Chapter III

The Mapping of Tamilakam and Keralam in Colonial Historiography

This section seeks to discuss the factors that prompted the historians of South of India to undertake the reconstruction of history of their own regions. It inquires as to how far colonial Indian historiography set the model for the writing of history in colonial South India. In the process of following the colonial master narrative, how historical interpretations embodied sentiments of cultural/regional identities is another question considered here. Similarly the section examines as to how the brahminical and anti-brahminical loyalties have worked in determining the structure and content of South Indian historiography. How the geographical definitions of regions, population and culture by historians have involved uncritically accepted notions and a taken for granted approach is another issue focussed in the section. It seeks to primarily reveal the autonomy exercised by the historians in the mapping of Tamilakam and Keralam. The assumptions, themes and interpretations that went into the mapping of Tamilakam and Keralam thus form the core of the chapter.

Geographical definitions of regions and the historicisation of such regions are considered as the primary requisites for the mapping of regions in any historiography. The colonial historiography of India and South India are significant for their emphasis on the identification of geographical units and
historical units. This is made possible by employing different parameters. Geography, culture, language and race are the parameters employed by historians for the mapping of regions in historiography. There are also assumptions and themes behind the mapping of regions.

There is no single scientific criterion in South Indian historiography for the mapping of regions. The geographical units as defined in historiography reveal that the depended criteria were what each scholar considered appropriate. Thus criteria of definition of regions and the construction of historical units are not absolute. But they are derived from the choice of historians. Thus they are interpretative in nature. This is illustrated through the geographical formulations in the colonial historiography of India, South India and South of India because historiography of India always set the model for the historians of South India.

**Geographical Formulations in Colonial Historiography of India**

British Statesmen authored the pioneer historical texts. In Geographical terms, India was designated as the Indian subcontinent. These imperialist writers assigned primary to latitude and longitude as the criteria for the geographical defined India as "the portion of Asia comprised between the 37th and 8th degrees of latitude north."¹ They employed the same principle of latitude in the definition of South India also. In the very same perspective they regarded Ceylon as an extension of South India.² Meanwhile European and West Asian writers had applied the word India to the whole of the main land of South Asia irrespective

of political boundaries for over 2000 years. It is revealed that river basins were also taken as the criteria for the construction of geographical units in India (see Map 3:1). The river systems of Sindhu and Ganga were employed to define geographical units in India north of the Vindhyas. Regions north of the Vindhyas were regarded as Hindustan, a name derived from the name of the river Sindhu.

"The Persians who found difficulty in pronouncing an initial 's' called it Hindu. From Persia the word passed to Greece where the whole of India became known by the name of the western river. The earlier names which the natives used to denote their land such as Jambu dvipa (the continent of the Jambu tree) or Bharatavarsha (the land of the sons of Bharata a legendary figure) were replaced by the term Hindustan. The inhabitants who followed their old religion were regarded as Hindus."  

The Persian and Arab chronicles which were the earliest foreign sources to the history of India named the land as Hindustan on the basis of the Sindhu river system. Western scholars who were engaged in the writing of history of India adopted this practice of defining regions in India on the basis of river systems. The Persian chronicles employed the term Hindustan to denote adjoining regions of the Sindhu river system. The traditional Sanskrit literature of India too followed this method of geographical definitions of regions in the north, on the basis of river Systems. The traditional Sanskrit literature focused on the regions of upper Ganges river system and designated the land as Aryavarta

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7 A.L. Bhashan, A Cultural History of India, New Delhi, 1954, p.5. The earliest evidence for this in written form comes from Alberuni’s accounts of India. He calls the land as Hind inhabited by "Hindus who are entire different from us in every respect many a subject appearing intricate and obscure which would perfectly clear if there were more connections between us." He speaks of Hind as "the continent located to the eastern part which protrudes far into the seas in the western half of the earth and extends its shore in the far South." Edward C. Sachau (trans.) Alberunis India, Vol.1, New Delhi, 1978, p.4.
(abode of the Aryans). Later when traditional Sanskrit literature was employed as the indigenous source for the historiography of India, western scholars designated the regions of the Sindhu river system and upper Ganges river system as Hindustan. The Indologists too assigned primacy to the principle of river systems for the geographical formulation of India. While they designated the regions of Sindhu river system and upper Ganges river system as Hindustan, they regarded the regions of upper Ganges river system as the heartland of Hindustan because Aryan culture and Aryan race in India were axiomatic in their writings.

This practice of adopting river systems as the criterion for the geographical formulations of India was considered as obsolete. It was pointed out that this was an error. Due to this method the Indo Chinese Peninsula has been called as Trans-Gangetic India and that the American continent was called the West Indies. The criterion of river systems was replaced by the principle of geographical system. This was regarded as more scientific for the identification of geographical units. The river systems and mountain ranges were combined as features demarcating one region from the other. By this India got defined as “the subcontinent extending from the Hindukush mountains to Ceylon, from Seistan to Irrawaddy.”

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8 A.D. Pusalker, Studies in the Epics and Puranas, Bombay, 1955 and also see Ralph Griffith Ramayana of Valmiki, Benares, 1895, p. X.
9 The native scholars too adopted this method. To cite a few examples, R.C. Dutt, The Ancient History of India, Calcutta, 1888 pp 6-9 and also see R.C. Dutt. The Epics And Lays of Ancient India, Calcutta, 1890, pp. 4-6.
10 To cite few examples Tolboy Wheeler, India of Vedic Age with Reference to Mahabharata, Delhi, 1953 and William Jackson, (ed) History of India, New Delhi, 1987 (Reprint).
the land of the Sindhu - Ganges river systems (the regions north of Vindhyas). There were geographical definitions of India that took mountains as boundaries. Mountains were regarded not only as natural barriers but also as sources of river systems. The mountain passes that provided accessibility to regions on either side were assigned great significance. Such regions which had contact with other regions were prioritised over regions which had less accessibility to other regions due to geographical barriers. The regions with limited accessibility were treated as excluded regions which are static in development. In Indian historiography Malwa and Malabar are identified as isolated regions. Such regions are regarded as regions “where people pass either military or peaceful invasion with no persistent political tradition.”

Historians like Vincent Smith, P.E. Roberts, Grantduff recognised mountains and seas as the natural frontiers that demarcate India as a geographical unit. India is defined as:

“the land which consists of Himalayan system, the great northern alluvial plains, the broken central plateau of Malwa, and Bundel Khand, the Deccan the triangular shaped peninsula of south.”

“The India of this book is almost exclusively the geographical unit called by that name on the ordinary maps of the days before partition bounded on the north, Northwest and north east by mountain Ganges and elsewhere by the seat.” Appropriating this model, India is defined as “the sharply demarcated subcontinent bounded on the north by the worlds largest mountain range the claim of the Himalayas with its

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15 This characterisation is treated as one of the limitations of Indian historiography. For further details see Bernad S. Cohen “Regions subjective and objective Their relation to the study of modern Indian society” in Thomas R. Metcalf (ed) Modern India, New Delhi 1990. pp. 109-137.
16 P.E. Roberts, History of British India, New Delhi, 1921, p. 17.
17 Vincent A. Smith, The Early History of India, New Delhi, 1989 (Reprint) p.4.
extensions to the east and the west. Cape comorin is designated as the southern most boundary."  India was defined as "the subcontinent extending from the Himalayas to Ceylon." India was also defined as "extending from the Himalayas to Ceylon and as including Southeast Asia."

In these definitions the criteria of definition remained the political system. So the adjoining regions of the Indian sub-continent which were regions of the British Indian Empire were also included as the geographical units of India.

Thus even the geographical formulations of India reveal that there is no single geographical definition of India. On the other hand there were many geographical definitions of India. This is explicit in the definitions of South India too. Combining geographical system and political system of South India created the definitions of South India. Besides these two factors, the race, culture and language were also employed as the criteria for the definition of South India.

**Geographical and Political Definitions of South India**

The pioneer scholars like William Jackson, Ramachandra Dutt, Griffith, and R.G. Bhandarkar attempted to define South India in the light of traditional Sanskrit literature. Geographically South India was designated as "the portion of the Indian peninsula lying to the South of the Narmada." R.G. Bhandarkar introduced the two-fold geographical formulation of India – the North and the Deccan. Later he introduced the three-fold division of India namely the north, the

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Deccan and the South. By South was broadly defined as the region that consisted of the four linguistic regions of modern age (Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu and Kannada). He never intended to specify Tamilakam as the far south. The term Deccan is coined from the terms Dandakaranya/Dakshenapatha which were used in traditional Sanskrit literature. The rivers Krishna and Thungabhadra are recognised as the southern boundaries of the unit. The Deccan was also defined as the entire peninsula of South India "the entire land beyond the Vindhyas to the seas as Deccan." Robert Sewell who attempted to construct the history of Vijayanagar defined South India as the region between Deccan and Ceylon. South India is also regarded as the adjoining coast which extends in a high land from north to south and so this region is called Dechina for Deccan to mean south in the language of the natives. The monograph, The Early Muslim Expansion in South India which focuses on the establishment of 'the great Hindu Empire of Vijayanagar,' conceives the Kingdom of the Kakatiyas, the Hoysalas and the Pandyas constituting the peninsula of South India. Later with the publication of inscriptions scholars created new geographical units in the land extending from South of the Vindhyas to the seas. In this peninsular region of India two territorial segments are identified viz; the Deccan and the far South.

