

ARABIC LITERARY HERITAGE OF MALABAR THE ANTI-COLONIAL APPROACH



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PREFACE

This booklet by Prof. (Dr.) N.A.M. Abdul Kader is an eye opening effort on the rich cultural and literary tradition of Arabic literature written from Kerala since the 16th century. The Makhdums of Ponnani were great scholars and teachers who followed the Sufi order and trends of reforms in the Islamic way of life in Kerala. However it was a century of foreign invasions in the history of Kerala. As such Makhdums and later the Sayyids of Mamburam and their disciples were committed to spread the anti colonial ideology and struggles in Kerala over four centuries in their teachings and social organisations. Starting from the poetic tradition of Sheikh Zainuddin Makhdum I and the historical account of his grand son Sheikh Zainuddin II through *Tuhfat Ul Mujahidin*, the ideology of resistance against the foreigners continued in the socio-political milieu of Kerala. Such resistance made Kerala free from the colonial system of euro-centric hegemony. However by 1792 the region fell under the British, first time in the history inspiring the rich tradition of resistance. It culminated into a pitched battle in 1921 in South Malabar against the British.

This booklet, a revised form of lectures by the scholar organised by National Mission for Manuscripts, New Delhi, in print is intended to promote the anticolonial ideology from the Arabic literature of Kerala for further research and indepth study. I am happy to mention my association with these lectures in different academic centres along with the author. Prof. Abdul Kader who has shown his deep erudition in this new area of research and hope it shall be pursued by other scholars also.

Dr. K.K.N. Kurup

Former Vice Chancellor
Director, Malabar Institute for
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Prof. (Dr.) N.A.M. Abdul Kader *

It is a well known historical fact that the Arabs had commercial relations with Kerala coast from very ancient time onwards and even before the advent of Islam. The Arab merchants had close familiarities and contacts with the Malabar region and the linguists and philologists attribute that the term Malabar had derived from such contacts of the Arabs. There is difference of opinion as to whether Islamic propagations started in these regions during the life time of Prophet or later. Anyhow, it has been established beyond doubt that Muslims had become a distinct community in Kerala by 9th century AD; and as a result, Arabic language has struck deep roots in the region at least before a period of one millennium.

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 spread far and wide. It is known that Malik Dinar and his followers visited some of the harbour towns in Kerala and built the first mosque of Kerala at Kodungallur and later built other mosques at Madayi and Kasargod. The descendants of these first immigrants were known as Mappilas who extended their settlements to several harbour towns of Malabar coast. The local rulers never prohibited conversion to Islam.

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When Calicut became a prominent maritime trade centre during the end of 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 maritime trade in Calicut. In the village markets and trade centers they were able to achieve a prominent place with the active support of local rulers and landlords. Along with this progress in different localities they established their own Mahals, mosques and Dars and strengthened their social organisations.

Advent of the Portuguese

During the 16th century Muslims were compelled to fight against the Portuguese who struggled to establish their political and economic authority in Malabar. The advent of Portuguese on the western coast of Malabar had introduced new maritime regulations with regard to free trade. From the time of Vasco-da-Gama's arrival, the Portuguese sought monopoly in the lucrative spice trade from India. During his second visit in 1502 Vas-Coda-Gama introduced a system of passes called Cartaz system wherein every ship plying Indian waters for trade had to carry cartaz issued by the Portuguese. They as a naval power established their authority over Asiatic waters and found that the vessels crossing the sea without their permission were pirates. This situation brought in a new political and economic condition in a fairly prosperous free trade harbour of Calicut.²

The ruler of Calicut, King Zamorin, honoring his traditions of free trade initially allowed the Portuguese to buy spices despite his low opinion about them both for their conduct and quality of goods brought as gifts and for sales. But, the local Muslims since the very outset saw a danger and a clear threat to their traditional monopoly of trade about to be diluted. The Portuguese soon showed extreme cruelty by committing mass murder, mutilation and other depravation of the kind the locals were never used to. This was in fact willful employment of terror and might be an instrument of polity to facilitate their strategy of subduing a numerously superior opposition.

Naturally the economic ambitions, political designs and hidden religious motives of Portuguese were counteracted by the

². Captain G. Prakash, Strategy and Technology in Maritime warfare in sixteenth century- The Portuguese Vs Forces on the Malabar coast (Seminar paper), PP 8-9

Muslims in different parts of Malabar. Anyhow, these conflicts and constant efforts for resisting the Portuguese domination gradually resulted in diminishing Muslims authority and prosperity in the regions. The international trade in which the Arabs and the Mappilas jointly participated came to the 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 repeated conflicts and struggles for resources restricted the growth of the Mappilas also as a trading community.

This does not mean that Muslim community of Malabar has been reduced into total infirmity as a result of this set back. On other hand, its members had shown sufficient dynamism and devotion that worked a common brotherhood even during the period that ensued. The emergence of the house of Kunjali Marakkar as a house of naval commandants and their heroic struggles against Portuguese that lasted for more than a century remained a land mark in the history of resistance to colonialism in the Kerala regions. They were first rate admirals of the century who under the leadership of Zamorin led several encounters against the Portuguese for keeping up the independence of Arabian Sea. The last commandant from this house, Kunjali Marakkar IV was executed in 1600 AD by the Portuguese in Goa. The leadership of the house had played considerable role in resisting the Portuguese advent in Gulf countries which were also included in their offensive and defensive strategies, and finally resulted in the independence of Red Sea countries.³

The encounters of the Mappilas against the Portuguese colonial forces gave birth to famous writings in Arabic, which may be the first forms of anti-colonial literature originated in the region. The most significant one was Sheikh Zainuddin Makhdum II's '*Tuhfatul Mujahideen*' (1538 A.D.). He was the first historian of Kerala to write a historical account in Arabic. He has narrated the caste oriented communities of Kerala and the beginning of the settlements of the

³. Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, the legacy of Islam (Kerala), Samayam Publications, (Kannur) 2006, pp. 11-13

Mappilas. The 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 and all over the Arabic speaking world.

Sheikh Zainuddin Makhdums II's grandfather Sheikh Zainuddin bin Ali, popularly known as Zainuddin Makhdum senior was also an ideologue against the Portuguese conquest. He even suggested a 'Jihad' or holy war against them in his famous poem '*Tahrid Ahlil Iman Ala Jihadi Abadati Sulban*'. When the Zamorin and the Mappilas took steps to capture the fortress of Chaliyam, Qadi Muhammed bin Abdul Aziz wrote another poem named '*al Fath ul Mubeen*' to inspire the military action. This poet inspired the Mappilas for a Jihad against Portuguese. The '*Khutba*' (Friday sermon) named '*Al Khutbatul Jihadiyya*' prepared by Qadi Muhammed to be delivered to those assembled before Chaliyam Fortress is another anti colonial text. This text together with a poem named '*Al Qaseedatul Jihadiyya*' by the same author is a rare document in manuscript found out by this researcher quite recently after a hard labour. It may be specially remarked that the Jihad initiated through these three texts were not to convert Darul Harb into Darul Islam, but contained a message to strengthen the authority of a Hindu ruler or the Zamorin. Such practices give a new meaning to Jihad contrary to what was understood by many theologians during the British occupation.

