



Kaleidoscope:
An Interdisciplinary Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences
ISSN: 3139-2962



Vol 2 Issue 1, July 2026, 30-42, Journal homepage: <https://kaleidoscopejournal.in/>
DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.22896021

Esotericism in Transition: Cultural Memory and Moral Economies in North Malabar

Mr. Ahammed Saneer

Independent Researcher, Kasaragod, Kerala, India

Abstract

This paper discusses the transformation of esoteric practices in North Malabar, particularly the shifting forms of ritual expertise, traditions in talismans, kinship-based power, and the rise of pseudo-esoteric fraud. Based on anthropological conceptualizations of ritual, material culture, and disenchantment, the paper places Islamic talismanic practices (“asmā, ta‘wiz”) and Hindu māṭṭa in a historical and pluralistic regional context. The analysis holds that esoteric practices do not exist as static survivals but rather, they are adaptive systems that are embedded in cultural memory, kinship systems and moral economies. Simultaneously, state regulation processes, biomedical rationality, and digital mediation help in demystifying and remystifying these traditions. Through a combination of the use of ethnographic knowledge and the use of specific field-based observations of the North Malabar–Kasaragod region the paper has shown that the erosion of lineage-based authority has facilitated the introduction of commodified and decontextualized ritual practices. They are not viewed as a mere erosion of tradition, but as a reconfiguration of ritual authority in the new social, economic and technological circumstances.

Article History

Received
November 28, 2025

Accepted
June 07, 2026

Keywords: esotericism, North Malabar, cultural memory, ritual economy, māṭṭa, ta‘wiz, remystification

Introduction

North Malabar is a part of the cultural landscape of South India that is a region of dense interaction, of the ritual systems, kinship relations, and the local cosmologies. Occultism in the North Malabar region is not a marginal feature or a residual subculture, but a system that is well rooted in the social system with respect to land tenure, caste system, and family authority. Existing scholarship on Kerala and South Asia is useful in terms of the theoretical basis that it lays for the analysis of such phenomena. As is evident in the ethnography of Filippo and Caroline Osella, there is significant overlap, in terms of rituals, between the two Muslim and Hindu groups in Kerala despite differences in doctrine (Osella and Osella). Similarly, research by William Sax and David Shulman suggests that possession, healing and mediation in South Asia exhibit similarities in terms of symbols and performance (Sax; Shulman). However, the role of esoteric practice in North Malabar remains underexplored.

This gap is addressed in this paper by examining the esoteric practices of North Malabar in terms of process with the cross-section of cultural memory, institutional changes, and emergent markets. In particular, the three processes that will be considered are:

- (i) maintenance of culture memories by legacy of rituals according to genealogy.
- (ii) restructuring of esoteric institutions under the influence of laws, biomedical rationale, and socio-economic processes.
- (iii) emergence of pseudo-esoteric activities that are due to commodification and digital mediation of the ritual economy.

To go beyond the simplistic dichotomies of authenticity and superstition with respect to esoteric tradition, the paper will adopt a critical methodology which will situate esoteric traditions within wider contexts of social changes. In this light, it is implied that esoteric traditions in North Malabar are not dying or standing still, being reshaped through shifts in kinship, power, and modes of circulation.

Theoretical Framework

Esoteric practice among North Malabaris can be approached using an interdisciplinary approach based on theories of anthropology, religion, symbolism, and modernity from sociology. Unlike in most works which regard esotericism as irrationality, the theory views esotericism as a form of mediated rationality based on historically specific social relations. Disenchantment, a term derived from Max Weber's theory, is one of the points of departure that could explain how ritual authority changes in a modern setting (Weber). However, as it

turns out, a Weberian perspective based on the process of transition from enchantment to disenchantment is limited since it does not apply to the non-Western world. On the other hand, Geertzian interpretation of religion and Tambiah's view of magical rationality, emphasize the existence of different forms of rationality in society. Geertz views religion as a cultural system that brings meaning and order (Geertz), and it is the reason that the esoteric practice is still present and evolves even in the conditions of modernization. Tambiah also continues to believe that ritual logic is not irrational, but has its own rational internal logics, which directly justify the perception of esotericism as mediated rationality and not superstition (Tambiah).

