

Ships, Navigation and Maritime Exchange Centres of Kerala: Channels of Civilizational Contacts (100 BC to 1500 AD)

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Ships serve the purpose of crossing the gaps of water-space and they provide unity as well as cohesion to otherwise scattered territories bordering on the water-rim. Frequent movement of vessels ensures a rhythmic and organic growth to the unity evolving out of diverse groups of people living on the border of the maritime space. In this frame of unity, movement of commodities is sequentially followed by movement of people and ideas, effecting reciprocal and mutually enriching civilizational interactions and cultural embellishments. From ancient times onwards, maritime Kerala was exposed to a wide variety of ships, and thereby to cultural elements, coming from different civilizational zones like that of Rome, Persia, Arabia, China etc. In this paper an attempt is made to see the process of cultural synthesis that took place in Kerala, in the ancient and medieval periods, following its maritime contacts with diverse civilizational zones. This is done on the one hand, by analyzing the different levels of contacts that the maritime trade centres of Kerala had and the pattern of navigation that

evolved in Kerala over years. On the other hand the geo-physical micro-units that became the platform for this interaction are also examined as to see the spatial extent of this process.

THE EARLY MARITIME CONTACTS OF KERALA AND THE SHIPPING ROUTES

During the first centuries of Christian era, the vessels from Roman Egypt were coming in large numbers to India¹, about 120 per year, as Strabo writes². About half of these Roman vessels starting their voyage from Bernice or Myos Hormos in the Red Sea and crossings the straits of Bab-el-Mandeb used to move to Barygaza (Barukaccha or Broach), while the remaining ones came to Limyrike (Malabar or the present day Kerala). It was the spices of Kerala that made the Roman ships come there in large numbers; while the finished products (like the Malwa sword, silk coming from China and the like) obtained from the vicinity of Gujarat made it an important destination for Roman traders. In fact, the Roman maritime trade with India, which started with the occu-

pation of Arabia Eudaemon (Aden) by Augustus in 25 BC³, became very frequent and hectic with the discovery of the use of monsoon wind for navigation in the Indian Ocean, by a sailor called Hippalus in 45 AD⁴. Before this epoch-making discovery, the Arabs and other commercial intermediaries, who knew the details of monsoon winds, were enviously keeping as a secret the knowledge of monsoon currents for navigational purpose and the Greeks from the Roman Egypt had to depend on these intermediary people for Indian wares for a considerable period of time.⁵ However after 50 AD, the usage of the knowledge of monsoon winds for voyages between Rome and Kerala became common and there was a sporadic increase in the movement of vessels from Roman Egypt to India. The ships going to Barygaza (Barukaccha) made sailing along the coast conducting trade on the western seaboard, as Periplus of Erythrean Sea testifies⁶, and linked Ariake⁷ (Aryaka or the land of the Aryas) with Limyrike⁸ (Malabar).

However we do not know for certain the amount of shipbuilding

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techniques that the Malayalis imbibed from these Roman contacts. But it is now almost certain that the initiatives for civilizational contacts had already been made by Indians in such a remote past, through a process in which wheels of commerce were increasingly used as carriers of culture. The people of South India undertook long-distance voyages to Red Sea not less frequently, as is evidenced by the discovery of Tamil Brahmi inscriptions in Bernice and Qusier al-Qadim, where the Dravidian names Kannan and Korpuman and Chatan were inscribed on pots-herds.⁹ It is interesting to note here that the Archaeologists have discovered an Indian statue of goddess Lakshmi from the remnants of Pompei, which must have reached there before 79 AD.¹⁰

Indians visiting Red Sea ports and Alexandria eventually turned out to be significantly large in numbers. Warmington gives a long list of Indian embassies visiting Rome.¹¹ St. Jerome speaks of the Christians of India (Kerala?) going to the Roman port-town, Alexandria in 180 AD to invite Pantaenus to reform their church.¹² But does the presence of Indians in Roman towns mean building of vessels in Malabar for long-distance voyages? Nothing can be conclusively said. But it is highly probable that with the intensification of Roman trade, shipbuilding activities of Malabar also must have received a momentum, which enabled its people to take part in Mediterranean trade directly.

The vibrant presence of the Mediterranean traders on the coast of Kerala is testified by the discovery of several artifacts of Mediterranean origin from several parts of Kerala, especially from Pattanam on the southern bank of Periyar. Amphora

fragments, glazed pottery, semi-precious beads are some of the items obtained from this site, which is suggestive of Roman trade links.¹³

The recently discovered Vienna Papyrus of the mid-second century AD, which mentions a loan arrangement made between Muziris¹⁴ (Cran-ganore) and Alexandria, throws immense light on the frequent movement of merchants between these exchange centres for maritime trade. It evidently shows the closeness that was being established between the Mediterranean port (Alexandria) and the Kerala port (Muziris) by way of commercial networks and transactions. In this document mention is made about the maritime loan that had been drawn up in Muziris between a Greek merchant mentioned in the document as *ego* (I), who borrowed money from another Greek merchant operating in Muziris, mentioned in the document as *tu* (you), pledging certain valuable items as security.¹⁵

This document gives the following details: (i) The cargo is originating in Muziris and is destined to Alexandria (ii) The one who borrowed the money and undertook the contract, promises to pay off the loan to the Muziris merchant or his agents or managers once his cargo reaches Alexandria, and (iii) He further undertakes (a) to pay to the camel driver 20 talents for the transportation of commodities to Koptos (which had twelve days journey from Berenice on the border of Red Sea), (b) take goods through the desert under guard and under security up to the public warehouse at Koptos, (c) keep the cargo under the ownership and seal of the Muziris merchant or of the latter's representative present there, (d) load them

aboard on a seaworthy boat at required time and take them through Nile to Alexandria, and (e) to take them to the warehouse of Alexandria where a duty of one-fourth was paid. He promises that he would keep the cargo under the ownership of the Muziris merchant or his representatives there. In case he fails to pay off the aforementioned loan at the fixed time, the merchant *tu* was authorized to take this entire cargo and after paying the 25 per cent duty at Alexandria to appropriate the remaining three-fourths, which *tu* could transfer to anywhere he wished or sell. Moreover all the items pledged by *ego* as security were allowed to be sold at the prevailing market place to meet the expenses incurred on account of this aforementioned loan, if *ego* fails to repay the loan. The grand total for the 6 parcels of the cargo exported on the ship Hermapollon to Alexandria from Muziris in silver was 1154 talents and 2852 drachmas.¹⁶

This document throws light on the fact that the Greek merchants operating in Muziris had their commercial agents in Koptos and Alexandria, through whom the former used to get information about the market conditions of Mediterranean world and the commodity-distribution was realized. It also speaks not only of the channels through which trade was conducted but also of the varied cultural ambient against which the entire exercise was carried out.

Periplus speaks of Naura, Barake (Bakare), Nelcynda as the principal pepper-ports of Malabar, which had been satellite and feeding ports for the central pivotal port, Muziris. Naura is usually identified with Cannanore, Barake on the banks of river Baris is equated with Porakad.

Baris is identified by scholars as river Pampa. Nelcynda had been identified with Niranam. The principal region where pepper grew in large quantities was called Kottonarika, from where the Roman vessels used to get their cargo for Mediterranean trade. Pliny (50-60 AD) locates Cottonara near Bakare¹⁷ and Ptolemy (150 AD) lists it (Kottiare) south of Melkynda (Nelkynda).¹⁸ The consensus is that all are versions of Kuttanadu and that it refers to region lying on the banks of Pampa river. Though now it is a waterlogged area, it had been a vast pepper-growing region in the past.¹⁹ Probably this change must have happened because of the frequent geo-physical changes, which even now continue to reshape the coastal belt of Kerala and its topography. When we analyze the writings of Pliny and Ptolemy, which have got the time-gap of 90 to 100 years, we find that there was a slow expansion of agricultural activities in Kerala and that more and more areas were brought under pepper cultivation. Though there is a tendency to overlook this reality under the presumption that the information is wrongly given, a close scrutiny of the details furnished by these informants would enable us to understand that the variance in the geophysical position of Kottonarika happened not by mistake but because of the extended identity given to the region by way of expansion of pepper-cultivation. Corresponding to the high demands from the Mediterranean world, more and more areas were brought under cultivation, which extended up to the region south of Niranam by 150 AD. However, by 4th century AD, a great part of central Kerala was brought under pepper-cultivation. The ever-increasing demand for spices from

the Roman world made the people concentrate primarily on spice-cultivation, which went on increasing at the cost of food crops. *Tabula Peutingeriana* of the 4th century AD²⁰ places Cotiara (Kuttanadu) south of Muziris, which evidently suggests the fast expansion of pepper-cultivation to a wide range of cultivable land-space. The available documentary evidences show that there was a rapid expansion of pepper-cultivation activities in the region between Muziris and Quilon during the period between 50 AD and 400 AD, a period which witnessed the peak of Roman trade with Kerala. This evidently suggests that the expansion in spice cultivation got augmented with the increasing demand from the Mediterranean world.

