CHAPTER 1

ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF ISLAM AND ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN KERALA
The Arabs had established commercial relations with Kerala even before the rise of Islam in Arabia. Syed Amir Ali observes that the Arabs began to come to Malabar years ahead of Alexander’s military expedition. With the establishment of the Roman Empire, the carrying trade was passed into the hands of the Romans, but still a portion of the trade was carried on by the Arabs along the coasts of Arabia, the Red Sea route being full of dangers. Writing on Mouza (Modern Mukha in Al-Yaman), *Peripulus of Erythrean Sea* records, “The whole place is crowded with Arab ship masters and common sailors, and is absorbed in the pursuit of commerce for with ships of its own fitting out, its traders with the marts beyond the straits on the opposite coast (Eritrea and Somalia) and also with Barugaza (Broach).”

Abu Zayd, the Arab traveler of the 9th century A.D. mentions, “The Arabs of Umman take carpenters’ tool box with them and go to the place where the coconut grows in abundance. First they cut down trees and leave it to dry. When it is dry they cut it in to planks. They weave ropes of the coir. With this rope they tie the planks together and make of them a vessel. They make its mast from the same wood. The sails are made of fibre. When the boat is ready, they take a cargo of Coconuts and sail for Umman. They make huge profits in this trade.” On the basis

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3 Ibid., p.15.
of this evidence it is clear that the Arabs had close commercial relations with West Indian ports, and the spices of Kerala must have attracted them to Kerala ports.

There were a number of flourishing ports in ancient Kerala. Muziris Panthalayangadi, Baliapattanam, Kannor, Brahmapattanam, Panthalayini, Calicut, Beyapore, Chaliyam, and Azhikkode were the principal ports in those days⁴. Kerala held an important position on the trading map of ancient world. The port of Muziris⁵ was one of the greatest commercial centres of the world. Muziris was considered as a meeting place of the East and the West. From the East came China and probably the East Indian traders, while from the West came the Phoenicians, the Romans, the Arabs, the Persians, the East Africans and others. These commercial enterprises had been tremendously encouraged when the Egyptian pilot, Hippalus discovered how to utilise the monsoon winds for direct traverse of the Arabian Sea⁶.

The extensive coast and the availability of spices attracted foreign merchants to Malabar Coast from very early times. The Bible and early Greek and Roman writers justify to this fact. Referring to the age of Soloman the Old Testament says that in this period gold was obtained from Ophir and once in three years the navy

⁵ Muziris is usually identified with the present day Kodungallur. The port silted up as the result of unusual flooding by the Periyar River in 1341. It there upon lost its importance, being replaced by Cochin and the later northern river Calicut.
of Thurshis came bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks. All these, except gold, were products of Malabar, and Hebrew names for the last two terms, Kapin and Tukin are obviously the Tamil Kavi and Thikari. In view of this, it is not perhaps an altogether idle fancy, which identifies Ophir with Beypore, a port near Calicut at the mouth of the river of the same name, which is famed for its quriferious sands. The similarity again between the Greek names for rice (Onzya), ginger (Zin Ziber), Cinnamon (Karpion) and the Malayalam Ari, Inchiver and Karpuram indicates that trade existed in these articles between Greece and Malabar, the only part of India where these entire products grew in abundance.

As seas on three sides surround Arabia, the Arabs naturally had engaged in sea-borne trade from the very beginning of international trade. As India faces Arabia, the Arabs could easily establish trade relations with India from time immemorial. The historian, Sardar K.M. Panikkar observes that from very early times Kerala had been in contact with the Arabian coast and that traders especially from Muscat and other centres of the Arabian Peninsula used to frequent the Malabar ports.

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8 The Arab Geographer Yaqut is the first to give the name Malabar, meaning a hilly area.
10 C.A.Innes, op.cit., p.27.
To quote Miller, as pre-Islamic traders they provided a friendly situation that facilitated the introduction of Islam and Muslims who introduced the new faith\textsuperscript{13}. The Arabs during their stay here might have got enough time to propagate the new religion as they usually came before monsoon and stayed for four to six months to collect enough goods to sail back to Arabia.

The anonymous author of the 'Periplus of Eritrean Sea' describes the town of \textit{Muziris} as the principal international port of Malabar and as a place, which abounds in ships sent there with cargos from Arabia and Greece\textsuperscript{14}. According to Pliny, writing in the same century, a large number of Arabs had settled along the coast of Malabar, concentrating in central and southern parts\textsuperscript{15}. The Periplus makes clear that Indian trade with the horn of Africa and the Arab maritime enterprise in India can be dated to at least the first century A.D. And we know that in the same century the Mesopotamians, the Greeks and the Romans using the monsoon began sailing directly to India and Sri Lanka. It probably was at its peak in the first two centuries\textsuperscript{16}.

Islam as a religion and civilization made its entry into the world stage with the life and career of Prophet Muhammad (A.D.570-632) in Western Arabia\textsuperscript{17}. After his death a series of successors called \textit{Caliphs} claimed political authority over the

\textsuperscript{13} Roland E. Miller, \textit{op.cit.}, p.42.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}, p.45.
Muslim community. During that time Islam grew world wide and spread in the rest of the world. A proper historical view of Islam, its appearances and early development, however demands that these processes be studied against the cultural background of the 6th century Arabia and more generally the near East. Islam originated as an ideological movement based on belief\(^\text{18}\).

The Indo-Arab commercial relationship that began to spread Islam unified the various Arab tribes under a centralised state within a few years. After the treaty of Hudaybiyah\(^\text{19}\) the growth of Islam was very fast. As a result several tribes of Arabia embraced Islam and naturally there could have been traders too among whom were the pioneers of Islam\(^\text{20}\). After embracing Islam the Muslim traders must have continued their trade and they must have arrived at Kerala Coast as usual. They must have been welcomed as traders and apparently facilities would had been given to them to settle and acquire land and start missionary activities which paved way for Islamic growth.


\(^{19}\) Hudaybiyah is a place, nine miles away from Macca, where Prophet Muhammad and Quraishy leader (tribe) Suhail signed a pact in AD 628. In the treaty, the Prophet agreed not to enter Makkah in that year. See more details Maulana Syed Abdul Hassan Nadvi, (tran. Abdul Shukkur Alkasimi), *Karunyathinde Thiru Duthan* (Mal), 2005, pp.208-214.