The British occupation of Malabar did not contribute to the commercial, agricultural and social growth of the Mappila community. 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 deposited their capital in land and became lords. However the ordinary people lost their houses and holdings.

These frustrations of the community turned to outbreaks in 19th century. 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 Muslim members were transported to Andaman Island. Many of them were killed in action and hundreds were hanged to death under the martial law. The leaders like Ali Musliyar spread an anti-imperialist ideology in Malabar particularly among the Mappilas.

Prior to 1921 and after several heroic Mappila songs were composed and propagated to rejuvenate the Mappila enthusiasm. These songs in Arabi-Malayalam, recollecting the heroic deeds of Shahids and also the anti colonial ideology, inspired the Mappilas and activated them for any political programme. The major battles fought at the time of the Prophet like Badr, Uhd, Hunain and Khandaq as well as a number of local struggles including that of Malappuram, Cheroor and Puthanangadi were celebrated in this manner. These songs popularly known as '*Padappattu*' (war songs) numbering above fifty remained a constant source of inspiration to the warriors and provided spiritual solace to the Mappila women folk who were mostly kept in loneliness and perpetual anxiety over the fate of their men in struggle. Such corpus of songs and many other contemporary compositions provide us with an invaluable branch of literature exclusively contributed by the Mappila community.⁴

During the period, the Mappilas as a separate religious community was exposed to puritan religious reforms by their scholars and the community as a whole was in search of its identity. The question of identity was more intensified in the colonial context as there were efforts on parts of the Christian Missionaries to convert the lower 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 Mappila with all their intensity than any other time before. The great intellectual scholars like Sayyid Alavi Tangal, his son Sayyid Fadl Pookoya Thangal of Mamburam and Umar Qadi of Veliyankode, who lived in 19th century had an exceptional puritan approach to the

⁴. Ibid, pp. 15-17.

religious and social affairs of the Mappilas. Umar Qadi had even issued edit criticizing the British and their revenue system. Sayyid Alavi Thangal had also taken a strong stand against the British rule and his tract '*al Saiful Battar*' advised a fight against the enemies of God till the end. He always stressed the unity of Islamic community and endorsed a revitalisation among its members. His son Pookoya Thangal led the community more rigorously to the direction in which his father moved, and compiled several works exhorting the believers to defy and resist the colonial force.

Tahrid Ahl il Iman

Tahrid Ahl il Iman 'Ala Jihadi 'Abadat al Sulban is a poem of 135 lines composed by Sheikh Zainddin bin Ali al Ma'bari who was born in Cochin in 1467 AD and died in Ponnani in 1521 A.D. He was also known as Zainuddin Makhdum -I, who having educated in Mecca and Madina for a long time later became the supreme Qasi of Ponnai who built the grand mosque of Ponnani and laid foundation to the Dars system of Islamic higher learning there.

The title itself means 'Rousing the people of faith to struggle against the Portuguese.' It was written at a time when the power of King Zamorin had considerably declined as a result of the continuous encounters against the Portuguese and that reduced the Muslims into a helpless situation. Sheikh Zainuddin depicts the barbarous nature of the Portuguese and narrates the atrocities committed by them against Muslims. He tries to sensitize the believers of the true situation with a view to awaken their spirit. He says:

فإننا كربنا بارتكاب شــــدائد	بإفرنج عبّاد الصليب وصورة
طغوا في بلاد الله من كل ممكن	وقد اكثروا فيها الفساد بشهرة
بغوا في مليبار بأصناف بغيهم	وأنواع شدات وأجناس فتنة
من الأسر والنهبي وإحراق مسجد	وخرق كتاب ثم هتك لحرمة
وتحريق اموال وتخنيق مسلم	وتعويق أسفار وتعطيل عيشة
تخريب بلدان وتعبيد مؤمن	وتزيين نسوان لتفتن نسوة ⁵

⁵. Sheikh Zainuddin bin Ali Al Ma'bary, *Tahrid ahlil Iman 'ala Jihadi 'abadat Sulban*, lines 7-2

It means that the Muslims are in great grief due to the atrocities of the Portuguese, who worship the cross and image.

They transgressed beyond all bounds in the lands of God
and resorted to all sorts of mischief openly.

They practiced various sorts of violence in Malabar,
caused many hardships and disorders,

by means of captivations, loot, burning the mosques,
tearing Holy Book and violation of honor.

Burning the Properties, fighting the Muslims, blocking
the travel and stripping of livelihood.

Devastating the lands, enslaving the faithful

Fielding their women in charming attire for tempting
Muslim women.

He goes on describing their cruelties and oppression and finally calls the believers to get up and fall in line for *Jihad* against those tormenters.

جهادهم فرض على كل مسلم قوي بنفس ثم زاد وعدة
حتى على عبد بلا اذن سيد وولد بلا اذن وزوج قسوة⁶
جزى الله من يغزوا جزاء موفرا وأنقذهم من كل شر ومحنة
فيا اهل اسلام وأمة احمد هلموا الى هذه الجهاد بهمة
ففيه رضى الخلاق والخلق انسهم وجن ووحش والطيور ودابة
ولا تجعلوا افرنج يا قوم اوليا وان خفتم هلكا وفوت تجارة⁷
فان تهملوا هذا الجهاد خسرتم غنا دار دنيا ثم اخرى بحسرة⁸

He found that it was the duty of all Muslims who have physical strength, provision and equipment to wage holy war against the Portuguese. As for slaves, they need not get permission of their masters, so also for children without requiring permissions, and for

⁶ Ibid, ines. 26-27

⁷ Ibid, lines, 81-84

⁸ Ibid, line 86.

strong wife. May God give those who fight ample rewards and save them from any hardship and misery. Oh people of Islam, people of Prophet Ahmed, come on to this holy war with Zeal and fervor. Therein lies the pleasure of the creator and creation including mankind, jinn, animals and birds. Oh people, you should never take the Portuguese for your friends or masters, even though you fear ruin and loss of trade. If you neglect this holy war, you will lose the riches of this world as well as of here after.'

In this manner he rouses the fighting spirit of the oppressed believers by citing the pleasures of heaven and warning those who desist from the battle and those who hesitate to spend their wealth for its sake, of hell fire and its horrors. Thousands of copies of this revolutionary poem were produced in writing and were sent to *Mahals* in various parts of Malabar, as a result of which several outbreaks have occurred. It may be under the influence of this poem that the house of Kunjhali Marakkars proceeded to Calicut and assumed leadership of the maritime warfare of Zamorin against the Portuguese.

Tuhfat ul Mujahidin

'*Tuhfat ul Mujahidin*' is a pioneering historical work written in sixteenth century AD. It is the first authentic work on the history of Kerala which was widely circulated among learned circles within Malabar as well as in the various parts of the world for more than 3 centuries was first printed in Lisbon in the year 1898 and the copy of which is still available in the library of the world famous Al- Azhar university of Egypt.

