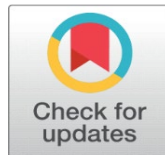
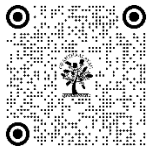


WHEN MAPPILA MEN SING AND DANCE: AN ANALYTICAL DISCUSSION ON PERFORMING ARTS OF MAPPILA MEN

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ABSTRACT

Muslims of Kerala state of the Indian republic are known as Mappilas. They have developed many unique cultural traits that are Indigenous in character, even though their culture has been influenced by Arabian tradition along with Malabar and Tamil culture. Mappilas were extraordinarily political and protested against Western powers like the Portuguese and British, which is why historians have extensively studied the Mappila community. They mostly looked at the aspects of the trade relationship with Mappilas, its impact on the community, and the protests of Mappilas against the colonial powers and feudal lords. But, Mappilas as a community in terms of identity is an outcome of many factors, including their political and cultural identities. The academic studies on Mappilas eschew the question of culture. Therefore, this study looks into one of the essential aspects of their culture: their performing arts. This study provides an analytical discussion on the performing arts of Mappila men, but focuses on one of the unique singing competitions known as Vattappaattu and the performing art called Kolkkali.

Keywords: Mappilas, Vattappaattu, Kolkkali, Malabar, Performing Arts

1. INTRODUCTION

In his functional analysis of society, classical anthropologist Malinowski emphasizes the role of culture. He maintained that culture is always instrumental to satisfying organic human needs. He emphasizes that "the functional approach, moreover, considers the totality of cultural phenomena as the necessary background both of the analysis of man and that of society" (Malinowski 1939: 939). Social and cultural institutions are born to meet the needs of human society. Once basic needs like food and shelter are satisfied, human society and its culture produce other social and cultural institutions to meet the derived needs of society. For instance, education as a social institution fulfils the human need for socialization. In short, every cultural aspect, such as religion, rituals, and arts, must meet specific human needs. Arts are considered to be an integral part of any culture since they satisfy human beings' recreational aspects.

Anthropologists are particularly interested in looking at the arts and rituals of a community to understand the identity of the community.

Mappilas are Muslims of Kerala state of the Indian republic. They have developed a unique culture in terms of rituals, language, singing songs, and performing arts. Mappila songs are generally called *Mappilappaattu* and are composed in the community language called Arabimalayalam. There existed another form of a singing style among the Mappilas which is called *Vattappaattu*. Vattappaattu was a singing competition generally held on the day of the Mappila wedding by two groups representing both the groom and bridegroom. Both groups sit in a semi-circle form by facing each other so that it creates a circle. Since the singers sit in a circle form, it is known as Vattappaattu; *Vattam* means circle, and *paattu* means songs. So Vattappaattu means circle songs.

Vattappaattu was an integral part of Mappilas' marriage till the 1960s, and slowly, it was replaced in Mappila marriages by the performing art of Mappila women, known as Oppana. Vattappaattu was, on the one hand, a singing competition; on the other hand, it was a kind of performing art. The singers used some specific instruments, and used to make certain body actions. In this paper, we will first explore the historical and ethnographic aspects of this waned art, and secondly, we will explain its new incarnation in contemporary times. Kerala State School Art and Cultural Festival is known as the 'youth festival'. This youth festival has helped to revive the Vattappaattu. In the youth festival, Vattappaattu became totally a performing art played by Mappila boys or men. But in reality, there were Vattappaattu groups of both men and women. The male singers were called *Kaimuttyppattukar*, and the female singers were called *Kalikkarathikal* (Randathani 2018: 110). Since Vattappaattu in the school youth festival is performed by boys, it is sometimes considered as male Oppana, though technically it is not. In short, in this article, we provide an analytical discussion on the performing arts of Mappila men but mainly focus on two performing arts such as *Vattappaattu* and *Kolkkali*. Kolkkali is another widely performed performing art of Mappilas. Kolkkali is played by striking small sticks and moving in a circle form. *Kolu* means sticks, and *kali* means play. Therefore, Kolkkali means dancing with sticks.

