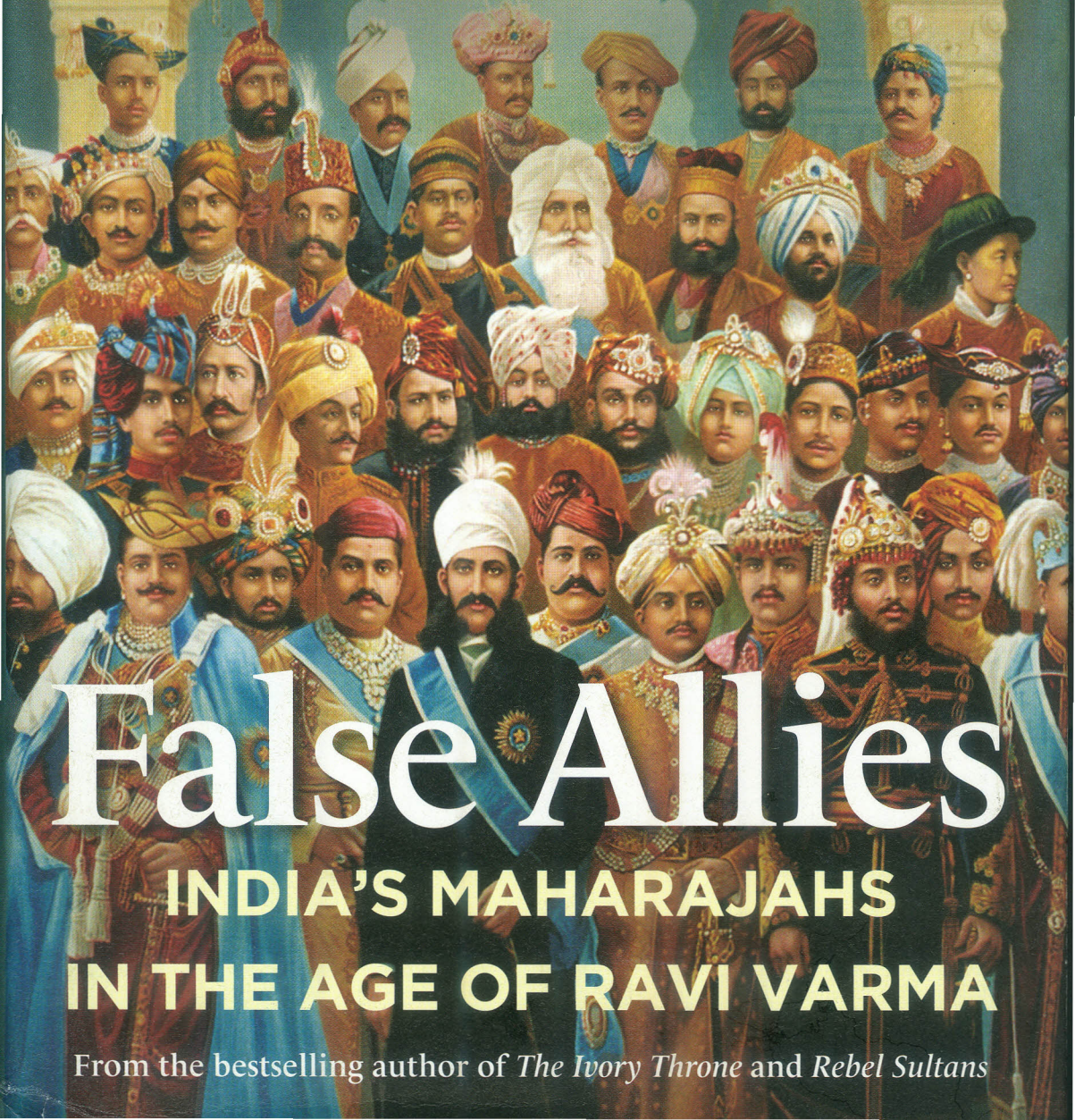


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False Allies

**INDIA'S MAHARAJAHS
IN THE AGE OF RAVI VARMA**

From the bestselling author of *The Ivory Throne* and *Rebel Sultans*

Acknowledgements

My interest in India's princely states began over a decade ago, when I first started researching Travancore. That culminated in *The Ivory Throne* (2015), but the project also taught me that princely territories have much to offer to the study of Indian history, if we rise above stereotypes. I hope *False Allies* will help generate interest in this direction among other students of history.

This project was made possible by the support and encouragement of several individuals and institutions. Early in 2019 in a remark to Gitanjali Maini in Bengaluru, I mentioned how Ravi Varma's portraits of princes might be a means to shortlist a few states from the intimidatingly large total and tell their stories. It was Gita who not only suggested that I turn this into a book, but also offered me a grant from the Sandeep and Gitanjali Maini Foundation. *False Allies* is the second book I have produced with the SGMF's support, the first being *Rebel Sultans* (2018). I remain most grateful to Gita and Sandeep Maini personally for their backing and their faith in my work.

On Ravi Varma, who has been of interest for about half my life now, over the years I was able to gather not only academic resources, but also anecdotal information and oral history from his relatives, both from the Kilimanoor and the Mavelikara-Travancore families. I must thank in particular Jay Varma, Prasanna Varma, Sethu Tampuratti, Dr R.P. Raja, Uma Varma, Dr Lakshmi Raghunandan, the late Divakara Varma, the late Kerala Varma (head of Kilimanoor until his demise last year) and others from the Varma family, who do not wish to be named. My friend Sharat Sunder Rajeev, with whom I have discussed Ravi Varma and

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This book is dedicated to my grandfathers, one of them an illiterate man who would have been somewhat amused with his grandson's decision to wield the pen; and the other, a gentle, intellectually inclined figure, whose patience and equanimity have helped me learn to negotiate life and work with optimism. My late father was present in picture form throughout the writing of this book, watching over my desk from his corner. And, of course, bearing with my chatter, mood swings and seasonal idiosyncrasies were my mother, sister and grandmother, without whom none of this would matter.

Manu S. Pillai

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