



# **Minicoy from Prehistory to 1973: The Political History of a Small Coral Island in the Indian Ocean**

**FRANK HEIDEMANN & MUHAMMAD NAAJIH**

FRANK.HEIDEMANN@LMU.DE; NAAJIHDIDI@GMAIL.COM

KEYWORDS: INDIAN OCEAN, LAKSHADWEEP, MALDIVES, POLITICAL HISTORY,  
COLONIALISM, ISLAND SOCIETIES

137

---

*Dedicated to Lars Vilgon*

## **Introduction**

Minicoy (locally, and hereafter, Maliku) is an Indian island with a Maldivian and, therefore, Islamic culture. The island is part of the Lakshadweep Union Territory, which marks the south-western national border of the Indian Republic. Its history has been neglected in most of the published work on India and in the Maldives, since it appeared to be marginal to the larger trajectories of both nation states. Archaeologists, historians and the islanders themselves agree that the inhabitants of Maliku (locally and hereafter Malikuns) were once Buddhists, and that they were, at one time, an integral part of the Maldives. When and why the island was lost to the Maldives is both an open historical question and a matter of public and political debate.

A few facts, however, can be considered as undisputed: In 1153 CE and the years that followed, the people of the Maldives and therefore of Maliku began to be converted to Islam, a process whose completion must have taken decades or even centuries. At some times in history, Maliku was ruled by South Indian "sea kings", and later became part of British India. After the Independence of India in 1947, the island became



part of a newly formed Indian Union. Today, it marks the southwestern maritime border of India.

When we, the authors of this article—a German anthropologist whose regional focus is on South Asia, and a Maldivian historian who was formerly a research analyst in the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Heritage—conducted research on Maliku, we collected local oral histories and genealogies and mapped historical sites.<sup>1</sup> In our study we include mythological narratives and other oral histories, artefacts from museums in Maliku and Malé, archaeological findings, unpublished sources from archives in Dhivehi and English, documentation left behind by early visitors to the island, analyses by scientific expeditions, colonial reports, and genetic evidence. Regrettably, many relevant historical sources have been destroyed by fire (in Malé in 1752, and in Maliku in the 1960s), but our extensive search for historical evidence has made it possible to trace and date the genesis of how Maliku became what it is today. Our focus is on the external relations of Maliku: we seek to identify the powers that Maliku belonged to, and at what time, and why these forms of affiliations changed. We have traced the few documents about the circumstances which brought Maliku under the control of the South Indian Ali Rajas, and we have used, also, the much better documentation for the nineteenth century, when the British Empire won hegemony over South Indian rulers and became the new overlords in that land.

We wrote this article in the spirit of India's enormous cultural plurality. It was our intention to present a piece of that plurality which may be geographically tiny but is—historically, linguistically, and ethnologically—a unique and fascinating mosaic. Like the Naga of North-East India, the Buddhist culture of Ladakh, or the tribal world of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the people of Maliku contribute to the kaleidoscope of India's cultural pluralism: despite this, they have garnered less attention in the historical record. At this point in our research, which is ongoing, we have decided to present the sources we have found and begin the task of making sense of the heterogenous material they represent. Our point of departure is not the global whole, but the island in its own right. "Small places – large issues" is an often-quoted phrase, one we would like to use in order to illuminate the connectivity of both the small and large, and to explicitly include the viewpoint of the Malikuns. We read these sources against the backdrop of Indian Ocean history, and we show that, within the larger Dhivehi world, Minicoy has developed its own remarkable culture, or "little civilization".

In our discussions on the island with the people of Maliku, they left us in no doubt that although their ancestors had had to supply the



island's goods to the Ali Rajas, and were later compelled to become a part of British India, they were never (or so they stress) colonised. According to their indigenous historiography, they once lived in fear of pirates and paid the South Indians to assure their security. Later, in British times, they continued to live an independent life on their island, with minimal interference by colonial authorities. This notion of having never been colonised in the past, however, is a statement made in the present. It is a question that has to be taken up, as we take it up later in this text, when we discuss relevant documents. The most commonly mentioned and undisputed date is 1956, when the people of Maliku opted to join the recently formed Indian state (the other option, some elders say, would have been inclusion in Pakistan, an entity with which the island had no known historical connection).

At this time India was creating a new administrative and territorial order: the presidencies and small kingdoms that had existed within British India were being re-organised into states, like the South Indian states of Kerala, Karnataka, Hyderabad and Tamil Nadu. Several territories received the status of a Union Territory (UT), like the former French colony of Pondicherry, and (later) the Portuguese colony of Goa (Raikar 2023). Other UTs in the South were the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the "Laccadive, Minicoy and Amindivi Islands". These UTs were governed from the centre and were represented only in the Lower House in Delhi. In the last six decades several UTs have gained statehood, or have been renamed, like the UT of "Lakshadweep" in 1973. This maritime UT is comprised 36 islands, including Maliku, out of which 10 are inhabited, with a total population of 64,473 in 2011 (Census of India 2011).

Today, as in the past, the people of Maliku live in nucleated settlements in the northern half of the island. This settlement pattern contrasts with other islands of the Lakshadweep territory, where housing follows a dispersed pattern. In Maliku, the people live in 11 wards, often called villages, which stretch from west to east, from the lagoon to the ocean. Each ward touches another, like the layers of a cake. Fishing was the main occupation, in contrast to the other islands of the Lakshadweep, where the majority of the population engaged in cultivation. The people of Maliku have traded with South India and Ceylon for centuries, but they lost their own fleet in the course of the twentieth century. In 2011, the island's total population was 10,700 (Census of India 2011).

Most of the men work around the world as seamen on commercial vessels (Heidemann 2020) and support their families by remitting money home. Fishing is still an important occupation (Heidemann 2022), even though the younger generation is looking for white-collar jobs on



the island, or in the diaspora in Kochi. The island is becoming increasingly linked to the mainland, and in both directions. Malikuns move to Kerala or elsewhere for medical treatment and education, and the Indian Government, with its many institutions, is extending its presence on the island. We now have to go back to the history of Maliku.

### **Before 1500: The pre-history and early history of Maliku**

#### *The Indian Ocean World: Pre-colonial maritime highways*

The world has no centre. Maps can be sketched upside down and, according to context, any point can be placed in their centres. Our point of departure is the Indian Ocean, the oldest maritime long-distance trading space in world history. In any map of this space, which roughly stretches from the Arabian Peninsula and East Africa to Indonesia and Melanesia, the Maldives and the Lakshadweep will appear somewhere in the central part of it. From the perspective of pre-colonial seafaring, it is no exaggeration to say that Maliku was at the centre of the Indian Ocean. In pre-Buddhist, pre-Christian and pre-Islamic times, the Indian Ocean served as a waterway connecting the West and the East. The regular monsoon winds enabled sustainable trading links, by carrying ships from west to east during the period spanning June to October, and from east to west in the months from November to April. Over centuries, the littoral settlements and the islands were connected by commerce and conquest.

In the beginning, luxury items from South Asia were traded to Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Arabian Peninsula. In the first millennium a wave of migration from what is today Indonesia crossed the Indian Ocean to Madagascar. In the centuries before European colonialism, Muslim traders established their stations in numerous ports along the East-African and South-Asian coast.

South Asia was a merchant's paradise. Topographically diverse, it contained a range of economies which produced an astounding variety of raw materials. [...] By the middle of the first millennium BC, peninsular India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives were linked into an extensive coastal trading network. (McPherson 1993, 39-40)

Later, European colonial powers used the established networks, navigational systems, skilled crews and existing harbors for their own colonial projects (Pearson 2003).

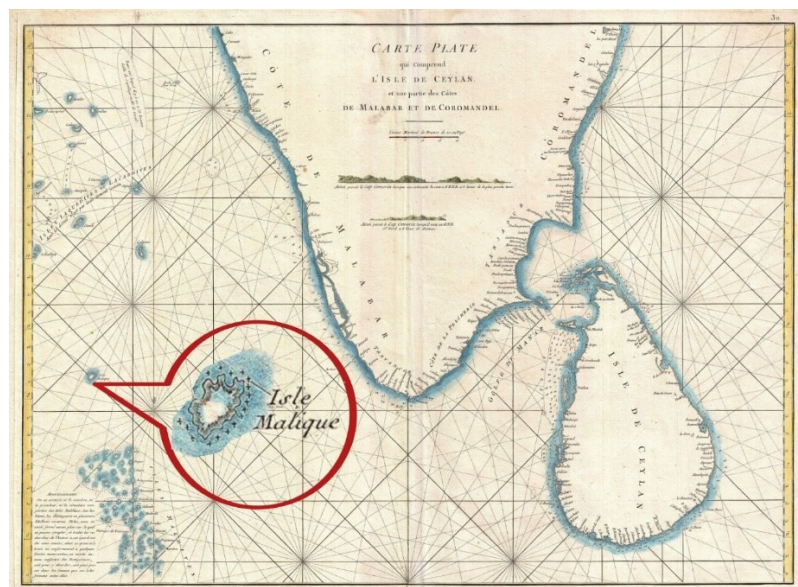
The ocean was not a barrier that divided countries, but a highway connecting them via waterways that allow ships to traverse the vast spaces from Africa and Arabia to South-East Asia and China, and within that vast space, the large maritime area occupied by the Maldives and



## FORUM

Laccadive islands, with less difficulty than would otherwise be the case. Two of these waterways pass by the island of Minicoy, and these must be taken into account. The nine-degree Channel lies to the north of the island, while the eight-degree Channel lies to its south. From the northern tip of the Maldives up to Hadhdhunmathi (or Laamu Atoll, as it is also known), a distance of almost five hundred kms that extends from north to south, there is just one larger passage. This is the Kardiva Channel, where the island of Kaashidhoo stands in the middle. Up to the nineteenth century, it was almost impossible to pass the Maldives without the help of a pilot. The island chains are connected by reefs, and expert knowledge was needed to pass through the narrow spaces in-between the islands.

