



THE LEGACY OF ISLAM (KERALA)

(A Study of the Mappilas of Kerala)



K.K.N KURUP

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Dr. K K N Kurup (B.1939) historian and former Vice-Chancellor, University of Calicut, is a distinguished scholar and academician. He has immensely contributed to the growth of higher education and historical studies in Kerala. His pioneering works in Folklore, Peasant Studies, Agrarian Relations and Nationalism have given a new dimension to the academic studies on Malabar and South Kanara. He has visited several universities in Europe and undertaken research programmes in the famous archives of London, Paris, Hague, Basel and Havana. He has also taken keen interest in analysing and interpreting the cultural legacy of Islam in Kerala. Currently he has established a research centre, Malabar Institute for Research and Development at Vatakara, for promoting research in Social Science in this region. He is a Senior Research Fellow of the Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi.

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English Language
The legacy of Islam(Kerala)
(Essays)

by Dr. K. K. N Kurup

Published in 2006

by Samayam Publications

City Centre, Fort Road, Kannur

Cover

Naveen K

Printed by

Geethanjali Offset Printers, Kozhikode

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Typeset in Samayam Publications

Price Rs: 65/-

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Publisher's Note

The Islamic culture and its legacy have immensely contributed to the history and heritage of Kerala. Unfortunately there are no much studies on the Socio-economic institutions and cultural aspects of the Mappila Muslims. Dr. K.K.N. Kurup as a historian has analysed their cultural tradition and their role in shaping the historical forces in this region. This collection of essays and Research papers highlight the multifaceted dimensions of Islam as a religious force and its impact on the socio-economic life of Kerala. Dr. Kurup as a scholar committed to secularism and scientific approach to historical studies traces the moorings of Islamic legacy and culture in this volume. Since the dawn of the 16 th century the Mappila community had been struggling hard to shape its destiny and identity. Its anti-colonial approach and legacy have created endless sufferings and agonies to the community. The author has given a meticulous analysis of these multi aspects and aspirations. This collection is our first publication for an international community of scholars interested in the frontier studies relating to Islam , its ideals and struggles.

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Contents

	Preface	
1	Arts and Literature of the Mappilas	7
2	Kerala-Arab Relations	16
3	The Mappilas and Peasant Questions	22
4	Persian and Revenue Administration	30
5	The Malabar Rebellion-An Analysis of its Impact	34
6	The Legacy of Sufism and Communal Harmony	41
7	Anti -Portuguse Struggles and the Islamic Culture	48
8	The Maritime Power of the Mappilas	53
9	The Early Mappila Uprisings	57
10	Al-Fath-UI-Mubin	68
11	Sheikh Zainuddin Makhdum-An Anti-Colonialist	72
12	Kunhi Marakkar Festival	75
13	Kerala Experience-Assimilation of Cultures	75
14	Harmony in Kerala-The Sufis and Religions	90
15	Tribute to Tipu Sultan	98
16	Tipu Sutlan and his State Policy in Malabar	104
17	The Ali Rajas of Cannanore- A Histrographical Study	105
18	The Ali Rajas of Kannur	117
19	Appendix	119

Preface

This collection of research articles published on different occasions is related to the legacy of Islam in Kerala. As a separate religious community, the Mappilas have much contributed to the development of socio-cultural and economic institutions of this region since its advent before several centuries. The community has maintained its identity of religion and culture, and at the same time did not depart away from the main stream of the socio-historical forces of Kerala. It is a complex situation for a community which has a different social and cultural background. However Islam and its world view had created an inevitable cultural dynamism and identity for its community to develop further and further in realising its prominence. It has promoted a cultural assimilation also in Kerala through centuries.

The best examples of this assimilation can be seen in the ruling authority of the Zamorins during the sixteenth century. The Mappilas as a community resisted the political and commercial expansion of the Portuguese and supported their veteran rulers or the Zamorins. The Kunjalis, the great naval house of the 16 th century, courted martyrdom for a cause which was dearest to them like their religion. They were loyal to the Zamorins and their fidelity enabled them to resist the Portuguese for a period over a century. It was not Kunjali, but the palace intrigues managed by the Portuguese alienated the Zamorin from his trusted admiral. The fall of this last admiral resulted in the fall of the free trade in the Arabian sea.

Sheikh Zainuddin, the great ideologue of anti-colonialism, lived in the 16 th century and inspired the encounters against

the foreigners who championed the cause of monopoly trade in free ports. Such affairs in Malabar, resulted in the emergence of an Islamic principality in Kerala known as the Ali Rajas of Kannur. As a community, the Mappilas enjoyed political and cultural patronage from this house.

The confrontations and struggles for identity had strengthened the Mappila community in Kerala and popularised its own cultural traditions. Some of such traditions are traced in these articles. The Mysorean interlude or experiments in this region had returned the agrarian relations and had invited the enmity of the traditional aristocracy. Some of these measures had been responsible for peasant disturbances in South Malabar during the 19 th century. They finally culminated in the Rebellion of 1921, spreading the sentiments of nationalism.

In this collection, these historical aspects are traced and analysed with objectivity. They may help an outside reader to understand the socio-cultural moorings of Mappila community of Kerala. In fact these articles extend to them an invitation for an indepth study of a religious minority community which had an existence over twelve centuries in Kerala.

I am extremely thankful to my learned friend Prof. Mohammed Ahammed for including this publication in the series of the Samayam Publications, Kannur. I sincerely thank them for undertaking this publication.

Vatakara
26.1.06

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1

Arts and Literature of the Mappilas

The Mappilas of Kerala is a separate religious community, which keeps its identity in the fields of culture, politics and economics of the region and aspires to progress and development. Although they observe their separate rituals and customs and enrich the heritage of Islam and keep themselves away from the main stream of society, they never turn back against the social forces of Kerala where different religious communities had found their home through centuries. As an Islamic community, its members are entirely different from the rest of the fellow religious groups of Asiatic nations. As a minority community they are conscious of their rights, privileges, democratic aspirations and duties. Such a consciousness and dedication have become the motive forces of progress and advancement of Mappila community.

The Arab merchants had close familiarity and contact with the coastal regions of Malabar even prior to the beginnings of Islam and its prophet. The linguists and philologists attribute that the term Malabar had derived from such contacts of the Arabs. The Arab merchants had established their contact with trade- guilds like Anjuvannam and Manigramam in Kerala. They mainly exported great quantity of spices from Malabar. The conversion of a Kerala king to Islam and his meeting with the prophet and his consent for propagation of Islam in the

region are popular legends. It is believed that Malik Dinar and his followers visited some of the harbour towns in Kerala and built the first mosque of Kerala in Cranganore and later built other mosques at Matayi and Kasargod. Some of these details are narrated in Tuhfatul Mujahidin of Sheikh Zainuddin.

The descendants of these first immigrants were known with the title of Mappilas who extended their settlements to several harbour towns of Malabar Coast. The local rulers never prohibited the conversion to Islam. When Calicut became a prominent maritime trade centre during the end of the 14th century the Mappilas and the Arabs became a potential merchant class in the town with substantial economic resources. They enjoyed the major share of the maritime trade in Calicut.

The four fold Varna system which had existed in the Indian background had not evolved with the Vysyas as the trading caste in Kerala. This responsibility of commerce and trade was undertaken by the Christians and the Mappilas in Kerala. As a trading class they strengthened themselves in the coastal belt as well as in the hinterland. They could achieve a prominent place in the village markets and trade centres with the active support of the local rulers and landlords. Along with this progress in different localities they built Dars and mosques in their Mahals and strengthened their social organizations.

However during the 16th century they were compelled to fight against the Portuguese who struggled to establish their political and economic authority in Malabar. These struggles had weakened their authority and prosperity. The international trade in which the Arabs and the Mappilas jointly participated came to a gradual decline due to the Portuguese intervention. The continuous encounters which had taken place between the Arabs and the Portuguese over a century for control of the Arabian Sea resulted in the withdrawal of the Arabs from

Malabar. Later when Malabar was exposed to colonial expansion by other European powers and their frequent conflicts and struggles for resources restricted the growth of the Mappilas also as a trading community.

However the growth of the community was not totally restricted, as its members had shown sufficient dynamism, devotion to hard work and common brotherhood. The community had given birth to the house of Kunjali Marakkar, a house of naval commandants in its hundred years' struggle against the Portuguese. The last commandant from this house, Kunjali Marakkar IV was executed in 1600 AD by the Portuguese in Goa. He was one of the top able commandants of his time of whom the Portuguese were afraid of. This house of admirals under the leadership of the Zamorin led several encounters against the Portuguese for keeping up the independence of the Arabian Sea. Such a prestigious heritage of this naval house and the 400th year of the martyrdom of Kunjali Marakkar IV, were commemorated by the issue of a postal stamp prepared by the Naval Head Quarters. The stamp was released by the Defence Minister George Fernandes at Calicut in December 2000. The leadership of this house, had played considerable role in resisting the Portuguese advent in the gulf countries, and included those countries also in their offensive and defensive strategies.

Considering this historical background in which the Mappilas and the Marakkar house had made substantial contribution the University of Calicut had started Kunjali Marakkar Centre for West Asian Studies at Vatakara. This is a pleasant reminiscence for this writer. That the entire programme was materialized when he was the Vice-Chancellor of the University. The encounters of the Mappilas gave birth to famous writings in Arabic language. The first famous one was Sheikh Zainuddin Makhdum's TuhfatuLMujahiddin. He was the first historian of Kerala to write a historical account in Arabic. He

narrated the caste-oriented communities of Kerala and the beginnings of the settlements by the Mappilas. Their encounters against the Portuguese including the necessity of a holy war or jihad against the Portuguese and the sufferings of the Mappilas were recorded in this work. His work propagated an anti imperialist ideology in Malabar. This work, which is taught in the Dars of Kerala has great relevance in promoting the ideology of anti-colonialism in an age of neocolonialism. It is translated into several European languages. Zainuddin's famous works on Karmakanda are taught in the Dars of South East Asia. He belonged to the Karaketti family of Azhiyur and it is believed that his final resting place is the Kunhippalli mosque on the highway connecting Calicut and Kannur.

Zainuddin's grandfather, Zainuddin Makhdum first was also an ideologue against the Portuguese conquest. He even suggested a jihad or holy war against them in his famous poem, Tahris Ahlil Emani Ala Jihadi Abadatti Sulbani. When the Zamorin and the Mappilas took steps to capture the fortress of Chaliyam, Khasi Muhammad bin Abdul Aziz wrote another poem named Fathul-Mubin to inspire the military action. The Zamorin took an oath that he would not take food until the capture of the fortress. This poet inspired the Mappilas for a jihad against the Portuguese. Here the jihad is initiated not to convert a Darul Harb into Darul Islam but to strengthen the authority of a Hindu ruler. Such a practice gives a new meaning to jihad that was not understood so far by theologians who misinterpreted the concept.

The continuous contacts with the Lakshadweep made the Mammalis of Kannur, into a house of prosperity. When the Portuguese invasions on Kolathnad made it a disintegrated country and administration, the Mammalis claimed independence and annexed the islands with their administration. Their independence was a symbolic act of the Mappilas to establish political identity in Malabar. This house

well known as Ali Rajas maintained cordial relationship with Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan and tried to safeguard their interests.

The frequent invasions and colonial conflicts for resources made the Mappilas to move from the coastal belt to hinterlands and engage in agriculture. They settled in places like Irikkur, Sreekantapuram, Ernad and Valluvanad and engaged in trade and agriculture. Several depressed caste members in Kerala, converted themselves to Mappila community, seeking social justice and new opportunity. Some of those converted sections known as 'Poosilan' or new comers.

During the Portuguese invasions, there had been a good number of martyrs from the Mappilas who were hailed through Nerchas and Mosques for perpetuating their memory. The Kottuppalli Nercha near Ponnani, is conducted in favour of one Manath Parambil Kunhi Marakkar Sahid. Perhaps, the ritual of Nercha may be a practice derived from the festivals conducted by the Hindu community. The Kundotti Nercha has become a village festival in which different religious communities had their participation. Some of the social reform organizations in Islam treat the Nerchas and rituals un-Islamic on philosophical ground. However the Nerchas are conducted with all festivities. Along with the Nerchas and in the recollection of martyrs, several songs are composed and they are recited. Some of the folk arts like Dabb, Arwana, Parichamuttu Kali and Kolkkali are performed as a matter of entertainment by the Mappila community. Some of these items had been borrowed from Hindu community. The songs had contributed to the development of a separate branch of literature in Arabi-Malayalam,

The British occupation of Malabar did not contribute to the commercial, agricultural, and social growth of the Mappila community in Malabar. The rural poverty was made intensive and extensive during this period. The colonial administration

introduced unhealthy changes in the Kanam-janmam system and other agrarian relations in Malabar. The tenants lost their fixity of tenure and were frequently evicted from their holdings. These developments made the Mappilas to turn against the landlords and the British administration. However the British land policy and revenue system made possible of land sales for revenue arrears. Those commercial and trading groups who had liquid capital could purchase lands and become landlords. Some of the Mappilas like the Keyis at Thalassery deposited their capital in land and became landlords. However the ordinary people lost their houses and holdings.

These frustrations of the community turned to outbreaks in the 19th century. During the nationalist movement there were social reform movements among several social groups. Vaikkam Abdulkhader Moulavi and many others introduced reforms among the Mappilas. They demanded to introduce modern education along with religious education.

The Khilafat movement in Malabar initiated by the Congress gave political leadership to the mobilization of the Mappilas. This development had finally turned to the Rebellion of 1921. When it was briefly suppressed several members were transported to Andaman Islands. Many of them were killed in action and hundreds were hanged to death under the martial law. The leaders like Ali Mussaliyar spread an anti-imperialist ideology in Malabar particularly among the Mappilas.

The sufferings of the community in 1921 were great. The Congress interpreted the movement as communal. Gradually the Mappila community was alienated from the mainstream of national movement in Malabar. The impact of the nationalist leaders like Moidu Moulavi, Abdurahman Sahib and scholars on the community was weakened. Such an occasion was utilized by the British collaborators and the landlords to introduce Muslim league politics and its organizations.

Prior to 1921 and after several heroic Mappila songs were composed and propagated to rejuvenate the Mappila enthusiasm. These songs in Arabi - Malayalam, recollectings the heroic deeds of sahids and also the anti-colonial ideology, inspired the Mappilas and activated them for any political programme. The songs on Cherur battle published by K.T. Muhammed highlight some of these developments. Such corpus of songs and many other contemporary compositions provide us with an invaluable branch of literature exclusively contributed by the Mappila community.

After independence, as a religious minority group, the Mappilas are conscious of their social, political and economic privileges. They have also organized their own organizations to safeguard their interests. The religious, social, political and educational organizations are actively working to promote the community interests. These organizations promote women education and educate its members to gain strength further through education. They try to make a compromise among politics, theology and modernization. However the social changes among the lower strata of society are slow and ineffective. The community had not obtained proper strength to become an industrial community from its moorings with commerce and agriculture. A group of professionals are gradually evolving from them.

During 1970 — 80, the migration to Gulf countries particularly from the Mappilas was considerable. The non-resident Indians remitted a good amount of capital to Kerala and that promoted a high standard of living even without a proper rise in the per capita income in this region. A share of this inflow was utilized to build educational institutions and religious centres. In fact this situation had contributed to develop a cultural awakening gradually leading to socio-political awareness. Before hundred years there were only a few Muslim primary schools for the Mappila community. Now

they have succeeded in running professional and a good number of Arts colleges. They have extended benefits to members of other communities and contributed to their progress. The organizations like MES and other individual institutions have obtained considerable growth in the field of education.

Whether it was a period of progress or decline, it is sure that the community had incorporated several art forms to strengthen its cultural moorings and visions. It is a factor of appreciation that the community had not dissociated itself from the mainstream of indigenous culture but integrated many of the native features to enrich their heritage and tradition. The art and literature of the Mappilas are closely related to the native traditions to which other social groups had their contributions. The native system of pattu or song had been a significant branch of literature in Malayalam. Following its model, the compositions of Mappila songs have become prominent in Arabi-Malayalam. In all social functions, these songs were recited for entertainment. Vattakkali pattukal or Oppana songs and dances were performed on occasions of marriages. There were several groups of singers to entertain on such occasions. War songs, love songs, ritual songs, letter songs etc. were composed for different occasions. The identity of the community is reflected in such songs. The art forms like Dabb, Arvana, Parichamuttu and Kolkkali were performed by this community. They have great social significance and relevance in their social life and community get-together. The contribution of Kerala to Arabic language and literature is a fertile topic for research and evaluation. Even the Arbi-Malayalam manuscripts available in Kerala had not been surveyed properly. The scholars like C.N.Ahmad Moulavi, K.K.M. Abdul Karim, and V. Balakrishnan have prepared some pioneering historical accounts in this direction. The background of Malayalam language and literature had been properly exploited by the literary talented personalities to develop Arabi-Malayalam

literature and its Kess and other songs.

The aspirations of a community, its frustrations, struggles, love and affection and other emotional aspects of Mappila songs had been now propagated everywhere through the dedicated missionary work of V.M. Kutty and other expert singers. They have dedicated their lives to the cause of Mappila songs not only in Kerala but everywhere including the Gulf nations. When research and study of Mappila culture and heritage were neglected for want of patronage and encouragement, Ubaid master from Kasargod dedicated his life as a pioneer to pilot such studies. His achievements in this direction are commendable and memorable.

In fact the Mappila community has maintained a distinct cultural entity in Kerala. As a community, its contribution to the arts and culture of Kerala is significant. When they followed the tenets of Islam, they had not hesitated in accepting the cultural moorings of Kerala. It was a matter of symbiosis and assimilation.

Kerala-Arab Relations

The geographical contiguity of Arabia to the traditional coast of Malabar by sea had made her an effective partner in a flourishing sea-born trade through centuries. The rich produce of spices, timber and other valuable forest produce of Malabar were imported to various port towns of Arabia from where they were further transported to Europe. Like the Romans, the Arabs were great entrepreneurs in maritime trade. In fact the Arabs monopolized the sea trade in historical times. Even before the advent of Islam in the seventh century A.D, the Arabs had established close trade relations with Western Indian Ports. Further the advent of Islam and the missionary zeal of the new religion were greatly responsible to make these contacts cordial and fruitful for both sides.

The tradition at least had attested the conversion of a Kerala ruler to Islam and his visit to holy Mecca and his meeting with the prophet.¹ In his return he died at Zahar. But he gave instructions to his governors to render all possible assistance to the Islamic missionaries in his country. Even folklore materials relating to the cult of Teyyam had incorporated such legends. One of the early mosques situated at Madayi in North Malabar. Following this historical event, the Mappilas were addressed by the Teyyam dancers in their performances as

"Madayi Nagaram". This mosque is dated 518 A. H or 1124 A.D. It is one of the early ten mosques built by Malik IbnDinar.²

The Arab trade with Quilon in Southern Kerala must have prospered by the 9th century. The Tarisappalli copper plate grant of the A.D. 849 had mentioned some of the prominent Muslim merchants of the port town. Their names are written in Kufi character. The Arab geographers had given proper, description of South India. Abu Zayd a noted Arab traveller of the 9th Century A.D. described that,

The Arab of Umman(Omen) take the carpenter's tool box with them and go to the place where the coconut- (trees) grow in abundance, first they cut down the tree and leave it to dry. When it is dry they cut it into planks. They weave rope of coir with this they tie the planks, together and make them a vessel. They make its most from the same wood. The sails are made of fiber. When the boat is ready they take a cargo of coconuts and sail for Umman. They make high profit of this trade.⁴

In the boat building technology of Kerala and Lakshadweep the tying system of planks by coir instead of joining by iron nails had continued even in the modern period. The noted Arab geographer, Ibin Rutstah (c-900 A.D) had pointed out that even before Islam Indian ships used to sail up the Tigris as far as Al maida in.⁵

The Arab merchants temporarily settled in the port towns of Malabar and even married native women folk. Their issues and converts to Islam were known as the Mappilas and they are a potential social group of Kerala society. In Kerala society, highly caste oriented, there was no trading community of Vaisyas in the traditional pattern of Indian society. This occupational responsibility was shared by the Mappila community who enjoyed the love and affection of other communities. The rulers like the Zamorins, extended whole hearted patronage to this merchant community. Their activities

articulated the growth not only of port towns but also local towns in the hinterland. Shayk Zainuddin on the history of Muslims in Kerala Stated :

Consequently there came into being new cities, like Calicut, Balinkut, Thirurangadi, Kannur, Funnar, Barpurangad, Barunur, in the neighbourhood of Shaliyat then Kaskad, Tirkur, and other towns in the Vicinity of Pandarina. Then Kannur, Edakkad, Barunkad, Hayli and Janba, round about Darmfatan and to the south of these Badfatan and Nadhavaram and there towns like Koshi, Bab, Ballabram to the South of Kodungallur, besides many other sea port towns. Population increased in all these places.⁶

During the fourteenth century, the Moroccan- traveller Ibn Batuta had travelled and resided in some of these Muslim settlements and noted their prosperity. The Arab capital which had flown to Calicut had made it one of the prosperous maritime trade centres and entreport in Asia in the 15 th century. A particular cloth, Calico, exported from this centre made Calicut internationally known. Abdur Razak, an ambassador to the Vijayangar Kingdom had attested the prosperous activities of Calicut. In 1442 he wrote:

"The most wealthy merchants bring thither from maritime countries considerable cargoes which they unload and unhesitatingly send into the markets and bazaars without thinking in the meantime of any necessity of checking the account of keeping watch over the goods".⁷

The Arab monopoly over trade in cities like Calicut and their large capital accumulation based on maritime trade created much jealousy all over Europe. The Portuguese experiments in navigation for discovering a direct sea route to India had to be assessed in this socio-political context. The eastern coast of Africa and the Sultanates like Mosambiq had continuous trade contacts with Gujarat. The Parsee merchants following the Arabs had their settlements in the eastern coast

of Africa. One of these merchants had piloted the vessel of Vasco de Gama to Calicut.