SASSANID TRADE AND A PHASE OF TRANSFORMATION

The third century, particularly towards the end of the reign of Marcus Aurelius, witnessed some sort of crisis in the Roman trading activities with Malabar, which was reflected in the debasement of coins and stoppage of gold *aurei*.²¹ Later with the invasion of Rome by Germanic tribes in the fifth century and the consequent feudalization process that crept into Western Europe, trade with the Mediterranean world started declining drastically. However the relatively sluggish phase in Rome's international commerce was profitably made use of by the newly emerging Sassanids to lay foundations for wider and longstanding networks of commercial operations from the ports of Persian Gulf. In fact attempts towards this direction started with king Ardashir, who laid foundations of the Sassanid rule in Persia by

overthrowing the Parthians in 224 AD and he founded or re-founded several ports for carrying out trans-oceanic trade with India.²² The oriental commodities that entered Persian Gulf from Kerala and other parts of Indian Ocean region moved from Charax to the Eastern Mediterranean through land route in which the city of Palmyra played an important role as an inland entrepot and an intermediary market.²³

These maritime developments are to be seen against the political and commercial rivalry that continued among the Romans and the Persians. Constant efforts were made by the Sassanid rulers to grab the oriental trade from the Romans, for which they even blocked the Silk route. In fact, the trade between India and the Sassanid ports in the Persian Gulf started with vibrancy from the time of Shahpur II onwards. He annihilated the tribal settlers who obstructed Sassanid trade on the Arabian littoral from Fars to Yathrib (later renamed as Medina)²⁴ and cleared the coast for carrying out long distance trade with India. Ammianus Marcellinus from Antioch (born c. 330 AD) refers to this maritime trade when he writes: "there are numerous towns and villages on every coast and frequent sailings of ships".²⁵ It is Palladius (the fourth century writer) who gives the first reference to Sassanid vessels (moving obviously for trade) in the Indian Ocean.²⁶

The important maritime bases of operation for the Sassanids in the Persian Gulf were Siraf, Rew Ardashir and Kharg Island.²⁷ The extensive excavations conducted at Siraf brought to limelight the remnants of a Sassanid fort, which was also used as a naval base during the time of

Shahpur II.²⁸ Rew Ardashir was a city on the coast of Fars, founded by Ardashir I²⁹ and from fifth century onwards it was the seat of the Nestorian metropolitan of Fars (Persis or Persia)³⁰. The archaeological excavations conducted by Professor Ghirshman in Kharg Island, 55 km north-west of Bushire, unearthed the remnants of a Nestorian monastery with a potential capacity to accommodate about hundred persons.³¹ This monastery seems to have been the main training centre for the formation of the missionaries meant for Kerala and other regions in the Indian Ocean region.³²

Following hectic maritime trade between Kerala and Persian Gulf regions, diverse mercantile communities seem to have preferred the marts of Kerala for migration, where they seem to have initially operated as collection agents. The earliest evidence of such migration is traceable in the case of the seventy-two mercantile families who came from West Asia under the leadership of Thomas of Cana and settled down in Cranganore (Cornelur) in about 345 AD.³³ It seems that the kings of Malabar were very much eager to attract the foreign traders by granting them privileges and special honours, as these merchants bought considerable revenue to the exchequer. The native ruler conferred upon Thomas of Cana and the seventy-two families, privileges on par with those of the nobility (which were later enjoyed by the upper caste Hindus), including the privilege to use palanquins, carpets on the ground, to use sandals, to ride on elephants, etc. Moreover, a particular portion of Mahodayapuram (Cranganore), which had forests, was given to these mercantile

families for clearance and habitation.³⁴

It seems that these seventy-two families formed only one segment of the different waves of migration from West Asia, which had started from the fourth century AD onwards. In fact, participation in the long-distance-maritime trade in the Indian Ocean made many Christians move over to the littoral of India to establish settlements. The active participation of Christian traders from Sassanid empire in the maritime trade is testified by the Nestorian annals. Sometime before 415 AD, as the eleventh century chronicle of Seert mentions, the Sassanid ruler Yazdigird I (399-421 AD) sent the Nestorian Catholicos, a certain Ahai, to Fars to investigate the piracy of ships returning from India and Ceylon.³⁵ Now the question is, why a Catholicos was deputed for handling piracy? It was highly probable that the merchant groups involved in the maritime trade between India-Ceylon and Persian Gulf were predominantly Christian and in that way he would be in a better position to gather more direct and immediate information about the piratical attacks on them, which besides, must have been a matter of concern for the church dignitary as well. It could have also been because of the support, which he, as a Catholicos, would be able to mobilize from the Christian merchant-settlers located on the rim of Indian Ocean to contain the problem of sea-piracy. The early commercial and spiritual expansion of the trading community of the Christians from the Sassanid Empire in South East Asia and China is evident from the resounding title of the bishop, who attended the synod of 410 AD. The title runs as follows:

“Metropolitan of the Islands, Seas and Interior, of Dabag, Chin and Macin.” Chin and Macin (Maha-china) were parts of China, whereas Dabag was an island, probably Java.³⁶

A Syriac document of this period refers to the entry and settlement of Nestorian Christians in parts of South East Asia through maritime channels³⁷; however the earliest reference to the Nestorian Christians, who entered China by land, belongs to 578.³⁸ Along with AD these Christian merchants from West Asia, Persian commodities also entered in larger volume in South East Asian markets including those of China, where they were called Possu (which initially was a Chinese version of the place name Parsa or Persia)-merchandise.³⁹ The list of commodities (including cumin, Possu alum used for dyeing, pistachio, marking nut, myrrh etc.) given by the Chinese writers of the fifth century, Ku Wei and Hsu Piao, as belonging to the Possu merchandise found in China and South East Asian markets, were grown in the Sassanid territory in Persia.⁴⁰

It was in fact the Nestorian Christian merchants who were considered to be the carriers of these commodities to the different parts of Indian Ocean. BE Colles is of the opinion that the Nestorians were not only zealous missionaries but also great traders. He refers to the account of Abraham Kashkar, a sixth century monk, who made his voyage to India as a merchant. He also mentions about Bar Sahde, who made several journeys to India before entering a monastery following the attack of his ship by the pirates.⁴¹ It seems that it was mainly through the channels of Sassanid traders that Christian ideas got disseminated and preserved with continuity in a sub-

stantial way in different parts of south west India, including Kerala.

As a result of Sassanid's monopolistic hold over Indian Ocean trade, commodities failed to reach Constantinople. The three main channels of Euro-Asian trade viz., the Silk route, the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, through which eastern commodities used to enter the Mediterranean world, were monopolistically controlled by the Sassanids. The Byzantine emperors Justin (518-527 AD) and Justinian (527-565 AD) wanted to break the Sassanid hold on Asiatic trade by seeking the support of Abyssinian (Ethiopian) Christians, who were asked to go to the markets of south India and Ceylon to fetch silk and spices.⁴² However the Sassanid ruler Khusrau I (531-78/9 AD) defeated this move by installing his own governor Yemen and started controlling the trade traffic in Bab-el-Mandeb and in the Red Sea, which denied access to the Byzantines to penetrate into the east including India.⁴³

It is against this wider context of commercial activities of the Sassanids on the rim of Indian Ocean that one should look at the account of Cosmas Indicopleustes (525 AD), who mentions the important centres of Persian trade in this maritime space. He makes reference to the principal port of Taprobane (Ceylon), identified with Mahatitha, where commodity streams from China, South East Asia, the Deccan and the Sind intersected. The Christians (probably from Persia and Kerala) played significant role in the commercial activities of this port of Ceylon. He mentions about a church here for the Christian settlers. Besides a priest who was appointed from Persia, the church had a deacan as well. Thus the place had all arrangements for public

worship. Many ships came to this island from all over India, Persia and Ethiopia. From Tzinista (China) and other places (reference is evidently to South East Asia), silk, aloes, cloves, sandalwood, etc. were imported to Taprobane. These were further taken to the entrepots on this side (evidently India), to Persia, Homerite (South Yemen) and Adule (Zula in Ethiopia).⁴⁴