Apart from Vattappaattu and Kolkkali, there are many other performing arts of Mappila men, such as *Daff Muttu*, *Arabana Muttu*, *Kuthu Raib*, *Cheenimuttu*, *Mappila Theyyam*, etc., but it is Vattappaattu and Kolkkali have more indigenous tradition while other arts are influenced by Arabian tradition. Anthropologists are particularly interested in exploring the indigenous culture and art form. While Vattappaattu has Tamil tradition, Kolkkali is believed to be borrowed from upper-caste Hindus; the *Nairs*. Therefore, in this paper, we focus on these two indigenous Mappila performing arts such as Vattappaattu and Kolkkali.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE, RESEARCH GAP AND METHODOLOGY

Mappila as a community is believed to have emerged from Malabar's trade relationship with the Arabian world. Arabian merchants had developed a trade network in south Asia from the first century A.D. Arabian male merchants got married to Malabar native women and Mappilas as a community emerged out of this union. Since women remained in Malabar, they continued the indigenous aspects of their culture, particularly in rituals and performing arts. Because of the trade relationship of the Mappila community with the Arabian world and the Mappilas' protests against colonial powers like the Portuguese and British, the community has been studied extensively by historians. More (2013) and Prange (2018) are more concerned with the early formation of the Mappila community. Stephen Dale (1980) looks into the role or ideology of Islam behind the Mappila rebellions, especially the 1921 revolts. Marxist historians like Conrad Wood (1987) and K.N. Panikkar (1989) look into the economic or material aspects behind the Mappila rebellion and argue that it is the British government's creation of a new political and economic environment that affected Mappilas' relationship with agricultural land and petty trade was the reason why Mappilas protested against colonial powers and the feudal lords. The historical studies on Mappila certainly shed light on different political and economic aspects of the Mappila community, but these studies eschew the question of culture. Indeed, some of the studies touch upon the cultural aspects of Mappilas. For instance, Miller (2015) touches upon two ritual performances of Mappilas such *Nercha* and *Mawluds*, but does not discuss the arts of Mappilas.

Similarly, in a vernacular book, Kunji (2008) discusses some of the cultural aspects of Mappilas, such as their food culture, dress, marriage, etc., along with a short description of Mappila songs called Mappilappaattu and Arabimalayalam. Though there are no academic anthropological studies on Mappilas primarily written in English, one work devoted to the Mappila songs and performing arts is by Randathani (2018), who briefly describes all Mappila performing arts. However, it is to be noted that there are plenty of works in vernacular that focus on the Mappila tradition of singing songs

called Mappilappaattu. While some of the studies on Mappilappaattu focus on individual Mappilappaattu poets like 'Mahakavi Moyinkutty Vaidyar' (Vallikkunnu 2018; Ahamed 2006), there exist studies on the structure and characteristics of Mappilappaattu (Aboobacker and Mangad 2018)) and the historical context in which Mappilappaattu was originated (Vallikkunnu 2014) and the historical transformation of Mappilappaattu (Kutty 2007). Though there is enough vernacular literature on Mappila songs, there is a lack of anthropological academic studies on Mappila performing arts. Only one work is devoted to studying Mappila women's performing art, *Oppana* (see, Puvvakkurussi 2010) sideways with a short piece on Mappila visual arts (Adimali 2015). Therefore, in my previous essay, I gave an anthropological description of Mappilappaattu and Oppana (Sunil 2023). I have emphasized the fact that the secularisation of Mappilappaattu helped Mappilappaattu and Oppana to travel beyond the Mappila world.

Two vernacular literature are devoted to the study of Vattappaattu (Koppilan 2008; Vadakara 2023) and Kolkkali (Gurukkal 2012; Kozhikode 2013), which aid this study along with our understanding of Vattappaattu and Kolkkali based on interviewing the people who witnessed Vattappaattu in their life, and the performing art of Kolkkali. In short, though Mappilas are extensively studied, there are not enough works that focus on anthropological aspects of Mappilas like their ritual, language, arts, etc. As a result, this study's methodological approach is exploratory in terms of features, or this study is exploratory research since there is a literature gap on these Mappila performing arts. This study is part of my continuing ethnographic research on the Mappila community, which I have been conducting since 2017 in three Mappila settlement areas: *Chaliyam*, *Pookkoottur*, and *Nilambur* of Kerala state of India republic. Aside from secondary sources, this study draws on ethnographic insights from direct observation on Vattappaattu and Kolkkali. I have observed Vattappaattu performance in the school youth festival as well as the university festivals and also interacted with the teachers of Kolkkali known as *Gurukkal*. I have also interacted with older people who have experienced Vattappaattu. Therefore, this study is exploratory in its characteristics and provides a historical and analytical discussion on Mappilas' singing competition, known as Vattappaattu and its historical transformation in contemporary times. Since the study focuses on the indigenous art forms of Mappilas, it also discusses one of the most famous performing art forms of Mappila men, known as *Kolkkali*.