The Portuguese advent inaugurated an age of commercial and political rivalry in Malabar. They tried to monopolise the maritime trade of Calicut. However the Arabs and the Mappilas extended all possible assistance to the local rulers, the Zamorin. Naturally the Calicut forces were dragged to a life and death struggle over a century⁸. When the concept of armed and fortified trade was introduced by the Portuguese in Kerala the Arabs and the Mappilas fought against them to establish the traditional system of free trade according to the local regulations. In these struggles, particularly in the maritime encounters of the 16th century, the trading house of Kunhali Marakkars came to prominence⁹. Their heroic struggle for freedom of the coast for a century is an important chapter in the annals of Indian History. The Arab capital and their vessels played a significant role in the anti -Portuguese struggles in South India. The philosophy of Islam was also a force of inspiration for the Muslims in these struggles. Shaykh Zaynuddin Makhdum in his famous work, *Thuhfat- ul-Mujahidin*, a treatise on these struggles had even appealed for a jihad against the Portuguese who had dedicated to the cause of liquidation of Muslims from the coast¹⁰.

The contact of the Arabs with Kerala in fact had been responsible for the genesis of a potential religious community in Kerala. Although the religion was different from the local religion its followers and the converts had even incorporated some of the cultural traditions including the matrilineal system of inheritance from the native soil. Their role in the process of establishing several coastal towns was also significant. The Arab relationship was entirely different from those of the colonial contacts and subjectification of the later periods. Their contacts had been responsible for economic and cultural development of Kerala. Following this process of History and

the foot prints of the past during the last quarter of the 20th century, millions of Keralities had found their bread earning jobs in the Middle East.

The historical contacts of the Arabs with Kerala had their own cultural characteristics. Along with traders, the religion of Islam also came to Kerala. The people of Yaman and other communities from Arabia who came to Kerala were traders. As they belonged to cultured tribes of Arabia a new culture and religion of Islam were introduced in Kerala on mutual understanding and religious tolerance. The Islam introduced in Kerala was not the religion of conquerors.

But in Northern India Islam was produced by conquerors who even depended on the strength of swords. Further several unsophisticated tribes like the Afghans were involved in the process of conquest and spreading of Islam. These measures in their relation with political policies, united native animosity and communal disharmony. This intra regional differentiation forced among the Islamic communities in India is a theme for social research. The Arabs with their fine qualities had transplanted communal harmony, tolerance, patriotism and culture in Kerala.

Notes and References

1. A. P. Ibrahim Kunju, "Origin and Spread of Islam in Kerala" in Asghar Ali Engineer. ed.. Kerala .Muslims: A Historical Perspective (New Delhi ,1995), P.P 17-8.
2. Some of the tombstones at Pantalayani Kollam refer to A.D 782.
3. Some of the names are Maimun Ibn Ibrahim, Muhammed Ibn Mahin,Ibn Ai,Muhammed Ibn Ali Marziban, Muhammad Ibn Yahya, Amar Ibn Ibrahim and Ibrahim Ibn al Tayyi.
4. Silsilat ul Tawarikh, See K.A.N. Sastri. Foreign Notices of

South India. P.127.

5. Quoted in Kunju, n.1, P.22

6. Shaykh Zaynuddin, Tuhfat ul Mujahiddin translated ed. M.H. Hussayn Nainar(Madras, 1942),P.39.

7. Quoted in R.H. Major,ed. India in the Fifteenth Century (Reprint, Delhi. 1974), P.14

8. Details of these struggles are given in K.V. Krishna Aiyar, The Zamorins of Calicut (Calicut, 1938)

9. K.K. N. Kurup, ed. Naval Traditions of India with special Reference to Kunhalimarakkars (New Delhi, 1997)

10. Zainuddin,n.6

The Mappilas and Peasant Question

South Malabar had been one of the regions of active peasant movement during the colonial period. The colonial land system and agrarian relations had articulated rural poverty and that had adversely affected the peasant interests. It was against this situation that active peasant protest movement was initiated by the peasantry as a remedial measure against rural pauperisation and poverty.

The majority of agrarian population in South Malabar were the Mappilas and their landlords were mainly the Namboodiries and the rich Nayars. With the establishment of colonial government there were substantial and structural changes in the agrarian relations. Some of the traditional practices of the Malabar land system, like the 'Polichezhuth' and the 'Melcharthu' were further strengthened by the colonial government in support of the proprietary right of the Janmis, the class of land owners, in this region. The theoretical and juridical approach behind this practice was based on the Roman concept of property and that was made applicable to the Malabar landholders. In brief the authorities on Malabar land tenures like William Logan had argued that there were structural changes in the land relations of traditional 'Kana-Janma-Maryada' of Malabar due to the British administration.

The judicial interpretation of Kanam tenure as a right restricted to a period of 12 years and after that period the land could be given to a new comer and the right of 'Polichezhuthu' could be effected by the landlord, had brought considerable changes in the land relations. In fact such a practice led to the system of non-fixity of tenure, and the cultivators were left to the whims and fancies of landlords. This situation had placed the land owners, not only economically superior but also culturally and socially dominant. The tenants had only an inferior position in the social system. Further the Mappilas as a separate religious identity had remained outside the socio-religious system of the Hindus.

The structural change in the land system under the British had far reaching impact on peasantry in Malabar. The rights for fixity of tenure, fair rent and free transfer were eroded in the long run and the peasantry as a class was exposed to frequent eviction, exorbitant payment of rent and rack-renting. The process of commercialization of land and the increase of price in the land market always compelled the landlord to restrict the transfer of land by one cultivator to another. For any such transfer, the written permission of the landlord was necessary for a tenant.

Since 1836, the Mappila outbreaks or uprisings with their specific programme of action against the oppressive land lords or their labourers like the Pulayas threatened the law and order situation in South Malabar. These uprisings were the outcome of religious sentiments also.

As they were frequently repeated with a specific pattern of action against the dominant class, a commission was appointed by the government to enquire into the root causes of these uprisings. The commission rejected the theory of peasant grievances behind those uprisings, but interpreted them as caused by the Mappilas' religious fanaticism. Such an approach had been more convenient to the commission as the British had

undertaken pitched battles against the Wahabis in different parts of India during the first half of the 19th century. In accordance with the recommendation of the commission, the government introduced the Mappila Outrages Act to deal with them more effectively.

However such governmental measures did not contribute to the elimination of these uprisings. Finally the Logan commission was appointed to investigate the question of land tenures and their alleged relationship with the uprisings.² William Logan, an experienced district collector, categorically explained that there was considerable truth in the hypothesis and that the colonial land system had been responsible to promote agrarian frustration and tension in Malabar³ He had further criticized that the ryotwari system of land revenue was similar to that of the Bengal Zamindari system as the ryot of the British in Malabar was a big landlord who never participated in the process of production. His recommendations were in favour of an exclusive tenancy legislation for Malabar incorporating the provision of fixity of tenure and fair rent. When a tenancy commission was appointed for this purpose, the Malabar landlords raised vehement protests against the statutory intervention by the government. The judiciary was also in favour of the absolute proprietary rights of the landlords and any effort for granting fixity of tenure to the tenants was criticised by Charles Turner, the Chief Justice of the High Court. The abrogation of the rights enjoyed by the landlords was not acceptable to the court. In reality the demands by the peasantry were to check the arbitrary eviction of their class from their landholdings by the landlords. The statute which was introduced by the government after much debate and discussion was to grant compensation to a tenant according to the market rate for his improvements when he was evicted.⁴ Formerly such valuation was effected according to the tradition of the region.

This shows that the colonial state had failed miserably to protect the rights of the tenants who toiled under the sun and rain. This Act was further diluted by the intervention of the High Court that in one of its judgments it stated that a portion of compensation should go to the landlord also as in his soil the improvements had grown up. This was tantamount to the miscarriage of the spirit of law in a style of hair splitting jurisprudence.

In the 20th century along with the emergence of nationalism, a good number of tenancy committees were organised in South Malabar, particularly by the lawyers like M.P. Narayana Menon and G. Sankaran Nair who had direct experience of the agonies and distress of the peasantry. These tenancy committees in fact followed the moderate policy of the national congress and led agitations for a comprehensive tenancy reform. In 1920 at the Mancheri conference of the Congress, thousands of Mappila tenants participated, where a resolution was passed in favour of a tenancy legislation for Malabar. Protests were made against such resolutions by the landlord elements in, the conference. This led to an ideological rupture into left and right wings within the congress.

The combined efforts of Khilafat and non-co-operation movements in this region had kindled the spirit of nationalism among the peasantry. The net result was the violent outbreak of the Malabar Rebellion of 1921. Soumyendranath Tagore, E.M.S. Namboodiripad and many others had emphasized the anti-feudal and anticolonial character of the rebellion.⁵

When the rebellion was suppressed and the national congress disowned the responsibility for it, the question of tenancy was also given up for a while by the peasantry. However the nationalists like G. Sankaran Nair as part of the congress activities again participated in shaping the public opinion for a statutory intervention in the tenancy question of

Malabar. The legislative discussions on Rebellion further highlighted the agrarian frustration in South Malabar. The public processions and conferences were' also organised to pressurise the government for promulgation of a tenancy act.

The government also felt the need of a legislation as a compromise with the emerging nationalism in Malabar. So far the landlords had acted as a bulwark of colonialism in the agrarian society. Now the process of nationalism and the peasants' agitations including their rebellious movements had destroyed the roots of this dominant class of society and that had even turned against the British. Naturally the British found the futility of depending on this class for perpetuation of their interests. They further turned to another section of agrarian society namely the rich kanamdars and intermediaries who were the backbone of national movement in Malabar in the twenties. Since the discussion of the Report of Logan Commission, this absentee cultivating class of kanamdars were demanding fixity of tenure and were protesting against the traditional practices like 'Polichezhuthu' and 'Melcharthu' the privileges of janmies or landlords.

Now the legislation introduced by the government was to satisfy the demands of this class of kanamdars and it was bestowed with fixity of tenure in the Malabar Tenancy Act XIV of 1930. The nationalists like G. Sankaran Nair played a vital role in getting the consent of the Viceroy for this Bill, passed by the legislature.⁶

However as discussed above, the purpose and motivation of the colonial government was not to appease the verumpattamdars or the cultivating tenants. The thirties had witnessed a radical socio-political movement which was initiated by a different section of nationalists in Malabar. The political activists of this movement came from the Congress Socialist Party with a different nationalist ideology of Marxism-Leninism.⁷ Their major ambition was to organise the peasantry

as a bulwark against feudalism and colonialism. The leaders like E.M.S. Namboodiripad, P. Krishna Pillai, E.P. Gopalan, A.K. Gopalan, K.A. Keraleeyan and many others played a significant role in this movement. By 1936 a new class organisation was formed known as Malabar Karshaka Sangham, exclusively to promote the peasant interests as affiliated to All India Kisan Sabha.

Along with this new organisation, the theatre of peasant struggles had also changed to North Malabar and the Kasaragod taluk. One of the reasons for this change was that national movement in South Malabar had thoroughly weakened on account of the rebellion and the majority of the Mappila peasantry were exposed to partisan and communal politics. However the intensive and the extensive peasant movements in North Malabar pressurised the congress government in Madras to appoint a new Tenancy Committee for Malabar being chaired by Kuttikrishna Menon. In a dissenting note to the report of this committee, E.M.S. Namboodiripad as its member presented an argument in support of abolition of landlordism and the elimination of all feudal practices in the agrarian system. This was the first theoretical discussion on abolition of landlordism⁸, whereas the Logan Commission had only recommended for fixity of tenure, fair-rent and free transfer.

The subsequent peasant struggles and movements in Malabar under the colonial system and the struggle after the Independence were responsible for more comprehensive tenancy legislation and later abolition of landlordism itself⁹. In these struggles the ideology of Marxism and Leninism had played a seminal role. Even after the promulgation of various Acts and amending Acts in Kerala to articulate changes in the agrarian system, a series of struggles have to be undertaken by the Leftists to implement several sections of those Acts. For instance, the struggle to encircle the hut-dwelling lands,

and distribution of surplus lands were organised to implement several sections of those Acts in favour of poor landless agricultural labourers and tenants. The district of Palakkad in South Malabar is one of such regions where active struggles in the post-Independence had also taken place, as in the early period during the colonial system. The well-known peasant activists in this region like E.P. Gopalan and Alathur Krishnan had made a substantial contribution to the peasant movement in this region.

As a summary of this brief paper, it can be rightly evaluated that the peasant movement is a vital force in history for economic and social change in an agrarian society. The collective human action and the proletariat ideology play an important role in social, political, cultural and economic transition of a society. Emperically and theoretically it can be estimated that the peasant movement and its ideology play a vital role in liberating an exploitive and subjugable social system into one that of social respect and economic freedom.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

(1) See, Correspondence on Moplah Outrages in Malabar; 1849-53 (Madras, 1863) (Report by T.L. Strange), pp.399-474.

(2). Government of Madras, Order No. 170, 25 January 1881, judicial.

(3). Malabar Special Commission: 1818-82; Malabar Land Tenures (Madras 1896), (Report by William Logan).

(4). See Malabar Compensation for Tenants' Improvement Act 1887.

The background of this Act had been discussed in K.K.N. Kurup, William Logan; A Study in the Agrarian Relations of Malabar (Calicut University.P.O., 1981).

(5). See Soumyendranath Tagore, Peasants Revolt in Malabar (Bombay ,1937) and E.M.S. Namboodirapad A Short History of

Dr. K.K. N. Kurup

pleasant Movements in Malabar (Bombay, 1943).

(6) See details in V.V. Kunhikrishnan, Tenancy Legislation in Malabar; 1880-1970 (New Delhi, 1993), pp. 49-76.

(7). See K.K.N. Kurup, The Kayyur Riot (Calicut, 1977). Also P. Radhakrishnan, Peasant Struggles, Land Reforms and Social Change in Malabar; 1836-1982 (New Delhi, 1989).

(8). See a discussion of this minute in K.K.N. Kurup, Modern Kerala (New Delhi, 1988), pp.131-8.

(9). These struggles are described in K.K.N. Kurup, Agrarian Struggles in Kerala (Thiruvananthapuram, 1989).

Persian and Revenue Administration

For any organised administrative system, it is absolutely necessary to make its own technical terms or vocabulary to deal with the routine matters without any ambiguity. As a language, Persian has immensely contributed to the growth of revenue administration in India. Not only it has strengthened the revenue administration, but also it has specifically defined all processes involved in judicial affairs. For any organised state, an efficient revenue system is essential for providing with necessary resources. In agricultural countries like that of India, land revenue is a major source of income. Therefore the efficiency of the state itself is depending upon the efficiency of the revenue system and its regulations. With the advent of the Sultanate rulers, Persian and Arabic were used as official language. The Mughals and many Muslim rulers in India continued the same practice. Frequent contacts with these foreign languages strengthened the native languages like Hindi and Urdu. Several technical terms used in our day to day revenue administration had their origin in Persian and Arabic. H.H. Wilson, an authority on the glossary relating to judicial and revenue terms had stated as follows:

Under the Mohammadan Government the language of judicial and revenue proceedings was Persian, borrowing lavishly from Arabic in which the Principal legal authorities

are written, and until within a comparatively recent period, the English courts followed the example of their Mohammadan predecessors, and all the proceedings were recorded in Persian. Although this is no longer the case, yet the employment of that language and of terms derived through it from Arabic for centuries, could not fail to influence the spoken language of the country'

Therefore it has become necessary for a student of revenue or judicial history of India, to understand the Persian language and its technical vocabulary in depth.

Many of these revenue terms with their origin either in Arabic or in Persian had become synonyms and they continued as popular terms over five hundred years and then became part of the Indo-British revenue administration. The revenue jurisdictions like talookdari, Talookdar, and Tahsildar denote an administrative unit and office. A Ziladar is an office in charge of Zila or Ziladari. The suffix 'dar' commonly represents a holder.

The terms Jagir and Jagirdari represent a common tenure under the Mohammadan government in India. It is an assignment of public revenue of a track to a servant of the state. He collects the revenue from that track for carrying out his office. Such an assignment may be conditional or unconditional. The assignment of revenue of a track for the service of the state is defined as a feudal character of the state by authorities like Strayer. Therefore these states in India represented some feudal aspects through centuries. The term dar-ijara denotes the sublease of an estate or farm. A tenant holding is defined as dar-mustajar.

The perpetual holder of a farm is Istimrardar. In the same way the Istimrari malguzari denotes the perpetual revenue of an estate. In fact the revenue administrative proceedings were recorded in Persian. The gumastas who were well versed in Persian were engaged in the revenue office. Later when the Indo-British system had substituted the former Mohammadan

governments, it also adopted the same structure and the vocabulary for all practical purposes.

The Diwani of Bengal, a governmental authority in favour of the East India Company Bahadoor, represented the lease of revenue. The assessment, collection, remittance to treasury, etc. were commonly denoted by Persian terms and some of their origin could be traced in classical language of Arabic. The term jumma, represented the total assessment. The jumabandhi is meant the settlement of account. An Irisal is meant remittance. An amdan is meant an income from the property. The term Ajmaish is literally the estimation of the standing crop by a subordinate officer. It is also known by the term Paimaish. The land belonged to the king or ruler is known as Badshahi. They are crown lands.

The Mughal ruler Akbar, was responsible to introduce the revenue year Fasli, which was derived from fazl or crop. Since the year A.D. 1555, this particular revenue year was calculated and that continued under the British for all revenue purposes. A Kabuliyat denoted the holding or Patta of a proprietor. The land benami showed the fictitious occupation.

The measurement of land was a common practice under the Mohammadan governments in India. A jaribkash is a surveyor. The term jaribana is the expenditure by a cultivator for measurement. The term jaribbeshi is the increase of land in juma and jaribkari is a decrease. A written deed or document was known as wakafnama. The term kist is a sown field and generally it is an instalment of revenue payment. The sarasari or average of revenue was calculated in each kist. The jama beriz denoted the particular statement of revenue. Any balance is described as baki. A bakikafiyat is a statement of arrears and a Bakidar is a defaulter. The present revenue year is described as halsal. The term Bandobasti Sheristadar referred to the revenue receiving and record keeping officer. In the long run he was known as Sheristadar, an important officer in the district

administration. He had to see all the records of the collectorate who also participated in the decision making. During the early administration of the British, a decision of the district magistrate or district collector, was withheld when it was not acceptable to the Sheristadar. It shows the significance of his office. The term *durkhast* was used for a waste land assignment in favour of a tenant.

The organised and systematic revenue administration had its impact on the process of urbanisation and the expansion of market. The term *abad* denoted a tract or village in the revenue system. Later it was used to denote an expanding populated area. For instance Aurangabad, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, etc. are gradually used for expanding urban centres. In the same way the term *ganj* referred to the common place or a market. The place names like *Islamganj*, and *sultanganj* are coined to show the emerging new markets. Hundreds of places ending with *ganj* in North India show the expansion of new settlements under the patronage of rulers and their effective and comprehensive revenue system.

A brief study of the revenue terms prevalent under the Mohamadan rulers in India and later under the British reflects that there was an effective and efficient revenue system throughout the country. The rulers of the Deccan kingdoms and their revenue specialists like *Gaban* with all their innovations in the revenue system had preserved the Persian technical terms in theory and practice. The Mysorean rulers, Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan, also followed the same pattern of revenue administration and technical terms. In fact Persian as an official language had articulated and strengthened the Indian process of revenue administration. It had also subscribed to the growth of an effective judicial system to strengthen the revenue collection and the maintenance of law and order. For an indepth and analytical study of the Indian revenue and judicial system one should master Persian language, which had been the *Lingua Franca* of the elites and aristocracy.