The important places of trade in India as mentioned by Cosmas were: Sindhu (Indus), Orrhota (Saurashtra), Kalliana (Kalyan), Sibor (Sindabor or Goa), the five marts of Malabar, namely Parti (?), Mangaruth (Mangalore), Salopatana (?), Nalopatana (Valapattanam?), Pudopatana (Puthupattanam), and the ports of Marallo (Marava or Marawar) as well as Khaber (Kaveripattanam). These ports operated in a larger orbit, within which the circulation of commodities from the Indian Ocean region to the Mediterranean world through Persian Gulf was realized. Cosmas speaks also of the vibrant Christian communities of Male (Malabar) and Kalliana (Kalyan), where the bishop from Persia was residing.⁴⁵

The extension of the commercial activities of these Persian Christians into the Indian Ocean region resulted in the formation of several trading colonies by them on its rim, followed by migration of Christians in considerable numbers. In fact these Christian settlements were located near the important trade centres or the collection centres or the halting places of long-distance trade, where temporary stay was necessitated by the monsoon factor. The traders from West Asia moving to South East Asia had to halt at Malabar or some other place on the

western coast of India for a considerable period of time till they got favourable wind for their long-distance voyage through Bay of Bengal, where the north-east monsoon obstructed navigation during the period between October and February. In the Arabian Sea, similarly, the southwest monsoon hindered transoceanic voyages during the period between May and September. The Christian merchants, who used to halt till they got favourable monsoon wind also laid foundation for some of the principal settlements like that of Ceylon, Quilon, Sindabor or Goa, Kalyan etc., which swelled in size with the inflow of people in the succeeding periods. In course of time many Christian traders from West Asia began to settle down on the fringes of Indian Ocean, from where easy movement of commodities and people to destinations of their choice was possible. These settlements seem to have been linked mutually by the network of exchange systems, in which they actively took part and interestingly commerce was a major unifying factor for these Diasporas.

The presence of these mercantile-cum-migrating communities on the fringes of Indian Ocean is attested to by the discovery of stone crosses with Pahlavi (archaic Persian) inscriptions in several places in south-west India and Sri Lanka. So far only nine crosses with Pahlavi inscriptions are found in the entire Indian Ocean region (and all over the world, as well): One in Aniruddhapuram in Sri Lanka, which was associated with the commercially oriented Christian community which had migrated from Persia⁴⁶, and eight in India viz., Mylapore (1), Kottayam (2), Muttuchira (1), Kadamattam (1), Alengad (1), Kothanalloor (1) and

Goa(I). Among the various Pahlavi-inscribed crosses found in India, the one in St. Thomas church of Mylapore⁴⁷ seems to be the oldest, which is traced back to the 6th century AD, and is probably as old as Anirudhapuram cross. Of these crosses, strenuous and continuous attempts were made to decipher the inscription of Mylapore cross, which in the latest translation of Gerd Gropp (1970) is "*Unser Herr Messias erbarme sich über Gabriel, den Sohn des Chaharbokht, den Enkel des Durzad, der dies (Kreuz) anfertigte.*"⁴⁸ It could be translated as "Our Lord Messiah may show mercy on Gabriel, the son of Chaharbokht (literally meaning having four sons), the grandson of Durzad (literally meaning born in distant land), who made this (cross)". In 1997, he gave another translation: "Our Lord Messiah may show mercy over Gabriel, son of Chaharbokht. Long life may be for him who made this (cross)".⁴⁹ However, it should be specially mentioned that scholars have not yet reached at an agreement on deciphering the cross-inscription, which for want of vowel-usage and familiarity with the letter-carvings of the inscription, was read differently.⁵⁰ The crosses of Kottayam, Muttuchira, Kadamattam and Alengad seem to have been copies made later. It is highly probable that the copies of the cross of Mylapore, which was an important centre of trade and settlement for the migrating Christians, were later made and sent to the old churches of Kerala located in the interior.⁵¹ The recent discovery of a granite stone cross with Pahlavi inscription from Agassaim (Goa) by Fr. Cosme Costa s.f.x., shows that the activities of the Pahlavi-speaking mercantile Christian community were even extended to such a wide area in the

south west India including Konkan.⁵²

These Christians including those located on the rim of Indian Ocean were spiritually fed by the metropolitan of Fars, who had his seat in Rew Ardashir on the coast of Fars. The Catholicos Isho-Yab III (650-8 AD) records that in his day the Metropolitan of Rew Ardashir was responsible not only for the dioceses of Fars alone, but also for 'India', a geographical concept in which he included the places between the maritime borders of the Sassanid kingdom to the country called QLH (Syriac QLH is equivalent to the Arabic place name Qal'ah, an important entrepot in the Malaya peninsula), covering a distance of 1200 *parasangs* and extending up to the doors of South East Asia.⁵³ Eventually the Pahlavi language that was used in Fars was also extended to Kerala and other parts of south west India, where the missionaries from Fars catered to the spiritual needs of the native Christians. This is evidenced from the 'granite stone-crosses' discovered in south-west India which carry Pahlavi inscriptions and also from the copper plates granted to Mar Sapor and Mar Peroz, where signatures were found in Pahlavi script.⁵⁴

These traders seem to have carried out their trade with the help of *manigramam* and *anjuvannam* merchant guilds of Kerala, which became a common phenomenon by the first half of ninth century AD. In the later developments, *Tarisapally* (Talisa Church) of Quilon turned out to be the principal rallying point for the merchants of the *manigramam* guild for their long-distance movement of commodities.⁵⁵ Meanwhile with the increasing migration of Christian traders from West Asia, there appeared a tendency among the Malabar Christians to go into the

interior part of Kerala and to bring more land-space under cultivation. This landward movement of the St. Thomas Christians is testified by the erection of new churches in the inland-agrarian pockets of Central Kerala from third century onwards. The agrarian settlements of the Christian community used to establish its identity by erecting in their settlements churches, which turned out to be the principal cohesive factor for them. There eventually developed a strong rapport between the agriculturists and the traders, between the spice-producing group and the exchange-oriented group, where commonality of religion seems to have cemented the bond. The spice-producing native Christians of Malabar and the Christian traders from West Asia created an economic axis for the flow of commodities through the window of Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean world.⁵⁶ There was an added logic for the St. Thomas Christians in their participation in the spice-production, which invited more Christian traders from Persia and with them many priests and bishops too, who would, in turn, cater to their spiritual needs. In the absence of native bishops, dependence on Persian traders, who guided and took ecclesiastical dignitaries from Persia, was an exigency of the time.

REORIENTATION OF MARITIME TRADE AND CIVILIZATIONAL IMPACTS.

By ninth century onwards with rapid Islamic expansion, the Arab *dhow*s began to visit Kerala coast rather regularly for trade. In fact, the trade networks and mercantile settlements of the Sassanid traders, formed the substratum upon which the Arab traders later erected an Islamic commercial superstructure. But in

their hands the maritime trade got reoriented: The long-distance trade, emanating from al-Basrah or Muscat or Sohar in Oman in the Persian Gulf and terminating in Canton in China, had Koulam Mali (Quilon) as the principal halting centre.⁵⁷ The Abbassid Caliphate (750-870 AD) in Persia which had transferred the capital from Damascus to the commercially strategic Baghdad and the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD) in China were instrumental in re-orienting the international trade by providing required amount of unbroken peace at both the ends of the route. The *dhow*s that started from Persian Gulf took 30 days to reach Quilon and another 30 days to reach Qalah (Kedah in Malaya Peninsula) and another 30 days to reach Canton. Thus the one-way trip from Persian Gulf to China took 90 days. On the way these *dhow*s invariably took shelter in Quilon for want of favourable monsoon wind and for taking provisions.⁵⁸ With this change the old Muziris lost its importance of being the prime pepper-exporting port and this position was taken over by Koulam Mali (Quilon). The navigational lines of the merchants belonging to the Jewish guild of *Anjuvannam* and the Christian guild of *Manigramam* emanated from Koulam Mali.

