THE ULAMA IN MALABAR

CHAPTER III
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Contact between India and the Arab world got established in the wake of Arab trade. The earliest reference to the Arab trade with Malabar goes to the period of King Solomon. It is mentioned in the Book of Kings that the sailors of King Solomon used to reach Port Ophir, which is identified as Beypore of Kozhikode district. The Arabs called this land as Malaibar. The works of pre-Islamic poets like Imrul Qays and Tarafa refers to the land of spices and its products. Imrul Qays has compared the excreta of a deer with seeds of pepper. Tarafa writes “a double edged dagger made in the Indian style would be found hanging in my waist.” Arab geographer, Baladhuri also testifies to the fact that the Prophet, his wives, and companions used many Indian goods like camphor, ginger and swords. Abu Huraira, a close disciple of the Prophet reports that, an Indian King presented a jar of pickles to the Prophet; he served it among his companions in pieces; I too tasted a piece from it.

1 S. Maqbool Ahmad, ‘Commercial Relations of India With the Arab world’ in Islamic Culture, (Quarterly), Volume 36, 1964, p. 132.
3 Some scholars identified it the Puvar of Tiruvananthapuram district. See G. F. Hourani, Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean, Princeton, 1951, p. 25.
6 Qazi Athar Mubarakpuri, Al Igdu ssamin (Ara.), Bombay, n.d. p. 18.
7 Imam Hakim, in Volume IV, Al Musthadak, p. 135.
Foundation of Baghdad as the capital of the Abbasid Empire helped to promote the Indo-Arab trade. In this trading activity, Malabar coastal emporia played a major role. The rulers of the land warmly welcomed the Arab traders and the Arab settlements, which emerged in the coastal areas. It is noteworthy that the references to South India in the Arab literature are larger in number than those to North India. It was in the wake of this active trade that Islam was introduced to the Malabar.

By the middle of the 7th century AD almost all people of Arabia embraced Islam. Naturally the Arab traders who came to Malabar in the 7th century would probably be the followers of this faith. Thus from them Islam would have spread in this part of the country. Francis Day also assumes that the first settlement of the Muslims on the western coast took place sometime in the 7th century AD.

The Dutch records also attests to the fact that, the Moors (Muslims) have been settled here for a long time; at any rate it is known that the Arabs

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9 S. M. H. Nainar, Arab Geographers' Knowledge on Southern India, Madras, 1942, pp. 162-164. See also, Sulaiman Nadwi, Muslim Colonies in India Before the Muslim Conquest, 'Islamic Culture' (Quarterly), Volume, 9, 1935.
12 Mouros or Moors, According to the Portuguese writers Muslims of Arabia and Persian origin and those born in India out of the relations with the Arabs and Persians are the Mouros or Moors
began to come here for trade and to propagate Islam as far back as 8th century AD.\(^{13}\)

The Tarisapally copper plate inscription of Sthanu Ravi Varma very well establishes the influential status of Muslims in Malabar between the 7th and 9th centuries AD. The names of Maimun, son of Ibrahim, Muhammad, son of Mani, Uthman son of Al Marziban, Muhammad son of Yahya, Amr son of Ibrahim, Ibrahim son of Al-tay, Belhr son of Mansur, Al-Kasim son of Isa and Ismael, son of Yaqub\(^ {14}\) are found in this document. The reference to a lot of Muslims as witnesses in such an important royal grant clearly proves the influence and high position of Muslims in the society. It would prove that by this time the Muslims had become a dominant group of the area. Moreover, it also supports the view that Islam had probably been introduced to Malabar during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad himself.

Rawlindson\(^ {15}\) and K. N. Panikkar\(^ {16}\) assert that Arab Muslims first settled in the Malabar coast about the end of the 7th century AD. There are affinities between the place names and the family names of Malabar with those of South Arabia. Many scholarly families like Aidid, Shihabudhin and Jamalullail migrated to the Malabar coast and settled specifically in the

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\(^ {15}\) Rawlindson, *Tuhfat- ul Mujahidhin* (preface).

surroundings of Calicut emporium under the patronage of the Zamorins.\textsuperscript{17}

During the rule of Khalif Uthman, a group of Arabs under Mughirath Ibn Shua’ba arrived and settled in Calicut. Later on, in honour of Mughirath, the place was called \textit{Mughira Dar} (House of Mughira). In course of time it became \textit{Mukhadar}. Also a large number of Arabian families like \textit{Qadar}, \textit{Musawi}, \textit{Hibshi}, \textit{Saqafi}, \textit{Hisbi}, \textit{Aidrus}, \textit{Ba’ Alawi}, \textit{Ba’at Sayyid}, \textit{Jifri} etc. followed them to the coast.\textsuperscript{18}

Tarachand is of the opinion that in Indian Ocean, the fleet of the Muslims had appeared in 636 AD.\textsuperscript{19} Though we lack direct epigraphical and literary evidence to prove the appearance of Islam in Malabar during the time of Prophet Muhammad, the numismatic evidence of the available Umayyad gold coins (736 AD) found in Poonjar near Kothamangalam indirectly supports the view that Islam spread in Malabar during the late 7\textsuperscript{th} century AD.\textsuperscript{20}

Yet some scholars have tried to link the spread of Islam in Kerala with the conversion of King Cheraman Perumal, the ruler of Kodungallur. He is said to have adopted the name Tajudhin and died in Makkah in 624 AD.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{17} P. P. Mammad Koya, Parappil, \textit{Kozhikkotte Muslimkalude Charitram (Mal.)}, Calicut, 1997, p. 90.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{19} C. F. Institute of Mappila studies, ‘\textit{Mappilamarum Keralavum (Mal.)}, Trichur, p. 216.
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Ibid.}
Logan rejects the theory of the conversion of Cheraman Perumal during the Prophet’s period on two grounds, the event is not recorded anywhere in the Hadith of the Prophet and the name like ‘Tajudhin’ was not prevalent during the 7th century.22

Whatever may be the available material proof, logically the Arabs having trade links with Malabar coast would have brought their faith with them to the region during the lifetime of the Prophet or immediately after his death in 632AD.

