

Testing Faith in God's Own Country: An Empirical Puzzle in the Politicization of Christians, Muslims and Hindus in Kerala, India

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Chhibber & Sekhon
(2014):

- Muslims favor candidates who appeal on Muslim lines
- Hindus disfavor candidates who appeal on Hindu lines

I ask: Do Christian Indians express greater confidence and likelihood to vote for politicians using Christian religious symbols than politicians who do not in Kerala?



Roadmap

(1) Religious Institutions and Politicization

- Christianity
- Islam
- Hinduism

(2) Survey

- Framing
- Method
- Findings

(3) The Case of Kerala

- Dominance of Non-religious Coalitions
- The IUML

Findings:

- (1) Generally, no religious group has confidence or likelihood to vote for candidates who make religious appeals
- (2) A two sample t-test reveals that although Muslims mostly lack confidence in politicians making religious appeals, their level of confidence and vote likelihood are statistically different from levels of confidence and vote likelihood are among Christians and Hindus.



Christianity in India

3rd largest religion, 27 million adherents



THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

- Epicenter of Christian life
- Communal worship
- Sunday sermon



The Role of the Mosque

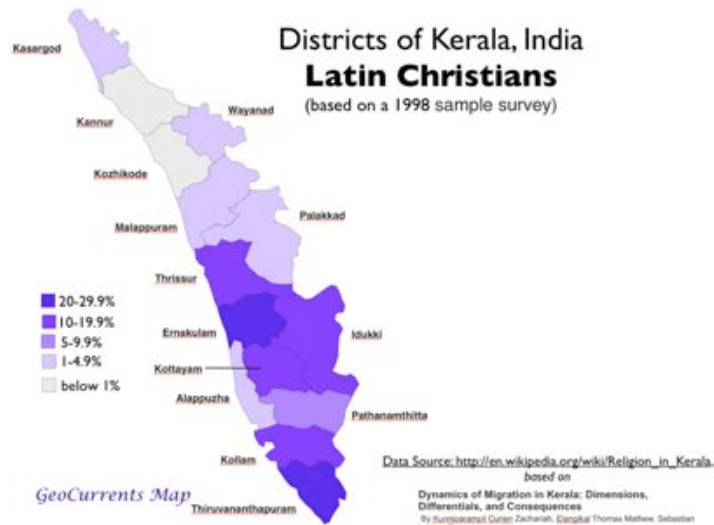
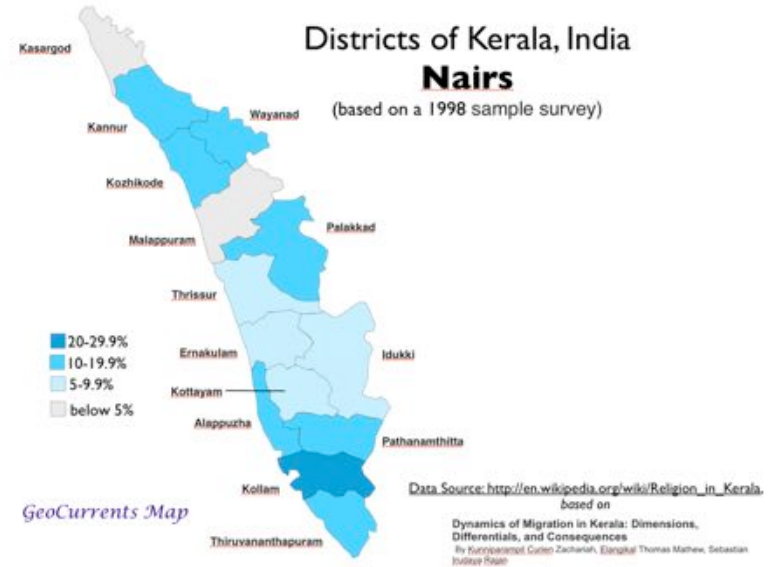
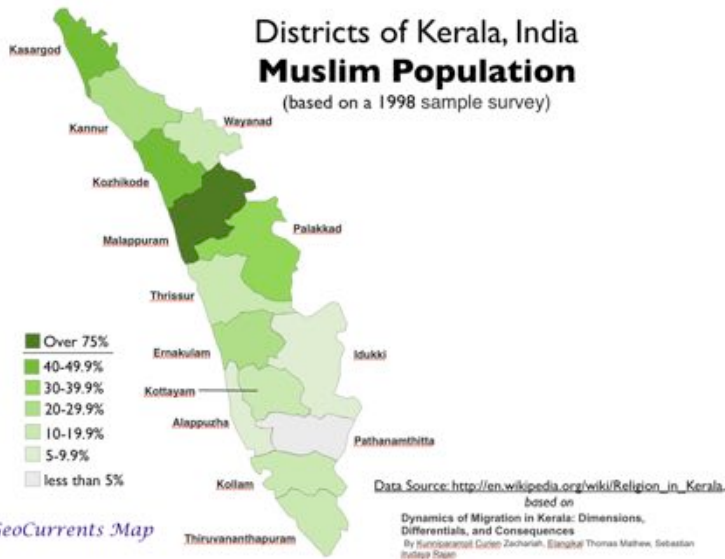
- Communal prayer (*salat*), the imam's *khutba*



