ULAMA AND THE MAPPILA - BRITISH CONFLICT: EARLY PHASE

CHAPTER V

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The void created by the evacuation of the Portuguese from Malabar was filled by the Dutch, the French and finally by the British. The Dutch and the French did not succeed in establishing their sway over the region. So we find no anti-colonial struggle led by the *ulama* until the advent of the British in Malabar. The Mappila attention turned to the social and cultural activities rather than to political interference. Following the evacuation of the Portuguese from Malabar the *ulama* remained largely “an anonymous class.”¹

The state of affairs remained unchanged until Tipu Sultan conquered Malabar. Though Tipu visited the houses of Sheikh Jifri at Calicut and Mohammed Shah of Kondotty, the *ulama*, in general, could not find any asylum in him because Tipu had no particular interest in the revival of the Muslim leadership in the region. It was a time when factional disputes over *Shiaism*, propagated by Muhammad Shah arose among the *ulama* of *Sunnis* and *Shias*. They actively indulged in factional disputes. Tipu by visiting the

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leaders of these groups aimed only to seek their moral support and recognition.²

When Tipu annexed Malabar and brought about major reforms in the social and revenue system, the traditional high caste Hindu landlords lost their dominance. Fearing breach of caste rules many of them fled to Travancore.³ The Mappilas who were deprived of their prosperity in trade during the Portuguese conflict had moved to the village and became tenants, under the control of the janmis.⁴ During Tipu’s period, some of the Mappilas who were already serving the landlords as managers got chances to become proprietors of the land after the flight of their masters.⁵ Mappila chiefs served Tipu as tax collectors also. This caused to the destruction of the age-old Hindu Mappila harmonious atmosphere of Malabar.

The English East India Company from its inception was purely an independent trading company. It followed a shrewd and diplomatic policy in politics. The treaty of Sreerangapatam brought Malabar under British colonial yoke. Soon after they reverted the agrarian system adopted by Tipu. In the changed political set up the old landlords reached back and the government

² A. P. Ibrahim Kunju, Mappila Muslims of Kerala, op.cit., p. 223.
³ Report of Joint Commission from Bengal and Bombay appointed to inspect into the state and condition of the province of Malabar in the years 1792-1793, Vol. II, Madras, 1862, p. 4.
⁴ Presidents Minute, MRP, 16 July 1822, p. 1871, No: 12, Para: 70.
⁵ Report of Joint Commission op.cit., p. 119.
helped them to restore their old positions. In order to win over the heart of the landlords, the British supported all the steps taken by the Janmis. The landlords by using their power were harsher towards the tenants. Thus the change in administration caused to the sufferings of the tenants. Mostly the Mappilas were the victims of this policy in south Malabar. The Company also had a hidden programme to eliminate the Mappilas and to favour the landed class of Hindus.

However, with the advent of the British, the ulama were forced to turn their attention to politics. The whole situation under the British was different from that under the Portuguese. The British took very cautious steps and by hook or crook made the local rulers their supporters. They were powerful and well organized in India at the time of their entry into Malabar and always sought the support of the powerful class for the expansion of their power. Yet, by the beginning of the 19th century, lawlessness and revolts broke out in Malabar, which affected the Muslim community. The ulama of Malabar, in such a situation took an active part in guiding them. For a better understanding of the role of the ulama, a close study of the structure of the Malabar society, land tenure relationships, and the attitude and treatments of the colonialists are to be discussed.

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6 The Malabar District Reports (pol.), 1800, p. 183. (Hereafter referred MDR). There was a rapid increase of Mappila population. Sixty percent of them concentrated in Emad, Walluwanadu and Ponnani Taluks. They were wretchedly poor peasants. Landlords were mostly Namboodiris and Nairs. In 1881 out of 511 Janmis, in these Taluks only 12 were Mappilas.
The British authorities were quite partial in the appointments of officials. They were suspicious of the loyalty of the Mappilas. The British suspected them to be agents of the Mysore rulers. So no coveted posts were offered to them. The revenue collectors appointed by the Company extracted revenue from the people through unscrupulous means. Acts were also passed for the recognition of landlord's rights. Moreover, the upper classes and the relatives of the landlords monopolized the judicial posts. Thus the judiciary also came under the control of the landlords.

The Walker Report of 1800 assures justice to Nairs and their possessions, whereas it blames Mappilas as usurpers. For each and every problem, the British found fault with the Mappilas. Such a partial approach of the British made the Mappilas more resentful to the authorities. To T. L. Strange, the Malabar special commissioner, the Mappilas are a harmful race. He has stated, "The Hindu inhabitants are naturally mild and forbearing, provocation has always been on the Moplah side." By such a colonial articulation, the authorities intended to ensure the support of the propertied classes.