Sheikh Zainuddin Makhdum, the author, also known as Sheikh Zainuddin Makhdum II, was born at Chombal, near Mahe North Malabar in the 16th century. He was the grandson of Sheikh Zainuddin Makhdum I, the author of '*Tahrid ahl al Iman*' and many other works. The full title of the work is '*Tufat al Mujahideen fi ba'd Akhbar al Burthughaliyyin*' (Tribute to the holy warriors in respect of a brief account of the Portuguese). The work consists of an introduction and four sections. The introduction sets forth the reasons which led the author to compile this narrative, mainly to stir up the Muslims into activity against the unbelievers who had invaded the territories of

the Muslims and oppressed them. The first section deals with the merits of Jihad, citing the verses of the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet that relate to the rewards for those who engage themselves in holy war against unbelievers. The second section gives an account of the first appearance of Islam in Malabar and the growth of various prosperous sea ports on the west coast. In the third section, the author enumerates the strange usages and customs of the Hindu inhabitants of Malabar and the treatment accorded to the Muslim subjects by the Hindu rulers. The fourth section is entirely historical, giving an account of the Portuguese from the time of their first arrival in Malabar in 1498 AD right up to 1583 AD.

In this work the author describes the Portuguese atrocities in Malabar, particularly stressing on their animosity towards Muslims. The author narrates the condition of peace and prosperity that Muslims enjoyed in Malabar before the advent of Portuguese and compares it with the pathetic situation that ensued.

ان جمعا من المسلمين دخلوا في بنادر مليبار وتوطنوا فيها، ودخل أهلها في دين الله يوما فيوما، وظهر فيها الإسلام ظهورا بالغا حتى كثر المسلمون فيها وعمر بهم بلدانها مع قلة ظلم رعاتها الكفرة، وعدم تعديهم عن رسومهم القديمة، وآتاهم الله نعمة وسعة، فغلبوا على ذلك زمانا، ثم بدلوا نعمة الله كفرانا، اذنبوا وخالفوا فسلط الله عليهم اهل يرتكال من الإفرنج خذلهم الله تعالى، فظلموهم، وأفسدوهم، واعتدوا عليهم بما لا يحصى من أصناف الظلم والفساد الظاهرة بين اهل البلاد، ومضوا على ذلك برهة من الأزمنة تنيف على ثمانين سنة، حتى آلت احوال المسلمين الى شر مآل من الضعف والفقر والذل، وصاروا لا يستطيعون حيلة، ولا يهتدون سبيلا، ولم يعتن بدفع ما حل بهم من البلاء والفتنة سلاطين المسلمين وأمرأهم اعز الله انصارهم مع كثرة عساكرهم وأموالهم، بالجهد وإنفاق الأموال في سبيل الله، لقلة اعتنائهم بأمور دينهم، وإيثارهم الدنيا الفانية على آخرتهم، فجمعت هذا المجموع ترغيبا لأهل الإيمان في جهاد عبدة الصليان، فإن جهادهم فرض عين لدخولهم بلاد المسلمين، وأيضا أسروا منهم من لا يحصى كثرة وقتلوا منهم كثيرين، وردوا جملة منهم الى النصرانية، وأسروا المسملمات المأسورات، حتى خرج لهم منهن اولاد نصارى، يقاتلون المسلمين ويؤذنونهم.⁹

Translation: A party of foreign Muslims entered some of the seaports of Malabar and settled there. In course of time, the inhabitants of these towns began to embrace Islam day by day. Before long, Islam spread all over the region at great pace and Muslim population began to grow and soon in the cities of Malabar heralded the settlement of Muslims in big numbers. In those days, they did

⁹ Sheikh Zainuddin bin Ali Al-Ma'bari, *Tuhfat al Mujahideen* ed. Hamza Chelakodan, (Calicut 1996), P. 14.

not face any kind of opposition or oppression from the non Muslim rulers who were then in power. As for these rulers, they continued to live adhering fully to their own ancient religion and its rites and practices.

Thus Muslims continued to live in peace and prosperity by the boundless grace and blessings of Allah. But this condition did not last long. The Muslims began to deviate into sinful living, forgetting the blessings of Allah and disobeying Him, and then Allah sent the cruel and wicked Portuguese Europeans to dominate over them.

The Portuguese invaded the Muslim abodes and subjected them to all kinds of oppressions. The abominable atrocities and cruelties the Portuguese openly unleashed on Muslims were countless. This Portuguese reign lasted for more than eighty years. By that time, the condition of the Muslims had become extremely pathetic. They had become impoverished, weak and powerless. They could not find a way to get out of this wretched hole. And the militarily and economically powerful Muslim Sulthans and Amirs reigning elsewhere did not come forward to rescue the Malabar Muslims from the calamity that had befallen on them. The reason was that these Sulthans and Amirs, having little interests in religion and who loved this transient world more than the next, would not struggle (*jihad*) in the path of Allah and spend their wealth in His cause.

I have undertaken the composition of this book in these circumstances. I have composed this with the intention of giving inspiration of the believers to wage war (*Jihad*) against the cross worshipping Portuguese. The occasion for this effort is the fact that waging a holy war has become an obligation of all individual Muslims as the Portuguese had invaded and occupied the Muslim abodes. They killed innumerable Muslims. Those who were caught, bound and confined were countless in number. Many were forcefully converted to Christianity. Kidnapping Muslim woman and raping them in custody to produce Christian children was rampant. Their intention behind these deeds was to prepare these children to harass and fight the Muslims when they are grown up.”¹⁰

¹⁰ Sheikh Zainuddin, *Tuhfat al Mujahideen* translated. M.H. Hussayn Nainar (Calicut, 2006) PP. 4-5

The author has made it clear in unambiguous terms that the intention of the narration is nothing but rousing the believer to fight against the oppressive colonialists. He elucidates that it was only by the sincere support of Muslim- friendly Zamorin, the Muslims who lacked a powerful leader of themselves - could keep fighting the foreign enemies. He also accuses Muslim Sulthans and Emirs for not taking any interest in the affairs of the Muslims of Malabar:

ولا يخفى ان مسلمي مليبار ليس لهم أمير ذو شوكة يحكم عليهم ويراعي مصالحهم بل كلهم رعايا الكفرة ومع هذا كانوا جاهدوهم وصرفوا في جهادهم الأموال على قدر طاقتهم بمعونة محب المسلمين السامري وإنفاقه الأموال في أول مرة حتى ضعف المسلمون بتعطيل تجارتهم وإهلاك نفوسهم وتخریب دیارهم وأموالهم، وهكذا مرارا حتى ازداد ضعفهم واشتد فقرهم وفاقتهم وعجزوا ولم يعتن بأحوالهم سلاطين المسلمين وأمرأهم - أعز الله انصارهم - مع وجوب الجهاد عليهم¹¹

The author appreciates and praises lavishly the Hindu rulers of Malabar for their tolerance and friendly relations with their Muslim subjects, after pointing out the fact that the places like Calicut, Veliyankode, Tirurangadi, Tanur, Ponnani, Parapanangadi, Paravanna, the localities surrounding Chaliyam port, Kakkad, Tikkodi, other localities surrounding Panthalayani, Kannur, Edakkad, Tirurangadi, Mahe, Chemmanad, the localities surrounding Dharmadam on its south Valapattanam and Nadapuram, on the south Kodunagallur, Kochi, Vypeen, Pallippuram and several other coastal areas became thickly populated and grew into towns with thriving trade and commerce, all because of Muslims.