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22 This territory was regarded as the land of non-Aryan demon worshippers. R.C. Dutt, The Ancient History of India, New Delhi, 1888, p.123.
25 N. Venkata Ramanayya, The Early Muslim Expansion In South India, Madras, 1943, p.16.
The boundaries of these geographical units were also defined differently since these units were perceived on the basis of political definitions of regions in various inscriptions.\textsuperscript{26}

After the model of nation states the "general histories of India"\textsuperscript{27} attempted to define South India in terms of historical regions and linguistic zones. Four linguistic zones and more than a dozen historical zones were identified in the regions south of the Vindhyas. Tamil, Canarese, Telugu and Malayalam are identified as the linguistic zones. The Deccan is politically defined as the region of Kakatiyas and Hoysalas. The Deccan was the coveted object of many adventurous monarchs of North India. Thus in course of few centuries there were several dominions in the Deccan in addition to the three original kingdoms i.e., the Chera Chola and the Pandya.\textsuperscript{28} The Deccan is also politically defined as the region of the kingdoms of Warangal, Western Chalukyas, Kadambas, Gangas, Hoysalas, Vijayanagara and Mysore. The boundaries of these kingdoms are regarded as depending "on the power of the monarch and the weakness of the rivals."\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{26} To illustrate an example, Vincent Smith considers Orissa and Bengal "as regions in Dekhan as they are lands opened to the sea coast of India" Vincent A. Smith, \textit{The Early History of India}, New Delhi, 1989 (Reprint) p.14. But Indian historiography incorporates these regions as regions in the historical unit of Hindustan. To cite an example Arun Bhattacharya, \textit{A History of Ancient India}, New Delhi, 1979 (Reprint).

\textsuperscript{27} This term is used to designate the historical works of a general nature, which appeared in the 19th century. These historical writings by contemporary English officials and statesmen were comprehensive in nature and historised India from the standpoint of British officials. Minute details of British domination and administration are available. Thus they put forth only the empirical view of British transactions in India. They ignored the dissonant views and the social, religious, literary movements which characterised the 19th century. To cite a few examples V.A. Smith, \textit{The Oxford History of India} (1919), P.E. Roberts, \textit{History of British India} (1921) Thompson and Garratt, \textit{History of British Empire in India} (1934).


\textsuperscript{29} Robert Sewell, \textit{Analytical History of India}, London, 1869, p.8.
South India is politically defined as consisting of two regions "the kingdom of Magadha in the north the Southern boundary of which was Tamilakam in the Southern most part of the peninsula." Thus within the unit South India yet another geographical unit is identified. Flanked by the Western ghats and the eastern ghats the southern most region is recognised as the South of India. "The extensive region may be described in modern terms as consisting of the Madras Presidency excluding the northern circas Districts of Vizhakhapatnam and Ganjam and with the addition of the native states of Travancore and Cochin. The southeastern part of the peninsula was regarded as the Tamil country. It is defined as "the region of languages in no way akin to those of the north and are of a different ethnic character." Thus the southern regions from the Krishna/Tungabhadra rivers to Capecomorin is designated as the 'Distant south,' 'Extreme south' and 'the far South.' The early administrator historians included Ceylon as an extension of South India because "the island was a part of the British Indian Empire." A group of historical regions are identified in the far South. "The Cholamandalam extending from Nellore to Pudukotta abutted on the Pandya territory extending over the entire coast are identified as the historical regions. The British political system categorised Cholamandalam, the Pandya kingdom and the Kongunadu in Malabar as

30 V. Kanakasabhai, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, Madras, 1904, p.2.
31 Vincent A. Smith, *The Early History of India*, New Delhi, 1989 (Reprint) 9.11.
33 A.L. Basham, *The Wonder That was India*, New Delhi, 1963, p.22.
Madras Presidency and the kingdoms of Travancore and Cochin as the Malabar District."  

Thus the colonial historiography of India politically defined the peninsula of South India as consisting of two segments – the Deccan and extreme south. They are treated as exclusive in terms of language, culture and royal lineages. The Deccan is regarded as an extension of ‘Hindustan’ in terms of culture. The kingdoms in the Deccan are regarded as “an offshoot of the culture of northern India.” These regions are regarded as regions that underwent a greater degree of Aryanisation. Thus south of India is delimited to the Kongu country, Tondaimandalam and Malabar. The political definitions of regions knit together different kingdoms and historical regions are constituted accordingly. Overlooking political history that reveals spatial and temporal discontinuities in historical regions, historians attributed historical continuity to these regions. This continuity extends from the post-Gupta period to the beginnings of the British Empire. It was also assumed that these kingdoms if knit together represent the entire region of the Deccan, while in reality there are also regions which are excluded or partially represented within these assumed entities. Thus the political definition of South India reveals the problems of the level of aggregation and disaggregation as well as the limited coverage spatially and

35 Vincent A Smith, The Early History of India, New Delhi, 1989 (Reprint), p.11.
36 It is pointed out that the basis of regional history in South India was the assumption that the differences between extreme south and Vindhyana regions are less than the differences between Vindhyana and transvindhyana India, Ashok Settar, N. Subramanians Studies in South Indian History, SIHC proceedings, Dharward, 1991, p. 219.
39 Op.cit. p.188.
temporally affordable in a given text. The reduction of the total space of South India to a centre is achieved with the help of one of the figures of speech namely synecdoche — taking part for the whole use of the synecdoche enables this conception of a historical unity of South India. The historiographic reflections of the far south resurface the same problems of the different levels of aggregation and disaggregation. This is illustrated through self-reflexivity of the historians on the representation of South India in Indian Historiography.

The historiography of India considered southern most regions of India as a part of the larger unit of South India. Thus in colonial Indian historiography, the far south has no independent existence. The representation of Southern India as a part of South India, in spite of its heterogeneous nature was considered as revealing the inadequate representation of South of India. The native historians of Southern India believed that such an aggregation in historiography was biased.

**Biased Representation and Southern India**

The colonial historians of Southern India found the preoccupation of natives and western scholars with the traditional Sanskrit literature and Aryan civilisation as problematic. The historians of Southern India questioned the image of Southern India as articulated in the general histories of India as it is derived from the traditional Sanskrit literature. There was growing consciousness among the intelligentsia of Southern India that their region was under represented in the historiography of India in terms of quality and quantity.

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38 Dr. S. Raju, "Excurses on South India And State in Historiography," in Champaklakshmi et al. eds. *State and society in pre-modern India*, Thrissur, 2002, p.183
The representation of Southern India in the Ramayana is regarded as inadequate and biased as the itihasa is "supposed to indicate one of the earlier phases of the Aryan expansion."⁴¹ An imaginative poet from bits of hearsay information assesses the references to South India in the Ramayana and the Mahabharatha. The text itself has undergone continuous embellishment so that any attempt to derive history from these sources will be as Nilakantasastri says like trying to read history in the Arthurian legends.⁴² It was found that the spasmodic references to the South in the literary works of Panini and Katyana and the references to the South in the Ramayana were reiterated in the historiography of India. It was criticised that the representation of ancient history of South India in the historiography of India was based on very limited sources such as the traditional Sanskrit literature, the edicts of Asoka and the travelogues of ancient geographers.⁴³ This representation of India in limited sources is regarded as "a delusion due more to the lack of information than to the lack of history."⁴⁴ The stories in the Mahabharata attributing the three lineages - the Cheras, the Cholas and the Pandyas to the lunar race are regarded as illustrating "the tendency to trace everything Indian to what was in use on the country of Magadha."⁴⁵ The civilising role of Aryans in traditional Sanskrit literature is criticised as "stretch of the imagination and this cannot be sufficient authority to warrant the advancement of a theory that one was borrowed from the other."⁴⁶ The historians

⁴¹ T.N. Subramanian, History of Tamil Nadu To 1565 AD, Madras, 1914, p.22.  
⁴³ S Krishnaswami Aiyangar, The Beginnings of South Indian History, Madras, 1917, p.112.  
⁴⁶ M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, Tamil Studies, Madras, 1914, p.73.
of Southern India meticulously studied the sources employed for the representation of Southern India in Indian historiography. They contradicted the conclusions which were historicised in Indian historiography. The travelogues and the edicts of Asoka were employed by the native historians to assert that South India was not a land of tribes and it was not an integral part of the Mauryan Empire. This assigns the "status of independence to the far south which" has distinct individuality of its own. The independence and identity of southern regions of India are projected to illustrate that the far south is an independent/separate entity.

The historians were aware of the discrimination between the traditional Sanskrit literature and the corpus of the Tamil Heroic Poems as literary sources in Indian historiography. This is attributed to the "neglect of the development of literature by the national mind." The omission of the far south in the historiography of India as "due to the lack of acquaintance with the language and culture of the people" is criticised by the historians of Southern India. Thus there was consciousness about the inadequate representation of Southern India in Indian Historiography. There was growing consciousness among the intelligentsia in the south that the vast body of indigenous literature in the south did not receive any attention from the historians of India as sources. Pioneer historians such as Robert Sewell, R.K. Bhandarker and Vincent Smith assumed that the paradigms of Dravidian languages and Dravidian culture are sufficient

49 Vincent A. Smith, The Early History of India, New Delhi, 1989 (Reprint), p.216.
criteria for aggregating South India as a single historical unit. Indian historiography created the impression that "the historiography of South of India was an impossible task." This self-consciousness has been foundational in the historiography of south India.