The Mappilas of Malabar

The Muslims of the Malabar coast are called Mappilas. Al Biruni (1051) Al Idrisi (1053) and Ibn Batuta (1342) clarified that Mappilas were strong in Malabar between the 11th and 14th centuries.23 Though different explanations are given regarding the origin of the word ‘Mappila’. Francis Buchanan, a 19th century traveller reported that Ponnani Tangal, the spiritual leader of the Mappilas had told him that “Mappilas are called Moplaymar in Malabar, and Labbaymar at Madras; but among themselves they acknowledge

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used for this work after comparing with the original text of Tuhfat and wherever any mistake was found, the translation of C. Hamza in Malayalam is utilized and if again found the translation unsatisfactory, the original text from Arabic script itself is quoted. Hereinafter the Tuhfat ul Mujahidin is referred as Tuhfat Nainar, Tuhfat Hamza, Tuhfat MS and like wise.

no other name than that of Mussalman." In the interior of South India they are also found in some parts of Karnataka State, particularly Coorg, but their number is not appreciable as compared with the non-Mappila population. Everywhere, the Mappilas speak Malayalam language but with variations in dialects from place to place.

How the nomenclature ‘Mappila’ came into being is a matter of dispute. Some scholars argue that it is an honorific term applied by the natives to respect the visitors and immigrants from abroad. They called this group *Maha Pilla* or great child in Malayalam. In another version one of the terms for bridegroom in Malayalam is ‘Mappila’. So the honorific title applied to those who married from the native families was Mappila. Yet, another group states that the word ‘Mappila’ is derived from the Malayalam words *Matavu* + *Pilla*. The meaning of the word then is ‘mother child,’ as it denotes the offsprings of foreign husbands and native wives. Some argue that it is derived from any of the term such as *Mahfil* meaning gathering place, *Muflil* meaning successor, or *Ma-falah* meaning people not engaged in agriculture.

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25 Imtiaz Ahmad (ed.), *Caste and Social Stratification Among the Muslims*, Delhi, 1973, p. 46.
Mappilas of Malabar might be either the descendants of Arab traders or of Hindu converts to Islam.\(^{31}\) According to P. R. G. Mathur, an eminent anthropologist, Mappilas of the coastal regions are mostly converts from the *Mukkuvans* or fishermen caste.\(^{32}\) It is also a fact that in Malabar there was no restriction on conversions. It was because of this situation that Abdul Razak, the Persian Ambassador came with the mission of Timurid Shahrukh Behadur inviting the Zamorin to convert to Islam.\(^{33}\) As a consequence of this favourable situation, "Many heathens became Moors to such an extent that there were more Moors than the natives."\(^{34}\)

There was rapid growth in the population of Muslims on the coast of Malabar prior to the advent of the Portuguese. The patronage of the rulers, caste rigidities of the Hindus, job possibilities in the new faith and the peaceful condition of Malabar were some of the favourable factors that helped the growth of Islam in the coast. The Zamorins of Calicut not only promoted conversions but also provided assistance to the converts. He issued orders that in every fisherman family one or more male member should be brought up as

Muslim.\textsuperscript{35} This action might have been for the maritime and military development of the country.\textsuperscript{36} Mappilas were enjoying maximum religious liberty under the king Zamorin who was their friend and benefactor. Such an attitude of the rulers helped the Muslims to increase their population and promote their trade.\textsuperscript{37} Moreover, the converted Muslims, irrespective of their former caste lineage were treated equivalent to other Muslims.\textsuperscript{38} It is interesting to note that Hindus did not object to the conversion to Islam.\textsuperscript{39}

The Mappilas were so highly honoured and held in such high respect that Barbossa expresses his anxiety that the land would have had a Moorish King if the King of Portugal hadn’t discovered India.\textsuperscript{40} Sheikh Zainudhin\textsuperscript{41} also certifies that the Mappilas enjoyed great comfort and peace in the Malabar society. The Mappilas were so numerous and powerful in the city of Calicut that the gentiles didn’t venture to dispute with them.\textsuperscript{42}

William Logan in his investigations has found the Mappilas industrious, skillful and rigid in the observance of the \textit{Quranic}

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\textsuperscript{36} Kerala Historical Association, \textit{Kerala Charitram} (Mal.), Eranakulam, 1973, p. 1120.
\textsuperscript{37} Sheikh Zainudhin, \textit{Tuhfat}, Nainar, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Ibid}, p. 61.
\textsuperscript{40} Duarte Barbossa, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 146. Similar statement he made about the city of Cannanore also.
\textsuperscript{41} An alim of 16\textsuperscript{th} century. Detailed study is made in the succeeding chapter.
\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Ibid}, p. 147.
\end{flushright}
injunctions. Social distinction in the customs and traditions of the two religions of Hinduism and Islam remained still they lived in apparent peace and co-operation for eight centuries.  