The Malabar Rebellion- An Analysis of its Impact

The 75th year of the Malabar Rebellion was commemorated in 1996 in different parts of Malabar through seminars, public meetings, conferences, and publication of special articles in periodicals. A popular interest has been shown by the Mappilas of South Malabar in this major historical event. This lively interest has also invited politically motivated criticism that the rebellion was a communal revolt engineered by the Mappilas against the Hindu population. A study of the impact of the rebellion, although attended by several historians, provided further scope for an objective and scientific evaluation on that occasion.

There is no doubt that the rebellion was a major revolt against the British in India after 1857¹. The British strategy for restoration of law and order in the affected villages in this region was entirely different from the policy which they had adopted in such cases. The entire south Malabar which was under Martial Law was treated as an enemy territory and military strategy was adopted for recapture. As such many valuable lives and properties were destroyed without calculation under the cover of Martial Law. Many were imprisoned and transported for life.² Even the Hindu nationality and activists

like M.P. Narayanan Menon and Brahmaddattan Namboodiripad were imprisoned. The tragic memory of the rebellion still haunts the minds of both the Hindus and the Mappilas.

The Indian National Congress which had given leadership to the Khilafat and non-co-operation movement had later disowned the responsibility of the rebellion. However the Mappilas had conceived that the Congress was responsible for their political mobilization which had culminated in the rebellion and its brutal suppression by the British. Further they believed that their Hindu brethren had stabbed them at their back. The nationalists believed that the rebellion was responsible for the failure of non co-operation movement.

This suspicion and cleavage between the Hindus and the Muslims had isolated South Malabar in the long-run from the mainstream of national movement. This situation had alienated the Mappilas from the Congress and the former had developed a loyalty towards the Muslim League. Even now the League politics have dominated in this region with communal feelings. The national movement was a major social reform movement in India, which had played a seminal role in initiating radical outlook in the society including the women liberation. As the nationalism was feeble in this region, there was considerable dominance of the orthodox sections over society. Further there was the natural continuity of the feudalistic relations in the social system. This had adversely affected the social progress and the social mobility of women. The radical movements from the Mappilas had also not originated to ameliorate their conditions. The gender inequality in social relations, family system and property inheritance have continued without much change.

The agrarian problems had a significant role in the outbreak of the rebellion. The scholars like Soumyendranath Tagore, E.M.S. Namboodiripad and Contrad Wood had

explained the agrarian frustration of peasantry as a vital force of the rebellion.³ The toiling peasantry under a colonial system of land monopoly and production relations were exposed to customary practices like 'Melcharthu' and 'Polichezhuthu', the evils of landlordism.⁴ Most of them had not enjoyed the fixity of tenure, fair rent and right for free transfer. The 19th century Mappila outbreaks were engineered against the dominant land monopolists and the colonial authorities. Willian Logan, a Tenancy Commission, had categorically recommended for statutory intervention in the colonial agrarian system.⁵ He also supported the theory of fixity of tenure being enjoyed by the intermediary *kanam* holders in the pre-colonial period in the history of Malabar⁶.

The *kanam* category of tenants who were potential nationalists, now tried to mobilise and exploit the agrarian factor involved in the rebellion. They had also pressurized the legislator to introduce a tenancy bill to safeguard their interests. The leaders like Mannath Krishnan Nair and G. Sankaran Nair had represented the interests of this intermediary class of cultivators and demanded legislation in their favour. As a class which had pivoted the national movement, they had further succeeded in pressing their demands before the authorities. Now the colonial government also felt the necessity of appeasing this particular section of nationalists. Formerly the government had much depended on the bulwark of landlords and zamindars. As a class, their strength and ability to support the British were eroded on account of multifaceted factors. For instance the rebellion had undermined their strength as a dominant class. These factors had compelled the British to establish a cordial relationship with the intermediary class of tenancy. The result was the promulgation of the Malabar Tenancy Act of 1930⁷.

However the Act did not entertain the rights of actual cultivators or toiling peasants. They were still exposed to

eviction, rack-renting and rural pauperisation. It was in this circumstance that a radical peasant movement was organized in Malabar. But its theatre was not South Malabar but North Malabar where the nationalist movement had penetrated to grass root level with a new category of cadre and leadership.

This generation of nationalists had differentiated themselves from that of the leadership of the Twenties. In 1934, the Congress Socialist Party was organised in Malabar within the Congress with an ideological commitment to Socialism and Marxism-Leninism.⁹ They found their strength on class organisations. All Malabar Karshaka Sangham, a peasant association was organised in 1936 to fight against landlordism, colonialism and casteism. This mobilization of the peasantry was responsible for radical social changes in North Malabar. The organisation had championed the cause of verumpattakkar or tenant-lease holders. Their anti-feudal and anti-colonial struggles had accelerated the national movement with strong anti-imperialist content.¹⁰

The Malabar Rebellion was an inspiration for many a peasant activist at this stage of peasant mobilisation. K.A. Keraleeyan, an activist, had visited many villages of Malabar Rebellion for a period over six months to ascertain direct information of the movement which was brutally suppressed by the British. He was the founder Secretary of Karshaka Sangham and was inspired by the heroic struggle of the Mappilas. In the peasants' meetings, Variyan Kunnath Kunhahammad Haji, a leader of the rebellion who was awarded capital punishment by the British, was eulogized as a martyr for the cause of the peasantry in a chorus. The communal colour of the rebellion was totally reacted by these peasant activists. Even after the Indian Independence, the tenancy legislation and the land reform were the burning issues before the Malabar peasantry. At least in the state of Kerala, the Communists were voted to power in 1957 and they were committed themselves to

radical agrarian reforms including the suspension of peasant eviction.

These developments in the history of Malabar had a close connection with the underlying historical forces of the Rebellion. The myths and legends of the Rebellion had exposed the heroic character of the Mappilas as anti -colonial fighters and had influenced the later generations in their struggle for freedom particularly the section of peasantry. The British had always tried to suppress any discussion or debate of the rebellion for its anti-imperialist content. When Soumyendranath Tagore, had published his monograph , *The Peasants Revolt in Malabar*, in 1937 in Bombay it was suppressed and proscribed. When a translation of the same had appeared in Tamil during the Quit India movement it was also proscribed. In 1946, on the Silver Jubilee occasion, E.M.S. Namboodiripad had published some extracts relating to the Rebellion, taken from his booklet, *A Short History of The Peasant Movement in Kerala in Desabhimani* under the title "Preachings and Warnings of 1921 - Lessons of Malabar Rebellion". The Publication of this highly inflammable material had invited the similar action from the British that the deposit of the newspaper was confiscated. The same material when published as a booklet was also proscribed.¹¹ In fact the anti-colonial character of the Rebellion was a continuous threat to the British authorities . That is why the history of the Rebellion traced along with documents, written by R.H. Hitchcock was also kept as a secret document, not to be circulated below the rank of under secretary¹². The charges against the Mappila rebels were also framed under section 121 I.P.C. that they had waged war against the King. In brief, the anti -imperialist content of the rebellion was so significant that any serious discussion or debate of the same was suppressed by the government.

The impact of the Rebellion on the Hindu caste orthodoxy was so deep rooted, that its caste system had faced an imminent

danger to its rules, practices and traditions. The Poet Kumaran Asan in one of his compositions known Duravasta or Bad Destiny had described a situation in which Savithri, an aristocratic Brahmin lady, who had taken asylum in a hut of Chathan, one Pulaya agricultural labourer, had finally become his wife. This was something like a bomb-shell in the caste orthodoxy that a Brahmin girl had become the wife of a depressed caste member. The poet had damaged both caste and class with a single stroke of his pen. Even such an imagination was really revolutionary. Here the question is not concerned with the number of how many Savithris had married how many Chathans in the real life. But this poetic work had introduced a new concept of casteless society at least in theory. The rebellion had created such an ideological change in the caste system and practically diluted its rigidity.

An analytical study of the impact of the Rebellion on Malabar society highlights its multifaceted dimensions of anti-colonialism, anti-casteism and anti-feudalism. The dominant feudal class had always emphasized its communal aspect and Mappila fanaticism against the Hindus. Even now these aspects are propagated by them. A political orientation could also be seen in this aspect. The Mappilas had always evaluated and found it a struggle for freedom on account of the same political orientation. But they had no answer for the destruction of a large number of poor sections of Hindu society in South Malabar. This dichotomy still exists in the public opinion even after 75 years. But there is no doubt that the rebellion was a major anti-British revolt in south India with far reaching results.

Notes and References :

1. The following details highlight the intensity of the rebellion.

Taluk	Total Villages	Villages totally participated
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The Legacy of Islam (Kerala)

in Rebellion

Ernad	94	94
Calicut	65	23
Valluvanad	118	68
Ponnani	<u>120</u>	<u>35</u>
Total	397	220

2. Sir Malcolm Haily in a statement had given the details as follows:

Death 2329, Wounded 1652, captured, 5995 punished 24167.
Total imprisoned 39348

3. Soumyendranath Tagore, The Peasants Revolt in Malabar (Bombay, 1937) E.M.S. Namboodiripad, A Short History of the Peasant Movement in Kerala (Bombay, 1943)

4. See V.V. Kunhikrishman, Tenancy Legislation in Malabar (New Delhi, 1993)

5. William Logan, Malabar Land Tenure (Madras, 1896) Report of Special Commission.

6. See an analytical study of the Malabar Land system in K.K.N. Kurup, William Logan : A study in the Agrarian Relations of Malabar (Calicut University P.O. 1981)

7. C. Govindan Nair, The Malabar Tenancy Act 1929 (Madras, 1931)

8. See these developments, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, Kerala Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow (Calcutta, 1968)

9. See details in K.K.N. Kurup, The Kayyur Riot (Calicut, 1978)

10. Ibid.

11. It was banned on 23 January 1947. G.O. Madras, Public (GI) B. Dept. No. 1594, 2 July 1948. The preface of the booklet is dated 16 August 1946.

12. See R.H. Hitchcock, A History of the Malabar Rebellion 1921.

6

The Legacy Of Sufism And Communal Harmony

Islam as a religion has great impact on Indian culture and civilisation. Its legacy has strengthened the creative and intellectual pursuit of Indian mind in art, architecture and philosophy, through centuries. Its way of life, brother-hood, social order and godliness had made a distinct imprint on the heritage of India. One of such valuable contributions of Islam is sufism which had professed the unity of mankind and universal harmony.

Sufism is a mystical movement in Islam represented by individual men and women who devoted themselves exclusively to the service of god and the joyous experience. The sufi orders had also become popular in the continent. The common belief of the rural masses credited the sufis with supernatural powers and attributed to them the ability to perform miracles. Among such powers, the ability to forecast the future, to trace the lost or stolen properties, to cure chronic diseases and to effect rain during the devastating draught were widely enumerated by the people. The sufis were loved and respected by all sections of society irrespective of their religious affinity. It is important to note that they led a married life as there was no sanction for monkery or rahbaniya by prophet in

Islam.

Order of Faith

Sufis traced their ideas and beliefs to the holy Quran and the Hadis. But they were quite against the orthodoxy of Ulamas. They advocated austerity for the whole of one's life. Further the sufis belonging to some orders offered the ideal of renunciation of all possessions by the individual. They never saved anything for themselves. For them the relationship between man and God consisted of the relationship of love between male and female. The aim of their life was not to gain paradise but to attain the union with God. While music was an un-Islamic practice for the Ulamas it was treated as a favour to move on the path of union with God. Therefore they encouraged the mystical compositions of Qawwalis, a popular form of song in North India. Their emphasis was on spiritual delight.

The spread of Islam in India was mainly based on the spiritual activities of sufis and not by the conscious political policy of the Muslim rulers. Along with the conquerors, traders, intellectuals, poets, scholars and saints also came to India. They wanted to realise the spirit of India. Scholars like Al-Beruni studied sanskrit language and wrote extensively on Indian affairs in his Kitab-al-Hind. Therefore a realm of cultural interchange had been promoted by those intellectuals who propagated religious harmony and spiritual realisation. The sufis, as a group of spiritualists realised this wisdom and practised it in their life system. Their Khanquahs (monasteries) were worship centres for the Hindus and the Muslims.

Different Orders

There are different orders or silsilas among the sufis based on their philosophical system and the way of life. The order of Chistiyas is a prominent one which embraced the doctrine of unity of entire mankind². Its founder was the famous sufi saint Muthi-Ud-Din Ibn Arabi. One of the famous disciples in

this order was Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya of Delhi who attracted followers from different religions. He was most catholic and universal in his outlook like his guru Sheikh Farid-Ud-Din. Once he reminded:

The renunciation of world is not meant that one should wear a loin cloth and sit idle. He should eat his food and wear his cloth. But he should not go after the desires. That is the only renunciation of world.

The orders of Suhar Vardiya and Shattari were also popular in India. They wore different from those of the Chistis on account of their way of life. They accumulated wealth, interfered in the political problems and maintained close relationship with the rulers. Its founder was Sheikh Shihabuddin Suharwardi. Sheikh Bahauddin Sakariya and Sheikh Sadrudin were some of the famous sufis of this order. Their luxurious way of life and political relationship brought to them dishonour. During the advent of the Mughals, they lost their popularity as an order. The order of Firdausiya is one of the branches of Suhar-wardi order.

The Shattari silsila had originated from Bistamiya Silsila. Its founder was Abu Yasid Ishki. The order was also known as Ishkiya. The shattariya order borrowed several practices of the Indian Yoga system. They preferred to live in the forests by eating fruits and leaves like the Indian yogis. Sheikh Burhanuddin was highly respected by the Mughal emperor Aurangazeb. But while the emperor proceeded on his Deccan campaigns, he wanted his blessings. However the emperor was blessed outside the hermitage as admission was denied to kings and princes.

Another order which was popular at the time of the Mughals was the Quadriya order. When Sheikh Dawud was invited by Akbar, to his palace, the invitation was politely rejected by the former. The movement was popular in Agra and Delhi particularly at the time of Sheikh Dawud who died during the last quarter of the 17th century. Sheikh Mulla Shah was an

eminent Sufi saint in Srinagar who was respected by Shahjahan. His son Dara Shikoh was a disciple of Mulla Sha. Shikoh like a sufi once expressed:

Paradise would be there where there are no priests Mullas, there will not be then criticisms or calls. Let the world escape from the terror of Mulla. Let no body take care in his fatawa. In the city where the Mulla lives, there will never be any gentleman.

This is the general attitude of the Sufi's towards priesthood and theology. Their language was of love and compassion. It flowed like a spring with purity from heart to heart.

Comparative Religion

Dara Shikoh was a scholar in comparative religion. He had translated some of the Upanishads into Persian. His Majma-Ul-Bahrayn (Meeting of two oceans) had compared some of the concepts and terms of both Hinduism and Islam. His Safinat-Ul-Auliya is a historical account of Sufis in India. It was even believed by the Mullas that he had given up his faith in Islam. For instance he wrote:

I have understood the price of non-belief. I have worn the sacred thread around my body. I have become an idolator. My residence is in the temples.... If the Muslims had known the fruitfulness of idols, they would have understood that the real faith was in idolatry.

A galaxy of scholars with their feet strongly placed in the Islamic religion tried to understand the Hindu religious ways and philosophy. When religious hatred was the order of the day in Western Europe among the Catholics and the Protestants, the sufis in India with their religious catholicism encouraged true devotion and tolerance.

The Nakhsabandiya movement was also popular during the advent of the Mughals. Sheikh Ahmad Sarhindi and Khwaja Bhakshi Billah were some of the prominent sufis of this order.

There were many other minor orders and Fakirs also in different parts of India. However some of them were influenced by the ideas of the above major orders. In Malabar Mamburam Tangals were powerful as religious leaders of the Mappilas or Muslims. These Tangals were advocates of Sufi philosophy but were enemies of colonial social order and culture. Their ideology and philosophy had been responsible to promote a series of agrarian revolts against the land monopolists and the British in South Malabar. Here these philosophers had adopted a different pattern of ideology against the exploiters mainly because of the compassion towards the oppressed and the wretched in a colonial social order. Such examples can be pointed out from other parts of India. Sufis like Shah Enayat of Sindh fought against the injustices faced by the poor sections and courted martyrdom.

Emergence of the Bhakti Movement:

When the different orders of Sufis enlightened the spiritual reality of oneness and brotherhood in the medieval period, there was a similar movement in the Hindu religious order, the Bhakti Movement, which raised its voice against caste hierarchy, and repression. The movement was against superstitions, accumulations of wealth and the dominance of the superior caste and class over the inferior caste and class. The movement had an egalitarian social content and its poets and philosophers and teachers spoke in the common dialects and languages of the people. Like the Sufis they were against the established religious systems and priesthood. The greatest devotional work of this period is Ramacharita Manas by Goswami Tulsidas. He was the tallest tree of the Bhakti movement. The movement was the outcome of a feudal social order, and it was fighting against the major evils of the same social order. Kabirdas, Guru Nanak, Meerabhai, Namadev, Eknath, Gyaneshwar, Tukaram and many others were the representative saints and savants of this movement. Most of

them came from inferior castes of the artisans. Kabir the greatest rationalist philosopher and poet of this movement was a weaver. His 'Dohas' (a poetic meter) deepened the philosophical wisdom in the emerging Hindi literature. In fact there had been the elements of social protest in religious garb in this movement. It also had incorporated the elements of women liberation. The movement tried to liberate her from the position of an object for sensual pleasures.

Both Sufi and Bhakti movements brought together the Hindus and the Muslims. They gave birth to a new culture of religious synthesis and tolerance. Both of them were against caste, creed and communal tensions. They were parallel religious movements with popular support among the rural folk. They did not adopt any sectarian approach to different religious systems.

Contemporary Relevance

The doctrine of the Sufis is valid today in an Indian context of communal friction and disharmony. The role of religion in those frictions and conflicts are significant one. The religions are exploited both by fundamentalists belonging to minority and majority sections to perpetuate their economic, sectarian and political interests. In such circumstances the promotion of unity and integrity of all human beings irrespective of their faith and creed is absolutely necessary for articulating the concept of secularism and national integration. Although the Sufis were religious to the core, they were secular in spirit by keeping away from sectarian outlook. The principle of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' or the universal familyhood was their philosophy. Today almost all the countries of the world have diverse elements in their population and they are exposed to communal or ethnic conflicts involving violence. These conflicts have their roots in social, economic and political disparities and inequalities. However most of those conflicts exploit religion for their identities. In such cases the religious

concepts and attitudes professed by the Sufi silsilas and the Bhakti movements can be utilised to promote social harmony and secularism. Therefore it is necessary to propagate the views of the Sufi and saints to fight against the religious fundamentalism and communalism. The history of our country has taught us the great lessons in this direction.

Notes and References

(1) A.J. Arberry Sufism : An Account of the Mystics of Islam (Aylesburg, 1979 edn) p,84.

(2) A study of these Sufi orders in India is given in Hussain Randathani, Ariyappedatha India (Unknown India)(Malayalam Calicut, 1993).

(3) See K.K.N. Kurup, "The Sufis and Religious Harmony in Kerala' in Asgar Ali Engineer, Sufism and Communal Harmony (Jaipur, 1991), pp, 79-85,

(4) See details in Tarachand, Influence of Islam on Indian Culture (1922).

(5) Engineer, n. 3, pp. 60-71.

Anti-portuguese Struggles and the Islamic Popular Culture

Kolathnad of Northern Kerala was one of the active theatres of struggles and confrontations during the 16th century. This region was exposed to European expansion and colonial activities on account of the bulk trade in spices and other commodities. Since 1502, the Portuguese effected their factory at Cannanore and tried to capture the profitable trade monopolised by the Mammalis and other Muslim traders. The Mammalis or the trading principality of the Alis later assumed the title of the Ali Rajas and usurped political power from the local chieftain or the Kolathiries.

The Muslims as a community held cultural and religious animosity against the Portuguese. The frequent confrontations at the sea between the new adventurers and the Muslim traditional traders further intensified this trend of conflicts. The Muslims as a religious community believed that any fight against the Portuguese was a religious duty and a death in an encounter was treated as martyrdom. Such a religious ideology was propagated in *Tuhfat ul Mujahidin*, by Sheikh Zainuddin Makhdom, on account of the atrocities committed against the Muslim traders, women and children by the Portuguese.

