

That Cross that Bends: Community and Caste among Syrian Christians of Kerala

*A thesis submitted to the University of Hyderabad
in partial fulfilment for the award of*

**Doctor of Philosophy
Comparative Literature**

**Bivitha Easo
12HCPH02**



**Centre for Comparative Literature
School of Humanities
University of Hyderabad
Hyderabad – 500046
Telangana, India**

October 2023



**Centre for Comparative Literature
University of Hyderabad**

Declaration

I, Bivitha Easo, hereby declare that this thesis titled “That Cross that Bends: Community and Caste among Syrian Christians of Kerala” submitted to the University of Hyderabad in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature is a record of the work done by me under the guidance and supervision of Prof MT Ansari, Centre for Comparative Literature, School of Humanities, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad. It is a bonafide research work which is also free from plagiarism. I also declare that the dissertation, in part or in full, has not been submitted previously for the award of any degree or diploma in this or any other University or Institution to the best of my knowledge. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodhganga/INFLIBNET.

A report on the plagiarism statistics from the University Librarian is enclosed.

Hyderabad
16 October 2023

Bivitha

Bivitha Easo
(12HCPH02)



**Centre for Comparative Literature
University of Hyderabad**

Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis titled “That Cross that Bends: Community and Caste among Syrian Christians of Kerala” submitted by Bivitha Easo bearing the Reg No 12HCPH02, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature, is a bonafide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance. The thesis is free from plagiarism and has not been submitted in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma to the best of my knowledge.

Parts related to this thesis have been:

A. Presented in the following conferences:

1. Easo, Bivitha. “Understanding Caste-Community Formation: A Study of Syrian Christians in Kerala.” University of Heidelberg, Santander School on “What’s Caesar’s, What is God’s? A Transcultural Perspective on the Legitimation of the Political and Religious Spheres.” Kyoto, Japan. 9-18 March 2015.
2. Easo, Bivitha. “Origin/Beginning Narratives as a Site of Enquiry: A Study of Syrian Christians in Kerala, India.” Oxford Symposia, “Oxford Symposium on Religious Studies.” Oxford, UK. 15-17 March 2017.
3. Easo, Bivitha. “Translated Christianities: ‘Eastern’ Christian Con-texts.” University of Toronto, Connaught Global Challenge Initiative on “Exploring Sovereignty and Charisma: Engagements, Contestations and Fabulations from the Global South.” Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram. 16-18 December 2019.

B. Published in the following:

1. Easo, Bivitha and Ambili Anna Markose. “‘Worship Towards the East’: Texts and Transitions of Christianity in Kerala.” *Nidan: International Journal for Indian Studies* 4(1). July 2019. 19-38.

2. Easo, Bivitha. "Kunjadukale Ethile Ethile: Chila Syrian Christian Sangharshangal" [Where to, Flock of Sheep? Certain Syrian Christian Contestations]. *Utharakalam*. 17 January 2022. 1-19.
3. Easo, Bivitha. "Christian Translations/Translated Christianities: Syrian Christian Con-texts in South India." *Global Religious Translation in the Early Modern Period*. Ed Lucinda Martin. Forthcoming.

Further, the student has passed the following courses towards the fulfilment of coursework requirements for the doctoral degree:

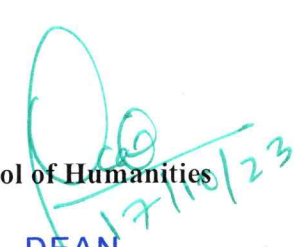
Course Code	Name of the Course	Credits	Pass/Fail
CL 801	Regional/Vernacular Modernities	2	Pass
CL 802	Representation and Discourse	2	Pass
CL 803	Counter Canonical Writing	2	Pass
CL 804	Comparative Literature & Research Methodology	2	Pass
CL 826	Reading Religion in South Asia	4	Pass
CL 827	Indian Folk Narratives	4	Pass


Supervisor

PROF. M.T. ANSARI
Centre For Comparative Literature
School of Humanities, University of Hyderabad
Gachibowli, Hyderabad-500 046. T.S. India.


Head of the Department

DR. J. BHEEMAIYAH
PROFESSOR & HEAD
CENTRE FOR COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES, UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD
GACHIBOWLI, HYDERABAD-500 046. T.S. INDIA.


Dean, School of Humanities

DEAN
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES
UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD
HYDERABAD-500 046. T.S. INDIA

Contents

Acknowledgements	vi
Introduction	1
Chapter One Christian Thinking, Thinking Christian	23
Chapter Two Criss-crossing the Malankara Nasrani Jati	69
Chapter Three Suriyani Christiani and Community/Caste Configurations	127
Chapter Four God between Rajah and Resident: Syrian Christian Salvations	176
Conclusion	225
Works Consulted	232
Presentation-Publication Proof	250
Originality Report (Similarity Index)	259

Acknowledgements

My research supervisor always makes it a point to remind his students, and particularly me, that work is not a miraculous revelation that happens in isolation, but a process that requires to risk oneself in conversations, critiques, and even contestations. Work itself is thus community and vice versa. And I have been fortunate enough to have such a dynamic commune that made this work happen with their critical interventions and unconditional care. All I can acknowledge is that those whom I remember here are only the few among the many more who have quietly left their traces on me as well as this work.

First and foremost is Prof MT Ansari, who is always working to worry and worrying to work, but never weary of either. A teacher who loves to learn together rather than ‘teach’ (curiouser and curiouser as he says!); guide who guides us to guide ourselves; mentor who taught life is work and work is political; and a dear friend forever. Many a times, he had to throw me into the water, risking me drown, so that I learn to swim, and yet pulling me out, right when I sink (of course I drown again!). Without any exaggeration, anything good in this work is because of him, and everything erroneous is despite him. Asma and Nashita have been incredibly patient, always warm and engaging, as Ansari’s home becomes a rendezvous point for all his students, and particularly me, round the clock, hosting spirited discussions.

Prof Deepa Sreenivas and Dr Jolly Puthussery, my doctoral committee members, have sustained their interest in me and the work from the beginning till the end, and critically intervened as the work twisted and turned over the time.

Interactions with late Prof Scaria Zacharia, Prof TM Yesudasan, Prof Sanal Mohan, Prof Istvan Perczel and Dr VJ Varghese at various stages of work have been immensely insightful in shaping the thesis.

Discussions with late Prof MSS Pandian, Prof Gauri Viswanath, Prof MV Narayanan, Prof Udaya Kumar and Prof EV Ramakrishnan, as they visited CCL for academic interactions, during the initial phases of the work, have really helped in getting clarity during confusion.

Prof Sowmya Dechamma has been an organic teacher and a dear friend all throughout, who has constantly taken interest in me, personally and academically. Late Prof Tutun Mukherjee and Prof J Bheemaiah, faculty at the CCL, have always tried to be encouraging mentors. Guest faculty at CCL, especially Manohar and Swathy when they were around, were very encouraging and supportive.

Rajani, Sreesailam and Balaraju have been the most proactive office staff, always one step ahead of what needs to be done. I would also like to acknowledge the staff at the ladies’ hostel, our hostel mess and the university for ensuring a comfortable stay in the campus. Staff at IGM library, UoH and the reading room always guaranteed the best working space.

As part of the field work, I have visited the Kerala State Archives, Trivandrum; KCHR library, Trivandrum; *Malayala Manorama* archives, Kottayam; *Deepika* archives, Kottayam; Catholic Archdiocese archives at Pala, Changanassery and Thalassery; St

Thomas Apostolic Seminary library, Vadavathoor; The Orthodox Theological Seminary library and archives, Kottayam; St Kuriakose Elias Chavara Archives and Research Centre, Kottayam; The Pastoral Orientation Centre, Kochi; and St Joseph Pontifical Seminary, Mangalapuzha. In addition, I was also able to briefly refer at The British Library, the Bodleian library and the SOAS library during a conference. I would like to thank all concerned staff who allowed entry, ensured access to materials, guided through field work and often aired new perspectives.

Workshop “Exploring Sovereignty and Charisma” organized at the Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum and interactions with various scholars, particularly Prof Filippo Osella, Prof Valentino Napolitano and Prof Simon Coleman gave a much-needed push towards a crucial turning point, during the writing phase. I would also like to acknowledge “Oxford Symposium on Religious Studies” and Santander School on “What is Caesar’s, What is God’s?” organized by Heidelberg University for generating important critical perspectives. Dr Deepra Dandekar, the issue editor of *Christianity in India* for *Nidan* and Dr Lucinda Martin, the editor of *Global Religious Translation* volume (forthcoming) have engaged with parts of this thesis and raised pertinent questions.

While the thesis has accumulated a lot of academic debts, the UGC fellowship, the Sahapedia Fellowship, Guest Faculty position at St Francis College, Hyderabad and Editorship for projects with OUP India and UK ensured that I do not accumulate financial debt! I thank all my colleagues for their support and the great working environment and experience.

CCL/UoH has been the heart and soul of this study. I must acknowledge that the journey from where I started to wherever I am now, is the result of the remarkable works that have been happening around, asking uncomfortable questions, posing unresolvable problems, to themselves as well as to others. Ambili and Muhammed [Afzal by choice!] have become my first readers, critics and confidants; I have kept them on their toes for the last couple of months with impossible deadlines to read and comment on everything I write! Muhammed patiently edited the whole thesis at the eleventh hour. Lenny (Dickens) and Manju have inspired with their (academic) labour of love, engaged with their critical inputs and cared with their affective camaraderie. Lenny is always there for me, readily available for an involved conversation and discussion about anything. Shan, as he engages with my whatever work, and even more as I read his reflective work, always pushes towards the unthinkable. Discussions with Thahir have provocatively raised altogether different perspectives. Engaging with Arun and Simi and their passionate works reminded me again of the academic rigour that I tend to forget. Conversations and camaraderie with Shyma, Vellaisamy, Elwin, Bipin, Zamir, Om, Bashir, Hemraj, Zeba, Saranya and Jomina, and more importantly their works, compelled to reflect on my own work in a comparative perspective, befitting our discipline. Indeed, thanks are due to Ansari, for always finding ways to literally put his otherwise different generational students in a room, often his own house, or even virtually, and making our works talk to each other. The result is a vibrant academic commune that one can always count on for honest critique. I also want to thank all my CCL/HCU colleagues and friends, naming whom would require pages.

Despite being a small PhD batch, Jaleel, Sayantan and Siddarth, my classmates and friends, ensured dynamic classroom discussions. Babu Shankar has been a concerned and considerate friend, motivating with his confidence in me, even when I had none. Pragma has always made it a point to light up everyone around with her undying spirit.

It has been a long journey, but never a lone one, and quite a lot of people, apart from Hyderabad city and UoH campus, have grown and continue to grow on me effortlessly and unconditionally. Hyderabad life, or rather life itself, would not have been the same without Jawhar, Themeem, Jaleel, Rajesh, Ajith, Shamseer, Shefeeque, Shinod, Anish, (if I may add, NRS hostel!), Priya, Levin, Elwin, Ann, Deepa, Subha (and room#102, LH-3 that has seen the unseeable and heard the unhearable!), their passion for work and life. Jawhar, my partner in all crimes with his cinematic drive, along with Levin, my fellow traveller on several counts, and Deepa, have gifted some of the most memorable journeys of my life. Jaleel has become my dearest friend for a lifetime; Themeem, my go-to person; Rajesh, our ‘big daddy’ [:)]; Priya, the permanent pain in my neck (!) and the pole on which I lean. Love to Ann, for being a cool friend, and Neethu, for being there when needed. And I just cannot remember a time without Elwin trying to keep my craziness and laziness in check with her alacrity. Shihab, Priyanka, Ali, Anna, Amal, Merlin, Anila, Treesa, Steffy, Bestin, Fazil and Jasna were the cherries on the cake. Shafla put a roof over my head at a critical time in campus. Shinaj, out of nowhere, opened a whole house at my most vulnerable time and has ever since become a part apart. And if not for Ringu, the last couple of years outside the campus would have been quite lonesome. Their care for me has been despite me, and indeed gave intimate lessons on friendship as community, thriving on an openness that risks exposure to each other.

Suvi has been the one constant in my life, no matter what, for as long as I can remember. Christy has miraculously tolerated me despite my topsy-turvy rides in the common interests that glued our friendship. Veena, Tina, Angella, Yasar, Aswin, Nidhya, Manna, Neetu, Nithin, Nikhil and Lithin are part of my oldest memories and hopefully will be there among the last ones as well. Janu, Sane, Manoj and their families, their camaraderie, the many all-nighters that we pulled with Ansari, with never-ending conversations and spirited music, and the trips together, have made all the difference in the last few years.

And finally, the people who do the thankless job of being the last ones standing, even after everyone and everything is over and out. Appa, Mommy and Bivin have surprised me with their patience, as I played outside all their handbooks, crossing their newly drawn boundaries every time. They let me go and still hold me close, despite me making it impossible. Their continuing trust in my choices, and chances, even when they disagree, is simply unfathomable. Over the years Minu has become a sister I never had. Omana Aunty has always loved me unconditionally. Appachan and Ammachi were irreplaceable presence, a loss that has left a permanent vacuum. And I am fortunate to have an enviously supportive closely-knit extended family of aunts and uncles, a dozen cousins, their equally amazing partners, and an ever-growing future generation. Last but never-ever the least, Ryan and Reuben made me their cool aunt and have become my ultimate happy tears.

Introduction

On 3 January 1653, a large majority of Christians in Malankara¹ gathered at Mattancherry, a part of the present-day Cochin in the South Indian state of Kerala,² held on to ropes tied to a cross, and pledged *sathyam* [truth/oath]³ to reject their enforced affiliation to the Portuguese Roman Catholic Church and filiation to the Pope, imposed half a century ago, through the Synod of Diamper in 1599.⁴ The story goes that the cross leaned towards one side with the force of the collective pulling and the event became known thereafter as *Koonan Kurishu Sathyam* [The Bent Cross Oath].⁵ Though not much is documented about Christianity in Malankara before the fifteenth century, interpretations of scant available references indicate the presence of a community of Christians as early as the third century.⁶ This community, which evolved independently

¹ Malankara was an endonym used by Syrian Christians to refer to the geographical regions that today form parts of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. ‘Malankara’ is etymologically derived from *mal* or *malai* meaning ‘hill’ and *kar* or *karai* meaning ‘shore,’ i.e., ‘the shore of hill’ or ‘the land of mountains near to water bodies (Philip, *Unmasking the Syriacs*, xxxiii). Philip also argues that Malabar is the Arab version of Malankara, derived by substituting *kar* with Arabic *bar* meaning ‘shore.’ Syrian Christians of Kerala even today uses Malankara Nasranis and Malankara Church in order to identify themselves, as will be shown later. Therefore, in this thesis, Malankara refers to the precolonial geography of ‘Kerala,’ in order to differentiate it from the present-day Kerala.

² Kerala was formed only in 1956 by uniting the princely states of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar, according to the States Reorganization Act, which divided the geographical territories of independent India along linguistic lines. Until the eighteenth century, the geographical regions that today constitute Kerala existed as *swaroopams* [principalities]. Venad, Kolathunadu, Nediyruppu and Perumpadappu were the four major *swaroopams*, which later became Thiruvithamkore (Travancore), Kochi (Cochin) and Malabar kingdoms, following various political conquests and territorial reorganizations. Among them, while Travancore and Cochin remained as independent princely states, Malabar became a British Presidency during the colonial period. Therefore, ‘Kerala’ is necessarily punctuated in any historical study, because of its complex geo-political genealogies.

³ Unless otherwise mentioned, all translations are mine, and all emphasis in citations are as in the source material.

⁴ Both events will be analysed in detail in Chapter Two.

⁵ Currently, ‘St George Orthodox Koonan Kurishu Old Syrian Church’ stands at the site of the *sathyam*. The church was consecrated in 1751 and rebuilt in 2017. However, the cross in the site is not the ‘original’ *Koonan Kurishu* and is no more slanting. At the same time, the Catholic Church considers Holy Cross Catholic Chapel in Mattancherry as the site of the event.

⁶ *Acts of Thomas*, Syriac Apocryphal text written in the third century, which describes the mission of Apostle Thomas, refers to him as the Apostle of India (Wright, “The Acts of Judas Thomas”). At the Council of Nicaea in fourth century Mar John signed as “Prelate of Metropolitan of Persia and Greater India.” Cosmas Indicopleustes [Indian Voyager], in his sixth century travelogues about his journeys to

through the migrant Christians who came via trade routes and the local converts, is understood to have been autocephalous, with theological relations with the Persian Church.⁷ Therefore, I take *Koonan Kurishu Sathyam* as a complex historic moment of culmination as well as inauguration, when a ‘vernacular Christian’ community resisted assimilation and declared its sovereignty to rule oneself in spiritual and worldly affairs, in response to the (Portuguese) ‘colonial Christianization,’ that complicated its sacred-secular moorings in the ‘local’ contexts. As will be elaborated in Chapter Two, while ‘colonial Christianity’⁸ tried to translate ‘vernacular Christianities’⁹ into a ‘universal Christianity,’ ‘Christian colonization’¹⁰ wanted to translate entire religiosities into a

Ethiopia, Ceylon and India, write about a church in *Male*, which is today interpreted as a reference to *Nasranis* [Christians] in Malankara/Malabar (*The Christian Topography of Cosmas, an Egyptian Monk*, 119). “Tharisappally Copper Plate Grant” of the ninth century describes a royal grant that accords certain privileges to the church of Tharisa in Quilon (Varier and Veluthatt, *Tharisappally Pattayam*). Of course, ‘India’ in these records is not the present-day India, but scholars have interpreted it as part of the Greater India, a geography that includes many regions in South Asia.

⁷ See, Perczel, “Syriac Christianity in India.”

⁸ In the thesis, ‘colonial Christianity’ broadly refers to the Christianity brought by the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British, in order to differentiate it from the Christianity that already existed in ‘Kerala.’ While I am aware of the problems of such binary compartmentalization, it became unavoidable for delineating the negotiations between the two. Though the Portuguese and the Dutch did not colonize India per se, I use ‘colonial Christianity’ for the same, particularly because their equation with the ‘vernacular Christianity’ was colonial. Starting with the Portuguese, the Christians in the region were considered pagan, who had to be converted into ‘true’ Christianity—Catholicism—and brought under the Pope for a universal Church and Christendom to be established.

⁹ I use ‘vernacular Christianity’ to refer to the Christianity that was practiced in ‘Kerala’ even before the arrival of the Portuguese, that negotiated with various waves of ‘colonial Christianity.’ Here, ‘vernacular Christianity’ is taken neither as an extension of a universal Christianity, nor as its variant, but as its critical ‘other,’ the encounter with which determined the need for European Christianity to universalize itself. Though I played with ‘regional Christianity,’ ‘Christianity in the region,’ ‘local Christianity,’ etc, for the same, all these terms seem to carry a sense of territoriality for Christianity, which is what this thesis tries to critique. ‘Vernacular,’ though a colonial term, etymologically meaning ‘slave language,’ has been turned around by many studies to signify what preceded and proceeded in colonies before and after colonization, and not something shaped by and inferior to the colonial experiences (Aquil and Chatterjee, *History in the Vernacular*). Further, I take ‘vernacular’ as always already cosmopolitan and civilizational (Pollock, “The Cosmopolitan Vernacular”), encounter with which shaped the European enterprises, and not just the other way around. For example, Christianity, like that practiced in Malankara, traces its roots/routes back to a non-European cosmopolis consisting of Persia, Syria, Antioch, Babylon, etc, where Christianity flourished as a critique of ‘Christian West’ and ‘Western Christianity.’

¹⁰ Officially, though colonization is associated with the British, a careful analysis of the Portuguese period would show how European Catholic Christianity tried to define religion and colonize ‘vernacular religiosities’ as early as the sixteenth century, by translating ‘vernacular Christians’ as its ‘internal enemy,’ who had to be converted in an Inquisitorial spirit, as evident from the experiences of Christians in Goa and

‘universal religion.’¹¹ Hence, it is quite possible that the cross itself hunched (‘hunch,’ rather than ‘bend,’ will be the literal translation of *koonu*) for what became of it! Now, whether or not the cross actually bent, it remains as a living memory of bending the metaphorical cross of ‘colonial Christianity’ and/or ‘Christian colonization,’ as well as of the resistance that reclaimed Christianity itself as ‘non-Western.’ Because what Malankara Nasranis/Christians resisted was also the growing ‘native’ perceptions of Christianity as a ‘Western/colonial/foreign’ religion that came from outside. Rather, *sathyam* proposed a renewed understanding of Christianity as that which evolved parallelly across the world through independent missions of Apostles and disciples through different waves of migrations and conversions. Today, these genealogies of Malankara Christianity are solely claimed by the community that has come to be known as Syrian Christians of Kerala, the subject of this study.

Interestingly, after three and a half centuries, a second *Koonan Kurishu Sathyam* was held on 6 October 2019, when thousands of members of the Jacobite Syrian Christian Church of Kerala gathered at the Marthoma Jacobite Syrian Cheriapally [small church], Kothamangalam, Kerala, held on to a cross and took oath to protect their faith, this time in order to protest the final Supreme Court verdict against them, on a hundred years long feud between the Orthodox Syrian Church of Kerala and the Jacobite Syrian Church, by which the Orthodox faction was granted legal rights over the churches and properties of the Jacobite faction.¹² Interestingly, the *koonu* of the cross was genealogically

Kerala, and non-Christians as its ‘external enemy’ who had to be eliminated in a Crusading spirit, as evident from the experiences of Muslims in Kerala.

¹¹ One of the professed interests of the medieval Catholic Church was to establish one ‘true’ Christianity/Church in the Earth and a Christendom, with the Pope as spiritual-temporal Head. Further, this ‘true’ Christianity became the paradigmatic religion that conceptually defined the very fabric of ‘religion’ itself.

¹² Both the Orthodox and the Jacobite factions filed suits against each other for being recognized as the parent Church of Malankara from which the other Church has split. Ultimately, the recognition would grant legal rights over the defeated faction. The feud itself has been quite ‘spectacular’ over the years, with

presupposed in the second instance (as the cross did not really hunch/bend/lean this time) as if to symbolically mark the manifold ways in which the cross continues to bend under/against the neo-colonialism of the ‘secular’ ‘modern’ Indian nation state, which legitimized the supreme judiciary to single handedly decide the future of an entire community. However, upon careful analysis, it becomes evident that the second *Koonan Kurishu Sathyam* is also anti-genealogical, as it makes two drastic departures from the first, in order to address the community’s immediate concerns. Firstly, the second *sathyam* negates ‘the throne of Thomas and its laws’ and asserts Peter as the sole ‘rock upon which the Church is built,’ thereby contradicting Syrian Christian legacy as Marthoma (Saint Thomas) Christians. Further, the first *sathyam* declared the ‘vernacular Christian’ community as autocephalous, whereas the second *sathyam* pledged their unwavering filiation to the Patriarch of Antioch as the supreme Head.¹³ That is, the first *sathyam* tried to attribute a ‘truth value’ to Malankara Christianity as not ‘foreign’ or ‘European,’ but, ‘native’ and ‘vernacular’ with a ‘non-Western cosmopolitanism’ exemplified through its relations with Syriac Christianity, as the oath was taken against the Portuguese Catholic Church that tried to disenfranchise the Christians in the region. Whereas the second *sathyam* tried to pledge af-filiation to ‘the throne of St Peter’ and the jurisprudence of the Church of Antioch, taking it as a more ‘authentic’ Christianity. By doing so, the second *sathyam* claimed trans-regional and extra-judicial status for the Malankara Christian community, in order to invalidate the Orthodox faction’s legitimacy

both factions claiming common churches as their own, trying forceful entries into each other’s churches, refusing to bury each other’s dead in respective cemeteries, leading to the ‘bodies’ being kept in limbo for days, resulting in protests and police interventions. See, Viju Kurien’s “Narrating the Feud: *Sabatarkam* and Church History among Syrian Christians of Kerala” (unpublished doctoral dissertation) for a detailed discussion.

¹³ The second *sathyam* reads thus: “We and our children would hold on to the only true belief system which has the blessing of the throne of Saint Peter in Antioch and has been strengthened through the synods of Nicaea, Ephesus ... till the time there is sun and moon. We would not deviate from the true faith even if that means to sacrifice life for the bond between Antioch and Malankara” (*The Times of India*, “Jacobite Faction Reenacts Historic Coonan Cross Oath,” 7 October 2019).

as ‘original’ Church, and to annul the ‘temporal’ court’s right to intervene in their ‘sacred-secular’ affairs. Therefore, the Supreme Court judgement in favour of the Orthodox faction is of considerable importance as it recognizes the Malankara Church as founded by the Apostle Thomas in CE 52 in Kerala and therefore an ‘Indian’ Church bound by the constitutionalism of the nation state. It gives constitutional validity to the Malankara Metropolitan (Head of the Orthodox Church in Kerala) as “the prime jurisdiction regarding temporal, ecclesiastical and spiritual administration of Malankara Church” and nullifies the power of the Patriarch of Antioch in the Malankara Church as illegal (Arun, “Judgement,” 4), thereby invalidating any trans-territorial affiliations and communitarian jurisprudence.

Nonetheless, notwithstanding the differences, both *sathyams*, that are centuries apart, can be perceived as representative attempts to uphold theo-political sovereignty as immanent to community, at a time when the same was compromised by the state—the first, precolonial and the second, postcolonial. The first *sathyam* was taken against the ‘unholy’ alliance between the colonial and native regimes that co-produced indigenous Christians as outsiders in their own land. The second, against the ‘secular’ nation state, that juridically compromised any external allegiance of ‘Indian Christianity,’ thereby manifesting its archetypal fear of any semblance of a trans-national pan-religiosity. This Christian dilemma of becoming an outsider-insider within the contexts of India and the Syrian Christian differential claims to being more Christian and more (than) ‘native’ in order to navigate their (non)belongingness, by actively re-inheriting an Apostolic and a Brahminic lineage, and the crises ensuing from this ‘excess’ that tries to ‘supplement’ some perceived ‘lack,’ for themselves as well as for others, constitute the problem space of this thesis. “That Cross that Bends” is therefore an attempt to capture the heterogeneous genealogies of cross, caste and community with respect to Christianity, in

the ‘glocal’ contexts, by focusing on the Syrian Christians of Kerala. Here, ‘bend’ represents more a dynamicity of the cross, that is constantly subjected to reinterpretations, than just strategic flexibility.¹⁴ So then, who are these Syrian Christians?

According to 2011 census, 2% of India’s population are Christians, of which 22% belongs to Kerala. They form around 18% of Kerala’s population, half of whom identify themselves as Syrian Christians (Census of India 2011, “Kerala Hindu Muslim Population). The *Wikipedia* entry for Syrian Christians reads as “The Saint Thomas Christians, also called Syrian Christians of India, Marthoma Suriyani Nasrani, Malankara Nasrani, or Nasrani Mappila, are an ethno-religious community of Indian Christians in the state of Kerala (Malabar region), who, for the most part, employ the Eastern and Western liturgical rites of Syriac Christianity. They trace their origins to the evangelistic activity of Thomas the Apostle in the 1st century” (“Saint Thomas Christians”). As ‘unacademic’ as *Wikipedia* is, the reason for reproducing this quotation is to foreground the common-sensical perception of Syrian Christians, the particular focus of this study.¹⁵ However,

¹⁴ Not to mention that there is no universal cross for Christianity. For instance, Malankara Christians used what is known as the Persian Cross, which is quite different from the cross used by other denominations. “These are granite crosses in bas-relief, with four equal branches, placed on a three-graded pediment, with the representation of the two wings placed on the crown of the Sasanian king, so that the cross occupies the original place of the crescent and the star on the crown. The wings have been stylised so that they resemble floral motifs. On some of the bas-reliefs a dove is descending on the cross, representing the descent of the Holy Spirit at Christ’s baptism, while on other crosses the dove becomes a mere ‘bud’ at the top of the cross. There are nine such crosses extant at the following locations. In Tamil Nadu: Mailapur; in Goa: Pilar; in Sri Lanka: Anuradhapura; in Kerala: Kottayam-Valiyapally—two crosses; Alangad; Muttuchira; Kothanallur; and Kadamattam” (Perczel, “Syriac Christianity in India,” 671).

¹⁵ Interestingly, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*’s entry on ‘Thomas Christians’ do not replicate their substitutability with ‘Syrian Christians,’ as it states that “Thomas Christians, also called St Thomas Christians, Mar Thoma Christians, or Malabar Christians.... Claiming to have been evangelized by St Thomas the Apostle, Thomas Christians ecclesiastically, liturgically, and linguistically represent one of the oldest Christian traditions in the world, particularly in Christianity outside the West” (Frykenberg, “Thomas Christians”).

some of the recent scholarships have called attention to the im-possibility of uncritically collapsing all these terms—Malankara Nasranis, Thomas Christians, Syrian Christians—and the theological, ecclesiastical, philosophical, genealogical and socio-political significations of such a-historical substitution, which pose grave methodological challenges in studying Christianity of Kerala. For instance, Jeevan Philip, in his archaeologic-linguistic study of crosses and inscriptions excavated from parts of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, hypothesizes that ‘Malankara Nasranis’ meaning ‘Christians of Malankara,’ could have been the broader term which referred to diverse Christian communities of ‘Kerala’ in the pre-colonial period, until it was replaced during the colonial period with ‘Thomas Christians’ and later with ‘Syrian Christians’, who began to signify a pure lineage of Brahmin converts of the Apostle Thomas (*Unmasking the Syriacs*, xxxi-xxxiii). Because the second aspect of the Syrian Christian origin narrative is that converts of St Thomas were Namboodiri Brahmins and that they are a community that shares their blood. Philip observes that the nomenclature ‘Malankara Nasrani’ is very much in line with the practice of the early Churches that called new convert communities by region and not by the Apostle who converted them (for example, in the New Testament, Paul addressed his “Letters” to Romans, Galatians, Corinthians and so on). That is, Malankara Nasrani which embodied a dynamic community of indigenous converts and migrant Christians become translated/converted into Syrian Christian that represents an endogamous community of Namboodiri converts by St Thomas.¹⁶ One of

¹⁶ According to a growing DNA based study, 30% of Syrian Christians descend from Syria, Iraq and the Levant regions (J2 group), 25% from Central Asia and Eurasia (R1a group), 20% from Baluchistan, northern Pakistan and Kerala (L group), 10% from South Asia and Central Asia (R2 group), 10% from South India (H group) and 5% from South America, Siberia and South East Asia (Q group) (“FamilyTreeDNA of Syrian Christians,” [FamilyTreeDNA - Syrian Christians of Kerala, India](#)). In a recent archaeological study of cemeteries spread across India, Abraham Benhur argues that the first Christians converted by St Thomas were migrant Jews (*Jutha Bharatham* [Jewish India], 204-205). Based on the currently available historical materials, many historians have already argued that Namboothiri Brahmins have not reached Kerala until the seventh or eighth centuries. All these have also compelled contemporary

the concerns of this thesis is to explore the idea that the substitution of ‘Malankara Nasranis’ (community of all Christians of Malankara) with ‘Thomas Christians’ (community of those Christians who were converted by St Thomas) and later ‘Syrian Christians’ (community of only those who followed Syriac liturgy), in order to signify one of the ‘ancient’ communities of Christians in the world, coincides with the historicization of a common particular ‘origin’ and ancient lineage—Apostolic and Brahminic—for the community, thereby arranging its otherwise dispersed heterogeneous ‘beginnings’ in a linear progressive order, in order to become ‘more Christian’ and ‘more native,’ at a time when ‘vernacular Christians’ were theo-politically threatened by ‘colonial Christianization’ and ‘native Hinduization,’ which rendered them insufficiently Christian and insufficiently ‘native.’ The result of such a metonymic substitution is the conceptual invention of Syrian Christian to whom the two thousand years of Christianity in India is confined, and ‘other’ Christians whose history could only begin from the sixteenth century with colonial missionary Christianity.

Denominationally speaking, the Churches that today self-identify as ‘Syrian Christian’ include the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, the Jacobite Syrian Church, and the Thozhiyur Church or the Malabar Independent Syrian Church all identifying with some form of ‘Oriental Orthodox Christianity’;¹⁷ the Syro-Malabar Church and the Syro-Malankara Church both Catholic in theology; the Chaldean Church which affiliates to the

Church historians to critically engage with the origin narratives of the community. Nonetheless, Christian family histories continue to actively re-invent the ‘pure’ bloodline from the supposed four Brahmin families of Pakalomattom, Shankarapuri, Kalli and Kalliankal that were converted by Thomas in CE 52. The story also talks about *ezharappallikal* [seven and a half churches] established by Thomas at Kottakkavu (today’s Paravur), Malankara (Kodungalloor; according to one interpretation Malankara is a derivative of Maliankara), Palayoor, Kollam, Niranam, Nilackal, Korkkumangalam and Thiruvithamcode, also known as *arapalli* or half-church, apparently because of its small size (“The Seven and a Half Churches”).

¹⁷ Oriental Orthodox Churches, subscribing to the two natures of Christ—Christ is fully divine and fully human—is a conglomeration of Armenian Apostolic Church, the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East, the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church of India, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church, all autocephalous in status but in communion with each other (“Oriental Orthodox Church,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*).

‘Assyrian Church of the East’;¹⁸ the Malankara Marthoma Syrian Church which is Syro-Antiochean in orientation and the St Thomas Evangelical Church that follows ‘Eastern Protestantism.’ Among these, the Syro-Malabar and the Syro-Malankara accept the Pope as their spiritual Head, and the Jacobite recognize the Patriarch of Antioch, whereas all others remain autocephalous with their headquarters and the Heads in Kerala. Apart from these, other Churches in Kerala, like the Church of South India and many Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches have members who identify themselves as Syrian Christians. This is despite the fact that the foundation of all of the above-mentioned Churches can be officially traced to the nineteenth and the twentieth century. To complicate this further, all members of these so-called ‘Syrian Christian’ Churches are not identified as ‘Syrian Christian,’ which is further determined by their individual/familial claim to an ‘Apostolic’ and a ‘Brahminic’ lineage. The sheer multiplicity, and even incompatibility, of their theological, ecclesiastic, liturgic and linguistic affiliations, thus unsettles from within any monolithic understanding of Syrian Christians. The point of telling this rather convoluted story, of who is (not) who and what is (not) what, is to call attention to the amorphous genealogies of this formation called Syrian Christian. However, it is not the intention of this study to do an anthropology of Christianity, let alone of Syrian Christians, in order to delineate the particularities of various Christian communities. Rather, what is attempted is a critique of the paradigmatic image signified by ‘Syrian Christian,’ in the cultural and intellectual common sense of Kerala, as an embodiment of ‘upper caste Christianity’¹⁹

¹⁸ Assyrian Church of the East is an Eastern Christian Church based in Assyria that follows the theology of Syriac Christianity. See, McGuckin, *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodox Christianity* and Lamport, *Encyclopedia of Christianity in the Global South* for a comprehensive documentation of Christianity in ‘non-Western world.’

¹⁹ ‘The upper caste and Syrian Christian’ is now a well-accepted catch phrase in the academic scholarship on caste in Kerala presuming the link between both. However, *and* signifies that Syrian Christians, despite all claims, is still not a part of the ‘upper caste’; and yet they are not apart as well. This (im)possibility of locating Syrian Christians within the caste discourse, as expressed by the *and-ness*, calls for a rigorous unpacking, rather than being taken for granted.

and ‘privileged minority,’²⁰ where both ‘upper casteness’ and ‘privilege’ are taken as pre-given, thereby invalidating its own minor-migrant predicaments. That brings us to the question of the rationale for studying Syrian Christians today.

In 2018 or thereabout, during a protest-discussion gathering in the university, against the rampant attacks on minorities in India, a student started talking, after almost everybody shared their stories. However, she started reluctantly with a rather long confession that she is a Syrian Christian, and that she does not have the right to speak in such a platform because of her community’s casteist and communal histories, and yet she is speaking after being aware of her privileged position. She continued to acknowledge that Syrian Christian community has always been and is still indifferent to national causes. Everyone gathered admired the young student’s self-awareness and nodded in agreement about the quintessential Syrian Christian apathy to anything other than self-interest!²¹ For me, this anecdote of an ‘apologetic Syrian Christian’ struck many chords, personally and academically, as it captured several questions that animated me to undertake this study to begin with: what does the Syrian Christian story tell about the

²⁰ See, Sonja Thomas’ *Privileged Minorities*, where she problematizes the presumed link between numerical subordination and political vulnerability and argues that Syrian Christians constitute “a privileged religious minority community that has routinely invoked secular constitutional protections in India and has thus played an integral role in defining minority rights in the nation-state” (4).

²¹ For instance, the Malayalam cinema has been feeding to/on the quintessential figure of *achayan* (common term of reference for Syrian Christian male) or vice versa—a white clad ultra-masculine hero, who is industrious, frugal and opportunist, who thrives on ancestral wealth, whose social acceptance is based on his *kudumba paramparyam* (family lineage). See, Ambili Markose’s “Performing Religion: Visual Publics and Christianity in Kerala” (unpublished doctoral dissertation) for a detailed analysis. An exception may be John Abraham’s film *Cheriyachante Kroorakrithyangal* [Cruelties of Cheriyaachan], an adaptation of Abraham’s own story “*Cheriyachante Varalchayile Kroorakrithyangal*” [Cruelties of Cheriyaachan during Drought], which captures Cheriyaachan, the Syrian Christian protagonist, as an im-possible hero, descending into a state of ‘paranoia,’ when caught between his own feudal privileges and guilt over peasant atrocities, still unable to take a stand.

entangled nature of religion, caste/race, capital and nation state? How can the discourse of Syrian Christian exceptionalism be understood? Why do Syrian Christians (as represented by the student), even when being part of an anti-majoritarian movement, set oneself apart, with dis-claimers of one's caste? Can Kerala Christianity, with its 'vernacular-cosmopolitan genealogies' of migrations and conversions, be reduced to a caste origin, as projected by/on Syrian Christians? How does this far history of caste privilege explain their near history of minoritarian predicaments? Is it possible for Syrian Christians to imagine 'anti-genealogical futures' for an ethical political present by actively un-inheriting its caste-history,²² and without re-inventing a 'golden' period?

When I started the doctoral research, the idea was to study the recurring Syrian Christian movements in Kerala since the early-twentieth century to the present, which mostly revolved around three issues—the anti-nationalization of education, anti-eviction of migrant Christians and anti-alcohol movement. My intention was to theorize the community formation by critically engaging with a minority community's negotiations with changing regimes—colonial, 'native' and 'modern' nation state. However, while going through the field work materials on movements, and secondary studies on the community, it became increasingly clear that the category of Syrian Christian has become so self-evident that they can only be attacked or supported, without ever having to stop to ask what is it that we are 'for' or 'against.' Therefore, in order to make sense of Syrian Christians today, it became important to critically deconstruct the self-evidentiality or the constitutiveness of the community.²³ This called for a different kind of study, focusing more on genealogies of Syrian Christian, along with their immediate contexts. Therefore,

²² See, Ananda Abeysekara's "Politics of 'Postsecular' Ethics, Futures of Anti-genealogy" in *The Politics of Postsecular Religion* (227-278), which will be discussed in Chapter One.

²³ In *Define and Rule*, Mahmood Mamdani asks, "If you take identities existing in the present period as a given, then generalize it across historical time, how would it then be possible to understand the process of identity formation over time and relate it to the larger process of cultural change, economic development, and political transformation?" (97).

the thesis has two preoccupations. One, to deconstruct the contexts in which many beginnings of ‘vernacular Christianity’ were de-constituted, for a historical Syrian Christianity with a single origin (Apostolic and Brahminic) to be strategically constituted since the eighteenth century (Chapter Two). And two, to critique an already constituted Syrian Christian, as they re-configure community as caste and vice versa during the latter half of the nineteenth century when alienated as a colonial/foreign religion (Chapter Three), and as they co(n)script a nationalist future when caught in the interstices of majoritarian aspirations and minoritarian predicaments through the twentieth century (Chapter Four). Despite my best efforts, if both still stands apart, it by itself is probably reflective of the Syrian Christian impossibility to reconcile the two.

For the purpose of the study, I have divided the thesis into four chapters. The first chapter “Christian Thinking, Thinking Christian” attempts to derive a methodology for the study by engaging with selected scholarship that have critically examined the Christian question, from various vantage points, globally and locally. The title of the chapter is reflective of its attempt to delineate the transition from ‘thinking as a Christian’ to ‘thinking itself becoming Christian,’ and at the same time, critique the universal ‘Christian’ in the ‘Christian thinking,’ by foregrounding ‘vernacular Christian’ intellectual traditions that ‘lacked’ and thereby ‘exceeded’ such universalization. It was Jean-Luc Nancy who called attention to the redundancy of studies on both Christianity and ‘West’/Europe, that begin and end by assuming Christianity as pre-given and self-evident. Nancy proposes ‘deconstruction’ as a methodological approach to study Christianity, so that it can be disassembled, in order to play with everything that was

transcended, which the assembled structure hides. However, following Gil Anidjar, the chapter underscores that deconstructing Christianity is not a means to recover a ‘pure’ and ‘unadulterated’ Christian essence, which, willy-nilly, is exempted from critique, but is precisely to critique Christianity, for its secular-modern-capitalist-nationalist-humanist imperatives that have shaped and continue to shape ‘West’/Europe and its orientalist discourses, and by extension colonial experiences and postcolonial experiments. Further, based on the premise that discourses on Christianity is largely determined by ‘Western Christianity’ in the ‘Christian West,’ the chapter proposes that there is an urgent need to revisit particular manifestations of Christianity, as that which deconstructs and critique its universal valency from within. Because this study stems from the understanding that ‘Christian West’/‘Western Christianity’ is only the territorialization of a particular Christianity in a particular Europe—Latin/Roman Catholicism. I foreground a scholar-bishop-theologian from Kerala, Paulose Gregorios, among others, who developed a ‘vernacular critical approach’ to Christianity and ‘West,’ and endeavoured to recover ‘Eastern’ genealogies of Christianity for Kerala Christians, in order to deconstruct the self-evidentiality of Christianity qua ‘West.’²⁴ However, it is not the intention of this thesis to re-invigorate a golden past or re-imagine an alternative future. Rather, I examine how some Christians, in the geographical region that today constitute the South Indian state of Kerala, critiqued ‘Westernization’ of Christianity at the hands of both Catholic and Protestant European missions by animating their ‘Eastern’ Christian genealogies (who would later paradoxically reterritorialize themselves as Syrian Christians), and at the same time conscripted into the modernist-capitalist-secularist moorings of ‘Western Christianity’ and ‘Christian West,’ in order to co-script a nationalist future to come.

²⁴ ‘Eastern’ Christianity, for Gregorios, as well as for this study, is neither a binary opposite to ‘Western Christianity,’ nor its orientalist counterpart, rather an absolutely deterritorialized Christianity, that refused to be part of a territorialized ‘Western Christendom’/‘Christian West,’ and which has not been further reterritorialized into any other kind of universal Christianity.

Therefore, in the final section of the chapter, I engage with existing discourses on Syrian Christians in Kerala from various vantage points in order to mark my departures in this study. And, caste has been the most important vantage point, from which Syrian Christians have been studied, so much so that, one must go through it in order to go beyond it.

Chapter Two “Criss-crossing the Malankara Nasrani Jati,” is a comparative critical reading of ‘vernacular-cosmopolitan genealogies’ of Malankara Christianity, in order to deconstruct the self-evidentiality of singular Apostolic and Brahminic origin of Syrian Christians, and to re-locate them in their ‘glocal’ con-texts. The chapter takes CE 1498 (Vasco da Gama’s expedition landed in Kappadu, Kerala) as a historic moment that marked the encounter between European (Portuguese to be precise) Catholicism/Catholic Europe and ‘other’ Christianities along with ‘other’ religiosities and territorialities outside Europe.²⁵ It is the encounter with these Christianities (internal enemies of Christendom), and other religiosities (external enemies), as part of the colonial exploration and expansion, that compelled Europe to Christianize religion and religionize Christianity at the same time, which reconfigured the former as not-yet-Christians and not-yet-religions, in need of reformation or conversion, assimilation or annihilation, Inquisition or Crusade, as will be elucidated in the Chapter. Therefore, I read the *Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper* in 1599, which records the Portuguese conversion of all ‘vernacular Christians’ to Roman Catholicism under the Pope and *Tuhfat ul Mujahiddin*, a response to the Portuguese annihilation of Malabar Mappilas, in a comparative framework to analyse this encounter. A reading of *Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper* entails four purposes 1) to re-present the texts and contexts of ‘vernacular Christianity’ in the region

²⁵ Interestingly, Mahmood Mamdani traces 1492, when “Castilian monarchy sought to create homogenous national homeland for Christian Spaniards by ejecting and converting those among them who were strangers to the nation—Moors and Jews” and took over overseas colonies that spearheaded ethnic cleansing, as the founding moment of modern nation state (*Neither Settler nor Native*, 1-5).

before the Synod; 2) to deconstruct the *globalatinized* Christianity in the region after the Synod; 3) to delineate the European Christianity and Christian Europe's desire for an absolute theo-political sovereignty over the world; and 4) to foreground the clash between 're(li)gional' sovereignties like that of pre-colonial Kerala and the absolute sovereignty of the Portuguese/Pope. Such a reading also allows to dispel the chimeras of singular origin among the Malankara Nasranis, by foregrounding the genealogies of their multiple beginnings marked by several waves of migrations and conversions, their trans-regional affiliations and 'Eastern' Christian filiations, which enable to interpret them as a heterogenous community of converts. Further, I read selected colonial treatises between the Portuguese-Dutch-British regimes and Travancore-Cochin kingdoms to elucidate that Christians in the region were automatically placed under direct colonial rule within the 'native' kingdom, following the 'Westernization' of 'vernacular Christianity,' thereby jeopardising their local equations, as they suddenly became non-tax paying subjects who did not come under 'native' jurisprudence. It is against these entangled sacred-secular contexts that I locate the *Koonan Kurishu Sathyam* and *Varthamanapusthakam* as 'vernacular critiques' of a new universal Christianity. *Varthamanapusthakam*, is the travelogue of a journey from Malankara to Vatican from 1778-1785 (thereby reversing/retracing Gama's route) by Paremmakkal Thoma Kathanar, who started the journey with the aim of uniting 'vernacular Christians' under the Papacy, but ended the journey by declaring their difference, autonomy and independence. These resistances of the 'vernacular Christianity' against the Portuguese, the Dutch and later the British Christianities did not just arise from differences in belief systems, but in fact as struggles to reclaim their theological-political autonomy in the region, where sacred and secular were co-constituted. That is to say, the theological was always already political. The chapter argues that, by the nineteenth century, the 'vernacular Christians' found

themselves in the most precarious position, by becoming not Christian enough and ‘native’ enough, as they were caught in the tussle between changing ‘colonial’ and ‘native’ regimes for sovereignty of the region, which called for an emergent political community of Christians that ironically corresponded with the conceptual invention of Syrian Christians with a miraculous Apostolic and Brahminic origin, in order to make them more Christian and more (than) ‘native’ than their oppressors.

Chapter Three, “Suriyani Christiani and Community/Caste Configurations,” critically engages with the constitution of ‘Syrian Christian’ as an ethnic identity for political purposes, towards the end of the nineteenth century, and its implications for the discourses of caste/community in Kerala. Through a reading of *Nasrani Jaathyaikya Sangham*, census reports, *The Travancore Manual*, *Malayala Manorama* and *Deepika* newspapers’ archives, and a comparative reading of three Memorials—“The Malayali Memorial,” “The Counter Malayali Memorial” and “The Ezhava Memorial,” I observe that the Christian conscription to the new symbolic order of Brahminical ascendancy, and their re-constitution as a caste-community exemplified in/through Syrian Christians, at a time when different communities were actively engaged in anti-caste struggles, played a crucial role in legitimizing the Brahmin/‘Hindu’ as the ‘original’ inhabitant and ‘real native’ of the land, in authenticating the verticality of caste structure as ancient, and in secularizing the same, thereby re-configuring caste/community discourses for a modern Travancore. I read the three Memorials in order to examine the modality of the political that emerged among Christians of Travancore, during the latter half of the nineteenth century, in response to the ‘colonial Christianization’ and ‘native Hinduization,’ and the imagined community which they tried to co(n)script, by forging alliances and associations with other caste-communities. Given that Travancore was the locus of Malankara Christians at that time, and since it was one of the earliest provinces to declare itself as a

‘Hindu’ kingdom, even refusing to join the Indian Union until 13 August 1947, Travancore offers a unique problem space within Kerala to explore the emergence and consolidation of ‘Hindu’ in its ‘local’ contexts, outside the national problematics of Hindu/Muslim binary, as it was Christianity that was perceived as a threat within Travancore.²⁶ Therefore, through a reading of census reports and *The Travancore Manual*, the chapter discerns the enumeration of a consolidated ‘Hindu’ in Travancore, as a response to a perceived fear of Christianity, owing to the impending threat of mass conversion by ‘lower caste’ communities, and the potential demographic change. Against this context, the chapter analyses the discovery and translation of “Tharisappally Copper Plate Grant” (arguably CE 849) in the mid-nineteenth century, which is still debated as the sole proof of age-old upper casteness of Syrian Christians. Further, I examine the formation of *Nasrani Jaathyaikya Sangham* [United Christian Community Front] in the latter half of the nineteenth century Travancore, arguably one of the earliest articulations of Christians as a political community against ‘colonial Christian’ and ‘native Hindu’ coercions, as problematically inaugurating a new paradigm of being Christian itself. The political community of Christians imagined by the *Sangham* refused to be-in-common with a large majority of Christians themselves, categorizing them as non-Syrians, (or in other words ‘colonial’ or ‘new’ Christians) in order to immunize a minor group of major Christians (who then became ‘original’ or ‘old’ Christians) from the burdens of both caste and colonizer’s religion, by externalizing both as problems of these ‘other’ Christians.

²⁶ Even though the study is on Syrian Christians of Kerala, it is important to differentially navigate the geopolitical divisions that existed in the precolonial and postcolonial Kerala, without retrospectively recovering an ancient Kerala. The state pre-existed as Travancore-Cochin-Malabar provinces, with Travancore and Cochin remaining as princely states and Malabar as British Presidency, until the formation of united Kerala in 1956, during the linguistic reorganization of states in the independent India. Therefore, taking into account the density of population of Syrian Christians, this chapter focuses on Travancore, even though I discuss Cochin and Malabar contexts for comparative purposes, while dealing with specific texts from the respective regions. This has additionally allowed to examine the ways in which Syrian Christians have shaped the ‘modern’ Travancore public sphere emerging since the end of the nineteenth century, which in turn has arguably affected the futures of Kerala polity itself.

Thus, the new group of ‘old Christians,’ with a retrospectively recovered Brahmin ancestor, becomes the paradigmatic Christian, by which the new group of ‘new Christians,’ particularly those converting from ‘lower castes,’²⁷ much like the ‘conversos,’²⁸ could remain only as Dalits and not become ‘true’ Christian, despite conversion that promised an ‘exit’ from caste. This formation is important as it is this newly imagined Syrian Christian that would present oneself as the ‘legitimate’ representative of political Christianity in Travancore, starting from the end of the nineteenth century, that continues to define the political.

The fourth and the final chapter “God between Rajah and Resident: Syrian Christian Salvations” critically analyses the discourses of democratization and modernization of Kerala in the first half of the twentieth century, through the lens of Syrian Christians, who represent an apparent success story in the said narrative. For the purpose, I specifically examine memoirs of Syrian Christian interventions in the emerging public sphere, contested as it is, of the twentieth century—the Civic Rights League, the Abstention Struggle and the Responsible Government Movement. The chapter progresses through the comparative reading of two memoirs—Mamman Mappila’s *Jeevithasmaranakal* [Reminiscences] and Accamma Cheriyan’s *Jeevitham Oru Samaram* [Life, A Struggle]—and above-mentioned movements of which both were active leaders, by drawing on newspaper reports, as well as records by both the state and the Church, and other memoirs from the period. Written after Indian independence, and therefore looking

²⁷ It is possible to pitch two hypothetical exceptions to this phenomenon. One is an ‘upper caste’ who newly converts to a Syrian Church who may still be immediately accepted as Syrian Christian owing to caste lineage. The second is a ‘lower caste’ who converted a few generations back and managed to become economically and socially affluent over the generations, or to put it simply become ‘modern’ and ‘human,’ whose caste is gradually invisibilized to become Syrian. In fact, one can provocatively argue that most Syrian Christians belong to the second group, who then claim ‘the origin’ through the production of family histories.

²⁸ See, Anidjar, *Blood*, for a similar analysis in the European contexts, which will be discussed in Chapter One.

back at the Travancore political from a united Kerala and a modern nation-state, these memoirs of two minoritarian citizen subjects exhibit an earnest desire to find a place for Travancore and Syrian Christians in the ‘secular nationalist history’ of Kerala state as well as Indian nation. On the one hand, I explore how Accamma Cheriyan becomes prototypical of Syrian Christian refashioning oneself as the ‘secular critic’ in the emerging nation, by externalizing caste as a Hindu problem and communalism as a Muslim problem, thereby immunizing Christianity from addressing both. The chapter examines political Travancore’s transition from anti-caste struggles (Abstention Struggle) to anti-colonial movement (Responsible Government Movement), and Syrian Christian subscription into this emerging new order, as coinciding with the reincarnation of caste-Hindu as secular nationalist, whereby becoming Hindu and becoming secular are co-constituted in the modern nation state. On the other hand, Mamman Mappila’s *Jeevithasmaranakal* is read as the testimony of a Christian capitalist, who formulates capitalizing as the theology of being Christian, and/or Christianity as the theology of capitalizing, and this Christian modality as the universal philosophy of economy for a modern nation. His-story almost presents itself as a short history of the political economy of (Syrian) Christians as well as Travancore, almost like a synecdoche. Therefore, taking Mamman Mappila as prototypical of ‘Nasrani Mappilas,’ as Syrian Christians are addressed in Travancore, I examine the Christian ethics embedded in the new capitalist spirit, and the universalization of this Christian/capitalist ethics in Travancore. What emerges is Mappila’s ‘genuine’ faith in the revolutionary capacity of circulating capital, in abstracting a ‘human’ that can transcend the caste-communitarian quandaries. However, I continue to show that despite Syrian Christian collective-fashioning of themselves as the Hinduized Christians (or vice versa?) and modernist-capitalist ‘human,’ by affecting as well as affected by the contextual particularities of the nineteenth-

twentieth century Travancore, in order to be conscripted into the secular/‘Hindu’ nation-in the-making, they were recovered as an ‘outsider’ and a ‘communal minority’ every time they exceeded their ascribed role. Thus, Syrian Christians occupy and offer a unique problem space to critique the entrenched contradictions and the impossibilities of secular democracy. On the one hand, it shows the contradiction internal to any kind of universality—modernity or democracy, subjecthood or citizenship—that pushes communities to precarious positions, as a result of which they can only belong by sublating their anthropological differences to spheres of particularity that subscribes to a universal logic, in order to become ‘secular,’ ‘modern,’ ‘human,’ ‘national’ and so on. On the other hand, it shows the (im)possibility of this sublation that always produces residues of differences with the majoritarian subject, which alienates more and more communities into the plane of non-belongingness. At the same time this im-possibility does not exonerate the subject from one’s ethical-political responsibility in the continuing conscription of the conditions of her conscription, which can only be critiqued by engaging with her agency/capacity to act.

What makes each archive a deconstructionist reading of another is its preoccupation with “the work, the before-work and the outside-the-work,” observes Jacques Derrida in *Geneses, Genealogies, Genres, and Genius: The Secrets of the Archive* (11). Derrida seems to be suggesting the impossibilities of a pre-given and already available archive, and that each archive is unique, newly imagined and always political. This work therefore tries to imagine an archive of Syrian Christians, which cuts across disciplinary boundaries as well as temporal and spatial boundedness, which blurs the

oblique between sacred and secular or political and theological, in order to reflect on their own entangled genealogies. In fact, Syriac Christianity offers a different entry point to study Christianity in colonies, not as a byproduct of colonialism and European ‘civilizational’ missions, but as its before-work and outside-work. That is to reconceive Christianity not as a ‘religion’ originated in Europe and spread to the rest of the world, but as having parallel beginnings across the world, encounter with which also shaped ‘Western Christianity’/‘Christian West’ itself. It is this encounter that is mapped through the comparative reading of Nancy, Anidjar, Gregorios, etc, alongside each other (Chapter One) and the Synod of Diamper, *Koonan Kurishu*, *Varthamanapusthakam*, colonial policies, etc, against each other (Chapter Two). What also emerges is what Emily Apter terms “translational genealogy” of Christianity—that is how on the one hand the Latin Christianity tried to be the universal translator, by translating itself into everything it encountered or vice versa, and its affects on both, but also on the other hand how the untranslatable elements of Christianities become sites of resistances that celebrated entrenched differences and incommensurability.

The thesis is premised on the understanding that Syrian Christian is neither a linguistic community as denoted by ‘Syriac’ (contrary to the claims that they are the ones who follow Syriac liturgy), nor an ethnic community (contrary to the claims that they are descendants of Syrian migrants), and never a caste community (contrary to the claims that they are descendants of Brahmin converts). Rather, the very entangled genealogies and multiple beginnings of Syrian Christians pose an internal critique to the misinterpretation of community as a group of people sharing something in common, as well as to the ‘pseudomorphosis’ of Christianity (Verghese, *Freedom and Authority*) as a community of (pure) blood. Therefore, the thesis explores the genealogical relation between Christianity, caste and colonialism by tracing Syrian Christian co-constitution of religion

and caste in the colonial period thereby distinguishing between Christians of different bloods, as a precursor to the systematization of caste as a political and economic structure that governs the social relations. While the census reports, the state manuals and historical accounts expose the workings of ethnography, enumeration and historiography in the colonial and ‘native’ collaborative production of caste, the Memorials, Movements and Memoirs (Chapters Three and Four) offer a dynamic site of enquiry as it allows to study Syrian Christians not in isolation, but in their absent-present relation to other communities. And finally, I argue that, while Brahmanization and secularization of Syrian Christians were strategic responses to their non-belongingness and alienation, these strategies only created the conditions for further minoritization, not only for themselves, but also for others, as every time they exceed this strategic positionality, they were recovered as communal (Pandian, “Nation as Nostalgia”), which again could only be over-compensated through an excessive rhetoric of ‘secularism’ and ‘nationalism.’ Hence, the thesis attempts to locate Syrian Christians as a manifestation of both the minoritarian predicament of being an outsider-insider subject, as well as the majoritarian desires of co-scripting as well as conscripting into a national community of citizens.

Chapter One

Christian Thinking, Thinking Christian

Is there such a thing as “the Christian Question?” What would it mean to ask it? What could it mean today to attend to “the *enormous question mark* called Christianity” and to ask, for instance, *what* Christianity is? The answer—so obvious, so unremarkable, and so resilient—is, of course, religion. Christianity is a religion. A religion like any other, then? Not by any means. (Anidjar, *Blood: A Critique of Christianity*, 8)

Christian Question

When I titled this Chapter as “Christian Thinking, Thinking Christian,” my research supervisor promptly asked me why this particular order, and why not “Thinking Christian, Christian Thinking.” Though he did not explicate his logic, as neither did I at that point, I would suppose that he suggested the transition from ‘thinking as a Christian’ (thinking Christian) to ‘thinking itself becoming Christian’ (Christian thinking). Nothing could be more valid, as has been theorized by many scholars, from Talal Asad¹ to Carl Schmitt² to Jean-Luc Nancy, whom I will discuss in the coming sections. However, ‘Christian’ has also now become more or less universalized (secularized to be precise), that it does not seem to warrant anymore (re)thinking. Hence, my point of departure is that there are (dis)continuities in this transition of thinking, not only outside of Christianity, but also internal to it. ‘Thinking Christian’ is therefore not just thinking as a Christian but re-thinking the Christian itself.

At this point, it may be pertinent to ask what is Christian question, in the global and/or Indian context. Is it in the sense of the Jewish question, possibly the first question

¹ Asad has eruditely traced genealogies of religion and secular to the Christian monastic societies of medieval ages, which will be dealt with later in the chapter. See, *Genealogies of Religion and Formations of the Secular*.

² Schmitt argues that “all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts not only because of their historical development—in which they were transferred from theology to the theory of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver—but also because of their systematic structure, the recognition of which is necessary for a sociological consideration of these concepts” (*Political Theology*, 36). See, Gil Anidjar’s *Blood: A Critique of Christianity* for a revision of Schmitt’s thesis.

of the like, which debated the singularity of Jews in the face of the emerging politics of modern nation states in Europe, most eloquently raised in Marx's "On the Jewish Question"? Or is it similar to the later Muslim question, which critiques the globalized 'secular' suspicion of Islamic political theology that has become a permanent critique of bounded nationalism? Or has it to do with the fact that both the Jewish question and the Muslim question have been formulated primarily in response to the 'Christian West' (Euro-American)? Does it relate to the 'globalatinization' of Christianity, as Derrida puts it, through colonial-imperial expansion? Is it the problem of 'secularized theological (Christian) concepts' that Carl Schmitt pointed out which continue to determine political modernity? Can it refer to Gil Anidjar's formulation that it is not just that Christianity was secularized but that Christianity was/is the paradigmatic secular? Is it a way to address postcolonial experiences of Christianity? Or are there 'Christianities' which have been questioning the homogeneity of Christianity? Or does it correlate to the minority question and thus the status and treatment of Christians in majoritarian nations, such as India?

There is no single answer to the question—what is *the* Christian question—however, in this chapter I attempt to think through the sheer multiplicity of these distinctive questions and yet their interconnectedness, in order to situate the thesis. In any case, the definite article 'the' of the Jewish question and the Muslim question has tried to render it a universal valency, which can be compounded by the particular manifestations of the question but cannot be negated or reduced by the same. Whereas Christianity has held an unparallel universality and globality in critical discourses, which can only be punctured and punctuated with particularities internal to its own genealogies. Therefore, in the course of this chapter, it is also my intention to raise particular questions from the immediate contexts of this study to the 'globalatinized' Christianity, which may make it 'im-possible' to think of Christian question as a universal one. What do we do with

Christian question, assuming that it is available, is what Jean-Luc Nancy and Gil Anidjar pursue in their respective works, (both grounded in what can be called for convenience as ‘Western Christianity,’ as they themselves acknowledge), with the former proposing ‘deconstruction’ and the latter ‘critique’ as the conceptual framework. Hence, I begin this conversation by engaging with two distinctive approaches to Christian question, assuming that there is one, if not more, by Nancy (*Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity* and *Adoration: The Deconstruction of Christianity II*) and Anidjar (*Blood: A Critique of Christianity* and “The Idea of an Anthropology of Christianity”).

Deconstructing Christianity

Christianity has become so self-evident that it can only be attacked or supported, without ever having to stop to ask what is it that we are ‘for’ or ‘against,’ complaints Nancy in *Dis-Enclosure*. This self-evidentiality of Christianity is the Christian question/problem for Nancy, as it has curtailed Christianity from being deconstructed. Hence, Nancy asks, what is so self-evident with Christianity that we have stopped examining its storehouse of traditions more closely. Nancy’s question comes from his conviction that in a modern world “*all* our thought is Christian through and through. Through and through, and entirely, which is to say all of us, all of us completely” (142). Hence, the very question “how we are still Christian” irrespective of being pious or even being Christian at all, takes to Christianity to its limits. For him, any analysis that pretends otherwise “forgets or denies that the modern world is itself the unfolding of Christianity” (143). Such an approach forbids the modern world from understanding itself, as the ‘modern’ world, ‘secular’ as it is, according to him, is constructed on the “internal denial of its Christian reference” (144). It is this “shadow” that “we” must bring to “light,” which can only be achieved by deconstructing Christianity, as far as Nancy is

concerned. Therefore, deconstructing Christianity is also deconstructing modernity, self-evident that it has become as well.

Nancy's deconstructive move comes from his understanding of Christianity as a "divided integrality" (144); as the very movement of opening out as well as its dissolution; as "the conflict between an integrality and its disintegration" (144). That is, he argues that there is a double schema at the heart of Christianity: it is an event that conceives itself as both an "absolute happening," and a "dialectical *Aufhebung*" [sublation] or at least an "integration." An "absolute happening" in the sense that Christianity was born, or rather revealed, out of thin air, one fine day and then changed everything before and after its birth, which Nancy calls as "the Christmas projection" (145)! And "dialectical *Aufhebung*" in the sense that Christianity is a sublation of Judaism, Hellenism and Romanity, on the one hand, and a conjunction of (at least) Jewish Christianity, Roman Christianity and Greek Christianity [and all the 'Christianities' that came later, and is yet to come, complementing, contradicting and complicating itself and each other]. Thereby, Christianity becomes "the constitution of a dogmatic/ecclesiastic integrality *and* the internal tension of an identity that can be conceived only in relation to what it negates in transcending it" (146). Thus, to deconstruct Christianity, for Nancy, is to be guided by the motif that "the essence of Christianity is opening: an opening of self, and of self as opening," which it may have foreclosed, and therefore is to reach at the heart of this movement of opening, thereby opening Christianity to its own limits (145).

Deconstructing Christianity is imperative for Nancy, because that is the only way to deconstruct the self-evidentiality of the 'West' itself, which is also increasingly not subjected to any substantial philosophical enquiries, other than being criticised or left alone, taking it as a given either way. Nancy postulates a triple axiom, according to which, 1) Christianity is coextensive with the 'West,' 2) despite the de-Christianization of

the ‘West’ [dwindling number of congregations for instance], “we” [it is never clear who is ‘we’ for Nancy; or how is it still possible to assume a ‘we’ at all] are still in the “nervation” of Christianity and that it holds “us,” and 3) deconstruction of Christianity coexists with accompanying the ‘West’ to its own limits (142-143). Therefore, deconstructing Christianity and deconstructing the ‘West’ is the same move, in Nancy’s terms. He argues:

To deconstruct Christianity is to accompany the West to that limit, to that *pass at which* the West cannot do otherwise than let go of itself in order to continue being the West, or still be something of itself beyond itself. In this pass, it [Christianity/West] must let go of itself; thus it is the same move—letting go of the West and letting go of Christianity. (143)

Nonetheless, Nancy’s deconstructive move is neither a project of rejecting Christianity, or the ‘West’ for that matter, “of shedding an old skin,” nor one of recovering an ‘original,’ ‘pure’ Christianity/‘West,’ but a process of squaring with “what comes to the West and Christianity from beyond themselves” (143). Therefore, for him, the pertinent question is “to find out whether we can, by revisiting our Christian provenance, designate in the heart of Christianity a provenance of Christianity deeper than Christianity itself, a provenance that might bring out another resource” (143), in order to grasp what made Christianity and the ‘West’ and the world itself as we understand today possible (149). Because, according to Nancy, “to deconstruct means to take apart, to disassemble, to loosen the assembled structure in order to give some play to the possibility from which it emerged but which, qua assembled structure, it hides” (148). With the possibility brought into play by such a deconstructive move, neither Christianity nor the ‘West’ can any longer be itself, because it brings out that which made the ‘West’ and Christianity possible.

Hence, Enlightenment rationality that supposedly emerged in the spirit of purging the ‘West’ of its ‘illness’ of Christianity/religion, according to Nancy, was only a culmination, if not (dis)continuation, of Christianity. Because, it in fact only tries to fulfil what Christianity has promised and betrayed at the inception itself: fraternity that engenders justice, equality that emerges out of a common destination for all, and singularity that exists in its relationality rather than essentiality (*Adoration*, 25). In fact, Nancy asserts that “human-ity” itself, that personifies ‘rational’ beings as the secularized ‘modern’ world understands it, “proceeded from Christianity insofar as it was an assurance that the other life [after life] was opened up in life itself and its death” (25). Therefore, deconstructing Christianity is imperative, according to Nancy, for “opening reason to its very own reason, and perhaps to its unreason” (25).

Dis-Enclosure and *Adoration* are, according to Nancy himself, only blueprints for a larger project of engaging with Christianity/religion. Drawing on Nancy’s deconstructionist approach, this thesis also brings out a part in the assembled structure of Christianity—as represented by the Christians of Kerala—that exposes it to its limits, by remaining-in-difference. I take the encounter between Malankara Christians and Latin/Roman Catholicism, which will be discussed in Chapter Two, as an entry point to deconstruct the ‘integrality’ of Christianity. However, I also depart from Nancy when he takes a decisive turn away from critique, as his proposed deconstruction is an alternative to the post-Enlightenment mode of rejecting religion and the post-secular, post-national and post-modern modality of criticising Christianity for everything that went wrong with the world. This turn from critique in Nancy has elicited responses from Gil Anidjar, who problematises the same in his article “The Forgetting of Christianity,” and restores a way to combine deconstruction with critique in his work *Blood: A Critique of Christianity*, which we will examine in the following sections.

