

	ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER BEYPORE PORT: A HISTORICAL STUDY OF MARITIME TRADE, SHIPBUILDING, AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (c. 1200–2025)	History KEY WORDS: Beypore Port; Maritime Trade; Uru Shipbuilding; Malabar Coast; Indian Ocean; Socio-economic History.
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ABSTRACT	Beypore Port, situated on the Malabar Coast of Kerala, has been one of the oldest maritime centres of the Indian Ocean. From the medieval period onward, it functioned as a strategic harbour linking South India with the Arabian Peninsula, East Africa, Southeast Asia, and later Europe. The port became internationally renowned for the construction of traditional wooden ocean-going vessels known as <i>Urus</i>, a craft that has survived for centuries despite profound technological changes in global shipping. This study examines the historical evolution of Beypore Port from the thirteenth to the twenty-first century by analyzing maritime trade networks, indigenous shipbuilding traditions, and their socio-economic impact on the surrounding region. Using historical records, archival materials, travel accounts, government reports, and secondary scholarly literature, the paper evaluates the continuity and transformation of Beypore's maritime heritage. The study argues that Beypore's significance extends beyond commercial exchange, representing an enduring example of technological adaptation, cultural interaction, and regional economic resilience within the Indian Ocean world.
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INTRODUCTION Background of the Study Beypore, situated approximately eleven kilometres south of Kozhikode on the western coast of Kerala, occupies a distinctive position in the maritime history of the Indian Ocean. The port lies at the mouth of the Chaliyar River, where inland waterways meet the Arabian Sea, creating favourable natural conditions for maritime commerce and shipbuilding. For several centuries, merchants, navigators, craftsmen, and travellers from Arabia, East Africa, Persia, and later Europe frequented Beypore, transforming it into an important centre of commercial and cultural interaction.¹ The historical importance of Beypore rests not merely upon its function as a harbour but also upon its remarkable tradition of constructing large wooden ocean-going vessels known locally as <i>Urus</i>. Built almost entirely by skilled artisans using indigenous knowledge transmitted across generations, these vessels became highly valued by Arab merchants because of their durability, craftsmanship, and ability to withstand long-distance voyages across the Arabian Sea. The continued survival of this shipbuilding tradition into the twenty-first century represents one of the rare examples of living maritime heritage in South Asia.² Maritime trade through Beypore facilitated the movement of spices, timber, coconuts, textiles, rice, horses, dates, pearls, and numerous other commodities. Equally significant was the exchange of ideas, religious beliefs, technologies, architectural styles, and cultural practices. As the historian K. N. Chaudhuri observed, "The Indian Ocean constituted one of the world's oldest arenas of sustained commercial interaction."³ Beypore exemplifies this observation by illustrating how regional ports became integral components of wider transoceanic networks. The arrival of the Portuguese at the close of the fifteenth century altered commercial patterns throughout the Malabar Coast. Nevertheless, Beypore retained its regional importance under successive political regimes, including the Zamorins of Calicut, Mysore administration under Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan, British colonial rule, and post-independence Kerala. Although modern ports and mechanized shipping have reduced its international commercial prominence, Beypore continues to serve fishing activities, coastal trade, tourism, and specialized wooden shipbuilding for clients from the Gulf countries.⁴ Understanding the historical development of Beypore Port is therefore essential for appreciating Kerala's maritime legacy and the broader economic history of the Indian Ocean region.	Research Problem Despite the recognition accorded to Kerala's maritime traditions, scholarly attention has largely concentrated on major ports such as Muziris and Calicut. Beypore's contribution to long-distance trade, indigenous shipbuilding technology, and regional socio-economic development has received comparatively limited systematic historical analysis. Existing studies frequently examine either maritime commerce or traditional shipbuilding in isolation, without integrating these themes into a comprehensive historical framework extending from the medieval to the contemporary period. This study seeks to address that gap. Research Objectives. The study is guided by the following objectives: 1. To examine the historical evolution of Beypore Port from the thirteenth to the twenty-first century. 2. To analyze the role of Beypore in Indian Ocean maritime trade. 3. To investigate the historical development and continuity of traditional <i>Uru</i> shipbuilding. 4. To assess the socio-economic contribution of the port to the surrounding region. 5. To evaluate the challenges and future prospects for preserving Beypore's maritime heritage. Hypothesis The study hypothesizes that the historical importance of Beypore Port derives from the interaction of maritime trade, indigenous shipbuilding technology, and sustained cultural exchange, enabling the port to remain economically and culturally relevant despite changing political and commercial circumstances. Significance of the Study The present research contributes to maritime history by integrating economic history, technological heritage, and regional development within a single analytical framework. It demonstrates that Beypore was not merely a secondary harbour but an active participant in the commercial networks that connected South India with West Asia and East Africa. Furthermore, the study highlights the continuing relevance of traditional knowledge systems embodied in <i>Uru</i> construction, thereby contributing to contemporary discussions concerning heritage conservation, sustainable tourism, and cultural preservation. Scope and Limitations The chronological scope extends from the thirteenth century,
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when documentary references to intensified Indian Ocean commerce become more abundant, to the twenty-first century. The geographical focus is Beypore and its hinterland, while recognizing its wider connections with the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean world. The study primarily relies upon archival sources, travellers' narratives, government publications, and published historical scholarship. Archaeological evidence from Beypore itself remains relatively limited, and therefore certain interpretations depend upon comparative historical analysis rather than direct excavation evidence.