A long chain of ports in the Indian Ocean had hectic trade relations with Koulam Male or Quilon, as is testified by the Jewish letters of Cairo Genizza.⁵⁹ The Jewish traders, who expanded their commerce along with the Arabs, either from Abbassid Persia or Fatimid Egypt, were the principal commercial intermediaries involved in this trade.⁶⁰ However the main channel through which they used to take commodities to the Mediterranean world was via Aden, al-Qus, Fustat/Cairo and

Alexandria.⁶¹ These Jewish traders bolstered their economic positions by well-established family bonds and matrimonial links. One among them was Mahruz b Jacob, a ship-owning Jewish merchant (*nakhoda*), who carried out trading activities with the ports of Konkan, Malabar and Egypt.⁶² In his letter of 1145 AD, Mahruz b Jacob refers to Kanbayat (Cambay), Broach, Tana, Mangalore, Malibarath (Koulam Mali), Kayakannur (Lower Kannur) as the important centres of Jewish trade on the western seaboard.⁶³

More or less during the same period (1116-1117 AD) we find one Allan b Hassun, another Jewish merchant, making commercial voyages from Aden to Sindabur (Chandrapura) to sell storax and coral, which he collected from Mediterranean ports.⁶⁴ After having carried out trading transactions in the port of Sindabur (Chandrapura), he proceeded to Munaybar (Malabar or Kerala), whose important ports (according to him) were Fakanaur (Barakuru or Bhatkal) and Kawalam (Koulam Mali)⁶⁵, of which the latter was the most important port also for the Abbassid traders. Corresponding to the hectic trading activities of the Jews with the ports of Kerala, the names of Elly (Mount Dely) and Columbo (Koulam Mali or Quilon) also entered the famous Catalan map prepared by the Majorcan Jew called Abraham Cresques in 1375 AD for the king Charles V of France.⁶⁶

Meanwhile during Yuan (Mongol) and Ming periods the Chinese *Junks*, started visiting the principal maritime trade centres of Kerala frequently. The principal destination of Mongol vessels was Quilon, from where tributes were sent to China.⁶⁷ Official mission from Quilon to the court of Kublai Khan was dispatched in 1282 AD, which was reciprocated

by an official mission sent by the Chinese ruler in 1283 AD.⁶⁸

By the middle of the fourteenth century a new phenomenon is seen whereby the rulers from inland regions were moving over to maritime centres of exchange in their attempts to carve out independent states. It coincided with the revitalization of trade principally by the Muslim merchants (who had already become an important commercial group capable of operating independently of Christian and Jewish guilds by thirteenth century)⁶⁹ and the consequent restructuring of port-hierarchy in Malabar⁷⁰, whereby Quilon's position as pivotal port in Malabar was taken over by Calicut. In fact the emergence of Calicut as the principal port, strengthened by a chain of satellite ports, is traceable to the developments that took place in international trade routes following the collapse of Baghdad. In this process there was a relative decline of Quilon, following the slackening of international trade emanating from Persian Gulf after the Mongol attack of Baghdad Caliphate (1258 AD), an event which facilitated the Calicut-oriented commercial operations from the ports of Red Sea and the Mamluk Egypt to gain precedence over Persian Gulf commerce. Eventually the entrepreneurial activities of the Arab/ Al-Karimi traders of Cairo, who were commercial allies of the Mamluk Egypt and gradually settled down in the city for the furtherance of their trade, favoured the rise of Calicut as a prominent exchange centre in the Indian Ocean region.⁷¹

It was against this background of the increasing commercial importance of Calicut following contacts with Mamluk Egypt that the Nediyrappu Swarupam shifted its royal residence from the inland

pocket of Nediyrappu in Ernad (Malappuram district) to the maritime centre of Calicut.⁷² This transfer of headquarters enabled the Zamorin to get access to the surplus accruing from maritime trade and to transform it for his state formation ventures.

Meanwhile another chief was also moving from an inland political unit to the maritime centre of Cochin, which emerged in 1341 AD following the great flood in Periyar.⁷³ It was none other than the chief of the Perumpadappu Swarupam, who was moving from Vanneri down to south to escape from the attacks of the Zamorin. Though the Perumpadappu ruler was made to flee from inland region mainly because of Zamorin's expansionist and state-building policy, his movement towards the maritime centres of exchange evidently suggests that it was guided by a deeper desire to appropriate surplus from maritime trade. First he moved over to Mahodayapuram, from where he proceeded further to Cochin in around 1405 AD⁷⁴, which is indicative of his desire to rely on the surplus from maritime trade for building up a strong state structure that could counter the expansionist moves of the Zamorin. Cochin's hectic commercial contacts including those with the Ming China (paved by Cheng Ho's repeated voyages)⁷⁵ and the Arab world,⁷⁶ offered the capital for such a political move of the Perumpadappu swarupam.

By the end of the fifteenth century there was a development evolving in Cannanore to carve out a petty maritime state structure under the Mamale as separate and distinct from Kolathunad, though its political fruition came only in the sixteenth century.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, in the south, the ruler of Quilon whose state

power also depended on the returns from its port, maintained a petty kingdom, was greatly compensated by its rich spice-producing hinterland.⁷⁸

The important trade centres in Kerala attracting merchants from China as well as West Asia were Calicut and Cochin during the period before 1500 AD. Their commercial vibrancy invited the attention of Cheng Ho vessels (1405-1433 AD) sent by the Ming dynasty.⁷⁹ The navigational lines of Calicut and Cochin incorporated the different mercantile networks in the Indian Ocean. In 1409 AD Ma Huan noticed the active presence of different mercantile groups like the Muslim merchants (linked with West Asian trade), Chetties (associated with the coastal trade of Coromandel and Canara) and Kelings (Klings or Kalingas linked with South East Asian commerce) in Cochin.⁸⁰ The Chetties linked Cochin with the exchange centres of South India, while the Kelings carried its trading networks to South East Asia. The Muslim traders linked it principally with the trade centres of Islamic civilizational zones. Cochin's strand of trade extending up to China was equally important in the first half of the fifteenth century, although it later declined following the stoppage of Ming maritime expeditions.⁸¹

However during the third and fourth quarters of the fifteenth century a major share of Cochin's commerce passed on to the powerful Muslim merchants, who eventually replaced other merchant groups. It started with Zamorin's move to conquer Cochin and convert it into a feeding centre for Calicut, for realizing which he depended heavily on the monetary and military help of the Muslim mercantile community. The assistance from Muslim

merchants did not go unrewarded. On capturing Cochin Zamorin insisted on handing over its commerce to Muslim merchants, after having ousted the traditional trading community of the *Nazarenes* (or the St. Thomas Christians) from the port of Cochin.⁸² The trade scenario which evolved in Malabar in the following years manifested two basic trends. On the one hand the *paradeshi* Muslim merchants particularly the Al-Karimi merchants linked with the Mamluks of Egypt took up the overseas trade of Malabar and transshipped commodities to the Red Sea ports from Calicut. On the other hand a major segment of the coastal trade had passed on to the Marakkar Muslim merchants who had by this time expanded to different exchange centres of Malabar from Coromandel coast.⁸³ In this process their navigational lines were linked with the economic zones of south west India and shipbuilding tradition got concentrated in Beypur. It is the availability of timber in the neighbouring Nilambur forests which helped the ship-manufacturing tradition to take deep ground here.

On the eve of Portuguese arrival, the Marakkar traders had established themselves in Cochin as the principal suppliers of spices for foreign vessels and major distributors of Coromandel rice in Malabar.⁸⁴ Some of them had large number of vessels with larger tonnage, which were moving between the economic zones of Malacca, Coromandel, Malabar and Gujarat.⁸⁵

Though the Marakkars formed the most important trading group of Cochin, other merchant groups like the Jews (who were once linked with the *anjvannam* merchant guild) and the St. Thomas Christians (who were

earlier associated with the *manigramam* merchant guild) continued to operate in this port rather in a low profile. The Jewish traders, as the Geniza papers mention, had developed their own navigational lines to take pepper, ginger, brazil wood and cardamom from the ports of Malabar from as early as 8th AD century onwards.⁸⁶ The Jews who came in 1471 AD to *Sinhora Savod'e* (*Senhora Soude*, almost two kilometers away from Cochin)⁸⁷ developed a network of trade, running mostly through the Semitic Diasporas scattered in Europe and Egypt.⁸⁸ Even after Zamorin's intervention in the affairs of the port of Cochin, the economic activity of the StThomas Christian community still continued in Cochin area rather in low profile under the banner of the merchant guild *Korran*, from which later in 1503 AD, Francisco Albuquerque bought 4000 *bhars* of well-dried pepper.⁸⁹