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7 J. Wye, Report on the Southern Division, to the Board of Revenue, 4th February 1801. Later, the government took some positive steps like the abolition of Purushantaram (death duty), recruitment of Mappilas in government posts etc. to get the support of the Mappilas. Kuttoossa, a Mappila was appointed as the Tahsildar of Ernad.
9 MDR (pol.), 1800, p. 183.
The British also spread the notion that Tipu's rule made the Mappilas a turbulent race. The feelings of the ignorant Mappilas were inflamed both against the government, and the Hindu janmis. Fawcett, the District Superintendent of Police noted during the close of the 19th century that Ernad Mappilas had an insane idea that Europeans hated them and wanted to destroy them. In 1882 Sir Thomas Munroe, the Governor of Madras also referred to Mappilas as a 'worst race in Malabar' and the 'most hostile' to the British dominion.

The condition of the tenants under the Company was miserable. They had no right over any property. They were subjected to the enhancement of rent, eviction, imposition of renewal fees etc. Earlier they got 33% of crop produce as their share after harvest. With the change in administration it was reduced to 2-12%. Besides, many other obligatory feudal levies, presents to the lords on different occasions etc., increased their burden. Even for minor lapses punishment was severe. Delays in the payment of levies, inadequacy of customary presents, improper public obeisance or even a slip of the tongue

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13 Presidents Minute, MRP, 16th July 1822, p. 1871, quoted in Conrad wood, Ibid, p. 114.
15 F. B. Evans and C. A. Innes, Notes on Tenancy Legislation, Madras, 1915, Appendix X.
during conversation, would cause eviction of the tenant from the lease.\textsuperscript{16} Physical tortures like whipping,\textsuperscript{17} selling as slaves, chaining and keeping in captivity were also resorted to for delaying payments.\textsuperscript{18} Here the British land revenue policy and administration acted as facilitating factors to the oppressions and exploitations perpetrated by the landlords.\textsuperscript{19} This sort of economic distress made the Mappilas resort to house breaking, dacoity and gang robbery. In the years preceding 1850's the \textit{Foujdari Adalath} reported a three-fold increase in crime.\textsuperscript{20} Moreover, the newly bestowed power to the landlords and the Mappila desperation of defence caused many uprisings in 19\textsuperscript{th} century Malabar.

William Logan, the Malabar Collector, has brought out the intensity of the agrarian problem in 1881. He noticed 91,720 cases of eviction. Out of 7,994 tenants he interviewed in 1881 he found 4,401 were in debt for about 17 lakhs of rupees at interest rates ranging between 12-36\%.\textsuperscript{21} The British gave unlimited powers to the landlords; and they had the prerogative to expel a tenant at the end of every twelve years. Thus the whole labour and sweating of the tenants' in the fields were in vain. Moreover, the prices of the

\textsuperscript{16} K. N. Panikkar (ed.), \textit{Peasant Protests and Revolts in Malabar}, Delhi, 1990, p. X.
\textsuperscript{17} Statement of Tasheri Unni Ali, Karaye Pandikkad, Record of Court of Special Assistant Magistrate of Malabar, quoted in K. N. Panikkar, \textit{Peasant Protest...}\textit{op.cit.}, p. 259.
\textsuperscript{18} K. K. N. Kurup, \textit{Aspect of Kerala History and Culture}, Tiruvananthapuram, 1977, p. 65.
\textsuperscript{19} M. Gangadharan, ‘Peasant Exploitation...’ \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 155-86.
\textsuperscript{20} Bombay Gazetteer, 29 September 1849. Hindu tenants were also suffered but they were largely low castes and non-castes who could not rise against the high caste \textit{janmis} that would become dishonour to the caste rules and Hindu land system.
\textsuperscript{21} W. Logan's Report on... \textit{op.cit.}, Para 88.
agricultural products increased by more than 100%\textsuperscript{22} and thus the landlord always tended to transfer his lease for higher \textit{pattam}. It resulted in harsh treatment of the tenants,\textsuperscript{23} which caused a series of peasant uprisings. The peasant uprisings of modern era were, as E. K. G. Nambiar states, less concerned with religious or utopian aims than with practical demands like reducing taxes and doing away with the worst of the feudal obligations.\textsuperscript{24} Contradictory to this world phenomenon Mappila uprisings of Malabar had a strong religious background.