\(^{20}\) M. Abdul Samad, *op. cit.*, p.5.
The coast of Malabar was the first place to host Islam in India. And the Mappilas are considered as the first descendants of Indian Muslims. Scholars differ in their opinions about the advent of Islam in Kerala. Most of the historians are of the view that Islam came to Kerala during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad. It is based on the narration contained in 'Keralolpathi' about the well-known legend of the conversion of Cheraman Perumal, the last king of Chera Empire. The Arrakkal records also mention the Perumal's travel to Mecca and the history of conversion.

The story of Cheraman Perumal tradition is considered, as an important turning point in the development of Islamic settlements in Kerala. During the reign

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21 Rolland E. Miller, Mappilla Muslims of Kerala A Study in Islamic Trends, 1992, p.30. The name 'Mappila' is a transliteration of the Malayalam 'Mappila'. The transliteration has taken several different forms, the most common being 'Mappila' and 'Moplah'. The origin of the term is not yet settled, but it appears to have been basically a title of respect. In its partial form, 'Pilla', it is found among 'Nayars'. It was a common honorific title for Christians in middle Kerala, and this usage continues to some extent to the present. At an earlier period Muslims and Christian Mappilas were differentiated as 'Jonaka' and 'Nasrani Mappilas' respectively, But recently the term has tended more and more to an exclusive name for Kerala Muslims.

22 Keralolpathi is considered as an important traditional sources of the study of Kerala. The work deals with events and personages of the early period of Kerala history. Logan, the author of Malabar Manual, has given a detailed account of the traditional history of Kerala on the basis of information contained in Keralolpathi.

23 The Rama Varma Kulasekhara, the last ruler of Mahodayapuram was called Cheraman Perumal. All the Kulasekharas from Kulasekhar Alwar to Ravarma Kulasekhara belonged to the Chera Royal house of Mahodayapuram.

24 The Ali Rajas of Cannannore were the only ruling family among the Muslims of Kerala. The ruling house was known as Arakkal house.

of Cheraman Perumal at Kodungallur the Arabians used to visit Adan Mala\textsuperscript{26} in Srilanka\textsuperscript{27}. At that time they visited Kodungallur too and the king heartly welcomed the Muslim pilgrims. At the time the king told them about an unusual dream\textsuperscript{28} and the king was satisfied with the clear explanations given by them to this dream\textsuperscript{29}. With this experience the Perumal decided to become a Muslim. He secretly determined to join the pilgrims on their return to Mecca and accordingly reached Arabia with them. Most of the accounts substantiate the fact that he settled in Arabia and changed his name to Abdul Rahman Samuri\textsuperscript{30}. The history of Cheraman Perumal is also mentioned in the ‘Theyyam’\textsuperscript{31} hymns of Malabar.\textsuperscript{32} The conversion story of Cheraman Perumal has aroused considerable debate.

\textsuperscript{26} The Adam Peak in Ceylon is one of the loftiest and the best known in the world. It is 7260 feet in height, rising in solitary grandeur on the western front of the great central plateau and could be seen by navigators miles away on the sea. It is a great pilgrim centre to peoples of all nationalities. On its summit is a lofty black rock with a hollow depression about four feet long resembling a big human footprint. The Singhalese, Siamese, Burmese and Tibetans claim that it is the footprint of the Budha and call it his Sri pata. The Hindus venerate it as the mark of Siva’s foot. The Muslims consider it the footprint of Adam. The Christiane however claimit to be that of St.Thomas.

\textsuperscript{27} Velayudan Panikkashe, Keralam Pathinanchum Pathinarum Nuttandukalil (Mal), 1997,p.46.

\textsuperscript{28} Cheraman Perumal dreamed that the full moon appeared on the night of new moon at Mecca, in Arabia and that, when at the meridian she split in to two one half remaining and the other half descending to the fact of a hill called Abikubais when the two halves joined together and then set.

\textsuperscript{29} Velayudan Panikkasseri, op.cit., p.47.

\textsuperscript{30} Roland E Miller, op.cit., p.47.

\textsuperscript{31} It is a kind of ritualistic performing art form in Kavu in north Malabar, especially in Kannur and Kazargode district.

\textsuperscript{32}K.M.Bahavudeen, Kerala Muslimgal Porattathinde Charithram(Mal),1995,p.39.
The question is whether the advent of Islam in Kerala is related to the conversion and emigration of a Perumal ruler of Kerala or not. It is more possible that a king of Kerala was converted to Islam and immigrated to Arabia. Ibn Batutta who had travelled widely in Kerala during 1342-45 A.D. and recorded the tradition of a king of Kottayam called Kuwayl having accepted Islam. But the pertinent questions are, had the Perumal prior to his emigration to Arabia partitioned his kingdom. Was the Kollam Era instituted in commemoration of that event. And had the partition of kingdom taken place in the year 824-25 A.D., the starting year of the Kollam Era.

Eminent historian M.G.S Narayan has pointed out, "there is no reason to reject the tradition that the last Chera king embraced Islam and went to Mecca since it finds a place not only in Muslim chronicles but also in the Hindu Brahminical Chronicles like 'Keralolpathi' which need not be expected to connect such tale, which no way enhances the prestige or further the interest of the Brahmin or Hindu population.

If we try to associate the tradition of the division of Kerala into several principalities with the conversion and emigration of the last Perumal, it would have

33 A.P.Ibrahimkunju, op.cit.,p.18.
34 The introduction of the Kollam Era marked a milestone in Kerala chronology and history. The origin of Kollam Era remains to this day one of the unresolved mysteries of Kerala History. The early inscriptions and records of Kerala were dated in the Kali era or Saka Era till the Kollam Era became popular.
taken place only by the beginning of the 12th century. The inscription in the *Madayi* Mosque, one of the ten celebrated mosques in tradition built by Malik Ibn Dinar, the companion of Cheraman Perumal during his sojourn in Arabia and the first Muslim Sufi missionary in Kerala was dated 1140 A.D. (518 A.H)\(^{36}\). The tradition relating to the disappearance of the last Perumal, Rama Kulashekhara under strange circumstances that prevented the succession of a new Perumal was in 1122 A.D. The fact that the old *Madayi* Mosque was built in 1124 A.D., only two years after the disappearance of the Perumal, makes his conversion and emigration to Arabia quite possible\(^{37}\).

But there is no need to discard the Cheraman legend as sheer 'anachronism' or to take cover under the statement of Sulayman, the merchant (851-52 A.D.) who had evidently visited the countries. He wrote "I don't know that there is any one of nation either the Chinese or Indian that has embraced Mohammedanism or speaks Arabic"\(^{38}\). But we cannot fully support this argument. Rainord, a British historian who translated Sulayman's work into English, points out the limitation of this work. Rainord argues that the observation of Sulayman was totally inaccurate


because of his work did not deal with the Arab commercial activities. The work does not mention the history of the Jews and Christians. The Arab Geographers say that Sulayman's work is not his own. It is of an anonymous author who had come to Kerala during the 5th or the 6th century.