Thus Kerala in the pre-modern period was a well-activated commercial unit of India, where vibrant mixing of cultures had taken place through the channels of trade. Civilizational contacts with the Mediterranean world and later with Sassanid and Islamic cultural zones, followed by assimilative and synthetic responses, contributed to shaping its unique culture and ethos. The long and continuous exposure to outside world made Kerala society highly composite in nature and mosaic in appearance. On the one hand, Kerala society and economy were highly adaptable to meet the needs of the times. Economically it went on specializing in spice-cultivation that conditioned Kerala's agricultural pattern in favour of cash crops to the detriment of food crops. With increasing demand for spices from overseas markets more and more

people moved over to inland cultivable space for bringing more areas under spice-production, which eventually led to the emergence of enterprising farmers specialized in spice-cultivation, whose prime position in Kerala's economy continued to remain so till recently. On the other hand several foreign ideas and ideologies including the belief systems that appeared first in West Asia got easy penetration into Kerala soil. Now Christians form about 19.6 per cent (out of whom majority are of pre-Portuguese Christian community) and Muslims about 27.8 per cent of Kerala's total population, a development that took place mainly as a sequence to large scale-movement of commodities. The northern parts of Kerala have the greatest Muslim concentration, thanks to the favourable and pro-Muslim policies followed by the Zamorin of Calicut and the ruler of Kolathunadu, who took such an attitude as to invite more foreign Muslim traders and thereby more foreign capital that would enable them to build strong states. Simultaneously sizeable and continuous chain of Jewish mercantile settlements also appeared along the Kerala coast following their commercial endeavours, though their number has currently been reduced to an insignificant figure. The end result was that Kerala's society turned out to be remarkably composite in nature, with multiple cultural streams and plural belief systems, resembling a bouquet of flowers.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. For details see Vimala Begley and Richard Daniel de Puma (ed.), *Rome and India: The Ancient Sea Trade*, Delhi, 1992; Rosa Maria Cimino, *Ancient Rome and*

India: Commercial and Cultural Contacts between the Roman World and India, New Delhi, 1994

2. Strabo, *Geographia*, 2, 118
3. E.H.Warmington, *The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India*, Cambridge, 1928, pp.8-9
4. Lionel Casson (ed.), *The Periplus Maris Erythraei*, Princeton, 1989, p.87. Earlier the Arabs knew the use of monsoon wind for conducting navigation in the Indian Ocean, which they held as a navigational secret so that others might not take its advantage for commercial ventures. Till the discovery of the use of monsoon wind by Hippalus, the Greeks and the Romans had to depend heavily on the Arab intermediaries for obtaining Indian wares. See E.H.Warmington, op.cit., p.10
5. E.H.Warmington, op.cit., p.10
6. The anonymous author of *Periplus of Erythraen Sea* includes a number of ports in this region located to the south of the region *Dachinabades* (Dakshinapatha). The ports south of Kalliena (Kalyan) were Semylla (Chaul) Mandagora (Palaipatmai, Melizeigara, Byzantium, Toparon, Tyrannosboas, Sesekreienai Islands, the Isle of Aigidioi. According to Ptolemy, Ariake ends with Mandagora. Ptolemy calls this region as region of pirates, which starts from Mandagora and terminates in Tyndis. (Ptolemy 7.1.7.) However Pliny says that the pirates operated as far south as Muziris.
7. The great port of Ariake was Barygaza (41.14.2-3). Ariake included the regions of north Konkan at least as far south as Bombay (i.e. the northern border of the Andhras. S. Chattopadhyaya holds the opinion that Ariake must have been a hellenized version of Aryaka or Aryavarta. See S. Chattopadhyaya, *The Sakas in India*, Santiniketan, 1955, p. 37.
8. According to the author of Periplus, the region of Limyrike starts from Naura (Cannanore) and Tyndis (Ponnani), 53.17.26-27; Ptolemy 7.1.8; 1.7.6; 7.1.85.
9. K.Rajan, "Mucuri-Alexandria Trade Contact: An Archaeological Approach", in *Pondicherry University Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (PUSH)*, Vol.1, No.1&2, January and July, 2000, p.98.
10. A. Maiuri, "Statuetta eburnean di arte Indiana a Pompei", in *Le Arti*, 1, 1938/39, pp.111-115.
11. Perhaps the best known was the embassy from the Pandyan king. Strabo

- mentions that a mission or an embassy was sent to Augustus Caesar in 20 BC, by Pandyan king, probably to attract the Mediterranean traders. One embassy sailed from Broach to Rome in about 25 BC, and included a strange assortment of men and animals—tigers, pheasants, snakes, tortoises, a monk, and an armless boy who could shoot arrows with his toes. It took the mission four years to reach Rome and the animals were presented to Augustus Caesar about 21 BC. Later Roman emperors including Trajan also received several embassies from Indians. E.H.Warmington, *op.cit.*, pp. 30 ff.
12. St. Jerome says that Demetrius, the bishop of Alexandria sent him to India, at the request of the legates of that nation. St. Jerome says, "in India Pantaenus found that Bartholomew, one of the twelve Apostles, had preached the advent of Lord Jesus according to the Gospel of Mathew, and on his return to Alexandria he brought this with him, written in Hebrew characters." For details, see Jerome, 'Lives of Illustrious Men', *A Select Library of Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, (ed.), Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Vol. III, Michigan, 1892, p. 370.
 13. M.G.S. Narayanan, *Muzirissine Thedi*, A Paper presented in the Seminar on Muziris organized at Kerala Sahitya Academy, Trichur by Kerala Historical Research Society, 11 th July, 2004, pp. 4-8; K.P.Shajan, "Discovery of Muziris: Geological and Archaeological Evidences", A paper presented in the Seminar on Muziris organized at Kerala Sahitya Academy, Trichur by Kerala Historical Research Society, 11th July, 2004.
 14. The excavations conducted in Pattanam in 2004 and the discovery of several artifacts showing cultural contacts with Rome make many historians view that the old Muziris is the present day Pattanam located near Parur. On seeing the site and the artifacts, I too am convinced of the antiquity of the place and feel that it must have been a trade centre of the early centuries of Christian era. It must have been highly contemporaneous with Muziris, probably a feeding port for Muziris. However so far nothing is obtained from the site as to substantiate that it was Muziris. For want of a link to connect Pattanam with Muziris, I here maintain the old view that Muziris must have been Cranganore.
 15. H.Harrauer and P. Sijpesteijn (ed.), "Ein neues Dokument zu Roms Indienhandel, P. Vindob. G.v 40822", in *Anzeiger der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, phil.hist.Kl.122 (1985), pp. 124-155; These scholars suggested that the merchant *ego* must have pledged his own ship as security for the loan. However Lionel Casson says that the security was not a ship but items subject to the 25 per cent customs duty on imports: *ego* had secured his loan from *tu* by pledging the goods he bought with that money. See L.Casson, "P. Vinod G. 40822 and the Shipping of Goods from India", in *BASP*, 23(1986), pp. 73-79; See also G.Thlr, *Hypotheken-Urkunde eines Seedarlehens für eine Reise nach Muziris und Apographe für die Tetarte in Alexandria (zu P.Vindob)*", *Tyche* 2(1987), pp. 241-246; Lionel Casson, "New Light on Maritime Loans: P.Vindob G.40822", in *Zeitschrift für Papyriologie und Epigraphik*, Band 84, 1990, pp. 195-206. It seems to me that the items of pledge were entirely different from the vessel used for voyage and the cargo bought with this loan-money, as both of them included the elements of the risks of being destroyed before reaching destination. No lender would advance money on the securities, which are susceptible to immense risks in the process of realization. It gives us the impression that the securities must have been some valuable items deposited with the creditor (merchant *tu*) at Muziris, may be a bulk of cargo, which he (the merchant *ego*) collected for his trade, but could not be taken to Alexandria because of huge expenses involved in transportation. See for more details, Pius Malekandathil, "A Historical Analysis of the Origin and Growth of St.Thomas Christians", in *St.Thomas Christians and Nambudiris, Jews and the Sangam Literature*, Cochin, 2003, pp. 1-48.
 16. G.Thlr, "Hypotheken-Urkunde eines Seedarlehens", pp. 238 ff.
 17. Pliny 6.105.
 18. Ptolemy 7.I.9.
 19. P.J. Thomas, "Roman Trade Centres in Malabar", in *Kerala Society Papers*, Vol. 2, 10. p. 267; See the note of T.K. Joseph; Ward and Conner, *Memoir of the Survey of Travancore and Cochin, 1816-1820, 1863*, pp. 57-58. Here mention is made that the taluk of Changanaseri is an elevated inland taluk abounding with pepper.
 20. A. and M. Levi, *Itineraria picta: Contributoallo studio della Tabula Peutingeriana*, Rome, 1967
 21. The Roman debasement of the golden *aurei* could also be seen as the epilogue of the bad internal situation of the Roman empire, caused partly by the export of precious metals to India, to buy spices and other luxury items. In fact Pliny the younger, in a letter to his pen-friend, the emperor Trajan, informs us that Rome exported over a hundred million of golden sesterces to Asia annually. Pliny, *Natural History*, 12, 84; E.H.Warmington, *op.cit.*; p. 274. The critical phase in Indo-Roman commerce, which started with Marcus Aurelius, continued for a considerable period of time until the appearance of Constantine. With the abdication of Diocletian in 305 there was indescribable confusion and civil war till 324, when Constantine united the whole empire. With this began a phase of revival of Roman commerce with the East.
 22. D.Whitehouse and A. Williamson, "Sassanian Maritime Trade", in *Iran*, 11, 1973, pp.29-32.
 23. J.Teixidor, *Un port romain du desert. Palmyra et son commerce d'Auguste a Caracalla*, Paris, 1984; A. Maricq, "Vologesias. L'emporium de Ctesiphon", in *Syria*, 36, 1959, 273; J.Starcky, *Palmyre*, Paris, 1952, pp. 70-76.
 24. Abu'l-Qasim Hasan Firdausi, *Shah-Nama*, ed. and tran. by J.Mohl, Paris, 1830-1878, Vol. 5, p. 429; Shahpur II tied together the Arab prisoners by piercing their shoulders, which earned for him the Arabic nickname, *Dhu'l Aklaf* (Lord of the Shoulders). See for details Muhammad ibn Jarir Tabari, *Annales*, (ed.), M.J. de Goeje et alii, Series I, Leiden, 1879-93, pp. 836-39; David Whitehouse and Andrew Williamson, "Sassanian Maritime Trade", pp. 32-33.
 25. *Res Gestae* XXII, 6, 11; David Whitehouse and Andrew Williamson, "Sassanian Maritime Trade", p. 33.
 26. D.M. Derrett, "The History of Palladius of the races of India and Brahmans",