Some of the Muslim martyrs in this category had

contributed to the popular culture of Islam in Malabar. In south Malabar, the martyrdom of Kunhi Marakkar is a popular legend recollected in the festivals and rituals of Kottuppalli Mala at Veliyamkode. Marakkar had been responsible to rescue a Muslim girl captured by the Portuguese and in the heroic encounter he lost his life. The Muslim community cherished his memory through the annual festival and Nercha at Veliyamkode. The Kottuppalli Mala, a ritualistic song, reflects the entire legend of heroic martyrdom of Marakkar. Further the myth of the origin of Muslim settlements in different coastal towns, had been highlighted as the sacred places where the mutilated body parts of the martyr fell down. His head was rolling in the river with super natural powers. In brief as a religious community, the myth and legend of Marakkar was well preserved and recollected by the Muslims in the annual festival related to the martyr. The mosque and the sacred burial had created a popular culture around the historical event of a native confrontation against the Portuguese. A network of events, pattern of religious behaviours, concept of martyrdom and legends had promoted the Islamic identity and its own popular culture in the annals of history of Malabar. The Muslim community has created its own cultural environment for this purpose with supernatural events and the myths.

A similar incident from the local history of Kolathnad is analysed here as a case study to understand the origin and growth of the popular culture of Islam in the northern region of Malabar. Here also the martyrdom of three Muslims in their fight against the Portuguese is recollected.

Hazarat Mahim Pokkar was born in Ponnalakath House in the town of Kannur in the 16th century. This house was later known as 'Sahidorakath' due to his martyrdom. He was much committed to the rituals of Islam and was a scholar leading 'Jihadul Akbar' (fight against the devils) and 'Jihadul Asgar' (fight against the enemies) simultaneously. He could see the

atrocities committed by the Portuguese soldiers in the town against the Muslims and their women, particularly under the administration of Albuquerque. Even Muslim children were assassinated as a policy. In an exhibition by the Portuguese soldiers, they tied up an indigenous person and put him under the scorching sun for hours. While every body was enjoying this scene, Pokkar, the Sheikh, moved towards him heroically and liberated him without much resistance. This incident made the Sheikh an enemy of the Portuguese and they wanted his physical liquidation. They surrounded him but they could not capture him due to his inherent heroism and divinity. He then organised a small group of Muslims for a total fight against the Portuguese. He decided that the confrontation should be made outside the town for reducing damages to local people.

Then he approached his mother and informed his decision seeking her blessings in the path of religion and heaven. She blessed him, the only son, and handed over the sword and sheild for preserving the honour of Islam. He told her that if he had met his martyrdom, the sheild would fall into her lap and the sword would drown into sea. After this he was on his way to the battlefield and came much tired at a place known Mundayad. He was under the scorching sun and suddenly, there appeared a Kadjan umbrella in the atmosphere to provide him shadow. Two of the agricultural labourers then ploughing the paddy field found this scene and realised that he was a saintly man with supernatural powers. The Sheikh told them that he was going to fight against the Portuguese and court martyrdom. These labourers after hearing the benefits of martyrdom wanted to convert into Islam and follow him in his path of war. They converted themselves into Islam and renamed as Sirajuddin and Abdulla. It was the belief that only the Muslims could enjoy the divinity of martyrdom.

These three, later came into confrontation with a moving search party of the Portuguese and a horrible attack was

initiated by them in which the two converted followers lost their lives. After defeating the enemies, the Sheikh retired himself under a tree upon which he could see a Portuguese soldier focusing his spear down to his head. Then the Sheikh threw his sword and shield against the enemy whose head was chopped off. The spear wounded the Sheikh fatally, and he obtained the martyrdom as desired in the path of religion.

The devotees of the Sheikh, finding the sword falling into the sea, rushed in search of his mortal body. The myth highlights that the shield fell down in the lap of his mother. The devotees then searched for his body and found it with the help of the local Hindu chieftain, one Kokkarachan, and the religious head, Sheikh of Kallai. Then they carried the dead bodies of the three martyrs for burial. When they came at a place at Mamba, they failed to lift the bodies further. Then they decided that this place would be the destined one for their burial. The place belonged to Kokkarachan who permitted to construct the Makham, mosque, etc in honour of the martyrs. The chieftain later became prosperous and donated the surrounding lands for effecting necessary. The place is also known as Siyarat buildings, located 16 k.m away from Kannur.

In 1925, the local landlord and the owner of the Anjarakkandy plantations sub-leased an additional land of 12 acres to the Makham and the mosque. In a predominantly Hindu residential area, the Mamba Nusarathul Islam Jamayath Committee is promoting the Islamic culture and running its religious and educational institutions with social harmony and respect for other religious communities.

A case study of the Mamba Makham, reveals certain common facts related to the cultural milieu of Kolathnad. In a common cultural milieu, both communities of the Hindus and the Muslims had followed the same cult pattern. For instance Kolathnad is renowned for its traditional cult of Teyyam. The deities like Kativanur veer is now worshipped by rural folk as

part of Hindu popular cult. The hero known as Mandappan was killed in a battle against the cattle lifters. Later he was deified as a major deity in the popular cult form of Teyyam as Kativanur veer. Sheikh, a true Muslim courted martyrdom in his fight against the infidels, who persecuted the Muslims in different ways. Although it is against the Shariyat or Islamic practice, the Muslim devotees find solace in the Makham of Sheikh. In the case of Kunhi Marakkar of south Malabar also the same trend of popular culture is adopted by the Muslims. Through the tenets and rituals of popular culture from the same socio-religious milieu, the Muslim as well as the Hindu communities have preserved their social and cultural harmony.

As a religion Islam believed in martyrdom against injustice, intolerance and oppression. Around such martyrs a popular culture had been built resulting in the identity of the community. In the 19th century, there were several outbreaks against the Hindu landlords and the British officials in South Malabar. Annual festivals and rituals are taking place in honour of such events and martyrs. The modern terrorists belonging to the fundamentalists of Islam as well as Hinduism wanted to build a popular heroic culture around the so called martyrs nourished by the purity of religion and its revivalism. Such a trend is against the progress of civilization. But the trend of tolerance and religious harmony should be promoted through popular culture in a multi religious society like that of Kerala and India. Kolathnad is a good example to this progressive scenario of culture.

Reference:

These aspects are discussed in my book, *The Mappila Heritage* (Calicut, 1998). See also its Translation in Arabic language. I am indebted for the information of the myth of Mamba Makham to Abdu Rasheed Maruvambayi. See his article in *Risala*, issue number 346.)

The Maritime power of the Mappilas

The maritime power of Calicut almost came to an end by the dawn of the 17th century. The prolonged and protracted wars against the Portuguese over a century, in fact, weakened the political power as well as the economic stability of this kingdom. The prosperity and surplus enjoyed by it from the maritime trade were lost for ever. Calicut which was an international port during the medieval period lost its name and fame due to the advent of the Portuguese and its encounters with other trading nations.

These conflicts as traced in the earlier chapters continued over a century, in which the House of Kunjali Marakkars came to be prominent being the House of admirals in the 16th century. This trading house gradually turned to be the defender of freedom of the Arabian Sea. Its role in offensive, and defensive capacity was praiseworthy and it inculcated the spirit of freedom in land and sea. The emerging trend of nationalism, particularly in the countries of Western Europe including Portugal was the determining force behind the European expansion. Such a trend was developing gradually among the political fragments of Kerala. The House of Kunjalis had represented this new trend and it was much ahead of its time. The Zamorins and the Calicut Kingdom raised an acute defence system against the political and commercial intruders on the

Western Coast and showed the elements of emerging trends of nationalism. Although there were compromises with the Portuguese by the Zamorins as political and military strategy, there were always confrontations against the Portuguese and their allies like the Raja of Cochin. In fact the spirit of resistance was always kept alive by the House of Kunjalis. The house had sacrificed its men and money for this purpose. Further the leadership on the basis of an anti-Portuguese ideology given by this house to coastal Mappilas or Muslims was praiseworthy. The coastal settlements in small towns by this community were defended against all exploitations by the Portuguese.

A century of confrontation on the Malabar Coast had left reminiscences of these heroic struggles even now among the Mappila rural folk. Some of the festivals and the myths are related to the sixteenth century struggles. Two such instances are narrated here for an analytical study. Manath Parambil Kunhi Marakkar was a martyr who lost his life while he was engaged in saving a girl from the Portuguese. He saved her but became a martyr in that attempt. Several myths related to this hero are available in folksongs known as Kottupalli Mala. Annual festivals are organised in honour of his memory at Kottupalli near Ponnani. Thousands of Mappila rural folk attend the festival. Thus his memory is perpetuated from generation to generation.

The Mamba Makham or tomb near Kannur, is also associated with the martyrdom of three heroes, Mahim Pokker, Zirajuddin and Abdulla, who lost their lives in an encounter against the Portuguese. The Makham is situated near the place where they attacked the Portuguese. Some of such tombs and centres perpetuate the memory and history of those anti-Portuguese struggles on the Malabar coast. The Mappilas as a community cherish these reminiscences as a matter of identity of their community. However such tendencies could not be

found among other communities of the coast, even if they had participated in these struggles.

A promontory near Vatakara projected in the Arabian sea known as sacrifice rock had several stories to tell as it had witnessed several encounters and sacrifices of both the Portuguese and the Mappilas. The petty traders and merchants of Mappila community who had peacefully settled and lived in the small towns of the coast were compelled to migrate to the hinterlands. The peaceful trade in spices was not possible for them due to the Portuguese activities. As a trading class, the Mappilas lost their opportunities in the sixteenth century. Many of them later turned to small farming, facing all economic difficulties. The kadtas or passport system enforced by the Portuguese vessels eliminated the Mappilas and other native merchants from the maritime trade. The kadtas consisted of a declaration of commodities and their destination and the details of voyage. Naturally such declarations facilitated the Portuguese for looting them in the distant seas.

Therefore the House of Kunjalis under the flag of Zamorin came to be the symbol of sea-resistance against the Portuguese. The native encounters both offensive and defensive against the Portuguese had considerable impact on the maritime history of Malabar. These contacts were well exploited by the Kunjalis in designing strategy of warfare, construction of vessels and innovation of new techniques like surveillance, naval blockade and convoying cargo vessels escorted by armed sailors. During the second world war, submarine threats were counteracted by such convoy system. The Malabar sailors under the able leadership of the Kunjalis had such convoy of cargo vessels to the Red-Sea. They also introduced sector attack by charging from flanks in separate groups as a matter of surprise. The strategies like hit and run instead of direct attack and confrontation were adopted by the Malabar sailors. The principle of flexibility was always maintained to counteract

the attack of heavy tonnaged vessels. Such strategies further developed into a policy of using naval forces for maintaining control in the area of interest. The Indian Navy in the modern period had adopted several such strategies at the time of exigencies.

The Malabar sailors had properly realised the significance of the freedom of Arabian Sea in a trade link with the middle east. This concept of the freedom of sea was much in advance of the time and even the great Mughals could not adopt such a policy in their campaigns for political control.

The decline of the House of Kunhalis added more facilities to the advent of the Dutch and the English over the Malabar coast. The power of Zamorin was always connected with the sea power of the Kunhalis. Their decline had further contributed to the decline of political and economic power structure of the kingdom of Zamorin. Therefore in the 17th century , the kingdom of Calicut was further exposed to the European adventurers and the empire builders. There starts the history of colonialism in Malabar and other parts of South India.

An analytical study of the historical forces which shaped Portugal as a maritime power highlights that some of such forces were prevalent in the kingdom of Calicut also. The gallantry of the Marakkars in the 16th century could be equated to any one of the commodores of that period . However the institutions of caste, hereditary occupational system, traditional ship-building, lack of capital formation etc. had arrested the growth of Calicut kingdom as a maritime state. Its ongoing feuds with Cochin and Kolathnad were well exploited by the Portuguese for their national advantage in Asia. The maritime fortresses like fort St. Angelo and Chaliyam turned to be the daggers drawn against the Calicut Kingdom. These fortresses safeguarded the political and maritime interests of the Portuguese. This situation was well understood by Kunhali Marakkar IV, who also strengthened the maritime fortress at

Kottakkal at the river mouth of Pudukattanam. The construction of an independent fortress which was absolutely necessary for maintaining the maritime interests, came to be an act of suspicion for the Zamorin. The Portuguese exploited this situation and alienated the vassal from his overlord. As such the forces of history were taking a new dimension in Malabar which finally culminated in the subjugation of this country by a foreign power.

The saga of Kunhali Marakkar teaches one vital lesson of history and that is the freedom of sea which finally maintains the freedom of land also. Therefore this 400th year of martyrdom of Kunhali Marakkar IV has a meaningful message to this nation: "the freedom of sea is the absolute freedom of a nation".

The Early Mappila Uprisings

The occupation of Malabar by the English East India Company since 1792 brought about radical changes in the agrarian relations of the region. The Joint Commission appointed for the settlement of Malabar affairs borrowed the model of revenue assessment from Bengal which was pioneering one in India in such experiments. The Bengal Commissioner of with his experience in that region practically restructured the revenue affairs in Malabar. Subsequently the royal houses of Malabar chieftains were converted into mere landholders or stanam holders. This situation was evaluated by Herbert Wigram, a noted authority on land tenures, in the colonial period as follows:

The British occupation of Malabar was injurious to the friendly relationship which had hitherto existed between landlord and tenant. In the first place the British Government required a fixed land revenue and this was foreign to the customs of the people'.

The Government further introduced another regulation in 1822 as Permanent Settlement Interpretation which articulated rural conflict in the agrarian system. The cumulative effect of all such measures was the expansion of agrarian poverty and pauperisation of peasantry. The general situation

in Malabar was described by Wigram:

If not unfrequently happens that the rent which he covenants to pay is more than the land can yield, and in this case a burden of debt accumulates round him, and this position is little better than that of a slave. If he incurs his land-lord's displeasure, decree for eviction and arrears of rent follows, and his means of livelihood are gone for ever².

The early revolts against the British in Malabar were originated in the agrarian frustration and discontent of peasantry. The Pazhassi revolt was one of such major events which compelled the Company authorities to transfer the entire region of Malabar from Bombay presidency to Madras administration as warranted by military expediency³. In 1805, after the liquidation of Pazhassi Raja the region was almost maintained under proper law and order. The series of administrative regulations promulgated by the Company also helped the systematic flow of surplus to the colonial system. There was a substantial increase in the population followed by a sudden decrease in the indigenous industries and job opportunities. The impact of the colonial administration and its regulations including the revenue laws was disastrous on peasantry. The rural poverty was more intensified in South Malabar, particularly in Ernad and Valluvanad Taluks where a majority section of peasantry came from the Mappila community. Their population was much higher than that of other communities⁴.

There were numerous factors contributory to the poverty of Mappilas as labourers and peasants. The colonial agrarian system as analysed by William Logan denied the right for fixity of tenure, fair rent and free transfer to the tenants. The inferior tenure holders became pauperised like the Irish Cottiers and lost their means of production in the agrarian system under the British. Therefore rural tensions appeared in the form of violent

outbreaks. It was highlighted that,

The violence periodically committed during the nineteenth century by the Moplahs was a never-ending source of horrified fascination for British officials in the Madras presidency. The curiosity consisted in the form of the violence, styled the moplah 'outbreak' or 'outrage'.⁵

The Mappilas as a separate religious community was exposed to puritarian religious reforms by their priests and the community as a whole was in search of an identity. The question of identity was more intensified in the colonial context as there were efforts on part of the Christian Missionaries to convert the lowest segments of native society. Therefore an ideological conflict was even taking place in the social order against the dominant sections in authority. The question of land, religion and identity came before the Mappilas with all their intensity than any other time before. The four intellectuals who lived in the 19th century had a puritan ie, approach in the religious and social affairs of the Mappilas. They were Umar Qasi of Veliamkode, Sayyid Alavi Thangal and his son Sayyid Fazal Pookkoya Thangal of Mamburam and Sayyid Sana-Ullah Makti Thangal. Umar Qasi had even issued fatwa criticising the British and their revenue system. He had great influence on Mappilas and served as a symbol of early resistance against the British and also a cult figure after his demise in 1852. Sayyid Alavi Thangal had also taken a strong stand against the British rule and his tract, Saiful Battar advised for a "fight against the British till the end"⁶. There were two early Mappila uprisings in 1801 and 1817 in which his involvement was suspected. However the authorities did not take action against him. The British found him a religious fanatic. He always stressed the unity of Islamic community and endorsed a revitalization among its members. His son Pookkoya Thangal led the community more vigorously to the direction in which his father moved and established the Jamaat Mosque at

Mamburam. He was against the un-Islamic practices followed by the Muslims and tried to regulate the social conduct of them. He even issued fatwas against ploughing on Fridays for a better observance of Mohammedan Sabbath. One of his injunctions was not to address a Nair with the honorific 'You' in the plural but only in the singular form. This was to create a sense of social negation. These trends reveal an identity crisis of the community in the colonial context, in the early 19th century.

Makti Thangal born in 1842, in a religious and priestly family was an ardent reformer in the latter half of the 19th century. His tracts against the christian religious views were popular among the Mappilas. There were other reformers also in the community who propagated religious ideology by establishing a network of mosques and religious learning centres. Thus the Ulamas and their ideology of Puritanism had played a seminal role in search of Islamic identity in Malabar.

The early uprisings of the Mappilas against the landed elements and other section of Hindu community had taken place in a social setting as highlighted in the above paragraphs. In 1852, T.L. Strange, a Judge, was appointed to enquire into the 'Mappila Outrages' who traced its beginnings to 1836 when a Hindu astrologer was stabbed and killed and three others were wounded in a remote village of Pandalur. After such incidents the culprits waited to be shot dead in an encounter with the law enforcing forces of the government. Strange as commissioner conducted enquiries into the causes and nature of 31 disturbances and came to the conclusion that they were resulted mostly by the religious fanaticism of the Mappilas.

His conclusion was warranted to the above direction as he was requested by the Government to bear in mind that his "grand object" should be "to secure to the Nair and Brahmin

population the most, ample protection and safety possible against the effect of Moplah fanaticism". In the light of this direction the commission had an injected and preconceived notion that fanaticism and not agrarian grievance was the cardinal issue behind these outbreaks. He stated that "pride and intolerance fostered by the Mohammedan faith, coupled with the grasping and treacherous, and vindictive character of the Moplahs in these districts drawn out to its worst extent have fomented the evil and it may be said to lie at the root thereof."

The commission studied and analysed 31 disturbances since 1836. These materials throw considerable light on the issues for an analytical study, though he had a different conclusion emphasising the contemporary view of the officials. The outbreaks had a unique character in their *modus operandi* and they were similar in almost all cases. The preparations for an outbreak involved "the intending participants donning the white clothes of martyr, divorcing their wives, asking those they felt they had wronged for forgiveness, and receiving the blessings of a *Tangal*" or priest for the success of their activity. When the outrage was initiated openly in a murder of a Hindu victim, the participants would wait for the governmental forces in a sturdy building for a last fight and martyrdom. They had worked into a frenzy by frequently praying shouting *takbir* as a war cry and singing songs with reminiscences of past outbreaks."

Although the commission found the outrages positively a "fanatical measure" indirectly he highlighted the agrarian tensions and conflicts in the rural society of Malabar. He further suggested that the Mappilas were a "united and advancing body" and the Hindus either stationery or retrogressive people". The commission suggested a few remedial measures which included,

1. taking into account of the ancient usages and practices connected with land tenures for interpretations of land lord-tenant relations,

2. preparation of registers showing lands held by tenants for a long time.

3. empowering the Collectors to decide disputes between landlords and tenants; and

4. imposing restriction on the absolute rights of janmis over wastelands.

Out of such recommendations only the first one was accepted by the Government. However when the land tenures were interpreted not on the basis of customary laws but according to the definitions given by the British courts. The repressive measures recommended by the commission were adopted by the Government and the Acts XXIII and XXIV of 1854 known as Mappila Outrages Acts were passed. Accordingly the authorities could impose fine on the Mappila population of any village implicated in outbreaks and also severe action.⁹

The question of outbreaks and its enquiry posed more issues for the searching mind than their answers. The rebels, if acted on mere fanaticism, they could have acted against any member of Hindu community. In many cases they had selected their victims. They never tried to escape for life but courted martyrdom in the confrontation against the police or military personnel. In several cases they had spared the lives of women and children. The Mappila tenants in other taluks of Malabar except in the case of Mattanur in 1852 had not initiated a measure like this.¹⁰ Further the coastal Muslims or trading communities of the coast had not been involved in the uprisings. Only the agrarian communities particularly in a zonal area had been participants in the process.