Mappilas had an age-old tradition of resistance. During the time of the Portuguese, they had developed a notion that they were being victimized. During the early years of the British influence in Malabar, Mappilas of Tirurangadi challenged the officer of the Zamorins.\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Tellichery records} report about some conflicts between the British chieftains and Mappilas.\textsuperscript{26} A fight took place between Paranambi, the \textit{janmi} and the Mappilas at Malappuram. A similar confrontation is reported to have occurred at

\textsuperscript{22} W. Logan's Report on... \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. II, 1951.
\textsuperscript{25} For details see, S. F. Dale, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 245-246.
\textsuperscript{26} For details see, \textit{Tellichery Consultations}, Vol. XVI, p. 169.
Peringathoor near Tellichery on the question of obeisance between Mappilas and Nair landlords in the beginning of the 18th century.27

As stated earlier, peace in Malabar disappeared; instead, revolts, dacoity, thefts and social banditry occurred almost quite frequently. Having lost everything, the hapless Mappila rose in revolt against the landlords and the British colonialists. It culminated in a series of outbreaks in the 19th century. Religious ideology united them and played a dominant role in these outbreaks. The ulama reminded them of the commandments of the Quran, “Fight in the cause of God those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for God loveth not transgressors,”28 and “fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in God.”29 Accordingly, outbreaks of Muttiyara (1841), Cherur (1843), Manjeri (1849), Kolothur (1873), Malappuram (1884) and so on took place in south Malabar.

About the revolts of the 19th century William Logan, the District Collector of Malabar comments, “there was no other association for them (the Mappilas) except their religion... the religion gave them a philosophy of

28 Quran 2: 190.
action and nourished their feelings of antagonism against the well to do land owners.\textsuperscript{30}

The identical character and the uniformity of these occurrences would prove the ideological backings and leadership. It would be very clear from the statement of Kunhi Koya Tangal,\textsuperscript{31} one of the ulama, who led the revolt of 1849 that, "my reason for joining these people arises from the dictates of religion, for when a member of Mussalmans is in trouble and in danger, it is for us, Sayyids to join and die with them. Seeing their grievous state, I thinking of the face of God, joined them."\textsuperscript{32} He also warned that similar incidents would recur if Mappila grievances were not redressed.\textsuperscript{33}

The Mappilas have been fed on the folklores of shuhada (martyrs) right from childhood. Many such folklore compiled by the ulama of the time, planted several dreams in their minds: of martyrdom and extreme desire for heavenly bliss. It was at this juncture that the landlords took away the dwellings of the Mappilas, which kindled the outbreaks.\textsuperscript{34} As H. V. Connolly, the Malabar Collector, pointed out, no year passed during his tenure without

\textsuperscript{31} While stating about the occasion when Raja of Manjeri forced Mappila tenants to contribute towards the expenses for the reconstruction of the temple.
\textsuperscript{32} CMO, Vol. I, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} M. P. S. Menon, \textit{Malabar Samaram M P Narayana Menonum Sahapravarthakarum} (Mal.), Calicut, 1994, p. 25.
recording a Mappila outbreak. These words were the expression of a frustrated authority.

The period 1836-1919 witnessed a number of revolts and uprisings in south Malabar. Thirty-two of them were rather major revolts, which shook the British power. Out of these, twenty-two occurred between 1836-53. Murder of Connolly in 1855 and the attempts on C. A. Innes in 1915 were grievous. Each of these revolts had some common features, beginning with a religious ceremony like nercha. A Mappila peasant either evicted from his land or unduly exploited by the landlord without any alternative means of livelihood would declare his intentions to kill his landlord and to become a martyr. Immediately, a few others would also join him in religious frenzy. After divorcing their wives and clad in white robes of martyrs, they marched to the houses of their landlords; killed them and then waited in the landlord’s house or a convenient place or a temple to encounter the police. Attempts to escape from punishment or to surrender to the police were not seen. Out of 351 Mappilas who directly took part in the outbreaks, 319 died and only 32 survived to be captured.

35 M. Gangadharan, Mappila Padanangal, op.cit., p. 49.
36 K. N. Panikkar, Peasant Protest... op.cit., p. XII.
37 Cf, S. F. Dale, op.cit., p. 122.
Terrified by the recurring Mappila revolts, Connolly appointed T. L. Strange as Commission to trace the causes of the Mappila revolts. The report he brought out was disappointing. Without going deep into the agrarian problems, he rather justified the authorities and emphasized the landlords' rights. In his opinion the outrages were due to fanaticism fanned by Muslim priests and land hungry rich Mappilas who exploited the religious sentiments of their illiterate and poor brethren. He recommended repressive policy and legislation against the outbreaks. He also emphasized the role of spiritual leaders, especially of Tarammal Tangals of Tirurangadi, behind many of these outbreaks.