**Historiography of Far South and Formation of Cultural Identities**

Thus historiography of the far south was in search of the cultural roots of the region. The pioneer scholars were curious to construct the past of the regions that reared them. The increased availability of inscriptions, textualisation of native traditions and indigenous forms of literature created the consciousness that not only South India and the far south are exclusive to each other in terms of language, culture and traditions but in the far south also there are two geographical, historical, cultural identities. These identities are historicised as Tamilakam and Keralam. They are historicised as exclusive to each other. Thus historiography of the far south which consisted of the historical texts on Tamilakam (Coromandal plains) and Keralam (Western coast) had their own characteristics. The social, cultural, political interpretations in the historical works of Tamilakam hardly have any correspondence with the social, cultural, political interpretations in the historical works of Keralam. Tamilakam and Keralam are defined by historians in their own way through integrating and interpreting different categories of sources. The definitions of Tamilakam and Keralam and their historicisation further resurface the problems of omission and partial representation. The historians of Tamilakam found that Tamilakam as a

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definable unit is possible only if Kerala is excluded (see Map 3.2). Historians of Tamilakam equated far south with Tamilakam. The omission and partial representation of Keralam was necessary for the historians of Tamilakam to define the far south as a historiographic unit. Keralam was termed as the "western coast." It was designated as a single heterogeneous unit beyond Tamilakam. Geographical exclusion, language and culture are identified as the factors of differentiation. The people of the Malabar Coast are regarded as part of Tamilakam in the beginnings of Christian era. The West Coast is excluded from Tamilakam on the basis of later sources. "The Tamil who inhabited the western coast which were separated from the rest of the country by high mountains differed in their speech from the main body of the Tamils."51 The languages of the West Coast such as Malayalam, Konkan and Canarese are regarded as altered forms of Tamil.52 The historians carried out an extensive comparative study of these languages. They based the syntactical and semiotic analysis of the languages on the study of Tamil by Bishop Caldwell, Rhysdavids and Burnell. To a greater degree they attributed the differences in linguistic structure of Malayalam, Konkan and Canarese from Tamil to Aryanisation of the West Coast. Similarly they believed that the languages owed their differences in the structure and phonetics to the greater degree of influence of Sanskrit.53 The same elements that are employed for the definition of south India as a historiographic unit in Indian historiography are employed in the definition of Tamilakam as a

51 S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, South India and Her Muhammedan Invaders, Madras, 1921, p.27.
52 M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, Tamil Studies, Madras, 1914, p.69.
historiographic unit. Southern India is defined as “the territorial kingdoms of the Pandyas, the Cholas and Viraballala III.” Keralam is excluded as “the West Coast of India which had trading contacts with the Mohammedan from early ages and that the region was unaffected by the invasions.” The West Coast excluding the Kongu country was defined as Malabar. It was regarded as the region which has been branched off from the Tamils in the historic period and as “the land colonised by the Brahmins from Hindustan and governed by an aristocracy of that caste.” The Cheralanadu extending from the southern Konkan over the entire coast is perceived as a part of the macro unit “Tamilakam,” which had commercial relations with the Roman Empire in the early centuries of Christian era. The historians were also aware that space in history has been subjected to definitions which were subjective. It was also realised that “several definitions appeared from time to time on the Deccan in which the narrow strip of land between the Western Ghats and the sea excluded.” Indian historiography considered the western coast as a “shatter zone.”

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54 S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *South India And Her Muhammadan Invaders*, Madras, 1921.
60 This term is borrowed from Bernard S. Cohn. He points out the theoretical and methodological issues in the study of Indian society. By shatter zones he designates these areas which are excluded from the orbit of historical spaces because “they are found to be regions where people pass either in military or peaceful invasion with no persistent political tradition.” He refers to Malwa and Malabar as such regions in the history of India. This characterisation is regarded as one of the limitations of Indian historiography. For further details see Bernard S. Cohn, “Regions subjective and objective, their relation to the study of modern Indian history and society” in Thomas R. Metalf (ed.) *Modern India*, New Delhi, 1990, p.109, 137.
Thus Keralam was projected as a unit distinct from the south of India which is equated with the Tamil speaking area. Geographically, it is designated as the "Coromandal plains extending from Venkatagiri hills to Cape Comerin"\(^\text{61}\) (see Map 3.3).

The distinction between Tamilakam and Keralam is justified by many arguments. The historiographic exclusion of the west coast (Kerala) is thus expressed "though this region is included in Tamil Anthologies and pattatipattu one of the reasons for the exclusion of western regions has been its geographical isolation from the interior regions of Tamilakam."\(^\text{62}\) Kerala is regarded not only as a distinct geographical unit but also as a different political/cultural unit. This is attributed to the geographical isolation of Keralam from Coromandal regions. The historians of Tamilakam asserted that the decline of the Chera dynasty marked the beginnings of different political identity of Keralam. The historians of Keralam appropriate this reason in the historical explanations on the origin of the kingdoms of Travancore, Cochin and Calicut.\(^\text{63}\) "Tamilakam and Keralam are very clearly distinguished in terms of Aryanisation. Malayalam is a highly developed dialect of Tamil and Sanskrit. The growth of Malayalam and peculiar socio-economic practices are obscure due to little archaeological work in Kerala."\(^\text{64}\)

In the historiography of India the regions of Tamilakam and Keralam

\(^{61}\) R.K. Bhandarkar, Lectures on the Ancient History of India on the Period from 650 to 325 B.C., Bombay, 1919, p.2.

\(^{62}\) M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, Tamil Studies, Madras, 1914, p.59.

\(^{63}\) The origin of Travancore as a political unit is traced to "the dismemberment of the Chera dynasty. The Chera dynasty was constantly engaged in warfare with its neighbour, Pandya and Chola till central Chera was overrun by the Konga rajahs, the original dynasty of the Cheras migrated to its southern possessions and joined the family residing in the south." P. Shungoonny Menon. History of Travancore From the Earliest Times, New Delhi, 1985 (Reprint), p.31.

constituted the entity of ‘Far South’; but these historiographic reflections of southern India reveal that the indigenous historians regarded Tamilakam and Keralam as two historical units. So they considered Tamilakam and Keralam as two historiographic units. On the basis of Sangam literature Malanadu was regarded as a part of ancient Tamilakam. Later on the Keralam was historicised as a distinct historiographic unit. Thus the notion of total and part characterise this historiographic non-unity.

The historicisation of Tamilakam and Keralam as exclusive units thus became self-evidently necessary. The nature of sources, interpretations of historians, the themes and assumptions are the key elements in the formation of these cultural identities. The concepts employed in the historiography of India (Aryanisation, Dravidianism and civilisation) are appropriated in the formulation of historiographic identities of Tamilakam and Keralam. The primary factor that conditioned the construction of Kerala and Tamilakam was the ‘Aryan myth.’ In the historiography of Keralam and Tamilakam the dichotomy of Aryan><Dravidian races took a new resonance. The historical interpretations of the Aryan myth by the historians of Keralam and Tamilakam are polemic.

**Tamilakam and Aryan Myth**

Historians of Tamilakam and Keralam adopted the historiographic model of Aryans and non-Aryans in Indian historiography. They proceeded from the assumption of William Jones that a linguistically defined race of Aryans from
Europe implanted in India the *Varna* system. William Jones reaffirmed the 'all important Aryan conquest myth' which was the basis of later ethnological and historical explanations of India.

The historians of Tamilakam interrogate the dominant assumptions on the civilising role of Aryans in India. This is accomplished by re-examining the sources from which such assumptions were derived. In the pioneer texts that interpreted ancient Indian civilisation to the Western readers, Aryan civilisation was axiomatic. Sanskrit literature being the source, attempts were made to historicise South India and south of India in accordance with the contents of these traditional narratives. The Indo-Gangetic region as far as Benaras and North are identified as the land of the Indo-Aryan World while South Bihar, Malwa, a portion of the Deccan and the regions to the South of the Rajaputana desert are regarded "as lands unknown, uncivilised and not yet hinduisd." The story of Bhima in *Aitareya Brabman* speaks of Dandakaranya (South of the Vindhyas) as the land of aborigines. The only exception was the region between Godavari and Krishna which was regarded as the kingdom of the Andhras colonised by the Aryans. Thus the extensive territory extending from Dandakaranya to Setu was not the only region of non-Aryan people.

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66 This term is derived from Gilbert Slater. He criticised this as obliterating the equally significant Dravidian elements in the formation of Indian culture. "This all important Aryan myth initiated by Maxmuller is popularised by the Indians who cling to this theory that they are Aryans and that their religion and culture are that of Aryans. They are proud of their affinities with the Indo-European language speaking groups" Gilbert Slater, *The Dravidian Elements In Indian Culture*, London, 1924, p.26.
The territories of Gujarat, Orissa and Bengal are regarded as "the land of non-Aryan demon worshippers."\(^7\) The paradigms of Dravidian race and Dravidian culture which were employed by Indologists, British historians and the native English educated historians to represent south of India are re-examined and reinterpreted. The historians of Tamilakam regarded the *itihasa* - purana tradition as insufficient to analyse the contributions of Dravidians to Indian culture. So the 'great Aryan myth' is criticised as biased and ahistorical.\(^7\) The historians of Tamilakam considered that the indigenous literature was the true source for the reconstruction of past in the south of India.\(^7\) Geographically southern India is regarded as the region least disturbed by foreign invasion due to the geographical barriers. The composite and complex culture of the contemporary society is attributed to acculturation that took place only at a later age. Some of the concepts such as antiquity, continuity, civilisation that we identify in the context of Aryan culture in Indian historiography are present in the counter historicisation of Tamilakam also. The counter historicisation by the historians of Tamilakam intends to elevate southern India from the position of its secondary place in the historiography of India. At the same time south of India (equated with Tamilakam) is recognised as a part of the totality of India. Methodologically the notion of totality and part in historicisation was treated as unproblematic.


\(^{71}\) "The Dravidians were sufficiently civilised at this stage and the Brahmins felt no necessity to bring with them neither the Kshatriyas nor the Vaisyas to civilise the south," M. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Tamil Studies*, Madras, 1914, p.59.

\(^{72}\) The historians of Tamilakam were proud of the vast corpus of literature. They believed that by eliminating inconsistencies they can derive history. "The Sanskrit literature as a whole will not bear a comparison with Tamil literature," M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, *Tamil Studies*, Madras, 1914, p.127. The traditions of Agastya as the father of Tamil language and literature assigning him vedic origin are pointed out to prove the antiquity of Tamil.
The counter historicisation by the historians of Tamilakam is different from the counter historicisation visible in Indian historiography. While historicisation of India germinated from eurocentric history the counter historicisation of Tamilakam germinated from inside. The ‘other’ is the Sanskrit culture. It is revealed that Sanskrit culture obliterated the regional identities in India. The historians of Tamilakam were eager to find out the roots of their own culture. This resulted in counter historicisation.

