

## **R K Jayasree**

This thesis seeks to describe and theorise the historical context which engendered the two earliest translations of the Bible into Malayalam, the Buchanan Version of 1811 and the Bailey Version of 1829. It explores how, before it became a colonial artifact, along with a whole lot of seemingly innocuous texts, the Bible was the record of Jewish interaction with various imperialisms of the Levant. It also attempts to trace the history of the Bible in India into Malayalam. It also leads one to the realization that a major linguistic enterprise like a translation of the Bible cannot materialize out of a linguistic vacuum.

It gives a brief account of the literary and linguistic activities of Carmelite missionaries who came to Kerala in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and wrote grammars, dictionaries and lexicons of Malayalam, which form part of an Orientalist discourse formation. It explores the significance of the Buchanan Version of 1811 (the first translation of the Bible into Malayalam) in the wider context of imperialism which has generally received scant attention and also reads the Bailey Version of 1829 as the product of the collaboration between the colonial and missionary enterprises.

To trace the trajectory of Scripture translation in Kerala and to explore its imperial underpinnings, the study moves beyond textual analysis into an examination of para-textual sources, mostly archival, like contemporary histories, letters, tracts, memoirs, gazettes, proceedings of missionary societies and the like. It seeks to situate the earliest translations in a historical context and illustrate how they were conceived of as significant tools of colonial domination.