It was on the recommendations of Strange that Fazl Pookoya Tangal was deported to Makkah on 19th March 1852. Measures like the imposition of heavy fines on the Mappila population in localities where outrages occurred, confiscation of the property of those found guilty of outrages and deportation of persons suspected of complicity were the main recommendations of the

38 CMO, V. I, pp. 268-73
40 K. N. Panikkar, Peasant Protest... op.cit., p. XV.
41 Mamburam Sayyid Alawi Tangal and Fazl Pookoya Tangal are often referred in the Strange Report as Tarammal Tangal, Tirurangadi Tangal, and Mamburam Tangal.
strange report. To enforce the measures a special police force was raised in Ernad.\textsuperscript{42}

The findings of Strange were one sided and the results of his prejudices. The recommendations and its subsequent measures such as Mappila outrages Acts of XXII and XXIV in 1854 and the acts of XXV and XXX in 1859 were considered humiliating to the Mappilas.\textsuperscript{43}

The report and measures proposals were prepared under the supervision of Connolly, the District Collector.\textsuperscript{44} The report did not lead to any positive solution to the serious problems of the tenants. But, definitely the measures taken against the Mappilas based on the Strange report intensified the anti-British feelings among the Mappila peasantry. Its first expression was the murder of Connolly on 12\textsuperscript{th} September 1855 by three Mappilas.\textsuperscript{45} Instead of a decline, more violent outbreaks occurred in the areas of Kolothur (1873) Melattur (1880) Malappuram Kilmuri (1884), Pandikkad (1889), Chambrassery and Payyannur (1898) and so on. Thus Malabar has witnessed more than 86 revolts against the officials during 80 years prior to 1921.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{43} K. K. N. Kurup, \textit{Mappila Parambaryam}, Tirurangadi, 1998, p. 77
\textsuperscript{45} K. N. Panikkar, \textit{Peasant Protest... op.cit.}, p. XV.
\textsuperscript{46} K. Madhavan Nair, ‘Malayalathile Mappila Lahala,’ \textit{Mathrubhumi}, 24 March 1923.
On 14th October 1880, the government received an anonymous petition from some educated Mappilas. It contained complaints against the landlords’ oppression of Mappilas and a pleading to the government to take immediate steps. The government took quick steps on the problem by appointing William Logan, the Collector of Malabar as special commissioner to inquire into and report on the general questions of land tenure, tenant rights and conditions of peasants in Malabar. Logan in his report, criticized Strange’s finding and was much optimistic about improving the peasant condition for which he recommended permanency of tenure, free hand to exploit the soil for agricultural purposes and the right to sell or transfer their interest in the soil. He reported that the tenants were constantly in fear of eviction by the landlords. Their life was in abject poverty, debts and starvation. Logan also recommended the immediate redressal of the tenants’ grievances. But instead of taking steps on the report, the Government of Madras appointed another committee in 1885.

The British authorities’ attitudes to the causes of the revolts were highly biased. They concluded that the recurring outbreaks were due to fanaticism of the Mappilas and even designated the area as fanatic zone. They treated the Mappilas of Ernad-Walluvanad area with contempt and called

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49 K. N. Panikkar, Peasant Protest... op.cit., p. XVI.
them ‘Jungle Mappila’ or ‘fanatic Mappila.’ They were accused of possessing war knives at the instigation of religious leaders like Tarammal Tangals. The British did not spare even the dead bodies of the martyrs. They cremated them en bloc. Their attempt to burn the dead bodies of the martyrs of the Cherur revolt and the deporting of 125 accused to the Andaman made the Mappilas uncontrollable. Prohibition on the construction of mosques and deporting of Fazl Pookoya Tangal also provoked the Mappilas.

To redress the grievances of the peasants, Malabar Compensation for Tenants’ Improvement Act was passed in 1887. The Act provided for compensation for those who were evicted from their holdings. Despite all these measures, the number of evictions increased after 1887. For instance in 1887 the number of evictions was 2819 while it increased to 4,620 in 1892.