Critiquing Christianity

Criticising Nancy's deconstructive move as a "turn away from critique," Gil Anidjar ("The Forgetting of Christianity," 28) argues that "forgetting of Christianity"³ which Nancy postulates, unfolds itself as the "forgetting of critique" in Nancy himself. In *Dis-Enclosure* and *Adoration*, according to Anidjar, Christianity emerges as *a* religion and *a* monotheism that surpassed itself and became something more, without subjecting either religion or monotheism, let alone Christianity, to any kind of critique. This is self-evident because, in both works, Nancy's remarks on Judaism and Islam always appear in brackets of his profound reflections on Christianity, marking them as a case either 'similar to' Christianity or most often as 'that which requires a different study.' Further, Buddhism appears here and there as an 'exception' or that further needs to be explored. Thus, he generalizes about both 'religion' and 'monotheism' from the foundation of Christianity. Moreover, the universal Christian provenance that he deconstructs, as acknowledged by Nancy himself, does not apply to many Christianities like Orthodox Christianity (or Syriac Christianity which this thesis explores) for instance. And yet, he speaks of a 'world' primarily from his hypothesis that Christianity has become the nervous system of modern world. That is, even while deconstructing Christianity, 'religion' remains self-evident enough in Nancy for him to take it for granted that even as Christianity is one of the 'world religions,' it is *the* representative religion. Drawing on Talal Asad who explicated that Latin *religio* initially referred only to the Christian monastic communities, which later was expanded to differentiate between the 'religious' and 'secular' affairs of

³ Anidjar is referring to Nancy's position that any analysis of the modern world that does not take Christianity into account is denying or forgetting that modern world itself is the constitution of Christianity. Nancy also proposes deconstruction as neither 'critical' nor 'perpetuating.'

the community (*Genealogies of Religion*),⁴ and Derrida who deconstructed the etymology of *religio* and elucidated how Christianity co-constituted ‘religion’ only to name everything else it encountered as ‘err-religions’ or ‘ur-religions’ (*Acts of Religion*),⁵ Anidjar argues that Nancy, by identifying with Marcel Gauchet’s notion of Christianity as “the religion of the departure from religion,” exempts Christianity from critique, by making a sudden move to deconstruction and auto-deconstruction (“The Forgetting of Christianity,” 33).⁶ Anidjar argues:

Christianity (as colonial and global modernity, as capitalism, as “a certain conception of ‘human rights,’ as well as a certain determination of the relationship between politics and religion” (Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 33)) reduces itself, as if by magic, to a religion, in the restricted, and now well accepted, modern sense of the

⁴ Talal Asad argues that “socially identifiable forms, preconditions, and effects of what was regarded as religion in the medieval Christian epoch were quite different from those so considered in modern society... For the entire phenomenon [of religion] is to be seen in large measure in the context of Christian attempts to achieve a coherence in doctrine and practices, rules and regulations, even if that was a state never fully achieved... there cannot be a universal definition of religion, not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition is itself the historic product of discursive processes” (*Genealogies of Religion*, 15).

⁵ Derrida terms the co-extensiveness of the two questions of religion and worldwide Latinization as *globalatinization*. He gives two possible etymological sources of the word *religio*: a) Greek *religere* from *legere* (harvest, gather) b) Latin *religare* from *ligare* (to tie, bind). He reads Benveniste who identifies the Latin equivalent as a historically false etymology invented by Christians and yet asserts it as a word “which cannot be designated in short by anything but itself, which is to say, by an equivalent without equivalent.” This, to Derrida, is “the most faithful reflection, even the most theatrical symptom of what actually occurred in the ‘history of humanity,’ the ‘globalatinization’ of ‘religion’” (*Acts of Religion*, 72-73).

⁶ Derrida critiques Nancy elsewhere for co-extending ‘fraternity’ and community to each other, as it foregrounds ‘brotherhood’ (at the expense of sisters, daughters, female cousins and more importantly strangers), a term which is grounded in the Christian notion of ‘sons’ bound by a shared ‘Father,’ which is again enacted in the sharing of Eucharist (“sharing father’s dismembered body”) as well (*Rogues*, 56-61). Similarly, Ananda Abeysekara, in his reading (“The ‘Problem’ of Religion, Christianity, and the Capacity of Community”) of Anidjar’s response to Nancy (“The Forgetting of Christianity”), critiques the inseparable connection of fraternity and community to the problem of religion’s legacy. Abeysekara asks: “what does it mean to claim that fraternity and community qua Christianity constitute a problem of religion?” (“The ‘Problem’ of Religion,” 38). This conception of problem of religion qua Christianity, according to him, “may reproduce a modern notion of what we now call religion—that is, the notion that religion is something that can be *separated* from a life of practice within a community itself” (39). Drawing from his work on Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhist monastic tradition, Abeysekara argues that collapsing the critique of history of brotherhood into a history of *Christian* fraternity overlooks specific practices that cultivate specific capacities that constitute the relation between community and life. That is, “one cannot understand the relation between fraternity, community and religion as a problem without already having collapsed a normative into a critique” (40).

term. It turns itself into what it has never been in order to become something else, something better, than religion. Doing so, and without subjecting itself to adequate critique, the marking of its actual and resilient boundaries, Christianity exonerates itself more than it deconstructs itself. (33)

For Anidjar, then, deconstruction should not be a way to recover a ‘pure’ essence at the heart of Christianity, but to critically uncover what it transcended while becoming what it became. Therefore, in his monumental work *Blood: A Critique of Christianity*, he explores how European Christianity, in its singular history, religionized itself and simultaneously Christianized religion itself, whereby recognizing only itself as religion. And later when this singular history became a burden for Europe’s colonial and capitalist expansion, how Europe/Christianity liberated itself from its own conditions by secularizing itself and naming everything else it encountered as religious/religions, which concomitantly could only be ‘communal’ in the modern disenchanted secular/Christian world.

Anidjar proposes ‘blood’ as a category of historical analysis in order to critique Christianity as a community of blood.⁷ He theorizes that Christianity foregrounded the ‘sharing of a substance’ (Eucharist) as foundational to the existence of community and subsequently expropriated ‘blood’ as the shared substance that constitutes the communitarian experience of Christianity and belongingness of Christians, thereby co-constituting religion, race and nation. Anidjar develops his argument from a rather brief and unexplored account by Roberto Esposito in his work *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community*, in which Esposito deconstructs the etymology of community and

⁷ To this end, Anidjar in fact rewrites Carl Schmitt’s secularization thesis as “all significant concepts of the history of the modern world are *liquidated* theological concepts. This is not only because of their historical development but also because of their systematic *fluidity*, the recognition of which is necessary for a political consideration of these concepts” (*Blood*, 115; my emphasis).

argues that the only thing that is shared in *communitas* is ‘no-thing.’⁸ While engaging in his etymological reading of *communitas*, Esposito suggests that the ‘modern’ misinterpretation of community as a shared substance, property, or having something in common, as opposed to the earlier understanding of the same as a shared obligation, debt or gift is itself part of a communitarian genealogy of the ‘Christian West.’⁹ Before exploring Anidjar’s critique of Christianity by taking Esposito on board, we will briefly look at Esposito’s engagement with community qua Christianity, Christianity qua community, each constituting each other.

After tracing the etymology of *communitas* to the Latin word *munus* which means obligation, debt or gift, Esposito identifies a double move at the heart of Christianity—which is historical-institutional and theological-philosophical in nature—when *communitas* intertwined with *koinonia* or ‘communion’ in the New Testament, which according to him reconfigured the very notion of community itself (*Communitas*, 9). On the one hand, the theological-philosophical vector of Christianity remains closer to the earlier understanding of *munus* as obligation, because *koinonia* or fellowship is

⁸ Esposito traces the etymology of *communitas* to the Latin word *munus* which can contextually mean obligation, debt or gift. It refers to “the gift that one gives because one *must* give and because one *cannot not* give” (*Communitas*, 5). It is a gift distinguished by its obligatory character that further connotes an exchange. Therefore, *munus* foregrounds “reciprocity” or “mutuality” of giving by which one is related to the other only in an obligation that can never be repaid. Following this, Esposito elucidates that etymologically “*communitas* is the totality of persons united not by a ‘property’ but precisely by an obligation or a debt; not by an ‘addition’ but by a ‘subtraction’: by a lack” (6).

⁹ In fact, dissolution with the Christian and the Communist understanding of ‘community as lost and hence to be recovered,’ or ‘community as future and hence to be reached,’ is at the heart of a long-standing conversation among philosophers of community, and hence their attempt is not to grasp community in its finiteness and form but in formlessness and infiniteness. So, for Bataille, community is negative, experienced in an endless negation of the work of totalization (“Sovereignty,” *The Accursed Share*). For Nancy, community is relational, experienced in the inclination towards the other by taking on Heidegger’s notion of being-with (*The Inoperative Community*). For Blanchot, community is founded in death, such that the death of the other exposes one to the alterity outside the self (*The Unavowable Community*). For Agamben, community is the co-belonging of singularities without identity, unconditioned substitutability, absolute un-representability (*The Coming Community*). For Derrida, who wonders why use ‘community’ at all, the experience of a certain a-humanity, friendship from before friendships, with ‘respect’ and ‘responsibility’ and not ‘reciprocity’ co-implied at its heart, opens up to the ‘democracy to come’ (“Politics of Friendship”). Community, in this study, is primarily informed by these mutually complimenting and yet complicating discourses.

reconstituted in the Eucharistic participation. That is, “Man receives the gift that God, through the sacrifice of Christ, makes to him, a gift that is both free and overabundant” (10). A debt that cannot be repaid as our giving back will inevitably be insufficient. “This gift-giving inflection of ‘participation’ restores to the Christian *koinonia* all of the expropriating drama of the ancient *munus*” (11), says Esposito. On the other hand, the historical-institutional vector of Christianity increasingly erased this obligatory aspect of *munus* in the direction of an “appropriating drift,” thereby locating a kind of “belongingness” as the essence of community (9). *Communitas* undergoes a drastic simplification in the Middle Ages, at the hands of Christianity, in its transformation to Christendom, by which *communitas* in its close proximity to *civitas*, acquires the characteristics of a juridical-political institution that takes on the shape of a fixed territory, securing its borders, granting itself autonomy to appropriate for itself the thing/property/substance that it sees as given and as sharing (9). That is community becomes territorial to which one can belong only by sharing something common, and hence that which has to be protected. According to Esposito, it is at this vector that moderns, starting with Thomas Hobbes, performs a historical break, that privileges *immunitas* over *communitas*.¹⁰ This new paradigm privileges self-preservation, by immunizing the self in advance, against coming into contact with ‘other’ elements, for

¹⁰ For instance, Augustine had already laid foundation to a ‘community of destiny’ with death as the shared substance and a ‘community of guilt’ with violence (Cain’s violence) as the shared substance, through which he introduced the idea that “love for one’s neighbor is directly proportional to the memory of common danger” (Esposito, *Communitas*, 11). Following Augustine, Hobbes, by reconfiguring *communitas* as that which shares the gift of death—the shared capacity to be killed by each other (13)—negated the very foundation of community, with his notion of social contract: as “the contract is that which is *not* a gift; it is the absence of *munus*” (14). Hobbesian contract immunized individuals in advance from the mutual obligation of gift and isolated and protected them by sacrificing the ‘cum’ or ‘relation’ in *communitas* (13, 14). “In this convergence of the preservation of life and its capacity to be sacrificed, modern immunization reaches the height of its own destructive power” according to Esposito (14). Hence, for Esposito, the category of *immunitas*, that is directed against the very notion of “associated coexistence,” can be taken as “the explicative key of the entire modern paradigm,” more than any other hermeneutic models like ‘secularization’ or ‘rationalization’ (12).

fear of risking destruction of the body, and thereby compromises the ‘relation’ inherent in *communitas*.

Following this exposition by Esposito, Anidjar provocatively states that the “community of Christians came to understand itself as a community of substance” (*Blood*, 59), which began to differentiate and self-protect. And that ‘substance,’ according to Anidjar, is blood. Anidjar identifies several sites of enquiry, namely the ‘Investiture Contest’ starting in 1058 which he calls “the papal revolution,” The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, and the ‘Statutes on the Purity of Blood’ in 1449 which he terms “the disciplinary revolution” (*Blood*, 61), in relation to ‘Crusade’ and ‘Inquisition,’ in order to analyse three central concepts of modernity—nation, state and capital—as the “community of blood, the bloodless body politic and the blood of economic thought” respectively (53). The Investiture Contest was the tussle between what would later be called the Holy Roman Empire and the Papal Office regarding the theocratic and political power invested in each, the settlement of which co-constituted religion and state in the ‘Christian West.’ Anidjar elucidates that in the course of the papal revolution, a ‘peace council’ held at the city of Narbonne substituted the Christian dictum against “the shedding of *human* blood” as “the shedding of *Christian* blood” (169; emphasis mine), which would later sanction the shedding of non-Christian blood as ‘holy’ in Crusades that follow. That is, ‘thou shalt not kill’ became interpreted as ‘thou shalt not kill a Christian’ paving the way for a newfound differentiation between bloods, forging a consanguineous community of Christians, to which non-Christian was the paradigmatic enemy figure.¹¹

¹¹ It is against such an immunitarian paradigm that Derrida radically proposes ‘auto-immune community’ or ‘auto-co-immunity.’ For him, “no community is possible that would not cultivate its own auto-immunity, a principle of sacrificial self-destruction ruining the principle of self-protection (that of maintaining its self-integrity intact)” (*Acts of Religion*, 87). Only a common death drive can work against the immunitarian instinct, risking the self-preservatory fear and welcoming the entry of ‘foreign’ elements into the body politic, effect/affect of which is unpredictable. Only in unconditional ‘hospitality,’ can then community come. Here, ‘come’ does not signify an end, but a continuous process. This process is risky because what these unannounced ‘guests,’ or what he calls as ‘arrivants,’ do to the ‘host’ and vice versa is

Secondly, Anidjar pays attention to The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 that reinterpreted the sacramental practice of the Eucharist with the theology of ‘transubstantiation,’ by which bread and wine of the Eucharist ‘miraculously’ transform as flesh and blood of Christ. Hence, taking part in the Eucharist becomes partaking in the blood of Christ, which takes ‘Christian blood’ apart from any other blood, whereby blood becomes the shared substance of the new *communitas*, a “property, a having and a being simultaneously, [that constitutes] *res publica christiana*” (122). Thus, the Eucharistic matrix was a radical theological move that particularized and universalized Christian blood at the same time: universal as anyone who partook in the blood of Christ became Christian, and particular as it made the Christian blood distinct and hence to be defended from/against ‘non-Christian’ blood. Medieval transubstantiation of the Eucharist thereby inaugurated a new political theology which invented the ‘body politic’ that signals towards “a community so organically linked, so immanent to itself, that it is no longer dependent on an exteriority” (102).

Thirdly, Anidjar reads the Statutes on the Purity of Blood in 1449¹² as the predecessor of ‘one-drop rule’ and the genealogical link between race and religion, which institutionalized an included exclusion (excluded by the very act of including) at the heart of Christianity, as it charted out the difference between ‘Christians’ and ‘conversos,’ as the latter became insufficiently Christian due to their ‘impure’ blood (63). The Statutes simultaneously established two different communities of Christians, ‘old and pure

uncertain. In fact, this may destruct the host as is. But, only in such a shared auto-immune self-destructive risk, can community come—com-mon auto-immunity. In Derrida’s formulation of community-to-come, community never actually comes, but it is always coming, it is a promise that is always deferred and not fulfilled. Here, ‘to come’ represents the displacement that structures the very possibility from within. It is this possibility of deferment, which is always open to the arrival of irreducible singularities or the absolute ‘other,’ that is replaced when community is reconfigured as a destination attainable through commonality.

¹² The purity of blood (*pureza [limpieza] de sangre*) thesis, which originated in the 15th century Spain, claimed that unfaithfulness of ‘the killers of the Son of God’ (Jews) has transmitted through blood even to the Jews who converted to Catholicism thereby making them ‘impure’ Christians. See, Maryks, *The Jesuit Order as a Synagogue of Jews* for details.

Christians,' who claimed direct lineage of Christ in blood, claiming this antiquity as a source of privilege and symbolic capital, and 'new' Christians, who are primarily converted Jews, whose blood is tainted. Blood became at once both pure and cleansing as well as vulnerable to contamination and hence something to be protected. The irony is that it is in fact the large majority of 'old' Christians, whom the Church has been trying to discipline for their lack of 'Christianness,' (due to remainders of their pagan or Jewish practices mixing with 'Christian' ones), who were reconfigured as the 'new' Christians. Hence, Anidjar discredits this philological differentiation between the 'old' and the 'new' and argues that "what is being fashioned is indeed a new kind of Christian; in fact, many different kinds of 'New Christians.' And among them, the most important are the so-called Old Christians" (94). That is, as the 'old' Christians refigured as 'new' Christians under the Statutes by those Christians who claimed themselves as the 'Old' Christians, the category of 'Old Christian' in fact paradoxically became the paradigmatic New Christian: a new paradigm of being Christian itself, by which blood and lineage were privileged over faith. The Statutes was therefore essentially anti-theological, as willy-nilly it undermined holy sacraments, and the essence of conversion itself, because baptism or Eucharist, let alone faith, was no longer enough for one to *become* Christian, as one could only *be* 'true' Christian by virtue of one's birth/ancestry. Anidjar reads this as one of the beginnings of secularization of Christianity that radically altered its course.¹³

While the Eucharist marked Christianity's relation to others, that is 'non-Christians,' the Statutes marks its relation to self, that is Christians themselves, thereby making the difference between communities as that of a difference between bloods. The former marked non-Christians, particularly Muslims, as the external enemy of Christianity, who had to be eliminated in a Crusading spirit, while the latter engraved

¹³ See, Nermeen, "The Jew, The Arab: An Interview with Gil Anidjar."

Christians themselves, particularly converted Jews and ‘pagans,’ as its internal enemy, who had to be disciplined in an Inquisitorial spirit.¹⁴ As different and differentiating as they are, the Eucharist and the Statutes, the Crusades and the Inquisition, in a way become two sides of the same Christian coin, in which “race and religion, nation and religion, emerge as co-constitutive in their distinctiveness” (88). This European Christian genealogy is important as we will later see how it transpired in the spatial-temporal contexts explored in this thesis, as ‘Western Christianity,’ starting with the Portuguese, encountered more and more ‘others,’ ‘different bloods,’ internally and externally, outside Europe in its singular imperial expansion, particularly to the ‘East.’ I will be reading the Synod of Diamper in 1599, which converted Christians of Malankara (referring to pre-colonial geography of Kerala in general, as explained in the Introduction) to Portuguese Catholic Christianity, under the authority of Aleixo de Menezes, the Archbishop of Goa, who worked under the aegis of the Office of Inquisition at Goa, as an event which has radically altered Christianity in South India. In the light of above discussion, it is not accidental that Christians who were ‘newly’ converted by the Portuguese through the Diamper Synod came to be officially called as *pazhayakootukar* or ‘Old’ Christians and Christians who resisted the conversion through the Coonan Cross Revolt of 1653 became *puthenkootukar* or ‘New’ Christians, thereby inaugurating a new paradigm of being Christian/religious, which rendered majority of Christians to the status similar to that of ‘conversos,’ and simultaneously compromising their juridical-political status in the region.

¹⁴ Elsewhere, Anidjar would argue that the distinction of Jew as the theological enemy and Arab/Muslim as the political enemy is foundational to the Christian Europe. See, Anidjar, *The Jew, The Arab: A History of the Enemy*. See, Shaikh, “The Jew, The Arab: An Interview with Gil Anidjar” for Anidjar’s discussion on Franz Rosenzweig’s differentiation of Judaism as the theological subject or the theological community, Christianity as theological-political community and Islam as political community by which the theological subject (Jew) only knows political war, the political subject (Muslim) only knows holy war, whereas the theological-political subject (Christian) does not know to differentiate between holy and political wars.

Anidjar, thus, offers a paradigm to reconfigure the Christian question in relation to the need to rethink (rather than repress and/or avoid) Christianity and its uninterrogated definition as *the* religion with the urgency of critical attention. In his analysis, “Christianity turned against itself in a complex and ambivalent series of parallel movements, continuous gestures and rituals, reformist and counterreformist, or revolutionary or not so revolutionary upheavals and reversals while slowly coming to name that to which it ultimately opposed itself: religion” (*Semites*, 45). The difference, for Anidjar, seems to be huge: between the general consensus that ‘Christianity is secularized,’ and his argument that ‘secularism is Christianity’ and/or vice versa! Therefore, in *Semites* he argues that it is Christianity that co-constitutes the secular, in order to exonerate itself from its own conditions, and names religion its enemy, as that which could only be communal (as in the case of Islam) and hence have to necessarily secularize itself, only to be ‘born again’ as modern/Christian. That is, there is a deflection of community at the hands of Christianity. This deflection was crucial in the unfolding of political modernity by which, a particular religion became secular, a particular secularism became co-constitutive of nation state, and a particular economic theology became the universal logic of capitalism.¹⁵ The problem of political modernity thus becomes the problem of Christianity as well, if not the other way round; modernity unfolds with Christianity. It also means to enquire how secular modernity is Christian and Christianity is “the religion of the end of religion, the true rise of worldly politics” (*Blood*, 297). And

¹⁵ Max Weber has famously argued the spirit of capitalism as Protestant and especially Calvinist (*Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*). In a critical rejoinder to Weber, RH Tawney has traced the genealogy of capitalism to medieval Catholic Church and particularly its formations of guilds, which ensured the thriving of individualism based on an ethic of self-help and frugality (*Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*). William Connolly has termed this ‘unholy’ alliance between Christianity and capitalism, whether it is of Catholicism or Protestantism or Evangelicalism, as “capitalist axiomatic” of Christianity that give rise to a state-capital-Christian complex” (*Capitalism and Christianity: American Style*). Walter Benjamin has poignantly remarked that parasitic relation between Christianity and capitalism has to be shown not just in the case of Calvinism, but in the case of Eastern Churches as well (“Capitalism as Religion”). I will take this discussion on Christian capitalism and capitalist Christianity further in Chapter Four.

finally, it is to critique “Christian civilization” which is “none other than the ensemble of collateral effects which faith in Christ has produced on the civilizations it has encountered along the way,” (308) which also means “Christianity has no essence” and that it only “persists as the fluidity of its transformations” (311).¹⁶

Anthropology of Christianity

As enlightening as they are, Nancy’s invocation to deconstruct Christianity, and Anidjar’s exhortation to critique the same, yet again seems to be determined by ‘Western Christianity’ in the ‘Christian West.’ Despite Anidjar critiquing Nancy for ‘bracketing’ Islam and Judaism while generalizing on monotheism, both of them gloss over or bracket what is known as ‘Eastern’/Orthodox Christianity despite engaging with Christianity as a universal (Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 33; Anidjar, *Blood*, 310). This is irrespective of the different theological, ecclesiastical and political trajectory that ‘Eastern Christianity’ has maintained from that of the ‘Western.’ While the nomenclature ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ sounds too oriental for today, with respect to Christianity, it has its genealogy in the ‘East-West Schism’ culminating in CE 1054. After centuries of theological, political and ecclesiastical differences and debates, the Roman Catholic Church predominant in the western Europe and the Orthodox Churches prevailing in the Eastern Europe officially parted ways by mutually excommunicating each other in 1054.¹⁷ Even though the details are not important to this study, it is relevant to remember that it was also a schism

¹⁶ Irfan Ahmad would caution that ‘critique’ itself is embedded in the Enlightenment legacy, so much so that it translated itself as critique of religion (other than Christianity), instead of critique from within religion. He interestingly argues that European Enlightenment was only an ethnic project and hence Enlightenment/‘Western’ notion of critique is only a product of highly local political anthropological phenomena, that emerged by fashioning and subjecting a series of ‘others’ as the object of criticism, and therefore is only one among many modalities of critique, and hence never universal. An alternative genealogy of critique would imply that critique is not opposed to religion, but that religion itself is critique. From this premise, Ahmad explores how critique has been integral to Islamic traditions and hence instead of viewing Islam as an object of critique, there is an urgency to recover Islam as critique, as permanent critique (*Religion as Critique*, 37-40).

¹⁷ See, Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: The Spirit of Eastern Christendom* for details.

between ‘Greek East’ and ‘Latin West,’ the latter increasingly determining the discourse of Christian Europe. However, ‘Eastern Christianity’ does not only refer to Christianity in the eastern Europe, but also to that simultaneously developed in different parts of the world, outside Europe, traditionally believed as the result of various Apostolic missions and migrations, one of the most important ones being in parts of the present-day Kerala, which is the subject of this study.

Therefore, ‘Eastern Christianity’ is used in this thesis neither as a binary opposite to ‘Western Christianity,’ nor as its orientalist counterpart, rather as an absolutely deterritorialized Christianity that refused to be part of a territorialized ‘Western Christendom’/‘Christian West,’ and which has not been further reterritorialized into any other kind of universal Christianity. Hence, genealogies of different autochthonous Christian sects, denominations and Churches¹⁸ across the world that do not identify with Romanized/Latinized Christianity and its theological and ecclesiastical traditions, that may be in communion with each other, but remain autocephalous without a central authority, doctrine or tradition, constitute ‘Eastern Christianity.’ That is also to say that the ‘Christian West’ that is now normatively universalized, as that which established ‘Western Christendom,’ that which globalized through Crusade and Inquisition, that which imperialized through colonialism and capitalism, is only the territorialization of a particular Christianity (‘Western’/Latin/Roman) in a particular Europe (western parts) at the expense of many Christianities. The fact that the Fourth Crusade was also one that was waged by the so-called ‘Western Christianity’ against the ‘Eastern,’ by Rome against Constantinople, by the Pope against the Patriarch, points to the political-economic ramifications of the Schism. This genealogy is of importance to this thesis, as it is their

¹⁸ According to traditions, these Churches were simultaneously born out of Apostolic missions in regions across eastern and south-eastern Europe, Asia Minor, Caucasia, Africa, Persia, Asia, Malabar, etc, which today constitutes parts of Constantinople/Istanbul, Finland, Greece, Korea, Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Jerusalem, Russia, Japan, Belarus, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Georgia, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Macedonia, Armenia, Antioch, Eritrea, Kerala, etc.

long-standing communion with ‘Eastern Christian’ Churches that made Christians in the parts of Malankara pagans/heretics, when encountered by the Portuguese/Roman Catholicism in the fifteenth century.

How can this ‘Eastern Christian’ genealogy—which resisted the centralization of theological-ecclesiastical-political power in the figure of the Pope and instead privileged a decentralized notion of authority, which did not privilege the theology of transubstantiation that resulted in the privileging of Christian blood, which risked the immunity of its body politic by being more in communion with the Judaic and Islamic elements from ‘outside’ than with ‘Western Christianity’ from within—become a critical concept to engage with the ‘universal’ Christianity, which in fact is again only a particular Christianity? Fenella Cannell proposes the idea of anthropology of Christianity (*The Anthropology of Christianity*) in order to (dis)engage with the universal unfolding of Christianity by looking at particular trajectories of the same, in its complex continuities and discontinuities. Drawing from Talal Asad (“The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam”)¹⁹ and Marshall Sahlins (“The Sadness of Sweetness”),²⁰ Cannell conceives anthropology of Christianity not as a methodology to map particular Christianities and their beliefs/rituals that are different from each other, but as a conceptual framework to critically deconstruct the universality of Christianity by foregrounding particularities internal to Christianity itself. If I extend Cannell, then, it is not that there is something universal about Christianity and therefore every particularity that it encountered were assimilated and/or eliminated to this universality. On the contrary, it is only in its encounter with diverse

¹⁹ Asad argues to conceptualize Islam as a discursive tradition by foregrounding its textual foundation, in his critique of existing anthropological works on Islam which mostly try to present Islam as a distinctive social structure or a heterogenous collection of beliefs, by differentiating between scriptural Islam and ‘popular’ or ‘lived’ Islam (“The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam”).

²⁰ In his attempt to engage with “archaeology of social science discourse,” Sahlins argues that Judeo-Christian epistemology has constituted ‘Western’ epistemology so much so that anthropology, which is primarily ‘Western,’ even with its indebtedness to Enlightenment legacy, continues to be Judeo-Christian in its approach (“The Sadness of Sweetness”).

particularities, posed most importantly by Christians themselves, that a particular Christianity, in this case ‘Western Christianity,’ tried to universalize itself in order to become the paradigmatic ‘religion.’ Cannell revisits the relation between anthropology and Christianity and critiques disciplinary anthropology as “both an attempt to separate from Christian metaphysics and a simultaneous assimilation of key ideas derived from those metaphysics” (*The Anthropology of Christianity*, 5). That is, anthropology, even as it disenchanted itself of the Christian cosmology, has uncritically taken the civilizational narrative and universal *humanitas* derived from Christianity in the western Europe as its subject position, based on which every other culture, civilization and community becomes its object of study. Therefore, Christianity is the ‘repressed’ of anthropology, argues Cannell, which always returns (4). Hence, anthropology of Christianity, according to her, should suggest ways in which we “might begin to renew thinking about a religion whose very proximity has hitherto rendered it only imperfectly perceptible” (5). In other words, it is a call to move away from Christian anthropology to anthropological Christianity, which is not necessarily a negation of any universality embodied in/by Christianity, but a delineation of the same as dialectics of particularities.²¹

“... understanding of Christianity has something to do with *genealogies*,” argues Anidjar, “none of which *have* to follow a straight line of patriarchal descent.... Through its transformations, it is neither *simply* an unfolding, nor a *simple* replay of its past” (“The Idea of an Anthropology of Christianity,” 384). Therefore, he proposes Christianity, not as the name of an essence, but as a concept by itself, a polemical concept, with which ‘religion,’ the ‘West,’ ‘modernity,’ ‘capitalism,’ etc, can be critically interrogated. Further,

²¹ Gil Anidjar also observes that the idea of anthropology of Christianity is both urgent and elusive. Borrowing from Talal Asad, Anidjar observes: “the issue goes beyond being for or against the attempt to generalize about Christianity. It is rather set against the manner in which the generalization is undertaken. Anyone working on the anthropology of [Christianity] will be aware that there is considerable diversity in the beliefs and practices of [Christians]. The first problem is therefore one of organizing this diversity in terms of an adequate concept” (“The Idea of an Anthropology of Christianity,” 369).

understanding Christianity as a concept allows it to not be exhausted by ‘Western Christianity,’ but to be critiqued for its multifarious relations with Christianities outside the western Europe and ‘Christian West,’ taking them neither as an extension of ‘Western Christianity’ but as its coexistent, nor as a by-product of colonialism but as autochthonous, by paying close attention to its genealogical transmutations. Immanent genealogies of Christianity thus become imminent to deconstruct and/or critique Christianity and its ‘modern’ ‘nervations.’ It is in this spirit that ‘non-Western Christian’ scholar-theologians have been pitching ‘Eastern’ genealogies of Christianity in order to un-inherit the legacy and logic of ‘Western Christianity.’ It is this genealogy, which, Paulose Gregorios (or Paul Verghese),²² a scholar-bishop-theologian of Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church in Kerala, tried to animate for Syrian Christians, through his writings, to imagine an ethical-political future. The next section explores what it means for Christianity to be ‘Eastern’ and for Syrian Christians to recover an ‘Eastern Christian’ genealogy in order to locate themselves as the critical ‘other’ of ‘Western Christianity’ and ‘Christian West.’

‘Eastern Genealogies’ of Christianity

Gregorios (1922-1996), who was born to a Syrian Orthodox family in Kerala and trained in the Protestant seminaries of America as well as Catholic institutions in Europe, developed a ‘vernacular’ critical approach to ‘Western Christianity’ and ‘Christian West’ and proposed to recover an ‘Eastern’ cosmopolis of Christianity in order to deconstruct the self-evidentiality of Christianity qua the ‘West’ for post-colonial societies. So much so that in 1994, towards the end of his life, Gregorios wrote a tract titled “Why I am an

²² Paulose Gregorios is his customary name after he became a bishop. Before that he was T Paul Verghese. I will be using Gregorios for general purpose and will specify the name that appears in the published version in citations.

Eastern Orthodox Christian?” (My Vision of the Ultimate (paulosmargregorios.in)). Even before that, through a close reading of Augustine of Hippo and the Cappadocian fathers of the fourth century,²³ particularly Gregory of Nyssa, Paulose Gregorios argued that Christianity underwent a “pseudomorphosis” in the second, third and fourth centuries culminating in the hands of Augustine, which became the foundation of ‘Western Christianity’ and ‘Christian West.’ Gregorios borrows the term ‘pseudomorphosis’ from mineralogy in order to refer to a change of substance/property without any change in the appearance.²⁴ By reading Irenaeus of Lugdunum (CE 130-202) and Origen of Alexandria (CE 185-253), Gregorios observes that, in their struggle against Gnosticism—which he calls “an internal problem of Christianity,” that offered access to ‘secret’ knowledge revealed to the chosen few by the Apostles of Christ themselves as the basis of salvation—some Christian fathers of the second century ironically authenticated an Apostolic succession as the authorizing power to differentiate ‘true’ teaching from ‘false’ ones (Verghese, *Freedom and Authority*, 67), thereby establishing a community of lineage rather than that of faith.²⁵ This solidified Christianity as a doctrine of authority that reduced Christian faith as fidelity to formulaic doctrines, which itself had to be ‘proved’ using ‘texts,’ thereby privileging scriptural authority (69). As a result of this formation of a religion of book and revelation, interpretations automatically became

²³ Basil of Caesarea (CE 330-379), Gregory of Nyssa (335-395) and Gregory of Nazianzus (AD 329-389), the three bishops in Cappadocia that is now part of Turkey, who played key roles in developing the early Christian theology, are known as the Cappadocian fathers. Augustine of Hippo, popularly known as St Augustine (CE 354-430) is a contemporary to the Cappadocian fathers. While the Cappadocian fathers form the basis of ‘Eastern Christianity,’ Augustine, through the hands of Thomas Aquinas (CE 1225-1274) became the foundation of ‘Western Christianity’ and ‘Christian West.’

²⁴ Gregorios explains: “Different elements in crystallizing assume varying geometrical shapes—sphere, cube, cone and so on. It is observed that such crystals of various minerals are seen in the rocks. Imagine one of these crystals disintegrating in due course of time, leaving an empty space in the rock, say in the form of a cone. Into this empty space later on comes a solution of another mineral which normally crystallizes as a cube. But it has only the space of the cone available to it. So contrary to its ‘nature,’ it takes a conical shape. This is pseudomorphosis.” Therefore, the substance of the rock changes though the appearance remains the same (Verghese, *Freedom and Authority*, 51).

²⁵ Irenaeus wrote *Against Heresies*, in which he discredits Gnosticism as that which confined knowledge to the privileged, and instead proclaims Orthodox Christianity as the true Christianity passed down from the Apostles of Christ (which is not entirely different to the Gnostic claims).

‘deviations’/‘heresies’ and those who propagated these traditions became ‘heretics,’ or ‘false’ Christians—that is ‘internal enemies’ of Christianity. One of the gravest errors of Christian thought that emerged out of this ‘pseudomorphosis’ which substituted freedom with authority, and interpretation with dogma, argues Gregorios, is the conception of God as the sovereign and creation as ‘His’ subjects, which later became secularized in the ‘Western’ political thought (34).²⁶

Paulose Gregorios identifies Augustine of Hippo at the centre of this ‘pseudomorphosis’ of what Gregorios calls as “authentic tradition” in Christianity. Gregorios traces Augustine’s notion of ‘original sin’²⁷ as a dis-continuation of Augustine’s own Manichaean past,²⁸ and reaction to Pelagianism,²⁹ by which he conceived human beings as inherently sinful who can only be saved by the grace of God. Augustine’s ‘doctrine of original sin’ and ‘doctrine of divine grace,’ which privileged the authority of the sovereign God over the free-will of creation, allowed the development of a theology that conceives Christianity as the sole religion of salvation, based on which emerged the duality of the salvation of Christians and the damnation of non-Christians. Further, since he foregrounded humans as inherently evil, salvation was configured as an individual pursuit, and not a collective experience, thereby privileging the individual over the community. Augustine postulated life as an eternal tension between Jerusalem, the

²⁶ Gregorios asks: “Is this the Christian God—the one who is so weakly sovereign that he wants an enslaved humanity? Or does it belong to a particular tradition of Europe—that of Augustine, Luther, Calvin and Barth?” He observes that “there were significant alternatives in Christian history to this jealous, petty, freedom-hating God, whom western civilization has created and now wants to murder, but is not quite able to” (Verghese, *Freedom and Authority*, 16).

²⁷ Doctrine of original sin understands human beings as born into a state of sin, by virtue of Adam’s sin, which has been transmitted to his descendants, and thus are in need of salvation.

²⁸ Manichaeism regards Jesus, Buddha, the Prophets and Mani himself as “men sent by the Lord of light to liberate the original particles of light which Satan has stolen from the Kingdom of light and later hidden in the evil human body” (Verghese, *Freedom and Authority*, 42). That is, it conceives a dualistic cosmology that considers life as a struggle between the good world of light and the evil world of darkness.

²⁹ Pelagianism argues that humans are not originally sinful and have free-will through divine grace to achieve perfection. It is against Pelagianism that Augustine watered his earlier acceptance of free-will in humans, as Pelagians used Augustine’s endorsement of free-will (which he agreed only to mark his departure from Manichaeism in the first place) to refute his doctrines of original sin and grace.

city of God and Babylon, the city of earth, in which mankind is inherently inclined to the worldly city, and hence has to be saved by the divine grace coming from the city of God. By “making the two realms disjunctive, Augustine has laid the foundation for the unfortunate choice between world affirmation and world denial in the western intellectual and cultural life,” argues Gregorios (Verghese, “Humanization as a World Problem,” 7). He reads this Christianity that thrives on dichotomies—that of interiority of evil and exteriority of grace, world and the other world, ‘secular’ and ‘sacred,’ predestination and free-will, reason and revelation, individual and community—and the ‘West’ that universalised this Christianity as a product of “over-dramatization” of Pauline interpretation at the hands of Augustine (Verghese, *Freedom and Authority*, 44; “Humanization as a World Problem,” 6).³⁰

Therefore, he is critical of the anticolonial or the postcolonial move of ‘non-Western’ world that simply rejects the ‘Western’ roots of Catholic or Evangelical Christianity or Marxist-Leninist roots of secular-liberal-humanist desires which they have inherited, and instead replaces the same by finding its ‘Eastern’ roots and then calling it as ‘vernacular’ or alternate modality. For him, it is just ‘old wine in the new bottle.’ Rather, according to him, what is required is a decolonial move that “digs deep into the Christian treasure of Tradition,” in order to deconstruct and critique the self-evidentiality of contemporary Christianity, which is a ‘pseudomorphosized’ element at best. For which, he traces the genealogy of earliest Christians in Kerala to a non-triumphalist Syro-Palestinian and Asian-African Christianity that quietly flourished on the fringes of the

³⁰ St Paul conceived sin as an enemy of humanity coming from outside and hence has to be freed by/in Christ. Gregorios mentions a particular verse, “the desires of flesh are against the spirit, and the desires of the spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would” (*The Bible*, Galatians 5:17), and argues that “what was a phenomenological observation in St Paul is made into ontological in Augustine” (Verghese, *Freedom and Authority*, 44).

Byzantine Empire,³¹ without the endorsement of any empires, without any centralized authority figure, and in communion with other faith communities without a missionary desire to multiply—the Egyptian, the Syrian, the Persian, the Armenian and so on.³²

Gregorios provocatively argues that “In the first century, Christianity was primarily an Asian-African religion” and only in the fourth century did the Romanization of Christianity happen with the Christianization of Rome, which co-constituted nation and religion. “The strength of Christianity in the early period was in Palestine, Syria, Greece, Asia Minor, Egypt, and Libya” (Gregorios, “How Different is the Eastern Orthodox Church?” 1). And the earliest Church in India is a “strictly Asian-African Church, an Apostolic Church in continuity with ancient West Asian Apostolic Church” (2). It is this genealogy of struggling, non-settled, non-triumphalist, deterritorial, decentred, non-hierarchical, non-authoritarian and interpretative Christianity that should animate the future of Christian political theology, particularly in postcolonial societies like that of Kerala/India, according to Gregorios.

Engaging with the writings of Cappadocian Fathers, Gregorios argues that early Christianity was more a synthesis of biblical realism and speculative genius, and therefore interpretative, than conformism to dogmatic and doctrinal rigidity. “Cappadocian

³¹ Gregorios pitches Byzantine Christianity, a Eurasian Christianity, a synthesis of ‘East’ and the ‘West,’ which produced the rich Slavic culture as well as eastern European Christianity of Bulgaria, Russia, Yugoslavia, Romania, etc, against the western European Christianity. Nevertheless, even Byzantine Christianity became territorial when it was endorsed and flourished by the Byzantine Empire.

³² Gregorios argues: “On the periphery of Byzantium flourished other traditions of ‘Eastern Christianity’—the Egyptian, the Syrian, the Persian, the Armenian and so on. These never achieved the cultural synthesis afforded by a Christian empire. And that may very well be their special contribution. They remained struggling traditions, not settled traditions Syro-Palestinian Christianity, which inspired Byzantine and Roman Christianity, was by these same two imperial civilizations ruthlessly suppressed. The Semitic tradition took history seriously, yet refused to accept a historicism that domesticated the transcendent. This is what needs to be recovered, a relation-in-tension between the historical and transcendent which refuses to settle for one while neglecting the other.... It is this Syro-Palestinian or Asian tradition of Christianity, fully open to Semite and Greek alike, but with roots in the Palestinian vision of Christ and the Apostles, that inspired the great Eastern Fathers. The writings of Cappadocians who achieved the great synthesis between Alexandria and Antioch within the categories of Greek thought are now open to us and should be explored.... Eastern Semitic Christianity, Syro-Palestinian ... with a non-triumphalist heritage, could be a small and quiet renovating force in the world today, if it could revitalize its own life, especially in the context of India today” (Verghese, *Freedom and Authority*, 32-33).

theology is a magnificent blend of the Gospel with elements of Hellenic philosophy, oriental mysticism, Antiochian realism and Alexandrian theoretical speculation” (Verghese, *Freedom and Authority*, 55). They argued that knowledge of God is dependent on ethical maturity, and hence the ethical is inseparable from the cultic. But ‘pseudomorphosis’ translated the incomprehensible God into comprehensible,³³ and this im-possible conceptual knowledge of God is at the root of ‘Western Christianity’s’ evangelical desire to teach the same to ‘others’ who do not know ‘Him,’ as well as the ‘Christian West’s’ civilizing mission. That is, reversing the creation theology of Man as the image of God, ‘Christian West’ reconfigured God in the image of Man, and set out to convert and conquer the world in this ‘pseudomorphosized’ image. Therefore, a confession of ignorance, of ‘not knowing’ is crucial to move past the binary of non-Christian/Christian, converso/Christian, born/born again, and damned/saved souls. Against Augustine who “worked with the categories of human sinfulness and divine sovereignty and therefore emphasized the huge *gap* between God and Man,” Gregorios foregrounds Gregory of Nyssa who “saw the freedom of Man as the central element to which everything was to be related, and therefore looked for the same freedom in the very essence of God, so sought for *common ground* between God and Man” (61). For Nyssa, the negation of the free-will of man is the negation of the free-will of God, because Man is the image of God.³⁴ “This unequivocal affirmation of sovereignty and dignity of man is peculiar to the ‘Eastern’ tradition. This freedom is what is distinctive of man and defines his nature—not original sin” (82).³⁵ Since creation itself is the manifestation of divine

³³ Incomprehensibility manifests ‘His’ transcendence, whereas creation his immanence, but immanence by free-will, thereby ‘Eastern’ tradition interprets God as both transcendent and immanent.

³⁴ Koinonia or communion with God, on equal terms, which is blasphemous to ‘Western’ theology is the essence of ‘Eastern’ tradition. “If not by creation, at least by Incarnation we have been made participants in God’s nature” (Verghese, *Freedom and Authority*, 70).

³⁵ Gregory of Nyssa uses five characteristic words to denote the freedom of man—*adoulotos*, *adespotos*, *autokrates*, *autexousios* and *eleutheros*. *Adoulotos* and *adespotos* denote free citizen in the Greek republics, which means “not the slave of another, not having a master.” That is, “If God is free and

grace, it can be seen in Christians and non-Christians, religions and anti-religions, humans and non-humans, as well as in matter. Therefore, ‘Eastern’ tradition did not develop a missionary modality that wanted to convert and save the world, according to Gregorios. Thus, for him, Cappadocian Fathers in general and Gregory of Nyssa in particular, among other ‘Eastern Christian’ thinkers, provide an altogether ‘new’ tradition, which is also Christianity’s “authentic tradition” for him, to think Christianity not as an ideology of two cities—of earth and of God—or that of true and false Christians, or that of Christians and non-Christians or that of a community of common substance. Through a critique of ‘Western Christianity’ and deconstruction of ‘Eastern Christianity,’ Gregorios seems to be proposing the possibility of actively un-inheriting the former and re-inheriting the latter, from his present, for an ethical-political future-to-come. Such a genealogy and the intellectual tradition of Gregorios become important for Syrian Christians today as it also automatically unsettles their assertion of a miraculous Apostolic and Brahminic origin that reduces its manifold beginnings, which will be discussed in Chapter Two.

But, So What?

To bring this discussion on deconstruction/critique to a full circle I now discuss *The Politics of Postsecular Religion* by Ananda Abeysekara, where he actively disregards the usefulness of ‘critique’ of the past-present for a future-to-come. He directs a peculiar question posed by David Scott—“But So What?”—towards postcolonial attempts to deconstruct the past as a means to critique the politics of the present.³⁶ Abeysekara

sovereign, then the image must also be treated as free and sovereign.... *Aurokrates* means ruling and acting out of one’s own power.... *Autexousios* implies having authority in oneself and not acting out of someone else’s authority.... *Eleutheros* means freedom, the absence of constraint, external or internal, that is freedom from all enslavements and bondage to forces outside oneself” (Verghese, *Freedom and Authority*, 81-82).

³⁶ Scott asks this question in his essay “Dehistoricizing History,” as he engages with the historicist debate in Sri Lanka—between RLH Gunawardana and KNO Dharmadasa. When the former deconstructed

kickstarts his discussion by taking two particular modes of critique, one by Slavoj Žižek (*The Fragile Absolute*) and the other by Gianni Vattimo (*After Christianity*). In his critique of the unholy alliance between democracy and capitalism, co-constituted in/through/by Christianity, Žižek (like Paulose Gregorios above) proposes to dis-inherit the same by re-inheriting a subversive core of Christianity, which he finds in the Pauline interpretation. For Žižek, the death of the Christianity that we know is imperative for the death of democracy, and thus for resolving the crisis of modernity. Gianni Vattimo, on the other hand, thinks of the possibility of a post-Christianity from the vantage point of secularization. According to him, secularization has fulfilled the central Christian message and thus calls for a new mode of Christianity. A critique of the spectral presence of Christianity/religion in the secular, according to Vattimo, opens a possibility to think of ways to imagine a new Christianity after the death of Christianity brought forth by its own secularization. That is, “the very process of postmodern pluralism that kills Christianity creates a new Christian identity” for Vattimo, that requires taking the Bible seriously, that does not involve returning to the Church or dogmatic Christianity, but that embraces the destiny of modernity, and deepens “its own physiognomy as source and condition for the possibility of secularity” (*After Christianity*, 96-98).

However, Abeysekara finds these ideas of a new community that bears the old name a problem. He observes:

However different it may be, this newly resurrected Christian Pauline community will still bear the same (old) name: the (Christian) community. For Žižek, as for

the Sinhalese nationalist ideology’s claim to the historical priority of Sinhala race in Sri Lanka, the latter wrote a rebuttal that challenged the historicity of this new history, to which Gunawardhana again retorted with a critical rejoinder with more data and evidence to prove his point. It is at this point that Scott intervenes and raises the problem of this vicious circle as stemming from the inability of both historians to ask the question “But so what?” This question, according to Scott, “would have disconnected the story of the past from the politics of the present and thus made itself invulnerable to historicist criticism” (*The Politics of Postsecular Religion*, 204). Without this question, there can only be ‘more’ histories with claims to ‘other’ prior identities, without any political valency for the present, as it does not render prior identity itself indeterminate.

others, the name does not present a permanent problem because it can be renewed and therefore can become something ‘new.’ The new redeems the old, if you will, but the new still retains the (old) name. (*The Politics of Postsecular Religion*, 26)

Abeysekara reads this mode of critique that attempts to retain a community without community, a Christianity without Christianity, and thus a name without a name, an impossibility (27). Critique, for him, always problematically foregrounds the possibility to reconstruct and improve ‘the name’ so as to re-inherit it. But Abeysekara urges to think of the im-possibility of such an inheritance (29). In other words, critique has run its course, for him!

Critique, according to him, is a “movement” tied to Foucauldian ‘problematization’ that “interrogates the process of the formations of the subject through genealogical investigation, which supposedly enables the subject to desubjugate itself” (132). However, Abeysekara asks a pertinent question: is ‘critique’ that problematizes the present without opening the im-possibility of un-inheriting³⁷ the past sufficient in order to imagine new anti-genealogical futures? For Abeysekara, what is required is not “more and more strategies of problematizing our identities,” but rather a way to think about how to live with those identities, “the identities that are beyond problematization, that are no longer a ‘problem,’” and thus “to mourn the already subjugated and deconstructed identities of aporia that haunt us” (132, 133). He proposes, following Nietzsche, ‘anti-genealogy’ or an ‘active forgetting of history’ that would open this im-possibility to un-inherit our past-present for a future to come (110). The idea of common/community is something that has to be un-inherited, not reinvigorated, through such anti-genealogical

³⁷ In Abeysekara, just as im-possibility is irreducible to any notion of possibility or impossibility, so is un-inheriting irreducible to inheriting or abandoning, remembering or forgetting; it is an aporia (*The Politics of Postsecular Religion*, 38). Drawing from Derrida, who talks in terms of “possible im-possible,” Abeysekara conceives that “always im-possibility—the possible as impossible—is linked to an irreducible divisibility that affects the very essence of the possible... the possibility of any politics and any justice has to be thought in terms of the impossible” (219).

futures of the political, for Abeysekara. Such anti-genealogical futures can un-inherit the distinction between friend/enemy, majority/minority, a seamless history of ‘fraternity’ or origin or birth or ‘blood,’ and thus the history of a given community itself (254). And deconstruction without reconstruction may perhaps open the im-possibility of un-inheriting the heritage for anti-genealogical futures of the political. Deconstruction undermines the logic of a text but does not reconstruct it. It neither declares the end of the text nor its completion. Abeysekara captures this im-possibility of deconstruction in a single sentence by Derrida: “I can interrogate, contradict, attack, or simply deconstruct a logic of the text that came before me, and is before me, but I cannot and must not change it” (*The Politics of Postsecular Religion*, 30). Therefore, what is important is to think of any ethical/political ‘name,’ for example Christianity, as a text that can be deconstructed but cannot be changed or improved. The question then is how to “*respond* to the deconstructed name/identity that we embody and live with but cannot change?” (30).

Many ‘Eastern Christian’ thinkers have been trying to think through this Christian problem of the im-possibility of un-inheriting a universal Christianity in order to animate anti-genealogical futures for the present from their immediate contexts. However, the result often tends to either locate ‘Eastern Christianity’ as an antithesis of ‘Western Christianity’ and hence an alternative,³⁸ or as a lost Christianity and hence waiting for

³⁸ For example, Christos Yannaras, a Greek Orthodox thinker, proposes Christianity as *ekklesia* (or *ecclesia* in its Latinized form)—a mode of relations of communion, which was the early modality of Christianity—as an antidote to Christianity as *religio*. Yannaras reads the texts that records the first Christian communities and interprets *Ekklesia* as a modality of ‘eating together’ or sharing of bread, without any religious connotations. It was not a simple act of taking food for individual self-preservation but a modality of communing with others. He observes that “The first Christians (drawn from Jewish people) constituted the *ecclesia*, or Church, apart from any religious rituals—outside of any sacred place (Temple). They constituted *ecclesia* ‘in their homes’ as a supper, of thanksgiving. From the first moment of its existence, the Christian *ecclesia* was precisely that: a gathering for a thanksgiving supper.... They wanted to transform the necessity of nature [eating] into the freedom of relation [communion], into love” (*Against Religion*, 23). According to him, it is the religionization of *ecclesia* starting from the third and fourth centuries, culminating in the theology of Augustine, and taken over by the Roman Catholic Christianity in western Europe for a global civilizational mission that constitutes the Christian problem. The religionization which privileged individual salvation compromised the Trinitarian mode of existence, which does not imply three separate individual beings, or three individuals with a common essence, but a mode of

recovery.³⁹ Stoeckl et al have argued that ‘Eastern Christianity’ “witnessed the emergence of Western modernity as a critical bystander, and has since undergone its own process of modernization” by analytically engaging with “both the liberating and destructive sides of the modern experience” (*Political Theologies in Orthodox Christianity*, 4). According to them, there are “three principled responses to political modernity in Christianity: first, to see modernity as an inherently Christian development; second, to reject modern society outright as an anti-Christian apostasy; and third, to formulate a position between these two extremes, giving a differentiated theological response and enhancing efforts of theological self-reflection for a better understanding of oneself and others” (5). However, it is not the intention of this thesis to suggest that ‘Eastern Christianities’ in general or Syriac Christianity in particular, have outrightly rejected or are outside the experience of Christianity qua capitalism, or even to argue that they offer a critical alternative to secular modernity, enlightenment rationality and formations of nation-state, and least of all to prescribe a way forward.⁴⁰ Rather, I look at how some Christians in the geographical

relationality that does not sacrifice the singularity for the communion, or vice versa, and therefore in other words singular plurality and/or plural singularity (26).

³⁹ For instance, Sergei Bulgakov, a Russian Orthodox theologian, proposes a *Sophic* (meaning ‘divine wisdom’) economy based on the Russian Orthodox Christian tradition, as a way out of materialism of both Marxism and secular capitalism. The Greek word *Sophia*, with its Hellenistic, Gnostic, Judaic, Christian, Platonic roots/routes, which means “divine wisdom,” offers for Bulgakov a means to conceive labour as selfless love that actualizes divine wisdom and not as fruitful work that serves individual goals or the state’s interest. Bulgakov considers economy as heteronomous rather than autonomous, and so he argues that what is required is not an ascetic denial of materiality or hedonistic celebration of the same, but a balance between the two, which calls for a change in the world view undergirding the political economy. That is, he is not against economic activity per se, but is against the worldview that interpreted it as capitalism. What is required, according to him, is to actualize the Edenic economy, by which labour is joyful and playful, that was lost in the Fall of Man, whereby labour became associated with suffering, repetition, survival and production. He combines *Sophia* with the notion of *Sobornost*, a distinctive idea of commune in the Russian Orthodox tradition, which according to him is an antidote to the theory of social contract. While ‘social contract’ requires individuals to surrender their freedom for the consensual commonality of society in order to receive protection of the state, *sobornost* privileges a participatory social process as a means to actualize the individual freedom (*Philosophy of Economy*, 142-156). See, Payne and Marsh, “Sergei Bulgakov’s ‘Sophic’ Economy: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective on Christian Economics” for a critical discussion.

⁴⁰ For instance, Athanasios N Papathanasiou proposes an alternative understanding of the political role of ‘Eastern Christianity’ as antipolitics. He argues for a “sacred anarchy”: “a radical anti-egoistic and self-sacrificial attitude based on indiscriminate love, one that could have important social and political consequences for the Church as a community becoming a counter-model for corrupted societies” (“The

region that today constitute the South Indian state of Kerala critiqued ‘Westernization’ of Christianity at the hands of both Catholic and Protestant European missions by animating their ‘Eastern Christian’ genealogies (who would later emerge as Syrian Christians), and at the same time conscripted into the modernist-capitalist-secularist moorings of ‘Western Christianity’ and ‘Christian West’ by co-scripting a nationalist future to come. Cyril Hovorun compares this nationalistic religiosity/religious nationalism of ‘Eastern Churches’ to that of Rousseau’s civil religion. He argues that “the concept of civil religion is a helpful hermeneutical clue to understanding the social and political processes in countries that associate themselves with the Eastern Christian tradition” (“Civil Religion in the Orthodox Mileu,” 253). As a civil religion, the Church paradoxically participates in nation building, and at the same time in mobilizing communitarian insurrectionary movements, as well as in creating and excluding its own ‘others,’ all in the name of public interest, without manifesting any self-contradiction. Such a paradox is also constituent to Syrian Christian dilemma in the Indian contexts as will be shown in the chapters that follow. At the crux of this paradox lies the Syrian Christian historical claims of a Brahminical origin and lineage in the present, which contradicts its own genealogies of fringe Christianity, that Gregorios thought should animate their futures. Therefore, in the final section of this Chapter, I examine the existing discourses on Syrian Christians in Kerala from various vantage points. Caste has been the most important vantage point from which Syrian Christians have been studied, so much so that, one has to go through it in order to go beyond it. Rather than giving a summary-analysis of all the works, I have

Politics of a ‘Weak’ Force,” 110) He suggests that the Church has to refashion itself as an open community, traverse between the ‘already’ and ‘not yet’ and recover its Gospel of ‘becoming.’ In a similar vein, David Dzalto in his critical response to the concept of *Symphonia* that has defined the Church-state relationship of ‘Eastern Churches’ from the beginning, which suggests a “harmony between the sacred and the secular through organic relation between the Church (theology) and the state (ideology)” (“Orthodox Political Theology,” 112), calls for an “anarchist alternative that opts for a radical apolitical position of love that nevertheless indirectly influences politics” (7). He presents anarchism as the most consistent feature of ‘Eastern Christianity’ from the beginning and therefore its ‘authentic’ political theology.

categorized various discourses into certain frameworks, in order to demarcate my divergences and convergences.

Syrian Christians: Modalities of Critique

a) Essentialization

CJ Fuller, in one of the earliest attempts to understand the relation between Christianity and caste in Kerala, argues that “Kerala Christianity” is caste. In “Kerala Christians and the Caste System,” Fuller proposes that Syrian, Latin and New Christians among “Kerala Christians” are in fact caste categories and that Christians and Hindus are ranked in terms of caste with respect to each other and that they are members of one caste system (58). Extending Louis Dumont’s thesis,⁴¹ Fuller argues that there is a shared orthopraxy between Hindus and Christians, particularly a religiosity based on purity/pollution, which constitutes them together as a single social system (64). However, refuting Dumont’s argument in the context of Hindu-Muslim relations that coexistence has not produced any “ideological synthesis” among different communities, Fuller maintains that there has been an ideological synthesis between Hindus and Christians contributing to a social totality (58). This “ideological synthesis,” according to Fuller, accounts for the Christian emphasis on Indian-ness, Syrian Christian assertion of Brahmin origins, lack of a pan-Christian consciousness, historical lacuna of any kind of Christian rule over the Hindu land, and absence of any demand for “Christian Pakistan” or “Christian equivalent of Mappillasthan” (58). In a way, he is problematically suggesting that Christian identification with the Hindu caste structure prevented Christian communalism and catalysed nationalism, unlike among Muslims. Further, he argues that while such purity/pollution, power/status hierarchy is continuous between Hindus and

⁴¹ See, Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus* for a detailed discussion on sociological approach to caste as a guiding religious order by which it is defined as an essential sacred principle that structures the Indian social totality based on hierarchical coexistence of purity/pollution opposition.

Christians, it is discontinuous among/within Christians. That is, “the shared orthopraxy operates only between the Christian and Hindu castes,” whereas it differs within the “Christian castes” (65).

Fuller, through his discourse, suggests a couple of propositions: at one level he locates caste as *the* essential guiding principle of Indian sociality; at another level he understands caste in Indian Christianity as an inevitable, if not ‘natural,’ extension of this essential reality produced by assimilation. In neither of the formulations, systematization of caste and even substitutability of caste and Christianity as well, are understood as part of political processes in continuum. Such a retrospective recovering of a continuous and consolidated “Kerala Christianity,” with a shared orthopraxy as well as ideology with the ‘Hindu’ caste/caste-‘Hindu,’ necessarily discounts discontinuities and fragmentations among Christians of Kerala, let alone ‘Hindu’ itself, and its ensuing complex relations with ‘non-Hindu,’ in response to the encounters between different geneses, genealogies, colonialisms, conversions and migrations. Given that the discourse of essentialization of caste itself is critiqued for its lack of sufficient engagement with ‘local’ realities,⁴² it is only logical to be sceptical of reducing “Kerala Christianity” as caste. Moreover, such an articulation refuses to engage with the otherwise complex political and theological genealogies of communities. Susan Visvanathan’s *The Christians of Kerala: History, Belief and Ritual among the Yakoba* makes such an attempt to engage with the heterogeneity among Christians in Kerala, instead of taking it for granted as a homogenous category.

b) Accommodation

⁴² See, Nicholas Dirks for an analysis of the complex ways in which colonial administration methodologically modernized caste as a political category through ethnography and enumeration (“Castes of Mind”).

Following the framework of Emile Durkheim,⁴³ Visvanathan's work is an ethnographic study on the *Yakoba*⁴⁴ Christians in a small region of Kerala in order to understand the relation between individual representation and collective consciousness of the society. Through an anthropological analysis of a particular Syrian Christian denomination's history (people's history in relation to 'official' history), rituals (domestic rituals and Church rituals in relation to marriage, birth and death) and belief (Eucharistic enactments), through their temporal, spatial, architectural and bodily manifestations, Visvanathan argues that the Syrian Christian subjectivity in Kerala is an ambiguous blend of the Hindu, the Christian and the Syrian as it accommodated everything that it encountered.⁴⁵ Even as she maps "pathologies arising out of difference" through a compelling ethnography of two warring factions among the Syrian Christians in Kerala (the Orthodox and the Jacobite, discussed in the Introduction), these differences do not seem to be reflected as a lack (or excess) in the common world shared by Christians and Hindus. That is, in the end, individual representations neither critique nor deconstruct collective consciousness in Visvanathan's account, as they comfortably play out only in the 'private' sphere. While *The Christians of Kerala* remains an important work in a move towards an anthropology of Christianity in Kerala, Visvanathan's discourse on

⁴³ Durkheim's understanding that society is a *sui generis* reality that cannot be reduced to its parts and is produced when individual elements act together to create a collective consciousness has dominated sociology and anthropology of religion for a very long time (*The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*).

⁴⁴ Visvanathan situates *Yakoba* as a community constituting of both the Orthodox and the Jacobite Syrian Christians. However, at present, the Orthodox does not identify oneself with/as *Yakoba*. Rather, Jacobite is the English translation of *Yakoba*. Both communities are embroiled in a century long legal battle over ecclesiastical differences and ownership of church properties.

⁴⁵ Visvanathan identifies three different calendrical times followed by members of the community—Malayalam Hindu calendar, 'Western' secular calendar and Syrian Christian calendar. They have a sense of both Hindu temporality of auspiciousness and Syrian Christian temporality that follows a Jewish tradition, she observes. Christianity that accompanied colonial mission has challenged both these temporalities and offered the community a 'secular' temporality which has further pluralized individual experiences of time vis a vis that of the community. She further explores the architecture—individual houses and community's churches—and delineates a similar pattern of Hindu, Christian and Syrian influences in their spatial orientation as well. Finally, she identifies body as a carrier of these complex genealogies as manifested in/through bodily rituals during birth, marriage and death (*The Christians of Kerala*).

Christianity endorses a pluralistic framework of inculturation, by which Christians and Hindus coexist in a symbiotic relationship, respecting similarities and differences of each other, without losing individual identities (2).⁴⁶ This thesis departs from such an overarching understanding of Syrian Christians in Kerala, which has now become commonplace, as elucidated by Placid J Podipara's oft-quoted statement that Syrian Christians are "Hindu in culture, Christian in religion and Oriental in worship" (qtd in Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, vol i, 154). Both Fuller and Visvanathan seem to be working with a-historical categories of 'Hindu' and 'Syrian Christian,' based on the understanding that Kerala has always already been structured according to caste and Syrian Christians accordingly within this system. Rather, there is a need to critique the uncritical translation of early Christians in the regions that today constitute Kerala as Syrian Christians and/or Brahmin-Christians, (and similarly the translation of 'Hindu' as an a-temporal category) thereby converting selected genealogies of Christianity in Kerala as *the* linear history of Syrian Christians alone. Hence, Chapter Two belabours to locate Syrian Christian as a historical category emerging in response to particular political-theological-social contexts.

c) Integration

Susan Bayly's *Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society*, offers a new paradigm to engage with this problem. Bayly moves away from the paradigm that "assume(s) the existence of an all-pervading 'Hindu' culture and 'Hindu' caste system" (3) and argues that "Christians or Muslims, were not 'converted' from a fixed social order defined by 'traditional' Hindu religious orthodoxy and the traditional rigidities of an established 'Hindu' caste system" (2). While not discrediting the discourse

⁴⁶ Interestingly, 'accommodation' was the official strategy of Jesuit missions in the later phases, after the earlier strategy of elimination and assimilation of differences failed in the colonies.

that present-day ‘Hinduism’ is a colonial product of the eighteenth and nineteenth century orientalist textual codification and the British sponsored religious reformism and revivalism (40), Bayly’s contribution lies in the fact that she precisely identifies the pre-colonial interactions and incorporations between communities—both warrior cults and “Sanskritic” traditions—already underway in the region, which have equally fed into the ‘Hinduism’ as is perceived today. She asserts that transformations in the political and religious life of South India until the direct British rule was not determined by Brahmins or “Sanskritic” rituals, but by the changing nature of warrior kingdoms/little kingdoms (48). She observes that pre-colonial South India did not develop any stable hierarchies of power, rather it was in constant flux. Thus, for Bayly, “convert religions” like Christianity and Islam in South India are neither extensions of an always-already caste-Hindu society, nor just products of colonial mission; rather they are dynamic communities which have interacted with and incorporated into/from the centuries of political and religious changes underway in the region.

Bayly reads Syrian Christians as a community “integrated” into the religious and political order of Kerala at least since the sixteenth century as they were traders who moved into “wet zones,” intermarried with Nairs and other warrior cults, and became an integral part of highly militarised territories as warriors (247-250). It is in her attempt to move away from the thesis of ‘assimilation,’ and ‘accommodation,’ that Bayly introduces ‘integration’ by which differences of ‘others’ are not subsumed into the ‘self,’ but are mutually transformative. In this case, “Sanskritic” Hinduism did not just replace warrior cults, power divinities and other religiosities like Christianity and Islam, but reconstituted itself with everything that it encountered. ‘Integration,’ unlike ‘assimilation,’ thus can account for conflicts embedded in the process, according to Bayly. While she does not dispute the ‘high’ status traditionally enjoyed by the Syrian Christians and their

resourceful past, she identifies it as not a caste status, but the result of what she calls “honours”—“position of high status and acceptance within the region’s most prestigious social and religious institutions” (251)—received in return for their economic and military services (282). According to this reading, Syrian Christians, like Muslims, exemplify the fluid political structures in the region, as late as the seventeenth century, that was still open to different communities. Bayly attributes the collapse of this integration since the latter half of the eighteenth century to the disintegration of the ‘indigenous’ political order under the British colonialism and internal fragmentation among Christians owing to the ‘Western Christian’ missions (281), which resulted in the loss of their “honours” (290), engendering a conflictual relation between Hindus and Christians often leading to riots (312-314).

What Bayly’s account offers here is an opening and a possibility to understand ‘vernacular Christianity’ not as an extension of an always-already caste ridden Hindu society, and Syrian Christians not as essentially upper caste Christians; but, as a probable case, among others, that offers a critique of the paradigm of an a-historical caste-Hinduism as the only recognizable social, political and economic determinant in the region. Rather, Bayly shows that there was nothing static about the political and religious systems in South India, which were in constant flux, whose emergences owe to the genealogies of migrations, interactions of ‘indigenous’ power divinities, warrior cults and ‘Sanskritic’ divinities, militaristic and commercial operations of changing ‘regional’ polity as well as colonial invasions. Christianity and Islam emerged, differently, not simply through principles of ‘assimilation’ or ‘accommodation,’ but in dialogue with these warring forces, deploying “strategies of resistance” (4)—complimenting, complicating and contesting existing realms of the sacred and the sacrilege. However, there are two methodological problems arising out of Bayly’s work. One is the

essentialization of early Christians in the region as a homogenous community of Syrian Christians. That is, contrary to her own methodology that refused to take ‘Hindu’ for granted, Syrian Christians emerge as an a-historical category, that linearly progressed for almost fifteen centuries from the Apostle Thomas to the Portuguese mission, which then fragmented into different factions. Second is the consequent interpretation of this essentialized Christians as a traditionally high-ranking homogenous status group, even as she recognizes their “syncretic” nature that interpenetrated with warrior cults, goddess traditions and “Sanskritic” divinities, in order to elucidate her “integration” thesis in the pre-colonial period (319). These problems partly arise from her dependence on the European sources that re-presented ‘Syrian Christians’ to the world through this lens, corroborated by the ‘vernacular’ sources that were again discovered and translated as part of the Orientalist mission and continued by the nationalist project.⁴⁷ Hence, this thesis extends Bayly’s paradigm and tries to critically engage with this homogenization of Syrian Christians and their upper caste-ness itself as a product of a complex collaborative project of eighteenth and nineteenth century colonial and ‘native’ political-religious discourses.

Conscription

One of the most important interventions in studying the co-constitution of Christianity and caste in the Indian contexts comes from Sanal Mohan’s work *Modernity of Slavery*. Mohan closely follows Poykayil Yohannan, the founder of *Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha*,⁴⁸ and foregrounds Dalit Christianity as a critique of the limits of

⁴⁷ For instance, Bayly uses the Copper Plate Grants as an example of the resourceful past of Syrian Christians. However, in Chapter Three, I read this interpretation as an over-reading that retrospectively recovered an unquestionable caste status for Syrian Christians from time immemorial.

