conversion myths being Sufi travellers, a possibility which Jones does not directly express. This seems plausible when one considers the traditional role played by the Sufis in the spread of Islam throughout the Indian Ocean world. Indeed, the ruler's conversion by a dream or vision resonates with the Sufi idea of 'individual piety and the direct experience of the divine'.[367]

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[364] Jones, p. 156.
[365] Jones, p. 157.
[366] Jones, p. 155.
[367] Sebastian R. Prange, *Monsoon Islam: Trade and Faith on the Medieval Malabar Coast* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 238.

In addition to the four features identified by Jones, several other recurring motifs appear in most of the myths, including the motif of the ship from which the messengers of Islam alight on the shore, the conspicuous figure of the religious scholar (*sheikh*) who acts as an intermediary figure, the insertion of the Muslim rite known as *shahada*, and the adoption of a Muslim name by the ruler after his conversion. An integral part of the conversion ritual, *shahada* involves the recitation of two brief sentences – 'there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His messenger' – through which the believer testifies to his or her faith.[368] According to Ronit Ricci, the Arabic form of the *shahada* is thought to possess a magical power similar to a Sanskrit *mantra*, both emphasizing the sound of the sacred language than its meaning.[369] Thus, *shahada* is inserted in its untranslated Arabic form in literature written in vernacular Malay as well as in Tamil, forming one of the 'citation sites' that link a range of textual sources written in Javanese, Malay, and Tamil between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries. The written Arabic form of *shahada* was also associated with healing practices, often kept as an amulet or ingested as a cure.[370]

Royal conversions were also at the centre of conversion myths from other parts of the Indian Ocean world. Scott Kugle and Roxana Margariti mention one such myth on Sofala (in present-day Mozambique) recorded by Buzurg b. Shahriyar, an Arabic-speaking Muslim of Persian descent, sometime in the late tenth to early eleventh centuries. In this myth, Shahriyar narrates the excruciating journey by which the ruler comes to convert to Islam. Kidnapped and sold into slavery by Omani traders, the king's Arabian sojourn leads him through the

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[368] Ricci, p. 333.
[369] Ricci, p. 337.
[370] Ricci, p. 334.

heartlands of Islam, including Oman and Baghdad, and concludes in a pilgrimage to Mecca. The transformed king then returns to his kingdom via Cairo and is restored to former glory by his subjects. Following the king's example his subjects then embrace Islam, leading to the emergence of what Timothy Insoll has termed 'an indigenized African Islam'.[371] Shahriyar adds that the Omani traders who enslaved the king later make a second visit to the kingdom and are, to their surprise, welcomed by the slave-turned-Muslim ruler.[372] The Sofala myth shares both the Meccan connection and the motif of the ship with the Indonesian myths. The role played by the Omani traders in the king's conversion also underscores the region's commercial and religious ties to the Indian Ocean world.

The Moroccan traveller Ibn Battuta records a corresponding royal conversion myth from the Maldives during the fourteenth century. The introduction of Islam to the island coincides with the arrival of a western Arab named Abu'l Barakat the Berber, a Muslim traveller and reciter of the Quran, who Battuta describes as a 'holy man' who 'committed the Koran to memory'. According to the myth, a spectre ('*jinn*') has been making monthly visits to the island on a glowing ship, and the islanders try to appease the spectre by offering up a virgin at the 'idol temple' ('*budhkhana*') by the seashore.[373] On his visit, the Arab traveller offers to take the place of the virgin and succeeds in repelling the spectre by reading the Quran inside the idol house. The miraculous delivery of the virgin brings him to the attention of the king, who promises to convert to Islam if he repeats the miracle a second time. Notwithstanding this stipulation,

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[371] In Kugle and Margariti, 'Narrating Community', p. 373.
[372] Kugle and Margariti, 'Narrating Community', pp. 371-373.
[373] Arabic terms are taken from, Kugle and Margariti, 'Narrating Community', p. 373.

the king converts before the arrival of the spectre, while the islanders convert after the traveller repels the spectre a second time.[374]

The conditional conversion that we see in Battuta's story can also be found in some of the Indonesian myths cited by Jones, although it is not a characteristic feature of Indonesian conversion myths in general. For instance, in a myth from the kingdom of Patani, the king makes his conversion contingent on finding a cure for a skin disease that he suffers from. In this myth, the king goes back on his promise until he is cured a second time by the same *sheikh*.[375] This hesitant and conditional conversion to Islam is in contrast to the sudden conversions that characterize most Indonesian myths. Battuta's Maldivian myth also shares some other features with the Indonesian myths, such as the role of miracles and supernatural events in the royal conversion, the motif of the ship, and the intermediary role of the *sheikh*.

In Indonesia, Sofala and the Maldives, it was trade networks, rather than violent usurpation of the throne by foreigners, which served as the common mode of transmission of Islam.[376] In the case of Indonesia, Jones remarks that 'it was the religion which changed', indicating that both the ruler and the state stayed the same.[377] Islam reached the higher echelons of society, leading to its official adoption as a state religion. As Jones observes, all the Indonesian conversion myths are silent on commercial and political advantages received by the state through conversion or the offering of women in marriage to Muslim traders –

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374 Battuta, e-edition (Ch. XIX).
375 Jones, pp. 141-143.
376 An observation made by Jones on Indonesia, which may hold true for other parts as well. Jones, p. 158.
377 Jones, p. 158.

factors that historically led to the advent and spread of Islam in the Indian Ocean world.[378] By their emphasis on the king's conversion and its consequences, the mythmakers obscure the fact that Islamic conversions actually spread from the coast to the court, rather than from the king to his subjects.[379] The sudden miraculous conversion also contradicts the likelihood that Islam spread gradually through the area over a protracted period.[380] Jones argues that 'the maker of the myths on principle avoided narrating what had occurred; and that moreover he showed a marked preference for the seemingly incredible over the credible'.[381] The silence on intermarriages, as Jones speculates, could be due to the matrilineal custom of tracing legitimacy through the female line, prevalent in Indonesia and other parts of the Indian Ocean world, including the Malabar Coast.[382] An equally plausible explanation for the silence on commercial exchanges is that the mythmakers had only a passive involvement in sea-based economic activities. They were, in all probability, Sufi mystics or mendicants, represented by the intermediary figure of the *sheikh* who occupies a conspicuous role in majority of the myths.

5.2. The Advent of Islam in Kerala

Islam did not have the same kind of impact throughout the Indian Ocean world. In Kerala, for example, it spread along the coast, rarely reaching those settled inland. In contrast to the kingdoms in Indonesia, Sofala and the Maldives, the post-Chera kingdoms in Kerala were Hindu-ruled until the sixteenth century

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[378] Jones, p. 156.
[379] Jones, p. 154.
According to Jones, this was a result of the 'Indonesian conception of the overwhelming importance of the ruler, making it necessary to insert his conversion at the very beginning of the conversion process'.
[380] Jones, p. 155.
[381] Jones, p. 156.
[382] Jones, p. 156.

and mostly thereafter. There is little evidence to suggest that any of the local rulers converted to Islam, despite the prevalence of conversion myths which claimed this.[383] The sole exception to this is the Arakkal kingdom, the only Muslim-ruled kingdom in Kerala, established during the sixteenth century in response to the Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean. The rulers of this kingdom, known as the Ali Rājās, are believed to have emerged from a Hindu merchant clan that converted to Islam as early as the eleventh century.[384] However, the founding of the Arakkal kingdom in the aftermath of the Portuguese arrival is not immediately relevant for the discussion that follows, since *The Story of Emperor Perumal* seems to have originated in the pre-Portuguese period.

Even though Islam did not have the same kind of impact on the royalty in Kerala, it flourished among the populace with little interference from the Hindu rulers. During the first days of Islam, Arab-Muslim merchants settled on the Malabar Coast and entered into marriages with women from the lower castes.[385] The progeny of such marriages were likely the first converts to Islam; they were addressed in Malayalam by the honorific term Māppila, meaning 'bridegroom' or 'son-in-law'.[386] The development of commerce and the growth of indigenized

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[383] On the Perumal's conversion to Islam, Menon writes, 'On careful consideration of all aspects of the question, it would be seen that the Cheraman legend was only the figment of the imagination of some early writers. It is exceedingly doubtful if any Chera emperor ever became a convert to Islam.' See Menon, *Survey of Kerala History* (Ch. IX, Section: Cheraman Legend)
[384] Stephen Federic Dale, 'Trade, Conversion and the Growth of the Islamic Community of Kerala, South India', *Studia Islamica*, 71 (1990), 155–75 (p. 164).
[385] Genevieve Bouchon and Denys Lombard, 'The Indian Ocean in the Fifteenth Century', in *India and the Indian Ocean, 1500-1800*, ed. by Ashin Das Gupta and Michael N. Pearson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 46–70 (p. 63).
[386] Hermann Gundert, 'Māpilla', *A Malayalam and English Dictionary* (Mangalore, London: C. Stolz, 1872), p. 810 <https://dsalsrv04.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/app/gundert_query.py?qs=മാപ്പിള്ള&searchhws=yes> [accessed 19 March 2020]. Logan offers a different interpretation of the word 'Mappila' as 'great child,' coined from *Maha* (great) and *pilla* (child). Logan, *Malabar* (vol. 1), p. 191.

Muslims attracted both the Sufis as well as the *ulama* ('the religious scholars and officiants of Islam') who served as leaders of the community and spearheaded the spread of Islam.[387] Islamic conversions began in significant numbers by the ninth century, and the coastal fisherfolk belonging to the Mukkuva caste became one of the main targets.[388] The Māppilas were mainly Sunni Muslims of Arab descent and followers of the Shafi'i school of Islamic law.[389] Their numbers grew through the combined processes of intermarriage and conversion, and they adopted local matrilineal customs of inheritance of property through the female line. Battuta's report from his trip to Kerala indicates that by the fourteenth century there were notable Muslim settlements in the port cities of Hili (Ezhimala), Dadkannan (Dharmadam), Fattan (possibly Kannur), Fandraina (Pantalayani Kollam), Kalikut (Calicut), and Kawlam (Kollam), most of which had mosques equipped with a preacher and a judge.[390]

Scholars have shown that the Māppila Muslims of Kerala shared more in common with their coreligionists from other Indian Ocean regions such as Indonesia and the Maldives than with their compatriots from northern India. As Frank Fanselow writes, Islam arrived in the northern parts of India through territorial expansion of Persian and Turkish empires. He identifies the Delhi Sultanate, founded in 1206 CE, as 'the first major Muslim kingdom in India'.[391] North Indian Muslims followed the Hanafi school of Islamic Law in contrast to

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[387] Stephen Frederic Dale, 'Religious Suicide in Islamic Asia: Anticolonial Terrorism in India, Indonesia, and the Philippines', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 32.1 (1988), 37–59 (p. 41).
[388] Fanselow, p. 266. On Mukkuva conversions to Islam see, Prange, *Monsoon Islam*, pp. 173-176.
[389] The Shafi'i school of law was formulated by the Meccan jurist Imam Shafi'i based on the 'Traditions (Ar. *hadith*) of the Prophet, the memories of his words and deeds preserved in the centres of early Islam at Mecca and Medina.' Fanselow, p. 265.
[390] Battuta, e-edition (Ch. XVIII).
[391] Fanselow, p. 265.

the Shafi'i school adhered to by the Māppilas of Kerala.[392] It is clear from his historical sketch that the brand of Islam that spread in the northern parts of India did not extend all the way up to Kerala.[393]

There is some consensus among scholars that the pre-Portuguese period in Kerala was one of harmonious coexistence between the Māppila Muslims and the Hindus. In Stephen Dale's estimation, 'the stability of the Hindu-Muslim relations was primarily the function of the unique economic role of the Muslim community'. He elaborates that the maritime profession of the Muslims distinguished them from every other caste and occupational group in Kerala.[394] He cites their residence pattern (with Māppila traders on the coast and the Hindu upper castes inland) as a reason for limiting any contact, and hence conflict, between the two groups.[395] In a similar vein, Fanselow observes that the Arab Muslims 'occupied a previously largely uninhabited economic niche', and hence, were not in economic competition with the indigenous castes. Hindu-Muslim relations were, in his words, 'characterised by peaceful co-existence and religious tolerance'.[396] Further, he notes that the Shafi'i Muslims from South

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[392] Codified by Abu Hanifa, a legal theorist of Persian ancestry from Kufa in Iraq, the Hanafi school arose in non-Arab territories among the West Asian converts of Islam who were faced, in the words of Fanselow, 'with new kinds of administrative and legal problems for which they found no direct precedents in the Qur'an and the Tradition (*sunnah*) of the Prophet', and hence 'took recourse to their own judgement (Ar. *ra'y*)'. Fanselow, p. 265.
[393] According to Fanselow, the Pandyan kings who ruled parts of South India lost some of their territories to the Delhi Sultanate, but Kerala remained unaffected during these southern invasions. The subsequent rise of the southern Vijayanagara empire in the 1370s ended Pandyan rule and halted the northern Muslim military expansion into the south. However, the rise of the Deccan Sultanates during the sixteenth century revived the disintegrating Delhi Sultanate in the south. The Deccan Sultans independently held sway over much of South India (excluding Kerala) and jointly defeated the Vijayanagara forces in a battle fought in 1565. Like the Vijayanagara rulers before them, the Deccan Sultans too resisted the southern advance of the Mughal empire, which succeeded the Delhi Sultanate in the north during the sixteenth century. Fanselow, pp. 270-273.
[394] Stephen Frederic Dale, 'Communal Relations in Pre-Modern India: 16th Century Kerala', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 16.2/3 (1973), 319–27 (p. 324).
[395] Dale, 'Communal Relations', p. 325.
[396] Fanselow, p. 266.

India 'never had a tradition of political sovereignty', which set them apart from their powerful Hanafi neighbours from the northern parts of India.[397] Similarly, K. M. Panikkar argues that before the arrival of the Portuguese, Māppila Muslims were never interested in political power.[398]

Why did Islam have such a limited impact on the rulers in Kerala when compared to their counterparts from other parts of the Indian Ocean? Dale argues that it was Kerala's strong Brahmanical culture which prevented the upper caste groups from converting to Islam:

> Along the Malabar Coast [...] Brahmanical culture and its social expression, the caste system, were well entrenched and no major upper-caste political figures are known for certain to have converted to Islam. Most conversions there took place among the degraded and impoverished lower castes, although the inequalities of the caste system were sufficiently great that large numbers of these castes became Muslims [...] In contrast, neither Sumatra nor the Philippines had possessed a great religious or literary tradition in the pre-Islamic period, although elements of Brahmanical culture had been absorbed by at least some groups in both areas, and Islam spread with remarkable speed at the upper levels of society in Atjeh, Mindanao, and Sulu, where, unlike Malabar, local rulers were often the first to convert.[399]

In these lines, Dale considers the Brahmanical culture and its social expression, the caste system, as the primary factors for the diminished impact of Islam on the ruling elites of Kerala. Another reason could be the presence of other religions such as Christianity and Judaism, which were similarly introduced to

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[397] Fanselow, p. 284.
[398] Mentioned in J Devika, 'Cochin Creole and the Perils of Casteist Cosmopolitanism: Reading Requiem for the Living', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 2015, 1–18 (p. 3).
In Devika's reading, Panikkar's writing is an example of an elitist construction of Kerala's sub-national identity in the twentieth century – a 'specific narrative that enables the Hindu to occupy centre-space in the regional identity'.
[399] Dale, 'Religious Suicide', pp. 41-42. His observation that the rulers of Indonesia and the Philippines were the first to convert may be based on the claims made by the conversion myths.

Kerala by maritime traders, and which had similarly established a pattern of trade, marriage, settlement, and royal patronage before the arrival of Islam. These diverse maritime groups coexisted in Kerala, were in active economic competition with each other, and took part in economic exchanges that linked the Malabar Coast to the Indian Ocean world. All these groups served as bridge groups for the land-based rulers, mediating their relationship with the sea.[400] They also came about through the intervention of the rulers, who promoted conversion among the lower castes with the aim of facilitating maritime trade in their kingdoms. This, in turn, would have reduced the need for Hindu rulers to convert to any of the religions introduced to Kerala by maritime traders. If the royalty did not have any need to convert to Islam, and did not actually convert to Islam, what aims did royal conversion stories from Kerala really serve? A royal conversion story from Dharmadam, a port town situated to the north of Calicut, offers some clues.

5.3. A Royal Conversion Story from Dharmadam

Travelling through Kerala in the fourteenth century, Battuta recorded a royal conversion story from the port town of Dharmadam (Dadkannan, fig. 8, p. 261). This story credits the grandfather of the 'infidel' ruler of the city with building the city mosque after receiving the knowledge of Islam from a tree known as *Darakhti Shahadet* or the 'tree of testimony.' However, his conversion does not affect his successor. Described as a 'violent infidel,' the successor, according to Battuta's report, 'cut down the tree, tore up its roots, and effaced every vestige of it'. The tree, nevertheless, grew back in strength and regained its original size. Moreover, the king who cut down the tree died suddenly and his 'infidel

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[400] As mentioned in Chapter Four.

descendants' desisted from harming the tree thereafter.[401]

The Dharmadam story appears to have borrowed several elements from the Buddhist tradition. This might be a sign of its author's affiliation to Sufism, whose proponents were willing to accommodate pre-existing religious traditions to bridge the gap with Islam.[402] Battuta reports that the leaves of the 'tree of testimony' were like those of the fig, which is reminiscent of the Bodhi Tree, under which Buddha received his enlightenment (*bodhi*), and its heart-shaped leaves that are prominently displayed in Buddhist religious iconography.[403] The mosque built around 'the tree of testimony' corresponds to the Buddhist shrine constructed around the Bodhi Tree.[404] The attempts to cut down 'the tree of testimony' parallels one of the traditions associated with the Bodhi Tree, according to which attempts to destroy the Bodhi Tree proved to be futile when the tree persistently grew back in strength.[405] The presence of these diverse elements in the Dharmadam story suggests that its author attempted to adapt the story to the local context and integrate it with the Buddhist tradition, which had a presence in Kerala until the eighth century, after which it began to decline and eventually disappeared by the twelfth century.[406] These equivalences suggest that the legend originated while Buddhism still had a stronghold in Dharmadam, probably before the twelfth century.

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[401] Battuta, e-edition (Ch. XVIII).
[402] Prange, *Monsoon Islam*, p. 242.
[403] G.P. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pali Proper Names*, 3 vols (London: John Murray, 1938), II, p. 320.
A Bodhi Tree leaf can be found displayed in the artwork, *Bodhi Leaf with Dragon Decoration*, 13th-14th century CE, Collection Vũ Tán, National Museum of Vietnamese History, Hanoi <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:National_Museum_Vietnamese_History_1_(cropped).jpg> [accessed 19 December 2018].
[404] The location of the Buddha's enlightenment was later converted into a shrine by the followers of the Buddha. Malasekera (vol. 2), p. 320.
[405] Malasekera (vol. 2), p. 320.
[406] Menon, *Survey of Kerala History*, e-edition (Ch. VI, Section: Buddhism).

Seen against the backdrop of the Indian Ocean conversion myths, the Dharmadam story conforms to the emphasis on the cultural significance of the ruler by claiming him as a royal convert to Islam. Like the other myths, the *shahada* occupies a principal place in the conversion of the ruler. Denoted by the word *Shahadet* in the name given to the tree, the leaf of the 'tree of testimony' bears the verses of the *shahada*. According to Battuta's report, the people of Dharmadam, irrespective of their religion, gathered under the tree, awaiting the annual fall of a single leaf during the season of autumn. After the fall of the leaf, the Muslims preserved one half of the leaf for curing their diseases, and the king of the 'infidel city' guarded the other half in his treasury as a blessing. The story also states that the converted ruler could read Arabic and thus could understand the import of the inscription on the fallen leaf, which led to his conversion.[407]

By suggesting that the 'infidel' king who cut down the tree died suddenly, the Dharmadam story attributes supernatural powers to the 'tree of testimony' – replicating another feature commonly found in the Indian Ocean myths. The supernatural powers it claimed might have added a layer of protection to the mosque that was built around the tree. From the port town of Fattan (possibly Jurfattan/Cannanore/Kannur), situated next to Dharmadam (see fig. 8, p. 261), Battuta records another Muslim legend in which the supernatural element was used in a similar fashion to convey the power of Islam among the 'infidels'. According to this legend, a mosque built by merchants outside the city premises was destroyed by a Brahmin, who removed the roof of the mosque to build his

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[407] Battuta, e-edition (Ch. XVIII).

own house. The following night, the legend goes, his house burnt down and he and his family died in the fire. The legend claims that as a result of this, the Brahmins of the city restored the mosque and refrained from damaging it in the future.[408] The death of the Brahmin from Fattan mirrors the death of the 'infidel' king from Dharmadam: both suffer a sudden and violent death for causing injury to Islam.

Christians also devised similar protective legends to protect their lands and their institutions from the Hindu 'infidels'. The Venetian traveller Marco Polo records one such legend associated with the church of St. Thomas in Mylapore (in present-day Tamil Nadu) in the twelfth century. According to this legend, a Hindu landlord used a house of religious significance to deposit the rice grain accumulated during harvest against the will of the church authorities. Subsequently, St. Thomas appeared to the landlord in a vision and, pointing a fork at his throat, ordered him to vacate the sacred house immediately. Alarmed by the vision, the landlord not only removed the grain from the house but also publicly proclaimed that he witnessed the saint in a vision.[409] This legend is remarkably similar to the Muslim legend from Fattan, both ascribing supernatural powers to religious institutions.

The Dharmadam story diverges from other Indian Ocean conversion myths in portraying the ruler's conversion as a standalone event without any kind of impact on his successors, who, it is claimed, were opposed to the new religion of Islam. By conferring supernatural powers to the tree and propagating the myth

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[408] Battuta, e-edition (Ch. XVIII).
[409] Komroff, e-edition (Book 3, Ch. 18).

that the grandfather of the present king built the mosque, the story provides the mosque with legitimacy and protection from the 'infidels'. Thus, the royal conversion story appears to have had the modest aim of protecting the city-mosque built around the tree. The need to formulate such protective legends, centred on the ruler's conversion, suggests that the relationship between the Muslim traders and the Hindu elites was not entirely harmonious and peaceful as some scholars have suggested, at least during the time of the framing of the story. In this context, such stories were perhaps meant to resolve ongoing tensions and rivalries between different religious groups. *The Story of Emperor Perumal* builds on some of the basic premises of the Dharmadam story, but on a wider scale, encompassing the entire region of Kerala – something which it achieves by claiming the conversion of the Perumal to Islam.

5.4. The Story of the Perumal's Conversion to Islam

The Story of Emperor Perumal is a written record of the 'story' ('*qissa*') of the advent of Islam in Kerala. It is formed of three distinct parts, each centred on a figure who was instrumental in the founding of Islam in Kerala: Prophet Muhammad, Cheraman Perumal, and Malik bin Dinar. Among the three parts, only the contents of the second part on '*Shakarwati Farmad*', i.e. 'emperor' Perumal, overlap with the origin stories found in the palace *granthāvari*s. By contrast, the other two parts – centred on the Prophet and Malik bin Dinar – are based in the Islamic traditions.

The Story of Emperor Perumal opens in Mecca with the Prophet performing the miracle of the splitting of the moon in front of Habib bin Malik, an Arabian prince and the brother of Malik bin Dinar. The scene then shifts from Mecca to

India, where the Perumal witnesses the same miracle from his capital in Kodungallor (Makotai) and sees the Prophet in a dream. Perplexed by the miracle, the ruler seeks answers from his astronomers as well as from people visiting his country. Ultimately, he receives the knowledge of Islam from a group of Muslim pilgrims visiting the king in Kodungallor on their way to Ceylon. The meeting with the pilgrims prompts the ruler to set sail to Mecca in their company to meet the Prophet. After his meeting with the Prophet, the Perumal marries Malik bin Dinar's sister and moves to the port town of Shihr (in present-day Sultanate of Oman). There, while making preparations to return to Malabar to spread the faith of Islam, the Perumal meets with his demise. His death coincides with the first day of Muharram in the Islamic calendar (Hijri). Before his death, however, the Perumal had the foresight to entrust Malik bin Dinar and his family to set sail to Kerala and propagate the religion. The Dinar family arrives in Kerala, bearing the Perumal's letter, written in Malayalam with instructions for the new rulers of Kerala to welcome his emissaries. The Dinar family then proceeds to build ten mosques in ten different cities on lands granted by the rulers, paving the way for the establishment of Islam in Kerala.[410]

The Provenance of *The Story of Emperor Perumal*

The opening lines of *The Story of Emperor Perumal* reveal that a descendant of Malik bin Dinar was the source of the text: 'It has been narrated by Muhammad, the son of Malik, from his father Malik, from his grandfather Habib b. Malik, may God be content with them all.'[411] According to Prange, the legend in *The Story of Emperor Perumal* was originally devised by Sufi mystics and later

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[410] Kugle and Margariti, 'Qissat', pp. 349-63.
[411] Kugle and Margariti, 'Qissat', p. 349.

committed to writing by the Arab *ulama* with the aim of legitimizing their status within the Muslim community. Prange points out that *The Story of Emperor Perumal* acknowledges the role of the Sufis in the spread of Islam on the Malabar Coast by casting them as the intermediaries between the Prophet and the Perumal. He supports this assertion further by pointing to the strong association of the name Malik bin Dinar with a famous personality from Sufi folklore.[412] The influence of Sufism is also evident in other aspects of the myth such as the appearance of the Prophet in a dream to the ruler.[413] The roles played by the orthodox *ulama* and the anti-establishment Sufi mystics in propagating this story show that the association between the two groups was particularly close in Malabar, and perhaps in other parts of the Indian Ocean world.[414]

The time and place of the formulation of *The Story of Emperor Perumal* continues to be a matter of contention. Kugle and Margariti argue that it was composed in the Arakkal realm in the context of Muslim state-building in the mid-sixteenth century.[415] Prange dissents from this view, arguing that the story's aim of establishing a space for Islam in Malabar would be unnecessary in a state that was already ruled by a Muslim dynasty.[416] Instead, he proposes that *The Story of Emperor Perumal* is

> the product of a particular time, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, shaped by its specific historical context, the rapid growth of Muslim trade and settlement on the Malabar Coast,

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[412] Prange, *Monsoon Islam*, pp. 240-41.
[413] Jones, p. 155.
[414] Prange, *Monsoon Islam*, p. 246.
[415] Kugle and Margariti, 'Narrating Community', p. 376.
[416] Prange, *Monsoon Islam*, p. 107.

