

# Malabar in the Indian Ocean



# Malabar in the Indian Ocean

Cosmopolitanism in a Maritime  
Historical Region

Edited by

MAHMOOD KOORIA  
MICHAEL N. PEARSON

**OXFORD**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

# INTRODUCTION

## Situating Malabar in the Indian Ocean

MAHMOOD KOORIA

Many studies of the Indian Ocean have appeared in recent years, and conferences proliferate. However, there are two problems. First, the Indian Ocean world includes many different communities with diverse languages and historical records. No scholar can claim to be able to use all of these in the original. Second, some subregions have received more attention than others. In particular, the south-west Indian coast has been somewhat neglected so far. This volume contributes to fill both these gaps, as it presents translations of many unknown or little used sources from, or relating to, the Malabar region.

According to the available literary and material sources, the traces of maritime involvement of Malabar in the Indian Ocean world go back to at least the late centuries before the Common Era.<sup>1</sup> As many studies demonstrate, commercial traffic on the south-western Indian coast was intensified through the remarkable interventions of multiple extra-regional and trans-local communities such as the Chinese, Arabs, Persians, Africans, and Europeans in premodern times. By the end of the eighteenth century, this coastal arena was monopolized by the British, who continued to do so until the mid-twentieth century. In postcolonial contexts too, the commercial circulations endure in different forms although the maritime highway ceased to be an effective avenue for the movement of people and ideas. In this long history of Malabar's constant connections with the wider world, the ocean has left a deep impact not only on the region's

<sup>1</sup> In this volume, we use the term 'Malabar' in its precolonial sense. Before the British colonial administration made Malabar one of the administrative districts under the Madras Presidency, it was a term used (in its variant forms such as Malayalam, Malai-nāṭu, Malibār, Manibar, Ma-li-mo, and Ma-lo-pa) to denote the whole coast and lands of the south-western India, from the southern end of Konkan, or Goan, coast or Mt D'eli in the north to Cape Comorin in the south.

economy, but also on many other realms such as society, culture, religion, politics, and worldview, making it an exemplary cosmopolitan space. In the *longue durée* of the Indian Ocean–Malabar interaction over two millennia, the period between 1500 and 1800 CE stands out with many unprecedented historical changes, ruptures, and discontinuities.

A few researches since the second half of the last century have improved our knowledge of the maritime history of Malabar in this period.<sup>2</sup> However, most of those studies were partial, since the large literary and material evidence on the maritime engagements of the region was unknown or underutilized. Those studies were also one-sided, in the sense that the primary sources they accommodated were mainly European, and at times exclusively from one language. Only a few studies accommodated indigenous sources, and interestingly, most of those are earlier works written with a nationalistic perspective.<sup>3</sup> In a recent survey, I have pointed out numerous formal and informal archives and private manuscript collections in and outside Malabar which still remain underutilized.<sup>4</sup> There is a largely disproportionate use of European sources compared to the ones available in the local languages and collections—which naturally have been producing unbalanced conclusions. In the last two decades, some local scholars have started to engage with the region’s premodern histories by getting out of a ‘nationalistic’ hangover in favour of more scientific historical studies; yet they too tend to seek exclusive refuge in the European archives and sources. Despite their linguistic skills and relatively easy access to the informal collections, these scholars ignore those materials and do not take even the known sources (such as the ones partially used by earlier scholars) into consideration.

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of the literature, see Mahmood Kooria, ‘The Long History of Malabar’, unpublished.