Ibn Batuta and Barbossa assert that growth of Islam in Kerala up to the 16th century was peaceful and steady. The relation between the Muslims and the ruling authority was friendly. Though the Muslims struggled for trade and commercial monopoly, they never strove for any political advantage.

Al Biruni, Ibn Batuta, Ibn Kurdabih, Abu Sa’d, and Ibn Haql speak elaborately about Muslim settlements and institutions all along the coasts of Kerala. Ibn Batuta who visited almost all parts of Kerala in the 14th century refers to the flourishing Muslim centres in the coast. He noticed Muslim settlements in all the important centres between Sainthapur and Kollam.

Malabar, being famous for its honesty, generosity and freedom of belief had attracted traders from distant countries from time immemorial. When the followers of Islam from different places settled together in Kozhikode, the power of Samoothiri began to spread far and wide among the

43 William Logan, op.cit., Volume, 1, p. 238.
44 Ronald E. Miller, op.cit., p. 59.
45 Maqbool Ahmad, ‘Commercial relations...op.cit., p. 7. See also, C. K. Kareem (ed.), Kerala Muslim Directory, Volume, 1, Cochin, 1997, p. 154.
46 Mahdi Hussain (ed.), The Rihla of Ibn Batuta, Baroda, 1953, pp. 186-188.
kings of Malayalam country.49 This harmonious character also further spread
the name and fame of the Zamorin to Europe.50

The large-scale settlement of Muslim merchants made Calicut a big
metropolis. A number of Muslim colonies sprang up around Calicut and it
became a great port on the West Coast of India. Barbossa records that the
Zamorin gave each Moorish merchant a Nair to guard and serve him, a chetty
scribe as his accountant and a broker for his trade.51 The close relationship of
the Zamorins with Muslims even caused the conversion of a Zamorin to Islam
in the 9th century AD52 and he presented a rob of honour (Qil‘a) to Ka‘aba53

The rulers were also interested in the religious observances of Muslims
like Friday prayers and Id celebrations. The Zamorin did not allow a Muslim
to neglect the Friday prayers. Whosoever neglected it was punished or made
to pay a fine.54 Qazi Muhammad observes that, the Zamorin had approved the
imposition of Sharia on the Muslims and sanctioned the recitation of Friday
Khutuba in the name of Turkish Khalifa.55 They fixed the allowances of Qazis
and Mudarris and entrusted the ulama to carry out the Sharia.

49 Kerala Varthamanam quoted in K. K. N. Kurup (ed.), India’s Naval Traditions-The Role
51 Duarte Barbossa, op.cit., p. 148.
52 Ferishta IV, p. 531-33, quoted in Gopala Krishnan, ‘Keralathinte Samskarika Charitram’,
53 P. S. M. Burhanudhin, ‘Hazrat Ubaidullah Madaniyum Arabikkadalile Pavizha
Dweepukalum’ (Mal.), 1976, p. 25.
55 Qazi Muhammad, Qasidat ul Fath ul Mubin (Ara.), compiled by Mankada Abdul Aziz,
Calicut, 1996, verse. 18, p. 4.
The relation between the Qazis and the Zamorin was proverbial. This close association attracted many saintly families to Calicut and thus the city became the centre of Muslim scholars and saints. Sheikh Sayyid Jifri, a prominent sufi of Hadarmouth of South Arabia came and settled in Calicut. He was given an extensive land grant and exempted from all taxes.\textsuperscript{56} Subsequently Hasan Jifri, Sheikh Ali Barami and others came to Malabar and played their role in shaping the history of the region.\textsuperscript{57}

The Zamorin enjoyed great admiration of Muslim writers. Qazi Muhammad of Calicut compiled his poetical work, \textit{Fathul Mubin} in which he prays for the prosperity of the Zamorin’s kingdom and asks the Muslims to pray for his success.\textsuperscript{58}

Besides, the Muslims were highly privileged under the Zamorin’s rule. A Muslim, irrespective of his former social status, was permitted to sit beside a Namboothiri, whereas a Nair was not permitted to do so. Tangal, the leader of Muslims had the right to travel with the Zamorin in a Pallanquin.\textsuperscript{59} The Qazis of Chaliyam and Calicut had special seat in the court of the Zamorins.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{56} P. P. Mammad Koya Parappil, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 90-91.
\textsuperscript{57} V. Kunhali, \textit{Sufism in Kerala}, Calicut University, 2004, pp. 75-85.
\textsuperscript{58} Qazi Muhammad, \textit{op. cit.}, verses. 48-52, p.5.
\textsuperscript{59} Tarachand, \textit{Influence of Islam on Indian Culture}, p.35.
\textsuperscript{60} P. K. Muhammad Kunhi, \textit{Muslimkalum Kerala Samskaravum}, Trichur, 1982, p. 77.
Ibn Batuta states that Zamorin had some Arab officers in his administration, and his envoys to distant countries were Muslims.

