Saranya Chandran

A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN SCRIPTS IN KERALA

MA Thesis in Comparative History, with a specialization
in Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies.

Central European University

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May 2022

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by

Saranya Chandran

(India)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,

Central European University, Vienna, in partial fulfilment of the requirements

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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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I, the undersigned **Saranya Chandran**, candidate for the MA degree in Comparative History, with a specialization in Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Vienna, 18 May 2022

Abstract

Malayalam is a Dravidian language spoken in Kerala, a southern state of India. During the medieval and early modern periods, various scripts were used to denote the Malayalam language. The history of individual scripts has been written by scholars. However, a comprehensive study of all these scripts has never been written either among Malayalee scholars, or the international academic community. When scholars have been treating the development of Indian scripts, the two scripts used by the Muslim and the Syrian Christian communities, namely Arabi Malayalam and Garshuni Malayalam, were never included. Since the modern Malayalam script has not developed from one particular script without the influence of the other scripts, Garshuni Malayalam and Arabi Malayalam, as well as the literature produced in these scripts, should get their organic place in the history of Malayalam language and literacy.

Arabi Malayalam and Garshuni Malayalam have been created as a result of contact between languages. So, an analysis of the origin and the development of these scripts in the context of contact linguistics might provide more clarity about the language and cultural situation of medieval and early modern Kerala.

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Introduction

Malayalam is a Dravidian language spoken in Kerala, a Southern state of India with 38 million native speakers. Like all the known Indic scripts,[1] the Malayalam scripts are alpha syllabary (abugida) writing systems, which are partly alphabetic and partly syllable-based. That is, consonant–vowel sequences are written as units: each unit is based on a consonant or conjunct letter, while the vowel notation is secondary. Vowel notations that modify the consonants are in the form of diacritics, or vowel signs. Vowels have independent existence only at the beginning of words. This is the common characteristic of the Brahmic family of scripts from South and Southeast Asia.

Nobody has written a comprehensive study of Malayalam scripts in medieval and early modern times. The received wisdom about the origin of the scripts is that they had developed from *Vaṭṭeḻuttu and Koleḻuttu,* which were used to write Malayalam in medieval and early modern times.[2] At the same time, Eḻuttaccan, the reformer of Malayalam and father of the Modern Malayalam language, is also considered as father of the script. Both these beliefs have some elements of truth but they do not correctly reflect a far more complex reality. The development of the Malayalam script was not a linear transformation from one script to another. Since more than one script were used at the same period, it is not right to say that the development was linear. And it is important to keep in mind that all scripts used to write

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1 This specification is required as the only exception to this rule is the hieroglyphic script of the Indus Valley civilisation, which remains undecoded to the present.

2 M R Ragha Varier, "Eluttinte Caritram" (History of Malayalam Writing), in *Malayala Basha Padanangal* (Studies on Malayalam Language), ed. Unnikrishnan, M.M (P. K Parameswaran Nair Memorial Trust, 2019), 206.

Malayalam language were in use with many variations.There are 17 types of scripts, such as Brahmi, *Vaṭṭeḻuttu, Koleḻuttu, Grandha, Tulu, Tamil, Hebrew, Dutch, English, Halekannada, Kannada, Syriac, Arabic, Portuguese,* and *Garshuni Malayalam* used in Kerala.[3] However, all these scripts were not used to denote the Malayalam language. In this study, I am only focusing on scripts which have been used to write Malayalam. The mainstream history of the development of Malayalam scripts only focuses on three main scripts: *Vaṭṭeḻuttu, Koleḻuttu* and *Grandha.* Because of the recent discoveries of Brahmi inscriptions from various parts of Kerala, scholars started to focus on Brahmi also. The majority of the literary documents written in these four scripts are by the Hindu community, and Hindu rulers. As an exception to this rule, *Koleḻuttu i*s described as the *"Vaṭṭeḻuttu"* of Muslims in an 18th-century manuscript.[4] Although the standard literature fails to mention this fact, the three main scripts, *Vaṭṭeḻuttu, Koleḻuttu* and *Grandha* were widely used by the Syrian Christian community, too. In the first chapter, I will give examples for Christian *Vaṭṭeḻuttu* and *Koleḻuttu* inscriptions.

This kind of focus on some particular scripts resulted in lack of information on other scripts. Due to this unilateral focus on documents written and used by Hindus, popular Kerala history is also written in a biased manner, while the Muslim and Christian communities are indulging in communal (and often even factional) history writing, serving apologetic purposes. Results obtained based on a study of the documents of one community more often than not remain ignored by historians of the other communities. Thus, a comprehensive study about all the scripts used to write Malayalam will help historians to read non-standard historical sources. Texts written in Arabi Malayalam and Garshuni Malayalam will open mainstream historiography to historical sources of other communities than Hindu (namely to Muslims and

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3 Pavithran T, Likhithapadanam/Epighraphy, (Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala, The State Instituite of languages, 2019), 2-3
4 Varier M.R, Epigraphy, 215

Christians). Reading these sources is important because this would make the history of Kerala inclusive to all religious communities

Previous Literature

The main scholarship about the history of Malayalam scripts includes two types of works. The first type treats the question of how Malayalam script has been developed from mediaval and early modern scripts usd in Kerala. Raghava Varier M.R wrote an article "*Eḻuttinte Caritram*" (History of writing) in *Malayala Basha Padanangal* (Studies on Malyalam Language) edited by Unnikrishnan, A.M. (2019) This article only includes the details of Brahmi, Grandha, *Vaṭṭeḻuttu and Koleḻuttu.* The article focuses on how Modern Malayalam scripts developed from medieval and early modern scripts. "*Lipikalum Manavasamskaravum*" (Scripts and Human culture) written by Jaleel K.A (1989) and "*Pracheena Bharatiya Lipisastravum Malayalalipiyude Vikasavum*" written by Mangalam S.J (1997) are other examples of works coming under the same category.

To another category belong works that are introductions to medieval and early modern scripts used in Kerala. These works are presenting characters and features of the scripts and some examples of manuscripts written in those scripts. "*Pracheena Lighithangal*" (Ancient inscriptions) by Parameswaran Pillai V.R (1963), "P*racheena Keralalipikal*" (Ancient inscriptions of Kerala) by Ravivarmma L.A (1971) and *"Keralathile Pracheenalipi Mathrukakal"* (Models of ancient script in Kerala) by Sam. N (2006) are the notable works in this category. None of these include Garshuni Malayalam and Arabi Malayalam.

There are many studies about Arabi Malayalam literature, but only few studies focus on the script itself and the connected linguistic features. The first work that considers the linguistic features of Arabi Malayalam was written by Abu, O. in his *Arabi Malayalam Sahitya*

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Charithram (History of Arabi Malayalam) written in 1956. In this book, he includes literary features of Arabi Malayalam with some notable works written in this script. Another work was written by Shamsudheen in 1978. In his *Mappila Malayalam oru Basha Misram* (Mappila Malayalam – A mixed language) he treats Arabi Malayalam as a mixed language and compares it to Manipravalam[5] Another linguistic study has been conducted by Saidalavi, C. in 2006 ("Arabi Malayalam: A contact linguistic Analysis"). Apart from the linguistic studies, there is one work co-authored by Aneesha, P and Saidalavi. "Arabi Malayalalipi: *Avirbhavavum Parinamavum*" (Arabi Malayalam scripts: Origin and Development). All these studies are only about Arabi Malayalam. Those who were dealing with Arabi Malayalam scripts have never considered other scripts which had been used to write Malayalam in the medieval and early modern periods. As to Garshuni Malayalam, J. P. M. Van der Ploeg gave a short note about Garshuni in his *The Christians of St. Thomas in South India and Their Syriac Manuscripts* (1983). In 1997 Thomas Koonammackal wrote an article titled "An Introduction to Malayalam Karshon" in: *The Harp*: *A Review of Syriac and Oriental Ecumenical Studies* in 2002. A detailed study about the script and its development was published by Istvan Perczel in 2014. His work "Garshuni Malayalam: A witness to an early stage of Indian Christian literature" is giving a detailed presentation of the script and its features. Just like in the case of Arabi Malayalam, none of these studies tried to place Garshuni Malayalam among other scripts which were used to write Malayalam. This study is an attempt to include all medieval and early modern scripts of Malayalam.

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5 A style of writing Malayalam literature with Sanskrit and Malayalam expressions.

Aims and Methods

My aim for this study is to write this missing comprehensive study of medieval and early modern script of Kerala, which would treat the historical development of all these script systems. This study also aims to place Arabi Malayalam and Garshuni Malayalam in the general context of the Malayalam scripts, which has not been done earlier.

For this purpose, first I made a list of scripts of medieval and early modern Kerala and collected inscriptions written in those scripts. Some published photos/estampages of the inscriptions, especially those about the Muttuchira granite inscription, were not clear and not readable. So I personally visited Muttuchira and took clear photos and made an estampage. After that, I read the inscription together with Istvan Perczel, He helped me to understand the meaning in context. I also used photos of inscriptions taken by my friends for me (I was not able to go back to Kerala to take photos). I also used inscriptions and manuscripts which have been read and published by other scholars.

In the first chapter, I included a description of all medieval and early modern scripts of Malayalam, with a chart of graphemes of the script and an example of inscriptions/manuscripts. The final chapter is a detail analysis of Garshuni Malayalam and Arabi Malayalam, which is needed to place these scripts in the popular history of Kerala and the medieval and early modern scripts of Kerala.

Chapter 1

Medieval And Early Modern Scripts of Kerala.

There is a common opinion about the development of the modern Malayalam script, claiming that it has developed from *Vaṭṭeluttu* or *Koleluttu.* This is definitely erroneous. The development of the modern Malayalam script was not a linear transformation from these scripts. During the history of Malayalam, various scripts were used to note it down, such as Brahmi, *Grandhalipi, Vaṭṭeluttu, Koleluttu,* Ancient Tamil, Arabi Malayalam and Garshuni Malayalam. In this chapter I am going to give a brief description of these scripts.

1.1 Brahmi

Brahmi is the basis of Malayalam scripts, just like of any other Indian script. Brahmi is the script of the oldest inscriptions found in south India.[6] Many inscriptions of Ashoka were found at different parts of South India. In these inscriptions, Pali is the language and Brahmi is the script. Apart from this, there are many other inscriptions in Tamil, using the Brahmi script. The inscriptions from Madhura, Thirunalveli, Arichellur, Thirunatharkuttu and Mankulamare in Brahmi.[7] Brahmi inscriptions found in South India are not exactly like Brahmi scripts found in North India. This variety of Brahmi found in South India is called Southern Brahmi, Dravidian and Tamil Brahmi.[8] This Brahmi is the base of the Modern

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6 Jaleel K A, *"Lipikum Manavasamskaravum"* (Scripts and Civilization) 2nd ed. (Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala, The State Institute of Languages, 2006) 264

7 Places in Present Tamil Nadu and Kerala

8 Jaleel K A, *Scripts and Civilization*, 264

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Grandha script, from which, on its turn, Modern Malayalam has evolved. [9]   132 Brahmi

inscriptions, written in Pali and Prakrit, were found in six different districts of Kerala.[10]

1.1.a. Graphemes in Brahmi

Vowels

Brahmi	Ͱ	Ͱ (◌ാ)	∴ (◌ി)	∷ (◌ീ)	Ⅼ (◌ു)	Ⴄ (◌ൂ)	Δ (◌െ)	Δ (◌ൈ)	Ⅎ (◌ൊ)	Ⴈ (◌ൌ)
Malayalam	അ	ആ	ഇ	ഈ	ഉ	ഊ	എ,ഏ	ഐ	ഒ,ഓ	ഔ
English	a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	e, ē	ai	o, ō	au