<sup>3</sup> Two exemplary authors are K.M. Panikkar, who wrote two separate works on the Portuguese and the Dutch, in which he accommodated the Cochin royal records, *Keralappaḷama*, *Kerala Caritram*, *Paṭappāṭṭu*, and so forth, and O.K. Nambiar, who accommodated many folk songs and ballads such as *Vaṭakkan Pāṭṭukaḷ* and *Koṭṭūrpāḷḷi Māla*. Both had intense nationalistic inclinations. See K.M. Panikkar, *Malabar and the Dutch: Being the History of the Fall of the Nayar Power in Malabar* (Bombay: Taraporevala, 1931); K.M. Panikkar, *Malabar and the Portuguese* (Bombay: Taraporevala, 1929); Odayamadath Kunjappa Nambiar, *The Kunjalis: Admirals of Calicut* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1963); and Odayamadath Kunjappa Nambiar, *Portuguese Pirates and Indian Seamen* (Bangalore: M. Bhaktavatsalam, 1955).

<sup>4</sup> Mahmood Kooria, ‘*Taḥrīd ahl al-īmān*: An Indigenous Account against the Early Modern European Interventions in Indian Ocean World’, in Zainuddin Makhdoom, *Taḥrīd ahl al-īmān ‘alā jihādi ‘abadat ṣulbān*, trans. and ed. K.M. Muhammad (Calicut: Other Books, 2013), 19–48.

Among the European sources, the Portuguese materials have claimed the lion's share in the existing studies.<sup>5</sup> The Dutch hold the second position. The uses of French, German, Danish, and English materials are nominal, yet the latter have dictated the studies on the period since the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>6</sup> The premodern European travel accounts on Malabar are comparatively well known and found across the studies, mainly because they are available in English owing to the contributions of the Hakluyt Society since the mid-nineteenth century. Only a few indigenous materials found a place in the studies: the sixteenth-century Arabic treatise *Tuhfat al-Mujāhidīn* was the most 'fortunate'; the eighteenth-century Malayalam travelogue *Varttamānappustakam* and certain Syriac sources were less fortunate, yet found their way now and then.<sup>7</sup>

This lesser utilization of local sources by no way means the absence or rarity of these sources. Indeed, there are numerous accounts, documents, manuscripts, and texts from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries available inside and outside the Malabari archives. Only the above-mentioned ones were fortunate to have been translated into English, whereas the remaining ones wait for translators or scholars with relevant linguistic skills. Many of those have not even been systematically catalogued, save a few materials primarily preserved outside Kerala.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> For a recent historiography, see Fernando Rosa, *The Portuguese in the Creole Indian Ocean: Essays in Historical Cosmopolitanism* (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Margaret Frenz, *From Contact to Conquest: Transition to British Rule in Malabar, 1790–1805* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003); Stephen Frederic Dale, *Islamic Society on the South Asian Frontier: The Māppilas of Malabar, 1498–1922* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Zayn al-Dīn al-Malaybārī, *Tohfut-ul-mujahideen: An Historical Work in the Arabic Language*, trans. M.J. Rowlandson (London: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1833); Pāṛēmmākkal Tōmmākattanār and Yausēppā Kariyāṭṭi, *The Varthamanappusthakam: An Account of the History of the Malabar Church between the Years 1773 and 1786 with Special Emphasis on the Events Connected with the Journey from Malabar to Rome Via Lisbon and Back Undertaken by Malpan Mar Joseph Cariattil and Cathanar Thomman Paremmakkal*, trans. Placid J. Podipara (Roma: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1971).

<sup>8</sup> For a few interesting and useful catalogues of Malayalam manuscripts preserved outside Malabar, see T. Chandrasekharan and P.P. Subrahmanya Sastri, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Malayalam Manuscripts in the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras* (Madras: Superintendent of Government Press, 1940); Chelmat Achyuta Menon, *Catalogue of the Malayalam Manuscripts in the India Office Library* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954); and Antony Vallavanthara, *A Catalogue of the Malayalam Manuscripts in the Vatican Library* (Kottayam: Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, 1984). For their counterparts in Malabar,