3. VATTAPPAATTU: FROM SINGING COMPETITION TO PERFORMING ART.

In Kerala's Malabar area, the entertainment art form known as Vattappaattu was performed the day before the wedding day of the Mappila families. Traditionally, groups from the bride and bridegroom's side performed this Muslim art style called Vattappaattu. It was a singing competition from both sides of the bride and bridegroom. This art form was an integral part of Mappila marriages till the 1960s. It was most popular in the *Ernadu* and *Valluvanadu* Taluks of the present Malappuram district, a predominantly Mappila-populated area. By the 1970s, this art form had disappeared from the Mappila marriage functions. One of the respondents who was well equipped with Vattappaattu and Mappilappaattu, Aminatha, an 82-year-old Mappila woman, opined that by the 1970s, the loudspeaker with music based Mappilappaattus appealed to the Mappilas and every family began to use loudspeaker in marriages. While Vattappaattu was performed orally with specific traditional instruments only, it was not appealing to the people, while the modern recorded music-based Mappilappaattu was more romantic and appealing. In addition, by the 1950s, Malayalam feature films had Mappilappaattu and Oppana into their content (Sunil 2023). By the 1970s, Mappila women's performing art called Oppana also gained popularity among the Mappila families, and Oppana became an integral part of Mappila marriages. Due to these two essential factors, Vattappaattu was waned, but it reincarnated as a performing art in the Kerala School cultural and art festival as well as the college and university art festivals.

Vattappaattu is an indigenous art form since its genealogy is the Tamil tradition of *Tamil Pulavars* (Koppilan 2008). Traditionally, Vattappaattu and early Arabimalayalam Mappilappaattus, especially the ritually significant song tradition of Mappilas called Maalappaattus, had more Tamil words. Approximately thirty per cent of words in early Mappilappaattus were Tamil (Koppilan 2008: 37). Early Arabimalayalam Mappilappaattus also followed the poetic structure borrowed from Tamil Sufi traditions. The indigenous aspect of Vattappaattu is also this Tamil Tradition. The Tamil tradition of Kerala region and her language called Malayalam can be understood only within the cultural history of Kerala. Though Malayalam was a variation of Tamil spoken in the Kerala region, from the sixteenth century onwards, when the caste system became the social order of Kerala society, Malayalam began to be *Sanskritised*. Firstly, by modifying the letters so that they can represent the cultural world of Brahmins, and then incorporating the Sanskrit grammar into the poetic and prose structure of Malayalam. Though the language had been Sanskritised, the common masses used an oral Malayalam, which had more Tamil words than Sanskrit words. This Tamil tradition of *Vattappaattu*

is the reason why the art can be considered to be an indigenous art. Koppilan (2008: 46) notes that in the 17th and 18th centuries, it was mainly the 'Tamil Pulavanmars' Vattappaattu groups who performed in Malabar marriages. Then later, people from the Mappila community began to sing this Pulavars' Tamil-based songs. By the 19th century, Mappila poets began to compose Vattappaattus, thus giving more Mappila identity to the art. In contemporary Vattappaattu music, Tamil, Malayalam, Arabic, Persian, and Urdu are the five languages that are typically blended together. Many poets from Kerala have also composed Vattappaattus. This includes poets Payyal Qayyath, Kadayikkal Moideen, C.P Muhammed, K.T Muhammed, etc (Randathani 2018: 116).

Mappilas from their early formation into a community itself, mainly engaged in petty trade and agricultural activity as peasants and labourers. During this period, Mappilas had to spend their daytime in local markets and towns or in the agricultural field. Therefore, Mappila marriages were celebrated during the night. Professional Vattappaattu singers were mostly part of the wealthy Mappilas' marriage ceremony. One Vattappaattu troupe generally has eight to ten members. The Vattappaattu team did not have any specific dress patterns. Vattappaattu singers use some traditional instruments while performing the art, such as *Kolambi*, *Ilathalam*, *Chapplamkatta*, *Chilambu*, small *Daffu* and *Kolkkali* sticks (Vadakara 2023: 19). A spittoon called *Kolambi* made out of metal is placed in the middle of singers who beat it with a kind of hand-fan named *Vishari*, made by the leaf of areca nut tree. Therefore, Vattappaattu is also known as *Kolambi-Ppaattu* (Koppilan 2008: 47). The singers also make rhythmic sounds by clapping their hands together (Randathani 2018: 110). Along with that, expert artists among the singers use other instruments like *Daffu*, *Ilathalam*, etc. Together, they produce an impressive musical sound with a more folk style.