The Koya of Kozhikode was conferred with the title of Shahbander Koya. He enjoyed many powers and privileges including a prestigious position in the festival of Mamankam. He had special powers and privileges similar to those of a Nair chief and an exclusive right to check the Muslim bazaars. He had also the right to accept small gifts from certain communities. Besides, he was honoured with the right of standing on the left side of the Zamorin on the Vakayur platform on the last day of the festival. Sheikh Zainudhin attributes that these privileges were due to their status in the society and the increase in the number of cities in Malabar was because of the presence of Muslims. The Muslims were not only satisfied with the guardianship of the Zamorin, but also joined hands with him in protecting the honour of the kingdom, for to them Zamorin’s realm was not Dar ul Harb but Dar ul Islam.

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66 Abode of war.
67 Abode of Islam.
We have inscriptional evidences to show the official patronage of Islam and its institutions.68 The bilingual stone inscription of Muccunti mosque at Calicut registers one *Nali* (a measurement) of rice for the maintenance of the mosque and land grants set apart for it in Kunnamangalam and Pallikal villages of Calicut.69 The famous Malappuram mosque was built in the land donated by Para Nambi, a chieftain of Zamorin’s family, as a reward to the Muslims who had assisted the Nambi in the battle against the Raja of Kottakkal.70

Thus Barbossa comments, “they (the Muslims) continued to thrive until the Portuguese came to India.”71 According to him, they have big houses and servants and are very luxurious in eating, drinking and sleeping and in this manner they prospered.72 Despite their material affluence, they were found very backward in education. They were almost illiterate. The number of Mappilas who could read and write English was few and far between. In matters of education “there was no more backward class in India than the Moplahs.”73

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69 M. G. S. Narayanan, *Cultural... op.cit.*, pp. 38-42.


The Ulama in Malabar

The ulama had a decisive and dominant role in the Mappila society of Malabar. Even before the advent of the Europeans, they were powerful and had played an active part in moulding the society of Malabar. The earliest known figure of this group, Ali Kufi who is believed to have arrived in the 9th century AD, propagated Islam in north Malabar. His centre of activity was Kanakamala in Peringathoor near Thalasseri. At Ezhimala Sheikh Olakkal Abdul Latheef and at Valapattanam Sayyid Aboobacker and Qazi Mohammed and at Madayi Malik Ibn Abdul Rahiman et al. were the early divines who gave leadership to the people.

The earliest literary reference to the ulama of Malabar is found in the travelogues of Ibn Batuta, who visited the region during the early decades of the 14th century. In his journey he witnessed a large number of Durus flourishing in north and south Malabar. He records the functions of the Durus, its Mudarris, maintenance, pupils, etc. From his references we find scholars from distant countries running Durus in different parts of Malabar. At Ezhimala he met a scholar named Sa’d from Mogadishu. Similarly at Dharmadom he met a scholar named Qasim Sarsar from Baghdad.

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75 See Ibn Batuta, Rihla... op.cit., pp.210-12.
76 Durus means Mosque seminaries. Singular of it is Dars. For details, see Kamal Pasha, 'Muslim Religious Education', in Asghar Ali Engineer (ed.), Kerala Muslims- A Historical Perspective, Delhi, 1985, pp.132-36.
77 One who teaches in the Dars is a Mudarris.
Fakhrudhin Usman, the Qazi of Calicut had disciples from China, Ceylon, Iran and Yemen. He also informs us that the ruler of Calicut maintained a monastery for the residence of the ulama. Sheikh Shihabudhin Gazeruni was the head of the monastery. Here the expenditure was met from the offerings made in the name of Sheikh Abu Ishaq Gazeruni.

The ulama in Malabar have been very powerful from the earliest times. They played a dominant role in the life of the Mappila society. The Zamorins of Calicut had great veneration and respect to the ulama because of their status and influence as a guiding force of the Mappilas. He always sought their advice and suggestions in administration. He also took keen interest in the selection, appointment and payment of the Qazis, and other religious authorities. However, we have scanty information about the political role of the ulama in Malabar till the coming of the Makhdums in the 16th century.

The ulama tradition of Malabar coast is quite different from that of the north. In the north, the ulama constituted a part of the ruling class during the

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79 *Ibid*, Abu Ishaq Gazeruni belonged to Shiraz in Persia and died at Gazerun. The Sufi orders called Gazeruniyya was started in his name. People believed that the offerings in his name were effective safeguard against the perils in sea travel to India and China. A monastery in China at Zaitun was also maintained in his name. See Trimmingham Spencer, *The Sufi orders in Islam*, Oxford, 1971, p. 236.

80 Sheikh Zainudhin, Tuhfat, C. Hamza, p. 61.

81 It is an Arabic word, means one who is to be served. The family of Sheikh Zainudhin bin Ali accepted this title. He reached Ponnani from Kochi and became the leader of the family. He established a religious seminary, which made Ponnani, 'The Makkah of Malabar'. See, C. Gopalan Nair, *Malayalathile Mappilamar*, Mangalore, 1917, p. 78.
medieval period and had no active role in the problems of the people. But in Malabar there was no such Muslim political authority. So the ulama were at the beck and call of the community and their problems. Whoever might be at the political leadership, the religious leaders acted as guides and guardians of the Muslim community. In a territory where political authority was absent, the ulama held the exclusive leadership. This was the case of Malabar where, in the absence of a Muslim political authority, the leadership of the community was entirely in the hands of the ulama.

The ulama of Malabar are more related to the Arabs while north Indian ulama had a Persianized tradition. The ulama of Malabar were mainly from two sources—the Yamanis and the Hijazis. The Qazis of Calicut belonged to the Hijazi line and the Makhdums of Ponnani were of Yamani origin. During the time of the Zamorins, many ulama groups like Idid, Shihabudhin, Jamalullail, Qard, Musawa, Hibshi, Saqaf, Hisbi, Haidarus, Ba'Alawis, Ba'ath, and Sayyid Jifri etc. entered Malabar.