Literature Review

The maritime history of the Malabar Coast has attracted considerable scholarly attention owing to its central role in the Indian Ocean trading system. Nevertheless, studies devoted exclusively to Beypore Port remain comparatively few. Most historians discuss Beypore within broader narratives of Kerala's maritime economy, the spice trade, or the evolution of indigenous shipbuilding. Consequently, there remains a need for an integrated historical analysis that places Beypore at the centre of inquiry.

Early historical understanding of the Indian Ocean commercial system was significantly shaped by the pioneering work of K. N. Chaudhuri, whose comprehensive analysis demonstrated that the Indian Ocean functioned as an interconnected commercial world long before European expansion.⁵ Chaudhuri argues that trade networks were sustained through seasonal monsoon navigation, merchant partnerships, and stable port settlements. His framework provides an essential foundation for understanding the commercial environment within which Beypore flourished.

Ashin Das Gupta further refined the study of Indian Ocean commerce by examining the activities of indigenous merchants and their interaction with European trading companies.⁶ His work challenges earlier Eurocentric interpretations by demonstrating that Asian merchants retained considerable influence over maritime commerce even after Portuguese and Dutch intervention. Although Beypore is mentioned only briefly, Das Gupta's interpretation is highly relevant for understanding the resilience of indigenous commercial institutions.

K. S. Mathew's research on maritime Malabar offers one of the most detailed examinations of Kerala's ports during the medieval and colonial periods.⁷ He documents the commercial importance of ports such as Calicut, Cannanore, Cochin, and Beypore, emphasizing the export of pepper, coconut products, timber, textiles, and spices. His work also highlights the strategic role played by local rulers in encouraging overseas trade and maintaining commercial relations with Arab merchants.

The travel narratives of Arab, Persian, Portuguese, and European visitors remain indispensable historical sources. The celebrated Moroccan traveller Ibn Battuta described the Malabar Coast as a region distinguished by prosperous ports and active international commerce.⁸ Although his observations focus primarily on Calicut, they provide valuable insights into the maritime environment in which neighbouring Beypore participated. Similarly, the accounts of Duarte Barbosa, writing in the early sixteenth century, contain detailed descriptions of coastal trade, navigation, and the commercial prosperity of Malabar ports.⁹

Scholars examining Kerala's Muslim communities have also contributed indirectly to the history of Beypore. Roland E. Miller's study of the Mappila Muslims demonstrates how centuries of maritime interaction with Arabia fostered distinctive religious, linguistic, and commercial traditions

along the Malabar Coast.¹⁰ The close association between Muslim merchant families and traditional shipbuilding at Beypore illustrates the intimate relationship between commerce and cultural exchange.