Moreover, it was difficult to spot the islands at night, and to identify the individual islands during the hours of darkness. Hundreds of ships have been shipwrecked there (Gaur et al. 1998). The passage via Minicoy must have been a safe choice for early sailors. After the opening of the Suez Canal, Minicoy lay on the shortest route from Europe to Sri Lanka and further to South-East Asia and Australia. But even before that time, Minicoy must have been a "caravanserai" in the sea (Kattner n.d. -a, 1). Many of the islands in the Indian Ocean became hubs (Schnepel & Alpers 2018), indispensable places in the evolution of early globalisation. They contributed to an exchange of goods and a diffusion of technologies, cultural ideas and religions. The two complementary qualities – isolation and connectivity – shaped the history of Maliku.



Map 1: 1775 Mannevillette Map of Southern India, Ceylon and Northern Maldives. This map has been edited by Muhammad Naajih with an enlarged Malique (Minicoy) to show the location of Minicoy on the map.



In spite of the historical importance of small islands, the written history of South Asia has been a landlocked one, at least until today. It seems that the ocean swallows time. In most compilations, edited volumes and textbooks, small coral islands are conspicuous by their absence. Early globalisation, however, took place along both, the land-bound silk road and sea routes across the Indian Ocean. Islands were the steppingstones, they offered orientation and protection. They were the places to find drinking water and to repair ships. On these islands, local societies emerged. Surrounded by water and cut off from the rest of the world during windy and stormy seasons, they became “think tanks” for maritime issues. Sailors returned to their homes, stayed for a few months, exchanged views and experimented with new materials and technologies.

When Tim Severin (1982) searched for materials and the expertise to build a reconstruction of an ancient Arab Dhow, he found the coir ropes and expertise he needed in such islands. Ali Manikfan from Minicoy was called to Oman, where he directed the building of the Sohar, the ship which Severin finally sailed up to China. The coral islands were small in size, but large in their effect. If it is true that history is written by the victors, it is not surprising that these islands, which have no record of victorious conquest of other territories, are blank pages in history.

*Myths: Graphic histories, good to think.*

Myths are poetic reflections of, and on, the past. They are not based on written documents or archaeological discoveries, but on other realities like stars and topographies, plants and animals, winds and currents, *et cetera*. Myths connect these realities and transcend others: humans may fly, or fish walk on islands. They need not be historically true, but they are good to think. They are true in the sense that they serve as real elements of thought, opening a window to the human mind that tells us how it works. It is worthwhile to begin with the myths of Maluku, since they refer to an idea of the origin of the island’s population and legitimate the relationship of status groups within it.

The most widespread oral tradition on Maluku concerns the coming to the island of two Maldivian princesses, Kan’boaranin and Kohorathu Kamana. When they arrived, the Tivaru people, who had previously resided on the island, had left for Sri Lanka. After these two princesses came to Maluku all the lands became their property. Kan’boaranin had children and became the ancestor of the Bodun, the chiefs of Maluku who owned all the private lands of Maluku. After Kohorathu Kamana died without having any offspring, her lands became the Bandaara (*pandaram*) lands. The captains of the vessels from which they came



became the ancestors of the Niyamin; the second highest status group after the Bodun. The offspring of the crew and the servants who accompanied the two princesses became the ancestors of the Meduken'bin: the working class, and the Raverin: the palm sappers. (Kattner n.d. -b; Kulikov 2014; Farouk 2019)

According to another local oral tradition, a Maldivian by the name of Bodu Thakurufaanu—whose identity might have been confused with the story of a Maldivian freedom fighter of the sixteenth century of the same name—landed at Maliku at a time when nobody lived on the island. To claim the island for himself, he carved a coral stone with motto “La ilaha illa-Allah” (there is no other god but Allah), and placed it in the centre of the island, near the present-day house of Serikkal. He then left the island, and did not return until a few years later, when he found that it was populated by a group of people called Tivaru. He told them that the island belonged to him, that he had marked it, and showed them the stone. They believed his story, and became his servants. It is said that they became the ancestors of the Raverin, who are today a group on Maliku with the lowest social status group. According to another version of the same story, this Bodu Thakurufaanu came from Sri Lanka. When he visited Maliku for the second time, he came with his two daughters Kan'boaranin and Kohorathu Kamana. Kan'boaranin was married to a Maldivian man and became the ancestress of the Bodun; Kohorathu Kamana (as in the version mentioned above) had no children. (Sudarsen 1979, 861; Farouk 2019)

These myths link Maliku to Sri Lanka and to the Maldives, and they offer a narrative for the origin of the four status groups in the island. Ellen Kattner (1996) has described these categories, each connected to a normative position in the division of labour. The Bodun—often confused with the term “Manikfan”, which is the title of males from this group—were landowners and shipowners; the Niyamin acted as captains, navigators and religious scholars; the Medukembin worked as fishermen, seamen or as craftsmen; the Raverin specialised in palm-sapping, tree-climbing, and other land-based jobs. It seems that the division of labour and the social effect of status groups had begun to lose their importance by the time the first British reports were published in the second half of the nineteenth century (Thomas 1859, 257-258), and that this change in the local culture had progressed even more drastically in the second half of the twentieth century, when formal education gained increasing importance. As in other parts of the world, oral tradition lost its range and impact in Maliku. Other forms of knowledge about the origin and of the past overshadowed ancient narratives as comprehensive explanations of the world.



*The archaeology of Maliku: An old civilization on its own terms*

Ancient objects are patient and remain silent over centuries, but they are—it seems—happy to speak when they feel honored as unbiased witness of the past. They talk in riddles, and they rarely give straight answers when questioned. A close look at Maliku suggests that a complex pre-history is preserved beneath the island's sandy soil, or behind its overgrown vegetation. One indication for the early settlement of the larger region is the terracotta objects found in Kalpeni, which have been dated to 1500 BC (Tripathi 1999, 829). It is beyond the scope of this article to offer a comprehensive analysis of these facts, but a few landmarks, however, need to be mentioned to illustrate the antiquity of Maliku.

The best documented aspect of the island's pre-Islamic past are its wells and ponds. Ellen Kattner (2007, 145) describes and analyses twenty-six ponds (*valu*) near the inhabited area of Maliku (*valu* literally means well). Out of these, twenty-one are big (*bodu*). These *bodu valu* are fed by sweet water sources, which are found a few feet under the sandy surface. This water was not used as drinking water, since it was not filtered through deeper layers of sand. In the open water of the *bodu valu*, islanders used to keep freshwater fish (which are still found today on some Maldivian islands with inner sweet water lakes), to monitor the water-quality. The *bodu valu* have a depth of 1 to 1.5 m. and can be reached by stairs. All but one are of a rectangular shape. Most of the big stepwells have a surface area of 20 sqm (the largest is around 100 sqm in area) and are fenced by walls with a height of 1.5 to 2 m. All are made from coral stones, like most of the Buddhist stupa and other ancient constructions in the Maldives. Some of the *bodu valu* are attached to the Buddhist mounds and must have been constructed by the earlier settlers of the island.

Kattner points out the astonishing similarities they show to the 'Great Bath' in the Citadel of Mohenjo Daro, one of the centres of the Indus Valley Civilisation 2600–1800 BCE. Based on other, additional findings linked to the Indus Valley Civilization (Tripathi 2009), Kattner suggests that there may even have been pre-Buddhist settlements of the Lakshadweep and Maldivian islands. In the Maldives, bathing tanks were common in several islands until the mid-twentieth century. According to the Census Report of 1921 there were 1880 stepwells or bathing tanks all over the archipelago, with the largest concentration of such tanks being at the capital Māle, with its 77 bathing tanks. In the south of the Maldives, even larger numbers are recorded: on the island of Fuvahmulah there were 426, in Addu atoll 567, in Huvadhu atoll 594 bathing tanks, and in the other atolls of the Maldives 216 more are listed (Census





of the Maldives 1921).

The largest object on Maliku is a wall,<sup>2</sup> or *dhigukunnu*, (from *dhigu*, long, and, *kunnu*, peak), about 1.2 km long and 10 to 15 feet high, which runs near and parallel to the eastern coastline from north to south (Thomas 1859, 251; documented in a detailed map of Basevi 1872). The location of the wall is directly due east of the villages: it seems obvious that it protected the islanders from the impact of the open ocean. The villages are built on the western side of the island facing the lagoon, and agricultural fields lie between the houses and the wall. The origin of the wall might be connected to the former use of the gardens for planting taro, for which an artificial swamp was created, an endeavour which required the removal of soil. But this can be only a partial explanation. Later, parts of the wall were removed, and today its profile can be seen clearly.