Ponnani was a great centre of learning from the very beginning of Islam. Many world-renowned ulama came out from this centre and Ponnani

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82 Most of the ulama of Malabar belonged to this group. The dress and culture of this group are similar to the ulama of Yemen.

83 The ulama belonging the group of Hijaz is known as Hijazis. They were by nature and culture related to the ulama of Hijaz


85 P. P. Mammad Koya Parappil, op.cit., p.90.
came to be known as the 'Makkah of Malabar'. The ulama of Makhdum line were world renowned and widely respected. Their words had great appeal and works were widely taught. Scholars like Ibn Hajarul Haithami, a world famous alim and writer of Makkah had association and correspondence with the Makhdums of Ponnani.

The ulama of Malabar always drew their inspiration from the mosque of Ponnani. The convocation ceremony of the mosque was historically important. The outgoing students of the mosque had to sit near a lantern to be personally instructed by the Makhdum for sometime before their departure to carry on religious propagation and teaching. Those who were bestowed the title of Musaliar from Ponnani were treated with great respect and honour in the society.

The ulama of Malabar consisted of different groups viz. Tangals, Musaliars, Maulawis, Mullahs, and Muallims. The Tangals are mostly

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87 Abdu Rahiman Mangad, a scholar on Mappila history and Islamic theology told to this writer that Fath ul Muin of Sheikh Zainudhin Makhdum is the most reliable and recognized Fiqh compilation taught in different Arab universities.
88 One of his letters to Zainudhin Makhdum is preserved in the library of Ahmad Koya Shaliyathi library at Chaliyam.
89 V. Kunhali, Sufism in Kerala, op. cit, p.18.
90 Descendants of Prophet Muhammad known as Sayyids or the family of Ahl Bait.
91 Musaliar is an Arabic word derived from the Arabic Malayalam word Musalli (one who performs prayer) and the Malayalam honorific suffix 'you'. Some think that it is derived from Muslih meaning, the one who reform. Originally 'Musaliar' was the name of the degree awarded from Ponnani religious seminary and later it came to be used to all those performing religious duties.
92 The term used for the scholar as synonym to Musaliar.
the immigrants from Yaman and Hadarmouth. The word ‘Tangal’, equivalent to Sayyids might have been derived from the Malayalam term ‘Thankal.’ It means the honorific ‘you’ in plural. Even a child in that house is respected and called Tangal. A large number of Tangal families like Shihab, Jifri, Hyderus, Bafaqih, Ba’Alawi, Jamalullail, Alubarumi, Aidid, Muqaibil, Musawa, Mashhur, Alushill, Alussathiri, Alu Maulaqaila, Aluhabshi, Haddad, Saqaf, and Alu Hadi were from Hadarmouth (Republic of Yaman), whereas the Bukharis came from Bukhara in Russia.95

The Musaliars and Maulawis were less prominent than the Tangals. The former were religiously educated and served as Mudarris of Dars, Khatib (one who deliver Juma’a or Friday speech) Imams and Waidhs.97 The Mullah performed household ceremonies and had better rapport with the lower strata of the people. They could read and understand Arabic and therefore could interpret the Quran. They also teach in the primary religious institutions or Othupallis. Muallims are more educated and perform the same duties as Mullahs.

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93 Mullah is originally a Persian word meaning teachers. Being the reader of the Quran, he is also known as Mukri, from Muqri meaning one who recites.
94 Muallim is an Arabic word meaning one who teaches the people (teachers) in a Madrassa or Othupalli. See, S. F. Dale, op.cit., p. 111
96 Ibid, p.31. Generally the Tangals were brought up in the scholarly atmosphere, still there are persons in the family who were not taught theology and hence cannot be consider an Alim.
97 Means orator, technically one who gives public religious advice to the mass.
There was a steep rise of Muslim population in Malabar through the influence of the ulama and the divines. The rulers owing to the influence and importance of the Muslims accorded them all possible assistance. Available proofs would show that along with traders a number of ulama reached and settled on the Western coast. These ulama groups did hard work for the well-being of the society and constructed mosques and educational centres. In such a peaceful and cordial atmosphere the ulama had no explicit role in the political life of the Mappila society. But with the coming of the Portuguese the whole scenario changed.

The ulama of Malabar had close contact with the ulama of the Islamic world. Many of them were educated from holy places like Makkah and Madina. Sheikh Zainudhin, Sayyid Alawi, Sayyid Fazl, Ali Musliar and so on were the products of these centres. Sheikh Zainudhin, Sayyid Fazl, Umar Qazi, Marakkarakath Awukkoya Musliar, Sayyid Muhammad Fakhrudhin et al were prolific writers of the period. The Vaitulyam of Sayyid Muhammad Fakhrudhin is a comprehensive guide to Shafi Jurisprudence. They also had works on subjects like politics, sociology, astronomy, mathematics and medicine to their credit in Arabic and Arabi-Malayalam languages. They also

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98 Sheikh Zainudhin, Tuhfat, Nainar, pp.51-52.
composed a large number of spiritual poems like Malas, Maulids, Padappattus, Qasidas and Quissappattus. For the purpose of exhorting the people Dhikr Halqas, Ratib, Khutubiyyat, Haddad, Maulid and Mankus recitations, were conducted publicly. They also arranged platforms for the public recitation of Malas, Padappattus, Qasidas and Quissappattus.