- Classica et Mediaevalia*, 21, 1961, pp. 64-135; D.M. Derrett, *The Theban Scholasticus and Malabar in c. 355-60*, *J.A.O.S.*, 82, 1962, pp. 21-31.
27. David Whitehouse and Andrew Williamson, "Sassanian Maritime Trade", pp. 30-43.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-35.
29. Tabari, *op.cit.*, p. 820.
30. J. St. Martin, *Memoires historiques et geographiques sur l'Armenie*, Vol. 2, Paris, 1819, p. 372; J. Marquart, *Eransahr nach der Geographie des Ps.Moses Chorenaci*, Berlin, 1901, pp. 138, 147. The Nestorians, who were particularly numerous in northern Mesopotamia, formed an important minority in the Sassanid empire and from time to time Nestorians filled key positions in the administration.
31. R. Ghirshman, *The Island of Kharg*, Tehran, 1960, pl. 12 ff.
32. David Whitehouse and Andrew Williamson, "Sassanian Maritime Trade", p. 43. They make this inference on the ground that traditionally the captains approaching Basra used to put in at Kharg to engage a pilot before entering the Shatt al-Arab and the island thus played a significant role in the maritime trade of the Gulf. The importance of this monastery is to be seen against the background of the missionary expansionist activities of the Nestorians and the ecclesiastical administration of Indian church by the metropolitan of Rew Ardashir. For a detailed discussion on whether the St.Thomas Christians were Nestorians, see Luis Filipe F.R.Thomaz, "Were the St.Thomas Christians looked upon as Heretics?", in *The Portuguese and the Socio-Cultural Changes in India:1500-1800*, (ed.), K.S.Mathew, Teotonio R. de Souza and Pius Malekandathil, Funda o Oriente, 2001.
33. Diogo do Couto, *Da Asia, Decadas XII*, liv.3, cap. 5, tome 8, Lisboa, 1788, pp. 283-285; Though the authors may differ on the date of his arrival, a rough analysis of possible demographic increase per century after deducting the possible mortality rate would show that 345 AD could have been the probable year of his arrival. The copper plate inscription as referred to by the Portuguese writers of the sixteenth century says that Thomas Cana came with seventy-two families and 400 people. Dami o de Gois, *Chronica de El-Rei D.Manoel*, Parte I, cap. 98, Lisbon, 1749, p. 133. Currently this community, both belonging to the Catholic diocese of Kottayam and the Jacobite diocese of Chingavanam, would come to two lakhs in number. One has to see the possible demographic increase per century and find out whether 16 centuries are required to make the community to reach two lakhs from the initial 400. The high mortality rate of the medieval and early modern periods is to be taken into special account, which seems to have made the demographic growth-index proceed slowly till twentieth century. However, it should be admitted that a very conclusive and definite answer to this problem of date can be given only after a thorough demographic analysis by studying micro-regions and verifying the baptismal register and death records kept in their churches.
34. Monteiro d'Aguiar, "The Magna Carta of the St.Thomas Christians", in T.K.Joseph (ed.), *Kerala Society Papers* (Series 4), Vol.1 & 2, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997 (reprint), pp.169-200; See particularly the translation Roz' Portuguese text given by H. Hosten, pp. 180-183.
35. Addai Scher, *La Chronique de Seert in Patrologia Orientalis*, V, pp. 324-6; B.E.Colles, "Persian Merchants and Missionaries in Medieval Malaya", in *Journal of the Malayasian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, XLII/2, 1969, pp. 10-47.
36. David Whitehouse and Andrew Williamson, "Sassanian Maritime Trade", p. 47. It should be specially remembered here that there was a tradition in the 16th century Kerala that St.Thomas himself had gone to preach in China, Macin and Java. For details see Pius Malekandathil (ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes:A Portuguese Account of the Sixteenth Century Malabar*, Kochi, 2003, pp. 7-13.
37. B.E. Colles, "Persian Merchants and Missionaries in Medieval Malaya", p. 11.
38. P.Y. Saeki, *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China*, 1951, p. 85. He refers to the Chinese record which speaks of the arrival of "a great Nestorian family of Mar Sargis from the western lands" in 578 AD. It was a forerunner of the official mission of 635 AD, which is recorded in an inscription from Si-ngan fu in Shensi. Chabot, p.620; David Whitehouse and Andrew Williamson, "Sassanian Maritime Trade", p.47.
39. For details see O.W.Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce: A Study of the Origins of Srivijaya*, Ithaca, 1967, pp. 129-158. Though initially Possu meant commodities from Persia, by twelfth century the term was increasingly used to denote an area in South East Asia, probably Pasai in Sumatra. David Whitehouse and Andrew Williamson, "Sassanian Maritime Trade", p. 46.
40. O.W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce*, pp. 139-150.
41. B.E. Colles, "Persian Merchants and Missionaries in Medieval Malaya"; A.Mingana, "The Early Spread of Christianity in India", in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, X, 1926, p. 455.
42. Procopius, *Wars*, I, 20; Muhammad ibn Jarir Tabari, *op.cit.*, p. 965; R. Pankhurst, *An Introduction to the Economic History of Ethiopia from Early Times to 1800*, London, 1961, pp. 33-37. The Ethiopians (the Aksumite kingdom) who embraced Christianity around 300 AD were considered as an integral part of the eastern Christian world. The St.Thomas Christians of Malabar and the Coptic (referring to Koptos, the old generic term for Egypt) Christians of Ethiopia had good commercial relations in the medieval period. These diversified channels of commerce led to the flow of Sassanid silver *dirham* and the Byzantine gold *nomisma* to the marts of Kerala.
43. Muhammad ibn Jarir Tabari, *op.cit.*, p. 965.
44. Cosmas Indicopleustes, *La Topographie Chretienne*, tran. by Wanda Wolska, Paris, 1962, pp. 3-5.
45. *Ibid.*, p.5; Male could also be a place name. It is difficult to say whether it stands for Malyanakara near Cranganore or for Kulam Male (Quilon). It could be either of these two. In Geniza papers we find reference to Malibarat, which could have been Kulam Male. S.D. Goitein, *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders*, Princeton, 1972, p. 64. For identification of Malibarat see Pius Malekandathil, *The Germans, the Portuguese and India*, M nster, 1999, p. 4.
46. B.J. Perera, "The Foreign Trade and Commerce of Ancient Ceylon", in *Ceylon Historical Journal*, I, 1951, pp. 110-13.
47. C.P.T.Winckworth, "A New Inter-