THE ROLE OF THE HINDU TEMPLE

- Prayer and *darsana* are individual experiences, temple priests has no congregation

Why Kerala?



Research Design

Prompt: At a recent meeting celebrating India's democracy, this political leader whose religious views are the same as yours said "Politicians like me from different parties try hard to represent the interests of the people who support us and vote for us."



Hindu



Muslim



Christian

- Q1) Are you confident in this politician? [Yes/ No/ Don't know]
Q2) Would you vote for this politician? [Yes/ No/ Don't know]



The study was conducted in four cities:

- (1) Thiruvananthapuram/
Trivandrum
state capital
- (2) Kochi/Ernakulam
financial capital
- (3) Thrissur
cultural capital
- (4) Malappuram -
Islamic capital

Survey Administration

Conducted July 4 - August 10
Administered with 12 University
of Kerala graduate students

$N = 1175$

Mix of urban and rural sites,
large and small-scale religious
sites



Pictured is me with the Trivandrum research team

Findings

A score of 1 is assigned to “Yes”, a score of 2 is assigned to “No”

Confidence	Mean	95 % Confidence Interval	Standard Error	Vote Likelihood	Mean	95 % Confidence Interval	Standard Error
Hindu	1.87	1.93	0.57		1.91	1.96	0.55
Muslim	1.53	1.59	0.58		1.62	1.68	0.59
Christian	1.89	1.94	0.48		1.96	2.00	0.49

Generally, no religious group has confidence or likelihood to vote for candidates who make religious appeals

Findings

Difference of the Means	T- statistic	p-value
Ho: diff = 0		
Confidence		
Hindu and Muslims	8.91	0.0
Hindus and Christians	0.33	0.63
Muslims and Christians	8.39	0.0
Vote Likelihood		
Hindu and Muslims	8.39	0.0
Hindus and Christians	1.29	0.9
Muslims and Christians	7.10	0.0

A two sample t-test reveals that although Muslims mostly lack confidence in politicians making religious appeals, their level of confidence and vote likelihood are statistically different from levels of confidence and vote likelihood are among Christians and Hindus.

Puzzle

- How do I explain a lack of politicization across all three religious groups?
- What explains the difference in degree of politicization of Muslims in Kerala?