⁴⁸ Poykayil Yohannan was a key figure who ‘exited’ Syrian Christianity for its entrenched casteism even after conversion, founded his own Church *Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha*, and formulated a unique Dalit theology.

Christian political-theology's civilizational potential,⁴⁹ which ironically co-constituted Christianity and caste in the Indian contexts, explicitly re-presented by/in/through Syrian Christians of Kerala.⁵⁰ Thus, any critique of Syrian Christian as a caste-community needs to be accompanied by the deconstruction of the same. However, this cannot be achieved by giving in to the already available discourse of the Syrian Christian as an upper caste Christian, and then continuously problematizing the same, which only reproduces the same discourse, but by critically deconstructing their genealogies to actively un-inherit the caste history and reinscribing them as a community of converts, who then co(n)scripted its Brahmin origin through colonial apparatuses of ethnography, enumeration and historiography. Such a framework also allows to account for the community's minoritarian predicaments, despite upper caste claims.

Hence, it is my contention that a 'faithful' translation of Syrian Christian capital—social, political and economic—as caste-capital, while it provides most sought after explanation for several immediate historical problematics like caste practices among Syrian Christians or their privileged status in relation to other minor communities, in effect leaves out the untranslatable residues of their Christian elements and undermines the complex communitarian negotiations across periods, with changing power dynamics in the region, which engendered the contexts to generate that capital in the first place, and

⁴⁹ Similarly, Nathaniel Roberts studies Pentecostal Christianity among 'slum dwellers' of Tamil Nadu in order to understand Dalit religiosity as that which foregrounds "the twin notions of care and the human." He argues that since belonging itself was 'foreign' for them in their own land, owing to their caste-class baggage, they perceived themselves as belonging to the world of humans—who are in similar state—who are "foreign in the sense of existing beyond national boundaries (*To be Cared For*, 6).

⁵⁰ Drawing from David Scott, Sanal Mohan argues that slave castes in Travancore, particularly Pulaya and Paraya converts to Protestant Christianity were conscripts of modernity, in whom Christian missionary discourses engendered self-awareness and consciousness of their caste-slavery and thus emerged a new subjectivity. The modern Enlightenment ethos of equality, freedom and self-respect inculcated by these missionary discourses, coupled with literacy and education, along with Christian work ethic enabled the slave castes to move beyond missionary imaginations and creatively use the same for anti-caste struggles. According to Mohan, slave caste converts were not just passive receptors of this missionary modernity as they creatively critiqued the continuing caste experiences in Christianity through impressions of their own forms of Christianity that expressed their Dalit-Christian subjectivity, as exemplified by Poykayil Appachan (as he was fondly called) and *Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha* (PRDS) (*Modernity of Slavery*, 153-208).

problematically reinstates caste as the only social, political and economic determinant in the region. Such a framework pre-emptively forecloses the possibility of conceiving relations of community and capital that emerged not necessarily from outside, but at least from the hyphenated space in the caste-capital of caste-community. Therefore, taking one step outside, and thereby one step ahead, as MSS Pandian reminded (“One Step Outside Modernity”), moving away from the discourses that understands Syrian Christians as always upper caste and already privileged,⁵¹ I explore the possibility that major minor communities like Syrian Christians were conscripted as caste-communities through colonial, ‘native’ and ‘nationalist’ collaborative projects, in order to universalize/secularize the logic of caste-capital for an emerging modern Indian nation state, which will be examined in Chapter Three.⁵²

⁵¹ For instance, Sonja Thomas in *Privileged Minorities: Syrian Christianity, Gender and Minority Rights in Postcolonial India* adopts an intersectional approach to understand how “a dominant-woman paradigm overlays and interacts with dominant minority culture, separating women into their respective communal groups and disconnecting the political struggles of vulnerable minorities from each other” (7) by examining diverse aspects of Syrian Christians, ranging from their ‘dress culture,’ ‘mythhistories,’ as well as selected gender and minority rights discourse. She uses the category of ‘privileged minority’ in order to challenge the equation between numerical subordination and political vulnerability (15). The shift from “Chattas to Chruidars” (former being the traditional dress of Nasranis and the latter kind of ‘modern Indian’), which also happens to be the title of her doctoral thesis, marks the transition from communal to national clothing, which limits the intersectionality of diverse communities. She explores intersectionality of religion, caste, class, colour, gender and sexuality by analysing community ‘mythhistories’ that, according to her, allows Syrian Christians to claim an Aryan racial identity. Further, echoing the Marxist discourse, Thomas reads the Liberation Struggle of 1959 in Kerala, that brought down the first democratically elected communist government in the world itself, as a communal movement that overturned the secular credentials of an emerging nation. Such a reading fails to account for the complexities of negotiations between the state and the minoritized community, which can only be communal, the moment it exceeds its role assigned by the state. The ‘privilege’ and ‘dominance’ of Syrian Christians, for Thomas, seems to be a natural extension of their upper caste and upper class-ness, which this thesis tries to problematize.

⁵² The figure of the “conscript” was developed by Talal Asad, as a category to analyse the predicament of modern societies directly and/or indirectly shaped by the European imperialism and industrial capitalism, in his essay in honour of the anthropologist Stanley Diamond (“Conscripts of Western Civilization”). Asad observes that “social and cultural variety everywhere increasingly responds to, and is managed by, categories brought into play by modern forces” and therefore we are its “conscripts” and not necessarily volunteers (333) of the same. So much so that, even the resistances to this conquest, being the by-product of European modernity, were determined to an extent by the conditions produced by the same, like the nationalist movement in India demanding secular, modern, independent nation (339). That is neither to echo ‘nativist’ scholars who glorify pre-colonial societies nor ‘modernist’ arguments that post-colonial societies are mere mimicry of European modalities, but to acknowledge that the playing field has been fundamentally altered.

However, conscript—meaning ‘recruit’ or ‘someone enlisted for service’—does not necessarily imply lack or loss of agency for the conscripted, as shown by David Scott in *Conscripts of Modernity*⁵³ and Sanal Mohan in *Modernity of Slavery*, albeit differently; former in the context of slavery in the Black Atlantic and the latter in the contexts of “slave castes” in the princely state of Travancore, a part of present-day Kerala. Reading Mohan and Scott in comparative perspectives allows to unentangle the ‘romance’ and the ‘tragedy’ of ‘colonial modernity,’ to borrow Scott’s own categories with which he explained the first and second editions of *Black Jacobins* respectively. Mohan elucidates how the anti-caste struggles in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries reinscribed the agency of slave castes as authentic, despite they being conscripts of colonial modern discourses, as they proactively rejected slavery in modern forms and struggled on their own terms for the Enlightenment values promised by the modern nation state (116-147). Thus for Mohan, “slave caste” struggles, though informed by missionary discourses and Enlightenment rationality, nevertheless embody an alternative “slave caste” modernity that enabled their pre-constituted will to resist caste slavery—‘modern’ and/or ‘premodern’ forms—and caste Christianity itself. That is, while the conditions of conscription may be pre-given, the consequences of conscription are agential and thus a testimony to their capacity, for which the conscripts have ethical-political responsibility.

⁵³ In a comparative reading of the first and second editions of CLR James’ *Black Jacobins*, David Scott, drawing from Talal Asad (“Conscripts of Western Civilization”), argues that there is a shift in James’ perspective from ‘romance’ to ‘tragedy.’ While the first edition romanticized the journey of Toussaint Louverture who from the suffering slave in a plantation became the quintessential anti-slavery revolutionary figure and finally an exile, the second edition had some additional paragraphs that reflectively reconfigured Louverture as a tragic hero whose unwavering belief in French revolutionary ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity transformed as uncompromising desire to belong to French nation, which led him to suppress and even eliminate any dissent, difference or separatist thoughts, which he genuinely believed to be in the way of his modern ‘civilizational’ goals (*Conscripts of Modernity*, 150-156). This, to Scott, is the paradox of conscription, and tragedy of Enlightenment.

Therefore, as David Scott, drawing from Michel Foucault,⁵⁴ seems to suggest, at a time when both anticolonial revolution and nascent national democracy are long past, it is important to examine the tragic paradoxes presented by the figure of conscripts of emerging nation, who found ‘modern’ answers to ‘premodern’ questions, which seemed to have created more problems rather than solutions, as both emerged in the conditions already created by modernity itself. Scott presents this paradox, which he identifies as the tragedy of Enlightenment, in the context of anti-slavery movements in the Black Atlantic, through the heroic figure of Toussaint Louverture, the anti-slavery leader. After tracing the romantic potential of Enlightenment ethos in inciting democratization, Scott goes on to problematize how Louverture’s ‘enlightened’ commitment to equality and freedom, and his unwavering desire for the ‘imagined community’ of nation, ironically suppressed differences in the new nation. In a way, the paradoxical conjuncture of ‘modernity of slavery’ and ‘slavery of modernity’⁵⁵ emerges as a “problem space” (*Conscripts of Modernity*, 4) in Scott. Such an analysis entails, to borrow from Foucault, historical enquiries, that are not directed towards retrospectively recovering the “essential kernel of rationality” that needs to be preserved for the future, but rather towards the “contemporary limits of the necessary,” that is, critically understanding what is not indispensable for our constitution as autonomous subjects (“What is Enlightenment?” 9).

⁵⁴ In his critique of Immanuel Kant’s extrapolation of Enlightenment as “man’s emergence from self-imposed nonage,” Michel Foucault emphasises the extent to which a type of philosophical interrogation—one that simultaneously problematizes man’s relation to the present, man’s historical mode of being, and the constitution of the self as an autonomous subject—is itself rooted in the logic of Enlightenment. Foucault stresses that what connects us with the Enlightenment is not faithfulness to its doctrinal elements, but rather the permanent reactivation of an attitude that is best described as “permanent critique of our historical era” (“What is Enlightenment?” 8). Foucault has critiqued the binary approach of present-day enquiries that take a ‘for’ or ‘against’ position towards the discourse of Enlightenment. He even finds inadequate the ‘dialectical’ approach that tries to sieve the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ elements of Enlightenment and proposes particular critical variants of Enlightenment as opposed to a universal one. Rather, he argues that what is important is to analyse “ourselves as beings who are historically determined, to a certain extent, by the Enlightenment” (9).

⁵⁵ MT Ansari, in one of our discussions, suggested that ‘modernity of slavery’ will be complicated when juxtaposed with ‘slavery of modernity,’ because a systematic translation of ‘modernity’ as the universal civilizational desire and destination for all, subsequently creates communities as ‘premodern,’ particularly Islam, as its other and outside.

This thesis examines Syrian Christians in Kerala as occupying such a problem space, symptomatic of communities whose conscription was/is crucial to the emergence of modern nation state, but paradoxically engendered the conditions of minoritization, for themselves as well as for others, that they have to continuously ‘supplement’ their perceived ‘lacks’ with ‘excesses,’ only to ensure their belongingness in the same nation that they co(n)scripted. For instance, MSS Pandian has engaged with the spiritual journeys of Vengal Chakkarai, a Tamil Christian convert from a non-Brahmin upper caste, who tried to Indianize his Christianity throughout his life, which gave rise to a mystical Hinduized Christianity, in order to come to terms with the impossibility of being a Christian and an Indian (Hindu) at once (“Nation as Nostalgia,” 5357). Chakkarai confined his Christian identity to the ‘private’ in order to become part of the nationalist movement and to become fully Indian. For him, being Christian and being nationalist was an im-possibility. Pandian observes that, for Chakkarai, “Only in its death, Christian community can reach the destination of nation” (5362). Critical of “extraterritorial patriotism” of Muslims (5361), uncritical of ‘Hindu India,’ and indifferent to anti-caste politics (5363), Chakkarai’s nationalism tried to emulate Indian nationalism with his non-interfering Christianity, which was accepted and appreciated in the nationalist circles.

However, Pandian skilfully presents an aberration in Chakkarai’s life when his nationalism could not compensate for his Christianity. That was the moment when Chakkarai questioned the inadequate reservation for non-Brahmins in electoral seats; at that very moment, his right to speak for non-Brahmins was immediately questioned by the (Hindu) nationalist, underscoring his conversion to Christianity, the very identity he had silenced for his nationalism. According to Pandian, “that was, for majoritarian nationalism, a moment of Chakkarai transgressing the role assigned to him in the nation-in-the-making ... [and at that very instance] Indian/Hindu nationalism recovered him as a

Christian and denied him the right to speak about and for the rest of the nation” (5363). Chakkarai’s attempt to invisibilize Christianity for the sake of nationalism made him a lone figure in both the Indian nation and the Christian community, as on the one hand it continued to produce residues of differences in the ‘secular’ (Hindu) India and on the other hand failed to resonate with other communitarian discourses and larger Christian/minor political. In a way, Pandian seems to be exposing how the very inclusion of Chakkarai into ‘secular,’ ‘modern,’ ‘nationalist’ frames paradoxically created the conditions for his exclusion. In Pandian’s account, however, Chakkarai/Christian does not take part in co-constituting the majoritarian nationalism, but is subsumed into an already constituted nationalism, which while explicating the im-possibility of his subjectivity, also invariably and problematically exonerates him from his ethical-political responsibility by dis-engaging with his agency/capacity to act. Therefore, this thesis locates Syrian Christians in their im-possibilities of being an outsider-insider within the (Hindu) nation state, by deconstructing the conditions of their conscription and by critiquing their continuing co-scription of the same.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ One intervention in this direction with respect to Syrian Christians in Kerala has been by J Devika and VJ Varghese in “To Survive or To Flourish? Minority Rights and Syrian Christian Community Assertions in Twentieth Century Travancore/Kerala.” Looking at community movements since 1930s through 70s, Varghese and Devika observe that Syrian Christians, without confining to any primordial identity, adopt different strategies while engaging with the state—colonial and postcolonial—thereby moving freely from “secular to non-secular, minoritarian to majoritarian and lawful to unlawful, with claims to a greater citizenship” (103), in order to facilitate not just their survival but capitalist flourishing (125). Equally problematizing attempts by the Travancore state during the colonial period and by Kerala state in the post-Independence period to define secularism as ‘Hindu’ majoritarian, and as separation of religion and state, respectively, as well as by Syrian Christian attempt to define the same as favouring multi-religious establishments, Varghese and Devika explore “contextual secularism” which takes a “critical position that neither capitulates to majoritarian understandings of the problem nor compromises on constitutional provisions for protection of minorities” (106), following Rajeev Bhargava (“Indian Secularism: An Alternative, Trans-cultural Ideal”). However, ‘contextual secularism’ does not address the question of power relation between nation state, majority and minority, as the power to contextualize secularism and determine the ‘principled distance’ to each community remains with the state, despite the context being already conditioned by the majority, and minority remaining as a ‘protected’ category within the conditioned context. Whereas the questions the ‘minor’ has been posing for so long seems to have been about the condition itself.

While sifting through various approaches to Christian question, it has been clear that a universalized Christian thinking is possible only by going along with the universal Christian discourse of ‘Western Christianity’ and ‘Christian West.’ Such a Christian thinking which has ‘pseudomorphosized’ as secular thinking has to be deconstructed, critiqued, anthropologized, particularized and probably even un-inherited in order to open the definite category of ‘the Christian’ to its own limits. Christianity which has exonerated itself from critical scrutiny, by subjecting everything else it encountered to criticism, has to be re-subjected to critique by its internal and external ‘others.’ While doing so, I have particularly foregrounded ‘Eastern Christianity,’ with its detriumphalist, deterritorial, decentralized, anti-authoritarian free tradition, as critique. However, I have also cautioned against renewed attempts to reterritorialize the same as either ‘lost’ Christianity or ‘promised’ Christianity and hence as a prescriptive alternative to ‘Western Christianity’ and its legacies. I have discussed Paulose Gregorios, Syrian Orthodox scholar-bishop from Kerala, who tried to actively forget/un-inherit the ‘Western pseudomorphosis’ of Christianity and re-inherit the ‘Eastern Christian’ genealogies. Hence, in the next Chapter, I try to deconstruct this ‘pseudomorphosis’ and critique the essentialized and homogenous Syrian Christianity that emerged in the interstices of ‘colonial Christianization’ and ‘native Hinduization.’

Chapter Two

Criss-crossing the Malankara Nasrani Jati¹

What is there then in the depths of our tradition, that is, in our own depths? What has been handed down to us by our own tradition from the depths of this storehouse of Christian self-evidence, which is so self-evident to us that we do not examine it more closely? (Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity*, 140)

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said, who has extensively reflected on the concept of ‘beginnings,’ observes that “there is no such thing as a merely given, or simply available, starting point: beginnings have to be made for each project in such a way as to enable what follows from them” (16). For this thesis, I have taken CE 1498 as a beginning point that led to the discursive formation of Syrian Christians as we understand today. 1498 marks the arrival of Vasco da Gama in Malabar, and whether or not he was looking for “Christians and spices,” it actually became an encounter with both,² which probably changed the course of history for both Europe and Malabar. This chapter engages with this encounter, particularly that between two distinct ‘Christianities’ in these two parts of the world,³ and its political-theological-economic (three aspects that are inseparably entangled) implications for both. By doing so, I hope to critique the self-evidentiality of Christianity in western Europe as the paradigmatic ‘universal religion,’ and to deconstruct

¹ Many of the early documents use *Jati* in order to imply group/collective/community and not necessarily caste. Christians, Muslims, Buddhists were referred to as Nasrani *Jati*, Mappila *Jati*, Baudha *Jati* and so on. Therefore, it may be interesting to examine the translation of *Jati* from community to caste, and Nasrani *Jati* becomes an important site for this enquiry as they underwent this transition, when Syrian Christians reconfigured themselves as a caste-community.

² The legend of the Prester John, for example, which is believed to have circulated throughout Medieval Europe, excited their search for a mighty Christian king ruling a vast kingdom, just outside their world, who could aid them with riches and army to crusade against their enemies, who were of course Moors or Muslims. Early stories pinned his kingdom to Greater India, while it gradually migrated to the Africa, and has finally found a resting place in and around Ethiopia! What fuelled this search was a supposed letter from Prester John himself to the Byzantine Emperor Manuel Comnenus, describing his glory and glamour and indeed his Christian faith (Brewer, *Prester John*, 68-90). The explorer, Duarte Barbosa, in his *Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar* describes Prester John’s kingdom in detail (19-20).

³ To be more precise, it is the second Portuguese Indian Armada under Pedro Alvares Cabral, no less a master of the Military Order of Christ, who makes the first contact with Malankara Christians, in 1500, when he moved to Cochin after waging war with Calicut.

the emergence of a historical Syrian Christian subjectivity in Kerala. The idea is not to pitch particular formations of Christianity against the ‘universal one,’ and thereby puncture the universal with the particular, but to punctuate the universal itself as only a particular form of utterance, the universalization of which was arguably a ‘violent’ act of translating differences into the sphere of particularity with an embedded universal logic.⁴

The chapter proceeds through a critical comparative reading of diverse texts—*Tuhfat ul Mujahiddin* (1583), *Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper* (1599), *Koonan Kurishu Sathyam* [Bent Cross Oath] (1653), *Varthamanappusthakam* [Book of News] (1785), *Niranam Granthavari* [Chronicles of Niranam] (circa 1770-1830), as well as selected Portuguese, Dutch and British colonial records to delineate the translation of heterogenous Malankara Nasranis to a homogenous *Suriyani Christiani* [Syrian Christian]. What is attempted is a criss-crossing—cross-reading, cutting a-cross, crossing over—of these otherwise linearly arranged divergent con-texts, in order to analyse the (dis)continuous emergence of *Suriyani Christiani* (Syrian Christian) as an anti-‘colonial Christian’ consciousness in response to ‘Western Christianization’ and ‘Hinduization,’ in

⁴ Etienne Balibar has deeply engaged with the notion of universal and argues against understanding universal and particular as binary opposites. Rather, he argues that every universal is only and always a particular, and every particular already has a universal logic to it. Particularity is a way to classify ‘differences’ by giving them a universal logic. Because it is ‘difference’ that becomes a problem, that which resists, that which is an aberration and that which needs to be kept in check by categorizing them into comprehensible particular units which has a logic of universality binding them. Balibar observes: “by a sort of tragic fate of communities—the moment when they come closest to instituting universality, inventing for the universal an original historical or cultural language... is also the moment when they once again experience their particularity or finitude, as the other side of their claim to universality, the mark of the internal contradictions that might lead them to collapse. To utter the universal, or, more precisely, to utter it ‘for all,’ *sub specie universitatis*, is by the same token, to determine it and thus to particularize it. Inversely due to the fact that the particularity of a determinate utterance of the universal does not exist in ‘itself,’ but only for *another*, in a conflictual relation or an essential process of *scission*, there is in the particularity *some universal* which exceeds it” (*Citizen Subject*, 164). And finally, for him, the quest for universality ultimately leads the subject back to “*noncommunity* made up of incommunicable individualities: the ‘abstract person’ under the law of the State” (164). See also, Balibar, *On Universals: Constructing and Deconstructing Community* for a detailed analysis.

what can be loosely mapped as Travancore-Cochin regions.⁵ However, the chapter also elucidates that the very nomenclature ‘Syrian Christian,’ with its particular-universal (or vice versa) significations, becomes a historical category in the hands of colonial historians, hand in hand with regional elites, starting from the Dutch period, who have constructed a monolithic Syrian Christian subject with a beginning, middle and end, through historiography, ethnography and enumeration, against her own genealogy of multiple beginnings. Such a re-presentation has obliterated the dynamicity of a community that presented itself as a critique of changing ‘colonial Christian’ regimes, and emerging ‘caste-Hindu state.’ These con-texts, which are otherwise in-comparable due to their spatial and temporal locations, are juxtaposed in comparative perspective, in order to expose a presently essentialised ‘Syrian Christian’ to its own limits. Translation is thus central to the chapter, not only because most of the texts are accessed in translation, but because it brings out the “translational genealogy of the subject,”⁶ which focuses more on the untranslatability of differences in-comparison. This opens new perspectives to understand Syrian Christian negotiations in the contemporary times, which will be explored in the subsequent chapters. Hence, what is attempted here is to argue the need for genealogical—fragmented, discontinuous, disrupted, heterogenous—rather than historical—linear, continuous, progressive, homogeneous—understanding of

⁵ In the chapter, ‘region,’ ‘regional,’ etc, refer to the dynamic spatiality of pre-colonial Kerala, then loosely consisting of Travancore-Cochin-Malabar provinces, which existed before that as numerous principalities called *swaroopams*, though most of the discussion pertains to Travancore-Cochin regions, as that is the primary contact zone between ‘colonial Christianity’ and ‘vernacular Christianity,’ owing to the density of population of Christians in these regions. However, this is not to give any finality to the geography, which was constantly under erasure, as the boundaries were very much entangled. See, Raju, *Petals of the Self-Formed: Antecedents of Travancore Kingdom* for a detailed analysis of pre-colonial Kerala’s administrative units.

⁶ In her “Foreword” to Etienne Balibar’s *Citizen Subject*, Emily Apter argues that Balibar builds a “translational genealogy of the subject that rivals Foucault’s epistemological genealogy of modern subjectivity... by rewriting concept-philosophy along the axis of mistranslation and endless retranslation” (ix). According to her, Balibar “turns nubs of untranslatability into sites of resistance to any model of absolute knowledge.... Untranslatability uses linguistic difference and the incommensurability among languages to question the universalism of any univocal idea of the subject, identifying instead singular subjects in singular texts, idioms, diction and words” (x). See also, Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* for her conceptualization of untranslatability.

Syrian Christian subjective formation. Genealogy, as Michel Foucault observes, “does not oppose itself to history,” rather it “opposes itself to the search for ‘origins’” (“Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” 140). It recognizes the events of history and dispel the chimeras of origin (144), through an analysis of ‘descent’—traces of numberless beginnings—and ‘emergence’—not as the final term of development, but as a moment of arising in a series of subjugation, thereby re-establishing the various systems of subjection (148).⁷

Genealogies of Christianity

In 1778, during the transition phase from the ‘peaceful’ Dutch period to the British era, following an in-famously violent Portuguese phase, a small delegation of ‘Malankara Nasranis’⁸ set out on a journey to meet the Queen of Portugal and the Pope in Rome. I will be traveling along this journey using the twentieth century versions of the Malayalam travelogue titled *Varthamanappusthakam*, ‘originally’ recorded by one of the delegates, Paremmakkal Thoma Kathanar, around 1785. The journey was mostly by sea, taking the four delegates⁹ across four continents¹⁰—Asia, Africa, South America and

⁷ “Traditional history” functions to “compose the finally reduced diversity of time into a totality fully closed upon itself” and “encourages to subjective recognitions and attributes a form of reconciliation to all the displacements of the past,” and “implies the end of time, a completed development” with an “apocalyptic objectivity” from a “suprahistorical perspective” (Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” 152). It reduces everything to its lowest common denominator (157). Whereas “effective history” differs from “traditional history” in being without constants. It introduces discontinuity into our very being (154). It confirms our existence among countless lost events, without landmark or a point of reference (155). Genealogy, according to Foucault, exposes history to its own limits, as it brings out contradictions rather than exact essence of things, ‘adulteration’ rather than purest possibilities, thereby risking rather than protecting identities (142).

⁸ As already explained in the Introduction, Malankara Nasrani was and is still an endonym used by a group of Christians in the current geographical region of Kerala, earlier constituted of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. ‘Malan-kara’ is interpreted as ‘land of pepper’ and ‘land of mountains’ depending on ‘mala’ being interpreted as ‘spices’ of which pepper was prominent, or ‘mountain.’ Nasrani could be a derivative of Arabic word Nasara used to refer to followers of Jesus of Nazareth. Today, Malankara Nasrani and Syrian Christian have become one and the same, a synecdochic substitution which this chapter problematizes.

⁹ The travellers included Kariyatil Joseph Malpan, Paremmakkal Thoma Kathanar who is also the author of *Varthamanappusthakam*, Malayil Chacko and Panchasarappalakkal Maathu, the last two selected by the Malankara Church for joining the Propaganda College at Rome. Initially there were 20 delegates apart from these four, but rest of them had to return from Tharanganpady, due to shortage of money, as there were unprecedented delays due to on-going Anglo-French war.

Europe—in about a period of eight years and finally returning in 1786. The intention of the journey was manifold: to request the Pope/Queen of Portugal to allow a regional rebel faction among Christians to pledge allegiance to the Roman Catholic Christianity, to petition for the establishment of an independent and autonomous Malankara Church governed by ‘native Heads,’ and to petition against the Latinization of liturgy, thereby asserting the community’s Syriac-ness.

In order to contextualize the journey, it is important to remember that we have crossed a tumultuous century, which has witnessed in-tense engagements between minor communities in the region and the Portuguese, before reaching this moment/movement of 1778. The fifteenth and the sixteenth century witnessed Papal Bulls, one after the other, ‘granting’ the Portuguese suzerainty over land and sea, thereby claiming sovereignty over every territory that they ‘discover.’¹¹ The Papal Bulls “Romanus Pontifex” (1454), “Aeterni Regis” (1481), and “Inter Caetera” (1493) granted the kings of Portuguese the right to appropriate the territories they discover in their oceanic explorations, symptomatic of European Christianity (I would add, that particular European Christianity which was Romanized) taking the path of “a true juridico-political institution that factually and legally (one might add historically and philosophically as well) grants itself autonomy and secures and militarizes borders and appropriates for itself the shared substance it sees itself as given and as being made of” (Anidjar, *Blood*, 60). “They are the proprietors of themselves,” Anidjar remarks (60). As a result, the always-already autonomous communities and territories that the Portuguese/Roman Catholic Christianity encountered in their journey outside western Europe were a challenge not only to their desired economic monopoly, but also to their ambitious geo-theo-political sovereignty.

¹⁰ The journey began on 7 May 1778 from Neendur and proceeded to Rome via Lisbon. The route-map of the journey roughly was Neendur-Udayagiri-Thoothukudi-Nagapattanam-Tharanganpaadi-Chennai-Benguela-Baya-Lisbon-Jenoa-Rome.

¹¹ See, “Papal Encyclicals,” [The Papal Encyclicals Online](#).

The extreme violence attributed to the Portuguese period ought to be understood in the context of this bizarre but ‘genuine’ belief in their ‘rightful’ ownership of the globe!¹² I read Kathanar’s journey to Rome as retracing Gama’s routes to Malabar, and thus the Portuguese/Roman Catholic Christianity’s way to Malankara, in order to redo, if not undo, what transpired three centuries ago. In order to analyse the travelogue and the travel itself, it is imperative to travel back in time to the sixteenth century when Europe, suddenly awake from its contested slumber of the supposed ‘Dark Ages,’ came across civilizations and even Christians outside itself, as it crossed oceans. I take a particular event called *Udayamperoor Sunnahadose* or the Synod of Diamper as a representational site of this encounter.

**Religionizing Christianity/Christianizing Religion:
*Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper***

On 20 June 1599, about a hundred years after the arrival of the Portuguese in the Malabar Coast, a Synod of Malankara Church was held at Diamper in Cochin, under the leadership of Alexio de Menezes, the Portuguese Archbishop of Goa. The Synod was attended by “all the priests and curates of the bishopric; and the procurators of all the towns and corporations in the same, with great numbers of other persons belonging to the said church” (Zacharia, *Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper*, 73). The objective of the Synod was adulation of the Christian (read Roman Catholic) faith, the expulsion of heterodoxies within ‘vernacular Christian’ communities and the purgation of false doctrines from their texts. In addition, the ‘different’ affiliations of Christian communities

¹² To draw a parallel, Sebastian Prange (*Monsoon Islam*), while analyzing the tense relations between Muslims and the Portuguese in Malabar, identifies trade and economic monopoly, rather than socio-religio-politics, as the nucleus of the ensuing friction. He traces the “interaction of these ordinary Muslims ... with non-Muslim societies” with emphasis on “the spread of Islam through the agency of Muslim merchants” and the “effects on Islam of their interaction with non-Muslim societies” (3). The focus of this chapter, however, is the effects of ‘non-Western Christian’ communities in shaping the ‘Western-Christian West,’ following their encounter with the same.

in the region ('vernacular-cosmopolitan' elements owing to regional influences and relation to the Persian Church/Church of the East) were to be sublated as filiation to the 'universal' Christian Church that pledged obedience to the Pope. The Synod began by asking:

... *does it please you*, that for the Praise and Glory of the holy and undivided Trinity, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and for the increase and exaltation of the catholic faith, and the Christian religion, of the inhabitants of this bishopric, and for the destruction of the heresies and errors which have been sown therein by several heretics and schismatics, and for the purging of the books from the false doctrines contained in them, and for the yielding of obedience to the supreme Bishop of Rome, the universal Pastor of the church, and the successor in the chair of St Peter, and vicar of Christ upon Earth, from whom you have for some time departed, and for the extirpation of simony, which has been much practiced in this bishopric, and for the regulating of the administration of the holy sacraments of the church, and the necessary use of them, and for the reformation of the affairs of the church and the clergy, and the customs of all the Christian people of this diocese, we should begin a diocesan Synod of this bishopric of Serra? They answered, *It pleaseth us*. (75; emphasis mine)

What is ironic is that the historic Synod, which disrupted the course of Christian community in the region forever, was itself held in Portuguese and was available to the 'local' attendees in an instantaneously translated Malayalam by an interpreter chosen by Menezes. That is, both the parties had no idea of what each other was uttering! It was very much in line with the way colonialism and 'Western Christian' imperialism unfolded across time and space. The Synod itself was conducted based on two 'briefs' from the Pope Clement VIII in the Portuguese language, "being *faithfully* translated into the

Malabar tongue, were immediately read, and received with that reverence and obedience that was due to them” (74; emphasis mine). And “seeing he [Menezes] had but little knowledge of the Malabar tongue, it was necessary for him to have some *faithful* person, to relate truly in the congregations what he should say, or what should be spoke to him” (74; emphasis mine). Subsequently, Jacob, a priest well-skilled both in the Portuguese and the Malabar tongue was charged with the office of the interpreter to “truly and exactly relate all that should be said by his lordship, or any other person in the Synod, without any *addition* or *diminution*” (74; emphasis mine). Francisco Roz and Antonio Toscano, two Portuguese prelates were entrusted to oversee the reading of all the decrees and determinations of the Synod in the regional congregations, “which were to be in the Malabar tongue” (74).

The Synod identified the Christianity which was already practiced in the region as pagan and heretic, and thus essentially un-Christian or insufficiently Christian. Therefore, “the oath of the faith” made publicly by the archbishop in the beginning of the Synod 1) condemned the diabolical and perverse heresy of Nestorius¹³ supposedly followed by the ‘vernacular Christians’ (Zacharia, *Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper*, 80), 2) rejected all those who ignorantly teach that there was one law of St Thomas and another law of St Peter (81), because Apostle Thomas was the patron saint of ‘vernacular Christians,’ 3) anathematized the Patriarch of Babylon and cut off any ties with him and his Church (81), because Malankara Christians had theological and ecclesiastical relations with the Church of the East. This urge to sever the ‘vernacular Christianity’ of its transregional links, particularly Persian, is not just an instantaneous reaction, but again symptomatic of the centuries-old larger and growing rift between ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’

¹³ Nestorius was a fourth century Christian theologian from Constantinople whose Christology was controversial and rejected by the major Christian Councils of the fourth and the fifth centuries. He was declared a heretic and his teachings blasphemous.

Churches in Europe.¹⁴ It is this ‘Eastern Christian’ cosmopolitanism of the ‘vernacular Christian’ community that made it ‘aberrant’ before the ‘Western Church.’ Therefore, in the name of ‘vernacular Christians,’ Archbishop Menezes swore true obedience to “the Pope, the Roman Bishop, the successor of the blessed prince of the Apostles, St Peter, and *vicar of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth, the head of the whole Church on earth, and the father, prelate and pastor of all Christians*” (80; emphasis mine). Interestingly, the oath itself was again professed in Portuguese by Menezes, and Arkadiyakkon (Archdeacon) George, the regional Head of the Christian community, who did not know the language, was made to repeat a translated version of the oath in the “Malabar tongue” (81).

As is evident from the above excerpt, translation was foundational to both the imagined community and the communitarian imagination resulting from the encounter. In other words, the transformation that marked this rupture was also translational in nature. I further argue that what was translated in the Synod was not just the proceedings, but (Western) Christianity itself as the paradigmatic religion, and in extension religion itself as Christian. It was Roman Catholicism/Latin Christianity that translated itself as the paradigmatic ‘Christianity’ and in extension the ‘Universal Church,’ by obliterating the strands of Christianity in the Europe itself,¹⁵ let alone those outside of Europe. It is ironic

¹⁴ Due to irreconcilable theological, ecclesiastical and political differences, ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ Church parted ways in 1054 in what is known as the ‘East-West schism.’ Today, ‘Western Church’ denotes various Churches across the globe that accepts the Pope as the canonical and administrative Head, whereas ‘Eastern Church’ is a fellowship of autocephalous Churches across the globe that are canonically and administratively independent. See, Editors, “East-West Schism: Christianity,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica* for details.

¹⁵ It is possible to read Pope extending his powers outside Europe and imagining a global Christendom, as an immediate response to the fraught European milieu, where his political and theological sovereignty was challenged and defied, with the beginnings of the Reformation of the Catholic Church. For instance, the Council of Constance (1414-1418), held at Germany, condemned Jan Hus, one of the earliest reformers/critics of the Catholic Church, and ordered to burn him at the stake for blasphemy. The same council declared John Wycliffe, who advocated the translation of the Latin Vulgate Bible to ‘vernacular’ languages, as a heretic and ordered to burn his writings, as well as exhume his bodily remains from the church ground to be burnt. William Tyndale was similarly executed in 1536, and his body burnt at the stake

that while the translation of the Latin Bible, and thus ‘vernacularization’ of the Word, initiated a fragmented Christianity inside Europe, the same translation became an act of bringing Christianity outside Europe into its fold. It is this translated Christianity that was engaged in converting itself as the absolute sovereign Christendom through the colonial territorial expansion. This singular act of translation/conversion was completed with the ‘addition’ of the ‘internal enemies,’ like the Malankara Christians, (like Jews in the European context) who could still ‘become religion’ through conversion, and ‘diminution’ of ‘external enemies’ like Muslims, who could never become religion.¹⁶ Therefore, in this context, conversion itself becomes an act of translation. In this singular act of translation/conversion, ‘Western Christendom’ was signifying itself as *the* religion, thereby re-signifying everything else it encountered outside itself as not-yet religions, which therefore had to be either appropriated through inquisition or eliminated through crusade. Therefore, in a sense, Christianity was translating/transforming ‘religion’ itself, thereby becoming the paradigmatic religion. To put it simply, which makes it even more complex, the Synod of Diamper was the culmination of a translational process by which the Pope tried to convert Christianities that he encountered outside Rome—which were considered as internal problems of Christianity—into Catholicism qua western European Christianity, and thereby ‘religion.’

for translating the Bible, following Martin Luther’s German Bible. It is therefore ironic that Catholic clergies were translating Bible to the vernacular outside Europe, while burning those engaged in the same act inside Europe. It is also the time when the doctrine of the ‘Divine Right of King’ began to gain strength, which further reduced the Pope into the ‘private’ and the religious/theological, and displaced his ‘political’ sovereignty, thereby establishing the division between sacred and the secular.

¹⁶ Scholars have argued in the European context that the conception of ‘enemy’ was at the centre of the imagined ‘Christian West.’ It proceeded by identifying the Jew as the enemy internal to Christianity/Europe and Islam as the enemy external to itself. However, as the history of ‘conversos’ depict, even after conversion, a Jew still had to constantly prove his/her ‘true’ religiosity. See, Carl Schmitt’s *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* for the conception of sovereignty in relation to the figure of ‘enemy’ and Gil Anidjar’s *The Jew, The Arab: A History of the Enemy* for a re-reading of Schmitt’s conception of enemy.

Having said that, I will be accessing this sixteenth century event through a twentieth century Malayalam version of the sixteenth century *Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper*, translated by Scaria Zachariah (henceforth *Acts and Decrees*). Hence, at no point, the sixteenth century context, the sixteenth century text and the twentieth century text are conflated but are presented as an argument for multiple translations/transformation as intrinsic to the process. *Acts and Decrees* is a document almost in the form of minutes of the Synod, as it details the proceedings of the Synod as well as its decisions, in Portuguese as well as ‘old Malayalam.’ It was translated to ‘modern Malayalam’ by Scaria Zachariah in 1994. A discussion of the *Acts and Decrees* entails at least four purposes—1) to re-present the con-texts of Malankara Christianity before the Synod, as there is a dearth of documentation from earlier periods; 2) to deconstruct the *mondialatinization*¹⁷ (Derrida, *Acts of Religion*) of ‘vernacular religiosities’ after the Synod; 3) to delineate the ‘Western-Christian West’s’¹⁸ desire for an absolute theo-political sovereignty; and 4) to foreground the clash between entangled ‘re(li)gional’ sovereignties of Malankara/Malabar and the absolute sovereignty of the Portuguese/Roman Catholic Church. According to the *Acts and Decrees*, the Synod had decreed a set of texts that were followed by the ‘vernacular Christian’ community as blasphemous,¹⁹ forbade all Christians from reading them, and directed that they be

¹⁷ Derrida’s notion of ‘globalatinization’ is already discussed in Chapter One.

¹⁸ In the chapter, neither ‘West’ nor Christianity is considered as monolithic. I particularly use ‘Western-Christian West,’ than ‘Christian West,’ to suggest that Christianity that determined the ‘West’ was predominantly western European, and there are other strands of Christianity in direct conflict with this ‘Western Christianity,’ within Europe itself, which I am forced to term ‘Eastern’ in this chapter, for lack of a better term. ‘West’ here denotes western Europe that increasingly determined Christianity, and ‘Western Christianity’ denotes Roman Catholic Christianity and later Protestant Christianity that determined ‘West,’ a phenomenon exemplifying “nation and religion emerging as co-constitutive *in their distinctiveness*” (Anidjar, *Blood*, 88). Christianity in Kerala, owing to its unapologetic af-filiation to the Church of the East that dissociated with ‘Western Christianity’ in the ‘East-West Schism’ of the eleventh century is conceptualized in the chapter as ‘Eastern Christian.’

¹⁹ “The Infancy of our savior” or “The History of our Lady,” “The Book of John Barialdan,” “The Procession of the Holy Spirit,” “Margarita Fidei” or “The Jewel of Faith,” the book of the “Fathers,” the book of “Life of Abbot Isaias,” the book of Synods, the book of Timothy the Patriarch, “Letter of the Lord’s-day,” “Maclamatas,” “Uguarda” or “The Rose,” “Camiz,” “Menra,” the book of Orders, the book of

destroyed (Zacharia, 98-103).²⁰ A genealogy of these texts points to the transregional ‘Eastern’ inter-textual universe that was integral to Christianity in the region. The presence of these erased textualities speak volumes about the trans-regionality of Christianity in the region before the ‘universalizing’ mission. *Paalpusthakam*, an astrological calendar was one such book. Though such astrological practices, like predicting good/bad times for events, belief in fate, omen, etc, definitely had ‘local’ influences, one recently discovered version of this book is also interpreted as a translation of a Syrian calendar (Thomas, *Niranam Granthavari*, 240). That is, the censored textual universe was simultaneously constituted of ‘local’ and global’ intertextual traces. Similarly, *Parisman* or Persian Medicine that contained directions for countering sorceries, magic, witchcraft and misfortunes was another among the banned books (Zacharia, *Acts and Decrees*, 103). In addition, *Acts and Decrees* condemned the Syriac version of the Bible based on the *Peshitta* Bible, believed to have been given by the Church of the East to the community, and commanded that “errors in the Syriac Scriptures to be corrected and omissions to be supplied” (89). It also commanded the ‘vernacular Christian’ community to sever all affiliations to the Persian Church, Nestorian beliefs and the Patriarch of Babylon (92-93). Francisco Roz, a Jesuit priest, was subsequently conferred with the responsibility to translate the Bible anew, using the *Vulgate* Latin edition as a source, as part of Latinizing the diverse ‘vernacular-cosmopolitan’ textualities existing in the community. Even the Roman/Latin mass had to

Homilies, “An Exposition of the Gospels,” the book of Hormisda Raban, the book of Lots, the book of Parisman or Persian Medicine were among the books identified as blasphemous (Zacharia, *Acts and Decrees*, 98-103).

²⁰ Many of them have been rediscovered by an on-going project *SRITE*, “The Project for Preserving the Manuscripts of the Syrian Christians in India,” that collects, digitizes and translates early Christian manuscripts—available in Syriac, Garshuni-Malayalam or Syriac-Malayalam, as well as in variants of Malayalam from different periods. See, Perczel, “Have the Flames of Diamper Destroyed All the Old Manuscripts of the Saint Thomas Christians?” This project is just one example of the rekindled desire among the contemporary Syrian Christian community to re-claim the multifarious lineages, especially Syrian, as opposed to the more recent Portuguese or the Dutch or the British, which has a different history that will be discussed in the course of the chapter.

be translated in place of the Syriac liturgical tradition (138). The whole process is exemplary of the attempt to transcend plurality immanent to ‘vernacular Christianity’²¹ and translate it as *the religion of the Book*,²² which itself was institutionalized through a long process of selection and omission between the third and the fifth centuries, by eliminating books and religiosities, including multiple ‘Christianities.’²³ While the sixteenth century Europe was fractured with the waves of Reformation and ‘vernacularization,’ with the translation of the scripture to English, thereby questioning the sanctity of Latin as the sacred language, Catholic Christianity attempted Latinization/Romanization of Christianities that it encountered outside itself. While the act of translation actually pluralizes the text, these twin moves to make the Latin *Vulgate* as the ‘true’ source text and the translatable language, thereby depriving all other languages the possibility of being a source, and simultaneously rendering these other languages as untranslatable languages, works against the spirit of translation itself.²⁴

²¹ Many scholars have already identified different strategies adopted by different missions, of the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British, as it encounters ‘non-Western Christian’ communities in colonies. Most researched and widely accepted strategy is ‘accommodation’; and recent scholarship (Xavier, *Catholic Orientalism: Portuguese Empire, Indian Knowledge (16th-18th Centuries)*) has recovered ‘natives’ as active agents, and not just passive receptors, of these strategies. Nevertheless, I find the ‘accommodationist’ and ‘orientalist’ frames, how much ever ‘decolonized,’ insufficient to conceptualize the ‘local’ untranslatables that resisted any kind of assimilation, which called for these newer strategies in the first place. ‘Accommodation’ could/should be read as a strategy adopted to coopt differences for maintaining power, thereby thwarting the always-already sovereign communities from resisting in order to become free. As ‘Western Christian’ missions forced themselves to orientalize and accommodate communities outside Europe, owing to their autonomous, if not sovereign, dispositions, for the sake of a Christian Empire, communities continued to exceed this symbiotic Christianity. This chapter is an attempt in this direction.

²² It is important to locate these homogenization efforts of Roman Catholicism outside Europe, which is in line with the Council of Trent, in the larger ambit of its responses to the heterogenization happening in the Christian Europe following the Reformation. The period under study is marked by probably the greatest factionalism faced by the ‘Western Christendom’/Roman Catholic Church after the ‘East-West Schism’ of the eleventh century. The ‘plurality,’ here, refers to not just theological, but also doctrinal, ritualistic and ecclesiastical, not to mention geo-political, economic and social moorings of the same.

²³ For instance, two humungous volumes, *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures* (Meyer) and *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (Vermees), which contain recently discovered Gnostic texts, Apocryphal books, Gospels and manuscripts of scriptures that never made its way to “the Bible” brings out “the conflict between an integrality and disintegration” (Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 144) which is at the heart of Christianity, right from the beginning.

²⁴ The first Malayalam Bible by a ‘native’ priest, Philipose Ramban, had to wait till 1811.

What was undermined was the cosmopolitan textuality of Malankara Christianity, which bypassed Christianity in the ‘West’ by taking a different route, as can be elucidated through a brief discussion of the text “The Revelation of the Seraphic (or Fiery) Gregory (Gregorios Nuroño)” (henceforth “The Revelation”). A manuscript of this text condemned by Roman Christianity was recently discovered in the Syrian Orthodox monastery of Gethsemane Dayro, Kottayam, Kerala in 2005, under the project *SRITE*, “The Project for Preserving the Manuscripts of the Syrian Christians in India,” by Istvan Perczel who has digitized and translated the same to English. The colophon of the text says:

The grace of God be on those who listen to this [story], on those who read it, on those present and on those far away, and on the scribe, Mor Ivannios, the foreigner, Bishop of Niniveh, who translated it from the Arabic into Syriac in the church of St George in Koramattam, in the year 2000 of Greeks [CE 1689], in the month of Nisan, on the 24th day. May God have mercy on the departed of the scribe for the ages of ages. Amen. Amen. End. (Perczel, “The Revelation,” 346)

“The Revelation” is a theological text constituting a vision of Gregory about the life after death. What I am interested in is not the content, but the translational journey of the text. “The Revelation” is a prototypical witness to the diverse roots/routes of Christianity outside of its western European empire. According to the translator, this text was originally written in Syriac around seventh-eighth century at Edessa, which was then translated into Arabic at Cairo, following which the original Syriac text was lost. The Arabic text was later translated back to Syriac in 1689. A different version of the text copied by another scribe in 1880 has also been discovered, which was then translated into Malayalam. The journey of a text from seventh century Edessa to Cairo to Kerala through Syriac, Arabic, Malayalam and now English (with the recent translation by Perczel)

corresponds to the trans-regionality and ‘vernacular-cosmopolitan’ textuality embedded in the Christian genealogy of the region. Known as a text of Melkite origin, which has been translated for the Arab Christian community and probably other not-yet studied Christian communities, “The Revelation” reveals the possibility of an ‘Eastern Christian’ genealogy that complicates the oriental knowledge produced by ‘Western Christianity’ and ‘Christian West.’ The presence of multiple languages, multiple spatiality, multiple temporalities and multiple theologies, deconstructs any singularity, linearity and universality attributed to Christians in Kerala by modern historiography. This translational cosmology acts as a backdrop to this study as it opens unlimited possibilities to understand the emerging Syrian Christian subjectivity.²⁵

Further, *Acts and Decrees* opens up the repertoire of a religion and region that were co-constitutive of each other (that is, Christianity in the region before the Synod). This is evident from practices banned by the Synod as “heathenish”—belief in transmigration of souls (Zacharia, *Acts and Decrees*, 90); destiny; belief that everyone may be saved according to one’s own law (91); all forms of exorcism *but* those of Rome (161, emphasis mine); ‘heathen’ superstitions relating to propitious and unpropitious days for marriages (162). In addition, it emphasized celibacy of priests (164); forbade consanguineous marriage (174) and polygamy (178); condemned heathenish ablutions (188); prohibited from consulting witches and fortune-tellers; witchcraft workers and conjurors (205). All of these made them suddenly ‘insufficiently Christian’ and hence automatically (sub)human who required to be civilized and salvaged through Christianization/humanization. It is precisely these ‘heterogeneous/heterodox’ trans-

²⁵ There is a lack of old documents regarding Malankara Christianity and hence, constructing an archive poses huge methodological challenge. Projects like *SRITE*, through collecting, digitizing and translating ancient manuscripts and documents, is attempting to recover this ‘lost’ Christianity before ‘Westernization.’ However, I am not arguing for an ‘original’ or ‘pure’ Christianity, rather my argument is that Christianity in the region has multiple beginnings, ruptures, discontinuities and heterogeneity, rather than a single origin and linear history, and thus a genealogy of ‘becoming’ than ‘being.’

re(li)gional routes that made regional religiosities including Christianity the ‘enemy’ in the ensuing territorializing project of ‘Western Christian’ Europe. As a result, ‘vernacular Christians,’ who had their own different theological traditions and affiliations with ‘Christianities’ outside western Europe and associations with ‘vernacular religiosities,’ became the ‘internal enemy’ of *the* Christianity, their beliefs being blasphemous to Roman Catholicism/Pope and to the ‘universal Church.’ They became like the ‘conversos’ who had to constantly prove the ‘truth’ of being religious/Christian before the Inquisitors owing to their lack of ‘pure’ bloodline.

Subsequently, in this ‘Western Christian’ axiomatic of the ‘West,’ the Jews, Muslims and other non-Christians from the region became the ‘external enemy,’ who could never have *religion* and had to be eliminated in a Crusading spirit. Hence, *Acts and Decrees* tabooed any Judaic and Semitic practices followed among ‘vernacular Christians’ (179); banned heathen musicians and other pagans from remaining in church when the sacrament is administered (142); prohibited all priests from eating with infidels, whether heathens, ‘Mahometans,’ or Jews (162); forbade Christians from attending heathen festivities (204), thus alienating Christians from non-Christians in a ‘non-Christian land.’ More importantly, the Synod exhorted all ‘native Christians’ “to come and live in some village, or to build new villages with churches, that so they may live more civilly” away from its ‘enemies’ (213). That is to say, a ‘deflected’ notion of community²⁶ emerged, a community of those who share a common thing, with a drive to self-preserve, which was immune to everything that was outside itself, an outside that it

²⁶ New scholarship on ‘community’ (Roberto Esposito, Jean-Luc Nancy, Maurice Blanchot, Giorgio Agamben, to name a few; discussed in Chapter One) has argued that the notion of community as ‘a thing that belongs to its members’ is a deflection by itself. According to this deflected notion, what one has in common is proper only to those who belong to community. Thereby, the common is reduced to the realm of the proper. Subsequently, members of a community who have rights to common property, which itself is historically appropriated, immunize themselves from those excluded from this commonality. That is, community itself becomes an immunitarian paradigm, as that of ‘being’ and not of ‘becoming’ (Esposito, *Communitas*).

constructed and manifested in the figure of ‘enemy’(s). Such a deflected notion foregrounded a ‘common-being,’ instead of ‘being-in-common,’ as foundational to a communitarian experience. Nevertheless, these con-texts that can be delineated from a sixteenth century text also point to the heterogeneous civilizational routes of Christianity in the region, ranging from ‘Eastern Christian,’ Judaic, Islamic and ‘vernacular.’

Therefore, I read *Acts and Decrees*/Synod of Diamper as a single stroke of ‘Western Christendom’ to purge Christianity of both internal and external enemies through the covenant of a ‘universal Christian’ political-theology. In a way, then, it may be one of the earliest instances of ‘religionization’ of Christianity, and simultaneously Christianization of religion itself, unveiling outside the European context. One could argue that it is in encounter with its own internal and external enemies, within and without western European contexts, that Romanized Christianity configured itself as *the religion*—of sin and salvation—and in the same process assumed a universal prerogative that devalued all other religiosities. That is, there is a ‘transvaluation,’ or in Christian terms transubstantiation, of religion—what religion ought to be—which becomes a ‘faithful’ transliteration of centuries-old ‘Western Christian’ con-texts, be it the Inquisition against its ‘internal’ enemy or the Crusade against its ‘external’ enemy.

Hence, at another level, the *Acts and Decrees* reflects what Derrida later terms “globalatinization” (79), which he explains as “co-extensiveness of two questions (religion and worldwide Latinization)” (67). The attempt speaks of a familiar trajectory of ‘Western Christendom’ that was translating its own ‘vernacular-cosmopolitan’ con-texts into a meta-language of religion. In its singular imperial history, Latin Christianity/Roman Catholicism first incarnated as *the religion*, naming everything else it encountered as its enemies. These configured enemies—internal and external—had to transcend their differences, and reconfigure themselves into particularities that were

already translated into a universal language, in order to become *religion*. For instance, ‘vernacular Christians’ who accepted the Pope and the Catholicism after the Synod of Diamper were legitimized, despite their particularities in terms of practices and traditions, because these particularities were already translated in tune with the universal Christianity propagated by the ‘Western-Christian West.’ That is, they could be particular, as long as the particular speaks a universal language, but not different. This will be complicated further when I analyze *Varthamanappusthakam* later in the chapter. Derrida pushes this problem to argue that “the history of the word ‘religion’ should in principle forbid every non-Christian [‘non-Western Christian,’ if I may add] from using the name ‘religion,’ in order to recognize in it what ‘we’ would designate, identify and isolate there” (28). In the next two sections, I discuss two different con-texts in order to map two different responses, one by the enemy without and the other by the enemy within, to this ‘Western Christian’ territorialization in the region.

Emerging Christianity: Koonan Kurishu Sathyam

In order to elaborate the con-texts of the ‘enemy within,’ I focus on an event popularly known as *Koonan Kurishu Sathyam* or the Bent Cross Oath in 1653, which was briefly invoked in the Introduction.²⁷ In 1653, after half a century of the Synod of Diamper and the involuntary ‘conversion’ of Malankara Christians to Portuguese Christianity, a section of the ‘conversos’ (whose number varies from 1000 to 10,000 according to different accounts) held onto a cross in the church of Mattancherry, and took an oath to give up Roman Catholicism, defy the authority of the Pope and return to the ‘Eastern vernacular-cosmopolitan’ rites, liturgy and traditions. The story goes that they tied ropes onto the cross and held on the ropes because everyone could not touch the cross

²⁷ See, Pattapparambil, *Koonankurishu Shapatham: Karanavum Prathyakhathangalum* [Bent Cross Oath: Causes and Consequences] for a detailed description of the event.

together, and that the cross bent with the force of the collective pull. It is important to remember that the Dutch would overthrow the Portuguese monopoly in Kerala, a decade after *Koonan Kurishu Sathyam*, in 1663. That is to understand that the *Sathyam* took place in the context of the tug of war between the Portuguese and the Dutch which was already underway.²⁸ Hence, one of the earliest available documentations of this event appears in the letters by Jacob Canter Visscher, a Dutch official who served Cochin from 1717-1723, written to his friends at home, collected and translated from Dutch to English by Heber Drury as *Letters from Malabar*.²⁹ In one of his letters, Visscher reproduces a letter to him by Mar Gabriel, a bishop from the region, who recounts the *Sathyam* as the assertion of their ‘ancient’ faith:

... for about 55 years [after the Synod of Diamper] the Christians followed the same customs as the Portuguese. In the meantime a priest called Mar Matti came to Maliapore sent by the Patriarch. The Portuguese apprehended him and brought him into the city, and afterwards dragged him to the harbour and cast him into the water. On hearing this, the Christians of Malabar assembled in the church of Mar Tancheri, [Mattancherry] took counsel together, bound themselves by oath, and thus threw off the Portuguese yoke from their necks; having first written and signed a letter declaring that from that time forward and forever, they would have nothing more to do, for good or evil, with the Portuguese. (Visscher, *Letters from Malabar*, 108)

This ‘signed letter of declaration of faith’ has never been found to this day, and the *Sathyam* survives as a memory through oral narrations and later documentations. The

²⁸ The Portuguese-Dutch war in India was not an isolated event, but one in the chain of battles happening across the world, and particularly in Europe, between the Dutch East India Company and the Dutch West India Company against the Iberian Union in the beginning and the Portuguese Empire later, for trade monopoly over the sea.

²⁹ The *Letters from Malabar* is also important as it is one of the earliest instances of colonial classification of Christians in the region into Syrians, Latins and New Christians.

next account of the Oath can be found in *Niranam Granthavari*,³⁰ considered to be written during 1770-1830, which is a collection of chronicles by the *Arkadiyakkons* [Archdeacons] of Malankara Nasranis, documenting their day-to-day activities. It is in this version that the information about “holding on to the ropes” while taking the Oath appears (Thomas, *Niranam Granthavari*, 103). Hence, the memory of bending the cross seems to be appearing only a century later. However, historicity need not be measured against the written word, as the oblique between story/history/legend/myth etc, is already blurred. In any case, the historicity of the event is not the concern of this study as well, rather, the living memory of this moment is the point of enquiry here. What does a performative text like *Koonan Kurishu Sathyam* offer to the understanding of Malankara Christians, by translating the very utterance of an oath as an act of resistance?

I read *Koonan Kurishu Sathyam* or the Bent Cross Oath in 1653, as an emergence against the religionization/Christianization mission in order to reclaim their lost ‘vernacular Christianity.’ Michel Foucault interprets, “emergence” as the moment of arising; not the final event of a historical development, but current episodes in a series of subjugations. The analysis of emergence allows to delineate the “interaction of forces” and designates a “non-place” that is an endlessly “repetitive play of dominations,” always occurring at their interstices (Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” 145-150). It is only in reflective historical exercise a moment of arising becomes ‘the Event,’ by identifying a space-time of its origin, as a result of conscious decision, in order to recover the Event as the sudden outburst of an invisible part, which resulted in the formation of new subjectivities, or new ‘truths’ that were previously suppressed, and which thereby

³⁰ *Niranam Granthavari* is the name given to the published version of “Kaniyanthra Thaaliyola” [palm leaves of Kaniyanthra family] (Thomas, 24). *Granthavari* refers to a collection of manuscripts in palm leaves that are tied together.

initiates a radical change in the social order.³¹ However, understanding a particular moment of arising as the Event also gives an unwarranted finality to a moment. It does not account for the chance that the event has been already happening before and continues to happen after as well. Therefore, it is not the exactness of the event that is important, but the emergence of it. In the case of Malankara Christians, the cross has been bending from the moment of their encounter with the Portuguese, and therefore the naming of the emergence as Bent Cross Oath, and reliving the moment as the paradigmatic secessionist event is probably a historical exercise to straighten the cross which was already bent.

According to both accounts of Visscher and *Granthavari*, the immediate reason for this resistance movement/moment was the drowning of a Persian Bishop Ahatallah who was trying to visit the region in order to recover the ties with the ‘Eastern Churches’ (Thomas, *Niranam Granthavari*, 102-103; Kathanar, *Varthamanappusthakam*, 8; Aleyas, *Syrian Manual*, 286) by the Portuguese Inquisition at Goa. As already mentioned, the Portuguese had cut all ties of the Christianity in the region with Churches of the East after the Diamper Synod, and the Portuguese suzerainty over the sea allowed them to control the land as well. Therefore, this death—murder—marked the emergence of a renewed communitarian consciousness among the ‘vernacular Christians.’ The task of translation, argues Emily Apter, is “not the transference of roughly equivalent meanings from one language to another, but rather, bring out the untranslatable singularity, the ‘only once’ or singular occurrence of the subject enunciated by each articulation or text in its own language” (“Foreword,” *Citizen Subject*, ix). In its attempt to translate itself as the

³¹ See, Alain Badiou’s engagement with Gilles Deleuze on the conception of ‘event’ (“The Event in Deleuze”). While for Deleuze, “unlimited becoming becomes the event itself.... The event is always that which has just happened and that which is about to happen, but never that which is happening” (38). Whereas, for Badiou, “an event is never the concentration of a vital continuity, or the immanent intensification of becoming.... It is on the contrary, on the side of a pure break with the becoming of an object of the world, through the auto-apparition of this object. it is the supplementation of apparition by the emergence of a trace: what formerly inexisted becomes intense existence” (39).

absolute sovereign, as the ‘Universal Church,’ the Romanized Christianity did not eliminate, but brought out, the untranslatable singularity of Malankara Christianity. While the Romanization/Latinization may have translated certain differences of Christianity in the region into particulars that speak a universal language, the differences rooted in the heterogeneous genealogies of the community remained as excesses. The entangled sovereignties of the region and communitarian autonomies thus repressed, returned with the Bent Cross Oath. Hence, the Bent Cross Oath can be read as the retranslation of a Christian subjectivity that the Synod of Diamper tried to mistranslate. Apter makes a compelling argument that the process of ‘translating the untranslatables’ is a moment of conceptual ‘invention’ (“Foreword,” ix). While the Synod of Diamper attempted to inscribe a Christian subject in line with ‘Western,’ Latin and Roman Christianity, the Bent Cross Oath tried to re-inscribe a Christian subject that was antithetical to this inscription. As a result, there was a ‘conceptual invention’ of ‘Eastern Christianity,’ that was irreconcilable with the former, in the post Portuguese period. Therefore, I read this event of 1653 as the return of the repressed untranslatable elements in the translational process of 1599, with respect to the Christianity in the region.

What the Diamper Synod displaced and the Bent Cross Oath reclaimed was also the theological-political sovereignty of a ‘vernacular community.’ That is to emphasise the fact that what was unfolding was not just a tussle over ‘sacred’ which did not have any effect/affect by/on the ‘secular’ affairs. If anything, the ‘sacred’ and the ‘secular’ were co-constituting each other and hence to treat them as separate categories would be problematic. It can be gathered from the rather scant sources of the period that Christians in the region, like many other communities, possibly existed as decentralized, unstructured and federal communes with their own autonomous governing bodies headed by *Arkadiyakkon* (Archdeacon), who was displaced after the institutionalization of

Christianity that accompanied the Portuguese colonialism. According to the “Quilon Copper Plate Grants,” which will be critically discussed later in detail, gifted to the community members by ‘local’ rulers, some of the Christian communes even enjoyed juridico-political authority to settle their disputes as early as the ninth century (Varier and Veluthatt, *Tharisappally Pattayam*, 132). Antonio de Gouvea, chronicler of Alexio de Menezes (orchestrator of the Diamper Synod), who compiled his account of the Portuguese period in Malabar in 1603, translated by Pius Malekandathil to English, records that though Christians were subject to ‘Hindu sovereigns’ in general affairs, they were still ruled by their Bishop in social and spiritual matters (Gouvea, *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*; Moens, “Memorandum on the Administration of Malabar,” 171-189). With the dismissal of *Arkadiyakkon*, or the local Head, this autonomy, which was juridico-political and theological-ecclesiastical in nature, of the community was displaced, as they came under direct Portuguese rule, in ‘sacred-secular’ affairs. Though I have not yet found any document that puts Christians under the Portuguese rule, the treaty signed between the Dutch East India Company and the Rajah of Cochin in 1663 states that “the Christians that were formerly under the Portuguese, are now to be considered under the authority of the Company, and subject to their jurisdiction” (“Treaty between the Dutch East India Company and the Rajah of Cochin, 1663,” *Selections from the Records of Fort St George*, 3).

This record retrospectively suggests the placing of ‘vernacular Christians’ under the Portuguese rule, thereby alienating them in their own land. That is, the claim the Portuguese laid over the ‘vernacular Christians’ as ‘fellow believers’ had complex sacred-secular implications. The repercussions of this power play will be demonstrated shortly. For now, suffice it to say that the emergence in 1653 was a moment of arising by the subjugated, in the interstices of the ‘interaction of forces in the ‘repetitive play of

domination,' in this case among 'native' and colonial rulers. Hence, *Koonan Cross* arising can be read as a moment that re-claimed sovereignty as immanent to community, as it desired to reinstate the community's displaced theological-ecclesiastical authority along with the juridical-political powers.³² Therefore, it is only paradoxical, but not surprising, that the Roman Catholic Church named this group, who returned to their old faith, as *puthenkootukar* [the new faction], and the group that remained under the Papal authority came to be regarded as *pazhayakootukar* [the old faction], initiating a long struggle for 'originary' claims and lineage of 'pure' blood. This is in tune with the medieval European Christianity dividing between different Christians, newly converted Jews as new Christians (*conversos*) and others as old Christians (*Christians*), irrespective of the fact that all were converts and most were Jews in the first place. As a result, the new category of old Christians became the paradigmatic New Christian, that is, the new paradigm of being Christian itself against which everybody else was measured. Therefore, what is required is, "to suspend the philological appellation of 'Old Christian'.... Instead, we must recognize that what is being fashioned is indeed a new kind of Christian, in fact, many different kinds of 'New Christians'" (Anidjar, *Blood*, 94). Then, the category of 'Old Christian' becomes just one among many 'New Christians,' deconstructing the attached signification of 'original,' 'pure,' etc.

³² Roberto Esposito, while offering a genealogy of 'community,' and Anidjar while extending Esposito, argue that a deflected notion of community begins with Hobbes. Hobbesian conception of community denigrates any natural unity outside the state. For Hobbes, there cannot be any "organic community" or "organic unity" between a community and the will of the sovereign it chooses for itself. For him, community can only come into being at the same moment it grants itself a sovereign. In such a misconception, community—the understanding that community precedes the state, and that community is in a "pre-political condition" with "the capacity to exercise a single will" which it exercises to grant itself an additional *persona*, a sovereign body, which can still act only in its name—becomes impossible. Hence, what is required is an anti-Hobbesian conception, where sovereignty always already belonged to the community (Esposito, *Communitas*; Anidjar *Blood*, 160, 161).

Deterritorializing³³ Christianity: *Varthamanappusthakam*

It is in this context that I try to read *Varthamanappusthakam*³⁴ and the journey to Rome itself, as it was undertaken by representatives of the so-called ‘Old Christians,’ who remained with the Pope. (Let me call them Papal fold, and so-called ‘New Christians’ as *Arkadiyakkon* fold, for convenience, as well as to emphasize the difference as a question of sovereignty). I argue that the journey to Rome was an emergence against the co-constitution of Christianity and race because the Papal fold, despite accepting Catholicism, was further divided between Europeans and ‘natives,’ and undermined the latter as not Christian/civilized enough to rule themselves. Therefore, *Varthamanappusthakam* is one of the early documented attempts to think Christianity from the standpoint of the ‘local’ which was already ‘globalised’ with its ‘Eastern’

³³ Deleuze and Guattari propose ‘deterritorialization’ as a process of displacement from the codes of territorialization. It is a line of flight, escape, outlet and exit from the interpretation. Nonetheless, deterritorialization, when relative and not absolute, leads to reterritorialization in new interpretation. Becoming minor is therefore a nomadic experimentation without fixed meaning, an escape from interpretation, an absolute deterritorialization, a state of becoming and not being, which is lost in the process of reterritorialization (“Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature”).

³⁴ Though completed in 1785, written either over the period of the journey or at the end of the journey, it was first published only after a century and a half in 1936, by Plathottathil Luka Mathai from St Mary’s Press, Kottayam. St Thomas Christian Museum in Cochín has preserved one of the manuscripts of the text, which is generally regarded as one of the earliest travelogues in Malayalam. There are at least eleven versions published so far, all of which varying in the form, structure and content, attesting to its complex publication history. Many parts are believed to have been lost as the travelogue does not include many attached documents which the author promises as Appendix. The first publication was titled *Varttamanappusthakam, Kariyattil Yuseppumetrappolittayute Romayatravivaranam; 1778-1786* [Varthamanappusthakam, Travelogue of Kariyattil Joseph Metropolitan to Rome]. The first translation to English was by Placid J Podipara, in 1971, titled *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 Jospeh Cariattil and Cathanar Thomman Paremmakkal*, published by Pontifical Institute of Oriental Studies, Rome. Among different available versions of the text, I use versions by the Oriental Institute of Religious Studies India Publications (1989) and the Indian Institute of Christian Studies (1994) for the purpose of this chapter. The former version contains 78 chapters running into around 550 pages, with the Malayalam title *Varthamanappusthakam (Onnum Rantum Bhagannalum Bhulokasastravum)* and English title *Varthamanappusthakam (Travelogue of Dr Joseph Kariyatty and Paremmakkal Thomman Kathanar to Lisbon and Rome 1778-1786)*. While Part One has the travelogue itself, Part Two has the documents related to the book and then attachments related to important dates, glossary of unfamiliar terms and route map of the journey. The latter is a republication of Mathew Ulakamthara’s 1983 version by DC Books, Kottayam, with 78 chapters, in ‘modern Malayalam,’ titled *Varthamanappusthakam athava Romayatra* [Varthamanappusthakam or Journey to Rome]. All quotations are my translation from this version. Details of earlier publications are taken from Muraleedharan, *Community and History: The Early Narratives of Kerala*, which has an exhaustive documentation of the publication history of *Varthamanappusthakam* (56-86).

roots/routes—Malankara—and not from that of the ‘West.’ The text radically pushes the idea that Christianity is not ‘Western,’ but primarily ‘Eastern.’ Hence, a reading of *Varthamanappusthakam* is imperative to understand how different ‘vernacular Christians’—internal enemy—negotiated with the ‘religionization’ project of the ‘Western Christendom.’ Ironically, the delegates, Kariyatil Joseph Malpan, Paremmakkal Thoma Kathanar, who undertook the journey between 1778 and 1786, were in fact entrusted with the huge responsibility of convincing the Pope and the Queen of Portugal that the ‘lost sheep’ or the ‘prodigal children,’ who rebelled against the Pope and renounced Roman Catholic Christianity in the Bent Cross Oath of 1653, were now waiting to return to their ‘father’ and ‘true’ faith. Kathanar, after all, belonged to the Roman Catholic faction that remained with the Papal fold even after the Bent Cross Oath. In that sense, the journey was in line with the universalizing mission of ‘Western Christendom.’ Even while doing that, the delegates ended up asserting the autonomy of the community by reclaiming its ‘cosmopolitan’ roots/routes and ‘vernacular sovereignty’ during the ‘travel-logue.’ Travel and travelogue are not disjunctive, as it is in travel that the travelogue emerges, and it is through travelogue that the travel continues to emerge, as the *Pusthakam* [Book] reverberates our *Varthamanam* [present/discourse/dialogue].