- pretation of the Pahlavi Cross-Inscription of Southern India”, in T.K. Joseph, (ed.), *Kerala Society Papers*, Vol. 1 & 2, pp. 159-64; 267-69.
48. Gerd Gropp, “Die Pahlavi-Inschrift auf dem Thomaskreuz in Madras”, in *Archaeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran*, Neue Folge Band 3, 1970, pp. 267-71.
 49. Gerd Gropp, “Christian Maritime Trade of Sasanian Age in the Persian Gulf”, in *Internationale Archæologie*, 6, 1997, p. 86; Pius Malekandathil, “St. Thomas Christians and the Indian Ocean: 52 AD to 1500 AD”, in *Ephrem's Theological Journal*, October 2001, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 187-88.
 50. C.P.T. Winnckworth has translated the inscription as: “My Lord Christ, have mercy upon Afras son of Chaharbukht, The Syrian, who cut this.” For details see C.P.T. Winnckworth, “A New Interpretation of the Pahlavi Cross-Inscription of Southern India”, in T.K. Joseph, (ed.), *Kerala Society Papers*, Vol. 1 & 2, pp. 161-164. Winnckworth has later revised his reading and interpretation as follows: “My Lord Christ, have mercy upon Afras, son of Chaharbukht, the Syrian, who preserved this (cross).” For details see “Revised Interpretation of the Pahlavi Cross Inscription of Southern India”, in T.K. Joseph, (ed.), *Kerala Society Papers*, Vol. 1 & 2, pp. 267-269; Pius Malekandathil, “Discovery of a Pahlavi-Cross from Goa: A New Evidence for Pre-Portuguese Christian Settlement in Konkan, in *Christian Oriente*, 2002, pp. 140-142.
 51. These crosses are considered to be copies of the Mylapore cross on the basis of the fact that all these crosses carry the same Pahlavi inscription as that of Mylapore and the churches where these crosses are found were built at a later period after 8/9th centuries (except Muttuchira). See also Gerd Gropp, “Die Pahlavi-Inschrift”, p. 267.
 53. For more details about the cross discovered from Goa see Pius Malekandathil, “Christianity came before the Portuguese to Goa”, in *Navahind Times* (Panorama), Panjim, May 13, 2001, p.1. The same article in its entirety or in parts was published in different national dailies like *Indian Express*, *Times of India* and *The Asian Age* under different titles. This cross has Pahlavi inscription in the form of an arch and a Portuguese inscription at the base, which runs as follows: *A de S. (São) Tome (Ö.) de Ilez (ilhas?) 642 (1642)*. The Portuguese inscription which would mean “that which belongs to the St. Thomas Christians of the islands (Tiswadi) 1642”, must have been added later to identify this cross and show its difference from the rest of crosses, a step which was necessary in the seventeenth century Goa. It seems that this cross of Goa must have taken origin at a time, when Konkan and Deccan had hectic maritime trade with Sassanid Persia, probably during the time of the Chalukyan king Pulikesin II (610-642 AD) of Deccan, who sent commercial envoys to the Sassanid court. It is said that a painting in Cave I at Ajanta represents a return embassy from Persia to the Chalukyan court. Muhammad ibn Jarir Tabari, op.cit., p.1052; G. Yazdani and L. Binyon, *Ajanta, The Colour and Monochrome Reproductions of the Ajanta Frescoes based on Photography*, I, London, 1930-55, pl. XXXVIII.
 53. O. Braun, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium: Scriptorum Syri*, II, p.252; B.E. Colles, “Persian Merchants and Missionaries”, pp. 20-21.
 54. See the copy of the copper plates given in T.A. Gopinatha Rao, *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. II, Madras, 1916, pp.66-86. For a study on the Pahlavi signatures of the Quilon copper plates see, C.P.T. Winnckworth, “Notes on the Pahlavi Signatures to the Quilon Copper Plates”, in T.K. Joseph, *Kerala Society Papers*, pp. 320-323.
 55. For details on these Christian merchant guilds see Meera Abraham, *Two Medieval Merchant Guilds of South India*, New Delhi, 1988. Only *Manigramam* and *Anjvannam* had the right to impose customs in the town of Quilon. For details of the text of the Sthanu Ravi Varma copper plate, which indicates a close connection between the Christian community of Quilon and the *Manigramam* guild, see T.A. Gopinatha Rao, *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. 2, Madras, 1916, pp. 66-86; T.K. Joseph, “The Malabar Christian Copper-Plates”, in *Kerala Society Papers*, Vol. 1, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997, pp. 201-204.
 56. Some of these inland settlements are the following: Pallipuram (3rd century), Ambazhakad (300 AD), Aruvithara (301 AD), Kuravilangadu (335 AD), North Pudukkad (400 AD), Puthenchira (400 AD), Akaparambu (450 AD), Angamali (450 AD), Mattam (5th century), Chambakulam (5th century), Muttuchia (5th century), Kaduthuruthy (500 AD), Enammavu (500 AD), Mylakombu (6th century), Udayamperur (510 AD), Edappally (593 AD), Chalakudy (600 AD), Kolencherry (7th century), Moozhikulam (7th century), Kayamkulam (824 AD), Athirampuzha (835 AD), Kottayam (9th century). These are the important churches, which were built in the period between third and the ninth centuries, as a result of these developments. Interestingly the region, in which these settlements are distributed, formed the best land for spice-cultivation in Central Kerala. This reiterates the fact that the movement of the St. Thomas Christians to these places was not accidental or casual, but was a part of the move to participate in the expanding pepper-cultivation, accelerated by the demand from the Mediterranean world and Persian Gulf. Most of these places were located on the banks of rivers or the channels of backwaters, which ensured regular irrigation and easy transportation. Coincidentally the migration of Christians from the Coromandel coast, which is attributed to religious persecution there, also augmented the size of Christian settlements in Malabar region. While some of them settled down on the coast of Cape Comorin (exactly Tiruvancode) to take advantage of the prospects of trade (thrown open by the Sassanid commerce and the revival of Roman commerce from the time of Constantine onwards), some others seem to have moved to the expanding agricultural zone to produce spices to meet the external demands from the west. For details see Pius Malekandathil, “The Sassanids and the Maritime Trade of India during the Early Medieval Period”, in *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, (63rd Session) Amritsar, 2002, pp. 156-173.
 57. George F.Hourani, op.cit., pp. 70-74.
 58. George F.Hourani, op.cit., pp. 60-80.
 59. These are the wide variety of papers obtained from the Geniza of Cairo. Geniza is a place where discarded writings on which the name of God was written and deposited in order to preserve them from desecration. Most of the papers of the Cairo Geniza were

