



past for a positive future

MATRILINEAL OCEAN

Multiple Histories of *Marumakkattāyam*
in the Indian Ocean



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Speaker

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Image courtesy : Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam

The origin of matrilineal system has been a matter of long debate in the academia with social anthropologists, philosophers, archaeologists, feminists and linguists making claims on its origin in prehistoric communities. Going beyond an obsession with search for origins, historians have rarely studied the premodern histories of the existing matrilineal communities. In this talk, I engage with the matrilineal communities of the Indian Ocean littoral with a focus on the context of southwest India. I argue that matrilineal system (identified as *Marumakkattāyam* in the region) was one of the most convenient ways for the Indian Ocean exchanges. From Southeast Asia to Southeast Africa, the matrilineal praxis has been prevalent in several Islamic communities; but in the west coasts of India it historically existed among the Hindus and Muslims, and to some extent the Jews and the Christians made use of the system. On the basis of some fragmentary but significant evidence on the matrilineal praxis between ca. 800 and 1800 CE among Hindu, Muslim, Jewish and Christian communities, I explore the nuances of conversion and incommensurability across religions. I investigate how the praxis benefited the oceanic mercantile system of southwest India as well as the dispersal of Abrahamic religions which are often interpreted as significant domains of patriarchy and patriliney.



Dr. MAHMOOD KOORIA

Dr. Mahmood Kooria is a Researcher at the Leiden University, the Netherlands and Assistant Professor of History at the Ashoka University, India. Earlier he was a Research Fellow at the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) and African Studies Centre (ASC), Leiden the Dutch Institute in Morocco (NIMAR), Rabat, and the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), New York. He did his PhD at the Leiden University Institute for History on the circulation of Islamic legal ideas and texts across the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean worlds. With Michael N. Pearson he has edited *Malabar in the Indian Ocean World: Cosmopolitanism in a Maritime Historical Region* (Oxford University Press, 2018). He has published in several peer-reviewed journals such as the *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, *Law & History Review*, *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion*, *Itinerario: Journal of Imperial and Global Interactions* and *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*.

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