The Manjeri uprising of August 1849 was participated

by 65 Mappilas led by One Attan Moyan Gurukkal. The rebels consisted of 9 tenants, 33 labourers, one Tungal and two Mussaliars (Sons of an impoverished tenant), two charcoal burners, one gold washer, one son of a goldsmith, one barber, one leper and fourteen others who were not identified. The district records give every detail of Athan Mayan Gurukkal, the ring leader of the outbreak. He was a friend of poor peasants who safeguarded them from the corrupt officials. He was turning thus into a rural authority. When the instructions in ballistics were forbidden to him he lost his livelihood also. He was much sensitive to the insults and grievances faced by his fellow Mappilas. His statement addressed to the Collector and left in the Manjeri Temple dated 26 August 1849 enumerated the circumstances which led to the revolt. This is an important document which recorded the Mappila grievances. He observed:

The Government is ignorant of the weight of the grievance which the Mussalman inhabiting the inland part of Malabar have been suffering of late years; since the country has been under their rule, the majority of the public servants being of the Hindoo caste, they as well as the landlords of Malabar and the Rajas, who are also landlords, are from the beginning connected as fathers and sons, as also dependents, such as pattola achens (hereditary accountants), Karyasthans (managers), adiyars (vassals) and tenants. Thus leagued, they have been preferring false and vexatious complaints in the adalat and police, against several wealthy Mussalman who held land on mortgage, fee simple rights, which were the means they had of supporting themselves and family, which complaint, the sirkar without knowing the real merits of the case, decreed against them, upon the arguments (false pleas) brought forward in support of them, and afterwards thus passed, were enforced. In many instances, property of great value were by strategem set down as worth little. Some people (Mussalman) in order to

avoid complaints of this nature, have been under the necessity of giving large sums, as bribes and presents the consequence of all these has been, that many Mussalman have been reduced to a state of beggary, so much so, that they find themselves unable to represent,, and prove to the sirkar, the real, state of matters, with the view of putting a stop to such practices. Hence, the cause of the events which took place before this, in this part of the country, when some of the landed proprietors and their adherents were cut down and put to death, the perpetrators of which, after setting the public authority at defiance, were punished by Government.¹²

The agrarian grievances of the Mappilas, particularly under the colonial land system, had been enlisted by him, It also reveals the question of land, religion and identity playing a crucial role in motivating the outbreaks. Gurukkal after collecting 15 servants in Arecode Village, moved to Pandikkad, where they wanted to attack one wealthy Namboodiri landlord who had evicted tenants and engaged in money lending. As the Namboodiri was not available they returned to Manjeri where the local Raja's temple was attacked. Only the priest was hurt and others were left out. After spending eight days there and encountering with the troops they left to Angadipuram where they died in fighting with arms in hand.

In 1851, there was an outbreak in Kulathur in which a wealthy Mappila tenant had instigated two rebels against the Kadakkottil Namboodiri from whom he had possessed Kanam tenure lands. After his murder the gang took refuge in one Varier's house and murdered him. They died in fighting against the British troops. In 1852 there was another outbreak in Mattanur, a place out of the Mappila taluks, where an entire Brahmin family with servants were liquidated. The original band of the rebels were only nine but finally it consisted of about 200.¹³ In 1855, H.V. Conolly, District Magistrate and Collector of Malabar, was also assassinated by the Mappilas at

his bungalow.

The outbreaks continued even after the enforcement of the Mappila Outrages Act in the latter half of the 19th Century. In 1864, 73, 80, 84, 85 (May and August) 94, 96 and 98, the uprisings had been repeated in the Ernad and Valluvanad Taluks. In 1882 William Logan, as requested by the Government had given a detailed study on the Malabar land tenures.¹⁴ He categorically pointed out that tenancy legislation in favour of the cultivating tenant was absolutely necessary for maintaining law and order in this region. He also analysed that the colonial land structure had articulated the privileges of landlords at the expense of cultivating tenants, mainly the Mappilas in South Malabar. The burden of the British land revenue fell upon the paddy cultivating tenants in South Malabar. Therefore such lands were exposed to realisation of competitive rent particularly from the pauperised cottiers. His recommendation was in favour of a tenancy legislation in the model of Bengal Tenancy Act of 1858.¹⁵

The British officials described an outbreak zone or fanatic zone where the number of outbreaks were larger than in other areas. A study of the anatomy of those uprisings highlights certain possible conclusions. In the Mappila taluks of South Malabar, rural poverty had been intensified in the colonial context and new power structure of the landed class or Janmis had been created by the alien government. Although some of these outbreaks had been instigated by the rich Mappila intermediary landholders, most of the participants were pauperised or evicted lower sections of the peasantry. The uprising served as a ritual to create possible threats in the minds of landed and dominant sections and thus compelled them to restrict their actions against the tenants and other lower sections.

Mappilas as a community encouraged the rituals of uprisings through its popular institutions. The institutions

like Jarems, Mouluds, Nerchas, Mosques, Tangals and Mussaliars and their popular ballads and songs of particular occasions had brought in close association of the rebels. The rebels' martyrdom had taken place in acute social frustration and in several cases it was narrated that they had no alternative. It can be rightly pointed out that religion and the identity of the community were brought out together with the question of land, the means of production, in an agrarian society and its fast changing tenurial system and regulations. Their anti-feudal character was inspired from religious sentiments and promoted through a ritualistic approach. It also promoted anti-British sentiments as the entire socio-political system had adversely affected the life pattern of the rural poor of the Mappila community. The struggles against injustice and social oppression in the long run had created an awareness and consciousness in the community against the landlords and the British. The institutions which promoted this awareness and social memory later played considerable role in providing a historical background of the great rebellion of 1921 in this region.

Note and References

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5. Conrad Wood, The Moplah Rebellion and its Genesis (New Delhi : 1987)
6. See details in C.N. Ahamad Moulavi and K.K. Muhammed Abdul Karim, Mahattaya Mappila Sahithya Paramparyam (Calicut, 1978), PP.170-203

The Legacy of Islam (Kerala)

7. Report of Strange. 25 September 1852.

8. Wood, n.5

9. Some aspects of the outbreaks are studied by M. Gangadharan, *Malabar Rebellion : 1921-212* (Allahabad, 1989).

10. An appendix with detailed statistics of events, persons involved, etc. in the period under the Company administration ie. 1836 to 1855 are given to this paper. This was quoted from the study of Conrad Wood.

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12. Statement on 26 August 1849 by Athan Gurukkal, *Correspondence of Moplah Outrages in Malabar for the Year 1849-53* (Madras-1863), P.52

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Summory of 18 Moplah Outbreaks: 1836-1855

Al- Fath-ul-Mubin

Kerala has made a major contribution of creative writings to Arabic literature. The Mappila community has not only encouraged specialized theological discourses in the dars but also created a social and cultural milieu to promote Arabic language and literature. As such scholars, theologians, sufis, and poets had come up from this community with high reputation in all centres of Arabic learning. In northern India, the Persian contacts and the Mugal conquests had been responsible for the growth of Urdu language and literature. In the similar way the Mappila community in Kerala had promoted the Arabi-Malayalam languages and literature. It is written in the Arabic script with a textual combination of Arabic words and local vernacular. A great poet and genius in this language system was Moin kutty Vaidyar. He introduced many Islamic legends and traditions through specialized Malas and Kappal pattu among the Mappilas. His verses were beautiful compositions of philosophy, wisdom and poetic imagination.

Khasi Muhammed Abdul Azis of Calicut was a great poet in Arabic literature, who composed more than 12 works. He was the author of "Muhayiddin Mala". His composition Al-Fathul-Mubin is on a historical theme and it seems that he was an eye witness to that event which determined the course of the Portugese political power in the history of Kerala. This war poem was written between A.D 1579 and A. D.1607. By 1600

the maritime power of the Zamorin of Calicut had declined due to the last encounter at Kottakkal between the Kunjali Marakkar iv and the Portuguese supported by the Zamorin in 1600 A.D. Thus the poet was looking back to an event of pride with nostalgic sentiments. The event was a symbol of success, communal harmony, prestige and satisfaction of the Mappila community.

In fact the text was a criticism of communal disharmony and the atrocities committed by the Portuguese in Kerala. It further showed that only a united movement could resist the Portuguese intrigues and political designs. While narrating a historical event of 1571, the conquest of Chaliyam fortress constructed by the Portuguese on the right bank of the river Bepur at Chaliyam, the poet had become a historian like Thucydides, and had given an impressive account of a war between the Portuguese and the Zamorin supported by the Mappilas or his own community. Apart from epics and mythological narrations, such war poems on a contemporary event are rare in Kerala. Here the poet has followed the tradition of Arabic literature like the war of Badr and also projected the ethics and morality.

There is no account of the conquest of the Chaliyam fortress with details. As the poet was an eye witness, he was able to give much details of the event. Even after deducting the poetic exaggerations, it gives detailed information of a major event in the Portuguese history of Kerala. This reality adds more value to this poetic account by Abdul Aziz. As he was the Khasi of Calicut, the poem also reflected his loyalty and patriotism in favour of the ruler, the Zamorin. His loyalty towards the ruler was deep. The main motivation of writing a poem like this, is expressed by the poet, was to obtain the blessings of God. For a Muslim, Patriotism, is a way to Godly blessings. Then he dedicated his work to the Zamorin. He further described that the "Zamorin who loved the Muslims".

The qualities of Zamorin or his ruler are described as follows:

The world famous Zamorin's
Mental strength be known to the whole world,
Particularly in the foreign countries of Syria and Iraq.
He likes our religion, and loves
Muslims than all other[subjects].
He helps our religion and
Implements our religious laws.
In Malabar, wherever the Muslims live
They are his subjects.

(14-19lines)

The poet praises the heroism of the Nayar soldiers. It is further narrated that the ruler will not attack any other country without a reason and he will not confiscate the property of any one. While praising the ruler again and again the poet also mentions that he will not adopt dubious and treacherous methods in a war.

His criticism of other Muslim rules is interesting. He described:

He fights, although he is not a Muslim,
But the Muslim rulers are not fighting.

According to the poet he is fighting for the religions of Hinduism and Islam whereas the Muslim rulers are compromising with the enemies of Muslims. (Lines 50). The atrocities committed by the Portuguese are:

They burnt the countries
Pulled down and destroyed the mosques
Kept the men as slaves
Killed the innocent persons,

Gave troubles to those who are travelling.

(Lines 73-74)

The poet threw light on the violation of civil rights of the indigenous people. The Portuguese compelled their enemies to "eat one's own flesh and to shoot arrows themselves to their bodies". The hero of the poem, in the poetic concept was the Zamorin and the villain was the Portuguese captain, Antonio. It is interesting to note that in the early stage of the battle, there were several set backs to the soldiers of the Zamorin. Then the Zamorin himself marched to a nearby hill and proclaimed that he will go on starvation till the fortress was captured for him. The Mappilas then, declared a jihad against the Portuguese and initiated a life and death struggle with a single motivation that their ruler should not go without food and prolong his vow of starvation.

Finally the nairs and the Mappilas succeeded in capturing the Portuguese fortress with a great valour and heroism. Here jihad was declared to support the local ruler who was the follower of Hinduism. Infact it was not to crown a Muslim ruler or for making a darul harb (country of non-Muslims) into a darul Islam (country of Muslims). Even the meaning of jihad is demanded re-interpretations in social and theological conceptualisations.

The texts like the Fathul Mubin and their ideologies be brought out to the masses for promoting communal harmony, spirit of nationalism, and patriotism. Only such efforts would be able to resist the onslaught of neo-colonialism in developing and multireligious countries like that of India. This poem written before four centuries has a living message not only to Kerala but also to India in a wider context. It should be heard and practised.

[This text has been translated into Malayalam by Prof. Mankada Abdul Aziz]

Sheikh Zainuddin Makhdum, an Anti-colonialist

Kunhippalli, in Azhiyur, a mosque located on the highway from Calicut to Mahe, is a worship centre where all travellers used to offer coins or money as a votive for the blessings of a renowned Sufi, Sheikh Zaimuddin Makhdum Junior. It is believed that the earthly remains of this savant and his mother are buried in the South eastern side of the mosque. tradition says that the Makhdum family, belonging to a tribe in Yaman of Arabia migrated to Ponanni, on the Malabar coast, during the latter half of the fifteenth century. The family head who migrated to Ponnani was one Sheikh Zainuddin Ibrahim Ibn Ahmed. His brother's son, Zainuddin senior, the first Makhdum Zainuddin Ibn Ali Maabari (A.D. 1467-1521) wrote a mystic poem, *Hidayath ul Adkiya Ila Tarikhatil Auliya* which was a manual of Sufism in Kerala. His son Abdul Aziz had recorded that his father had been initiated to Chisti Tarikat of Sufi order. Zainuddin was against all oppressions by the Portuguese on the coast. His third son Sheikh Muhammed Al Cassali was a mufti who constructed the Juma mosque at Chombal or Jaubala. His wife was from the family of Valiyakath Karaketti of Azhiyur. His eldest son Sheikh Zainudin Makhdum had his religious education at Ponnani. Then he migrated to Mecca for higher education. He continued his education for ten years and became an authority of Hadiz. The

scholars of Haram declared him a Muhadis. Zainuddin's teacher, Imam Shihabuddin, was an authority on Islamic jurisprudence and the author of Thuhfa, a famous work on Islamic religion. Later he studied under Abdul Hassan Albakari and specialised in the branch of Tasavuf. Albakari bestowed eleven special dress or karkha on him and ordained him to the Kadiriyya Tarikhat as Sheikh.

After that, he returned to Ponnani where he conducted a Dars for 36 years and acted as Mudaris. He was an orator and social reformer who continued to be the friend of Emperor Akbar and the rulers of Bijapur. He served as a diplomat to the Zamorin of Calicut and negotiated with the Sultan of Egypt and Turkey for effecting a political alliance against the Portuguese invasions in Kerala.

His religious text Kurrath Al Ain is even now taught in the Arabic colleges. This text is also known as Fathul Mubin. Another work Irsad ul Ibad is a famous philosophical account.

Zainuddin's famous work is Tuhifat ul Mujahiddin which described the Portuguese atrocities in Kerala along with the native measures adopted against them from 1498 to 1583. This work is translated in to Portuguese, English, Spanish, Latin, French, Chek and other languages. The translations are available in Malayalam, Urdu, Kannada, Tamil etc. The author dedicated his work to Ali Adil Shah of Bijapur, who was in a life and death struggle against the Portuguese to recapture Goa.

Muhammed Kasim Firista realized the significance of his work and incorporated in " the Rise of Muhammadan Power in India upto 1612". It was translated into English by Anderson. The fourth part of this work, describing the Portuguese invasions and the native counter measures in Kerala was translated into Portuguese by David Lodas.

In 1833, Lt. M.J. Rowlandson translated the work second

time into English. The scholars like A Emerson, James Briggs and Rox had translated this work again into English. Malik S. Muhammed Hussain Nayanar translated again this work into English and published it from the University of Madras. The translations in Malayalam by C. Hamza, K. Moosan Kutty and Velayudhan Panikkasseri are available.

A jihad, as justified by holy works of Islam are frequently quoted in the first part of his work. The second part traces the Islamic settlements and information in Kerala. Part third deals with caste oriented contemporary Kerala society. The advent of the Portuguese, their invasions, native resistance under the leadership of the Zamorin and the maritime encounters led by the House of Kunhalimarakkar upto 1583 are described in the fourth part of the book. In the year 1583, treaty of peace was entertained between the Portuguese and the Zamorin. This was a contemporary historical account of the Portuguese by a native historian of Kerala. He promoted the idea of anticolonialism which was in the offing in Kerala.

Thucidides had given a detailed account of the Peloppenecian wars. In the same way Zainuddin had become Thucidides of Kerala by writing this historical account of Kerala's resistance against the Portuguese. The great achievement of Zainuddin was his devotion to Islam and its philosophy. He was a pragmatist and tried his best to inspire the native elements in a total fight against the Portugues in the 16 th centuary. His notion of a jihad was not to convert the Darul Harb in to Darul Islam but to safeguard the interest of the native ruler, the Zamorin. Such a broad mind in a theologian was not generally found in the middle ages. Thus his philosophy has a relevance even in the present century in a total fight against the ideology of neo-colonialism which consolidates the resources all over the world.

Kunhi Marakkar Festival

In all traditional societies the chastity of the woman had been highly respected. The European medieval chivalry had been the result of such social philosophy. The society respected the heroes who sacrificed their lives for a common cause. The heroic deaths were commemorated through installing hero-stones. Such stones described the heroic activities of a hero. There is a popular couplet depicted on several herostones as follows:

"If you win you can court Lakshmi or the goddess of wealth. If you die, you can embrace the heavenly damsels. The body perishes in a little time. Then why do you worry the death in a battle?"

This is a philosophical intoxication for a hero to fight and sacrifice his life either for this world or for heaven. The concept of jihad or martyrdom in Islam cherished the same idea and promised the enjoyment of a huri or celestial girl in heaven. The religions like Hinduism and Islam promoted such ideas among the followers through myths, legends and teachings. Here a festival conducted by the Mappilas of Malabar is analysed to highlight the social philosophy of martyrdom.

The legend of Manath parambil Kunhi Marakkar shahid or the ballad of Kottuppalli Nercha provides a theme of

martyrdom, an anecdote of the medieval history of Kerala. Every year this festival is conducted by the local community of the Mappilas. The hero lived at Manath in Veliyankode, near Ponnani. It is believed that his bodily remains were kept in a small structure at Manath. The maulud or recitation of this ballad or conduct of such a song-ritual is generally organised for divine blessings, cure of diseases and fulfilment of desires. The style of the song is like this:

In the village of Veliyamkode

In the house of Manath

With great love and affection

The mother brought him up

He acquired knowledge and also fighting skill.

When the father died, he was brought up by the mother who loved him and gave him necessary education. He was also taught in the Kalari system. At an age of 12, his mother gave him some money to start selling of fish from Ponnani.

In Ponnani, while he was passing near the mosque with a headload of fish, he was seen by Zainuddin Makdum. He realised that this boy of 12 years, would cross the ocean and fight as a hero against the non-believers or kafirs. Makdum requested him to give up the fish-load and gave him good clothes. The boy told everything to the mother and then engaged himself in the dars learning of religion. He spent several years in learning of Islamic theology. Finally his mother wanted him to be married.

The nikah ceremony was being conducted. Then an old man came and informed that the people of Nazarath (Portuguese) had come and two of them after landing on the shore had captured a young girl and kept her in their custody in the vessel. The people assembled for the ceremony, were of opinion that the news may be true. They found that

they could not do anything to rescue her. They finally asked to serve food.

The bridegroom came to know that a Muslim girl was in danger. He went back to his house, while everybody was eating. He then sought the blessings of his mother and told her that he was going to fight against the Kafirs. In a country boat, he approached the vessel anchored off the seashore. It was midnight and the soldiers fully drunken were in deep sleep. Marakkar killed them one by one. He rescued the girl from the hide out. He asked the boatman to take her to the shore. Then he went to another vessel with an ultimate aim to become a martyr in the encounter against the Portuguese. He killed several soldiers in the vessel. Finally he was cut into pieces by a soldier and killed. His fragmented body of seven pieces had fallen to far off places.

The mother had a dream that his beloved son was killed and the body was cut into pieces. One of such pieces had come to Manath also. The people buried it there. The local ruler of Karappa Palace was suffering from a bruise. It was not cured after medication. One day he had a dream of the young Muslim martyr. It was repeated two more days. The dream suggested that the head was floating somewhere in the river. If it is buried properly then the bruise will be cured. The ruler had sent people to find out the head. They found eagles flying near by a fort compound. When they swam to capture it, it was moving away from them. Then the Mappilas came and they recited Takbirs: The head came to them and they prepared the burial ground on the hill. But they could not move the head. Then they wanted to bury the bodies in the river bank itself. The dargas of Kunhi Marakkar are located in Veliyamkode, Tanur Calicut, Vadakara, Beypore, Veypin and Kotta

The ballad recited in a maulud depicts the heroic martyrdom of the Islamic scholar, who from his own wedding

occasion decided to be a martyr to safeguard the honour of a Muslim girl. Many of his fellowmen were not ready for an encounter. He rescued the girl, adopted for divinity through his heroic death. The origin of several dangers in the Mappila settlements is tied up with the legend of Kunhi Marakkar. A ballad is composed by the unknown poet to record his life story. Every year a festival is conducted in his birth place at Veliyamkode where thousands attended. It is an interesting episode from the local history. The whole ideology behind the festival and the maulud is to promote the social philosophy of martyrdom for religion and the honour of Islam. In North Malabar the hero-deities like the Kativanur Veer who fought against cattle lifters and safeguarded the community interest are propitiated. Although the festival is against the Islamic principles, as a local tradition of the native soil, it is continuing as a synthesis of two cultures in the social milieu of the Kerala society.

The Kerala Experience Assimilation of Cultures:

Since the formation of Kerala society, there had existed different religious communities and groups in this region. It is believed that St. Thomas, the Apostle, had introduced Christianity in Travancore and had converted a good number of people into that religion¹. In the early centuries of the Christian era, the Jews, when they faced persecution in their homeland, migrated to Kerala for asylum. The rulers of Kerala were sympathetic to those migrants and were good in their heart to grant special privileges to the Jewish trading community. Such privileges and concessions were recorded on copper plates which show the generosity and compassion towards the new settlers following a different religious system². They were also permitted to construct synagogues in places like Mattanchery.