> and evidence of a concrete discursive project, to sanction (or even, sanctify) the legitimacy of a Arab-dominated ulama.[417]

To substantiate his dating of *The Story of Emperor Perumal* to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Prange points to references to multiple port cities in Kerala, a list from which the city of Calicut is conspicuously absent.[418] Since Calicut only rose to prominence in the thirteenth or the fourteenth century, this document can thus be dated to an earlier period.

The third part of *The Story of Emperor Perumal*, detailing the activities of the Dinar family, comes closest to being a factual account. This part is, therefore, useful for situating *The Story of Emperor Perumal* in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Even though the family itself still remains shrouded in legend, the ten cities where they built the first mosques correspond to prominent medieval port cities in Kerala, which, according to Prange, only became noteworthy ports-of-trade during the twelfth century.[419] An inscription found at the mosque built at Madayi (Ezhimala, see fig. 8, p. 261) records its establishment in the year 1124 CE, only two years after the end of the Chera reign.[420] Furthermore, the author of *The Story of Emperor Perumal* acknowledges that the ten mosques received Egyptian gold, a robe, and a turban from Nasir bin Habib bin Malik, the Sultan of Aden and the son of Habib bin Malik.[421] Documentary evidence from Yemen confirms that during the reign of the Rasulid dynasty (1228-1454 CE), the rulers of Aden acted as sponsors of the *qādi*s serving in mosques situated on the west

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[417] Prange, *Monsoon Islam*, p. 108.
[418] Prange, *Monsoon Islam*, p. 100.
[419] Prange, *Monsoon Islam*, p. 100.
[420] Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, p. 344.
[421] Kugle and Margariti, 'Qissat', p. 363.

coast of India.[422]

The Dharmadam story (concerning the supernatural tree) recommends Dharmadam as a possible site for the framing of *The Story of Emperor Perumal*. Though different in terms of the geographical scope, the Dharmadam story shares some parallels with *The Story of Emperor Perumal*, mainly in centring the conversion on a local ruler. Further, Dharmadam forms an integral part of the geographical landscape of *The Story of Emperor Perumal* – it is one of the port cities where the Perumal instructs the Dinar family to disembark on the Malabar Coast and one of the ten cities where the Dinar family proceeds to build a mosque. Moreover, Dharmadam traditionally belonged to the ruler of Kōlathunād, who also reigned over Kannur (the seat of the Arakkal kingdom from the sixteenth century onward) and Kasargod. This site is therefore geographically and politically close to Kannur and Kasargod, both regions indicated by Kugle and Margariti as possible settings of *The Story of Emperor Perumal*.[423]

The Significance of the Perumal as a Royal Convert

Kugle and Margariti argue that *The Story of Emperor Perumal* is the origin legend of the Muslim community, comparable to origin legends of other communities such as the Parasurāman legend of the Brahmins or the St. Thomas legend of the Syrian Christians. In all three cases, they say

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[422] Kugle and Margariti, 'Narrating Community', p. 368.
[423] Kugle and Margariti mark Kasaragod as a possible site for *Qissa*'s formulation on the basis of a local lore that claims Malik bin Dinar died there. Kugle and Margariti, 'Narrating Community', p. 375.

> the origin of the community is metaphorically enacted by a heroic figure who is closely linked with divine authority, and the timing of the origin events is projected back into the remote past in order to emphasize its sacredness.[424]

Kugle and Margariti see the Perumal as performing the same heroic role for the Muslims as Parasurāman did for the Brahmins and St. Thomas did for the Syrian Christians. In each case, the heroic figure is associated with a divine authority: the Prophet, Vishnu, and Jesus, respectively.[425] However, in separating the founder-heroes of Kerala by the origin of the communities who claim them, Kugle and Margariti overlook the shared importance of the Perumal for different communities in Kerala, including Brahmins, Muslims, and Christians. It is against this context the Perumal's role in the founding of Islam becomes significant. I argue that the growing importance of the Perumal among various communities contributed to the formulation of the Islamic conversion myth around this figure. The Dharmadam story gives evidence that conversion myths centred on local rulers existed prior to the conjoining of the myth with a pan-Kerala figure such as the Perumal. This points to some amount of deliberation by the author of *The Story of Emperor Perumal* in choosing Perumal as the royal Muslim convert.

The Story of Emperor Perumal clearly shows that the Perumal's division of his kingdom was a major concern for its author; a mythical division that scholars have argued corresponds to the historical re-organization of the Chera realm into different principalities. According to the text, the Perumal implored the Prophet to pray for the protection of his newly divided realm:

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[424] Kugle and Margariti, 'Narrating Community', pp. 363-64.
[425] Kugle and Margariti, 'Narrating Community', p. 366.

> I have many towns in my realm, and in each town's region I have delegated a ruler, some strong and some weak. I desire that you pray for them that they preserve the boundaries of my realm, so that the strong ones do not take over the lands of the weak ones![426]

The Prophet grants the Perumal's wish and assures the preservation of the realm as he desires, thereby alleviating his anxiety about the affairs of his realm. The articulation of the Perumal's anxiety over his divided kingdom betrays the author's own preoccupation with the status of Islam in the newly organized polity of Kerala. It is against this context that the more historical parts of *The Story of Emperor Perumal*, related to Malik bin Dinar, assume significance.

The Story of Emperor Perumal presents the letter from the Perumal, written in Malayalam, as a binding document between the departed Perumal and his successors. It is this letter that guides the Dinar family to the ports of Malabar through its inclusion of 'the names of the rulers of India, their realms, capitals, treasuries, relatives, armies, and all they would need of the rules and customs of India'.[427] The Perumal's letter instructs the family to disembark either at Kodungallor, the former capital of his kingdom, or at several other ports, namely Dharmadam, Pantalayani Kollam or southern Kollam. The successors of the Perumal grant the newly arrived Dinar family lands, houses, orchards, and fields, in accordance with the Perumal's instructions in his letter. The family then proceeds to build mosques on those lands using stones from Mecca, appoint a *qādi* (a Muslim judge) in each mosque, and a 'chief of the port'

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[426] Kugle and Margariti, 'Qissat', p. 356.
[427] Kugle and Margariti, 'Qissat', p. 358.

('*shahbandar*') in each city.[428] The author credits the Dinar family with building ten mosques in total, each in a different port city (see fig. 8, p. 261): Kollam, Kodungallor, Shaliyat (Chaliyam), Fandarayna (Pantalayani-Kollam), Darmafattan (Dharmadam/Dharmapattanam), Jurfattan (Cannanore/Kannur), Hili (Ezhimala/Madayi), Kasargod, Mangalore, and Faknur (Bhatkal/Barkur).[429] Protecting these mosques appears to be one of the more important aims of *The Story of Emperor Perumal*, an aim which it shares with the Dharmadam story. The only difference lies in the scope of the stories: while the Dharmadam story was intended to protect just one mosque, *The Story of Emperor Perumal* intends to protect the establishment of the Islamic faith throughout the Malabar Coast. *The Story of Emperor Perumal* achieves this by claiming the conversion of the Perumal, a pan-Kerala cultural hero; the locations of all the mosques fall within the political realm represented by the Perumal, extending between Gokarnam and Kanyakumari, as shown in fig. 6 (p. 259).

The Story of Emperor Perumal also serves another purpose, that of establishing the superiority of Islam over Judaism. The twelfth-century Geniza documents (which, Elizabeth Lambourn calls the 'earliest documentary evidence on Malabar and the Indian Ocean networks') corroborate the presence of Jewish settlements in several port cities situated along the south-western coast of India, including Kodungallor, Mangalore, Pantalayani Kollam, Cannanore, and Dharmadam.[430] The fact that *The Story of Emperor Perumal* identifies these

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[428] Kugle and Margariti, 'Qissat', p. 360.
[429] Kugle and Margariti, 'Qissat', p. 363.
[430] Elizabeth Lambourn, 'India in the "India Book": 12th Century Northern Malabar through Geniza Documents', in *Sur Les Chemins d'Onagre: Histoire et Archélogie Orientales*, ed. by Claire Hardy-Guilbert and others (Oxford: Archaeopress Publishing Ltd, 2018), pp. 71–84.

same port cities as sites for the earliest mosques in Kerala shows that Muslims and Jews lived and carried out their occupations in the same areas. In what appears to be a reference to actual historical rivalries between the two groups, *The Story of Emperor Perumal* reports that following the construction of the first mosque at Kodungallor, a civic strife broke out between Muslims and Jews, forcing the Muslims out of the town. It is perhaps against this context that the author takes pains to establish the superiority of Islam over Judaism by claiming that, before his conversion to Islam, the Perumal tested the religious knowledge of the Muslims against that of the Jews and concluded that the Quran was far superior to the Torah.[431]

In the light of these political aims of *The Story of Emperor Perumal*, its more fantastical parts – the moon miracle and the improbable meeting between the Perumal and the Prophet – appear to have had the aim not just of enhancing the status of Muslims in Hindu-ruled kingdoms but also of legitimizing their claim to territories in post-Chera kingdoms. In fact, the legendary meeting between the Perumal and the Prophet forms an integral part of the Māppila songs, specifically the war song (*pata pāttu*) tradition, which according to F. Fawcett, constituted nine-tenths of Māppila literature.[432] This implies that the more fantastical parts of *The Story of Emperor Perumal* circulated independently of its more historical parts.

The royal conversion myths from other parts of the Indian Ocean world could offer a comparative framework for discussing the more fantastical aspects of

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[431] Kugle and Margariti, 'Qissat', p. 354.
[432] F. Fawcett, 'War Songs of the Mappilas of Malabar', in *The Indian Antiquary*, ed. by Richard Carnac Temple, 1901, XXX, 499–508, 528–37.

The Story of Emperor Perumal. Like the Indian Ocean myths, *The Story of Emperor Perumal* draws the Perumal (a local ruler) into the Islamic world (centred in Mecca) by suggesting a link between the ruler and the Prophet. The myth connects the origins of Islam in Kerala to its historical roots in Arabia through the Perumal's transoceanic viewing of a moon miracle performed by the Prophet in Mecca. Whereas in the Indonesian myths, the Prophet only appears in a dream or a vision, in *The Story of Emperor Perumal*, the ruler actually meets the Prophet in Mecca. The Perumal recites the *shahada* in front of the Prophet himself rather than a *sheikh*, as is the case with most Indonesian myths. The Perumal is also given a new name – 'Taj al-Din al-Hindi al-Malabari' ('Crown of the Religion, the Indian and Malabari') – by the Prophet. After his conversion, the ruler resides with the Prophet for five years, which further heightens the ruler's proximity to the founder of the religion.[433]

The attempt to link a local founder-hero (the Perumal) to the founder of a religion (the Prophet) is not just characteristic of Islamic myths but also of origin myths of other religions such as Christianity and Buddhism. As Kugle and Margariti note, the Syrian Christians of Kerala consider St. Thomas to be their founder-hero, which links their early community directly to Jesus and to the first days of Christianity. In a similar vein, the origin myth of Sri Lanka found in the Buddhist chronicle *Mahavamsa* associates the founder-hero Vijaya with Buddhism 'by according him divine protection ordained by the Buddha and making his arrival coincidental with the moment of Buddha's "death"'. In Alan Strathern's analysis, the chronicler contrives to associate Vijaya with the

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[433] Kugle and Margariti, 'Qissat', pp. 356-57.

Buddha since Vijaya 'can never even have heard of the Buddha'.[434] The Vijaya myth also traces Vijaya's origin back to northern India, which is historically viable for the Sinhalese claim to both a Buddhist and an Aryan origin.[435]

The attempt made in *The Story of Emperor Perumal* to associate the advent of Islam in Kerala with the historical Perumal (Rama Kulasekhara, 1089-1122 CE) appears to be anachronistic. However, such anachronisms do not seem unusual when one considers other conversion myths. Jones discusses one such myth from Wajo (Sulawesi), which anachronistically conjoins the coming of Islam to To Udama, a cultural hero and a popular ruler whose reign ended with his death in 1607 CE, some years before the actual introduction of Islam in the region.[436] The myth claims that the ruler prophesied the coming of Islam to his kingdom in the years following his death but, 'In his heart, they say, he was already a Muslim.'[437] Commenting on this anachronism, Jones has stated that in this particular instance, 'the myth has the task of associating with the coming of Islam the hero who had died previously'.[438] A reversion of this logic seems to be at play in *The Story of Emperor Perumal* – it associates the conversion myth with a ruler who likely succeeded the actual advent of Islam in his kingdom but is shown to be a contemporary of Prophet Muhammad and personally responsible for bringing the religion to Kerala.

The story's use of a miracle as the means of the ruler's conversion is a characteristic feature of Indian Ocean conversion myths. Though drawn from

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[434] Strathern, 'Vijaya Origin Myth', p. 22.
[435] Strathern, 'Vijaya Origin Myth', p. 5.
[436] Jones, p. 151.
[437] Jones, p. 152.
[438] Jones, p. 151.

the Islamic traditions, specifically the Quran, the miracle of the splitting of the moon is not specifically mentioned in any of the other myths.[439] Based on his study of two conversion myths from northern India, which also cite the splitting of the moon as the miracle that led the unbeliever to Islam, Y. Friedmann has suggested that the moon miracle was perhaps a matter of some importance to Indian lore.[440] However, unlike the myths from Indonesia, in *The Story of Emperor Perumal* the miracle does not result in the 'sudden, unpremeditated' conversion of the ruler. Instead, after seeing the miracle, the ruler remains perplexed for some time, despite consultations with his astronomers, enquiries with Jewish and Christian visitors to his kingdom, and the Prophet's appearance in a dream. After considerable meditation on the part of the ruler, the mystery is finally explained by a *sheikh* (Shaykh Zahir al-Din b. Shaykh Zaki al-Din al-Madani) who arrives at Kodungallor with a group of Sufis ('*darawish*').[441] In his discussion of the sudden and unprepared conversions in Islamic mysticism, R. A. Nicholson writes, 'All these phenomena, however sudden they may seem, are the climax of an interior conflict that perhaps only makes itself known at the moment when it is already decided.'[442] By representing the confusion of the Perumal after witnessing the miracle, *The Story of Emperor Perumal* potentially offers a peek into this 'interior conflict', which, in turn, could be read

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[439] The Quran mentions the miracle in Surah al-Qamar: 1. See Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 113.
[440] Friedmann, p. 243.
Friedmann discusses two conversion myths from India involving the use of the moon miracle. In the first, from a nondescript Indian village, a merchant named Shaykh Ratan sees the miracle performed by the Prophet, journeys to Arabia to meet the Prophet, and recites the *shahada* in front of him. In the second, a ruler of Ujjain, named Bhoja, sees the moon miracle and sends his *wazir* (minister) to Arabia to make enquiries. The *wazir* meets the Prophet and adopts Islam on behalf of his ruler. After his return, the ruler too converts to Islam and adopts a new name. The ruler then names his *wazir* Shaykh Changal. Both these myths share many features with the Indian Ocean myths: the connection to Mecca and the Prophet; the adoption of new Muslim names; the role of a *sheikh*; the recitation of the *shahada*; and, the use of miracle as a means of conversion. Friedmann, pp. 242-43.
[441] Kugle and Margariti, 'Qissat', p. 353.
[442] In Jones, p. 154.

as a sign of the strong resistance among the rulers toward religious conversion. This, as shown by the Dharmadam story, is a feature that distinguishes myths from Kerala from the Indian Ocean myths.

Much like the Dharmadam story, *The Story of Emperor Perumal* stages the resistance of the Hindu state toward royal conversion through diverse means, namely through the Perumal's attempts to hide his love for the Prophet, his abdication of the throne, and his departure from his kingdom. Despite being confronted with the truth of a new religion, the ruler does not convert at once. Instead, he consults, compares, and contemplates before embracing the new religion. He forbids the *sheikh*'s party visiting his kingdom from revealing his secret conversion to anyone from his country. Having decided to convert, he goes into seclusion for seven days to meditate on the affairs of his realm, at the end of which he decides to divide his kingdom. At Shihr (where he eventually dies), he requests the Dinar family not to reveal his illness to his people, as his death would mean the death of all his people. *The Story of Emperor Perumal* also claims that despite receiving news from the departed king through the letter sent through the Dinar family, 'the infidels (*kuffar*) suppressed the story of the Indian ruler'.[443] All of these signs of secrecy, seclusion, departure, and denial are unique features of *The Story of Emperor Perumal*, and thus, a departure from the traditional form of Indian Ocean conversion myths. The ruler dies in a foreign land, neither returning to his kingdom as a new convert nor regaining his former glory like the Zanji king of Sofala. Nor does his conversion bring about a conversion of his successors or his subjects. Whereas in the Indian Ocean myths, the people identify with their king and accept his

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[443] Kugle and Margariti, 'Qissat', p. 359.

new religion, in *The Story of Emperor Perumal*, the conversion of the ruler results in a rupture between the ruler and his people. This rupture reflects the resistance to Islam among the higher echelons of the Hindu society when compared to the other Indian Ocean regions. This raises the question of how the palace *granthāvaris* received the story of the Islamic conversion of the Perumal current among the Mappilas. To answer this question, I now turn to *The Origin of Kerala*, specifically its account of the Perumal's fate after the division of his country.

5.5. *The Story of Emperor Perumal* and *The Origin of Kerala*

According to the *The Origin of Kerala*, it was a royal error, rather than a moon miracle, that forced the Perumal to abdicate.[444] When the Perumal sought a solution for his error from his Brahmin councillors, they suggested he seek the path of the *baudhas*.[445]

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[444] As mentioned in Chapter Three.

[445] The Brahmin attitude toward the Islamic conversion of the last Perumal seems sympathetic when compared to their attitude toward the Buddhist conversion of an earlier Perumal, known as Vaanan Perumal. The conversion story associated with Vaanan Perumal presents *baudhasastra* (likely Buddhism) as a threat to the Hindu state. The story acknowledges the role played by Brahmins in protecting the state from the whimsical Perumal who had come under the influence of the *baudhas* (Buddhists). According to the story, Brahmins made a pact with the king to conduct a debate (*vivadam*) to prove which among the religious traditions is true and to punish the unsuccessful party with mutilation (by severing their tongues) and banishment from the country. The story goes on to stage the incommensurability of the Vedic and the Buddhist traditions; the *baudhas* suffer mutilation and banishment from the country following their defeat in the *vivadam*. However, the Perumal, having undergone a true conversion of the heart, abdicates and leaves for 'Mecca', entrusting Brahmins with the punishment of the *baudhas* if they were ever to return to the country for another debate. Thereafter, Brahmins appointed a new Perumal to rule the country in accordance to the Vedic principles. See Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', pp. 123-24. Here, 'Mecca' could be a reference to the direction West, as it was current in Malayalam.

The *Origin of Kerala* casts the Perumal as a Kshatriya hero with links to the Aryan centres in northern India.[446] It states that the Perumal wrongfully sentenced to death an innocent man, suggesting he violated the principle of Kshatriya *dharma*. This leads to his abdication and departure from his country, supposedly on a pilgrimage to 'Mecca', since his Brahmin councillors could not find a solution for his sin in either the Hindu *sastras* or the Vedas.

How does the story of Perumal's conversion to Islam fit into this narrative? The references found in *The Origin of Kerala* to the Perumal's Islamic conversion suggests that its author was aware of the story contained in *The Story of Emperor Perumal*.

The Origin of Kerala employs a Buddhist vocabulary to refer to Islam: the adherents of the religion are referred to as *baudhas* (followers of the religion founded by the Buddha) and their scripture is denoted as fourth *Veda*.[447] This could be a sign of Buddhism serving as a bridge religion between Islam and the Hindu traditions. Notwithstanding the Buddhist terminology, it is fairly certain that the target religion of the last Perumal was Islam. In addition to the usage of *baudha*, the followers of the target religion are addressed as *jonaka* – a word derived from the Sanskrit word *yavana*, meaning a Greek or a Muslim.[448] In the Malayalam language, *jonaka* was used as a prefix to distinguish the Māppila

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[446] As mentioned in Chapter Three.

[447] Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', pp. 142-143.
Vaman Shivram Apte, 'Bauddha', *Revised and enlarged edition of Prin. V. S. Apte's The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Poona: Prasad Prakashan, 1957), p. 1172 <https://dsalsrv04.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/app/apte_query.py?qs=बौद्ध&searchhws=yes>.

[448] Arthur Anthony Macdonell, 'Yavana', *A Practical Sanskrit Dictionary with Transliteration, Accentuation, and Etymological Analysis throughout* (London: Oxford University Press, 1929), p. 128 <https://dsalsrv04.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/app/macdonell_query.py?qs=यवन&searchhws=yes> [accessed 27 December 2018].

Muslim from the *nasrani* Māppila (Christian) and the *juda* Māppila (Jew).[449] According to Ronald E. Miller, 'fourth *Veda*' was a term that was current among Muslims to denote the Quran, in contrast to the *Vedas* of *Taurat* (the prophecy of Moses, the Law), the *Zabur* (the prophecy of David, the Psalms), and the *Injil* (the prophecy of Jesus, the Gospel).[450]

The text's acceptance of the Perumal's conversion is in keeping with the social reality of Hindu conversions to Islam, chiefly among the upper castes, where conversion was rarer than the lower castes. In *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*, Zainuddin II draws attention to involuntary Hindu conversions among the high castes, including both men and women, which occurred as a consequence of breaching caste boundaries. The consequences of breaching these boundaries could range from the offender being sold by the ruler, to conversion to Islam or Christianity, to having to become a religious mendicant (*yogi*).[451] Seen in this light, the Perumal's conversion to Islam reflects the prevalent social practice of adopting Islam in the event of violating the principles of *dharma* in the Hindu traditions.[452] This brings us to the immediate event that led to the conversion of the Perumal, a point on which *The Origin of Kerala* and *The Story of Emperor Perumal* diverge.

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[449] Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', p. 140; Logan, *Malabar* (vol. 1), p. 191.
[450] Ronald E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1976), p. 48.
[451] Makhdum, trans. by Rowlandson, p. 44.
[452] The fifteenth-century folk-epic poem *Mantesvami kavya* offers a parallel example from South India of a literary text that accommodates the social reality of Islamic conversion. Mantesvami, who is the hero of the poem, advises the Jangamas (devotees of Lord Siva) who offended him during his visit to the city of Kalyāna that, as a penance for their wrongdoing 'in the human world, they could worship the god saying "Allah Khuda Akabar Imamswami" and they could become Muslims'. In Shobhi's reading of this encounter, Mantesvami's advice incorporates the growing presence of Muslims in medieval Deccan and presents the new religion of Islam as an option for the Jangamas. See Shobhi, p. 97.

The only indication of the Perumal's fate after his abdication in *The Origin of Kerala* is the information that the Perumal decided to adopt the path of the *baudhas* (possibly Islam), invited the adherents of that religion to court from a ship, and then left on a pilgrimage (possibly *hajj*) to Mecca to meet the scholar of the religion (*veda adhiyar* or the scholar of the *veda*, perhaps the Prophet). There are no more details provided on the Perumal's actual journey, his meeting with the Prophet or his death in a foreign land. It follows that the people had no further news on his whereabouts, which is in keeping with the popular Hindu belief of the time that the Perumal simply disappeared. By explaining the fate of the Perumal, *The Story of Emperor Perumal* thus fills a gap in the existing historical tradition. The connection between *The Story of Emperor Perumal* and *The Origin of Kerala* is important for understanding the relevance of the conversion story for the sixteenth century, which will be the focus of the next section.

5.6. Citations of *The Story of Emperor Perumal* in the Sixteenth Century

Citations of *The Story of Emperor Perumal* appear in Māppila records written in Malayalam and in Arabic records like *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* and *The Manifest Conquest*, which were written in the aftermath of the Portuguese arrival. One important development that we see in these citations is their emphasis on the relationship between Perumal and Zamorin. In the Arabic records, in particular, we also see the *ulama* emphasizing distinct parts of *The Story of Emperor Perumal*. For example, in his citation of *The Story of Emperor Perumal* in his poem, *The Manifest Conquest*, Qadi Muhammad focuses on the supernatural and improbable elements of the myth such as the

moon miracle and the Perumal's meeting with the Prophet. By contrast, in *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*, Zainuddin II concentrates on the more historical parts of *The Story of Emperor Perumal* related to Malik bin Dinar's construction of mosques in Kerala. This difference in emphasis in the texts is a sign of the divisions among the *ulama* with respect to the Portuguese.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, *The Story of Emperor Perumal* is silent on the Zamorin and the city of Calicut which rose to prominence in the thirteenth century. This silence suggests that the composition of *The Story of Emperor Perumal* predates the rise of Calicut as the principal port city on the Malabar Coast, as Prange has argued.[453] However, following the political rise of the Zamorin, the Māppila Muslims of the Kozhikode kingdom evidently attempted to draw the Zamorin into the narrative framework of *The Story of Emperor Perumal*. *The Origin of Kerala* incorporates one such story, which is attributed to the Māppilas.

A summarized version of *The Story of Emperor Perumal* appears in *The Origin of Kerala* toward the end of the second section, 'The Age of the Perumals'. The opening line of the paragraph – 'Listen to the antiquary related by the Muslims' ('*Mappillamar parayunna pazhama kettalum*') – suggests that the story came from the Māppilas.[454] The Māppila story opens with the journey of the Perumal to Arabia and adheres to key details of the ruler's journey found in *The Story of Emperor Perumal*, including his meetings with the Prophet and the Dinar family, as well as the family's arrival in Kerala. However, it adds one important

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[453] Prange, *Monsoon Islam*, p. 100.
[454] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 69; Gundert, 'Keralolpathy', p. 147.

detail to what is already known from *The Story of Emperor Perumal*. Whereas *The Story of Emperor Perumal* indicates that the Perumal departed for Mecca from his capital city in Kodungallor, the Māppila account claims that the Perumal made two brief stops during his voyage to Mecca, one at Pantalayani Kollam and the other at Dharmadam, both port cities situated on the northern parts of the Chera domain. The Māppila account also claims that at Dharmadam the Perumal met with the then Zamorin and entrusted him with the protection of a palace in that town.[455] Considering that *The Story of Emperor Perumal* makes no mention of the Zamorin, the suggestion of a meeting between the Perumal and the Zamorin can be read as a later invention made by the Māppilas to legitimize the place of Islam in the Kozhikode kingdom.