It was under circumstances of such oppressions by the landlords supported by the British authorities that the ulama played their active role in the Mappila community. Thus behind the outbreaks of the 19th century, the presence of the ulama was conspicuous as they were basically against the colonialists and oppressions. The people stood behind them with implicit obedience and blind belief in their miracles (Karamat). As K. N. Panikkar

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53 K. N. Panikkar, Peasant Protest... op. cit., p. 56.
quotes, "Rumours about the ability of religious leaders to work miracles (Karamat) were widely current among the Mappilas."\(^{54}\)

**The Ba Alawis of Mamburam**

The above analysis reveals the role of religious leaders in the revolt of the 19\(^{th}\) century. The *Ba Alawis*\(^{45}\) were foremost among the spiritual leaders to give lead to the Mappilas in their struggle against the colonial powers. They came to Calicut and stayed in the city, Jamaludhin Makhdum of Ponnani or the Arabi Tangal invited Sheikh Hasan Jifri, their leader to Mamburam.\(^{56}\) Thus it became the head quarter of the *Ba Alawis*. The place must have been chosen as their head quarters due to its historical importance, since Tirurangadi had a long tradition of resistance. In 1746 Mappilas of Tirurangadi resisted the Zamorin’s plan to destroy the Tirurangadi mosque.\(^{57}\) So also two of the Anglo-Mysore wars in 1782 and 1790 took place in

\(^{54}\) *Times of Malabar*, 13\(^{th}\) January 1900, MNNR, p.1900.

\(^{55}\) *Ba Alawis*, a prominent Sayyid family reached Malabar from Hadarmouth. The first among them Sheikh Hasan Jifri came to Mamburam in 1764 but left shortly.

\(^{56}\) Mamburam near Tirurangadi is a rural area on the northern bank of Kadalundi River, 35 Kms. south of Calicut. The place has a long tradition of *jihad* since the Portuguese period. When the Portuguese menace was overcome the *Makhdums* of Ponnani had diverted their attention to the cultural and educational development of the community. Thus, gradually the centre of spiritual leadership moved to the *Ba Alawis* of Mamburam.

Tirurangadi in which thousands of Mappilas of the locality fought along with the Mysore forces.\(^5^8\)

The sanctity attributed to a Sayyid family by the community was great. Moreover the practice of Taqbil or kissing the hand of the Sheikh after salutation was prevalent only among the Ba Alawis.\(^5^9\) This practice led to a closer affinity among the people. Thus when the Ba Alawis gave the call to resist the colonialists, people heeded the call and acted accordingly, which manifested in the form of revolts in the 19\(^{th}\) century.

**Sayyid Alawi Tangal**

Sayyid Alawi Tangal,\(^6^0\) the second in the line of Ba Alawis in Mamburam, was the first Ba Alawi to give leadership to the people of Malabar.\(^6^1\) The teachings of Sayyid Alawi initiated a process of revitalization and regeneration among the Mappilas.\(^6^2\) But it was never motivated by any

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\(^5^8\) *Ibid.*


\(^6^0\) Born at Tarim of Hadarmouth, the son of Muhammad Ibn Ali and Fatimah, direct descendant of the Prophet. Having lost his parents in the early age he travelled widely; reached Malabar in 1767. He settled at Mamburam under the guidance of Shiekh Jifri. He led people in all the walks of life. He died at Mamburam 1200 AH. He wrote many works, important among them is Saiful Battar, a collection of fatwa.

\(^6^1\) Earlier the centre of Mappila spiritual leadership in Malabar was Ponnani. After the Portuguese it was shifted to Ponnani. Though for a short period Sheikh Jifri was there in Mamburam he could not influence the people as their spiritual guide. Sayyid Alawi was the first to do it.

fanatic views. He built a number of mosques at different places like Mamburam, Tanur, Moonmiyoor, Muttiyara, Ponmundam, Konduchina, Velimukku and Kodingi. With the establishment of these mosques he aimed at setting up a spiritual network with Mamburam as the centre.

The Mappilas believed that the Tangal could perform miracles. The popular belief about his miracles like prediction of future, bringing rain during drought etc. increased his fame and recognition. Marvellous stories are told of his supernatural knowledge. A large number of visitors flowed to him for cure of chronic diseases, for the recovery of the stolen property, to induce rain during drought and to restore fallen trees to their original position and to swear at his feet. The common mass looked upon the Tangal as being imbued with divinity. Earth on which he has spat or walked is treasured up. His blessings were supremely prized.

There was no confrontation between the colonialists and the Tangal in the early revolts of the 19th century. When Chemban Pokker, Attan Kurikkal and Unni Mutha Moopan revolted, the Tangal did not interfere in it for it was an isolated event. But the government authorities were of the strong opinion

63 Ibid. p. 61.
that religious leaders played a vital role in all the revolts of the 19th century. Mr. Strange throughout his report accused Tarammal Tangal for his active role in directing these ‘fanatical outrages.’

