

## Researching Historical Links between Kerala and the Vatican: A Case Study

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### ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the search for evidence regarding the possibility of the transmission of the medieval Kerala mathematics to Europe. Despite the paucity of *direct* documentary evidence, there is mounting *circumstantial* evidence to support the transmission hypothesis. The paper draws attention to the facts that Jesuit were interested and sought knowledge relating to the computational, astronomical and calendrical practices of the local people. In their attempt to obtain such local knowledge and promote their evangelical activities, the Jesuits learnt the local language and gained influence in the Cochin Royal Court. To determine whether there was any direct evidences a meticulous search was undertaken in the archives of Rome. There was also an investigation to unearth possible relevant material from the correspondences of Jesuits such as Ricci and Rubino . Additionally, a survey was done of the catalogued and uncatalogued palm leaf manuscripts in vernacular languages such as Malayalam kept in the Vatican and other libraries in Rome as well as in other places in Europe. . An extensive survey of palm leaf manuscripts in Malayalam, held in the Vatican and other archives in Rome, many of them uncatalogued or in some cases wrongly catalogued, indicate that these manuscripts were of varied nature like dictionaries, grammatical texts, historical writings, and theological writings. Only a very small part of the manuscripts related to scientific, technological and computational aspects. An inference from the paper is that if the evidence gathered does not support the transmission hypothesis, the Kerala phenomenon may well be the first major case of scientific development in post ancient era that remained localized in its place of origin, despite the existence of a direct corridor of communication to Europe initiated by Vasco da Gama's voyages to India.