The 78 chapters of the text are an intimate recording of the journey: the places they travel, the mode of travel, people they meet and cultures they traverse. Almost every chapter has an Afterword, which appears as the afterthoughts of the traveller/author (Kathanar), as many of them are addressed directly to the reader, almost assuming in advance their thoughts while reading the text.³⁵ It can be hypothesized that while the chapters were written during the journey itself or after the journey based on notes, the

³⁵ For instance, the Afterword of chapter seven begins with “You who have read all this! What do you think?” (24). Similarly, chapter eleven: “What do you readers think?” (Kathanar, *Varthamanappusthakam*, 33).

Afterword is written as a result of his reflection of everything that transpired during the journey, as many a times, in the Afterword, he analytically recalls earlier events in order to draw connections. They reflect the author/traveller practicing a ‘particular’ Christianity negotiating its differences with the new ‘universal’ Christianity. Hence, on a different note, I argue that despite the fact that the mission of the journey was to unite ‘vernacular Christians’—old and new factions—under the papal fold and Romanized Christianity, the ‘travel-logue’ eventually conveyed a simple message, ‘difference’—differences that were internal to the structure of religionized Christianity/Christianized religion. This becomes very important, because as I mentioned earlier, particularities are ‘accommodated’ as long as they speak a universal language, but not ‘differences’ that threaten the sovereignty of the newly imagined community. It is precisely by demarcating those differences that the journey unsettled the theo-political sovereignty of the ‘Western’/Roman Catholic Christianity and reclaimed sovereignties that are immanent to region/community.

In this chapter, I particularly focus on the 72nd chapter, which acts as a ‘supplement’ to the rest of the book and even to the journey itself (*Varthamanappusthakam*, 255-279). The 72nd chapter, probably one of the longest, does not narrate any events related to the journey. Instead, it consists of Kathanar’s point-by-point response to an insulting letter, sent by a Catholic Bishop from Rome, Cardinal Anthonelly, which categorically states that the Malankara Christians are insufficiently Christian. He accuses that 1) those Malankara Christians who have not accepted the Catholic faith are not Christian; 2) even though they have set out on this journey to *become* Catholic/Christian it is only for material benefits and hence they can never truly *be* one; 3) there would not have been ‘Christians’ in Malankara/Malabar if not for the Catholic missionaries; and 4) they cannot be given autonomy as they are incapable of ruling themselves. The last point is especially important because one of the major

demands of the delegation was the coronation of a ‘native Head’ for the community and independent ecclesiastical jurisdiction without Portuguese missionary/clergy intervention.³⁶ The demand is a direct response to the imposition of the Portuguese/Roman Catholic theological-political sovereignty over an always-already sovereign sociality. Hence, while ‘difference’ as a critical category can sufficiently capture most aspects of the communitarian expressions of discontent, the desire for juridical power, spills out of this analytical category. The ultimate aim of the journey was not just to demand accommodation of ‘differences,’ but to *become* autonomous, to declare independence, to liberate themselves.³⁷

Hence, the 72nd chapter, a response to these accusations, acts almost as a postscript, an afterthought by Kathanar, to the whole book and even the journey. He illustrates in a “virulent language,” that they do not need to become Christians in Catholic terms because they have always-already been Christians: “even before you and your race

³⁶ The genealogy of this demand for self-rule can be traced to “Alangatu Padiyola” (Kathanar, *Varthamanappusthakam*, 28). Padiyola is a resolution passed in a synod, regarding the affairs of the community. The immediate context of this rebellion was incidentally another death, (immediate context of *Koonan Kurishu Sathyam* was also the death/murder of Persian Bishop Ahatallah by the Portuguese) this time of their own Vicar Apostolic, who was a Portuguese Bishop. However, ‘native Christians’ were not allowed to pay their last respects to the bishop, as they were sent away by saying “Why have you come here now? This bishop is only ours. His funeral has nothing to do with you. This is our affair. So, you should vacate immediately” (Kathanar, *Varthamanappusthakam*, 3). In fact, this was the last among a series of alienating moments and non-belongingness experienced by the ‘native community’ who remained under the ‘foreign rule,’ ever since the ‘conversion’ of 1599. Additionally, around the same time, Ramayyan Dalawa, regional ruler, unprecedentedly fined ‘native Christians’ for organizing a ceremony to welcome their bishop without Dalawa’s permission (39, 40). Kathanar observes this as a challenge to the autonomous existence of the community and a breach upon its rights, as the community never required such a permission before that. In this peculiar context when the ‘secular’ and the ‘sacred’ were constituting each other as an oppressive force, the Roman Catholic ‘vernacular Christians’ immediately gathered and decided to reclaim their autonomy. On 15 February 1776, at Alangatu Church, the Papal fold agreed that having a foreign bishop as the Head of the Church compromised their ecclesiastical, theological and ‘secular’ autonomy in the region. They wrote a declaration of independence on a palm leaf, signed by all members, which is known as Alangatu Padiyola.

³⁷ I have been asked by MT Ansari and Filippo Osella in two separate conversations as to why the community had to make the journey all the way to Rome and ask for Pope’s blessings, if I argue that the intention was to declare independence. My point is that the journey began with the motif of converting the remaining rebel faction into Catholicism. However, as Kathanar travels across the sea, interacts with different Christian communities across lands, accepts their hospitality, and at the same time experience hostility at the hands of ‘Western Catholic’ Bishops at various places, he develops a growing sense of autonomy and rebellion as is evident in the progress of the travel narrative. It is in the course of the journey that he figures the need for a ‘regional Head’ in order to reconfigure themselves as autochthonous.

heard of Christ or the true belief, we had believers and priests in Malankara” (271). Hence, there is an excessiveness about the language of this chapter itself—quite different from other chapters, which are arguably a composed documentation of events unfolded in a journey—because it is a manifestation of their own untranslatable ‘excess’ that has survived the translation into universal-particulars during the conversion. Kathanar, a Roman Catholic priest, asserts that “we are Syrians” (258) and that they have been following Syrian liturgy ever since St Thomas spread the word in the region. Both Latinization and ‘Malayalamization’ of the communitarian textualities is read here as an attempt to deprive Malankara Christians of their language (Syriac), thereby dispossessing the community of its Syrian-ness (259). In a nutshell, the arguments raised by Kathanar are as follows: 1) Malankara Christians are Syrians and Syriac has been their liturgical language; 2) they are Mar Thoma Christians, true descendants of the Apostle; 3) they will rule themselves and will not accept any other authority; 4) some of them may have accepted Synod of Diamper/Pope/Roman Catholicism, but it does not hold any value in determining a Christian; and 5) hence Bent Cross Oath was an act of rebellion by ‘original’ Christians against Portuguese/Roman Catholic persecutions, and was in the ‘true’ spirit of Christianity.

Therefore, in an ironic turn of events, Kathanar defends the faction that rebelled against Pope/Roman Catholic Church in 1653 by arguing that:

Why do *Puthenkootukar* [Arkadiyakkon fold], our brothers in the Malankara have gone astray from us? Is it because they are against holy Church or true belief? No, never. It is because they took the oath that they will not surrender to *you who came in a new colour* with new norms and destroyed our ancestral beliefs, traditions and rituals. (*Varthamanappusthakam*, 269; emphasis mine)

Kathanar constantly uses ‘our community’ (interestingly, *jati* [the term currently used for ‘caste’] and *samudayam* [the term currently in use for ‘community’] are interchangeably used for ‘community’ throughout the text hinting at the co-constitution of the same in translation) while referring to himself and Malankara Christians as a whole, including the strayed factions, and addresses the bishop and Portuguese missionaries/Roman Catholics as ‘you and your race.’ In a reversal of roles, it reads as though Kathanar does not even consider them Christians because of their ‘unchristian’ ways—looting of wealth; trial, persecution and killing of ‘natives’; discrimination on the basis of skin colour (264).

Even while not questioning the spiritual authority of the Pope, Kathanar, through his journey, reinstates a self-governing autochthonous ecclesiastical commune with its own Head for Christianity in the region, with his uncensored critique of the co-extendibility of White supremacy and ‘Western Christianity’—race and religion. While the journey in its entirety can be read as a community undertaking a pilgrimage to translate its ‘sinful particularities’ into a language of ‘universal salvation,’ (marked by the purpose of the journey which was to convey the repentance of rebel faction to the Pope) the in-script in the 72nd chapter works against the grain and percolates the anthropological ‘difference’—the untranslatable singularity—that was sacrificed in the process. The journey and the writing of the travelogue becomes hermeneutic in the sense that Kathanar interprets the same aspects perceived by European missionaries as ‘lacks’ of his community, as ‘excesses’ of a different civilizational ethos, which he identifies with ‘Eastern Christianity,’ particularly Syriac Christianity. This is also probably the moment of conceptually inventing Syriac Christianity as a critique of Latin Christianity. It could be argued that it is in Kathanar’s encounter with different Christianities in the journey that took him across the world, independent of Roman/Papal territory, that he comes to terms

with this difference.³⁸ *Varthamanappusthakam* thus becomes a ‘travel-logue’ that transforms Kathanar himself who exhorts the repentance and realization of a ‘new faction’ in order to accept Pope in chapter 11 to the one who justifies the rebellion and declares independence in chapter 72; from the one who requests for a Portuguese Head (chapters 33-37) to the one who argues for a ‘native Head’ (chapter 62). He goes on to become the first ‘native’ Metropolitan of the community in the region ever since the Portuguese colonialism. “Angamaly *Padiyola*” in 1787 that decided to elect Kathanar as the Head of the community declared:

... like every other region and community has a Head from their own kind, since we have *informed* [not requested] Rome and Portugal that our community also should have a Bishop from our own kind, and since we believe that we should have a Bishop of our own kind, apart from allowing them [foreign Bishops] to anoint [priests] and from accepting holy oil, we will not accept any other kind than ours as our Head, and since we have decided to make Paremmakkal Thoma Kathanar our Head, if Portugal Queen does not heed our prayer for the same, we will shift allegiance to the Chaldean Patriarch Mar Joseph like our ancestors deemed fit, and bring Bishops from there, to anoint Thoma Kathanar as the Head, and we will not obey anything that stands in the way of achieving this end, and since we all have gathered and decided this together, anyone who go against this goal will be excommunicated from the Church and community, and rest of the community will not have anything to do with them, thus we 84 churches of Malankara, gathered in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, swear in the presence of St George at Angamaly church, in this *Padiyola*. (Pattaparambil,

³⁸ Throughout the ‘travel-logue,’ Kathanar narrates the hostile reception he received at the hands of Roman Catholic Bishops both in India as well as Lisbon and Rome, and at the same time the warm hospitality from non-Roman Christian Bishops wherever he went, especially Africa and Brazil.

Paulinus Pathiriyum Angamaly Padiyolayum [Father Paulinus and Angamaly Decree] 143)

As already mentioned, Kathanar's 'travel-logue' becomes a pilgrimage, tracing back the route of Gama/Portuguese, from Malankara/Malabar to Lisbon/Rome, and thus searching the roots of 'Western Christianity,' in order to find the way back to his 'Eastern' roots/routes. By actively un-inheriting Latinization and accompanied territorialization, and by associating with a non-territorial 'Eastern cosmopolis,' a community emerged, that deterritorialized Christianity and defamiliarized itself in the region, thereby "becoming minor" in both the 'Western' and the 'vernacular' contexts (Deleuze and Guattari, "Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature"). That is to say, an entangled Christian subjectivity emerged with diverse af-filiations—factions with filiation to 'regional Heads,' affiliation to 'Eastern Christianity' and allegiance to 'native Rajahs' at the same time, and factions with filiation to 'Pope,' affiliation to 'Romanized Christianity,' allegiance to 'native Rajahs,' and yet with a will towards 'Eastern Christianity.' Such a deterritorial imagination became possible for Kathanar, only as a migrant, on a journey away from land, across the seas, experiencing non-belongingness, uncertain of a return, and that too, as an afterthought.

Secularizing Christianity: Colonial Correspondences

This section elucidates that the emergence of an anti-'colonial Christian' consciousness among Malankara Christians, and the attempts to differentiate themselves as 'native Christians,' was not only a result of theological and ecclesiastical incommensurability, but also of political and economic necessities. That is, the sacred and the secular were not dichotomous but co-extensive in pre-colonial Kerala. For the purpose, I analyze the changing juridical political implications of the encounter between

‘colonial Christianity’ and ‘vernacular Christianity’ for ‘native (Christian)’ subjects across the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British periods. They illuminate how the perceived commonality of their religion with colonizers complicated their lived realities in the region. For instance, “The Treaty between the Dutch East India Company and the Rajah of Cochin, 1663” depicts that, with the advent of ‘colonial companies’ and their growing monopoly over trade, ‘native rulers’ and the Company came into several agreements, and one of the important clauses was the status of ‘native Christians.’ In this regard, the Treaty of 1663, that handed over the Christians from the Portuguese to the Dutch also makes it clear that they have to be:

... considered under the authority of the Company, and subject to their jurisdiction, should the Christians commit a crime the Company’s judge will chastise or punish them, as they deserve and in the same manner, if a Christian and a Malabarian quarrel, the Christian is to be punished by the Company’s authority and the Malabarian by the Rajah. If a murder should happen between a Christian and a Malabarian; if the Christian is killed the Rajah will kill the Malabar [sic] and in the same manner, if the Malabarian is killed the Company will kill the Christian. (*Selections from the Records of Fort St George*, 3; henceforth *Selections* in this chapter)

This political-juridical change was also supplemented by economic factors, as ‘vernacular Christians’ were exempted from paying taxes to the Rajah. As a result, a centralized, homogenous and hierarchical political-juridical system was established in the place of a provincial political system where different communitarian jurisprudences co-existed along with regional governmental systems. Though it may look like the ‘colonial Christian’ regime was doing a favour in the spirit of ‘fellowship’ for the benefit of ‘vernacular Christians,’ it is clear from the discussions so far that Christians in the region

have resisted colonial attempts to define the terms of this universal Christian fellowship. Further, such a move made ‘native Christians’ politically, juridically and economically non-subject to the ‘native ruler’ in their own land. As a result, whether or not ‘vernacular Christians’ may have benefited from this power shift, it definitely complicated their equation with fellow communities and the ‘native regime.’ While the colonial move ought to be understood as a strategy to construct a ‘universal Christian’ subject for the imperium, it ironically resulted in the rise of a ‘universal Hindu’ consciousness, in opposition to the threat posed by the ‘Christian outsider,’ which alienated ‘native Christians’ further. Thus, while ‘vernacular Christians’ continued to be insufficiently Christian for the ‘Western Christianity,’ they also increasingly became ‘insufficiently native’—foreign—for the emerging ‘Hindu kingdom.’³⁹ As a result, violent conflicts between Nairs and Christians became common during the time and they were persecuted by the resourceful ‘native communities’ (Munro, “Judicial Consultation,” 2 February 1813, *Selections*, 55-56; Pearson, “Judicial Consultation,” 11th September 1812, *Selections*, 32.).

Taking this problematic turn of events into consideration, “Treaty between the Rajah of Cochin and the Dutch East India Company” was revised in 1785, in order to make ‘vernacular Christians’ into tax payable subjects of the Rajah. It reads:

Since till now no fixed determination has been made of the Duties appertaining to the King of Cochin from the Christians who live in his dominions and are also Vassals of the Company as from this uncertainty many odious disputes arises....

The King has exacted a new duty since the year Koilang [Malayalam era] 987 or 1762 C.E. from all Inhabitants and also from the Christians.... The Christians

³⁹ This study does not take ‘Hindu’ as atemporal, but as being constituted as a result of colonial and ‘native’ encounters. Hinduism emerged as a Sanskritic religion in the *globalatinized* sense through a collaborative project of ‘colonial Christian’ and ‘native upper caste’ historiographers, ethnographers and enumerators.

have till now not paid these imposts; but with mutual consent it has been determined that the King shall not demand these imposts from the elapsed years viz from the years 937 Koiling [sic] till 959 being C.E. from 1762 till 1784 but that in return the Christians shall pay them in future annually.... Christians shall also be obliged to pay duties to His Highness from the salt. (“Treaty,” *Selections*, 4-5)

However, what is interesting is that even though Christians are again made tax-paying subjects of the Rajah, Rajah is still deprived of the juridical power to act on them in case of noncompliance. The Treaty continues:

To prevent all disputes and differences between Nairs and the Christians, which often arise about the collection of the duties it has been agreed that all rents and Duties abovementioned shall be collected in future not through Nairs or other of the King’s servants, but by the Lieutenants and Ensigns of the Christians ... in default of the payment no force is to be (used) employed by the King’s people against the Christians, or their officers, but they are immediately to apply to the Captains of the Christians. (“Treaty,” *Selections*, 5)

The Treaty concludes with the clause that compromises and complicates sovereignty of the regional regime, by making the Rajah answerable to the colonial regime in matters related to ‘vernacular Christian’ subjects:

Further it is expressly stipulated on the part of the complainant and expressly promised by His Highness that in future neither from the King nor His ministers any Christians shall be arrested or be kept in Confinement nor shall any more their houses be shut up ... but His Highness, in all cases, shall address himself to the Governor who herewith promises and engages to give His Highness prompt satisfaction. (“Treaty,” *Selections*, 6)

The supposed exceptionalism thus practiced by the Dutch rather endangered than benefited the Christians, because, in the eyes of the Rajah, a substantial portion of subjects in the region suddenly came to have more in common with the colonial forces, not just in their beliefs, but also politically, economically and juridically, and became one with the ‘enemy’ by being displaced from under his rule.⁴⁰

In the light of these ‘secular’ contexts, it is important to read the resistances of the ‘vernacular Christians’ against ‘colonial Christianity,’ as not just ecclesiastical battles, but in fact as struggles to reclaim their entangled theological-political autonomy in the region. However, the Rajahs of Travancore and Cochin sealed their alienation and non-belongingness by dispossessing ‘vernacular Christians’ of their lands and revenues, rather than defending their Christian subjects, despite their resistances to fall in line with ‘colonial Christianity’ (Clephane, “Political Consultation,” 16 August 1814, *Selections*, 103-105; Munro, “Letter,” 9 October 1812, *Selections*, 47). Because, even after reclaiming economic control over his Christian subjects, the Rajah still did not have political authority over them, which threatened his sovereignty. Therefore, the only way to assert his political sovereignty in the region was to exercise economic sanctions over those ‘foreignized’ subjects who still did not come under his political jurisprudence. Thus, the treaties simultaneously deprived both ‘native Christians’ and ‘native rulers’ of their juridical powers and installed a new political order for the region, by which there was a divided sovereignty between the Company and the Rajah.

It is the British colonial correspondences regarding the validity of the Dutch Treaties, after the Dutch defeat at the hands of the British, that forms the archive for the rest of the analysis, because there is a gradual re-conception of sovereignty with the

⁴⁰ The British correspondences hint that the above conditions were not unique to Cochin, but also was similarly unfolding in Travancore as well (Clephane, “Political Consultation,” 16 August 1814, *Selections*, 102-105).

advent of the British colonial regime. As is evident from the renewed Treaty between the British and the Cochin Rajah—"that the Rajah Rama Warma shall have a complete and unlimited authority over the aforementioned possessions acknowledging the sovereignty of the English Company" ("Treaty between the Rajah of Cochin and the English Company, 1790," *Selections*, 7), the Company assumes absolute sovereignty by which they then granted autonomy to the Rajah. The common 'enemy' figure that enforced this political manoeuvre, which brought together the British and the Rajahs of Cochin and Travancore, even at the expense of the Rajahs' sovereign power in their own regions, was Tipu Sultan. However, as a result of this new alliance, 'vernacular Christians' under the Dutch Company were again passed on to the British Company, just like they were passed on from the Portuguese to the Dutch as vassals:

I have resolved to re-establish a regular court of justice at Cochin upon the former footing, the Members of which are directed to preceed [sic] and be guided in all matters relative to the Christians, White Jews and Canarees⁴¹ ... according to the letter of treaty made between your [Rajah's] ancestor, and Mr Moens on the 14th February 1772 ... and in conformity to the agreement made between yourself and Mr Van Angelbeek in the year 1786 and to afford them [Christians] in General that degree of protection, to which in virtue of the abovementioned treaty they are entitled from us, and which they have enjoyed under the Dutch Government. (Duncan, "Letter from the Hon'ble the Governor of Bombay, Jon Duncan," 9 April 1800, *Selections*, 36)

However, notwithstanding the initial endorsement of the Dutch Treaties by the British Company, there are long deliberations regarding the continuation or abrogation of the same starting from the very beginning of the nineteenth century, which constitute as a

⁴¹ Canarees, in these correspondences refer to Konkanies, Banians, Silversmiths etc.

rich archive to engage with the questions of sovereignty. Here, the position on ‘vernacular Christians’ constitutes an important point of discussion.⁴² John Munro, who was appointed as the Resident and Diwan of Travancore and Cochin states in 1810, in the aftermath of Velu Thampi Dalawa’s revolt against the English East India Company, in fact changes the discourse from ‘exceptionalism’ of some subjects to ‘equality’ of all subjects. Colonel Munro argued for taking away the ‘privilege’ and ‘protection’ of Christians guaranteed by the Portuguese and the Dutch and placing them under the ‘native rule.’ Munro observed that ‘vernacular Christians’ were the most ‘lawless’ subjects, as they were outside the jurisprudence of Rajahs and as there were no Dutch or British juridical systems in place either to govern them. His crucial aim was to transform Christians as ‘legitimate’ tax-paying subjects, very much in line with the ‘Reformed’ Christian understanding, “render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” (*The Bible*, Mark 12:17). Hence, he argued for the abrogation of the Dutch Treaties so that “every class of people inhabiting the Rajah’s territories shall be subject to His authority, and to the laws of the state” (Munro, “Judicial Consultation,” 2 February 1813, *Selections*).

Departing from the Portuguese and the Dutch *modus operandi*, this move to reinstate absolute sovereignty to the ‘native rulers,’ by giving up the perceived partisan treatment of some subjects in the region based on their religion, is prototypical of the British Protestant Christianity reincarnating as the paradigmatic secular. He observes:

⁴² Unfortunately, I could not find any records that depict the agency of the Christian subjects in these crucial decisions—transferring from one regime to another for over a century among three ‘colonial’ forces and ‘native’ forces—pertaining to them that has reconfigured their subjecthood in the region forever. However, their struggles with the changing ‘colonial Christianities,’ claiming their difference and asserting their identity as ‘Eastern Christians’ or Syrian Christians, historically irreconcilable with the ‘Western Christians,’ become all the more important, as that which marks their dissent to the ongoing colonization of their sacred-secular spheres. There are many historical and scholarly works that problematizes the absence of Christians in the freedom struggle, which read them as accomplices to the colonial regimes owing to their shared beliefs. On the contrary, it was precisely ‘belief’ that complicated their subjectivity in the region. Hence, this archival absence has also to be understood in the complex context of their unique positionality within the region as direct colonial subjects unlike any other community. This chapter argues that rather than subscribing to a pan-Christian subject formation imagined by the changing ‘colonial Christian’ regimes, subjective formation of ‘vernacular Christians’ ought to be provincialized.

If the Dutch treaties shall be considered to be abrogated it appears to follow that every class of people inhabiting the Rajah's territories shall be subject to His authority, and to the laws of the state. As a general principle, the Christians, Jews and Cokunees should be deemed intitled to the same civil rights that are possessed by the Rajah's Nair subjects and liable to the same revenue assessments that are paid by the latter.... Christians accused of criminal offences, such as murder, robbery &c. should be subject like the Nairs, Bramins and other inhabitants of the Country to be seized the Police and tried by the Native Courts. (Munro, "Letter," 5 January 1813, *Selections*, 56)

However, while this purported separation of religion and state played out in the European contexts by co-constituting the secular and Christianity, in the Indian contexts it resulted in the co-constitution of the secular and Hinduism, as is exemplified by later Travancore polity.

There are two different discourses emerging in these British correspondences. First of all, the disadvantage of preferential treatment of certain subjects; that 'vernacular Christians' fell out of the Rajah's and other communities' favour as they were no longer his subjects and were not assessed for taxes on similar lines with other communities (Munro, "Letter," 9 October 1812, *Selections*, 47-48). Secondly, the disadvantage of a divided ruling to the political stability of the region was underscored when Munro subscribed to the idea that "foreign nations have no right to intrude themselves into the government of an independent state... it is not difficult to prove that this state has a right of refusing to suffer it. To govern itself according to its pleasure is a necessary part of its independence, a sovereign state cannot be constrained in this respect..." (Munro, "Judicial Consultation," 13 November 1812, *Selections*, 43). Similarly, W Clephane, the

Commissioner appointed to ascertain the proper limits of the Court of Judicature at Cochin observes that:

The obstacles to, and embarrassment in, continuing to exercise the Judicial, whilst in Rajah is vested the fiscal Jurisdiction, over the Christians being of such a Magnitude, and the political consequences of formally establishing such a divided system ... our pretensions to the exercise of a direct and exclusive Jurisdiction over them by the Court at Cochin be abandoned.... The Native Christians can have no claim to be exempted from contributing to the Revenue of the Government, in the same rate, as is paid by the other classes of Inhabitants. (Clephane, "Political Consultation," 16 August 1814, *Selections*, 103-104)

As a result, taking Clephane's suggestions into consideration, the authorities decided to hand over the Christians to the Rajah's court of justice:

The Board are disposed strongly to concur in the opinion of Mr Clephane, that to ensure the good treatment of these people [Christians] they must cease to be rendered objects of jealousy, and should be placed in every respect on an equal footing with their fellow subjects. It is accordingly Resolved in conformity with the suggestion of the Commissioner that the Christian subjects of the Rajah be not placed under the jurisdiction of the Court at Cochin, but that the Resident in concert with the Judge and Magistrate, be desired to submit a detailed arrangement for securing to them an *impartial administration of justice in the name of legitimate Sovereign but under the guarantee and general superintendence of the British Government* ... encourage the Christian subjects of the Rajah to confide in the good intention of the British Government, and to be satisfied that the sole object of any new arrangement is to secure to them the perfect enjoyment of *their civil and religious rights, on the natural condition,*

common to all subjects, of obedience to the Laws, and an equal participation in the necessary burthens of the state. (“Order,” 16 August 1814, *Selections*, 110-111; emphasis mine)

As is evident from these deliberations, a new political discourse—of secularism and equality—was emerging with the British colonialism, of course as a result of the Enlightenment notions in the European contexts. That is, under the British, European Christianity was becoming secular, as the religionization became an impediment in the proliferation of the Company’s capital. While the argument seems to be ‘just’ and for the good of both ‘native Christians’ and ‘native kingdom,’ magnanimous for a colonial government (!), the immediate contexts that led to this change in the political discourse tells a different story.

One of the underlying factors that drove these emerging discourses of just and good governance, equality of subjects and sovereignty of the ‘native regime’ was in fact capital. The treaty between the British and Travancore regime in 1805 (Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties*, 135) in exchange for the British aid in blocking the advent of Tipu Sultan, required that a fixed tribute be paid by the Rajah to the Company, which as a matter of fact increased from time to time, and which was also flouted by the ‘native rulers’ from time to time. By the virtue of not being under the law of the land, ‘vernacular Christians’ were not privy to this arrangement. And, lesser the number of Rajah’s tax paying subjects, lesser the share of the Company! Hence, it became the need of the colonial government that ‘native Christians’ are again made tax-paying subjects to the ‘native Rajah.’ Granting the Rajah economic control without political control had already proved inefficient under the Dutch. Therefore, the sudden dawn of secular ‘enlightenment’ spirit on the Company, that desires to make everyone equal subjects

under the common law, irrespective of religions, is deeply intertwined with its economic interests.

Another factor was an emerging ‘anti-Christian’ consciousness with the strategic emergence of the ‘Hindu’ under the leadership of ‘local’ chiefs like Velu Thampi Dalawa, who consolidated ‘natives’ like Nairs against the colonial forces.⁴³ Again, in this ‘native political imagination’ as well, ‘vernacular Christians’—who came under direct colonial rule, who did not pay taxes to the regional government, who were politically and juridically colonial subjects—were excluded, forgetting the fact that they were placed in such a precarious position primarily as pawns for the benefit of the alliance between native-colonial regimes. Velu Thampi effectively used the preferential treatment of ‘native Christians’ by the ‘colonial Christian’ rulers in order to arouse a Hindu consciousness and to consolidate them under one banner against the British.⁴⁴ He exhorted them that “Hindus and Muslims possess ancient religious institutions and ritualistic traditions. Once these institutions are annihilated both parties would be forced

⁴³ *Vettikkolappada* [murdering battalion], which is hardly mentioned in mainstream historical records, organized under Velu Thampi, supposedly set ablaze to Christian houses and churches, looted the same and massacred thousands (Joseph, *Mathutharakan*, 376; Agur, *Church History*, 536-537). However, The Travancore Manualist Nagamaiya records this incident as murder of European soldiers during the revolt, which could very well be the case (vol i, 438).

⁴⁴ The episode between Velu Thampi and Thachil Mathu Tharakan, an influential ‘native Christian’ trader who rose to the position of advisor of Travancore ministry during the reign of Rajah Rama Varma and subsequently to the *Mulakumadisheelakkaran* (revenue officer) of Travancore, exemplify the straining ‘native’ equations. The anti-colonial imperatives of Thampi’s revolt being given, it is important to emphasise that his first revolt was against the then Travancore ministry constituted of Jayanthan Namboothiri, Shankara Narayanan Chetti and Mathu Tharakan. It was a Nair revolt against a ‘foreign’ Namboothiri, Chetti and a Christian ruling the region at the expense of Nairs. The legend is that Tharakan was prosecuted and his ears cut off by Thampi, at a time when Thampi fell out of favour of both Travancore Rajah and colonial Resident Macaulay (Joseph, *Mathutharakan* 314-315; 456-457). Hence, it is crucial to understand that it was Mathu Tharakan, caught between ‘native’ and colonial tussle, who organized and funded Kathanar’s Journey to Rome as part of his earnest efforts to consolidate ‘vernacular Christians’ under one banner to fight their increasing marginalization. Configuring a Syrian identity was important to distinguish themselves from the Christianity of colonizers. And, historicizing a Brahminic origin was similarly strategic to counter the ‘Hinduization’ of the polity. On a different note, Benny Daniel, who writes under the pen name Benyamin, has published an experimental novel (the reader can start reading the novel from any page) in 2022, based on Mathutharakan’s life known as *Tharakan’s Grandhavari*, a critical reading of which may be worthwhile.

to accept Christian religion and live as their dependents” (qtd in Joseph, *Mathutharakan*, 335).⁴⁵

That is, as ‘Western Christianity’ religionized itself, it also became a problem for the colonial-capitalist expansion underway, and it had to liberate itself from its own conditions by disenchanting its world by dividing into the sacred and the secular. The British therefore liberated themselves from the conditions brought forth by the Portuguese and the Dutch before them by secularizing the ‘West’ qua ‘Western Christianity.’ Reconfiguring ‘native Christians,’ as ‘unruly’ subjects who had to be brought under a common law under the sovereign rule of ‘native sovereign,’ despite the commonality of religion with ‘colonial Christian’ rulers, was the ultimate strategy, by which Europe and Christianity reincarnated as the paradigmatic secular. I quote at length certain excerpts from the colonial correspondences by the British that elucidates this substantial change in approach:

Both my predecessor and myself have repeatedly adverted to the losses sustained by the Governments of Travancore and Cochin from the contraband trade.... I am sorry however to state that the Christians in the northern parts of Travancore and Cochin are the most lawless subjects of the state. (Munro, “Letter,” 5 October 1812, *Selections*, 45)

Again:

The Rajah of Cochin with the advice of the British Resident has lately adopted efficient regulations for improving the revenues arising from the monopoly of

⁴⁵ On 11 January 1809 he made the famous “Kundara Declaration” against the British colonial forces wherein he exhorted that “when the country falls into the hands of the British, after shutting down respectful institutions including Koyikkal, Palace and Kottappadi, ritualistic traditions related to temples and regional governing bodies, monopolizing everything including salt, taking over barren lands and even households, accumulating excess taxes for lands and even coconuts, making rogues meet out punishments for least of the crimes, placing cross and flag in temples, taking on Brahmin women and others without differentiation, unjust systems would be put in place” (Joseph, *Mathutharakan*, 169; emphasis mine; see also, Nagamaiya, *The Travancore State Manual* vol i, 434-436).

tobacco and preventing a contraband trade in that article from the Fort of Cochin. This contraband trade so destructive to the revenues is prosecuted principally by Christians, whom the Rajah according to the Dutch treaties has not power either to arrest or to punish although their crimes are committed in his own country of which they are inhabitants and subjects. (Munro "Judicial Consultation," 13 November 1812, *Selections*, 43)

Further:

These men scarcely pay any revenue, or obey any orders of the Circar; and unless some change shall be made in the regulations for their Government it will be nearly impossible for the Rajah to collect his Revenues or fulfil his engagements to the Company. (Resident of Travancore and Cochin, "Letter," 13 June 1814, *Selections*, 96)⁴⁶

Thus, the British turned around the same systems put in place by their predecessors as well as by them for the 'native Christians' in order to re-present 'native Christians' as 'lawless,' who hence has to be controlled by bringing them under a 'secular' jurisprudence. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the 'vernacular Christians' found themselves in the most precarious position, as they were caught in the tussle between changing 'colonial Christian' and 'native Hindu' forces for sovereignty of the region, thereby becoming neither Christian enough nor 'native' enough for either. What this also depicts is that the theological, political, economic, social and secular are deeply entangled, by determining each other, and not occupying separate spheres.

⁴⁶ As one of the later correspondences show, the discourse of exceptionalism continued to haunt British colonial correspondences even to the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1848, the revenue board had to look into a case where 117 gardens, which were once owned by Christians, were still held tax-free. Though out of 117 gardens, 21 were already sold to Hindus. The Board orders to levy taxes from the Hindu holders and further decides that "the present exemption may be allowed to continue as regards the 96 gardens which are now held bona fide by Christians on proprietary right, but that it should subsist only for as long a period as these gardens may be held on their present tenure and further should not extend to any other lands which may be acquired by the same parties" ("The Board of Revenue," 16 November 1848, *Selections*, 143).

Christianizing the Secular/Communalizing the Other: Translating *Tuhfat ul Mujahiddin*

So far, I have been examining the encounter between ‘colonial Christianity’ or ‘Christian colonizers’ and what they perceived as its ‘internal enemy.’ The encounter with the ‘external enemy’ illuminates further the complicated legacies of colonial conquests. Therefore, I take a short detour to draw attention to the Portuguese-Muslim interactions in the region, and the way it was reconfigured by the British, as is relevant to this study. The religionization/Christianization of the polity in the Travancore-Cochin milieu, which I have tried to follow throughout the chapter, was already underway in Malabar from 1498, much before the Diamper Synod and its *Acts and Decrees*, as documented in the sixteenth century text *Tuhfat ul Mujahiddin (Offerings to the Muslim Warriors of Malabar)* by Sheikh Zainuddin-II. *Tuhfat ul Mujahiddin* is an Arabic text that documents the extreme persecution of Malabar Muslims at the hands of the Portuguese, against which Zainuddin calls for *jihad*. Armed with the Papal Bulls to purge ‘Christianity’ of its enemies within and without, and sanctions from the Portuguese king for militaristic expansion of the trade, Gama’s expedition was a ‘historical’ symptom, if not solution, of the ‘un-holy’ alliance between ‘Western Christianity’ and the rise of capitalism⁴⁷ that was already underway.

Though, *Tuhfat ul Mujahiddin* itself does not shed much light on the equation between ‘local’ Christians and Muslims in the region, other materials from the period have suggested how they were both key players in the maritime trade.⁴⁸ It is this existing

⁴⁷ See, RH Tawney’s *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study* for a discussion on the co-constitution of Medieval (Catholic) Christianity and emerging capitalism, in response to Weber’s (*The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*) lens that pinned it down to Protestant ethics, especially that of Calvinism. This capital-Christian complex will be analyzed in later chapters.

⁴⁸ See, Sanjay Subrahmanyam’s *Europe’s India: Words, People, Empires 1500-1800* for a detailed analysis.

economic order that was challenged by the Portuguese. Therefore, in *Tuhfat ul Mujahiddin*, the *jihad* is a resistance—warfare—against a particular political-economic theology, in this case, propagated by the Roman Catholic/ Portuguese sovereignty, that expropriated differences, within and without, into the figure of the enemy.⁴⁹ Clearly, *jihad* for Zainuddin is a call for war to uphold communitarian sovereignties, threatened by the violent imposition of an absolute sovereignty by the Portuguese, marked by the memory of Crusades. This is evident from the fact that Zainuddin mostly addresses the persecutors as Franks or Portuguese, and not Christians. Even when he mentions “worshippers of crucifix” or “people of the cross,” the narrative qualifies it as “the people of Europe, the Franks, Christians by religion” (More, *Offerings to the Muslim Warriors of Malabar*). What was threatened was the juridical, economic and political freedom of a community, not to mention the theological underpinnings that bound them all. Unlike in the case of ‘vernacular Christians,’ the ‘differences’ could not be translated/transformed in inquisition,⁵⁰ or appropriated through ‘accommodationist’ strategy, but only eliminated in a crusading spirit. Hence, Islamic contexts clearly exposes that what the Portuguese/‘Western Christianity’ posed was not just a question of cultural ‘difference,’ but that of autonomy, sovereign sociality and civilizational ethos immanent to communities.

For the purpose of my discussion, I focus not on the text itself, written during and in response to the Portuguese presence, but on the first known English translation of *Tuhfat ul Mujahiddin* in 1833, more than 200 years after its composition, titled *Offerings to the Muslim Warriors of Malabar* (Tr. From the Indo-Arabic Work ‘Tohfut ul

⁴⁹ Comparative studies of Portuguese-Christian and Portuguese-Muslim interactions provide the perspective that what unfolded was clearly driven by economic, as much as it was theological, desires (Prange, *Monsoon Islam*; Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories”).

⁵⁰ See, AK Priolkar’s *The Terrible Tribunal for the East: The Goa Inquisition* for a documentation of Catholic inquisition based in Goa.

mujahideen'), and its "Preface" by the translator MJ Rowlandson, a Protestant Christian British army officer in charge of public instruction and publications at the College of Fort St George. It is important to remember that Rowlandson represents a 'reformed' European Christianity, Protestantism, which distanced itself from the Portuguese as well as the Dutch and the Catholic order that preceded them in the region. My attempt is to complicate the narrative by bringing in the new prototypical 'Western Christian,' now the Protestant, and changing strategies of 'colonial Christianity' during the nineteenth century. In the very act of translation, Rowlandson, who was proficient in several languages including Arabic, Latin and Portuguese, presents himself as a historian who 'objectively' documents the past without prejudices. Despite his 'Western' and Christian sensibilities, he first corroborates Zainuddin's accounts on the region with available documents from the period, thereby 'discovering' *Tuhfat ul Mujahiddin* as a 'valid' historical document. He even attests to Gama's atrocities using evidence from the Goan inquisition.

However, in the "Preface," even as the Protestant Rowlandson acknowledges the unparalleled Portuguese/Catholic persecution of Muslims, in turn he also ingenuously exonerates Christianity of its burden, by transferring the 'guilt' on to the unchristian ways of Gama and Franks, and probably in extension Catholicism, and simultaneously identifies Zainuddin and his community as 'communal.' Thereby, Gama, Frank and Catholicism become the deviation from the spirit of 'pure' 'original' Christianity, which Protestantism has now redeemed. It is interesting to recall Michel Foucault arguing that the Reformation represents the strength and not the weakness of the sixteenth century Catholic Christianity: "German Catholicism retained enough strength to turn against itself, to mortify its own body and history, and to spiritualize itself into a pure religion of conscience" ("Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 149). That is, by choosing to translate a

controversial sixteenth century text and calling out these Christian deviations, Rowlandson translated himself as the representative of Christianity which was always-already ‘secular’ and ‘objective.’ This particular translation illustrates an instance of ‘Western Christianity’ secularizing itself by turning against its own past and simultaneously communalizing every other ‘religion’ in its singular imperial history. This is evident from the textual strategy adopted by Rowlandson, who after establishing his disinterestedness, further describes Zainuddin’s text as an attempt to “excite his brethren to a holy war against the infidel intruders—the cursed ‘Franks’” “who were deadly enemies of his race” (44). Thereby, Rowlandson plays with and turns around the figure of enemy, configured by ‘Western Christianity’ in the first place, only to re-translate/transform Christianity as the enemy of Islam and not the other way around. Gama’s episode is simultaneously translated as just an aberration of ‘true’ Christianity by Rowlandson “which writers of their own country and religion have admitted as justly chargeable to them” (46).

It is prototypical of the transition whereby, in its encounter with Islam and the Orient, ‘Western Christianity’ reincarnated itself as secular while ‘recognizing’ the former as paradigmatically religious, and concomitantly communal, as that which has to be the ‘object’ of permanent critique. Of course, this ‘critique,’ as elucidated in the very act of translating *Tuhfat ul Mujahiddin* by Rowlandson—the ‘Western Christian,’ now Protestant, the ‘secular critic’—invariably becomes ‘secular criticism.’ That is to say, as medieval Christianity religionized itself, it also became a problem for the colonial-capitalist expansion underway, and it had to liberate itself from its own conditions by disenchanting its world by dividing into the sacred and the secular. While two centuries ago, as was depicted in *Acts and Decrees*, the enemy without was configured because it could never be ‘religion,’ two centuries later the same enemy was reconfigured as that

could never be ‘secular,’ but only ‘religious/communal,’ as it comes out in this translation. In short, even as ‘Western Christendom’ Christianized religion, it actively secularized itself and concomitantly religionized/communalized ur-religions/err-religions.

Reterritorializing Christianity

Coming back to the ‘enemy within,’ in his rhetorical question to a European Bishop, Kathanar wonders:

Do you think all the Christians whom your ancestors found in Malankara came from Europe? That is not the case. They are people in Malankara who accepted the faith.... In the past people belonging to different races, ancestries and castes in Malankara embraced this faith without any contempt or indifference. Everyone irrespective of being respected, poor, elite or discriminated... lived without conflicts. (*Varthamanappusthakam*, 272)

Kathanar does not stop there but accuses the Portuguese of implementing ‘divide and rule’ policy among Christians “by calling some as *mundukar* [one who wears the traditional attire called *mundu*, probably implying laity] some as *margakkar* [converts] and some as *kuppayakkar* [priestly Christians] and attributing different traditions and rituals for each of them” (272). He emphasises that the ‘precolonial Christianity’ of Malankara was a heterogenous community of converts with no single origin, caste, race or regional af-filiation, and a dynamic community which opened to multiple waves of migrations and conversions. He is thus reconfiguring convert/Christian as permanently being in a state of becoming. The temporary and fragmented nature of the convert is an internal critique to the permanency and unitary being, imagined by any essentialized notion of community. Hence, re-presentation of Christianity as a ‘community of converts’ disrupts the illusions of ‘origin’ and thereby deconstructs Christianity itself.

As I have shown so far in the chapter, the assertion of ‘Syriac’ and by extension ‘Eastern Christianity’ was an agential act by Malankara Christians as a critique of ‘Western Christianization,’ first Catholic and then Protestant, starting with the Portuguese and continued by the Dutch and later the British.⁵¹ For ‘vernacular Christians,’ this strategic assertion was to argue that they were a defying force that did not fall in line with ‘Western Christianity,’ despite the repeated attempts of Christianization/religionization, and thus legitimate subjects of the Rajah. That is to say, ‘Syriac-ness’ was not primarily invoked to essentialize an identity that immunized itself from welcoming ‘other(s),’ as it has become today, for, community was always ‘in the coming’ for these Malankara Nasranis who have been open to multiple entries and exits, ruptures and discontinuities. This is evident from the fact that, ‘vernacular Christians’ who began to assert their ‘Syriac-ness’ already consists of *Pazhayakootukar*, *Puthenkootukar*, Jewish Christians, migrant Christians, and converts under different Christian missions. That is, at this point, Malankara Nasrani was neither a homogenous essential identity, nor a territorial belongingness, but a deterritorial singularity that accounted for its heterogeneous genealogies—the multiple beginnings, migrations and conversions, its West Asian relations, ‘Eastern Christian’ affiliation, ‘Western Christian’ translations and (trans)regional theology. It is this genealogy which Paulose Gregorios tried to recover for Syrian Christians (see, Chapter One).

However, notwithstanding the heterogenous genealogies of ‘vernacular Christians,’ the colonial historiographic project starting from the Dutch period reterritorialized a *Suriyani Christiani* (Syrian Christian) with definite meanings, by representing an archive that imagined a chronological past and a linear progressive history

⁵¹ Syriac Christianity refers to the theological oeuvre and liturgical traditions formulated and practiced in and through Syriac language, derived from Aramaic. It is considered as one among the early languages of Christianity, others being Greek and Latin.

for them.⁵² In *Letters from Malabar* (1717-1723), Jacob Canter Visscher, the Dutch official in Cochin writes:

To have a clear notion of the people in question, you must understand that all the Christians in Malabar are divisible into three classes: viz., the Europeans, the principal of whom are the Portuguese, the English and the Dutch; the Topasses, who spring from mixed races of whites and Indians; and the native Christians of unmixed race. These last are again divided into the new Christians, consisting mostly of converts from the low castes, made by the Portuguese priests after their arrival in the country, and the old Christians, called Christians of St Thomas ... they are sometimes called St Thomas' Christians, and sometimes Syrian Christians.... Among these St Thomas' Christians may be distinguished, on the one hand, those who have remained constant to their first faith, and on the other hand the Apostates, not few in number, who have embraced the doctrines of Rome. (102)

This letter is probably one among the earliest documents where such a classification of 'vernacular Christians' can be found. Through the colonial classification and ethnography of these anthropological realities, the fluidity that was otherwise present became impossible as everyone had to be marked as belonging to one or the other. Needless to exemplify, categorization and enumeration were key tools by which colonial administration created a discourse of the colonized. Classification of 'vernacular Christians'—who were heterogenous and fragmented—into intelligible categories by the Dutch, and later the British, has to be understood from this framework. As is evident from

⁵² G Arunima observes that language and emergent print culture has been central to discussions of modernity and the creation of ethnic identities, principally that of nationalism, in precolonial Kerala. Examining the "origin myths" of Syrian Christians, she argues that they knit together narratives of a favourable arrival, prosperous settlement, as well as moments of stress and conflict that affect the internal ordering of communities as much as relations among them ("Who is a Malayali Anyway? Language, Community and Identity in Precolonial Kerala"). See also, Arunima, "Imagining Communities Differently: Print, Language and the 'Public Sphere' in Colonial Kerala."

this classification, ‘Syrian Christian’ emerging in the post-Portuguese period was more a colonial administrative appellation attributed by the Protestant Dutch in order to fix those Christians outside its own political theology, as Syrians, Latins and so on, which did not become a self-identificatory nomenclature until the nineteenth century, by which time it attains different significations.

Hence, it was not accidental that the earliest ‘official histories of Syrian Christians in Kerala’ began to appear in the first half of the eighteenth century, written by European missionaries and colonial administrators, beginning with that of Mathurin Veysierre de la Croze in 1724 (Webster, *Historiography of Christianity in India*, 15).⁵³ Histories of Christianity in the region written by ‘native Christians’ had to wait till the mid-nineteenth century with Edavalikel Philipos’ *The Syrian Christians of Malabar* in 1869 (Webster, *Historiography of Christianity in India*, 38) and Ittoop Writer’s *Suriyani Christianikalude Sabhacharithram* [Church History of Syrian Christians] in 1869, which mostly referred to the missionary histories that preceded.⁵⁴ The historiographic project recovered a Syrian Christian subject with a beginning, middle and end, that is homogenous, historically continuous and coherent. Even the discontinuities, disruptions and fragmentations that are

⁵³ James Hough’s *The History of Christianity in India: From the Commencement of the Christian Era* (1839), John William Kaye’s *Christianity in India: An Historical Narrative* (1859), George Milne Rae’s *The Syrian Church in India* (1892) etc, are some of the early histories that mark Kerala Christianity as the beginning of Christianity in India.

⁵⁴ Istvan Perczel and George Kurukkoor have recently translated a Church history from the eighteenth century (not dated exactly) in Garshuni Malayalam. “Malayalam Garshuni is the common name given to Malayalam texts written in Syriac characters with the additional use of eight old Malayalam or Mappilla (more precisely: *Kole ezhuttu* [used in Malabar and Kochi] or, rather *Thekken-Malayanma* [used in Travancore]) letters.... It is to be noted that none of those Sanskrit letters or sounds that were introduced into the predecessor of Modern Malayalam script (*Arya ezhuttu*), also called Modern Grantha, are used in Malayalam Garshuni, which permits us to formulate the hypothesis that the origins of Malayalam Garshuni antedate the introduction of *arya ezhuttu* for writing Malayalam by Tunjettu Ezhuttacchan in the seventeenth century” (Perczel and George, “A Malayalam Church History from the Eighteenth Century, Based on Original Documents,” 291-292). They also argue that the above history is similar to a model followed by a Syriac Church History from the seventeenth century. Hence, it is possible that more studies on Syriac and Garshuni Malayalam documents along with sources in Persian, Arabic, Portuguese, Dutch, etc, may open different stories of ‘vernacular Christians’ owing to their trans-regional connections from early period itself. Unfortunately, most studies, including this thesis, is limited by language incompetence to explore these resources.

re-presented in this chapter were rationalized as the causal effect of an essentialized subjectivity.⁵⁵ Most of these narratives start by selectively historicizing an ‘absolute beginning’/‘origin’ for the subject from among many beginnings, in this case Apostolic, by singling out the conversion by St Thomas in CE 52, from among many other previously available foundation stories.⁵⁶ The difference in approach is that while European missionaries/historians treat this as an improbable story due to lack of ‘evidence,’ the ‘native Church historians’ made it into a matter of faith/belief and hence that which does not need ‘proof.’⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Despite the relevance of projects like *SRITE* today (“The Project for Preserving the Manuscripts of the Syrian Christians in India”), re-discovering a Syrian Christian from CE 52 or beyond, as a prototype for contemporary times, falls into the trap of both colonial and nativist argument, problematically arguing for an ‘original’ or ‘pure’ essence that continues to animate the present.

⁵⁶ Eusebius of Caesarea, one of the earliest chroniclers of Christianity, identifies St Bartholomew as the apostle sent to India with “good news” (*Church History*, Book V, Chapter 10). Socrates Scholasticus in a similar manner credits Bartholomew to be the founder apostle of Indian Church (*The Ecclesiastical History*, 57). St Thomas’ tradition though popularly received and believed till date, according to James Hough, is a later addition as it did not find any place in either Eusebius’ or Socrates’ or any other early historian’s ecclesiastical accounts of beginnings of Christianity in India (*The History of Christianity in India*, vol i, 32). It is the seventeenth century historians like William Cave and La Croze who historicized the St Thomas tradition. The narratives on St Thomas are anything but consistent as is evident from the narrations of his martyrdom. In Hough’s history, St Thomas was stoned to death by Brahmins for the crime of spreading Christianity in their land (35). Whereas in Kaye’s history, who cites Marco Polo’s account of martyrdom, the apostle was killed accidentally by a low caste man while hunting peacocks (*Christianity in India*, 4). Historians from Kerala often adopt the strategy of ‘objectively’ laying out the ‘proofs’ without deriving upon any conclusive statement. Earlier historians like Edavalikel Philipose (*The Syrian Christians of Malabar*), Ittoop Writer (*Suriyani Christianikalude Sabhacharitam*) and EM Philip (*The Indian Church of St Thomas*) held the St Thomas conversion as the origin, unless and until it is disproved. Mundadan relies on oral tradition to account for St Thomas origin. He narrates *Ramban Pattu*, *Veeradyan Pattu*, *Margamkali Pattu* and other oral narratives which documents St Thomas’ life and death in Kerala (*History of Christianity in India*, vol i, 32). However, most of these *pattu* (song) belong to the sixteenth century and later. PJ Podipara, on the other hand, concentrates on histories of converted Namboodiri families and those of churches established by St Thomas, and grants benefit of doubt in favor of the tradition (*Keralathile Marthoma Christianikal*, 19). Zacharia, quoting major historians of Kerala and State Manuals, neither rejects nor accepts the origin myth (Introduction, *Udayamperur Sunnahadosinte Kanonakal*, 17). However, it is not the intention of this study to credit or discredit the belief of a community. It is rather an enquiry on the intention behind the historicizing of a particular beginning narrative as *the origin*, the conditions of its production and the method of this construction of a temporal beginning which determines the formation of a community. The point is that the Thomas conversion can only be one among the many beginnings of the community and hence not an excuse for claims of superiority and lineage.

⁵⁷ Thomas being the Apostle of India is particularly interesting as he himself is popularly called “doubting Thomas” for asking the risen Christ for proof of identity. And Christ’s response to Thomas was “Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed” (*The Bible*, John 20:29).

Edward Said's understanding of "divine, mythical and privileged origin" and "secular, humanly produced and ceaselessly reexamined beginning" (*Beginnings*)⁵⁸ as well as Tomoko Masuzawa's reflections on "essential, atemporal" origin and "temporal" beginning (*In Search of Dreamtime*)⁵⁹ are particularly useful here. According to Said, the beginning is the first step in the "intentional production of meaning" (Said, *Beginnings*, 5). Beginning, is an intentional act which, decides what follows from it, relates what follow from it with each other in an "eccentric order of repetition." For Said, 'intention' means "an appetite at the beginning intellectually to do something in a characteristic way—either consciously or unconsciously, but at any rate in a language that always (or nearly always) shows sign of the beginning intention in some form and is always engaged purposefully in the production of meaning... a beginning intention is nothing but created inclusiveness within which the work develops" (12). That does not mean intentional beginning anticipates only an organic whole, but is also prepared for inconsistent and conflicting parts, which would eventually give an eccentric order to the whole. Beginning influences—influence for Said is not a linear idea, but an open field of possibility because it includes repetition, refinement, amplification, loading, overloading, rebuttal, overturning, destruction, denial, invisible use—the continuities and discontinuities from the 'original' moment. 'Beginning' also authorizes what follows from it—continuities

⁵⁸ Origin, for Said, is "sacred," "passive" (*Beginnings*, 5) and "purely circumstantial existence of conditions" (32). Quest for an essential origin, which is not located in the 'secular' spatiality or temporality but in the divine, mythical, atemporal spatiality, is what forms the unifying thread for religions. Whereas, 'beginning' is "profane," "active" and "intentional." "Concept beginning designates a moment in time, a place, a principle, or an action ... these designations are verbal constructions employing variations of the term beginning ... thus the concept beginning is associated with an idea of precedence and/or priority. Finally, a beginning is designated in order to indicate, clarify, or define a later time, place or action. Designation of a beginning involves designation of a consequent intention" (Said, *Beginnings*, 5).

⁵⁹ For Masuzawa, "religion's unity is the kind of totality that is claimed to emanate from a common source, an original and originating principle" (*In Search of Dreamtime*, 38). Further, myths (narratives of origin), ritual (repetition, re-enactment of an original event or paradigmatic order), and tradition (concern for the transmission of an essential, original "truth" through time), represent—thus making it present again—the moment of absolute beginning of religion (15). Consequently, creation myths or origin myths form the founding narratives of most religions and, religious rituals and tradition are formulated to repeat and recreate these mythic times of origin.

and discontinuities—and how it has been repeated in order to make it present—to represent. In Said’s own words, “underlying the formal quest, of the mind to conceive a point in either time or space that marks the beginning of all things, is an imaginative and emotional need for unity, a need to apprehend an otherwise dispersed number of circumstances and to put them in some sort of telling order, sequential, moral or logical” (41).

Following Said, retrospectively fixing and fixating on St Thomas’ conversion as *the* beginning/origin of Malankara Nasranis could then be re-read as intentional and purposeful, as it determined the progressive narrative of the community, giving legitimacy in its strategic resistances to ‘Western Christianity,’ as it made them ‘more Christian.’ Similarly, asserting the Syriac Cosmopolitanism made it part of a pan-Christian imagination outside of the western Europe. Origin, thus, is most often born out of a linguistic process, carried out by modern historians in their quest for an absolute beginning of religions, as Masuzawa argues (*In Search of Dreamtime*). A beginning is intentionally fixed and narratively repeated as *the* origin, thereby creating ‘traces’ of subject’s continuity, which further authenticates its essential beingness. Nevertheless, such a historicization of the particular chosen ‘original’ event also overshadows many beginnings which may otherwise enable different narratives of community still possible.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I tried to critically deconstruct the emergence of Syriac Christianity as a communitarian consciousness in the interstices of both the ‘colonial Christian’ and ‘native Hindu’ coercions of ‘vernacular Christians.’ The chapter tried to elucidate that *Suriyani Christiani* [Syrian Christian], in the context of Kerala, was a floating signifier that presented itself as a deterritorial critical category, which was

reterritorialized to represent an essentialized identity. Their anthropological differences, which became the ‘lack’ that made the community insufficient, in its encounter with ‘European Christianity,’ is translated into a ‘surplus’—an excessive identification which makes them ‘vernacular’ and ‘cosmopolitan’ at the same time outside ‘Western Christian’ discourse. That is to argue that *Suriyani Christiani* is neither a linguistic community as denoted by ‘Syriac,’ (contrary to the claims that Syrian Christians are those sects who follow Syriac liturgy) nor an ethnic community (contrary to the claims that they are the descendants of Syrian migrants) and never a caste community (contrary to the claims that they are descendants of Brahmin converts).⁶⁰ It is rather a historically produced strategic formation in the post-Portuguese period, which was coopted as a colonial administrative category by the Dutch, based on the anthropological differences within the community, and later adopted as a marker of collective identification for consolidation against the colonial/Hindu state, which has acquired different significations over the time. Genealogies of *Suriyani Christiani* would however expose this finiteness to its limits by revealing multiple beginnings, descent and emergences that would fragment any unbroken, continuous and coherent historical subject. On a different note, the alternate genealogies of Christianity, and the many routes of its arrival, as exemplified by ‘Kerala Christians,’ expose the limits of western European histories of Christianity itself.

The modern historiography’s quest for “miraculous origin,” as Foucault explains, is an attempt to “capture the exact essence of things, its purest possibilities, protected identities” that is “directed to that which was already there, the image of a primordial truth fully adequate to its nature and necessitates the removal of every mask to disclose an original identity” (“Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” 142). However, genealogy dispels

⁶⁰ The second aspect of the Syrian Christian origin story, that is the conversion of Brahmin families by the Apostle Thomas, and their formation as a caste-community will be taken up in Chapter Three.

the “chimeras of the origin” by recognizing the traces of numberless beginnings that dissociate the self. The entangled course of descent or multiple beginnings that I mapped, be it different traditions of Apostolic missions, or the West Asian migrations, regional conversions, translations at the Diamper Synod, the *Koonan Kurishu Sathyam*, the journey to Rome, Angamaly *Padiyola*, among myriad other events, against the backdrop of changing colonial and ‘native’ socio-political and economic-theological scenario, constitute the “heterogeneous layers that threaten the fragile inheritor from within or from underneath” (Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” 146). As far as Malankara Nasranis are concerned, the emergences or ‘moments of arising,’ which were minute deviations or sometimes complete reversals, are isolated in this chapter, to critically deconstruct their hegemonic formation as *Suriyani Christiani*.

As discussed in this chapter, the autonomy of minor communities in the region was compromised in the tug of war among ‘native Hindu’ kings and ‘colonial Christian’ rulers. This was particularly so for ‘vernacular Christians’ as their political-economic struggle with the colonizers was also deeply theological. Having placed under the changing colonial rules, within the ‘native kingdom,’ ‘vernacular Christians’ had to repeatedly prove both their faith as well as belongingness. The fragmentation and discontinuities within the community, as well as the disruption of imposed ‘Western Christian’ universality, continued to render them as ‘not yet Christian’ in the eyes of colonial regimes. At the same time, placing them under direct colonial rule within the ‘native kingdom,’ outside of the laws of the land, with tax exemptions and juridical protection, rendered them as ‘not yet native’ in their own lands as well. This precarious

position that jeopardized their lived social-political-economic-theological realities, called for an emergent political community of Christians, in order to negotiate with both the Rajah and the Resident, which will be critically analysed in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Suriyani Christiani¹ and Community/Caste Configurations

Somewhere along the line, a thing came of nothing. This is what went wrong. The community of Christians came to understand itself as a community of substance, as partaking of, which is to say *as sharing rather than dividing*, some thing. (Anidjar, *Blood: A Critique of Christianity*, 59)

In Chapter Two, I tried to elucidate that *Suriyani Christiani* emerged as a fluid communitarian consciousness in the interstices of both ‘colonial Christian’ and ‘native Hindu’² coercions of ‘vernacular Christians.’ The ‘vernacular Christians’ were doubly

¹ *Suriyani Christiani* is the Malayalam equivalent of Syrian Christian. *Suriyani Christiani*, in the current disposition, culturally implies a Christian with the twin ancestries of 1) Apostle Thomas and 2) Brahmin converts of the Apostle. According to the origin story, there are four Brahmin families that received baptism from Thomas—Pakalomattom, Shankarapuri, Kalli and Kaliyankal. To this day, annual family conventions and family histories of Syrian Christians quintessentially begin by tracing their lineage to one of these families. So much so that Geevarghese Mar Coorilos, a Syrian Christian bishop, made a public statement in 2018 that he will not attend such “programs that assert their artificially created upper caste identity and lineage.... They say their ancestors were Brahmins converted by St Thomas. They even put out their family history in books proclaiming such false notions. These baseless, savarna caste-oriented and reactionary myths have to be busted.... I did attend such events due to my personal intimacy with them. But, I regret it. I can’t (do it) any more” (*Outlook*, “Bishop Demolishes the Biggest Conversion ‘Myth’ of Kerala,” 15 April 2018. Abraham Benhur gives a list of all contemporary families that claim to be the branches of these four families: 101 families claim Shankarapuri, 20 claim Pakalomattom, 67 claim Kalli and 120 claim Kalliankal (*Jutha Bharatham*, 295-312). Among these, Pakalomattom and Shankarapuri further claim that they were solely given the right of priesthood, from whom *Arkadiyakkon* was traditionally chosen. See, “Pakalomattom Family,” :: [History - Pakalomattom Family :: \(pakalomattamfamily.org\)](http://History - Pakalomattom Family :: (pakalomattamfamily.org)) and “Kaliyankal Ezhumali Family,” History – Kaliyankal Ezhumalil Kudumbam for their family histories.

² ‘Hindu’ here is taken as nebulous category, a work in progress since the middle of the eighteenth century. What and who constitute ‘Hindu’ was a point of debate as late as the beginning of the twentieth century. However, this study takes mid-eighteenth century as the beginning of ‘religionization of Hindu’ and ‘Hinduization of Travancore,’ very much in line with ‘colonial Christian’ imperatives, when Marthanda Varma, after territorializing Travancore through conquests, submitted Travancore state to God, thereby making him the representative of God on earth, resembling the divine rights of kings in the European contexts. Travancore Manualist writes: “Marthanda Varma signalised his glorious reign by dedicating the state to Sri Padmanabha, an event unprecedented in the annals even of the Hindu kingdoms of India.... The pious Maharaja proceeded to the temple and dedicated himself and his state to the deity.... Marthanda Varma placed the state-sword in front of the deity and received it back consecrated. To this day the Maharajas of Travancore hold the sword of state as the agents of Sri Padmanabha.... In accordance with the spirit of this solemn act the Maharaja assumed the title *Sri Padmanabhadasa*, the servant of the deity” (Pillai, *The Travancore State Manual*, vol ii, 347-348; see also, Nagamaiya, *The Travancore State Manual*, vol i, 362-363). With this act, the religion of the king and the state were co-constituted in the context of Travancore. The gift deed reads as “We, Bala Marthanda Varma, the senior member of Thrippappur and Sri Pandarakkaryam cheyvarkal, have this day transferred by absolute gift and dedication, to endure as long as Sun and Moon shall last, all the lands and functions appertaining thereto, together with all rights and dignities and all other possessions that We have been hitherto enjoying as of right within the territories between the Thovala Fort in the east and the Kavanar river in the west, in favour of Perumal Sri Padmanabha Perumal. In token of whereof we have this day executed this deed of absolute gift and dedication” (Pillai, *Travancore State Manual*, vol ii, 348). S Raju, in his study of *swaroopams*, [provincial

minoritized as they became ‘insufficiently Christian’ for the British Protestant colonial government owing to their ‘Eastern Christian’ genealogy, and ironically at the same time ‘insufficiently native’ for the Travancore regime owing to their shared religion with the colonizer. It is in this context that *Suriyani Christiani* with an Apostolic origin emerged strongly as an anti-‘colonial-Christian’ consciousness, which was enumerated by the colonial state as a fixed ‘native Christian’ category, as distinct from the Latin and the Protestant Christians, for administrative purposes, and essentialised through ethnography and historiography. However, even at this point, Malankara Christians did not seem to be vexed by the question ‘who did St Thomas convert first’ until it becomes a historiographic necessity in the nineteenth century, which I will explore in this chapter.

Not only that the early histories do not mention that they are descendants of Brahmin converts, but also, and more importantly, the available narratives describe them as converts from various castes and creeds, faithful to the ‘lowly’ beginnings of Christianity itself. For instance, *Ramban Pattu*, one of the texts that constitutes the archive for St Thomas narrative, which was supposedly composed by the disciple of St Thomas in the first century and was orally transmitted until documented in the sixteenth century by Thomas Ramban Maliakkal, sings thus: “he gained 17,450 human souls / among them were 6,850 Brahmins / 2,500 Kshatriyas / 3,750 Vaisyas / 4,250 Shudras” (Koonamakal, *Ramban Pattu* [Songs of Priest]). Similarly, *The Acts of Thomas*, the apocryphal text considered to be primarily written in Syriac during the first half of the third century, which is the key archival source on St Thomas in India, while writing

governing structures before the formation of kingdoms] has argued along these lines that Travancore as kingdom in the European sense, with king as the sovereign Head, is a construct of the eighteenth century, co-produced with the legitimation of the king through its relation to the deity (*Petals of the Self-Formed*). The territorialization of Travancore as a kingdom in the Roman/Christian sense, as well as co-constituting of the king’s religion and the state, has to be understood in the contexts of the repeated attempt of the ‘Christian colonizers’ to conquer the land. Hence, the correlation between the threat/fear of Christianity and the emergence of Hindu as a religion, the simultaneous Hinduization of the state and subsequent secularization of the Hindu and its impact on regional religiosities including ‘vernacular Christianity’ in the context of Travancore forms the conceptual framework of this chapter.

extravagantly about the mission and miracle of Thomas in India does not mention anywhere about converting ‘upper caste,’ rather it mentions Thomas baptising kings and queens along with *all their subjects* (James, *The Acts of Thomas*; emphasis mine).³ Therefore, it can be deduced that the discourse of *Suriyani Christiani* as descendants of Brahmins converted by St Thomas in CE 52 was not historicized until the nineteenth century, when the community was increasingly alienated in its own land by the Nair forces due to the anti-Christian discourses in the light of negotiations with the colonizers, which I have discussed in Chapter Two. So much so that by the middle of the nineteenth century, there is a surge in the production of Church histories by various Christian denominations, and family histories by resourceful ‘men’ belonging to these denominations,⁴ each recovering one’s Apostolic and Brahminic origin on the one hand, and ‘anti-colonial Christian’/*Suriyani Christiani* lineage on the other.