The Malappuram Pada and Cherur Pada deal with local fights whereas

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100 It describes the important episodes in the life of saintly persons. It praises them. Important amongst the Malas are Muhiyiddheen Mala, Riai Mala, Manjakulam Mala etc. They were sung during illness and calamities. Ibrahim Kunhu, Mappila Muslims of Kerala, Tiruvananthapuram, 1989, p.199.

101 Birth celebration of great persons. The first Maulid written in the name of the Prophet Muhammad and celebrated on 1291 AD under Sultan Abu Yakub of Morocco. Later it was multiplied and hundreds of them were written worldwide on different personalities and events like Mamburam Mouild, Veliyancode Mouild etc. (See 333 Waka Mouild Kitab, C. H. Muhammad sons, Tiruranjadi, 1992.

102 Very important group of devotional songs praising the martyrs and heroes. Important among them were Badr Padappatu, Uhdu Padappatu, Makkam Fath Padappatu, Cherur Padappatu, Malappuram Padappatu etc. During the time of Mappila encounter with the British, this Padappattus had a tremendous role in mobilizing Mappila sentiments against the British in the 19th century. Many of them are found dedicated to Mamburam Tangal. During the outbreaks, the British authorities realized the danger of this literature and took steps to proscribe them. Thus these literatures were searched out and destroyed. From this it is clear that the authorities feared this sort of works as these literatures brought out the concept that the rebels would be the winners in both cases of fight. If they succeeded in the revolt they would be saved from the tortures and exploits of landlords or else they would enter the Bliss of Paradise as shahid.

103 Collection of songs in honour of great persons sung in congregation.

104 Story songs on great persons in Islam.

105 Centre where people assembled to recite Dikr (remembrance of God) in congregation. These sorts of groups were common in the Sufi centres.

106 Collection of Dikr prescribed by Sufi Sheikhs to his disciples.

107 It is a collection of poems praising Abdul Qadir Jilani, the founder of Qadiri order of Sufism seeking his intersession. It is believed by some groups that the reading of it would rescue them from evils and diseases.

108 A collection of selected Dikrs compiled by Abdullah bin Alawi al Haddad. According to some group of Muslims, recitation of this once a day in congregation would solve the problem of both worlds.

109 It is the extract portion Mouild recited in short time.

the *Padappattus* of *Badr*, \(^{112}\) *Uhd* \(^{113}\) and *Kharbala* \(^{114}\) celebrate the great battles fought in the Islamic world. Besides, the celebration of *Nerchas* \(^{115}\) in the name of heroes and martyrs provided occasions for the meeting together of the *jihadis*. The *ulama* used these occasions to convey the messages of solidarity and *jihad* against the colonialists in Malabar.

The *fatwas* of the *ulama* had a commanding effect on the Mappila community. The *ulama* of Malabar were far ahead in realizing the needs of the time and urged the community to support the Zamorin and to question the legality of European interlude. They not only issued *fatwa* to carry out *jihad* but also led them to the forefront of the struggle.

Keen on bringing the Mappilas closer to religion, the *ulama* never allowed any kind of deviation from Islam. They closely observed the day-to-day activities of the community and were with them to share their joys and sorrows. It is with the blessing and guidance of the *ulama* that every function of the household in the Mappila community was fixed and conducted. In a

\(^{111}\) One of the Mappila uprisings of 19th century, which caused to the murder of Kaprat Panikkar, followed by the fight with British forces and killed seven Mappilas. On this issue Muhammad Kutty and Mohideen of Cherur compiled a *Padappattu* and C. M. Muhammad Maulawi wrote *'Britainte Parajayam Athava Cherur Chinth'*. Both of these were proscribed due to the fear of British authorities.

\(^{112}\) The first battle fought by the Prophet with the enemies of Makkah near Madinah. The success of the battle becomes decisive for the coming years of Islam.

\(^{113}\) Second battle in the history of the Prophet in Islam.

\(^{114}\) A place in Iraq where a furious battle was fought during the Umayyads in which Prophet’s grandson, Hussain was murdered.

\(^{115}\) Celebration of the death anniversary of divines to commemorate their heroic deeds, M. Gangadharan, *op.cit.*, pp. 114 -139.
land like Malabar where the Muslims and non-Muslims mixed freely, the ulama took every step to avoid any kind of religious influence from the indigenous beliefs. At the same time they had no objection in adapting to the life styles of the native people. It was because of this attitude a sort of synthesis developed between the Islamic and indigenous cultures in Malabar.

On the advent of the Europeans the responsibility of the ulama increased. In the face of European onslaught, the ulama were the only hope of the community for direction. They directed the community through teachings, preachings, sermons, fatwas etc. The fatwas had a mobilizing effect in the religiously conscious Muslims.116

**Jihadi Tradition in Malabar**

Islam provided an ideological basis to the anti-colonial struggle of Malabar and the ulama took a leading role in it. On the basis of the scriptures they described the anti-colonial struggle as jihad.117 The Quran and Hadith are replete with references to jihad and shahid.118 The Quran reminds, “Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight you, but, transgress not the limits.