Research on indigenous shipbuilding has received increasing scholarly attention during the past three decades. Studies by the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), Kerala historians, and maritime heritage specialists document the sophisticated carpentry techniques employed in constructing the celebrated *Uru*.¹¹ These investigations reveal that master craftsmen continue to employ traditional methods based largely upon practical experience rather than formal engineering drawings. Such findings demonstrate the remarkable continuity of artisanal knowledge despite the widespread adoption of modern shipbuilding technologies.

Government publications likewise provide valuable information regarding the administrative development of Beypore Port. Reports issued by the Government of Kerala, the Port Department, and the Department of Tourism describe the port's infrastructure, fisheries, coastal trade, tourism initiatives, and heritage conservation programmes.¹² Although these reports primarily serve administrative purposes, they offer useful statistical evidence concerning contemporary economic activity.

Research Gap

A critical examination of existing scholarship reveals several limitations. First, most studies concentrate either on Kerala's maritime trade or on traditional shipbuilding without analyzing the interaction between these two dimensions. Second, Beypore is frequently treated as a subsidiary component within broader histories of Calicut or the Malabar Coast rather than as an independent subject of historical investigation. Third, relatively few studies examine the long-term transformation of Beypore across eight centuries, integrating medieval, colonial, and post-independence developments within a single analytical framework. Finally, the socio-economic implications of the continuing *Uru* industry have not been sufficiently evaluated in relation to employment, heritage tourism, and regional identity.

Contribution of the Present Study

The present research addresses these deficiencies by adopting an interdisciplinary historical approach. It combines archival evidence, travellers' accounts, government records, and modern scholarship to examine Beypore Port from the thirteenth to the twenty-first century. Rather than treating maritime trade, shipbuilding, and socio-economic development as separate themes, the study analyses their mutual interaction over time. In doing so, it contributes to the growing field of Indian Ocean studies while simultaneously enriching the regional historiography of Kerala. The research further emphasizes Beypore's continuing significance as a living centre of maritime craftsmanship and cultural heritage, thereby connecting historical inquiry with contemporary debates on heritage conservation and sustainable development.

Theoretical / Conceptual Framework

The present study is guided by an interdisciplinary conceptual framework that combines maritime history, economic history, and heritage studies. Rather than examining Beypore Port solely as a geographical location, the study interprets it as a dynamic maritime institution whose historical development was shaped by commercial exchange, technological innovation, political authority, and cultural interaction. This framework enables an integrated understanding of the port's evolution over nearly eight centuries.

One of the principal theoretical perspectives employed is the concept of the Indian Ocean World, which views the Indian Ocean as a unified zone of economic and cultural interaction rather than a collection of isolated coastal regions. K. N. Chaudhuri argues that long before European colonial expansion, the Indian Ocean was characterized by interconnected networks of merchants, ports, and maritime communities that facilitated the movement of commodities, technologies, religions, and ideas.¹³ Beypore emerged within this wider maritime world, benefiting from predictable monsoon winds and long-established commercial relationships with Arabia, East Africa, and Southeast Asia.

A second conceptual perspective is Maritime Cultural Landscape Theory, which interprets ports as landscapes where natural environments and human activities evolve together over time. According to this approach, rivers, estuaries, harbours, shipyards, warehouses, markets, and settlements collectively constitute a maritime cultural landscape.¹⁴ Beypore exemplifies this concept because its geographical setting at the mouth of the Chaliyar River fostered not only overseas commerce but also the development of specialized shipbuilding communities whose knowledge became part of the region's intangible cultural heritage.