From all these evidences we can safely conclude that the Arabs had close contact with Kerala even before the rise of Islam in Arabia in the 7th century A.D. They made trade relations with Kerala, especially in spice trade. As this trade required time to collect the different spices sufficient for loading the ships, colonies of Arabs must have resided in different port towns of Kerala. In the first flush of enthusiasm of conversion to the new faith, these Arab Muslims must have tried to spread their religion in all the countries with which they had contacts. Thus Islam might have spread in the port towns of Kerala, as soon as it spread in Arabia.

The other argument shows that Islam reached Kerala during the Pious Caliphate, on the basis of some activities of the Pious Caliphs. They were very eager to spread the ideals of Islam far and wide as a part of their responsibility to lead mankind in the right spiritual path. Dr. Tarachand in his *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture* states that the first Muslim fleet appeared in the Indian waters in 636 A.D., during the period of Caliphate Ummar. Baladuri quotes it in his *Futuhul Buldan*, a

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40 Ibid., p.95.
41 M. Abdul Samad, *op.cit.*, p.2.
conversation between Caliph Ummar and an Arab traveller. Ummar asked the traveler what he thought of India. The traveller replied "its seas abound in pearls, its mountains, rubies and its trees in fragrance." From this it is evident that the Arab traders had been in Malabar during Ummar's reign or even before it.

A theory based on Rihlatul Muluk and Tuhfatul Mujahidin states that Islam spread in Kerala in the eighth and ninth centuries. These two books narrate the story of the arrival of Malik Ibn Dinar along with his friends and relatives. According to Rihlatal Muluk, Malik Ibn Dinar established fourteen Mosques in different places in Kerala and made arrangements for their smooth functioning. He died in 749 A.D. (A.H. 127).

The most outstanding and unquestionable evidence to show that Islam reached Kerala earlier than the ninth century is the 'Tarisappilly Copper Plates'. It refers a deed by which some land was given to the Tarisapally (Church) of Quilon by Ayyanadikal, a vassal of Sthanu Ravi (844-885 A.D.), of the Second Chera Empire.

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43 M. Abdul Samad, op. cit., p.2.
44 Ibid.
45 The famous book Rihlathul Muluk written by an Arabic traveller Shihabudhuin Suhravadhi. The book reveals the early Islamic expansion in Kerala.
46 The book was written by Sheik Zainudhin. It was first written in Arabic in the late sixteenth century. It gives as a clear picture of the early Muslim expansion in Kerala and also the earlier activities of the Portuguese in Malabar.
47 M. Abdul Samad, op. cit., p.3.
The plates reveal Arab names and Arab Script of 849 A.D., which include the names of eleven Muslims as witnesses viz, Muimun Ibn Ibram, Muhammad Ibn Mahin, Salih Ibn Ali, Utman Ibn Ali, Marziban, Muhammad Ibn Yahya, Amir Ibn Ibrahim, Ibrahim Ibn al Tayyi, Baker Ibn Mansur, Al Quasim Ibn Hamid, Mansur Ibn Isa and Ismail Ibn Yagub. From all these evidences it is clear that the Muslims had a strong hold in Kollam area at that time.

There are some more evidences to show that Muslims were present in large numbers in Kerala in the beginning of the ninth century. 'Keralolpathi' refers to a Muslim traveler from Muscat who had settled in Kozhikode and later became the 'Koya' of Kozhikode.

The Cochín State Manual mentions that there were Muslims in Kerala during the ninth century and they had fought a war with the Jews and had succeeded. Rihlatul Muluk mentions one Ali of Kufa who arrived in North Malabar in the year 830 A.D. (A.H 208) and started missionary work among the 'Vanavasis' of Kanakamala near Tellicheri.

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48 C.K.Kareem, op.cit., p.96.
49 M.Abdul Samad, op.cit., p.3.
51 The important tribal groups in Malabar.
52 M.Abdul Samad, op.cit., p3.
Dr. Tarachand observes that Muslims came to India, not like the Christian colonies of Syrians, driven and persecuted from their homeland, but full of ardour of a newfound religion and of conquest and glory\(^3\).

Thomas Arnold’s ‘The Preaching of Islam’, first published in 1896, popularised the theory that the Sufis were great preachers of Islam\(^4\). Simplicity and clearness of Islamic teaching were certainly among the most obvious forces at work in the religion and missionary activity of Islam\(^5\).

We have only scanty information about early Muslim missionary and Sufi activity in Kerala during the period, in contrast to detailed accounts of such activity in other parts of the world. This has made scholars like I.H Qureshi to assert that extensive Sufi missionary activity is to be found elsewhere in India\(^6\).

Traditional accounts preserve the names and activities of several Sufi saints and missionaries who propagated the teaching of Islam in Kerala. Unfortunately the available Arabic works, being mainly on theology have completely ignored the ideologies and activities of the Sufis and missionaries.

The tradition of Malik Ibn Dinar and his associates in spreading the religion of Islam in Kerala definitely indicates missionary activity. It is now known that Malik Ibn Dinar was a disciple of the famous Sufi, Hassanul Basri who died in 130

\(^4\) S.M.Muhammed Koya, *op.cit.*, p.5.
A.H (748 A.D.). The tradition of Malik Ibn Dinar is that Cheraman Perumal on his return trip from Arabia was accompanied by the family and friends of Malik Ibn Dinar. According to Rihlutul Muluk, Malik Ibn Dinar was accompanied by 44 members. Before the king died at Zatar on the Arabian coast, he had instructed his friends to proceed to Kerala and spread the new faith.

Likewise a Mappila pious poetry written by an unknown author commemorates the Muslim saints of the 12th century such as al-Jilani and al-Rifai. The fact that the 13th century witnessed some Sufi activity in the neighboring Tamilnadu indicates that this influence might have entered after the 12th century.