Though it adds new details to *The Story of Emperor Perumal*, the Māppila account does not deviate from the basic function of the conversion myth to centre the conversion story around a local power centre. While the departed Perumal held a prominent place in the newly founded post-Chera kingdoms that existed at the time *The Story of Emperor Perumal* was framed, it was the Zamorin who occupied a similar distinction throughout Kerala in the sixteenth century. The Māppila story thus takes the new reality into account in its recounting of an old story.

Qadi Muhammad's citation of *The Story of Emperor Perumal* appears in *The Manifest Conquest*, written in the context of the Zamorin's siege on a Portuguese fort in Chaliyam in 1571. This siege was especially significant for the Māppilas as the Portuguese fort was built in the place of a mosque, which, the

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[455] Menon, *Keralolpatti*, p. 69.

Māppilas believed, was among the first mosques built by Malik bin Dinar on the Malabar Coast. In his brief citation of the myth presented at the end of the poem, the Qadi focuses on the supernatural and the improbable elements of *The Story of Emperor Perumal* such as the Perumal's viewing of the moon miracle, his voyage to Mecca, his meeting with the Prophet, and his recitation of the *shahada* before the Prophet. He attributes the triumph of the Zamorin 'from among all other infidels' to the 'hidden influence of the prayer which the Holy Prophet said for the uncle of the Zamorin on the day of the cleavage of the moon'. The Zamorin's 'uncle', he adds, wished to return to his native country to spread the faith of Islam but died at Zafar (in Yemen). Here, the Qadi enhances the importance of the Zamorin by casting the Perumal as his 'uncle' ('*khāl*', which specifically refers to maternal uncle) which, according to the matrilineal laws of kingship, would make the Zamorin his legitimate successor.[456]

The Qadi's selective focus on the supernatural and improbable elements of *The Story of Emperor Perumal* is in keeping with the Māppila song (*Māppila pāttu*) tradition, especially the war song (*pata pāttu*) tradition, to which *The Manifest Conquest* generically belongs. By focusing on the Perumal's journey toward Mecca, the Qadi not only invokes the ritualistic practice of the Muslim pilgrimage (*hajj*), but also, in the manner of the Sufis, regards conversion as a direct and individual experience.

Unlike the Qadi, who likely based his account of the Perumal's conversion on the Māppila song tradition, Zainuddin II seems to have consulted a written

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[456] Muhammad, *Fat'h al-Mubin*, p. 69 (verses 524-28).

version of *The Story of Emperor Perumal*.[457] Approaching *The Story of Emperor Perumal* from a logical standpoint, Zainuddin II strips the text of all its fantastical elements and, instead, focuses on the more historical parts related to the activities of the Dinar family in Malabar. Against the claim made by *The Story of Emperor Perumal* that the Perumal's conversion occurred in the era of the Prophet, Zainuddin II situates the ruler's conversion in the ninth century (200 AH/822 CE), i.e. two hundred years after the commencement of the Islamic calendar in 622 CE, based on what he calls 'majority opinion'. Zainuddin II's revised chronology challenges some of the most fantastical features associated with *The Story of Emperor Perumal*, such as the ruler's transoceanic viewing of the moon miracle performed by the Prophet, his conversion by means of the miracle, and his meeting with the Prophet. These features are not only at the core of the conversion myth found in *The Story of Emperor Perumal* but, as Zainuddin II himself says, were part of the belief system of the Māppilas during the sixteenth century. He explicitly states that '[t]here is but little truth in this.'[458] Through this dismissal, Zainuddin II consciously positions himself not only against the prevalent Māppila belief of his time but also against the belief held by his contemporary, the Qadi.

In divesting the conversion myth of its supernatural and improbable elements, Zainuddin II appears to have had as his aim the staging of a reliable history of how Islam arrived and spread in Kerala. While he does not question the veracity of the Perumal's conversion to Islam – an important feature of the myth – he claims to have accepted this story on the basis of a report of a grave of a

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[457] Kugle and Margariti, 'Narrating Community', p. 367.
[458] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, pp. 32-33.

Malabari ruler found in Zafar (Yemen).[459] He does not provide this story with greater significance by drawing a link either between the Perumal and the Prophet or between the Perumal and the holy land of Mecca. In fact, he diminishes the significance of the Perumal's conversion by suggesting that his journey ended at Shahar al-Mukalla (Shihr) and hence did not advance to Mecca at all, despite the Perumal's intention to perform the *hajj* (pilgrimage). The interruption in the journey caused by the illness and the death of the ruler meant that he was unable to complete his *hajj*. Such a scenario would vastly diminish the aura of the ruler because he has neither met the Prophet (as *The Story of Emperor Perumal* claims, and *The Manifest Conquest* reiterates) nor has he performed *hajj* – 'a duty obligatory on every Muslim man or woman who has reached the age of puberty and is of sound mind to perform the *hadjdj* [*hajj*] once in his or her life provided that they have the means to do so'.[460]

Committed to the more historical parts of *The Story of Emperor Perumal*, Zainuddin II focuses on the activities of the Dinar family and reproduces the list of ten cities where the family built the first mosques on the Malabar Coast.[461] In

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[459] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 33.
According to Nainar, the grave bears the name 'Abd al-Rahman Samuri', which suggests a connection to the Zamorin rather than the Perumal. Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 116.
Qadi Muhammad, too, identifies the Perumal's burial place as Zafar, rather than Shihr (as given in *The Story of Emperor Perumal*). Both the Qadi and Zainuddin II appear to have therefore made this correction based on evidence that may have come to light after the composition of *The Story of Emperor Perumal*.
[460] B. Lewis, 'Hadjdj', ed. by B. Lewis and others, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 31–38.
A Malayalam proverb captures the popular perception of a Muslim pilgrim who failed to complete the *hajj*, who is referred to as a half-haji (മുറിഹാജി): 'A half-doctor will kill a person; a half-haji will kill the faith' (മുറിവൈദ്യൻ ആളെ കൊല്ലും മുറിഹാജി ദീൻ കൊല്ലും). Hermann Gundert, 'Ayirathirunooru Pazhanchol (Twelve Hundred Malayalam Proverbs)', in *Kerala Pazhama, Keralolpathy, Ayirathirunooru Pazhanchol* (Kottayam: Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society & State Bank of Travancore, 2014), pp. 169–206 (p. 196).
In the light of this proverb, Zainuddin II's version of the myth can be read as efficaciously reducing the ruler to a half-haji.
[461] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 32.

a departure from *The Story of Emperor Perumal*, Zainuddin II does not suggest a familial connection between the Perumal and Malik bin Dinar. Instead, he reports that the Dinar family was already headed to Malabar to spread the faith of Islam when they met the ruler at Shahar al-Mukalla and received a letter of introduction from him.[462] It is plain from this excision that for Zainuddin II, it was not the Perumal's conversion but the arrival of the Dinar family in Kerala and their acceptance of land grants from the local rulers that was of historical relevance. Moreover, for him, it was the settlement of Muslims in Kozhikode under the leadership of the Dinar family that led to the rise of Calicut and the rise to prominence of the Zamorins.[463] In his retelling, the Perumal acts not as the founder-hero of Islam, but more as a facilitator for the establishment of the religion in Kerala.

There could be many reasons for Zainuddin II's unique approach to *The Story of Emperor Perumal*, which not only went against the popular Māppila belief of his time, but also against the narrative logic of conversion myths, which in general and throughout the Indian Ocean world strove to associate local rulers with the Prophet and Mecca. One reason for this approach could be his lack of a sense of belonging to the land of Kerala. This could be attributed to his family's recent immigration from Yemen.[464] His lack of belonging is also apparent in his disdain for the cultural proximity between Māppilas and Hindus, which

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[462] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, pp. 30-31.
[463] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 45.
[464] Zainuddin II belonged to the Makhdum family, who emigrated from Ma'bar in Yemen and settled down in Ponnani in the second half of the fifteenth century. Zainuddin I (Zainuddin II's grandfather) built the famous *jum'ah* mosque of Ponnani, where Zainuddin II received his primary education. See A. I. Vilayathullah, 'Short Biography of Shaykh Zainuddin', in *Tuhfat Al-Mujāhidīn: A Historical Epic of the Sixteenth Century*, trans. by S. M. H. Nainar (Malaysia: Islamic Book Trust, 2006), pp. xvii–xxiii.

becomes clear from his denouncement of the practice of matrilineal inheritance by the Māppilas:

> This custom of denying inheritance right to male children, following the Hindu practice, has crept into most families of the Muslim community in Kannur and the neighbouring places. They read the Qur'an; they learn it by heart; they recite it beautifully; they acquire religious learning; they perform prayers and other forms of worship; yet it is extremely strange and surprising that this custom prevails among them.[465]

A second reason could be his growing distrust of the Zamorins in the aftermath of the Portuguese arrival. This could have also been his motivation for dedicating *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* to a foreign ruler, Sultan Adil Shah of Bijapur. A third reason might have to do with his legal training and his pursuit of a legal aim through his recounting of *The Story of Emperor Perumal*. By focusing on the land grants received by the Dinar family, Zainuddin II appears to have had as his aim the consolidation of Muslim lands in Kerala as part of the *dār al-Islām* or 'the land of Islam' – a theological idea promoted by him to resist Portuguese incursions on Muslim lands in the Indian Ocean.

Conclusions

In the specific context of Kerala, *The Story of Emperor Perumal* served the aim of legitimizing the place of Islam in the Hindu-ruled kingdoms on the Malabar Coast by promoting the legend about the conversion of a great ruler of the land to Islam. The story's emphasis on the figure of the Perumal suggests that the Muslim author shared the territorial vision of the local Hindu rulers. As we will see in the next chapter, the Perumal also served another important political aim

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[465] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 40.

in the context of Portuguese-Muslim conflicts in the Indian Ocean: to legitimize the establishment of the first Muslim-ruled state in Kerala by the Ali Rājās, a Māppila trading group from Kannur.

The existence of similar stories around the Indian Ocean world suggests that Muslims (especially those whose ancestors first made contact with various parts of that world as traders and not as invaders) employed similar storytelling and history writing modes to express their sense of belonging to specific regions. However, the crucial difference that I bring out is that, unlike other parts of the Indian Ocean world, none of the rulers in Kerala appear to have actually converted to Islam. In this context, the Perumal's conversion assumes greater significance as a founding event of the Māppila Muslims. This is a testament to the power of founder-heroes to mediate between divergent literary, historical, and religious traditions.

My analysis of the sixteenth-century citations of *The Story of Emperor Perumal* has brought to the fore divisions among the *ulama* in the context of the Portuguese arrival. While the Qadi's citation is a sign of his continued allegiance to the local ruler (the Zamorin), Zainuddin II's citation raises questions about his political affiliations. The next chapter will further explore these divisions considering the *jihad* literature produced by the *ulama*. Specifically, I will look at Zainuddin II's vision for a politically unified 'land of Muslims' in the Indian Ocean, which he bases on the more historical parts of *The Story of Emperor Perumal*, that is, on the activities of Malik bin Dinar and his family in Kerala.

Chapter Six:
'The Land of Muslims':
Portuguese-Muslim Encounters on the Malabar Coast

In July 1499, soon after the return of one of the ships from Vasco da Gama's fleet, King Manuel I (r. 1495-1521) wrote the following letter to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Castile, conveying his strategy for the Indian Ocean:

> And your Highnesses may believe, in accordance with what we have learnt concerning the Christian people whom these explorers reached, that it will be possible, notwithstanding that they are not as yet strong in the faith or possessed of a thorough knowledge of it, to do much in the service of God and exaltation of the Holy Faith, once they shall have been converted and fully fortified (confirmed) in it. And when they shall thus have been fortified in the faith there will be an opportunity for destroying the Moors of those parts. Moreover, we hope, with the help of God, that the great trade which now enriches the Moors of those parts, through whose hands it passes without the intervention of other persons or peoples, shall, in consequence of our regulations be diverted to the natives and ships of our own kingdom, so that henceforth, all Christendom, in this part of Europe, shall be able, in a large measure, to provide itself with these spices and precious stones. This, with the help of God, who in His mercy thus ordained it, will cause our designs and intentions to be pushed with more ardour in *the war upon the Moors* of the territories conquered by us in these parts, which your Highnesses are so firmly resolved upon, and in which we are equally zealous.[466] (my italics)

The letter includes both implicit and explicit references to earlier Christian-

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[466] This letter is included as Appendix A in *Journal of the First Voyage of Vasco Da Gama*, trans. by E. G. Ravenstein (London: Hakluyt Society, 1898), p. 114.
In the original: *[A]lem de o trauto primcipall, de que toda a mourama d aquelas partessse aproveytave, e que por suas mãos sse fazia, sem outras pessoas, nem linhajeens nisso entemderem, se mudar e comunicar per esta minha parte descuberta a toda a christyndade, que ssera, com ajuda d elle mesmo Deos, que assy por sua piedade ho hordena, mais causa de nossas temçoes e preposytos com mais fervor se eixerçitarem, por sseu serviço, na gerra dos mouros, pera que Vossas Alltezas teem tanto proposyto e nos tanta devaçam.* See *Alguns Documentos do Archivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo ácerca das Navegações e Conquistas Portuguezas* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1892), p. 96.

Muslim conflicts in Europe: the Crusades, which saw the advance of Christendom against Islam in the Western, Central and Eastern Mediterranean in the eleventh century; and the 'reconquest' (*reconquista*) of Iberia from Islamic rule in the thirteenth century.[467] The use of the term *mouros* ('Moors'), which applied primarily to Muslims in the Mediterranean region, to refer to the Muslims of Kerala suggests both political and theological enmity, as Bindu Malieckal has noted.[468] Operating on the assumption that the newly discovered world was divided between Muslims and Christians, Manuel proposes the renewal of the Crusades against Muslims in the newly discovered territories in the Indian Ocean. As he makes clear in his letter, the proposed war was driven by commercial concerns: to divert the Indian Ocean trade from the 'Moors' to the natives and ships of Portugal so that Christendom in Europe could be enriched with wealth from the East.

This chapter focuses on the impact of Manuel's proposed 'war upon the Moors' (*'gerra dos mouros'*) on the Māppila Muslims of Kerala. I begin by examining the extent to which the Portuguese rhetoric of war translated into reality, citing instances of both conflict and co-operation between the Portuguese and the Muslims on the Malabar Coast. Second, I look at literary responses to this war, specifically in the *jihad* literature produced by the *ulama* of Kozhikode, in works like *Instigating the Believers* by Zainuddin I, *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* by Zainuddin II (grandson of Zainuddin I), and *The Manifest Conquest* by Qadi Muhammad. Third, I examine Zainuddin II's vision for a global Muslim

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[467] B. Lewis, 'Ifrandj', ed. by B. Lewis and others, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 1044–46; Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia*, p. 300.
[468] Bindu Malieckal, 'Muslims, Matriliny, and A Midsummer Night's Dream: European Encounters with the Mappilas of Malabar, India', *The Muslim World*, 95.2 (2005), p. 302.

resistance against the Portuguese, encapsulated in the theological idea of *dār al-Islām* or 'the land of Muslims' in the Indian Ocean. I then look at local manifestations of *jihad* across the Indian Ocean world and the transmutation of the word *kāfir* in the early modern period. My aim in this chapter is to investigate if and how the idea of *jihad* influenced the local Māppila Muslim response to the Portuguese and impacted their sense of territorial belonging in Kerala, and their modes of history writing and storytelling centred on the figure of the Perumal.

6.1. Conflict and Cooperation on the Malabar Coast

The first years following Gama's voyage to Calicut witnessed particularly brutal attacks on Muslim life and property on the Malabar Coast. A notable example of Portuguese brutality directed against Muslims is the burning of a Muslim pilgrim ship, the *Miri*, from Calicut during a second voyage led by Gama in 1502. An eyewitness account of this event by a Dutch sailor on board Gama's ship relates the ferocity with which Gama attacked the 'Meccha ship'. The Dutch sailor records that Gama and his crew robbed the ship and then proceeded to burn the ship and its people, 'of which were 380 men many women and children', with gun powder.[469] According to Gaspar Corrêa, Gama was motivated to burn this ship by his knowledge that the ship belonged to a chief merchant from Calicut who was on board and whom Gama held responsible for

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[469] *Calcoen: A narrative of the second voyage of Vasco da Gama to Calicut 1502*, trans. by J. Ph. Berjeau, pdf version (London: Basil Montagu Pickering, 1874), p. 33.
This book was first printed in Antwerp circa 1504 and was translated into English by Berjeau in 1874. According to Berjeau, the manuscript copy was given to him by a bibliophile to translate into French. He claims that the book is not a translation of any previous work in Portuguese, Spanish, or Italian, and was written by a Dutch officer or sailor who took an active part in Vasco da Gama's expedition.

an attack on a Portuguese factor in Calicut two years before.[470] Further evidence for this motive appears when the Dutch sailor reveals more violent acts that Gama committed after this incident, acts solely directed towards Calicut ('*Calcoen*'), while other port cities of Malabar were left unscathed. The sailor recounts that the crew captured a great number of people in Calicut, hanged them on the yards of the ships, and then cut of their hands, feet and heads.[471] During the same voyage, Gama requested the Zamorin (r. 1500-1513) to expel all the Muslims who came from Cairo and the Red Sea from Calicut. The Zamorin, however, refused this one the grounds that the four thousand Muslim households in Calicut 'as natives, not as strangers, and from [them] his kingdom had received much profit'.[472]

Portuguese assaults on Calicut continued throughout the first decades of the sixteenth century. Assessing the impact of these assaults, Duarte Barbosa, who resided in Calicut for some time, wrote of the disappearance of foreign Muslims from Calicut: '[T]hey continued to thrive until the Portuguese came to India. Now there are, it may almost be said, none, and those that there are do not live independently'.[473] In his evaluation, the obstruction on the Muslim merchants had another critical effect: that of curtailing the spread of Islam and the growth of the indigenous Māppila community. According to Barbosa, the most important result of the Portuguese Crown's campaign was in preventing the rise of Muslim power in the region; if not for the Portuguese arrival, says Barbosa,

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[470] Gaspar Correa, *The Three Voyages of Vasco Da Gama, and His Viceroyalty*, trans. by Henry E. J Stanley (New York: Burt Franklin, 1869), p. 313.
[471] *Calcoen*, trans. by Berjeau, p. 34 (pdf version).
[472] Pearson, *The Portuguese in India*, p. 73 (from Barros, *Da Asia*, 1, vi, 5).
[473] Barbosa, trans. by Dames (vol. 2), 78.
In the Portuguese edition: '[P]rosperavam estes antes da ida dos portugueses à Índia; já agora não há quási nenhuns e esses que há não vivem soltos'. Barbosa, ed. by Machado, p. 162.

Malabar would have had a Moorish king.[474]

Though the Portuguese crusade against Muslims achieved some of its intended results in Calicut, it could not sustain itself in the wider context of the Indian Ocean where Muslims dominated maritime trade and politics. Muslim merchants who were well integrated into the Indian Ocean trade system were also vital sources of information for the newly arrived Portuguese traders. The ship diary from Gama's first voyage to Calicut credits several Muslim intermediaries for their integral role in the successful completion of the voyage: a pilot from Gujarat who directed Gama from Malindi in East Africa to Calicut, two merchants from Tunisia who spoke Castilian and received the Portuguese crew at Calicut, and a Jew-turned-Muslim trader from Goa, whom Gama captured and christened Gaspar da Gama.[475] One of the Tunisian merchants, named Monsayeed, decided to follow Gama on his voyage back to Lisbon following accusations by the locals that he was a Christian spy working for the king of Portugal.[476] Gaspar da Gama, who was also later taken by Gama to Lisbon, proved to be one of the most valuable additions to the journey. As well as familial ties to Calicut, he had a vast knowledge of the geographical layout of the Indian Ocean world. It was Gaspar da Gama who provided information to the scribe of the ship journal on the price of spices in Alexandria and the kingdoms that lay in the region south of Calicut, extending to southeast Asia.[477] He accompanied the Portuguese on later voyages and mediated with the

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474 Barbosa, trans. by Dames (vol. 2), p. 74.
475 Fardilha and Fernandes, pp. 145, 146 & 161.
476 Fardilha and Fernandes, p. 157.
477 Gaspar da Gama is generally regarded as the source for two appendices found attached to the *Journal of Vasco da Gama*, one titled '*Descrição de alguns reinos*' ('Descriptions of some kingdoms') and the other titled '*Este é preço por que se vende a especiaria em Alexandria*' ('Prices of the spices in Alexandria'). See Fardilha and Fernandes, pp. 83-86.

Zamorin and the Kochi *Rājāh* on behalf of the Portuguese. He also apprised Pedro Álvares Cabral of the existing enmity between the Zamorins and the Kochi *Rājāhs*, thereby paving the way for the Portuguese alliance with the Kochi *Rājāh* in their war against the Zamorins.[478] Go-betweens like Monsayeed and Gaspar da Gama fit the description of 'transactional go-between', a category proposed by Alida C. Metcalf to include 'translators, negotiators, and cultural brokers' in the Portuguese colonization of Brazil. According to Metcalf, 'transactional go-betweens possessed complex and shifting loyalties'.[479] This is evident in Monsayeed's decision to follow Vasco da Gama to Lisbon and in Gaspar da Gama's fluid religious identity and shifting political allegiances.

While they were engaged in sustained warfare with the Zamorins and the Calicut Muslims, the Crown officials adopted the policy of cooperation with Muslims from the allied kingdoms of Kochi, Vēnād (Kollam), and Kōlathunād (Kannur). The Marakkārs and the Māppilas of Kochi were indispensable to the Portuguese for the procurement of spices due to their strong ties to the spice-producing areas inland. The Marakkārs also acted as the principal suppliers of food to the Portuguese factories that were situated on the coast and hence cut off from the production centres. According to Malekandathil, until the second decade of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese directed their 'crusading spirit' only against foreign Muslims, while sparing the indigenized Marakkārs and the Māppilas, whom they assimilated into their commercial system as collaborators and partners. Unlike Calicut Muslims, indigenous Muslims from the Portuguese-allied Hindu kingdoms could trade in the Indian Ocean unmolested

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[478] Panikkar, *Malabar and the Portuguese*, p. 42.
[479] Alida C. Metcalf, *Go-Betweens and the Colonization of Brazil, 1500-1600* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), p. 10.

on the condition that they carried the Portuguese license (*cartaz*). Following the policy of intermarriage implemented by Afonso de Albuquerque (in office, 1509-1515), many Portuguese traders married Marakkār women, and so became better integrated into the Marakkārs' trading networks that extended into the eastern Indian Ocean.[480]

By the 1520s, however, even the Muslim traders from the Portuguese-allied kingdoms were being subjected to increased scrutiny and control by the Portuguese. According to Malekandathil, the entry of Portuguese settlers (*casados*) from Kochi into the intra-Asian trade contributed to this conflict. In response to these heightened tensions, the Marakkār clan shifted their base from Kochi to Kozhikode and declared their allegiance to the enemy of the Portuguese, the Zamorin (r. 1522-1529). The Marakkārs revived the declining trade of the kingdom by providing military support to traders, employing tactics such as coastal patrolling along the Malabar Coast and offensive attacks on Portuguese ships. Around the same time, Māmale Marakkār initiated the process of setting up a Muslim-ruled state in Kannur, where he had previously enjoyed the right to administration of trade granted by the Kōlathiri.[481] Events from the 1520s had a long-lasting impact on Portuguese-Muslim relations and Hindu-Muslim relations on the Malabar Coast. It is against this context of renewed conflict between the Portuguese and the Muslims that the idea of *jihad* against the Portuguese gained momentum in texts like *Instigating the*

[480] Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, pp. 134-35.
[481] Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, pp. 137-41.

Believers, *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*, and *The Manifest Conquest*, produced by the *ulama* from Kozhikode.[482]

6.2. Instigating the Muslims for *Jihad* Against the Portuguese

The *ulama* of Kozhikode gave a scathing response to the Portuguese incursions on Muslim land, trade and property on the Malabar Coast and the wider Indian Ocean world. In their writings, the *ulama* emphasize the Christian identity of the Portuguese, invoking parallels with the Crusades. They denote the Portuguese as *Ifrandj* or 'Frank' – a descriptor used by Muslim chroniclers in the East to refer to the crusaders.[483] Both Zainuddin I and Qadi Muhammad invoke the Crusades by referring to the Portuguese as 'worshippers of the cross' ('*abdati sulban*'). Zainuddin I displays this idea prominently in the extended title of his poem *Tahrid Ahlil Iman Ala Jihadi Abdati Sulban* ('*Instigating the Believers for Jihad against the Worshippers of the Cross*').[484] Equating the Portuguese with the non-Muslim idol-worshipping populations from the Indian

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[482] The manuscript copy of *Instigating the Believers* was found in the possession of K. K. Muhammad Abdul Kareem and was first published in 1996. In 2012, another copy, found in the private collection of V. Muhammad Sahib, was published along with an English translation by K. M. Mohamed. This thesis consults this latest publication.
The Tribute to the Holy Warriors was first translated into English by Rowlandson, an East India Company official, in 1833. The Arabic original was first published, along with its Portuguese translation, by Lopes in 1898. Nainar has published the most recent translation of this text in 2006. This thesis consults the 2009 edition of Nainar's publication.
Qadi Muhammad authored a number of texts on *jihad*. The first English translation of *The Manifest Conquest* by M. A. Muid Khan appeared in 1975. Khan based this translation on an unpublished Arabic manuscript, which he found inserted between section three and section four of the manuscript copy of *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* in the India Office Library, London. The location of this manuscript suggests that the English East India Company acquired it during the colonial period – perhaps alongside *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*. The latest English translation of this text appeared in 2015, along with its Arabic original. This thesis consults this publication.
Among the Qadi's other works are, *Khutbat al-Jihādiya* ('*The Jihadic Sermon*') and *Qasidath al-Jihādiyya* ('*The Jihadic Poem*'). Kooria recently translated *The Jihadic Sermon* into English.
[483] Lewis, p. 1045.
By the sixteenth century, the descriptor *Ifrandj* was adopted in most Muslim countries to describe European Christians in general. Lewis, p. 1046.
[484] See Ali.