A major thrust of this book is to call the attention of researchers to this rich trove of sources by exhibiting a few examples of unknown or underutilized materials from a number of different languages. It introduces source materials written as texts, along with certain material references that bear archaeological, epigraphic, or architectural significance, in order to illuminate the role of the region in the broader picture of the Indian Ocean world. The Sanskrit cosmopolis and its Indian Ocean successor Arabic cosmopolis, as recently suggested by Ronit Ricci along the lines of Sheldon Pollock, have made significant impacts on the literary production of Malabar too.<sup>9</sup> In the case of the former, Sanskrit produced texts in its own right, as well as through an intermixture with Tamil, generating a hybrid language called Manipravalam. By the fifteenth century, Manipravalam had given way to the development of an independent language, Malayalam, and all these linguistic developments and related textual productions have referred either specifically or partially to the maritime engagements of the region and its influence on the economic, social, and cultural landscapes. In the case of the Arabic cosmopolis, Arabic's intermixture with vernacular language has produced the so-called Arabi-Malayalam with literatures available from the early seventeenth century. Again, while the Arabic sources written by foreign travellers to Malabar are comparatively well known to researchers, the indigenous Arabic sources written since the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and Arabi-Malayalam sources since the seventeenth century are almost unknown. Furthermore, beyond the grand narratives of Sanskrit and Arabic-cosmopolis, there also were other languages acting as the lingua franca among the trans-local religious, commercial, and/or cul-

---

see K. Mahadeva Sastri and L.A. Ravi Ravi Varma, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Malayalam Manuscripts in the Curator's Office Library, Trivandrum*, 3 vols (Trivandrum: V.V. Press Branch, 1940–1); K. Mahadeva Mahadeva Sastri, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Malayalam Manuscripts in H. H. the Maharajah's Palace Library, Trivandrum*, 2 vols (Trivandrum: V.V. Press Branch, 1939). Recently, there have been several attempts to catalogue the Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, and Syriac manuscripts of Kerala. On the attempts related to the Syriac ones, see István Perczel, 'Syriac Manuscripts in India: The Present State of the Cataloguing Process', *The Harp: A Review of Syriac and Oriental Ecumenical Studies*, vol. 15 (2002): 289–98; Françoise Briquel Chatonnet, 'Syriac Manuscripts in India, Syriac Manuscripts from India', *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2012): 281–91.

<sup>9</sup> Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006); Ronit Ricci, *Islam Translated: Literature, Conversion and the Arabic Cosmopolis of South and Southeast Asia* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

tural communities (such as Persian and Syriac) of Malabar and producing numerous literary monographs directly or secondarily.<sup>10</sup>

Other than the literary sources, we also have copious material evidence that explicates the maritime connections of Malabar. Past and recent archaeological excavations conducted at coastal sites of Malabar have significantly contributed to the understanding of the region. Various epigraphic evidences found at different places also point to the same possibility. Regional architectural sites and the transmitted memories of certain living communities are another intangible source for investigating the maritime past of the region. Close analysis of oral traditions, such as various forms of folksongs, performances, and other cultural articulations, help researchers understand their potential as source materials.

The volume emphasizes on the local sources, and it should be noted that those are not exclusively in Malayalam, which had become the lingua franca of the region by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and today is synonymous with the identity of the state of Kerala of independent India that divided its states on the basis of language. Instead, the inhabitants in the region also wrote in Tamil, Sanskrit, Syriac, Hebrew, and Arabic, together with many vernacularized variants. While the European languages remained in the region only for a century or two (save English), these languages have been there for many centuries before the Europeans arrived and continued to exist even after they left. In this volume, we have materials from Arabic, Syriac, Persian, and Hebrew.

The volume also brings together some European sources. Apart from the commonly known travel accounts, the abundant European sources remain largely unexplored despite the aforesaid significant dependency on Portuguese or Dutch sources. The studies that have been based on those materials so far have been almost entirely through the prisms of economic or political–economic perspectives, leaving the social, cultural, and intellectual histories neglected.<sup>11</sup> In the case of the Dutch materials, a series co-edited by Jos Gommans, Lennart Bes, and Gijs Kruijtzter is instrumental in helping identify sources related to Malabar from various

<sup>10</sup> For an overview of such cosmopoleis, see Jos Gommans, ‘Continuity and Change in the Indian Ocean Basin’, in *The Cambridge World History*, vol. 6: The Construction of a Global World, 1400–1800 CE, ed. Jerry H. Bentley, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, and Merry E. Wiesner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 182–209.