The main material forming the wall is coral, in brick-size stones which were mined from the reefs. Considering the small number of islanders and the tremendous amount of work the wall's construction would have entailed, the making of the wall must have been taken many years or generations. The people of Minicoy, however, have not much to talk about, today, where this large barrier is concerned. We have no clue as to when and why it was built. We can say, without doubt, that it must have offered protections against waves and wind from the ocean. And this tells us that a large number of people had once been working for a long period on a joint project—a project gigantic in size in comparison to the dimensions of the island.<sup>3</sup>

On Maliku, only a few archaeological excavations have been carried out, but the detailed reports we have provide strong indications for an old culture in its own terms. One of the few objects which caught more interest of Indian archaeologists is a 292 cm long Indo-Arabian stone anchor found in Maliku, suggesting trade contacts with the Arab world in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Tripathi 2009, 407). More obvious, and scattered over the northern part of the island, are human made mounds, mostly from the Buddhist era. According to Farouk (2019, 13) there were 17 of such mounds (*kunnu*) when he visited the island in the 1990. They are also made from coral stones and have an average height of around 15 feet. Buddhism spread via Sri Lanka to the Maldives in the first centuries BCE and must have reached Maliku on the same route. Malikuns found a well-preserved Buddha head, which is kept in the Maliku Museum today (Hoon & Mohammed 2022). Among the objects in the Museum there is also an elephant bone, an object without any corresponding local narrative. But we do know from fourteenth century *loamaafaanu* that the Queen of the Maldives rode on an elephant in Malé



(Bell 2002 [1940],185). The religious orientation of the island in pre-Buddhist times, which some archaeologist identified in the Maldivian context as a kind of cult of the sun with parallels to early Hinduism (Heyerdahl 1986), must remain, at least at our present state of knowledge, a matter for speculation.

One of Maliku's archaeological features that is unique to the island and cannot be found elsewhere in the Lakshadweep or Maldives are human made caves, which have not yet been either counted or dated. Thomas describes them as

chambers which have been constructed underground at an unknown period, most of them are about 4 feet high, 3 wide and 10 or 12 long, many are smaller, they are but little removed from the surface; [...] no bones or other traces of man has been found in them [...] there are about 50 of these, and it may be surmised that they were used as temporary places of concealment during incursion of pirates [...] (Thomas 1859, 252).

Similar reports can be found in the texts of Bartholomeusz (1885, 161) and Logan (1889, 320-321). Today, such caves are found when construction work is going on. In 2019, a new road at the eastern coast was built in between the wall and the coastline. We were called to the spot when a cave of such type became visible. This cave did not have a kind of roof made by 'large slaps of solid coral'—as described by Thomas (1885, 161), but the upper part was formed by a regular self-supporting ceiling made from smaller coral bricks. As described by Thomas, this cave was also 'in almost a perfect state of preservation' (ibid.).

There is no detailed oral tradition about the making and purpose of the caves, but it appears, as most writers suggested, that they were made to hide things or persons when pirates attacked. An early report of the dangers or piracy is from the narrative of the French ships *Pensee* and *Sacre*. In 1529 they reported from Fuvahmulah, which, like Maliku, is also rather isolated), where the arrival of the European must have been feared as an act of piracy: 'There was but little in the houses; whereby we judged that they had removed all their valuables, as also their young women and children, further into the interior of the island, fearing perhaps lest they should be seized by force.' (reprinted in Bell 2002 [1940], 125).

#### *Early written records of Maliku: An island known, but still unknown*

The emergence of the Indian Ocean world is visible in the archaeological findings that also indicate a long and in great part unknown early history of the Maldives and Maliku. As the first millennium turns to the second we find the Lakshadweep and the Maldives (most likely the northern



atolls) mentioned in South Indian inscriptions. In this period, from the mid-ninth century onward, the Chola empire was expanding from the Kaveri delta in Southeast India to encompass large parts of the sub-continent, and then to Sri Lanka, and its expansion did not stop at the latter. 'Other islands in the Indian Ocean such as the Lakshadweep and the Maldives were also brought under its control' (Mahalakshmi 2016, 1–2; see also Kulke & Rothermund 2004, 122), most likely under Rajraja (985–1014) or Rajendra Chola (1012–1044). In their colonies they established an elaborate revenue and bureaucratic structure, but details about the islands in the Indian Ocean are lacking.

Clarence Maloney compiled an impressive list of sources, beginning with the Jātakas (c. 500–250 BCE), followed by 36 further texts, including Chinese, Egyptian, South Indian, Sri Lankan, Roman, Genoese, Portuguese, Dutch, Arabic sources (Maloney 1980, 414–425). Many of these writings are based on vague information, while others are rather detailed. In most cases, Maliku cannot be identified specifically, since the island was known by different names. It is also not certain if Ibn Battuta (1304–1369) came to Maliku during his visits to the Maldives. Wāng Ta-yüan mentions, in 1405, the atolls of the Maldives, including Mulaku, Malé, Fadhippolhu, Kela, and Maliku (Loutfi 2011, 66). All of this leaves us in no doubt that Maliku, small though it may be, has been on the world map of learned men for a long time.

As with most of the small coral islands in the greater region, the first settlement took place at a time of which we know nothing. Even the first settlement of the Maldives, which is usually equated with the spread of Buddhism from Ceylon in the centuries before Christ, cannot clarify the origin of the ancient population, due to the prior residence on the isles of the Girāvaru people (Maloney 1980, 274ff). In short, we are ignorant of when and how the ancestors of today's Malikuns found the island, and we do not know if it was already settled when they found it. Until now, mythology and archaeology have offered no definite answers. The social stratification of the island population, however, suggest that it was formed by more than one wave of immigration.

Inhabitants of Maliku and other islands offer narratives about fishermen who were disoriented by storms and who were unable to return from Maliku, but these stories do not consider the fact that only male persons would have been found aboard fishing boats. The proximity to India might suggest that settlers came from north or north-east. Linguistically it appears more likely, that the migration took place from the south. One study of the genomes of Lakshadweep's peoples has revealed connections to India, West- and East Asia, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. 'The most diverse island is Minicoy which might have served as a popular



destination for maritime sailors, thus received gene flow from various directions (Mustak et al. 2019).

The second millennium provides a corpus of written documents that includes many sources written in the Maldives: these go back to the island's conversion to Islam in 1153. The oldest texts, written from the twelfth century onwards, are *loamafaanu* on copperplates, and other official records, mostly land grants to mosques or shrines. The *Tarikh Islam Diba Mahal*, a history of the Islamic Maldives, goes back to the date of conversion and was written in Arabic by Hassan Tajuddin in the eighteenth century. A later text, the *Dhivehi Tarikh*, was written during the Rule of Sultan Mohamed Imaduddin VI, 1893–1903.<sup>4</sup> But still, there are few explicit references to Maliku in the first half of the second millennium. What we can conclude from these sources is that Maliku represented the most northerly extension of the Maldives, where a centralised early state that possessed a monopoly on the use of force, an administrative division existed on the atolls, and each ward had its legal representatives. We are inclined to hope that what is a truism in history in general applies to Maliku also: if there are empty pages in the history books, these must indicate peaceful and happy years for the people.

---

### **From ca. 1500 to 1791: Maliku, the Ali Rajas of South India, and Portuguese colonialism**

With the arrival of European vessels in South Asia from the sixteenth century onwards, a new world order began to emerge. Portuguese, Dutch, French and British colonial powers occupied large parts of the Indian subcontinent. The ensuing years of warfare, the transfer of the material and personnel needed for the large-scale subjugation of territories, along with the transportation of goods extracted from the colonies, were all carried out by sea. The principal route involved traversing the Cape of Good Hope and, then, following the Monsoon in north-east and south-west directions across the Indian Ocean. The importance of control of the sea space need not be highlighted.

Pirates and small islands surrounded by coral reefs proved to be major obstacles. It does not come as a surprise that the Lakshadweep and the Maldives were affected by these geopolitical dynamics. Maliku, as an island between two major sea-routes, thus became an important landmark—and this was so even before the arrival of the Portuguese in Goa. As will be shown, Maliku came under different forms of political affiliation and rule. Also, the guerilla movement against the Portuguese in Malé found in Maliku a safe haven. For these and even more reasons, Maliku became an important toponym in the history of the Maldives.



Long before the advent of European colonialism in the maritime space of the Lakshadweep and Maldivian sea, a much smaller set of players exerted a long-lasting impact on that maritime region: these were the Ali Rajas (or sea kings) of the Arrakal Kingdom, a matrilineal Muslim dynasty based in the town of Cannanore. The origin of the dynasty is a controversial subject. Documents were lost when their palace burnt down; today the building hosts a museum. According to Kurup (1970), they claimed a legendary origin from the last Chera king. According to oral tradition, the last ruler of the Chera empire journeyed to Mecca and embraced Islam.

Another version of the story is that the first chieftain of the family was Arayankulangara Nayar, one of the ministers of the Kolathiris, who is said to have lived about the end of the 11th or beginning of the twelfth century A.D., to have embraced Islam and adopted the name of Muhammed or Mammad Ali. Succession passed political rule to the firstborn child, irrespectively of the sex. Female rulers were called Beevi (also Bibi or Beebi), the dynasty and males referred to as Ali Raja (Sirajudin 2020).

The Ali Rajas did not own much landed property on the Indian mainland but commanded a fleet to control islands in the Arabian Sea. Their emphasis was not the direct rule of these islands, but the extraction of produce from their property. In the case of Maliku, the main products were coconuts, coir ropes, dried tuna (also known as Maldivian fish or *hikimas*) and cowries. Ali Rajas installed a local representative, either a person from Maliku or a Malabari. Their ambitions to control larger maritime areas included expansion plans on what is today the Republic of the Maldives. In 1494–1495 they supported Sultan Kalu Mohamed to regain his throne in Malé, and later, in 1512–1513, after Kalu Mohamed had lost his power, they engaged in an agreement with him to attack Malé and reinstate him on the throne against an annual payment. When the ships of Ali Raja were on their way to Malé, they were

encountered and [...] captured by Portuguese vessels, which held it to ransom for a large sum. In a masterpiece of diplomacy and strategic procedure, the two fleets then jointly proceeded to the islands, where they attacked Malé and reinstated Sultán Kalu Muhammad in A.H. 919 (CE 1513–14). (Bell 2002 [1940], 24-25)

At the time of his rule Maliku came under the control of the Ali Raja for the first time. From the available historical documents, we cannot draw conclusions about the motivation of the Malikus, but they must have been willing or were forced to act on behalf of the Ali Rajas. For navigation to Malé, their assistance was indispensable, because best protection of the island kingdom against foreign invaders were its sandbanks



and reefs. 'Whenever Malabaris attack Maldives, every time they use a Dhivehi person from Maliku to guide them and assist them.' (Loutfi 1995, transl. Muhammad Naajih) In the following decades several attacks from the Portuguese on the Maldives took place. Finally, the Portuguese overthrow Malé and established their rule there, which lasted from 1558 to 1573. For them, no doubt, Maliku was a steppingstone to the southern atolls. After this short period of Portuguese colonialism, the Maldives Islands were never again under a colonial power.