لما دخلوا مليبار وعمروا المساجد في البنادر المذكورة وفشا فيها دين الإسلام دخل أهلها في الدين قليلا ووصل إليها التجار من أطراف كثيرة وعمرت بلاد غيرها مثل كالكوت، وبلينكوت، وترورنغادي، ثم تانور، ثم فنان، وبربورنغادي، ثم برونور من حوالي بندر شاليات ومثل كابكات وتركودي وغيرها من حوالي قندرينة ومثل كننوز، والكداد، وترونكاد، وميلي وجمنيا من حوالي درمفتن وفي جنوبها بدفتن، وتادورم وفي جنوبي كدنگلور كشي، وبت، وبليرم وكذا غيرها من البنادر وكثر فيها سكانها وعمرت بالمسلمين وتجاراتهم لقلة ظلم رعاتها مع كونهم وكون عساكرهم كفرة ومع رعايتهم عاداتهم المتقدمة وعدم مخالفتهم لها الا نادرا والمسلمون فيها رعايا وقليلون لا يبلغون عشر معاشيرهم.¹²

He asserts in the above lines: "The Muslims and their trade prospered because of the great tolerance with which the rulers and their military, though they were Hindus, treated the Muslims. They were not Hindus only in name, but pious people who strictly observe their ancestral customs and rites in Practice. Seldom did they do

¹¹. Sheikh Zainuddin, Tuhfat al Mujahideen (Ed. C. Hamza) Calicut - 1996. Page 18

¹². Ibid., p. 24

anything amiss so far as their religious rites were concerned. The Muslims then were, in fact, their subjects and not even accounted one tenth of the population. Yet, they did not treat the Muslims in any way hostile or unfriendly except on rare occasions.”¹³

Dr. K.K. N Kurup, the renowned historian of Malabar remarks: “Thucidides had given a detailed account of the Peloppenacian 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 Portuguese in the 16th century. His notion of a Jihad was not to convert the *Darul Harb* into *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 relevance even in the present century in a total fight against the ideology of neo-colonialism which consolidates the resources all over the world.”¹⁴

Al Fath ul Mubeen

Qadi Muhammed bin Abdul Aziz of Calicut who passed away in 1616 AD (1025 AH) was a renowned philosopher, poet and sufi. He had composed more than 12 works and profusely contributed to the growth of Arabi Malayalam literature. He was the Qadi of Calicut and the spiritual leader of Muslims belonging to *Qadiri* sufi order founded by Sheikh Muhyiddin Abdul Qadir al Jeelani of Bagdad. His composition of ‘*Muhyiddeen mala*’ a ballad in Arabi Malayalam paying rich tribute to Sheikh Abdul Qadir al Jeelani was a landmark in literary history of Malabar and a great contribution to Islamic devotional literature.

The most significant work of Qadi Muhammed, is ‘*al Fath ul Mubeen*’ which is on a historic theme and it seems that he was an eye witness to those events which determined the course of the Portuguese political power in the history of Kerala. This war poem was written in 1579 AD. The text was a criticism of communal intolerance and atrocities committed by the Portuguese in Kerala. While narrating a historical event of 1571, the conquest of Chaliyam

¹³. *Tuhfat al Mujahideen* (Tr. M.H Hussain Nainar) P. 45

¹⁴. Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, the Lefacy of Islam, P. 79

fortress constructed by Portuguese on the right bank of the river of Beypore at Chaliyam, the poet had also shown that only a united movement of Muslims and Nair warriors could resist the Portuguese intrigues and political designs. As he was the Qadi of Calicut, the poem also reflected his loyalty and patriotism in favor of the ruler, the Zamorin. His loyalty towards the ruler was deep. The main motivation of a poem like this, as expressed by the poet, was to obtain the blessings of God. For a Muslim, patriotism is a way to Godly blessings.¹⁵ Full title of poem is 'Al Fath ul Mubin li Samiriyyi Alladhi Yuhibbu al Muslimeen'. 'Al Fath ul Muben' means the manifest victory and the rest denotes that it has been dedicated to Zamorin who loves Muslims. It may be found strange that such a great Islamic scholar and spiritual leader had celebrated a manifest victory gained for a Hindu ruler in 537 lines which was also dedicated to him.

He starts the narration qualifying Zamorin as Muslim friendly:

فإن هذي قصة عجيبة	في شرح حرب شانها غريبة
واقعة في خطة المليار	ومثلها لم يجر في تلك الديار
بين محب المسلمين السامري	وبين خصمه الفرنج الكافر

"Let me narrate a wonderful story of a strange war
broke out in Malabar province,
The like of which had never occurred in that province before.
This occurred between Zamorin, the lover of Muslims
and his antagonists the ungrateful Portuguese."

He goes on describing the virtues and noble qualities of Zamorin:

وعلمها تسير في الأفاق	لا سيما في الشام والعراق
ويعلموا لهمة السلطان	السامري المشهور في البلدان
وهو محب ديننا الإسلام	والمسلمين بين ذا الأنام
ناصر ديننا ومجرى شرعنا	حتى بخطبة على سلطاننا
والمسلمون كلهم رعيته	وإن يكن في أي أرض بلدته ¹⁶

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 73-74

¹⁶ Ibid., lines 14-19

"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 others.
He helps our religion and
Implements our religious laws
In Malabar, or wherever the Muslims live

They are his subjects.

The poet admires the commitment of Nair soldiers and praises the ruler again and again. This ruler will not attack any other country without a reason and he will not confiscate the property of anyone. He will not adopt dubious and treacherous methods in a war. He is also a man of vision, strategy, courage, patience and forgiveness:

ولا يأخذ المال بغير جرم	وليس يؤذي أحدا بظلم
لا يأخذ البلدان ممن دونه	وإن عصوا يعفوا بما يهدونه ¹⁷
ويخبر الأعداء بوقت حربه	ليس تعد خصمه بحربه
فخرا لدى الملوك بالشجاعة	اذ حرب غير السامري بالخدعة ¹⁸
ذو الرأي والتدبير والشجاعة	والصبر والعفو لدى الشفاعة ¹⁹

Then he prays for the Zamorin's welfare and proclaims that it is the duty of every Muslim to pray like that:

فواجب على جميع المسلمين	ان يدعوا بمثل ذا يا مسلمين ²⁰
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While applauding the ruler's will to fight for his religion and religion of Muslims, he finds fault with other Muslim rulers for their inaction and compromise with enemies: (lines 50-51)

لأنه مع كفره يحارب	والملك المسلم لا يحارب
لأجل دينهم ودين المسلمين	لكنهم قد صالحوا للكافرين ²¹

¹⁷. Ibid., Lines. 34-35

¹⁸. Ibid., Lines. 41-42

¹⁹. Ibid., Line. 44

²⁰. Ibid., Line. 49

²¹. Ibid., Lines. 50-51

He describes the ugly features, unruly behavior and barbarous dealings of the Portuguese:

يا أيها الناس بقلب حاضر
المقتدي لا نجس الطرائق
ودينه وأمة الرسـول
وساجد الصـورة والأوثان
ازارق العينين كالأغـوال
فخارج عن دينه فيزجـز
ابعد خلق الله عن طهارة