Table 1 : vowels in Brahmi

Consonants

Brahmi	+	ꓱ	Λ	꒖	Ⴀ
Malayalam	ക	ഖ	ഗ	ഘ	ങ
English	ka	kha	ga	gha	ṅa

Table 2 : Gutturals (kavarggam)

Brahmi	ꓒ	ɸ	Ɛ	Ͱ	ꓧ
Malayalam	ച	ഛ	ജ	ഝ	ഞ
English	ca	cha	ja	jha	ña

Table 3: Palatals (Cavarggam)

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9 Raghava Varier M R, *History of Writting*, 207

10 Pavithran T, *Epigrapy*, 11

16

Brahmi	C	O	⌐	𝟨	I
Malayalam	ട	ഠ	ഡ	ഢ	ണ
English	ṭa	ṭha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa

Table 4: Retroflex / Cerebral (ṭavarggam)

Brahmi	⅄	⊙	⸾	D	⊥
Malayalam	ത	ഥ	ദ	ധ	ന
English	ta	tha	da	dha	na

Table 5: Dentals (tavarggam)

Brahmi	∪	Ⴆ	□	⊓	Ɣ
Malayalam	പ	ഫ	ബ	ഭ	മ
English	pa	pha	ba	bha	ma

Table 6: Labials (pavarggam)

Brahmi	⊔	ᛁ	⨼	ᑲ	⊹	⟊
Malayalam	യ	ര	ല	വ	ള	റ
English	ya	ra	la	va	ḷa	ṟa

Table 7 : Semivowels

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Brahmi	Λ	Ᏺ	ᴧ
Malayalam	ശ	ഷ	സ
English	śa	ṣa	sa

Table 8: Sibilants

Brahmi	Ϟ
Malayalam	ഹ
English	ha

Table 9: Aspirate

1.1.b. Kaṟadukka Inscription of Sthānu Rāvi
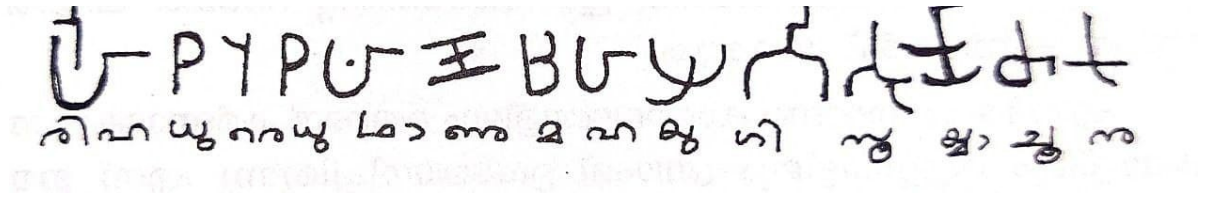
Figure 1: Kaṟadukka Inscription

A Brahmi inscription was found on a brick surface at a place called Kadakam, in the Karadukka village in Kasaragode[11]. This inscription is about Sthānu Rāvi,   who, in the light of recent discoveries, was the first ruler of the Kulaśēkhara dynasty (A.D 800/844-1102) also known as the 'Second Cēra Empire'.The inscription calls Sthānu Rāvi "Dhuredhu Thānu," that is, "the Invincible Thānu." Sthānu Rāvi ruled in Magōdaipattanam, near the present-day Kodungallur.

There are alternative datings for Sthānu Rāvi's reign. The founder of modern historical studies in Kerala, Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, thought that Sthānu Rāvi was the second king of the Cēra Kulaśēkhara dynasty, and was ruling from 844 to 885, while M.G.S. Narayanan

11 Northern district of Kerala.

corrected these dates to 844-883. With the discovery of the Kurumattur Sanskrit inscription of Rāma Rājaśēkhara in 2011 (see below), which M. R. Raghava Varier dated to 871, this view seemed to become untenable,[12] as scholars began to think that Sthānu Rāvi was the first Kulaśēkhara king. In a recent paper Aneesh S. proposed the dates 800-844 for Sthānu Rāvi and also proposed that Rāma Rājaśēkhara was the third Cēra king reigning from 871 to 883.[13] Yet, it seems to me that this early dating for Sthānu Rāvi runs into insurmountable difficulties. For example, in this case, the Kollam copper plates giving privileges to a Christian merchant community settling in the city of Kollam, dated to the sixth reigning year of Sthānu Rāvi, would be dated to 805, twenty years before the founding of the city, which looks impossible. Thus, keeping the traditional date 844 for the access of Sthānu Rāvi to the throne and 849 for the Kollam plates looks safer.

Also, recently, in his book *Likhithapadanam/Epigraphy*,[14] T. Pavithran gave a transcription in modern Malayalam of the Kurumattur inscription, dating it to 837 or 839, which would correspond to Rāma Rājaśēkhara's traditional dating as the first Kulaśēkhara king. As there is no clarity in this issue, we should consider this question as undecided. Here, I am giving a transcription of the Karadukka inscription,in Modern Malayalam transcription, a transliteration and an English translation.

Based on Pavithran's publication in Malayalam, the following is the first English-language publication of this inscription.

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12 Abdul Latheef Naha, "*Ancient Inscription throws new light on Chera history*," The Hindhu, February 11, 2011, https://www.thehindu.com/features/friday-review/history-and-culture/Ancient-inscription-throws-new-light-on-Chera-history/article15293183.ece#:~:text=The%20inscription%2C%20unearthed%20during%20the,of%20the%20first%20Chera%20king (last access: 17.05.2022).

13 Aneesh S, "*Problems in Fixing the Regnal Years of the Rulers of Mahodayapuram from Ninth Century AD to TenthCentury AD – A Historical Reappraisal*," Heritage: Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies in Archaeology 6 (2018): 1058-66. http://heritageuniversityofkerala.com/JournalPDF/Volume6/55.

14 T. Pavithran, *Epigraphy*, 108-112.

Romanised version of the inscription's text- *rihā dhuredhu thāṇu mahayugi sūyyācūnu.*

rihā: time, period;

dhuredhu: invincible;

thāṇu: Sthānu (Rāvi)

mahayugi: ruling for long

sūyyācūnu: the son of Sūrya (the Sun god)

Thus, the translation of the inscription is: "[This was erected in] the time of the invincible Thānu, ruling for long, the son of Sūrya."

1.2. Grandha

From the 8th century A.D., a special script evolved, used to denote Sanskrit documents (Grandhas) in the kingdom of the Pallava. This script is called Grandha script.[15] This script is widely used in Kerala incriptions and manuscripts, too, to denote Sanskrit phonemes. As Dravidian scripts are incapable to express Sanskrit phonemes, so there was a need for another script to write faithfully some Sanskrit words. Thus, from the earliest times of Malayalam literacy (the earliest document being the Kollam copper plates, generally dated to 849 AD but see the doubts below), the Malayalam texts were written in *Vaṭṭeḻuttu*, while the inserted Sanskrit expressions were written in Pallava Grandha. From the fourteenth century, there evolved an entire elite literature in a mixed Malayalam-Sanskrit language, called *Maṇipravāḷam* ("a necklace made of rubies and corals"). However, the *Maṇipravāḷam* style appeared in Tamil literature much earlier: the first instances date to the ninth century, while the term occurs first in the 182nd verse of the *Vīracōḻīyam* , an eleventh-century grammatical treatise.[16] The Malayalam *Maṇipravāḷam* literature prepared the development of Modern

15 Mangalam S J, *"Prachina Bharatiya Lipisastravum Malayala Lipiyude Vikasavum"* (Ancient Indian Palaeography and the development of Malayalam Scripts), 1997, p 149

16 See, Suganya Anandakichenin and Erin McCann, *"Towards Understanding the Śrīvaiṣṇava Commentary on the Nālāyira Tivviya Pirapantam : The Blending of Two Worlds and Two Languages,"* in *The Commentary*

Malayalam (or "pure Malayalam"), a heavily Sanskritized Dravidian language, and the introduction, in the seventeenth century, of the *Ārya eḻuttu* ("Aryan script"), a development of the Pallava Grandha, to write Malayalam, being the present-day Malayalam script.[17]

Two different kinds of Grandha scripts can be found in Pallava inscriptions. Both had evolved from Brahmi and influenced other South-Indian scripts, such as Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, and Malayalam. The first one is directly based on Ashoka Brahmi. The second one is called Pallava Grandha, which is also based on Ashoka Brahmi but there are two notable differences from the first one. One important difference is the usage of small curves in the letters instead of straight lines. The other change is the usage of multiple curves in graphemes. Pallava Grandha also includes graphemes for the Dravidian sounds, ḷa, ḻa, ṟa, other than the graphemes for Sanskrit phonemes.[18] Here I am giving the Grandha graphemes.

1.2.a. Graphemes in Pallava Grandha

Vowels

Grandha	அ	ஆ	இ	ஈௗ	உ	௨ள	ஜ	ளா	ஹ	ஹெ	ஒ	ஷௗ
Malayalam	അ	ആ	ഇ	ഈൗ	ഉ	ഊൗ	ൠ	ൡ	എ),എ)	ഐ	ഒ,ഓ	ഔ
English	a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	r̥	ḷ̥	e,ē	ai	o,ō	au

Table 10: Vowels in Pallava Grandha

Grandha	கூ	வ	ற	வ	ஐ
Malayalam	ക	ഖ	ഗ	ഘ	ങ
English	ka	kha	ga	gha	ṅa

Table 11: Gutturals (kavarggam)

Grandha	உ	உஉ	ஜ	ஈஉ	ரூ
Malayalam	ച	ഛ	ജ	ഝ	ഞ
English	ca	cha	ja	jha	ña

Table 12: Palatals (cavarggam)

Grandha	ட	O	ஃ	ஃ	ண
Malayalam	ട	ഠ	ഡ	ഢ	ണ
English	ṭa	ṭha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa

Table 13: Retrofex (ṭavarggam)

Grandha	த	ஊ	உ	�	ந
Malayalam	ത	ഥ	ദ	ധ	ന
English	ta	tha	da	dha	na

Table 14: Dentals (tavarggam)

Grandha	ப	ஃ	ப	ஐ	உ
Malayalam	പ	ഫ	ബ	ഭ	മ
English	pa	pha	ba	bha	ma

Table 15: Labials (pavarggam)

Brahmi	ய	௱	ஓ	வ	ண
Malayalam	യ	ര	ല	വ	ള
English	ya	ra	la	va	ḷa

Table 16: semivowels

Grandha	ஶ	ஷ	ஷ
Malayalam	ശ	ഷ	സ
English	śa	ṣa	sa

Table 17: Sibilants

Grandha	ஹ
Malayalam	ഹ
English	ha

Table 18: Aspirates

1.2.b. Kuṟumaṯṯur Inscription

This is the earliest Sanskrit inscription from Kerala, found in 2011, in the Viṣnu temple in Kurumattur, near Arakode, in the present Malappuram district. It is dated to the times of the Cēra king Rāma Rājaśēkhara, and was written as a poem in the Sardula Vikriditha meter in three stanzas. This inscription is written in Pallava Grandha characters.

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The inscription was first deciphered and analysed by M. R. Raghava Varier, who dated it, on the basis of a chronogram in the inscription, to 24 May, 871 A.D.[19] Thus, if Raghava Varier's dating is correct, the Vāḻappaḷḷi inscription of Rājaśēkhara (A Malayalam *Vaṭṭeḻuttu* copper plate inscription found in Kerala, issued in the 12th year of the reign of Rāma Rājaśēkhara) could not be considered as the oldest document written in Malayalam. This role would befall on the Tarisāppaḷḷi copper plates, dated to the sixth year of Sthāṇu Rāvi, in which Ayyaṉ Aṭikal Ṭiruvaṭikaḷ ("His Highness the Ruler of Ay"), the governor of *Vēṇāṭu*,[20] grants privileges to a Christian merchant community centred on a church, the Tarisāppaḷḷi, settling in the newly founded city of Kollam. Yet, Pavithran has redated the Kurumattur inscription to 837/39, and this scholarly debate is not settled until the present day.