Maliku however, did come to find itself under different forms of government. The island, or at least the large coconut plantations in its south, were ruled or owned by external forces. We propose to structure the following decades according to the forms of political affiliation or foreign rule that prevailed at a given period. In the first period, from the time of the rule of Sultan Kalu Muhammad (1491–1529) until the accession of Sultan Ibrahim Iskandar I (1648–87), Maliku was controlled by the Ali Raja. In the second period, through the reign of Sultan Ibrahim Iskandar I (1648–87) and up to the third year of reign of Sultan Muhammad Imad-ud-din III (1752), Maliku became, again, part of the Maldives. In the third period, from 1752 onwards, Maliku came under the control of the Ali Raja for the second time (Loutfi 1995, 35, transl. Muhammad Naajih) and the Bibi considered the southern Pandaram lands as her private property. This remained the case until her dynasty lost the overlordship in 1791.

*From Sultan Kalu Muhammad (1491–1529) to Ibrahim Iskandar I (1648–1687)*

Maliku spent more than a century under the control of the Ali Raja, from the time of Sultan Kalu Mohammad until the rule of Sultan Iskandar (1648–1687). Little is known about the context of this change in rule and from the administration of these sea kings.<sup>5</sup> The transfer of power from Sultan to Ali Raja was more than a change of the ruling object, but also a transition in the conception of land rights. Bell (2002 [1940], 92) writes: 'The Maldivian Sultans, in short, were never the absolute personal owners of either the soil or the produce' but it was owned by the Government. But in Maliku, the southern lands (*pandaram* or *bandara*) had been the Maldivian Government's property, but the Ali Rajas considered them to be their birth right and, as such, their private property (Basevi, in 1872, identified the coconut plantations as "private property" of the Ali Raja). In the residential part of the island, palm trees and other trees were the privately owned by those who planted them and could be passed down to their successors. (When the present authors visited Maliku a few years ago, islanders pointed out palm trees that belonged



to them, and some of which were marked as private property, a legal practice also found in parts of the Maldives today.)

The Ali Raja sent a representative from the mainland and extracted natural products from the southern part of Maliku. The close affiliation to the Maldives, however, remained. Later, from Pyrard de Laval (1887–1889 [1611]) at the beginning of the seventeenth century to Festetics de Tolna two centuries later (1900), visitors to Maliku reported the island's close diplomatic links to Malé. On a ship embarking from India, John Caspar Leydon (1805) asked Maliku seamen about their principal town: he received, in answer, 'Malé', which proves that they considered themselves to be Maldivians. But the same seamen said that a South Indian ruler controlled Maliku: They told him that 'the Raja keeps up a military force of two or three thousand men, arranged in uniform and armed with masques, swords and spears. The force is employed in collecting his revenue from different islands' (Leydon 1805, 1).

To this day, the strongest association with the term "Maliku" in the Maldives goes back to the struggle for freedom against the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. The national hero Bodu Thakurufanu, whose story is taught in elementary school and whose name now adorns the capital's ring road, found strong support in Maliku for his asymmetrical struggle against the Christian rulers in Malé (Hussain 1986). When the authors of this article visited the island, Malikuns proudly pointed out the Dhivehi Ganduvaru (Maldivian Palace), where the islanders built a house for him and his associates. In the Tarikh's account of the Interregnum of 1558 to 1573, the freedom struggle is documented:

Muhammad Bodu Thakurufaanu Akbár [...] with his younger brothers [...] Ali and Hassan [...] left the Maldives [...] for Maliku (Minicoy) which belonged to the Áli Rájá of Kannanúr. [...] They then returned to the Máldives and commenced an unremitting guerilla warfare. [...] [The] recapture of Mále took place on [...] A.H.981 (CE 1573). (quoted from Bell 2002, 26-27; see also Salahuddeen 1986, 115)

The story of Bodu Thakurufan, as recounted by the famous Burara Mohamed Fulhu (Burara Koi), tells of the following episode:

Finally [...] the Jumping Baitfish (*kalhuoffummi* is the name of the ship) sailed out through Vagaaru channel. Maldives was left behind and the ship set course for Minicoy. The sun came up as they were travelling, and the day was about to begin as the two brothers sailed their ship through the Saalu Magu Channel at Minicoy. The elders and lords of Minicoy were on the beach and saw the Jumping Baitfish approaching from the north. They said to each other that it must belong to an important man from Minicoy, otherwise the ship would not be entering the lagoon that way. It eased into the



harbor and when the crowd approached the boat, they discovered it wasn't a lord from Minicoy, rather it was a ship belonging to two brothers who had come to stay on their island, because Maldives was losing its religion. The leading men of Minicoy went into the forest with the people and cut down coconut trees. They split the timber and cut it into lengths, while the rest of the people went onto the reef and brought up corals and broke them into useable sizes. Then on an auspicious day of an auspicious month, the grand building known as Dhivehi Palace was built on Minicoy. When the building was completed, the possessions of the brothers were unloaded and put in there. The Jumping Baitfish was beached and covered with an awning, and the two brothers were able to live there safely. (Mohamed Fulhu 1958, unpaginated)

The oldest eye-witness report of Maliku that we have comes from Francois Pyrard de Laval, who came to the island about 4 or 5 decades after Bodu Thakurufanu. Pyrard was shipwrecked in Fehendhoo, South Maalhosmadulu Atoll, in 1602, and stayed until 1607 in the Maldives. He learnt Dhivehi, moved freely in the Sultan's palace, but remained, formally, a prisoner, and was thus not permitted to leave the country. After an attack by Bengali pirates, he succeeded in fleeing to India. On his way, he stopped in Maliku. The woman who ruled Maliku at that time knew Pyrard from her visits in Malé, and she hosted him like a state guest. As a relative of the King, she was shocked to hear of his death after the pirates' attack.

Pyrard, whose detailed description of the Maldives became a reliable reference book<sup>6</sup>, states that in Maliku

the people have the same customs, manners, and language as those of the Maldives. This island was at one time part of the Maldivian realm; but a king gave it to his brother as a portion. It is now governed by a lady, who holds it of the king of Cananor, for the sake of greater security. (Pyrard de Laval 1887–1889 [1611], 323)

Pyrard leaves us with the puzzle of why Maliku 'was given to the King's brother' (ibid.), and why the island was held by the 'king of Cananore', but it supports the analysis of Loutfi, that the island came under the rule of the Ali Raja in the beginning of the sixteenth century.

*From the accession of Sultan Ibrahim Iskandar I to the third year of the reign of Sultan Muhammad Imad- ud-din III*

In 1648 Sultan Iskandar I acceded to the throne of the Maldives, beginning a reign that would last until 1687. From the time of his accession to the mid-eighteenth century, several royal documents mention the territorial boundaries as Malikaddu, indicating the northern and southern





boundaries of the state (from Maliku to Addu, i.e. the southernmost atoll of the Maldives). However, no grants relating to the island of Maliku have survived not in the National Archive in Malé, nor in the katcheri in Maliku. As the seventeenth century ended, and the eighteenth century began, there were repeated battles between the Maldivian forces and the Ali Raja. Eventually, the Sultan of the Maldives succeeded in bringing Maliku back in his realm. In the Dhivehi Tarikh we can read about the end of the first rule of the Ali Raja:

The Malabaris (i.e. the Ali Raja, comment added) continued to mount frequent attacks on unarmed civilians, robbing and assaulting them, and the situation disturbed the king (Sultan Ibrahim Iskandar I, comment added). To solve the problem, he sent his best soldiers to wage war directly against Ali Raja's islands. Armed with swords and guns, they sailed to the Deevanduroa islands near Androth in the Laccadives and threatened the natives. Ali Raja's troops ran away. The Maldivians robbed and burnt, doing the same things that Ali Raja's soldiers did in Maldives. They were unopposed and returned triumphant to Malé where the happy king received them with honours. The chief and lords of Minicoy were arrested and brought to Malé and held there for many days. Later, when Minicoy's tribute tax was fixed at twelve laari coins per year, the nobles were permitted to return. The Maldivian king had captured one of Ali Raja's islands. Shocked, the Cannanore sea king retreated into silence and there were no more attacks on Maldives or demands for tribute. With the end of hostilities between the Maldivian and Cannanore rulers, both groups resolved to remain at peace. (Mohamed Fulhu 1958, 5-8; see, for the same context, Bell 2002 [1940], 30, and for land rights Bell 2002 [1940], 92)

#### *1752–1791: The second rule of the Ali Rajas*

According to the Tarikh, the troops of Ali Raja took over Malé in 1752. The sons of Hassan Tajuddeen, chief justice of the Maldives, Muhammad Shamsudeen and his brother Katheeb Muhyiddeen, supported this attack in the hope that it would allow them to gain power in the island state. Another supporter of the seizure of Malé was Mohammed Bandoaru Maniku from Maliku, who was made the chief *Kanakku pillai*, (a south Indian term used for an accountant or bookkeeper) of the Maldives on behalf of Ali Raja (Naajih 2021). Therefore, historians assume that the troops took over Maliku on their way to Malé (Loutfi 1995, 12). The Ali Raja made Bandoaru Maniku the administrator (*kanakafoolhu*) in Malé and ruled in his name for four months. A wooden plank found inside the tomb of Medhu Ziyaaraiy (now kept in the National Museum in Malé) bears the following text:

On 13th of Safar 1166 (20.12 1752) Ali Raja's troops came to Malé, burnt the palace of the sultan, 63 houses, 3 mosques, and took



## FORUM

hostage of the King of Maldives of that time Sultan Mukarram Mohamed Imaddudeen, his brother's son Prince Mohamed, and took them to Cannanore and started ruling the Maldives in the name of Ali Raja. The soldiers of Ali Raja were placed on the Forts of Malé and Mohamed Bandoru Maniku of Maliku sat upon the seat of the government. (translation by Naajih)<sup>7</sup>

In the course of the liberation of the Maldives from the south Indian ruler, Bandoru was killed by Don Hassan Manikfan. The Sultan was taken to South India by the Ali Raja and later sent to Maliku, where he died. His nephew escaped from Cannanore, and went to other parts of India, where he married. Later, after living in Ganjam he returned to the Maldives and became Sultan Mohammed Ghiyasudeen. Even after 1752, however, the island of Maliku remained under the influence of the Ali Raja. In the eighteenth century the Malikuns continued to fish for tuna and produced dry fish that they traded in Calcutta and other ports. The coconut plantations in the south of the island were claimed, and managed, by representatives of the Ali Raja. When the political autonomy of the Ali Rajas came to an end, Lieutenant Bently visited the Lakshadweep islands, including Maliku.

He visited Minicoy and found it physically similar to the other islands. Vegetable products were, however, more various. Bread-fruit, lime, supary and junglewood grew readily. The population consisted of 400 families of 2000 persons. The internal management was on the same footing as on the other islands, the Beebees property being under the Karyakar, who manufactured the produce at the expense of the people, and remitted from 600 or 800 rupees annually. The exports amounted to about 400 candies of coir, cowries, dried fish. The islanders had twelve boats in which they traded with Bengal (Ellis 1924, 63).

It seems that the people of Maliku remained independent in their fishing, the agriculture they engaged in near their villages, and their trade, but were forced to supply coconuts and coir to the Ali Raja. 'The nuts in the Raja's time were collected monthly after they had fallen to the ground [...] (and) the people were remunerated in coconuts at a mamul rate for their labour in picking.' (ibid.) This kind of enumeration became an essential form of income, since the people of Minicoy (members of the higher social classes and unmarried persons excepted) each had to pay an individual poll tax (ibid.).

**1791 to 1947: Maliku in the time of British Rule**

Most of the available sources about Maliku in the nineteenth century and, indeed, up to 1956 were written by British administrators who visited the island for a mere few days at a time. They praised the maritime skills of the islanders, the neatness of the roads, and the high status enjoyed by the island's women. In their writings, they showed a patriarchal and benevolent attitude towards the islanders. They portrayed themselves as rulers who were satisfied with their subjects (Heidemann 2021). But there are also sources from the archives in Malé that were—unfortunately—not yet included in the historical writings. Also overlooked, almost unconsidered, are voices of the inhabitants of Maliku, and what they know of their parents and grandparents. Moreover, historical evidence is inscribed as well in photographs, textiles, *et cetera*. Some of our older informants remember forgotten place names and genealogical relationships beyond the limits of the island or refer to the wooden porch pillars imported from Burma. We include these sources in reflection, and in the hope that they can help provide a multi-layered and balanced view of the history of Maliku.

*1791–1909: The continuation of the Ali Rajas as tributaries of the British administration*

155

Up to the end of the eighteenth century, the Ali Raja of Cannanore claimed Maliku and extracted goods, mainly coconuts, from the Pandaram land in the south of the island. They came with heavily armed soldiers and forced the islanders to provide services while depriving them of the exported products. The islanders had to pay tax and work in plantations located in the south of the island (Ellis 1924, 62–63). This narrative is true: but it is also just one way of interpreting history, just one side of the coin. A different view was offered by the elders of the island when we talked to them. They look back at their own history with much pride, thanks to their status (as they see it) of 'being never colonised'. They emphasise the fact that they lived rather freely in their communities in the northern part of the islands, under their own leadership in a stratified local society. They explain their past as a kind of agreement with the Ali Raja.

The South Indian sea kings, they say, protected the island from pirates, and their ancestors "paid" for this. Elders recall: Malikuns were shipowners-cum-traders, navigators-cum-captains, fishermen, boat-builders, seamen, or toddy tappers; they produced and exported dry fish and coir ropes, and traded cowry shells. They followed their Muslim faith, built mosques, spoke Mahal, travelled freely in all directions, and maintained an affinal relationship with the Maldives. No doubt, Maliku



developed a refined local culture, a rather autonomous chieftain in its own terms—a small civilisation! This is the other side of the same historical coin, and it means that everyday life in Maliku cannot be reduced to just one side of that coin.

Over the “long nineteenth century”, which we define as commencing in 1791, there were major shifts in the political geography of South Asia, and these affected Maliku. In that year, the southern part of the Lakshadweep ‘passed, by conquest of Cannanore, to the East India Company along with other possessions of the Bibi’ (Ellis 1924, 18). Maliku became part of British India, but a year later an agreement was reached with the Ali Rajas. In return for an annual payment, the Ali Raja could continue the exploitation of the Lakshadweep. Nevertheless, (at least) two points remained controversial in the decades that followed: firstly, the amount of taxes to be paid to the British and, secondly, the administrative and legal control over the islands. For the British, control of the Indian Ocean was a higher priority than the agricultural production of small coral islands.

Technological changes also affected the administration of Maliku in the nineteenth century: perhaps the most important of these was the introduction of steamships. In 1869 the Suez Canal was completed, opening a new and shortened (and soon, highly frequented) sea-route from England to Australia, a route which passed near to Maliku. In the 1885 the lighthouse—the iconic building of Maliku—was put into operation, and the island became a point on the world map. Maliku, once a steppingstone to the Maldives, now became a ‘marking stone’ (Prasad 2015, 19) for international maritime movements.

The years from 1791 onwards saw many British officers, administrators, engineers and scientists come to Minicoy. They published a substantial corpus of texts on the everyday life of the island, the local practice of fishing with pole and line, the distribution of the catch at the beach, the boiling and drying of tuna, the production of coir ropes etc. They praised the cleanliness of the island, the perfection of the locals’ boatbuilding and sailing technique, and their hospitality. One widely read text of the time has the title “The island of women” (Logan 1889), and it contextualises Minicoy’s matrilineal system of inheritance with a mix of astonishment and exoticisation.

The Encyclopedia Britannica described the islanders as ‘well behaved, but of a very independent character’ (Yule 1882–1883). We assume that the latter attribute derives from their resistance to a new tax system in the years following 1869. The authors create a “feel-good”-atmosphere that leaves the readers with an impression of an island of happy people and without open conflict (Heidemann 2021). Excluded from this picture



were the subtle tensions of life in a hierarchical society. Those who wrote these texts lacked knowledge of the local language, and their visits to the island tended to coincide with the milder seasons. They may also, arguably, have brought a “Robinson Crusoe” attitude to their perspectives on the island. But they doubtless felt very welcome.

The process of communication between the British, the Ali Raja, and the Malikuns was always a difficult one, and not only because messages were often delayed. The analysis of the available historical documents leaves much room for interpretation, because areas of responsibility were not always clearly defined. For example, the building of the lighthouse required the consent of the Ali Raja, but at the same time the *amin* (island chief) was sent by the British from the mainland (Prasad 2015, 42). When the authors of this article spoke to elders on the island, they told us that the office of the *amin* was a dual one, held, usually, by two persons. One was appointed by the islanders while, the other was nominated by the British. The term *amin* was both applied to a local headman, elected or nominated from among the islanders, and also to the representative of an external force, such the Ali Raja or the appointee of the British Indian administration, a person from the mainland or from a high-status group on the island. (Note from the authors: The proper term for the local headman should be *rarhu verin*) An even more difficult task was the delimitation of spheres of authority and responsibility.

As early as the 1790s, for example, there were disputes between the Bibi and the British about the administration of the island, but finally she agreed ‘to allow the Company to appoint some person to administer justice on these islands [...]’ (Ellis 1924, 19). When the Ali Raja failed to pay the tribute, Maliku came under British sequestration (meaning that it was subject to a forceful seizure or confiscation of assets) in 1854, but only for a few years. In 1861, a new agreement was reached, and the island came back under the influence of the South Indian rulers. According to this agreement, the Ali Raja could govern the island and use the products of Maliku, but the British were entitled to an annual payment—but that contract also said that if there was a misuse of power, the British could take the island back.

Again, the payments were either delayed, or were not made at all. A new process of sequestration began in 1905, after a fresh period of indebtedness. Finally, a new agreement was fixed in 1907, which was ratified in 1909 (Ellis 1924; Prasad 2015, 17-19). Considering the logistical challenges presented by the physical distance from the island to the mainland, and from Cochin, the centre of the district, to Madras, (the seat of the Presidency), and to London, it should be no surprise that



such decisions and their implementation took such long amounts of time.