ولا نطيق حصره بذكره
وجعله للخلق مثل الأعد
وظلم كل وارد وصار²²

فاستمعوا قصة حرب السامري
وذاك ان اخبث الخلائق
اعدى عدو الله والرسـول
وهو الفرنجي عابد الصـلبان
كريهة الهيئة والأشـكال
يبول كالكلب ومن يطـهر
ذو المكر والطغيان والخديعة

كذاك اجرى ما جرى من امره
من حرق بلدان وهدم مسجد
وقتلهم من غير ذنب صادر

So, oh people listen to the war tale of Zamorin in rapt attention.
The worst sort of human beings who follows the most impure way,
The staunchest enemy of Allah, His messenger,
His religion and the community of the messenger.
He is the Portuguese, the worshipper of cross
who prostates before idols and images;
Despicable in figure and appearance
feline eyed like devils.
He urinates like the dog and whoever cleans for it
out-casted by them and driven away.
Master of trickery, aggression, betrayal
most distant from cleanliness.
Thus they made several similar attacks
those beyond any reckoning.
They burnt countries, demolished mosques
kept the men as slaves.
They killed many innocent persons
harassed those who pass by.

The poet threw light on the violation of civil rights of the indigenous especially in the lines 168 to 196. The Portuguese even compelled their enemies "to eat one's own flesh and to shoot arrows

²². Ibid., Lines. 52-58

themselves selves to their bodies”

ونزلة يطعمه بلحمه ودفعة يهدفه لسهمه²³

In the early stages of the battle narrated here, 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 by 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 starvations.

Finally the Nairs and Mappilas succeeded in capturing the Portuguese fortress with great valour and heroism. Here Jihad was declared to support a local ruler who was the follower of Hinduism. In fact it was not to crown a Muslim ruler or for making a country of non Muslims into a country of Muslims. Even the meaning of Jihad is demanded re interpretations in social and theological conceptualizations. The texts like *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 multi religious countries like that of India.²⁴

Al- khutbat ul Jihadiyya

This another anti colonial text by Qadi Muhammd of Calicut in the form of a *khutuba* prepared by him and sent to Chaliyam fortress and neighbouring mosques during the war narrated in *al Fath ul Mubin*; to be delivered there by the preacher most probably as a Friday sermon. This is a unique document remained unknown to the outside world and found out only recently in the course of the survey conducted by this researcher for National Mission for Manuscripts and procured by one of his students following a hard task.²⁵

²³. Ibid., Line. 188

²⁴. Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, the legacy of Islam (Kerala), P. 76

²⁵. It was kept hidden in a volume of several works bound together and among a number of other handwritten books at the house of Pangil Ahamed Kutty Musliyar, a highly renowned Islamic scholar of the last century. The student visited this repository several times in search of this work and could find it out only after a highly tiresome effort. The student is M.K Abdu Rahman Kutty Faidi, a UGC junior Research Fellow under my supervision in the Department of Arabic, University of Calicut.

It is a highly instigative speech in written form composed with a view to stimulate the faithful towards a hard battle against the Portuguese till the achievement of total victory. A number of Quranic verses and sayings of Prophet were cited to awaken the spirit of the Muslim warriors who had been assured of either reward and booty or honorable martyrdom and ensuing eternal bliss.

Following the abundant quotations from Holy Quran and due formalities of speech it enters into an open call for Jihad against the hostile aliens, the Portuguese who entered Malabar and created all sorts of mischief there.

أيها الناس من أراد الجهاد فهذا أوانه، ومن ابتغى السعادة العظمى فهذا إبانته، فإن النصارى عبدة الأصنام والأوثان، قد خطوا في اقليم مليبار في كل بلدان، وأكثروا فيه الصولة والفساد، وظهروا أنواع التعدي والعناد، وهموا مباني الإسلام، ومحو شعائر الأحكام، وتسلطوا على المسلمين تسلط المالك على المملوك، وأتوا الجبابرة من السلاطين والملوك، وملكو بسطوة بلادهم، وملأوا من خيفة أكبادهم، حتى أزالوا رسمهم واسمهم، وأخرجوا دموعهم ودمهم، وتحصنوا بالقلعة والمدافع، وليس لقلعها حيلة ولا مدافع، قد أيتموا بقتلهم الولدان، وأرملوا الإمام والنسوان، وخربوا أكناف البلاد، وأبطلوا معاش العباد، وعطلوا المسافرة والتجارة، وعوضوا لربحها الخسارة، كم من مسلم في حبسه مقيدون، وأي محنة بها يعذبون، كم من مراكب بنار احرقوه، كم من سفائن ببحر اغرقوه، كم من مسلم قد دخلوا في دينهم قهرا، ومنعوا طرق المسلمين برا وبحرا، أحرقوا المصحف والمساجد وعمرؤا في أماكنها الكنائس والمعابد، ونشوا بظلمه قبيور، وشيدوا بجرها قصورا، وهتكوا بين المحارم حرمة النسوان، وعذبوا المسلمين بعذاب اهل النيران، وجعلوا المؤمنين ذبيحتهم، وأموالهم غنيمتهم، قد نزع الله من قلوبهم الرحمة، كأنهم لم يخلقوا الا من النعمة.²⁶

“Oh people whoever intends Jihad, this is the occasion. Whoever aspires to the highest success this is the day. The Christians, the worshippers of idols and images have indeed entered into every locality of Malabar region. They have proliferated onslaughts and atrocities. They set forth different means of transgression and torture. They demolished Islamic edifices. They obliterated rules of governance. They have dominated over the Muslims, domination of a master over his slave. They put powerful *sulthans* and kings to disgrace, took over hegemony of their lands, filled their hearts with fear, even wiped out their signs and names, shed their tears and blood and strengthened their position with the fortress and canons; leaving not any artifice and canons to get destroyed. They orphaned children by their murders. They widowed ladies and dames. They destroyed shadows of the land. They took away livelihoods of the people. They left traders and travellers without work; and

²⁶. Qadi Muhammed bin Abdul Aziz, *Al-Khutba al Jihadiyya* the unpublished text, pp. 3-4

compensated their profit with loss. How many Muslims were confined in their prisons! What a catastrophe that has been afflicted! How many vessels they did set fire! How many ships in the sea they drowned! How many Muslims were entered into their religion by force! They blocked routes of Muslims both land and sea. They burned Holy books and mosques. They erected in their places churches and houses of worship. They flattened graves without any authority. They abused the women in the presence of kith and kin. They tormented Muslims like people of hell. They reduced Muslims to their scapegoats, and their wealth to their booties. Allah has indeed taken away mercy from their hearts; as though they were created out of nothing but grudge.”

Then the text congratulates those who came forward to wage Jihad and those who supported the fight by their wealth. It reminds that death is an inevitable end from which no one can escape. Running away from the battle field is the meanest act and courting death there is the greatest honor one can achieve. It goes on inciting those around to heroic fight by illustrating the alluring rewards reserved for martyrs in the heaven.

A paragraph is set apart for elucidating special rewards assured for taking part in the maritime warfare, which is described as ten times more superior to a war in land. Every sin including debt will be forgiven to a martyr of sea, when in the case of a martyr of land, the debt has been excluded. The farmer will not feel the pain of weapon but as delicious as a chilled nectar taken by one when he is thirsty.