In fact the waves of Aryan religions like the Buddhism and the Jainism from the northern parts of India had found their way to this region even prior to the consolidation of Hinduism with its *chaturvarnya* division and the caste system of society. Both these heterodox religious systems with their compassionate philosophy and humane approach had organized new social institutions of medicine, education and

charity in Kerala society. When those religious forces became decadent in Kerala, their institutions and centres of worship were gradually incorporated within the social structure and the cultural legacy of Hinduism³. The process of cultural assimilation was effective and all-embracing and the distinct identities of those religions was lost for ever in Kerala society. The assimilation was based more on the process of unity in diversity and not on the suicidal aspect of confrontation or conflict.

People living within a district or geographical contour, but following heterogeneous cultural and religious trends, are bound to promote a common culture or heritage pertaining to that particular society. More often, it can be a composite culture, but absolutely leading to social integrity and unity.

The social and cultural history of a region like that of Kerala stands witness to this. The people who followed different religious and cultural patterns, with their conscious or unconscious social behaviour had promoted a synthesis of cultures providing for a common heritage.

Islam as a religion and a way of life is a fine example of this generalization. As a dynamic civilization originating in the Middle East, it has spread its message throughout the world including India. Even prior to the advent of Islam, the Arabs had established regular commercial contacts with the western coast of Kerala⁴. Following those maritime contacts of trade and commerce, Islam came to the coastal towns of Kerala as early as in the time of the Prophet himself⁵. Like the Jews and the Christians, the Muslims also were well received in the social system of Kerala. The local rulers gave all possible assistance to the Arab settlers, and encouraged their settlements in coastal and interior towns⁶. In northern India, the Islamic religion had spread as introduced by the Afghan and the Mongolian conquerors, and that historical situation had led to a common animosity against its followers from the natives. However, in

southern India including Kerala, it had a different process based on mutual consent and encouragement as the trading community was acceptable to the indigenous society. Centres like Calicut became a trade emporium in the eastern hemisphere, mainly because of the Muslim entrepreneurs. The bulk of the eastern trade till the advent of the Portuguese and other European nations in Asia was in the hands of the Arab merchants. Among the natives of Kerala, the Arab descendants were known by the pet name, the Mappilas. The growth of political power of the Zamorins of Calicut depended mainly on the prosperity of Arab trade. The volume of indigenous and foreign trade, mainly controlled by the Arabs and the Mappilas, made Calicut one of the major centres of foreign trade in Asia in the fifteenth century. Abdur Razzak, the Persian Ambassador, wrote in 1442 about Calicut that:

... the most wealthy merchants bring thither from maritime countries considerable cargoes which they unload and unhesitatingly send into the markets and bazaars, without thinking in the meantime of any necessity of checking the account or of keeping watch over the goods⁷.

The rulers of Calicut encouraged these trading communities and settlers with liberal concessions and endowments. One of the mosques in Calicut, known as Muchundi, was given state patronage by the Zamorin. Many mosques and temples, situated in the same locality in the kingdom of Calicut, have existed with harmony and mutual respect. Some of these mosques were constructed in the same architectural style, with slight variations, as that of the Hindu temples, specifically known as Dravida. In effect, the construction style of a mosque and a temple was one and the same⁸.

Assimilation of Cultures: The Kerala Experience

In other parts of India, the Indo-Islamic architecture had

its main inspiration from the Persian and Turkish traditions. However, in Kerala, the Arab tradition of simplicity of structural form had combined with the indigenous style of *Tachusastra* thereby giving rise to a new style of mosque architecture. This was probably due to the employment of indigenous carpenters and masons who knew only the temple style of architectural construction. The mosque architecture flourished in Kerala mainly between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries when the Muslims enjoyed a prestigious position in the maritime trade with Arabia.

Gradually, the Mappilas migrated to the interior from the coastal towns and settled as cultivators and traders. Along with such new settlements, they established their juma mosques and minor prayer halls⁹. In the long run the Mappilas became an integral part of Kerala society. This process was based on co-operation and sympathy and not on conflict and hatred. As a trading class the Mappilas enjoyed confidence and self respect from the rest of the communities.

In the sixteenth century these Arab traders and the Mappilas were the first to realize the political significance of the European expansion and the advent of the Portuguese in the Arabian waters. They started an era of native resistance against the Portuguese for establishing the right of free trade and political independence of the native rulers like the Zamorin. The role of the Kunhali Marakkars, as the defenders of Islam and the Zamorin, is a significant chapter in the history of Kerala in her fight against colonialism¹⁰. The Nayar soldiers of the Hindu community, and the Mappila mariners of Muslim community fought shoulder to shoulder for capturing the Portuguese fortresses of Chaliyam and Ponnani. In those days of atrocities, the Hindus and the Muslims faced the Portuguese courageously and courted martyrdom in the cause of their native land and resisted its attempted subjugation by the intruders. Sheikh Zainuddin, the *author of Tuhfat-ul-Mujahideen* was a

guide and philosopher of this heroic resistance against the Portuguese¹². Religion was not a barrier in their unity and cultural integration but it strengthened its cause by encouraging martyrdom for one's own country or *Mulk*. That explains why when the Zamorin was forced to surrender the Kunhali Marakkar IV into the hands of the Portuguese, his Nayar soldiers revolted against this situation¹³.

In fact, for long centuries, Islam as a religion was deep-rooted in the soil of Kerala. The long association with the Hindu community of this region had basically restructured some of the cultural and ideological aspects of Islam. The fundamentalist sections, who are always in search of Islamic purity, will not appreciate its regional variation and the trends of change in the cultural milieu of Islamic community in Kerala. The Shariyat or the Islamic law had always recognized the primogeniture or the succession by the eldest son to property and estate. In Kerala the institution of matriliney or the succession in the female line is very commonly known by the local term *Marumakkathayam*. The ruling chieftain of Kannur or the Ali Rajas of Cannanore, the estate owners like the Keyis of Thalassery and many other land-owning families in different parts of Kerala had adopted this local Hindu custom of succession. Here the Islamic custom and law had been dominated by the native custom which had been ratified by the court of laws. On account of such a legal situation, the Madras Legislative Assembly promulgated the Mappila Succession Act of 1919, stipulating the Shariyat rules for self acquired properties of the Muslims who followed Marumakkathayam. The High Court of Madras held that this act, including the amendment of 1949, extending to agricultural lands also, did not purport to, nor did it abolish the rights and incidents of, the Mappila Marumakkathayam. The same proposition was accepted by the full bench of the High Court of Kerala. "...Here the court was supporting the centuries-old traditions of the Mappila

community, particularly inherited by it from its Hindu counterpart. As the Mappilas wanted to strengthen their patrilineal ties, they also, like the Nayars, insisted on the partition of joint families and tarawads. Thus the Madras Legislative Assembly enacted the Mappila Marumakkathayam Act of 1939, giving permission for such partition for ensuring the operation of Shariyat laws of succession. Many wealthy Mappila families went for partition only after this act. It shows that the landed aristocracy of the Mappila community in Kerala had deeply imbibed the indigenous culture even against their religious rules and practices.

The annual *Uruz* and *Nerchas* in honour of sufis and philosophers are significant religious festivals for Islamic community in Kerala. The anatomy of those festivals resembles more often Hindu festivals like Kaliyattam, Perumkaliyattam and temple festivals like *Pooram* and *Vela*. In all these festivals, the rituals and processions have common and similar elements. They are all village festivals, participated in by rural folk without any distinction of caste, creed and religion. These folk festivals are the manifestation of a common culture and heritage, and they reflect the strength of unity and oneness. The local Hindu community had always participated in the festivals of the Muslims. In the same way in many of the Teyyam festivals of northern Kerala, the ritual role as suppliers of salt and sugar is observed by the Muslims. These aspects of unity are still pursued with mutual respect. Formerly, at the time of wedding ceremonies, a brass lamp was lighted by the eldest female member in the Muslim family as is done in the Hindu family. It was also followed by the sprinkling of rice on the heads of newly wedded couples as in the Hindu custom. Another common practice is the newly married couples to seat on a white sheet spread over a blanket.

Some of the Mappila folk performances like the Kolkkali (stick play),

Oppana (a dance form) and several other items are mere imitation and modification of folk items of Hindu community. The performance of Oppana is highly indebted to a folk item exclusively performed by the Hindu women folk named after *Thiruvattirakkali*. The clapping and movement in a circle along with the gay recitation of the folk song are the main characteristics of both items. In the folk songs of Oppana, more Arabic and Persian vocabulary is used along with Malayalam words. The performance itself is rhythmic, artistic and melodious.

The classical theatres of Kerala, Koodiyattam and Kathakali had borrowed at least some items of costumes from the Arabs and the local Mappilas. The female costumes in Kathakali are actually the same dress as used by Mappila women. The dress known as 'Kuppayam' was a forbidden thing for a highcaste woman of Kerala who kept her upper part naked. Therefore, the model was taken from the Mappila womenfolk.

The cult of Teyyam is a ritualistic art form. Even in such performance, the Muslim characters are incorporated as boatmen of the goddesses. These characters wore fez caps and also observed the *namaz* as ritual. The famous Hindu deity, Ayyappa at Sabarimala, has a Muslim companion and saint known as Bavar. The pilgrims to the Ayyappa shrine also visit the place of Bavar. Places like the Mamburam Tangals' mosques and several Jarems of the sufis and saints are visited by the Hindus. They also bring offerings to these centres and pray for blessings and boons.

Several Christian churches like Malayattur, Kaduthuruthi, Mannarcad and Cochin and their festivals are attended by the local Hindu community also. As in a mosque, offerings are made in these churches also. Further, some of the church authorities had introduced a process of Indianization and had adopted saffron dresses for nuns and priests and lighted bronze lamps for prayers. Even much earlier, the sermons were given

in the native language of Malayalam and the holy texts, like the Bible, were published in that language. Such a process had brought different communities closer and closer, thereby destroying the barriers of religion. Christianity or Islam today does not believe in proselytization as in early centuries, but exhibits tolerance and mutual respect. Such efforts had articulated their identity as Malayalee or Keralite as part of the Indian nationality.

The policy of the rulers in traditional Kerala was to encourage all religious communities and they were quite liberal in their attitude towards religious groups other than their own. Sheikh Zainuddin wrote:

The unbelievers never punish such of their countrymen who embrace Islam, but treat them with the same respect shown to the rest of Muslims, though the convert belongs to the lowest of grades of their society. As a result of such kindly treatment, Muslim merchants of olden days used to come in large numbers¹⁶. The caste system in the Hindu community had weakened its position by putting down its lower sections as untouchables for the upper sections. Christianity and Islam opened their doors for these oppressed sections who sought their liberation through conversion into those religions. Once converted, their caste grievances were largely mitigated. Such conversions in the early centuries had increased the numerical strength of the followers of those religions. The sufis enjoyed great command over the rural folk and attracted them towards the order of Islam.

The Arabi-Malayalam, a dialect of the Muslim intelligentsia, was invented for the purpose of communication among themselves and a separate branch of literature developed in that dialect. It was neither Arabic nor Malayalam but an admixture of both. Like the Urdu language and literature, this has become a language of the intelligentsia. The Muslim community were familiar with the Arabic letters and script.

The language used by them was Malayalam but words from Arabic, Persian and Urdu languages were liberally borrowed into it. Even philosophical discourses like *Muhyiuddeen Mala*, authored by Khazi Mohammed in 1607, had enriched this branch of literature. The Mappila pattus (or songs) also add to the emotional integration of the Muslim mind with the Hindu ethos¹⁷.

As a large minority community in Kerala, the Mappilas offer many fascinating factors for study and analysis relating to historical development of Kerala society. As noted by a recent writer, 'nowhere in India have foreign trading, commercial and religious interests interacted within the indigenous socio-economic and political institutions more intimately than they have in Malabar¹⁸.

An analytical study of Kerala society reveals that it had promoted a composite culture by developing an indepth harmony and tolerance among different religious communities and bringing them together in a collective experience of integration. This spirit of collectivity can be identified in her festivals, rituals and artistic performances. The boundaries of religious systems had not put the people of Kerala in watertight compartments; rather they contributed to the matrix of a mosaic and composite culture. This culture is a product of collective human experience in the annals of history. Today, however, many of the cultural expressions of the Mappilas are under attack from both classicists and progressivists. Their search for purity of Islam as part of their fundamentalist thought is prompting them to reject many ritual celebrations and processions with an indigenous character as Un-Islamic. These purist and classicist movements shun the folk elements of a composite culture of Kerala and lead to the polarization of religions and communities. Situations like this subscribe to the disintegration and separation which must be resisted for the well-being of an Indian society.

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1. A. Sreedhara Menon, *Cultural Heritage of Kerala - An Introduction* (Cochin, 1978), p. 17.
2. See Tarisappalli Copper plate Grant of 849 A.D issued by Ayyan Atikal Tiruvatikal, the Governor of Venad. The senior members of the Arab settlement of Quilon were asked to witness this grant.
3. There is a famous temple known as Ganapathivattam at Sultan Battery of Wayanad. Originally it was a Jaina Basti. Even now Jaina images of Tirthamkaras can be identified on the walls. Now they are destroyed.
4. The Arab geographers had a thorough knowledge of such maritime centres of Malabar. See traditional account of Calicut kingdom in K.V. Krishna Iyer, *The Zamorins of Calicut* (Calicut, 1938).
5. The earliest settlements are Quilon, Kodungallur, Chaliyam, Pantalayani Kollam. Dharmadham, Sreekanthapuram, Madayi, Kasaragod, Mangalore and Barkur.
6. Then these settlements are extended to Calicut, Veliyankot, Tirurangadi. Tanur, Ponnani, Parappanangadi, Paravanna, Kappat, Tikkoti, Kannur, Baiiapatam, Nileschwaram, Cochin, etc.
7. R.H. Major, (ed.), *India in the Fifteenth Century* (Delhi, 1974, reprint), p. 14.
8. Recently many of these mosques are reconstructed in concrete with minarets and domes as the Mappilas have become an affluent community with their employments in gulf countries.
9. A large number of such centres are scattered in the interior of Malabar and new settlements are effected even in the rural areas.
10. See details in K.K.N. Kurup (ed.) *India's Naval Traditions- The Role of Kunhali Marakkars* (New Delhi, 1997), Also, O.K. Nambair,

The Legacy of Islam (Kerala)

The Kunjalis, Admirals of Calicut (Bombay, 1963).

11. A descriptive poem on this event is written in Arabic by Khasi Muhammad Bin Abdul Aziz of Calicut probably between ad 1578 and 1579. See *Fathuhul Mubeen* translation into Malayalam by Mankata Abdul Aziz, Calicut, 1996.

12. A medieval historian and sufi of Kadiriyya order of Kerala even demanded a jihad against the Portuguese. It is believed that his holy tomb is situated at the Kunhippalli mosque of Chombal, near Mahe.

13. See Nambair, in n. 10.

14. Abdu Rahiman *vs* Avoomma, A.I.R. 1956 Madras, 244. See K. Sreedhara Warrior, *Marumakkathayam and Allied Systems of Law in the Kerala State* (Cochin. 1969).

15. A.I.R. 1959, Kerala 67 (Full Bench).

16. Sheikh Zainuddin, (trans. and ed.) Sheikh Malik Hussain Nayanar. *Tuhfat ul-Mujahidin* (Madras University, 1942), pp. 51-52.

17. N.P. Muhammed, 'Reflections on Mappila Heritage', in Asghar Ali Engineer, *Kerala Muslims: A Historical Perspective* (Delhi, 1995), pp. 35-46.

18. D.N. Dhanagare, *Peasant Movements in India: 1920-1950* (Bombay, 1983), p. 54.

Harmony In Kerala The Sufis And Religions

Sufism is a mystical movement in Islam represented by individual men and women who devoted themselves singly and exclusively for the service of god and the joyous experience of His grace¹. When Islam spread in India, the Sufi orders had also become popular in the continent. The common belief of the rural masses credited the sufis with supernatural powers and attributed to them the ability to perform miracles. Among such powers, the ability to forecast the future, to trace the lost or stolen properties, to cure chronic diseases and to effect rain during the devastating drought were widely enumerated by the people. The sufis were loved and respected by all sections of society irrespective of their religious affinity. It is important to note that the sufis led a married life as there was no sanction by the prophet for monkery or rahbaniya in Islam.

Kerala being a coastal region which had continuous contacts with the Arabs as a matter of maritime trade, had welcomed the religion of Islam since the days of the Prophet. The Kerala rulers on account of their maritime trade interest with the Arabs gave all facilities for peaceful religious conversion of their subjects to Islam². The earliest mosque in Kerala, as per tradition, was constructed in Cranganore, where

the later Chera rulers had their headquarters. The early Islamic missionaries in Kerala including Malik-bin-Dinar and his companions after effecting the first mosque at Cranganore continued the process of construction in Southern Quilon, Chaliyam, Panthalayini, Srikanthapuram, Elimala (Matayi), Kasaragod, Mangalore and Pakkanur (Bharacore) on the western coast³.

The spread of Islam in Kerala had been noted by the fourteenth century travellers like Ibn Batuta. The religious and communal harmony which had existed in Kerala between the Hindus and the Muslims continued over centuries without much change. The sufis and the Islamic intellectuals promoted communal harmony with their devoted activities and attracted the caste-ridden and oppressed lower section to their religious and organisational fold.

The advent of the Portuguese in Kerala during the end of the fifteenth century completely changed the socio-political milieu of the region in the ensuing years. The Portuguese even carried over their medieval political and religious hatred against Islam to Malabar also. The Mappilas or the descendants of Islam had established a monopoly over maritime trade and commerce in Kerala which also accelerated the hatred of the Portuguese against the former⁴. They destroyed several Mappla villages on the coastal belt and enforced innumerable atrocities on Mappila women and children. Even the vessels carrying pilgrims to Mecca were destroyed on the sea as a matter of religious fanaticism.

The sufis, theologians and other intellectuals of Islam found this as a hard situation faced by their religion in Kerala. The petty chieftains and rulers of Kerala found this situation created by the Portuguese, absolutely irresistible one on account of their inferior naval force. However, with the help of the naval force organised by the Mappilas under the admirals of Marakkar

family (Kunhali to Kutti Ali) ; the Zamorines of Calicut offered a stubborn resistance against the Portuguese intrusion and expansion.

The aforesaid political situation in Kerala had greatly changed the character of Islamic sufis and theologians in this region. In spite of their religious teachings and preachings of harmony and solidarity, they were compelled to protest an organised war or jihad against the Portuguese to safeguard Islam and its followers and other communities. In another sense, the traditional intellectuals of Islam in Kerala remained as defenders of Islam on one side and on the other preached communal harmony. Their cult of Xenophobia or hatred of foreigners, particularly the Portuguese, made them different from their counterparts in the rest of India. The character of Indian sufism and mysticism had greatly changed in Kerala on account of the Portuguese invasion and later the British conquest of Malabar. Under the British colonial systems the sufis and the intellectuals and the theologians of Islam shared the responsibility of organising the rural masses against the cultural hegemony of the British. Some of the sufis who could not accommodate with this new situation migrated to interior rural areas, quite away from the coastal line and led ascetic life preaching social harmony and religious solidarity among the Hindus and the Muslims. They had combined the role of fakirs, physicians, fortunetellers, poets and followed Islamic purity of life. Their tankhavs and tombs scattered in different places are centres of rural pilgrimage. The annual festivals in these centres attract thousands of rural folk irrespective of their religion⁵.

PONNANI AND TIRURANGADI

The two great centres of sufism and theology in Kerala are Ponnani and Tirurangadi. These centres had seen several sufis, scholars and theologians. Some of them are known as Tangals. On account of their diametrically opposite roles as

sufis, scholars, jurists, etc., at least some specialists doubt the sufi-mysticism of Kerala as an inferior character. Perhaps sufism in its original form may be said to have come to an end in Kerala after the advent of the foreigners. Anyhow the classical tradition of sufism must have come to an end on account of various socio-political reasons of which an indepth study is a historical desideratum⁶.

Ponnani was the birth place of Sheikh Zainuddin Makhdum whose mother hailed from Chombayi (Chombala) near Mahe.⁷ His major works both religious and historical, consist of *Khurrathul In*, *Ajeebathul Ajeeba*, *Ahkamun-Nikhah*, *Manhajul Valiyah*, *Irshad*, *Fathhul Muyin*, *TuhfatulMujahideen*.etc. *The TuhfatulMujahideen* is th first historical account of the Portuguese invasions written from Kerala side⁸. The author even instigated the Muslims for a jihad or holy war against the Portuguese who had destroyed mosques and Mappila settlements in large numbers on the Malabar coast. He found Adilshah I, the Sultan of Bijapur, as a true defender of Islam and a close friend of the author. It is believed that his death had taken place in Hijira 991 or A.D. 1583.