Numerous sources from the National Archives in Malé offer more insights into the relationship between Maliku and the islands of the Maldives in general, and to the government in the Maldivian capital in particular. Here, we shall refer to just 3 documents from the beginning and the end of Maliku's long nineteenth century. The first is a letter sent by Sultan Hassan Nooraddeen I, in AH 1212 (1797/1798 CE) to the boats and ships of Maliku people in Thiladhunmathi Atoll in the North of the Maldives. The letter—addressed to the captain of these boats—was written at a time when smallpox was spreading in the wake of a visit by Maliku boats to the northern atolls. An excerpt from that letter expresses the strong reaction of the Sultan:

Every year, 8, 9, (or) 10 furadhhe odi (foreign going vessel), 2-3 nau [larger boat, schooner] of Maliku, enter Thiladhunmathi [a northern atoll of the Maldives] without any permission or order from Malé. [...] They buy all the fish [tuna] and coconuts and do business. How did you get this permission? One of your nau with smallpox came to Miladhunmadulu atoll. They told that the nau is leaking and anchor near Dholhidhoo, [...] sail around the island in the name of buying coconut and doing business and spread smallpox to all islands. Because of this all the inhabitants of 3 or 4 islands had died. You made the islands uninhabitable. [...] Wherever you are now, just leave the Maldives and go wherever you like. Hereafter, no nau, guraabu (mid-size vessel), or furadhhe odi should enter the Maldives to get water or firewood. If anyone ignores this letter, or if anyone goes against this order, you should fear my wrath. (transl. Muhammad Naajih)

What we can read in this letter is that Malikuns had a considerable number of trading contacts with the northern islands of the Maldives, that the Maldivian capital was well informed about these contacts, and that—after an epidemic of smallpox—the boats from Maliku were sent back.

The second document is a note from the Treasury Department of the Government of Maldives to the Tax Collector who was also the Chief of the Province of Thiladhunmathi, dated 23rd February 1892. It says that the Tax Collector should provide the crew of 'Loajehi Odi' (a freighter vessel belonging to Dhon Manikfan of Maliku/Minicoy) with a quantity of sailcloth, which they needed to sew a sail for a 'mas odi' (local fishing boat), some 'lhis kuradhi' (*Pemphis acidula*) to make trenails (a wooden peg or pin for securing timbers together), three kan'doo (or mangrove) timbers to make a keel for a boat, and some Rihaakuru. This note shows that the Government of the Maldives had, by this time, once again



permitted Maliku boats entry into their territory, and were even prepared to support a captain seeking to repair his vessel.

The third document is a letter from the National Archives in Malé. It was written in 1908 by Mudhin Thakurufanu of the main mosque in Maliku and signed by six *bodun*, six *niyanmins* and three *moopans*. (*bodun* and *niyanmins* are the social groups with the highest status, *moopans* are headmen of the wards). The background of the letter is that the Sultan had asked the elders of Maliku to send back two Malidivians who opposed the Sultan and had fled to Maliku, Malé Isdooge Maniku Haji and Vaaruge Yusuf. The elders held an island council, a *havaru* (see also Maloney 1980, 181). The letter reads: 'Our havaru has no power on our island now. The government has abolished it. They [the dissidents] remain on the island because we lack the authority to arrest and deport them. We are appealing for assistance from the government.' However, beyond these issues of the dissidents, and a complaint they made about limited powers on their own ships sailing to India, the elders who signed the letter closed the text with an assurance that they would still 'obey all orders by the Government in Malé'.

#### *1909–1947: Maliku under British colonialism*

159

British administrators, who had shared a kind of co-existence with the representatives of the Ali Raja during the nineteenth century, became the sole sovereign power on in the first half of the twentieth century. By that time the "ethnographic state" (Dirks 2001, 125-227) on the mainland had documented, counted, and classified the Indian people in the name of the grand project of ruling the subcontinent. After taking control of production and trade in the coastal area during the closing decades of the eighteenth century, they fought battles to conquer the land of the interior. The conquest of Cannanore with the Arrakal palace, the battle of Seringapatam and the killing of Tipu Sultan in 1799 became the final chapters in the occupation of South India.

It was, however, in the second part of the nineteenth century that the colonisation of the mind commenced. Every corner of the British Raj was mapped, western medicine became more important, and new tax systems were introduced. Schools and universities with English as a medium of instruction were founded in North and South India. All this was either done or was in full progress by the first decade of the twentieth century, the time when the Ali Raja departed the scene. The larger context is well documented (Dirks 2001) but what we know of this process as it occurred in the small islands consists of little more than mere documents of brief encounters, snapshots of history.



## FORUM

We would like, now, to come back to the question of to what extent (or in what respects) Maliku was colonised, or ruled by its own inhabitants. Some documents support the former point of view, for example, the letter quoted above (dated 1908) stating the lack of authority to expel Maldivian rebels. On the other hand, other documents indicate that a high degree of sovereignty was retained by local people and their institutions. For example, in the 1940s the village *moopans* ("village chiefs") punished an employee of the British administration, a person with a high social status. 'There is no doubt but that the Attiris (wards or villages) are still paramount in Minicoy' (Griffith 1943, unpaginated). In a different incident, 'the observer William of the Wireless station' was accused of having illegitimate contact with women of the island and was placed in custody by the islanders. Griffiths concludes by considering the impact of inspecting officers who tried to bring together two factions on Maliku:

However, as many Inspecting Officers have remarked, the influence of the officer does not long survive his departure and it is likely that further schism will occur in Minicoy. Opinions of Inspecting Officers about the island differ considerably, but for an Island Minicoy has a strong character of its own and to have born it is a stimulating experience. (Griffith 1943, unpaginated)

160

Maliku had longstanding family ties to the Maldives. According to home ownership documents in the National Archives of Maldives, many Malikuns owned houses in Malé and some of were even buried there (Hassan Ahmed Maniku 1979, Mosques of Malé). In 1935, on Dec. 6, Serikkal Ibrahim Manikfan, son of Serikkal Ali Manikfan of Maliku, was granted citizenship of the Maldives, and therefore came not under British, but Maldivian jurisdiction. Another, more prominent and much older relationship goes back to Moosa Muhyiddin from Maliku, who became chief judge of the Maldives in 1799. Marital relationships, especially between Maliku and the northern islands, continued to occur in large numbers over this period.

When the authors of this article visited islands in north Thiladhunmati recently, islanders showed us photographs of family re-unions in Kochi, where they went for medical services. Many families in Maliku have genealogies containing a branch in distant places, even in the southern atolls like Huvadhu, Fuahmulah and Addu. The aristocratic family in Malé, Kakaage, has a branch in Maliku in the houses Dhivehi Ganduwaru and Oludhu Gothi. The scientist and ecologist Ali Manikfan, who built the Sohar for Tim Severin, still has a first cousin in Malé. Many houses in Maliku bear names indicating their early relationship to a great number of Maldivian islands (Naajih 2011).





In last decade of the nineteenth century, and at the beginning of the twentieth century, there were shifts in the trade connections of Minicoy. While those connections had, before, been oriented to the Maldives, Colombo, and Calcutta, they were now turned—generally speaking—to the west coast of India. Trade with Oman and East Africa became a chapter of the past. Malikuns who had settled on Car Nicobar, closed their businesses and returned home.<sup>8</sup> Trading vessels were now motorised, and the range of commercial products they could carry expanded. The first traders from the Malabar coast settled on Maliku about a hundred years ago. By the time the first schools were opened in Lakshadweep and in Maliku, a knowledge of Malayalam had become more important, and that tongue now contended with Arabic and Hindi for the position of the island's second language.

The elders from Maliku to whom we spoke recalled that by the middle of the twentieth century sailing had come to require more documents and licenses. Some octogenarians to whom we spoke in the 2010s, recalled that they had been engaged to work on ships without a passport or any other document of identification. Sending letters or money home was difficult, and any news they might have received would have been passed on returning seamen. Their earnings they hid under their clothes. Some of the men bought gold jewelry in the last port on their journey home. One of the men pointed to his wife, who was also in the room. She was wearing gold earrings from Colombo, which she had without interruption since he brought them home in the late 1940s.

The trading fleet of Maliku, which has a longstanding history, had three types of outgoing vessels. The *nau* (400 tons), the *odi* (200 tons), and the *bandu odi* (70 tons) connected Maliku with the outer world and supplied the island with rice, sugar, wheat flour, textiles, household goods, and many other items. Older people still remember the songs they would chant when a sailboat reached the lagoon. There were verses for the entering of the lagoon, the lowering of the sails, and dropping the anchor. There are no exact data on the size of the fleet, but records for the period of 1933/1934 to 1964/65 list ten outgoing ships by name (Farouk 2019, 236-7). The trade to Yemen, which is recalled by Maliku elders, stopped in the nineteenth century, but a house by the name Thukkathuraa Ganduwaru, refers to the island of Socotra (in Arabic, "Sukkathuraa").

The shift in of orientation to the west coast of India did not mean the end of multiple connections to the Maldives. A strong link is religion. In 1937, when Malinge Hussein Didi from an aristocratic family from Malé came to Maliku and preached an orthodox version of Islam, a major religious debate arose. This new orthodoxy contradicted the social



norms and practices prevalent in the Maluku of the time. Malukans recall that he was against playing music and dancing in public. Public discontent arose. By the time of Ramadan 1941, that discontent had grown so great that the wall of Muradu Ganduwaru, the islands chiefs house, was broken while Malinge Hussein Didi was teaching there. He escaped and left the island for the Maldives by 'the fastest boat' (Manikfan 2010, 1). Later, after participating in a political revolt in Malé, he was banished to Hinnavaru, from where he fled to Trivandrum (present-day Thiruvananthapuram).