**Dravidianism and Tamilakam as counter history**

Following the model of Indian historiography, the historians of the far south proceed from the assumption that the people of south of India are essentially Dravidians. So Tamil culture is equated with Dravidian culture. The questions, such as, who are the Dravidians and what are the elements in Dravidian culture are axiomatic in the mapping of Tamilakam. Certain presuppositions that characterise the study of race were reiterated in the mapping of Tamilakam also. One presupposition was that the traits of higher culture were inherent to the superior race. The inferior races are civilised by superior races. Thus the historiography of the South identifies the presence of different racial elements in ancient Tamilakam. These are historicised in the hierarchical order. The Negritos, the Proto-Austroloids and the Mangoloids are recognised as the racial elements in the Proto-history of Tamilakam and Keralam. The Dravidians who superseded these groups due to their superior qualities of culture are identified as the dominant racial element in Tamilakam. Thus Dravidian culture is identified as the civilisation of Tamilakam in the
Pre-historic period. "This part of India ever since the original migration of man has been the home and centre of the Dravidian life and culture, and possess the richest materials, archaeological, sociological, linguistic and literary." The Dravidians are regarded as yet another branch of the Aryans who were an outcaste. The historians shared the speculation that the basic characteristics of Dravidian culture survived though there was intermingling of Dravidian race with other primitive races in Tamilakam. The culture of Tamilakam before the coming of Aryans is defined as the Dravidian culture. Religious practices, languages, physical characteristics and social structure are illustrated as evidences for this definition. The Dravidians are regarded as “superior in elements of culture which make for the wealth and civilisation” in contrast to “the Aryans – relatively barbarous invaders with an immense advantage for right and concerted action made possible by horses.” There were speculations on the maritime trade of the ancient Tamils. The trade relations of Tamilakam with the middleeast propounded by the diffusionist school of anthropology and

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73 “Literary conventions especially of the early unsophisticated stages of literature which existed long before the rise of the much later artificial poetry of Sanskrit was based on the actual customs and manners of the people.” P.T. Srinivasa Aiyangar, History of the Tamil From The Earliest Times to 600 AD, Madras, 1928, p.63.
74 K. N. Sivaraja Pillai, The Chronology of The Early Tamils, Madras, 1932, p.3.
75 “The outcaste went to South because the Vindhyas was the southern boundary of the holy land of Aryan Varta and he who berit of the Aryarites had necessarily to go to south.” M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, Tamil Studies, Madras, 1917, p.4.
76 It was assumed that the sangami literature revealed Dravidian culture as the dominant culture though there existed primitive races in Tamilakam. Quoting a poem from *puranaruru* which spoke of (s. 140) the king Nall as the patron of music a historian asks “if any other race at so early a time could take the art of music to so high.” K.N. Sivarajapillai, The Chronology of the Tamils, Madras, 1932, p.107.
77 “Study of Dravidian culture had no received any attention. First and foremost duty of the Dravidian section of the oriental research institute is to see if there are things ethnic linguistic, or cultural that may be categorised under the distinct label of Dravidian.” Op.cit. p.108.
78 K. N. Sivanja Pillai, The chronology of the Tamils, Madras 1932, p. 118
79 Gilbert Slater, Dravidian Elements in Indian culture, London, 1924 p. 52
archaeology were historicised. In such speculations South India was regarded as the terminus of the movement.  

The historians of Tamilakam through Lemurian theory justified this. Though this theory was a speculation of the diffusionist school of anthropology the historians preferred to assume that migrations from some part of the Mediterranean through Baluchistan to India and South India took place before the dawn of the Sumerian civilisation. Historians pointed out the similarities in language, religion and cultural practices as evidences. South India is also compared with other regions in India, which were labelled as non-Aryan. Thus Dravidian land is conceived rather as a macro unit consisting of different regions in the north west India and the southern India. The identification of a coherent unit also necessitates the evidences for the logical conclusion that the region had independent status in terms of political power so as not to allow further acculturation. The Tamil heroic literature is defined as the works composed long anterior to their first contact with the Aryans. By combining indigenous literary works and Asokan edicts the historians illustrated that since the term Tamils is absent it indicates that Tamilakam was not a part of the Mauryan Empire. When the historians characterise the society of far south as Dravidians/Tamils the sources they employed, and the strategies they used, reveal that their ideas on Tamilness/Dravidians were rather derived from medieval literature and inner social situations. It is based on the self perception of Brahmins and Dravidians (non-Brahmins) who are identified as the Tamils. “Broadly speaking the brahmins and the Sudras of the Tamil country belong to a distinct race. In a way each had its own system of thought, religion and ethical and social rules so that

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81 M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, Tamil studies, Madras, 1914, p. 195
an attempt to engraft the one on the other might look strange preposterous. This fact has been grasped by the English educated portion of the non-brahmin caste who endeavour to assert an indigenous Dravidian civilisation. This is only natural and they merit the support and sympathy of the scholars if they confine themselves to a rational scientific enquiry.”82 The medieval Saiva and Vaishnava movements were the major themes in the historiography of far south. They become themes of historical investigation, because they were indigenous movements that assert ‘Tamilness.’ The Saiva and Vaishnava literature were composed in Tamil. The sanctity of Tamil was prioritised over Sanskrit. The Saiva siddhanta literature interrogated the social privileges of Antanar (brahmins). It went a step further and excluded the Brahmins from Tamil identity.83 The terms parppan in the Tamil heroic poems, marayoor/Antanar/ariyar in medieval literature were used to designate the Aryan groups in Tamilakam. It was assumed that the Aryans maintained purity of lineage through strict social rules.84 There were writers who believed that these different groups who claimed Aryan descent were new groups with admixture of dominant tribal groups.85 They adopted Vedic profession that assigned them a high status in the hierarchy of caste in Southern India. Thus purity of Aryan race

84 Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, proceeded on this assumption and pointed out that the existence of marunakkattayam in Kerala was the result of the exclusion and hegemony of the Nambudiris on the land. He designates all non-Aryan groups as sudra-s/dravidians. Tamil is regarded as the language of all groups in the far south. Tamil used by Ariyar is regarded as Arya Tamil, and Tamil used in Malanadu is designated as Malanadu Tamil. Elamkulam P. M. Kunjan Pillai, Some problems in Kerala History, Kottayam, 1955, pp. 14-17.
is demystified through historical explanations of caste in the Southern India. Thus race is displaced by caste.  

The non-brahmin castes in Tamilakam were regarded as a large category. It was found out that the non-Brahmin castes in Tamilakam consisted of Telugu, Marattas and Chalukyas who came as migrants and became occupational groups. Thus the Tamils historicised by the historians as *Tiravitar* was a unified category as it included all non-brahmin castes. The essential similarities among the caste groups and equality among Dravidians were interpreted from *Saiva Siddhanta* literature. *Saiva Siddhanta* literature reveals fear and resentment of the brahmins. The brahmins are now seen as outsiders of Aryan oppression in the south and as not belonging to the soil. Dravidian had always been a linguistic and geographical term in traditional narratives until Europeans defined it as a race. The historians of Tamilakam combined race and caste as a single system and defined it in their own way. The Tamils are perceived as non-Brahmin caste (*sudracāti*).  

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86 M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, *Tamil Studies*, Madras, 1914, p. 212  
90 Such assumptions were foundational to consciousness of Tamil identity. Literary men such as Damodaran Pillai, Sundaram Pillai, Vaiyapuri Pillai and Kanthaiya Pillai projected Dravidianess as the models of civilization and virtue. The Vellalars were placed at the apex of Dravidian culture in Tamilakam. These ideas appeared in journals such as *Chenthamal* (1922), *Tamil moli* (1925), *Tamil Tai* (1935) and *Tamil Selvan* (1892).  
91 The Dravidian movement of E. V. Ramasami Naicker rejected the idea of Tamils as *Sudracatu*. He asserted that the Aryans had racially and not culturally subjugated the Dravidians. He rather regarded the equation of Dravidians with Sudra as a nefarious Aryan scheme to humiliate the southerners. He defined Tamils as “those born in Tamilnadu and Tamil speaking.” *Anaimuttu Periyar* *Verai Cintanaikal*, Trichy, 1974, pp. 226-240.
Aryan Myth and Historiography of Keralam

If the historiography of Tamilakam focussed on the concept of *Tiravitar* the colonial historiography of Keralam rejected their Dravidian overtures. They depicted this by pointing out that Tamil was the original and oldest language. The admixture of Sanskrit in Malayalam and the evolution of Malayalam is pointed out as the evidence for racial distinctiveness of the people of Keralam from that of Tamilakam. The historiography of Keralam defined the brahmin communities in Keralam as Aryan and therefore regarded them as superior.92

This is evident in the genealogical descriptions of the rulers of Cochin, Travancore and Calicut. The dominant assumption of historians was that the rulers of these kingdoms were *kshatriya*-s. The traditional narratives were the chief sources that were illustrated to back up this *kshatriya* status. There were even discussions on the genealogies of these rulers.93

The interpretations of the historians of Keralam being based on traditional narrative accounts, historicise the hierarchical social order of Kerala

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93 To cite an example "Travancore royal family maintains a high degree of purity in its marriage relations than does the Cochin Rajah and in the social scale the Travancore royal family may be considered better kshatriya-s that those in the north." P. Shungoony Menon, *History of Travancore From the Earliest Times to 1867 A.D.*, Trivandrum, 1878, p.57. Pacchu Moothathu the pioneer historian of Keralam traces the kshatriya status of the Travancore royal family through traditional narratives. Pacchu Moothathu, *Thiruvithamcore Charithram*, Trivandrum, 1867. In contrary to this the historians of post independent India assert an indigenous origin of royal families. They criticised the early historiography of Kerala as the historiography within the paradigm of *vamsamahatmya* of rulers. For further details see T.H.P. Chentharassery. *Elamkulavum Kerala Charithravum*, Trivandrum, 1988 and also see K.P. Ganesan, *Keralathente Innalekal*, Trivandrum, 1982.
in accordance with the descriptions of these traditional narratives. The rulers and the elite are regarded as having strong affinities with the Aryans.

**Tamil Identity**

The historians had to name the society they were historicising. They applied the term Tamils to define coromandal regions which they equated with the South of India. The historians characterised Tamils in their own terms by integrating indigenous literature with various categories of sources drawn from linguistics, anthropology, sociology and political theories.