Malik Ibn Dinar built the first mosque at Kodungallur and he himself became the first Quazi of this place. Then he went to southern Kollam, where also he received hospitality apparently by the Travancore Raja and the second mosque was founded of which Hassan, one of his sons, became Quazi. Another mosque was constructed at Madayi. To this mosque the party brought with them from Arabia three blocks of white marble, one of which was placed in this mosque, where it is still to be seen. The other two, were similarly placed in the mosque at Quilon and Crangnmore. Abdar Rahman remained there as Quazi. Then the party proceeded to Bakkanur (Barkur) and to Manjalur (Mangalore) and to northern

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57 C.K.Kareem, op.cit.,p.102.
58 Roland E Miller, op.cit.,p.53.
60 Ibid.
Kayarode (Kasaragode), three places in Canara, founding mosques at each place and appointing Quazis like Ibrahim, Musa and Muhammad, son of Malik Ibn Habib respectively.

The locality of the next mosque has been the subject of some debate, but there seems no reason to doubt the correctness of the current Malayali accounts, placing it at Cherupattanam. Another important mosque was constructed at Sreekandapuram, and Ummar became the first Quazi.

After this the missionary group visited Daramapattanam in Kottayam taluk and Pantalayini – Kollam in Kurumbranad taluk and lastly Chaliam in Ernad Taluk, the present terminus of the Madras South West. At these three places Hassan, Muhammad and Thaki-ud-din, three more of the ten sons, were appointed as Quazis.

The style of architecture adopted in these and other mosques in Kerala stands as a testimony to the Hindu indigenous influence imbibed by the Kerala Muslims in different aspects of life. Following Cranganore, the missionary party led by Malik Ibn Dinar founded ten more mosques in places they set foot. Founding of mosques went hand in hand with missionary activity.

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61 Ibid.
62 C.K. Kareem, op.cit., p.103.
63 S.M. Muhammed Koya, op.cit., p.5.
It is easy to infer that conversions took place in various centres. The steady spread of faith and the gradual increase in the number of its adherents explain this fact. As has been suggested by a modern writer it is not clear from the traditional account whether Malik Ibn Dinar's primary intent was the conversion of Malayalis or the establishment of mosques for the use of the Arab traders and their employees. But it seems most likely, that organised Islamic worship was first established in the merchant communities in Kerala during that period. These settlements of Arab merchants cemented and strengthened by their marital union with native Hindu women brought forth the first Mappilas, a community generated by immigrant Arab traders and mariners.

The illustrious family of the Makhdums of Ponnani occupies a very distinguished position among the early Arabian settlers of Kerala. They were so reputed for their erudition, piety, dedication and commitment to the cause of knowledge that Ponnani, the centre established by them came to be known as the "Mecca of Malabar". This centre of advanced studies in Arabic was established by Shaykh Zayn al Din Ibn Ali (928 A.H) on whom the title Makhdum was conferred for

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64 The Malayalam speaking people is known as Malayalis.
65 S.M. Muhammed Koya, op. cit., p.5.
66 Ponnani became the centre of Islamic activity with the settling of the Makhdums family in the second half of the 15th century. The first Makhdum, Zaynaddin ibn Ali-al-Mabari (1467-1521) was the author of a well-known mystic poem, Hidayath ul Adhkiya ila Tariqath il-Aliya, renowned as the manual of Sufism in Malabar. Ponnani still imparts instruction in religious studies and is a training centre for new converts.
the first time. The *Makhdum* suffix the title *Mabari* to their names\(^{68}\). *Mabar* is the Arabic name for Coromandal. The forefathers of *Makhdum* came to Tamilnadu from south Yamen. His grandfather Ahmad Ali Mabari shifted his residence from *Maabar* to Cochin where Zayn al din Ibn Ali was born in 871 A.H. Zayanddin Ibn Ali al Mabari was the author of a well-known mystic poem, 'Hidayaul Adhklyah ila Tarigat il Auliya' renowned as the manual of Sufism in Malabar\(^{69}\).

Another Scholar of *Makhdum* family was Ahmad Zayn al Din Ibn Muhammad. He was popularly known as Sheik Zainuddin (1028 A.H). His work *Tuhfatul Mujahidin*, the first authentic work on the history of Kerala to be written by a Keralite, deals with the time of Portuguese arrival in Kerala in 1498 A.D. up to 1583 A.D., covering about eighty-five years\(^{70}\). It also deals with the history of the advent of Islam in Kerala and the condition of Muslims and the local people during the time.

In the mean time many schools of Sufi saints known as *Tariqah* sprang up in different parts of India. The *Qadiri Tarigah*\(^{71}\) was the most popular *Tarigah* in Kerala and could claim thousands as its adherents in the 15\(^{th}\) century. Even men of other *Tarigah* claimed their *Qadiri* adherence. Another *Tarigah* that had wider pursuit in

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\(^{69}\) A.P.Ibrahim Kunju, op.cit.,p.21.


\(^{71}\) *Tariqah* is a generic term literally it means a path, and technically it refers to a school of a Sufi saint. In India there were a large number of *Tariqah*. 
Kerala was the Rifai Tarigah that spread from the main land to the Mahal islands\textsuperscript{72}. The people of Kerala were much inspired by all the activities of these Sufi missionaries. The effective activities of these missionaries accelerated the spread of Islam in Kerala.

Ba-Alavi is another important Arab family that came to Kerala from Yemen in 1159 A.H (1748 A.D.\textsuperscript{73}) and he was warmly welcomed by the Zamorin, who assigned a house and other amenities to him. His later abode at Mamburam became a sacred shrine to large numbers of Mappilas and others. The Mamburam Tangals, as the Ba-Alavi saints of Malabar were popularly known were great scholars and issued several fatwas\textsuperscript{74}.

Muhammad Sha known as Kondotti Tangals was greatly honored next to the Mamburam Tangals, the founder of the line, by the Mappilas. Muhammad Shah reached Kondotti in 1718 A.D and established very cordial relations with both Haidar Ali and Tippu Sultan\textsuperscript{75}. Tippu Sultan granted extensive inam lands for the personal benefit of the Tangal.

\textsuperscript{72} A.P.Ibrahim Kunju, \textit{op.cit.},p.23.  
\textsuperscript{74} Fatwa, as a formal legal opinion given by an expert on Islamic law issued by a Mufti and taking the form of an answer to a question a fatwa is the considered opinion embodying the interpretation of Shariat.  
\textsuperscript{75} A.P.Ibrahim Kunju, \textit{op.cit.},p.22.
The *Bukhari*²⁶ constitute another family of luminaries who came to Kerala from Bukhara in Samargand. The first Sufi scholar of this family Ahmad Jalaludin Bukhari who came to Baliyapattom in Kannur District, was renowned for piety and scholarship and commanded respect and regard in society. Sayyid Muhammad Moula of Kavara island, born in 1144 A.H (1724 A.D.) was the fifth descendant of Jalaluddin Bukhari²⁷. It is reported that his activities extended from Mangalore to Trivandrum. A few scholars belonging to this family established centres of Arabic at Kadapuram near Chawghat in Trichur District and Sayyid Hamid Ibn Muhammad (1352 A.H) belongs to this family. His most important work is *Matali al Huda bi Matami I Ihtida* that deals with the history of the Sayyids with special reference to *Bukhari*.