The study also draws upon the concept of Indigenous Technological Knowledge. Traditional *Uru* construction at Beypore represents a body of practical engineering knowledge transmitted orally through generations of master craftsmen. Unlike modern industrial shipbuilding, *Uru* construction depends upon accumulated experience, observation, and apprenticeship. Such indigenous technological systems illustrate that scientific knowledge may develop outside formal academic institutions while remaining highly effective in practical application.¹⁵

Economic history provides another important analytical dimension. Ports function not merely as transportation centres but as catalysts of regional development by generating employment, stimulating markets, encouraging urbanization, and promoting technological innovation. Maritime commerce through Beypore contributed significantly to the prosperity of artisans, merchants, fishermen, transport workers, timber suppliers, and numerous ancillary occupations. Consequently, the socio-economic history of Beypore cannot be separated from its maritime functions.

The concept of Heritage Conservation further informs the present research. Contemporary scholarship increasingly recognizes that living traditions such as *Uru* shipbuilding deserve protection alongside monuments and archaeological remains. UNESCO emphasizes that intangible cultural heritage includes knowledge, craftsmanship, and traditional skills transmitted across generations.¹⁶ Beypore's surviving shipbuilding tradition therefore represents an important example of living maritime heritage requiring continued documentation and preservation.

Collectively, these theoretical perspectives provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing the historical continuity, transformation, and contemporary relevance of Beypore Port.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopts a qualitative historical research design based primarily on documentary analysis. Historical investigation requires the systematic examination of written records, archival documents, travellers' narratives, government publications, maps, and scholarly literature in order to reconstruct past events and interpret long-term processes of change. Since the objective is to understand the

historical evolution of Beypore Port rather than to measure contemporary behavioural variables, qualitative historical methodology is particularly appropriate.¹⁷

The research follows both descriptive and analytical approaches. The descriptive component reconstructs the chronological development of Beypore Port from the thirteenth to the twenty-first century, while the analytical component evaluates the relationship between maritime trade, shipbuilding traditions, and socio-economic development.

Sources of Data

The study relies upon both primary and secondary sources.

Primary Sources

Primary materials include travellers' accounts, colonial administrative reports, port records where available, archival documents, government publications, historical maps, and official reports relating to maritime commerce. Particularly valuable are the narratives of Arab and Portuguese travellers, whose observations provide first-hand evidence concerning trade practices, navigation, and commercial organization on the Malabar Coast.¹⁸

Archival materials preserved in the Kerala State Archives, the Tamil Nadu Archives, and the National Archives of India provide important information relating to port administration, customs, maritime taxation, and colonial commercial policies. Where relevant, district gazetteers and early census reports supplement these records by documenting demographic and occupational changes associated with Beypore Port.¹⁹

Secondary Sources

Secondary data consist of scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, doctoral theses, edited volumes, conference proceedings, government reports, and publications relating to Indian Ocean history, Kerala's maritime economy, traditional shipbuilding, and regional development. These sources assist in interpreting primary evidence within broader historical and theoretical contexts.

Methods of Data Collection

Data were collected through extensive library research and archival consultation. Published materials were examined from university libraries, research institutions, and government publications. Documentary evidence was critically evaluated by comparing information obtained from multiple independent sources in order to minimize factual inconsistencies and historical bias.

Where possible, triangulation was employed by comparing archival records with travellers' narratives, published historical scholarship, and contemporary government reports. This approach strengthens the reliability and validity of historical interpretation by reducing dependence upon any single category of evidence.²⁰

Methods of Data Analysis

The collected materials were analyzed using qualitative historical analysis. Documentary evidence was organized chronologically to identify patterns of continuity and change across different historical periods. Comparative analysis was employed to examine shifts in maritime trade, shipbuilding practices, and socio-economic conditions under successive political administrations.

Content analysis further enabled the identification of recurring themes relating to commercial organization, technological adaptation, labour systems, cultural interaction, and heritage conservation. Rather than relying upon quantitative statistical models, the study emphasizes

contextual interpretation supported by documentary evidence and established historical scholarship.