Ocean world, the *ulama* also describe the Portuguese as *kāfir* (plural: *kuffar*).[485] Zainuddin II emphasizes this correspondence by referring to both the Portuguese and the Hindus of Malabar as *kuffar* within the same text.[486] This parallel is also brought out by Qadi Muhammad, who, in *The Manifest Conquest*, writes, 'The Frank who worships the cross and prostrates before pictures and idols.'[487] Similarly, in his work, *The Jihadic Sermon*, the Qadi characterizes the Portuguese as 'the image-worshipping idolatry Christians'.[488]

It was Zainuddin I who first laid the ground for *jihad* (holy war) in his poem *Instigating the Believers,* written sometime before his death in 1522.[489] In the poem, he interprets *jihad* as an individual responsibility 'incumbent on each Muslim/Who is healthy and equipped with provisions' based on the idea that the Portuguese had 'entered the houses of Muslims/And incarcerated Islamic Sharia's followers.'[490] Here, Zainuddin I interprets *jihad* as a defensive war against the Portuguese. A series of *jihadi* texts followed, notably by Zainuddin II and Qadi Muhammad, which together formed the corpus of *jihad* literature – a genre that came to define the writing of the *ulama* during the sixteenth century. Drawing heavily from the Quran and the Prophetic traditions, these texts propagated the ideals of *jihad* and martyrdom among Muslims from Malabar

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[485] In its original Arabic usage, *kāfir* signified 'obliterating, covering', 'concealing benefits received', or 'ungrateful'. In the Quran, *kāfir* is used in the sense of 'concealing God's blessings' to denote an unbeliever or a non-Muslim. W. Björkman, 'Kāfir', ed. by E. van Donzel, B. Lewis, and C. H. Pellat, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 407–9 (p. 407). According to Björkman, during the first days of Islam, *kāfir* was used to distinguish the followers of Islam from the pagan Meccans who endeavoured 'to refute and revile the Prophet'. With the spread of Islam through the Arabian trade networks, the word developed common currency in the Indian Ocean world, where it was used by Muslims to describe those they considered to be idol-worshipping infidels. For instance, Ibn Battuta refers to the rulers of the Malabar Coast as 'infidel' or *kāfir*. Battuta, e-edition (Ch. XVIII).
[486] Makhdum, trans. by Lopes.
[487] Muhammad, *Fat'h al-Mubin*, p. 24 (verse 55).
[488] Kooria, 'Khutbat Al-Jihādiyya', p. 70.
[489] Kooria, 'Tahrid Ahlil Iman', p. 32.
[490] Ali, p. 63 (section 2: verses 26 & 29)

and the Indian Ocean world.

Zainuddin I perceived the Portuguese arrival in Kerala as divine retribution sent by God upon Muslims for deviating from the path of Islam. He articulates this belief in the last section of *Instigating the Believers*, titled 'Corruption and Injustice of Israelites,' where he narrates the story of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, who raided Jerusalem, burnt the holy books, demolished the temple, and abducted the children of the Israelites. He calls the raids a punishment sent by God upon the children of Jacob for committing sin, deception, and injustice. When the Israelites repented their sins, God helped them rescue their children; however, they soon reverted to disobedience, for which they were punished by foreign conquest again, and so the pattern continued.[491] Echoing his grandfather's vision of divine retribution, Zainuddin II writes, 'The Muslims began to deviate into sinful living, forgetting the blessings of Allah and disobeying Him, and then Allah sent the cruel and wicked Portuguese Europeans to dominate over them.'[492] He asserts that the Portuguese only targeted Muslims, while sparing the Nāirs and other 'unbelievers' of Malabar.[493]

Zainuddin I underlines the parallels between the cruel Babylonian king and the Portuguese by recounting the many atrocities committed by the Portuguese against Muslims. In the opening section of *Instigating the Believers*, he produces a detailed list of atrocities committed by the Portuguese, which touch upon every aspect of Muslim life: burning mosques, desecration of the Quran,

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[491] Ali, pp. 76-77 (section 15)
[492] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 5.
[493] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 58.

rape of women, demolishing commercial hubs, blocking the passage of *hajj* pilgrims, inducing Muslims to worship the cross, and ridiculing Islam and Muslims.[494] In the following decades, the other *ulama* can be seen taking this rhetoric forward, emphasizing, in particular, the Portuguese attempts at conversion of Muslims to Christianity. For example, in *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*, Zainuddin II observes that '[t]he ardent desire of the Portuguese at all times had been to make the Muslims renounce the faith of Islam and convert them to Christianity'.[495] Similarly, in *The Jihadic Sermon*, Qadi Muhammad reports the forceful conversion of Muslims into Christianity.[496]

The intended audience of the texts comprised Muslim traders as well as rulers who cooperated with the Portuguese, perhaps because religious identity was of little significance to them. This is evidenced by the stringent warnings issued by the *ulama* against both economic and political cooperation between Muslims and the Portuguese. For example, Zainuddin I declares that Allah has prohibited any kind of association with the Portuguese. He cautions that Muslims who disobey this warning risk losing their property in this world and the other world, where they will face additional humiliation, fire, ruin, and violence.[497] To underscore this message, he compares the Portuguese with Auj ibn 'Unq, the giant king of Bashan, who was slain by Moses. He writes that the companions of Moses left him alone to fight against Auj ibn 'Unq and for this sin they wandered for forty years and got lost in labyrinths. Through this story, Zainuddin I warns Muslims that they will be subjected to humiliation and God's

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494 Ali, pp. 61-63 (section 1).
495 Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 58.
496 Kooria, 'Khutbat Al-Jihādiyya', p. 71.
497 Ali, p. 69 (verses 84-87).

curse if they flee on the day of battle.[498] In other texts, the other *ulama* too vehemently oppose any kind of association between Muslims and Portuguese.

For Zainuddin I, the end goal of *jihad* was religious martyrdom. In various sections of *Instigating the Believers*, he reproduces verses from the Quran and the Hadith to entice Muslims to deliberately seek martyrdom. In one of the quoted Quranic verses, martyrs are promised 'Seventy-two beautiful buxom Houris' who 'Will hurry up to become their good wives'.[499] In another verse, he urges Muslims to cure themselves of the 'secret disease' that is the 'love of this world and hatred of death', which he says would only make the enemy powerful; he implores them to fight and think of death instead.[500] The other *ulama*, too, replicate these ideas in their works. For instance, in *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*, Zainuddin II cites a story from the lifetime of the Prophet: during the battle of Uhud, a man asks the Prophet where he shall be if he were to be killed in the battle; the Prophet replies, 'In the heaven'. On hearing this, the man runs to the battleground and fights until he is slain.[501] To alleviate the fear of death, Zainuddin II assures the reader that a martyr feels the pangs of death only 'as light as that of a bite'.[502] Furthermore, he presents martyrdom as the most desirable thing in the world, so much so that a martyr would aspire to return to this world and be killed ten times over.[503]

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[498] Ali, p. 70 (verse 97).
[499] Ali, p. 68 (verse 77).
[500] Ali, p. 72 (verses 119-121).
[501] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 19.
[502] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 23.
[503] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, pp. 18-19.

Zainuddin II, in particular, appears to have a second goal in mind, one more political than religious: to consolidate Muslim power in the Indian Ocean against Portuguese imperial expansion. This goal sets his vision of *jihad* apart from the vision of his grandfather, as well as from his contemporary, the Qadi – neither of whom propose a change in the existing political structure. The Qadi's text is especially fulsome with praise for the leadership of the Zamorin, painting him as an exemplary ruler who is worthy of emulation, even by the Muslim rulers. A closer look at Zainuddin II's vision of *jihad* brings out his political vision and, in particular, the challenge that his vision poses to the existing structure.

6.3. A Theological Defence of the Muslim Territories in Malabar

In the opening lines of the first section of *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*, Zainuddin II elaborates how the concept of *jihad* applied to the region of Kerala, where Muslims lived as subjects of the Hindu rulers:

> Know then: there are two sets of unbelievers. One is the group that permanently dwells in their countries. *Jihad* against them is a collective duty, that means if some among the Muslims discharge that responsibility, then, the rest of them will be released from that duty. If nobody undertakes to do it, the entire community will be held responsible for committing sin of negligence. The other set of unbelievers are those who invade Muslim territories as is the situation we are facing now. Engaging them in war in such circumstances is the responsibility of every able-bodied individual adult Muslim, male and female living in the city. For this, no slave has to wait for the permission of his master, nor a wife that of her husband, nor the borrower that of the lender and nor the children that of their parents.[504]

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[504] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 13.

Like his grandfather, Zainuddin II interprets *jihad* as a defensive war which is, moreover, an 'individual obligation' (*farz 'ayn*), i.e. one that requires the participation of all Muslims, irrespective of their status or position in society.[505]

Through his territorial demarcation between 'unbelievers' (*kuffar*) and 'believers', Zainuddin II invokes two Islamic principles: *dār al-Islām*, which stands for Muslim territories, and its opposite, *dār al-harb*, which is the dwelling place of the 'unbelievers.' In Islamic jurisprudence terms (*fiqh*), *dār al-Islām* ('the land of Islam') derives its territorial unity from 'the unity of the faith, the unity of the law, and the guarantees assured to the members of the *ummah* (community)'.[506] On the other hand, *dār al-harb* or 'the land of war' refers to territories where the worship of the faithful and the protection of the three peoples of the Book (Jews, Christians and Muslims) are not regulated by Muslim law. In theory, *dār al-Islām* could become *dār al-harb* if non-Muslims conquered Islamic territories and replaced its law. Conversely, a non-Muslim territory could be regarded as *dār al-Islām* so long as a single provision (*hukm*) of the Muslim law is kept in force.[507]

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[505] *Jihad* as a military action has as its object the expansion of Islam. According to E. Tyan, this idea stems from the fundamental principle of the universality of Islam. In Islamic jurisprudence texts, exceptions to *jihad* are made to the followers of the book (*ahl al-Kitab*), such as Christians and Jews (*dhimmis*), who are considered equal in purity to the Muslims and could therefore qualify as subjects of the law. In *dār al-Islām* non-Muslim followers of the book are regarded as legal subjects with rights and obligations but are required to pay tax (*djizya* or *kharādj*) to the Muslim state. Similarly, in *dār al-harb* non-Muslim followers of the book could pay tax and make a claim to protection by law when under attack by Muslims. In theory, it is affirmed that 'the Muslim commits a punishable offence if he says to the Christian or Jew: "Thou unbeliever"'. However, in practice, such principles of leniency were flouted, especially during times of persistent wars such as the Crusades. See Björkman, p. 408.
In the interpretation of *jihad* as an offensive war, *jihad* becomes a 'collective obligation' (*farz kifaya*). See E. Tyan, 'Djihād', ed. by B. Lewis, C. H. Pellat, and J. Schacht, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 538–40.
[506] A. Abel, 'Dār Al-Islām', ed. by B. Lewis, C. H. Pellat, and J. Schacht, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 127–28.
[507] A. Abel, 'Dār Al-Harb', ed. by B. Lewis, C. H. Pellat, and J. Schacht, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 126.

In 'Custom and Conversion in Malabar', Enseng Ho raises the following question: being that Malabar (Kerala) was not originally Muslim and Muslims constituted only a small proportion of its population, 'so on what basis could al-Malibari [Zainuddin II] claim that they were defending their own country against interlopers?'[508] According to Ho, Zainuddin II answers this question in the third section of *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*, translated by Ho into English and published as 'An Account of the Strange Customs of the Malabar Unbelievers'.[509] In this section, Ho writes, there is evidence that Islam became entrenched in Malabar through a process of 'cross-cultural interaction' and 'mutual moral adjustment', making the religion 'a genuine part of Malabar society, even as Muslims continued trading and consorting with foreign lands and peoples'.[510] However, it seems that Zainuddin II, a legal jurist by profession, had something more than just the deep-rootedness of Islam in mind while conceptualizing Malabar as a part of *dār al-Islām*. More clues may be found in the second section of *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* where Zainuddin II recounts the story of the Perumal.

The Right of Muslims to Lands in Kerala

In the last chapter, we looked at the way in which Zainuddin II disputed the supernatural and improbable elements found in *The Story of Emperor Perumal*, instead giving weight to the more historical parts of the text – those

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[508] Enseng Ho, 'Custom and Conversion in Malabar: Zayn al-Din al-Malibari's Gift of the Mujahidin: Some Accounts of the Portuguese', in *Islam in South Asia in Practice*, ed. by Barbara D. Metcalf (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), pp. 403–8 (p. 404).
[509] The translation was based on two very similar Arabic recensions of Zainuddin II's book: Hamza Chelakodan, ed., Tuhfat al-Mujahidin fi-ba'd akhbar al-Burtughaliyyin (Calicut, India: Maktabat al-Huda, 1996); and, Amin Tawfiq al-Tayyibi, ed., Tuhfat al-Mujahidin fi-ba'd akhbar al-Burtughaliyyin (Tripoli, Libya: Kuliyyat al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya, 1987.
[510] Ho, p. 404.

relating to the activities of Malik bin Dinar and his family in Malabar. Zainuddin II reiterates that the Dinar family received lands and estates from the local rulers upon their arrival in Kerala, and built ten mosques on those lands and appointed a *qādi* (judge) for each mosque. Under the definition of *dār al-Islām*, the presence of a mosque and a *qādi* would imply territorial unity based on the principles of the community of the faith, the unity of the law, and the guarantees assured to members of the community (*ummah*).[511] This would make the ten mosques built by the Dinar family and the Muslim settlements surrounding them a part of *dār al-Islām*. In this fashion, Zainuddin II asserts the legal right of Muslims to lands in Kerala.

Zainuddin II also enumerates privileges bestowed on the Muslims by the Zamorins, a list which further affirms the territorial unity behind the idea of *dār al-Islām*. The privileges included assistance to organize Friday congregation prayers (*jum'ah*) and celebrations like *Id*, offering remuneration to the *qādis* and the *mu'adhdhins* (those who call to prayer), imposing fines on Muslims who neglect Friday prayers, consulting with Muslim elders before imposing the death penalty on Muslims accused of serious crimes, and handing over the executed corpses of Muslims to the community to be buried according to Islamic customs.[512] These privileges seem to have afforded the Muslims with a fair degree of autonomy in the Hindu-ruled kingdom. Though this autonomy did not translate into self-government, it helped safeguarded the Muslim way of life. In the definition of *dār al-Islām*, a non-Muslim territory could be regarded as *dār al-Islām* so long as a single provision (*hukm*) of the Muslim law (for

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[511] Abel, 'Dār a-Islām', pp. 127-128.
[512] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, pp. 45-46.

example, the stipulation for Friday prayers) was kept in force; thus, it was clearly applicable in the territories ruled by the Zamorins.[513]

Writing on the spatial implications of the term *dār al-Islām*, Stephen Dale argues that the Malabar Coast served as the boundary between *dār al-Islām* (constituted by Muslim lands) and *dār-al-harb* (represented by the Portuguese) in the aftermath of the Portuguese arrival.[514] However, Ayal Amer disputes the simplistic notions of a Malabari frontier between Muslim and non-Muslim land, arguing that Zainuddin II's invocation of *dār-al-Islām* should also be situated in the context of the concomitant rise and consolidation of powerful Muslim dynasties across the Indian Ocean world, such as the Ottomans, the Mughals, the Safavids, and the Deccan Sultanates.[515] The territorial clashes between the Ottomans and the Safavids, according to Amer, also translated into a rivalry between the Sunni and Shia legal regimes, creating a 'division of the territories of *dār al-Islām*'.[516] A close reading of *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* supports Amer's contention that Zainuddin II's vision of *dār-al-Islam* extended beyond the Malabar Coast.

Zainuddin II seems to have considered all the Muslim-ruled territories in the Indian Ocean world to be part of *dār al-Islām*. He extends his vision of *dār al-Islām* to territories far beyond Kozhikode to places like Goa, Diu, Sri Lanka, Aden, Jeddah, and Sumatra. Based on this vision, he interprets the brief capture

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[513] Ayal Amer adds that the presence of a Muslim *qādi* who administers the Muslim law is an important condition for applying this term. This condition was also applicable to Kerala. Amer, p. 7.
[514] Stephen Frederic Dale, 'The Islamic Frontier in Southwest India: The Shahīd as a Cultural Ideal among the Mappillas of Malabar', *Modern Asian Studies*, 11.1 (1977), 41–55 (p. 54).
[515] Amer, p. 298.
[516] Amer, p. 299.

of Goa in 1510 from the Portuguese by the Deccan Sultan Ismail Adil Shah (r. 1510-1534) as a reclamation of a territory that was previously part of *dār al-Islām*: 'Adil Shah fought against the Portuguese and recaptured Goa and routed them from there. Thus, it once again became part of Islamic territory (*Dār al-Islām*)'.[517] In another instance, he describes how the brave Sultan Ali al-Ashi recovered Sumatra from the Portuguese and transformed it into an 'Islamic state'.[518] In both these cases, Zainuddin II considers far-flung kingdoms in the Indian Ocean to be part of *dār al-Islām*.

Zainuddin II presents a unified notion of *dār al-Islām* even in the face of Muslim Sultans forming friendly alliances with the Portuguese. For example, in the fourth section (chapter seven) of *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*, he gives an account of the Mughal emperor Humayun's (r. 1530-1540 & 1555-1556 CE) invasion of Gujarat in 941 AH (1535 CE).[519] Following his defeat, Sultan Bahadur Shah (r. 1526-1535) of Gujarat entered into an alliance with the Portuguese and ceded some of his territories, including Diu, which, according to Zainuddin II, was much sought after by the Portuguese. Although there exist conflicting reports about the Sultan's death only two years later, Zainuddin II unequivocally states that he was assassinated by the Portuguese.[520] Zainuddin II therefore remains detached from the issue of territorial conflict between the Mughal emperor and the Gujarat Sultan as well as on the subject of the Sultan's treaty with the Portuguese. Instead, he reserves his vitriol for the Portuguese,

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[517] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 55.
[518] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 82.
[519] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 71.
The Gujarat Sultanate was established in 1391 by Zafar Khan, who was previously the governor of Gujarat under the Delhi Sultanate. The Sultanate lasted until 1572 when it was annexed by the Mughal emperor Akbar, who succeeded Humayun in 1556.
[520] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 72.

whom he clearly perceives as a common threat to *dār-al-Islām*. Furthermore, he adds a religious colour to the conflict between the Portuguese and the Gujarat Sultan, declaring that the Sultan was a martyr who died in the cause of *jihad* against the Portuguese invaders.

A Vision for Muslim Rule in Kerala

The cooperation between the Portuguese and Muslims from the Portuguese-allied kingdoms on the Malabar Coast often led to conflicts between Muslims. In *The Manifest Conquest*, the Qadi writes that the Muslims of Kannur and Tānūr carried Portuguese passes and so were able to travel and trade unmolested. This special privilege irked other Muslims, who began to attack and burn Portuguese allies' vessels.[521] Similarly, in *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*, Zainuddin II notes instances where Muslims betrayed their brethren. In one instance, he reports that the Muslims of Kerala turned from looting Portuguese ships to looting Muslim-owned ships.[522] Like his grandfather, Zainuddin II invokes the Prophetic traditions to deter Muslim traders from cooperating with the Portuguese. Rather than merely use scriptural arguments like his grandfather however, he also seeks a political solution for the problem of infighting among Muslims.

Zainuddin II identifies the reason for Muslim disunity in the face of the Portuguese threat as being the lack of a Muslim leader: 'They do not have a leader who can pass judgement over them'.[523] In another section, he articulates the same concern, 'Muslims of Malabar do not have a leader who possesses

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[521] Muhammad, *Fat'h al-Mubin*, p. 33 (verses 145-148).
[522] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 84.
[523] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 84.

power and can exercise authority over them and be mindful of their welfare.'[524] In Amer's interpretation, Zainuddin II's organization of the various chapters in section four of *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* reflects his waning confidence in the Zamorins' rule. The chapters alternate between themes of friendship and hostility between the Portuguese and a succession of Zamorins: at least five chapters focus on friendship and four on hostility. Amer argues that these themes and the organization of the chapters reveal 'the rather disquieting indecisiveness of the Zamorin after the arrival of the Portuguese'.[525] Zainuddin II also evaluates the differing strength of the various Zamorins in the text, praising some and castigating others. For instance, he notes that the Zamorin (r. 1522-1529) who captured the Portuguese fort in Calicut 'was a weak and feeble-minded monarch, and he was grossly addicted to drinking', while his brother (r. 1529-1531), who was also his successor, 'was a strong, shrewd, brave man'.[526] His distaste for the first Zamorin's drinking habits likely stems from his support, as an orthodox Muslim and *ulama*, for the Islamic prohibition against alcohol. He also seems to have sensed the precarious position in which Muslims found themselves after the arrival of the Portuguese, making note of the Portuguese appeal to the Hindu ruler of Kochi to expel the Muslims *en masse* from his kingdom.[527]

Looking for a political solution beyond Kerala, Zainuddin II dedicates *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* to Sultan Ali Adil Shah of Bijapur (r. 1558-1579), expressing the following wish: 'May his kingdom extend over the east and the

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[524] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 15.
[525] Amer, p. 312.
[526] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 67.
[527] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 58.

west; may he exercise his authority over land and sea and over the Arabs and non-Arabs'.[528] According to Genevieve Bouchon, it was Adil Shah's role in the defeat of the Hindu empire of Vijayanagar in 1565 that provided the immediate impetus for Zainuddin II's dedication. In fact, Zainuddin II mentions the destruction of Vijayanagar by Adil Shah and Nizam Shah in the text.[529] In Amer's analysis, Zainuddin II's dedication was an invitation extended toward the Sultan to conquer the Zamorins' territories and set up a 'quasi-Muslim ruling state', thus 'establishing a territorial connection with the rest of the Muslim world', a plausible interpretation in the context of Zainuddin II's stated dissatisfaction with the leadership of the Hindu Zamorins and desire for a Muslim leader in Malabar, which he considered to be part of *dār al-Islām*.[530]

Interestingly, the Zamorin's much-celebrated siege of the Portuguese fort in Chaliyam in 1571 fails to inspire Zainuddin II's confidence in the Zamorin. The siege was the result of a concerted effort by the Zamorin (Manavikrama, r. 1562-1574) and the Deccan Sultans Adil Shah and Nizam Shah to launch a simultaneous attack on the Portuguese forts in Chaliyam, Goa and Chaul. While the Zamorin proceeded with the siege with the support of his Nāir and Māppila warriors, the Deccan Sultans withdrew from their attacks in Goa and Chaul and struck up a truce with the Portuguese. In his tract, Zainuddin II finds ways to defend the Adil Shah's reputation, despite his seeming betrayal of the Zamorin. He writes that Adil Shah 'might be exonerated from blame for the failure in his own undertaking' because he himself was betrayed by Nizam Shah as well as by

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[528] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 7.
[529] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 86.
[530] Amer, pp. 312-13.

his own ministers.[531] According to Zainuddin II, Adil Shah's ministers 'established clandestine rapport with the Portuguese', conspiring to imprison Adil Shah and install one of his relatives in Goa who was on good terms with the Portuguese on the throne.[532] He also cites practical considerations that prompted Adil Shah to withdraw from the attack, including the remoteness of Goa from the Sultan's encampment, the hindrance caused by a river that he would have had to cross to reach Goa, and the extensive fortification of Goa by the Portuguese. These efforts at exoneration of the Muslim leader reveal Zainuddin II's steadfast faith in his vision of a politically unified *dār al-Islām* under the leadership of Adil Shah.

6.4. *Dār al-Islām*: A Failed Project?

Zainuddin II's vision for consolidating Muslim power in the Indian Ocean under the leadership of Sultan Adil Shah of Bijapur did not materialize. There were several reasons for this. First, Adil Shah was assassinated by his courtiers in 1579, arguably at the behest of the Portuguese officials. Zainuddin II's silence on the death of his dedicatee implies that he completed *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* before the Sultan's death, and not afterwards as some scholars have argued.[533]

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[531] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 86.
[532] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, p. 87.
[533] In *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*, Sultan Adil Shah is mentioned for the last time in the final chapter (Chapter 14) of section 4 with reference to a peace agreement between him and the Portuguese in 987 AH (1579 CE). Curiously, Zainuddin II makes no mention of the death of his dedicatee in 1579 and, instead, proceeds to describe other events that led up to 992 AH (1583), four years after the assassination of the Sultan.
The English translator, Rowlandson, resolved this discrepancy by proposing that the account of events beyond the 1579 treaty is a 'postscript' added to *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* by someone other than the author. Makhdum, trans. by Rowlandson, p. xii.
The Portuguese translator, Lopes, also found it peculiar that Zainuddin II had omitted the Sultan's death. This led him to conclude that *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* was not entirely written by the same author (*'Não parece ser toda do mesmo autor*'). Makhdum, trans. by Lopes, p. xcvii.

Second, as Pearson has argued, all the major Muslim states in India were oriented more toward the land than the sea during the sixteenth century. In the north, the declining Lodi Sultanate and the newly emerged Mughal empire were land-based both in terms of resources and ethos, with the latter deriving a major part of their revenue from land. According to Pearson, the militarily-oriented Mughal elite's 'culturally sanctioned activities were land activities, especially heroic cavalry charges, and more prosaically the struggle to control more land and so more resources'. Similarly, in the south, the political elite of the Deccan regions (including Zainuddin II's dedicatee) were engaged in various territorial wars to set up their own independent states.[534] In 1565, the joint forces of the Deccan Sultans of Bijapur, Ahmednagar, Bidar and Golconda defeated the Hindu empire of Vijayanagar, which had ruled most parts of South India until then.[535] Moreover, when faced with threats from various land-based kingdoms, Muslim rulers from both the north and the south were willing to enlist the Portuguese as a naval force. In one instance, Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat formed an alliance with the Portuguese to fend off a takeover by Mughals, granting his new allies control of Diu.[536] The Mughal emperors were even prepared to take passes from the Portuguese to promote Muslim pilgrimage

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Challenging the above theories, Kooria has recently argued that *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* was dedicated to Sultan Ibrahim Adil Shah II (r. 1580-1627), who succeeded to the throne after the assassination of his uncle, Sultan Ali Adil Shah. In Kooria's evaluation, Zainuddin II made a mistake and entered the wrong name in the dedication. In pursuing this line of argument, Kooria attempts to resolve another problem: the difference in faith between Zainuddin II and Sultan Ali Adil Shah; while Zainuddin II was of the Sunni persuasion, the Sultan was a Shia follower. Sultan Ibrahim Adil Shah II, on the other hand, was of the same faith as Zainuddin II. In short, Kooria affirms that *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors* was completed in 1583, after the death of Sultan Ali Adil Shah and during the reign of Sultan Ibrahim Adil Shah. See Mahmood Kooria, 'An Abode of Islam Under a Hindu King: Circuitous Imagination of Kingdoms among Muslims of Sixteenth-Century Malabar.', *Journal of Indian Ocean World Studies*, 1 (2017), 89–109 (p. 101).