<sup>11</sup> For a recent exception to this trend, see Anjana Singh, *Fort Cochin in Kerala, 1750–1830: The Social Condition of a Dutch Community in an Indian Milieu* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010).

archives of India, Indonesia, and the Netherlands. However, the series is yet to bring out a volume particularly dedicated to the Malabar context.<sup>12</sup> The German sources produced by the moneylenders and mercantile houses such as the Fuggers and Welsers have been partly utilized by K.S. Mathew and Pius Malekandathil, but a large chunk of those remain unstudied, not to mention sociocultural aspects as in the case of the cultural impacts of the Fuggers' animal trade.<sup>13</sup> The French sources of the premodern period have been partially utilized to analyse the French settlement in Mahe, but the wider historical contexts of Malabar as reflected in these French sources are underutilized, especially as they were major competitors for the Dutch in the region in the eighteenth century.<sup>14</sup> The conundrums of the brief Austrian commercial enterprises in the northern tip of Malabar following an agreement with Sultan Hyder of Mysore and the colonization attempts of Nicobar Islands have also left behind materials which merit further researches. Against this background, the volume at hand has also introduced, translated, and annotated a few materials from Portuguese, Dutch, and French.

While all these sources are textual, we also have extra-textual sources such as architectural, epigraphic, ethnographical, and artistic representations which also enlighten us on the premodern maritime entanglements of the region. A few earlier surveys of local inscriptions (such as the ones in Arabic and Persian surveyed by Z.A. Desai; a few Tamil, Sanskrit, and Malayalam ones published in different series) cover the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, yet those attempts did not have continuities.<sup>15</sup> The ethnographic studies exploring the folk traditions are improving lately

<sup>12</sup> Jos J.L. Gommans, Lennart Bes, and Gijs Kruijtzter, *Dutch Sources on South Asia, c. 1600–1825* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 2001–present).

<sup>13</sup> Michael Gorgas, 'Animal Trade between India and Western Eurasia in the Sixteenth Century: The Role of Fuggers in Animal Trading', in *Indo-Portuguese Trade and the Fuggers of Germany: Sixteenth Century*, ed. Kuzhippalli Skaria Mathew (New Delhi: Manohar, 1999), 195–237; Pius Malekandathil, *The Germans, the Portuguese and India* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 1999).

<sup>14</sup> Indrani Ray and Lakshmi Subramanian, eds, *The French East India Company and the Trade of the Indian Ocean: A Collection of Essays* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1999).

<sup>15</sup> For example, see Ziyauddin A. Desai, *A Topographical List of Arabic, Persian, and Urdu Inscriptions of South India* (New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research and Northern Book Centre, 1989); V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, *Selected South Indian Inscriptions: Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada* (Madras: University of Madras, 1952); S.K. Nayar and T.V. Mahalingam, *Selected Malayalam Inscriptions* (Madras: University of Madras, 1952); and K. Mahēśvaran Nāyar, *Epigraphia Malabarica* (Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Society, 1972).

thanks to the contributions of scholars such as M.V. Viṣṇunampūtiri.<sup>16</sup> The architectural worlds have explicated the cosmopolitan components, although only limited studies have come out so far.<sup>17</sup> In this volume, we have contributions from these fields (inscriptional, architectural, and ethno-historical), all of which enquire into the wider maritime features of local traditions.