Douglas' studies of purity, danger, and classification provide more insights on how esoteric practices involve the organization of culture-specific anxieties relating to bodily susceptibility, contamination, and deviance (Douglas). Far from being abstract, these anxieties are socially constructed and contribute to the interpretation and handling of suffering, mishap, and immoral state via ritual intervention. In the case of South Asia, for instance, there has been a body of scholarship by anthropologists like William Sax and Lawrence Babb which shows how healing, trance, and ritual intervention become part of a moral economy and hierarchy of authority where legitimacy comes from social approval and continuance (Sax; Babb).

The ethnographic research conducted by Filippo and Caroline Osella helps to understand the relationship of talismanic ritual, spirit healing, and religion in the lives of Muslims living in Kerala by situating them within processes of ethical selfhood and sociality (Osella and Osella). According to Osellas' research, these forms of religious experience cannot be treated as exceptional; rather, they are a natural component of religious and moral life of Muslims in the region (Osella and Osella). All the above-mentioned theoretical perspectives allow viewing esoteric practices of North Malabar as socially rooted forms of technology of mediation that combine symbolic dimension of social life, kinship-based power relations, and moral economy. This approach makes it possible to critically analyze transformations that have taken place in esoteric practices (from legitimacy rooted in lineage to individualized and commodified practice of esoteric practices).

Kinship, Matriliney, and the Transformation of Ritual Authority

North Malabar had social organizations based on the matrilineal system of inheritance called "marumakkathayam" in which the "tharavadu" constituted the core of ownership, residence, and ritual jurisdiction. As found from Kerala's history and legal documentation, land ownership, inheritance, and ritual performance were held jointly by the matrilineal family,

usually controlled by the “karnavar” (elder male member). The system was important for ensuring economic stability as well as for passing down special knowledge like rituals, healing, and mysticism. Historians of Kerala society have shown that the “tharavadu” form of organization was used as an instrument of social control because authority was not exercised individually but shared among kinship networks and supported by reputation and accountability. In such a context, māṭṭa and talismanic healing were not independent professions but knowledge systems handed down along kinship lines and selectively taught within particular clans known for ritual expertise.

These structural underpinnings of the system were transformed extensively in the twentieth century through several legal measures, namely the Madras Marumakkathayam Act and the Kerala Joint Hindu Family System (Abolition) Act, whereby the legal structure that supported matrilineal joint families was abolished. The decline of “tharavadu” power gained momentum with land reforms in the post-independent era and the progressive legal erosion of joint-family property formations, which resulted in the break-up of land estates and undermined hereditary patronage systems of rites. This, together with land fragmentation, increased migration, especially in the Gulf, and increased nuclear families, contributed to the erosion of the “tharavadu” both as an institution and as an economic entity. This, of course, had consequences for the governance of esoteric knowledge. The process of governing ritual knowledge through controlled dissemination, collective supervision, and reputation became increasingly difficult to manage without the stability offered by the lineage structures. Ritual practices thus started detaching themselves from these structural supports to become a practice defined by individuals.

This process is not an indication that esoteric practices have disappeared; rather, it represents a restructuring of the power structure whereby power has shifted away from inherited privilege towards assertion, negotiation, and even commodification of tradition. The collapse of matrilineal kinship systems becomes a key factor in the process of moving from ritual performance under lineage control to a more dispersed market-based approach to esoteric practices. The division of land over the last thirty years had a direct impact on the economic foundation which supported the māṭṭa lineage of heredity, as the ritual power in this area could not be historically divided without land ownership and patronage in the “tharavadu” system.

Methodology

The research strategy used for this study involves the use of qualitative research design that combines several kinds of data such as ethnography, regional history, and current institutional records along with field observation. Comparative and analytical research designs will be used in order to examine the Islamic talismanic practices (asmā', ta'wiz) and Hindu māṭṭa in relation to each other within a regional context, while keeping in mind their distinct histories. The field observation took place in the Badiyadka–Perla–Ukkinadka belt of Kasaragod district. The field work was conducted in September– November 2025 in the form of brief visits, comprising about 3 – 5 informal interviews and observations at the shrines. There was also an interview with the members of a Brahmin-related ritual family in Ukkinadka, a professional temple-related ritual performer and a healer using “ruqya”(ruqya: Islamic faith-based healing practice involving recitation of Qur'anic verses and supplications). To uphold ethics, personal names have been anonymized. Historically, this area has been linked with the presence of local ritual experts, bhootha/daiva cults, and the practice of esotericism across religious lines. The field observation was not meant for complete immersion but rather for qualitative inquiry.