[534] Pearson, 'Indian Ocean in the Sixteenth Century', p. 79.

[535] Bouchon, 'Sixteenth Century Malabar', p. 177.

[536] Makhdum, trans. by Nainar, pp. 71-72.

(*hajj*) to Mecca and Medina.[537] This was not unlike the maritime policies of some of the Hindu rulers of Kerala, who not only entrusted the Portuguese with trade but enlisted naval support from the Portuguese to assist in territorial conquests.

The third reason for the failure of Muslim unification under the rubric of a common religious identity was the territorial affiliation of Muslim traders to their respective kingdoms. Even in instances where Muslim traders began to assert themselves politically against the Portuguese expansion in the Indian Ocean, they did so in territories where they already had roots. In Kerala, the Māppilas and the Marakkārs from the Portuguese-allied kingdoms cooperated with the Portuguese at least during the early decades of the sixteenth century, while the Māppilas and the Marakkārs from Kozhikode were recruited by the Zamorins to fight the Portuguese. In two illustrative cases, Muslim traders affiliated with two Hindu-ruled kingdoms in Kerala endeavoured to free themselves from the political tutelage of the Hindu rulers to curtail the influence of the Portuguese on the Malabar Coast and the Indian Ocean. In the first case, the descendants of Māmale Marakkār (Ali Rājās) seized power from the Kōlathiri to set up the first Muslim-ruled state in Kerala in the port town of Kannur in 1559. In the second case, the Marakkārs from the Kozhikode kingdom tried to emulate the Ali Rājās of Kannur by setting up a Muslim-ruled state in Pudupattanam in the late sixteenth century.

The state-building endeavours by the Ali Rājās and the Marakkārs demonstrate that the Muslim traders from Kerala, despite never having a tradition of political

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[537] Pearson, 'Indian Ocean in the Sixteenth Century', p. 79.

sovereignty, as Fanselow points out, followed the trails of the Portuguese to combine trade with politics.[538] Contrary to Barbosa's claim that the Portuguese thwarted the Moorish ambition to install a Muslim king in Malabar, it appears that, 'in fact, because of the Portuguese, Muslims for the first time stake a claim on political leadership'.[539] Unlike the land-based Muslims states from India, whose rulers only had a passive interest in maritime affairs, the Ali Rājās and the Marakkārs were engaged in setting up sea-based kingdoms. To this end, they aimed at freeing the sea lanes from the control of the Portuguese and protecting their traditional maritime bases across the Indian Ocean, which, in the case of the Ali Rājās, included the archipelagos of Lakshadweep and the Maldives. Uniquely among Muslim leaders in India, the political assertions of the Ali Rājās and the Marakkārs were based in maritime commerce. Moreover, their political assertions remained distinct, with each set of traders claiming political autonomy in the regions where they already had some control in commercial and political matters. In the case of the Ali Rājās, their challenge to the Kōlathiri did not signify a break from the existing social and political order of Kerala. The Ali Rājās assumed the Sanskrit title *Rājāh*, meaning 'king', and adopted matrilineal descent in the fashion of Hindu *swarūpam*s.[540] The Arakkal ruling house was the first of the Muslim matrilineal households (*taravādu*) to claim the status of a *swarūpam* in Malabar.[541] In their origin stories, the Ali Rājās claimed matrilineal descent from the Perumal, thereby accepting him as their founder-hero.[542] Their dynasty is said to start with the Perumal's nephew Mahābali: they claim that he converted to Islam and adopted the honorific title

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[538] Fanselow, p. 284.
[539] Prange, *Monsoon Islam*, p. 205.
[540] John, 'The Ali Rajas', p. 53.
[541] John, 'The Ali Rajas', p. 67.
[542] John, 'The Ali Rajas', p. 55.

'Adirājā' or Ali Rājā, after his uncle's departure to Mecca.[543] There are also parallel accounts claiming that the kingdom was a gift from the Kōlathiri to an Arab trader after he impregnated a princess of the Kōlathunād *swarūpam*.[544] These stories show that the Ali Rājās followed the pattern of Hindu rulers and legitimized their power in accordance to what Binu John terms 'the regional cosmic order'.[545]

Finally, Zainuddin II's political vision of a unified *dār al-Islam* was quite unique for his time. His contemporary Qadi Muhammad does not seem to have shared his standpoint. This becomes clear from their diverse approaches to the outcome of the Chaliyam war in 1571. While Zainuddin II justifies Adil Shah's retreat from the joint war against the Portuguese by citing reasons like the betrayal of the Sultan by Nizam Shah, the Qadi sees no justification for the Sultan's withdrawal from the war. In the Qadi's view, Adil Shah had 'made peace with the Franks, without there being any persistent need or pretext.'[546] The Qadi harshly condemns the Sultan's retreat, stating that he 'violated his pact before Allah forgetting all about his letters and promises' to the Zamorin.[547] In the Qadi's estimation, only the Zamorin persisted in the holy war against the Portuguese 'in spite of his being a non-Muslim'.[548] By his own admission, the Qadi's purpose for writing the poem was to inspire Muslim rulers so they 'might take lesson from it' and 'think of waging war with them (Portuguese) when they hear it'.[549] To this end, he narrates an incident in which the Zamorin seized a

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[543] Malieckal, p. 307.
[544] John, 'The Ali Rajas', p. 55.
[545] John, 'The Ali Rajas', p. 54.
[546] Muhammad, *Fat'h al-Mubin*, p. 67 (verse 506).
[547] Muhammad, *Fat'h al-Mubin*, p. 67 (verse 507).
[548] Muhammad, *Fat'h al-Mubin*, p. 68 (verse 518).
[549] Muhammad, *Fat'h al-Mubin*, p. 18 (verse 13).

bell from the Chaliyam fort and gifted to Sultan Adil Shah as 'a memento for all those who hear it and a warning to those who see it'.[550] The Qadi expresses hope that his account of the Zamorin's successful siege 'may travel over the world and reach Syria and Iraq in particular'.[551] He paints the Zamorin as an exemplary ruler by describing him as worthy of being emulated even by Muslim rulers. He also underlines the Zamorin's special regard for his Muslim subjects: '[The Zamorin] Who loves our religion of Islam and the Muslims from among all his mankind'.[552] This idea is also prominently displayed in the title of his poem, '*al-Fath al-Mubin*', the meaning of which is elaborated as 'the clear victory for the Zamorin who loves the Muslims' ('*al-Fath al-mubin lil-samuri alladhi juhibb al-muslimin*').[553]

Amer explains the difference of opinions among the *ulama* thus: Zainuddin II and the Qadi were caught between, on the one hand, re-evaluating 'their age-old alliance with, and allegiance to, the local rulers, to whom they had been subordinated for centuries', and, on the other hand, 'calling into question their political association with the global Muslim community (*umma*)'.[554] As we have seen, in his attempt to build a 'global Muslim community' under the leadership of Sultan Adil Shah of Bijapur, Zainuddin II disaffiliates from his allegiance to the local rulers, the Zamorins. Zainuddin II's text thus signals a disintegration of at least a section of the Māppilas from the local political order in the aftermath of the Portuguese arrival in the Indian Ocean.

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[550] Muhammad, *Fat'h al-Mubin*, p. 68 (verse 509).
[551] Muhammad, *Fat'h al-Mubin*, p. 18 (verse 14).
[552] Muhammad, *Fat'h al-Mubin*, p. 19 (verse 17).
[553] Muhammad, *Fat'h al-Mubin*, p. 69 (verse 521).
[554] Amer, p. 299.

6.5. Local Manifestations of *Jihad* in the Indian Ocean

Though Zainuddin II's particular vision of *jihad* did not achieve the wider political results he intended, the idea of *jihad* did percolate among the Māppilas, taking on a special form which Dale terms 'suicidal *jihad*'.[555] The *ulama* sanctioned this form of *jihad*, which targeted not only the Portuguese but also other European trading groups. Acts of *jihad* against Europeans were celebrated in the Māppila songs (*Māppila pāttu*), 'the overwhelming majority of which are concerned with war and martyrdom'.[556] They were also celebrated through the ritual of *nērcca*, a form of saint-martyr worship organized by the *ulama* and conducted on the grave-turned-shrine of the martyr.[557]

One of the earliest records of *jihad* among the Māppilas can be found in a letter dated April 1, 1512, addressed to the king of Portugal, and written by the Portuguese Governor Afonso de Albuquerque. In the letter, Albuquerque describes the 'very famous' grave of a Muslim Captain of Calicut named Maymame who was 'canonized as a saint' after he was killed in a 'war against Christians'.[558] Dale speculates that the canonized Muslim was likely a martyr (*shahid*) who had died in the cause of *jihad* against the Portuguese.[559] In what may be a reference to the same grave, the East India Company supervisor William Farmer reports in 1792:

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[555] Dale, 'The Islamic Frontier', p. 41.
[556] Stephen Frederic Dale and M. Gangadhara Menon, '"Nerccas": Saint-Martyr Worship among the Muslims of Kerala', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 41.3 (1978), 523–38 (p. 533).
[557] Dale and Menon, p. 523.
[558] *Alguns Documentos do Archivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo ácerca das Navegações e Conquistas Portuguezas*, pp. 233–61.
In the original: '[A] Maymame, capitam de Calecut, que emtam aly morro, que oj este dia em dia esta diamte dos nosos olhos, cassa muy bem obrada e muy fermosa, canunjzado por ssamto, porque morreo em guerra contra os cristãaos.'
[559] Dale, 'The Islamic Frontier', p. 47.

> Their [*sic*] is a person buried at Calicut who at his death became in the mind of his fraternity, a Pir or Saint and when I came to enquire into the cause I found that it was from the number of Christian Caffers [*kāfir*] he had at times coolly and deliberately murdered.[560]

Farmer's term 'Christian Caffers' almost certainly refers to the Portuguese, corresponding to the sixteenth-century usage of the term by the Kozhikode *ulama*. Both these records confirm that individual Māppilas took up the cause of *jihad* against the Portuguese and received the honour of sainthood upon their death. The reputation that Albuquerque associates with the grave suggests that the grave was transformed into a site of *nērcca* worship.

The Māppila songs relate stories of Māppilas who fought the Portuguese and achieved martyrdom upon death. For example, in the Māppila song 'Kotturpalli Mala', which has been recorded in the *Arabi*-Malayalam script, the poet narrates the story of Kunji Marakkār, a sailor, who became a martyr after valiantly fighting the Portuguese at sea. The fight reportedly ensued after a party of Portuguese raiders abducted a Māppila woman.[561] Though this particular event relates to the rescue of a Māppila woman, the conferring of martyrdom on the Marakkār suggests that the rescue mission was interpreted by the Māppilas as an act of *jihad* against the Portuguese.

In his study of the 1921-22 Māppila rebellion against the British, Dale traces the origins of the rebellion to the sixteenth century, in particular, to *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*. According to Dale, 'the only really unique feature' of this

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[560] Dale, 'The Islamic Frontier', p. 54.
[561] Dale, 'The Islamic Frontier', pp. 49-50.

rebellion was that it 'was conducted as a kind of suicidal *jihad* in which the Māppilas involved intentionally sought to become *shahids* or martyrs for the faith.' Dale interprets this 'peculiar religious militancy' of the Māppilas 'as a legacy of the prolonged commercial war fought out along the Malabar coast' from the sixteenth century onward.[562] He argues further that Māppilas continued their *jihadi* warfare against the British because the British, like the Portuguese, tried to enforce a monopoly in the spice trade. However, unlike the Portuguese, the British eventually established political dominion over Malabar. As a result, *jihad* was fought not at sea or along the Malabar Coast but along an 'internal frontier', which had thus far separated the Muslims from the Hindus. Apart from the British troops, the Māppila rebellion also targeted landed Hindus, who dominated Muslims both economically and socially. As Dale notes, here, too, the *ulama* played a critical role in transmitting the ideals of *jihad* and martyrdom to the local Māppila population. The Māppilas who died in the rebellion were honoured as martyrs through *nērcca* worship, an example of which is the shrine at Pūkkōttūr in Malappuram District, Kerala State.[563]

In a parallel to the Māppila outbreaks against the British, regions in Indonesia and the Philippines witnessed similar attacks against the Dutch and the Spanish during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Muslim sovereigns of Atjeh

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[562] Dale, 'The Islamic Frontier', p. 41.

[563] Dale and Menon, p. 535.
This year, two filmmakers from Kerala have announced their upcoming projects on heroes of the Māppila rebellion to be released in 2021, on the centenary of the rebellion. This has generated much debate on the rebellion with the Hindu right dismissing the rebellion as anti-Hindu and labelling the heroes of the rebellion as '*jihadi*' and 'terrorist'. See the newspaper articles in, The Wire Staff, 'Announcement of Film on Muslim Freedom Fighter from Kerala Leads to Hate Campaign', *The Wire* (New Delhi, 23 June 2020) <https://thewire.in/film/announcement-of-film-on-muslim-freedom-fighter-from-kerala-leads-to-hate-campaign> [accessed 23 June 2020]; K. R. Vishnu Radhan, 'Shahid Varuyamkunnan', *Manorama News*, 20 June 2020 <https://www.manoramanews.com/news/entertainment/2020/06/22/pt-kunhamamd-too-direct-variyamkunnan-movie.html> [accessed 20 June 2020].

(Aceh, Indonesia), Sulu (Philippines), and Mindanao (Philippines) led the *jihadi* wars in consultation with the *ulama* during most of their conflict with European colonial powers. Even after the loss of political power, *jihad* continued in those regions under the leadership of the *ulama*. After the defeat of Atjeh by the Dutch in a war lasting from 1873 to 1908, the *ulama* took over the conduct of the war and transformed it into a large-scale *jihad*.[564] From 1908, the *ulama* initiated a private form of *jihad* against Dutchmen, which the Dutch referred to as 'Atjjehnese murder' (Atjeh-moord).[565] Similarly, in Sulu, some members of the *ulama* continued to fight against the Spanish even after the king of Sulu had agreed to make peace with the Spanish during the latter part of the nineteenth century.[566] Philippine Muslims reacted to the Spanish navy campaign to bring Sulu and Mindanao under centralized control in Manila through what the Spanish called *juramentado*, or 'those who took the oath', in which Muslims who underwent initiation rites tried to kill as many Spanish soldiers as possible before being killed themselves.[567] Dale identifies the anonymous epic poem *Hikayat Prang Sabi* ('*The Story of the Holy War*') as a text comparable to *The Tribute to the Holy Warriors*, which shaped the Atjehnese conflict with the Dutch as well as the Philippine conflict with the Spanish.[568]

The parallels in *jihadi* ideology between the Malabar Coast and southeast Asia suggest that despite the political divisions among the Muslims, the idea of *jihad* constituted a common form of response to the presence of European powers in

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[564] Dale, 'Religious Suicide', p. 50.
[565] Dale, 'Religious Suicide', p. 53.
[566] Dale, 'Religious Suicide', p. 51.
[567] Dale, 'Religious Suicide', pp. 50-51.
[568] Dale, 'Religious Suicide', p. 52.

the Indian Ocean. The Muslim *ulama* from distinct parts of the Indian Ocean world seem to have adopted a similar stance – of war and non-cooperation – toward various European powers. This similarity could be a result of the strong focus on maritime trade in those parts, which was dominated by Muslims before the arrival of various European powers. Attempts by the Portuguese and other European powers to monopolize the spice trade had a significant impact on Muslim trade in all those parts. These parallels in *jihadi* thought and action, however, did not materialize into global Muslim resistance against the Portuguese. Muslims from Malabar as well as those from Indonesia and the Philippines stayed within the bounds of their kingdoms and fought their enemies independently.

In Malabar, specifically, ideals of *jihad* and martyrdom shared a common ground with some of the Hindu customs. Suicidal *jihad* is comparable to the *chāvēr* custom prevalent among the military Nāirs in which they undertook suicidal missions on behalf of the rulers or other prominent leaders. Like the *jihadi* texts and the Māppila songs that celebrated the martyrdom of Muslim warriors, the Malayalam *pāttu* categories of *pata pāttu*, *chāvēr pāttu*, *Māmānkam pāttu* and *vātha pāttu* describe the military feats of the *chāvēr* and celebrate their martyrdom. *Vātha pāttu*, in particular, was written in praise of the souls of the *chāvēr* who were believed to have become martyrs. As Dale and Gangadhara Menon have argued, even the ritualistic framework of Muslim *nērcca* worship was derived from the worship of folk deities in Kerala.[569] In fact,

[569] Dale and Menon, p. 525.

the Malayalam word *nērcca*, which means 'the act of taking a vow', originated from the Dravidian root *ner*, meaning truth or agreement.[570]

The close association between Māppila Muslims and military Nāirs in Kozhikode might have contributed to the mutual adoption of cultural practices between the two caste groups. In her study of eighteenth-century Travancore kingdom in southern Kerala, Susan Bayly presents a similar situation of two groups sharing cultural practices comparable to relations between Māppilas and Nāirs in Kozhikode. Bayly argues that the Syrian Christian 'client group' in Travancore shared 'a conspicuously close relationship with the Nāir warriors and partook in the long-standing martial culture of the region'. The Christian group intermarried with Nāirs, formed a part of the king's army as well as the *chāvēr* (suicide army), honoured the *chāvēr* fighters who took the vow (*nērcca*) to serve the ruler to the point of death, and made offerings (*nērccas*) at shrines dedicated to warrior-saints.[571] Sixteenth-century records from Kozhikode suggest that a similar relationship existed between the Māppila Muslims and military Nāirs from that kingdom. It follows that the militancy among the Māppilas against the Portuguese was not a peculiar Islamic phenomenon as Dale suggests but was part of a militaristic culture shared by Māppilas and Nāirs alike.

6.6. Early Modern Transmutation of the Word *Kāfir*

As noted earlier in this chapter, before the arrival of the Portuguese, the word *kāfir* circulated in the Indian Ocean world as a descriptor for non-Muslim

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[570] Dale and Menon, p. 525.
[571] Susan Bayly, 'Hindu Kingship and the Origin of Community: Religion, State and Society in Kerala, 1750-1850', *Modern Asian Studies*, 18.2 (1984), 177–213 (p. 180).

idolaters. With the advent of the Portuguese, the *ulama* extended the use of this word to refer to the Portuguese. Interestingly, the word also underwent a transmutation in Portuguese writings from the sixteenth century, which, in turn, had an impact on the modern understanding of this word, both in Kerala and in other parts of the world.

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) entry on 'kaffir' indicates the presence of the word in a number of European languages, including Spanish (*cafre*), Portuguese (*cafre*), French (*kafer*/*kafier*), Italian (*cafero*), and Dutch (*kaffer*). The entry offers two primary meanings for the word: a non-Muslim; and, a black person from southern Africa. It notes that the word entered English from one or all of the European languages listed in the entry.[572] For historical reasons, the language through which this Arabic word entered English and all other European languages is likely to be Portuguese.

The Portuguese appear to have first encountered the word in the kingdom of Benametapa in East Africa.[573] Writing in the early part of the sixteenth century, Barbosa writes of the 'Heathens whom the Moors name Cafres' ('*gentios, a que os mouros chamam cafres*').[574] Other voyagers to East Africa make similar observations in places such as Ethiopia, Melinde, and Mozambique.[575] In Portuguese history writing, the words *cafre* and *gentio* are sometimes used interchangeably to refer to the natives of East Africa. For instance, Gaspar

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[572] 'Kaffir, n. and Adj.', *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford University Press, 2016) <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/102330?redirectedFrom=kaffir&> [accessed 14 November 2018].
[573] Sebastião Rodolfo Dalgado, *Glossário Luso-Asiático*, 2 vols (Coimbra: Impresa da Universidade, 1919), I, p. 170.
[574] Barbosa, trans. by Dames (vol. 1), p. 10; Barbosa, ed. by Machado, p. 18.
[575] Dalgado, *Glossário* (vol. 1), p. 171.

Corrêa distinguishes *cafres* from *mouros*, describing the former as people who were native to the land (*'gentio natural da terra*').[576] Qualifying the word further, João de Barros notes that *cafres* denoted people without law ('*gente sem lei*'), who worshipped idols ('*gentio idolatra*'), adding that the Portuguese-owned slaves from Africa were also referred to as *cafres*.[577]

The transportation of slaves from Africa to other parts of the world by the Portuguese could explain how the word *cafre* came to be associated with black Africans in Asian languages like Malay, Achinese, Burmese, and Dayak.[578] In Indian vernacular languages like Konkani, Bengali, Assamese, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, and Tulu, variations of *cafre* are still extant and denote black Africans.[579] Since the Arabic word *kāfir* was already operational in its original meaning in the Indian Ocean world, derivates of the Portuguese word *cafre* acquired a completely new meaning. For example, in Malayalam, the word *kāppiri*, derived from *cafre*, refers to the people of Africa, while the word *kāfir* borrowed from Arabic refers to non-Muslims.[580] In the twentieth-century Malayalam travelogue *Kappirikalude Nattil* (In the Land of the *Kāppiris*), S. K. Pottekkat uses the word *kāppiri* to refer to people from Africa.[581] Thus, in its current usage, the word *kāppiri* appears to have an entirely different

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[576] Mentioned in Dalgado, *Glossário* (vol. 1), p. 171.
[577] Mentioned in Dalgado, *Glossário* (vol. 1), p. 171.
[578] Sebastião Rodolfo Dalgado, *Influence of Portuguese Vocables in Asiatic Languages*, trans. by Anthony Xavier Soares (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1936), p. 64.
[579] Dalgado, *Portuguese Vocables*, p. 64.
[580] 'Kāppiri', *Olam [Malayalam-English Online Dictionary]* <https://olam.in/DictionaryML/ml/കാപ്പിരി>.
Kāppiri shrines are present in many parts of India where they are similarly associated with Portuguese slave trade. Neelima Jeychandran, 'African Heritage in India: Kerala', *African Heritage India* <http://africanheritageindia.org/project/> [accessed 19 November 2018].
[581] S. K. Pottekkat, *Kappirikaluda Nattil [In the Land of the Kappiris]* (Kottayam: D. C. Books).

signification. Instead, it appears to be a relatively new word that entered the Malayalam language during the period of contact with the Portuguese.

A cultural practice from Kerala can shed some light on the movement of words in conjunction with the movement of people from Africa. The people of Mattancherry (a town near Kochi) make regular offerings of flowers, cigars, coconuts, and toddy (palm wine) to a deity called *Kāppiri Muthappan* ('The black African grandfather').[582] This deity represents the ghosts of all the African slaves who were allegedly chained and mortared inside the walls by the Portuguese just before they were evicted from their fort in Kochi in 1663.[583] The ghosts are believed to be guardian spirits residing in the walls and the trees near the shrine and guarding the treasures left behind by their Portuguese masters.[584] The *kāppiri* deity serves as a strong historical reminder of the enslaved black Africans brought by the Portuguese to Kerala.

After the Portuguese borrowed the word from the Indian Ocean Muslims, its usage became restricted to Africa, and the word acquired racist undertones. As a

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[582] Nidhi Surendranath, 'Once a Slave, Now a Deity', *The Hindu* (Kochi, 17 June 2013) <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/once-a-slave-now-a-deity/article4820623.ece> [accessed 16 November 2018].
In Kannur, offerings of fish and alcohol are made to *Sree Muthappan*, the deity of Parassinikkadavu temple, who is worshipped through daily *theyyam* (ritualistic dance) performances. This mode of worship does not follow the *sattvic* (Brahmanical) form of worship and does not involve idol worship. A similar mode of worship can be seen in the worship of *Kāppiri Muthappan* who is not only addressed similarly as *muthappan* but is also not represented through an idol. The admission of alcohol in both cases would indicate that the devotees belonged to non-Brahmin caste groups.
'Sree Muthappan' <http://sreemuthappan.org> [accessed 19 November 2018].
[583] Haritha John, 'African Slaves and Spirit of Kappiri Muthappan: Kochi's Culture under Portuguese-Dutch Rule', *The News Minute*, 15 June 2016 <https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/african-slaves-and-spirit-kappiri-muthappan-kochis-culture-under-portuguese-dutch-rule-44881> [accessed 19 November 2018].
[584] Surrendranath, 'Once a Slave, Now a Deity'.
See a recent discussion of this worship in, *Shackled Sentiments: Slaves, Spirits, and Memories in the African Diaspora*, ed. by Eric Montgomery (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019), p. xvi.

result, the meaning of the word changed from one that originally marked religious difference to one signifying racial difference. Further, during the period of British colonization of Africa, the word became a tool for race-based oppression against black people. In the aftermath of the end of the colonial era, some African nations have banned the usage of the slur entirely. For example, in South Africa, since the year 2000, the English word 'kaffir' is categorized as *crimen injuria*, i.e. 'unlawful and intentional violation of the dignity of another person', and its usage is legally actionable.[585] In India, however, the Arabic word *kāfir* and the Portuguese word *cafre* or *kāppiri* continue to operate distinctly, with entirely different connotations.[586]

Conclusions

This chapter examined the Māppila Muslim response to the Portuguese arrival based on the literature on *jihad* produced by the *ulama* of Kozhikode. Written in Arabic, this literature was intended for a global Muslim population. It exhorted Muslims, especially traders and rulers, to discontinue all cooperation with the Portuguese and fight a holy war against them. Zainuddin II, in particular, proposed a political solution to address the disunity among Muslims in fighting the Portuguese, in which he saw Sultan Adil Shah of Bijapur as a potential unifier of Muslims across the Indian Ocean world. As I have shown in this chapter, Zainuddin II's vision did not materialize into a global Muslim resistance against the Portuguese because of the differing territorial affiliations

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[585] 'Crimen Injuria', *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford University Press, 2010) <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/273235?redirectedFrom=crimen+injuria#eid> [accessed 16 November 2018].

[586] The word *kāfir* even appears in a romantic setting in a song titled 'Qaafirana' from the recent Bollywood Hindi film *Kedarnath*. In the song, the hero, a Muslim, addresses his Hindu lover as *qaafirana*. Abhishek Kapoor, *Kedarnath* (Gravitas Ventures, 2018).

of Muslims, both in Kerala and around the Indian Ocean world.