Although we have tried to include contributions from each of these indigenous and European textual sources as well as the local extra-textual materials, we do not claim these selections to be conclusive for or representative of the respective language or genre. Those only bring to attention the wider linguistic and dissimilar generic terrains. The common threads that connect the contributions are mainly three: First, the primacy of these materials as sources essential to the study of premodern Malabar. These, tangible and intangible, textual and material, and discursive and silent resources help scholars unearth the cosmopolitan and extra-local features within a micro-region like this. Second, all the contributions emphasize the social, religious, and cultural landscapes of maritime Malabar, and we have avoided translations of sources that merely engage with the economic aspects, a field which has been relatively well-trodden based on the European sources. Third, in a broader sense, all the contributions demonstrate a wider pattern of multi-layered complex cosmopolitanisms that ring true for any historical Indian Ocean region—a point to which I will come back at the end.

In the organization of chapters, we have tried to keep a chronological order, as far as possible, in which the older sources come first. Though each chapter refers to its own unique contexts, this volume is unique in putting together and amalgamating sources from different linguistic worlds in order to illustrate the past of Malabar. The first chapter, by Mehrdad Shokoohy, deals with a wide range of Arabic inscriptions from

<sup>16</sup> M.V. Viṣṇunampūtiri, *Kurattittōṭṭam: Paṭhanavum Vyākhyānavum* (Kottayam: Current Books, 1999); M.V. Viṣṇunampūtiri, *Vaṭakkanpāṭṭukathakaḷ: Oru Paṭhanam* (Kottayam: Current Books, 1995); and M.V. Viṣṇunampūtiri and Eḷayāvūr Surēṣ Bābu, *Nāṭanpāṭṭukaḷ* (Kannur: Keraḷa Folklore Academy, 2003).

<sup>17</sup> Mehrdad Shokoohy, *Muslim Architecture of South India: The Sultanate of Ma'bar and the Traditions of the Maritime Settlers on the Malabar and Coromandel Coasts (Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Goa)* (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003); H. Sarkar, *An Architectural Survey of Temples of Kerala* (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1978); K.V.S. Rajan and N.G. Unnithan, *Temple Architecture in Kerala* (Trivandrum: Government of Kerala, 1974); cf. William A. Noble, 'The Architecture and Organization of Kerala Style Hindu Temples', *Anthropos*, vol. 76, no. 1 (1981): 1–24.

the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries found in Malabar. He shows the continuities and ruptures in the Malabari Muslim inscriptions over the centuries, and demonstrates how those stand as incontrovertible historical records. He has dealt with major inscriptions from Kollam, Calicut, and Cochin in order to emphasise the maritime interactions of the Muslims on the one hand, and their increasing influence in different localities after the Portuguese interruption, on the other. The comprehensive chronological list at the end of the chapter registers all known Muslim inscriptions in the region, together with the details of locations and references.

In the second chapter, I introduce and translate a new Arabic treatise written around 1570—just before the Battle of Cāliyam between the Zamorins of Calicut and the Portuguese. The Muslim community of Malabar has produced certain war treatises inciting their audience to engage in holy war (jihād). In this genre, the *Tuhfat al-Mujāhidīn*, *Fath al-Mubīn*, and, recently, *Tahrīd ahl al-Imān* are known to the scholars through translations, and here I introduce another monograph titled *Khuṭbat al-Jihādiyya* by Qāḍi Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-‘Azīz. It describes different Portuguese attacks on the Malabar Coast, for some of which the author himself was a witness. It explicates the mentality behind the anti-Portuguese wars entangled between spiritual and material motivations. For its narrative style and strong religious contents, the *Khuṭba* is an exceptional text compared with other works of this genre that have been translated earlier.