The illiterate Mappilas were intensely religious with blind faith and veneration for their religious leaders especially the Tangal of Mamburam. It was from his preachings that they imbibed the religious ideal of martyrdom that motivated them to fight against injustice and oppression. The Mappilas held Sayyid Alawi Tangal in high esteem and looked upon him ‘almost as a prophet.’ The jihadis before going out for holy war received blessings of Mamburam Tangal and vowed, nercha and Moulid. By realizing the greatness of the Tangal, the British authorities tried to cajole him. But he never fell for the mean tricks of the British authorities. He always kept away from the authorities. He refused to entertain the British officials at Mamburam, who had come with the objective of influencing him.

Sayyid Alawi Tangal wrote the most exciting work, ‘Assaiful Battar ala man Yuvaril Kuffar wa ya Khudum min Dunillahi wa Rasulihi wal Mu’minin

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67 Strange Report, pp. 413-512.
68 The name used by Strange for Mamburam Tangals since their centre of activity was a ‘Tara’ (a high platform) at Mamburam.
69 The term used by the commissions to denote the outbreaks, as stated them due to fanatic reasons throughout the report.
70 MDR 1817, Letter received Police, pp. 435-36.
71 Conrad Wood, op.cit., p. 45.
72 A. P. Ibrahim Kunju, Mappila Muslims of Kerala, op.cit., p. 218.
wal Ansar’ (The sharp sword upon the supporters of Infidels and those serving against Allah, His Messenger and the helping Believers), exhorting people to fight against the frengi (European) rule. According to him the ‘white folk’ were supporting the oppressive landlords. The work was secretly circulated from mosque to mosque. The British authorities considered the work most dangerous. In 1851 Connolly issued orders for proscribing the book.

At the top of each page of the book, the following was written:

"Qatilu A’da Allahi Innal Jannatha Tahta Zilali Ssuyuf" (fight against the enemies of Allah, for the paradise is under the shadow of the sword). The Saiful Battar declares jihad against the British infidels as incumbent. It states that at critical situation jihad is compulsory on all including the old, women and children. No co-operation and compromise would be made with the British. If anybody praised the British rule it would be a great sin and he should repent it. If not, he would become an infidel and God’s wrath would befall on him.

73 The Assaful Battar is the collection of fatwas proclaimed by Mamburam Tangal as answers to the eight questions of Abdullah bin Abdul Bari Abdal Tangal of Quiland.
74 Sayyid Fazl, Uddat ul Umara wal Hukam li Jhanatil Kafarati wa Abadat il Asnam, Egypt, 1856 (1273 A H).
75 Ibid, p. 27.
76 Ibid, p. 28.
The *Saiful Battar* condemned the British courts and advised the Muslims not to file cases in the British courts since justice could not be expected from the Europeans. It also urged the believers to fight till the last breath for the liberation of the country from the British colonial rule. Quoting from *Tuhfat* of Ibn Hajarul Haithami, Sayyid Alawi emphasizes, “if *Dar ul Islam* (abode of Islam) is occupied by the *Harbis* (*Kafirs* or Christians), it should be treated as an Islamic country and it is obligatory on all Mappilas to resist the enemy.” According to him, the Europeans were the worst enemies of the Muslims and could not be trusted by the believers.

The British authorities had a strong contention that Unni Mutha Moopan, Athan Kurikkal and Chemban Pokker, the leaders of the uprising of 1801 had received succour from Sayyid Alawi Tangal. The government’s contention was based on the arrest of two of Kurikkal’s supporters, including his sword bearer from the Mamburam mosque. Thus the British authorities decided to arrest the Tangal. But due to the fear of riots gave up the plan.

Again in 1817, the authorities chalked out a plan to arrest Sayyid Alawi Tangal. It was also because of his relations with Athan Kurikkal. After the

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78 *Ibid*, p. 29.
79 Sayyid Alawi called Malabar as *Dar ul Islam*.
80 Sayyid Fazl, *Uddat ul Umara...op.cit.*, p. 25.
81 *Ibid*, p. 29.
83 MDR Police Department Letter, 1817, pp. 435-36.
murder of the Kurikkal, the government confiscated his lands and properties. In April 1817, one of his sons with hundreds of well equipped youths attempted to recapture the lands. The government aborted the attempt. On the suppression of the revolt, the government tried to trace the master brain behind it and found Sayyid Alawi Tangal as the moving force behind the revolt. Accordingly, James Vaughan, the Collector summoned him to Calicut. The *Tangal* appeared before the Collector accompanied by a huge and well-armed mob, which actually frightened him and made him give up the plan of arrest. The Collector remarked about the situation, “I had reason to believe that any attempt to seize the *Tangal* by force would be attended with the most dreadful consequences, no less than a general rise of the Mappila populace.”