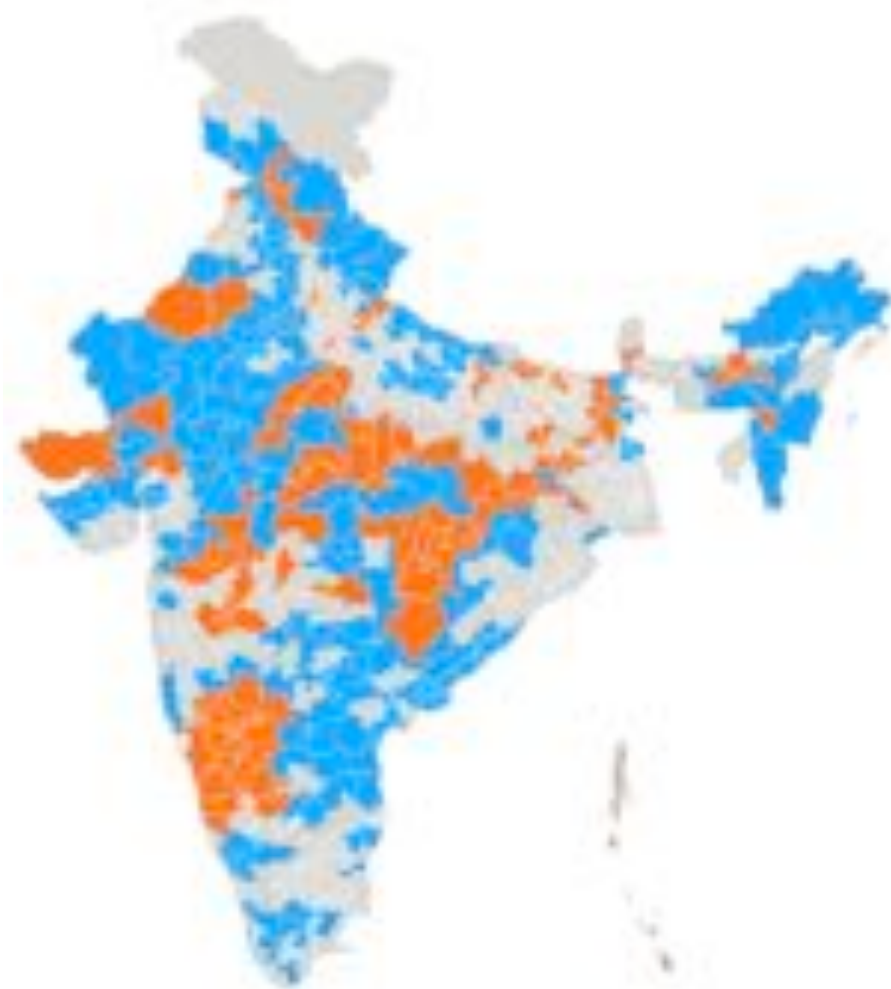
COMMUNISM

(Yes, really)

India general election results

■ BJP and allies ■ Congress Party and allies ■ Other

2009



2014



KERALA

20 CONSTITUENCIES OF LOK SABHA (LOWER HOUSE OF INDIAN PARLIAMENT)





COMMUNIST PARTY (MARXIST) APPEALS ON CLASS IDENTITY

Draws support
from all religions



CONGRESS PARTY APPEALS ON CLASS IDENTITY

Draws support
from all religions



BJP (PRO-
HINDU
PARTY)

Has lost
every
election it
has
contested
in Kerala



KERALA

20 CONSTITUENCIES OF LOK SABHA (LOWER HOUSE OF INDIAN PARLIAMENT)



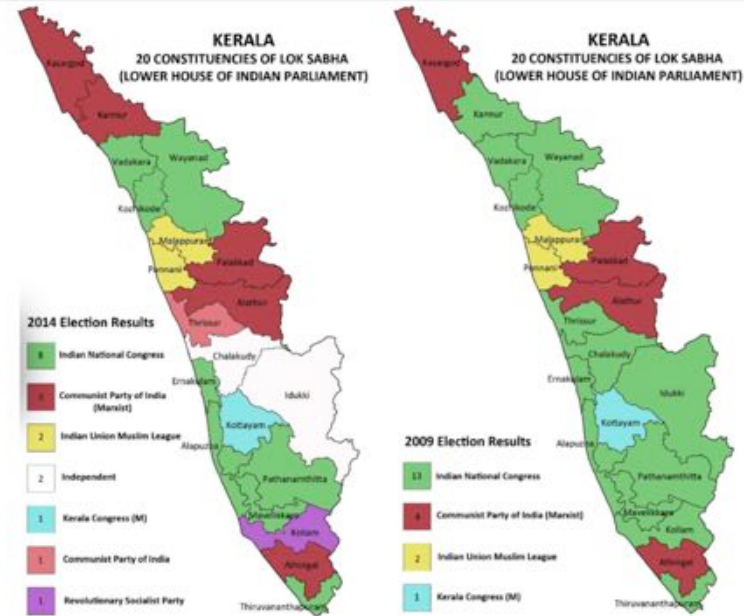


INDIAN UNION MUSLIM LEAGUE

Pro-Muslim Party in one
region of the state

Research Implications: On Kerala & India

- Confirms Chhibber & Sekhon (2014)
- Disproves Chhibber & Sekhon (2014)



“Muslims and Christians don’t see themselves as minorities because Kerala belongs to everyone.”
~ Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Chair of External Relations Committee in the Lok Sabha

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