The support of native rulers was another cause for the spread of Islam in Kerala²⁸. At that time trade was the key to economic recourses in South India, which was controlled by the Muslims. So each and every ruler developed a close alliance with the Muslim merchants. It enabled the Muslims also to get more support from the local rulers.

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²⁶ The title was given to the well-known collection of Sunni traditions by Abdulla Muhammad ibn Ismail ibn Ibrahim ibn Al-Mughirah al jail al Bukhari, who was born at Bukhara, A.D. 810, and died at the village of Khartang near Samarquaund in 870 A.D. His book is called the *Sahih of al Bukhari*. His compilation comprises upwards of the traditions of the acts and sayings of Prophet Muhammad.
During the 14th and the 15th centuries the Zamorin of Calicut had the supreme political power among the native rulers. The early Mappila history is closely linked with the rise of the Zamorin of Calicut who gained ascendancy among the contending Rajas of North Kerala. The latter included the Kolathiri to the north, the Cochin Raja to the south and the inland Walluvanad Raja. The extent of the Zamorin's dominance varied from time to time, as Panikkar optimistically estimates that by the 13th century he had sway from Cannanore to Quilon. The peaceful interaction of the Sufi missionaries gained full support of the natives that began to increase the population of the Muslims day by day.

80 Roland E. Miller, *op. cit.*, p.54.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
Economically, Arab-Zamorin coalition had brought beneficial results for the Muslims as well as the Zamorins. During that period the Arabs had succeeded in totally controlling the trade in the Arabian Sea and in exercising strong influence in
the East. On the other hand, the Zamorin, whose chief source of income was customs duty, could monopolise the trade outlet. The ancient Arab travellers like Ibn Battuta and Abdul Razak have given a clear idea of the social and political condition and how it helped the Islamic community in Kerala. Ibn Battuta says that the countryside was perfectly safe for travel and he also discusses the establishment of mosques throughout the area of Valarppattanam, Pantalayini Kollam, Madayi, Kozhikode etc.

Sayed Sulaiman Nadwi says quoting Majmaul Buldan of Yakoot, that the Rajas who ruled the coastal region of South India received large sums of money from the Arab merchants. This was the main reason for the highest regard and warm hospitality given to the Muslims by the Rajas. They did not oppose the conversion process by the missionaries and occasionally supported it. They ordered that one or more of the male members in each family of fishermen in his domain should be brought up as Muhammadans.

T.W Arnold points out that the trade in spices, ivory, gems etc. between India and Europe, which for many hundred years was conducted by the Arabs and the Persians, caused a continual stream of Muhammadans' influence to flow upon

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83 C.K.Kareem, op.cit., p.156.
84 M.Abdul Samad, op.cit., p.6.
the west coast of South India. But during that time the conversion was not limited only to the fishermen. It continued to other lower castes, as well. Any way, during the medieval period Muslims were the prominent community of south India especially in Kerala and they evolved a separate identity.

There was a similar approach by the Maharajas of Travancore towards the Muslims of Travancore area. T.K Veluppillai, the author of 'Travancore State Manual,' points out that "the rulers interested themselves not only in their temporal affairs but also solicitous of rendering assistance in the conduct of their religious observance." By the mid-15th century Muslims had become an important group in Travancore area.

In Northern Malabar the development of Mappilas was strengthened by the rise of the Arakkal Royal family led by Ali Raja of Cannanore. There are different opinions about the origin of the Arakkal family in Kerala. The epigraphical records reveal that the first viewpoint stresses that the origin of this royal family was in the first century Hijra. Another viewpoint is based on a coin and it mentions that the origin of this family was in 35 Hijra. Among the other evidences that the

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86 T.W.Arnold, op.cit., p.263.
87 K.N.Ganesh, Keralathile Innalekal (Mal), 1990,p.250.
89 P.A.Sayed Muhammed, Kerala Muslim Charithram (Mal),1961,p.49.
90 P.A.Syed Muhammed, op.cit.,p.49.
historians have found, one wood carved record in the Arakkal house, reveals that they became an important political power in the 16th century. However the Arakkal family holds the foremost place in the development of Islam in Kerala. The first Ali Raja was a Nayar minister of Kolathiri King. He embraced Islam marrying a Muslim woman. The family achieved independent status possibly in the 14th century. By the time the Europeans arrived they had become the rulers of a small principality at Cannanore occasionally extended to include territory as far as Tellicheri, the rule that continued to the modern time. Noteworthy is the fact that several of the family heads were women bearing the title "Bibi". The Ali Raja was the only instance of Mappila rule eventually anywhere in Kerala and was an exception to the general Mappila policy of accepting the local polity and living and working under the settled rulers. It is true to say “they never founded a state”. An important reason for their acceptance was the fact that they never interfered with the policies of the state. The exception of the Arakkal family developed fortuitously and not as a break in the policy. Although the family later came into contention with the Kolathiri Rajas, it made no real attempt to enlarge its

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92 Roland E Miller, *op.cit.*, p.57.
territory. However the Ali Rajas included the Lakshadweep Islands in their territory and they helped in its conversion and settlements. The influence of Ali Rajas also extended as far south as the Maldives Islands. This tradition also boosted the development of Islam in Northern Kerala.

We could find many reasons for the rapid growth of Islam in Kerala, and the social condition of the then Kerala gains prominence among them. It is a historical fact that the inequality that prevailed in society accelerated the spread of Islam. In its initial phase the people converted did not as fully internalise the doctrines of Islam, rather it was a means to get out of the Jati system in society. It might have been the reason for the massive acceptance of Islam by the lower caste people.