The historians proceeded with the assumption that the indigenous literature revealed Tamil identity. They believed that this Tamil identity existed from antiquity. Hence Tamilakam and Tamil identity are as the major themes visible in the colonial historiography of Tamilakam. *The Dravidian Elements in Indian Culture* presented many speculations that inspired historians of far south. Gilbert Slater regarded Tamil as the ancient Dravidian language that extended over the vast regions of Ceylon, Burma, Malaysia and Assam. Thus he regarded Tamil as “the language spoken by the majority in South Asia.” The richness of vocabulary, subtlety, sense of logic are regarded as the evidences for the antiquity.

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93 Though K.P. Padmanabha Menon attempts to explain the caste system in Kerala by integrating traditional narratives with the studies on caste by western scholars, he assumed that the lower castes were tribes. So they were non-Aryans and hence an inferior category. K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*, Ernakulam, 1986 (Reprint).

94 The question of who was a Tamil or what is Tamilakam is never mentioned in the Sangam literature. Inam was the term used for bringing out the differences. The traditional literature had no need to define the groups because it was self evident who and what was a Tamil or who they were or whom they sang for? For further discussion see Dagmirtellmann-Rajanayagam. “Is There A Tamil Race?” in Peter Robb (ed.), *The Concept of race in South Asia*, Madras, 1995, pp. 102-115.

of Tamil. "Civilization brings with it new ideas and thoughts which require new words coined." Language as basis of distinction is visible in the traditional literature of India. The traditional Sanskrit literature refers to 'anasa' which in Sanskrit conveys unintelligible tongue. The historians reiterate different traditions that speak of Agastya and Lord Siva as the creators of Tamil, as historical explanations for the antiquity of the language. Tamil is illustrated as the language that transcends over time. Tolkappiyam and Iraiyanaragapporul the two works on Tamil grammar are assigned to Lord Siva. The tradition of Siva as creator of these texts is regarded as evidences for the independent growth and development of Tamil from the beginnings of the world. Through this the sanctity of Tamil was postulated and this language was prioritised over Sanskrit.

Sound or language is regarded as the very basic feature of distinction. "language is a feature that pervades Tamil society and Tamil culture indeed all aspects of Tamil life in a way which has no equivalent in most other cultures." Tamil is prioritised as purest Dravidian language in tenmozhi (languages

97 M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, Tamil Studies, Madras, 1914, p. 146.
99 The presence of Idukkuri words in Tamil is point out as evidence of the antiquity of Tamil language in literature. P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar, Pre-Aryan Tamil Culture, Madras, 1985 (Reprint), p. 19. The study of Tamil language by Bishop Caldwell was analysed by Prof. R. E. Asher. He stated that Caldwell's study was based on (a) affiliations to any group (b) comparisons of philology and grammar of individual Dravidian language, (c) typological and morphological forms. For further details see Prof. R. E. Asher, "Tamil and Typology." In Nagaswaray (ed.), Prof. V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar Studies in South Indian History and Culture, Chennai, 1997, pp. 240-249.
spoken in the South). Tamil is regarded as one of the 500 principal languages spoken in the face of the globe at present.\(^{101}\)

Tamil is contrasted with Vadamzhi—the languages spoken by people in the north. The Tamil scholars such as Poornalingam Pillai, Vaiyapuri Pillai, Sundaram Pillai initiated the method of employing language (Tamil) as the basis of Tamil identity. The publication of Tamil lexicon and compilation of dictionaries introduced uniformity in language. Standardisation and compilation of numerous dialects that existed in the coromandal plains accomplished it. The historians historicised this language through the concepts of *muttamil* (The three kings—the Cheras, the Cholas and the Pandyas are historicised as the *muttamil ventar*). The society of five landscapes (*Tinai*) and the seven chieftancies are historicised as the evidences of Tamil identity.\(^{102}\)

**Local Traditions as Foundational to Tamil Identity**

The assumptions on the continuity of Tamil culture from time immemorial and its prevalence throughout the entire region of Tamilakam is foundational to the recognition of Tamilakam as a homogeneous unit.\(^{103}\)

Language, geographical category of *Tinai*, literature, spiritual traditions, trade, Dravidian kinship, social and political traditions are the "cultural corollaries

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\(^{102}\) From a careful study of ancient Tamil poems I am led to think that some of the earliest works were composed undoubtedly more than 2000 years ago and that the Tamil people acquired wealth and civilisation at these early period." V. Kanakasabhai, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, Madras 1904, p.3.

which are visible in colonial historiographic identity. The historical interpretations of Tamil identity (Tamil culture) are derived of religious literature of the medieval period and the literary works of Tamil scholars of early nineteenth century. The Tamil essays by Pandit R. Raghava Aiyengar the editor of Sen Tamil popularised the notion of integrity of Tamil culture. The commentaries on Avvaiyar by Mr. S. Anantavinayagam Pillai and the Saiva commentaries by Arumuganavalar, the critical studies on religious literature, the writings of Samasundara Desikar and the commentaries on Tamil anthologies by U.V. Swaminatha Iyer popularised the notions of antiquity and continuity of Tamil culture which were historicised as Tamil identity. These Tamil scholars eliminated the inconsistencies in traditional narratives and paraphrased the contents as information on Tamil culture (Tamil identity). The historians of Tamilakam translated them into history through historical methods which each scholar considered as appropriate. There were attempts to provide chronological framework to traditional literary works. "The facts of ancient Tamil history enshrined in early poems and set in a highly artificial grouping were not quarried systematically nor sifted nor arranged chronologically so as to enable us to get a clear, intelligible account of a past not much forgotten." There were also attempts to carve out Tamil identity through integration of scattered information of traditional narratives with the official literature on Tamilakam. Thus the role of Tamil literature is evoking the domain of Tamil culture cannot be neglected.

104 A. K. Ramanujan identified certain motifs in Tamil literature as constituting the identity of the Tamils. For further details see A. K. Ramanujan. "The Interior Landscape and poems of Love and War," Delhi, 1985, pp. 43-47.


"Contemporary literature and traditions as transmitted in literary records supply us with materials with which we have to construct history."^{107}

The *Saiva Siddhanta* literature (14th to 16th centuries) also played a major role in defining Tamil identity. One dominant assumption of this literature was that the Tamils are non-Brahmins and they are categorised as *Tiravitar*. The *Saiva sidhanta* literature manifested the increasing importance of agriculture. As a part of the British Indian empire the region of Tamilakam was considered as a unit of economy. The British Empire designed it as a part of the political, economic strategy in capital accumulation. When the British gained control over the empire, both they and the groups engaged in cultivation tried to establish some sort of stability of agricultural revenue. The agricultural landlords of Tamilakam designated as Vellalas were prioritised over other groups by many local traditions. Generosity and honesty were regarded as the special attributes of these agricultural landlords. Popular Tamil writers such as Ramalinga Swamikal, Maraimalai Adigal (Sanga Cheyyul) and many other writers praised these agricultural lands. "The word Velanmai became a synonym for charity and this in turn became a synonym for the instruments of productive cultivation."^{108}

The *Saiva Siddhanta* literature of 15th and 16th centuries illustrated the evils of

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^{107} R. Sathiyanatha Aiyar, *History of the Nayaks of Madura*, Madras, 1924, p.259. This increased significance attached to the production of local knowledge encourages the mapping and constitution of a social space. It is also a way of rejecting the ideological dependency on the culture defined as 'higher.' Lee M. Raymond illustrates this in the context of The Third World in the modern age. For further details see Lee. M. Raymond, "Modernity And Post-modernity In The Third World" in *Current Sociology*, Vol. 42, No.2, 1994, pp.42-45.

^{108} Eugene F. Ischick, challenges the attitude that knowledge about colonial culture is the product of only the west. it is regarded as the intricate cross pollination of European and native ideas. He states that "the notion of permanent space associated with the British revenue system was largely responsible for the notion of Tamilakam and Tamil identity." For the relevant discussion on the role of British revenue administration in different regions of South India. See Eugene F. Ischick, *Dialogue and History Constructing South India*, California, 1994, pp.198-201.
the society and the social privileges of pappan (Aarriyar) and popularised the
idea that Brahmins and Thiravitar (commons) were two monolithic categories
in Tamilakam. Historians of Tamilakam such as V. Kanakasabhai,
T.N. Subramanian, K.N. Sivaraja Pillai, P.T. Srinivasa lyengar rejected the
civilising role of Aryan culture in Tamilakam. They rather regarded Aryanisation
as that which corrupted the original Tamil culture. “The fallacy of reasoning with
which some read the influence of Aryan culture in every walk of life in the South
is deplorable. The evidences for them is the existing Sanskrit and Prakrit words
in literature.” “Nowadays it has become a fashion to trace anything great in
the south to Maghada. This at least in the case of linguistic studies in the south is
to be discarded.” But scholars like V.N. Ramachandra Dikshitar,
Dr. S Krishnaswami Aiyangar and K.A. Nilakantasastri recognise Aryanisation
as one of the trajectories which enriched Tamil culture. It is remarked “the
English educated non-brahmin castes endeavour to assert an indigenous
Dravidian civilisation. This is only natural and they merit the sympathy of
scholars and they confine themselves to a rational enquiry. The explanations of
Tamil culture are also based on the differences between Tamilakam and the
neighbouring regions. “The Tamils who inhabited the West Coast were separated
from the rest of the country by high mountains in their speech from the main
body of the Tamils.” Arram and Veeram are regarded as the special attributes
of Tamil culture. This is illustrated through descriptions of political traditions in
narratives. Thus Dravidian culture equated with Tamil culture. It is prioritised

111 M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, Tamil Studies, Madras, 1914, p.51.
112 V. Kanakasabhai, The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago, Madras, 1904, p.235.
over Aryan culture which is regarded as “highly philosophical and religious.”

The notion of Dravidian identity with its peculiar attributes is kept alive in historiography of Tamilakam in modern times also. Thus in the historicisation of Tamil culture the Aryan culture was always the framework of reference. The local traditions also created the consciousness a cultural space for the Tamils' socio-religious practices, kinship, taboo, incest, ecology, trading pursuits are all appropriated as the factors of after cultural integration of the Tamils.

