

# Layered Pasts and Ontological Security: Heritage, Belonging and Spatial Identity in Mathilakam, Kerala, India

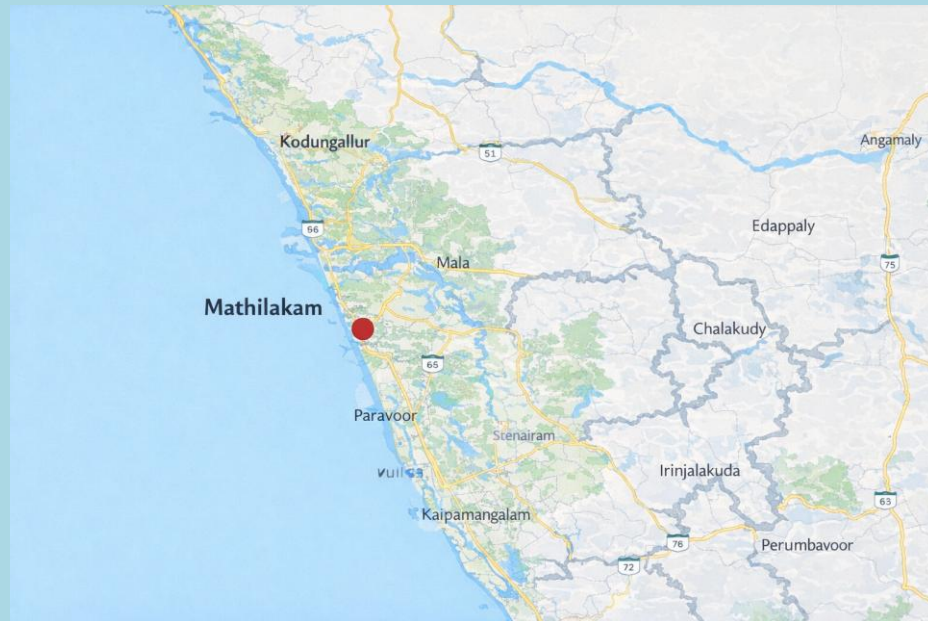
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## Introduction

Heritage is not a fixed object but a cultural process shaped by memory, discourse, and lived experience. This study examines how such layered heritage fosters ontological security and belonging.

## Location / Case Study

Mathilakam is located in Kodungallur Taluk, Thrissur District, in the state of Kerala, India, along the western coastal region of South India.



## Theoretical Frame work

- Heritage as a cultural process (Laurajane Smith)
- Ontological Security – continuity, belonging, identity
- Spatial Theory – lived space and everyday practices

## Methodology

- Literary analysis – classical texts such as *Cilappatikaram*, *Shukasandesham*, *Kokasandesham*, *Unniyachicharitham*, *Chithrashalabasandesham*.
- Historical analysis – inscriptions and local historiography
- Oral narratives – interviews with residents across caste, religion, and age
- Spatial analysis – everyday practices and lived experiences of place

## Research Question

How do layered historical, literary, and lived narratives shape heritage, belonging, and ontological security in Mathilakam?

## Key Argument

The heritage in Mathilakam is produced through layered narratives. This complex interplay of histories, myths & stories ensure that groups maintain their sense of continuity and belonging.

## Conclusion

Heritage in Mathilakam functions as a living cultural process whereby people negotiate their layered past to retain a sense of belonging. Through this heritage, Mathilakam shows how small regional sites contribute to ontological security in contemporary contexts.

**Heritage is not something that stays fixed; it is lived and negotiated and experienced.**