It could be seen that the Arab-Chinese travellers, who had traveled a lot along Kerala, were successful in giving a pictorial account of Kerala society of their time. The most famous among them is Sheik Zanudhin, author of the book ‘Thuhfathul Mujahidin’ which gives a comprehensive description of the 15th and 16th century Kerala society. Being a traveller, he commented that he could hardly watch the rites performed in Kerala and he could not see them any other parts of the world. This comment indicates the social deformities of Kerala in those years.

\[\text{Ibid}\]
\[\text{Velayudhan Pannikkassery, Keralam Pathinanchum Pathinarum Nuttandukalil (Mal), 1997, p.59.}\]
At that time Kerala was at the zenith of inequalities that resulted from the *Jati* system. The origin of the *Jati* system in Kerala is linked to the arrival of Brahmins. The Brahmins stood at the apex of the social ladder. The sacred thread worn across the shoulders distinguished them from others. Besides, there were several groups of Brahmins like *Nambidis, Elayad*, and in one instance *Embranthiri*, who succeeded in later times in securing or being thought fit to assume the name of *Namboothiriri* and there was yet another class, the *Mussat* or more properly the *Unilparisha Mussat*, who were privileged to eat with the *Namboodiris*, but did not inter-marry with them nor they were entitled to perform *Yagams*.

The *Namboodiri* Brahmins were at the top of the caste system. Elamkulam Kunjanpilla points out that the Brahmins became prominent from the 7th century and gradually they became a wealthy class and enjoyed more privileges from the rulers. The Brahmins could exert influence even in political affairs well by the later years of the eighth and early years of the ninth centuries. It is obvious that this supremacy of Brahmins in Kerala had instigated the caste system.

The growth of Brahmins was in the milieu of temples during the early stage. Temples played a major role in society at that time. Consequently the Brahmins

98 The caste system in Kerala was known as Jati System.
were given respect, as they were associated with temples. Even kings respected them as they were occupying an exalted status in society. There were many internal groups within the Brahmins and this internal division definitely implies hardness of the caste system. Teaching and temple related activities were the main occupation of the Brahmins at that time and there were three divisions among them like those performing inside the temple, Poduval and those who make flower garlands\(^2\). The internal divisions or the subcastes within Brahmins had strong influence on other castes too. It was the strong political and economical influence gained by the Brahmins that favoured widespread strengthening of caste system in Kerala and William Logan explains the same in his famous book *Malabar Manual*\(^3\).

The second in the caste system was the Kshatriyas. But in the absence of the Kshatriyas and Vyshyas, the third group of the four fold caste system, the Sudras got double promotions and received the caste title *Nairs*. They were commonly warriors and were more in number as compared to the *Namboodiris*\(^4\). The term 'Nair' was first mentioned in the *Thirukkattihanam* inscriptions of Vijayaragadevan in late ninth century\(^5\). The *Nairs* were dependents of the Brahmins because of *Brahminical* hegemony.

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\(^4\) C.K.Karemm, *op.cit.*, p.86.

Robin Jeffery's points out that occupationally there are several subdivisions among Nairs:- 1. Nayors (leader or soldiers) 2. Menons (generally writers or accountants) 3. Menochis (Superintendents) 4. Moolils (Chiefs) 5. Pada Nairs (fighting men) 6. Kurups 7. Kaimal, 8. Panickers, 9. Muthus and among the low caste Nairs, mention should be more of Chaliyan, veluthedan and Kottakkaththan etc. Most of the Nairs followed the matrilineal Marumakkathayam system of inheritance, based on matrilocal joint family called the Taravad.

Zainudhin refers to the Nairs who constituted the martial class. It was customary for the Nairs to move about with sword in hand. Though the main occupation of the Nairs was fighting, some of them were also employed as accountants and clerks in the service of the Naduvazhi. The Nairs were famous for their fidelity and loyalty. With the establishment of Namboodiri domination the Nairs succeeded in securing a major share of land and high offices of the state. Consequently, the landless classes were at the beck and call of Nayar Madambis who constituted the landed aristocracy of Kerala. The Nairs rank after the Namboodiries in Malabar, and they occupy the same position in the native state of Cochin and Travancore.

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107 Ibid., p.15.
Next below the *Nairs* in the social rank was the *Tiyyas (Ezhavas)*. Their main occupation was toddy tapping. But like the *Nairs* some of the *Tiyyas* also received military training. Then there were the *Kammalas* or artisan classes, the *Mukkuvas* or the fisher-folk and several other castes like *Pulayas, Kuruvas, Parayas* etc. They all occupied only a low status in society. During the medieval period the majority of the *Ezhavas* were tenants or *Kudiyans* of *Namboodhiri* and *Nair* landlords who exploited their labour to its maximum.

The condition of low-caste people below the *Ezhavas* was really pathetic and the castes like *Pulayar, Parayar* who struggled at soil were economically thwarted by the exploitation of Brahmins and became bonded labourers.

The pathetic condition of the fisher-folk was mentioned in the travel accounts of *Mahvan*, a Chinese traveller who reached Kerala in 1402 A.D. They were not allowed even to reside in a hut with more than three feet in height and were supposed to prostrate in respect whenever they meet *Nairs* and *Chettiyars*. From this we can very well be aware of the brutal inequalities which existed at that time.

One could see that even the *Namboothiris* and the *Nairs*, who formed the apex of caste system, had to suffer from many evil customs and rituals performed at that

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111 Ibid.
time, and the marriage system among the Nairs was the very instance of the same. Women were given prominence in Nair family. Husband had no rights over his wife. A woman was free enough to receive and reject husbands as she wished. During that period Nair women had two or three or even more husbands at a time\textsuperscript{112}. It is evident that all sections of the people were not comfortable with these customs.

Among Brahmins, only the eldest brother was allowed to marry according to their custom and the chance goes to the younger brother only if it was sure that elder brother would not have heirs\textsuperscript{113}. It is clear that only the eldest brother enjoyed full freedom. It may be to avoid difficulty resulting from the increased number of heirs. Resultantly Brahmins other than the eldest established relations with Nair community and many Nair women considered taking Namboothiris in bed as dignified and honored\textsuperscript{114}. The children born of them by Nair women are not entitled to inherit their father’s wealth\textsuperscript{115}.

Untouchability and unapproachability also existed in its dreadful form apart from unvisibility. A Nambudiri who happened to be seen by a Nayadi or Pulaya considered himself to have been polluted. A strict schedule of distance at which

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{112} Velayudhan Pannikkassery, \textit{op.cit.},p.61
  \item \textsuperscript{113} \textit{Ibid.},p.62.
  \item \textsuperscript{114} \textit{Ibid.}
  \item \textsuperscript{115} S Muhammad Husayn Nainar, \textit{Thuhfat al Mujahiddin A Historical Epics of the Sixteenth Century}, 2006,p.41.
\end{itemize}
members of castes below the Nairs had to stand with respect to the higher castes was evolved. Accordingly the Pulaya had to keep a distance of 60 feet from a Nair and there were distinct boundaries for each section of people.