István Perczel translates documents from the late sixteenth century written in four languages (Syriac, Latin, Portuguese, and Malayalam) in the third chapter. His major focus is on the Syriac documents that he has unearthed from the church archives of Kerala through extensive research over more than a decade. All the material that he has translated for this volume is related to the later phase of the Persian missions, following the schism between the Nestorian and the Chaldean factions of the Church of the East (1552), when Persian prelates dispatched by the two Catholicos patriarchs and their indigenous archdeacons were competing with European missionaries and with each other for the spiritual direction of the Indian Church: the bishops were called Mar Joseph Sulaqa (d. 1569), Mar Abraham (d. 1597), and Mar Shim’on (d. 1599), while the archdeacons were Pakalomattam George the Elder, George of Christ, George of the Cross, and Nadakkal Jacob. This is also the time when the Jesuits gradually took over the European mission in the Malabar Coast from the Franciscans. In the introduction, Perczel summarises, on the basis of the current secondary literature, what we could know about these events before he initiated the survey and collection of the indigenous documents, written in Syriac and

Malayalam, extant in the archives. In the main part of the chapter, he translates a selection of Western missionary and local Christian documents and sets them in an intertextual frame so that they enlighten each other's meaning. In this way, a more complex picture emerges, so that, besides the general trends, one may also understand the individual strives of the main protagonists. This picture shows how the four parties in interplay: the local Christians, the Chaldean and Nestorian prelates, and the European missionaries entered a complex relationship and contributed, while striving against each other and learning from each other, to a creation of a new, synthetic culture.

In the fourth chapter, Meera Muralidharan translates excerpts from two Dutch sources in the early seventeenth century: *Nauwkeurige en Waarachtige Ontdekking van de Afgoderye der Oost-Indische Heydenen* (Accurate and True Discovery of the Idolatry of the East Indies Heathens) of Philippus Baldaeus and *De Open-deure tot het verborgen Heydendom* (The Opening of Doors to the Secrets of Paganism) of Abraham Rogerius. Although Baldaeus's accounts on India and Sri Lanka are known through their English translations, the part Muralidharan has selected remains untranslated. She provides a translation history related to the works of both Baldaeus and Rogerius, shedding light on the importance of the parts under translation. The excerpts are related to the Hindu temples and Brahmins of Malabar in particular and peninsular India at large. While religion(s) of Malabar as such did not invoke much interest for the seventeenth-century Dutch officials of the VOC (Dutch East India Company), her descriptions show some examples of the Dutch perceptions of Hinduism and Brahminism.

In the following chapter, I deal with *Paṭappāṭṭu*, a Malayalam war-song on the Portuguese–Dutch battles in Cochin. It explores local perceptions of and interests in the wars between two European powers in the late-seventeenth century on the Malabar Coast. In the vast corpus of premodern Malayalam literature, scholars have always struggled to find any references to the Portuguese and Dutch interventions in the region. The literature available to us from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries mostly deals with a variety of such themes or genres as spirituality, epics, humours, and hagiography, and rarely any of them talk about the European presences in the region, except for the *Paṭappāṭṭu* by an anonymous author. It is a long poem, in the style of a bird-song (*kilippāṭṭu*) of classical Malayalam literature, describing the wars between the VOC and the Zamorins against the Portuguese and the Raja of Cochin in and around the 1660s. The author, who conceals his or her identity but reveals allegiance to the Rajas of Cochin, narrates the day-to-day developments of the war with minute details, sometimes with fanciful exaggerations and constant allegories from the epics Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa. Because

of its rich historical content and its standpoint on the Cochin War of 1663, which is different from the Portuguese and Dutch primary sources, the *Paṭappāṭṭu* is an outstanding source for those who are interested in the premodern Indian Ocean encounters. Due to the limits of space and length, I have translated only the first three sections of the song.

The sixth chapter, by Michael Pearson, is a reproduction of parts of a French account by Charles Dellon on Malabar in the 1670s. The English translation used here dates from 1698. Dellon was a perceptive, albeit ethnocentric, observer whose account has been almost totally ignored by historians. As a young man with a 'greater inclination to satisfy his [*sic*] own fancies', Dellon had left Paris after his studies and travelled across the Indian Ocean from Madagascar to Malabar. He wrote down his account of journeys elaborating on his encounters with the peoples and customs of each land in order to make himself acquainted with their 'genius and manners'. In his narrative on Malabar, he shows an ethnocentrism, against which Pearson warns us in his brief introduction. Pearson lets him speak for himself, except for identifying place names and other elements that were mangled in the English translation. In this chapter we have a remarkable description of the communities, customs, traditions, settlements, towns, and cities of Malabar in the late seventeenth century.