Along with the identification of elements of Tamil culture there is also the search for spatial and temporal continuities. "Tamilakam is the land of antiquity as it has well developed language and literature from very early times. Civilisation brings with it new ideas and thoughts which require new words coined" continuity of Tamil culture is thus asserted. "In the light of the evidence left in early Sanskrit writings like the Ramayana of Valmiki there can be no doubt that the early Dravidian peoples of South India had attained a fairly

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113 P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar, History of the Tamils From the Earliest Times to 600 AD, Madras, 1928, p.63. Essentialism, theory of conquest, anthropological approach, ethnological approach was the different methods employed to study race. The ethnological approach, which combined physique and culture, became dominant in the 19th century. To cite an example Michael Banton, Racial Theories, New York, 1986, pp.13-32.

114 To cite an example, Sadhasivan, “Genesis of Dravidian Movement,” South Indian History Congress Souvenir, Madurai, 1987, pp.161-163.

115 Economic and ecological determinism are regarded as the essential elements in culture. For details see Ernest Cassirer, “The genesis of cultural Diversity” in Graham Clark (ed) The Identity of Man, London, 1983, p.68. There is a view that questions the methodology of employing culture as a criterion for social space.

116 M.Srinivasa Aiyangar, Tamil Studies, Madras, 1914, p.146.
high degree of civilisation and culture."\textsuperscript{117} "The Tamils were the most cultured people of India before the age of the rishis. It is proposed here to investigate the culture which the ancient Tamils attained in South India before the Gorgeous fire-cult spread from the valleys of the Sindhu and the Ganga."\textsuperscript{118}

**Identifying Tamilakam through Political Definitions**

While in one strand of historiography the coherence of Tamilakam in terms of culture is asserted, another strand of historiography asserted the antiquity of Dravidian political/traditions in Tamilakam. This was accomplished through political definitions of Tamilakam. After the model of Indian historiography the historians of Tamilakam appropriated political history as the normative framework. The exemptions were *Economic Conditions in South India (1000 - 1500 AD)*, (A. Appadourai, 1936) and *Ananda Ranga Pillai: The Pepys of French India*, (Srinivasaachari C.S., 1940). On the model of Indian historiography which projected Empires and kingdoms to historicise coherence of India, historiography of Tamilakam was also in search of Kingdoms and Empires to attain the unifying totality. The sources employed for the representation of past in the far south belonged to the category which facilitated the writing of political history. Historiography of the far south appropriated the political history of India as the model. The dominant assumption in historiography that "political history can be the whole history of any country"\textsuperscript{119}


was appropriated in south India also. Copper plate inscriptions, official records, epigraphs of temples of Chidambaram, Tanjore, Vaikuntaperumal inscriptions are employed by the historians of Tamilakam to construct the dynastic histories. Such political definitions were preoccupied with the search for historical continuities. Historical continuity is projected as a reality of the past by interpreting the vast corpus of indigenous literature, temple inscriptions and other Western sources of historical knowledge. The existence of monarchy from antiquity is fabricated from the Tamil Anthologies and other local traditions “even from very early ages Tamilakam is a land of Muvander and seven chieftancies . . . a kingdom or state is the necessary condition for the conduct of human life.”\(^{120}\) The temple inscriptions, epigraphs, are meticulously studied to identify kingdoms and Empires. The traditional narratives are integrated with later ‘documents.’ It was interpreted that “the civil wars illustrated between Nallingilli and his rival Nedungilli which was a favourite theme of purananuru states that all these early chola chieftains established a sort of vague hegemony among the Tamil states.”\(^{121}\) Discontinuities are historicised as the interregnum between the disintegration of a state and the beginnings of another. So collateral branches of a ruling dynasty constitute a major theme in the historiography of Tamilakam.

The Muhammadan invasions of South of India initiated by Alauddin Khilji and carried forward by rulers of Tughlk dynasty is regarded as


“unenduring.” In this context Tamilakam is contrasted with the West Coast
“Muhammadan intercourse with this part of India seems to have begun much
earlier and have considerable evidence of the pre-musulman trade of the Arabs of
the people with it.”

Tamilakam is identified as the land of kingdom which
dictated terms of maritime trade from the early centuries of christian era.

In the search for historical continuities some of the patterns visible in
Indian historiography were appropriated as the model. It is asserted “South India
both by its rich prehistoric past and by its existing social structure and political
traditions forms the most characteristic if not the only source of real information
or Dravidian history past and present.”

The historiography of Tamilakam
politically defined the land through the categories of chiefdoms, kingdoms and
feudatories. The historians of Tamilakam ventured over grand schemes of past.

The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago (Kanakasabhai, 1904) narrated the
political history of Tamilakam from 50 A.D. to 300 A.D. The Tamil Studies
(M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, 1914)) narrated the origin and development of Tamil
culture History of Tamilnadu to 1564 A. D. (T.N. Subramanian, 1914) analysed
the political and cultural history of Tamilakam from the beginnings to the 16th
century. It is primarily a political history of Tamilakam and hence the various
dynasties—the Cholas, Cheras, Pandyas, Pallavas and Kakatiyas are the major
themes to be found in this text. The Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekhan (K.V.
Subramania Iyer, 1917) analysed the role of the Pallavas the Cholas, the Pandyas
and the Kakatiyas in the south of India. The Beginnings of South Indian History

122 S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, South India and Her Muhammaden Invaders, New Delhi, 1921,
p.124.
123 For the relevant discussion see K.N. Sivarajapillai, The chronology of the Early Tamils, Madras,
1932, p.120.
(S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, 1918) *Dravidian India* (T.R. Shesha Iyer, 1925) *Pre Aryan Culture* (P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar: 1931) narrated the history of Tamilakam from the prehistoric ages. Regional dynastic histories by Prof. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, Prof. C. Minakshi, K.G. Shesha Iyer, K.V. Krishna Iyer, Prof. T.V. Sadasiva Pandarathar, Prof. Sathianatha Aiyar, and Venkata Ramanayya are texts which analysed the history of centuries. Such mega history was rendered possible because of the conviction that history as the scientific knowledge of the past has epistemological status and social significance.\(^{124}\) It is regarded as the basic necessity of any nation. These historical texts the historians focused on "the historically constituted locations of the past."\(^{125}\) Tamilakam is projected as the "land of seven chieftancies and three kingdoms."\(^{126}\)

The geographical extent of the kingdoms (the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas) are articulated through the references to regions in traditional literature, epigraphs and the western sources such as survey reports, manual of Madras Presidency etc.\(^{127}\) The political definitions of Tamilakam are also embedded in the notions of Tamils and non-Tamils. The Cheras, Cholas and the Pandyas are identified as the original ruling dynasties of Tamilakam. "The tribes Maravar,\(^{124}\) This conviction was dominant in the historiographic reflections of colonial ages. "History has played a key role in the modern production of a nation state and of the various constituent bases of nationality. At the same time the nation has played a critical historical role in defining what a modern conception of state should be." Dirks, *History A Sign of The Modern In Public Culture* New York, Vol. 2 No.2. Spring, 1990, p.44-48

\(^{125}\) This term is borrowed from Aloka Parasher. She illustrates that how centre-versus, margin play a key rule in the Pre-modern representation of past. She states that this trend is continued by the modern writings of history. For further discussions on this trend see. Aloka Parasher, *Absences in History.* Symposium papers 3, India History Congress, Warrangal, 1992.


\(^{127}\) In the compilations of epigraphs, an account of political history was usually presented. To cite a few examples Robert Sewell, *The Historical Inscriptions of South India Till 1923 And Outlines of Political History*, Madras, 1932, pp. 214-261. *A Topographical List of the Inscriptions of Madras Presidency Till 1915*, 3 vols, Madras, 1917, pp. 171-175, pp.297-302 and also see Colin Mackenzie *Descriptive catalogue of the oriental manuscripts and other articles illustrative of literature science Antiquity and culture*, Calcutta, 1828.
Thurayar and Vanavar founded respectively the Tamil kingdoms subsequently known as the Pandya, Cholas and Chera kingdoms.”¹²⁸ “The Tamil monarchies—the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas of Sangam age were of great antiquity. It is undeniable that really no new monarchies rose to power. The ancient ones continued with or with outbreak and the chieftancies of one age became the monarchies of other and vice versa. The continuity of the major and minor political dynasties of Tamilakam through many centuries preceding Vijayanagar is undeniable.”¹²⁹ There were numerous narratives in Tamil that created renewed interest for finding out the history of the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas in Tamilakam. These narratives were based entirely on traditional literature especially the Tamil Anthologies.¹³⁰ The pioneer historians attempted to establish historical continuity in Tamilakam by interpreting Tamil Anthologies. Historians also integrated traditional sources and epigraphs and attempted to establish historical continuity of specific kingdoms.¹³¹ The Pallavas, Kakatiyas, Sambuvaraiyar and the Hoysalas are identified as the non-Tamil elements who enriched Tamilakam¹³² by their historical role. The nature of political relations among the Cholas the Pandyas and the Pallavas was one of the themes in the

¹²⁸ V. Kaukasabhai, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, Madras, 1904, p.50.
¹³⁰ Historians preferred to appropriate the information imparted by the Tamil Anthologies without scrutiny. The contents were rearranged in the form of prose. Such narratives were numerous in Tamilakam. To cite a few examples M. Arakiaswamy, *Tamil Nadtaralaru*, Madras, 1938 N.C. Kanthiapillai, *Namatu Nadu* Madras 1945. M. Srinivasa Pillai *Pallavar varalaru* Madras, 1932.
¹³¹ Geographical extent of the Empire, chronological arrangement of events and identifying rulers are the thrust areas in these historical texts. To cite a few examples P. Rajamanickam Pillai *Pallavar Varalaru* Madras, 1941 T.V. Sadasiva Pandarathar, *Pandiyar varalaru*, Annamalai University, 1935.
¹³² All the historians of Tamilakam recognise Pallavas as an offshoot of the mixed Aryan race except S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, Rajamanickam, T.N. Subramanian who assert that the Pallavas were of Tamil origin. The Pallavas, Kakatiyas, Hoysalas and the Nayaks of Madura were represented as adventurous, dynasties “who wielded the destinies of south India for some time” while the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas were prioritised over them as “rulers from the earliest times till a very late period.” K.V. Subramania Iyer, *Historical Sketches of Ancient Sekhan*, Madras, 1917, pp. 72-75.
historiography of Tamilakam. Similarly “the Muhammaden invasions of South of India initiated by Alauuddin Khilji and carried forward by the Tuglaks in the South Indian Kingdoms and culture was not enduring.” Muhammadans, Kakatiyas, Pallavas and Hoysalas are defined as the non-Tamil elements that appeared in Tamilakam as feudatories/chieftains/ kings. In terms of temporality these are termed as interregnums in between the decline of an Empire and the beginning of another. ‘The forces of disintegration’ and the aggressive ambitions of the neighbouring chieftains were the historical explanations for such interregnums. These historical explanations are methodologically treated as unproblematic along with the conviction that territorial sovereignty in Tamilakam has antiquity and historical continuity. The historians of Tamilakam were aware that defining the most approximate boundaries of the kingdoms of Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas was the only possible alternative. Hence there were differences of opinion among historians as to the exact boundaries of these kingdoms. But through the mapping of the territorial kingdoms of the Cholas and Pandyas the historians articulated the coherence of Tamilakam.