By doing so, *Suriyani Christiani* was reconceived as an endogamous community that shares a common substance with the Brahmins, who was never ‘polluted’ since its ‘miraculous origin.’ While an Apostolic lineage made them ‘more Christian’ and legitimized the discourse of ‘original Christians’ as a ‘strategy of resistance’ to ‘Western Christianization,’ a Brahminic lineage made them ‘more (than) native’ and thereby legitimized the discourse of ‘original inhabitants’ of the land in order to negotiate the increasing Hinduization of the polity. Needless to say, such a discourse of Brahmin lineage is fundamentally anti-theological because the Eucharist or partaking the flesh and the blood of Christ is no longer enough to become ‘true Christian,’ unless also sharing the blood of Brahmin. (Strangely, affiliation to Apostle Thomas did not translate as claims of

³ See, Nedungatt, “The Apocryphal ‘Acts of Thomas’ and Christian Origins in India” for a detailed analysis of the text.

⁴ See, K George Varghese’s “Writing Family Histories: Identity Construction among Syrian Christians” and Nidhin Donald’s “Every Family Its Own Historian? The Case of Syrian Christian Family Histories” for an analysis of the Syrian Christian family histories.

filiation, even symbolically, probably because he was a Jew and fisherman!). It reimagines Christianity as a community of blood, not only the blood of Christ but also of Brahmin as a common substance to its members, and thereby co-constitutes religion and race/caste, or religion as race/caste, in the contexts of Kerala. That is, there is a paradigmatic reinterpretation of ‘vernacular Christianity’ as it introduced a ‘brand new Christian’—the *Suriyani Christiani* or the ‘Brahmin Christian’ or the ‘Old Christian’ as opposed to the ‘non-*Suriyani*,’ the ‘*avarna*’ or the ‘New’ Christian—which problematically inaugurated a new paradigm of being Christian itself in the region. Given the community’s genealogies of multiple waves of migrations and conversions, and thus the conception of community as nomadic and not monadic, which I discussed extensively in Chapter Two, this new Brahminical bloodline has to be critically read as more symbolic than material. On a different note, as an aside, while one always worries about what, somebody remaining Brahmin or ‘Pariah’ after becoming Christian, does to Christianity, it may be equally interesting to wonder what it does to Brahminism—whether it potentially destabilizes the sanctity of the ‘sacred thread’ and thus the immunity of caste being, if one does not stop being Brahmin despite ‘polluted’ by becoming Christian!⁵

Nevertheless, and more importantly, it is my contention that the Christian conscription to this new symbolic order of Brahminical hierarchy, and their reconstitution as a caste-community in/through *Suriyani Christiani*, at a time when different communities were actively engaged in anti-caste struggles, played a crucial role in problematically legitimizing not only themselves, but also the Brahmin/‘Hindu,’ as the

⁵ I am reminded of Meena Kandasamy’s satirical poem “Becoming a Brahmin.” The poem reads as, “Algorithm for converting a Shudra into a Brahmin / Begin. / Step 1: Take a beautiful Shudra girl. / Step 2: Make her marry a Brahmin. / Step 3: Let her give birth to his female child. / Step 4: Let this child marry a Brahmin. / Step 5: Repeat steps 3-4 six times. / Step 6: Display the end product. It is a Brahmin. End (“Becoming a Brahmin”).

‘original inhabitant’ and ‘real native’ of the land and in validating the verticality of caste structure as historical, thereby re-configuring caste/community discourses for a ‘modern Travancore.’ Because, at a time when the ‘Hindu’ was being consolidated and enumerated nationally in response to colonizer/Christian as external enemy, and Islam/Muslims as internal enemy, and provincially in response to local enemies, like Christians in the case of Travancore, the collective constitution of a ‘non-Hindu’ community (here *Suriyani Christiani*), perceived as *varathar* (‘those who came’ as opposed to ‘those who were here’; non-natives or foreign or migrant) for that matter, as a caste-community, by inscribing themselves into this hegemonic hierarchy, may have corroborated caste as an integral ‘social reality’ of the land. Such attempts by *Suriyani Christiani*, along with others, to displace the discourse of caste from the paradigm of ‘religious’ to ‘civic’ can be seen later as well as, elucidated by their take on Temple Entry Movements for example. Hence, there is an urgent need to deconstruct the ‘Brahmin Christians’ (as *Suriyani Christiani*) in order to unpack modernization/secularization of caste discourse and what follows is only a first step.

While Chapter Two delineated the Christian contexts in Travancore and Cochin, owing to their respective roles in the genealogy of community, this chapter will focus specifically on Travancore, primarily because of the population density of Christians there. According to the census of 1875, there were 4,69,023 Christians in Travancore, 1,28,287 in Cochin and 40,638 Christians in Malabar (Zachariah, *The Syrian Christians of Kerala*, 13).⁶ Moreover, Travancore is also the major site of political consolidation among *Suriyani Christiani* in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Travancore, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, already started modernization of political and

⁶ See, Zachariah, *The Syrian Christians of Kerala*, for a detailed statistical analysis of Christian population from 1801-2001 (13-14). Also, since Cochin Legislative Assembly was not formed until 1925, there are no significant documentation pertaining to any kind of mobilizations with respect to Christians in Cochin, and hence the focus on Travancore.

economic spheres, which has in many ways decided the ‘developmental modernity’ of Kerala, which has been criticized for its entrenched exclusionary ideology through the invisibilization of caste. Hence, the need to critically analyse the foundational period of this ‘modernity’ and the key players that universalized it for the state. Through a reading of Tharisappally *Cheppedu* [Tharisappally Copper Plate Grant], *Nasrani Jaathyaikya Sangham* [United Christian Community Front], census reports, *The Travancore Manual*, *Malayala Manorama* and *Deepika* newspapers’ archives, and a comparative reading of three Memorials—“The Malayali Memorial,” “The Counter Malayali Memorial” and “The Ezhava Memorial,” I examine the configuration of *Suriyani Christiani* as an ethnic identity for political purposes, towards the end of the nineteenth century, and its implications for the discourses of caste/community in Kerala.

Retrospective Recovery of *Suriyani Christiani*: Tharisappally *Cheppedu*⁷

In 2017, Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India, during his diplomatic visit to Israel, gifted replicas of two Copper Plate Grants to his counterpart, as a marker of centuries-old historical relationship between the two countries. While one of the Grants, called *Joothapattayam*, is considered as gifted to the Jewish community of Kerala, arguably in CE 1000, by the ruler Bhaskara Ravi (Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, 277), the second Grant is believed to have been given to the Syrian Christians, arguably in CE 849, during the reign of Sthanu Ravi, both granting special privileges, rights and

⁷ *Cheppedu* or Copper Plate Grants are “official documents often recording royal orders, typically grants, i.e. allocation of land revenue and tax exemptions mainly to religious institutions or figures. They are frequently issued by royal chancelleries but also by provincial authorities.” “They are notably known as *raja-sasanas*, ‘royal orders,’ and (*tamra*)-*sasanas*, ‘orders (on copper),’ two terms which denote the textual content as well as the material container.... ‘Donative decrees and settlements doubled as deed or title to property rights and privileges and there are a number of instances in which the record refers to its own capacity to forestall or resolve future disputes over such rights’ In South India, copper plates were long designed in the landscape format and since, most of the time, the record spread on several plates, these were joined by a ring passing through a hole made in each of the plates and soldered with a seal” (Francis, “Indian Copper Plate Grants,” 392-394, 398).

properties to respective communities. This renewed act of gifting, as well as the gifting back, by the Prime Minister, re-ignited discussions on the privileged antiquity of *Suriyani Christiani*, as well as debates around their caste-community constitution.⁸ The Copper Plate Grants assume a performative function as it awards to the grantee certain permanent rights, ‘as long as the sun and the moon,’ as captured through a recurring phrase in these Grants. More importantly, Tharisappally *Cheppedu* also often figures as the ‘proof’ of the antiquity of caste system itself, as the Grant assigns some Ezhava and Vannan families to the church and sanctions the selling/buying of slaves. The Malabar Manualist, for instance, remarks that “as bearing upon this important subject of the origin of the caste system, the evidence of the early Syrian Christians’ deed, translated by Herman Gundert in *Madras Journal of Literature and Science*, vol xiii, part I, deserves, it would seem, a prominent place” (Logan, *Malabar*, vol i, 109).

Therefore, in this section, I critically engage with the Tharisappally *Cheppedu* or the Kollam *Cheppedu* or The Quilon Copper Plate Grant or The Syrian Christian Deed, currently in the possession of the Orthodox and the Mar Thoma Syrian Christian Churches as one of the primary documents, which to this day is presumed as a ‘historical proof’ for the age-old resourcefulness of Syrian Christian community and their ‘upper caste’ status from ancient times. However, this is not an attempt towards a new interpretation of the Grant itself as many competent scholars have already done that.⁹ What makes the Grant interesting for my work is that, like *Tuhfat ul Mujahiddin* (discussed in Chapter Two), it was ‘discovered’ and translated in the early nineteenth

⁸ See, “Proud Moments,” Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church Website, [Proud Moments... – Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church](#).

⁹ See, Gundert, “Translation and analysis of the ancient documents engraved on copper in possession of the Syrian Christians and Jews of Malabar” (1844); Rao, *Tamil and Vatteluttu Inscriptions on Stone and Copper Plates*. 1920; Joseph, *The Malabar Christian Copper Plates* (1925); Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala: Brahmin Oligarchy and Ritual Monarchy* (1996); Varier & Veluthatt, *Tharisappally Pattayam* (2013).

century by the British, as the colonial historiography was recovering a ‘history’ for the *Suriyani Christiani* in Kerala. Hence, I will be con-textually cross-reading different translations of the Grant to raise a simple question from within the text as to what (dis)connects it to *Suriyani Christiani* community, and thus their caste origin.

Following the announcement of the ‘discovery’ of an ancient inscription by the Royal Asiatic Society in 1806, Herman Gundert published its first English translation in June 1844, in *Madras Journal of Literature and Science*, edited by the Committee of the Madras Literary Society and Auxiliary Royal Asiatic Society (No 30). It was titled “Translation and analysis of the ancient documents engraved on copper in possession of the Syrian Christians and Jews of Malabar” [Henceforth “Translation and Analysis of Ancient Documents”]. Gundert sums up that the Copper Plate Grant “is an act by which one Maruwan Sapir Iso (the Shapur or Xabro of the Syrians?) transfers a piece of ground near the sea shore, with several families of different Heathen cast[e]s to a community and church, Tarisapalli, built by one Iso Data Virai, the grant being made with the Palace Major’s sanction (probably the Commissioner of Perumal Sthanu Ravi Gupta) and with the concurrence of the Venadu (Travancore) king, Anjuwannam and Manigramam that is the Jewish and Christian dynasties, being appointed joint protectors of the land and the Church endowed” (“Translation and Analysis of Ancient Documents,” 23). While the date of the Grant is still debatable, Elamkulam Kunjanpillai in his interpretation, dated the *cheppedu* (copper plate grant) to CE 849, during the reign of Sthanu Ravi, which is now generally concurred (Varier and Veluthatt, *Tharisappally Pattayam*, 97).¹⁰ The Grant appears to have several scripts including that of Tamil/Malayalam, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian and Hebrew languages constituted of Vattezhuthu, Granthaksharam, Kufic, Pahlavi and Hebrew scripts, excluding a still undeciphered language/script (Varier and

¹⁰ See also, Perczel, “Syriac Christianity in India,” for a discussion on the dating of the Grant (663-671).

Veluthatt, *Tharisappally Pattayam*, 114), indicating the ‘vernacular-cosmopolitan’ sociality of precolonial Kerala.¹¹ Gundert’s translation has historic significance as it was immediately co-opted by the ‘native historians’ as the unique surviving document that accounted for the ‘nobility’ of *Suriyani Christiani*—which will soon be shown as the privileges of a trading community (mis)translated as caste—thereby retrospectively recovering an ‘upper caste’ origin to Christianity in the region. Two aspects contributed mainly to this mis-reading: one by reading Sapir Iso as a *Suriyani* Bishop and therefore the Grant as that being gifted to the *Suriyani Christiani* community, and two by taking Manigramam as a dynasty of Christians, which according to the historians was made possible in the region owing to its ‘upper caste’ lineage.

Subsequent translations and studies have complimented, complicated and to some extent contradicted Gundert’s translation, particularly his observations on Anjuwannam and Manigramam. For instance, TA Gopinatha Rao refuted Gundert’s claim of Christian and Jewish dynasties and argued that Anjuwannam refers to ‘five castes’ that are mentioned in the Grant, namely “Ilavar, Tachchar, Vellalar, Vannar and one more which is not legible in the inscription” that contributed to the bulk of converts to Christianity, and Manigramam refers to Manichean followers of Sapir Iso, thereby negating any royal past to ‘vernacular’ Christians (“Tamil and Vatteluttu Inscriptions on Stone and Copper Plates”). However, based on the appearance of Anjuwannam and Manigramam from other documents in the period across regions, and based on the interpretation of witness signatures in the Grant, which are in Pahlavi, Kufic and Hebrew, subsequent studies have argued that Anjuwannam was a West Asian merchant guild or trading corporation constituted of Christians, Arabs and Jews, and Manigramam a ‘vernacular’ merchant

¹¹ See, Winckworth, “Notes on the Pahlavi, Kufic and Hebrew Signatures to the Qilon Plates.” Drawing from Varier and Veluthatt, Perczel notes that the Grant has Muslim signatures in Kufic Arabic, Christian signatures in Middle Persian, in Pahlavi script, Zoroastrian signatures in Middle Persian, in Pahlavi script and the Jewish signatures in Judaeo-Persian, in Hebrew script (“Syriac Christianity in India,” 668).

guild consisting of different castes/communities in different regions. The term Anjuwannam could be explained as the ‘vernacular’ form of ‘Anjuman,’ the term for corporations in the Persian language, and the term Hanjama or Hanjamana, found in some Telugu and Kannada records (Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, 277-284; Subbarayalu, “Trade Guilds of Kerala up to the Tenth Century”).

Nonetheless, despite all these plausible interpretations, there still seems to be a consensus that the *Cheppedu* offers historical proof for the resourcefulness of *Suriyani Christiani* community from time immemorial, which then arguably becomes the ‘proof’ of their ‘upper caste’ status, thereby re-presenting caste as an essential social reality and ‘legitimate’ form of belongingness in the region. However, this seems to be the result of an over-reading as *Cheppedu* only mentions that the privileges¹² are extended to Tharisappally,¹³ built by Sapir Iso, who is also mentioned in the same document as the founder of Kollam *nagaram* (town). Sapir Iso could have been a trading chief, going with the interpretation of Anjuwannam and Manigramam as merchant guilds that settled in Kollam. Taking into consideration the importance of Kollam port in the maritime trade of the region—so much so that CE 825, the founding year of Kollam became the ‘Malayalam era’ known also as Kollam era—and that of Sapir Iso who is hailed as the founder of Kollam *nagaram* twice in the *Cheppedu*, the privileges narrated in the inscription must have been gifted to Iso by the king Sthanu Ravi, and by extension to Tharisappally, the church that Iso founded at Kollam. Hence, these privileges could be read as those granted to a flourishing settler trading commune in a particular region,

¹² A piece of land is gifted to Tharisappally (church of Tarsa), along with four families of Ezhavar, one family of Vannar, two families of Eruviyar, one family of Thacchar, 4 families of Vellalar and slaves. People of Tharisaappally were granted tax exemptions, and right to politically, economically and juridically govern themselves. Families from the above castes who joined Tharisappally were allowed access to public spaces, reduced taxes, and were placed under the protection and governance of the church (Varier and Veluthatt, *Tharisappally Pattayam*, 114-116).

¹³ Istvan Perczel interprets it as a generic name for “a Christian place of worship,” Malayalam word *palli* meaning ‘settlement’ and Persian word *Tarsa* meaning ‘Christian,’ as there is no trace of any particular church by that name (“Syriac Christianity in India,” 665).

which attests to its cosmopolitan worldview than that which was automatically extended to all ‘upper caste Christians’ “as long as the moon and sun and the universe exists” (Varier and Veluthatt, *Tharisappally Pattayam*, 115). The problem with the latter reading is that, it, willy-nilly, warrants a Brahmin origin for the ‘original Christians,’ because caste becomes the only way to explain the resourcefulness of a ‘foreign’ religion. Whereas the former reading opens the possibility for existence of different political-economic orders independent of a systematized caste order.

Scholars have already argued that Malankara Nasranis became a ‘vernacular-cosmopolitan’ trading community that transacted with ‘local’ and ‘global’ merchant guilds through sea and land routes.¹⁴ In the case of Tharisappally *Cheppedu*, by (mis)translating the gift as a ‘caste-privilege,’ and not ‘trade-privilege,’ and by making Sapir Iso a *Suriyani*, and thus the Grant as a ‘*Suriyani Christiani* Grant,’ the rights of a migrant-settler community become co-opted as the privileges guaranteed by the verticality of caste structure. Thus, such retrospective over-reading of the archive to establish *Suriyani Christiani* as a caste-community, also enables to establish caste as the sole social and economic order of the land, thereby nullifying any other worldview that prevailed. Because, the interpretation of Tharisappally *Cheppedu* as attesting to their caste privilege, corroborates the Brahmin conversion origin of *Suriyani Christiani* and vice versa; they validate each other.¹⁵ While Brahmin origin becomes the explanation for a ‘foreign community’ being granted royal privileges, the grant itself becomes evidence for their Brahmin origin. As I already discussed, the intentional intellectual exercise arising from

¹⁴ Pius Malekandathil, while mapping St Thomas Christians as a merchant group, discusses other similar grants given to them. For example, Tahzhekkadu inscription that records certain privileges granted to local Christian traders Chathan Vadukan and Iravi Chathan (“Winds of Change and Links of Continuity,” 263).

¹⁵ Bayly identifies the ‘high’ status enjoyed by Christians as not a caste status, but the result of what she calls “honours”—“position of high status and acceptance within the region’s most prestigious social and religious institutions” (*Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, 251)—received in return for their economic and military services (282).

the “imaginative and emotional need for unity” apprehends an “otherwise dispersed number of circumstances and put them in some sort of telling order, sequential, moral or logical” (Said, *Beginnings*, 41). By doing so, ‘history’ tries to restore in *Suriyani Christiani* “an unbroken continuity” for the ‘vernacular Christian’ subject by “imposing a predetermined form to all its vicissitudes” that operates beyond the dispersed events, in order to demonstrate that past actively exists in and continues to animate the present without ‘deviations’ (Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” 146).¹⁶ Thus, such a (mis)interpretation allows for the reinterpretation of all/only ‘elite Christians’ of the nineteenth century as *Suriyani Christiani*, with the lineage of ‘pure’ blood—Brahmin blood—who remained an immunitarian community from CE 52, which made them eligible for royal Grants and caste deeds. Whereas, any other beginning narrative of the community would call for another interpretation of the Deed, to look at it as a ‘moment of emergence,’ as a memory of trans-original compositions of the ‘vernacular Christian’ body politic.

If anything, Tharisappally *Cheppedu* or Kollam *Cheppedu* should be read as one of the many beginnings in the genealogies of ‘vernacular Christianity,’ that consisted of West Asian migrants and converts from different regional castes/communities, who became Christians,¹⁷ rather than as ‘proof’ for the ‘upper caste origin’ dating back to antiquity. Such exercises are important not only because it punctures the ‘immunitarian history’ of the community from within, but also actively un-inherits the caste history of Kerala itself. Because, by recovering a Brahmin past for themselves, dating back to the first century, *Suriyani Christiani* is also problematically recovering a legitimate past for

¹⁶ See, Yesudasan, *Chettitheruvile Dvisathabdikal* for a critical discussion of Syrian Christian construction of miraculous origin by obliterating many ‘lower’ beginnings.

¹⁷ Tharisappally Copper Plate Grant shows that different castes and communities were affiliated to the church. Colonial and mission records show that the Portuguese converted ‘lower castes’ to Christianity. Considering that Christianity in the region was in a constant flux, with multiple entries and exits, as exemplified in the last chapter, it is erroneous to still retrieve an ‘original’ *Suriyani Christiani*, against its own genealogies.

Brahminism as well. From this, it may follow that Brahmanization of some Christians, and their consolidation as *Suriyani Christians*, at least in the contexts of the nineteenth century Travancore, probably played a crucial role in modernizing/secularizing the paradigm of caste, by which I mean the verticality of caste structure as the organizing principle of the polity, to others' as well as their own disadvantage. Because a Brahminical origin narrative and its uninterrupted continuity only reduces the lived realities of a community which, in its many beginnings, has always already become a community of converts, as is elucidated in Chapter Two. This reimagination among 'elite Christians' has significant implications in reconfiguring the caste/community discourses of the Travancore polity since the nineteenth century, which I will explore in the following sections.

Community: Being-in-common as a Critique of Common-being

In an engaging discussion on community, Jean-Luc Nancy conceives 'political' as indissociable from community. According to Nancy, "political is the place where community as such is brought into play," that is "the existence of being-in-common, which gives rise to the existence of being-self." Here, "in-common" does not imply "something that is *added onto* the dimension of being-self," but something that is "co-originary" and "coextensive" with the "self." However, this does not mean that what is "common" is some substance that is shared by everyone, rather it implies that, the "mode of existence and appropriation of a 'self' is the mode of an exposition in common and to the in-common, and that this exposition exposes the self even in its 'in itself'" (*The Inoperative Community*, xxxvii). That is, 'being-in-common' is the ultimate mode of 'being-with an-other' that constantly risk the 'self' by exposing it to the 'other.' In Nancy's terms:

To be exposed means to be ‘posed’ in exteriority, according to an exteriority, having to do with an outside *in the very intimacy* of an inside. Or again: having access to what is *proper* to existence, and therefore, of course, to the proper of *one’s own* existence, only through an ‘expropriation’ whose exemplary reality is that of ‘my’ face always exposed to others, always turned towards another and faced by him or her, never facing myself. This is the archi-original impossibility of Narcissus that opens straight away onto the possibility of the political. (*The Inoperative Community*, xxxvii-xxxviii)

To put it simply, community, is the process of being-with-an-other without having to forge a commonness that can be shared. According to this understanding, community never comes, but is always coming. Therefore, to think ‘commonness’ as an ‘essence’ of community is in effect the closure of the political. According to Nancy:

Such a thinking constitutes closure because it assigns to community a *common being*, whereas community is a matter of ... existence inasmuch as it is *in common*, but without letting itself be absorbed into a common substance. Being *in common* has nothing to do with communion, with fusion into a body, into a unique and ultimate identity that would no longer be exposed. Being *in common* means, to the contrary, *no longer having, in any form, in any empirical or ideal place, such a substantial identity, and sharing this (narcissistic) ‘lack of identity.’* Finitude, or “the infinite lack of infinite identity” is what makes community. The community that becomes *a single* thing (body, mind, fatherland, Leader ...) necessarily loses the *in* of being-in-common. Or, it loses the *with* or the *together* that defines it. It yields its being-together to a being *of* togetherness. The truth of community, on the contrary, resides in the retreat of such a being.... The retreat opens, and continues to keep open, this strange being-the-one-with-the-other to

which we are exposed... community does not consist in the transcendence (nor in the transcendental) of a being supposedly immanent to community. It consists on the contrary in the immanence of a ‘transcendence’—that of finite existence as such, which is to say, of its ‘exposition.’ Exposition, precisely, is not a ‘being’ that one can ‘sup-pose’ (like a sub-stance) to be in community ... community cannot be presupposed. It is only exposed. (xxxviii-xxxix)

Such an understanding bears the risk of conceiving various political programmes for the realization of a community, which in effect nullifies both community and the political, because community can never be actualized. Because once fulfilled, it closes its own openness. Informed by this exposition on community, I try to unpack *Suriyani Christiani* constituting themselves as a community with a common origin, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, as well as the discourse of community emerging in/through them, constantly re-configuring each other. For the purpose, I first analyse the formation of *Nasrani Jaathyaikya Sangham* [United Christian Community Front] in the latter half of the nineteenth century as one of the earliest articulations of ‘*Suriyani Christiani*’ as a political community. This is, of course, not to say that all earlier Christian articulations were apolitical/antipolitical/nonpolitical, but only to delineate the new paradigmatic political community of Christians emerging during the period.

Being Christian, Becoming *Suriyani*: *Nasrani Jaathyaikya Sangham*

The routes of this new imagination of community can be traced back to a declaration in 1882 titled “*Bhavimangalaprasthapanam*” or “*Prasthapapathram*” [declaration of good future] as part of forming *Nasrani Jaathyaikya Sangham* [United Christian Community Front] by a group of Christian leaders, which reads thus:

About 50 people from all sects gathered in a meeting to think about a way to invite *all groups among Suriyanis* to form *Nasrani Jaathyaikya Sangham*. Most of the gathered were *rich and influential*. The purpose of the above mentioned *Jaathyaikya Sangham* was to awake and spread worth and love for one's community [*Jati*], and with the strength that comes out of the unity of this community, rightfully reach the political and social heights that *the community once enjoyed and later unfortunately collapsed*. This *Sangham* is also responsible to represent the demands and petitions of the community to the state, act as strength and representative of the members, figure out ways to help each other, construct employment firms at appropriate places to develop each job and skill, and decide on other matters relevant to the welfare of this community ... everyone would agree that it is imperative to meet these goals for our state temporarily weakened by internal feuds and lack of external support. There is no doubt that these matters can be resolved by the united working of different sects ... it is only fitting for us to build unity among various sects differing only in a few aspects of belief and traditions. This difference just originated yesterday *considering the antiquity of our community*. (George, *Nidheerikkal Mani Kathanar*, 191; emphasis mine)

Jaathyaikya Sangham was the brainchild of Nidheerikkal Mani Kathanar, a Roman Catholic Christian priest, who was relentlessly working towards bringing together the warring Christian denominations in order to jointly fight for their rights, at a time when even the resourceful Christians fell out of both colonial favours owing to its 'secularization' and 'native privileges' owing to its 'Hinduization.' The economic thrust of this coming-together was evident from the manifesto of the *Sangham*—an organization described as consisting of the “rich and influential” Christians in the region—which had

elaborate plans to buy properties and establish schools, churches, libraries, orphanages, small-scale industries, cultivable lands, trading network and banks (George, *Nidheerikkal Mani Kathanar*, 200-203). Though *Nasrani Jaathyaikya Sangham* was disintegrated before achieving its end, it conceived for the first time a common political community to which diverse Christian sects could belong, without having to address the theological and ecclesiastical differences among them. This was achieved by separating the theological and ecclesiastical as the private affairs of concerned sects, which continued to divide them, and political-economy as the common public concern which could act as a unifying force; thus, essentially enacting a Biblical separation between God and Caesar. It was probably one of the earliest attempts to configure a critical subjectivity to negotiate with the emerging 'Hindu state' in Travancore, sponsored by the colonial regime.¹⁸

The formation of political Christianity in Travancore can be better understood by examining the 'local' contexts for the emergence of 'Hindu,' apart from its national contexts. In Travancore, by the latter half of the nineteenth century, Christianity with its missionary zeal for conversion was increasingly perceived as a 'threat' to the religious demographic constitution of the region. It is pertinent to remember that according to the census of 1875, the first comprehensive census of Travancore,¹⁹ Christians constitute 20.29% of the total population, making them the single largest community in Travancore, with Malayala Soodra [Nair] as second only forming 19.10%, Eloooven [Ezhava] 16.59%

¹⁸ The Governor of Madras, Lord Harris' letter to Uttram Tirunal Martanda Varma, the Travancore king, on 21 November 1855, notes that "Grave complaints have been preferred to this Government on the part of the Native Christians, who, it is represented, are maltreated by their masters and others in consequence of their performing the duties of their religion, although complete toleration was guaranteed by Your Highness' proclamation. Their applications to the Courts and Police authorities are stated to be disregarded and wholly to fail in obtaining redress" (Nagamaiya, *The Travancore State Manual*, vol i, 514). In the reply, while admitting the accusation, the king also makes it a point to mention that increasing number of Christians and their dispersion across the country led to disputes which impaired the Government's control on its 'Hindu subjects' (516).

¹⁹ Though there have been censuses of Travancore in 1816, 1836 and 1854, they were considered incomplete and inaccurate, which called for a fresh "systematic and reliable census" in 1874 (Nagamaiya, *Report on the Census of Travancore 1875*, 1-2).

and Muslims [Mahommedans] 6.06% (Nagamaiya, *Report on the Census of Travancore 1875*, 156, 161, 188, 189). This was coupled with the looming possibility of various communities debating conversion *en masse*, during the latter half of the nineteenth century, particularly to Christianity, in the context of Travancore, which could have radically changed the demography of the state.²⁰ As a result, all census commissioners since 1875 census are seen to be taking clear efforts in their reports to alert the state about this ‘problem.’ That is, the metonymic substitution of colonizer/Europe for Christianity and vice versa, crippled ‘vernacular Christians’ politically, socially, economically and theologically.

The detailed analysis of “Relative Growth of the Main Religions” in the census of 1901, comparing censuses of 1875, 1881, 1891 and 1901, scrutinized the changing demography and opines: “As the net variation within the last twenty-five years it is seen that, in a population of 10,000, as many as 373 Hindus have vanished and have been replaced by 333 Christians and 40 Musalmans” (Aiyar, *Census of India 1901*, vol xxvi: Travancore, 89).²¹ N Subramhanya Aiyar, the Census Commissioner in 1901 and Dewan Peishcar of Travancore, continues to note that between 1875 and 1881, the relative growth of the Christians was double that of the Hindus, whereas between 1881 and 1891 percentage of growth was nearly equal, but between 1891 and 1901 Christians advanced at more than thrice the Hindu rate. The rate of progress for Muslims, though less than Christians was still double that of the Hindus, adds Aiyar (90). Therefore, there are

²⁰ Ezhavas were at the forefront of such debates. C Krishnan wrote “We have to become a community with self-respect. This is impossible by staying in old Hindu religious structure. We should have the wisdom and courage to throw away the Hindu religious structure” (“*E Mathamaanu Nammude Abhimanathe Keduthiyathu*” [This Religion Destroyed our Respect] in PK Balakrishnan’s *Narayanaguru* 87). Similarly, CV Kunjuraman also exhorted that the self-respect that an Ezhava would ever feel by being Hindu is only an untouchable’s self-respect (“*Ee ‘Tatvamasiyude’ Abhasam Namuku Venda*” [We do not Need the Immorality of this Tatwamasi] in PK Balakrishnan’s *Narayanaguru* 84).

²¹ A comparative analysis of censuses of 1875, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911 and 1921 would return population of Hindus as 73.64%, 73.12%, 73.18%, 68.09%, 66.56%, 64%; Christians as 20.29%, 20.76%, 20.06%, 23.06%, 26.35%, 30%; and Muslims as 6.06%, 6.12%, 6.02%, 6.04%, 6.06%, 6.08% respectively.

concerted attempts in these censuses to define Hinduism as a religion and any caste/community that is not ‘foreign’ as Hindu, which primarily refers to Christianity and Islam. There are also conscious efforts in these censuses to include ‘Animism’ or tribal ‘religions’ under Hinduism.²² Thus, there are rigorous attempts by the census commissioners and Travancore Manualists to project Christianity as a ‘threat’ to the Travancore polity, against which a consolidated ‘Hinduization’ of the state and its population was advocated. It is in this context that the Christians in the region began to consolidate themselves with the intention of fighting for representation and resources.

Therefore, it is paradoxical that, contrary to its goal, *Nasrani Jaathyaikya Sangham* was rallied around *Suriyanis* alone, by keeping the ‘Protestant’ and ‘Latin’ Christians outside of this communitarian imagination, thereby neutralizing this emerging critical subjectivity.²³ The *Sangham* endorsed ‘special privilege’ owing to ‘antiquity,’ and

²² See, Aiyar, “*Census of India 1911*, vol xxiii: Travancore” for a detailed discussion to define “Who is a Hindu?, What is Hinduism?” (197-200).

²³ In 1892, Kochuthomman Appothikkari published a novel *Parishkarappathi* (Half-Reform) with the desire to re-present the Nasrani life in Travancore. *Parishkarappathi* is a novel about three generations of the Nasrani family ‘Poonthottathil’ [of garden], where, the first generation is portrayed as the ‘real’ Nasrani before the advent of colonialism, untouched by the missionary reforms, the second generation is the half-reformed, the products of missionary times who must negotiate the translations, and the third generation is the reformed who will decide the fate of the community. What Appothikkari does is to recover a ‘Suriyani Nasrani’ from ‘Christians,’ by writing an anthropology of Christianity in the region. The story happens in two different places called Karimankulangara and Periyandapuram. Karimankulangara emerges in the novel as a place that has remained immune to the reformed Christianity, epitomizing the untranslatable Nasranis, as opposed to Periyandapuram, where the Nasranis translate themselves as ‘Christians.’ Here, Nasrani invokes a genealogy of ‘Eastern Christianity’ that has bypassed the Christianity of the ‘West,’ and its product, the universal Christian. Therefore, it is not surprising that in his “Introduction” to the novel, Appothikkari does not locate himself or his novel in the genealogy of Mrs. Richard Collins’ *Khathakavadham* (1877) that offered a critique of coexistence of caste and Christianity in the region, or Archdeacon Koshy’s *Pullelikunju* (1882) that offered Protestant Christianity as the way out of Brahminism or Potheri Kunjambu’s *Saraswathivijayam* (1892) that offered to enlighten and ‘humanize’ the Namboodiri. Rather, *Parishkarappathi*’s filiation is to Chandu Menon’s *Indulekha*, which elucidates Appothikkari’s urge to represent the Nasrani in the lineage of the Nair male. After all, *Parishkarappathi* was published at a time when Nasrani and Nair were courting each other to emerge as the ‘rightful’ heir of a secularized ‘Hindu’ nation, as will be shown later in the chapter. Therefore, caste is not a contested space in *Parishkarappathi*, unlike most novels of the period, rather, it appears as a natural social law of the land. The novel comfortably inscribes Nasrani into the hierarchic structure along with the Nair, without any internal conflicts. Further, *Parishkarappathi* is also marked by a sense of loss of a Suriyani cosmopolitanism, owing to the ‘vernacularization’/reformation of the scripture by the Protestant missionaries. For Appothikkari,

not ‘equal rights’ for all subjects as their moto. That is, the political community of Christians imagined by the *Sangham* refused to be-in-common with a large majority of Christians themselves, categorizing Latin Christians and Protestants as ‘new Christians’ or ‘colonial Christians,’ and *Suriyanis* as ‘old Christians’ or ‘original Christians,’ in order to immunize a minor group of major Christians from the burdens of both caste and the colonizer’s religion, by externalizing them as problems of ‘non-*Suriyanis*’ or ‘other Christians.’ In its attempt to fit into the notion of community as *Jati*,²⁴ the *Sangham* “of rich and influential Christians” extracted a ‘common being’ for itself, the *Suriyani Christiani*, with a Brahmin ancestor converted by the Apostle of Christ. Thereby, a large majority of ‘other Christians,’ categorized as Latins and Protestants, were ‘re-casted’ as ‘lower caste’ whose Christianity is ‘tainted’ by colonial/missionary theology.²⁵ One of the proposals in the manifesto of the *Sangham* itself was to sponsor ‘native history’ writing because “foreign historians have defaced the history of Nasranis, and Protestants have wounded the ancient beliefs and customs of this community” (George, *Nidheerikkal Mani Kathanar*, 202). While Syrian Christians were not alone in historicizing their ‘golden past,’ the difference is probably that, while other communities tried to deconstruct the Brahminical past through history writing,²⁶ Syrian Christian histories tried to reconstruct the same by forging a Brahmin origin for themselves.

Suriyani supplements the ‘lack’ of a sacred language for Christians in the region, on par with Sanskrit, before and beyond the English, thereby forging a new Suriyani-Sanskrit cosmopolis.

²⁴ *Jati* [caste], like I mentioned in chapter 2 as well, did not historically imply caste, as we understand today, but it was broadly used as community. Though this interchangeability itself has to be understood as owing to the co-constitution of caste and community in the particular geo-political context.

²⁵ During the time, Christian groups wrote memorials and counter-memorials to the Dewan and the Resident of Travancore and Cochin, establishing their own ‘pure’ ancestry and discrediting the same for other groups (Nagamaiya, *The Travancore State Manual*, 119).

²⁶ Padmanabhan Palpu recovered Ezhavas as the descendants of Buddhists whose rule was displaced and replaced by the Brahmin (See, Kumar, “Dr Palpu’s Petition Writings”). Chattambi Swamikal also argued against the Brahminic origins of Kerala by claiming Nairs as the original inhabitants of the region (*Pracheena Malayalam*). Similarly, Poykayil Appachan radicalized ‘mainstream’ historiography in his history of ‘slave castes’ in Travancore by conceiving a period of equality that was free of caste distinctions. He conceived ‘Adi Dravida’ as the original inhabitants of the land, who even ruled the land,

Though, all the Churches (named in the Introduction) that later came to be called ‘Suriyani’ share the genealogy of conversion and migration with every other so-called ‘non-Suriyani’ Churches, *Nasrani Jaathyaikya Sangham* translated *Nasrani* not as Christian but as *Suriyani* Christian, and *Jati* not in terms of community but as caste.²⁷ So much so that, in 1921 census, the census commissioner Krishnamurthy Ayyar comments about *Suriyani Christiani* as: “Nazrani Mappillas or Syrian Christians are, as it were, born and not made” (Ayyar, *The Census of India 1921*, vol xxv: Travancore, 37). Interestingly, it was similar to an observation by V Nagamaiya in 1875 census: “A Brahmin is born not made. So is a Soodra. So are all those belonging to other castes” (186-187). Therefore, it is not just coincidental that the official separation of Catholics as Syrian and Latin Catholics also occurred around this time. In 1887, after repeated requests from the members to the Pope, separate autonomous Syrian Vicariates were established in Thrissur and Kottayam for Roman Catholics. Following this separation, there were pastoral letters, for instance by Charles Lavigne, the first Vicar Apostolic of Kottayam Syrian Catholic Vicariate, which urged Catholics to declare themselves as ‘Roman Catholic Syrians’ or ‘Roman Syrians’ for the census of 1891 in order to differentiate from the Latins. Later,

but was later enslaved (See, Mohan, *Modernity of Slavery*, 285-295). Pampady John Joseph argued that Pulayas were the descendants of Cheramar, the original inhabitants and rulers of Kerala, who were overthrown and made slave castes. He even held the view that Pulayas should rename themselves as Cheramar to reclaim the lost glory (Chentharassery, *Pampady John Joseph*, 32). In Madras, Iyothee Dass constructed a Buddhist past for Tamil Dalits through his speculative history writing. See, Leonard, “Casteless Community: Iyothee Dass (1845-1914) and Tamil Buddhism” for a critical study of caste and community through the writings of Dass.

²⁷ Every Church that is known today as Syrian Church in fact adopted the name Syrian to their fold only by the beginning of the twentieth century. The contradictory strands of the ‘Catholic Church’ in the region that converted to the Roman Catholicism and accepted the Pope as the spiritual Head under the Portuguese mission, the ‘Orthodox Church’ that resisted the same conversion and has a ‘regional Head,’ the ‘Jacobite Church’ that again resisted Catholic conversion and yet accepts the Patriarch of Antioch as the spiritual Head, and finally the ‘Mar Thoma Church’ that protested against all the above forms of Christianity under the British mission and established themselves as a ‘reformed’ Church, all came to identify themselves as Syrian Churches during the twentieth century, setting themselves as binary opposite to the Protestant Christians and the Latin Christians who would thereafter be re-presented as ‘lower caste Christians.’ In addition to this, ‘privileged’ members of other Churches like CSI and Anglican Communion would identify themselves as Syrian within non-Syrian Churches, whereby Syrian Christian was reduced to denote only a symbolic caste status.

similar demands were raised by newly and differently formed Churches, like the Mar Thoma Church, as its Head also asked its members to return themselves as Mar Thoma Syrians for the census of 1921 (Ayyar, *The Census of India 1921*, 38). That is, *Suriyani Christiani* which was a nebulous category until this point, begins to become an enumerated identity.²⁸

Notwithstanding the fact that this desire of the ‘elite Christians’ to place themselves in-difference to ‘others,’ stemmed from the geo-political conditions in Travancore, which was still a princely state ruled by the Nair-Namboodiri nexus in collaboration with the colonial regime, such a self-preservatory immunization move was paradoxically self-destructive to the ‘community-to-come,’ because it was the possibility of ‘becoming’ inherent in Christian theology, to which conversion was central, that was thwarted by recovering *Suriyani Christiani* as the ‘original’/‘pure’ Christian and thus the ‘new’ paradigmatic Christian. Only in ‘unconditional hospitality,’ can community come, argues Derrida (*Acts of Religion*, 87).²⁹ Here, ‘come’ does not signify an end, but a continuous process. However, by co-constituting *Suriyani Christiani* and ‘upper caste,’ anybody who is not a *Suriyani* could then only remain a ‘lower caste,’ thereby sabotaging conversion, by subverting the ‘vernacular’ political theology of conversion as ‘exiting’ caste.³⁰ BR Ambedkar observes that it is this impossibility of experiencing community in

²⁸ For instance, the census of Travancore in 1875 (Nagarnaiya, *Report on the Census of Travancore 1875*, 158-161; 169-174) classified Christians (20.29% of the total population) in the region as Eurasians (.29% of the total Christians), Europeans (.05%) and native Christians (99.6%). Native Christians were further classified as Syrian Christian (63% of total Christians), Roman Catholic (23.4%) and Protestant (13.08%). It is interesting to note that Roman Catholics who now forms a predominant force among the *Suriyani Christiani* were not categorized as Syrian Christian even in the census of 1875. Nagarnaiya also notes that whoever classified themselves as Syrians were included as Syrians, pointing to the amorphous nature of the category itself. See, Sudipta Kaviraj’s “The Imaginary Institution of India,” and later works, for elaborations on enumerated identities.

²⁹ I have already elaborated Derrida’s formulation in Chapter One.

³⁰ At the very root of BR Ambedkar’s desire to convert, lies the lack of this commonality that the ‘Untouchables’ experience within the Hindu fold. Ambedkar argues that the only way “outside the fold” for ‘Untouchables’ is to enter another religion as its kith and kin, thereby becoming that religion through casting out caste. And his search for a religion to convert is overdetermined by this possibility of

Christianity that compelled him to decisively move away from Christianity, as the coming community of ‘lower castes,’ for which he cites Syrian Christian constitution as an example.³¹ The general acceptance of *Suriyanis* as Christians who are still within the Hindu/Brahmin fold as opposed to ‘other Christians’ who were actively ‘exiting’ the Hindu fold, is evident from the Travancore Manualist Nagamaiya’s description of Syrian Christians as “Hindus by race” (*The Travancore State Manual*, vol ii, 185).

It may then be stated that it was not the ‘upper caste’ who was converted to become *Suriyani Christiani*, but *Suriyani Christiani* who was converted to ‘upper caste,’ thereby producing more and more people as ‘lower caste,’ despite their religions. This nullified their own genealogy of political economy, which was not necessarily a caste economy but a migrant economy, and reproduced the colonial-Brahminic discourse that explained the social and economic advancements of affluent Christians in terms of caste, albeit for different reasons. For the British ‘colonial Christian’ power, accused of Christian favouritism, explaining the privileged position of resourceful Christians in the region as directly proportional to their caste status and not their religious status, served the purpose of reconstituting colonial government and by extension ‘Western Christianity’ as paradigmatically secular. Similarly, endorsing the ‘upper caste’ status of *Suriyani Christiani* also served the purpose of the Nair-Namboodiri elites, as it legitimized their

experiencing commonality with them. That is why for him, a community is possible only with kinship as it is the antithesis of social isolation (“Away from the Hindus,” 413-415). See, Gauri Viswanathan’s *Outside the Fold* for an in-depth analysis of the political theology of conversion in Ambedkar.

³¹ Ambedkar considers Christianity a failed religion in India, as he deliberates extensively on the problematics of conversion and Christianity while exploring possible religions for his mass conversion (“Christianizing the Untouchable”). For him, a community is possible only if it remains dynamic and open with infinite possibility of entry and exit. For instance, he discusses in detail the desired conditions of conversion: “before a society can make converts, it must see to it that its constitution provides for aliens being made its members and allowed to participate in its social life. If there is no place for the convert there can be no invitation for conversion nor can there be an acceptance of it” (“The Condition of Convert,” 424). That is, conversion introduces ‘strange,’ ‘im-proper,’ and ‘unexpected’ elements into the always-already-ness of the community. Hence, conversion becomes the auto-immune condition that works against the immunity, risks the self-preservatory fear and allows the entry of ‘foreign’ bodies into the body politic. This process is risky because there is an uncertainty to the way ‘guests’ and ‘host’ affect each other. But, only in such an affective auto-immune self-destructive risk, can community come—auto-co-immunity—as Derrida postulated (*Acts of Religion*, 87).

efforts to rewrite the social-political-economic history of the state in terms of caste. The discourse of caste essentialism was after all an argument in favour of confining the resources within the Nair-Namboodiri nexus. Thus, in its attempt to conceive an open community as the site of the political, Syrian Christian imagination closed the very opening, by not exposing itself to ‘an-other,’ or rather by exposing only to an ‘other’ who can be similar. This poses two methodological problems for understanding ‘vernacular Christianity.’ One, it neutralized the heterogeneous genealogies of conversions/migrations for *Suriyani Christians*, and two, it neutralized the anti-‘Western Christian’ genealogies for ‘other Christians.’ Therefore, the actualization of a *Suriyani Christians* community made it impossible to imagine an emergent political community of Christians, let alone of other minor and marginalised communities. This formation is important as it was this *Suriyani Christians* that would present oneself as the ‘legitimate’ representative of political Christianity in Travancore, starting from the end of the nineteenth century, that would continue to define the political in the region as elaborated in the next section.

The (Im)possible Community of Common Being

In one of his deliberations on the contours of citizenship, Etienne Balibar observes that the democratization of the public sphere and political institutions go hand in hand with the “history of citizenship, which is a permanent dialectical tension between insurrection and moments of constitution.... It manifests the *incompleteness* of the ‘people’ as a body politic and aims at universalizing it through the development of a conflict in which an exclusion from recognition is ‘negated’ in a relationship of forces” (Balibar, “The ‘Impossible’ Community of the Citizens,” 2). In this mode of ‘permanent’ struggle, “rights have to be invented in the modality of conquest and the content of the duties must be redefined periodically according to the logic of an agonistic relationship”

(3). Taking cue from this formulation, in this section, I critically engage with certain selective ‘relationship of forces’ forged in the latter half of the nineteenth century in Travancore; their ‘insurrections’ that ‘constituted’ the future sublation of subject to citizen in the region; the dialectics of this insurrection and constitution; and its intrinsic contradictions that are embedded in the ensuing secular democracy.

In a sense, I am trying to put Nancy and Balibar in conversation as it is in response to Nancy’s question “Who comes after the subject?” in order to think of a community without subjection that Balibar begins his conceptualization of ‘citizen subject’ (Balibar, “Citizen Subject,” 33-57).³² Nancy’s thought on community starts from the impossibility of a common being (even that of citizen), that can be extracted as the essential foundation of a community (even a community of citizens, that is democracy/nation), because such an exercise subverts community as an open state of being, always becoming, constantly exposed to an-other, risking any essential ‘self.’ Nancy thinks community from the limits of ‘common-being’ including citizen, whereas Balibar thinks citizenship from the non-limits of community. For Balibar, “citizenship as a political principle cannot exist *without a community*, but this community cannot be completely unified—its essence cannot be *the consensus* of its members” (“The ‘Impossible’ Community of the Citizens,” 2). That is, any given constitution of universal citizen has to be continuously critiqued by the particularity of the insurrectionary subject that emerges out of the contradictions of the constituted citizenship. The movements in the latter half of the nineteenth century in Travancore can be brought to its limits from this vantage point to expose the foundations of the continuing antinomies of citizenship and the crisis of democracy for Kerala itself from a communitarian thought. Taking the

³² Written without hyphen or slash or conjunction, Balibar poses the relation between subject and citizen, not as complementary or oppositional or replacement but open—becoming-citizen-of-the-subject and becoming-subject-of-the-citizen, in his own words, as a continuous process (Balibar, “Citizen Subject,” in Cadava et al, *Who Comes After the Subject?* 33-57).

last decade of the nineteenth century as an important moment in tracing the dialectic of insurrection and constitution in Travancore,³³ in the next section I attempt a comparative reading of “The Travancore Memorial” also known as “The Malayali Memorial,” “The Counter Malayali Memorial” and “The Ezhava Memorial” in order to understand the relational politics/political relations, of which *Suriyani Christiani* was a crucial part, and the problems it presented for the political as such. the Malayali Memorial was submitted in 1891, the Counter Memorial in the same year as a rebuttal to the Malayali Memorial, and the Ezhava Memorial in 1896 as a critical rejoinder to the same.³⁴

This study looks at the Memorials from the perspective of Christian community in Travancore, primarily represented by *Suriyani Christiani*, with respect to their presence in both the Malayali Memorial and the Counter Memorial and subsequent absent presence in the Ezhava Memorial. The attempt is to understand the emerging *Suriyani Christiani* insurrectional subject at the end of the nineteenth century as it continued to contest and

³³ As already mentioned, while Travancore, Cochin and Malabar were witnessing their own insurrections and constitution, this chapter mostly takes Travancore as its site of study, as it was the primary locus of *Suriyani Christiani*. According to the census of Travancore in 1891, at the time of the Memorials, Nairs constituted 18.92% of the total population, Ezhavas 21.54%, Non-Malayali Brahmins and Namboodiris 1.5%, Christians 20.60 (57% of Syrians and 43% of natives), Muslims 6.21% and Pulayats and Parayats 10.72% (Nagamaia, *Report on the Census of Travancore 1891*, 635, 714, 724).

³⁴ There are at least two predominant strands of scholarship on the insurrections of the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century in general and the Malayali Memorial in particular. On the one hand, it is understood positively as an inaugural event in the secularization/modernization/democratization of the Travancore public sphere. In *Communal Road to Secular Kerala*, George Mathew has argued that ‘communal’ politics of caste/religious communities for equity and equality in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries has democratized the Kerala public sphere by generating a unique discourse of developmental modernity which in turn has secularized the public sphere as well as the community engagements. According to this arguably problematic understanding, democratization is a step-by-step process in which ‘primordial’ loyalties become necessary evil before the transformation to a secularized public; community and capital is perceived as essentially antithetical which was transcended by the discourse of developmental modernity. On the other hand, the period is understood as a ‘communal’ juncture that polarized the Travancore public sphere forever. A Shaji argues that “even though the Malayali Memorial was the first organised political movement of Travancore for social justice ... [it] was the expression of the assertion of Nayar community in order to maintain their status quo in the society” (“Elements of Caste and Communal Consciousness in the Malayali Memorial of Modern Travancore,” 80). However, this entrenched Nair sensibility was identified by the representatives of communities that took part in the Malayali Memorial, immediately after the moment/movement, as is evident from the submission of the Counter Memorial of 1891 and the Ezhava Memorial of 1896, which called out the Malayali Memorial as ‘Nair Memorial,’ aiding only the Nair community.

constitute the Travancore public sphere. However, this is not to claim that there were no other memorials or insurrections in the period. On the contrary, South India in this period witnessed diverse insurrectional moments/movements by various communities, which by and large were aimed against the exclusivity of the emerging bourgeois public sphere, and Travancore was not an exception,³⁵ which makes it all the more important to critically understand *Suriyani Christiani* stakes in this contested public sphere. Hence, *Suriyani Christiani* is not studied here in isolation but in relation to other communities, as they re-formulated alliances and affiliations during this process, and as they located as well as dislocated themselves in the insurrections that have been happening in parallel.

The period under study is also important as it marked the era of thriving print culture, generally referred to as print capitalism, which increasingly played a crucial role in shaping the public discourses.³⁶ As far as *Suriyani Christianis* were concerned,

³⁵ The latter half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century are replete with numerous struggles that ruptured any bourgeois homogenous public sphere by opening new discursive spaces for communitarian thought. Even before and alongside the print political there were Ayyankali's 'villuvandi' struggle [where he drove a bullock cart through forbidden roads to claim public roads for all castes] and Ayyankali *Pada*'s [Ayyankali Troop] public expedition from Venganoor to Aralumood in 1898 (See, Chentharassery, *Ayyankali the First Dalit Leader*, 18-19); Poykayil Appachan's *Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha* that imagined a 'vernacular cosmopolitan' Christian theology and anti-caste historiography for 'slave castes' (See, Appachan, *Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha Paattukal* [The Songs of Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha]; Mohan, *Modernity of Slavery*, 119-146); "Narayana Guru's spiritual renaissance by preaching "one caste, one religion, one god for human" (See, Kumar, *Writing the First Person*, 43-85); series of Mappila revolts starting from the beginning of the nineteenth century and the final Malabar Rebellion in 1921 that foregrounded the discourse of Muslim subjectivity (See, Ansari, *Islam and Nationalism in India*, 73-117; *Malabar: Dhesheeyathayude Ida-paadukal*); to name the few that have been studied among the many that are yet to be.

³⁶ George Mathew writes: "*Gnana Nikshepam* (1848), published from Kottayam by the CMS was the first Malayalam Journal from Travancore. The first newspaper in Malayalam came out from Cochin in 1864 as a translation of the *Western Star* with the title *Paschima Tharaka*. The first Malayalam editor was Oommen Philipose, a Syrian Christian. In 1867, *Sannigdavaadi*, a Malayalam version of *Malabar Herald*, began publication from Kottayam, but was short lived because of its criticism of Dewan Madhavaraayar. The first newspaper in Kerala to uphold a community's interest was *Malayali*, run by 'enlightened' Nairs in Quilon with its sole interest in Nair upliftment. The *Suriyani Christiani* followed the suit and produced *Nazranee Deepika* in 1887 from Mannanam, near Kottayam, with Nidhirical Mani Kathanaar as editor. *Malayala Manorama* was founded by a Syrian Christian company on March 22, 1890. The Ezhavas did not sit quiet and from Quilon in 1891 appeared *Suajana Nandini*, a weekly edited by an Ezhava, Paravur Kesavan Asan" (*Communal Road to Secular Kerala*, 36).

Vinil Paul in his article "*Achadi Nirmicha Keezhala Pothumandalangal*" [Subaltern Public Sphere Constructed by the Print] argues against this mainstream print capitalist discourse that has always been oblivious to the Dalit printing and publishing enterprises which existed alongside in the twentieth century. He appendixes a list of hundred Dalit publishing which does not figure in Kerala's print histories. The first

Deepika was established as the official newspaper of the Roman Catholic Syrian Christian Church in 1887 and *Malayala Manorama* (started by Orthodox Syrian Christian entrepreneur Varghese Mappilla) in 1890, both championing the causes of Christian community in the region. Apart from these newspapers, my archive constitutes of legislative assembly debates, petitions, pamphlets, pastoral letters and other documents by the community. The print, here, did not just imagine a homogenous community,³⁷ but instigated insurrection in the existing and emerging homogenous public sphere, while paradoxically contesting and constituting a community of emancipated subjects.

Petitioning emerged as an important form of negotiating the exclusionary public sphere in the “document Raj.”³⁸ In his study of the Ezhava leader Padmanabhan Palpu’s petitions, Udaya Kumar identifies a set of features shared by the genre ‘petition’:

... firstly, they have the state as their primary interlocutor; secondly, they indicate the positions of the writer and the addressee, and the relationship within which demands are made; thirdly, they have a clear first-person stake in the issues they foreground, enabling us to see in them expressions of individual or collective selfhood; and fourthly, they voice the writer’s conception of obligations and duties

of its kind was *Sadhujanaparipalini* by Ayyankali in 1912. Again in 1919 PJ Joseph began the publication of *Sadhujanadhoothan*. In 1924, “Cheramar Dhoothan Press” was started by Pampady John Joseph which continued to publish *Sadhujanadhoothan* as *Cheramar Dhoothan*. For a detailed documentation, see, Vinil Paul’s “*Achadi Nirmicha Keezhala Pothumandalangal*.” Different print cultures existed in parallel as/in resistance to the above-mentioned print modernity that only talked about/for the ‘lower caste’ sections and never carried voices from the communities, thereby diversifying the homogenous public discourse. This reflects the heterogeneity of the emerging Kerala public sphere, the very contradiction at the heart of its democratization, the dialectical nature of print culture, conflicts of modernity and the limits of citizenship that it exposes.

³⁷ Benedict Anderson proposed that nation is an imagined community entailed by the ‘horizontal comradeship’ among people, enabled by the development of ‘vernacular’ newspapers, with the convergence of capitalism and print media (*Imagined Communities*). However, regional print media in the latter half of the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century, in fact imagined, if anything, a contesting public sphere that critiqued any homogenous belongingness.

³⁸ See, Raman, *Document Raj* for a detailed analysis of everyday practices of the empire, especially its bureaucratic forms, manifested in what she calls ‘papereality’; that is, the privileging of writing as a means of governance.

vested in the addressee—i.e. the state, its functionaries and influential public figures. (“Dr Palpu’s Petition Writings and Kerala’s Past,” 2)

Kumar locates Palpu’s petitions in the contexts of emerging print culture and contesting shared public and demonstrates how it played a crucial role in shaping the political discourses of community. More importantly, Sanal Mohan elucidates how petitioning was an important mode of missionary modality in continuously negotiating with the colonial as well as ‘native regimes’ for rights and resources for the ‘slave castes.’ He also illuminates on the memoranda submitted by ‘slave caste’ leaders to the Sree Moolam Popular Assembly, since its establishment in 1912, demanding educational, employment and legislative representations (*Modernity of Slavery*, 123-124). Petitioning thus has played a heterogenous and contesting function among various communities and it is against these contexts that the three Memorials are analysed. Memorial can be defined as “a written representation of facts made to a legislative or other body as the grounds for a petition” (“Memorial,” *Online Etymology Dictionary*). One can only assume that ‘memorial’ was used instead of ‘petition’ for the collective and public nature that the former implied. However, such a dichotomy of private/public is no more tenable, and moreover, the publicness of private, or the political of personal, needs no further discussion.

Being *Suriyani*, Becoming Malayali: “The Malayali Memorial”

On 11 January 1891, more than ten thousand “subjects of different castes, creeds and calling, Namboodiris, Nairs and Tiers, Syrian and Native Christians and East Indians or Eurasians, Landlords, Merchants and Officials,” submitted a grievance petition to Bala Rama Varma, the king of Travancore (Menon, “The Travancore Memorial,” 79),

appealing to ensure ‘native representation’ in the employment sector of the state.³⁹ The primary intention of the Malayali Memorial is stated as to call attention to the “denial to them [them refers to the above-mentioned “most important classes of your Highness’ subjects” (80)] a fair share in the government of their country and their systematic exclusion from the highest grades of its service” (80). The Memorial demanded to put an end to the ‘foreign domination’ in governmental appointments, which is a reference to the perceived Tamil Brahmin domination that prevailed in all sectors of the Travancore administration of the nineteenth century.⁴⁰ Instead, the Memorialists emphasized that representation of ‘natives’ (here Travancoreans)⁴¹ in all political institutions is an essential criterion for Travancore to become a sovereign state.⁴²

At the outset, it was the coming together of different communities against the Brahminic hegemony in the region to augment the constitution of a more inclusive political condition. However, it has to be remembered that the Malayali Memorial was organized by the Malayali Sabha, a Nair community organization,; and Ezhavas as well as

³⁹ The Travancore Memorial was printed both in English and Malayalam. I have referred to two different versions of The Travancore Memorial. The English version titled “The Travancore Memorial,” did not have any publication details, and hence I have compared it with the Malayalam version: Menon, “Malayali Memorial,” *Vijnanakairali* 22, 7 July 1991. The citations unless otherwise mentioned are from the English version.

⁴⁰ On 15 September 1887, long before the Memorial, *Deepika* wrote “As foreign Brahmins have been Dewan in our state for a long time, many foreigners have come here and gained employment through them.... Is not that detrimental to the natives?” (“*Thiruvithamkur Sarkaril Ninnu Dhrishti Veppanulla Oru Sangati*” [A matter for the concern of Travancore government]). See, the “Editorial” on 2 February 1891 for details of the Memorial, and the “Editorial” on 1 June 1891 for a discussion of the Dewan’s reply.

⁴¹ GP Pillai wrote a pamphlet in 1891 titled “Travancore for Travancoreans” kickstarting the agitation that culminated in the submission of The Travancore Memorial (Mathew, *Communal Road to a Secular Kerala*, 50).

⁴² Not surprisingly, there are different memories of the same event. For Nairs, the Memorial represents a highest moment of reformed Hinduism—casteless and secular—which supposedly enabled them to include other castes and religions among the petitioners. *Suriyani Christianis* remember themselves as the primary force behind the submission of the Malayali Memorial, which makes them not just passive co-opters as signatories, but active producers of the same (*Deepika 1887-1989*, Aikara et al, 110-111). And for all parties, the memory serves the purpose of recasting themselves as the pioneering ‘secular’ force that rose above its community loyalties to kick start modern democracy in Travancore. That is, irrespective of various critical takes on the nuances of the Memorial, there is a consensus, problematic as it is, that it was, intentionally or unintentionally, an inaugural moment of secular modernity in Travancore.

Christians, rather than being co-originary, were ‘added onto’ this political imagination.⁴³ Out of the 250 signatures that were published and thus survived, 168 are of Nairs, 44 of Christians, and the rest belong to Ezhavas, Namboodiris, Ambalavasis and Eurasians (Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nair Dominance*, 168). This has to be read in conjunction with the fact that Ezhava leaders were actively debating conversion to Christianity *en masse* during this period, as already mentioned, which would have had far reaching impact on the demography of Travancore.⁴⁴ Hence, when The Travancore Memorial defined ‘Malayali Hindu’ as “all Hindus who follow the *Marumakkatayam* [matrilineal] system of inheritance or a mixed system of *Makkatayam* [patrilineal] and *Marumakkatayam* and whose *kudumi* or tuft of hair is in the front” (Menon, “The Travancore Memorial,” 80) it allowed Nairs to assimilate Nairs and Ezhavas into one fold. By doing so, Nairs efficiently used the colonial enumerative tool to strategically produce ‘Malayali Hindu’ (59% of the total population, when Nairs and Ezhavas put together) as the “permanent majority” of Travancore, as legitimate ‘Malayali,’ as ‘real native,’ and subsequently rendered all other communities, including Christians, as “permanent minorities” in the

⁴³ In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Travancore was already emulating and experimenting with the European nation form and refashioning itself as a welfare state. In 1887, Travancore became the first kingdom in India to form a Legislative Council for governance, with chosen representatives from common people. Of course, only elites among Brahmins and Nairs were part of the Council. Similarly, reforms were also undertaken in land-policy, agriculture, taxation, industries, judiciary, administration, legislature, education, health care, public service, etc, drastically changing the political and economic realities of the region (Nagamaiya, *The Travancore State Manual*, vols i-iii; Velu Pillai, *The Travancore State Manual*, vol ii, 650-695). This is the immediate context for Nairs to organize the Malayali Memorial as they suddenly found themselves lacking resources to maintain their monopoly, with new sources of economy like industry and employment opening up to all people, at least in principle, thereby displacing land as the dominant economic resource. Further, the changes in land policies led to the emergence of new middle-class/castes like Christians and Ezhavas thereby upsetting Nair-Brahmin monopoly over land as well. See, Robin Jeffrey’s *The Decline of Nair Dominance* for a detailed analysis of the Nair dilemma.

⁴⁴ This demographic anxiety is evident throughout the twentieth century as TK Velupillai, Travancore State Manualist, warns that “it [Christian population] has been steadily increasing at a much larger rate than the Hindus and Muslims. This is mainly due to conversions and to some extent to the high fertility of the Syrian Christians. The decennial rate of increase among the Christians has been higher than that of the Hindus. It is also higher than the aggregate State population during the past several decades. During the decade 1921-1931 the Christians have increased by 36.8 per cent” (*The Travancore State Manual*, vol i, 390). He elucidates his concern using the census in Travancore from 1816-1931, that while the Hindu population [he includes all castes and tribes as ‘Hindu’] has decreased from 83% to 61.6%, the Christian population has increased from 12.4% to 31.5%, and Muslims from 4.6% to 6.9% (389)

region (Mamdani, *Neither Settler nor Native*, 11),⁴⁵ thereby tackling what Arjun Appadurai has called the majority's "fear of small numbers" (*Fear of Small Numbers*, 51-58).

Thinking along these lines, it is important to understand how some Christians in Kerala—migrant and minor—became 'legitimate subjects' at the expense of others in the given permutations and combinations. *Suriyani Christiani* was integrated into this majoritarian 'Hindu subjectivity' imagined by The Memorial by predicating on "their long residence in the country which began in the early part of the Christian era, the complete identification of their interests with those of the region and having become merged in the truly native proportion of the population" (Menon, "The Travancore Memorial," 84). That is, by virtue of 'being-with' this imagined majoritarian subject, *Suriyani Christiani* translated themselves as 'particular subjects' with 'universal interests,' by sacrificing their 'anthropological difference.' As a result, anybody who could not do the same automatically remained 'non-Hindu' and 'non-native.' Which is why, though generally understood as the joint petition of Nairs, Ezhavas and Christians, the Memorial clearly differentiates between *Suriyani Christiani* and 'other Christians,' and represents only *Suriyani Christiani* as 'real native.' It even goes to the extent of arguing that *Suriyani Christiani*, as opposed to 'other Christians,' were suffering like Nairs and Ezhavas, despite their antiquity and loyalty. The Memorial strategically

⁴⁵ 'Permanent majority' and 'permanent minority' are concepts proposed by Mahmood Mamdani in *Neither Settler nor Native* in order to understand the changing subjectivation under colonial rule. He argues that while the colonial direct rule focused on building a national permanent majority through civilizing mission to actualize the colonizer nation, the indirect rule after 1857 aimed at the proliferation of permanent minorities, who were controlled through 'native colonial deputies' in order to keep any revolt in abeyance. Indirect rule looked to impose a native subjectivity on the entire local population, to create a specifically native subjectivity for colonized peoples, by transforming existing differences into boundaries of political identity. However, he is not arguing that the British invented these differences but that they "politicized real and acknowledged differences by turning them into legal boundaries deemed inviolable and predicating security and economic benefits on locals' respect for these boundaries" (*Neither Settler nor Native*, 12). According to him, "while indirect rule began as an alternative to nineteenth-century nation-building, it wound up creating the conditions for nation-building in the twentieth-century" because nationalist and post-colonial politics continue to be fed by these politicized differences (11).

includes statistics to subtly hint that while ‘other Christians’ occupied 49 positions in government jobs, *Suriyani Christiani* only had 16 positions, despite their resourceful and industrious past. However, according to their own statistics, Nairs occupied 56 positions, whereas Ezhavas had 0, while foreign Brahmins filled 86 positions (Menon, “The Travancore Memorial,” 83).

This is in line with my earlier argument that maintaining the division between *Suriyani* and non-*Suriyani*, and conscripting *Suriyanis* along with Ezhavas for social-economic-political purposes, augmented the Hinduization of the polity, as it prevented the emergence of a political community of Christians and at the same time mass conversion of Ezhavas to Christianity, both detrimental to the emerging ‘Hindu.’⁴⁶ As the result of the Malayali Memorial elucidates, the inclusion of *Suriyani Christiani* and Ezhavas were actually only a ‘differential inclusion,’ that is, they were excluded by the very act of including, as it only benefited Nairs. Balibar argues that “within the framework of civic-bourgeois universality, the principal form of exclusion is differential inclusion. Universalism cannot be materially separated from institutional forms that display the foreign body, define it, and control it” (*Citizen Subject*, 298). However, Muslims “among whom education is at a very low ebb” (Menon, “The Travancore Memorial,” 80) and “are very low in the ladder of civilization” (94) and Jews “who form but a very insignificant portion” (80) were excluded even from this differential inclusion.⁴⁷ While, other castes

⁴⁶ It is important to remember that the ‘Pulaya Christian’ leader Pampady John Joseph submitted a provocative memorandum to the British Parliament on 24 May 1935 explicating the gross discrimination meted out by *Suriyani Christiani* to non-*Suriyani Christiani* (Chentharassery, *Pampady John Jospeh*, 68-73).

⁴⁷ This is probably symptomatic of *Suriyani Christiani* impossibility to be-with Muslims in their political struggles even today. For instance, in the article “Mappilamarude Lahala” (Mappila Revolt) *Malayala Manorama* (21 December 1895) gives a non-partisan take on both the government and the revolting Mappilas by assuming the role of a ‘secular critic.’ The article criticizes the government failure in quelling the rebellion as the result of not identifying the ‘real’ reason behind the unrest and thus alleviating the ‘real’ problem that is increasing the number of clashes. At the same time, it criticizes the Mappilas for damaging the life and property of other communities. This is just an example of the Christian endorsement of a language of constitutionalism as a result of which it becomes impossible to come in solidarity with

and tribes were excluded from exclusion itself in the new relation of forces envisaged by these ‘dominant communities’ as they are not even counted as part of the ‘population’ in the Memorial (80).⁴⁸ This also means that no other caste or tribe were included in the imagination of ‘Hindu’ as a political identity, even at the end of the nineteenth century, despite the enumerative politics of the census.⁴⁹ Louise Ouwerkerk has observed that the communal problem in Travancore was “not Hindu-Muslim as in the rest of India, it was rather Hindu-Christian, or more accurately a question of the privileged caste Hindus opposed to the underprivileged groups of the Christians, the Muslims and the depressed classes, chiefly the progressive but still untouchable Ezhavas” (*No Elephants for the Maharaja*, 79).