Raghava Varier M. R published a brief description (but no translation!) of the Kurumattur inscription in Indian Archaeology.[21] As mentioned above, T. Pavithran gave a transcription in modern Malayalam of the Kurumattur inscription. He disagreed with Raghava Varier both as to the date and as to the content, but did not give any translation or analysis of the inscription. Here I am giving a photo of the inscription taken by Shabeeb C., whom I asked to make a clearer photo than the one published in Indian Archaeology.

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19 See Naha, "*Ancient Inscription throws new light on Chera history*."

20 Vēṇāṭu was one of the regions under the rule of the Cēra king. Later it became the kingdom of Travancore.

21 Raghava Varier M R, "*Chera Inscription, Kurumattur, District Allapuram*," *in Indian Archaeology 2010-11 – A Review* (Janpath, New Delhi: The Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, 2016), 118.

Figure 2: Kurumattur Inscription

As to date there is no English or Malayalam translation of the inscription, I am giving here Raghava Varier's summary.

"This inscription is in Sanskrit language and Grantha characters of the 9th century CE. It is found engraved on a loose stone and it states that the ruler Rajashekhara belonged to the illustrious Ikshvaku dynasty of Lord Rama. Further, he is eulogized as having ruled the country with justice and never deviated from the laws of Manu. During his righteous rule 12 brahmanas excavated a tank and also installed an image of Vishnu."

1.3. Vaṭṭeḻuttu

According to common opinion, *Vaṭṭeḻuttu* is a medieval script that had evolved from Southern Brahmi/ Tamil Brahmi. However, some scholars have proposed different explanations for the origin of *Vaṭṭeḻuttu*. N Sam explains the arguments of Burnell and Buhler in the introduction of his book *"Keralathile Pracheena Lipimatrukakal"*. According to Burnell, *Vaṭṭeḻuttu* had evolved from the Phoenician and Aramaic scripts[22]. Burnell also believes that the *Vaṭṭeḻuttu* script is older than the Tamil script. Also, Burnell thinks that the

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22 N Sam, *"Keralathile Pracheena Lipimatrukakal"* (*Ancient script models in Kerala*), 2nd edi. (Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala, The State archives,2010),13. See A. C. Burnell, *Elements of South-Indian Palaeography from the Fourth to the Seventeenth Century A. D.* (London: Trübner and Co., 1878), 49-51.

Thirukkural[23] and the Tholkappiyam[24] were first written in *Vaṭṭeluttu* and then copied into Tamil.[25] Buhler has a different argument about the evolution of *Vaṭṭeluttu*. According to him, this script system developed before the 7th century AD from Tamil[26]. However, it is safe to state that, just like the Tamil, Grandha, Telugu and Kannada scripts, *Vaṭṭeluttu* also evolved from Brahmi. The similarities are well visible when one compares *Vaṭṭeluttu* to ancient Tamil and Grandha. There are multiple arguments about the name *Vaṭṭeluttu*. A common thought about this name is that *vattam* means 'round' and *eluttu* is 'writing', so that the name *Vaṭṭeluttu* means 'rounded script'. Another suggestion is that in medieval and early modern manuscripts, *vattam* means 'sanctuary, 'temple'. As, usually, the *Vaṭṭeluttu* inscriptions are found in temples or other sanctuaries, or are related to sanctuaries, so, it has been suggested that *Vaṭṭeluttu* could mean the script used in the sanctuaries.[27] The script is also called *Veṭṭeluttu*, 'engraved script', as this script was used for engraved inscriptions. Other names of *Vaṭṭeluttu* are, *Nanammonam*,[28] South Malayalam, and the script of the Cēra Pandya (The script of the Cēra and Pandya dynasties).[29] The earliest *Vaṭṭeluttu* inscription found in South India is a inscription (?????) of Jadilavarmman Paranthaka Pandyan, the King of the Pandya Dynasty in AD 765 – 815.[30] The Pandya Dynasty is one of the ancient dynasties in South India. It occupied the region of the modern districts of Tirunelveli, Ramnad and Madurai in Tamil Nadu. Madurai was their capital, situated on the bank of the river Vagai, from the 8th century AD. The *Vaṭṭeluttu* alphabet includes nine vowels and eighteen consonants.

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23 Thirukkural is a classic in Tamil language, written by Valluvar/Tiruvalluvar. Kural means couplet. This work consist of 1330 couplets of seven words each.

24 Ancient Tamil grammatical treatise.

25 See Burnell, *Elements of South-Indian Palaeography*, 47.

26 N Sam; Keralathile Pracheena Lipimatrukakal, 13
27 Pavithran T ; Likhithapadanam/Epigraphy, 60
28 Vatteluttu inscriptions usually begin with writing "Namo Nārayaṇāya" (നമോ നാരയണായ), "Veneration to Narayana," that is, Vishnu. Nanammonam is a short form of this prayer.
29 Sam, Keralathile Pracheena Lipimatrukakal, 13
30 Sam Keralathile Pracheena Lipimatrukakal, 13

1.2.a. Graphemes of Vaṭṭeḻuttu

Vaṭṭeḻuttu									
Consonants → / Vowels ↓	க, ka	ങ, ṅa	ச, ca	ஞ, ña	ட, ṭa	ண, ṇa	த, ta	ந, na	ப, pa	ம, ma
அ (അ A)	௫	௵	௸	௞	௶	௳	௹	௺	௵	௴
ஆ (ആ ā)										
இ (ഇ i)										
ஈ (ഈ ī)										
உ (ഉ u)										
ஊ (ഊ ū)										
எ (എ/ഏ e, ē)										
ஐ (ഐ ai)										
ஒ (ഒ/ഓ o, ō)										

Table 19: Graphemes of Vaṭṭeḻuttu

Vaṭṭeḻuttu								
Consonants → / Vowels ↓	ய, ya	ர, ra	ல, la	வ, va	ள, ḷa	ழ, Zha	ற, ṟa	ன, ṉa
அ (അ A)								
ஆ (ആ ā)								
இ (ഇ i)								
ஈ (ഈ ī)								
உ (ഉ u)								
ஊ (ഊ ū)								
எ (എ/ഏ e, ē)								
ஐ (ഐ ai)								
ஒ (ഒ/ഓ o, ō)								

Table 20: Graphemes of Vaṭṭeḻuttu (continuation)

1.2.b. Muṭṭuciṟa Inscription[31]

In Muṭṭuciṟa, Kottayam district of Kerala, a granite stele is standing in front of the Church of the Holy Ghost, belonging to the Syro-Malabar Catholic jurisdiction. The stele was erected by a Persian bishop called Mar Shimʿon, and his archdeacon, Jacob Nadakkal, in 1581, to commemorate the erection of a granite cross in front of the church. The text of the monument was written in Malayalam, in a late version of the *vaṭṭeḻuttu* script. This happened in a crucial moment of the history of the Syrian Christians of Kerala, when Middle Eastern and Western missionaries, belonging to at least three mother Churches: the Church of the East, the Chaldean Church in a loose union with Rome, and the Roman Catholic Church standing on its new Tridentine dogmatic and canonical foundations, were competing for the souls of the indigenous *Suriyāni* (Syrian) Christians, also called Christians of Saint Thomas and *Māppiḷḷa* Christians.[32] The inscription was treated in several earlier publications but none of these gave a satisfactory reading and interpretation of the text, partly because the inscription has been eroded and was difficult to read.

The inscription was first treated by A.S. Ramanatha Ayar, who transcribed it in the Tamil script.[33] He did not give a translation but only an interpretation. It was also transcribed in modern Malayalam characters by T. K. Joseph, based on an estampage of the inscription,

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31 The following study of the Muṭṭuciṟa inscription is based on a forthcoming article, written by István Perczel and Saranya Chandran, "Re-reading the Muttuchira inscription (1581 AD: മുട്ടുച്ചിറ ലിഖിതം), accepted for publication in a volume dedicated to the Indian Ocean, edited by Alexandra Cuffel, of the online journal *Entangled Religions* (https://er.ceres.rub.de/).

32 On the history and the meaning of these names see I. Perczel, 'Syriac Christianity in India' in Daniel King (ed), *The Syriac World* (London: Routledge, 2019), 653-97, 654-62.

33 A. S. Ramanatha Ayar, "*Muttusira inscriptions*," (Trivandrum: Travancore Archeological Series VII/I 1930), 75–9.

where the shapes of the letters were painted.[34] T. K. Joseph translated the inscription first in a letter to H. Hosten SJ, dated 6 January 1926. Hosten published this translation with an interpretation in *Antiquities of San Thomé*.[35] Later T. K. Joseph revised the transcription and the translation.[36] There is a new comprehensive study about the inscriptions and the Muṭṭuciṟa monuments by Thomas Antony, based on both transcriptions.[37] As these translations partly contradicted each other, and partly did not correspond to the known historical facts, István Perczel tried to give a new translation and interpretation, based on T. K. Joseph's modern Malayalam transcription. However, feeling the insufficiency of this approach and aware of the deficiencies of the transcription used, he asked me to make a new estampage, which I made on 30 August 2021. Based on the new estampage, the two of us made a new transcription and translations in modern Malayalam and in English and wrote a study on the inscription as a new historical source. In the following I am giving a photo of the estampage, a transcription in Unicode *Vaṭṭeḻuttu* characters, another one in Modern Malayalam characters, and an English translation with brief notes on the inscription.

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34 See a photo of the estampage in *Kerala Society Papers*, Series 5 (1930): figure between pages 254 and 255 (in vol. I of the 1997 reprint).

35 In general, the most detailed study on the Muṭṭuciṟa inscription and the Persian Cross in Muṭṭuciṟa is that of Hosten, *Antiquities of San Thomé*, 341–63. T. K. Joseph's first translation of the inscription, which he modified later, can be found on pages 349–50.

36 T. K. Joseph, 'Notes to H. Hosten, "The Saint Thomas Christians of Malabar (A.D. 1490-1504),"*Kerala Society Papers*, Series 5 (1930) 253–4.