Sayyid Alawi Tangal was a staunch exponent of Hindu-Muslim unity. Kontu Nair was his trusted manager. A traditional folk song related to famous *Kaliyattakkavu* festival reads like this,

*Edavam Padinanjanthi*

*Nalloru Kaliyatte*

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85 MDR, Letter received Police, 18A, pp. 435-36, TNA.
87 A festival of the low caste Hindus at Muttiyara, annually held in the mid of *Edavam* (end of May) where *Poikuthira* (a model of horse) and hen (*Kozhikkaliyattam*) were sacrificed before *Kaliyattakkav Baghavathi*.
(It was Sayyid Alawi Tangal who fixed Friday 15\textsuperscript{th} Edavam as the day of Kaliyattam and till today it continues on the same day.)

Near the place of this festival called 'Muttiyara', a clash\textsuperscript{89} took place between Mappilas and \textit{janmis}. In the first phase of the Muttiyara incident, the Mamburam Tangal advised the Mappilas not to be provoked by the indecent behavior of the landlord, Thottasseri Thachu Panikkar.\textsuperscript{90} But when the Panikkar violated the sanctity of the mosque and manhandled the Mappilas who had assembled for prayer\textsuperscript{91} Sayyid Alawi Tangal permitted them to repay in the same coin. The subsequent events led to the Muttiyara revolt. From

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{88} Salim Icid, 'Kadha parayunna Mamburam' Chandrika Daily, 27\textsuperscript{th} April 1919, p. 3
\textsuperscript{89} In November 1841, on the issue of some flimsy causes a clash occurred at Muttiyara. Thachu Panikkar, the landlord, along with his men attacked the people by 'entering the mosque' before 'an overpowering number of Mappilas' and in the fight followed, the Panikkar, his peon and eleven Mappilas were killed.
\textsuperscript{90} Strange Report, p. 411-12.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid, p. 412.}
some letters found from the bodies of the martyrs, indicated that they had been in correspondence with the Tangal and had turned to him for support.  

Cherur was another centre of serious Mappila outbreak. As usual, the revolt was against the oppressions of Kaprat Panikkar, a local landlord and a British official (Adhikhary). In August 1843, the Mappilas killed the Panikkar and there followed the revolt. They believed that it was made possible by the blessings of Sayyid Alawi Tangal. They even held that the Tangal had fought with them in disguise.

The district authorities quite often reminded the government about the leadership of Mamburam Tangal in the outbreaks. On 30th November 1843 Connolly, the Collector wrote to J. F. Thomas, the Secretary to Governor stating his plan to arrest and question the Arab priest (Sayyid Alawi). But he

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92 Ibid, pp. 413-14.
93 A place, ten Kms. South of Mamburam.
94 Cherur Revolt was staged against Kaprat Panikkar, a landlord near Cherur. With the support of the British forces, he disgraced the Mappilas, mostly the converts from low castes. They complained it to Sayyid Alawi Tangal. With his blessings Mappilas fought against the Panikkar. It is said that within no time the Tangal reached the spot miraculously and fought in person. In the battle that followed 60 British officials of Vth Madras Regiment assisted the Panikkar. According to British version four British soldiers were killed. But Cherur Chinth states it to be twenty, and seven Mappila became Shahid. British authorities carried the dead bodies of the Mappilas to Tirurangadi with the intention of cremating them. But the Mappilas seized them on the way and buried them at Manthani Parambu near Tirurangadi Police Station.
95 K. K. Muhammad Abdul Kareem, Mamburam... op.cit., pp.59-60. The lines of Cherur Chinth and Cherur Padappattu refers that in the fight Sayyid Alawi fought in person and had wounds in his thigh. See C. M. Muhammad Maulawi, Britainte Parajayam Athava Cherur Chinth, Pub. By the author n.d, pp.2-23.
96 CMO, Vol. II, op.cit., p. 94.
himself was fearful of such an act, which would bring serious consequences.  

After the Tangal's death, his name and fame further spread far and wide and his tomb became a centre of pilgrimage to both Mappilas and Hindus, particularly to the lower castes.