Data collected during the field research include:

- Informal but focused interviews conducted with people associated with temples and members of ritual families,
- Engagements with trained practitioners performing māṭṭa rituals,
- Interviews with people, practicing Islamic medicine using ruqya intervention.

The interviews were not considered as anecdotes but as ethnographic inputs that could be analyzed in order to find any consistent trends in the transmission of ritual knowledge, evaluation of legitimacy, and practice adaptation in modern times. In terms of methodology, the research employs an interpretive triangulation approach in which the findings obtained through field observations are not extrapolated on their own but are critically positioned within the framework of existing ethnographic studies and historical accounts about Kerala society. Thus, the limitation of the research in terms of the narrowness of fieldwork is not a drawback but, rather, a conscious methodological approach. The limited number of interactions is admitted; but the goal was not statistical representation, but structural pattern recognition, every interaction was chosen for its typological relevance rather than its frequency, in which the goal of achieving representational comprehensiveness is subordinated to the need for analytical depth and structural correlations based on specific observations. Furthermore,

reports concerning the existence of ritual fraud that appeared in the press and in official documentation in Kerala (2020-2023) are used as secondary sources.

In this context, special attention should be paid to the critical assessment of the sources of information, as well as the study of the legal and institutional framework that defines the category of ritual fraud and the ways in which it is identified. Such an approach makes it possible to distinguish between the categorization system inherent to the institution and the inner evaluations practiced by esoteric communities. From this perspective, the proposed methodology unites qualitative insights based on personal experience with more abstract structural considerations.

Shared Sociological Logics of Esoteric Practice

Although *asmā'* and *ta'wiz* rituals in Islam and *māṭṭa* practices in Hinduism differ theologically, ethnographic and geographic evidence suggests that both types of practices rely on similar sociological principles in North Malabar. Research into the practice of medicine among Kerala Muslims and South Asian ritual practices reveals that they do not depend on doctrinal principles but rather on social mechanisms of mediation, legitimation, and exchange. Ritual practitioners serve as mediators between vulnerable humans and unknown forces, which may be either *shayāṭīn* in Islamic practice or regional *daiva* or *bhootha* spirits like *Gulikan* or *Raktheshwari* in South Asia (*shayāṭīn*: malevolent spirit beings in Islamic cosmology; *Gulikan* and *Raktheshwari*: regional spirit deities in the *bhootha/daiva* tradition of North Malabar, propitiated through specific territorial rites). As evidenced ethnographically, mediatory practices come to the forefront when there is an element of uncertainty in situations, which can be related to ill health, infertility, personal conflict, and unexpected adversity, as biological or legal reasoning appears to fall short in explaining the problems faced.

In reality, the effectiveness of rituals in both systems does not depend solely on the doctrinal precision of the ritual itself but depends more upon its legitimacy, which is recognized in society. As for example, studies of an ethnographic nature such as by Osella and Zupanov reveal that the work done by practitioners is evaluated not only according to the degree of orthodoxy but also according to lineage, discipline, and reputation (Osella and Osella; Zupanov). Furthermore, field studies carried out in the North Malabar-Kasaragod region have reinforced this trend even more. It is interesting to note that the *ruqya* healer, as well as the *māṭṭa* practitioner, independently reported almost the same client issues; marriage problems,

migration fears, and mysterious disease, which once again confirms the similarity of the sociological logic that is applied in these different traditions.

On the operational level, the rituals in both systems are performed through tangible means such as the use of ta'wiz (amulets), asmā' or mantra (formulae), and ritual activities carried out in a particular physical space such as shrines and domestic locations. Furthermore, both systems operate in negotiated moral economies instead of standard market economies. As discussed in anthropological works about ritual exchanges, most exchanges are based on offerings, dakṣiṇa, or promises to pay at a later time, with prices not fixed but defined in relational terms. Such an exchange paradigm points towards the imbedding of ritual practice in a social context and the dynamics of social relations and reciprocity.

Significantly, this is not evidence of theological similarity between different religious systems. Instead, it suggests that different religious traditions operating in the same historical region can develop similar sociological principles in response to kinship, cosmology, and history. In the case of North Malabar, this leads to the development of a multi-ritual ecology wherein different ritual traditions retain their theological distinction but operate similarly in a social sense.