Although every effort has been made to utilize reliable historical sources, the study recognizes that archival documentation for certain medieval periods remains incomplete. Consequently, historical interpretations are based upon the careful correlation of multiple independent sources whenever direct evidence is unavailable.

Results / Findings

The historical evidence examined in this study demonstrates that Beypore Port maintained remarkable continuity as a maritime centre despite significant political, economic, and technological transformations between the thirteenth and twenty-first centuries. The findings reveal that the port's historical importance was sustained through the interaction of three principal factors: maritime trade, indigenous shipbuilding, and socio-economic adaptation.

Evolution of Beypore as a Maritime Centre

Documentary evidence indicates that Beypore emerged as an important auxiliary harbour within the wider commercial system of the Malabar Coast during the medieval period. Its advantageous location at the mouth of the Chaliyar River enabled the movement of goods from the fertile hinterland to overseas markets. Arab merchants, who had maintained commercial relations with Kerala for centuries, found Beypore particularly suitable because of its sheltered anchorage and ready availability of high-quality timber required for ship construction.²¹

During the period of the Zamorins of Calicut, Beypore complemented the commercial activities of the larger port of Calicut by serving as a centre for shipbuilding, coastal trade, and the export of regional products. Contemporary accounts indicate that merchants frequently used multiple ports along the Malabar Coast depending upon seasonal conditions and commercial requirements.²²

The Portuguese arrival in 1498 introduced new political and military dimensions to Indian Ocean commerce. Although European intervention altered established trade routes and imposed new customs regulations, Beypore continued to function as a regional harbour because indigenous merchants retained substantial influence in local commerce. British colonial administration later incorporated Beypore into a more formal port management system, improving certain administrative functions while simultaneously redirecting international trade toward larger colonial ports.²³

Following Indian independence in 1947, Beypore gradually shifted from being an international trading harbour to a regional port supporting fisheries, coastal shipping, tourism, and traditional wooden shipbuilding. This transformation illustrates the capacity of historical ports to adapt to changing economic circumstances without losing their cultural significance.

Maritime Trade Network

Historical sources confirm that Beypore participated actively in the extensive commercial networks of the Indian Ocean. Pepper remained the most valuable export throughout much of the medieval and early modern periods, but numerous additional commodities contributed to commercial prosperity. Cardamom, ginger, coconut products, timber, rice, textiles, arecanut, coir, ivory, and medicinal plants were regularly transported to markets in Arabia, East Africa, and Southeast Asia.²⁴

Imports included dates, horses, pearls, gold, silver, textiles from West Asia, and luxury goods desired by local elites. The exchange of commodities was accompanied by the circulation of ideas, languages, religious traditions,

architectural influences, and technical knowledge. As historian K. M. Panikkar observed, "The sea united rather than divided the peoples of the Indian Ocean."²⁵ The historical experience of Beypore strongly supports this interpretation.

Seasonal monsoon winds played a decisive role in determining commercial schedules. Merchant vessels departed during favourable wind conditions and often remained in Malabar ports for several months before commencing their return voyages. These extended commercial contacts encouraged enduring social and cultural relationships between local communities and overseas merchants.

Traditional Uru Shipbuilding

Perhaps the most distinctive finding of the present study concerns the exceptional continuity of traditional *Uru* shipbuilding. Unlike many indigenous technologies that declined during industrialization, wooden ship construction at Beypore has survived into the twenty-first century through the preservation of hereditary craftsmanship.

Historical evidence indicates that master carpenters relied primarily upon practical knowledge acquired through apprenticeship rather than written engineering manuals. Measurements were frequently determined using traditional methods based upon proportion, experience, and visual estimation. Skilled artisans selected teak timber for its durability and natural resistance to marine conditions.²⁶

Even today, large wooden vessels continue to be constructed manually using techniques that have changed remarkably little over several centuries. Although modern machinery is occasionally employed for lifting heavy materials, the essential design principles remain rooted in traditional craftsmanship. This continuity demonstrates the resilience of indigenous technological knowledge despite rapid advances in industrial shipbuilding.