37 Thomas Antony, "*Muttuchira Sliva and Lithic Inscriptions – Landmark Monuments of Saint Thomas Christians of India,*" nasrani.net, March 12, 2021.
http://www.nasrani.net/muttuchira+church+sliva+lithic+inscriptions .
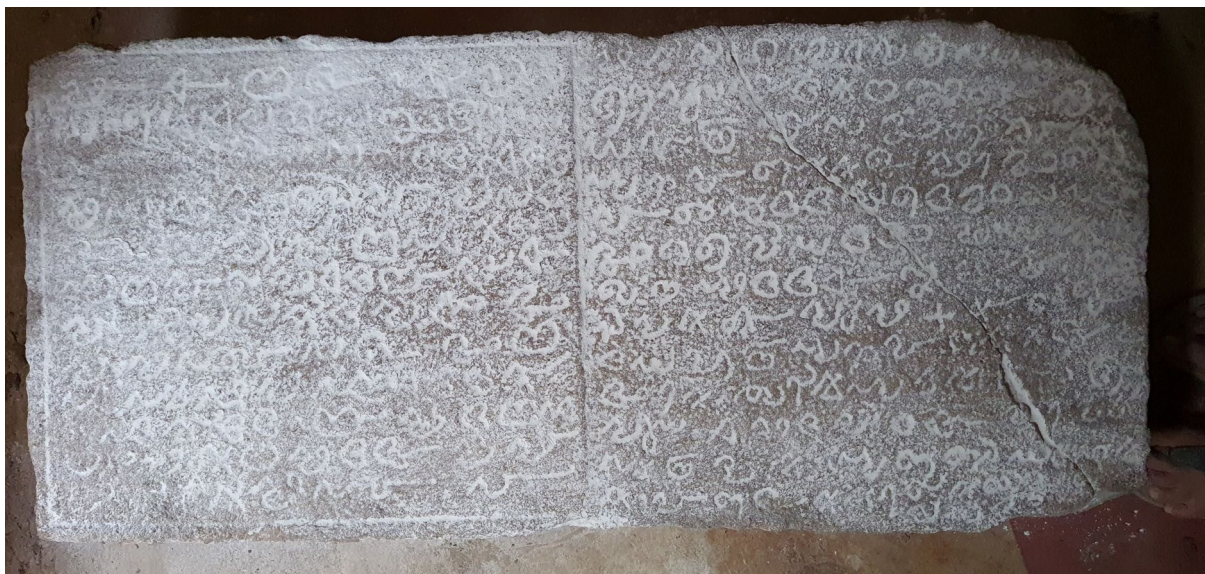
Figure 3: Muṭṭuciṟa Inscription

Transcription in Vaṭṭeḻuttu characters

First compartiment

ꢲꢲ ꢳꢲꢳꢳ
ꢮ ꢲꢲꢳꢳꢲ ꢀꢀꢀꢀꢲꢲ
ꢲꢲꢳ ꢲꢲꢳꢳ ꢳꢳꢳ
ꢲꢲꢳ ꢲꢳꢲꢲ ꢲꢲꢳ
ꢲ ꢳꢲꢲꢳꢳ ꢳꢲꢲ
ꢲꢳꢲꢲ ꢲꢳꢳꢳ ꢲꢲ
ꢲ ꢳꢲꢲꢳꢳꢳ ꢲꢲꢲ
ꢲꢲꢲꢲ ꢲꢳꢲ
ꢳꢲꢲꢲ ꢳꢳꢳꢳꢳ
ꢳꢲꢲꢲ ꢳꢳꢳ
ꢲꢳꢳꢳꢳ ꢲꢳꢳꢲꢲ ꢲ
ꢲꢲꢲꢲ ꢳꢳꢃ𝚷

Second compartiment

ꢲꢲꢮꢉ ꢲꢲꢳꢳꢲꢲꢀ
ꢀꢀꢀꢲꢲ ꢲꢳ ꢳꢳꢃ ꢳꢲꢳ
ꢵꢾꢉ ꢲꢲꢲꢳꢲꢲꢲ
ꢲꢳꢳꢳꢳꢳ ꢲ ꢲꢳꢲꢲ
ꢲ ꢳꢲꢳꢳ ꢲꢳꢳꢲꢳ ꢲꢲ
ꢲꢲꢲ ꢳꢲꢳꢳ ꢲꢲ ꢳꢲ
ꢲꢳ ꢲꢳꢳꢲꢲꢲꢲ ꢲꢲ

30

Transcription of the Vaṭṭeḻuttu text in Modern Malayalam characters:

First compartiment:

1 മാറാണ് ഇചൊ മിചി

2 യഹ പെറനനിടട അൗദ്രനവൃധ

3 വൃ മാത ഇ ണൈലതത ചുതത

4 മ ആന തിളിവാ ണിറുത

5 തി തമപുരാണറെ കലപ

6 പെണയാല മറതാണാ മാറാ

7 വൃ കീവറികീത പിറാതി

8 യ്മ് കുടി ഇതിണ

9 റെ ചൊഴമ പൊറതതകാ

10 ല തൈചാതത പൊയി തണറെ

11 മരുമകൈണ മാതതായി പാ

12 തിരിയ്മ കുടാ |

Second compartiment:

1 മിചിയഹ പെറനനിടട ണൗ

2 ദ്രനവൃധ മാത കണണി ഞായാറ

3 ധനന്ദു മാറു തിളിവാടെ

4 പെരുനാളകക ഇ മര തിളീ

5 വാ എട്ടതത മരതതിള പെ

6 തിഞഞ ണിറിതതി മാറു ചെമാ

7 ഒണ മെതതറാണുമ പാതി

8 രി യാക്കോവ്മ + കാലമി

9 ത ്ധവ്ന്ദു പെരുനാളകക ഇ ഉ

10 തിരകകുരിച വെചചു + ണൗദ്രന

11 വൃധഥ മാത മീണ ഞായറു വ്ധ

12 ർന്ദു ഇക്കവെള്ളി ആഴച

13 ച ണാള ഇക്കരില തിളിവാ

₁₄ നിറുതതി

English translation:

"In the year 1528 from the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, at this place, by the order of the Lord, Mār Denaḥā the Mār Abbā, together with Givargis *pātiri* erected a holy cross. After that, they [that is, Mār Denḥā and Givargis,] and his [Givargis'] nephew, Mattai *pātiri*, went to the Portuguese [dominated] land. | In the year 1580 from the birth of Christ, on the 13th of September, on the feast of the Holy Cross, the bishop Mār Śem'on and Yākōv *pātiri* took this wooden cross which had been broken, and erected it. + In that year, at the feast of 18 <December>, they placed this Bleeding Cross. + In the year 1581 of Christ, the 24th of the month of March, on Holy Friday, they erected this granite cross."

Brief explanation:

The inscription is a testimony to the Nestorian resistance against the Portuguese colonization and the forced Catholicisation of the native Saint Thomas Christians. "Mār Denaḥā the Mār Abbā" is the East Syriac bishop Mar Denḥā, who came with three other East Syriac bishops to Kerala in 1503, and wrote the first report on the Portuguese colonization in a letter addressed to his Patriarch, Mar Elias.[38] Givargis *pātiri* (from the Portuguese *padre*, "father") is Archdeacon George Pakalomattam, the priestly leader of the local community. The "Portuguese land" is the kingdom of Cochin, where the Portuguese had the upper hand. Muṭṭuciṟa, in the kingdom of Vadakkumkur, ruled by the "Pepper Queen," fell outside the

38 The letter was first published by Josephus Simonius Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana* vol. III/1. (Rome: Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, 1725), 589-99, and was re-published in Samuel Giamil, *Genuinae relationes inter sedem apostolicam et Assyriorum Orientalium seu Chaldaeorum Ecclesiam: nunc maiori ex parte primum editae, historicisque adnotationibus illustratae* (Rome: Ermanno Loescher et Co., 1902), 588-600.

Portuguese influence. The 13th of September is the feast of the exaltation of the Holy Cross according to the Nestorian customs. The Portuguese had transferred the feast to the 14th of September according to the Roman calendar, but Mār Śemʿon, a Nestorian bishop who arrived in Kerala in 1576, and "Yākōv *pātiri*," that is, his Archdeacon, Jacob Nadakkal, resisted the move to Catholicisation. In 1583, two Franciscan monks coming from Macau took Mar Shimʿon under their protection against the Jesuit resistance. In 1584 they took him to Rome, where it was discovered that "he was an impostor, having been neither consecrated as bishop, nor as a priest."[39] He was confined to a Franciscan friary in Lisbon, from where he corresponded with his Archdeacon until the latter's death in 1593.[40] Mar Shimʿon died in 1599. The inscription is also an important testimony to the fact that the open-air crosses, typical for the Kerala landscape, were originally carved from wood and that the custom of erecting granite crosses originated in the late sixteenth century. The "bleeding cross" is a replica of the Persian cross of Saint Thomas Mount in Chennai, which is still there in the Church of the Holy Spirit.

1.4. Koleḻuttu

Vaṭṭeḻuttu and *Koleḻuttu* look similar at first glance. scholars believe that the small difference in their shape is due to the material used for writing (Raghava Varier, 2019: p.215) *Vaṭṭeḻuttu* is carved in rocks and copper plates, but the majority of *Koleḻuttu* documents are preserved on palm leaves. A sharp stylus (*kolu*) was used to write on palm leaves, that is why the script

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39 See A. Gouvea *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes Primaz da India Oriental, Religioso da Orden de S. Agostino* (Coimbra: Officina de Diogo Gomez, 1606), 9r-10r. Whether or not this information should be believed, this is difficult to decide.

40 Priest Jacob was buried in the Holy Spirit Church of Muttuchira and his inscribed tombstone with the date was found in 1886. See H. Hosten, *Antiquities of San Thomé*, 353.

is called *Koleḻuttu*. It is also known as Malayalam Tamil or *Malayanma*.[41] However, *Vaṭṭeḻuttu*, *Koleḻuttu* and *Malayanma* belong to the same category. In fact, *Koleḻuttu* and *Malayanma are later versions of Vaṭṭeḻuttu. Vaṭṭeḻuttu* has changed during the time because of writing materials, style of the scribe, and writing style of the time. (Raghava Varier, 2019: p.215) Pavithran finds that some changes happened to *Vaṭṭeḻuttu* when it became *Koleḻuttu*. In *Koleḻuttu* , the vowels are known as *Uyireḻuttu* and the consonants are known as *Meyyeḻuttu*. The combination of vowels and consonants are called *uyir meyyeḻuttu*. *Koleḻuttu* is different from *Vaṭṭeḻuttu* in some particular areas. For example, when it comes to the phonemes a,i,o,n (അ,ഇ,ഒ,ന) and the symbols of ā and i (ാ,ി), *Koleḻuttu* is different from

Vaṭṭeḻuttu. In some *Koleḻuttu* scripts we can find long 'o'(ഓ) that does not exist in *Vaṭṭeḻuttu*. Here I am presenting two kinds of *Koleḻuttu,* collected and standardised from different *Koleḻuttu* manuscripts found in Kerala.

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41 Pavithran, *Epigraphy*, 79.

1.4.a. Graphemes of Koleḻuttu[42]

Figure 4: Garphemes of Koleḻuttu

Another kind of Koleḻuttu

Figure 5: Another model of Koleḻuttu

42   This Charecter map is prepared by A Vasudeva Pothuval, former superintendent of Travancore Archeological department. Sam, *Keralathile Pracheena Lipimatrukakal*,38,39

1.4.b. **Kanjoor Church Inscription**

Here I am adding as illustration an inscription, written on a crossbeam in the attic of the Kanjoor Church, in present-day Ernakulam District. The inscription, dated 1803, commemorates the reconstruction of the roof of the Kanjoor Church after the incursion of Tippu Sultan, the Muslim ruler of Mysore, who set the Church on fire. The photo was made during the SRITE digitization project (https://cems.ceu.edu/digitization-syriac-manuscripts-southern-india) by Yesudas Chovokkaran.
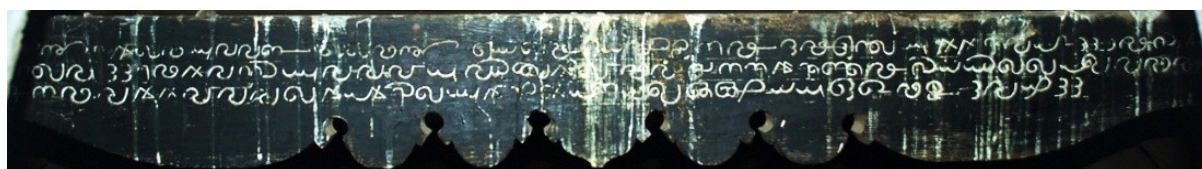
Figure 6: Kanjoor Church Inscription

The inscription was translated by the Rev Dr George Kurukkoor, with the contribution of Istvan Perczel. The following translation has not been published to date.

Translation

"In the year 1902[43] after the birth of Christ, that is, in the year 977according to the Kollam era,[44] in the month of Mithunam, on the 5th day, the roof[45] was erected and the bolster was built up. In the year [9]78, in the month of Thulam, on the 8th day, the beams upon the wall were placed. As far as possible, in that position, the supports upon which the crossbeams were resting were not changed. In Edavam[46] month, on the 12th day according to the old

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43 The counting of the year according to the Christian era is erroneous. See the next note.