Qazi Muhammad bin Abdul Aziz of Calicut who passed away in Hijira 1025 was a renowned philosopher, poet and sufi. He had profusely contributed to the growth of Arabi-Malayalam literature. As a social reformer he gave leadership to settle some of the religious issues and conflicts prevalent as Tarikhats in Kerala. It is believed that Qazi Muhammad was the follower of Qadiri sufi order founded by Muhyial Din Abd al Qadiri whose teachings were based on the Kuran and its traditions. Qazi Muhammad's Muhyi-al-Din Mala is a great contribution to Islamic devotional or Bhakti literature.

Hazarat Umar Qazi of Veliyamkode, born in 1765 in a family reputed for religious scholarship was educated under Mammikutty Qazi of the Maqdum family at Ponnani. Hazarat Mammikutty Qazi initiated him to Qadiriyya order. It was

believed that Umar Qazi had possessed supernatural powers with the ability to disappear from a police-lockup and also to force the police to act according to his desires. He had written several tracts and fatwas both in prose and poetry on various aspects of religion. After his death in 1857 he became a popular cult figure among the rural folk of Malabar.

Although he was a sufi with supernatural power to cure chronic diseases and bring rain in extreme drought, he was a great critic of the British and their administrative system. His landed properties in Veliyamkode were heavily assessed by the revenue officials. He had even protested against such collections and even demanded a non-payment of tax. He never paid land revenue, but his friends had fulfilled this obligation. After their death, the village headman demanded the payment from Umar Qazi. He scolded them as servants of the imperialists who had slain Tipu Sultan and destroyed many native rulers. When a complaint was filed before the Revenue Divisional officer, Umar Qazi was brought before him for trial. During the trial he was forced to spit on the face of the officer Neebu. He was put under imprisonment at Choughat from where the Qazi disappeared during the night from the lock up. Later he was arrested and produced before the District Magistrate who sentenced him on 18 December 1819 for imprisonment at Calicut for a long period. However, after hearing these developments the Mappila aristocracy under the leadership of the Mamburam Tangal went to Calicut and got him released. He was highly respected by the Hindus and the Mappilas as a divine personality⁹.

Tirurangadi is a well-known religious centre for the Muslims of Malabar as several sufis, philosophers and theologians had lived there and commanded respect. They were not sectarians in their outlook and always promoted communal harmony. They played an important role in regenerating an anti-British consciousness in the minds of the Mappilas who

were greatly exploited by the British raj. These scholars and sufis of Tirurangadi are generally known as MamburamTangals. Sayyid Alavi Tangal and his son Sayyid Fazl Pookkoya Tangal are renowned scholars, mystics and theologians. Sayyid Alavi had arrived here in 1767 from Arabia as a boy of seventeen and settled at Mamburam where his maternal uncle was also a scholar and theologian. His uncle Sayyid Hassan Jif ri came from the family of Alavis of Tarim, near Yaman being the direct descendant of prophet through his daughter Fatima and cousin Ali. This blood relationship of the Tangals with the prophet made Mamburam as a holy seat.

Like Umar Qazi and others, Sayyid Alavi Tangal also aroused anti-British feelings. His tract known as *Saiful Battar* demanded a fight against the British till the end¹⁰. The English were known by the term *afarang* which was used originally for the Portuguese. Tangal's involvement in the Mappila uprisings of 1801 and 1817 had been noted by the British who did not arrest him fearing of a possible riot in protest in South Malabar. He had a large number of Hindu followers. Through his teachings he brought Mappila community to a process of revitalization, regeneration and purification. He emphasised the role of self purification. It is believed that the Tangal had possessed all sorts of supernatural powers. It is also believed that he had participated in the Cherur uprising against the British.

His son and successor, Sayyid Fazal Pookkoya Tangal had established the Jamait mosque of Mamburam. He was very much an architect of Hindu Muslim unity. Like his father he also inherited anti-British feelings and issued a radical fatwa known as "Uddathu Umravu" which was prohibited by the district authorities. In 1852 he went to Arabia with his family and later even assumed the office of governor of Yaman. He passed away in 1901 in Constantinople.

H.V. Conolly, the district Magistrate of Malabar observed:

" The lower orders look upon the Tangal as imbued with a portion of divinity. They swear by his foot as their most solemn oath. Earth on which he has spat or walked is treasured up. Marvellous stories are told of supernatural knowledge. His blessing is supremely prized¹¹"

Thus, the Tangals combined in themselves the role of sufis scholars and theologians and made Tirurangadi one of the distinguished centres of Islamic scholarship and mysticism.

A brief survey of these facts reveal that sufism, although in its changed or deteriorated form with anti foreign feelings, had popularised communal harmony and religious solidarity in Kerala. Both Hindus and Muslims followed these ascetics and tried to purify their life in the light of their teachings. Sufism in its pristine purity of mysticism is not traceable in Kerala as one could find in the different sufi orders in the rest of India. Here the foreigners had unleashed great atrocities against Islam. Thus, the mystics and sufis assumed the role of defenders of Islam, social reformers, traditional intellectuals and poets. Even they dedicated themselves to the service of the poor and depressed. Their hatred against the foreigners or xenophobia had been due to the fanatic activities of the foreigners. Sheikh Zainuddin and the Tangals of Mamburam had regenerated Islam through their teachings and activities. However, they were not sectarians but propagated the cause of religious harmony.

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2. The tradition relating to the Zamorin of Calicut and other local rulers are important in this respect
3. C.N. Ahmed Moulavi and K.K. Muhammad, *Mahathaya Mappila Sahithya Paramparyam* (Calicut, 1978) PP 123-4.

The Legacy of Islam (Kerala)

4. See details in K.M. Panikkar, *Malabar and the Portuguese*.
5. These festivals are known as Urus, Nerchas, etc.
6. Arberry argues that there was a decline of sufism in Egypt from the political and economic disorders in the 16th century, n.1, p.120.
7. The tombs of the mother and the son are available in the mosque of Kunhippalli in Chombala.
8. Moulavi, n.3, pp. 146-50.
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10. Moulavi, n. 3, pp. 175-7.
11. Quoted in K.N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and State* (Delhi, 1989), p.63.

Tribute To Tipu Sultan

When we recollect, the bicentenary of the fall of a great ruler and administrator, we pay homage to his patriotic achievement in building up of a modern state and fighting against the British conquests in South India with men and resources available to him. In that way Tipu Sultan, like his father Haider Ali, never accepted the political hegemony of the British. The circumstances and the political environment were not favourable for him to perpetuate the kingdom inherited by him. When the powers like the Marathas and the Nizam continued a policy of amity and friendship with the British and marched in the battle field of Seringapatnam, against Tipu Sultan, he never compromised with the enemies but yielded to his own destiny and left his major territorial possessions in the hands of the British. Thus came the end of a heroic chapter of resistance against the British in South India. In fact the Kingdom of Mysore under Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan had to wage four Anglo-Mysore wars within a period of forty years mainly against the British and their native allies.

In the latter half of the 18th century, the Kingdom of Mysore, under Haider Ali occupied a prominent place in South India. Like the Marathas and the Nizam, Mysore enjoyed considerable political power and became a powerful state. Its continuity was for a short period of fifty years, but it had marked

an epoch in the history of South India. It was a crucial period in the history of India on account of the protracted wars waged for consolidation, conquest and existence by the native states as well as the European powers. The European wars were fought in India between the French and the English. The native state of Mysore was dragged into these frequent wars as an opponent of colonial expansion designed by the English in the South.

The fall of Tipu Sultan had far reaching results in the history of South India. A powerful and well administered state was reduced to the colonial exploitation. The cost of the costly wars waged against Mysore was imposed on people by the British in the form of commercial tax and land revenue. The fertile regions of Kanara, lost its agricultural prosperity under the British. Famines and revolts were frequently repeated as a result of economic drain.

After the fall of Tipu Sultan, the Marathas, were finally defeated, and the Nizams were brought under perpetual loyalty. The expansion of the British empire in the South was materialised only after the battle of Seringapatnam. The fall of Sultan subscribed to the political expansion of the British, not only in the south but in the whole of the sub-continent. Therefore the year 1799 remains as a land mark in the loss of India's freedom. This conquest was possible for the British only through the repeated Anglo-Mysore wars. Nearly two decades Mysore under the Sultan resisted the expansionist policy of the British. One of the major theatres of the confrontation was Malabar. Another one was Trichinappalli. Both of these regions were strategic and resourceful. The Sultan as a man of diplomacy was able to dictate his terms of peace at Mangalore in 1784. The British who were more anxious to possess Malabar found it futile to negotiate with him. The Sultan wanted to establish his sovereignty over Malabar with more rigidity and keep it along with Kanara.

The frustrated rulers of Malabar joined the English East India Company to revolt against the Sultan. The trade and commerce of the Company deteriorated on the Malabar Coast as the Sultan himself adopted a policy of state-trading. His revenue policy in Malabar was something related to ryot war, collecting the share directly from the cultivating class. In reality it was restructuring the agrarian relations and improving the status of the peasantry by eliminating the intermediary classes. The system was a total blow on the feudalistic classes who had so far enjoyed monopoly rights in land and administration. Arshad beg Khan, his revenue specialist had taken keen interest in the introduction of these revenue reforms in Malabar. Such administrative reforms and the collection of land revenue made the landed class antagonistic. Further his administrative control of Malabar was against the interest of the English. The Tellicherry officials were apprehensive of the continuation of sovereignty of Mysore over Malabar kingdoms. They wrote:

But should the countries before mentioned come once more under the dominion of Tipu he will surround this settlement so closely, that he can cut off our provisions whenever he pleases and deprive us of a valuable trade to give it to a more favoured nation.

His later relations with the English proved that their fear was real. The political developments in Malabar gradually led the English to the Third Anglo Mysore war. When it was terminated by the Treaty of Seringapatnam in 1792, this treaty gave Malabar to the British. These affairs once again proved that he was the only one ruler who stood with a firm policy against the colonial expansion in South India. But the regions like Malabar and Coorg which were annexed to the Kingdom of Mysore formerly were not properly consolidated into his administration due to their continuous revolts and their preference of loyalty to the British.

He was much ahead of his time in adopting various administrative reforms. The introduction of sophisticated coinage of Sultani fanams, state trading, modernisation of the army, introduction of a navy, improvement of roads and planting of avenue trees and other policies made Mysore an advanced native state in India. Water transport and construction of canals were encouraged by him. He sent an emissary to the Republic of France for establishing diplomatic relationship and that also led to the prominent causes of Fourth Anglo-Mysore War. His destruction was an absolute political aim of the British, that they had to extend their authority to Kanara and other fertile regions of South India. Further they wanted to defeat the French also. This political environment finally led to his destruction and partition of the Kingdom of Mysore.

These affairs highlight certain qualities of Tipu Sultan as a ruler and administrator. Like his father, he resisted to the last the British colonial policy of expansion. The freedom of Mysore was always threatened by the British and other native states. Therefore he had to wage wars against these powers. The British historians always depicted him as a fanatic, in reality he was not. His administrative reforms in Malabar, particularly the covering of breasts by women, were interpreted as forcible conversion to Islam. The feudal classes and the British propagated his religious fanaticism and intolerance to get popular support against him. Wilks, in his monumental work on Mysore wrote that his father established a kingdom by his prudent policy and his son lost it by his fanatic policy. He further stated that even his death was like an ordinary soldier but not as a commandant of an army at the battlefield. Such remarks had not done historical justice to him. There was much difference in the political milieu of Haider and Tipu Sultan. In the latter's time, colonialism had reached its highest water mark in India. Lord Mornington was sent to India with a definite mission of reduction of political power of Tipu Sultan.

There was no comparison between the emerging England after industrial revolution and a tiny native state in India. The native Indian powers like the Marathas and the Nizam were more interested to join the English forces and treated Mysore as an enemy state. Mysore as a land locked kingdom was trying to expand to the coast and participate in the International trade and seek the French assistance. The French and the English hostility further aggravated the hostility between the English and Mysore.

The fall of the grand Mughals had created a political vacuum of a centralised political power structure in India. Thus the arena was left free for the economic competition for land and resources by the English and the French. When such a major struggle was initiated, the Indian native states were also compelled to join one side or the other. But Mysore under the Sultan continued a constant policy against the English and counteracted their expansionist policy.

As Sultan was the dead enemy of the English, the colonial historians painted him in dark colours as a man of fanaticism, intolerance, religious bigotry and incompetence. The anonymous writer M.M.D.L.T, the author of *The History of Hyder Shah and of his son Tipu Sultan* continued his version of cruelties of these rulers against the people of Malabar and Coorg. In fact, the Mysorean interlude in the history to Malabar gave a fatal blow to the dominant feudalistic socio-economic system. It also contributed to the dilution of caste system through inter relationship of several communities and ethno- migrations to different regions. As such modern trends were initiated by Tipu Sultan in Malabar, but they were not consolidated as the region later passed into the hands of the British. The scholarly native research works like *Tipu Sultan's Mysore: An Economic Study* (1971) by M.H. Gopal lay high tribute to Sultan for his enthusiasm in administrative reforms and economic policies. Many of such measures were ahead of his time and they were

not properly carried out in the regions conquered by him. This is high time to reassess his policies and evaluate his role as a fighter to the last against the colonial expansion, when others compromised and allied with it. His, is a heroic chapter in Indian struggle against the British and that will be ever remembered and recollected in the life of our nation.

Tipu Sultan and His State Policy in Malabar

The latter half of the eighteenth century was a crucial period in the history of South India on account of the political situation and the protracted struggles for power. The indigenous political powers were facing the European expansion in its total reality and many of them crumbled before the colonial policy of the expansionists. The seven years' war, which was fought not only in Europe but also in India had substantially subscribed to the failure of the French policy of expansion in India. From among the native powers one small kingdom came into prominence even in this circumstance under its new political architect, Haider Ali.¹ Under his politics and campaigns the kingdom of Mysore occupied a prominent place in South India. He was not only the builder of Mysore state but also a fighter against the colonial expansion. His kingdom was bequeathed in favour of Tipu Sultan who also followed the same policy of his father. Tipu was a natural enemy of the British in South India. The British also evaluated properly that they would not be in a position to establish their political authority over South India if Tipu was left to pursue his political designs.

Nearly two decades he resisted the expansionist policy of

the British. One of the major theatres of confrontation was Malabar. The Anglo-Mysore wars were repeated in Malabar as the British were eager to possess this strategic coastal belt. As a man of diplomacy Tipu was able to dictate the terms of peace in Mangalore with the British. The British who were more anxious to possess Malabar found it futile to negotiate with him for possession of Malabar. Some of the Malabar Rajas who had sided with the English during the second Anglo-Mysore war, found it very difficult to adjust with Tipu after the treaty of Mangalore. However Tipu as a man of action wanted to establish his sovereignty over Malabar with more rigidity.

From 1782 to 1792 atleast in theoretical sense Malabar was under his control. On account of various reasons he could not enforce his legitimate control over this region. This led to various military campaigns against several chieftains with a great drain to his treasury². There were protests, uprisings, and rebellions against the Mysore authority by the chieftains, Nair landlords and even by the peasantry.

These developments were combined with the third Anglo-Mysore War in which the Malabar chieftains sided with the English. Virtually in 1792, the treaty of Seringapatam ceded Malabar in favour of the English. In general, the Mysorean occupation of Malabar is treated as an interlude in the history of this country. No doubt that the Mysorean policy and administration were failures in Malabar.

It was not the fault of Tipu Sultan. For him Malabar was a conquered territory to be kept under his control as a political unit. His enthusiasm for introducing reforms also alienated the administrators from the administered. The Malabar society was a traditional one with feudalistic agrarian relations and caste system. Tipu's efforts for unification of Malabar as a single administrative unit, retaining the native chieftains under a tributary system ended in failure. They were opposed to this

situation as their economic interests were involved⁴. For centuries the fragmentation of political power had taken place in Malabar. Naturally these chieftains could not contribute to a political policy of Tipu. Thus the ideology propagated by them was 'religion is in danger'.

Though religious conversions, either for political or economic gains or by force, had taken place in Malabar, only an infinitesimal percentage of population came under this situation. The tribal characteristics of the Malabar society were not in a position to reconcile with the advanced social reforms of Tipu. For instance his order or edict for covering the female breast was much in advance of his time. The traditional Malabar society from higher to the lower castes were not in practice of covering the female breasts⁵. Those who covered the breasts were usually the Mappila women. Thus the above order was interpreted as a practice leading to the loss of one's own religion and caste. The loss of one's own religion and caste was treated as a calamity equal to that of death in the traditional society. Such orders only helped to promote rebellions.

Tipu's revenue policy was also responsible for uprisings. His system was something related to ryotwar, collecting the state's share directly from the cultivating class. In reality this was restructuring the agrarian relations and improving the status of peasants by eliminating the intermediary classes. The system introduced by Arshad beg Khan, a revenue specialist, invited protracted struggles and antagonism against the state. How much this reform was implemented in Malabar is a question of debate. But as a sound state policy in favour of the cultivating classes, it deserves appreciation. It was a blow inflicted on the feudal class which had hitherto exploited the peasantry by way of surplus extraction⁶.

Tipu was the pioneer to introduce water transport and construct new canals in Malabar. He further linked the

head-quarters of several principalities with major towns like Calicut. The roads existing at present had been his designs for mobilising troops. His state trading policy in spices had been innovated to counteract the European trade on the Malabar coast through the settlements like Tellicherry.

In brief Tipu's administration in Malabar represented a period of transition from medievalism to modernity. The conglomeration of Malabar principalities and kingdoms were for the first time united under a single ruler as an administrative unit. The rigidity of caste and its institutions were relaxed on account of internal and external migrations. The administrative policy of Tipu in this region was to reform the medieval institutions like caste and feudal mode of production. Such activities in reality ended in political chaos which was further exploited by the British to promote their colonial aspirations. His concept of unification of fragmented kingdoms and principalities into a powerful state made him the natural enemy of the British. Thus he had either to yield to the colonial power or fight against them for survival. He accepted the second one and died in the battle field as an ordinary soldier to support the cause of his state. His role as a fighter for freedom made him one of the destiny makers of modern India. That is why he was pointed in dark colours by the imperialist historians⁸. He was much ahead of his time as an architect of a modern state free from the interference of colonial masters.

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(3) See the treaty provisions in William Logan, ed. *A collection of Treaties and Engagements, etc.* (Madras, 1951 edn.)

(4) An account of his Malabar policy is given in C. K. Kareem,

Kerala under Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan. (Ernakulam, 1972).

(5) Charles Lockyer who visited Malabar in 1710's had given an account on this custom. See *An Account of the Trade in India* (London, 1711).

(6) Even some of the Muslim landlords like Attan Gurukkal were against him and hoisted the banner of revolt. See William Logan, *Malabar Manual* (Madras, 1951 edn).

(7) Tellicherry factory was turned into a residency during this period. see Kurup, n. 2.

(8) Mark Wilks even recorded that he was a despot destined to liquidate his state by his policy.

The Ali Rajas of Cannanore A Historiographical Study

The Arakkal house widely known as the Ali Rajas of Cannanore is a minor Muslim principality in the north Malabar with a continuous history over three centuries. This only Muslim principality in Kerala came to political predominance in the 16th century, particularly during the advent of the Portuguese. Their struggle for trade and territorial expansion on the Malabar coast is well known.

Although references are available on this house in several historical works and foreign notices on Kerala, a detailed study of its growth to political prominence was not available till the seventies. The main reason was that there is no availability of continuous archival sources, but only scattered references along with other sources. The house maintained its authority over Lakshadweepu and played a significant role in the annals of history of Malabar on account of its strategic position in a centre of maritime trade where the European powers struggled one against the other for trade and territorial acquisitions.

Situated in the traditional kingdom of the Kolathiries, one of the ancient principalities of India, the Arakkal house came into political authority in and around Cannanore only in the

16th century. The internal struggles in the Kolathiri Kingdom, and the Portuguese ascendancy in the coastal towns like Cochin, Calicut and Cannanore through the establishment of fortified and garrisoned trade centres, made the local Muslim noble to aspire for political authority. A chronicle of the house records its advent in the 12th century. But it is not acceptable on account of various historical reasons. If it was prominent even as a vassel of the Kolathiries, it would have been mentioned by Atula, in his *Mooshaka Vamsa Kavya*¹.

The two historical works on this principality refer to its existence only in the 16th century. These two works, one written by this writer and the other by Genevieve Bouchon in French appeared simultaneously in 1975². The monograph by this writer has mainly depended on English and native sources, particularly the Tellicherry Factory Records. The emphasis is given to the historical developments in the 18th and 19th centuries. However Bouchon has mainly depended on the Portuguese sources available in the archives of Lisbon and traces the history of a leader of the Islamic community in the Kolathiri Kingdom. The Portuguese attached to his name the title 'Reged or do mar' (Regent of the Sea). He was the head of the Mappila community in Cannanore and the uncle and the predecessor of the Muslim prince Ali Raja or Anderrajao of the Arakkal house.