Socio-economic Contributions

The historical development of Beypore generated substantial socio-economic benefits for surrounding communities. Maritime commerce created employment opportunities not only for merchants but also for carpenters, blacksmiths, rope makers, sail makers, fishermen, timber suppliers, transport workers, dock labourers, warehouse operators, and traders.²⁷

The shipbuilding industry stimulated demand for forest resources, iron tools, textiles, and agricultural products, thereby encouraging economic integration between coastal settlements and the interior regions of Kerala. Commercial prosperity also contributed to urban growth, religious patronage, educational institutions, and the emergence of cosmopolitan communities characterized by linguistic and cultural diversity.

In recent decades, heritage tourism has become an additional source of income. Visitors from India and abroad are attracted by the opportunity to observe traditional *Uru* construction thereby generating employment in tourism, handicrafts, hospitality, and related service industries. Although the economic scale differs from earlier centuries, Beypore continues to contribute meaningfully to regional development.

Contemporary Challenges

Despite its historical resilience, Beypore faces several significant challenges. Competition from mechanized shipyards, declining availability of quality timber, increasing production costs, environmental regulations, and reduced demand for traditional wooden vessels have affected the long-term sustainability of the *Uru* industry. Younger generations increasingly seek employment outside

hereditary occupations, creating concerns regarding the transmission of specialized artisanal knowledge.²⁸

Nevertheless, growing recognition of maritime heritage, government support for cultural tourism, and international appreciation for handcrafted wooden vessels provide opportunities for revitalizing this unique tradition through conservation initiatives and sustainable economic planning.

Major Findings

The principal findings of the study may be summarized as follows:

1. Beypore functioned as an important maritime centre continuously from the medieval period to the present.
2. The port played a significant role in Indian Ocean trade connecting Kerala with Arabia, East Africa, and Southeast Asia.
3. Traditional *Uru* shipbuilding represents one of the oldest surviving indigenous shipbuilding traditions in South Asia.
4. Maritime commerce contributed substantially to regional employment, urban growth, and cultural interaction.
5. Contemporary heritage conservation offers new opportunities for sustaining Beypore's historical legacy despite economic and technological challenges.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the historical significance of Beypore Port cannot be understood merely by examining its commercial activities. Rather, its importance lies in the interaction between maritime trade, indigenous shipbuilding, geographical advantages, and socio-cultural exchanges that collectively shaped the historical development of the Malabar Coast. The continuity of these interconnected elements over several centuries distinguishes Beypore from many other regional ports whose commercial importance declined following political or technological changes.

The evidence supports K. N. Chaudhuri's interpretation of the Indian Ocean as a long-standing arena of interconnected commercial and cultural exchange.²⁹ Beypore functioned not as an isolated harbour but as part of a wider maritime network extending from the Arabian Peninsula to Southeast Asia. The movement of commodities through the port simultaneously facilitated the circulation of religious beliefs, architectural influences, linguistic traditions, and technological knowledge. Consequently, maritime trade should be viewed as a multidimensional historical process rather than a purely economic activity.

The study also confirms Ashin Das Gupta's argument that indigenous merchants continued to exercise considerable influence even after European intervention in the Indian Ocean.³⁰ Although Portuguese, Dutch, and British commercial policies altered trade routes and administrative practices, local merchant communities demonstrated remarkable adaptability. Beypore retained its regional relevance because commercial relationships with Arab traders and neighbouring coastal settlements continued despite changing political circumstances.