44 Kollam era 977 corresponds to 1802 AD. The calculation of the date according to the Christian era has been made erroneously, adding 925, instead of the required 825, to the Kollam era date.

45 The inscription uses the term *akara*, a Malayalam version of the Syriac *egara*.

46 The text uses the (Tamil?) form *Yenamam*.

counting,[47] having fixed the ceiling and placed the adornments, Master Ñāñida, from the carpenters of Kannayalacheril, wrote this."

Notes: The inscription commemorates the reconstruction of the roof of the Kanjoor church, which occured in 1802-1803, after the devastations of Tippu Sultan of Mysore, who set the church on fire. The inscription uses a Malayalam dialect close to Tamil, but for "roof" it uses the Syriac term *akara/ēgara*. Apparently, this word, inexistent in today's Malayalam, was part of the Syro-Malayalam dialect used by Master Ñāñida.

1.5. Arabi Malayalam

Jaleel K.A says that Arabi Malayalam has been used in Kerala from the 9th century. Merchants came from Arabia to Kerala and used their native script to denote Malayalam. This is quite a common opinion about the origin of Arabi Malayalam, also called Mappilla Malayalam. However, this view does not stand to reason, as there are no literary monuments written in Arabi Malayalam before the seventeenth century, the first being the *Muhiyuddhin Mala*,. Thus, it is much more reasonable to suppose that the Arabi Malayalam and Garshuni Malayalam scripts emerged quasi simultaneously in early modernity.

In this script system, Arabic characters are used to write Malayalam. It also includes some signs to denote Malayalam characters which do not exist in Arabic. Khatafunnani or Ponnani script is another name for the Arabi Malayalam script.[48] Like Arabic, this script is also written from right to left. The special features of this script will be discussed in next chapter.

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47 When the Portuguese came in India, they introduced the Gregorian calendar; this also influenced the counting of the days of the month in the Malayalam month- and year-system. However, the large majority of the inscriptions uses the pre-Portuguese system, indicating that it follows the "old counting."

48   http://hdl.handle.net/10603/49524

1.5.a. Graphemes of Arabi Malayalam

vowels

Arabi Malayalam	اَ	آ	اِ	اِي	اُ	اُو	رْ	اَ	اَي	اَيْ	اُ	اُو	اَوْ	اَمْ
Malayalam	അ	ആ	ഇ	ഈ	ഉ	ഊ	ഋ	എ	ഏ	ഐ	ഒ	ഓ	ഔ	അം
English	a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	r̥	e	ē	ai	o	ō	au	ṃ

Table 21: Vowels of Arabi Malayalam

Consonants

Arabi Malayalam	ك/ﻙ	كه	گ	گه	غ
Malayalam	ക	ഖ	ഗ	ഘ	ങ
English	ka	kha	ga	gha	ṅa

Table 22: Gutturals (kavarggam)

Arabi Malayalam	چ	چه	ج	جه	ڠ
Malayalam	ച	ഛ	ജ	ഝ	ഞ
English	ca	cha	ja	jha	ña

Table 23: Palattal (cavarggam)

Arabi Malayalam	ڊ	ڊه	ز	زه	ن
Malayalam	ട	ഠ	ഡ	ഢ	ണ
English	ṭa	ṭha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa

Table 24: Retrofex/ Cerebral (ṭavarggam)

Arabi Malayalam	پ	پھ/ف	ب	بھ	م
Malayalam	�	ﬅ	ബ	ഭ	മ
English	pa	pha	ba	bha	ma

Table 25: Labials (pavarggam)

Arabi Malayalam	ي	ر	ل	و	ض	ژ	ر	رّ
Malayalam	യ	ര	ല	വ	ള	ഴ	റ	ഺ
English	ya	ra	la	va	ḷa	ḻa	ṟa	ṯṯa

Table 26: Semivowels

Arabi Malayalam	ش	ثش	س
Malayalam	ശ	ഷ	സ
English	śa	ṣa	sa

Table 27: Sibilants

Arabi Malayalam	ه/ھ
Malayalam	ഹ
English	ha

Table 28: Aspirate

1.5.b. Muhiyuddhin Mala

This is the first text in Kerala, which was written in Arabi Malayalam characters. This is a poem written by Khazi Muhammad of Kozhikode to praise Abd-al-Qāder Jīlānī,[49] Sunni Muslim preacher, theologian, mystic, jurist and founder of the Qāderī Sufi order. Here I am giving the first page of this manuscript along with its transcription.

Figure 7: Muhiyudhin Mala

Modern Malayalam Transcription

അല്ലാഹ് തിരുപേരും സ്തുതിയും സ്വലവാത്തും

അതിനാൽ ഇടങ്ങുവാൻ അരുൾ ചെയ്ത ബേദാംബർ

ആലം ഉടയവൻ ഏകൽ അരുളാലെ ആയെ മുഹമ്മദവർകിള ആണോവര്

എല്ലാക്കിളയിലും വന് കിട ആണോവര്.

എല്ലാ തിശയിലും കേളിമികച്ചോവര്

സുൽത്താനുലൗവിലിയാ എന്ന പേരുള്ളോവര്

49 See the entry Abd-al-Qāder Jīlānī in the Encyclopaedia Iranica at https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abd-al-qader-jilani.

സയ്യിദാവർതായും ബാവായുമായോവര്

ബാവ മുതുകിന്ന് ഖ്യുത്ത്വബായി വന്നോവര്

വാനമതേഴില്യം കേളി നിറഞ്ഞോവര്

ഇരുന്ന ഇരുപ്പിന്നേഴാകാശം കണ്ടൊവര്

ഏറ്റം മലക്കത്തിലോര് രാജാളി എന്നോവര്.

വലതുശരീഅത്തെന്നും കടല്യുള്ളോവര്

ഇടത്തു ഹക്കീകെത്തോന്നും കടല്യുള്ളോവര്

English Translation[50]

By the grace of the Possessor of the World, the

He was born into the family of Muhammad222

He was born into the greatest of all families He was famous everywhere223

He came from his father as a leader

His fame fills all seven skies

He saw the seven skies simultaneously

He holds a kingly position among the angels

He has the sea of shari'a 224 The sea of haqiqa 225 on (his) right

on (his) left

1.6. Garshuni Malayalam

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50 The first two lines are missing in the translation. See, Maude Keely Sutton, *In the forest of sand: history, devotion, and memory in south Asian Muslim poetry* (Austin: The university of Texas, 2015), 80

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Garshuni Malayalam is also known as Suriyani Malayalam or Malayalam Karson. This script was used by the St. Thomas Christians in Kerala. This is a mixed, Syriac-Dravidian alphabet. Like Syriac, it is also written from right to left. Apart from Syriac characters it also includes nine Malayalam characters, such as; ña, ṭa, ja, ṇa, ra, ṣa, ḷa, ḻa, na, ṅa (ഞ, ട, ജ, ണ, ര, ഷ, ള, ഴ, ന, ങ). Earlier Garshuni Malayalm documents only contain eight of them, ṣa (ഷ) being a later addition. Even later, ja (ജ) and bha (ഭ), along with some ligatures were also included adopted from the alphabet (Perczel, 2014: p.305 -323). The eight basic additional characters were adopted from the *Koleḻuttu, and* the Grandha scripts. ña, ṭa, ṇa, ra, ḷa, ḻa, na, ṅa (ഞ, ട, ജ, ണ, ര, ഷ, ള, ഴ, ന, ങ). ṣa (ഷ) was adopted from early modern Grandha, while ja (ജ) and bha (ഭ) are borrowings from the *Ārya eḻuttu* ("Aryan script"), that is, the ancestor of Modern Malayalam. There are only few studies about Garshuni Malayalam. Moreover, this script has never been studied together with other medieval and early modern Malayam scripts. So, it remains less known in Malayalam academic circles. In the next chapter I am going to discuss the origin, development and a socio-linguistic analysis of Garshuni   Malayalam.

1.6.a. Graphemes of Garshuni Malayalam

Vowels

Garshuni Malayalam	ܲ	ܴ	ܝܲ	ܘܲ	ܶ	ܶ	ܲ	ܐܲ	ܘܲ
Malayalam	അ	ആ	ഇ, ഈ	ഉ, ഊ	എ	ഏ	ഐ	ഒ,ഓ	ഔ
English	**a**	**ā**	I, **ī**	U, **ū**	e	**ē**	**ai**	**O, ō**	**au**

Table 29: Vowels in Garshuni Malayalam

Consonants

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Garshuni Malayalam	Malayalam	English
ܒ	വ, ബ, ഭ	Va, ba, bha
ܓ	ഗ, ഘ	Ga, gha
ܕ	ത, ദ, ധ	Ta, da, dha
ܗ	ഹ	Ha
ܘ		
ܙ	ഹ	Ha
ܚ	ത	Ta
ܝ	യ	Ya
ܟ	ക, ഖ, ഗ, ഘ	Ka, kha, ga, gha
ܠ	ല, ൽ	La, l
ܡ	മ, ◌ം	Ma, m
ܢ	ന, ൻ	Na
ܣ	സ	
ܥ		
ܦ	പ, ഫ	Pa, pha
ܨ	സ	Sa
ܩ	ക	Ka
ܪ	ര, ർ	
ܫ	ച, ഷ, ജ, ഝ, ശ	
ܬ	ത, ഥ, ദ, ധ, സ	

Table 30: Garshuni Malayalam Graphemes

Additional Malayalam Characters

Garshuni Malayalam	Modern Malayalam	English
�“	ഞ	ña
◡	ട	ṭa
ജ	ജ	ja
ഉ	ണ	ṇa
⌐	ര	ra
ഷ	ഷ	ṣa
ഌ	ള	ḷa
⌐	ഴ	ḷa
൭	ന	na
൭	ങ	ṅa

Table 31: Additional Malayalam characters in Garshuni Malayalam

1.6.b. Malayalam Acts of Thomas

As an illustration, I am adding here the first part of the Malayalam Acts of Thomas. It is contained in MS Mal Gar 1 of Fr. George Kurukkoor's personal manuscript collection, which contains apocryphal Acts of the Apostles and Lives of early saints in Malayalam. Obviously, this is a missionary production. In "Garshuni Malayalam: A Witness to an Early Stage of Indian Christian Literature" István Perczel had claimed that these apocrypha and Lives were translated from Latin (Perczel 2014: 286). However, this proved to be an oversimplification. While the texts are definitively based on the Latin tradition and reflect Roman Catholic theology, they seem to be original creations, made in India, using Latin, Spanish, Portuguese and Syriac sources. According to Perczel, the collection must have been written after the Synod of Diamper (1599), which in Decree 14 of Session 3 according to the Portuguese Acts, corresponding to Canon 13 of Session 2 in the Malayalam Acts, condemned a set of Syriac apocryphal Acts of the Apostles and many Lives of the Saints of the Church of the East"

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(Perczel 2014: 287). Perczel hypothesises that, as a result, a new set of similar readings was created in Malayalam, to replace the Syriac collection deemed heretical.