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117 The word jihad came from the Arabic word ‘Jahada’ means one who struggle, technically ‘Struggle in the Holy war’ to defend Islam from danger and to extend Islam into the Dar ul Harb if religious life is not allowed. It also signifies that a person strove, laboured or toiled; exerted himself or his power, or effort, or endeavour or ability employed himself vigorously, diligently, studiously, earnestly or with energy etc to live on the principles of Islam. (Maulawi Chirag Ali, *A critical Exposition of Popular Jihad*, Delhi, 1984, pp. 164 -72).

118 One who sacrifice life for the cause of Islam.
Truly, Allah likes not the transgressors.\(^{119}\). The *Quran* also ordains the believers to fight in the way of Allah regardless of personal interests.\(^{120}\) Islam offers great rewards for those who become *shahid*. The *Quran* asserts, "Think not of those who are killed in the way of Allah as dead. Nay they are alive, with their Lord."\(^{121}\)

In the Islamic framework, there are four forms of *jihad*—*jihad* through purification of conscience, *jihad* through speech, *jihad* through the use of pen and *jihad* through swords.\(^{122}\) Islam permits the armed *jihad* as only the last resort to achieve the objective. As often misinterpreted, *jihad* doesn't mean aggression against non-Muslims for the purpose of proselytization or exacting tribute.\(^{123}\)

The way the Prophet pictures the luck of a *shahid* is illuminating. He said, "Verily, the souls of martyrs are kept in the body of certain green birds whose nests are attached to the Divine throne. They fly joyously in the heaven and take rest in their nests. Then God appears before them and asks! 'Do you have any more desire?' They will reply: Oh! Lord what more we want than this? God will repeat the question three times. Then the souls will say, oh,

\(^{119}\) *Quran*, 2:190.

\(^{120}\) Ibid, 2:216.

\(^{121}\) Ibid, 3:169.

\(^{122}\) *Jihadun Bil Qalb, Jihadun Billisan, Jihadun bil Yad* and *Jihadun bil Saif* quoted in Mujeeb Ashraf, *Muslim Attitude Towards British Rule and Western Culture in India*, Delhi, 1982, p. 125.

lord please put our souls back in our body so that we may get another chance of fighting unto death and become martyrs!”

Before the coming of the Portuguese, the Mappilas were in utmost amity and harmony with the locals. But the advent of the Portuguese turned the conditions upside down. The ways and attitude of Portuguese made life miserable and atrocious in Malabar. Thus the ulama thought of an effective way of mobilizing people to resist the intruders. They imbibed the jihadi spirit from religious scriptures and transmitted it to the ordinary Mappilas through the resistance literature and folk literary pieces. Sheikh Zainudhin Makhdum in the beginning of the 16th century wrote two important works in the name of holy fighters, which presents the precarious condition of Mappilas and the rewards that await those who fight the intruders.

The ulama also wrote a large number of ballads and folk songs in the Mappila popular language of Arabi-Malayalam, which acquired wide currency throughout Malabar. Those literatures include Malas, Maulids, Padappattus and Quissappattus. The Mappilas sang these verses with veneration in solo and in groups, on both joyous and grievous occasions, in poor as well as rich households. The ulama also took night classes for days together to impart the spirit and sense of sacrifice. Singing and hearing the

125 For details see in the 5th chapter, Makhdums of Ponnani.
heroism of the historic persons celebrated in these works, the Mappila drew inspiration and set out for *jihad*. It was this background, which prepared a sort of *chaver* (self-sacrificing band) in Malabar in the 19th century.

The cult of *shahadath* (*become shahid*) was considered glorious. Many scholars were astonished to see the way the Mappila was prepared to become martyrs. An analytical study of the Mappila quest for *shahadath* would bring out some amazing findings. One such amazing observation made by Fawcett was that the Mappilas fought to die and those who go out to die in *jihad* and returned alive is never forgiven, and his life would not be safe for a moment among his own people. “Why did this would be shahid not die”? Was the response of a family member left out in the outbreak? Fawcett presents a living instance of the revolt of 1894 when thirty two fanatics were shot, of whom but two survived, one a convert shot through the spleen, and a boy of 15 wounded in the leg. The mother of one of the survivors was heard to say indignantly: “If I were a man, I would not come back wounded!” Thus, it proves the longing for *shahadath* and achieving the heavenly bliss was the spirit behind *jihad*. Before such a spirited community all the worldly pleasures and joys are insubstantial.

128 Ibid.
The ulama of Malabar produced large number literatures containing such heroic events. In one of such works, *Kottuppalli Mala* or *Mahatbhuta Mala*, a youth named Mannath Veettil Kunhi Marakkar of Ponnani went out of his marriage function and rescued a girl from the Portuguese ship where she had been kept arrested. Though she was rescued, the hero was cut into pieces and thrown into the deep sea. The pieces of the body drifted ashore at seven places i.e. Mannath, Kalat, Tanur, Beypore, Calicut, Badagara, and Kottummal. The pieces were buried in the respective places. These places later became the centres of annual *Nerchas*, which commemorate the heroism of the youth. The *Nerchas* thus acted as the moving spirit to the *jihadi* traditions in Malabar. The author of the work in the introduction recommends that everybody should read the book and acquire lessons from it.