Field-Based Observations and Controlled Ethnographic Specificity

Conducting field interactions in the Badiyadka-Perla-Ukkinadka region enabled an understanding of how the current process of esoteric activities works from a localized perspective. This study, although of limited duration, was analytical and complemented by earlier scholarly literature on this topic. During discussion with members of the ritual household of a temple, it was found that esoteric activities are maintained in oral traditions based on certain calendar dates (for example, Aati festivals) as well as spiritual hierarchies related to particular territorial contexts. The continuity of rituals was specifically attributed to the calendrical cycles like the Tulu Yugadi and Aati month celebrations and the principal bhoothas of the local ritual memory was identified as Gulikan and Raktheshwari. Ritual practices like thambila offerings were explained to be territorially bound practices rather than a generalized belief. Mention of Gulikan and Raktheshwari, and ritual acts like thambila suggest that esoteric practice is not merely a system of belief but part of larger cosmology related to particular shrines, lineages, and ritual territories.

Discussion with a māṭṭa specialist clarified that there is a particular methodology involved in rituals. The expert made it clear that the interaction with daiva/bhootha spirits must follow certain procedures including:

- The ritual protocols for invoking spirits
- Observance of ritual prohibitions
- Authorization according to lineage

It thus directly undermines attempts to reduce such practices to a form of uniform “black magic,” emphasizing their internal regulation and organization through knowledge and disciplining. Similar patterns were found within the Islamic healing tradition. The interaction with the ruqya healer made it evident that there is a significant doctrinal difference between:

- Qur’anic healing techniques based on reciting asmā’ and verses from the scriptures
- Strictly prohibited techniques that consist in invoking or negotiating with localized spirit beings

While at the same time, the ruqya healer emphasized the persistent existence of hybrid practices, suggesting the coexistence of doctrinal regulation and social practice.

Throughout all interactions, one constant pattern became evident in evaluating the practitioners - the clients did not use any theological criteria, but rather judged practitioners by their credibility, effectiveness, and popularity within the local community. This finding confirms the ethnographic observations, proving that the ritual power in North Malabar is socially constructed. Such field studies do not necessarily have representational completeness, but rather serve to support the main arguments of the paper concerning the continuity of cultural memory, the change in the basis of kinship authority, and the nature of the ritual economy of today.

Remystification and Digital Transformation

The current changes in the practice of esoteric ritual in North Malabar, therefore, involve not just demystification but also its counter-movement, remystification, in which ritual practices get transformed into new contexts of technology and economy. The use of mobile communication media, especially WhatsApp groups and short video clips on rituals services, have become important conduits for the distribution of such practices. During the field discussions, younger residents referred to WhatsApp-shared ads selling 3-day curse removal and quick marriage settlement rituals, which is an indicator of the increasing ritually packaged services. These include advertisements that promise remedies to problems such as marriage

problems, migration problems, lack of money and afflictions. Unlike the previous systems wherein the availability of ritual specialists depended on social and spatial constraints, these media have allowed ritualists to transcend their limitations. They are services that are completely beyond kinship or community control - there is no family to check, no neighbourhood shrine to ground the practice, no society that can impose any discipline on the practitioner. The traditional symbols like ta'wiz or invocation of the spirits are borrowed and repackaged into commercial products, devoid of the disciplinary and relational context that created the meaning and legitimacy of the symbols.

Ritual authority is now less based on lineage, shrine identity, or legitimacy of heritage. Rather, it is now increasingly constructed through visibility, responsiveness, and performance of efficacy in terms of testimonies, instant consultations, and promises of timely delivery. Notably, however, this development does not negate esoteric belief. On the contrary, it organizes esoteric practice. The use of symbolic materials from the past, such as ta'wiz, mantric utterances, or invocation of daiva/bhootha spirits, is strategically selected and packaged as commodified services. In other words, they become transferable and divorced from the specific contexts of ritual practice, locality, and kinship relations. Thus, remystification should not be seen as a return to the past and traditional esoteric beliefs. Remystification is rather a reorganization of esoteric practices within a new structure that combines the loss of lineage authority with the advent of digital technologies and market processes.