- preserved in a room adjacent to the synagogue. See for details, S.D. Goitein, *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders*, Princeton, 1973, p. 3; S.D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 5 volumes, Berkeley, 1967-98; S.D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs: Their Contacts through the Ages*, New York, 1964.
60. Pius Malekandathil, "The Jews of Cochin and the Portuguese (1498-1663)", in *The Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, (62nd Session, Bhopal, 2001), 2002, pp. 248-280; See also Andre Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, pp. 86-91.
 61. S.D. Goitein, *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders*, pp. 175-229.
 62. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
 63. *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64; For the identification of these place names see also Pius Malekandathil, *The Germans, the Portuguese and India*, pp. 3-4.
 64. S.D. Goitein, "Portrait of a Medieval India Trader: Three Letters from the Cairo Geniza", in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, XLVIII, 1987, p. 457.
 65. S.D. Goitein, "Portrait of a Medieval India Trader", pp. 459-460; Ranabir Chakravarti, "Chandrapura/Sindabur and Gopakapattana: Two Ports on the West Coast of India (1000-1300 AD)", in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* (Diamond Jubilee (60th) Session, Calicut, 1999), Aligarh, 2000, pp. 156-157. In fact Fakanur (or Baknor of Ibn Batuta), which is often identified as Barakur, is located not in Malabar but in South Canara. It is Bhatkal.
 66. For details see Pius Malekandathil, *The Germans, the Portuguese and India*, p. 15; The original Catalan Map of 1375 AD from the Library of king Charles V of France is now kept in the Mazarine Gallery of the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris (Spanish Mss. no. 30). See also Henri Cordier, *L'Extreme-Orient dans l'Atlas Catalan de Charles V, roi de France*, Paris, 1894.
 67. W.W. Rockhill, "Notes on the Relations and Trade of China with the Eastern Archipelago and the Coast of the Indian Ocean during the Fifteenth Century", *T'oung Pao*, Vol. 15, Leiden, 1914, pp. 430-38.
 68. *Ibid.*, pp. 438.
 69. Pius Malekandathil, "St. Thomas Christians and the Indian Ocean", pp. 197-200; Andre Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of Indo-Islamic World*, Vol. 1, New Delhi, 1999, p. 71.
 70. The port-hierarchy which appeared in Malabar had the following characteristic feature: there would be a central pivotal port supported and reinforced by satellite ports and subordinate nodal exchange centres. In ancient period Muziris was the principal port fed by a chain of satellite ports; however by 8th /9th centuries Muziris was replaced by Quilon and later by Calicut by mid fourteenth century.
 71. Ashin Das Gupta, *Malabar in Asian Trade: 1740-1800*, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 5,19; B.J. Schrieke, *Indonesian Sociological Studies*, Vol. 1, The Hague, 1955, pp. 7ff; Pius Malekandathil, *The Germans, the Portuguese and India*, Munster, 1999, p. 9; For details about the Al-Karimi merchants see Eliyahu Ashtor, "The Venetian Supremacy in Levantine Trade: Monopoly of Pre-colonialism", in *Journal of European Economic History of the Orient*, Vol. 1, Leiden, 1958, p. 165; Pius Malekandathil, "From Merchant Capitalists to Corsairs: The Role of Muslim Merchants in Portuguese Commercial Expansion" in *Portuguese Studies Review* (Canada), No. 2, November, 2004.
 72. For details for the shifting of Nediyrappu Swarupam see K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *The Zamorins of Calicut*, Calicut, 1938, pp.1-2; Pius Malekandathil, "Merchants, Markets and Commodities: Some Aspects of Portuguese Trade with Malabar", in *Portuguese, the Indian Ocean and European Bridgeheads; Festschrift in Honour of Prof. K.S. Mathew*, (ed.), Pius Malekandathil and Jamal Mohammed, Funda AGO Oriente, Lisboa, pp. 248-252.
 73. Pius Malekandathil, *Portuguese Cochin and the Maritime trade of India, 1500-1663*, (A Volume in the South Asian Study Series of Heidelberg University, Germany, No. 39), New Delhi, 2001, p. 29; W.W. Hunter, *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. IV, London, 1885, p.11; C. Achyuta Menon, *The Cochin State Manual*, Ernakulam, 1911, p. 2.
 74. A Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, Kottayam, 1967, pp. 173-4; Ramesan Thampuran, *Gosri Rajavamsavali: Geneology of Cochin Royal Family*, Cochin, 1989, p. 6.
 75. For details about Cheng Ho's voyages see W.W. Rockhill, "Notes on the Relations and Trade of China with the Eastern Archipelago and the Coast of the Indian Ocean during the Fifteenth Century", *T'oung Pao*, Vol. XVI, Leiden, 1915, pp. 450-51.
 76. The place name Saudi in Cochin is indicative of Arab contacts with this port. Some local historians view that this place located in the south end of Fort Cochin got its name from Saudi Arabia. K.L. Bernard, *History of Fort Cochin*, Cochin, 1991, p. 2.
 77. For detailed discussion see Genevieve Bouchon, *Cannanore's Response to Portuguese Expansion, 1507-1528*, Delhi, 1988; Pius Malekandathil, "The Maritime Trade of Cannanore and the Global Commercial Revolution in the 16th and the 17th Centuries", in *Cannanore in the Maritime History of India*, (ed.) M.O. Koshy, Kannur University, 2003, pp. 43-57.
 78. Earlier the rulers of Desinganadu (Quilon) were very powerful. Vira Ravi Varma Sangrama Dhira of Desinganadu defeated the Pandyas and the Cholas between 1299 and 1312 and was crowned at Kanchi. K. M. Panikkar, *A History of Kerala, 1498-1801*, Annamalinagar, 1960, p. 7.
 79. Pius Malekandathil, "The Jews of Cochin and the Portuguese, 1498-1663", in the *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, 61st Session, Calcutta, 2002, p. 240.
 80. Ma Huan, *Ying Yai Sheng lan 12, "Kochih"*, as translated by W.W. Rockhill, "Notes on the Relations and Trade of China with the Eastern Archipelago and the Coast of the Indian Ocean during the Fifteenth Century", *T'oung Pao*, Vol. 16, Leiden, 1915, pp. 450-1
 81. Pius Malekandathil, *Portuguese Cochin and the Maritime Trade of India*, pp. 32-33.
 82. O.K. Nambiar, *The Kunjalis, Admirals of Calicut*, Delhi, 1963, p. 40; K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*, Vol. I, p. 167.
 83. Genevieve Bouchon, "Les Musulmans du Kerala a L'Epoque de La Decouverte Portugaise", in *Mare Luso-Indicum*, tom.II, Paris, 1973, pp. 1-54; Genevieve Bouchon, "Calicut at the Turn of the Sixteenth Century" in *The Asian Seas 1500-1800: Local Societies, European Expansion and the Portuguese*, *Revista de Cultura*, Vol. 1, anoV, 1991, p. 42; W.J. Fischel, "The Spice Trade in Mamluk Egypt" in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 1, Leiden,

- 1958, pp. 162-3; S.D.Goitein, "New Light on the Beginnings of the Karim Merchants", in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 1, Leiden, 1958, p. 181; Pius Malekandathil, "From Merchant Capitalists to Corsairs: The Role of Muslim Merchants in the Maritime Trade of the Portuguese", A paper presented at the International Seminar on *The Maritime Activities in India with Special Reference to the Portuguese:1500-1800*, organized by the Department of History, Goa University, 25-28 April, 2001, pp. 2-6.
84. For details see Gaspar Correia, *Lendas da India*, tom., I, Lisboa, 1921, pp. 428-30; tom.II, p. 722; Genevieve Bouchon, "Les Musulmans du Kerala a 'L'Epoque de la Decouverte Portugaise", in *Mare Luso-Indicum*, II, Paris, 1973, pp. 52-54; Jorge Manuel Flores, "The Straits of Ceylon and the Maritime Trade in Early Sixteenth Century India: Commodities, Merchants and Trading Networks", in *Moyen Orient and Ocean Indien*, XVIe - XIXe s, Vol. 7, Paris, 1990, pp. 30-6.
85. Some clues to the tonnage capacity of the Marakkar vessels of the pre-Portuguese period were given by JoGo de Barros. One single ship of Cherina Marakkar of Cochin, which was captured by Pedro Alvarez Cabral in 1500 AD at Calicut on the Zamorin's bid, was as large as to carry seven elephants. It was moving towards Cambay. JoGo de Barros, *Asia. Dos feitos que os Portuguezes fizeram no Descobrimento e conquista dos mares do Oriente, Decadas II*, Lisboa, 1973, liv.V, cap.VI, p. 140. In 1500 AD two merchants of the city of Cochin alone had as many as fifty ships. "Letter from King Mauel to Ferdinand and Isabella", in William Brooks Greenlee (ed. and trans.), *The Voyage of Pedro Alvarez Cabral to Brazil and India*, Nendeln, 1967, p. 49. Mamale Marakkar and Cherina Marakkar used to bring cinnamon from Ceylon, cloves and mace from Malacca and supply to the Portuguese in Cochin. Raymundo Antonio de BulhGo Pato, *Cartas de Affonso de Albuquerque seguidas de documentos que as elucidam*, tom. III, Lisboa, 1884, p. 401.
86. S.D. Goitein, *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders*, Princeton, 1972, pp. 70, 118, 190, 214-6, 262. For more details see pp. 175-229.
87. Visscher says that the process of migration of white Jews from Cranganore to Cochin began in 1471 AD. However it was only by 1521-1523 AD that these white Jews finally shifted their residence completely to Cochin. See Letters of Visscher from Kerala, in K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*, Vol. 2, New Delhi, 1982, pp. 51, 517.
88. Pius Malekandathil, *The Jews of Cochin and the Portuguese : 1498-1663*, p. 241.
89. "Reisebericht des Franciscus Dalbuquerque vom 27. December, 1503", in B. Greiff, *Tagebuch des Lucas Rem aus den Jahren 1494-1541: Ein Beitrag zur Handelsgeschichte der Stadt Augsburg*, Augsburg, 1861, p.146; Genevieve Bouchon, "Calicut at the Turn of the Sixteenth Century", in *The Asian Seas 1500-1800:Local Societies, European Expansions and the Portuguese*, *Revista de Cultura*, Vol. 2, ano V, 1991 p. 44.

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