In the seventh chapter, Gagan Sood introduces and translates eighteen Persian letters and reports written in Malabar in the mid-eighteenth century. Their authors were in the main three unexceptional individuals who, because of the vagaries of fate, found themselves spending more time than they had originally intended in Malabar's ports while on their long journeys between Bengal and Basra. That their writings have survived and come down to us is because of sheer accident. As a result, however, they give us penetrating insights into the everyday lives and concerns of maritime itinerants engaged in trade, banking, and pilgrimage. As Sood notes: 'It is ... their very ordinariness which renders them and their writings extraordinary, and which allows us to reconstruct vernacular aspects of Malabar's world in the middle of the eighteenth century that have hitherto been obscured or forgotten.' The letters and reports of this chapter also encourage us to explore further the cornucopia of source materials in Persian, which was once the regional lingua franca.

In the following chapter, Abhilash Malayil provides a translation of a *Tōṭṭam* narrative sung traditionally by the farmers in praise of a local cultic deity, the goddess Marakkalattamma. Collected through the extensive investigations of M.V. Viṣṇunampūtiri into Malabari folklore, this song is the lengthiest among the folk songs and one of the rarest indigenous lores directly related to the oceanic realm. It narrates an eventful 'foundational-legend' of a prodigious mother goddess (*amma*) who lived and reigned over high-standing ocean-going wooden sailing-ships or *marakkalam*.

She, known also as ‘divine motherly virgin’ (*daivakanyāv*) Tiruvārmoli, was born to the Brahman head-man of Śrīśūlam and his royal consort in one of the most opulent households of enterprising twice-born Vishnavas in Kōlattunāṭu. In many respects, this is a ‘revolutionary’ song as it demonstrates several features against the prevailing notions of Brahmins’ reluctance to undertake oceanic voyage, their proscriptions of widow marriage, and their engagement in the mercantile activities that were considered to be the ‘duty’ of a particular caste. Furthermore, since the Tōttam songs in northern Malabar embody a transitional phase towards a new media of literary prose by the late eighteenth century, the one under translation represents that stage in many respects together with its secular/non-religious contents such as the Indian Ocean trade and travel and the whole narration of the process of wooden ship-building, as Malayil writes. However, he also has only translated a few initial parts related to ship-making from this almost 4,000-line song.

The ninth chapter, by Abdul Jaleel P.K.M., includes translated excerpts from the three eighteenth-century texts of Shaykh Jufri (1729–1808), a Hadrami Sufi scholar born and brought up in Tarim (Yemen), but who migrated to Calicut around 1750. Although there has been an increasing interest in the travels of the Hadrami community across the Indian Ocean rim, we have rarely heard ‘their voice’ and concerns from eighteenth-century Malabar. The translations in this chapter are an attempt to solve this problem to some extent. After his arrival in Calicut, Jufri became an influential figure not only among the local Muslims, but also in the wider Hadrami diaspora, whom too he addressed in his writings. Through his writings he reinforced the wider Hadrami pattern across the Indian Ocean in Malabar, stressing the Sufi-Shāfi‘ī version of Islam. Two of his polemics translated here explicate his staunch attack on the increasing tendency of ‘fake’ Sufism in Malabar, while the other text connects the genealogy of the diaspora in the region to the wider networks in the Indian Ocean.