Bouchon's work which appeared in 1975 deals with the response of Cannanore to Portuguese expansion in its beginnings from (1507 to 28. The first chapter is an analytical study of the kingdom of Eli or the house of Kolathiries. Towards the end of the thirteenth century, Marco Polo emphasised that the kingdom was independent and its king paid tribute to no body. When he described that the Eli kingdom had no port, after fifty years Ibn Battuta attributed that it was the name of a prosperous port, situated on a *hur* (gulf or bay in Arabic). He also mentioned the prosperity of the Islamic community and

their mosques 'bursting with light'. The kingdom was extended to Kumbla in the north. There were merchant communities like the Ravari Nayar, Persians, Arabs, Chinese, Bengalis, Chettis, Muslims, and Venetins. The Muslim chief of Cannanore was referred to by Gaspar Correia as 'Regent of the Sea'. This chapter is elaborately documented from European sources including the indigenous sources like the Mushaka Vamsa.

The second chapter is on 'the Islands', the Laccadive and Maldivé archipelagoes. The Portuguese sources retrace the steps of the domination that the Muslim chiefs of Cannanore maintained over the whole equatorial archipelago. A native source *Tarikh* and *Raddvali* traces the political chaos in the Male kingdom from 1491 to 1513. During these twenty-two years there had been several administrative changes in this island. It was ruled by Kalu Muhammad (1491-92), Yusuf (92-93), Ali IV (92-95), Kalu Muhammad (94-1510), Hassan VII (1509-11), Sih Ahmad (1511-13), Ali V (12-13) and Kalu Muhammad (13-28). Such a political instability always invited the intervention of Cannanore. The history of Maldivé is given by A. Gray and H C. Bell who believed that the Islands were under the Sinhalese influence, and Buddhist tradition but soon replaced by that of Islam.

The Chapter 'Feitoria of Cannanore' traces the Portuguese advent on the coast and their struggle for establishment of trade against the monopoly enjoyed in Malabar trade by the Muslims. The Portuguese *feitor* (factor) Paio Rodrigues and an Italian *feitor* were permitted, to settle at Cannanore by the Kolathiri. The Kolathiri allowed them to live outside. It is described:

The town, on the rocky headland which overlooked the port and upon which stood a few fishermen's huts which had been evacuated by the order of the king. The coconut palms were cut down and their wood and palms used to build a hamlet which was fortified by a palisade encompassing the full width

of the headland. It was lined on the inside by an embankment of debris, which was made into a rampart-walk, and on the outside by a ditch which separated the rocks from the land. Set into the enclosure was a grilled gate which was locked at night. This arrangement was approved by the Kolathiri who was pleased that his guests had settled a reasonable distance from the native population. Nobody was authorised to go to the headland for any reason other than to take provisions or to trade goods. Six Nayars guarded the area surrounding the rocks and were at the feitor's disposal", (as per details given by G. Correia and quoted by Bouchon, pp. 57-8). , ,

This was the starting of the *feitoria* (factory of Cannanore) and the maritime fortress, St. Angelo. The fortress was like the castle of Rome on the side of water. The feitoria supplied rice, dried fish, medicinal drugs and naval equipment for sale. The most influential community of the Muslims (Mouros da terra) in Malabar determined to defend their interests at all costs against the Portuguese.

Subsequently in the fourth 'chapter, "The Fortress and the First Conflicts", the construction of fort St. Angelo and the conflicts are narrated. The Muslim merchants suspected the activities of the captain of the Fortress, Lourenco Brito. They were compelled to initiate seige against them and it was merely sanctioned by the Kolathiries. The author believed that the "Mamali's diplomatic moves at the outset of the conflict, the presence of Muslim dignitaries at the royal councils, the absence of the traditional Brahmin negotiators and the king on the battle field and even the delegation for requesting peace" were some of the factors which demonstrated the authorities of the Islamic community (p. 97). It was first time that in the factory a hospital was built which was not big enough to accommodate the large number of wounded and sick by 1509 (p. 98-V). The Muslims were hostile against the Portuguese.

Chapter V is on Mamale and Albuquerque. The exploits of Mamale in the Maldives and the conquest of Goa by Albuquerque are traced here. The Muslims even boycotted the factory without making any dealings with the Portuguese. The Mamale's exploits in the Maldives invited much antagonism of Albuquerque. The Maldivian Sultan, Kalu Muhammad, agreed to deal only with the Portuguese. (p. 125), Mamale also promised to give up his income from the Archipelago (p. 126). However after the demise of Albuquerque Mamale's tax collectors again in 1515 tried to establish themselves in the Archipelago. The Portuguese fortress at Goa and Calicut had caused the ruin of Cannanore kings and merchants. Its trade became totally unprofitable during these years.

The last chapter is on 'Regent of the Sea' Bouchon states : "The relaxing of the Portuguese authority, the weak state of the Cannanore fortress and the decline of the Kolathiri favoured his increasing influence in the city" (p. 153). After 1512, Gaspar Correa gave Mamale the title 'Regedor de Cannanore'. Again the interest of Mamale and the Portuguese came into conflict in the Maldives. Joao Gomes, who was appointed as a Captain in the Maldives, behaved like a pirate. In a revolt in Ceylon against the Portuguese, Mamale played some role. However after 1522, there is no reference to his activities in the Portuguese records.

But the Muslim community had not lost its prominence. After 1523 Valiya Hassan was one of the maritime leaders who fought against the Portuguese. They organised a united defence consisting of people from Matayi, Irikkur, Dharma-patam and Eli. Their *Paraos* similar to the Portuguese brigantines were manned by twenty to thirty oarsmen on each side. They were also supplied with artillery (p. 165). The trading interests and the political interests of the house of Mamale were always in conflict with the Portuguese interests. These struggles brought

the house into prominence and later it was recognised as the Ali Rajas by the Kolathines, or the local rulers.

Bouchon was able to trace the Portuguese confrontations with the natives and their struggles for supremacy. In these struggles the major role was played by the Islamic community of Cannanore. The main approach of Bouchon was Eurocentric and she neglected to trace the indigenous character of the social and economic systems.

The present writer's work 'The Ali Rajas of Cannanore' was published in 1975.

The main emphasis of this work was on the political and economic affairs at the house in the 18th and 19th centuries. The first chapter deals with the beginnings including the traditional account of the origin of the house and its rise to prominence as a principality in the 16th century. The early relations with the Dutch and the English are traced in the second chapter. The third chapter traces the political developments and expansion of the Kanarese or the Nayaks of Ikkeris in the Kolathnad region. This situation was much exploited by the English at Tellicherry. They possessed the Dharmapatam island in 1731 by negotiating with the Arakkal house. In the fourth chapter the Mysorean invasion by Haider Ali has been analysed. In this invasion, the Ali Rajas co-operated with him and also gained the governorship of Kolathnad. The fifth chapter 'The Days of Adversity' is on the affairs leading to the surrender and looting of the house by the English. As the Ali Raja Beebi was an ally of Tipu Sultan she was invaded by the English Brigadier Macleod. He wrote to the Madras governor:

Finding my army at leisure I seized the opportunity of reducing the Mopla settlement which has been a most inveterate enemy with Tellicherry..... This is one of the finest settlements in India, an acquisition of great value to Bombay (p. 45).

The St. Angelo fortress which had been already purchased by the Beebi from the Dutch masters who got it after a conquest from the Portuguese in 1663. On account of its strategic position the fortress was later occupied by the English Company. To Mecleod she paid an amount of Rs. two lakhs and sixty thousand but in the treaty only an amount of Rs. one and a half lakhs was shown. It was a striking parallel to the spoliation of the Begums of Oudh by Warren Hastings (p. 46). The whole later history of the house is a struggle for existence in the territorial expansion of the English Company. The English factory records give the meticulous details and treaty provisions of such relations. Finally in 1792 Malabar was surrendered by Tipu Suitan in favour of the Company. In 1793 the Beebi was compelled to execute a treaty to pay an annual revenue of Rs. 28,680 to the Company. It included her land revenue, profit from Lakshadweep, etc. The further disputes between the Beebi and the English are traced in the sixth chapter. Chapter seven traces the circumstances leading to the sequestration of the islands by the English. The entire proceedings in this matter continued over a century and in 1908 the Government of India, compelled the house to surrender the sovereignty of the islands for an annual malikhana payment of Rs. 23,000 to the house. Over a period of four centuries, except Amini group islands, rest of the islands were under the sovereignty of the House. Chapter eighth highlights the indigenous administrative system in the islands. The details like trade, judiciary, religion and revenue are given from the Arakkal records. The appendices showing the chronology of the rulers and all treaties executed with the English are given in this volume. The chronology as traced from an account given by the house starts with one Muhammad Ali Adi Raja in Higira 64. After that it is shown that Hussain, Ali Moosa, Coonhy Moosa and in 1184 A.D. Ali Moosa succeeded in the house. The chronology upto the 9th ruler, Abubacker Ali (1452-1515 A.D.), is based on legend and tradition. As shown by Bouchon

and this writer, the first founder of the house may be the Mamale in the dawn of the 16th century.

The house followed the native custom of succession based on *Marumakkathayam* or matrilineal system against the Islamic principle of primogeniture. This custom was also sanctioned by the Caliph in a letter addressed to the palace. When the English, during the Anglo-Mysorean wars, were concentrating on a military expedition against the forces of Tipu and the Arakkal house, the emissaries from this house, even visited the Caliph at Constantinople to seek his goodwill and put some pressure on the, English Company through the English ambassador at his court. But nothing came out of this mission.

In brief these two works on the Arakkal house give some account of the Islamic community in north Malabar and its aspirations to establish a political system in the region and even to the distant islands in the Arabian sea. It was possible for them when the native ruler, the Kolathiri, was facing the advent and expansion of the Portuguese. For trade and seafaring right the community had to wage costly wars off the land and in the islands. Finally their right as an independent house was recognised by the Kolathiri and the Portuguese. For a century they maintained their commercial interests in reconciliation with the Portuguese. Their privileges as a political entity was accepted by the Portuguese also. The Dutch also followed the same policy with this principality. But the English who were in a struggle to conquer the territory of Malabar at all costs, finally annexed its territorial possessions with its domain. It was converted merely a landlord with some privileges and a malikhana from the government. Its rise, growth and decline are closely connected with the history of the European expansion on the Western coast. Even now the house enjoys some authority over the Islamic Community in the region.

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The Ali Rajas Of Kannur

The Ali Rajas of Kannur were the only Muslim rulers of Kerala. The house claims its descent from the last Chera ruler but no authentic documents or contemporary evidences are available to prove this claim. But it preserved several Hindu customs as reminiscences of the past.

The possession of the Jagir of Laccadives made the house a significant principality. Even though in the early period, the house respected the sovereignty of the Kolattiries, gradually it was refuted and even the payment of tribute was denied. The House issued its own silver and gold coins. It has its decorated and wood carved throne and great seal and royal emblem. But it never possessed a crown of any kind. A few customs continue till the present time which reveal the vassalage of the house towards the Kolattiries. On the demise of the ruler of this house the funeral shroud is brought from the Kolattiri as a gift. When coronation and other functions are celebrated by the principality the ornaments and elephants are also brought from the Kolattiries as a temporary loan.'

Throughout the period, the house supported the spread of Islam. The Malabar Joint Commission reported:

The law of the Koran must be the prevalent one, excepting in commercial and similar cases. Beebi's ministers or her son-in-law appointed cheif justice assisted by three or four of the

best informed of the profession to guide the better decision. The fees on the trial very moderate not exceeding 2% equally divided between principal mosque and the Beeby and her officers.

The house initiated the construction of several mosques in North Malabar. Beebi Imbichi was mainly responsible for the construction of Mohiyuddin Masjid of Cannanore. In the palace itself a new mosque was constructed. The house is the managing trustee for several mosques including the mosques like Isinka (Cannanore), Puyislan (Mattul) and Madayi. Even at present the Khatib of Madayi mosque and Dharmadam mosque are appointed by the Beebi. In all religious affairs of Cannanore Mahal the house enjoys supreme authority and capacity of Naibkhasi. The Mahal officiates under the direct control of Arakkal House. It has made liberal donation to other Islamic institutions in distant place also.

The house has a very good collection of religious and philosophic works on Islam. Several products of calligraphy is preserved. The book "Kitab-Fautuh-La Masunath" by Zaffiyuddin Ahamed Alavan, is in this collection. The members of the family were instructed in subject like Arabic and Theology. Some of the Beebees were well-versed in Hindustani and Persian languages also. Later, English was taught by special tutors.

Their offices were thrown open to the Hindus also. Generally the Dewan and officers were the Hindus. But one of the policies of Arakkal had far reaching repercussion on the history of Malabar. The mutual sympathy and tolerance which prevailed among Hindus and the Muslims were disturbed on account of Mysorean invasion, in which Arakkal supported the invaders.

Even after the relinquishment of quasi sovereignty the house played a predominant role in the history of Malabar. The Moplahs who clustered around the Arakkal House tendered

the loyalty towards the British during the Rebellion of 1921 in South Malabar. They stood by the British during their government through thick and thin and braved all difficulties and appealed to the Moplahs by issuing pamphlets and notices requesting them not to participate in any out-break. If the rebellion had not extended to the northern region it was mainly due to the pacification of the Moplahs under the leadership of the Arakkal house. In 1934 when a riot occurred in Kannur between the Tiyyas and the Mappilas this house played a prominent role in maintaining place. It was appreciated by the district officials.

Many of the Malabar chieftains lacked liquid money and financial stability. But this was not the case with the Arakkal family. Its income mainly depended upon its foreign trade. Even in 1850 the house had two ships named Hydross and Samadani. But the intermittent mismanagement of the House led to the English conquest.

The properties of the house were generally found under three categories as Arakkal pandaram, Puthiya Pandikasala and Valiya Pandikasala. It is supposed that the Pandaram property is the traditional possession of the family. Valiya Pandikasala may be a later addition through the profits of trade. Puthiya Pandikasala also may be a later development. The huge palace buildings situated on the southern bank opposite to the Fort St. Angelo with a picturesque mosque close by have majestic and significant appearance from the Fort Maidan. There was a spacious hall called "Mahal" attached to the palace, built under the orders of Tipu Sultan, which was demolished only a decade ago. The "Sultan's Canal" about two miles in length was constructed by this house when it managed the Kolathiri domains under Haider Ali. This canal adjoins the Pazhayangadi railway station and has an importance as a linking water channel for coastal navigation.

After the formation of the state of Kerala in 1956 the Inam lands of Arakkal under the agreement of 1908, were also assessed. But the Malikhana of the house has not been stopped. It is still continued, and that payment brings to the memory of the students of Kerala history, the long political tussle of a small principality for its existence.

An analysis of the history of this house clearly brings to light the dubious ways by which the English Company acquired territories in India, particularly in the South. Even the petty powers like the dynasty of the Ali Rajas, which would never have become dangerous rivals to the English, were not spared. Their mutual jealousies increased their defencelessness. It was an inevitable historical circumstance in which neither treaty nor diplomacy could save this small principality. Its territories were sequestered by a superior power and it was reduced to the status of a mere land holder. Its "phantom sovereignty" over the islands was finally liquidated by a consent treaty in 1908.

The Arakkal royal house rendered yeoman service for the spread of Islam in Kerala. Islamic institutions flourished under the principality and even now it extends its helping hand to those institutions. It maintained friendly relations with the Ottoman empire and in return the Caliph even ratified its traditional custom of matrilineal succession. To conclude, the growth of Islam in Northern Kerala is well associated with the origin and growth of this house.

APPENDIX

TRANSLATION OF AN ARABIC LETTER FORWARDED
FROM THE EMPEROR OF CONSTANTINOPLE TO THE
QUEEN BEEBE OF CANNANORE

(Hijira 1194)

In the name of the most-merciful God

Praise be to the Almighty, who made us an asylum to the kings of the earth, defender of the laws of his chosen prophet by whom he proclaimed the title of monarchy by this verse of the Quran, "Inna jaalnakka Khalifattan fil Arzi" and spread the shadow of our justice over the world from latitude to longitude.

May the blessing of God be upon his chosen friend who has been created for dispensing mercy to the universe as well as on his descendants and companions who have illumined the surface of the world by the splendour of their swords and removed there from the darkness of paganism.

We commence this our condescending letter with royal compliments showing kindness and courtesy towards one who has covered herself with the sheet of modesty, who is adorned with the ornaments of truth and justice, venerated in pedigree, viz Bebee Sultan the queen of Malabar May God Preserve her in her country to defend the pillars of faith and Islamism.

When the almighty opened the doors of our kingdom on the face of Moslems, and turned the blackness of the shadow of our victorious colours condensed into frightful clouds upon the heads of the infidels, It became incumbent upon us to protect Mahomedanism, and take care of the Muslims who are far off from us, and escort our outmost power on the face of the earth for tranquillity of the people who may submissive to us or opposed to our rule. We have received your letter from your two envoys who have surpassed their predecessors in all respects; and venerated amongst contemporaries viz Sheik Raja Aboo Bakar, brother of your Vizier, and the second his companion, Hajee Ally Jasoss- honoured and revered by us opened it and imparted us the knowledge of the demise of your uncle the Sultan of Malabar viz Ally Raja who was steady in the way of God may preserve him in paradise and of succeeded him according to the custom your country by the co-operation of

the inhabitants there of and of your country towards our delightful threshold and having requesting our powerful assistance for yourself as well as for your subjects through kindness and civility. Accordingly we informed Consul, the English ambassador who is present in the capital, of your regarded and being revered by us and the necessity of our assisting yourself and your subjects in consequence of which it was requested to the King of England that orders ought to be forwarded to the authorities in India directing them to treat you favourably. The Ambassador being satisfied, pledged his word of promise and the aforesaid envoys being favourably received by us, have started hence by our permission. I conclude this letter for yourself amongst your and shall never fail to protect Mohamedan either by word or deed possible dated the 1st Shaival Mohomedan era Constantiople.

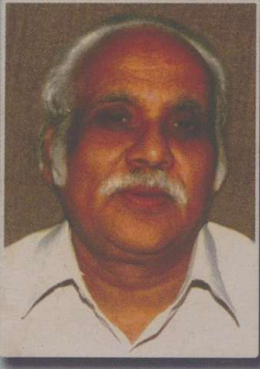
[From Arakkal Records]

Appendix

Summary of the 18 Moplah Outbreaks of 1836-1855

Date	Location (all Eranad or Walluvanad taluks unless other wise started	Victims		Participants (all Moplahs)
		Caste	class	
26 Nov. 1836	Pandalur	1 Kanisan(astrologercaste)	Unknown	1 killed
15 Apl 1837	Kalpetta	1 Mussad(Brahmin)	Jemni	1 killed
5 Apl 1839	Mankada	1 Hindu	Peon(a low-ranking village-level Govt. servant, a club bearer)	2 killed
6 Apl 1839	Mankada	1 Hindu	Jenmi	1(Captured)
19 Apl 1840	Irumbuzhi	1 Nair	Unknown	1(killed)
5 April 1841	Pallippuram	2 Nambudiries		
		1 Nair	1 Jenmi, 1 dependant of the Jenmi and 1 adviser of the jenmi	9 (killed)
13 Nov 1841	Koduvayur	2 Nairs	1 Jenmi	11 Killed
27 Dec 1841	Pallipuram	2 Nairs	1 Adhigari's son 1 unknown	3 killed
19 Oct 1843	Tirurangadi	2 Nairs	1 Jenmi(formerly an adhigari) and 1 adhigari	7 killed
11 Dec 1843	Pandikkad	1 Mussad	1 Nair 1 Jenmi and adhigari and his servant	10 killed
26 May 1849	Exact location unknown. Shernad taluk (later Western Ernad)			
25 Aug 1849	Pandikkad	1 Nair 1 Tien 1 Brahmin 3 Nairs	Unknown 1 cultivator 1 Priest and guest of jenmi, 1 servant of jenmi, 1 peon,	1 killed

Dr. K.K. N. Kurup



This collection of research articles highlights the legacy of Islam in Kerala. As a large minority community, the Mappilas offer many fascinating factors for study and analysis relating to the historical development of Kerala society. It is no where in India have foreign, trading, commerce and religious interests interconnected within the socio-economic and political institutions more intimately than they have in Malabar. It is an earnest attempt to understand the Socio-Cultural moorings of the Mappilas of Kerala.

Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, an eminent historian and former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calicut has made valuable studies on the Mappila community of Kerala. They are available both in English and Malayalam. A collection of articles is available in Arabic.

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(A Study of the Mappilas of Kerala)



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