Therefore, even though the Malayali Memorial envisaged a relational politics whereby different groups ‘being-with’⁵⁰ the ‘other’ or ‘being-in-common’ forms the political foundation for the constitution of a ‘coming community,’⁵¹ a ‘common being,’

struggles that question this constitutionalism itself. But Christians themselves would find the limits of this language in the modern nation state as is evident from the Liberation Struggle.

⁴⁸ The ‘population’ of the state, according to the Malayali Memorial, included three broad categories: “1) Malayalee Hindus 2) Foreign Hindus 3) Christians comprising the Syrian and Native Christians and the Eurasians and the East Indians” (80, 81). And it excluded “1) the Europeans who are not subjects of your Highness 2) the Mohammedans among whom education is at a very low ebb, and 3) the Jews who form but a very insignificant portion” (80). As a matter of fact, the large mass of ‘lower caste’ and tribal population are completely ‘missing’ in this new imagination of ‘population.’ Following this logic, ‘population’ as the basic category of governance is itself conceived on the basis of the principle of differential inclusion.

⁴⁹ Demographically, an alliance among Nairs (18.92%), Ezhavas (21.54%) and Christians (20.60%) was enough to form a majoritarian subject that could decide the political-economy of the region.

⁵⁰ Nancy is in fact extending Heidegger, as he conceives community as being-in-common. Heidegger understands existence as “Being-with-one-another as its kind of Being” (*Being and Time* 163) as opposed to the generally understood individualistic thrust of the self. For him, “by ‘Others’ we do not mean everyone else but me—those over against whom the ‘I’ stands out. They are rather those from whom, for the most part, one does not distinguish oneself—those among whom one is too” (154-55). This ‘sameness’ is what limits the experience of ‘in-common’ by abstracting a ‘common-being,’ according to Nancy.

⁵¹ In *The Coming Community*, Giorgio Agamben postulates a community that is coming, “a community without presuppositions and without subjects, a communication without the incommunicable” by abandoning the search for a proper identity in the already improper and senseless form of individuality, and instead belonging to impropriety as such. ‘Whatever’ singularity without identity, an absolutely exposed singularity that borders all possibility is the modus operandi of this coming community. For this purpose, Agamben deconstructs the common understanding of ‘whatever’ as ‘indifference’ in order to recover its Latin meaning which is “being such that it always matter” (1). Therefore, “whatever singularity, which wants to appropriate belonging itself, its own being-in-language, and thus rejects all identity and every condition of belonging, is the principal enemy of the State,” argues Agamben. Subsequently, he reads

was paradoxically abstracted and extracted as the essence of this community, whereby ‘in-common’ or the relation itself was sacrificed, thereby compromising the political before its inception. This was achieved by differentiating between ‘others’ like *Suriyani Christiani* and Ezhavas with ‘whom one need not distinguish oneself’ and the ‘Other’ with ‘whom one does not identify oneself’ like Muslims, ‘other Christians,’ and ‘other’ castes and tribes. For Ezhavas and *Suriyani Christiani* in Travancore, the Malayali Memorial probably was a strategic possibility to be-with a-familiar-other—the most dominant caste in the region, Nairs—in order to imagine community as the site of the political. However, it was this relation with Ezhavas and *Suriyani Christiani* that also enabled Nairs to strategically conceive a ‘modern Hindu,’ exonerated from casteism and communalism and reincarnated as ‘secular,’ at the expense of ‘others’ including Christians, Muslims, various castes and tribes. It validated Nairs to emerge as victims rather than perpetrators of casteism by forging ‘foreign Brahmin’ as the enemy figure, while keeping ‘native Namboodiris’ close. That is, it was a self-preservatory response of Nair immunity, that allowed certain familiar pathogens, thereby producing antibodies against all the other unfamiliar strains, in order to protect the indemnity of the Nair body, at a time when the body was under attack by anti-caste movements.

The Malayali Memorial was one of the earliest moments/movements in the consolidation of ‘Hindu’ as a political community in Travancore, through the twin processes of ‘assimilation’ and ‘association’; assimilation of various castes and tribes into its fold, beginning with Ezhavas, through various strategic interventions culminating with the Temple Entry Proclamation in 1936, and association with communities that identify with this majoritarian ‘Hindu,’ like *Suriyani Christiani*. However, it must also be located in continuation with its predecessors from the Madras Presidency in order to unpack its

Tiananmen as a moment when “singularities form[ed] a community without affirming an identity” when “humans co-belong[ed] without any representable condition of belonging” (86).

inherent contradictions. For instance, the “Memorial to the Right Honourable Lord Stanley, Secretary of State for India, from the Members of The Madras Native Association and Others, Hindus and Mahomedans, Inhabitants of the Presidency of Madras on the Subject of Government Interference in Religious Matters” (cited as “The MNA Memorial”) was a petition submitted in 1859, against a renewed colonial governmental support of Christianity, missionaries and ‘Christian natives,’ calling it a violation of the religious neutrality policy of the British Government. The Madras Native Association (MNA), formed in 1852, was the Malayali Sabha (formed in 1886) of Madras, or chronologically speaking the other way around. The MNA itself took off from the British Indian Association formed in 1851 in Bengal. Scholars have argued that the MNA was primarily constituted by the ‘upper castes’ with the intention of consolidating the ‘Hindu’ against the Christianization of the state by means of proselytization, Christian education, grants-in-aid for Christian institutions, annexation of temples and mosques, revocation of religious endowments for non-Christians, etc, (Suntharalingam, “The Madras Native Association: A Study of an Early Political Association”). In the contexts of Madras, however, it was Muslims who were included along with the members of MNA in order to give a ‘secular’ outlook to the petition against the Christian dominance. Even so, this strategic inclusion of Muslims was exposed when one of the Muslim signatories, in his speech during his endorsement of the Resolution, commented that “I wish to say a few words about the Madras Native Association which is alluded to in it [Memorial]; my reason in doing so is that a majority of the Mossulmans now present have not the slightest idea of the existence of such a corporate body” (“The MNA Memorial,” 37). Therefore, it is evident that the association of minor communities was not just appropriation, as they immediately recognized the political paradoxes in these new imaginations. That is to say that, the enumeration and politicization of ‘Hindu’ began provincially, and differentially

in the Presidencies as well as the Princely States, by the latter half of the nineteenth century, in response to particular ‘regional contexts,’ which was later nationalized.

From Syrian to Human: “The Counter Malayali Memorial”

This section examines the co-extensiveness of *Suriyani Christiani* with ‘Hindu’ as marked by their paradoxical presence in “The Counter Memorial,” submitted by Tamil Brahmins, in order to refute the allegations in the Malayali Memorial, along with the support of Muslims who were excluded from the Malayali Memorial.⁵² On 1 July 1891, the Counter Malayali Memorial was submitted by “the Christian and Malayali Hindu portion of your Highness” in order to detach themselves from the Malayali Memorial, of which Syrian Christians were a crucial presence (“The Counter Memorial,” 185). What is ironic is that the Counter Memorial was in fact drafted as if written by Syrian Christians, apologetic of the accusations by the Malayali Memorialists against ‘non-Malayali Brahmin.’ It stated:

We the Syrian Christian portion of your Highness’ Memorialists, were until lately devoted to the pursuits of religion, agriculture and commerce. We owe our present flourishing and prosperous condition to the tolerance and encouragement held out to us from time immemorial by the Travancore Maharaja and their Brahmin Prime-Ministers. The majority of our class and its really thinking portion do not share in the sentiments expressed by the Malayali Memorialists. We would be guilty of ingratitude if we join the Malayali Sudras in an agitation which appears to us to have no foundation whatever on facts. (192)

⁵² Syrian Christians were divided about the Counter Memorial as is evident from the editorials in *Deepika* ridiculing both the Memorial and foreign Brahmins’ demand to be treated as natives (“*Shankarankali*” [Shankaran’s Game], 15 May 1891).

At one level, this presence of Syrian Christians in seemingly oppositional movements shows the differences within the community, and the impossibility to attribute a homogenous Syrian Christian position.⁵³ On the other hand, it also reveals the collective-fashioning of the Syrian Christian subjectivity in such a way that they could at once be-with Nairs to displace the Brahminic hegemony and also be-with Brahmins to retain the status quo, while unable to be-in-common with any other communities that were contesting both the Nair and the Brahmin hegemony in the region at the same time. In that sense, they were co-scripters of the majoritarian ‘Hindu’ subjectivity, thereby generating conditions for their own minoritization in the state, because while Syrian Christians were immunized as long as they conscripted into the new ‘Hindu’ subjectivity, they became ‘non-Hindu’ and ‘non-native’ the moment they critiqued the ‘Hindu state,’ as will be shown later in the chapter.⁵⁴

The main preoccupation of the Malayali Memorial was the politicization of the category of ‘native’ for emancipatory purposes, and simultaneous reconfiguration of ‘Malayali Hindus’ as the ‘real natives’ of the land and hence the ‘legitimate subjects’ of the sovereign. Therefore, the primary demand of the Malayali Memorialists to the king was to define ‘native’ as “any person born and domiciled within Travancore of parents habitually resident in Travancore and not established there for temporary purposes only,” and use this category for political and economic emancipation⁵⁵ (Menon, “The

⁵³ Robin Jeffrey notes that it was Mar Thoma Syrian Christians who signed the Malayali Memorial and Jacobite Syrian Christians who signed the Counter Memorial, given their factional disputes. While the Mar Thoma Bishop presided over the Malayali Memorial meeting, the Jacobite Bishop presided over the Counter Memorial meeting (*The Decline of Nayar Dominance*, 172-173). However, what is interesting for me is that it was ‘Syrian Christians’ who presided over both meetings, despite factional differences.

⁵⁴ The later formation of Christian Political Association, cutting across denominations and sects, has to be understood as the result of the realization of their liminality, which was not alleviated by allying with Nairs or Namboodiris (*Malayala Manorama*, “The Race Question in Travancore,” 19 March 1898).

⁵⁵ This definition was emulating the colonial classification that defined the entire population of the colony as ‘native’ in British India—“any person born and domiciled within the dominion of Her Majesty in India of parents habitually resident in India and not established there for temporary purposes only” (Menon, “The Travancore Memorial,” 93). However, colonizers used ‘native’ for ‘negative discriminatory’

Travancore Memorial,” 93). After establishing ‘native’ as the ‘legitimate subject,’ the Malayali Memorial further argued that:

As the Malayali Sudras are the most loyal portion of your Highness’ subjects, as they are in point of intelligence, general culture and attainments not behind any other class in the country, as they were from the earliest times till within the last few years the ruling race in the land, and as it is *they that mainly contribute to the resources of the State more than one-fourth of which is derived from land revenue, their claims on your Highness’ Government are far stronger than those of any other class in the country.* But, even if in point of education they are comparatively backward, *they are the real natives of the soil, deserve special support of your Highness’ Government.* (Menon, “The Travancore Memorial,” 93; emphasis mine)

With this, it introduced the notion of ‘productive native’ as a preface for the emancipated subject. The discourse of ‘productivity’ was reinscribed with private property and the capital it generated for centuries. Thereby, the landless castes and communities are automatically rendered as ‘unproductive’ and ‘resourceless’ people of the state. As a result, the landed and productive ‘native’ was envisaged as the legitimate subject who had to be rightfully emancipated first, if Travancore was to become a modern democratic nation-state. Moreover, apart from using *Suriyani Christiani* and Ezhavas for signatory purposes, the Malayali Memorial actually represented only Nair concerns. With the above move of forging a category of ‘productive native,’ the Nair Memorialists at once displaced the monopoly of so-called ‘settlers’—both ‘Brahmin and Christian colonizers’ (who, according to them, came into existence by hijacking Nair hegemony)—in deciding the future of Travancore as a ‘modern’ state. At the same time, the collective sabotaged

purposes, whereas the Malayali Memorialist revised the colonial category and founded ‘native’ as a category for ‘positive discrimination.’

the entry of emergent communities, that were capitalising on the universal education initiated by the Christian missions, into the nation building process. Because, what was underlying the Malayali Memorial was after all a ‘fictive’ communitarian bond between individual property owners, at a time when land was being displaced by labour as the productive capital.⁵⁶

In this problematic dialectic of insurrection and constitution presented by the Malayali Memorial, only the ‘common-being’ who is particular, and yet belongs to a universal, had the right to have rights; and the rights itself, even if they are particular, had to fit into a universal logic. Hence, rather than constituting a ‘transindividual minoritarian subject’ who invented rights, established struggle in relation to ‘others,’ figured multiple ways of ‘becoming’ as a modality of ‘being,’ and formed “a protection against the nihilistic forms of negative individuality and self-destructive violence,” this collective insurrection produced a ‘majoritarian subject’ who paradoxically created ‘nonpersons’ and endowed them with ‘nonequality’ (Balibar “The ‘Impossible’ Community of the Citizens,” 11). In a self-contradictory move, this collective problematically made ‘common-being’ the logic of ‘being-in-common,’ which are philosophically and politically oppositional to each other, for self-preservation, thereby creating the conditions for self-destruction. As a result, in this equation, a community remained impossible, the democratization process unfinished and the people incomplete.

What is interesting is that the Counter Memorial which was a critique of the Malayali Memorial did not question this co-constitution of Hindu and Travancore, rather tried to extend it to constitute a pan-Hindu subjectivity, with not just Nair and Ezhavas,

⁵⁶ Balibar observes that the argument for “natural and inalienable rights of ‘man’ as constituting the foundation and horizon of the rights of citizen, are in no way forms of universal emancipation but rather modalities of actualizing the primacy of private property” (*Citizen Subject*, 277). Therefore, for him, emancipation is that which “dislodges and quells the utilitarian individualism of bourgeois society where the egoism of property reigns” (278).

but with different communities, thereby disordering the Nair-Ezhava majority. The Counter Memorialists argued:

The first of these errors [in the Malayali Memorial] is, the classing as foreign Hindus of a large portion of the population of Travancore consisting of non-Malayali Brahmins, Pandi Sudras, Vellalars, the artisan classes, Shannars, Pariahs & c. who are really natives of the country. The majority of the above classes are descendants of foreign Hindus who emigrated to and settled in Travancore generations ago and who now know no other father-land than Travancore. Some of them are recent settlers but they too are nevertheless natives of Travancore in the proper sense of the terms. ("The Counter Memorial," 185)

That is, on the one hand, the Counter Memorial upsets the native/settler binary, and proposes the settler as the new native, thereby making everyone who lives in a state its subjects in equal capacity. On the other hand, it introduces new categories to classify subjects, thereby pushing them into the 'not yet' spheres of political subjectivity. For this purpose, the Counter Memorialists located individual, and not community, as the site of the political.⁵⁷

In no civilized country are appointments distributed among the component classes of the population according to numbers. Such a distribution will not only be subversive of all good government and productive of mischievous consequences but will practically be impossible. Good government can be secured only by the selection of the fittest and best available men for public service. (187)

Therefore, the Counter Memorial refuted that the demand of the Malayali Memorialists to privilege 'native,' irrespective of their qualification, was a "departure from the

⁵⁷ The Counter Memorial is primarily a statistical celebration of Tamil Brahmin Dewans as the founders of "order and good government" and "prosperity, civilization and enlightenment" in Travancore (186) with the support of colonial administrators.

enlightened and liberal policy” of Travancore that selected men “irrespective of caste or creed, native or foreigner” for public services (193).⁵⁸ By founding ‘enlightened individual human,’ who was none other than the ‘reformed Brahmin,’⁵⁹ as the emancipated subject of the emerging state of Travancore, moulded in the like of the reformed Christian in the European Enlightenment, the Counter Memorialists, rather than breaking away from Brahminism, reconfigured it within the discourse of state secularism, thereby immunizing it from any critique while subjecting all others to critique. Its indebtedness to Western Christian enlightenment rationality is important in understanding regional Christian conscription into this logic.⁶⁰ With this move, the rest of the subjects

⁵⁸ This is very much an extension of the Christian Europe’s secularization policy by which Christianity became paradigmatically secular. In her “Proclamation by the Queen in Council, to the Princes, Chiefs and People of India,” on 1st November 1858, accompanying the Government of India Act 1858, in the aftermath of the 1857 Rebellion, Queen Victoria stated that “Firmly relying Ourselves on the truth of Christianity, and acknowledging with gratitude the solace of Religion, We disclaim alike the Right and the Desire to impose Our convictions on any of our Subjects. We declare it to be Our Royal Will and Pleasure that none be in any wise favored, none molested or disquieted, by reason of their Religious Faith or Observances, but that all shall alike enjoy the equal and impartial protections of the Law.... And it is Our further Will that, so far as may be, Our Subjects, of whatever Race or Creed, be freely and impartially admitted to Offices in Our Service, the Duties of which they may be qualified, by their education, ability, and integrity, duly to discharge” (Neill, *A History of Christianity in India 1707-1858*, 472).

⁵⁹ ‘Humanize the Namboodiri’ was the slogan of the Yoga Kshema Sabha, a Namboodiri organization formed in 1908, with the intention of reforming the Namboodiri community. It is interesting to remember Foucault’s observation about the Reformation here, that it did not emerge out of the weakness of Christianity but rather from its strength. That, “German Catholicism retained enough strength to turn against itself, to mortify its own body and history, and to spiritualize itself into a pure religion of conscience” (“Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” 149). That is, at a time when it was under attack and facing the risk of obliteration, ‘Western’ Christianity was reborn as the paradigmatic religion through the Reformation, making all other religions insufficient. Similarly, at a time when different communities were contesting the existing public sphere and laying their claims to the same, ‘upper castes’ like Namboodiris and Nairs turned against their own past, just enough to appropriate the discourse of ‘reform’ in the region.

⁶⁰ Writing from the eighteenth-century European milieu, Kant defines enlightenment as “man’s emergence from self-imposed nonage” (“What is Enlightenment?” 1). Enlightenment, according to Kant, is the way out from the state of ‘immaturity,’ by which he means our inability to use our own understanding without another’s guidance. Therefore, to be enlightened is, for Kant, to be autonomous subjects capable of reasoning. Whereas reason itself needs to be distinguished as private and public, with religion constituting the private sphere. Foucault, in his critique of Kant’s enlightenment, deconstructs this universality of Enlightenment and argues that what is required is not to recover “the essential kernel of rationality” in Enlightenment that can be preserved universally, but to identify “what is no longer indispensable for the constitution of ourselves as autonomous subjects” (Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?” 9). However, Irfan Ahmad in his exposition of Enlightenment argues that both Kant and Foucault, despite the latter’s departure from Kant, held modern Europe/reformed Christianity as the precinct for the birth of ‘critique,’ thereby rendering other forms of critique defenceless (*Religion as Critique*, 79). Instead, Ahmad argues that Enlightenment was an ethnic project as Europe/the West constituted their identity in the name of reason and universalism against a series of internal and external ‘others’ (56). It is a highly specific, local mode of critique and reasoning, which is by no means universal, which was not a break from Christianity as is

could be kept in the “waiting room of history” (Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 8) to be enlightened and emancipated, in order to become human, through education and other welfare policies. Taking John Stuart Mill as a classic example, Dipesh Chakrabarty argues how the colonizers kept the colonized nations in the waiting room of history, as people who are headed for the same destination as Europe but are ‘not yet’ there. Chakrabarty goes on to argue that the anti-colonial nationalist struggle for ‘self-rule’ broke this ‘not yet’ of the ‘waiting period’ with its insistence on ‘now’ (*Provincializing Europe*, 8). However, the anti-colonial discourse of the ‘nationalists’ was only an appropriation of the colonial discourse, as it did not demolish the ‘waiting room,’ but only pulled themselves out while pushing more and more communities into the ‘waiting room’ of its own history. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Counter Memorial depends hugely on John Mill for their argumentation that ‘civilized’ ‘enlightened’ ‘educated’ individual ought to be the sole criterion for opportunity, and that whoever can reach this stage automatically becomes equal and free, irrespective of their identity.

This rationality emulated by the Counter Memorial reflects the two antithetical movements of political modernity with respect to ‘anthropological differences’: on the one hand, it “invented a notion of the citizen” or emancipated subject, that upholds a universality in the name of transcending differences into the sphere of particularity that politics tries to neutralize, thereby making all humans as equal citizens in principle; on the other, it “enlarges the project of classifying human beings precisely in terms of their differences,” by reintroducing a universal logic to particularity itself, thereby depriving more and more individuals of their ‘right to have rights’ and producing ‘nonpersons’ (Balibar, *Citizen Subject*, 275-276). As a result of coextending ‘human’ and the political, one could not be denied ‘rights’ without being out-cast(e)d from humanity itself, by

commonly understood but its reconfiguration whereby West/Christianity/Europe enacted an immunity to protect itself from any critique while subjecting all others to critique (57).

reducing them to sub/non-humanity. “Difference is often only a euphemism for this exclusion,” which through a “performative reversal” became the slogan for upholding rights, thereby designating an “antinomic political foundation,” argues Balibar (276). Therefore, at a time when communities were clamouring for democratization of public sphere by demanding educational rights and equal opportunity, the Counter Memorial appropriated the same to validate the discourse of ‘continuous democratization’ or step by step progress towards enunciation of rights, as the founding principle of the modern Travancore state, by which rights will be granted one after another to everyone who meets the universal criteria, without acknowledging that it is only their own particular logic that has been universalized for every others, and that such a universality is available and accessible only to them. Because on the one hand, to have social-economic capital you had to have political representation, and on the other to have political representation you had to have social-economic capital, and only a minority had both, who were reconfigured as the majoritarian subject. This generated a vicious circle, that exclude more than what/who were included.

The Syrian Christian subjects that projected themselves as the representatives of political Christianity in Travancore thus endorsed two conflicting political philosophies for the modernization and democratization of Travancore. One a discourse of privilege based on birth/nativity, and the other a discourse of right based on individual emancipation. Both produced remainders and since they were excluded from the discourse of privilege by birth they had to now be educated and emancipated and become ‘modern’ and ‘human’ to be included as subjects with rights. Starting with the very first editorial (“*Pulayarude Vidhyabhyasam*” [education of Pulayas], 22 March 1890), *Malayala Manorama* continuously wrote articles arguing that it is the duty of the ‘enlightened Travancoreans’ to ‘civilize’ ‘lower castes,’ Muslims and other tribals, in

order to imagine a modern state without critiquing the paradox of enlightenment itself.⁶¹ Thus the modern state in its imagination itself was restrictive, in which only an emancipated subject could become a rightful citizen. Through a comparative reading of the Malayali Memorial and the Counter Memorial against its regional contexts, I have tried to argue that the im(possibility) of community, manifested by *Suriyani Christiani*, aided the consolidation of ‘Hindu’ as the ‘permanent majority’ in the nineteenth century Travancore, which in turn created the conditions to produce themselves as well as others as ‘permanent minorities.’ As already mentioned, the *Suriyani Christiani* incarnation as ‘upper caste Christian,’ and reconstitution of this ‘New Christian’ as the paradigmatic Christian, whereby ‘new converts’ can only remain ‘lower caste’ despite their religion, co-scripted the ongoing political assimilation of various castes as ‘Hindu.’ The Syrian Christian conscription into this majoritarian subjectivity kept more and more ‘not yet non-persons’ (not yet educated, not yet civilized, not yet enlightened, not yet emancipated, not yet modern, not yet human, or in other words not yet Hindu) from being subjects, let alone becoming citizens. Instead, they could only be the objects of emancipatory political projects, as they could not belong on their own terms. More importantly, a minority community can only be excluded by the very act of being included in such a majoritarian subjectivity as will be shown in the case of *Suriyani Christiani* in the next section.

Neither Native, nor Settler, but Christian: “The Ezhava Memorial”

⁶¹ “It is not for us to find fault with caste in its purely social and private aspects. Nor do we blame the authorities for not carrying out all needed reforms *en masse*. What we contend for is that legislature should be so framed and patronage so distributed that all classes of people will eventually have equal opportunities to avail themselves of, and to excel in life. The blessings that the people of India including the rulers of feudatory states, at present enjoy are the outcome of the enlightened and unselfish policy of a great Christian Power that looks after all classes of its subjects with equal solicitude. Our authorities are in duty bound to extend to those placed under them, the same equitable treatment that is meted out to themselves” (*Malayala Manorama*, “The Present Outlook in Travancore,” 16 October 1897 [English article; *Manorama* used to publish articles in both Malayalam and English in the beginning]).

The census of 1901 elucidates that the strategic association of *Suriyani Christians* with Nair-Namboodiri nexus failed to produce the desired results. Even in 1901, ten years after the Malayali Memorial, and the Counter Memorial, Christians occupied only 3% of government jobs as opposed to 48% of Nayars. Mahommedans were 3%, Ezhavas were numbered zero, not to even mention the state of any ‘lower castes’ (Aiyar, *The Census of India 1901*, 435). Therefore, the remainders produced by such contradictions internal to democratization and universalized modernity continued to insurrect the constituted political modality and “The Ezhava Memorial” was one such movement. The Ezhava Memorial of 1896 exposed the contradiction of the political constitution of the Malayali Memorial/Counter Memorial which ensured only the survival of Nair-Namboodiri nexus. In 1896, Ezhavas separated themselves from the Malayali Memorialists, and submitted a new Memorial in order to alleviate their political non-representation, under the leadership of Padmanabhan Palpu.⁶² Memorialists demanded to put an end to the discrimination towards the community regarding representation in education, employment and governance (“The Ezhava Memorial”). Since the political relevance of the Ezhava Memorial, is rightly complimented in the existing scholarship, let me try to complicate it for the purpose of this chapter.⁶³ On the one hand, the Ezhava Memorial was indeed a critique of the universality envisaged in the Malayali Memorial—by then rightfully perceived as the universalization of only a Nair particularity—and a reminder of the ‘remainders’ in that imagination. However, on the other hand, rather than problematizing the logic of constituted subjectivity set by the Malayali Memorial, which arguably co-scripted the imagination of Travancore as a modern state, what the Ezhava Memorial did

⁶² Palpu had already given a long memorandum to the Dewan S Sankara Subha Iyer in May 1895, to no avail, demanding to remove obstacles that prevent social, educational and employment opportunities for Ezhavas (*Malayala Manorama*, “Thiruvithamkote Thiyar” [Thiyas of Travancore], 21 December 1895).

⁶³ The Ezhava Memorial was submitted five years after the Malayali Memorial, by exposing the latter as merely a ‘Nair Memorial.’ See, Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nayar Dominance*.

was to reinscribe Ezhavas as conscripts of the same logic.⁶⁴ They argued that “we constitute one-fifth of the total population of the state, who have been living honourably with fear-worship-faith at your holy feet [king’s] and submitted to your political justice for generations, who are children to ancestors whom laid their life for their dear rulers of the land whenever there was unrest in the country, who strive for the welfare of the country even today by participating in agriculture, industry and trade and bring more resources to government than any other castes” (“The Ezhava Memorial,” 43).⁶⁵ That is, the same discourse of native/foreigner and productive/non-productive subject was reproduced by Ezhavas, only to extend it to include themselves, thereby producing more communities as remainders who were ‘not yet’ there. For, the Memorial lamented that “in addition to people who did not have as much right as Ezhavas to the government and people who were lower to them in caste status sitting in decent jobs in this land, people both among them and even lower than them in the caste hierarchy who were exiled from their caste or *merely adopted a different name from another religion* [referring to Christian conversions] had gained more rights to education and employment” (44; emphasis mine).

Therefore, what is even more striking about the Ezhava Memorial was the renewed religionization of ‘Hindu’ more as an oppositional category, or as a panacea, to the supposed Christianization of Travancore. Because, though the Ezhava Memorial is

⁶⁴ Talal Asad has argued that colonialism has inscribed ‘modern’ ‘Western’ categories into the administrative and legal discourses of the colonies in order to instil the desire for ‘progress,’ that the choices of the colonized, even anti-colonial ones are already conditioned and conscripted by these new categories. That is, “Contrary to the appearances, what we have here is not the West being chosen but a Western choice—the desire for unlimited improvement which is at once the precondition and the aim of a collective discipline” (“Conscripts of Western Civilization,” 345). Taking Asad’s notion of ‘conscripts’ David Scott has argued that “modernity was not a choice the colonized could exercise but was itself one of the fundamental *conditions* of choice, and therefore they were conscripts—and not volunteers of modernity.” Therefore, according to Scott, “the tragedy of colonial enlightenment is not to be perceived in terms of a flaw to be erased or overcome, but rather in terms of permanent legacy that has set the conditions in which we make ourselves what we make and which therefore demands constant renegotiation and readjustment” (*Conscripts of Modernity*, 19-21).

⁶⁵ I have used the Ezhava Memorial fully reproduced in *Dr Palpu* by Velayudhan Panikkassery.

now remembered as a critical offshoot of continued Nair dominance even after the Malayali Memorial, it did not produce any entrenched critique of the universalization of Nair particularity as ‘Hindu,’ as much as it did of Christianity. For, it said, “it is a pity that your humble subjects have to give up their land which is your Majesty’s country or *give up their religion which is your Majesty’s religion* if they want to escape their perils even at a time of increasing regionwide reformatory policies” (44; emphasis mine).⁶⁶ That is, the Ezhava Memorial only reaffirmed the co-constitution of “King’s own country” and “King’s own religion” as foundational to the birth of Travancore as a nation-state.⁶⁷ That the very imagined community to which Christians were trying to belong, as manifested by *Suriyani Christiani*, made them ‘non-native’ and ‘outsider’ and moreover a threat to ‘native land’ and ‘native religion.’⁶⁸

Is this Syrian Christian dilemma, simultaneously manifesting majoritarian aspirations and minoritarian predicaments, entrenched, or is it symptomatic of a larger problem? On the one hand, it shows the contradiction internal to any kind of universality—modernity or democracy, subjecthood and citizenship—that pushes

⁶⁶ The Ezhava Memorial was only a condensed form of Palpu’s much longer and detailed individual Memorial of 1895. In this Memorial, Palpu extensively addresses the question of conversion. He emphasises how conversion has become a necessary evil for Ezhavas in Travancore, as even castes ‘lower’ to Ezhavas are in better position as a result of exiting Hindu religion. However, in Palpu’s discourse conversion appears more as a threatening tool to claim material rights for his community, than as an actual philosophical, political or spiritual intention. It only serves the purpose of finding a means to remain ‘Hindu’ with rights (“Another Memorial,” in Panikkassery, *Dr Palpu*, 30-41).

⁶⁷ However, in the article “*Thiruvithamkote Thiyar*” [Thiyas of Travancore] (14 November 1896), *Malayala Manorama* extended its support to Palpu and the Ezhava Memorial and condemned the discrimination against Ezhavas in Travancore despite their resourcefulness.

⁶⁸ Robin Jeffrey mentions an incident in 1899, when the Malayali Memorialist KP Shankara Menon, who was then the district judge, sentenced a Syrian Christian judge for 24 years rigorous imprisonment and 1,500 rupees fine for ‘wrongfully’ detaining and charging a Brahmin engineer (*The Decline of Nayar Dominance*, 200).

communities to precarious positions, as a result of which they can only belong by sublating their anthropological differences to spheres of particularity that subscribes to a universal logic, in order to become ‘secular,’ ‘modern,’ ‘human,’ ‘national’ and so on. On the other hand, it shows the (im)possibility of this sublation that always produces residues of differences with the majoritarian subject, which alienates more and more communities into the plane of non-belongingness. This volatility of being insider/outside points to the liminality of Christian subjectivity within the emerging (Hindu) national discourse, that would determine the formations of political Christianity in Travancore starting from the twentieth century, as is examined in the next chapter.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ This probably explains the formation of the “Travancore and Cochin Christian Association” in April 1898, as a step towards uniting all Christian sects, that submitted a memorandum to the Dewan K Krishnaswamy Rao in 1899, demanding to separate the temple administration from the state administration as it prevented ‘lower castes’ and non-Hindus from holding the office, to establish competitive exams for executive posts, and to ensure Christian representation in legislative bodies (*Malayala Manorama*, 11 March 1899). However, the association continued to be Syrian dominated, despite being pan-Christian in principle.

Chapter Four

God between Rajah and Resident: Syrian Christian Salvations

Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. (*The Bible*, Matthew 22:21)

As is well known and oft quoted, when asked whether “thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?” (Mark 12:14), Jesus, supposedly, made a distinction between the political and the religious, thereby setting the scene for the emergence of the ‘secular,’ with its own complicated, even convoluted, histories. But such a demarcation has vexed Christianities for a very long time, for it is generally understood as fundamental to its division between theological and political, or the division between sovereignties of God and Caesar, which in turn became foundational to the birth of secularism as separation of religion and state. However, what is not taken into account is that the im-possibility of an entangled sovereignty of God and Caesar was already part of the question to Jesus, and thus pre-Christian. Jesus’ answer seems to have strategically out-manuevered this im-possibility by proposing their co-existence without conflict. (After all, he was an ‘internal problem’ of Jews and a ‘minority’ within the Roman empire). He does this by throwing capital into the equation because what was Caesar’s was, after all, a coin stamped in his image. Hence, rather separating the religious from the political and the economic, this act represents their entanglement in such a way that one cannot but affect the other. Nonetheless, what Christians did seem to be different, when they made Christianity Roman, just as Rome became Christian, thereby co-constituting religion and state. And it is this already political theological state that reconstituted itself as secular with the formation of modern nation state. As a result, whoever did not belong to the theology of this sacred-secular state could only be communal and thus its enemy. These complex and

contradictory genealogies of secular have already been sufficiently deconstructed in the European context.¹

However, the lived realities of Christians, where the state is not necessarily Christian, (keeping aside for the moment, the Christian roots of the very rise of nation state itself), may tell a different story. How do they navigate their differential allegiances, if any, especially when they are in conflict with each other? This question has been mostly, rather only, asked and addressed in relation to Islam/Muslims in India, and it has been most eloquently answered by Mohamed Ali, who observes that Muslims live in “two circles of equal size, but which are not concentric. One is India and the other is Muslim world.... We as Indian Muslims came in both circles” (qtd in Ansari, *Islam and Nationalism*, 12). However, as has been demonstrated in the thesis so far, the Christians, or at least Syrian Christians of Kerala, with their ‘Eastern genealogies’ and anti-‘colonial Christian’ sensibilities, do not seem to identify with a universal Christian world either. Therefore, this chapter tries to examine how they negotiated their difference, when caught between the Rajah (king of Travancore) and the Resident (colonial administrator of Travancore). I focus on two Christian figures, Accamma Cheriyan and KC Mamman Mappila, who played crucial roles in Syrian Christian political formations, during the first half of the twentieth century, in Travancore, through a comparative reading of their memoirs and the movements of which they were a part. The chapter progresses through a con-textual analysis of the two memoirs, by reading them against their absent presences, in relation to other memoirs, as well as with other available records of the movements that they re-present in their narratives. By doing so, I intend to deconstruct the conditions of Syrian Christian conscription that resulted in their minoritization and critique their continuing co-scription of the same conditions for others.

¹ See, Asad, *Genealogies of Religion and Formations of the Secular* (discussed in Chapter One).

Fragmented Memories/Memoirs

The mainstream understanding that linked the emergence of auto-bio-graphy² to the emergence of modern individual has already been debunked by tracing the genealogy of the genre to chronicles, diaries, testimonials, memoirs, etc, that have been prevalent for a very long time. For instance, *Niranam Granthavari* from the eighteenth century that I discussed in Chapter Two is now interpreted as the remains of daily chronicling by *Arkadiyakons* (Heads of the Church), and hence as a source of their individual as well as community's biography for the period. The canonical understanding of autobiography as a kind of *bildungsroman*, wherein an individual traces one's whole life from childhood to adulthood in a reflective or confessional mode, almost following Augustine of Hippo's *Confessions*, attached a certain revelatory truth value to the individual expression as is exemplified by MK Gandhi's *An Autobiography, or the Story of My Experiments with Truth*. The universality of such truth claims has been punctured by fragmentary autobiographical narratives, by the like of Mohamed Ali (*My Life: A Fragment*) or BR Ambedkar (*Waiting for Visa*). In that sense, these fragments deconstruct the genre itself, whereby, any autobiographical narration can only be fragmented and fractured.

In his discussion of Mohamed Ali's fragment of an autobiography titled "Islam: Kingdom of God," and re-titled by the editor Afzal Iqbal for publication as *My Life: A Fragment; An Autobiographical Sketch of Maulana Mohamed Ali*, MT Ansari raises a pertinent question: "is it that by its very constitution autobiography is not a viable opening for/from minority position?" (Ansari, *Islam and Nationalism in India*, 4).³ For

² *Autos* meaning self, *bios* meaning life, and *graphe* meaning writing/recording/documenting.

³ Ansari argues that the fragmentary nature of Ali's autobiography or the impossibility of writing an autobiography for Ali, unlike Gandhi or Nehru, reflects the unfinished nature of Islam itself in India. Following Walter Benjamin, Ansari argues that the Muslim "is forced to mediate a fragmented existence, a minor fragment in a major genre that is not yet a piece that would make the amphora whole again. The

Ansari, Ali's reluctance to write about his life raises questions about the genre of autobiography itself, which, as he observes, comes easily to nationalist figures like Gandhi and Nehru who could manifest a national selfhood. And yet, it is such minoritarian enunciations through unfinished fragments that punctuate the nationalist attempts to "enlarge community into the nation or reduce the nation to a community" (13). It upsets the primacy of individual that is usually associated with the genre and foregrounds communitarian articulations of the individual and vice versa. Thus, minor autobiographical narratives most often expose subjective experiences of a contested exclusionary heterogeneous public, rather than a commonly shared homogeneous public, historicized by the 'secular' 'modern' 'nationalist' historiography.

It is in this context that I locate KC Mamman Mappila's (1873-1954) *Jeevithasmaranakal* [Reminiscences of Life] and Accamma Cheriyan's (1909-1982) *Jeevitham Oru Samaram* [Life, A Struggle], both identifying themselves as Syrian Christians, Mamman Mappila⁴ from the Jacobite faction⁵ and Accamma Cheriyan from the Catholic faction.⁶ I concluded Chapter Three by suggesting that Syrian Christian attempts to be co(n)scripted into a majoritarian subjectivity, at the expense of fellow

Muslim is in this sense a fragment of the amphora of our nationalist aspiration, while also being a fragment within it. Islam is a fragment that does not fit into the whole as it is being imagined and imaged; hence its supplementarity, as something that denotes an excess as well as a lack" (*Islam and Nationalism in India*, 23).

⁴ 'Mappila' was a title name used by Christians, Muslims and Jews in Kerala. The word is believed to have its etymology in '*Maha Pilla*' [great child], an honorific title given to 'foreigners' visiting the land. As an honorific title, Nairs also used to be called as '*Maha Pilla*.' 'Mappila' also means son-in-law or bridegroom. There is also an unpopular interpretation that, it comes from *Ma-pilla* [mother's child] implying they are the children of 'foreign' merchants or visitors who briefly courted 'local' women and returned without accepting the child. The three communities used to be differentially called as 'Jonaka/Chonaka/Yavanaka Mappila' (Muslims), 'Nasrani Mappila' (Christians) and 'Jootha Mappila' (Jews). In the present contexts, Mappila in general refers to Muslims of Malabar, though in the central parts of Kerala, Mappila is still commonly used to address Christians, particularly Syrian Christians. However, because the political-cultural connotation of the term is inseparable from Mappilas of Malabar, I will be referring to Mamman Mappila by his full name and not by the second name.

⁵ Mamman Mappila uses Jacobite as his affiliation throughout the autobiography, though he belongs to the Orthodox Church, presumably because Jacobite earlier referred to both the factions, until the feud between the Jacobite (*Bava Kakshi* or followers of Patriarch of Antioch) and the Orthodox factions (*Metran Kakshi* or followers of Metropolitan in Kottayam).

⁶ The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church that follows Syriac liturgy and Eastern Christian traditions, even while accepting Pope as their Head, consider themselves as Roman Catholic Syrian Christian.

minor subjects, created the conditions for their own minoritization, owing to the residues of differences that percolates from within. Therefore, departing from the normative modality of lumping Syrian Christians together with ‘upper caste’ Hindus, I intend to complicate the discourse by engaging with the collective minoritarian enunciations of self, in its “constitutive exposedness” to the other (Kumar, *Writing the First Person*, 20), as is manifested in the selected Syrian Christian auto-bio-graphical narratives. By reading these texts in comparative con-texts—against its contexts as well as other texts—I argue that even as Syrian Christians self-fashioned themselves as the Hinduized Christians, by affecting as well as affected by the contextual particularities of the twentieth century Travancore, in order to be conscripted into the ‘Hindu’ nation-in-the-making, they remained an ‘outsider’ and a ‘communal minority’ every time they exceeded their ascribed role.⁷ Here, nation-in-the-making is Travancore, one of the earliest states to declare itself ‘Hindu,’ which refused to join the Indian Union up until 12 August 1947, that is two days before the Independence.

Engaging with selected autobiographies from the twentieth century Kerala,⁸ Udaya Kumar elucidates that even though they are narrativized as the authors’ experiments with Enlightenment notions of progress, freedom, equality and the like, the ‘slippages’ expose the ‘traces’ of the exclusionary past in new forms.⁹ In a way, this is

⁷ Refer Chapter One for an engagement with MSS Pandian’s “Nation as Nostalgia,” which explores this line of argument.

⁸ Kumar focuses on autobiographies by ‘upper caste’ and Ezhava men, with the exception of Lalithambika Antaranam, a Namboodiri woman writer, in order to explore their “incomplete inhabitations” (*Writing the First Person*, 211-278). Later, subaltern autobiographies, like that of CK Janu’s *Mother-Forest: The Unfinished Sory of CK Janu*, KK Kochu’s *Dalitan* [Dalit], among others, exposed the homogeneity of the early modern public sphere of Kerala, which requires further study.

⁹ Following Adriana Cavarero’s and Judith Butler’s conceptions of self-narratives, Kumar observes that “what is revealed in self-narratives is a desire for exteriority—the desire to appear in the narrative of another as its object... the core of one’s singular existence consists in one’s ‘exposedness’ to others; what human beings share in common is their constitutive exposedness.” And therefore, he argues that there is a need to analyse “the public exterior dimension of self-narration. Instead of seeing the autobiographical act as a movement from the inner domain to the outer, we may see it as located from the outset in a public, exhibitory space” (*Writing the First Person*, 20-21).

probably the autobiographical enactment of Kerala itself, which has always celebrated its ‘modernity,’ garbed as developmentalism, social reform movements, and secular democratization (famously known as Kerala Model Development, which has been intensely critiqued for its uneven distribution based on caste, tribe, religion and gender), but is often punctured by the ‘slippages’ of entrenched casteism and communalization of minor religiosities. Kumar argues that a reorientation of the question of ‘agency,’ which is usually taken as ‘one’s sovereign or original capacity to act,’ into its mundane meaning of ‘acting on behalf of someone else,’ would allow to analyse the ‘passivity’ and structures of authorization in autobiographical enactments. That, autobiographies present the author not only as an active subject but also as a receptive experiencing subject. According to Kumar, “the experience of being affected by ourselves—where we are simultaneously active and passive—is a necessary condition for self-representation” (16).

It has been observed that autobiographies, particularly by ‘minor’ and ‘marginal’ subjects are not just stories of individuals, but histories of communities. However, ‘history’ continues to give a teleological sense of the narrative. Whereas, the fragmentary nature of autobiographies, rather than producing a coherent subject, in fact fractures from within any pre-given understanding of the subject. Hence, autobiography is not just the story of an individual, or the history of a community, but genealogies of a subject—subject as a product and producer of conditions of being. I have selected these autobiographies primarily because of the time period that produced these subjects and vice versa—last decade of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, which are the focus of this chapter—and secondarily because they are looking back at this time period, which is presently taken for granted as the ‘inaugural moment of

modern democracy' in Kerala,¹⁰ through the lens of minor subjects who participated in the emerging contested public sphere of the then Travancore. For both Mamman Mappila and Accamma Cheriyan, the act of recollecting and recording their life-stories is not just documenting their own respective individual lives, but the life of their community as well as their state during those times. Hence, like most autobiographies, they contain memories of the past from the authors' present for a future to come. Consequently, writing from a united Kerala, after the Independence, and after Travancore joining the Indian Union, there is an earnest desire in both Mamman Mappila and Accamma Cheriyan, now constitutionally belonging to a minority community, to find a place for Syrian Christians as well as Travancore, in the 'secular history' of Kerala state as well as that of the Indian nation. Therefore, many a times, the authors can be seen as criticising their own subject positions in the past as they reminisce the same from the vantage point of their present at the time of writing.

Further, it is also to be remembered that both these 'autobiographies' were not written as coherent narratives, but produced as one much later, with the mediation of editors and publishers, by putting together otherwise nonlinear, non-chronological memoirs. Interestingly, both autobiographies under study were 'originally' written as notes scattered across their lifetime, and then serialised in newspapers as memoirs—Mamman Mappila's in *Malayala Manorama* from 1948-1959, and Accamma Cheriyan's in *Deepika* from 1972. Both memoirs were edited and published posthumously, Mamman Mappila's partially in 1977 by *Manorama* and completely in 2006, edited by CK Karim, and Accamma Cheriyan's in 2011 by DC Books, edited by R Parvathydevi. The interventions in both fragmented memoirs to make them into 'autobiography' is evident

¹⁰ See, George Mathew, *Communal Road to a Secular Kerala*, which I have discussed in Chapter Three, for a reflective engagement with the democratization of Kerala public sphere through communitarian movements.

from the editorial notes themselves. CK Karim states that “my pen moved without making a scratch in the original work. Repetitions were discarded and scattered portions were clubbed together. Some declarations and court proceedings were moved to appendix” (*Jeevithasmaranakal*, 8). Parvathydevi’s note is even more interesting: “this book is a compilation of memoirs published over seven issues in *Deepika*, 1972,¹¹ her ‘Story of 1114’ [Malayalam year for 1939] which was published during her lifetime, and her scattered notes in different forms and formats discovered from a ‘treasure box.’ All I have done is to order everything that Accamma Cheriyan has written. I have retained Accamma’s language and style as it is in the book” (*Jeevitham Oru Samaram*, 14).¹² However, despite the editors’, and of course publishers’ and even readers’, attempt to give order to the ‘chaos,’ these memoirs remain as fragmented and fractured, much like the experiencing subjects; therefore, I will be referring to them as ‘memoirs’ instead of autobiography. It is interesting to note that there is almost a complete absence of dates in Mamman Mappila, who has acknowledged that he wrote them from memory, and therefore a tentative timeline can be derived only through contextual comparison from other parallel sources; whereas, Accamma Cheriyan makes it a point to date most events, probably because of her habit of recording, as suggested by the notes which became the primary source of her ‘autobiography.’

One of the key differences between both memoirs can be found in their treatment of family. Family often becomes a central site in societies which are in transition, undergoing transformation. It is at the level of the family that many contradictions unfold, and many resolutions are arrived at. However, apart from brief overtures, family does not

¹¹ Even though the seventh issue ended with ‘to be continued,’ the memoir ended abruptly and unannounced. Cheriyan’s scathing critique of the Church leadership in the last issue (*Jeevitham Oru Samaram*, 179) for their ‘communalism’ and ‘hypocrisy’ could have been the reason for *Deepika*, a Church sponsored newspaper, to call it off.

¹² Unfortunately, I was unable to access the serialized versions of the memoirs for a comparative analysis, which would have shed more light on the politics and poetics of editorial and translational processes.

figure as important in Cheriyan's account, and those brief accounts mostly mark her and her family as exception, as she tries to problematize the normative gendered orientation of Syrian Christian families, that control a woman's freedom, that deny her education, that deprive her of equal property rights,¹³ that confine her to the 'private' and the 'domestic.' In *Jeevitham Oru Samaram*, there is a steady critique of such private/public and personal/political compartmentalization, particularly in relation to women, and for Cheriyan—whether or not 'personal is political'—political is unarguably personal. Whereas, in Mamman Mappila's account, family constitutes an overarching presence that is inseparable from his public self, which was not a unique position for 'elite men' of his time. Therefore, while family becomes something that had to be overcome for Cheriyan, probably on account of being a woman, it is family that validates Mamman Mappila's political, economic and social decisions.

However, interestingly, notwithstanding these differences in approach towards the institution of family, understandably emerging out of their gendered disposition, both Accamma Cheriyan and Mamman Mappila begin their narratives by locating their respective families in the Apostolic and Brahminic lineage. Cheriyan's unapologetic account is typical of Syrian Christian families for which the Apostolic tradition is a pre-given condition of its being. She begins her memoir by stating:

There is historical evidence that our ancestors, who used to live in Nilaykal after receiving baptism from St Thomas, migrated to Kanjirapally.... My mother's grandmother hails from Chambakkulam Palakkunnel which is a branch of

¹³ Cheriyan writes: "curing those days, Syrian Christian community did not give equal rights for male and female children to father's property. Girls only had the right for dowry. Even though Indian Constitution guarantees equal right for men and women, Syria Christian community does not seem to acknowledge this" (*Jeevitham Oru Samaram*, 38). "Mary Roy Etc v State of Kerala and Others" in 1986 is considered as a landmark judicial case, as Mary Roy, a Syrian Christian woman, challenged the Travancore Succession Act of 1916 and Cochin Succession Act of 1921 practiced by the community that granted only dowry rights to women. The Supreme Court of India passed judgement in her favour, guaranteeing equal rights for men and women in ancestral property (Bhagwati, "Mrs Mary Roy Etc vs State of Kerala & Ors on 24 February, 1986").

Pakalomattom¹⁴ I was born and brought up in one of the very orthodox families that claims greatest nobility in the Central Travancore. It is this nobility that often stood in my way forward. (*Jeevitham Oru Samaram*, 23)

Despite writing at a time when the ‘origin’ is already contentious, Cheriyan does not express any burden to provide this ‘historical document’ or reflect any further on it, let alone, critique or deconstruct it in order to ‘un-inherit’ this caste past. For her, *vamshavali* [genealogy], is a ‘fact,’ which is already available. In a sense, the *is*-ness embedded in her own perception of her ‘self’ is what allows her to portray herself as a ‘revolutionary’ and ‘reformist’ to whom this ‘self’ does not matter. Because, self-narration, for her, is about what she becomes rather than what she is, which is probably why she calls her participation in a protest for the first time as her “political baptism” (91). Mamman Mappila on the other hand tries to ‘objectively’ present his ancestry when he writes:

There is a legend that Thayyil family and Pattamukkil family belong to some of the Brahmin families that accepted Christianity during the Thomas apostle’s mission at Niranam. It is not possible to determine the historical fact of this legend. However, it is true that such a chronicle has been passed on through oral accounts. (*Jeevithasmaranakal*, 39)

She continues:

A pride that there are no two other Christian families in this place with pure Apostolic tradition rooted in me as I grew up. (*Jeevithasmaranakal*, 41)

Thus, even though he begins by creating a binary between history/legend like an ‘objective historian,’ he also unsettles history by attributing ‘truth value’ to oral accounts and memories, which are probably outside ‘historical time.’ There is no need to exemplify

¹⁴ As already mentioned, Pakalomattom is considered as one of the four Brahmin families converted by Thomas, from which *Arakadiyakons* (Archdeacons) that head the community in earlier times used to be chosen.

the abundant scholarship that has blurred the boundary between orality/writing in order to foreground the un/under/non representations of mainstream histories. However, in Mamman Mappila, privileging of speech over written only figures as a means to re-historicize the existing history. This is evident when he later narrates an incident where his family fought with the parish, for denying them the age-old ancestral privilege of exemption from paying certain obligatory donation owing to their apostolic lineage (47). However, it is worth mentioning that upon looking back on this incident, at the time of his writing, he acknowledges that certain families claiming special rights and privileged treatment in a church, where democracy and equality should thrive, was wrong and that it was fair for the members of the church to protest (48). While this self-critique can be understood as the affective effect of the ‘democratizing struggles’ of his lifetime, it also lays bare the contradiction internal to the Syrian Christian subjectivity, as this critical reflection even then does not destabilize the very conviction about his ancestry, but only that such ancestry should not be the determining factor for rights and duties. That is, it preserves the conditions of the privilege even while problematizing the privilege. In a sense, both Accamma Cheriyan and Mamman Mappila’s strategic narration of their caste positionality—former naturalized and the latter secularized—is symptomatic of the way Kerala polity itself modernized caste by invisibilizing it.

From Subject to Citizen:

Political Salvation in Accamma Cheriyan’s *Jeevitham Oru Samaram*

Accamma Cheriyan is now remembered as a freedom fighter, popularly known as the ‘Jhansi Rani of Travancore.’¹⁵ A teacher by profession, she resigned as Head Mistress of a school, in order to become the twelfth Dictator of the Travancore State Congress that

¹⁵ She is always portrayed in the quintessential freedom fighter image of a Khadi saree clad woman with a fearless look and stern fist with a ‘Gandhi cap.’ There is a sculptor in her honour at Kavadiar, Trivandrum.

was leading the struggle for the Responsible Government in Travancore.¹⁶ She was imprisoned multiple times during the struggle. Writing from a United Kerala and independent India (started serializing in 1972), Accamma Cheriyan's *Jeevitham Oru Samaram* [Life, A Struggle], in its bare minimum, can be read as a Syrian Christian woman's struggle to 'redeem' herself and her community in/through nation. She begins by narrating three immediate contexts that encouraged her to "dive into the memories of freedom struggles and jot them down, at a time when she had retired from political life and forgotten everything" (Cheriyan, *Jeevitham Oru Samaram*, 20-21). First was a government correspondence in 1971 that nominated her to the Kerala state advisory committee, which was responsible for identifying the freedom fighters eligible for the government pension scheme. Second was a letter from Louise Ouwerkerk requesting permission to interview Cheriyan for a book on Travancore. According to Cheriyan, this interest shown by a European woman in documenting Travancore history, that too using primary sources, unseen among Travancoreans themselves, instilled the desire to write her own story (22).¹⁷ And the third was the silver jubilee of Indian Independence, as part of which she was honoured by the Central government as one among 25 freedom fighters from Kerala (22). Therefore, there is a concerted attempt in her autobiography to attribute a universal secular national interest to regional communitarian struggles in Travancore, which also had its own immanent logics. This can probably be read as the manifestation of the burden of a woman from a minority community to relieve herself and her community from the 'colonial tag,' owing to their shared religion with the colonizers, and purported indifference to the national freedom struggle, as well as from the 'communal

¹⁶ The struggle to establish Responsible Government in Travancore started with the founding of the State Congress in February 1938, and TM Varghese demanding the adjournment of the assembly to demand Responsible Government (Varghese, "Travancore Sri Mulam Assembly Proceedings," 2 February 1938).

¹⁷ Ouwerkerk, a teacher at the Women's College in Trivandrum from 1929 and Professor of History and Economics at University of Travancore from 1936 to 1939, later published this book as *No Elephants for the Maharaja: Social and Political Change in the Princely State of Travancore (1921-1947)* in 1994, and Accamma Cheriyan is one among her primary sources.

tag' owing to their pivotal role in bringing down the first democratically elected Communist government in Kerala (and second in the world itself) through the Liberation Struggle in 1959.¹⁸

Owing to the brevity and incomplete nature of her memoir, many significant events make only a fleeting appearance, mostly in the form of unexplained statements, that throw some light, or cast a shadow rather, on her view on the concerned subject. Hence, I have used the memoirs of her contemporaries as well as other parallel sources in order to cross-read Cheriyan's fragmented memories in comparative contexts. Cheriyan presents her political life in two parts, one as a passive observant of *Nivarthana Prakshobhanam* or the Abstention Struggle of 1930s, and the other as an active participant of *Utharavadhabharana Samaram* or the Responsible Government Struggle of 1940s. It is in her rather brief description of the Abstention Struggle (41-42), as that which affected and shaped her political activism in future, that she first identifies with the precariousness of her Christian subjectivity in a 'Hindu kingdom.' She remembers that "the *savarna* ['upper caste'] hegemony that suffocated the country at that time forced other major communities like that of Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims to join forces. They organized. Demanded for rights" (41).

Abstention struggle, organized by the Joint Political Congress, which was a Christian-Ezhava-Muslim association formed against the Nair-Namboodiri nexus in Travancore,¹⁹ was in fact a direct response to the legislative reforms undertaken by the Travancore government, in the name of the democratization of the polity. The legislative

¹⁸ Jointly organized by Christians, Muslims and Nairs, the Liberation Struggle was a controversial protest movement against the policies of the newly elected Communist government, which these communities perceived as threatening their constitutional rights and religious freedom. I will briefly discuss the Struggle later in the Conclusion of the thesis. For now, suffice it to say that the Struggle has been accorded the status of being a 'communal' revolt against the 'secular' forces in the emerging nation.

¹⁹ Ezhava Political League, All Travancore Christian Political Congress and Muslim Service League joined to form the Joint Political Congress on 17 December 1932 (Kusuman, *Nivarthana Prakshobhanam*, 46).

reforms of 1932 reconstituted Travancore Sri Mulam Assembly and Travancore Sree Chitra State Council as two chambers of a Legislature with the “intention to provide for increasing association of Our people with Our Government in the administration of the State” (“The Legislative Reforms Regulation II of 1108”). However, only those paying 5 rupees land tax had the right to vote for the Assembly and only those paying 25 rupees land tax or graduated with a degree had voting rights for the State Council. Thus, the declared universal access to legislature was punctured internally, whereby only 2.5% of the total population got suffrage, who would still belong to the landed Namboodiri-Nair communities (*Deepika*, “Editorial,” 1 November 1932). Thus, in the end, the purported democratization to establish a ‘modern’ Travancore state, (even though still a monarchy), by forming a representative government through electoral procedure, only secularized the already existing Namboodiri-Nair dominance. It is against this antidemocratic spirit of an imagined ‘democratic monarchy’ that Christians, Ezhavas and Muslims of Travancore came together and formed the All-Travancore Joint Political Congress on 17 December 1932, and demanded for proportional representation of all communities in legislative councils through separate electorates and reservation policy, until adult suffrage is guaranteed (*Malayala Manorama*, “*Thiruvananthapurathe Rashtreeya Sammelanam: Ezhava Muslim Chraisthavarude*” [Political Meeting at Thiruvananthapuram: of Ezhavas Muslims and Christians], 22 December 1932). As a protest, the members of the above communities decided to abstain from voting in elections, standing as candidate, and accepting government nomination to assemblies until their demands are met (*Deepika*, “*Asamathva Samudaya Sthanarthikal*” [Unequal community candidates], 3 January 1933; *Malayala Manorama*, “*Kraisthava Ezhava Muslim Samudhayangal Puthiya Niyamasabhakalodu Nissahakarikkuvan Theerumanichu*” [Christian Ezhava Muslim communities decided to abstain from new legislative assemblies], 26 January 1933).

In a sense, the Joint Political Congress was a renewed attempt towards being-in-common in order to insurrect against the ‘upper caste hegemony,’ that emerged out of the impossibility of Christian-Ezhava-Nair common-being that the Malayali Memorial tried to extract. Because, as already explained, the flawed communitarian imagination of the Malayali Memorial ended up translating Travancore as a ‘modern’ ‘Hindu state,’ by ensuring the universalization of a Nair particularity, at the expense of Syrian Christians and Ezhavas who were differentially included, not to mention the invisibilization of countless other communities who were excluded even from such exclusionary inclusion itself. Therefore, in the petition²⁰ to the Dewan, the Abstentionists exposed the contradiction at the heart of the proposed ‘modernization’ of Travancore polity and argued that all it does is to ‘democratically’ retain the status quo, through the elected majority of privileged minorities like Nairs and Namboodiris, who themselves are bound by the monarchic sovereignty, thereby subverting the very purpose of the proposed representative governance. However, at this very juncture, government and anti-Abstentionists tagged these communities as ‘communal’ and ‘anti-democratic,’ who were sabotaging an electoral procedure.²¹

²⁰ “On behalf of the All-Travancore Joint Political Congress representing the Christian, Ezhava and Muslim communities of the state ... there was no free election; that the new Houses of Legislature are not at all representative of the different communities and various interests of the State; that the reformed Legislature only tends to strengthen the predominance of a minor community in the State; that our grievances are real; and that the remedy lies in reconstituting the Legislature so as to give representation to all considerable communities in proportion to their population.... The new Legislature has in more than one sense become another stronghold of the Nairs. This preponderance in the Legislature, combined with their predominance in the public service, makes the Nair community a powerful oligarchy, dangerous at once to the State and to the other communities. If things are allowed to continue longer in this manner the other communities in the state are sure to lose their political rights and become politically annihilated... It needs no argument to show that such an over-representation of large sections of the people is a negation of the very idea of representative Government which is claimed to be developed here by the institution of Legislature with an elected majority” (*Malayala Manorama*, “Memorial to the Dewan by the All-Travancore Joint Political Congress,” 10 November 1933; see also, Kusuman, *Nivarthana Prakshobhanam*, Appendix, 174).

²¹ “As you may be aware the Central Committee of the Christian, Ezhava, Mohammadan league have passed resolutions deciding upon total abstention from the new Legislative Reforms and recommending propaganda work to be caused on throughout the State.... They have also resolved upon the thoroughly unconstitutional method of seeking outside intervention by presenting memorials to Parliament, the Viceroy etc, and carrying on active propaganda outside the state through newspapers and other means”

On the contrary, through the adoption of a strategy of ‘abstention,’ the three communities together constituting half the population of the state, in fact effectively suspended ‘whatever democratic’ procedure that would have self-destroyed, in its attempt to self-preserve the existing ‘upper caste state.’ Therefore, it can be read that it was this alleged ‘communal’ and ‘undemocratic’ act of ‘abstention,’ that eventually forced the state to effect the reconstitution of legislation, the dissolution of the elected autocratic government and the re-election that reinstated an elected body with proportional representation of majority of communities.²² Nonetheless, even as the Abstention Struggle ought to be understood as an attempt to democratize a deferred democracy, what the discourses also exposed was in fact the im-possibility of democracy itself or as Derrida terms it, “democracy itself as presently and forever lacking” (*Acts of Religion*, 34). Drawing on his own formulation of community-to-come, by which community never comes, but is always coming, Derrida theorizes democracy-to-come, as a condition by which democracy never comes; where ‘to come’ represents the displacement that structures the very possibility from within.²³ He explains this as owing to the auto-

(“Letter from the District Magistrate Quilon to K Raja Raja Varma”). Similarly, another correspondence notes: “It is seen there from that the speakers have been using intemperate language and making false allegations about one community viz, the Nairs, calculated to breed hatred in the minds of the general public against that community and also to provoke the members of that community to open violence” (“Letter from the Commissioner of Police to the Dewan: 30-3-1933”). Interestingly, K Kusuman observes that many Left leaders including EMS Namboodirippad held similar views (*Nivarthana Prakshobhanam*, 48).

²² See, Kusuman, *Nivarthana Prakshobhanam* [Abstention Struggle] for a detailed statistical documentation of the Travancore polity during the Abstention Struggle (39-45; 59-61).

²³ According to Derrida, there is an auto-immune logic inherent to democracy. He explains this phenomenon through the contradictory coexistence of sovereignty and democracy. “Democracy and sovereignty are at the same time inseparable and in contradiction with one another. For democracy to be effective, what is required is sovereignty, a force that is stronger than all the other forces. But if the construction of this force is, in principle, supposed to represent and protect democracy, it in fact betrays and threatens it from the very outset, in an autoimmune fashion. The paradox is that sovereignty is incompatible with universality even though it is called for by universal or universalizable, and thus democratic law. Sovereignty is always in the process of autoimmunizing itself, or betraying itself by betraying the democracy that nonetheless can never do without it” (Derrida, *Rogues*, 100-101). Therefore, democracy can never be achieved, but is always “to come.” Here, ‘to come’ does not mean that democracy is something that can be achieved in future either. Rather, it would always be ‘coming.’ However, Derrida also observes that it is this auto-immunity that contradictorily gives life to democracy; because absolute immunity is impossible, it paradoxically opens ‘to what is to come’ that constantly intervene, disrupt, resist, transform

immune equation between sovereignty and democracy. While sovereignty is essential for a democracy to come, the very constitution of sovereign as representative of demos, displaces democracy from within, because threatened by the very freedom and universality that democracy offers, sovereignty in turn destroys the demos in its attempt to self-preserve. Therefore, democracy can never come, but is always coming, argues Derrida. However, it is this very possibility of eternal deference that paradoxically keeps democracy alive, because inevitably ‘what is to come’ destroys the preservatory zeal of present democracy for a future-to-come.

This is clear from the glaring contradiction of the Joint Political Congress itself, that still could only forge a commonality amongst the three ‘major minor’ communities, without identifying with various ‘minor marginal’ communities that were fighting graver struggles. In fact, as the Abstentionists were negotiating with the government, independent representations were submitted by Latin Christians and Depressed Class Christians asking for separate reservation within Christian community as the Abstentionists failed to protect their interests (“The Government Communique, the Electoral System Outlined: 29-10-1932”; and “Government’s Reply to the Memorial of the All Travancore Joint Political Congress: 28-1-1933”). Similarly, on 24 May 1935, during the peak of the Abstention Movement, Pampady John Joseph submitted a memorandum to the Maharaja and the British Parliament, seeking separate categorization of Depressed Class Christians from Syrian Christians. He argues that even the newly adopted proportional distribution policy for major communities in public service and legislative assembly has failed the majority of minor communities, because in the context of Christianity, while Depressed Class Christians are counted to increase the total population of Christians in Travancore and thus claim more representatives, the seats

the ‘democracy here-and-now’ or democracy in the present, for a democracy to-come (Matthews, “The Democracy to Come”).

continue to be filled only by Syrian Christians. (“Memorandum Submitted by John Joseph to the British Parliament,” *Pampady John Joseph*, 68-73).²⁴

Therefore, rather than recovering the Abstention Movement as a final event in Travancore’s transition to a democratic sovereignty, I read it as part of a continuous process, that foregrounded community as a dynamic critical category, without the urge to form or belong to a homogenous community of ‘whatever’ abstract beings with universal rights. This is evident from the Abstentionists’ initial suspicion of both the United Kerala as well as the United India movement, as only an extension of the same exclusionary logic by which ‘upper castes’ emerge as the national majority, thereby producing numerous permanent minorities, as exemplified by C Kesavan’s ‘treasonous’ speech for which he was arrested.²⁵ So much so that, we see Ezhava leaders submitting a Memorandum to the Simon Commission in 1928 stating they would rather live in colonial

²⁴ Similarly, N John Joseph moved a resolution in Sri Mulam Praja Sabha on 22 November 1933 demanding to treat ‘depressed class Christians’ as a separate category for reservation (Joseph, “Sri Mulam Assembly Proceedings,” 22 November 1933). To this day, reservation for Dalit Christians continues to be unresolved. Presently, the Supreme Court of India is hearing a petition for the same, and has constituted a committee to look into the matter.

²⁵ C Kesavan in his speech addressing the Joint Political Congress gathering at Kozhenchery on 13 May 1935 chaired by KC Mamman Mappila, following which Kesavan was arrested for treason, emphatically stated that: “Many great Nair leaders—reputed Nair leaders from Travancore, from Cochin, nay from all parts of Kerala—took part in the Nair Mahajana Sabha held during the past week at Kottayam. What we heard as the prologue and epilogue of that conference was about the creation of a United Kerala. Mr Palat and others said that a united Kerala might be created by starting Karayogams of the Nair Service Society all over Kerala.... For the safety of the Caste Hindus, the Indian National Congress and the leaders in British India tried to create an inter-communal fellowship and an Indian Nation in the Congress, wherein the caste Hindus have a large majority of representation. Similarly those worthy personages have assembled today in Travancore and passed resolutions for the creation of a United Kerala... They have not considered whether it is possible by the union of Nairs alone... They say that nationalism is their monopoly. They have strongly brought forward the question of efficiency to reduce to ashes the agitation for communal representation... efficiency is the monopoly of certain communities... We did not see any such question of efficiency during the days of the Malayali Memorial sponsored by Nairs... Nairs who glorify that the culture of Travancore is the culture of Nairs, the Nationalists who pride themselves in having conquered Travancore in the battle field, have declared that adult franchise is not required here... Nair means the Government. The Nair and Pattar make the Travancore Government. There may be some Chettis also. Our Government is really an assembly of such persons... I am referring to Sir CP. We do not want that ‘*Jantu*’ [creature] I did not say ‘*Jantu*’ but Hindu. He will do no good to the Ezhava, Christian and the Musalman... Therefore it is my opinion that joint organization of these three communities should be continued whether we get some more seats in the Legislature or not. I conclude with the prayer that this joint movement may stand as a permanent party in Travancore” (“Speech Delivered by C Kesavan at Kozhenchery: 13-5-1935,” MO Pushpangadan’s translation; see also, Kesavan, *Jeevithasamaram* [Life Struggle], 306-313).

India than in a 'Hindu' independent India.²⁶ The adoption of the term 'abstention' itself was to differentiate it from the 'non-cooperation' and the 'civil disobedience' aspects of the nationalist movement. That is, Abstentionism was a critique of both the regional nationalism as well as the Indian nationalism of the 'upper castes,' by foregrounding community as critique, in order to expose the antinomies of imagined citizenship and contradictions of ensuing democratic state. Therefore, the establishment of Hindu Maha Sabha and its activities in both Travancore and Malabar, focusing on the consolidation of a pan-Indian Hindu identity, through reformation of the caste-Hindu and re-conversion of various castes from Christianity and Islam, has to be read in the light of the Travancore Abstention Movement and the Malabar Rebellion, as both foregrounded minor community as a critical category in the imagined nation of the nationalist movement.