In general, the Māppila Muslim responses to the Portuguese remained rooted to the locality in which they dwelt. Maritime groups like the Ali Rājās and the Kunjāli Marakkārs engaged in Muslim state-building endeavours in port towns where they already had some control in the administration of trade. Their assertions of power were based more in commerce than in their global identity as Muslims. The Ali Rājās, in particular, legitimized their power through the Perumal, the local founder-hero, and modelled themselves after the Hindu rulers, adopting the title *Rājāh*. Manifestations of *jihad* too remained local and even shared a common ground with the *chāvēr* custom among the military Nāirs.

The Māppila-Muslims' localized response to global conflicts between the Portuguese and Muslims in the Indian Ocean can be attributed to Muslim patterns of settlement in the Indian Ocean, which, as mentioned in the chapter before, centred around local power structures. In the next chapter, I will explore the Portuguese pattern of settlement in Kerala and its similarities and differences with the existing patterns of maritime settlements.

Chapter Seven:
The Perumal Myth and the
Portuguese Encounters with the Land of Kerala

In Luis Vaz de Camões' epic poem *The Lusíads* (1572), Vasco da Gama is privileged with knowing the origin story and the founder-hero of the Kozhikode kingdom almost immediately upon his arrival in Calicut. According to Camões, Gama receives this knowledge from Monsayeed, the Tunisian trader, who is known to have historically played a role as a linguistic mediator between the newly arrived Portuguese and the people of Calicut in 1498. Monsayeed relates to Gama that,

> This country, in which you have now
> Made harbour is known as Malabar;
> From time immemorial it worshipped idols,
> A practice widespread in these parts;
> Today, it has many different kings,
> But in former times only one;
> Their traditions claim the last imperial
> Governor was one Sarama Perimal.[587]

In the stanzas that follow, Monsayeed goes on to narrate the founding myth of the kingdom, which ultimately casts the Zamorin as the successor of the Perumal and the most powerful ruler of Kerala:

> On him [the Zamorin], too, he conferred the title

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[587] Camões, trans. by White, p. 145 (Canto 7, Stanza 32).
In the Portuguese edition:
'Esta província, cujo porto agora
Tomado tendes, Malabar se chama;
Do culto antigo os ídolos adora,
Que cá por estas partes se derrama;
De diversos reis é, mas dum só fora
Noutro tempo, segundo a antiga fama:
Saramá Perimal foi derradeiro
Rei que este Reino teve unido e inteiro.' Camões, ed. by Guégués, p. 202.

> Emperor, setting him above the rest.
> This done, he [the Perumal] departed for Arabia
> To live and die in sanctity.
> And so the great name of Samorin,
> The most powerful in the land, passed
> From the youth and his descendants, down
> To the Samorin who now wears the crown.[588]

One of the earliest records of the Perumal myth in Portuguese literature appears in Duarte Barbosa's chronicle from the early sixteenth century. Camões' privileging of Gama with the knowledge of the myth therefore seems to be a case of anachronism. Nevertheless, it underlines the importance of this myth for the Portuguese during their early contact with the people of Kozhikode and the other kingdoms in Kerala. Significantly, it acknowledges the role played by Muslim intermediaries in facilitating Portuguese contact with unknown territories on the Malabar Coast.

This chapter examines how the Portuguese traders, who arrived under the aegis of the Crown, oriented themselves in the land of Kerala, by looking at transfers of knowledge between the local population and the Portuguese. I begin by introducing some of the Portuguese sources on Malabar. In the second and third sections of this chapter, I look at the reception of the Perumal myth and the caste order of Kerala in early Portuguese records such as the chronicle of Barbosa. The chapter then explores the extent to which the knowledge of origin

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[588] Camões, trans. by White, p. 146 (Canto 7, Stanza 36).
In the Portuguese edition:
'*Este lhe dá, com o título excelente*
De Emperador, que sobre os outros mande.
Isto feito, se parte diligente
Para onde em santa vida acabe e ande.
E daqui fica o nome de potente
Samori, mais que todos dino e grande,
Ao moço e descendentes, donde vem
Este que agora o Império mande e tem.' Camões, ed. by Guégués, p. 203.

stories influenced the Portuguese pattern of settlement in Kerala, comparing their patterns of settlement with exiting patterns, notably that of the Māppila Muslims, in the last section.

7.1. Portuguese Sources on Malabar

Many records were produced by scribes who either accompanied Crown officials to Kerala or served in a Portuguese fort/factory on the Malabar Coast. Three Portuguese sources form the basis for my study in this chapter, namely, the *Journal of Vasco da Gama*; *The Book of Barbosa*; and the epic poem *The Lusíads,* which was based on the journal.[589] Although their main focus is Malabar, all three texts take the much-traversed, Muslim-dominated Indian Ocean as their wider setting. The most detailed descriptions in the *Journal of Vasco da Gama* begin to appear from the Cape of Good Hope onwards. *The*

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[589] The original manuscript of the *Journal of Vasco da Gama* is lost and only a transcription from the sixteenth century has survived which is now in the possession of the Municipal library of Porto. Diogo Köpke and António Costa de Paiva, the first publishers of the journal (1838), assigned the authorship of the records to Álvaro Velho, who travelled on Paulo da Gama's ship *S. Rafael*. Most publishers have followed this tradition. Fardilha and Fernandes, however, identify the author as 'o Navegador Anónimo' ('the Anonymous Sailor'). The journal was translated from Portuguese into English by E. G. Ravenstein for the Hakluyt Society in 1898, on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of Vasco da Gama's first arrival in Calicut.
In 2009, Glenn J. Ames translated the journal into English, almost a century after Ravenstein's translation. *Em Nome de Deus: The Journal of the First Voyage of Vasco Da Gama to India, 1497-1499*, trans. by Glenn Joseph Ames (Leiden: Brill, 2009).
The latest English translation by Fardilha and Fernandes, which this thesis consults, appeared in 2016.
The original manuscript of Barbosa's chronicle is lost and only copies have survived. As early as 1524, a Spanish translation by Martin Cinturion appeared, which was translated into Italian in 1550 by João Baptisto Ramusio, who also claims to have consulted a Portuguese copy given to him by Damião de Góis. The Portuguese copy found attached to Ramusio's translation was first published in 1812 and was subsequently translated into English by Mansel Longworth Dames in 1918. See Barbosa, trans. by Dames (2 vols.).
Fernão Lopes de Castanheda is thought to have consulted the manuscript copy of journal that is now extant in the form of transcription. According to Köpke and Paiva, the first half of Castanheda's book *Primeiro da História do Descobrimento e Conquista da Índia pelos Portugueses* (*First Book of the History of the Discoveries and Conquest of India by the Portuguese*), published in 1551, is literally copied from the extant copy. Castanheda's 'near copy', they argue, served as a source for Camões' epic poem. See Fardilha and Fernandes, p. 107.
The Lusíads was first published in 1572 and first translated into English by Richard Fanshawe in 1655. In this thesis, I consult the latest English translation by White (1997) and one of the more recent Portuguese editions by Guégués (2016).

Book of Barbosa, too, takes the Indian Ocean as its primary focus; its descriptions of various countries begins with the Cape of São Sebastião, east of the Cape of Good Hope, and ends in Lequeos, a group of islands facing the 'great land of China'.[590] As Bernhard Klein emphasizes in his study of *The Lusíads*, the poem opens *in media res* (adhering to the form of the epic), which for Gama's crew also happens to be 'midway on the wide ocean' just south of Mozambique, at 'the southernmost fringes of the Indian Ocean trading zone'.[591]

As we have seen in previous chapters, the available Arabic and Malayalam sources from Kerala give only a brief, matter-of-fact description of the Portuguese arrival in Calicut. Remarkably, they do not show any familiarity with Vasco da Gama, the man who led the voyage and later became the hero of Camões' epic poem in 1572. In the absence of any indigenous descriptions of Gama's voyage, the *Journal of Vasco da Gama* is valuable as the only surviving first-person account of the first encounter between the Portuguese and the Zamorin. The recent Malayalam translations of the *Journal of Vasco da Gama* and *The Lusíads* are testament to the growing importance of Gama's voyage for the Malayali public in the present day.[592]

The Book of Barbosa stands out among all the sixteenth-century Portuguese chronicles because of Barbosa's knowledge of Malayalam and his first-hand experience of having lived and worked in Kerala for an extended period until his

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[590] Barbosa, trans. by Dames (vol. 1), p. 3 and (vol. 2), p. 215.
[591] Bernhard Klein, 'Camões and the Sea: Maritime Modernity in The Lusiads', *Modern Philology*, 111.2 (2013), 158–80 (p. 162).
[592] *Vasco da Gamayude Diarykurippukal [The Diary Entries of Vasco da Gama]*, trans. by Prabha Chatterji (Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 2012); Luis Vaz de Camões, *Lusiadukalude Ithihasam [The History of the Lusiadas]*, trans. by Davees C. J. (Thrissur: Current Books, 2016).

death in 1546 or 1547.[593] His book includes one of the earliest European descriptions of caste in Kerala.[594] This chapter looks at Barbosa's description of caste in Kerala in the light of indigenous caste models, specifically Sankaracharya's caste order. Before going into the Portuguese reception of the caste order, the next section looks at how Barbosa and other Portuguese writers received the Perumal myth.

7.2. The Perumal Myth in Portuguese Literature

The only founder-hero that appears significantly in the origin stories narrated in the Portuguese texts is the Perumal. Since early Portuguese writers like Barbosa must have received the stories from locals in Kerala, this suggests that stories about other heroes like Parasurāman, Shankaracharya, and Malik bin Dinar were less significant in the oral tradition at the time.

In his chronicle, Barbosa begins the section on 'the land of Malabar' ('*as terras do Malabar*') with the story of the Perumal's division of his kingdom among his

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[593] Barbosa belonged to the first generation of Portuguese men who permanently settled in Kerala. He arrived in Kochi in 1500 with Cabral and worked in factories across Kerala in Kochi, Kannur and Kozhikode. By 1503, he seem to have gained enough fluency in Malayalam to have been commissioned by Afonso de Albuquerque to act as a linguistic mediator between the Portuguese officials and the ruler of Kannur. Barbosa completed his chronicle in 1516 and left a copy of it in Lisbon during a visit. He returned to India and remained in Kerala until his death in 1546 or 1547. Though his chronicle was not published until the nineteenth century, it was known to sixteenth-century Portuguese historians such as Gaspar Correa, Lopes de Castenheda, João de Barros and Damião de Góis, and was translated in the same century into Castilian, Italian and German. See a biographical sketch of Barbosa given in, Cristina Osswald, 'On Otherness and India: O Livro de Duarte Barbosa (c. 1516) Seen in Context', *CEM - Cultura, Espaço & Memória*, 6, 2015, 23–38 (p. 27); Joan-Pau Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology in the Renaissance: South India through European Eyes, 1250-1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 205.

[594] Joan-Pau Rubiés has used Barbosa's chronicle to explore the emergence of an 'ethnographical attitude' in the sixteenth century. He groups Barbosa along with other Portuguese travellers like Tomé Pires, Domingo Paes and Fernão Nunes into 'a new category of colonial ethnographers' who 'introduced an understanding of India as a caste society in Europe'. See Rubiés, p. 202.

'kinsfolk' ('*parentes*').[595] Before this division, he says, 'all Malabar was one kingdom' ('*todo o Malabar era um só rei*').[596] Details of the partition story in Barbosa's chronicle correspond more or less accurately with that of the founding myth produced in the Malayalam and the Arabic records:

> And at last, having given away all, and going to take ship from an uninhabited strand (where now is the town of Calicut), and accompanied by more Moors than Heathen, he [Perumal] took with him a nephew [Zamorin] who served him as his page to whom he gave this piece of land, telling him to settle and inhabit it. He then gave him his sword, and a golden lamp which he carried with him as a matter of state, and left a charge to all the Kings and Lords to whom he had given lands that they should obey and honour him, save only the Kings of Cananor and Coulam whom he made independent.[597]

Barbosa's account of three independent rulers in Malabar parallels the accounts given by both the Malayalam and the Arabic records. Like Qadi Muhammad, Barbosa addresses the Zamorin as the Perumal's 'nephew' ('*sobrinho*'), drawing a legitimate kinship relation between the Perumal and the Zamorin that would have made him the Perumal's legitimate heir under the matrilineal system of inheritance. In his retelling of this story, Barbosa, however, includes one detail that is not present in either the Arabic or the Malayalam records. Deviating from *The Story of Emperor Perumal*, which indicates that the Perumal departed for Mecca from the Chera capital in Kodungallor, Barbosa writes that

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[595] Barbosa, trans. by Dames (vol. 2), p. 1 & 4; Barbosa, ed. by Machado, pp. 118-19.
[596] Barbosa, trans. by Dames (vol. 2), p. 4; Barbosa, ed. by Machado, p. 119. This line translates better as, 'all Malabar had only one king'.
[597] Barbosa, trans. by Dames (vol. 2), pp. 4-5. Barbosa, ed. by Machado, p. 119.
In the Portuguese edition: '*E tendo já por derradeiro tudo dado, vindo-se embarcar em uma praia desabitada, onde agora é Calecut, mais acompanhado de mouros que de gentios, trazia consigo um seu sobrinho, que o servia como pajem, ao qual deu aquele pedaço de terra, dizendo que assentasse nela e a fizesse povoar, dando-lhe uma espada sua, e um candeeiro de ouro, que ele trazia por estado, e deixou mandado a todos os reis e senhores a quem dera as terras, que lhe obedecessem e acatassem, sòmente el-rei de Cananor e de Coulão que fez isentos, de maneira que deixou dentro no Malabar três reis, livres uns dos outros*'. Barbosa, ed. by Machado, p. 119.

the Perumal sailed off from an 'uninhabited strand' (*'praia disabitada*'), which he identifies as Calicut. The importance of the land where the city of Calicut was to be established suggests that Barbosa received the story from the kingdom of Kozhikode, possibly from the Māppila Muslims settled there.

On the subject of the Perumal's conversion, Barbosa relates that the Perumal converted to Islam due to the influence of the 'Moors' ('*mouros*') in Malabar. In Barbosa's understanding, 'Moors' began to take cargoes of pepper from Calicut primarily 'in memory of the embarcation of the Indian King there on his way to become a Moor'.[598] Barbosa gives this special remembrance by the Muslim traders as the reason for the rise of Calicut and the parallel decline of Kollam as the principal port city on the Malabar Coast. The increase of trade in Calicut, he says, made the city 'great and noble' (*'grande e nobre*') and the king 'the greatest and most powerful of all in Malabar'.[599]

João de Barros too cites Calicut as the place of departure of the Perumal and paints the Zamorin as the most powerful ruler of Kerala, whose title 'corresponds to the name of emperor amongst us'.[600] He also accepts the conversion of the Perumal to Islam. Camões' retelling of the myth echoes Barbosa and Barros as he too asserts that the Perumal conferred the title of the 'emperor' ('*emperador*') on the Zamorin, setting him above the other rulers.[601] However, he rejects a kinship connection between the Perumal and the

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[598] Barbosa, trans. by Dames (vol. 2), p. 5.
In the Portuguese edition: *'em lembrança que o rei índio se embarcara ali , a ir-se tornar mouro*'. Barbosa, ed. by Machado, p. 119.
[599] Barbosa, trans. by Dames (vol. 2), p. 5.
In the Portuguese edition: *'o maior e mais poderos de todos que no Malabar*'. Barbosa, ed. by Machado, p. 120.
[600] In Ayyar, p. 64 (from Barros, *Decada* I, Book IX, Ch. 3).
[601] Camões, trans. by White, p. 146 (Canto 7, Stanza 36); Camões, ed. by Guégués, p. 203.

Zamorin, writing instead that since the Perumal had no natural heir, he divided his kingdom among 'the most worthy' ('*os mais aceitos*').[602]

In the late sixteenth century, Diogo de Couto received a divergent version of the Perumal's conversion that circulated among the St. Thomas Christians (Syrian Christians). He writes that the Perumal, 'being a very good and affectionate friend of the St. Thomas Christians of Cranganore [Kodungallor], [...] became a Christian and then went on a pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Thomas in Mylapore'.[603] In promoting this story, Couto might have had the aim of discrediting the story promoted by the Māppila Muslims of Kerala in order to aid the Portuguese missionary activities targeting the Syrian Christians in Kerala, taking place at the time. Unlike his predecessors, Couto does not project the Zamorin as the legitimate heir of the Perumal. Instead, he writes that the 'lords of Malabar adopted to themselves on their own account the title of kings' after Perumal's death in Mylapore (in present-day Tamil Nadu).[604]

Even before the stories of the Perumal begin to appear in Portuguese writings, there are indications that the Portuguese officials were already aware of the tensions between the various rulers, each of whom contested the others' claims over the 'land of Perumal', which then had a bearing on the political strategies of the Portuguese for the region of Kerala. Following his failed negotiations with the then Zamorin (r. 1500-1513), the Portuguese captain Pedro Álvares Cabral was directed by Gaspar da Gama (a captive taken by Vasco da Gama from Goa)

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[602] Camões, trans. by White, p. 145 (Canto 7, Stanza 34); Camões, ed. by Guégués, p. 203.
[603] Ayyar, p. 64 (from Couto, *Decada* VII, Book X).
[604] Ayyar, p. 65 (from Couto, *Decada* VII, Book X).

to the rival kingdom of Kochi, where he also received letters of invitation from other rival kingdoms such as Vēnād and Kōlathunād.[605] According to K. M. Panikkar, Cabral's treaty with the Kochi *Rājāh* included a secret clause, guaranteeing the *Rājāh* his independence from the Zamorin and his installation as the chief ruler of Malabar.[606] Although the alliance initially reduced the *Rājāh* to the position of a vassal to the king of Portugal, the kingdom of Kochi and the eponymous port town gained in importance, finally posing a legitimate threat to the suzerainty of the Zamorins. Writing some years later, Barbosa recorded the impact the Portuguese arrival had on the Kochi kingdom:

> The King of Cochim has a very small country and was not a King before the Portuguese discovered India, for all the Kings who had of late reigned in Calecut had held it for their practice and rule to invade Cochim and drive the King out of his estate [...] The King of Cochim gave him [the Zamorin] every year a certain number of elephants, but he might not strike coins, nor roof his palace with tiles under pain of losing his land. Now that the King our Lord has discovered India he has made the King independent and powerful in his own land, so that none can interfere with it, and he strikes whatsoever money he will.[607]

In these lines, Barbosa attributes the *Rājāh*'s release from political servitude under the Zamorins to the king of Portugal's 'discovery' of India and subsequent patronage of the *Rājāh*. However, he fails to mention the reduced status of the *Rājāh* in relation to the Portuguese Crown and the benefits received by the Crown through the alliance.

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[605] Panikkar, *Malabar and the Portuguese*, pp. 42-43. As also mentioned in Chapter Six.
[606] Panikkar, *Malabar and the Portuguese*, p. 55.
[607] Barbosa, trans. by Dames (vol. 2), pp. 94-95.
In the Portuguese edition: *'El-rei de Cochim tem muita pequena terra e não era rei antes que os portugueses descobrissem a Índia, porque todos os reis que novamente reinavam em Calecut, tirado el-rei fora de seu Estado* [...] *El-rei de Cochim lhe dava, cada ano, certos elefantes, mas não podia fazer moeda, nem cobrir seus paços de telha sob pena de perder a terra. Agora que el-rei nosso senhor descobriu a Índia o fez rei isento e poderoso em sua terra, que ninguém entendesse nela e faz moeda do que quer*.' Barbosa, ed. by Machado, p. 169.

More than a century later, the Dutch followed the pattern of the Portuguese in collaborating with the weaker rulers from Kerala to wage war against the more powerful Zamorins. The Dutch collaborations, too, may have been influenced by their knowledge of the Perumal myth. An early eighteenth-century text by the Dutchman Jacob Canter Visscher, who served as a chaplain in Kochi, gives some insights into the Dutch reception of the tale. Visscher writes that when the Perumal divided up his kingdom (before his departure to either the Ganges or to Mecca), he gave Kozhikode to his illegitimate children, 'who according to the law could not inherit', and gave Kochi to his nephews, 'who were the lawful heirs of the crown'. This commentary is likely influenced by the Dutch alliance with Kochi. Visscher also writes that the Perumal gave his sword to the Zamorin and his shield to the king of Kochi, making them the heads of two dominant factions in the country.[608] This enhances the importance of the minor kingdom of Kochi by putting it on an equal footing with the powerful kingdom of Kozhikode. The Dutch also targeted the sword of the Perumal, an important material evidence of the Perumal's story and a powerful symbol of the Zamorins' supremacy throughout Kerala. In 1670, the Dutch forces broke into a temple where the sword of the Perumal was preserved, smashed the idol, killed the priest, and attempted to destroy the sword (which was later restored from the broken pieces).[609] This attack was most likely performed at the behest of the Kochi *Rājāh*.

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[608] *Letters from Malabar by Jacob Canter Visscher*, trans. by Heber Drury (Madras: Gantz Brothers, 1862), p. 50.
[609] Ayyar, p. 223; Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, p. 146.

The Perumal story also drew the attention of the British who annexed Malabar, including the Zamorins' territories, in 1792. William Logan (who served as the revenue collector of British-ruled Malabar District) used a sketch of the sword as the frontispiece to the first volume of his book *Malabar*.[610] Logan may have associated the inscription on the sword – 'Die and kill and annex' ('*Ningal chathum konnum adakkikolka*') – with the British annexation of Malabar, which he refers to in the Preface to *Malabar*: referring to the events of 1792, he says 'the Honorable Company's “merchants” and “writers” laid aside day-book and ledger and assumed the sword and sceptre of the land'.[611] In these lines and through his choice of frontispiece, Logan appropriates an important historical symbol for the local people to signal the transition of power in British-ruled Malabar. Such appropriations of the Perumal myth suggest that the myth served as a kind of political roadmap for various European powers seeking to assert their authority in the region of Kerala. The Portuguese reception of the caste order of Kerala presents a comparable case.

7.3. The Portuguese Encounters with Caste

The first encounter between Vasco da Gama and the people of the Kozhikode kingdom was, in the words of Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'the occasion for a great misunderstanding'.[612] The *Journal of Vasco da Gama* describes how Gama misidentified the Zamorin as a Christian king, and a Hindu temple he visited as a Christian church dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Thinking the idol to be a statue of Mary, Gama then knelt and prayed before it.[613] According to the journal, the

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[610] Frontispiece to Logan, *Malabar* (vol. 1).
[611] Logan, *Malabar* (vol. 1), p. viii.
[612] Subrahmanyam, 'The Birth-pangs of Portuguese Asia', p. 262.
[613] Fardilha and Fernandes, p. 148.

crew members were shocked after the initial meeting with the Zamorin turned hostile, believing themselves to have been mistreated by a fellow Christian: 'We felt it too because his affront was caused by a Christian king to his own'.[614]

The Portuguese crew seems to be under this misapprehension even during Gama's return journey to Lisbon, during which the writer of the journal compiles (with the help of Gaspar da Gama) a list of kingdoms lying south of Kozhikode, which he classifies as either Christian or Muslim. Kozhikode, Kollam and Kodungallor are all indicated on the list as having Christian rulers.[615] As Subrahmanyam points out, the Portuguese eventually correct this error, producing a new tripartite scheme involving Christians, Moors and Gentiles by 1501.[616]

Barbosa's chronicle includes one of the earliest European descriptions of caste in Kerala, in which he recognizes the institution of caste as specific to a political realm. He describes the contours of various realms, including Vijayanagar and Malabar, treating each as a distinct political unit. His idea of 'the land of Malabar' is clearly shaped by his knowledge of the Perumal myth. However, he draws its boundaries somewhat differently from stories about the Perumal or the legendary Parasurāman – though the southern boundary is located in all

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[614] Fardilha and Fernandes, p. 156.
In Portuguese: '[*E*] *assi mesmo o sentiámos por um rei cristão nos fazer tanta perraria*.' (p. 72)
[615] Fardilha and Fernandes, pp. 165-67.
In the appendix, titled 'Description of some kingdoms' ('*Descrição de alguns reinos*'), the scribe does not name Gaspar da Gama as his source but instead acknowledges his source in the following lines: 'The names below are of certain kingdoms that stretch from Calicut to the south, what is produced in each kingdom and what they are worth, all of which I learnt from a trustworthy man who knew our language and who had come from Alexandria to these parts thirty years before'. There is, however, some consensus among the editors of the various editions of the journal that the 'trustworthy man' from Alexandria was Gaspar da Gama. See Fardilha and Fernandes, p. 106; Ames, p. 113.
[616] Subrahmanyam, 'The Birth-pangs of Portuguese Asia', pp. 262-63.

three accounts at Kanyakumari (or the Cape of Comorin), Barbosa draws the northern boundary not at Gokarnam but further south at the Hill of Dely (Ezhimala).[617] He may have factored in the spoken language in each region while making these choices, since he notes that people spoke Malayalam in 'the land of Malabar' as opposed to Kannada in the neighbouring Vijayanagar kingdom: 'And in the Land of Malabar all men use one tongue only, which they call Maliama'.[618]

A comparison of Barbosa's description of the caste order with that of Sankaracharya could yield insights into transfers of knowledge between various socio-political groups at the time. In contrast to Sankaracharya's caste order, Barbosa sees caste as a system governing the Gentiles ('*gentios*') alone, and hence, as an institution with no bearing on other religious groups like the Muslims, Jews, and Christians.[619] Thus, Barbosa classifies the Gentiles as an entirely separate group from these other religious communities. He even introduces his own category of 'foreign people' ('*gentes estrangeiras*'), in which he includes Chettis from Coromandel, Gujaratis, and the 'Moors'.[620] This is a different understanding of caste than Sankaracharya's caste model, which ascribes a rank to every occupational group regardless of their religious affiliations. Though Barbosa does not include his own community in the list, it may be that he intended the 'foreign people' category to cover the Portuguese,

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[617] Barbosa, trans. by Dames (vol. 2), p. 1.
[618] Barbosa, trans. by Dames (vol. 2), p. 6.
In the Portuguese edition: *'Nesta terra do Malabar todos se servem de uma língua que chamam maliama*'. Barbosa, ed. by Machado, p. 120.
[619] Barbosa, ed. by Machado, p. 157.
[620] Barbosa, trans. by Dames (vol. 2), p. 70; Barbosa, ed. by Machado, p. 157.
Dames gives 'outlandish folk' as the translation. 'Foreign people' seems like a better translation for '*gentes estrangeiros*'.

situating them outside the Gentile framework of caste, and alongside other religious groups like the Muslims, Christians, and Jews.