Nayadis (Dog eaters) 72 feet
Kaniyan (Astrologer) 36 feet
Mukkuvan (Fisher man) 24 feet

William Logan in his Malabar Manual describes this terrible caste system\textsuperscript{116}.

One of the strange customs that favoured the people to embrace Islam and Christianity was Mannappedi. In South Thiruvithamkur it was called as Mannappedi and in north Thiruvithamkur it was 'Pulappedi' and 'Parappedi'. According to Gundert, it is said to have been practiced in the month of Karkkitakam\textsuperscript{117}. At that time Nair women were not used to go out in the evening without the company of men. If some Mannan from a lower caste happened to see a Nair woman and declare as 'seen', she would be ousted from her caste and was supposed to live the rest of her life with that Mannan\textsuperscript{118}. But some historians are of the view that the woman should be touched with a stone or stick by a Mannan and not just seeing was the condition for her ostracism\textsuperscript{119}. All the upper caste women were in fright till the

\textsuperscript{116} William Logan, \textit{op.cit.}, p145.
\textsuperscript{117} Elamkulam P. N. Kunjanpillai, \textit{Anathe Keralam} (Mal), 1959, p. 93. Karkidakam is a Malayalam month.
\textsuperscript{118} \textit{Ibid}. Mannan were the untouchables and depressed class of ancient Kerala society.
\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Ibid}. 
practice was banned legally in 871 M.E.\textsuperscript{120} In such circumstances, she has no alternative other than embracing Islam, Christianity or become a Yogi. Otherwise the local ruler would sell her\textsuperscript{121}.

The \textit{Smartha Vicharam}\textsuperscript{122} practiced in the \textit{Namboothiri} community too had caused inflow to Islam to a certain extent. If a \textit{Namboothiri} woman was found guilty through \textit{Smartha vicharam} she had to leave her house. Historians like Elamkulam Kunjanpillai have opined about the inflow.

It is easy to imagine the pathetic life of different caste strata of Kerala society and the fact that many sections of the people were discontented of these social practices. And it is believed that Kerala in those days was filled with large masses of discontented people. But when a slave or an upper caste becomes a Muslim, inequality ends there and he would be treated equally with the same respect shown to other Muslims even by the elite class. And also a person would not be treated badly by other Hindus for his conversion to Islam. This paved the way for people being attracted to Islam.

The social system might have played a vital role in the conversion of people into Islam. It would rather be the contempt towards the existing social structure and

\begin{small}
\textsuperscript{120} Velayudhan Panikkassery, \textit{Sancharikal Kanda Keralam} (Mal), 2001, p.256.  \\
\textsuperscript{121} Shaikh Zainuddin, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.43-44.  \\
\textsuperscript{122} It was a prevalent caste tribunal among the \textit{Namboothiri} family. The \textit{Namboothiri} women accused of adultery were tried before a caste tribunal, the whole procedure being called \textit{Smarhta Vicharam}. Those who were found guilty were subjected to excommunication from their caste.
\end{small}
practices than the ideals put forward by Islam that attracted them and the people wished for freedom from such social evils.

The Arabs had been a friendly towards the natives of Kerala, because the real ground behind their arrival was trade. The novel social system, which embraced all irrespective of their caste and creed must have attracted them. Under these circumstances people might have responded to Islamic missionaries in a more amicable way.

The converted people, mostly illiterate, did not fully understand the Islamic teachings. So first step of the missionaries was to impart the basic Islamic principles to the newly converted people. They appointed one Quazi for each mosque. The prime motive of the quazi was to lead the prayer and teach the Islamic principles to the converted followers. This was the background in which Islamic religious education was started in Kerala.

Prophet Muhammad had to escape because of Tawheed\textsuperscript{123} enlightenment all across Mecca as he had been continuously attacked from all quarters of Mecca. Hence he had initiated \textit{Majilisulannabavi}\textsuperscript{124} in order to instruct the \textit{Sahabakkal}\textsuperscript{125} with

\textsuperscript{123} Is an Arabic term, meaning literally, making one or unifying. Tawhid has traditionally been recognised as a fundamental doctrine of Islam.

\textsuperscript{124} The Prophet Mosque at Madinah, it is held to be the second mosque in Islam in point of seniority, and the same, or according to others the first, in dignity, ranking with the sacred mosque at Makkha.

\textsuperscript{125} One of the companies of Muuhammad. The number of persons entitled to this distinction at the time of Prophet Muhammad's death is said to have been 144000, the
Islamic knowledge *Surat* in the *Quaran*; such attempts on the part of the prophet was supposed to be the beginning of Islamic religious education. This religious educational practice which was predominant in Arabia has thus been taken to all over the world.

In Kerala, the progress of Islamic culture was primarily centered in mosques. If we examine the Muslim settlement anywhere in Kerala, the role of mosques in the life and culture of the Muslims could be found unavoidable. It is not at all a recent phenomenon, which could be proved by the fact that the missionaries who had come over to Kerala under the leadership of Malik Ibnu Dinar also concentrated more on constructing mosques.

The role of Islamic missionaries in spreading religion was crucial during the earlier times. The illiterate people of Kerala were fascinated by Islam but did not completely understand its doctrines. Majority of the earlier Islamic centres were on seashores and a major chunk of the fisher folk were also attracted to Islam. It could not be claimed that it was the wisdom and knowledge of the Arabs that attracted these uneducated people into Islam. And it has to be reflected upon how the Arabs communicated their ideas with the natives.

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number includes all persons who had ever served as followers of the Prophet, and who had actually seen him. The general opinion is that one who embraced Islam, saw the Prophet and accompanied him, even for a short time, is a *Sahabi* or associate. See more details in Thomas Patrik Hughes, *A Dictionary of Islam*, 2001, p.555.
Since the arrival of Islam in Kerala the mosques have functioned as centres of religious education both in the sense of instruction and in the sense of building a moral personality in the student who becomes an integrated member of the community\textsuperscript{126}. The Islamic social life progressed on the basis of mosques, and the culture so developed has been known as Mahallu \textit{Jamaat}\textsuperscript{127}.

The \textit{Madrasas} taught the basic education in the Islamic faith and also practices in his every day life. They also inculcated the belief that Islam and his \textit{Ummah}\textsuperscript{128} are religiously superior to all other religions and communities of the world. The purposes of the education should be the establishment of Islamic religion in all aspects of life.

The main feature of this system is a one-man centred educational practice. There was no age limit for students. Pupils came from different areas. As the word \textit{Othupally} denotes, the method of teaching was oral\textsuperscript{129}. Students learn completely by heart. They do not use any type of writing materials. It followed the traditional method of the Brahminical education. Along certain temples there were \textit{Othumadams}\textsuperscript{130} in which Hindu students were taught to recite Sanskrit verses\textsuperscript{131}.