واحتكم على الغزو في البحر، فان غزوة في البحر افضل من عشر غزوات في البر، وكفى لغزوة البحر شرفا بقول سيد البشر، من فاتته الغزو معي فليعز في البحر، ومن اجاز البحر فكأنما اجاز الأودية بقدمه، والمائد في البحر كالمشحط في البر في دمه، وان ملك الموت يقبض روح كل شريد وغيره الا ارواح شهيد البحر، فان الله يتولى قبض ارواحهم لكرامتهم عنده على شهيد البر، ويغفر لشهيد البر الذنوب كلها الا الدين، ولشهيد البحر يغفر له الذنوب والدين، ولا يجدون ألم السلاح الا كشربة عسل، بماء بارد على الظم²⁷.

This text was prepared by a great scholar of Islamic theology, a mystic and Qadi of Calicut Sheikh Muhammed bin Abdul Aziz in order to rouse the valour and boost the morale of those Muslim fighters who surrounded the Chaliyam fortress to conquer it for the

²⁷. Ibid., lines. 7-8

ruler Zamorin. The Jihad mentioned here was not in any way to establish Muslim supremacy over the land, but in fact favoring a Hindu ruler of the land to strengthen his hands, especially his maritime power.

Al Qaseedat ul Jihadiyya

This is another valuable text found out together with '*al khutbat ul Jihadiyya*' mentioned earlier in the course of the survey conducted under the leadership of this researcher, quite recently. A poem in 43 lines composed by the same author Qadi Muhammed in the same context of the war for capturing Chaliyam fort and subsequent victory secured by the allied forces of Muslims and Nairs under the leadership of the ruler Zamorin. At the outset, he congratulates the Muslim fighters for winning this decisive victory over the Portuguese and celebrates their courage, dedication and heroism.

ألا أيها السادات اهل الشجاعة	ومن بهم الإسلام حل بذروة
ويا من غدا بين الأنام مجاهدا	بمال وروح ثم نفس كريمة
لقد شاع في الآفاق صيت جهادكم	وقتلتم الأعداء في وسط لجة
فطبتم وبعتم بالجنان نفوسكم	ونلتم رضاء الله مع كل نعمة
واعطاكم الرحمن أجرا بلا انتها	باخرى وفي الدنيا فوز الغنيمة ²⁸

Oh the leaders, men of courage and those
who are fascinated by Islam utmost.
Oh the one who turned fighter from the folk,
With wealth, spirit and his own noble self.
Reputation of their Jihad indeed spread far and wide
for also slaying of enemies in the depth of sea.
You, done well and sold yourselves for Heaven
Won pleasure of God with all blessings together.
Bestowed by the Most Gracious unending reward
And treasures of booty in the world on other hand.

Then he turns to be an admonisher and warns those fighters who might be carried away by material motives, and they spoil divine

²⁸. Qadi Muhammed bin Abdul Aziz, *al Qaseedat ul Jihadiyya* (the unpublished text), lines 1-7

blessings of this world and alluring rewards reserved for them in the hereafter. From the context it is understood that a small number of fighters might have misbehaved after gaining the victory by attacking some ships passing by the sea with the aim of looting the sailors belonging to their own community. The poet condemns such tendencies in emphatic terms:

وبعضهم قد باع أجر جهادهم بظلمهم في البحر اهل السفينة
فصاروا كقطاع الطريق بأخذهم لأموال بعض المسلمين بلجة
فمن ثم قل النصر وارتفع العدا عليهم وكانوا غالبين بنصرة²⁹
وكل يقول الحمد لله شاكرا اذا مات عبد ظالم للبرية
لأن بظلم العبد ينقص رزقهم كذا يرفع البركات في كل بلدة
وينزل من فوق السماء لكم بلا ويسلب الإيمان عند المنية³⁰

Some of them have sold their reward for their struggle,
They attacked ship men in the sea.
Thus they turned into robbers by plundering
wealth of some believers in the depth of the sea.
So came down the success, enemies rose high
they prevailed over by (divine) assistance.
A person hostile to mankind when he dies
All say 'Al Hamdulillah' thanking Almighty.
For by hurting fellow beings their provisions grow less
Everywhere else will go high the blessings.
Calamity befalls upon you from above the heavens
And at the demise you will be stripped of your faith.

In the concluding lines he reminds that mutual admonition is the duty every believer and clarifies that his intention while giving this advice is genuine and free from any ill feeling. He asks for forgiveness if anybody felt otherwise.

Arabi Malayalam Literature

Arabi-Malayalam is a unique form of expression developed by Malabar Muslims. It is Malayalam language written in sophisticated Arabic script. A number of sounds in Arabic tongue do not have

²⁹. Ibid., lines. 7-9

³⁰. Ibid., lines. 13-15

corresponding phonic forms in Malayalam. Even the very fundamental terms of Islamic doctrine 'Allah' and 'Muhammad' cannot be transliterated retaining its purity. The Arabic alphabet comprises 28 letters. Of these, 13 letters lack phonic equivalents in Malayalam. The only solution that scholars of early Muslim generations in Kerala could find is to use Arabic script for Malayalam, and this is what has happened as a virtual inevitability. Most regional languages of India had adopted the sophisticated Arabic script in Islamic societies which gave rise to Arabi- Tamil, Arabi-Kannada, Arabi- Bengali etc, in same manner. The languages in other cultures had undergone the similar transformation while interacting with Arabic and the original scripts of some of them had even totally surrendered to Arabic. The Pahlavi scripts of Persians for instance, virtually become defunct by the over riding deployment of Arabic script.³¹ *

The heroic Mappila songs composed during the colonial period in Malabar were propagated to rejuvenate the Mappila enthusiasm.

³¹ M.N. Karasseri, Arabic in south India (Ed.), (University of Calicut- 2003). pp. 126-128

* Arabic Malayalam was developed as a dialect of Muslim intelligentsia, 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. The Muslim community, in general were familiar with the Arabic letters and scripts. The language used by them was Malayalam but words from Arabic, Persian and Urdu languages were liberally borrowed into it. The literature of Arabi Malayalam can be divided into prose and verse, out of which verse was more popular. It is generally known as Mappila songs '*Mappila Pattus*' (Mappila songs) that includes hymns that eulogise the holy figures, martial songs, moral lessons, songs of praise addressed to God, historical documents of holy events, love lyrics and wedding songs.

The first work in Arabic Malayalam verse, as per the generally accepted view, is '*Muhyiddin Mala*', which is a devotional song that celebrates the greatness of Sheikh Muhyiddin Abdul Qadir of Jilan and renders the major events, especially the miraculous feats of his life. *Badar Mala*, *Nafeesat Mala*, *Manjakkulam Mala*, *Mamburam Mala*, *Malappuram Mala* and *Makhdoom Mala* are some other works of this sort.