Sankaracharya's caste order integrates the substantial number of occupational groups in Kerala into the four *varna*s based in the Sanskrit Vedas, with Brahmins occupying the superior position. Probably unaware of the *varna* model, Barbosa presents a list of eighteen castes, which he divides into two distinct groups of upper castes and lower castes. In organizing the castes into two groups, Barbosa does not consider the differential relationship to land which was likely crucial in determining rank within the caste order prescribed by Sankaracharya. Instead, he employs the criterion of distance pollution which he observed in the form of touch and permissible sexual relations between different castes. He not only discerns the absence of touch and sexual relations between the two groups but also understands the two groups to share a master-slave relation.[621]

The upper caste group in Barbosa's model is comprised, in descending order, of kings, Brahmins, Nāirs, merchants, potters, washer folk, and weavers; while the lower caste group includes toddy tappers, another group of washer folk, astrologers, masons and carpenters, fisher folk, salt makers, sorcerers, scavengers, and two other particularly degraded castes referred to as *poleas* and *pareens*. Unlike Sankaracharya's caste order, which divides each caste into many sub-castes, Barbosa does not see any subdivisions within his categories and treats the Nāirs, for example, as a single caste group. Another clear difference between the two is that Barbosa regards kings, rather than Brahmins,

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[621] Barbosa, trans. by Dames (vol. 2), pp. 59 & 70.

as the highest caste.[622]

To decode the indigenous rules of caste, Barbosa brings to bear a Christian and European reference system. First, he frequently uses the word 'lei' to refer to caste groups.[623] As Joan-Pau Rubiés notes, the concept of 'lei' was 'analogous to the distinction between different religious communities in the biblical tradition: Jews, Christians, and Muslims'. The novel point for Barbosa, according to Rubiés, was that he detected different laws for each caste group within the common law governing the Gentiles.[624] Second, Barbosa draws analogies between the social order of Kerala and of Europe. As both Rubiés and Christina Osswald have noted, he finds similitude between the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity and the *trimurti* (triad) of Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu found in Hindu worship.[625] Barbosa also equates Brahmins with clergymen and Nāirs with noblemen.[626] He appears to have been fascinated by the ways of the Nāirs, whom he saw as equivalent in status to European nobility. In addition to this affinity, it is possible that the military occupation of the Nāirs drew the interest of Barbosa, who was keen to inform his Portuguese readers of the military strength of each of the kingdoms he had visited or heard of. Further, he finds the practice of monogamy among Brahmins to be analogous to the European system of marriage. He also makes a specific note of the practice of matriliny and the absence of marriage law among the non-Brahmin castes. Finally, as Osswald argues, Barbosa attempts to associate whiteness of skin 'with a

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[622] Barbosa, trans. by Dames (vol. 2), pp. 7-70.
[623] Barbosa, ed. by Machado, p. 157.
[624] Rubiés, p. 210.
[625] Rubiés, p. 221; Osswald, p. 33.
[626] Rubiés, p. 219.

particular level of civility' and 'racial superiority'.[627] For example, he describes foreign Moors as 'white, well-bred and proper to behold', distinguishing them from the native Moors who 'go naked like the Nayres'.[628] He also claims that the caste of fisherfolk ('Mogeres') were of foreign descent, 'whiter than the natives of the country, and the women go well clad, with many gold ornaments'.[629]

In what seems like an effort to guide the behaviour of the Portuguese men in a caste-based society, Barbosa specifies which among the castes could have sexual relations with foreigners. He claims that a Nāir woman if touched or 'polluted' by a man from the lower caste would be sold to foreigners. Women from the Mukkuva (fisherfolk) caste, he says, were available to anyone, and the Tiyya (toddy-tappers) women were available to everyone except foreigners.[630]

Writing more than half a century after Barbosa, Camões corrects some of the early misconceptions of the Portuguese on the religious organization of Kerala. He, however, does this by anachronistically privileging Vasco da Gama with knowledge of the religion of the Gentiles. Contrary to the first impressions jotted down by Gama's scribe in the *Journal of Vasco da Gama* (in which the scribe reveals that the captain mistook a Hindu temple for a Christian church and the Hindu idol for Virgin Mary), Camões writes that the Portuguese crew not only correctly recognized the temple but were 'baffled and dismayed' to see the images of gods, whose faces and colours were 'as discordant / as if the Devil had devised them'.[631] Thus, Camões turns the very idol before which Gama had

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[627] Osswald, p. 33.
[628] Barbosa, trans. by Dames (vol. 2), pp. 77 & 74.
[629] Barbosa, trans. by Dames (vol. 2), p. 64.
[630] Barbosa, trans. by Dames (vol. 2), pp. 60 & 65.
[631] Camões, trans. by White, p. 148 (Canto 7, Stanza 47); Camões, ed. by Guégués, p. 206.

knelt and prayed into a repulsive symbol of idol-worship that shocks the Christian visitors.

Compared with the comprehensive list of eighteen castes given by Barbosa, Camões divides the people of Kerala into two categories: Nāirs ('*Naires*') and Pariahs ('*Poleás*').[632] Like Barbosa, he stresses touch pollution and sanction to intermarry as the main criteria separating the former from the latter. He also applies a Christian and European framework to make sense of the caste system. He refers to each caste as 'lei', equates Nāirs with nobility ('*nobres*'), and compares the practice of touch pollution to an ancient Jewish practice in their treatment of the Samaritan people. Unlike Barbosa, who withholds any judgement toward peculiar practices such as polyandry and polygamy across caste groups, Camões expresses shock at the permissible sexual practices, especially among Brahmins: 'Only in matters of love is their goal / Greater indulgence and less self-control'.[633] In short, Camões presents a greatly oversimplified and disparaging picture of Kerala society when compared to Barbosa. As these records show, the early Portuguese travellers to Kerala seem to have seen themselves as outsiders with respect to the social customs governing the region. Nevertheless, their knowledge of the caste order had some bearing on their strategies of intermarriage and conversion in the region, as we

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In the Portuguese edition, the entire stanza goes as follows:
'*Ali estão das Deidades as figuras,*
Esculpidas em pau e em pedra fria,
Vários de gestos, vários de pinturas,
A segundo o Demónio lhe fingia;
Vêem-se as abomináveis esculturas,
Qual a Quimera em membros se varia;
Os cristãos olhos, a ver Deus usados
Em forma humana, estão maravilhados.'

[632] Camões, trans. by White, p. 146 (Canto 7, Stanza 37); Camões, ed. by Guégués, p. 204.

[633] Camões, trans. by White, p. 147 (Canto 7, Stanza 40).

will see in the next section.

7.4. The Portuguese Pattern of Settlement in Kerala

Pius Malekandathil's comparative study of Portuguese and Chinese maritime traders, the latter operating under the backing of the Ming dynasty in the fifteenth century, finds that the Chinese were more sea-oriented than the Portuguese. He claims that the Portuguese engaged in 'land adventurism' due to the great distance from their homeland. An illustrative case is Goa, where the Portuguese turned from trade to agriculture on land they acquired through the 'donatorial-captaincy' (*foreiro*) system of colonization, in which the land was legally the inalienable property of the Crown.[634] In this section, I take a deeper look at the Portuguese pattern of settlement in Kerala, looking at similarities and differences from other maritime settlements, especially those of Arab Muslims, who dominated the Indian Ocean trade and had a strong presence in the various port cities of Kerala at the time of the Portuguese arrival.

Similarities and Differences with the Existing Settlements

The Portuguese pattern of settlement in the port cities was not very different from that of the Arab Muslims, the Jews, and the Syrian Christians who preceded them. Some key features of their settlement such as intermarriage and conversion suggest that the Portuguese may have tried to emulate the Arab Muslims and the other maritime groups in Kerala. However, there were also some characteristics that were unique to the Portuguese, which had to do with what Malekandathil calls their 'land adventurism' in Kerala.

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[634] Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, pp. 74-75.

First, the Portuguese settled in port cities close to the sea, on lands granted to them by local rulers. This was in keeping with the existing pattern of trade settlements in the region. However, unlike these settlements, the Portuguese fortified all their settlements in Kochi (1503), Kannur (1508), Calicut (1513), Kollam (1519), Chaliyam (1531), and Kodungallor (1536) – an activity that the Dutch also carried out later (see fig. 8, p. 261, for locations of these forts).[635] Available evidence suggests that only royal families fortified their strongholds on the Malabar Coast in the pre-Portuguese era.[636] Fortification of trade settlements, therefore, seems to be something new that the Portuguese brought to the Malabar Coast. The Portuguese organized their settlements in such a way as to reflect their sovereignty over the seas, which they claimed for themselves through the concept of *mare clausum* (closed sea) and institutionalized through the *cartaz* system.[637] With a view to demonstrating this claim, they constructed prominent sea-facing edifices and maintained, in the words of Malekandathil, 'an astonishingly remarkable degree of exclusiveness by keeping all the non-Portuguese people outside the walls of their dwelling place'.[638] The Portuguese settlements near the sea probably posed a very minimal threat to the Hindu ruling elites, who lived inland. At least in theory, the Portuguese only claimed sovereignty over the sea and not over the land from where the ruling elites derived their ritual authority.

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[635] Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, pp. 69-70; Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia*, p. 85.
[636] In his chronicle, Barbosa records the presence of such royal forts on the Malabar Coast. Barbosa, trans. by Dames (vol. 2), p. 79.
[637] Malekandathil, 'Changing Perceptions of Sea', p. 57.
Mare clausum, according to Malekandathil, 'refers to any sea or other navigable body of water which is under the jurisdiction of a particular country and which is closed to other nations. This perception of sea was held by the Portuguese and the Spaniards during the period of geographical discoveries'.
[638] Malekandathil, 'Changing Perceptions of Sea', p. 58.

The Portuguese settlements in Kerala were, however, different from other parts of the Indian Ocean world where they exerted more power. While in Kerala, they coexisted with native settlements, in Goa the 'existing city was erased to graft new one', as Malekandathil notes.[639] Their settlement pattern was later adopted by other European settlers in Kerala, notably by the Dutch who took over the Portuguese territories in the latter half of the seventeenth century. However, in contrast to the Portuguese, the Dutch perceived the sea as *mare liberum* (the open sea).[640] The Dutch settlements in Kerala were also more diverse. In the Dutch settlement in Kochi, for example, half the population was non-Dutch, including former Portuguese settlers (*casados*), Jews, Konkanis, and Tamils.[641]

A second characteristic of the Portuguese pattern of settlement is that, like the other maritime groups, Portuguese men married native women. During his time in office as the Governor of the Estado, Afonso de Albuquerque (1509-1515) introduced the mixed marriage policy known as *Politica dos Casamentos* which allowed Portuguese soldiers, traders, and artisans to marry indigenous women after converting them to Christianity.[642] The married settlers, known as *casados*, were allowed to leave the royal service and settle down as citizens or traders in the Portuguese part of the town.[643] Charles Dias has argued that in devising the marriage policy, Albuquerque might have considered the situation of the Arabs

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[639] Malekandathil, 'Changing Perceptions of Sea', p. 62.
[640] Malekandathil, 'Changing Perceptions of Sea', p. 63.
As Malekandathil notes, in 1609, Hugo Grotius published *Mare Liberum* in which he formulated the sea as international territory, free for all nations to conduct trade.
[641] Malekandathil, 'Changing Perceptions of Sea', pp. 63-64.
[642] Charles Dias, *The Portuguese in Malabar: A Social History of Luso Indians* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2013), p. 73.
[643] Dias, p. 86.

who married and settled in Calicut.[644] However, unlike the Arabs who married women from the lower castes, the Portuguese men, under directions from Albuquerque, preferred to marry 'good-looking and fair complexioned Muslim women'.[645] In Goa, which was dominated by Muslims at the time of its capture in 1510, the Portuguese were induced by Albuquerque to marry Muslim widows and orphans. In Kochi, however, they married Muslim women brought from Malacca after its capture in 1511.[646] In the first years of cooperation with the Marakkār clan in Kochi, Portuguese men also married women from the Marakkār clan.

According to Dias, the Portuguese preference for Muslim women was not just on account of their fair complexion but also because they were found to be 'virtuous' in comparison to the low caste Hindu women who they thought to be 'neither chaste nor comely'.[647] There were probably also other factors involved in this preference such as the Portuguese competition with Muslims in controlling the sea lanes and the port cities. However, Albuquerque's instructions were largely ignored after his governorship ended in 1515.[648] After this period, the Portuguese men appear to have set aside conditions of skin colour and 'chastity' to marry women from the lower castes. Dias argues that Albuquerque's policy of colonization through intermarriage was unique in the history of Europeans in India and was not pursued as a policy either by the Dutch or by the English.[649] Marriage and relations with indigenous women characterized the Portuguese

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644 Dias, p. 73.
645 Dias, p. 72.
646 Dias, p. 95.
647 Dias, p. 92.
648 Dias, p. 92.
649 Dias, p. 93.

pattern of settlement in different parts of the world, as Amélia Polónia and Rosa Capelão have argued in their work on women as intermediaries in the Portuguese overseas empire.[650]

While there is evidence of both marriage and sexual relations between Portuguese men and native women, there is no evidence (to my knowledge) to suggest that the Portuguese, be it traders or the nobility, entered into any alliance with the ruling families in Kerala. They did, however, form such alliances in other parts of the Indian Ocean world. Polónia and Capelão have discussed the example of the ruler of the Maldives, Sultan Hassan IX Svasi Sri Dhirukusalokya Maha Radun, who converted to Christianity, adopted the name D. Manuel, and married a Portuguese woman, D. Leanor de Ataíde, the daughter of Heitor de Sousa de Ataíde. The ruler's son, too, is said to have married a Portuguese woman, Francisca de Vasconcelos. In this context, Polónia and Capelão state that 'the Portuguese women were used as alliance builders as much as autochthone and mixed breed women, representing strategic pieces in political games'.[651] It is important to note that the Maldivian ruler's conversion occurred against the backdrop of the conflict between the Ali Rājās of Arakkal (Kannur) and the Estado to wield control over the island state of Maldives. This conflict led the Maldivian ruler to seek asylum in Portuguese-controlled Kochi. There, he and his sons adopted Christianity in 1557 and remained in exile, while a new ruler nominated by the Ali Rājās succeeded to the throne in the island state.[652] In this context, the ruler's marriage with a

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[650] Amélia Polónia and Rosa Capelão, 'Connecting Worlds: Women as Intermediaries in the Portuguese Overseas Empire, 1500-1600', in *Cooperation and Empire: Local Realities of Global Processes* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), pp. 58–89 (p. 60).
[651] Polónia and Capelão, p. 63.
[652] Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, p. 141.

Portuguese noblewoman might have served a different aim than if the ruler had still remained in power. Perhaps in seeking this alliance, the two parties might have expected the ruler to return to power in the near future.

A third characteristic of the Portuguese pattern of settlement in Malabar is that, like the Muslim conversion activities in Kozhikode, Christian evangelization work began as soon as the Portuguese found a foothold in Kochi in 1500.[653] The missionaries came to Kerala as part of the ecclesiastical arrangement known as *Padroado Real*. This arrangement had its origins in the Papal Bull *Romanus Pontifex* of 1455 which legitimized Portuguese dominion over newly discovered territories and handed over the spiritual jurisdiction of those territories to the Portuguese Crown.[654] Apart from the usual target group of low caste seafarers, the *Padroado* missionaries targeted existing maritime groups such as the Syrian Christians who had ties to the East Syrian Church in Babylon and the Māppila Muslims. They also targeted Hindu caste groups who were engaged in land-based occupations, including the royalty.

Portuguese writings from the sixteenth century indicate that the Crown officials saw the Syrian Christians as belonging to what Malekandathil refers to as a 'corrupt religion'.[655] In fact, Barbosa describes Syrian Christians as 'very devout Christians, lacking nothing but true doctrine'.[656] In this context, it seems, Barbosa saw the missionaries as performing some kind of reformative work. It

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[653] Cabral's fleet brought eight Franciscan missionaries, among whom four settled in Kochi. The expedition of João da Nova in 1501 carried more Franciscans who divided their activities between Kochi and Kannur. Dias, p. 315.
[654] Malakandtahil, 'Changing Perceptions of Sea', p. 58.
[655] Pius Malekandathil, 'Contextualizing the Encounters between Portuguese Missionaries and the St. Thomas Christians', *Journal of the Syro-Malabar Liturgical Centre*, x.18 (2017), 61–109 (section 2).
[656] Barbosa, trans. by Dames (vol. 2), p. 89.

is possible that such conversion activities also had as their goal the building of a joint Christian front against Muslim dominion in the Indian Ocean. This becomes clear from some of the privileges extended to Syrian Christian converts, which included a preference in matters of trade and permission to live alongside the *casados* within the Portuguese part of the town. Further, applying Metcalf's theory on go-betweens, the Syrian Christian converts might have served as 'transactional go-betweens', as translators, negotiators, and cultural brokers, between the Portuguese and the natives.[657] While Christians traders might have welcomed this opportunity, the heads of the Syrian Church seem to have resisted this imposition as they made several attempts to free the Church from the *Padroado*, which culminated in the historic 'Oath of the Coonan Cross' (*Koonan Kurishu Satyam*) in 1653, which saw members of the Church publicly disavowing the Roman Pope and the *Padroado*.[658] It is perhaps not a coincidence that this occurred at a time when the Estado was beginning to lose its foothold on the Malabar Coast following the arrival of the Dutch in the Indian Ocean.

Missionary activities among the seafarers do not seem to have faced much opposition from the Hindu rulers who followed the practice of encouraging low caste seafarers to convert to foreign religions. However, the Portuguese faced stiff resistance from the Hindu rulers when it came to conversions of people involved in labour on land. A notable example of this resistance can be found in a letter written by the Kōlathiri of Kōlathunād to the king of Portugal in 1507. In the letter, the ruler petitions the king of Portugal to instruct the Portuguese

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[657] Metcalf, 10.
[658] Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Europe's India: Words, People, Empires, 1500-1800* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017), p. 315.

missionaries to desist from converting the caste groups of Tiyyas and the Mukkuvas as it would free them from labour on land and lead to conflicts with their Nāir masters:

> And I would also like that some people who in my kingdom I hold as slaves, as do my Nayres, who are of two categories (*leis*) of people, that is Tiues [Tiyyas] and Mucoas [Mukkuvas], should not be converted into Christians, and nor should Nayres or Bramanes. Because if these slaves become Christians, a conflict (*arroydo*) may result between our vassals and your people, because the Nayres of my lands gain their revenues from them and they will not want to lose them.[659]

The contents of the letter suggest that the missionaries attempted to reach further than the conventional targets of conversion in Kerala, leading to conflicts with local powers.

Apart from the agrarian caste groups, the Portuguese missionaries targeted rulers who were allied to the Crown in Kochi, Purakkad and Vettat.[660] While such attempts at royal conversions met with some measure of success in other parts of the Indian Ocean world such as the Maldives and Sri Lanka, evidence from Kerala suggests that the Hindu rulers remained resistant to Christian conversion in much the same way as they did toward Islam in the preceding centuries. Even in places like the Maldives and Sri Lanka, the 'top-down conversion strategy' of the Portuguese did not fit the existing pattern of royal conversions, which, as some scholars argue, spread from the coast to the court rather than from the king to his subjects.[661] In both the Maldives and Sri Lanka,

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[659] In Alam and Subrahmanyam, p. 107. Insertions in round and square brackets as found in the record.
[660] Menon, *Survey of Kerala History*, e-edition (Ch. XV, Section: 'Religious History of the Portuguese Period').
[661] For a discussion of the 'top-down conversion strategy,' see Polónia and Capelão, p. 62.

royal conversions by Portuguese missionaries occurred under extreme military duress, against the threat of invasion from neighbouring rulers. This was certainly the case with the Maldivian ruler, who was in exile in Kochi when he converted to Christianity.[662] Royal conversion in Sri Lanka occurred in a similar fashion; fearing attacks from a rival king, the Sinhalese ruler Dharmapala of the kingdom of Kotte fled to Portuguese-controlled Colombo, adopted Christianity, and took the name Dom João Pereapandar.[663]

The fourth and final characteristic of the Portuguese settlement pattern was that the Portuguese, like the other maritime groups, served as a bridge group for the land-based rulers on the Malabar Coast, effectively bridging the gap between the land and the sea. They were indispensable to local rulers as diplomatic intermediaries, carriers of goods to foreign markets, and as a formidable naval force who could aid their allies in territorial wars. With the arrival of the Portuguese, port cities like Kochi became integrated into a 'new world-system' with links to the Atlantic world via the Cape of Good Hope.[664] Like the Arab Muslims who assisted the Zamorins in their territorial conquests, the Portuguese presence in Kochi propelled the territorial ambitions of the Kochi *Rājāh*s. The Portuguese not only assisted the Kochi *Rājāh*s in their wars against the Zamorins but also aided the Zamorins in fighting the Marakkārs, thus serving as a naval force for rebelling rulers on the Malabar Coast.[665]

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[662] Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, p. 141.
[663] Zoltán Biedermann, 'Colombo versus Cannanore: Contrasting Structures of Two Colonial Port Cities (1500-1700)', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 52.3 (2009), 413–59 (p. 438).
[664] Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, p. 131.
[665] As mentioned in Chapter Four.

In the four areas discussed above, the Portuguese pattern of settlement shows significant similarities and differences to other settlements in the region. The differences can generally be attributed to the political interests of the Portuguese traders in the region. Their attempts to impose the political will of the Crown had no precedents in the pre-Portuguese era as far as merchant-king relations were concerned. Pre-Portuguese era maritime groups in Kerala, chiefly the dominant Muslim population, were disinterested in political power, as Fanselow has suggested. Violence was an important strategy through which the Portuguese officials set about achieving their political goals on the Malabar Coast as well as the wider Indian Ocean world throughout the sixteenth century.

Strategies of Political Control

The use of cannons was a novel technology introduced by the Portuguese on the Malabar Coast. According to Pearson, the concept of using cannons on ships was unknown before the Portuguese arrived in the Indian Ocean.[666] On his first voyage to Calicut, Gama's ships were equipped with cannons, which were put to use on several occasions, both as an offensive and defensive measure.[667] Calicut city, in particular, was bombarded by cannons on Gama's second visit in 1502.[668] The Portuguese use of cannons forced the Zamorin to upgrade his weaponry. He recruited two Milanese artillerists from the Portuguese side to purchase European-made artillery and guns for Calicut and by 1506 the Zamorin had a fleet of two hundred ships fitted with cannons to defend his capital.[669] Further, it

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[666] Pearson, *The Portuguese in India*, p. 58.
[667] On one occasion, Gama ordered his crew to fire the cannons at boats that were pursuing them from Calicut. See Fardilha and Fernandes, p. 158.
[668] Panikkar, *Malabar and the Portuguese*, p. 51.
[669] Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, p. 72; Pearson, 'Indian Ocean in the Sixteenth Century', p. 87.

can be gleaned from *The News of Kerala* that in addition to developing cannons, the Zamorin tried to deprive the Portuguese of their cannons on at least one occasion when a Portuguese fleet was shipwrecked near Ponnani in 1528.[670]

The Portuguese use of cannons not only ushered in a novel military technology but also introduced a new vocabulary in the Malayalam language. The entries in *The News of Kerala* indicate that its author lacked an adequate vocabulary to describe cannons. He describes the cannons as 'big guns' (*valiya vedi*).[671] This implies that he viewed them as something bigger than guns, a technology with which he was probably familiar. In one of the appendices to the *Journal of Vasco da Gama*, which includes a list of Portuguese words and their corresponding Malayalam words, the Portuguese scribe supplies the word '*bombardas*' for 'cannon' as a gloss for the Malayalam word '*vedii*' ('guns').[672] This again confirms the lack of a suitable vocabulary for the Portuguese cannons. However, in current usage, a cannon is referred to with the word *pīrangi*. In his Malayalam-English dictionary, Hermann Gundert traces the root of this word to the Persian word *firangi*, meaning European. *Pīrangi* is almost certainly related to the Malayalam word *paranki* – derived from *firangi* and

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[670] Vijayakumar, p. 101.
[671] Vijayakumar, p. 101.
[672] Fardilha and Fernandes, p. 87.
In the view of Sanjay Subrahmanyam, the scribe prepared the appendix titled *'Este é a linguagem de Calecut'*/'This is the language of Calicut,' with the help of hostages taken by Gama from Calicut. See Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Career and Legend of Vasco Da Gama* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 163.
A list of names, which appears as part of the appendix, might be the names of the hostages taken from Calicut. The list includes sixteen names: Tenae, Pumi, Paramganda, Ujapee, Quilaba, Govaa, Ajapaa, Arreco, Axirama, Cuerapa, Cutitepa, Anapa, Canapa, Gande, Remaa, and Mamgala. See Fardilha and Fernandes, p. 87.
The naming of the hostages could be the scribe's way of acknowledging his sources.

used strictly to denote the Portuguese.[673] This suggests that in the Malayalam language the weapon had become synonymous with its wielders.[674]

A second area in which the Portuguese had an impact on the existing political system was their attempted interference with royal successions in Kerala, which often went to the extreme of orchestrating political assassinations to dispense with prominent leaders who stood against Portuguese interests. Successful assassination plots had both positive and negative outcomes for the Portuguese. In one of the earliest of such attempts, Afonso de Albuquerque is said to have masterminded the assassination of the then Zamorin (r. 1500-1513) and placed a new king on the throne who was more favourable to the Portuguese Crown.[675] In a positive outcome for the Crown, the alliance with the newly installed Zamorin (r. 1513-1522) ushered in a brief period of peace between the two parties, during which the Portuguese constructed a fort in Calicut (1513). However, even this ally seems to have become a liability for the Portuguese at some point. *The News of Kerala* records another failed assassination attempt, this time of the man they themselves installed:

> [The Portuguese] treacherously tried to kidnap the Zamorin but he escaped from that trap. The Portuguese constructed a temporary residence near the fort and invited the Zamorin to that house under the pretext of delivering a gift from the King of Portugal. The King accepted the invitation and went to that house. While he was there one Portuguese citizen himself

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673 Hermann Gundert, 'Pīrangi', *A Malayalam and English Dictionary* (Mangalore, London: C. Stolz, 1872), p. 670 <https://dsalsrv04.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/app/gundert_query.py?page=670> [accessed 10 October 2020].
674 The word *paranki* appears as a prefix to a number of Malayalam words: *parankimaavu* (graft mango-tree), *parankimanga* (graft mango), *parankimulaku* (capsicum), *parankipunnu* (venereal disease) etc. See the entries on, Hermann Gundert, 'Paranki', *A Malayalam and English Dictionary* (Mangalore, London: C. Stolz, 1872), p. 628 <https://dsalsrv04.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/app/gundert_query.py?page=628> [accessed 3 May 2019].
675 Panikkar, *Malabar and the Portuguese*, p. 83.