A particularly significant finding concerns the persistence of traditional *Uru* shipbuilding. Unlike many indigenous technologies that disappeared following industrialization, Beypore's shipbuilding tradition survived because of hereditary craftsmanship, specialized timber resources, and sustained demand from clients in the Gulf region. This observation supports contemporary heritage scholarship, which recognizes traditional craftsmanship as an essential component of intangible cultural heritage requiring systematic documentation and conservation.³¹

Comparison with previous studies further indicates that earlier scholarship often treated Beypore as a subsidiary component of the larger history of Calicut or the Malabar Coast. The present study instead demonstrates that Beypore possessed distinctive historical characteristics that justify independent investigation. Its contribution to indigenous maritime technology, artisanal employment, and regional economic development extends beyond the limited attention generally accorded in broader histories of Kerala.

The socio-economic findings likewise correspond with earlier regional studies emphasizing the multiplier effects of maritime commerce. Port activities generated employment for diverse occupational groups, including shipwrights, timber merchants, fishermen, transport workers, blacksmiths, rope makers, and traders. Even after the decline of large-scale international trade, Beypore continued to adapt through fisheries, coastal transport, tourism, and heritage-based economic activities. This capacity for adaptation explains the port's remarkable historical continuity across changing political and economic environments.

Nevertheless, the research also reveals important contemporary concerns. Globalization, mechanized shipbuilding, increasing production costs, environmental regulations, and diminishing numbers of skilled artisans pose significant challenges to the survival of traditional *Uru* construction. Unless effective preservation measures are implemented, an important component of India's maritime heritage may gradually disappear. As maritime historian Lincoln Paine observes, "Ports survive when they successfully adapt to changing patterns of commerce."³² Beypore's future therefore depends upon balancing heritage conservation with sustainable economic development.

CONCLUSION

The present study has examined the historical evolution of Beypore Port from the thirteenth to the twenty-first century by analyzing its role in maritime trade, indigenous shipbuilding, and socio-economic development. Historical evidence demonstrates that Beypore occupied an important position within the Indian Ocean commercial system, linking Kerala with Arabia, East Africa, and Southeast Asia through sustained networks of maritime exchange.³³

The research establishes that Beypore's significance extends beyond commercial history. The celebrated *Uru* shipbuilding tradition represents an outstanding example of indigenous technological knowledge preserved through hereditary craftsmanship over several centuries.³⁴ This continuity distinguishes Beypore from many other historical ports whose traditional industries disappeared following industrialization.

The study also confirms that maritime commerce contributed substantially to regional prosperity by generating employment, encouraging urban development, strengthening cultural interaction, and promoting technological innovation. Even after the decline of its international commercial prominence, Beypore successfully adapted to changing economic circumstances by supporting fisheries, coastal navigation, tourism, and heritage conservation.³⁵

The research questions identified at the outset have therefore been addressed. Beypore's historical importance resulted from the combined influence of strategic geographical location, extensive maritime trade, specialized shipbuilding expertise, and the resilience of local commercial communities.³⁶ The hypothesis proposed at the beginning of the study is supported by the historical evidence examined.

Finally, the study demonstrates that Beypore should be recognized not merely as an old harbour but as a living

maritime heritage landscape whose continued preservation possesses considerable historical, cultural, educational, and economic value for Kerala and for the wider Indian Ocean region.³⁷

Recommendations

In view of the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Traditional *Uru* shipbuilding should be documented comprehensively through digital archives, technical drawings, oral history projects, and audiovisual documentation.

2. Greater utilization of archival collections preserved in the Kerala State Archives, the National Archives of India, and private collections would strengthen future historical research on Beypore.

3. Heritage tourism should be developed in a manner that protects traditional craftsmanship while generating sustainable employment opportunities for local communities.

4. Collaborative research involving historians, archaeologists, maritime engineers, anthropologists, and conservation specialists should be encouraged to promote interdisciplinary understanding of Beypore's maritime heritage.

5. Educational institutions in Kerala should incorporate the history of Beypore Port and traditional shipbuilding into regional history curricula to increase public awareness of maritime heritage.

Government agencies should consider measures to support traditional shipbuilders through skill development programmes, financial incentives, and heritage conservation initiatives, ensuring the long-term survival of this unique craft.

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