On fol. 66r of the manuscript begin the Malayalam Acts of Thomas. In the following I am adding as illustration the photo of the first two pages of the Acts, and a Modern Malayalam transcription with an English translation of the first sentences. The photos were made during the SRITE digitization project (https://cems.ceu.edu/digitization-syriac-manuscripts-southern-india). Courtesy of Fr George Kurukkoor.
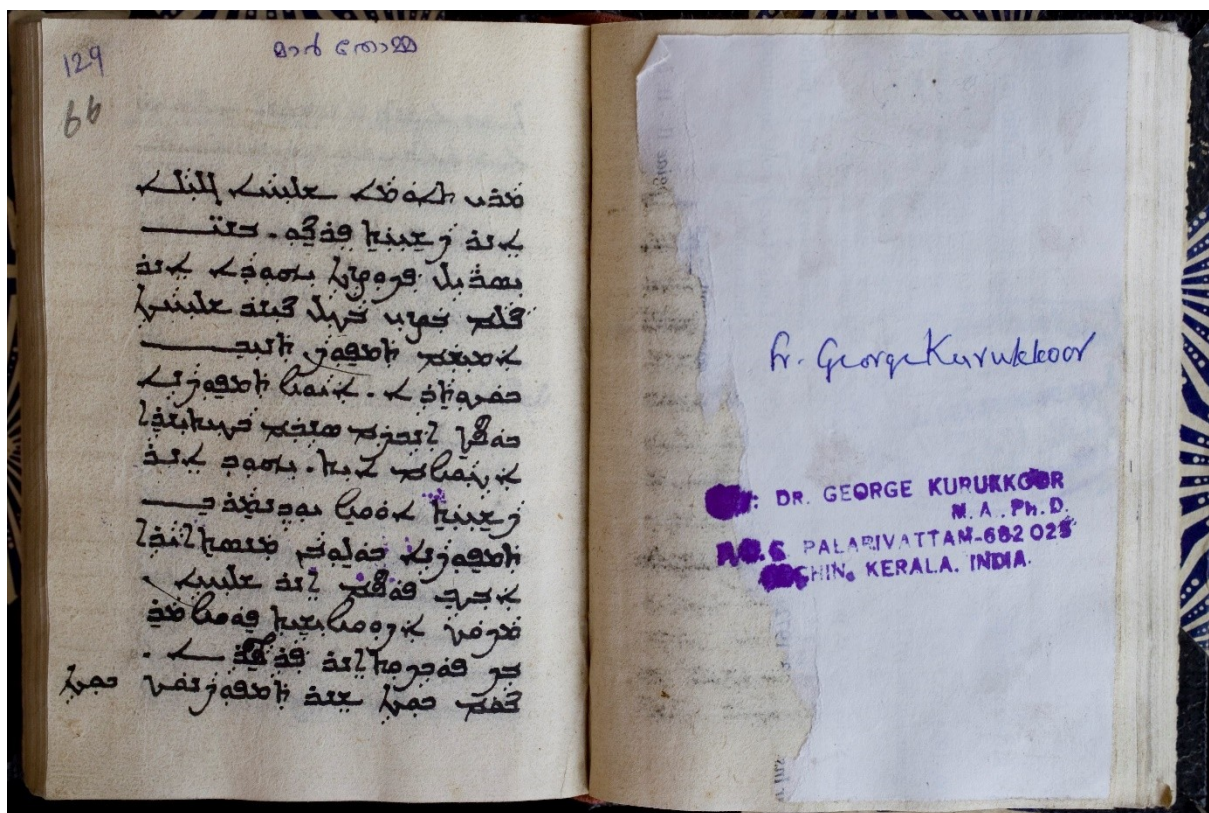
Figure 8: Act of Thomas, Page-1
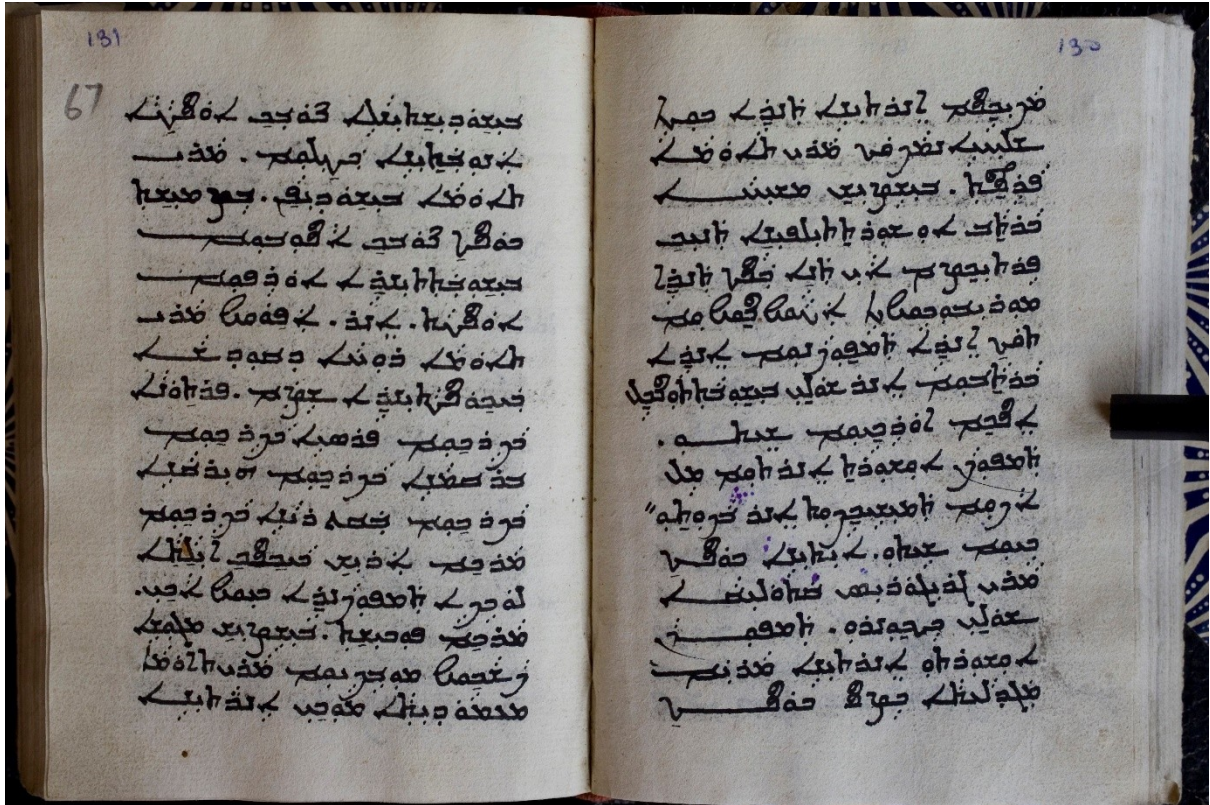
Figure 9: Act of Thomas, Page - 2

Modern Malayalam transcription

[fol. 66r] 1. മാറയ തോമാ ശലിഹാ ഗലിൽ

2. എൻറ രാച്ചിയത്ത് പേറന്ന

3. യസറായേൽ പരുഴോ(ഷേ)ടെ യഹുദാ എനറ

4. നാലാമ വഴി വാട്ടിൽ നിനറ ശ്ലിഹാടേ

5. കൊടുത്താറെ അയാൾ തമ്പു(മപ) രാനെ

6. കൊണ്ട് അനേകരമ സനേകമ(സ്നേഹം) കാട്ടിയ തിനനെ

8. അടയാളമ ഇത് യഹുദ് എനറ

9. രാച്ചിയത്ത് ഉള്ള യുദേന്മാർക്ക്

10. തമ്പുരാനേ കൊല്ലുവാൻ മനസത(മനസ്സ്) ആയാറേ

11. അവടേക്ക് പോണം എനറ ശ്ലു(ശലി) ഹേ

12. മാരേട അരുളിച്ചെയത് പ്പോൾ മാറ്റ്

13. പേർ പുകേരത് എനറ പറഞ്ഞാറേ

14. നോം കൂടെ ചെനറ തമ്പുരാനോട് കൂടേ

[fol. 66v] 15 മരിക്കേണം എനറതിനേ തനറ്റേ കൂടേ

47

16 ശ്ലീഹായേ ന്മാരോട മാറയ തോമ

17 പാറഞ്ഞാത്. വിചേശിച്ച് മഛിയഹാ

18. കർത്താവ ഉശ്ശർത്തതിൽ പിന്നേ തനിക്ക്

19. മുറിവുകൾളേ അടയാളങ്ങളമ

20. തൊട്ട് എന്നറ്റേ തറവ്വരാന്മ എന്നറ്റേ

21. കർത്താവ്വും എനറ ചൊല്ലി വിച്ച വാതണ്കൾ

22. എണക്കമ ഒറേക്കേയമ ചെയ്തു

23. തമ്പുരാർ ഉശ്ശർത്ത് എനറ തുമ മേൽ

24. ആരുമ തമിച്ചേയക്കേരുത് എനറ വരുത്ത-

25. കേയും ചെയ്തു. ഇതിനെ കൊണ്ട്

26. മാർ ഗ്രിഗോറിസീസ് കത്തോലിക്കാ

27. ചൊല്ലി കെടക്കുന്നു. തമ്പുരാൻ

28. ഉശിർത്തു എന്നതിനെ മാറിയം

29. മഗദലാന്താ കേഴഞ്ഞ് കൊണ്ട്

English translation

"The Apostle Mar Thoma was born in the country called Galilee from the *Bnay Yisrayēl*, the tribe of Judah, that is, the fourth lineage.[51] The Lord had given him the lot of an apostle. This is the sign that he showed of his great love for the Lord: The Jews who were in the country of Judah agreed to kill the Lord. When he proposed to the Apostles that they should go there, the others said not to go. "We should go and die together with the Lord"[52] – this is what Mar Thoma said to the Apostles who were with him. Moreover, after the Lord Christ had risen, he saw Him as He appeared to him, touched the scars of his wounds and said: "My God and my Lord!"[53] He set an eternal memory of the faith, and he proclaimed that nobody should doubt that the Lord has risen."

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51 Judah was the fourth son of Jacob.
52 John 11:16.
53 John 20:28.

Chapter 2

Arabi Malayalam and Garshuni Malayalam

2.1. Socio-Linguistics and Contact Languages

Language contact can occur not only in borders but also as part of migration and trade. When speakers of different languages interact, it is normal that their languages influence each other. This will lead to language convergence and borrowing of words. Other common outcomes of language contact are code switching, code mixing, and mixed language[54]. When two or more languages serve different purposes to a particular speech community, there will be a tendency to switch over from one language to another and also mix various linguistic items of these language. This is called code switching and code mixing in contact linguistics. Contact linguistics also investigates cases when a particular language variety becomes dominant over and above other languages and language varieties. This kind of social, cultural, political, economic, or educational dominance of one language or language variety over the others is known as linguistic hegemony.[55] Sometimes this dominance would not be clearly visible because it is not affecting the entire language. That means that some forms of language contact only affect one particular segment of a speech community (Ahmed 2015). The change may be manifested only in particular dialects, jargons, or registers. I am proposing to explain the creation of the Garshuni Malayalam and Arabi Malayalam scripts as cases of partial

54 Ahmed, F. Z. *Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Salatiga: STAIN Salatiga, 2015. Chapter IV downloaded from https://www.academia.edu/13522307/INTRODUCTION_TO_SOCIOLINGUISTICS (draft version without page numbers)
55 Themoth Regan; 2019, p. 95

linguistic hegemony. In the present chapter I will examine the contact between Arabic and Malayalam, which has resultedin the formation of a new script called in the literature Arabi Malayalam, used by the Kerala Muslim community. Second, I will examine a closely related phenomenon, namely the contact between Syriac and Malayalam, which has resulted, on the one hand, in the formation of the Garshuni Malayalam script, used by the Saint Thomas Christians in Kerala and the European Catholic missionaries missionizing the native Christians and, on the other hand, in the birth of a literary dialect, which was recently dubbed "Suriyani Malayalam."[56]In this chapter, I will analyse the socio-historical background of the origin and development of the Arabi Malayalam and Garshuni Malayalam scripts by looking into the formation and spread of the Muslim (Māppiḷḷa) and the Christian (Saint Thomas Christian) communities separately. Then, I will study in both cases the new language situation in the bilingual communities formed by these contacts. Subsequently, I will explain where we can place these scripts in the history of Malayalam writing or scripts. Finally, I will analyse why these scripts are important in Kerala history.