In north Malabar, Vanimel near Nadapuram in a folk song, entitled *'Madha Mohini Kunhami Mala,'* speaks about the conversion of a low caste woman, Cheeru to Islam who accepted the name ‘Kunhami’ and married a Muslim youth. She was later reverted to the Hinduism and kept in custody with the compulsion of a landlord. After sometime she escaped from custody and took shelter in the house of P. V. Kunhahmed Haji, a local leader. The event led to the verge of an open conflict between the communities but was compromised with the negotiations of the Haji. This event was compiled in

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the form of a Mala and sung by the people of north Malabar to get inspired to fight against injustice.\textsuperscript{131}

These kinds of works were invogue as Malas, Padappattus and Quissappattus. The spirit and soul of all these works were to inspire and exhort the community towards jihad. Thus a number of audacious ‘shahid’ bands were kept alive in popular songs composed in their honour.\textsuperscript{132} When a man decides for jihad he also determines to become shahid and in most cases completes a series of rituals like wearing the white cloths of the martyr, divorcing his wives, clearing all the obligations with fellow beings and visiting tombs and saints for their blessings and offering prayers at mosques for the success of their great undertaking.\textsuperscript{133}

The spirited hero before proceeding to jihad performs Nercha and Moulid in honour of the Prophet or some deceased persons.\textsuperscript{134} There are records of such preparations and recruitments of jihadis from mosques,\textsuperscript{135} chandas,\textsuperscript{136} (weekly markets) places of annual Nerchas\textsuperscript{137} and so on.

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item Edavalan Moideen, \textit{Madha Mohini Kunhami Mala}, Tirurangadi, n.d.
\item Conrad Wood, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 25.
\item S. F. Dale, The Islamic Frontier in South Asia, “The Shahid as a Cultural Ideal of Malabar”, \textit{MAS}, XI 1, 1977, pp. 41-55.
\item Conrad Wood, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 45-46.
\item A report of J. Twigg, Acting Special Assistant Collector, Malabar 9 July 1884, \textit{MJP No S: 2776-81}, 1 November 1881, p. 3.
\item P. Karunakara Menon, Deputy Magistrate, Southern Division to Logan, 1 July 1885, \textit{MJP, No: 2725}, 8 October 1885, p. 6.
\end{itemize}}
Moinkutty Vaidyar, in his works, *Malappuram Padappattu* depicts the preparation of a Mappila for sacrificing his life for the safety of the mosque. Through his *Padappattus*, he exhorts the Mappila to lay down their lives for their noble cause of waging against the enemies. He presents, "The soul in our body is in the hands of God, can we live for ever in this world? Must we not die once? Everything will die, but God alone will not. Such being the commandments of God, we will have no excuse when we are brought before Him after death; so determine earnestly to fight and die, if we die fighting with the wicked man who attempt forcibly to burn this holy mosque, which is the house of God, we shall obtain complete salvation. The occasion to fight and die for the faith is like unto embarking in a vessel which has come to bear the believers to the shores of Bliss..." 

Motivating the fighters with the blessings of heaven and its splendours, he continues, "Our most venerable Prophet has said that those who die in battle can see the *houris* (heavenly damsels) who will come to witness the

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138 A well-known poet who composed a number of works in the 19th century. He was born in Kondotty as son of an Arya Vaidya Physician, Unni Mammad. He brought innovations in Mappila songs. Large number of works like Badr Padappattu, Uhd Padappattu, Malappuram Padappattu, Vettillappattu, Kilathippattu, Kurathippattu, Hijrappattu (His last work) etc were written.
139 CF. Fawcett, *op.cit.*, Volume XXX, November 1901, p. 507.
fight. There is nothing in this world to compare with the beauty of the *houris*. The splendour of the sun, of the moon and of the lightening is darkness compared with the beauty of their hair, which hangs over their shoulders. Their cheeks, eyes, face, eyebrows, forehead and head are incomparably lovely. Their lips are like corals; their teeth like the seeds of *thalimathalam*; their breasts like cups of gold, the pomegranate or like beautiful flowers... If they wash in the sea, the salt becomes like honey, and as fragrant as *attar*. If they were to come down to earth and smile, the sun, moon and stars would be eclipsed. Mortals would die if they but heard the music of their voice... If a human being were to see their beauty, their smile or their dance, he would die (with longing) on the spot."\(^40\)

On the other hand, he also warns those lagging in the fight. He states that he incurs the wrath of God. He will be written down a renegade in the Book of God. His prayers will be in vain. He will die a sinner and be thrown into Hell where all kinds of torture will be his due. In Hell there are countless myriad of scorpions, snakes and frightful dragons. It is a pit of everlasting fire.\(^41\) It was the motivations and warnings made the Mappilas uncompromising to the colonial exploiters.

\(^41\) Fawcett, *op. cit.*, Volume XXX, November 1901, p. 508.
Thus it is clear that, the ulama of Malabar have a long tradition, extending over a period of eight centuries prior to the advent of the Portuguese. Malabar had served as a meeting place of ulama from different countries. They had contributed in shaping the history and culture of the country in general and that of the Muslims in particular. Though the sufis and the ulama played a different role in North India, in Malabar they worked together and there was no disparity between them in their role both in the uplift of the people and in their struggle against colonial powers. Both the ulama of the North and the South used fatwa and resistance literature as instruments to mobilize people towards the desired goal. A number of anti-colonial literatures were brought to light in prose, poetry and folklore to impart the lessons of fighting against the enemies. Thus a jihadi tradition was created in Malabar under the guidance of the ulama. The spirit of jihad and thirst for shahadath kindled by the ulama were alive all through the colonial struggle in Malabar.