In 1958, all *moopans*, acting with the consent of the administrator of the Union Territory, invited him to return to Maluku. He continued his preaching, at that time, without opposition. His presence resulted also in the change of women's dress to a form that continues to be the social norm today. One year later, in 1959 a conflict arose with Indian authorities, when he married a woman from Maluku without obtaining the administrator's permission. He was expelled from Maluku. On mainland India, in Paraparangadi, he continued his work on the first translation of the Holy Koran into Dhivehi (Manikfan 2010), which was later published in Malé by Novelty press. The publisher asked Muraidugandugar Ali Manikfan to write the foreword of this translation.

### **1947–1973: Maluku becomes part of Independent India**

From the perspective of contemporary Maluku sailors and seamen, the colonial practices did not have much of an influence or impact on their village affairs and their movements. From Pyrard's account we learn that, at the time of his visit in 1607, Maluku was a part of the Ali Raja's territory, but also closely associated with the Maldives. Two centuries later, Leydon confirmed this view (Leydon 1805, see above). And at the turn of the twentieth century, after Rudolphe Festetics de Tolna (1900) was shipwrecked on Maluku and had to wait for a passage to Europe, he was able to witness (as he mentions in his narrative) the visit of Bodun noblemen from Malé. From all this evidence we can conclude that there were both a free-floating traffic and ongoing relationships between Maluku and the Maldives. A maritime boundary did not exist. Hence, vessels from Colombo supplied the needs of the lighthouse on Maluku. Fishermen could make use of the open ocean and the Maluku long-distance trade flourished. The produce of southern Pandaram was claimed by the Ali Raja and later by the British, and it would not have made much difference if it had been appropriated by the highest status group on Maluku itself.

However, from our point of view there is a need to point out that there was a deeper layer of colonialism, expressed in the British system of



administration, law and tax, and later in the use of English as a *lingua franca* and medium of instruction in school. This influence was not a direct effect of the British sphere of influence on the island, but resulted, rather, from the spread of various forms of networking across India until it reached the remotest corners of the subcontinent, including Maliku. When we spoke with Maliku elders, the year 1956 is often mentioned as a significant point in the island's history. In this year, they say, Maliku became part of India (Kattner 2010, 165).

This is in accordance with textbook knowledge. Saigal, a former administrator of the UT has written of how, on 1 November, 1956, the Union Territory "Laccadives, Minicoy and Amindivi" came into being. We know from our reading that a referendum was held to decide on the future status of the island. We spoke with elders in Maliku, including Ali Manikfan, who was born in 1938 and who earned many honors for his life achievements as a scientist and ecologist. We asked him about the events of the 1950s. As the son of the last *amin*, he was able to tell us in detail about the British people on the island. He also told us about the daily routine of his father, especially when it took him to the weather station, and how they watched the weather balloons to document the direction and the speed of the wind. But he—like other elders to whom we spoke—has absolutely no memory of any referendum. We asked the elders how they could relate their lack of memory to the significance of this date. No one doubted that a document was signed by the elders of the island, but it must have been done, they averred, in a closed circle, or on a ship anchored in the lagoon.

The process of becoming a part of Independent India remains without sharp contours. A look at the Census Handbook of Malabar District reveals that at that time, five years before the referendum, Minicoy like the other islands of what are the Lakshadweep today was counted as an integral part of the newly formed Indian Union. The population was 13,992 in 1951. 'The Laccadive and Minicoy Islands have registered an increase of 14.9 per cent (in the last decade, comment added) though these are backward and unattractive islands.' (Census of India 1953)

It seems, that the administration of the mainland did not show much interest in these islands. This is reflected in the report of Saigal who served three years in Kaveratti in the 1980s. In retrospect, he found that not much work made its way to his desk. 'Every day I spent in the Lakshadweep was a full 24 hours, with not more than 3 to 4 hours needed for the official routine. Thus, I had time to indulge in everything – from deep sea fishing and skin diving to writing and directing a couple of short films for the Film Division.' (Saigal 1990, vi) He tells the story of the first years in Independent India, when the new Government



recognised the expertise of the Malikuns in fishing and boatbuilding: '(A) fisherman and carpenter from Minicoy were employed in 1961 to teach these traditional crafts to other islanders.' (ibid., 91) Tahsildars were sent to Kavaratti and Minicoy, a police station and schools were opened in Minicoy, but the functions of the Indian Government agencies 'till the end of 1973 had not fully picked up' (ibid., 90). Apparently, even after their incorporation into the Republic of India, the islanders still had a few more years without substantial interference in their internal affairs.

In 1973 the Union Territory was renamed "Lakshadweep", and Minicoy disappeared in the name of the UT. The loss of visibility that Minicoy experienced then is paralleled by its loss of political representation. The UT is represented in the Lower House in Delhi by a single seat, and Maliku, as just one of the territory's ten inhabited islands, has no realistic chance of sending its own representative to Delhi. Since the creation of the UT, its people are represented by a person who does not speak their language and does not know their culture. Even worse, the entire UT is under the administration of a person selected in New Delhi, a person from the mainland, usually a man from the north of the country—the Hindu-Hindi belt.

The external rule can be interpreted as a continuation of historical processes, because Maliku has always been part of a larger whole. But today, that is in the 2020s, things are different because, firstly, the infrastructure permeates many areas, starting with faster boats that visit the island more frequently, and electronic systems make communication more effective. This has positive aspects, as vital goods can be or, at least, could be delivered on time, and outside help, if needed, might be able to arrive more quickly. Maliku has a helipad, and critically patients can thus be flown to Kochi. However, this improved infrastructure is also accompanied by an increased surveillance and a loss of autonomy.

Secondly—and this is related to the first point—the state is present through additional institutions and offices. A growing number of laws and regulations that affect the whole of India in the same way apply here also, but without taking local circumstances into account. The people of the Lakshadweep constitute a minority as islanders and as Muslims. And within the Lakshadweep, Malikuns form a cultural and linguistic minority in their own terms. While European visitors and administrators might have once praised and respected them in their reports and essays, today they are governed by a giant state, whose centre is more than 2000 kms away. However, the people of Maliku, despite their turbulent history under changing forms of government, have been able to maintain their own identity, their social system with its matrilineal



rules of succession, their skills as boatbuilders, fishermen and sailors, and their pride in those skills. They have also lost none of their overwhelming hospitality, which has always been praised.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Frank Heidemann visited Maliku in 2014, 2016, 2019 and 2020 and Muhammad Naajih in 2015. We would like to thank Mohammed Kolugege (KG) of Maliku, Mohamed Farook of Meedhoo (Addu Atoll) and Abdullah Farouk Hassan of Fuvahmulah and Abdullah Sadiq, Muli (the latter two conducted research in Maliku in 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Map of Basevi 1872: [https://dnhb.thulb.uni-jena.de/receive/ufb\\_cbu\\_00012891](https://dnhb.thulb.uni-jena.de/receive/ufb_cbu_00012891).

<sup>3</sup> Large walls like the wall at the eastern coast in Maliku are unknown in the Maldives. A smaller wall is found in Lhohi, South Miladhummadulu (Noonu Atol).

<sup>4</sup> Printed in old Thana by Center for Linguistic and Historical Research, in Malé 1981 (second edition 1993), later published by Novelty Printers in Malé, handwritten in modern Thana.

<sup>5</sup> One of the few sources about the rule of the Ali Raja over the Lakshadweep in the sixteenth century is text from Zainudin Makhdom (1517–1583), translated from the Arabic by S. Mohammad Husayn Nainar: 'During the period of the holy war against the Portuguese, a great leader Ali Adhraja by name, who was energetic and zealous, spent a large amount of money in that war. But the ruler of Kolattiri and his subjects in other town did not lend support to Ahraja. It was during that period the accursed Portuguese started out in angry mood to despoil Adhraja of his islands in Malibar. (...) The islands of Malibar are many in number, but the biggest of these has within its limits only five islands; Amini, Kardib, Andur, Kalfini, and Malki (the latter is Maliku, Naajih Didi).' (Nainar 1942 [1583], 80). Xaver Romero-Frias notes that he could not record oral history when talking to Maliku men (2012, xxxv). In the Maldives a common narrative talks about the reasons why Maliku was lost to the Ali Raja. Romero-Frias summaries a wide-spread known version: 'Oral tradition says that in centuries past Minicoy was devastated by a cyclone that broke most of the coconut trees. The island was then ruled by the Maldivian King, so Minicoy islanders sent a delegation to Malé asking for financial assistance. Since the King told them that he had not enough money in his treasury, the delegation went onwards to the Malabar coast, where they found favour with the King of Cannanore who agreed to help them rebuild their island. Thereafter the Minicoy people owed allegiance to this Kingdom of the SW Indian shore. (Information: Magieduruge Ibarhīm Dīdī).' (Romero-Frias 2003: 26, footnote 58)

<sup>6</sup> It was translated by Albert Gray and edited by H.C.P. Bell.

<sup>7</sup> In the course of the liberation of the Maldives from the south Indian ruler, Banderu was killed by Don Hassan Manikfan. The Sultan was taken to South India by the Ali Raja, and later sent to Maliku, where he died. His nephew escaped from Cannanore, went to other parts of India, and later married and lived in Ganjam, but he returned later to the Maldives and became Sultan Mohammed Ghiyasudeen.