Vattappaattu in marriages starts with a specific Mappila tradition called *Varane Thedippokal*. The brother-in-law and his friends come to the bridegroom's house and invite him to the bride's house. Once the brother-in-law and friends have the food, the bridegroom will sit in the marriage *Panthal* (tent) and the local barber, often called *Ossan*, does the beautification of the bridegroom by shaving and dressing his hair, which is known as *Mothala Idal*. In the meantime, Vattappaattu singers start singing the songs by standing around the bridegroom. After *Mothala Idal*, the bridegroom wears his wedding dress, and his brother-in-law and friends invite him to the bride's house. Upon accepting the request of the brother-in-law, bridegroom and brother-in-law, and the friends of the brother-in-law as well the bridegroom's friends, move to the bride's house, mostly after ten p.m. Most of the time, marriage alliances were from nearby villages. Therefore, the bridegroom and his friends used to walk to the bride's house. Vattappaattu singers accompany the bridegroom group by singing songs through the corridors and roads. They used traditional lamps like *Raanthal* and *Petromax* and a kind of torch made from coconut fronds called *Choottu*. Just before reaching the bride's house, the bridegroom and his friends halt until they are invited from the bride's side. Vattappaattu singers, or Vattappattukar, from the bride's side invite the bridegroom by singing a welcome *Baith* (a kind of Arabic song often having devotional elements). The welcoming *Baith* song from the bride's side starts with the Islamic greeting of *Assalamu Alaikkum*, followed by the replay song of the bridegroom's Vattappattukar with *Wa Alaikumussalmi*. For instance, one of the popular welcoming *Baith* from the bride's side was;

Assalamu alaikum ya soorathul ahibba

Atabil jinanai bil karamaathati bil jinani.....

In reply to this bride's welcoming *Baith*, the bridegroom's Vattappattukar sing the reply *Baith*;

Wa alaikumussalami inta rabbinabbinassalam

Hakada Mahmudunnabi deenina ssalam ...

(Koppilan 2008: 50; Randathani 2018: 111).

Once both parties sing the welcoming *Baith* songs, they greet each other by hugging and shaking hands. Then, the singing of the *Baith* song continues for a while and then slowly shifts to other genres of Vattappaattus. Once the bridegroom sits in the *Panthal* of the bride, the Vattappattukar of the bridegroom sit on the right side of the bridegroom, and the Vattappattukar of bride side sit on the left side of the bridegroom. Both groups sit in semi-circle forms facing each other, creating a circle; Vattappaattu, therefore, is a circle song (Vattam means circle). Once they sat, they continued the *baith* songs for a while and then shifted to the other genres of Vattappaattu. It's a kind of competition. If the bridegroom's party sings a particular *Ishal* (the structural feature of the song), the replay songs should meet the parameters of the same *ishal*. The competition from both sides continued often till morning, and it was considered to be prestigious to win in every marriage competition. One of the *Kalikkarathis* told me that they usually received only agricultural products like coconut and vegetables as their remunerations.

Vattappaattu was an integral part of the marriage ceremony of Mappilas till the 1970s. But it was slowly disappeared from the scene. Mappilappatttu and Oppana, the dance form of Mappila women, began to appeal to the Mappila community because of the influence of Malayalam movies. A good number of the Malayalam movies from the 1950s featured romantic Mappilappaattus and *Oppanas*, which had an impact on Mappilas. Mappila families replaced Vattappaattu with Oppana in their marriage functions. By the 1970s, Vattappaattu had almost disappeared from the scene, but it reincarnated into a new form or *avatar* in the Kerala school art and cultural festival known as *Youth Festival*.