However, even when Cheriyan recollects the Abstention Struggle as the organization of minor communities against the 'upper caste' monopoly that sidelined them in the first half of the twentieth century Travancore, she immediately makes it clear that such communitarian struggles can only achieve temporary relief, and only the establishment of a Responsible Government that guarantees adult suffrage and minority rights can solve fundamental problems of polity (42). That is, there is a discursive transition from 'communitarianism' to 'secularism,' among Syrian Christians, as is exemplified by Cheriyan. It is their very critical subjectivity that communities were required to transcend, in order to sublimate themselves from subject to citizen and belong to the national community of citizens. It is this impossibility of communitarian critique,

²⁶ In the memorandum submitted to the Simon Commission on 26 May 1928, Ezhava representatives stated that "This is not an exaggeration, for their own self-interest demands them to cast their lot with the British Government, and not with a caste Hindu oligarchy under whom they suffered untold miseries for hundreds of years... It is a mistake to call the Tiyya a Hindu when he is denied even the privilege of worshipping the same Deity in the same place... The real power of the Government should not be shifted from the British officials to the so-called educated classes in India as they do not represent real India" ("Memorandum submitted to the Indian Statutory Commission by Mr CV Kunjuraman, General Secretary, the SNDP Yogam").

which can only be ‘communal’ in a ‘secular’ ‘modern’ nation state, that probably makes Cheriyan look back at 1930s from 1970s and re-present the Joint Political Congress as a ‘communal’ organization, and the Abstention struggle a ‘communal’ movement, before the dawn of a ‘secular’ Kerala. These struggles, according to her, probably had relevance under a monarchic sovereignty, but do not have a place in the imagined political community of the modern nation. In fact, she takes on the Congress position that “nationalism should grow disempowering communitarian-communal organizations, because only a national community can bring all communities and classes under one flag” (187).

Therefore, it is interesting that the Responsible Government Struggle marks for her, the ‘progressive’ transition of Travancore politics from regional to national, from monarchy to democracy, from subjecthood to citizenship and from community to nation. This is evident from her speech as the 12th President of the State Congress in Travancore, leading a march towards the king’s palace, in order to submit the memorandum demanding Responsible Government in Travancore, when she makes it clear that:

... there is a concerted attempt to reduce this struggle as the one to get some civic rights. However, nobody should misunderstand that the State Congress would be satisfied with some civic rights. In reality, civic rights can be ensured only in a democracy. Thus, this struggle is not only a part of the Indian freedom struggle, but also a part of the global struggles between the imperial powers and the democratic powers. Looking from this perspective, there is more to our struggle than regionalism. (97)

What is overlooked is that the Responsible Government Struggle was spearheaded by the State Congress, which was established in Travancore primarily by Nairs, in order to pitch ‘national interest’ against the perceived ‘parochial’ and ‘communal’ interests of the

Abstention Movement, to which Abstentionists were gradually integrated after dissolving the Joint Political Congress, in July 1938, thereby circling back to a Nair-Ezhava-Syrian Christian association in Travancore. This, in effect, undermined the anti-caste struggles that were still clamouring for rights and representations, by displacing the anti-caste discourse and replacing it with anti-colonial discourse.

In his report on the Travancore Responsible Government Struggle, BR Ambedkar quotes a long letter from Srinarayanawami, the representative of All Travancore Pulayar Cheramar Aykia Maha Sangham, who criticizes the movement as a “Savarna agitation” and the Temple Entry as a “check to the further concessions to us” (“Gandhi and His Fast,” 393).²⁷ Cheriyan’s momentary critique of the Temple Entry Proclamation of 1936, now celebrated as revolutionary,²⁸ makes it clear that she is aware of this inherent incongruity of nationalist politics, and yet is choosing to elude it. She reads the Proclamation as a pre-emptive strike by the Travancore government to divide the Abstentionists, and isolate Christians and Muslims, by re-converting Ezhavas as ‘Hindu,’ at a time when they were passing resolutions stating they are not ‘Hindu’ (45).²⁹ Nonetheless, guided by ‘national secular’ imperatives, Cheriyan endorses the rhetoric of

²⁷ Ambedkar argues that “if the plan of Temple Entry is ultimately to deprive the Untouchables of their statutory rights, then the movement is not only not spiritual but it is positively mischievous and it would be the duty of all honest people to warn the Untouchables, ‘Beware of Gandhi’” (“Gandhi and His Fast,” 395).

²⁸ In 1936, as a consequence of the Temple Entry Movement since 1924, Maharajah Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma publicized a proclamation opening all temples in Travancore to all ‘Hindus,’ including Dalits, who till then were not allowed entry.

²⁹ The 1936 Editorial in the *Sahodaran* emphatically stated that “It is impossible for Subramanya Aiyer or Mannathu Padmanabhan [‘upper caste’ leaders] to establish an organization based on religion or community. In the religious and social contexts, Pilla has to first throw the yoke of Aiyar [because Pilla is lower than Aiyar in the hierarchy]. They who maintain silence on this problem are calling Pulayars and Ezhavas to join this front. There is no doubt that this is only an endeavour to retain their political monopoly. This is a ploy to use Pulayars and Ezhavars in the political battle against Christians” (See, Kusuman, *Nivarthana Prakshobhanam*, 72-73). According to C Kesavan, All Travancore Ezhava Youth League passed a resolution that they are not Hindus and that they should be categorized as a separate community as early as 1903 itself (*Jeevithasamaram*, 320). Therefore, the gradual translation of Ezhava as ‘Hindu,’ by setting aside their consistent ‘anti-Hindu’ discourse that lasted for three or four decades, with Ezhavas emerging as a powerful middle caste, its role in the final integration of other castes and even tribes into the ‘Hindu fold,’ thus neutralizing the anti-caste discourse of other ‘lower castes,’ and its impact on the political economy of Kerala itself, still needs critical unpacking. For example, see, P Chandramohan’s *Developmental Modernity in Kerala: Narayana Guru, SNDP Yogam and Social Reform*.

the nationalist discourse that community is fulfilled in the making of nation, as subjects sublate themselves as citizens, transcending their differences. Thereby, she distances herself from communitarian movements like the Abstention Struggle, that enabled ‘major minor’ communities like Syrian Christians to seemingly transcend—temporarily, insufficiently and incompletely, if that—their subjecthood to become citizens, and its own critique of the contradictions inherent in such a top-down universal solution, that always leaves ‘remainders’ in the process of abstracting ‘citizen.’

When Cheriyan justifies the transition from the anti-‘caste Hindu’ Abstention Struggle to the anticolonial Responsible Government Struggle as stemming from the realization that “majority of Nairs are enlightened and it is against the national interests to fight with them in the name of caste and religion,” what she exhibits is the self-preservatory symptoms of a minority community (48). What is ironic is that this conviction arises from her firm belief in the universal valency of the ‘enlightened human’ that emerged out of particular European contexts, which makes her lament that “Hindu, Christian, Muslim, Nair and Ezhava within Hindus, Catholics and non-Catholics within Christians, good and bad Catholics within Catholics; such that there is no human community here” (223). It is this belief in the possibility of actualizing an ‘abstract human,’ that can transcend the caste, religious and racial differences, which guides her when she emphasizes in her Presidential address at the third annual convention of the Travancore State Congress that:

... fortunately politically suicidal claims like Pakistan have not raised its head here [Travancore]. However, communal sensibility is burning here in the guise of representational claims in legislature and jobs. Even though all parties have agreed to allow community representations without hurting the national interests, there is a concerted attempt to keep highlighting this problem in the public discourse.

Anyone who wakes up the dormant communalism would be traitors of the nation. Communalism gives rise to more communalism, and communalism in one place awakens the latent communalism elsewhere.... Hence, let those who are caught up in the regional problems like community representations line up in the endeavour to achieve what is good in general for the nation. Then, such problems will be automatically resolved. (219)

With such ‘objective’ and ‘rational’ rhetoric, Cheriyan becomes prototypical of Syrian Christian refashioning oneself as the ‘secular critic’ in the emerging nation, by externalizing caste as a Hindu problem and communalism as a Muslim problem, thereby immunizing Christianity from addressing both. That is, the Syrian Christian integration into the nationalist movement, and by extension the emerging nation, was premised on their readiness to invisibilize caste question, secularize community question, and communalize Muslim question.

However, what Cheriyan overlooks is how every time Christians exceed this assigned ‘secular nationalist’ character, they are immediately alienated as ‘outsider’ and ‘communal.’ To elaborate this point, I would like to juxtapose Accamma Cheriyan’s Memoir, which presents the translation of a Syrian Christian from communitarianism to nationalism, and which endorses nation as the only legitimate community that can transcend all other communities, with an anecdote from the biography of another Syrian Christian of her times, George Joseph (*George Joseph: The Life and Times of a Kerala Christian Nationalist*), which represents the untranslatability of the same.³⁰ George Joseph, was a barrister from Travancore, who settled and practiced law in the Madras Presidency, became an ardent disciple of MK Gandhi and a close associate of the Indian

³⁰ In a sense, the title of the biography itself exposes the burden of a minority community to mark its otherwise unaccounted presence in the nationalist freedom struggle, as it pins down Joseph as a “Kerala Christian Nationalist.”

National Congress and its freedom movement, only to disown Gandhi, the Congress and the nationalist movement in the end, and ‘return’ to his religion and community, following his realization that he will always be earmarked as a Christian, in the emerging ‘secular’ (Hindu) Indian nation. His ‘revelation’ came during the Vaikom Satyagraha,³¹ when Joseph, who till then disassociated with ‘regional’ or ‘communitarian’ desperations in his own ‘native land,’ and associated only with ‘national’ aspirations, had to assume the leadership of the movement, as the representative of the Congress, following the arrest of KP Kesava Menon. However, MK Gandhi, who was closely following the agitation and writing regularly in *Young India*, with whose blessings the Congress started the agitation, demanded Joseph to step down from the leadership owing to his religion. In his letter to Joseph, following Joseph’s Satyagraha and imprisonment, Gandhi wrote: “regarding Vaikom, you should leave that to Hindus. It is they who must cleanse themselves. You can be empathetic to them; you can also help them in your name. But you should not offer Satyagraha or organize the movement” (Gandhi, “Vaikom Satyagraha”). He continued to reiterate that “if I can encourage the Christian and Muslim sympathizers who went to prison as Satyagrahis, I would ask them of one thing—they should confess to the authorities that it was wrong to offer Satyagraha; because they have gone to prison for untouchable Hindus. I deliberately use untouchable Hindus. I understand that there are untouchable Christians among Syrian Christians in Kerala. This Satyagraha is not offered for Christians. Therefore, there is no value for the sacrifices of Joseph, Sebastian and Abdul Rahim” (Gandhi, “Interview with *The Hindu*”).

³¹ Vaikom Satyagraha started as a movement in 1924 towards the annihilation of untouchability by demanding temple entry for all and ended in 1925 by claiming equal access for everyone to public roads around Vaikom Temple in Travancore, which was till then not open to ‘lower castes.’ In a sense, then, what started as an anti-caste struggle ended up as a civic rights struggle. See, PK Harikumar’s *Vaikom Satyagraha Rekhakal* for a compilation of primary sources related to the agitation, which I have also used. Also see, Jeffrey, “Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940” for a detailed analysis of the Satyagraha.

Joseph's immediate response to this sudden alienation at the hands of his mentor was to assert his 'secular' credentials, by problematically endorsing the discourse of Vaikom Satyagraha as a civil rights movement, and not an anti-'caste Hindu' movement, which is what became of the movement itself, in the end. He wrote:

It is true that Gandhiji took the view that as a Christian, I had no business to go into it and he sent me word that I should apologise. But I did not agree with him. There was no apology, because I took the view that since a civic right was denied to the untouchables, it was as much my concern as that of caste Hindus to fight for it. (Joseph, *George Joseph*, 172)

However, Joseph's long-term response to Gandhi was to actively embrace his Christian identity, which he, till then, had considered as an unnecessary detail to his 'secular' and 'nationalist' self, because he realized that only a 'Hindu' can be secular and nationalist in Gandhi's India.³² Cheriyan's occasional jibes at Gandhi prove that she was not oblivious to this complexity. Even in retrospect, though she reaffirms her unwavering support to the decisions of the State Congress and national freedom movement, she makes it a point to note her discontent with Gandhi for looking at the provincial matters from a long distance and failing to understand the pulse of local people (138). She particularly critiques Gandhi for compelling the State Congress leaders to retract their 'strongly worded' memorandum against CP Ramaswamy Iyer (henceforth Sir CP, as he was popularly known), the dewan of Travancore, which according to her, weakened the Responsible Government Struggle in the state and strengthened Sir CP's suppression of the movement and its leaders (120). However, for Cheriyan, the solution to this precariousness of minor communities is modern nation state and universal citizenship, that would act as a leveller,

³² Geroge Gheverghese Joseph, the grandson and biographer of George Joseph, mentions a post card sent by Gandhi to Joseph after the rift between the two which read: "Oh George Joseph, why have you forsaken me!" (*George Joseph*, 205).

as is evident from her position, as well as the Christian position against the independent Travancore demand.

As already mentioned, more than (or at least, along with) marking herself in history, memoir, for Cheriyan, has a larger historiographical function, by which she inscribes her community as well as Travancore into the history of India itself. This is evident from her critique of the independent Travancore movement and her earnest attempt to distance people of Travancore, especially Christians from the demand. Cheriyan reads Sir CP's American Model Constitution of 1946³³ for Travancore and Maharajah's Independent Travancore Declaration of 1947³⁴ as strategic attempts by the royal family and Sir CP to lawfully co-constitute religion and state for a new world order, in the guise of 'modernizing' monarchic sovereignty and 'secularizing' 'Hindu' kingdom, both detrimental to minority rights and interests. Along the same line, she discredits Sir CP's statement that Christians and Muslims of Travancore supported independent Travancore because of their realization that united India, and even united Kerala, would

³³ In January 1946, Sir CP introduced the American Model Constitution in Travancore with bicameral legislature composed of two houses with elected members. However, it also proposed an executive council with the king as the sovereign and the dewan appointed by the king as administrator, neither of whom can be removed by the Legislature, and who will have complete control of judiciary, and who will have the ultimate legislative power. Sir CP stated that British model of governance is impossible in Travancore and only a modified American model is practical. However, the 'modification' was to immunize and preserve the absolute sovereignty of the king even within a seemingly 'democratic' model (See, "Constitutional Reforms in Travancore"; "The Proposed New Constitution of Travancore"; and "Travancore Constitution Act, 1122 [AD 1947] all reproduced in the Appendix of Sreedhara Menon's *Sir CP Thiruvithamckoor Charithrathil* [Sir CP in Travancore History], 550-581; and Menon's *Triumph and Tragedy in Travancore*, 349-375).

³⁴ On 18 July 1947, Sree Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma declared Travancore's independence from Indian Union: "On this epoch-making day, His Britannic Majesty has assented to the Indian Independence Bill by the provisions whereof this ancient State of ours is enabled to recover its traditional and historic independence. On and from the 15th August 1947, the close and friendly alliance that has subsisted for over a century and a half between the British Crown and Travancore will be formally terminated by reason of the renunciation of His Majesty of his suzerainty in respect of the Indian States. The mutual rights and obligations arising out of treaties, agreements, and undertakings entered into between the successive Rulers of Travancore and the British Crown and its representatives will also lapse and from that date, Travancore will reassume its independence and sovereignty in full measure.... All the elements necessary for a happy and prosperous national existence are present, and I feel confident that, with the blessings of Providence and the cooperation of my people, Travancore will realise its destiny as a sovereign State working in close collaboration with the rest of India in all matters of common concern" ("Chithira Thirunal's Declaration of the Independence of Travancore from the Thiruvananthapuram Radio Station on July 18, 1947," *Triumph and Tragedy in Travancore*, 378-379).

make them an even smaller minority with even lesser rights (171-172). Instead, she maintains that majority of people, except direct beneficiaries of Sir CP and the Maharajah, struggled for united Kerala and united India, and ensured the transition of power from monarchy to democratically elected people's government (176). Thus, Cheriyan redeems her community's past from the tag of both 'colonialism' and 'communalism' by giving them their due in the secular nationalist history of India. By doing so, there is an uncritical valorisation of modern nation state as universally available to everyone, as well as a problematic vulgarization of communitarian aspirations as 'communal.'

Apart from her initial impressions on gender discrimination among Syrian Christians, it is only towards the end that Cheriyan becomes preoccupied with the women's question, unlike many of her contemporaries who have been writing specifically on gender discrimination and women's emancipation.³⁵ This is when she reflects on being denied political representation after independence, by taking away the ministerial positions offered to her twice. She remarks: "those who pushed women to the front during the struggle, tripped them and sprinted forward when positions and glory came by.... Women only have place in the battlefield. Struggle and sacrifice for women, power and glory for men.... I was fed up of politics" (177). For the first time in her narrative, she experiences/expresses being a Christian woman as doubly marginalizing. Even then, woman remains a universally available category for her, without expressing any critical awareness or engagement with its intersectionalities. Cheriyan's memory/memoir

³⁵ Mrs IC Chacko ("Our Women"), K Mary Thomas ("Women's Independence"), Anna Chandy ("On Women's Freedom"), all of them being Syrian Christian women and contemporaries of Accamma Cheriyan, can be seen as writing on women's question around the same time. See, Devika, *Her-Self* for a collection of women's writings from the period. Anna Varki, yet another Syrian Christian from the time, in her memoir *One Woman's India*, is makes conscious efforts to locate her experience of India—colonial and postcolonial—as a woman. See also, Anna Chandy's untitled autobiography, now being digitally published by J Devika, on her blog *Swatantryavaadini* (Chandy, [The Autobiography of Anna Chandy – Part 1 – Swatantryavaadini](#)).

progresses almost as if she outgrew her gender and community, the moment she stepped out in to the ‘public’ domain from the ‘private’ space of her home and became ‘human’ with her ‘political baptism,’ only to be engendered as a woman and a Christian in the end. Thus, in the final account, national citizenship failed to offer a salvation from not only her communitarian dilemmas but also gendered quandaries. Even then, there is no evidence of a critical reflection of multiple marginalities internal to the abstract category of ‘woman,’ on account of one’s caste/religion/race/sexuality etc, but only a liberal disillusionment with the impossibility of a universally available woman in becoming an equal ‘human.’

The national aspirations of Christians in Travancore can be understood as the natural outcome of minoritarian desperations that emerged from the anti-Christian policies of Travancore government in general and Sir CP in particular, during the first half of the twentieth century. However, arguably, the Syrian Christians who represented political Christianity in Travancore, through and through, further created the conditions of minoritization for themselves as well as others, with their possibility to shift loyalty between God and Caesar! Because, in the transition from the Abstention Struggle to the Responsible Government Struggle, what Syrian Christians also legitimized for the ‘caste Hindu nationalism’ was the invalidation of ‘community as critique’ of nation and instead validation of nation as the ultimate community, to which Christians themselves could only belong in the capacity of minority, ‘protected’ by the majority. This is evident from the change in (Syrian) Christian position, that demanded proportional representation and separate electorates for minor communities during the Abstention Struggle, to voluntary relinquishing both demands during the Responsible Government Struggle, as part of ‘becoming citizen’ in a modern nation state, by claiming only minority rights. And, non-

Syrian Christians became the untranslatable elements in this translation of subject to citizen, as they were denied rights as both Hindu and Christian.

What is interesting is that this position of (Syrian) Christians in Travancore is no different from the Christian position at the national level, as is evident from the Constitutional Assembly debates. In the constitutional assembly debates, ‘Indian Christians,’ though irreconcilably heterogeneous despite the nomenclature, were represented by Joseph Alban D’Souza, HC Mookerjee, Salve and Roche Victoria, with separate representation for Anglo-Indians. Having no representative organization in place, and because the representation of less than 2% of Christian population in the Assembly was mediated by Indian National Congress, representatives hardly had any conflict of interests. In the course of the debates, Christians who had claimed separate constituencies and reservation in legislatures in the Government of India Act of 1935, ‘voluntarily’ gave up the demand for separate electorate and even reservation. The only demand was to include minority rights and safeguards in the constitution. This was a moment when Christianity secularized itself by giving up claims for separate electorate as well as community reservations, and by identifying themselves as ‘minority’ determined by the ‘majority,’ thereby thwarting reservations even for Dalit Christians.³⁶ I quote at length two moments, one representing the Indian Christian position in the debates, and the other representing the Constitutional Assembly’s position on Indian Christian for comparison.

³⁶ Ambedkar was in principle against the politics of majority. As he rejected the need for a constituent assembly and instead suggested to amend the Government of India Act, 1935 to address India’s Dominion Status, he proposed his solution for “communal problem” (“Communal Deadlock and a Way to Solve it”). For him, majority rule is untenable in theory and unjustifiable in practice and hence a majority community can only be given relative majority and never absolute majority. Even this relative majority should not be so large as to enable them to co-opt small minorities to establish a majority rule. A combination of majority and a major minority should not result in an absolute majority threatening other minorities. Minorities when combined should have the majority to form a government without depending on the majority. The weightage taken from the majority should be distributed among minorities in the inverse proportion based on their social, economic, educational and numerical status. Notwithstanding this careful formulation of majority-minority, it is paradoxical that he excludes North-West Frontier as he thinks the minority as “so small” and Aboriginal Tribes as they “have not as yet developed any political sense” (374-376).

HC Mookerjee, who was also the Vice President of the Constituent Assembly of India and the chairman of the Minority rights sub-committee, presented the Christian stand based on the replies to “a questionnaire and 42 letters addressed to my people” and enquiries made among their “Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Scheduled Caste friends” that:

So far as the masses are concerned my friends are united in saying that the masses do not want reservations.... When we have passed the different Fundamental Rights which guarantee religious, cultural and educational safeguards, safeguards which are justiciable, safeguards which can be decided in a court of law, I feel that the presence of people belonging to certain groups is not necessary.... Now, the question is: Can the majority community be trusted? The majority community has been very generous to every one of the minority communities. I am firmly convinced from my own experience that it is the path of wisdom for the minorities to trust the majority community that if they want to live in peace and honour in this country, they must win its good-will. Our attitude in the past has not been very helpful. I do not want to go into details, but everybody will admit that the attitude of the minorities has not been at all helpful. Let us recollect how many times we used back-door influence in order to sabotage our nationalist movement. I shall not go beyond that. To the majority I say: “Once for all we are placing the responsibility of looking after us fairly and squarely on your shoulders.” This is an opportunity which Providence has given to the majority community to prove by actual work, to prove by actual example that the protestations made so far are genuine and personally I have every reason to believe that they will not be found wanting. (“Constituent Assembly Debates,” vol viii, 25 May 1949, 8.91.162 & 8.91.164)

Hence, it is not surprising that the notion of a ‘nationalist Christian’ as opposed to a ‘communal Muslim’ becomes a recurrent motif throughout the assembly debates. The debates delineate the translation of Indian Christians as ‘the model minority,’ as ‘the secular citizen,’ simultaneously refiguring Muslims as the paradigmatic other in the nationalist imagination. It is this translation that enables Syrian Christian historians like Placid Podipara to observe with such ease that they are “Hindu in culture, Christian in religion, Oriental in worship.” This image is invoked time and again whenever discussions on religion, community, minority, citizenship and the like come up in the assembly. For instance, in the debate on whether to retain ‘propagate’ as a right for minorities, Lakshmi Kanta Maitra opines in favour of the right:

The Indian Christian community happens to be the most inoffensive community in the whole of India. This great Christian community which is willing and ready to assimilate itself with the general community, which does not want reservation or other special privileges should be allowed to propagate its religion along with other religious communities in India.... They have been willing to give up reservation of seats in the Assembly and the local Legislatures of Madras and Bombay, and have been good enough to give notice of an amendment to delete the clause giving reservation to the Christian community. That is the way in which this community, which has been thoroughly nationalist in its outlook, has been moving. (“Constituent Assembly Debates,” vol vii, 6 December 1948, 7.67.90 & 7.67.91)

Thus, the Christian refigures oneself as paradigmatically ‘secular’ in the emerging modern nation, by arguing against separate electorates, by giving up their claims over reservation, by constituting themselves as model minority, by ‘sacrificing’ their differences, at the expense of both Dalits and Muslims, whose rightful demands can

consequently only be ‘communal.’ Syrian Christians continue to remember and remind the state about this ‘national sacrifice’ every time a new policy is perceived as ‘anti-minority,’ and lay greater claims to citizenship, based on their ‘secular history.’ For instance, when the “Freedom of Religion Bill” was introduced in the Indian Parliament in 1978, which proposed to prohibit religious conversion using “force or inducement,” there was widespread protests across the country including Kerala. The Pastoral Letter “*Mathanyoonapakshangal Pradhisandhiyil*” [Religious Minorities in Danger] observed:

Christians in India did not become weary during the bloodshed in the name of religion at the time of Indian Independence. They also could have legally demanded for special rights and privileges then. Nation builders constitutionally granted such rights and privileges to Muslims, Harijans [Dalits] and Girijans [tribals]. Whereas, trusting the ancient culture of Bharat, political leadership of nation builders, greater good of the nation, and magnanimity of majority, Christian community gave up such rights and privileges. It has to be suspected that, that cultured approach of ours is today interpreted as cowardice. Culture is not weakness; and sincerity shall always be tested. (Kunnasseri, *Madhyasthan* [Mediator], 14)

However, as the next section elucidates, it is the im-possibility of sustaining their own strategic position that constitutes the Christian dilemma in India, as they can only sustain this by sacrificing their anthropological differences, in order to become more national and more secular. This is evident from Accamma Cheriyan’s final accounts which maintain that “religious belief and religious fanaticism are different. A believer lives according to the doctrines of one’s religion. But a religious fanatic? Does not have any reluctance to do anything in the name of religion.... He does not have the eyes to see as a human.... Religious Heads should be strictly prevented from politically influencing people”

(*Jeevitham Oru Samaram*, 187). In a sense, she seems to be differentiating between ‘religion as faith’ and ‘religion as ideology’ (Nandy, “The Politics of Secularism,” 178), former producing ‘good believer’ and the latter ‘bad believer,’ primarily as an exercise to immunize oneself from critique, which seems to be a burden of minority necessitated not by a crisis of religion but by a crisis of secularism.

While this section focused on the political of the economic relations evolving in the first half of the twentieth century Travancore, the next section examines the economy of this political through a reading of Mamman Mappila’s memoir and its constitutive contexts. That is, while I have differentiated between Accamma Cheriyan and Mamman Mappila as political and economic respectively for the purpose of my reading, this does not in any way negate their entanglement in Travancore. Rather, the very juxtaposition of these texts in-comparison demarcate the ways in which one affected the other.

**‘State-Capital-Christian Complex’:
Economic Salvation in KC Mamman Mappila’s *Jeevithasmaranakal***

KC Mamman Mappila was a journalist, statesman and entrepreneur from Travancore. He was the chief editor of *Malayala Manorama*, one of the earliest newspapers in Malayalam, which, as discussed in Chapter Three, explicitly advocated Christian representation in the Travancore polity since the last decade of the nineteenth century. He was also the Christian representative in the Travancore Sri Mulam Popular Assembly for several years, the first people’s legislative body in any princely state, formed in 1904. More importantly, he was an avid entrepreneur, which to him, forms the defining aspect of his life, as is represented in his Memoir. In fact, *Jeevithasmaranakal* [Reminiscences of Life] can be read as the testimony of a Christian capitalist, that formulates capitalizing as the theology of being a Christian, and/or Christianity as the

theology of capitalizing, and Christian modality as the universal philosophy of economy for a modern nation. Economy, in Mamman Mappila's narrative, is thus problematically re-presented as the political equalizer with which people can transcend their religious/caste/gender/racial differences and become equal in the capacity as human.

As already explained, the memoir begins with the historicization and secularization of his 'upper caste' ancestry, by disenchanting it with a 'rational' approach, and yet foregrounding the same as his symbolic capital, the preservation and proliferation of which is his "life's calling," almost in a Weberian sense (*Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*). Even so, his recollection of Hindu clerks "struggling not to be polluted by touch" when his grandfather got a job as the first Christian revenue officer in Tiruvalla (*Jeevithasmaranakal*, 61), contradicts the self-assumed 'upper caste-ness' of Syrian Christians exemplified by him. However, as Mamman Mappila further states, his grandfather could overcome this initial estrangement with his personality and diplomatic skills, which was not the story for the majority of minor communities. Mamman Mappila's stance is symptomatic of the uncritical naturalization of caste-pollution as a tradition that belonged to the past, which modernity overcame, and invisibilization of the modernity of caste itself. That, even when looking back, he refuses to recognize that what was accepted as "personality and skill" was only differentially available. What is most interesting is that, despite being the chief editor of *Malayala Manorama*,³⁷ and a proactive legislator for several years, during the first half of the twentieth century, arguably one of the most contested periods in the near history of Travancore, ruptured by

³⁷ Mamman Mappila was passionately writing "Editorials" in his *Malayala Manorama* newspaper on the question of Christian and other community representation during the first half of the twentieth century. As a result, *Manorama* newspaper was shut down by the Dewan of Travancore, Sir CP Ramaswamy Aiyar, on 10 September 1938 for seditious articles against the government (Tharakan, *Portrait of KC Mammen Mappillai*, 272) and was not allowed to be relaunched until 1947. He wrote several articles in support of the Civic Rights League that demanded to separate the Dewasom [temple administration department] from the Revenue Department, so that other religious community members can get jobs in the Revenue Department, as well as in support of the Abstention Movement demanding proportional representation of communities in legislative assembly.

heterogenous forms of insurrections, and him and the *Manorama* engaging in that contested public sphere, there is hardly any sustained critical engagement with this aspect of his life in the memoir.³⁸ Instead, he recovers him first and foremost as an entrepreneur, whose driving force was the circulation of capital, in the interest of himself, family, community, society and state. In that sense, Mamman Mappila's memoir has to be read in/against the contexts laid out by Accamma Cheriyan, as they were both contemporaries and Mamman Mappila and *Manorama* played a crucial role in shaping the political that Cheriyan participates.

The capitalist spirit of Mamman Mappila becomes evident when he proudly recalls declining a government job as senior assistant inspector of the education department, saying that his "internal desires were flying towards a zone full of trading/industrial experiences, which were beyond the limits of a government job" (160). Ironically, this is around the same time when he/*Manorama* was fervently writing in support of communities calling out the exclusionary ideology of the state and clamouring for representation in government jobs.³⁹ However, this was not just his vision for himself, or for his community alone, but for the state itself, as is evident from one of his speeches as a member of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly in 1908, on the "Betterment of the

³⁸ There are only brief overtures to these important aspects of his life. Writing about the Malayali Memorial and Civic Rights League in one short paragraph, Mamman Mappila emphasizes "even though these agitations now look like just competitive fights between communities, they all carried, sometimes implicitly and sometimes explicitly, dissatisfaction and protest against unparalleled power invested in monarchy" (*Jeevithasmaranakal*, 180). C Kesavan's memoir *Jeevithasamaram* [Life Struggle] and Mannathu Padmanabhan's *Ente Jeevitha Smaranakal* [Reminiscences of My Life], two figures with whom Mamman Mappila has associated for various community struggles, are starkly different in this manner, as they foreground their political life.

³⁹ Mamman Mappila himself recalls that this offer came at a time when government job was the impossible dream for majority of people in Travancore. For instance, until the second decade of the twentieth century, the Revenue department and the Devasowm [temple management] were clubbed together as one department. As a result, only 'upper castes' were appointed to both departments, with the excuse that 'others' will pollute temple premises. In 1918, Christians demanded the separation of the Revenue department and Devasowm [temple management] in order to allow equal access for all to the Revenue department. A "Civic Rights League" was formed by Christians, Ezhavas and Muslims of Travancore, which in fact was the predecessor of the Joint Political Congress that led the Abstention Movement. *Manorama* and *Deepika* were in the forefront of writing against this discriminatory practice and instigating the agitation for equal representation for all subjects in public service. Civic Rights League, in that sense, emerged out of the failure of "The Malayali Memorial" in securing the rights of Christians and Ezhavas.

Economic and the Industrial Condition of the State,” where Mamman Mappila laments that “the energies of the more intelligent and more educated among them [Travancoreans], who were best able to start industrial and or economic schemes, were unfortunately spent in some department of the public service.” He goes on to argue that “it is the duty of all civilized Governments, besides keeping internal peace and carrying on administration, to make the people industrially prosperous and economically happy and independent” (Mappila, “Travancore Sri Mulam Assembly Proceedings,” 12 November 1908, Item 54). Most of his other interventions as a legislator are also submissions towards a developmental modernity. Therefore, it will not be an exaggeration to state that the entrepreneurial experiments presented by Mamman Mappila in the 470 odd pages of *Jeevithasmaranakal* is intended as a short history of the political economy of Nasrani Mappilas in/and Travancore. In fact, his-story becomes Nasrani Mappila history as well as Travancore history, almost like a synecdoche, when Mamman Mappila recounts his manifold ad-ventures, that too many of them failures, in a rather matter of fact tone, as symptomatic of a new economic ethos that was set in motion, beginning with the last decade of the nineteenth century Travancore.

However, the occasional overtures in the memoir on the politics of economy also exposes the economy of the political, and the theology of both, during his times. Therefore, I read Mamman Mappila’s *Jeevithasmaranakal* to examine what William Connolly identifies as “state-capital-Christian complex” and what Gil Anidjar terms as “economic theology,”—theology of economy and economy of theology—of the emergent political in Travancore. Connolly proposes ‘state-capital-Christian complex’ in order to capture the manner in which Christianity, particularly evangelical Christianity in the American contexts, embedded by a capitalist ethos, shaped the political in the nation

(*Capitalism and Christianity*, 17-34).⁴⁰ Anidjar describes economic theology as “Christianity qua capitalism, capitalism qua Christianity, each term expanding in a different manner the reach of the other” (*Blood*, 180). The relationship between Christian ethics and capitalist spirit has been the topic of discussion for a very long time, starting with Max Weber. It was in 1904 that Weber postulated the Protestant ethics, particularly that of Calvinism—one’s ‘calling’ to ‘work’ in the world, and its emphasis on the duty of believers to be (re)productive and fruitful, thereby multiplying god’s resources trusted in the disposal of each individual, is the worldly means to eternal salvation (*The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*)—as the theology behind the rise of capitalism. However, in his critique of Weber, RH Tawney (*Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*) observed that it was Portugal, Spain and other Catholic centres that acted as the economic capitals of Europe, where it was Catholic bankers who led the financial reforms. Tracing the transformation of European societies from mercantile capitalism to financial capitalism to industrial capitalism and the role of religion in reaffirming its changing ethics and spirit, Tawney has argued that the Reformation and subsequently Protestantism, have merely reproduced, or rather radicalized, the existing Medieval Christian (Catholic to be precise) ethics, including its economic ethos, probably in a different degree and with a greater valency. This, to him, is a reflection of the increasingly decreasing critical thinking and intellectual exercises in the Christian world that resulted in the uncritical translation of the notion of “Church-civilization”—Christian theology as civilizational ethics that binds every aspect of a believer’s life—across time and space.

⁴⁰ Connolly’s solution to this problem seems to be a possible displacement of ‘evangelical capitalist resonance machine,’ with the rise of a ‘counter resonance machine,’ with its ‘eco-egalitarian’ concerns, consistent with the ideals of Democratic Left. However, such solutions, more in line with the emerging discourses around Anthropocene and planetary concerns, with its broader Left orientation, seems to be furthering the ‘good old’ abstract ‘human’ by making species arguments, that obliterate communitarian particularities. Therefore, detaching myself from Connolly’s solution, I use his ‘state-capital-Christian axiomatics’ only as an entry point to understand the interdependency of these categories, in the contexts of this study.

This ‘chicken or egg discussion’ about whether Christianity is the catalyst of capitalism or capitalism is the driving force of Christianity, is brought to its limits when Walter Benjamin, in a posthumously published incomplete and yet insightful fragment titled “capitalism as Religion,” remarks that “Capitalism has developed as a parasite of Christianity in the West (this must be shown not just in the case of Calvinism, but in the other orthodox Christian churches), until it reached the point where Christianity’s history is essentially of its parasite—that is to say, of capitalism” (2). This unapologetic interdependency of Christianity and capitalism, and its paradigmatic role in shaping the political economy of modern nation, is what comes alive in Mamman Mappila’s reminiscences of his life.

Born into an agricultural economy of a land-owning family, Mamman Mappila’s memoir presents his entire life as a search from one entrepreneurial venture to another. He focuses on three major interventions that modernized Travancore economy and changed the narrative of its development—Joint Stock Companies, Plantations and Banking. Mamman Mappila believes that “joint stock companies and industries formed with the aid of government and other influential forces are crucial contributors to the prosperity of a country in a modern world” (*Jeevithasmaranakal*, 64). ‘Malayala Manorama,’ founded by his father Varghese Mappila, was one of the earliest home-grown joint stock companies to be registered in Travancore in 1889, at a time when it was still monopolized by European investors. The fact that the then Head of Syrian Orthodox Church owned the second largest number of shares, along with many other priests and bishops as shareholders (70-71), points to the Church’s crucial role in this ‘local’ foundational venture, by bringing together ‘elites’ of the community. Simultaneously, *Manorama* newspaper was continuously publishing articles on the urgent need for ‘native enterprises’ in Travancore, following the European model, in order to vernacularize economy, and displace colonial

monopoly.⁴¹ Thus, vernacularization of Travancore's economy was the anticolonial philosophy that Mamman Mappila propagated through his newspaper, assembly speeches and his own way of life. This, he believed, would weaken the hold of the British in princely states like Travancore. Further, the list of 18 companies that followed the suit of Manorama Company from 1889-1930, experimenting with trade, plantations and banking in Travancore, as furnished by Mamman Mappila (67), proves the influence of this new 'Church-civilization' in the modernization of Travancore. However, a cursory look into the history of these companies also proves that majority of them (12 out of 18) were owned and operated by Syrian Christians, thereby exposing the exclusionary ideology inherent in the emerging modernity.

The second concern of Mamman Mappila was plantation. *Manorama's* Editorials in the first decade of the twentieth century try to 'enlighten' Travancoreans about the profits of Rubber plantations, of which's demand was rapidly rising in the global market, and encourage them to start plantations of their own, rather than merely work for the Europeans. Mamman Mappila's earnest attempt to find a place for Syrian Christians in the economic history of Travancore is evident from his recollection of P John, again a Syrian Christian, as the founder of Malankara Rubber and Produces Company in 1910, the first home-grown Plantation, at a time when plantations were still the monopoly of Europeans (*Jeevithasmaranakal*, 56, 80). He opines that the opening of shares of "Malankara Rubber and Produce Company" for the public to buy, unprecedented in the history of Travancore, was a milestone in the democratization of economy (303). For Mamman Mappila, "Malankara Company" and *Manorama* newspaper were the pioneers

⁴¹ See, *Malayala Manorama*, "Kraisthavarude Abhivridhi Margangal" [Means for Christian Prosperity], 30 April 1932.

in popularizing plantation cultivation in the state (304).⁴² This is followed by detailed narration of his independent attempts at rubber plantations and tea plantations along with his search for new lands for continuing agricultural cultivations.⁴³ Mamman Mappila's account of expansion of cultivation to Malabar as early as 1930, when he along with other partners tried to set up his first multi-crop plantation in Malabar, spread across 20,000-30,000 acres (331), as well as Rubber Plantations in Wayanad and Nilambur (328), though none of them succeeded, recovers him as a forerunner of later Travancore Christian mass migration to the Northern Kerala. It is almost as if he went wherever the land took him, as he expanded his territory to Mysore by buying Devon Tea Estate from Europeans (339). Ironically, the greatest regret of his life was losing his shares in the thousands of acres of forests of Wayanad, after financial setbacks, which he describes as "gold mines" (467). And the greatest joy seems to be "two mountains" that he bought for cultivation, named Nenmeni and Panthallur, which to him are symbol of his life-long dream (469).

However, this Syrian Christian plantation economy and their migration to Malabar and North-Eastern parts of Travancore, celebrated in Mamman Mappila's account, have been critiqued on several counts. First and foremost, for the displacement of the Adivasis who were already living in these lands. Secondly, for the disproportionate upperhand the Syrian Christians got in land acquisition as opposed to the Dalits, including Dalit Christians, who were simultaneously fighting for land rights. Thirdly, the ecological concerns on the mindless capitalization of the forest-hill areas, leading to the depletion of

⁴² Again, a priest from the Marthoma Syrian Church was among the founding members of Malankara Company as well (*Jeevithasmaranakal*, 300). Almost all pioneering ventures described by Mamman Mappila shows active involvement from the concerned Church leaders of the entrepreneur. Both the Church and the newspaper seem to have acted as the advertising agency that popularized the initiative among the mass.

⁴³ His lifelong experimentation with rubber resulted in the formation of a balloon manufacturing company (*Jeevithasmaranakal*, 465) and finally led to the founding of Madras Rubber Factory (MRF) in 1946, (466) which is today a multinational tyre manufacturing company and one of the largest manufacturers of tyres in India.

natural resources and climate change in the present context.⁴⁴ On the other hand, and as the other side of the above arguments, these migrant Christian population themselves faced constant fear of eviction, in the name of developmental projects, which the Church has been fighting ever since the first waves of migration.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, even though Mamman Mappila is looking back at these events, from a time when all these entrenched contradictions of the so-called Kerala Model Development have already been exposed through land rights movements and anti-eviction movements, he continues to remember them as the fulfilment of his life's calling, without any critical reflection on these discourses.

Instead, for Mamman Mappila, his journey represents the long and winding Biblical path paved with stones and thorns that led to his and his community's salvation from the colonial and Namboodiri-Nair monopoly of capital.⁴⁶ In this regard, VJ Varghese has examined how “during the expansive colonization of a space described as ‘lost’ and largely heathen by its leadership, the church provided a particular orientation towards modern entrepreneurship and capital accumulation, by expounding and sanctifying a new

⁴⁴ There have been two expert committee reports that studied the grave ecological impact of mindless deforestation for cultivation and mining in the Western Ghats, namely Gadgil Report and Kasthurirangan Report. Both reports suggested several measures to prevent further damage. However, neither report has been implemented so far, as they are heavily criticized as anti-minoritarian, because most of the suggestions would deprive both the indigenous communities and the migrant communities in these regions, especially Christians, who have settled in these places, of their properties and economic activities. The Church has been repeatedly organizing protest movements whenever the government makes a move towards implementation.

⁴⁵ Church magazines, particularly from Malabar, are replete with pastoral letters against evictions. I am just citing one such letter as example: “poor migrants in our diocese are those who peacefully live off the sweat of their brow, without exploiting anyone. People have the right to migrate to less populated area from places with more population density, and governments have supported it.... Now, attempts are being made in several places to evict migrants who turned forest areas, that were deserted due to malaria and wild animals, into fertile lands with their laborious effort.... We will not let even a single family to be ousted” (Valloppilli, “*Kudiyirakku Bheeshanika*” [Threats of Eviction]). Also see, Valloppilli, “*Shimoga Kudiyarakku*” [Shimoga Eviction]; “*Pulpalliyile Kudiyettakkar*” [Migrants of Pulpalli] and many more in *Girideepam*, the Church magazine of Thalassery Diocese.

⁴⁶ In “Out of the Shadow, into the Spotlights. The ‘Indigenous’ Aspects of Plantation Development; the Case of the Emergence of Syrian Christian Planters in Princely Travancore in the First Half of the Twentieth Century,” PE Baak has argued that Syrian Christian planters emerged in the twentieth century Travancore by displacing both European and Nair monopoly over land (74-96).

conduit for mobility with land and hard work at the heart of it” (“Yielding to the Divine Will?” 1112). This, according to him:

... complicates the pre-scribed teleologies of the modern, which prophesied the progressive disappearance of religion with the blooming of the political, and demonstrates that the church by producing a specific rationality in support of land colonization and expansion of agriculture provided for engaging with and fostering novel forms of capital accumulation, apart from displaying its political acumen by taking on the state with its own contextual reasoning and ingenious maneuvering. (1113)

The third and final preoccupation of Mamman Mappila is regarding his experiments with banking, which according to him completed the modernization of Travancore economy, and revolutionized social relations. He floated Travancore National Bank in 1912 (345), the second organized bank in Travancore, the first being Travancore Bank started and ended by KV Eapen, another Syrian Christian and a member of Mamman Mappila’s Kandathil family. Travancore National Bank ran successfully from 1912-1938, with branches even outside Travancore. The Travancore National Bank was merged with The Quilon Bank (369), run by yet another Syrian Christian CP Matthen, in 1937 to form Travancore National and Quilon Bank, which subsequently crashed and was liquidated in 1938, leading to eight years of imprisonment of Mamman Mappila and CP Matthen, making it one of the most controversial events of the period, as the crash was allegedly plotted and executed by the Dewan of Travancore, CP Ramaswamy Iyer, as part of his anti-Christian policies (377-408). In Mamman Mappila’s own account, banking introduced the notion of “investment with interests,” among people who used to just keep their surplus income at home without reinvesting (274) and loaned huge amounts to common people for starting enterprises that churned immediate profit (275). That is, there

is a proposed transition from accumulation to reinvestment, production to reproduction and thus to profit based economy. For him, modern banking was the radical solution to *Hundis*, the then existing regional alternative for moneylending conducted by Tamil Brahmins, who lent money only to their kith and kin, collecting 30-50 percent interest on loans (274). Therefore, loans were not available for common people to start productive public entrepreneurial ventures, but only for non-productive personal necessities, which did not result in any circulation of capital. It is interesting to recall Giorgio Agamben in this context, who in his exposition on religion and capitalism, has observed that the Bank has become “the high priest who administers to the faithful the sole sacrament of the capitalist religion: credit-debt” (*Creation and Anarchy*, 62).⁴⁷

In “Rise and Growth of Banking in Kerala,” MA Oommen observes that in the early decades of the twentieth century “there was a sort of contagion, in that, prominent Christian families belonging to different denominations, vying with one another, began to start banks (36). The evolution of organized banking in Travancore can be traced back to the Joint Stock Companies, again locally pioneered by Syrian Christians, under which plantations, trade and industry flourished and thereby increased the circulation of capital. The Stock Companies themselves evolved from *chit* and *kuri* funds (a rotating savings and credit system), commonly practiced in villages and families as early as the eighteenth century, and which later was informally organized under the aegis of churches (*palli kuries* or *chit* funds managed by churches) to collect money for building churches and

⁴⁷ In a rather curious revision of Christian theology, particularly that of Paul, Agamben interprets *pistis*, the Greek term that Jesus and apostles used for ‘faith,’ as ‘credit.’ Because “creditum, the past participle of credere is that in which we believe, in which we put our faith, when we establish a fiduciary relationship with someone” (*Creation and Anarchy*, 60). Capitalism is a religion that “believes in the pure fact of believing, in pure credit, in money. Capitalism, then, is a religion in which faith—credit—has been substituted for God. Said differently, since the pure form of credit is money, it is a religion whose God is money. This means that bank, which is nothing other than a machine to fabricate and administer credit, has taken the place of the church and, by governing credit, manipulates and administer faith—the scarce, insecure trust—that our time still has in itself” (61). Christianity therefore emerges as the paradigmatic capitalist religion that believes in continual indebtedness, which neither can nor should be paid off.

schools (39). What is most interesting in the emergence of this capitalist revision of economy is the active participation of the Church, rather than its obliteration, so much so that, bishops or priests of some or the other Christian denomination, Syrian of course, were always among the founding shareholders of most enterprises that Mamman Mappila describes, be it stock companies or plantations or banks. In fact, the only non-family founding member of Mamman Mappila's Travancore National Bank was Kalaikkattil Thomas, a Christian priest who mediated its very formation (345). This was supplemented with the pastoral letters and sermons giving theological grounding to labour and suffering as 'Christian calling' in the 'City of Man' that ensures citizenship in the 'City of God.' That is, aspiring capitalists like Mamman Mappila did not need to disenchant with religion, particularly with Christianity, for expansion, as Christianity reinvented itself through a renewed enchantment with the capitalist spirit.

What emerges from this long story is Mamman Mappila's 'faith' in the revolutionary capacity of monetary capital, which according to him, displaced the agrarian capital that monopolised Travancore until the nineteenth century. Because, until the nineteenth century, capital, mostly in the form of land, was accumulated in the hands of private owners and family clans, mostly 'upper caste,' who distrusted credit-debt, and refused to 'risk' for the 'fictive' promise of future profit. Whereas the modernization of economy allowed 'anyone' (he would say, anyone with a good idea to sell) to raise the capital, by merely pledging labour, profit and future production in advance as surety, enabling a circulation of capital, which made it accessible to the larger public, thereby democratizing social and economic relations. However, what is missing in Mamman Mappila's narrative is a reflection on how the supposed 'democratization' initiated by the new bank, which still charged 18 percent interest for loans, which only lent money to 'credible' investors (that is, the politics of whose idea would be accepted as sellable), was

undemocratic by itself, as it only financed the emergence of a new middle caste/class. More importantly, such a discourse also made various other economic world views, mostly practiced internally among communities, that ensured circulation of capital, but not necessarily based on interest and profit, as ‘premodern’ and ‘precapitalist.’ Mamman Mappila calls this mode of circulation, for instance communitarian or village-based practices of lending money for weddings and so on, as non-re-productive (273). As a result, different histories, life worlds, and economic views that are not necessarily incompatible with capital, but ‘not yet’ or ‘not wanting to’ contribute to the universal re-productive logic of capitalism foregrounding profit, which Dipesh Chakrabarty calls as “History 2,”⁴⁸ were displaced. Such a transition to capitalism is also a “translation of diverse life worlds and conceptual horizons about being human into the categories of [European] Enlightenment thought that inhere in the logic of capital” (Chakrabarty, “Universalism and Belonging in the Logic of Capitalism,” 676).

There are two aspects that I would like to highlight from this narrative, by taking Mamman Mappila as prototypical of ‘Mappilas,’ as Syrian Christians were called in Travancore. One is the Christian ethics embedded in the new capitalist spirit, as is exemplified by ‘Mappila.’ And the other is the universalization of this Christian/capitalist ethics in Travancore as is elucidated by the developmental modernity of Travancore. One of the most interesting and recurring motifs in Mamman Mappila’s reminiscences is ‘failure.’ For a man so ‘successful,’ a large share of the narrative is about his failed

⁴⁸ In his critique of Marx, Chakrabarty argues that “History 1 is the past established by ‘capital’ because it lends itself to the reproduction of capitalist relationships.” What Marx describes as antecedents to capital, “not as antecedents established by itself, not as forms of its own life process,” are the “relationships that do not lend themselves to the reproduction of the logic of capital,” or History 2 according to Chakrabarty (“Universalism and Belonging in the Logic of Capitalism,” 669). The past of History 2 is not separate from that of capital, but that which is inherent to capital, but that which also interrupt any universal logic of capital (670). This difference is not outside of capital, nor is it something that is incorporated into it, but that which maintains diverse relationship to capital, be it oppositional or in-difference (671). That is not to say, History 2 is alternative to capital, or that it is a dialectical Other of History 1, which would only lead to incorporation of History 2 to History 1. Rather, “History 2 has a negative function to interrupt the totalizing thrusts of History 1” (671).

enterprises. Because, it is not the crop, but the toil that he is reminiscing. In the end, he makes it clear that this is the story of his life that turned around, after repeated failures, with the mercy of God, as he consistently laboured without giving up (*Jeevithasmaranakal*, 469-470). The unwavering spirit that drives Mamman Mappila from one failure to another, (which he narrates dispassionately), the hope against hope that Mamman Mappila shows during unfortunate times (his imprisonment and attachment of all his wealth following the collapse of bank), and the persistence with which Mamman Mappila rises again from nothing (return or revival as he calls it) is marked by an entrenched Christian ethics of salvation that awaits the faithful who endures the sufferings (466-470). Rather than attributing this spirit as a new awakening following the works of European missionaries and the spread of Protestantism, like Weber, or merely as a Westernization of the East following colonialism, which of course have provided different tools for its actualization, it could be understood as the manifestation of an economic theology immanent to Christianity.⁴⁹ While the theology of ‘kingdom of God awaiting those who multiply what is given to them in the kingdom of man’ guides its economy, the economy of abstracting the differential labours as ‘human labour’ guides its theology.⁵⁰

That is, according to Mamman Mappila, modern economy ensures the abstraction of a ‘human’ that can transcend the caste-communitarian quandaries. However, paradoxically, this also means that the only way to become human was to inscribe oneself into this new economic order, which remained inaccessible to a majority of minor

⁴⁹ For instance, in the parable of the sower, Jesus exhorted that those seeds that fall on good soil would produce crop that is 30, 60 or 100 times what was sown (*The Bible*, Matthew 13: 3-9). Similarly, in the parable of three servants, two who doubled the principal amount became good and faithful servants entitled for more responsibilities, whereas the one who neither decreased nor increased the principal amount was casted out as “lazy and wicked” (*The Bible*, Matthew 25: 14-30).

⁵⁰ To borrow from Gil Anidjar, “for a society of commodity producers, whose general social relations of production consists in the fact that they treat their products as commodities, hence as values, and in this material form bring their individual, private labours into relation with each other as homogenous human labour, Christianity with its religious cult of man in the abstract is the most fitting form of religion” (*Blood*, 181).

communities. A cursory look at a full-page long list of his ‘friends’ recollected by Mamman Mappila in the memoir (74), even with business partners and political associates that he later mentions, is completely dominated by Syrian Christians, Nairs and Namboodiris, punctures the ‘human’ imagined by Mamman Mappila.⁵¹ More importantly, as already discussed in Chapter Three, what the Malayali Memorial and the Counter Memorial tried to constitute was also this ‘new human,’ which was in itself exclusive.

Nonetheless, the last quarter of Mamman Mappila’s memoir, a detailed description of the collapse of his bank and his subsequent imprisonment (*Jeevithasmaranakal*, 345-470), and the shutting down of *Malayala Manorama*, ruptures the contradiction internal to the transcendental human that he tries to constitute and embody till then. While the liquidation of his bank is presented as orchestrated by the Dewan Sir CP as a warning for allegedly financing Christian conversions as well as for supporting the agitation against the Travancore state through the Responsible Government Movement,⁵² the shutting down of *Manorama* (1938-1947) is explained as the direct consequence of publishing ‘seditious’ articles against Sir CP and the Travancore Government during the Responsible Government Struggle. Hence, after narrating his life-long endeavours to become modern and human, and thus more than one’s immediate identity, Mamman Mappila acknowledges in the end that he remained a Christian for the state, when he presents himself as a victim of an anti-Christian government (Travancore).

⁵¹ Though there is mention of a Jew, who was enlisted to run an insurance company, as “it is possible to get a Jew from among those running away from Hitler, as insurance companies were very successful in Germany” (*Jeevithasmaranakal*, 359), and some unnamed Muslim businessmen in Bombay, from whom he tries to buy a ship in vain (310). Mamman Mappila also notes that Muhammad Ali Jinnah initially appeared as his lawyer in the beginning of the trial following the collapse of the bank (407).

⁵² Mamman Mappila’s account of the enforced breakdown of the bank, Sir CP’s role in the same, court cases with the Travancore government and his imprisonment, run to almost 100 pages. CP Matthen, Mamman Mappila’s partner, in his autobiography *I have Borne Much*, gives much more insights on the Dewan’s role in the collapse of the bank. Recently, his wife Eliamma Matthen’s personal diaries during 1938-1942, when Matthen and Mamman Mappila were imprisoned, have been found and handed over to the Kerala Council of Historical Research, which is involved in digitizing the content. More than Mamman Mappila or Matthen, Eliamma Matthen showers unbridled attacks on Sir CP’s policies and critically reflects on the socio-political times of her life, not just locally but globally as well (*Diaries of Eliamma Matthen*).

In a sense, this im-possibility of belongingness determines varied minoritarian discourses in the modern nation. Interestingly, the first editorial of *Malayala Manorama* upon its reopening in an Independent India, after being shut down for a decade, exhorted:

Responsible Government was a long-felt need of the people of Travancore; now they have achieved it after a long-fought battle. We have to triumph over caste and communal considerations and engage ourselves in nation-building efforts.... As adult franchise is implemented it is in the best interest of the State that the people of different communities forget all their differences and work united as one body. *Therefore, there shall not be in Travancore any more agitation by a community for its own interest. The day of struggle for rights by communities is over....* The *Manorama* is willing to serve the people and it shall never succumb to communal pressures, nor shall it cater to communal interests. *It shall be secular in its outlook.* (Tharakan, *Portrait of KC Mammen Mappillai*, 294-296; emphasis mine)

With this, Mappila (Mamman Mappila and Nasrani Mappila) is ‘born again’ as the paradigmatic secular critic who atones for not only his own, or his community’s but also Travancore’s communitarian past. This attempt to supplement his lack of belongingness with an excessive rhetoric of secularism and nationalism, as he became the citizen of India from being a subject of Travancore, and from being a representative of 20% of people in Travancore to 2% in India, probably captures the minoritarian dilemma in a majoritarian nation. However, by doing so, all and any communitarian struggles were rendered ‘communal,’ without acknowledging the economic imperatives of universal citizenship which has included different communities differentially in the modern secular state. The memoirs and movements of the twentieth century, in relation to Syrian Christians, examined in this chapter, manifest this dilemma of permanently negotiating the status of being an outsider/insider. While Accamma Cheriyan pursues salvation for

her community's anthropological differences in political citizenship, Mamman Mappila finds the same in the universal logic of capital, both determining each other, and both problematically producing its own remainders.

Conclusion

On 25 July 2009, Andrews Thazhath, the Syro-Malabar Catholic Archbishop of Thrissur Diocese, issued a veiled threat to the then Left Democratic Front Government, led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist), that hit a raw nerve in the state. “The Church would not hesitate to lead another Liberation Struggle in the State if necessary,” he stated (*The New Indian Express*, “Church won’t Hesitate to Launch a Struggle”). He was inaugurating the golden jubilee celebrations of the (first) *Vimochana Samaram* [Liberation Struggle] in 1959, which was organized primarily by the joint forces of All Kerala Catholic Congress, Nair Service Society and Indian Union Muslim League, with the support of the Indian National Congress, against the Communist Government under EMS Namboodirippad, which was also incidentally the first democratically elected government in Kerala. The Struggle initially demanded to revoke the newly introduced Kerala Education Bill and the Land Reform Bill, which were deemed anti-minoritarian and later clamoured to put an end to the Communist rule which was considered anti-religious.¹ The Liberation Struggle resulted in the Union Government dismissing the elected government within a year of assuming the office,² and hence has attained a historic, mostly infamous, reputation in the recent history of modern Kerala.³ Among the many contested accounts of the Struggle, the details of which are not relevant for our

¹ Kerala Education Bill was perceived as an attack on minorities because the Bill proposed to implement government regulations on private schools, majority of which are run by ‘minority communities’ like Christians, and therefore was considered as the first step towards nationalization of education by the Communists, and 2) the Land Reform Bill, that proposed to limit the maximum ownership of land and distribute the excess land among the landless, was perceived as an attack on the propertied communities like Nairs.

² There are studies that have explored the role of Central Investigation Agency and USA in supporting and sponsoring the anti-Communist movement in Kerala (See, Ajayan, “Midterm Election in Kerala in 1960 and the American Government”).

³ It may be interesting to study the role of popular culture in keeping the nightmare of *Vimochana Samaram*, as an uprising of the ‘communal elites’ against a secular democratic government, afresh in the Malayali memories. See, for example, Cherukad Govinda Pisharadi’s novel *Pramani* [Feudal lord].

purpose,⁴ one consensual understanding is that it was an outburst of ‘communal’ interests against the communist (‘secular’) interests, an ‘aberration’ to the predominant narrative of “communal road to secular Kerala” (Mathews). This readily available lens of communalization versus secularization has made it impossible to go beyond either attacking or supporting the encounter, every time religion and state engage. It is the final event, that is the suspension of an elected government, which can still only be an anathema to secular democracy, that has immunized the Struggle itself from any kind of critical engagement. Therefore, I take the Liberation Struggle as an entry point to exit from my discussions so far, as it allows me to look back and trace the problem spaces explored in the thesis.

This is not to overlook the limits of democratic imperatives of the Liberation Struggle, as its ‘paradigm of democratization’ has already been problematized by the subaltern critique of its hegemonic character, as a result of which, the insurrection only upheld the interests of the propertied communities like Nairs and Syrian Christians, at the expense of non-Syrian Christians, Dalits and Adivasis. However, it cannot be merely disavowed as a ‘communal’ revolt either because its discourses which offer a critique of secularism as separation of religion and state, and which foreground the minoritarian dilemmas in the modern nation state, still warrants critical reflection. That is, it may be relevant to relocate the Liberation Struggle from being regarded as a singular event in the history of Kerala to being one in a continuum of struggles, by which ‘insurrectionary subjects’ continuously imagine a ‘democracy to come,’ in which citizenship does not transcend subjectivities, whereby communitarian questions have to be neutralized in the

⁴ See, Jayasankar, *Communist Bharanavum Vimochana Samaravum* [Communist Governance and Liberation Struggle]; Isaac, *Vimochanasamarathinte Kaanappurangal* [Unseen Sides of Liberation Struggle]; Kumbalakuzhi, *Vimochanasamaram* [Liberation Struggle]; Paikada, *Vimochanasamarathinte Kazhchappurangal* [Visible Sides of Liberation Struggle] for discussions on the Struggle from various positions. See also, Thomas, *Privileged Minorities* for an intersectional feminist analysis of the Struggle and the minority question.

name of ‘secularism.’ By doing so, the struggle itself will not be exempted from critique, as its own anti-democratic compulsions will be exposed by insurrections that emerge out of its contradictions.

First and foremost, I take the Liberation Struggle as that which embodies the spectres of state-capital-Christian complex, explored in Chapter Four, haunting the postcolonial modern nation state. Through a comparative reading of memoirs and movements from the twentieth century Travancore, the chapter argued that Christians negotiated their im-possibility of belonging to a ‘Hindu kingdom’ by proposing a political theology that imagines the sublation of the subject to the citizen, and an economic theology that imagines a bourgeoisie human that transcends communitarian differences (of course political, theological and economic are not separate, but entangled), an imagination which nonetheless remained incomplete as their immanent differences continued to lack and thereby exceed any kind of transcendence. Therefore, a genealogy of the Church-state negotiations coming alive in the modern Kerala can be traced to the colonial Travancore, as it was Dewan Sir CP who first tried to introduce a similar Education Bill in 1945. The Church’s response to Sir CP came in the form of what he called as a ‘seditious’ Pastoral Letter from Catholic Archbishop Kalacherry who exhorted the ‘faithful’ to fight the anti-Christian government with “spiritual sword, spiritual atomic bomb” and their “moneybag” (Kalacherry, “Pastoral Letter,” 26). It is this call that is fulfilled after a decade, with the formation of Christopher *Sena* [troop], that led the direct actions of the Liberation Struggle.⁵ While the former tried to affirm the liberation of Christians as subjects under a ‘Hindu kingdom,’ the latter tried to assert the same for

⁵ See, Vadakkan, *Ente Kuthippum Kithappum* [My Leaps and Gasps] for a first-hand account of the *Vimochana Samaram*. Vadakkan’s memoir offers a unique perspective as he transformed from being the leader of the Church in its anti-Communist *Vimochana Samaram* to the leader of peasant movements with the support of the Communists after the *Samaram*. In the latter phase, he was suspended from his priestly role for critiquing the Church as anti-Christian, anti-poor and anti-marginal communities.

Christians as minority citizens of a ‘secular state.’ This conflict emerges primarily from the state’s understanding of universal/‘secular’ education as means to abstract an ideal citizen, and the Church’s (as well as other religious minorities) assertion of its right to impart ‘Christian education’ to mould a Christian citizen subject.⁶ Therefore, discourses around education as a contested site was cultural as well as capitalist.

Archbishop Thazhath’s call for a second Liberation Struggle was neither the first nor the last. It returns every time there is a conflict with the state—the Communist or the Congress. Education and land, two major sources of Christian capital in Kerala, have become the contested sites of these recurrent negotiations with the state. In fact, the Catholic Church called to form a “private militant force” in 2019, this time named Gabriel *Sena*, as “guardians of faith” and “warriors of ideals” by enlisting ex-military and paramilitary men.⁷ The ‘call’ itself, rather than an actual second struggle, thus attains a performative role in reminding the state of community’s capacity to act. It is this capacity to act, (actively or passively as ‘act’ is not necessarily ‘doing,’ but also ‘experiencing’), as exemplified by the many emergences or ‘moments of arising’ explored in the thesis, that reconfigures community as critique. However, the immediate dismissal of these interventions as ‘communal,’ is symptomatic of the ‘secular’ nation state’s im-possibility to engage with questions posed by religion/community. That is, a pre-given framework of ‘communalism/secularism,’ by which all and any communitarian articulations always become ‘communal,’ may be insufficient to unpack these conflict zones. As mentioned in the Introduction, this doctoral research began by engaging with these contemporary

⁶ This tension became most evident with the ‘textbook controversy’ of 2007, based on a chapter in the Social Science syllabus, titled “*Mathamillatha Jeevan*” [Jeevan without Religion]. Since Jeevan, a proper name, also in Malayalam means ‘life,’ it was interpreted as ‘Life without Religion.’ The chapter describes an inter-religiously married parents (Hindu and Muslim), when admitting their child in the school, requests to add ‘no religion’ and ‘no caste’ in the respective columns. The textbook had to be removed from circulation after being severely critiqued as an attempt to imagine a ‘hollow citizen.’

⁷ See, *The Indian Express*, “God’s own Sena.”

questions, but went on to critically deconstruct its genealogies, thus laying the ground for future work.

Secondly, insurrections by the Church against Education Reform Bills and Land Reform Bills, beginning with the Liberation Struggle, are simultaneously symptomatic of the repressed caste-communitarian-Christian complex, elucidated in the Chapter Three, returning to the secular democracy, as Syrian Christians and upper castes like Nairs continue to be-with each other by refusing to be-with ‘Other’ minor communities. Chapter Three argued that while Brahmization of Christians as manifested by the Syrian Christians was a response to their increasing alienation in their own land, this also paradoxically and problematically legitimized Brahmin/Hindu as the ‘original native,’ *varna* system as an essential social reality, and caste as the only paradigm of political and economic relations. Even if the conditions of such a conscription was probably pre-given during the colonial times, the continuing co-scription of the same conditions for the modern state needs to be further critiqued, by engaging with the community’s capacity to act, for an ethical-political future.

The paradox of the (Syrian) Christian discourse of liberation seems to be in its impossibility to recognize the same for others.⁸ This is most evident from the Church’s incapacity to be-with Dalits and Adivasis, in their several land struggles and anti-eviction struggles, despite the Church’s own movements against the eviction of migrant Christians. The same paradox is heightened as the Church invokes the same Constitutional rights that guarantee minority protection, to deny the implementation of reservation policy within minority institutions, even for Dalit Christians, thereby re-configuring caste as a ‘Hindu problem,’ and thus the responsibility of the ‘secular’ state.

⁸ While the liberation theology had its beginnings in the intersectional discourses of Christianity in Latin America, the liberationists in Kerala continues to invisibilize any kind of intersectionality for Christianity.

This is compounded by the increasing anti-Islam rhetoric by the Christian clergy or Christian laity associations like CASA [Christian Association & Alliance for Social Action] which have been repeatedly accusing the Muslims of ‘love jihad’ (a term coined to denote alleged love and marriage of a non-Muslim by a Muslim as a pretence to convert).⁹ This is just one instance, among many, of Christians continuing to reincarnate as ‘secular critic,’ reconfiguring communalism as a Muslim problem, by secularizing Christian conversion as voluntary, and communalizing Muslim conversion as forced. Chapters Three and Four argued that these paradoxical constitution of (Syrian) Christians, strategic as it may be, problematically reproduce the conditions for further minoritization within the nation state, for themselves as well as others, as they can only be a minority that has to be protected, and not a community that can be propagated.

Thirdly, the collective articulations of Syrian Christians in the postcolonial state compel one to open the community once again to its own limits as explored in Chapter Two, which argued that Syrian Christian emerged as a critical subjectivity when ‘vernacular Christians’ were rendered as ‘not Christian enough’ by ‘colonial Christianization’ and ‘not native enough’ by ‘native Hinduization,’ which compromised their political-theological-juridical autonomy in the region. What emerged in this work is also the entangled nature of sovereignty in the ‘precolonial Kerala’ (Chapter Two), as exemplified by this juridical-political autonomy enjoyed by the Malankara Nasranis in Travancore (and Mappilas in Malabar, as many studies argue), and thus the possibility to understand power as that which did not rest solely in the Head of a centralised state, but as shared by communities, clans and provincial governing systems, which calls for further decolonization of the modern state.

⁹ See, *The Hindu*, “Bishop warns Christians in Kerala against ‘Love and Narcotics Jihad.’”