<sup>8</sup> Maliku's trading post in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in Car Nicobar is discussed by Sanat Kaul: 'Around 1900, the majority of the traders residing on the islands were from Myanmar while a small number of them came from Laccadives, China, Maldives and the Indian sub-continent. Of the 201 traders in 1901, 154 were Buddhists, 32 Muslims, four were Hindus, and 11 were Christians. ... A decade later, the Muslim traders from the island of Minicoy in the Laccadives came to be the dominant group among all. According to the survey in 1931, of the 3,632 Nicobarese on Car Nicobar, 559 could converse in Hindi and 157 of them Myanmarese. The situation in the central and southern islands was different. These had more interaction with Malays and hence of the 2,531 Nicobarese there, 793 spoke Malay.' (Kaul 2015, 33)

**Bibliography**

- Bartholomeusz, Oliver. 1885. *Minicoy and its People*. London: Smith and Ebbs, quoted from Vilgon vol. 3.
- Basevi, J.P. 1872. "Account of the island of Minicoy." *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 42: 368-372.
- Bell, H.C.P. 2002 [1940]. *The Maldive Islands: Monograph on the history, archaeology and epigraphy*. Malé: Novelty Printers & Publishers.
- Census of India. 1953. *Census handbook Malabar District 1951*. Madras: Superintendent Government Press.
- Census of India. 2011. *Population statistics*, New Delhi.
- Census of the Maldives 1921. (Handwritten copy in the National Archives of the Maldives, translated by Muhammad Naajih)
- Dirks, Nicholas B. 2001. *Castes of mind: Colonialism and the making of modern India*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Ellis, R.H. 1924. *A short account of the Laccadive Islands and Minicoy*. Madras: Government Press.
- 166 Farouk Hassan, Abdulla. 2019. *Minicoy: Near yet so far* (in Dhivehi - First published from 1990 to 1994 in "Faiythoora", by the National Center for Linguistic and Historical Research. Now online <https://oneonline.mv/9199>).
- Festetics de Tolna, Rudolphe 1900. "Festetics de Tolna, Rudolphe." *Vers l'Ecueil de Minicoy* 2: 289-350.
- Gaur, A.S., K.H. Vora, Sundaresh S. Tripathi, Gudigar Bandodker & S.N. Bandodker. 1998. "Exploration of steam engine wrecks off Minicoy Island, Laksadsweep, India." *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 27 (3): 225-236.
- Griffith, J.C. 1943. "Inspecting officer. Minicoy Island." In *Maldive Odd History*, edited by Lars Vilgon, 241-257. Stockholm: selfpublished.
- Heidemann, Frank. 2022. "Fishermen in Minicoy (Maliku): The production of Maldive fish as a sustainable economy." *Man In India* 102 (3-4): 243-262.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2021. "The idea of Minicoy: Nineteenth century writers on an Indian Ocean coral island." *South Asia Chronicle* 11/2021: 1-34.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2020. "The Seamen from Minicoy: An oral history of social transition in the Laccadive Sea." *Man In India* 100 (3-4): 227-244.



- Hoon, Vineeta & K.G. Mohammed. 2022. *Maliku Museum: Collection of item in the museum*. online. <https://www.seacology.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Maliku-Museum-collection-for-seacology.pdf>.
- Hussain, Salahuddeen. 1986. *The story of Mohamed Thakurufan. Edited and Retold in English by Mohamed Farook*. Malé: Noverlty Press.
- Kattner, Ellen. 2010. "Seven men, six women: Names and the socio-cosmic order of Maliku (Minicoy Island)." In *The Anthropology of Values*, edited by Peter Berger, Roland Hardenberg, Ellen Kattner & Michael Prager, 162-179. Delhi: Pearson.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2007. "Bodu valu – big ponds: Traditional water management and its socio-cosmic implication in Minicoy/Maliku, an Indian Ocean island." In *Antike Zisternen*, edited by Christoph Ohlig, 145-172. Siegburg: DWhG.
1996. "Union territory of Lakshadweep: The social structure of Maliku (Minicoy)." *International Institute for Asian Studies* 10: 19-20.
- \_\_\_\_\_. n.d.-a. "Maliku/Minicoy, a caravanserai in the midst of the ocean?". manuscript.
- \_\_\_\_\_. n.d.-b. "The social structure of Maliku (Minicoy)." [https://maldivesroyalfamily.com/minicoy\\_kattner.shtml](https://maldivesroyalfamily.com/minicoy_kattner.shtml).
- Kaul, Sanat. 2015. *Andaman and Nicobar Islands: India's untapped strategic assets*. New Delhi: Pentagon Press.
- Kulikov, Leonid. 2014. "Traces of castes and other social strata in the Maldives: A case study of social stratification in a diachronic perspective (Ethnographic, historic, and linguistic evidence)." *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 139 (2): 199-213.
- Kulke, Hermann & Dietmar Rothermund. 2004. *A history of India*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Kurup, K.K.N. 1970. "Ali Rajas of Cannanore, English East India Company and Lakkadive Islands." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 32 (2): 44-53.
- Leydon, John Casper. 1805. "Journal of Doctor John Casper Leydon's Travels on the Brigg "LOUISA VALLI" ... 1804–1805." quoted from Vilgon vol. 3, British Museum, London.
- Logan, William. 1889. "Minicoy - The Island of women." *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 145: 197-213, 307-323.
- Loutfi, Ibrahim. 2011. *History of the Maldives (in Dhivehi based on an earlier text)*. Malé: Maldives National University.



- \_\_\_\_\_. 1995. "Maldives and Minicoy" (in Dhivehi), *Faiythoora*, vol. 131; 132. Center for Linguistic and Historical Research (series in 1994–1995).
- Mahalakshmi, Rakesh. 2016. "Chola (Cola) Empire." In *The Encyclopedia of Empire*, edited by John M. MacKenzie, 1-7 (online edition). Malden, MA & Oxford: John Wiley and Sons.
- Maloney, Clarence. 1980. *People of the Maldive Islands*. Bombay: Orient Longman.
- Manikfan, Ali. 2010. "Foreword." In *The Holy Koran, translated by Hussin Didi (in Dhivehi)*. Malé, The Maldives: Novelty Press.
- McPherson, Kenneth. 1993. *The Indian Ocean*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mohamed Fulhu, Buraara. 1958. *Bodu Thakurufaanu Vaahaka as narrated by Buraara Koi transcribed by Ibrahim Ismail Feebo*. Malé: Saada Press. (Translated by Fareesha Abdullah and Michael O'Shea. 2002.)
- Mustak, Mohammed S., Niraj Rai, Mohan Rao Naveen, Satya Prakash, S. Justin Carlus, Nagarjuna Paspuleti, Anshika Srivastava, Prajval Pratap Singh, Idrees Babu, Pavan Kumar Dubey, Gyaneshwer Chaubey & Kumarasamy Thangaraj. 2019. "The peopling of Lakshadweep archipelago." *Scientific Reports* 9 (6968): 1-7.
- Naajih, Muhammad. 2021 "Huravee Day... The true independence day of the Maldivians."  
[https://oneonline.mv/41106?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR2EOoUAWuI535ymBDLj8xalfWBvPp5scqPMiTBvlh0xtUubguB\\_IC\\_9WHO\\_aem\\_AcqAUa1pgXDVwFfSm\\_8Bft7VBZF38zwj65A8r9yPyFnXgCIjPfvBMvT4OkMrzvXWjgMWFQTU4GSdwPDecHj0iLs\\_](https://oneonline.mv/41106?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR2EOoUAWuI535ymBDLj8xalfWBvPp5scqPMiTBvlh0xtUubguB_IC_9WHO_aem_AcqAUa1pgXDVwFfSm_8Bft7VBZF38zwj65A8r9yPyFnXgCIjPfvBMvT4OkMrzvXWjgMWFQTU4GSdwPDecHj0iLs_)
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2011. "Names of the houses of Minicoy and the islands of the Maldives." *Ray Dhuvaa Maliku Express* Vol 1, p. 4.
- Nainar, S. Mohammad Husayn. 1942 [1583]. *Fuhfat al Mujahideen, translated from a manuscript by Zainudin Makhdam (1517–1583)*. Madras: University of Madras.
- Pearson, Michael. 2003. *The Indian Ocean*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Prasad, I.C.R. 2015. *Minicoy lighthouse*. Noida (India): Directorate General Lighthouses and Lightships.
- Pyrard of Laval, Francois. 1887-1889 [1611]. *The voyage of Francois Pyrard of Laval to the East Indies, the Maldives, the Moluccas and*





*Brazil*, edited by Albert Gray and H.C.P. Bell. 3 vols. London: The Hakluyt Society.

Raikar, Sanat Pal. 2023. "Union territories." In *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, online, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/union-territory> [accessed 23 June 2023].

Romero-Frias, Xavier. 2012. *Folk tales of the Maldives*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2003 [1999]. *The Maldivian Islanders: A study of the popular culture of an ancient kingdom*. Barcelona: Nova Ethnographia Indica.

Saigal, Omesh. 1990. *Lakshadweep India: The land and the people*. New Delhi: National Book Trust, India.

Schnepel, Burkhard & Edward A. Alpers, eds. 2018. *Connectivity in motion: Island hubs in the Indian Ocean world*. Cham: Palgrave.

Severin, Tim. 1982. *The Sindbad voyage*. London: Hutchinson.

Sirajudin, Muhammad K. 2020. "Arrakal swaroopam: Matriliney, trade and politics (1723–1907)." Doctor of Philosophy in History, Farook College (Autonomous) Kozhikode.

Sudarsen, V. 1979. "Historical development of social organisation among Minicoy islanders." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 40: 856-866.

Thomas, Edward G. 1859. "Report on the management during Fusli 1268 of the five Laccadive Islands." *The Madras Journal of Literature and Science* 5 (10): 248-264.

Tripati, Sila. 2009. "Stone anchors from Minicoy Island, Lakshadweep, India." *Nautical Archeology* 38 (2): 406-412.

Vilgon, Lars. 1991-99. *Maldivian History*, Vols. 1-8. Stockholm: selfpublished.

\_\_\_\_\_. ed. 1987. *Minicoy, The Maldivian Island anthology*. Stockholm: selfpublished.

Yule, Henry. 1882–1883. "Minicoy." In *Encyclopædia Britannica*.