Pseudo-Esoteric Fraud and Structural Transformation

Ritual fraud cases recorded in Kerala in the last decade, specifically in districts like Kasaragod, Kannur, and Kozhikode, should be interpreted not only in their individual contexts but as part of a more general shift in the regional ritual economy that is visible in police reports, court testimonies, and media inquiries between 2020 and 2023. These records refer regularly to instances of people without a known lineage or institutional basis performing ritual healing practices on the basis of curses, affliction, or other forms of spiritual danger and demanding increasingly large sums of money. Through police records in 2021 and 2023 alone, between the Kannur and Kasaragod districts, the police registered similar cases in which people posing as hereditary healers would exploit economically disadvantaged families in the justification of doing it to get rid of curses or reverse misfortune. For instance, in Malayala Manorama, mainstream media, on 30 November 2025, three people were arrested in Kozhikode district on allegations of defrauding a man of large sums of money by promising spiritual healing and

protection services in false promises, which demonstrates how a financial exploitation can be disguised as esoteric intervention (“Duped Two Crore”; “Three Held”). The structure of these practices includes an absence of credible qualifications or hereditary credentials; fear-based diagnosis; ritual treatment of afflictions like buried objects or spirit attack; and payments for rituals done repeatedly or over time. This reflects a change from earlier traditions where ritual power was situated within the family network and subjected to various social controls.

However, the categorization of such practices as “fraud” itself needs to be understood within the framework of the legal and institutional system. According to the state authorities, fraud involves deceit, compulsion, and exploitation – all of which are essential elements of governance, although none of which account for the distinctions that esoteric traditions themselves draw between different practices within their traditions. Ethnographies in Kerala (Osella and Osella; Zupanov) show that practices like talismanic curing or spirit mediumship were validated not only in terms of orthodoxy but also lineage, discipline, and reputation in a community. One must take into account though that records are inherently institutionalized. Legal types of fraud identified by the state, which are not based on the internal distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate practice in esoteric traditions, are financial harm, deception, and compulsion. What the state considers as fraud might be the same or similar to what is considered as a violation by the tradition. When utilising police and court records as ethnographic evidence, this difference between institutional and internal definitions should be kept in mind.

In other words, the recent rise of pseudo-esoteric healers can be seen as an outcome of the breakdown of these systems of validation. The waning influence of tharavadu systems of authority, the dissolution of patronage networks in the form of lands, and the proliferation of service delivery through markets have made traditional systems of validation obsolete. Such a transformation leads to a crucial change: rituals become progressively independent of kinship-based systems of accountability and redefined as individualistic and service-oriented practices. In such conditions, legitimacy will not depend on lineage or legacy but will be simulated via performative declarations, sense of urgency, and fear-mongering tactics.

Nonetheless, one should not confuse all non-lineage practitioners for charlatans. The essential difference rests in the existence or lack thereof of accountability systems either by virtue of community approval, moral constraints, or tradition. Without them, there is a higher chance that a person may act as a manipulator. Thus, pseudo-esoteric fraud cannot be considered simply an individual act of deceit. Pseudo-esoteric fraud is best seen as the

consequence of esoteric beliefs being commodified, occurring at the crossroads of kinship-based control weakening, markets growing, and ritual authority shifting in present-day Kerala.

Discussion: Interpretation, Structure, and the Politics of Esoteric Practice

The above discussion shows that it is difficult to understand the esoteric practices of North Malabar from a perspective based on binaries where either of the two extreme positions of glorifying them as true cultural practices or demonizing them as irrational or pathological vestiges would be valid. At the heart of such a system is the dialectic of cultural memory, authority based on kinship and moral economy. Traditionally, rituals, whether they were based on the concept of *māṭṭa* or used Islamic talismans for healing, formed part of a system where there was continuity, legitimacy, and accountability. Such practices existed within the framework of regulated social technologies based on inheritance and disciplining.

The contemporary reshaping of these activities should not be viewed in terms of their decline, but rather, their restructuring in response to changing social circumstances. Weakening of matrilineal lineage systems, disruption of territorial power structures, and increasing infrastructure of markets and internet platforms have created the conditions in which authority, in the performance of rituals, becomes credible, rather than inherent by virtue of inheritance. Such changes create both an opening and a vulnerability, allowing for the development of adaptive ritual performances that can address contemporary fears and concerns, like migration, economic insecurity, and social division. However, at the same time, it has created vulnerable spaces, in which the lack of accountability mechanisms and modes of verification leaves room for fraudulent activities to occur.