Though the traditional Vattappaattu had performing art elements, it was primarily a singing competition. In the Kerala School Youth Festival and university art festivals, it became a form of performing art played on the stage. It lost its gender neutrality. Vattappaattu, in youth festivals, became a male performing art, and now it is considered Boys' Oppana. Traditionally, Vattappaattu was performed by males and females. However, in the school and university cultural festivals, it became a performing art of males only, and so it lost its gender neutrality. There has been a lot of structural change in the Vattappaattu after the influence of the youth festival. Traditionally in Vattappaattu, there was no dressing pattern. But now, it has a uniform dress code in its new form. Ten members, including the bridegroom, are part of the performance. The bridegroom stands in the middle of ten people with a *Maala* (garland) made out of artificial pearls, and the performers wear some specific dress pattern like long white shirts known as *Kurthas*, and *Mundu* or Dothies with white turban known as *Thalappavu*. Sometimes, the bridegroom wears a colourful dress. Now in this performing art, no instruments are used; instead, the performers clap their hands loudly and rhythmically while singing. While the traditional Vattappaattu was a singing competition between two parties, the new Vattappaattu is a performing art played by only one group of boys on the stage. In traditional Vattappaattu, one group first sings, and then the other group sings the replay song. In the new Vattappaattu, only one group sings different genres of Vattappaattu by standing and sitting on the floor, clapping the hand and moving the upper part of the body to right and left frequently in a rhythmic manner. Now, it is also performed by sitting in a semi-circle form. The art starts by standing the performers, and there will be a lead singer in the group as well as a bridegroom. Firstly, it begins by singing a stanza of a kind of prayer song by the lead singer without clapping and then others or the chorus joins it by clapping and singing the same stanza. Then, the lead singer welcomes the audience by chanting the Islamic greeting, *Assalamu Alaikum*. Then, the chorus slowly sits on the floor, humming a sound like 'Aaaa'. Still, its lyrics use predominantly old Malayalam and Tamil words. The lead singer sings one stanza, and the chorus also sings related stanzas. Sometimes, they don't clap, but when the song reaches a high pitch, the performers clap their hands rhythmically and move the body to both sides in a uniform specific manner. Then, they continue singing the different genres of Vattappaattus for around ten minutes. In short, Vattappaattu has transformed from a singing competition between two parties to a single group singing the songs by clapping their hands. The quality of Vattappaattu is now evaluated based on the clarity of language, rhythm, and literary richness of the lyrics.

4. KOLKKALI: THE FOLK ART FORM OF MAPPILA MEN.

Kolkkali is one of the most famous performing arts of Mappilas. The art is beautiful and appealing since it has swift steps with attractive collective sound coming from the striking of sticks they use in the performance and chorus singing by the members of the players. Though Mappilas performed Kolkkali in every part of Kerala, the art is more prevalent in the coastal belt of Kerala, particularly in the Malabar region and among the fishermen community. Many experts or teachers of Kolkkali, often known as *Gurukkal*, are from the fishermen's community. There are many folktales on the origin of Kolkkali. Most of these folk stories trace the origin of Kolkkali to the geography of Kerala region and to the indigenous communities like fishermen communities of Kerala or upper caste Hindu *Nair* of Kerala and, therefore, the art is considered to be an Indigenous as well as a folk art. Randathani (2018: 123) cites one of the folk stories on the origin of Kolkkali narrated by an expert in Kolkkali named T.P Alikkutty Gurukkal, who attributes the origin of one variation of Kolkkali to Arakkal Ali Raja of Kannur and a fisherman named Paithal Marakkan. Arakkal Rajas were the only Muslim dynasty that existed in Kerala. According to Alikkutty Gurukkal, though there are different types of Kolkkali, the most popular one is *Vaimalakuth*, of which "the rhythm and play were articulated by one fisherman named Paithal Marakkan. The play was organized during the coronation ceremony of Arakkal Raja for the first time" (Randathani 2018: 123).

Historically, a similar kind of dance form, playing by striking two small sticks and singing songs, existed among many indigenous communities of India, particularly among the tribes. Many castes and communities in Kerala performed a similar kind of dance form. The *Nair* caste or community had their own version of Kolkkali and, therefore, Kolkkali was also known as *Nair Kali* (Nair Play) among the Hindus (Gurukkal 2012: 9). Because of this multiple identity of Kolkkali,

the art performed by the Mappilas are addressed with 'Mappila Kolkkali'. For instance, the title of Gurukkal's (2012) work is *Mappila Kolkkali*. Kolkkali is believed to have originated in *Kalaries*, the Indigenous traditional school system of Nair men and upper-Thiyya, where the Nair men and members of upper-Thiyyas got training in martial arts known as *Kalarippayattu*, and other primary education. Kolkkali spread among the Nairs through the *Kadathanadan* warriors of Northern Kerala, where it was known as *Rajasooyam* (Randathani 2018: 121).