Martial songs known as '*Padappattu*' is another main branch of Arabi-Malayalam verse, which was enriched by over 50 songs the most prominent being *Badar Padappattu*, *Uhad Padappattu*, *Makkam Fatah*, *Futuhu Sham*, *Hunain Padappattu* and *Khantaq Padappattu*, all narrating the wars fought by Muslims in Arabia during the early period of Islamic propagation. Later these sorts of songs were also composed about local riots like that of Malappuram, Cherur and Puthangandi. The major contributions of Moyinkutty Vaidyar (1852-1892) - the all time celebrity of *Mappilappattu* - belong to this genre. Since such poems carried anti colonial message and remained a constant source of inspiration and spirit of sacrifice, a large number of those were proscribed or destroyed by the rulers of the period.

For instance, the legend of *Manath Parambil Kunhi Marakkar Shahid* or the Ballad of *Kottuppalli Nercha* provides a theme of Martyrdom. Every year this festival is conducted by the local community of the Mappilas to cherish the memory of this martyr the hero lived at Manath in Veliyankode, near Ponnani. He had courted martyrdom fighting against the Portuguese in order to rescue a Muslim girl who had been captured by them and taken to their ship. He was the first martyr of Malabar in an anti colonial encounter. His body was cut into pieces by a soldier, which had fallen to far off places. 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 organized for divine blessings, cure of diseases and fulfillment of desires. The *Kottuppalli Nerchappattu*, a ritualistic song, reflects the entire legend of heroic martyrdom of Marakkar. The narration begins according to the customary practice in the name of God and praying for His blessings.

Translation:

In the name of Allah, praise be to Allah,
Peace be upon the Holy Prophet and his family.
Oh Allah, bestow me well being so as to complete
the ballad of great martyr Kunhi Marakkar.
The beloved son of Abdullah, born in
the house of Manath in the village of Veliyankode.
With great love and affection, the mother brought him up.
He acquired knowledge and also fighting skill.

The ballad recited in *Maulud* depicts the heroic martyrdom of Islamic scholar, who from his own wedding occasion decided to be a martyr to safeguard the honor of a Muslim girl. *Kottuppalli Mala* a ritualistic song composed by an unknown poet, reflects the entire legend of heroic martyrdom of Marakkar. 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, patterns of religious behaviors, 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 myths.

'*Ramanthali 17 Shuhadamala*' in Arabi-Malayalam and '*Shuhada Moulid*' in Arabic also are devotional texts bearing anti-colonial message. The Portuguese had founded a small settlement in Ramanthali village near Ezhimala, of North Malabar, which was fortified and known as *Kottappuram* (place with fort). Since several centuries back there had been a Muslim settlement also at that place. As the Portuguese were in animosity against the Muslim inhabitants the latter were exposed to constant sufferings from the new settlers. In the circumstance the Muslims decided to fight against the Portuguese and an encounter between them took place in 1524 AD at Ramanthali, in which 17 Muslim heroes had courted martyrdoms. This incident, which was also referred in '*Thufat al Mujahideen*', was exalted and the exploits of these heroes were recollected in a traditional *Maulud* in Arabic and in '*Ramanthali 17 Shuhadamala*' in Arabic Malayalam.

In the encounter, these martyrs were cut into pieces by the Portuguese and were deposited in a nearby well of the Juma mosque. Finally, they were searched by the relatives who found the bodies with divine appearance and not decayed. They were given honorable burial at the place of the present Maqam where devotees used to give offerings for blessings and remedy of diseases.³³

These sorts of *Malas* and martial songs (*Padappattu*) had played a key role in anti – colonial struggles waged by Muslims during British period also. They were recited in great devotion by all members of Muslim families in Malabar. Though lived in utter poverty and constant stress, such recitals provided them with a feeling security, derived from the hope for divine blessings and the super natural powers of saints, martyrs and other holy men. The Muslims had never been superior to their adversaries with regard to number of soldiers, provisions, arms and ammunitions. In spite of that they had achieved impressive victory in the battles they fought at various stages of Islamic history and the legends of such victories narrated in the songs extended consolation to the women folk who were remaining inside their houses in an environment of perpetual apprehension and concern, whereas their male counterparts were

³³. K.K. Asainar, *Charitram Thamaskaricha Porattam* (Ramanthali Muslim Jama'ath 2007), pp. 18-20

indulged in constant struggle against the mighty British imperial forces.

Prof K.K.N Kurup has conspicuously put it "Mappilas as a community encouraged the rituals of uprisings through its popular institutions. The institution like *Jarems*, *Mouluds*, *Nerchas*, Mosques, *Thangals* 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 tenure 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 land lords 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."³⁴

Umer Qadi & Mamburam Thangals

Hazrat Umar Qadi (1765-1857) of Veliyankode, a sufi saint born in 1765 in a family reputed for scholarship in Islamic theology and was educated under Mammi kutty Qadi of the Makhдум family of Ponnani who initiated him to *Qadiriyya* order of Sufism. He had written several tracts and fatwas both in prose and poetry on various aspects of religion.

It was believed Umer Qadi had possessed supernatural powers with the ability to disappear from a police lock-up and also to force the police to act according to his desires. He was not only a sufi with miraculous capabilities, but a great critic of the British and their administrative system. His landed properties in Veliyankode were heavily assessed by the revenue officials. He had even protested

³⁴. Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *The Legacy of Islam (Kerala)*, PP. 70-71

against such collections and openly declared that he would not pay tax to British for God's land. He never paid land revenue, but his friends had fulfilled this obligation. After their death, the village headman demanded the payment from Umer Qadi. He scolded them as servants of the imperialists who had slain Tipu Sulthan and destroyed many native rulers. When a complaint was filed before the Revenue Divisional Officer, Umer Qadi was brought before him for trial. The officer Neebu asked him: "Are you Umer Musliar of Veliyankode who rebels against the British authority and refuses to pay taxes?"

He replied affirmatively. Then Neebu threatened him to confiscate his wealth and banish him out. Umer Qadi replied in a defiant tone: "I will never pay you tax for God's land. You may exercise your authority; I am ready to face any situation". When the officer threatened him again, he became furious, jumped up and spit on the face of the officer shouting 'ماذا تقول يا بطل' (what do you mumble, you stupid?). Subsequently he was sentenced for imprisonment for a long period.³⁵ During the life time, he was highly respected by the Hindus and Mappilas as a divine personality. After his death in 1857 he became a cult figure among the rural folk of Malabar and a symbol of defiance and negation of tax to the imperialist regime.

Mamburam Thangals of Tirurangadi played an important role in regenerating an anti British consciousness, in the minds of Malabar Muslims who were greatly exploited by the British rulers. Sayyid Alavi Thangal (d. 1845 AD) who was born in Tarim (Yemen), had arrived Calicut in 1767 AD as a boy of seventeen and settled at Mamburam where his maternal uncle was also a scholar and theologian. His tract '*al saif al Battar Liman Yuwali al Kuffar*' expounds the attitude that a Muslim must adopt towards oppressive foreign rulers every where in the world. This tract that called for an uncompromising fight against the aggressors till the end was widely circulated in Malabar which inspired Mappilas to direct action against British authority. Mamburam Thangal who had a large number of followers was an ambassador of Hindu-Muslim harmony. On the other hand he had personally involved in anti British Mappila uprisings of 1801 and 1817. It is also believed

³⁵. Veliyankod Mahallu Committee, *Hazrat Umar Qasiyude Jeeva Charitram Kritikalum* (Veliyankode 1999), PP. 38-49

that he had taken part in anti British battle of Cheroor in 1843 in a miraculous manner, fought sitting on horseback and his leg was wounded by a gunshot of the enemies.