\textsuperscript{128} The first followers of Islamic faith.
\textsuperscript{130} \textit{Othumadam} was a traditional educational centre of the Hindu community.
Probably early Muslims adopted the same method. That is why the Othupally got its name. The Muslim community gave a high regard to the Mulas. Their words and deeds greatly influenced the Muslim community.

These types of primary institutions were run either in small sheds, mosques or else in the houses of Mulas. The study materials subscribed at these centres were not at all in the form of printed books. The study material consisted of wooden sheets with white soil on both sides, after which charcoal ink was used to write Alif, Ba. The expenses of the institution were met by the Mahallu. It was the beginning of Madrasa education.

The higher education system was known as Dars. Almost all Dars were attached to the mosques. The students from the neighbouring villages were also accommodated in Dars. At times the leaders of the Othupally were the senior students of the Dar. The Mosque served as a classroom and hostel at the same time. The mosque was primarily meant for offering prayers, but mosques had also rendered great services in respect of expansion of religious education. The

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131 Hymns
134 The Madrasa education started from the Arabic Alphabet. Alif, Ba is a monogram frequently placed at the head of a letter.
villagers gave food for students and teachers. Each family adopted a student. So the students and the villagers had a co-relation with each other.

During that time Ponnani mosque in Malabar was one among the supreme mosques. In the early 15th century Zainudheen Ibn Ahammad Makhbari was crowned as the Quasi of Ponnani mosque and since then the golden era of Ponnani began. The Madrasa established in 1510 A.D. by Zainudheen Makhdoom the senior in the Juma masjid was the centre of high learning for the Musliyars all over Kerala. During the time students from all over India came to Ponnani for religious education. This centre has also been used as a centre to educate the newly converted Islamic believers and thus it has gained much importance. Vilakkatherikkal was the title given to the traditional Muslim religious educational practices. Vilakku means lamp. In Ponnani mosque there is a big lamp even today. All such activities are now being taken care of by the Mounathul Islam Sabha, which was established in 1900 A.D. at Ponnani. Some Muslim leaders interested in the welfare of the community convened a meeting at Malappuram under the presidency of Puthiya Maliyekkal Pukkoya Thangal on 8th October, 1900. Nearly a thousand representatives from different parts of Malabar attended the meeting. It

137 A.P.Ibrahim Kunju, op.cit., p.25.
139 Brochure of Mounathul Islam Association, p.9.
140 A.P.Ibrahimkunju, op.cit., p.25.
was registered in 1908 under the Companies Act\textsuperscript{141}. Thus Ponnani had long been the religious head quarters of Kerala.

To promote the general welfare of the community the \textit{Sabha} conducts an orphanage, several schools and a weaving institute. Several branch associations have been opened all over Malabar, Travancore and Cochin area. Ponnani Mosque has produced a large number of scholars in Kerala.

There was no division of classes as such. Those who study one textbook or \textit{kithab} could be considered as one class. The teacher is known as \textquote{\textit{Usthad}}\textsuperscript{142}. The students would sit in a semi circle. The \textit{Usthad} would read the text, word by word and would give meaning and explanation as much as possible. Generally there would be only one teacher, even if there were many students of both sexes and they study in different classes. But girls were not allowed to continue their education after they had attained puberty.

The \textit{Madrasa} curriculum included all subjects that would help the material, moral and spiritual well-being of men. The first textbook was known as \textit{Pathkitab} or \textit{As ratu Kutub} which literally means ten books. It deals with faith (\textit{Aquaid}), moral science (\textit{Akhlaq}) and Islamic mysticism (\textit{Tasawwuf}). Grammar books such as \textit{Alfiya}, \textit{Zanjan}, \textit{Ajnas}, etc. were also taught. \textit{Alfiya} is a collection of thousand verses on grammar. Books on prophetic traditions such as \textit{Mishkat}, \textit{Bukhari}, and \textit{Muslim} etc.

\textsuperscript{141} Brochure of \textit{Mounathul Islam Association}, p.9.
\textsuperscript{142} \textit{Usthad}, is a religious teacher who teaches in the \textit{Madrasas}. 
were taught. *Fathul Muin* written by Shaik Zainuddin Makdumn was taught in jurisprudence. At a later stage *Tafseer jalalain* (commentary on the *Quran*) was taught. Some of the subjects taught were Arabic language and literature, Grammar, Rhetorics, Geometry, Astronomy, Arithmetic, Logic, Philosophy, Medicine, History, and Mysticism. Some of the textbooks were *Uqlaidis* (Euclid) in Geometry, *Tashreehul Aflak* in Astronomy, *Tasheerhul Mantiq, Shrahu Tahdeeb Qutubi* and *Mulla Hassan* in Logic, *Mabadi* in Philosophy and *Al-Rahmath* in Medicine. But in many *Dars* in early Kerala not all these subjects were taught. Generally the syllabus was confined to Arabic grammar, *Quran, Hadith* (Prophetic traditions) and *Fikh* (Jurisprudence)\(^{143}\).

But this type of educational system faced a lot of problems. The method of study was not systematically done in Kerala. The religious leaders were not able to consult all the subject experts. They had only limited knowledge even in *Quran*. Most of the teachers used to consult only on religious matters. It is quite explicit that the development of Islam was mainly centered on the seacoast, and the mosques found in those days were mainly on the seacoast, for instance, the mosques of Kodungalloor and Ponnani, which were the Arabian trade centers as well as religious educational centres. Thus the evolution and development of Islamic culture in Kerala is mainly oriented on the development of Arabian trade

\(^{143}\) Azghar Ali Engineer, *op.cit.*, p.135.
and the coming up of Muslim mosques on the coastal areas. So it is clear that the initial religious education also started up from the above-mentioned centres.

During that time the Islamic elementary educational centre known as *Othupally* gave the basic knowledge of Islam to the newly converted people. The institution known as *Othuppallis*, in some places, was situated near a mosque. The curriculum was limited. And in some places most of these *Othuppallis* were conducted in the houses of the *Mullas*. Some times the teachers of the *Maktab* were the senior students of the *Dars*. During the earlier period the *Othupallikudangal* were the primary centres of religious education in Kerala.

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144 A Persian construction probably from the Arabic *Mawla* (master, leader). *Mulla* is the title used to identify a religious functionary, a cleric, a learned man, or some one with religious education.