**Historiography of Keralam under Colonialism**

The notion of Keralam as a coherent unit is a phenomenon unthought of in the historical texts of west coast. The historians were aware of the heterogeneous nature of the west coast from Tamilakam. This was made possible due to the nature of the sources which were used for the representation of past.

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133 S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *South India And Her Muhammaden Invaders* New Delhi, 1921, p.16.
West coast in traditional narratives

The Tamil Anthologies especially Ahananuru and Purananuru are employed by the historians of Keralam as traditional sources. These traditional narratives revealed geographical definitions through the category-tinai. The extent of Tamilakam is not specifically indicated. Keralam was also included in these geographical definitions.\(^{134}\) The Sangam literature speaks of Malainadu as the territory in Tamilakam under the cheralineage. It is the land beyond western ghats. Traditional Sanskrit literature regarded ‘Malanadu’ as the region in \textit{Dakshinapatha} beyond the western ghats to where a large number of migrants from the north settled. The later works such as \textit{Keralolpathi} and \textit{Keralamahatmya} elaborated upon this and referred to the frontiers of Malanadu which is termed as \textit{Bhargava Shetra}. It constitutes “the last links of a long chain of migration along the West coast and carrying the tradition of Parasurama.”\(^{135}\) The traditional accounts of \textit{Keralolpathi} speak of Brahmin settlements. It is stated that 36,000 of them were presented with arms (\textit{Sastra Bhiksha}) by Parasurama in order to enable them and to protect and rule Keralam-the 160 \textit{katham}s of land between Gokarnam and Kanyakumari.\(^{136}\) But local traditions of \textit{keralolpathi} focus on the sixty four villages established on the north and south of Korapuzha.\(^{137}\) The land beyond Korapuzha is an alien land for them. These settlements are legitimised by the traditions to justify the social privileges and


\(^{135}\) Kesavan Veluthat, \textit{Brahmin Settlements In Kerala Historical studies}, Calicut, 1975, p. 27.


identity of the brahmins unlike the Sangam literature which focuses on occupational groups in relation to nature the literacy genres *ula* and *parani* were patronised by royalty. They refer to the two lineages of Keralam and Cheran in Malanadu. The non-literary traditions of Keralam were numerous. *Puthuram Pattukal, Thottampattukal, Padappattukal, Tullal pattukal, Theyyam pattukal* dealt with religious or secular themes. The genre that had religious motifs presented profane geography among multiple meanings of the concerned tradition. *Vadakkan Pattukal, Thekkan Pattukal, Valiyathampi pattu, Kunju thampi pattu* narrate descriptions of the valour of the hero and descriptions of regions associated with his activities. *Margam Kalipattu* and *Pallippattukal* speak of vettatturajyam and vettattumannan. This ruler is regarded as the patron of christianity. The different literary traditions categorised as Manipravala tradition speak of regions which are associated with the motifs of the text. Space appear as one among the multiple meanings of the text. The admixture of facts and fiction in songs also refer to Zamorin, Chirakkal Thampuruan, Kottayathu Thampuran, Vadagaranadu and Moopan of Palyakottah.

Among these local narratives *Keralolpathi* and *Keralamahatmyam* were heavily relied upon as sources of historical truth. The historians eliminated the inconsistencies in these texts and appropriated the contents as historical truth. The discussions on the vamsa of the kings of Travancore (*The History of Travancore from the Earliest Times: 1878 A.D.*) the descriptions of the origins

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of the lineage of zamorins, *(The Zamorins of Calicut from The Earliest Times to A.D. 1806: 1938)* the descriptions of the origins of the vamsa of the rulers of Cochin *(The Progress of Cochin: 1932)* reveal that the traditional historiographic frame work was adopted as the normative frame work for the glorification of rulers.\(^{141}\) While the historiography of Tamilakam attempted at counter historicisation of Dravidian culture, the historiography of Keralam was rooted in the then existing social cleavage between the brahmin communities (designated as Aryan) and the non-brahmins.\(^{142}\)

**Role of Travelogues in Colonial Historiography of Keralam**

In the historiography of west coast travelogues were employed as true sources of historical knowledge. The travelogues of Varthema, Durate Barbosa, Nuniz, Domingopaes are regarded as accounts left by eyewitnesses. The travel accounts offered various definitions of Malabar. The entire west coast was designated as the sea coast of land of Malabar.\(^{143}\) It was invariably called Manibar, Malibar Malaiabar by different foreign travellers. Abususur designates the land extending from Santapur to Quilon as malaiabar-land of pepper. His narratives speak of the important harbours-Baswe, Bardar and Mangalore.\(^{144}\)

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\(^{141}\) "Travancore royal family maintains a high degree of purity in its marriage relations than does the Cochin Rajah in the social scale the Travancore Royal family may be considered better kshatriyas than those in the north" K.P. Shangoony Menon, *History of Travancore from the Earliest Times*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1878, p.14.

\(^{142}\) It is stated that culture and its plurality was axiomatic in the definition of Keralam in historiography. The society was historicised as consisting of five identities-the brahmins, non-brahmins, muslims, christians and the tribals. For further details on the role of culture in the interpretations of Kerala history see E.M. Sankaran Namboothiripad, *Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubhumi*, Part I (Mal), Thiruvananthapuram, 1947 pp. 24-47.

\(^{143}\) K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Foreign Notices of South India From Megasthene to Makavan*, Historical Series, no. 14, Madras, 1129, p. 5.

He also speaks of the Raja of Fili (Ezhimala) Jarfathen (Srekandapuram) Jaffathan (Dharmadan) Baffathan (Valiapattinam). The travelogue refers to many places, and events. Malabar was defined as "the place of entry to the western coast from the kingdom of Vijayanagar." Barbosa designates the land "extending from Cumbola to Cape-comorin as Malabar. Sheikh Zain-ud-din defines Malabar as the west coast extending from Cambay in Gujarat to the extremity of the peninsula. He designates Malabar as an entity that had great commercial and strategic importance. The travelogues regard kerobotras and pandyas as the kings who control the trading centres. The travellers were motivated by political and commercial prospects. Yet a few were motivated by the desire to win the fame of having seen the unknown world. Descriptions of towns, centres of trade, articles of trade, trade routes were the themes discussed in the travelogues. Since trade is associated with law and order a few details of law justice, and ruling authorities are mentioned. They speak of the kingdoms of Travancore, Quilon, Cochin and Calicut as major territorial divisions. Unaccustomed with the indigenous concept of power and its diffusion they portrayed ruling authorities as kings and territories as kingdoms. Barbaosa mentions Venad Attikal of Tripappur Swarupam, Kolattiri of Chirakkal Swarupam as kings of Quilon and Kannur Kūrumbiyathii Swarupam.

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145 E.F. Oaten, European Travellers In India, London, 1909, p.64.
146 This notion of Malabar as an entity is appropriated by historians. Malabar is viewed as one of the three major kingdoms K.M. Panikkar politically define Keralam through the categories of kings with sovereignty, Rajas, minor princely families, who exercised theocratic oligarchy. For the relevant discussion see K.M. Panikkar, Malabar And the Portuguese, Bombay 1929, p.5.
Puranattukara Swarupam, Paruppukavil Swarupam are translated as the kingdoms of Kolathunadu, Kottayam and Parappanadu. The opinions of Barbosa influenced the historians of Keralam who employed the categories of kingdoms and minor principalities. The so-called kings/rulers of medieval Travancore had been broadly formalised by historians and others in different ways which involves category displacement and conceptual slippage.

Defining Malayala Rajyam

Pachumoothathu and many others historians regard that the term Keralam is of later origin. It is stated that the term was derived from the abundance of coconut trees in the region. Malayalanadu/Malayala Rajyam was the epithet employed by the historians of Kerala in the history of regional Kingdom. From 1850 onwards there was increasing consciousness of significance of Malayalam as the medium of communication. This consciousness of linguistic identity was the result of the missionary activities in Keralam. The official writings suggested that the patronage of missionaries would enable the company to effect the civilising mission with out much expense. The missionaries also glorified the civilising mission of the British in Keralam to

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151 The missionary literature recorded their gratitude to the British authorities for their patronage. To cite a few examples Samuel Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore* New Delhi, 1883 pp. 378-395 and also see Francis Day *The Land of Perumals or Cochin Its past And Present* New Delhi, 1990 (Reprint) pp. 92-109
effect the civilising mission with out much expense.\textsuperscript{152} The missionaries often justified and glorified the civilising mission of the British.\textsuperscript{153}

The writings of missionaries state that knowledge of India and its curiosities was considered a fashion among the elite in England. Most of the missionaries stayed in South India for many years. Evangelisation being the prime motive, they focused on socio-religious practices of the natives and the downtrodden. The missionaries picture India as the land which needed a highly evolved religion, (christian) culture (Western) and rationality. They believed that these were totally unknown to the heathens of this land. The significant features of missionary writings on the native society are a) the construction of an unchanging society based on hierarchy b) the ideas of social progress.\textsuperscript{154} The ideas of social progress motivated the British policies of education in India. The missionaries also translated many of the traditions that dealt with non-christian themes communication with the common folk was one of the basic necessities for evangelisation. Hence most of them studied the native languages and made remarkable contributions to the development of language through studies in linguistics. The Serampore christian missionaries rendered active assistance in the compilation of Telugu-English dictionary. The company’s territories in South India had vastly increased since the 1760s. The board of Revenue insisted on the

\textsuperscript{152} Francis Buchanan, \textit{A journey from Madras Through the countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar}, New Delhi, 1907, Vol. I, p. 72.

