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ASSETS OF MONEY

*Commercialisation and Landownership in Malabar Coast;
Some Observations on the Late Eighteenth-Century*

Speaker

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Chair

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Commercialisation and Landownership in Malabar Coast;
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This paper offers a discussion and a historiographic critique of the institution of land ownership and its generalization in the eighteenth-century Malabar Coast. We will first describe a moment of agreement between two of the early nineteenth-century revenue investigators in British Madras namely Thomas Munro and F. W. Ellis. The essay calls this Munro-Ellis agreement the 'Malabar Consensus', and will argue that it was founded up on an economic phenomenon, viz. commercialisation, in the region's early-modern history. The term 'commercialisation' is taken to relate to a political economy; a fiscal scenario of economic activity and rampant egotism, in which a significant part of production is sold in—and a non-negligent portion of its consumption-basket is brought from—the market. Secondly, we will look into the eighteenth-century Malayalam documentation of property transactions and innovations; of mortgage, of common-credit and finally, of outright land-sale/purchase. Based on such an exercise, the paper will argue against the standard 'agrarianist' assumptions in mainstream historiography and propose that the landed property in this region was successful in mounting, if not predicating, reign for its own legal-material manifestation, and this success was seemingly integral to an internalist trajectory of economic development.



Dr. ABHILASH MALAYIL

Dr. Abhilash Malayil is Assistant Professor in History at the CKGM Government College, Perambra, Kerala. He completed his PhD from the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT-Mandi-Himachal Pradesh, India and his doctoral thesis dealt with the eighteenth-century political economy of Malabar Coast, South-Western India. He is a post-doctoral fellow of the European Research Council project *The New Ecology of Expressive Modes Early Modern South India* [NEEM], hosted at The Hebrew University, Jerusalem. Abhilash Malayil is interested in the histories of sharecropping, landed property, rural markets and money capital and has published in these areas in the journals like *Indian History*, and the *Indian Journal of History of Science*. He is currently completing a Malayalam monograph on the Company State and the Ryotwari Process.

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