It is important to recognize that pseudo-esoteric fraudulent activity cannot be viewed out of context as a problem of ignorance or dishonesty on the part of individuals. Instead, it should be contextualized within the process of reconfiguration of rituals in response to modernity, while still running through established systems of beliefs. As such, this research stresses the necessity of interdisciplinary methodology. An anthropological perspective becomes absolutely necessary to examine the inner logic, symbolic significance, and lived experience of esotericism, while the sociological perspective becomes significant in understanding the structural transformation of these practices in the present day.

Finally, this work brings out the political nature of interpretation of esoteric traditions. The institutional, academic, and media discourse plays a decisive role in distinguishing legitimate practice from fraud, relying more on external rather than internal definitions.

Consequently, a critical scholarship must be aware of not only the symbolic and structural dynamics of esotericism but also of the interpretive process that is inherent in the knowledge-producing process itself.

Conclusion

The esoteric practices of North Malabar cannot be seen as fixed survivals of a pre-modern tradition that will ultimately disappear as a result of modernization. Instead, this paper has shown that they can be viewed as historical constructions that are constantly modified through changes in kinship relations, economic organization, and technology. From this perspective, it can be seen that the power of esoteric practice rested on lineage-based forms of regulation in the socio-legal context of the tharavadu and matrilineal descent. Such systems allowed for controlled dissemination of knowledge, accountability within the community, and establishment of ritual power through reputation and patronage. With the transformation of laws and socio-economic conditions in the twentieth century, particularly the breakdown of matriliney, the fragmentation of land ownership, and out-migration, the traditional basis of ritual power was altered in a crucial way. Esotericism under present circumstances does not exist merely out of continuity, but also out of transformation. Power and authority no longer rely on inherited traditions but shift to the individualized, performative mode, through the logic of markets and digital technologies. This allows for transformation and adaptation, while at the same time creates a context where accountability is lacking, and exploitation is possible.

Pseudo-esotericism as fraud should be understood, accordingly, as a result of the transformation process. It is a product of the disconnection between ritual performance and traditional regulation mechanisms, as well as of the existence of beliefs that provide meaning-making in situations of uncertainty, bad luck, and vulnerability. On the other hand, official categorization into the category of “fraud” is an indicator of how far bureaucratic and legal discourse can capture what is inside esotericism. It is clear from this analysis that despite their differences in terms of doctrine, both the Islamic talismanic traditions and the Hindu māṭṭa traditions share similar socio-logical principles of mediation, legitimation, and transaction. It is not a question here of their ultimate similarities in terms of belief systems, but rather of the parallel ways in which rituals have been established, interpreted, and transposed.

Finally, esoteric traditions in North Malabar should be considered within the framework of a negotiated field, involving cultural memory, kinship, institutional constraints, as well as modern market forces. Demystification and remystification are not opposite processes; they

constitute rather two aspects of the same process. The analysis of these traditions calls for more sophisticated frameworks than simple oppositions such as those between beliefs and superstitions or tradition and modernity. It calls for an analysis of the social character of esoteric practice, one which endures and evolves despite the transformations of modern times. Further ethnographic research that entails extended fieldwork among various ritual groups within the area would help shed light on the phenomenon observed here and learn more about the dynamics of esoteric traditions being perpetuated in modern-day Kerala.

Works Cited

- Babb, Lawrence A. *The Divine Hierarchy: Popular Hinduism in Central India*. Columbia University Press, 1975.
- Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. Routledge, 1966.
- “Duped Two Crore in the Name of Spiritual Healing, Three Arrested.” *Manorama News*, 30 Nov. 2025, www.manoramanews.com/crime/kuttapathram/2025/11/30/duped-two-crore-in-the-name-of-spiritual-healing-three-arrested.html.
- Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. Basic Books, 1973.
- Osella, Filippo, and Caroline Osella. *Muslim Entrepreneurs in Public Life Between India and the Gulf*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Sax, William S. *Dancing the Self: Personhood and Performance in the Pandav Lila of Garhwal*. Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Shulman, David. *More Than Real: A History of the Imagination in South India*. Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Tambiah, Stanley J. *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality*. Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- “Three Held on Charge of Spiritual Healing Fraud.” *The Hindu*, 30 Nov. 2025, www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/three-held-on-charge-of-spiritual-healing-fraud/article70341817.ece.
- Weber, Max. *The Sociology of Religion*. Translated by Ephraim Fischhoff, Beacon Press, 1963.
- Zupanov, Ines G. *Missionary Tropics: The Catholic Frontier in India*. University of Michigan Press, 2005.