And finally, one of my attempts has also been to locate Syrian Christians in their alternate genealogies as elucidated in Chapter Two. The heterogenous genealogies of the community point not towards a ‘miraculous origin’ and its uninterrupted legacy, but towards its many and entangled beginnings through several waves of migrations, conversions and colonization. It disrupts the philological difference between ‘Old Christians’ and ‘New Christians,’ and exposes ‘Old Christian’ as only one among the many ‘new Christians,’ or as that which inaugurated a new kind of being Christian itself. Further, these genealogies of ‘vernacular Christianity’—for instance, the non-triumphalist, non-territorial Syro-Palestinian and Asian-African Christianity that quietly flourished in the fringes of Byzantine, without the endorsement of any empires, and in communion with other faith communities like the Egyptian, the Syrian, the Persian, the Armenian and so on, as imagined by Paulose Gregorios (Chapter One)—could be a way forward to ultimately provincialize Christianity itself, by decoupling it from its ‘Western’/European history.¹⁰

¹⁰ A possible ‘after-work’ of this thesis would also be to deconstruct the (re)Catholicization of Syrian Christians and its implications for their collective articulations. Because, the conceptual invention of *Suriyani Christiani*, with its ‘Eastern vernacular-cosmopolitan Christian’ genealogies was primarily to counter the Roman Catholicization of Malankara Nasranis. Even Kathanar’s journey to Rome was read as an attempt to ‘Syriac-Christianize’ his Catholicism rather than the other way around. Therefore, it is ironic that Syrian Christians in Kerala today have become synonymous with the Roman Catholics represented by the Syro-Malabar and the Syro-Malankara Churches. The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church is the largest and the most resourceful Christian denomination today, accounting for 60% of the Christian population, acting as the ‘legitimate’ representative of Kerala Christianity and particularly Syrian Christians, and responsible for most of the above-mentioned interventions passed off as (Syrian) Christian.

Works Consulted

- Abeysekara, Ananda. *The Politics of Postsecular Religion: Mourning Secular Futures*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.
- Abeysekara, Ananda. "The 'Problem' of Religion, Christianity and the Capacity of Community." *ReOrient* 1(1). Autumn 2015. 37-42.
- Abraham, John. "Cheriyachante Varalchayile Kroorakrithyangal" [Cruelties of Cheriyachan during Drought]. *John Abrahaminte Kathakal* [Stories of John Abraham]. Kottayam: DC Books, 2014.
- "Account of the Discoveries made by the Rev Dr Buchanan, in the Course of his Investigations Undertaken by the Order of the Supreme Government of Bengal." *Philosophical Magazine* 1(29:115). 1807. 228-240.
- Agamben, Giorgio. *The Coming Community*. Trans Michael Hardt. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- Agamben, Giorgio. *Creation and Anarchy: The Work of Art and the Religion of Capitalism*. Trans Adam Kotsko. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019.
- Agur, CM. *Church History of Travancore*. New Delhi: Asian Educational Service, 1990/1903.
- Ahmad, Irfan. *Religion as Critique: Islamic Critical Thinking from Mecca to the Market Place*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017.
- Aikara, Thomas and TC Mathew. *Deepika 1887-1989*. New Delhi: Media House, 2012.
- Aitchison, CU. *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, vol x: Madras & Ceylon. Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, India, 1909.
- Aiya, V Nagam [V Nagamaiya]. *The Travancore State Manual*, vols i-iii. Trivandrum: Travancore Government Press, 1906.
- Aiyar, N Subramhanya. *Census of India 1901*, vol xxvi: Travancore. Trivandrum: Malabar Mail Press, 1903.
- Aiyar, N Subramhanya. *Census of India 1911*, vol xxiii: Travancore. Trivandrum: Ananda Press, 1912.
- Aleyas, TO. *Syrian Manual*. Kottayam: Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society, 2015.
- Ali, Mohamed. *My Life: A Fragment; An Autobiographical Sketch of Maulana Mohamed Ali*. Ed Mushirul Hasan. New Delhi: Manohar, 1999.
- Aloysius, G. *Nationalism without a Nation in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Ambedkar, BR. "Communal Deadlock and a Way to Solve it." *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, vol i. Ed Vasant Moon. Dr Ambedkar Foundation. 2014/1979. 356-380.
- Ambedkar, BR. "Outside the Fold." *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, vol v. Ed Vasant Moon. Dr Ambedkar Foundation. 2014/1989. 19-26.
- Ambedkar, BR. "Gandhi and his Fast." *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, vol v. Ed Vasant Moon. Dr Ambedkar Foundation. 2014/1989. 329-395.
- Ambedkar, BR. "Away from the Hindus." *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, vol v. Ed Vasant Moon. Dr Ambedkar Foundation. 2014/1989. 403-421.
- Ambedkar, BR. "Caste and Conversion." *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, vol v. Ed Vasant Moon. Dr Ambedkar Foundation. 2014/1989. 422-425.
- Ambedkar, BR. "Christianizing the Untouchables." *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, vol v. Ed Vasant Moon. Dr Ambedkar Foundation. 2014/1989. 426-444.

- Ambedkar, BR. "The Condition of the Convert." *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, vol v. Ed Vasant Moon. Dr Ambedkar Foundation. 2014/1989. 445-476.
- Ambedkar, BR. "Waiting for a Visa." *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, vol xii. Ed Vasant Moon. Dr Ambedkar Foundation. 2014/1993. 663-691.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London & New York: Verso, 2006/1983.
- Anderson, Crista Nalani. "The Origins of Christian Society in Ancient India." *Honors Scholar Theses Paper 282*. 2012. [viewcontent.cgi \(uconn.edu\)](http://viewcontent.cgi(uconn.edu)).
- Anidjar, Gil. *The Jew, The Arab: A History of the Enemy*. Stanford & California: Stanford University Press. 2003.
- Anidjar, Gil. *Semites: Race, Religion, Literature*. Stanford & California: Stanford University Press. 2008.
- Anidjar, Gil. "The Idea of an Anthropology of Christianity." *Interventions* 11(3). 2009. 366-393.
- Anidjar, Gil. *Blood: A Critique of Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Press. 2014.
- Anidjar, Gil. "The Forgetting of Christianity." *ReOrient* 1(1). Autumn 2015. 27-36.
- Ansari, MT. *Malabar: Dhesheeyathayude Ida-paadukal* [Malabar: Transactions of Nationalism]. Kottayam: DC Books, 2021/2008.
- Ansari, MT. *Islam and Nationalism in India: South Indian Contexts*. London & New York: Routledge, 2016.
- Appachan, Poykayil. *Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha Paattukal* [The Songs of Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha]. Comp VV Swami and EV Anil. Thrissur: Sahitya Academy, 2011.
- Appadurai, Arjun. *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2006.
- Appothikkari, Kochuthomman. *Parishkarappathi* [Half Reform]. Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 2013/1892.
- Apter, Emily. *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*. London & New York: Verso, 2013.
- Apter, Emily. "Foreword." *Citizen Subject: Foundations for Philosophical Anthropology*. Etienne Balibar. USA: Fordham University Press. 2017.
- Aquil, Raziuddin and Partha Chatterjee. *History in the Vernacular*. Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2008.
- Arun Mishra, J. "Judgement." KS Varghese vs St Peter's & Paul's Syrian Orthodox & Ors. Civil Appeal Number 3674 of 2015. The Supreme Court of India. 3 July 2017. [K.S. Varghese vs St.Peter'S & Paul'S Syrian Orth.. on 3 July, 2017 \(indiankanoon.org\)](http://indiankanoon.org).
- Arunima, G. "Imagining Communities Differently: Print, Language and the 'Public Sphere' in Colonial Kerala." *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 43(1). 2006.
- Arunima, G. "Who is a Malayali Anyway? Language, Community and Identity in Precolonial Kerala." *Assertive Religious Identities: India and Europe*. Ed Satish Saberwal and Mushirul Hassan. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2006.
- Asad, Talal. "Conscripts of Western Civilization." *Dialectical Anthropology: Essays in Honor of Stanley Diamond*, vol i. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992. 333-351.
- Asad, Talal. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1993.

- Asad, Talal. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.
- Asad, Talal. "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam." *Qui Parle* 17(2). 2009. 1-30.
- Augustine. *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*. Trans EB Pusey. *The Project Gutenberg eBook*. CE 401. The Project Gutenberg eBook of The Confessions of Saint Augustine, by Saint Augustine.
- Ayyar, LK Anantakrishna. *The Cochin Tribes and Castes*, vols i-ii. London: Higginbotham & Co, 1912.
- Ayyar, LK Anantakrishna. *Anthropology of the Syrian Christians*. Ernakulam: Cochin Government Press, 1926.
- Ayyar, S Krishnamurthi. *Census of India 1921*, vol xxv: Travancore. Trivandrum: Government Press, 1922.
- Baak, Paul E. "Out of the Shadow, into the Spotlights. The 'Indigenous' Aspects of Plantation Development; the Case of the Emergence of Syrian Christian Planters in Princely Travancore in the First Half of the Twentieth Century." *Itinerario* 17(2). July 1993. 74-96.
- Badiou, Alain. "The Event in Deleuze." Trans Jon Roffe. *Parrhesia* 2. 2007. 37-44.
- Balachandran, Aparna. "Petitions, the City, and the Early Colonial State in South India." *Modern Asian Studies* 53(1). 2019. 150-176.
- Balakrishnan, PK. *Narayana Guru*. Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi, 2000/1954.
- Balakrishnan, PK. *Jathivyavasthithiyum Kerala Charithravum* [Caste System and Kerala History]. Kottayam: DC Books, 1983.
- Balibar, Etienne. "Citizen Subject." *Who Comes After the Subject?* Ed Cadava et al. New York & London: Routledge, 1991.
- Balibar, Etienne. "The 'Impossible' Community of the Citizens: Past and Present Problems." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 30(3). August 2011.
- Balibar, Etienne. *Citizen Subject: Foundations for Philosophical Anthropology*. Trans Steven Miller. New York: Fordham University Press, 2017.
- Balibar, Etienne. *On Universals: Constructing and Deconstructing Community*. Trans Joshua David Jordan. New York: Fordham University Press, 2020.
- Barbosa, Duarte. *A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar*. Trans Henry EJ Stanley. London: Hakluyt Society, 1866.
- Bataille, Georges. "Sovereignty." *The Accursed Share*, vol iii. Trans Robert Hurley. New York: Zone Books, 1993.
- Bayly, Susan. *Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society 1700 – 1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Benhur, Abraham. *Jutha Bharatham* [Jewish India]. Kottayam: DC Books, 2021.
- Benjamin, Walter. "Capitalism as Religion." Trans Rodney Livingstone. *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol i. Eds Marcus Bullock and Michael W Jennings. Cambridge: Harvard University Press-Belknap Press, 2002/1996.
- Benyamin. *Tharakan's Grandhavari* [Tharakan's Chronicles]. Kottayam: DC Books, 2022.
- Bhabha, Homi J. "Unsatisfied: Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism." *Text and Nation*. Eds Laura Garcia-Morena and Peter C Pfeifer. London: Camden House, 1996. 191-207.
- Bhagwati, PN. "Mrs Mary Roy Etc Etc vs State of Kerala & Ors on 24 February, 1986." *Kanoon*. Mrs. Mary Roy Etc. Etc vs State Of Kerala & Ors on 24 February, 1986 (indiankanoon.org).

- Bhargava, Rajeev. "Indian Secularism: An Alternative, Trans-cultural Ideal." *The Promise of India's Secular Democracy*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Blanchot, Maurice. *The Unavowable Community*. Trans Pierre Joris. New York: Station Hill Press, 1988.
- Brewer, Keagan. *Prester John: The Legend and its Sources*. London: Routledge, 2015.
- Bose, Satheese Chandra & Shiju Sam Varughese, eds. *Kerala Modernity: Ideas, Spaces and Practices in Transition*. Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2015.
- Bulgakov, Sergei. *Philosophy of Economy: The World as Household*. Trans Catherine Evtuhov. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000.
- Cadava et al, eds. *Who Comes After the Subject?* New York & London: Routledge, 1991.
- Cannell, Fenella, ed. *The Anthropology of Christianity*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2006.
- Census of India 2011. "Christian Population in India." [Christian Population in India - State wise Population \(census2011.co.in\)](http://census2011.co.in).
- Census of India 2011. "Kerala Hindu Muslim Population." [Kerala Hindu Muslim Population \(census2011.co.in\)](http://census2011.co.in).
- Chacko, Mrs IC. "Our Women." *Her-Self: Gender and Early Writings of Malayali Women, 1898-1938*. Ed and Trans J Devika. New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd, 2021.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. "Universalism and Belonging in the Logic of Capital." *Public Culture* 12(3). 2000. 653-678.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Chandramohan, P. *Developmental Modernity in Kerala: Narayana Guru, SNDP Yogam and Social Reform*. Chennai: Tulika Books, 2019.
- Chandy, Anna. *The Autobiography of Anna Chandy*. Ed and Trans J Devika. *Swatantryavaadini*. 25 October 2020. [The Autobiography of Anna Chandy – Part 1 – Swatantryavaadini](#).
- Chandy, Anna. "On Women's Freedom." *Her-Self: Gender and Early Writings of Malayali Women, 1898-1938*. Ed and Trans J Devika. New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd, 2021.
- Chentharassery, THP. *Pampady John Joseph*. Trivandrum: Mythri Books, 2015/1987.
- Chentharassery, THP. *Ayyankali the First Dalit Leader*. Trivandrum: Mythri Books, 2019/1996.
- Cherian, PJ. *Perspectives on Kerala History: The Second Millenium*. Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Gazetteers, 1999.
- Cherian, Accamma. *Jeevitham Oru Samaram* [Life, A Struggle]. Kottayam: Sahithya Prvarthaka Co-operative Society, 2011.
- "Chithira Thirunal's Declaration of the Independence of Travancore from the Thiruvananthapuram Radio Station on July 18, 1947." A Sreedhara Menon. *Triumph and Tragedy in Travancore: Annals of Sir CP's Sixteen Years*. Kottayam: DC Books, 2019/2001. 378-379.
- Clephane, W. "Political Consultation." 16 August 1814. *Selections from the Records of Fort St George: Dutch Possessions and Claims and to the British Rights Arising therefrom*. Madras: Superintend Government Press, 1915. 97-107.
- Collins, Mrs Richard. *Khathakavadham*. Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 2013/1877.
- Connolly, William E. *Capitalism and Christianity: American Style*. Durham & London: Duke University Press. 2008.

- “Constituent Assembly Debates,” vol vii. 6 December 1948, 7.67.90. [Constituent Assembly of India Debates \(loksabha.nic.in\)](http://loksabha.nic.in).
- “Constituent Assembly Debates,” vol vii. 6 December 1948, 7.67.91. [Constituent Assembly of India Debates \(loksabha.nic.in\)](http://loksabha.nic.in).
- “Constituent Assembly Debates,” vol viii. 25 May 1949, 8.91.164. [25 May 1949 Archives - Constitution of India](#).
- “Constituent Assembly Debates,” vol viii. 25 May 1949. 8.91.162. [25 May 1949 Archives - Constitution of India](#).
- “Constitutional Reforms in Travancore;” “The Proposed New Constitution of Travancore;” and “Travancore Constitution Act, 1122” [AD 1947]. Sir CP Thiruvithamckoor Charithrathil [Sir CP in Travancore History]. A Sreedhara Menon. Kottayam: DC Books, 2015/2003. 550-581.
- Curian, G. *Malayalathulla Suriyani Sabhayeyum Samoothatheyum Kurichulla Oru Prakaranam* [An Essay on the Syrian Church and Community of Malayalam]. Kottayam: Church Mission Press, 1872.
- Deepika. “Thiruvithamkur Sarkaril Ninnu Dhrishti Veppanulla Oru Sangati” [A Matter for the Concern of Travancore Government]. 15 September 1887.
- Deepika. “Editorial.” 2 February 1891.
- Deepika. “Shankarankali” [Shankaran’s Game]. 15 May 1891.
- Deepika. “Editorial.” 1 June 1891.
- Deepika. “Editorial.” 19 March 1918.
- Deepika. “Editorial.” 1 November 1932.
- Deepika. “Asamathva Samudaya Sthanarthikal” [Unequal Community Candidates]. 3 January 1933.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. “Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature: The Components of Expression.” *New Literary History* xi(3). 1985. 591-608.
- Dempsey, Corinne G. *Kerala Christian Sainthood: Collisions of Culture and Worldview in South India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Derrida, Jacques. “Politics of Friendship.” *American Imago* 50(3). Fall 1993. 353-391.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Acts of Religion*. New York & London: Routledge, 2002.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Geneses, Genealogies, Genres and Genius: The Secret of Archive*. George Square: Edinburgh University Press, 2003.
- Derrida, Jacques. “Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides.” *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*. Ed Giovanna Borradori. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2004.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.
- Derrida, Jacques. “Christianity and Secularization.” *Critical Inquiry* 47(1). 2020. 138-148.
- Devassy, MK. *Census of India 1961*, vol vii: Kerala. Delhi: Government of India Publications Department, 1965.
- Devika, J, ed and trans. *Her-Self: Gender and Early Writings of Malayali Women, 1898-1938*. New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd, 2021/2005.
- Devika, J and VJ Varghese. “To Survive or to Flourish? Minority Rights and Syrian Christian Community Assertions in Twentieth-century Travancore/Kerala.” *History and Sociology of South Asia* 5(2). 2011. 103-128.
- Dirks, Nicholas B. “Castes of Mind.” *Representations* 37. Winter 1992. 56-78.
- Donald, Nidhin. “Every Family Its Own Historian? The Case of Syrian Christian Family Histories.” *Economic & Political Weekly* 57(28). 9 July 2022.

- Dumont, Louis. *Homo Hierarchicus*. Trans Mark Sainsbury et al. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988/1966.
- Duncan, Jon. "Letter from the Hon'ble the Governor of Bombay, Jon Duncan. 9 April 1800." *Selections from the Records of Fort St George: Dutch Possessions and Claims and to the British Rights Arising therefrom*. Madras: Superintendent Government Press, 1915. 36.
- Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Trans Karen E Fields. New York: Free Press, 1995.
- Dzalto, David. "Orthodox Political Theology: An Anarchist Perspective." *Political Theologies in Orthodox Christianity: Common Challenges, Divergent Positions*. Ed Kristina Stoeckl et al. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017.
- Editors. "East-West Schism: Christianity." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. [East-West Schism | Summary, History, & Effects | Britannica](#).
- Esposito, Roberto. *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community*. Trans Timothy Campbell. Stanford & California: Stanford University Press, 2010.
- Eusebius of Caesarea. *Church History*. CE 340. [Eusebius of Caesarea ~ 340 AD CHURCH HISTORY :Index. \(documentacatholicaomnia.eu\)](#).
- "FamilyTreeDNA of Syrian Christians." Official Website. [FamilyTreeDNA - Syrian Christians of Kerala, India](#).
- Foucault, Michel. "What is Enlightenment?" *The Foucault Reader*. Ed Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984. 32-50.
- Foucault, Michel. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." *The Foucault Reader*. Ed Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984. 76-100.
- Francis, Emmanuel. "Indian Copper-Plate Grants: Inscriptions or Documents?" *Comparative Views on Record Keeping*. Ed Alessandro Bausi et al. Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter, 2018.
- Frykenberg, Robert Eric. "Thomas Christians." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. [Thomas Christians | History & Tradition | Britannica](#).
- Fuller, CJ. "Kerala Christians and the Caste System." *Man*, New Series 11(1). March 1976. 53-70.
- Gandhi, MK. *An Autobiography, or the Story of my Experiments with Truth*. Trans Mahadev Desai. London & New York: Penguin Classics, 2001/1927.
- Gandhi, MK. "Vaikom Satyagraha." *Young India* 1 May 1924. *Vaikom Satyagraharekhakal* [Documents of Vaikom Satyagraha]. Ed PK Harikumar. Kottayam: Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society Ltd, 2020/2009. 110-111.
- Gandhi, MK. "Interview with *The Hindu*." *Young India* 20 May 1924. *Vaikom Satyagraharekhakal* [Documents of Vaikom Satyagraha]. Ed PK Harikumar. Kottayam: Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society Ltd, 2020/2009. 136.
- Geddes, Michael. *The History of the Church of Malabar, from the Time of its Being First Discovered by the Portuguese in the Year 1501*. London: Prince's Arms, 1694.
- George, VC. *Nidheerikkal Manikathanar*. Thevara: Little Flower Industrial Press, 1950.
- Gouvea, Antonio de. *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes: A Portuguese Account of the Sixteenth Century Malabar*. Ed and Trans Pius Malekandathil. Kochi: LRC Publications, 2003.
- "Government's Reply to the Memorial of the All Travancore Joint Political Congress: 28-1-1933." Kusuman. *Nivarthana Prakshobhanam*, Appendix. Trans MO Pushpangadan. Kottayam: Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society Ltd, 2015. 145-151.

- Gregorios Paulose (T Paul Verghese). "How Different is The Eastern Orthodox Church?" 1991. How Different is The Eastern Orthodox Church - Paulos Mar Gregorios (1991).docx.pdf (ethiopianorthodoxchurch.ca).
- Gregorios, Paulose (T Paul Verghese). "Why I am an Eastern Orthodox Christian?" 1994. My Vision of the Ultimate (paulosmargregorios.in).
- Gundert, Herman. "Translation and analysis of the ancient documents engraved on copper in possession of the Syrian Christians and Jews of Malabar." *Madras Journal of Literature and Science* 30. Madras: Christian Knowledge Society Press, June 1844.
- Gundert, Hermann. *Kerala Pazhama* [Antiquity of Kerala]. Kottayam: Vidyarthimithram, 1868.
- Gurukkal, Rajan, and Raghava Varier. *Kerala Charithram*, vol ii [Kerala History]. Edappal: Vallathol Vidyapeedam, 2012.
- Harikumar, PK. *Vaikom Sathyagraha Rekhakal* [Documents of Vaikom Satyagraha]. Kottayam: Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society, 2020/2009.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*. Trans Joan Stambaugh. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996/1953.
- Hough, James. *The History of Christianity in India: From the Commencement of Christian Era*, vol i. London: RB Seeley and W Burnside, 1839.
- Hovorun, Cyril. "Civil Religion in the Orthodox Mileu." *Political Theologies in Orthodox Christianity: Common Challenges, Divergent Positions*. Ed Kristina Stoeckl et al. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017.
- Indicopleustes, Cosmas. *The Christian Topography of Cosmas, an Egyptian Monk*. Ed and Trans JW McCrindle. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010/1897.
- Irenaeus. *Against Heresies*. Saint Irenaeus Against Heresies Complete.pdf (archive.org).
- Isaac, Thomas TM. *Vimochanasamrathinte Kaanappurungal* [Unseen Sides of Liberation Struggle]. Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 2008.
- Ittoop, Joseph (Writer). *Malayalathulla Suriyani Christianikalude Charithram* [History of Syrian Christians in Malayalam]. Cochin: Western Star Press, 1869.
- James, CLR. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. New York: Vintage, 1989. (Revised edition).
- Janu, CK, NR Shankar and Bhaskaran. *Mother-Forest: The Unfinished Story of CK Janu*. New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2004.
- Jayasankar, A. *Communist Bharanavum Vimochanasamravum* [Communist Governance and Liberation Struggle]. Kozhikode: Mathrubhumi Books, 2012.
- Jeffrey, Robin. *The Decline of Nayar Dominance: Society, Politics in Travancore 1847-1908*. New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1976.
- Jeffrey, Robin. "Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940." *Social Scientist* 4(8). March 1976. 3-27.
- Jenkins, Keith. *Re-thinking History*. New York: Routledge Classics, 2003.
- Joseph, George Gheverghese. *George Joseph: The Life and Times of a Kerala Christian Nationalist*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2003.
- Joseph, KV. *Varthamanapusthakam: Oru Padanam* [Book of News: A Study]. Published by the author, 2010.
- Joseph, MO. *Mathutharakan*. Alappuzha: BKM Press, 1947.
- Joseph, N John. "Sri Mulam Assembly Proceedings." 22 November 1933. TSMA-001-00002-00006.pdf (niyamasabha.org).
- Joseph, TK. *The Malabar Christian Copper Plates*. Trivandrum: Sridhara Power Press, 1925.

- Kalacherry, James. "Pastoral Letter." *Madhyasthan* [Mediator]. September-October 1945. 25-33.
- Kalaitzidis, Pantelis. *Orthodoxy and Political Theology*. Trans Gregory Edwards. Greece: World Council of Churches Publications, 2012.
- "*Kaliyankal Ezhumali Kudumbam*" [Kaliyankal Ezhumali Family]. Official Website. [History – Kaliyankal Ezhumalil Kudumbam](#).
- Kandasamy, Meena. "Becoming a Brahmin." [Becoming a Brahmin - Meena Kandasamy - India - Poetry International](#).
- Kant, Immanuel. "What is Enlightenment?" [Kant. What is Enlightenment \(columbia.edu\)](#).
- Kathanar, Paremmakkal Thoma. *Varthamanappusthakam athava Romayatra* [Varthamanappusthakam or the Journey to Rome] Palai: Indian Institute of Christian Studies, 1994/1936.
- Kathanar, Paremmakkal Thoma. *Varthamanappusthakam ("Travelogue of Dr Joseph Kariatty and Paremmakkal Thomman Kathanar to Lisbon and Rome 1778-1786")*. Kottayam: Oriental Institute of Religious Studies India Publications, 2014/1936.
- Kaviraj, Sudipta. "The Imaginary Institution of India." *Subaltern Studies*, vol vii. Eds Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007/1992.
- Kaye, John William. *Christianity in India: An Historical Narrative*. London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1859.
- Kesavan, C. *Jeevithasamaram* [Life-struggle]. Kottayam: DC Books, 2004/1968.
- Kochu, KK. *Kerala Charithravum Samootharopikaranavum* [Kerala History and Social Formation]. Thiruvananthapuram: State Institute of Languages, 2012.
- Kochu, KK. *Dalitan* [Dalit]. Kottayam: DC Books, 2019.
- Koonamakkal, Malpan Thoma. *Ramban Pattu* [Songs of Priest]. [Ramban Pattu : Malpan Thoma Koonamakkal : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#).
- Koshy, Archdeacon. *Pullelikunju*. Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 2013/1882.
- Krishnan, C. "E Mathamaanu Nammude Abhimanathe Keduthiyathu" [This Religion Destroyed our Respect]. *Narayana Guru*. PK Balakrishnan. Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi, 2000/1954.
- Kumar, Udaya. "Dr Palpu's Petition Writings and Kerala's Pasts." *Nehru Memorial Museum and Library Occasional Paper, History and Society New Series* 59. 2014.
- Kumar, Udaya. *Writing the First Person: Literature, History, and Autobiography in Modern Kerala*. Ranikhet: Permanent Black in association with IAS, Shimla and Ashoka University, 2016.
- Kumbalakuzhi, Kurias. *Vimochanasamaram* [Liberation Struggle]. Delhi: Media House, 2010.
- Kunjambu, Potheri. *Saraswathivijayam*. Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 2013/1892.
- Kunjanpilla, Ilamkulam PN. *Chila Kerala Charithra Prashnangal* [Some Problems in Kerala History]. Kottayam: National Book Stall, 1955.
- Kunjanpilla, Ilamkulam PN. *Keralam 5, 6 Nootandukalil* [Kerala in Fifth and Sixth Centuries]. Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society Ltd, 1961.
- Kunjuraman, CV. ("Ee 'Tatvamasiyude' Abhasam Namuku Venda" [We do not Need the Immorality of this Tatwamasi]. *Narayana Guru*. PK Balakrishnan. Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi, 2000/1954.
- Kunnasseri, Kuriakose. "Mathanyoonapakshangal Pradhisandhiyil" [Religious Minorities in Danger]. *Madhyasthan*. April 1979. 13-16 & 33-39.

- Kuriakose, MK. *History of Christianity in India: Source Materials*. Delhi: ISPCK, 1982.
- Kurien, Viju. "Narrating the Feud: *Sabatarkam* and Church History among Syrian Christians of Kerala." Unpublished dissertation. University of Hyderabad: Centre for Comparative Literature, 2020.
- Kusuman, KK. *Nivarthana Prakshobhanam* [Abstention Struggle]. Trans MO Pushpangadan. Kottayam: Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society, 2015.
- Lamport, Mark A et al, ed. *Encyclopedia of Christianity in the Global South*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018.
- Leonard, Dickens. "Caste-less Community: Iyothee Dass (1845-1914) and Tamil Buddhism." Unpublished dissertation, University of Hyderabad: Centre for Comparative Literature, 2017.
- "Letter from the Commissioner of Police to the Dewan: 30-3-1933." *Nivarthana Prakshobhanam*, Appendix. KK Kusuman. Trans MO Pushpangadan. Kottayam: Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society Ltd, 2015. 157-160.
- "Letter from the District Magistrate Quilon to K Raja Raja Varma, DSP 1-4-1933." *Nivarthana Prakshobhanam*, Appendix. KK Kusuman. Trans MO Pushpangadan. Kottayam: Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society Ltd, 2015. 165-166.
- Logan, William. *Malabar*, vols i-ii. Madras: Asian Educational Services, 1989.
- Makhdum, Sheikh Zainuddin II. *Tuhfat ul Mujahiddin*. Trans C Hamsa. Kozhikode: Al Huda Book Stall, 2012.
- Malayala Manorama*. "Pulayarude Vidhyabhyasam" [Education of Pulayas]. 22 March 1890.
- Malayala Manorama*. "Mappilamarude Lahala" [Mappila Revolt]. 21 December 1895.
- Malayala Manorama*. "Thiruvithamkote Thiyar" [Thiyas of Travancore]. 21 December 1895.
- Malayala Manorama*. "The Present Outlook in Travancore." 16 October 1897.
- Malayala Manorama*. "The Race Question in Travancore." 19 March 1898.
- Malayala Manorama*. "Editorial." 11 March 1899.
- Malayala Manorama*. "Kraisthavarude Abhivridhi Margangal" [Means for Christian Prosperity]. 30 April 1932.
- Malayala Manorama*. "Thiruvananthapurathe Rashtreeya Sammelanam: Ezhava Muslim Chraisthavarude" [Political Meeting at Thiruvananthapuram: Of Ezhavas, Muslims and Christians]. 22 December 1932.
- Malayala Manorama*. "Kraisthava Ezhava Muslim Samudhayangal Puthiya Niyamasabhakalodu Nissahakarikkuvan Theerumanichu" [Christian, Ezhava, Muslim Communities Decided to Abstain from New Legislative Assemblies]. 26 January 1933.
- Malayala Manorama*. "Memorial to the Dewan by the All-Travancore Joint Political Congress." 10 November 1933.
- Malekandathil, Pius. *Portuguese Cochin and the Maritime Trade of India 1500-1663*. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2001.
- Malekandathil, Pius. "Winds of Change and Links of Continuity: A Study on the Merchant Groups of Kerala and the Channels of their Trade, 1000-1800." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 50(2/3). 2007.
- Mallampalli, Chandra. *Christians and Public Life in Colonial South India, 1863 – 1937*. London: Routledge Curzon, 2004.
- Mamdani, Mahmood. *Define and Rule: Native as Political Identity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012.

- Mamdani, Mahmood. *Neither Settler nor Native: The Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press-Belknap Press, 2020.
- Mappila, KC Mamman. "Betterment of the Economic and Industrial Condition of the State." "Travancore Sri Mulam Assembly Proceedings." 12 November 1908. 80. [TSMIPA-001-00005-00004.pdf \(niyamasabha.org\)](#).
- Mappila, KC Mamman. *Jeevithasmaranakal* [Reminiscences of Life]. Kottayam: DC Books, 2006/1977.
- Markose, Ambili Anna. "Performing Religion: Visual Publics and Christianity in Kerala." Unpublished dissertation, University of Hyderabad: Centre for Comparative Literature, 2018.
- Marx, Karl. "On the Jewish Question." *Early Writings*. Ed Lucio Colletti. Trans Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975.
- Maryks, Robert A. *The Jesuit Order as a Synagogue of Jews: Jesuits of Jewish Ancestry and Purity of Blood Laws in the Early Society of Jesus*. Leiden: Brill, 2010.
- Masuzawa, Tomoko. *In Search of Dreamtime: The Quest for the Origin of Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.
- Mateer, Samuel. *The Land of Charity: A Descriptive Account of Travancore and its People*. New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1991/1871.
- Mateer, Samuel. *Native Life in Travancore*. New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1991/1883.
- Mathew, George. *Communal Road to Secular Kerala*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing House, 1989.
- Mathew, KS et al. *Migration in South India*. Delhi: IRISH and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, 2005.
- Matthen, CP. *Diary of CP Matthen*. Kerala Council for Historical Research. [Diaries of Eliamma Matthen-Vol11.djvu - KCHR](#).
- Matthen, CP. *I have Borne Much*. Amphill, 1951.
- Matthen, Eliamma. *Diary of Mrs Eliamma Matthen*. Kerala Council for Historical Research. [Diaries of Eliamma Matthen-Vol9.djvu - KCHR](#).
- Matthews, Daniel. "The Democracy to Come: Notes on the Thought of Jacques Derrida." *Critical Legal Thinking*. 16 April 2013. [The Democracy To Come: Notes on the Thought of Jacques Derrida \(criticallegalthinking.com\)](#).
- McGuckin, John Anthony, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodox Christianity*. New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2011.
- "Memorandum submitted to the Indian Statutory Commission by Mr CV Kunjuraman, General Secretary, the SNDP Yogam." *Nivarthana Prakshobhanam*, Appendix. KK Kusuman. Trans MO Pushpangadan. Kottayam: Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society Ltd, 2015. 111-117.
- "Memorial." *Online Etymology Dictionary*. [memorial | Search Online Etymology Dictionary \(etymonline.com\)](#).
- Menon, A Sreedhara. *Triumph and Tragedy in Travancore: Annals of Sir CP's Sixteen Years*. Kottayam: DC Books, 2019/2001.
- Menon, A Sreedhara. *Sir CP Thiruvithamkoor Charithrathil* [Sir CP in Travancore History]. Kottayam: DC Books, 2015/2003.
- Menon, C Achyuta. *The Cochin State Manual*. Ernakulam: Cochin Government Press, 1911.
- Menon, Chandu. *Indulekha*. Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 2013/ 1889.

- Menon, K Achyutha. *Ancient Kerala: Studies in its History and Culture*. Trichur: Komattil Achyutha Menon, 1961.
- Menon, KP Shankara. "Malayali Memorial." *Vijnanakairali* 22(7). July 1991. 476-487.
- Menon, KP Shankara. "The Travancore Memorial." 1891.
- Menon, P Shungoonny. *History of Travancore from the Earliest Times*. New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1985/1878.
- Menon, Padmanabha KP. *History of Kerala Written in the Form of Notes on Visscher's Letters from Malabar*, vol i. New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2013/1924.
- Meyer, Marvin, ed. *Nag Hammadi Scriptures*. New York: Harper One, 2008.
- Moens, Adriaan. "Memorandum on the Administration of the Coast of Malabar 1781." *Selections from the Records of the Madras Government; Dutch Records: The Dutch in Malabar*. Ed A Galletti et al. Madras: Government Press. 1911.
- Mohan, P Sanal. *Modernity of Slavery: Struggles against Caste Inequality in Colonial Kerala*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- More, JBP, ed. *Offerings to the Muslim Warriors of Malabar (Translation from the Indo-Arabic Work 'Tohfut ul mujahideen')*. Trans MJ Rowlandson. Chennai: Saindhavi Publication, 2015/1833.
- Mundadan, A Mathias. *History of Christianity in India: From the Beginning up to the Middle of the Sixteenth Century (up to 1542)*, vol i. Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1984.
- Munro, John. "Letter." 5 October 1812. *Selections from the Records of Fort St George: Dutch Possessions and Claims and to the British Rights Arising therefrom*. Madras: Superintend Government Press, 1915. 45.
- Munro, John. "Letter." 9 October 1812. *Selections from the Records of Fort St George: Dutch Possessions and Claims and to the British Rights Arising therefrom*. Madras: Superintend Government Press, 1915. 47.
- Munro, John. "Judicial Consultation." 13 November 1812. *Selections from the Records of Fort St George: Dutch Possessions and Claims and to the British Rights Arising therefrom*. Madras: Superintend Government Press, 1915. 43.
- Munro, John. "Letter." 5 January 1813. *Selections from the Records of Fort St George: Dutch Possessions and Claims and to the British Rights Arising therefrom*. Madras: Superintend Government Press, 1915. 55.
- Munro, John. "Judicial Consultations." 2 February 1813. *Selections from the Records of Fort St George: Dutch Possessions and Claims and to the British Rights Arising therefrom*. Madras: Superintend Government Press, 1915. 55-56.
- Muraleedharan, Sreenath. *Community and History: The Early Narratives of Kerala*. New Delhi: Viva Books, 2018.
- Keralolpatti*. Mangalore: Stolz & Reuther, Basel Mission Press, 1868. (Second edition).
- Nagamaiya, V. *Report of the Census of Travancore 1875*. Trivandrum: Travancore Government Press, 1876.
- Nagamaiya, V. *Report of the Census of Travancore 1881*. Trivandrum: Travancore Government Press, 1884.
- Nagamaiya, V. *Report of the Census of Travancore 1891*. Madras: Addison & Co, 1894.
- Nair, U Sivaraman. *Census of India 1951*, vol xiii: Travancore-Cochin. Delhi: Government of India Publications Branch, 1953.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Inoperative Community*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008.

- Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Adoration: The Deconstruction of Christianity II*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2013.
- Nandy, Ashis. "The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance." *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 13(177). 1988.
- Narayanan, MGS. *Perumals of Kerala: Brahmin Oligarchy and Ritual Monarchy*. Thrissur: Cosmo Books, 2013/1996.
- Nedungattu, George. "The Apocryphal "Acts of Thomas" and Christian Origins in India." *Gregorianum* 92(3). 2011. 533-557.
- Neill, Stephen. *A History of Christianity in India 1707-1858*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Oommen, MA. "Rise and Growth of Banking in Kerala." *Social Scientist* 5(3). 1976. 24-46.
- "Order," 16 August 1814. *Selections from the Records of Fort St George: Dutch Possessions and Claims and to the British Rights Arising therefrom*. Madras: Superintendent Government Press, 1915. 110-111.
- "Oriental Orthodox Church." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. [Oriental Orthodox church | Christianity | Britannica](#).
- Outlook. "Bishop Demolishes the Biggest Conversion 'Myth' of Kerala." 15 April 2018. [Bishop Demolishes The Biggest Conversion Myth of Kerala \(outlookindia.com\)](#).
- Ouwkerk, Louise. *No Elephants for the Maharaja: Social and Political Change in the Princely State of Travancore (1921-1947)*. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2011/1994.
- Padmanabhan, Mannathu. *Ente Jeevithasmaranakal* [Reminiscences of my Life]. 1957.
- Paikada, Alexander. *Vimochanasamarathinte Kazhchappurangal* [Visible Sides of Liberation Struggle]. Delhi: Media House, 2010.
- "Pakalomattom Family." Official Website. :: [History - Pakalomattom Family :: \(pakalomattamfamily.org\)](#).
- Palpu, Padmanabhan. "Another Memorial." *Dr Palpu*. Velayudhan Panikkassery. Kottayam: DC Books, 2002. 30-41.
- Pandian, MSS. "One Step Outside Modernity: Caste, Identity Politics and Public Sphere." *Economic and Political Weekly* 37(18). May 2002. 1735-1741.
- Pandian, MSS. "Nation as Nostalgia: Ambiguous Spiritual Journeys of Vengal Chakkarai." *Economic and Political Weekly* 38(51/52). December 2003-January 2004. 5357-5365.
- Panikkassery, Velayudhan. *Dr Palpu*. Kottayam: DC Books, 2002.
- Panjikaran, Joseph C. *The Syrian Church in Malabar*. Trichinapoly: St Joseph's Industrial School Press, 1912.
- Papanikolaou, Aristotle. *The Mystical as Political: Democracy and Non-Radical Orthodoxy*. Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012.
- Papathanasiou, Athanasios N. "The Politics of a 'Weak Force.'" *Political Theologies in Orthodox Christianity: Common Challenges, Divergent Positions*. Ed Kristina Stoeckl et al. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017.
- Pareparembil, Aloysius. *An Account of a Very Important Period of the History of The Catholic Syrian Christians of Malabar*. Puthenpally: MTS Press, 1920.
- Parett, ZM. *Malankara Nazranikal: Padhaviyum Jaathyaacharangalum* [Malankara Nazranis: Status and Caste Practices]. Kottayam: Manorama Publications, 1966.
- Pattapparambil, Antony. *Koonankurishushapatham: Karanavum Prathyakhathangalum* [Bent Cross Oath: Reason and Consequences]. Aluva: Ayin Publications, 2016.

- Pattapparambil, Antony. *Paulinus Pathiriyum Angamaly Padiyolayum* [Father Paulinus and Angamaly Decree]. Aluva: Ayin Publications, 2018.
- Paul, Vinil. "Achadi Nirmicha Keezhala Pothumandalangal" ["Subaltern Public Sphere Constructed by the Print"]. *Utharakalam*. 29 June 2017.
- Payne, Daniel P and Christopher Marsh. "Sergei Bulgakov's 'Sophic' Economy: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective on Christian Economics." *Faith & Economics* 53. Spring 2009. 35-51.
- Pearson, JH. "Judicial Consultation." 11th September 1812. *Selections from the Records of Fort St George: Dutch Possessions and Claims and to the British Rights Arising therefrom*. Madras: Superintend Government Press, 1915. 32.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine; The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)*, vol ii. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1977.
- Perczel, Istvan. "Have the Flames of Diamper Destroyed All the Old Manuscripts of the Saint Thomas Christians?" *The Harp* xx. 2006. 87-104.
- Perczel, Istvan and George Kurukkoor. "A Malayalam Church History from the Eighteenth Century, Based on Original Documents." *Bibel, Byzanz und Christlicher Orient*. Ed D Bumazhnov et al. Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2011. (Bilingual edition).
- Perczel, Istvan. "The Revelation of the Seraphic Gregory found in two Indian Manuscripts." *Adamantius* ix. 2013. 337-356.
- Perczel, Istvan. "Syriac Christianity in India." *The Syriac World*. Ed Daniel King. London: Routledge, 2018. 663-671.
- Philip, EM. *The Indian Church of St Thomas*. Nagercoil: London Mission Press, 1950.
- Philip, Jeevan. *Unmasking the Syriacs: The Hidden Origin of Indian Christianity; An Archaeo-Linguistic Approach*. Kochi: Associated Books & Publishers, 2022.
- Philippos, Edavalikel. *The Syrian Christians of Malabar Otherwise Called the Christians of St Thomas*. Oxford & London: James Parker & Co, 1869.
- Pillai, Elamkulam Kunjan. *Studies in Kerala History*. Kottayam: National Book Stall, 1970.
- Pillai, N Kunjan. *Census of India 1931*, vol xxvii: Travancore. Trivandrum: Government Press, 1932.
- Pisharadi, Cherukad Govinda. *Pramani* [Feudal lord]. Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 2010.
- Podippara, Placid J. *Keralathile Marthoma Christianikal* [Marthoma Christians in Kerala]. Alappuzha: Prakasham Publications, 1972.
- Pollock, Sheldon. "The Cosmopolitan Vernacular." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57(1). 1998. 6-37.
- Pope Alexander VI. "Inter Caetera: Division of the Undiscovered World between Spain and Portugal." 1493. [Inter Caetera - Papal Encyclicals](#).
- Pope Nicholas V. "Romanus Pontifex: Granting the Portuguese a Perpetual Monopoly in Trade with Africa." 1455. [Romanus Pontifex - Papal Encyclicals](#).
- Pope Sixtus IV. "Aeterni Regis." 1481. [AETERNI REGIS \(1481\) \(angelfire.com\)](#).
- Prakash, Indra. *A Review of the History and Work of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Hindu Sanghatan Movement*. Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha, 1938.
- Prange, Sebastian. *Monsoon Islam: Trade and Faith on the Medieval Malabar Coast*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- Priolkar, AK. *The Terrible Tribunal for the East: The Goa Inquisition*. New Delhi: Voice of India, 1961.

- “Proud Moments.” Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church Website. Proud Moments... – Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church.
- Pulikkunnel, Joseph. “Introduction.” *Varthamanapusthakam*. Paremmakkal Thomas Kathanar. Edamattom: Indian Institute of Christian Studies, 1994.
- “*Pulpalliyile Kudiyettakkar*” [Migrants of Pulpalli]. Thalassery: *Girideepam*, August 1967.
- Rae, George Milne. *The Syrian Church in India*. London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1892.
- Raju, S. *Petals of the Self-Formed: Antecedents of Travancore Kingdom*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2022.
- Raman, Bhavani. *Document Raj: Writing and Scribes in Early Colonial South India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.
- Rao, TA Gopinatha. “Tamil and Vatteluttu Inscriptions on Stone and Copper Plates.” *Travancore Archaeological Series*, vol ii. Trivandrum: Government Press, 1920.
- Resident of Travancore and Cochin. “Letter.” 13 June 1814. *Selections from the Records of Fort St George: Dutch Possessions and Claims and to the British Rights Arising therefrom*. Madras: Superintend Government Press, 1915. 96.
- Roberts, Nathaniel. *To Be Cared For: The Power of Conversion and Foreignness of Belonging in an Indian Slum*. California: University of California Press, 2016.
- Robinson, Rowena. “Sociology of Christianity, Conversion and Secularism in India: Some Reflections.” *Sociological Bulletin* 54(3). September-December 2005. 473-495.
- Sahlins, Marshall. “The Sadness of Sweetness: The Native Anthropology of Western Cosmology.” *Current Anthropology* 37(3). June 1996. 395-428.
- Said, Edward W. *Beginnings: Intention and Method*. USA: Basic Books, 1975.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Classics, 2003/1978.
- Schmitt, Carl. *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1985/1922.
- Scholasticus, Socrates. *The Ecclesiastical History*. London: Henry G Bohn, 1852/circa 380-450.
ia800203.us.archive.org/5/items/ecclesiasticalh02valogooog/ecclesiasticalh02valogooog.pdf.
- Schurhammer, George. *The Malabar Church and Rome During the Early Portuguese Period and Before*. Trichinopoly: St. Joseph’s Industrial School Press, 1934.
- Scott, David. “Dehistoricizing History.” *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999.
- Scott, David. *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Selections from the Records of Fort St George: Dutch Possessions and Claims and to the British Rights Arising therefrom*. Madras: Superintend Government Press, 1915.
- Selections from Fort St David Consultations 1741*. Madras: Superintend Government Press, 1916.
- Selections from Public Consultations, Letters from Fort St George, and Fort St David Consultations, 1740*. Madras: Superintend Government Press, 1916.
- Shaikh, Nermeen. “The Jew, the Arab: An Interview with Gil Anidjar.” *Asia Society*. The Jew, the Arab: An Interview with Gil Anidjar | Asia Society.
- Shaji, A. “Elements of Caste and Communal Consciousness in the Malayali Memorial of Modern Travancore.” *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities* 5(4). April 2018.

- “Speech delivered by C Kesavan at Kozhenchery: 13-5-1935.” *Nivarthana Prakshobhanam*, Appendix. KK Kusuman. Trans MO Pushpangadan. Kottayam: Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society Ltd, 2015. 188-199.
- Stoeckl, Kristina et al, eds. *Political Theologies in Orthodox Christianity: Common Challenges, Divergent Positions*. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017.
- Subbarayalu, Y. “Trade Guilds of South India up to the Tenth Century.” *Studies in People’s History* 2(1). June 2015.
- Subrahmanyam, Sanjay. “Connected Histories: Notes Towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia.” *Modern Asian Studies* 31(3). 1997.
- Subrahmanyam, Sanjay. *Europe’s India: Words, People, Empires, 1500-1800*. USA: Harvard University Press, 2017.
- Suntharalingam, “The Madras Native Association: A Study of an Early Political Association.” *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 4(3). 1967. 233-253.
- Swamikal, Chattambi. *Pracheena Malayalam* [Ancient Malayalam]. Createspace Independent Publication, 2017.
- T, Ajayan. “Midterm Election in Kerala in 1960 and the American Government.” *History and Sociology of South Asia* 11(2). 2017. 212-220.
- Tampi, A Narayanan. *Census of India 1941*, vol xxv: Travancore. Trivandrum: Government Press, 1942.
- Tawney, RH. *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study*. The New American Library, 1922.
- Tharakan, KM. *The Portrait of KC Mammen Mappillai*. Kottayam: Malayala Manorama, 1988.
- Times of India*. “Jacobite Faction Reenacts Historic Coonan Cross Oath.” 7 October 2019. [Jacobite faction re-enacts historic Coonan Cross Oath | Kochi News - Times of India \(indiatimes.com\)](https://www.indiatimes.com/News/Jacobite-faction-re-enacts-historic-Coonan-Cross-Oath-Kochi-News-Times-of-India/indiatimes.com).
- The Acts of Thomas*. Trans MR James. [The Acts of Thomas \(gnosis.org\)](http://gnosis.org).
- The Bible*. Authorized King James Version. Ed Robert Carroll and Stephen Pricket. Oxford University Press, 2008. [Matthew 22: 20-22; Matthew 25: 14-30; Matthew 13: 3-9; Galatians 5:17; Mark 12:17; John 20:29, Matthew 22:21].
- “The Board of Revenue,” 16 November 1848. *Selections from the Records of Fort St George: Dutch Possessions and Claims and to the British Rights Arising therefrom*. Madras: Superintendent Government Press, 1915. 143.
- “The Counter Memorial.” D Peter and Ivy Peter. *Liberation of the Oppressed: A Continuous Struggle*. Nagercoil: Kanyakumari Institute of Development Studies, 2009. 184-193.
- “The Ezhava Memorial.” Velayudhan Panikkassery. *Dr Palpu*. Kottayam: DC Books, 2002. 43-45.
- “The Government Communique, the Electoral System Outlined: 29-10-1932.” *Nivarthana Prakshobhanam*, Appendix. KK Kusuman. Trans MO Pushpangadan. Kottayam: Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society Ltd, 2015. 132-144.
- The Hindu*. “Bishop warns Christians in Kerala against ‘Love and Narcotics Jihad’.” 9 September 2021. [Bishop warns Christians in Kerala against ‘love and narcotics jihad’ - The Hindu](https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/bishop-warns-christians-in-kerala-against-love-and-narcotics-jihad/article66444447.ece).
- The Indian Express*. “God’s own Sena.” 8 November 2019. [God’s own sena | The Indian Express](https://www.indianexpress.com/article/india/gods-own-sena-66444447).

- “The Legislative Reforms Regulation II of 1108.” *Nivarthana Prakshobhanam*, Appendix. KK Kusuman. Trans MO Pushpangadan. Kottayam: Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society Ltd, 2015. 118-131.
- The Madras Native Association. “Memorial to the Right Honourable Lord Stanley, Secretary of State for India, from the Members of The Madras Native Association and Others, Hindus and Mahomedans, Inhabitants of the Presidency of Madras on the Subject of Government Interference in Religious Matters.” Madras: Hindu Press, 1859.
- The New Indian Express*. “Church won’t Hesitate to Launch a Struggle.” 26 July 2009. [‘Church won’t hesitate to launch a struggle’- The New Indian Express](#).
- “The Seven and a Half Churches.” [Microsoft Word - 6. Churches Thomas Founded.docx \(malankaralibrary.com\)](#).
- Thomas, Abraham Vazhayil. *Christians in Secular India*. New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1974.
- Thomas, K Mary. “Women’s Independence.” *Her-Self: Gender and Early Writings of Malayali Women, 1898-1938*. Ed and Trans J Devika. New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd, 2021.
- Thomas, M Kurian, ed. *Niranam Granthavari* [Chronicles of Niranam]. Kottayam: SPCS, 2017.
- Thomas, Sonja. *Privileged Minorities: Syrian Christianity, Gender and Minority Rights in Postcolonial India*. Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2018.
- Thottapuzha, Varghese John. “Niranam Granthavari: Kalaganayum Theeyathikalum” [Chronicles of Niranam: Calendars and Dates]. *Niranam Granthavari*. Ed M Kurian Thomas. Kottayam: SPCS. 2017. 310-317.
- “Treaty between the Dutch East India Company and the Rajah of Cochin, 1663.” *Selections from the Records of Fort St George: Dutch Possessions and Claims and to the British Rights Arising therefrom*. Madras: Superintend Government Press, 1915. 3.
- “Treaty between the Rajah of Cochin and the English Company, 1790.” *Selections from the Records of Fort St George: Dutch Possessions and Claims and to the British Rights Arising therefrom*. Madras: Superintend Government Press, 1915. 7.
- Vadakkan, Joseph. *Ente Kuthippum Kithappum* [My Leaps and Gasps]. Kozhikode: Mathrubhumi Books, 2015/1974.
- Vadakkekkara, Benedict. *Origin of Christianity in India: A Historiographical Critique*. Delhi: Media House, 2007.
- Valloppilli, Sebastian. “Kudiyirakku Bheeshanikal” [Threats of Eviction], 8 September 1961. *Mar Sebastian Valloppiliyude Idayalekhanangal 1954-1989* [Pastoral Letters of Mar Sebastian Valloppilli]. Thalassery: George Chennappilli, 1990.
- Valloppilli, Sebastian. “Shimoga Kudiyarakku” [Shimoga Eviction], 5 June 1966. *Mar Sebastian Valloppiliyude Idayalekhanangal 1954-1989* [Pastoral Letters of Mar Sebastian Valloppilli]. Thalassery: George Chennappilli, 1990.
- Varghese, George. *Malankara Nasranikalude Jaathyaulkrishtyavum Raajyasevana Nirathayum* [Caste Status and Patriotism among Malankara Nazranis]. Madras: 1988.
- Varghese, K George. “Writing Family Histories: Identity Construction among Syrian Christians.” *Economic and Political Weekly* 39(9). Feb-March 2004.
- Varghese, TM. “Travancore Sri Mulam Assembly Proceedings.” 2 February 1938. [klaproceedings.niyamasabha.org/pdf/TSMA-002-00002-00011.pdf](#).

- Varghese, VJ, et al, eds. *500 Varshathe Keralam: Chila Arivadayalangal* [500 Years of Kerala]. Gen ed Scaria Zacharia. Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society, 2016/1999.
- Varghese, VJ. "Land, Labour and Migrations: Understanding Kerala's Economic Modernity." *Centre for Development Studies Working Paper* 420. 2009.
- Varghese, VJ. "Yielding to the Divine Will? Agricultural Migrations and its Religious Moralities in Modern Kerala." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 77. 2016. 1112-1128.
- Varier, MR Raghava and Kesavan Veluthatt. *Tharisappally Pattayam* [Grant of Tharisappally]. Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society Ltd, 2013.
- Varki, Anna. *One Woman's India: From the Gandhian Era to the Cyber Age*. Chennai: Notion Press, 2018.
- Vattimo, Gianni. *After Christianity*. Trans Luca D'Isanto. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.
- Velupillai, TK. *The Travancore State Manual*, vol i: General Features; vol ii: History; vol iii: Economic Affairs; vol iv: Administration. Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Gazetteers Department, 1996/1940.
- Veluthat, Kesavan. *Brahman Settlements in Kerala*. Thrissur: Cosmo Books, 2013. (Revised and enlarged edition).
- Verghese, T Paul (Paulose Gregorios). "Humanization as a World Problem." [humanization as a world problem.pdf \(paulosmargregorios.in\)](http://paulosmargregorios.in/humanization_as_a_world_problem.pdf).
- Verghese, T Paul (Paulose Gregorios). *Freedom and Authority*. Published by The Christian Literature Society, The Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and The Lucknow Publishing House. Madras: Diocesan Press. 1974.
- Vermes, Geza. *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*. London: Penguin Books, 2011/1962.
- Visscher, Canter Jacob. *Letters from Malabar*. Ed Heber Drury. Madras: Adelphi Press, 1862.
- Visvanathan, Susan. *The Christians of Kerala: History, Belief and Ritual Among the Yakoba*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Visvanathan, Susan. "Legends of St. Thomas of Kerala." *Muse India* 66. 2016.
- Viswanath, Rupa. *The Pariah Problem: Caste, Religion, and the Social in Modern India*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.
- Viswanathan, Gauri. *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity and Belief*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Trans Talcott Parsons. London & New York: Routledge, 2001/1930.
- Webster, John CB. *Historiography of Christianity in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Whitehouse, Thomas. *Lingerings of Light in a Dark Land: Researches into the Past History and Present Condition of the Syrian Church of Malabar*. London: William Brown & Co, 1873.
- Winckworth, CPT. "Notes on the Pahlavi, Kufic and Hebrew Signatures to the Quilon Plates." *Kerala Society Papers* 1(6). Thiruvananthapuram: Gazetteers Department, Government of Kerala, 1930.
- Wright, W, trans. "The Acts of Judas Thomas (or the Twin). The Apostle." *Apocryphal Acts of Apostles*. London & Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1871. 146-298.

- Xavier, Angela Barreto and Ines G Zupanov. *Catholic Orientalism: Portuguese Empire, Indian Knowledge (16th-18th Centuries)*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Yannaras, Christos. *Against Religion: The Alienation of the Ecclesial Event*. Trans Norman Russell. Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2013/2006.
- Yesudasan, TM. *Chettitheruvile Dvisathabdikal* [Two Centenaries of Chettitheruvu]. Kottayam: Thaiparambil Books, 2016.
- Zacharia, Scaria, ed. *Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper, 1599*. Edamattom: Indian Institute of Christian Studies, 1998.
- Zacharia, Scaria, ed. *Udayamperoor Sunnahadosinte Kanonakal 1599* [The Decrees of the Synod of Diamper 1599]. Oshana Mount: Indian Institute of Christian Studies, 1998.
- Zachariah, KC. "The Syrian Christians of Kerala: Demographic and Socioeconomic Transition in the Twentieth Century." *Centre for Development Studies Working Paper* 322. 2001.
- Zachariah, KC. "Religious Denominations of Kerala." *Centre for Development Studies Working Paper* 468. 2016.
- Zizek, Slavoj. *The Fragile Absolute: Or, Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* London and New York: Verso, 2001.

WHAT IS CAESAR'S, WHAT IS GOD'S?

A TRANSCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE LEGITIMATION OF THE POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS SPHERES

CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION

This is to confirm that

MS. BIVITHA EASO

has successfully participated in the Santander International Winter School for Doctoral Students

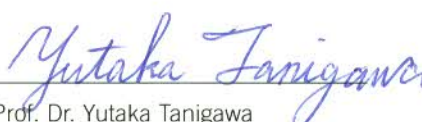
WHAT IS CAESAR'S, WHAT IS GOD'S?
A TRANSCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE LEGITIMATION
OF THE POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS SPHERES

from March 9 to 18, 2015 in Kyoto, Japan.

In this Santander International Winter School, the participants have discussed the construction of the modern idea of "religion" from a global perspective. On the basis of examples from Latin America, Europe and Asia, the history of the concept of "religion" was problematized mainly from two angles: 1) that "religion" as originally a European idea has shaped worldwide practices in the modern age; and 2) that, since the early modern era, the conceptual dichotomy between "religion" and "politics" was established along with categories such as "superstition", "science" and "the secular".

Ms. Bivitha Easo has given a short presentation on the topic
»Understanding Caste-Community Formation: A Study of Syrian Christians in Kerala«.

Kyoto, March 18, 2015


Prof. Dr. Hans Martin Krämer
Institute for Japanese Studies
Universität Heidelberg, Germany
Prof. Dr. Yutaka Tanigawa
Department of Japanese History
Kyoto University, Japan

This is to certify that

Bibitha Daso

attended the

*Camford Symposium on Religious Studies
held on 15, 16, and 17 March 2017 in Camford, UK*

presented the paper titled

*"Origins/Beginning Narratives as a Site of Enquiry: A Study of
Syrian Christians in Kerala, India"*

Brian Mountford - Director





INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY MADRAS

IIT Post Office, Chennai – 600 036

Phone: (091) (44) 2257 4517 (off); (091) (44) 2257 6517 (res); Fax: (091)(44) 22574502

Mob: (091)9444262410 Email: rsanthosh@iitm.ac.in, rsantho@gmail.com

Dr. R. Santhosh
Associate Professor
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

14/10/2023

To whomsoever it may concern

This is to certify that Ms. Bivitha Easo presented a paper titled “Translated Christianities: ‘Eastern’ Christian Con-texts” in a conference titled “Exploring Sovereignty and Charisma: Engagements, Contestations and Fabulations from the Global South” organized on 16-18 December 2019 at the Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum. The conference was jointly organised by the University of Sussex, Toronto University, IIT Madras, Hyderabad Central University and Centre for Development Studies.

R. Santhosh

Home (<https://journals.ukzn.ac.za/index.php/Nidan/index>)

/ Archives (<https://journals.ukzn.ac.za/index.php/Nidan/issue/archive>)

/ Vol 4 No 1 (2019): Introducing 'Christianity in India'
(<https://journals.ukzn.ac.za/index.php/Nidan/issue/view/98>)

/ Articles

'Worship Towards the East': Texts and Transitions of Christianity in Kerala

Nidān: International Journal for Indian Studies

ISSN: 2414-8636



**Published at the University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Durban, South Africa**

(<https://journals.ukzn.ac.za/index.php/Nidan/issue/view/98>)

pdf (<https://journals.ukzn.ac.za/index.php/Nidan/article/view/1186/1399>)

Published Jul 30, 2019

Bivitha Easo

University of Hyderabad

Ambili Anna Markose

Independent Scholar

Abstract

The history of community is best understood as an archive of collective memory. The history of Christianity in Kerala—the Southernmost state of India, where Christians belonging to different castes/sects constitute around twenty percent of the total population—has unfolded in an ensemble of multiple narratives about community. Nonetheless, caste and sectarianism have been the vantage points for the historiographical analysis of the Christian community in Kerala. As a result, experiences of a “minor” community, with its heterogeneous genealogies, has often been translated into the homogenous language of the colonial and nationalistic discourses of Hindu majoritarian “secular” nation-state. There has been little space for narratives that explicate community as a subjective experience, based on ontology and belief. This study, hence, explores textual universes of Christianity in Kerala, as an experiential category to engage with communities in transition. In doing so, the analysis problematizes the existing archive as that which identifies a faith community as a historically available category and re-reads and extends this archive to enable new interpretations of Christian subjectivity in the region. We re-read historical narratives in an attempt to destabilize the ways in which the history of communities is perceived as a chronologically evolved structure of events. The paper proceeds by critically analyzing various contemporary Malayalam texts that offer new narratives of Christianity, which, foreground heterogeneous genealogies of a community-in-the-becoming. These narratives of Christianity are identifiably at loggerheads with both the canonical and historical understanding of Christianity in Kerala. The community’s history is unfolded in these texts as an experiential category with political implications for the imagination of Christianity in the region, and in doing so offer an analytical frame to identify community within its discursive formations. The paper argues that Christianity in Kerala manifests an ‘Eastern’ imagination that enables us to explore possibilities beyond discourses generated by ‘Western’ Christianity and the Christian ‘West’.

How to Cite

Easo, B., & Markose, A. (2019). ‘Worship Towards the East’: Texts and Transitions of Christianity in Kerala. *International Journal for Indian Studies*, 4(1), 19-38. Retrieved from <https://journals.ukzn.ac.za/index.php/Nidan/article/view/1186>

[More Citation Formats ▼](#)

Issue



Politics Society Culture Noticeboard

Q

U



History Politics Religion

കുഞ്ഞാടുകളെ എതിലേ എതിലേ? ചില സിറിയൻ ക്രിസ്ത്യൻ സംഘർഷങ്ങൾ



ബിവിത ഇഷോ
3 days ago

Facebook Twitter Pinterest WhatsApp More 3

പ്രാദേശികമായി നിലനിന്നിരുന്ന ബഹുസ്വരമായ ക്രൈസ്തവതകളെ ഒഴിഞ്ഞും തഴഞ്ഞുമാണ് സാമാന്യമായ ഒരു സുറിയാനി ക്രൈസ്തവ സ്വത്വം രൂപപ്പെടുത്തപ്പെട്ടത്. എന്നാൽ, രാഷ്ട്രം എന്ന കൽപ്പിത ഭാവനക്കപ്പുറം, അതിനുള്ളിലെ വ്യത്യസ്തമായ ഒരു സംസ്കാരം എന്നതിലുമുപരി, വിശാലമായ നാഗരികതയുടെ ഭാഗമാകാനുള്ള അവകാശത്തെ, തങ്ങൾക്കെന്ന പോലെ എല്ലാവർക്കും ഉറപ്പാക്കുന്ന ഒരു സാമുദായിക

SUBSCRIBE OUR EMAIL NEWS LETTER

Your email address

Sign up

Tags

0 Comments

Sort by Oldest



Add a comment...

Facebook Comments Plugin

Subscribe Our Email News Letter

Your email address

Sign up

Home

Media

Literature

Sports

Editor's Choice

Politics

Religion

Music

Theater

Interviews

Caste

Culture

Painting

Campus

Creative Writings

Education

Cinema

Performing Arts

Events

Book Review

Gender

History

Science

Letters

Social Media Pulse



CONTACT

utharakaalam@gmail.com

CONNECT WITH US



© 2022 Utharakalam; Developed by



bivitha easo <bivi.easo@gmail.com>

Global Religious Translation publishing opportunity

Lucinda.Martin@t-online.de <Lucinda.Martin@t-online.de>
Reply-To: "Lucinda.Martin@t-online.de" <Lucinda.Martin@t-online.de>
To: bivitha easo <bivi.easo@gmail.com>

28 September 2020 at 14:08

Dear Bivitha,

Thanks very much for this excellent proposal, which I am happy to accept for the volume. Your published paper is also very interesting and contains many aspects relevant for this project. Thanks for sharing.

I am attaching the Cambridge guidelines. The only difficult one might be the limitation to 15 sources. However, I will try to argue to Cambridge that to cover the entire world we need more! After all, translation automatically means a doubling of languages and sources. Another issue might be which Bible to use in case of biblical quotations. I advise that you quote whichever Bible your historical subjects were using. For Europeans this was usually the King James or 1545 Luther Bible in the Early Modern Period, but I expect that your subjects may have had different Scriptures. Please let me know if you have any questions. Note that the word limit for the essay is 6000-8000 words.

I look forward to receiving your paper later this autumn. Would November be a realistic timeline for you?

Best wishes,
Lucinda

-----Original-Nachricht-----

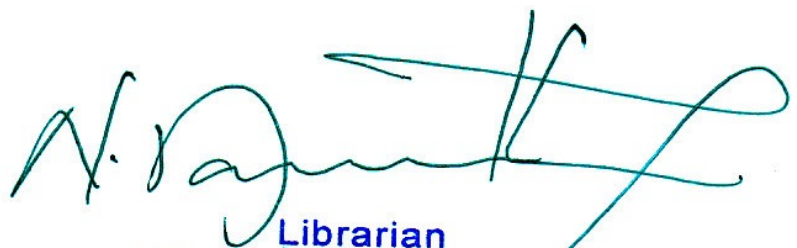
Betreff: Re: Global Religious Translation publishing opportunity

Datum: 2020-09-26T04:08:18+0200

[Quoted text hidden]

That Cross that Bends: Community and Caste among Syrian Christians of Kerala

by Bivitha Easo



Librarian
Indira Gandhi Memorial Library
UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD
Central University P.O.
HYDERABAD-500 046.

Submission date: 16-Oct-2023 08:13AM (UTC+0530)

Submission ID: 2196886977

File name: Bivitha_Easo.pdf (1.35M)

Word count: 58814

Character count: 333577

That Cross that Bends: Community and Caste among Syrian Christians of Kerala

ORIGINALITY REPORT

2%

SIMILARITY INDEX

2%

INTERNET SOURCES

1%

PUBLICATIONS

0%

STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1

journals.ukzn.ac.za

Internet Source

1%

2

dokumen.pub

Internet Source

<1%

3

archive.org

Internet Source

<1%

4

www.archive.org

Internet Source

<1%

5

Submitted to University of Hyderabad,
Hyderabad

Student Paper

<1%

6

eparlib.nic.in

Internet Source

<1%

7

vdoc.pub

Internet Source

<1%

8

"The Blackwell Companion to Eastern
Christianity", Wiley, 2007

Publication

<1%

9	Contributions to Phenomenology, 2015. Publication	<1 %
10	Joseph Nedumparambil, George. "A Search of the Roots of Syro-Malabar Church in Kerala", Universität Würzburg, 2013. Publication	<1 %
11	apostlethomasindia.files.wordpress.com Internet Source	<1 %
12	Michael B. Smith, Jean-Luc Nancy, Gabriel Malenfant. "Dis-Enclosure", Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2020 Publication	<1 %
13	"The City in the Islamic World (2 vols.)", Brill, 2008 Publication	<1 %
14	eprints.soas.ac.uk Internet Source	<1 %
15	Devika, J., and V. J. Varghese. "To Survive or To Flourish? Minority Rights and Syrian Christian Community Assertions in Twentieth-century Travancore/Kerala", History and Sociology of South Asia, 2011. Publication	<1 %
16	lids.ling-phil.ox.ac.uk Internet Source	<1 %
17	www.paulosmargregorios.in	

<1 %

18

biopolitics.kom.uni.st

Internet Source

<1 %

19

wikimili.com

Internet Source

<1 %

20

epw.org.in

Internet Source

<1 %

21

oro.open.ac.uk

Internet Source

<1 %

22

research.tilburguniversity.edu

Internet Source

<1 %

23

Submitted to Matignon High School

Student Paper

<1 %

24

en.wikipedia.org

Internet Source

<1 %

25

hdl.handle.net

Internet Source

<1 %

26

kupdf.net

Internet Source

<1 %

27

Kochurani Abraham. "Persisting Patriarchy",
Springer Science and Business Media LLC,
2019

Publication

<1 %

Exclude quotes On

Exclude bibliography On

Exclude matches

< 14 words