Richard Marks translates parts of a captivating Hebrew travel account *Even Sapir* by Rabbi Jacob Sapir in the tenth chapter. Though this travelogue was written in the late nineteenth century, we have included it here mainly for three reasons: (a) its language, as the historical literatures written in Hebrew from outside or inside Kerala remain significantly unfamiliar to the wider scholarship; (b) many accounts given by Jacob Sapir, especially on the division of and differences between the Black and White Jews, are taken from an earlier manuscript, which certainly should be older than the nineteenth century; and (c) the community under its discussion, since the Jews in the region have almost vanished after the formation of Israel and we do not have many historical accounts to their sociocultural worlds. Marks provides a detailed introduction to the broader project of Sapir and wider journeys from Jerusalem to India,

Burma, Java, and Australia. The translated parts given here also shed light on many non-religious aspects rarely found in contemporary sources.

The eleventh and twelfth chapters focus on the architectural aspects of Malabari mosques in relation to the local temples and extra-local mosque architectures of the Indian Ocean world. In the eleventh chapter, Mehrdad Shokoohy and Natalie H. Shokoohy undertake two projects: they compare and contrast Malabari mosques with the spatial organization of a temple on one hand, and connect and differentiate the mosques with those of other regions including Southeast Asia on the other. In the first case, they point out that there were no parallels between the local temples and mosques in architectural planning or concept. The mosques had the Friday sermons delivered by the religious leader, unifying merchants and believers from different parts of the world—a case that certainly was lacking in the Hindu temples that prohibited entry even for the people from the land itself. In the second case, they argue that Malabari mosques resemble closely that of other coastal regions of India as well as lands further in Southeast Asia. Shokoohy and Shokoohy argue that the Malabari mosque architecture and related attitude ‘were taken to South East Asia and beyond, but, of course, in each of these regions the local traditions were also absorbed in planning and in structure, something from which the maritime merchants had never shied away’.

Relatedly, the last chapter by Sebastian Prange takes mosques as primary sources for the maritime history of Malabar and explores how the architectures and inscriptions of the mosques serve as an important extension of the textual evidence on the social, political and cultural pasts of the region. He focuses on two Calicut mosques: the Mithqālpalli (or Nākhudā Mithqāl Masjid) and the Muchchandipalli. From these monuments, Prange peels off different layers of evidence—stylistic features, architectural changes, epigraphs, literary references, and historical context. Through this study, he demonstrates how a micro-space such as a mosque can be approached as a rich source for the broader maritime history of the Indian Ocean littoral—an aspect that very much resonates with the other materials displayed in this volume.

The volume thus presents some very important local and extra-local sources and attempts to introduce and amalgamate this whole range of primary sources on the participation of Malabar in the wider fluctuations and undercurrents of the Indian Ocean world in order to further studies of the region. The primary sources varying from Malayalam, Arabic, Syriac, Persian, Dutch, French, Hebrew, Latin, and Portuguese accordingly offer nuanced and complex histories and sociocultural and political aspects of different communities of Malabar such as Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Although the volume strongly depends on a historiographical framework, it is

also interdisciplinary in its content and approach to accommodate architectural, ethnographic, and epigraphic frameworks.

It would also enlighten us on the wider pattern of the Indian Ocean historical regions, all of which have a possible plethora of sources from several languages, geographical areas, and disciplinary fields. Even if one is planning to do a microhistory, she or he has a challenging task of accommodating a tremendous amount of source materials in a single narrative of a region or period. Recently, Carlo Ginzburg has convinced us that microhistory is in fact ‘an indispensable tool’ of world history. He writes: ‘Microhistory and macrohistory, close analysis and global perspective, far from being mutually exclusive, reinforce each other.’<sup>18</sup> The materials presented here explicate that aspect, and, therefore, in the burgeoning field of Indian Ocean studies, it would be even more productive if scholars with different linguistic and disciplinary skills could work together to produce comprehensive histories in micro or macro perspectives. Such wider collaborations, unusual in the humanities and social sciences compared to the natural sciences, can be more fruitful to uncover different aspects of a single time and space and to avoid one-sided narratives.

<sup>18</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, ‘Microhistory and World History’, in *The Cambridge World History*, vol. 6: The Construction of a Global World, 1400–1800 CE, Part 2: Patterns of Change, ed. Jerry H. Bentley, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 472.