2.2. Social and Cultural Background of the formation of Arabi Malayalam

2.2.a. Formation and spread of the Māppiḷḷa Community

The social and cultural background for the origin of Arabi Malayalam is directly linked to the spread of the Māppiḷḷa community in Malabar, northern Kerala. There are several theories about the etymology of the term Māppiḷḷa. However, it is logical to think that this name originated from the word *māppiḷḷa*, which is still used in Dravidian languages, such as Tamil

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56 I Perczel, *"The oldest monument extant of the study of Indian languages by Europeans'? A 17th-century Malayalam encyclopaedia discovered in the Mannanam Library"* in *Revisiting a treasure Trove*, Joseph Chacko Chennattusserry CMI, Ignatius Payyappilly ed. (CHIRST (Deemed to be university), 2018), 94 -104

and Malayalam, and means "son-in-law."[57] At the earliest stage, this term was used to denote foreign merchants who came to Kerala and married native women, as well as their offspring. So, Christians, Jews, and Muslims are known as Māppiḷḷa. Later, the term became limited to Muslims. Here I use the term Māppiḷḷa only for Muslims.[58] Kerala has had strong trade relations with the land of Arabia at least from the seventh century AD. Arabs used the term *Bilad-al-filfil*, which means "Land of pepper," to designate Kerala. Even the term "Malabar" is evidence for the relation between the Arabs and Kerala. The term "Malabar" is a combination of two words. The first is *mala,* which means "hills" in Malayalam, and the second is *bar*, which means "land" in Arabic. Arab merchants came to Kerala, and they stayed in port cities for their trade. Usually they came in July – August and stayed there until December- January for buying and collecting goods. During this time, they started marital relation with local women in the Malabar coast. They moved into rural areas after the Europeans reached Kerala where they engaged in farming and small business.[59]

There is a legendary story about the spread of the Māppiḷḷa community all over Kerala. This is the story of Ceraman Perumal, the last Perumāḷ ruler of Kerala. The Cēra Perumāḷs were a dynasty in Medieval Kerala, who ruled the area of present-day Kollam and Koyilandi from the 9th to 12th century AD.[60] According to the story in the *Tuḥfat-al-Mujāhidīn,* a historical work on the struggle between Māppiḷḷa Muslims of Malabar and the Portuguese colonial power in them 16th century, ,written in Arabic by Shaykh Zaynuddin Makhdum II (Nainar, 1948: p. 35-39), a few Muslim pilgrims came to Kerala and met the Perumal at Kodungallur/Cranganore (a port city in Kerala). The Perumal wanted to accept the new religion after hearing the teachings of the prophet Muhammad from the pilgrims. He went to

57 C Saidalavi, *"Arabi Malayalam: A Contact Linguistic Analysis,"* (Kozhikode: Lipi Publications, 2006), 256.
58 Saidalavi, Arabi Malayalam, 56.

59 Saidalavi, Arabi Malayalam, 51-52.

60 See M G S Narayanan, *"Perumāḷs of Kerala,"* (Thrissur: Cosmo Books, 2013), 89-90.

Mecca with the pilgrims and converted to Islam. Later he wished to come back, but he was ill and died in the Arabian coast. Before his death, he wrote a letter to the officers in his region to provide good facilities for his friends who bring this letter, and to make arrangements for the spread of their religion. Some years later, Mālik bin Dīnār and his companions came to Kerala with his letter and travelled to different parts of the country and spread their religion. They established ten mosques at those places where there were many Muslim converts. (Nainar 1942: 35-41). [61]

Zainuddin dates the arrival of Mālik bin Dīnār to the year 207 of the Hijra/822 A.D., yet the present conscience of the Muslim community dates it to 3/624. It holds that Mālik bin Dīnār had built the Malik Dinar mosque at Kasaragode in the 22nd year of the Hijra, that is, 642 A.D.[62] It is believed that he has been buried in the mosque. The identity of the legendary Mālik bin Dīnār is difficult to establish. The famous Mālik bin Dīnār of the Muslim tradition was one of the first Sufi ascetics, who lived in the eighth century, and died in Basra either in 130/747-8, or in 127/744-5, according to diverse sources.[63] These sources do not know about a trip to India, nor about Mālik dying there.

Perhaps, the association of Kerala Islam with the name of Mālik bin Dīnār, one of the founders of the Sufi ascetic movement, is due to the fact that Sufi missionaries had an important role in the spread of the Māppiḷḷa community. They composed songs called

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61 See also the parallel story in the Keralolpatti, a Hindu work written in Malayalam: Gundert (1868): 78-79.

62 See Miller, R.E., "Mappila", in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 18 May 2022 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0673>. For the popular belief, see
 https://www.keralatourism.org/bekal/malik-dinar-mosque.php.

63 See Pellat, Ch., "Mālik b. Dīnār," in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 18 May 2022 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_4864.

"Mala" to propagate the Sufi teachings. Ponnani (another port city in Kerala) became a centre for the conversion to Muslim faith and a centre for the education of Muslim theology after 1519, the year of foundation of the Ponnani Juma Masjid and the connected *dars* (*madrasah*).

Local rulers in Malabar were supportive towards the Muslim merchants. Shaykh Zainuddin writes: "It is well-known that the Muslims of Malabar have no Amīr who possesses power and can exercise authority over them and mindful of their welfare. On the contrary, all of them are subjects of rulers who are unbelievers" (Nainar 1942: 21). Many Muslims settled in Malabar because of the favourable treatment and the special social status given to them. All rulers, especially the Zamorins of Calicut, treated them well both for economic and military reasons. The Muslim Marakkars equipped and manned the military fleet of the Zamorin. This support helped the spread of Muslim settlements all over Malabar. [64]

Just like the native rulers, the local people also set up a favourable atmosphere for the spread of Islam. At that time the caste system was very strong in North Malabar, just like in other parts of Kerala. Locals considered people from low caste untouchables. So, the low caste people got attracted to Islam as Islam was an egalitarian religion, not recognizing the caste laws of pollution. The Untouchable believed that, if they convert to Islam, they would be treated as equal and their social status would also rise. There was also another economic reason behind the conversion of locals to Islam, based on occupation. In the caste system, people from a particular caste can only do a particular job. They were not allowed to do the job of other castes. However, after conversion they could choose their job according to their choice which would improve their economic situation. (Madhavan Nair 1971:55)

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[64] Saidalavi, Arabi Malayalam 66.

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As a result of the missionary activities, the native rulers' support to the Muslim merchants, and the conversion of local low caste people, an indigenous Muslim community was formed in Malabar. The Māppiḷḷa community in Malabar is not exactly following the Middle Eastern Muslim teaching. This new cultural group also created a new language situation in Malabar, which served as a base for the development of Arabi Malayalam literature.

2.2.b. A new language situation: Bilingualism among the Māppiḷḷas and Arabi Malayalam

This newly formed community was using both Arabic and Malayalam. From the above narrative it should be clear that the Māppiḷḷa community along the Malabar coast does not consist only of Arabian merchants, but the majority of them are Malayalam-speaking natives.[65] Apparently, a Malayalam literature produced by the Māppiḷḷa community did not emerge immediately after the arrival of Arab merchants in Kerala. Aneesha. P. and Saidalavi C. (2020), citing Abdurahman (1978) and Saidalavi (2006), claim that all the early literary production of the Māppiḷḷa community in Kerala was in Arabic. The Māppiḷḷas were bilingual. Their elite was and still is fluent in Arabic.

Anisha P. and Saidalavi C. are analysing the common language and script used in Kerala in the time of the rise of the Māppiḷḷa community, to explain the origin of Arabi Malayalam. For this, they are referring to studies about the written sources of Kerala history, such as inscriptions and manuscripts from the medieval and early modern period, conducted by Rathnamma K. (2003, 2005) and Prabhakara Warrier (1982). From this analysis, they conclude their findings as follows:

"മാപ്പിളസമുദായത്തിന്റെ രൂപീകരണ ദശയില്ലും തുടർന്ന് കേരളത്തിലേക്കുള്ള ഇസ്ലാമിന്റെ വരവുണ്ടായ ദശയില്ലും മലയാളം പൂർവ്വ ദ്രാവിഡത്തിൽ നിന്ന് പൂർണ്ണമായും സ്വതന്ത്രമാകാത്ത സങ്കരഭാഷയോ പ്രാദേശിക ഭേതമോ ആയിരുന്നുവെന്ന്

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65 See Miller, R.E., "Mappila," in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition.*

ഭാഷാചരിത്രം ചികയുമ്പോൾ കണ്ടെത്താനാകുന്നു. മലയാളത്തിന് ഒരു പൊതുവരമൊഴിയുടെ പ്രതിനിധാനം ഉണ്ടാക്കത്തക്ക വിധമുള്ള സ്വത്വസമ്മർദ്ദം അക്കാലത്ത് ഉണ്ടായിട്ടില്ല. വിളംബരങ്ങൾക്കും ആധികാരിക രേഖകൾക്കും സാഹിത്യാവിഷ്ക്കാരങ്ങൾക്കും ചെന്തമിഴിന് പ്രാമുഖ്യമുള്ള രാജഭാഷയായിരുന്ന ഉപയോഗിച്ചിരുന്നത്. ശാസനഭാഷ ഈ വസ്തുത അടിവരയിട്ടുന്നുണ്ട്." [66]

Translation:

"By inquiring into the history of the Malayalam language, it becomes clear that Malayalam is a mixed language or dialect, which was not fully detached from the early Dravidian language at the time of the arrival of Muslims to the Kerala Coast and of the emergence of the Māppiḷa community. There were no cultural identity forces at that time to form a representation of common script. An early Tamil dominated royal language was used for official documents, announcements, and literature. The language of the grants proves this."

There are some Arabic words used in trade documents before the rise of the Māppiḷa community.[67] Since there was no commonly used script for Malayalam, the newly formed Māppiḷa community was forced to create a new script. As the majority of the Māppiḷa belonged to the Malayalam-speaking natives, the vernacular remained in use. Yet, a script had to be created for teaching the principles of the Muslim religion in Malayalam. As the reading of the Qur'an was obligatory for every Muslim believer, they had to learn to read the Arabic script. Thus, it was convenient to introduce changes (including the addition of secondarysigns) in the Arabic script to enable it to represent the Malayalam sounds."

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66 P Aneesha, C Saidalayi, *Arabi Malayalam Lipi: Avirbhavavum Parinamum* (Arabi Malayalam Script: Origin and Development) in *Pytrikavimarsham* (Heritage Criticism, Cultural Heritage Journal), ed. Sajina, G (Thunchatheluttachan University: Faculty of Heritage Studies, 2020), 174

67 P M Abdurahiman, *"Contribution of Arabic to Malayalam,"* Unpublished PhD thesis, (University of Calicut,1978), 22

There is evidence for the fusion of Arabic with native languages all over the world, where Muslims live. Arabi Malayalam is also formed like this. Historically, written tradition is normally followed by oral tradition. However, in this case, the opposite was happening. As the majority of the Māppiḷas were native speakers of Malayalam, there was a need to create and learn a script which would make their reading of the holy text and the daily prayers easy, that is, which would be equally apt for writing Arabic and Malayalam. This script and words that they used for their prayers influenced their dialect. It has been proposed by Gamliel (2017) that the Muslims in the Malabar Coast have a particular dialect or regiolect.[68] However, it is not true that all the Muslims in the Malabar Coast speak the same dialect. It is necessary to think about the geographical variation of dialects in the Malabar region or all over Kerala. Other non-Muslim natives in Malabar, who are living together with the Māppiḷa community, speak the same dialect. Thus, speaking of a "religiolect" is not appropriate in this case.