> revealed the evil intention of his fellowmen to the King. Immediately, the King went out under the pretext of going for a bath in the pond and escaped.[676]

The event is dated to 921 AH, 689 ME, which corresponds to 1515 CE, only a few years after the assassination of the Zamorin's predecessor. The palm-leaf also records two other attempts made by the Portuguese to usurp two different Zamorins – one from 1509 CE in which the Portuguese occupied the then Zamorin's palace while the king was away on battle, and another from 1580 CE in which the Portuguese mistakenly captured the king of Tānūr who was acting as a proxy to the Zamorin at the time.[677]

The Portuguese suffered a commercial and political setback from their assassination of Ali Baker Ali, a prominent Māppila leader, carried out by Belchior de Sousa in Kannur. The assassination led Ali Baker Ali's nephews to seize power from the Kōlathiri of Kōlathunād and set up the first Muslim-ruled kingdom in Kerala, ruled by the Ali Rājās, whose interests in the Indian Ocean clashed with those of the Portuguese, especially in the Maldives.[678] As shown in earlier chapters, the Muslim community had never aspired to this degree of political power before the arrival of the Portuguese. The kingdom of the Ali Rājās can then be called a more or less direct consequence of the Portuguese activities in the Indian Ocean world. It arose not only as a response to the

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[676] Vijayakumar, p. 100.
In the Malayalam publication: '*Tamoothiri pidichu kondapovan bhavikkayum cheythappol anna rajava avante chathiyil akapettathum illa. Parunkiyude kotta kudi orachare aa kottayude ariyatha ora veeda rajavina irippan thakkavannam undakki aa veettilekka rajava varanamennum porathikkava rajava oru bahumanam koduthayachitta unda ennum paranki rajavinoda chennu paranju. Aa rajava ram veettilekkayezhunnalli avide irikkumpol itha chathippan ulla vazhi aakunnatha enna athil oru parunkithanne rajavinoda appol paranju. Atha kettu koodumbol rajava kulangareppoyi varatte enna paranja avide ninna ezhunetta ezhunallakuyum cheythu.*' See Kurup and Vijayakumar, p. 169.
[677] Vijayakumar, p. 100.
[678] Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, p. 141.

Portuguese threat, but also could be said to follow the Portuguese example, combining for the first time (for Muslims in the region) trade with politics. This is one of the most significant cases of resistance and adaptation by the local people to the changes introduced by the Portuguese.

Taking a more conciliatory stance toward allied kingdoms, Crown officials imposed their political will on them by transforming local rulers into tributaries of the empire. In Kochi, for example, they made royal successions dependent on the approval of the king of Portugal.[679] Attesting to this, the local *granthāvari*, *Perumbadappu*, acknowledges the active role played by the Portuguese in assisting the claims of the *elaya tāvazhi* (the younger matrilineal branch) over that of the *mootta tāvazhi* (the elder matrilineal branch) of the Kochi royal family to the throne and in expelling the latter from the country.[680]

However, the private interests of the Portuguese traders and mounting expenses of the Estado meant that the political aims of the empire were not sustainable in the long run and in places further afield from the Estado's capital in Goa. A notable example is Kochi, where the royal families eventually succeeded in releasing themselves from political vassalage from the empire and even managed to evict the Portuguese from their fort with naval assistance from the Dutch. As Malekandathil points out, by the 1520s, the Kochi kingdom had transformed itself 'from the position of a politico-economic feeding unit of the Portuguese state into that of a partner power unit with individual designs'.[681] In the year 1530, the king of Portugal João III (r. 1521-57) renounced all rights to

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679 Panikkar, *Malabar and the Portuguese*, p. 66.
680 Raimon, *Perumbadappu*, p. 8.
681 Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, p. 93.

collect custom duties at Kochi and handed over the right to the *Rājāh*.[682] With the aim of attracting more trade to his kingdom, the *Rājāh* then lowered the customs rate.[683] This eventually resulted in the creation of a commercial network parallel to that of the Estado, which involved both Portuguese *casado* traders and indigenous merchants.[684] The *casados*' matrimonial ties with the Marakkār women led to their integration into the commercial networks controlled by the Marakkārs in the eastern Indian Ocean.[685] This new alliance even led to the *casados* joining the Marakkārs in attacking the Estado's fleets.[686] By 1615, the Kochi *Rājāh* began to demand a higher share for the cargo taken from Kochi to Goa, claiming that the Portuguese settlement in Kochi was located in his territory and that its settlers were all his subjects.[687] It is around this time that the *Rājāh*, on the advice of his Jewish councillors, began to look at alternatives to the Portuguese commercial network, and established contact with the Dutch in 1618 and the ruler of Atjeh (Indonesia) in 1627.[688]

Another setback for the Portuguese occurred as a consequence of their attempted interference in royal succession in Kochi. The elder matrilineal line of the royal family (*mootta tāvazhi*), who felt usurped of their throne, invited the Dutch (who were in Colombo in 1663) to aid them in evicting the Portuguese from their fort in Kochi and ousting the usurpers. Following the eviction, Vira

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[682] This *Rājāh* appears to be Unni Rama Koli Tirumalpad (r. 1505-1537), known also as Rama Varma, who Dom Francisco Almeida (1505-1509) had installed on the throne in 1505. Raimon, *Perumbadappu*, p. 35.
[683] Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, p. 92.
[684] Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, p. 92.
[685] Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, p. 135.
[686] Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, p. 139.
Elsewhere in the Indian Ocean, too, the *casados* defended local interests as opposed to that of the Estado. See the case of Japan, discussed in Polónia and Capelão, pp. 64-65.
[687] Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, p. 93.
[688] Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, p. 93.

Kerala Varma (r. 1663-1687) of the *mootta tāvazhi* assumed power as the new Kochi *Rājāh*.[689]

Conclusions

An examination of the reception of the Perumal story in Portuguese literature shows that early Portuguese settlers in Kerala accepted many of the details of the story – primarily, his division of the country and conversion to Islam – as historical facts that explained the political limits of Kerala and the close relationship between the Zamorins and the Muslim traders. They were aware of the contested versions of the story and that these versions arose as a result of competing claims by the various kingdoms to the entire 'land of Perumal'. They put this knowledge to strategic use by supporting the political claim of the Kochi *Rājāhs* over the land against that of the Zamorins. In their reception of their knowledge of the land – its historical traditions and its social customs – it is possible to detect their political interests in the region. This becomes clearer in their pattern of settlement in Kerala, which, though it shows some similarities, also points to some deviations from the existing patterns. In areas where they diverged, the local systems nevertheless show a high degree of resistance and adaptability.

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[689] Raimon, *Perumbadappu*, p. 36.

Conclusion: Between Land and Sea

This thesis set out with the aim of studying history writing and global encounters between the Zamorins, the Māppilas, and the Portuguese in sixteenth-century Kerala. Based on origin stories about various founder-heroes, this thesis examined the roles served by these heroes in constituting the region of Kerala and in legitimizing the claims of various socio-political groups to the region across diverse historical traditions in Malayalam, Arabic, and Portuguese.

The Malayalam palace *granthāvari*s share a conception of land with its limits defined by three founder-heroes: Parasurāman, the Perumal, and Sankaracharya. In this conception, the land extends from Gokarnam in the north to Kanyakumari in the south, an imaginary territory which corresponds to the domain ruled by the Chera dynasty until the twelfth century. The most significant of these founder-heroes for my study was the Perumal, who ruled the land of Kerala before its division into various port-based kingdoms. The Perumal represented the land-based aspirations of the various Hindu rulers, each of whom claimed to be the legitimate successor to the Perumal. Such conceptions of the land, far from being unique to Kerala, could also be found in other parts of the Indian Ocean world, notably in Sri Lanka and along the Malabar Coast, where figures drawn from the Sanskrit and Buddhist historical traditions served to explain the sense of territorial belonging of newly emerged socio-political groups.

The Arab-Muslim settlers who served as a bridge group for the land-based Hindu rulers expressed their own sense of belonging to the land of Kerala by

claiming that the Perumal converted to Islam. This fits into the pattern of other royal conversion myths in the Muslim regions of the Indian Ocean world. Muslims who made contact with various parts of the world as traders, rather than invaders, employed these modes of storytelling and history writing to legitimize the place of Islam and its adherents in non-Islamic regions. Through these stories, a global event such as the spread of Islam is localized by claiming a local ruler as the first convert to Islam. Conversely, a local hero such as the Perumal becomes part of a global phenomenon; his journey takes him beyond his land and across the ocean to the holy land of Mecca.

In Kerala, the conversion story also served to legitimize Muslim claims to lands on the Malabar Coast and to claim protection of those lands from intrusions by other maritime groups. In later periods, the conversion myths are transformed to advance the interests of various groups. Particularly, the Māppila Muslims of Kozhikode transform the myth by attempting to draw the Zamorin of Kozhikode (their staunch ally) into the Perumal's conversion story. These developments reveal the sense of belonging of Muslims to the land of Kerala and their continued allegiance to local rulers, even after the arrival of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean.

The reception of the Perumal story into Portuguese literature suggests that early Portuguese settlers in Kerala assimilated the dominant conceptions of land found in both the palace *granthāvari*s and the Arabic records. However, unlike Muslims, who claimed the conversion of the Perumal to express their sense of belonging to the land, the Portuguese received both the partition story and the conversion story as historical facts, making no attempt to claim the Perumal as

their hero. The stories helped them to orient themselves in the land of Perumal by giving them information on the boundaries of the land, the existing political tensions and competing claims to the land, and, in particular, the close relationship shared between the Zamorins and their Muslim subjects. They put this knowledge to strategic use by supporting the political claim of the Kochi *Rājāh* over the land of Perumal.

Not only did they see themselves as foreigners, the Portuguese also failed to recognize the sense of belonging of other maritime groups in Kerala, especially that of Muslims, thereby setting the stage for a religious conflict on the Malabar coast between the local Muslims and the Portuguese Christians. This conflict was not unique to the Malabar Coast; as shown by the literature on *jihad* from various parts of the world, there were conflicts between the Portuguese and Muslims all over the Indian Ocean world. However, such conflicts across the Indian Ocean failed to converge into a global resistance by Muslims against the Portuguese. Rather, they remained local, which can be attributed to Muslim patterns of settlement in the Indian Ocean in the pre-Portuguese era. This is not to say that the Portuguese succeeded as a global empire in the Indian Ocean. Local acts of resistance had an impact on Portuguese settlements across the Indian Ocean: some forcing them to adapt to local patterns, while others led to their eviction from those settlements.

My study of history writing in sixteenth-century Kerala contributes to the fields of Indian Ocean studies and early modern studies in several ways. First, my approach takes as its subject myths and legends, specifically origin stories, which have generally been dismissed as 'non-history' (or even denigrated

through phrases like 'a farrago of legendary nonsense'), showing how these stories were integral to political and historical developments in the region of Kerala for centuries, used by many different groups who encountered each other there. Arguably, the region of Kerala was constituted by these unique history-writing practices. Modern historians tend to overlook the role of myths and legends in constituting and unifying a region. As a result, they see the region of Kerala only in parts, i.e. as independent kingdoms centred on various port cities, rather than as a single political unit with a shared history, a shared language, a uniform caste order, and a shared notion of who is a foreigner or a *paradēsi*.

Second, by looking into the reception, transformation and appropriation of these myths and legends into Arabic and Portuguese literature, I draw attention to the important role of founder-heroes in mediating between groups of diverse religious persuasions and geographical origins. While Muslims legitimized the place of Islam and its adherents in Kerala by claiming the conversion of the Perumal, the Portuguese used their knowledge of the Perumal to establish themselves in the region as an ally of the weaker rulers to jointly wage war against the hostile and powerful Zamorins.

Third, through an analysis of the origin stories, I have attempted to bring out some of the dominant attitudes to the sea. Despite their dependence on the Indian Ocean trade and the maritime groups, the ruling elites from Kerala demonstrate a great aversion to the sea. In this context, I have emphasized the role of maritime groups such as the Muslims and the Portuguese as bridging the gap between the land and the sea for the land-based ruling elite.

To answer the question of a 'silence' on the Portuguese in Indian vernacular records, this thesis proposes that the Malayalam *granthāvari*s were not silent on the Portuguese because they found them uniquely negligible; rather, they were silent on events at sea in general. In other words, the Malayalam *granthāvari*s were more focused on the land when compared to the sea. One key factor that contributed to the literate Hindu elites' intense focus on land is the presence of various go-between or bridge groups in Kerala, formed of lower caste groups and foreigners, who traditionally engaged in sea-related activities. This could explain why the Zamorins' own military conquests did not exceed the limits of the land of Perumal and why the palace *granthāvari*s and even the *pāttu* genre tended to focus on military exploits of kings and Nāirs on land. In my analysis of the Malayalam *News of Kerala* and the Arabic *Tribute to the Holy Warriors*, I identified this land-focus as the primary distinguishing factor between the texts, despite the correspondence in their content. The focus on land in *The News of Kerala* suggests that it was modelled after the traditional *granthāvaris*. Seen in the context of a land-sea division of labour, it is possible to conclude that an event such as Vasco da Gama's arrival in Calicut might have been significant for the local rulers only to the extent of procuring a new maritime group who could act as their instruments of sea power – connect them to overseas markets and offer naval assistance to political contestations in the land of Perumal.

This thesis took the Indian Ocean as the wider setting for the study of global encounters in Kerala. As I have shown, origin stories found in the Malayalam and the Arabic traditions have their own distinct parallels elsewhere in the

Indian Ocean, in regions like Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Sofala, and Indonesia. Specifically in Kerala, I have shown how appropriations of the same stories and the same heroes by different socio-political groups constituted the region of Kerala, lending itself to the development of a territorial model against which global encounters can be situated. There is scope for more comparative research in this area, which could potentially draw on origin stories and founder-heroes from across the Indian Ocean world.

Illustrations

Fig. 5. Sebastian Prange, 'Indian Ocean Trade Around the Fifteenth Century', in *Monsoon Islam: Trade and Faith on the Malabar Coast* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2018), p. 33. Reproduced here with permission from Sebastian Prange.

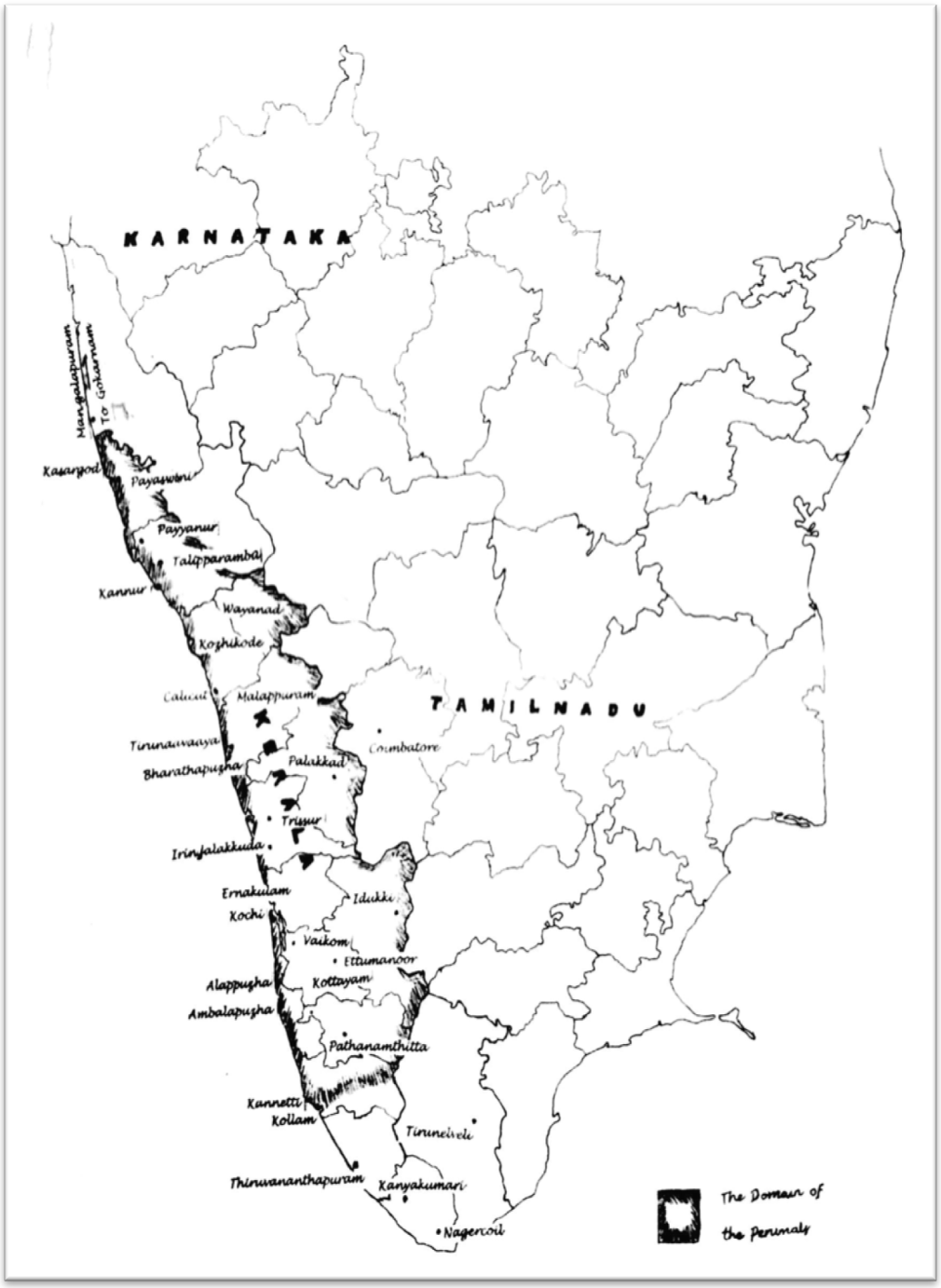

Fig. 6. Bindu R. B, 'Keralolpatty in Map', in *Gundert: Keralolpatti* (Thiruvananthapuram: International School of Dravidian Linguistics, 2003).

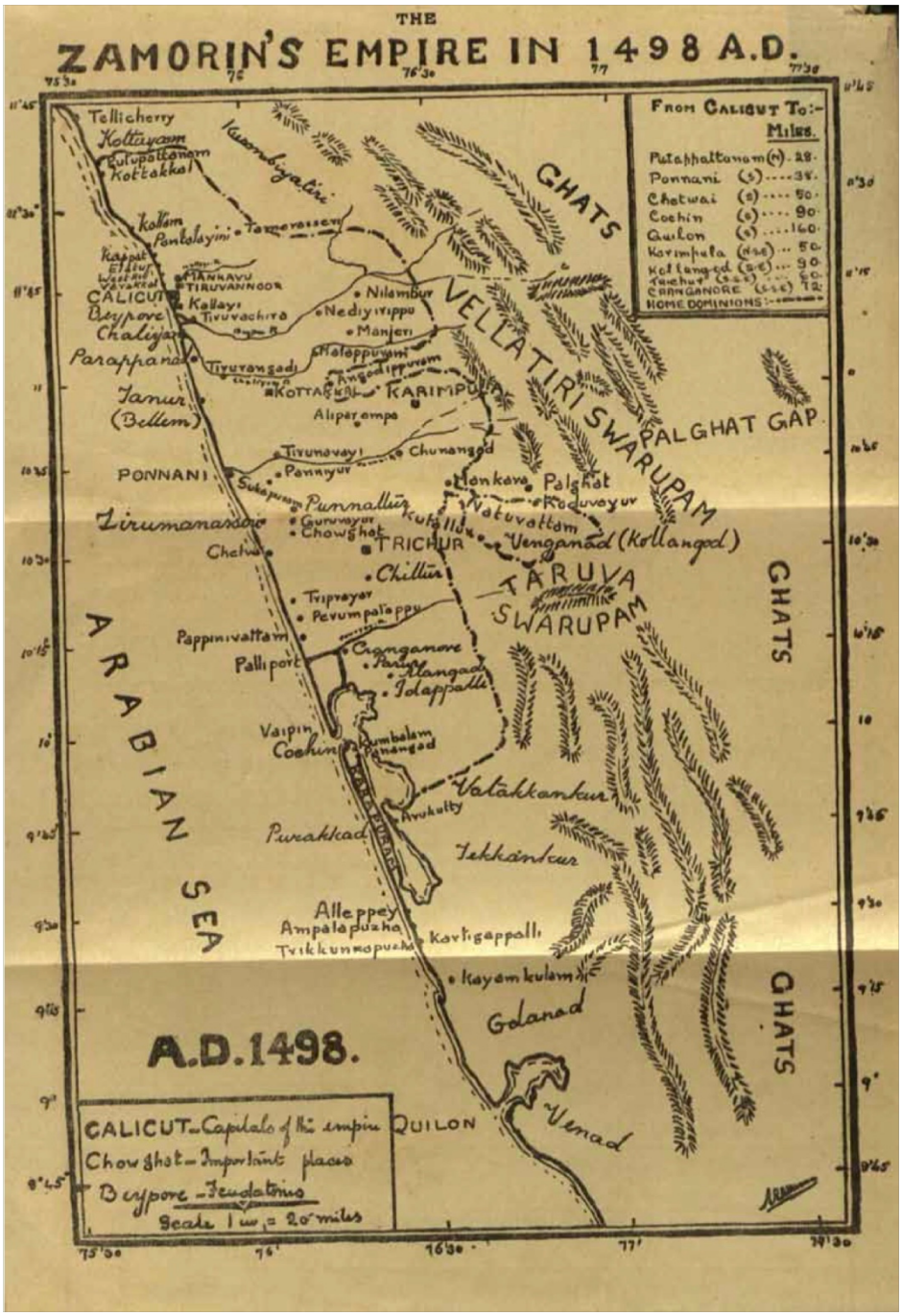

Fig. 7. K. V. Krishna Ayyar, 'The Zamorin's Empire in 1498 A. D.', in *The Zamorins of Calicut: From the Earliest Times Down to A. D. 1806* (Calicut: Norman, 1938)

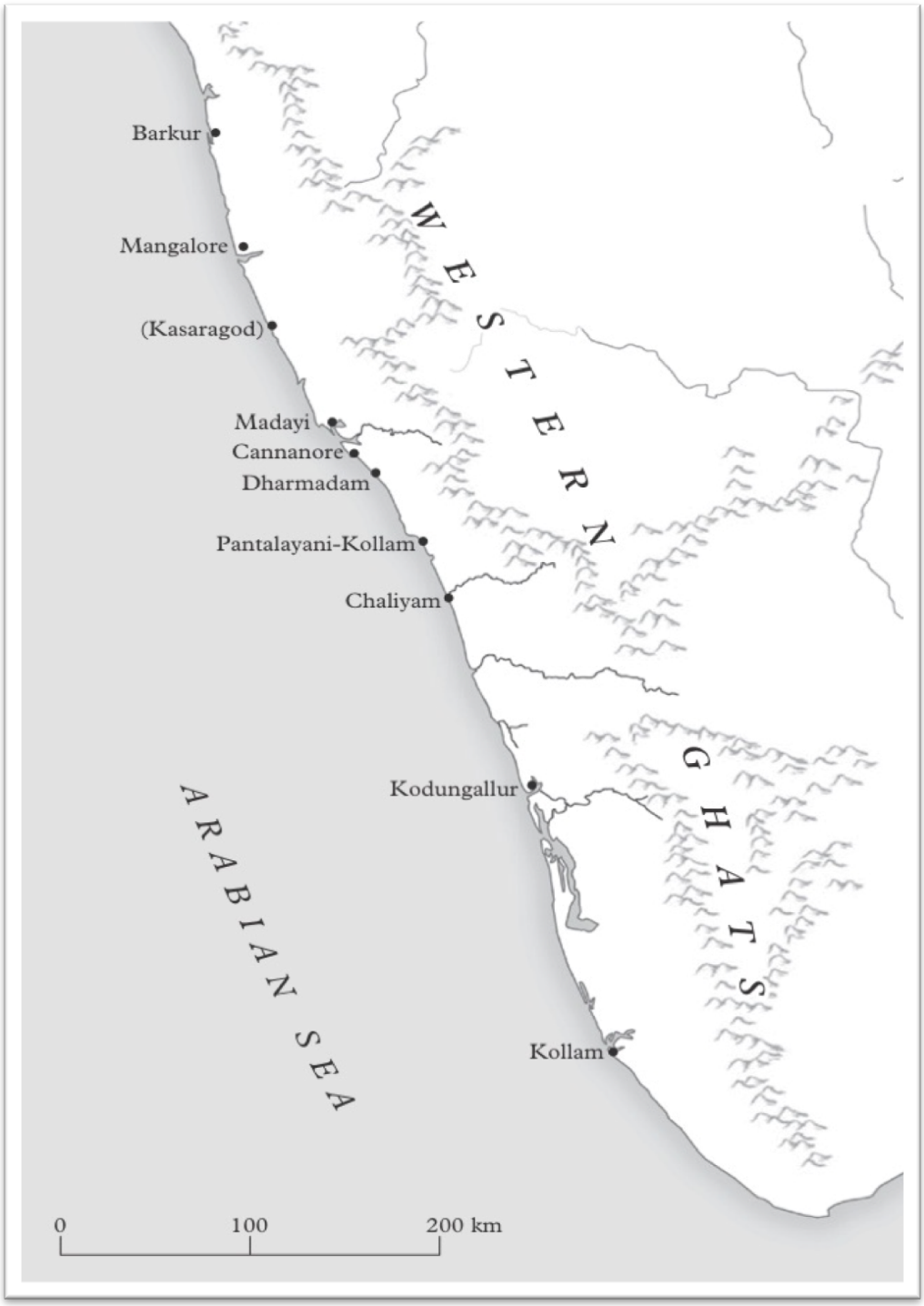

Fig. 8. Sebastian Prange, 'Malabar's First Mosques According to Qissat Shakarwati Farmad', in *Monsoon Islam: Trade and Faith on the Malabar Coast* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2018), p. 99. Reproduced here with permission from Sebastian Prange.

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