His son and successor, Sayyid Fadl Pookoya Thangal (d. 1901 AD) who had established the Jama'ath Mosque of Mamburam inherited anti-British feelings of his father. He issued a number of fatwas on theological questions and propagated anti-colonial message urging the believers to wage war. His most important contribution is '*Uddat al Umara wal Hukkam fi lhanat al Kafarati wa Abadatil Asnam*' , a collection of nine small works including '*Tanbih al Ghafileen*', '*al Durr al Mandoom*' etc., those incites the believers to open fight against colonial rulers. He was very much an architect of Hindu-Muslim unity and wielded great influence among both sections. Hence, the authorities saw in him a big threat to their sovereignty and forced him to leave the country. He went on exile to Arabia in 1852 together with his family and later passed away in Constantinople in 1901.³⁶

'*Muhimmat al Muemineen*' written by Aminummantakath Pareekkutty Musliar is another text that shows the involvement of Ulamas of Malabar in anti colonial struggle against British, compiled in the context of Khilafat movement. This work clearly stated that it was the duty of every Muslim to struggle against the imperial forces who were oppressing Muslims all over the world and confronting Islamic Caliphate in Turkey. This treatise was signed by the author and testified by the prominent Ulemas of the period. This was lithographed at *Muhyil Garaib* press of Tellichery in 1921 and widely circulated in all Muslim populated areas. Due to the explosive nature of the text it was proscribed by British authorities who issued a notification in Madras Gazatte which declared that anybody possesses a copy of this was liable to be sentenced for five years' imprisonment. The author later escaped to Mecca in disguise and carried on his anti British writings there also.

In fact these writings in Arabic and Arabi-Malayalam had to deliver a message to the Muslim community of Malabar, when they had been in a difficult situation created by the foreign aggressors in

³⁶. Moyin Hudawi Malayamma & Mahmood Panangangara, *Mamburam Thangal: Jeevitham Athmeeyatha Porattam*, Darul Huda Chemmad, 2009, PP 67-87.

their colonial exploitations. They had not only brought commercial rivalry but also religious fanaticism to the Malabar Coast. There had been no justifications for their unwarranted lootings, destruction of men and wealth and atrocities in Malabar. As a community, Muslims had to resist these oppressions in the light of the holy Quran and its policy of Jihad. But it was not to convert Malabar into an Islamic state. But, it was to safeguard the interest of the local ruler. It shows that it was the duty of a Muslim to support the native ruler. Jihad was an instrument for this motivation. The Arabic heritage of Malabar reveals the true spirit of anti colonialism and propagates an ideology for the consistent resistance.

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ARABIC LITERARY HERITAGE OF MALABAR THE ANTI-COLONIAL APPROACH

Prof. (Dr.) N.A.M. Abdul Kader

This booklet, a revised form of lectures by the scholar organised by National Mission for Manuscripts, New Delhi, in print is intended to promote the anticolonial ideology from the Arabic literature of Kerala for further research and indepth study. I am happy to mention my association with these lectures in different academic centres along with the author. Prof. Abdul Kader who has shown his deep erudition in this new area of research and hope it shall be pursued by other scholars also.

- Prof. (Dr.) K.K.N. Kurup

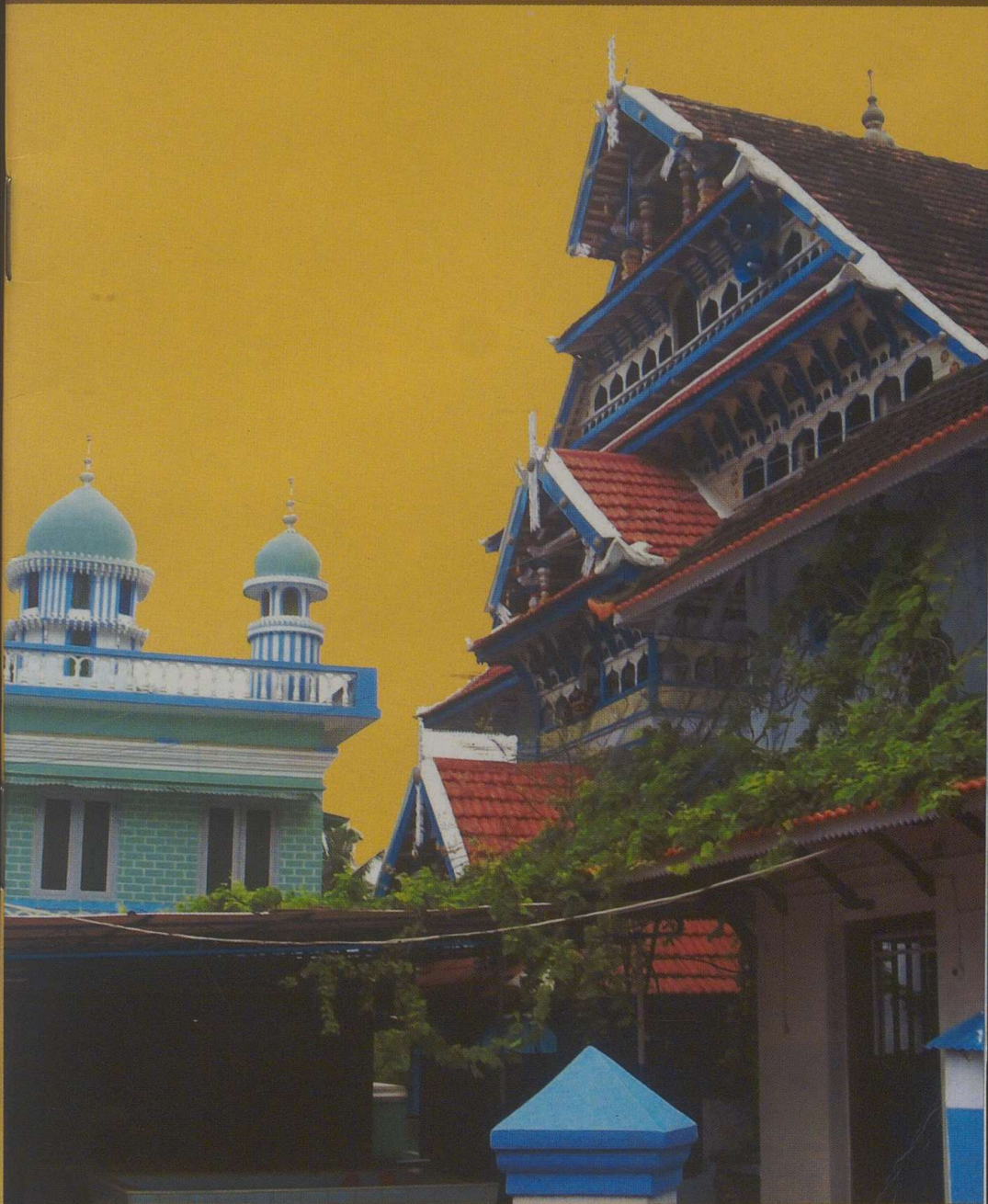


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