Features of the script

- Graphemes in Arabi Malayalam are designed as to represent all phonemes in Arabic and Malayalam

- The writing direction is from right to left, just like in Arabic.

- Vowel symbols are marked above and below the script

- Secondary signs like dots and curved lines are used to develop graphemes for Malayalam, which are not in Arabic

- Arabi Malayalam includes graphemes which are used in Malayalam but not in Arabic, to denote the following phonemes: e, ē, o, ō, ga, ṅa, ca, ña, ṭa, ṇa, ra, ṣa, ḷa, and ḻa

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68 Ophira Gamliel, "Fading memories and linguistic fossils in the religiolect of Kerala Jews" in *Oral history meets linguistics*, ed. Erich Kasten, Kata Roler, and Joshua Wilbur, (Fürstenberg/Havel: Kulturstiftung Sibirien, 2017), 83 -102

- It also includes the diphthongs ai and au, written and pronounced as ayã (അയ്) and avã (അവ്).

- Dental and palatal na are written with same character, just like in modern Malayalam

- Tta (ഠ) is witten as a double ṙa (റ), unlike in Modern Malayalam, where it is written as a double ra (Abhullah, 2015)

2.3. Development of Garshuni Malayalam – Social and Cultural Background of Syriac Christianity in Kerala

The development of Garshuni Malayalam script should be analysed in connection with the origin and development of Syriac Christianity in Kerala.

This community of Christians in Kerala believes that the first Christian community in Kerala (India) was converted and baptised by Apostle Thomas. AD 52 is claimed as the year of arrival of Apostle Thomas. Its historical authenticity is widely questioned[69]. There are many folklore ballads and performing arts based on this tradition such as Vīraṭiyān Pāṭṭu, Mārggam Kaḷi Pāṭṭu, and Rambān Pāṭṭu. This tradition is not only rooted in this community but also in their mother church, the Church of Persia.[70] In the colophon of the earliest extant Syriac manuscript copied in India, Ms Vaticanus 22 written in Śenglī in the Malabar coast, the scribe, a young deacon called Zachariah, son of Joseph, Son of Zacharia, commemorates the then metropolitan bishop of India, Mar Jacob, and calls him the Holder of the apostolic see of Saint Thomas.[71]

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69 Perczel, "Syriac Christianity in India," in The Syriac world, ed. Daniel King (London: Routledge, 2019), 655
70 Perczel, Syriac Christianity in India, 656
71 Van der Ploeg 1983: p.3-4, 187-9 and Perczel, Syriac Christianity in India , 653-97.

Another source is the legend about the arrival of Thomas of Kana, in Malayalam Knāyi Tōmman. According to this story, Thomas of Kana arrived in Mahādēvarpattanam, the 'City of the Great God' (Śiva), which is placed either in Kodungallur or, by early seventeenth-century Portuguese sources, in the neighbourhood of North Paravur.[72] The source of all this story is a lost document, written on copper plates. A Portuguese translation based on the Malayalam reading of a Jewish interpreter (Goes 1619: 77–78; Monteiro d'Aguiar/Hosten 1930/1997:183–5; Schurhammer 1963: 348) is still extant. This translation says that Mahādēvarpattanam was gifted to Thomas and seventy-two families, that came together with him by the king of Kodungallur. Many of the Syrian Christians in Kerala consider this as the story of their oringin.

Cardinal Tisserand says that, after the Synod of Diamper, held at *Udayamperoor* in June 1599, a raid was conducted in all the churches by Aleixo de Menezes, the Archbishop of Goa. In this raid they found and burned many documents written in Syriac. [73] Perczel (2006) provides information about a number of Syriac texts that had survived the flames of Diamper.

2.3.a. Socio-linguistic situation of the Saint Thomas Christians

We should also look for the social status and the life of this community. As I mentioned earlier, the Saint Thomas Christians are also known as Māppiḷḷa Christians. This community was considered a privileged class, similarly to the Hindu Nāyars,   that is a śūdra caste, because they were married to women from this particular community. At that time there were no kśātriya and vaiśya castes (higher caste than śūdra) in Kerala. This śūdra Nāyar caste constituted a warrior and land-tenant class among Hindus. Local kings also emerged from

72 Perczel, Syriac Christianity in India , 663-64.

73 Tisserant, Eugène, Cardinal, *Indiayile pawrasta christhavarude kadha* (*Eastern Christianity in India: a History of the Syro-Malabar Church from the Earliest Time to the Present Day*), translated by Mattam, A.D, Tachil, J, (Kottayam: Deepika books, 1960).

this community. Perczel refers to the work of Susan Thomas on the intermarriage of the Syrian Christian community with the Nāyars. (Perczel, 2019: p. 660). He writes: "This was possible because the Hindu Nāyar caste, which provided the bulk of the soldiers in Malankara society and from among whom the local kings also emerged, was exogamous and matrilineal, meaning that they intermarried with other castes, while the inheritance was passed on from maternal uncle to nephew. Moreover, there was a loose concept of marriage among the Nāyars. Nāyar women also acted as concubines to the young Brahmins, as the custom among the Brahmins was to marry only the first-born son to a Brahmin girl, so that the entire landed property of the family becomes his inheritance. The other sons had Nāyar concubines, so that their children also became members of the Nāyar caste and inherited from their maternal uncle only[74] The Syrian Christian community in Kerala includes two kinds of people, local Indians who converted by early missions and descendants of the West Asian merchants, who married to a Hindu martial caste."[75]

For understanding the socio-linguistic background of this community, we should look at the language of their daily lives and their liturgical language. Even though there is evidence to prove that their liturgical language was Syriac, there is no evidence to prove that they used Syriac as a spoken or literary language in the Middle Ages According to Perczel, Syriac plays a similar role for the Syrian Christians, as Sanskrit for the Hindu community.[76]This means that the knowledge of Syriac was limited to a priestly elite.[77] As mentioned above, the Syrian Christians had similar social status and privileges to the Hindu Nāyars. This means that they were accommodated in the existing caste system, and their social life and language of daily

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74 Susan Thomas, "Property Relations and Family forms in Colonial Keralam" (PH.D thesis defended at Mahatma Gandhi University Kerala), 9-12

75 Perczel, Syriac Christianity in India, 261

76 Perczel, "'The Oldest Monument Extant of the Study of Indian Languages by Europeans'?," 422. ,

77 Perczel, "'The Oldest Monument Extant of the Study of Indian Languages by Europeans'?," 422

life was similar to the native people. At the same time their liturgical language was Syriac, they were connected the Church of the East, and they were following Syriac liturgical tradition.

2.3.b. Garshuni Malayalam Script – Origins

Even though there are multiple arguments about the origin of this script, we can agree that this script originated in this community and for this community. Markose V.P presents some possibilities for the origin of this script, namely the following:

I.   The priestly community which knew Syriac and Malayalam, combined these two for curiosity.

II.   At the time of the origin of this script there were no particular scripts to write Malayalam.

III.   The script was used to keep the secret nature of religious literature.

IV.   When native priests (who knew Syriac and Malayalam) translated prayers and other religious text for Western priests who only knew Syriac, they did it in Syriac script, which helped the latter to communicate with the native Christian community. [78]

Markose thinks that the last two possibilities are valid. However, I do not find it plausible that the Syrian Christian clergy would have created a new script to keep religious secrets. Moreover, the religious literature of the community was entirely in Syriac. Malayalam written in various scripts was used for practical purposes (for example, several Garshuni Malayalam manuscripts are preserving historical documents and historiographic narratives). Comparing the development of Garshuni Malayalam to the Arabi Malayalam script, I think the second possibility might be a valid explanation. Perhaps, the reason behind the origin of

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78. V P Markose, *Karsoni Enna Suriyani Malayalam* (Garshuni, that is Suriyani Malayalam), (Tirur: Thunchatheluttachan University, 2020), 64-66

the script is a result of possibilities number two and four. Markose also states that this script was not widely used by the native community. The majority of the beneficiaries were priests. The time of the origin of the script is another question we should consider. Perczel analysed the time for the emergence of this script suggested by different scholars, such as J. P. M. Van de Ploeg (1983), Thomas Koonamakkal (2002), Markose V. P (2009) and Scaria Zacharia (1995). From the extant evidence, he drew the conclusion a that the earliest evidence for the Garshuni Malayalam script comes from the second half of the sixteenth century.[79] However, the recent discovery of Syriac Garshuni Malayalam dictionaries from the 17th century by Perczel[80] and that of the canons of the Synod of Diamper written in Garshuni Malayalam (1599) prove that the script existed before the 17th century. The analysis the of Syriac-Garshuni Malayalam dictionary will help to find more details about the script in the future.

2.3.c. Features of the Garshuni Malayalam Script

- The writing direction is from right to left, just like in Syriac.

- Vowel symbols are marked above and below the script.

- The graphemes include all phonemes in Syriac and Malayalam.

- Vowel symbols are marked at above and below of the letter

- It also includes the diphthongs ai (ഐ) and au (ഓൗ), written as ayã (അയ്) and avã (അവ്) with Syriac script

- The dental and the palatal na has different graphemes, just like in Vaṭṭeḻuttu and Koleḻuttu, and unlike Arabi Malayalam and Modern Malayalam.

79 Perczel, "Garshuni Malayalam: A witness to an early stage of Indian Christian Literature." *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac studies*, Vol. 17(2014), 264- 67

80 Perczel, "'The Oldest Monument Extant of the Study of Indian Languages by Europeans," 94-104.

- Garshuni Malayalam includes nine additional graphemes from Malayalam which are not present in Syriac.

- An additional line is being used under the letter (corresponding to the Syriac m-baṭlānā, "occulting line," but used for a different purpose, to indicate reduplication and conjunction.

Conclusions

The history of Malayalam scripts has been written many times by many scholars. Many of the studies only look at how Malayalam scripts have developed and at the question of which are the scripts used in medieval and early modern times. Even though the scholars listed the names and some features of the Arabi Malayalam and Garshuni Malayalam scripts, no detailed description was included in their lists. One possible reason for the omission of these scripts may be that these authors only wanted to write about the scripts from which modern Malayalam has developed. However, if this were the case, they should have avoided also Vatteluttu and Koleluttu. Since the modern Malayalam script has not developed from one particular script without the influence of other scripts, one should consider all the scripts including Arabi Malayalam and Garshuni Malayalam.

I So, it is important to include Arabi Malayalam and Garshuni Malayalam in the history of medieval and early modern scripts of Malayalam. Such an inclusion will be useful not only for studies about scripts but also for studies about the language, culture and history of the society. The analysis of the origin and development of the Arabi Malayalam and Garshuni Malayalam scripts in the context of contact linguistics gives more clarity about the cultural and language situation of early modern Kerala. Both Arabi Malayalam and Garshuni Malayalam are products of language contact. When two or more languages serve different purposes in a speech community, there is a chance for the domination of one language over other. This domination will not be very clear in all cases, because it is not affecting the entire system of the languages. By placing these two scripts in the context of linguistic hegemony, we can see that the script of the sacred language of the community dominated over the script

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of the natives. However, in the case of other jargons and registers of language, the native language is dominating. This can be compared to the Sanskritization of Malayalam. Sanskrit is dominating over Malayalam in all aspects, such as script, linguistic features and grammar. Yet, in the case of Arabi Malayalam and Garshuni Malayalam, the linguistic features of Malayalam are dominating over Arabic and Syriac.

Knowledge and studies about these scripts will help to understand more historical sources which are unexplored until now. They will also help to correct the errors in the existing historiography of Kerala. This study is not completed here. The history of the Malayalam language and the social and cultural aspects of Kerala historiography should be revisited after reading and re-reading the manuscripts written in these scripts.

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