Because of this genealogy of Kolkkali to the indigenous communities like Nairs and fisherman communities, the art has more folk elements. Maappila Kolkkalis' clothing style is similar to that of the working class, especially the peasantry. There are two main styles in Mappila Kolkkali: *Thalakkali* and *Kurikkalum Kuttikalum*. Quite noticeably, the *Thalakkali* was more prevalent in the coastal regions and particularly among the fishermen communities, whereas *Kurikkalum Kuttikalum* was more widespread among the Mappila peasantry community of Eranadu Taluk of Malappuram district (Randathani 2018: 123). In Mappila Kolkkali, a very traditional Mappila dress is used, which is very simple. The performers wear a white colour check *Dhothi* over a half-sleeve vest or undershirt. A green colour broad belt is also part of the dress code along with covering the head with a white handkerchief (Kozhikode 2013: 28).

Each performer uses two small sticks in their hand while dancing. This stick is made from the trunk of a palm tree with 43 cm in length and 2.5 cm in thickness. It is decorated with brass bars on the back part of the stick so that it creates an impressive sound beating wood as well as metal. The performers hold the stick at the back and beat with the other portion (Randathani 2018: 124). The dance requires pairs; traditionally, a Kolkkali team has sixteen members or at least eight members are required to play the dance. In the Kerala School cultural festival, the art is performed by twelve members, while at the college and university level, it is played by eight members (Gurukkal 2012: 10-11).

Kolkkali is performed by standing in a circle form. It has swift steps and specific Malayalam terminologies to address its particular steps, which cannot be translated into English. Even if an anthropologist having the ethnographic sensibility and tries to understand the art form from a subjective point of view, it is pretty challenging to explain the structural features of the art because of the complexity of Kolkkali art. In its simplest sense, Kolkkali is a dance performed by a group of boys or men who stand and move their bodies rhythmically by striking the sticks. There will be a lead singer. In traditional form, the lead singer was the teacher or gurukkal. One member among the performers can also be a lead singer, and he starts singing. Then, the chorus joins it by striking the sticks, keeping rhythm with special steps. Though the art starts slowly, when the play reaches its climax, it is performed extremely fast; therefore, body strength is also essential. This art has its origin in martial arts. As it is indicated, Mappila Kolkkali is played in circle form by standing. The circle expands and contracts as the dance progresses. The accompanying music or song gradually rises in pitch, and the dance reaches its climax. As the dance progresses, the circle grows and shrinks and the performers play by creating an inner and outer circle. The dance achieves its peak when the accompanying song or music progressively gets higher in pitch.

5. CONCLUSION

Mappila is an indigenous cultural community of Kerala state of Indian republic. Historically, the community emerged from the union between the Arab merchants and native Kerala women. When the Arab merchants became Muslims after the emergence of Islam, the Mappila community also became Muslims. The marriage between the Arab merchants and native women was temporary, and, therefore, the women stayed back in Kerala, whereas the Arab merchants went back to their land. In short, Mappila emerged from this union as a community on the Malabar coast. Therefore, the Mappila community and their culture were influenced by Arabian culture as well as the indigenous culture. The word Mappila connotes the geographical identity of Malabar and Kerala since the culture of Mappilas are shaped by indigenous cultural traits. Mappilas developed a unique cultural pattern. Their rituals like *Nercha* and their traditions of singing songs such as *Maalappaattu*, *Mappilappaattu* and *Vattappaattu*, and many performing arts, are influenced and shaped by the historicity of the region and different indigenous communities. In this article, we have highlighted the indigenous and folk elements of two art forms of Mappila men such as *Vattappaattu* and *Kolkkali*.

The Mappila community has many performing arts besides the *Oppana* dance of Mappila women, *Vattappaattu* and *Kolkkali*. Other principal performing arts of Mappilas are *Daff Muttu*, *Arabana Muttu*, *Ratib*, *Kuthu Ratib*, *Cheeni Muttu* and *Mappila Theyyam*. Though the Mappila Theyyam is just a version of Hindu Theyyam and is undoubtedly an indigenous art, it is not as popular as *Vattappaattu* and *Kolkkali*. Other performing arts, such as *Daffu Muttu* and *Arabana Muttu*, have more Arabian cultural influence, and *Cheeni Muttu* has more Persian traditions. Since anthropologists are

concerned with the historicity of a region in shaping the cultural identity of a community, in this article, we have focused on those arts of Mappilas, especially Mappila men's performing arts such as Vattappaattu and Kolkkali, that are having the indigenous and folk elements.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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