\textsuperscript{153} The missionary writings thanked the British administrators for their valuable assistance and encouragement. To cite a few examples Samuel Mateer, \textit{Native Life in Travancore} New Delhi, 1883, pp. 378-395 and also see Francis Day, \textit{The Land of Perumals or Cochin its past and present} New Delhi, 1990 (Reprint), pp. 92-109.

acquisition skills by its officials. The college at Fort William began to recruit teachers of South Indian languages and encouraged the production of texts of grammar and dictionaries. As early as the beginning of the eighteenth century French missionaries compiled a Telugu-French dictionary. Among the foreign missionaries in Keralam and Tamil Nadu only the works of Father Arnos, Benjamin Baily, Fr. Paulinos, Herman Gundert and Bishop Caldwell are available to us. Among them Father Arnos (John Earnest Hogslanden) of Germany, Bishop Caldwell and Herman Gundert of Germany made significant contributions to Tamil through compilation of bilingual dictionaries and books on Tamil grammar. The dictionaries that were compiled by the missionaries in Malayalam language are given in (Table 3.1). These developments in language and literature through the participation of both the colonizes and the colonized brought "the conquest of languages."¹⁵⁵

Thus the missionaries studied Malayalam to facilitate better propagation of religion. It was a social necessity to create cohesiveness and instil confidence in the minds of new converts in different parts of Kerala through instructions. This compelled the early missionaries of Keralam to write pamphlets and Journals in Malayalam. The journals and pamphlets created the consciousness of Malayala Rajyam. Though no rigid frontiers were mentioned the journals and pamphlets designated the land extending from Gokarnam to Southern boundaries

¹⁵⁵ The term is borrowed from P. Sudhir, he explores how the compilation of Dictionaries and grammar was one of the crucial devices of colonial hegemony. He illustrates this in the context of Telugu language. He states that bilingual dictionaries were not merely toxical tools but they constructed a cultural universe. For relevant details see P. Sudhir, "Colonialism and the Vocabularies of Dominance" in Tejeswani Niranjana, (ed.) Interrogating Modernity Culture and Colonialism in India Delhi, 1983, pp. 335-348.
of the state of Travancore as Malayala Rajyam. The image of Malayala Rajyam is reinforced in *Keralapazhama* also. *Malayalam Rajyam Charitrathodu Kudiya Bhoomisastram* (Bassal mission: 1870) associated language and geography in the identity of Malayala Rajyam. This new epithet gradually displaced the traditional epithet of Perumal Rajyam. Naturally even the pioneer historians perceived the unit of their study as the kingdom in the entity Malayala Rajayam.

**Anthropological Writings**

In the anthropological writings the west coast was considered as a region in the larger unit of Southern India. The ethnographic survey initiated in 1901 was carried out in the provinces and states of the British Indian Empire with a view to “investigating and recording the manners and customs of the tribes and castes in their respective areas.” Differences in conceptual apparatus and trends are visible in these writing. The pioneer anthropologists followed the conventional geographical division of India namely the trans vindhyan and vindhyan. The categorised the inhabitants of Southern India into the civilised and the aborigins. The latter were defined as the “non-brahmin community.” The hill tribes and other non-brahmin castes backward in socio-economic status were grouped together as the domain of study. It was subjected to investigation. Their marriage customs magio religious rites and social practices were observed and

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156 Raghavan Puthupally states that the term Malayala Rajyam was a new epithet which is of late origin. Till then the land was referred to as Malainadu/Perumal Rajyam. Raghavan Puthupally. *Pathrapraravarthana Charithram*, Thrissur 1988, p. 54.


information was collected and compiled. In this context the information in the local accounts were also appropriated. Thus the pioneer writings being empirical were descriptive in nature. The same trend is visible in *The Travancore Castes and Tribes* (L.A. Krishna Iyer, 1937). The author stated that “the enquiry was to understand the effect of contact with civilisation on the primitive tribes of Travancore. Sixteen tribes and hillmen “who were living in the hills from time immemorial” were studied. The regions occupied by them, there traditions, customs, manners, suggestions for their betterment were the areas of investigation. Later kinship was extensively employed as a tool of analysis. For this later anthropologist the idea of Dravidian kinship is necessarily linked to the historical and cultural area of Southern India that also included Ceylon. On the basis of data derived from various sources of India and Ceylon such as law, religious literature and traditions, chronicles and inscriptions. Certain rules of identification were formulated.

Thus west coast was a part of the larger unit Southern India. Dravidian kinship system was regarded as the binding factor between different regions irrespective of linguistic differences. The cleavage between the brahmins and non-brahmins was reiterated through the conceptual apparatus of race. In accordance with the ethos of contemporary society dominated by the elite the historians of Keralam combined race and castes as explanatory model for

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160 The rule of cross-cousin marriages and kinship terminologies are regarded as the basis of Dravidian system of kingship. For further details see, David Troutsman, *Dravidian kingship* New Delhi, 1958.
illustrating social hierarchy. The degree of pollution was employed as a tool of analysis for explaining the hierarchical order of society in Keralam.\textsuperscript{161} 

The historians of Keralam were preoccupied with the historicisation of specific political units such as Travancore/Cochin/Calicut. The exemption was \textit{The History of Kerala} (4 vol.) (K.P. Padmanaba Menon, 1935). As such in the west coast there was no historicisation of identity of Keralam either in terms of territorial integrity or culture. Travancore Cochin and Calicut are treated as the conspicuous kingdoms in Keralam. Historians focused on any one of them as the real domain of historical significance. The long association with the British and their history created the conviction that kingdom is the criterion of historicisation. So the kingdoms of Travancore/Cochin/Calicut were viewed as exclusive political units. They were perceived as historiographic units distinct from each other.\textsuperscript{162} 

The historical texts always attempted to narrate events in signal years of each ruler. Thus the pioneer historical texts were of the simplest kind. The texts were preoccupied with a) origin of the royal family b) wars and administrative reforms of rulers c) Trade relations with the Portuguese, Dutch and the British d) Details of adoption in to the royal families, e) ceremonies associated with royalty.

\textsuperscript{162} This is attributed to the existence of the native states of Travancore, Cochin and Calicut under the respective royal lineages even in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. It is asserted that a true history of Keralam is a great necessity. What was regarded as history was only the chronicle of rulers and eulogies of rulers. T.H.P. Chentharassery, \textit{Ilamkulavum Kerala Charithravum} (Mal), Trivandrum, 1988, p.16.
Certain factors such as increased revenue through maritune trade, expulsion of an aggressive aristocracy and territorial expansions assigned new dignity to ruling authorities. Dignified royalty sought new dimensions of history for enhancing legitimacy. This necessitated the maintenance of records. Trustworthy men were appointed in palace to write chronicles (Granthavari). Aristocratic families associated with palaces, temples also maintained records that coloured historians of Keralam considered that the antiquity and historical continuity were the necessary conditions for the legitimacy of royal lineage. The History of *Travancore Thiruvithamcore Charithram* (Pacchumoothathu: 1867 AD) in Malayalam served this need through the compilation of the dynastic history of Travancore. The pamphlet traces the origin of the royal lineage from the *perumals*. The author states that History is the objective narration of character and achievements of great men.163 The historians of colonial ages proceed with the conviction that *Bhoopathi* (king) is the pivot of administration (*Rajya dharma*) and is the owner of Rajya.

The historiographic reflections of the West Coast reveal the recognition of 'part' and 'whole' as methodologically unproblematic. There is the recognition of Malanadu as a unit distinct from other regions in India. But more significance is attributed to the respective kingdom that is selected as the object of historicisation. The specific region of study is recognised as a part of Malanadu. The presuppositions and of this historiographic unity and non-unity are derived

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163 For the relevant discussion see. Pacchu Moothathu, *Thiruvithamcore Charithram*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1867, pp. 4-6.
out of different genres of literature such as traditional narratives, travelogues and missionary literature. The historical interpretations from these sources reveal the presuppositions concepts and reinforcements in the historical texts of the kingdoms of Travancore/Cochin/Calicut.

While the pioneer historians such as Pacchumoothathu, Diwan Madhava Rao and P. Shangoony Menon employed traditional narratives and palace records a sources new categories of sources were available to the later historians of Kerala. Travelogues, anthropological writings, missionary literature and official literature were the new categories of sources. The historians of Keralam extensively employed these sources.

To sum up, the historiographic reflections of the historians of Tamilakam and Keralam reveal that in spite of their awareness of the absence of the far south in Indian historiography, it is not historiographic unity but historiographical non-unity which characterises the historical texts in the far south. The notions of whole and part is reiterated in these historical texts also. The mapping of South India thus reveals two parallel genres of historical production. The historiography of Tamilakam articulated notions of Tamil identity and Tamilakam. This was accomplished by converging pluralities in the mapping of Tamilakam. Contrary to this political atmosphere of princely states in Keralam rendered plurality as the normative framework of historiography. The social experiences of contemporary world motivated the production of history in the Far South in a manner which exhibited tremendous differences. For Tamilakam it was the projection of the self, designated as Dravidian. The historicisation Tamil
identity in historiography also reveals that the perception that is a Tamil and what is Tamilakam has undergone changes from time to time. It also reveals that the identity of the Tamils is elaborated from analytical models of sociology. This often results in dissolving the meanings and associations that are really in them. For Keralam it was in tune with the political and social experiences of contemporary world rooted in the cleavage between the brahmins and non-brahmins.