**Sayyid Fazl Pookoya Tangal**

Sayyid Fazl Pookoya Tangal,\(^9\) son and successor of Sayyid Alawi Tangal, was an ardent enemy of the British. He had great influence in the society. Through his writings and speeches he fought bitterly against the injustice committed on the peasants by the landlords and the atrocities perpetrated by the authorities against the poor. It made him a nightmare to the authorities. He dared to declare in *khutuba* that to kill a *janmi* who evicted the peasant is not a sin but a virtuous deed.\(^9\) He also used the Friday congregation at Mamburam mosque to make the people aware of their day-to-day affairs.\(^10\) He strongly warned the Mappilas not to follow the *kuffar* (unbelievers) in their habits and manners. By the term ‘kuffar’ he meant the

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98 Scholar, writer, reformer, crusader against the colonialists, statesmen born in the family of *Ba Alawis* at Mamburam. He became the spiritual leader after the death of his father. When the authorities found him inspiring the people against the British, he was deported to Makkah with his family.  
Europeans as he clearly described Malabar, the land of Mappilas and Hindus as *Dar ul Islam*.

Sayyid Fazl Pookoya Tangal edited a work along with Saiful Battar and some other *fatwas* and published it from Egypt. It was entitled *Uddat ul Umara wal Hukam li Ihanat al Kafarati wa Abadat il Asnam* (preparation to judges and leaders to undermine the idolaters and unbelief). The work contains 168 pages with nine chapters and is replete with quotes from *Quran* and *Hadith*. In the work he advises the readers to write war songs in different languages to mobilize the people against the Europeans. He also recommends the people to read the work and to consider the book a friend. He advises the Muslims to obey the ruler of their land and to boycott the *Kuffars* (Europeans) in all means.

The *Uddat ul Umara* remind the believers, “Is there any cruel group than these *Kuffars*? How did they enter to us? By crook they intrude us and destroy our women, children, wealth, lands and mosques. After conquest, they destroy our holy places replaces it with churches, captivated our women children and convert them into their religion. Is it not the great carelessness to make them

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102 Sayyid Fazl, *op.cit.*, p. 32.
103 Sayyid Fazl, *Uddat ul Umara...op.cit.*, p. 2.
104 Ibid, p. 25.
Thus enter against them in *jihad* is great honour and treasure of God. He asks the Muslim to quench the thirst for *jihad* and to sell the body for heaven. He strongly commands the believers to fight against frangis (Europeans), Oh, the believers, fight and fight. Here is the paradise. Sacrifice your health and wealth to save your body from hell. Martyrdom is a great treasure. Don’t be miser to become a martyr. You keep trust in God and his Prophet, but is a sin as not to act upon it.

He also describes the mortality of this world and everlasting hereafter. To the believers, there is success either by victory or by martyrdom. Like Haji Shariatullah of *Faraizi Movement*, Sayyid Fazl worked for the enlistment of poor peasant groups. He also was uncompromising with the British as Jamaludhin Afghani of the Pan-Islamic Movement.

The British authorities made out a strong case about his role in the outbreaks of the 19th century. They held the presence of the *Tangal* responsible for the outbreaks. To them, Sayyid Fazl was more dangerous than his father. Reports on the outbreaks and court trials, reveals his role. Moreover, the circumstantial evidences supported his role in the outbreaks. There was an absence of *Tangals* at Mamburam between 1843 and 1848.

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107 *Ibid*, p. 44.
109 Mujeeb Ashraf, *Muslim Attitude Towards* ... *op.cit.*, p. 144.
following the death of Sayyid Alawi Tangal and the accession of Sayyid Fazl Pookoya Tangal. The period was noted for the absence of revolts. As soon as Sayyid Fazl reached Malabar in 1848, within a period of four years of his arrival (1848-52) there occurred eight outbreaks, which according to the British authorities, were because of the presence and guidance of Sayyid Fazl. Moreover, the occurrences of these outbreaks in the vicinity of Tirurangadi, the assailants' relations with the Tangal, the dedication of many of the war songs to the Tangal, his attitude and doctrines (fatwas), his later career in Arabia and Turkey all tended the British officials to charge Sayyid Fazl as the spirit behind the outbreaks. Many of the war songs (Padappattus) set out with a high wrought invocation to the Tangal, were compiled and dedicated in the name of the Tangal. Moreover, the venues of most of the 19th century rebellions were the nearby areas of Tirurangadi. All these factors confirm the role of Sayyid Fazl in the revolts.

The British authorities were provoked and alerted by the steps of the Tangal. The Tangal had strictly instructed the new converts to obey the following injunctions.

- To act and dress like the ordinary Mappilas.

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10 S. F. Dale, op.cit., p. 128.
11 Ibid.
12 Strange Report, p. 416.
13 Connolly's Letter to J. Pycroft, 11th February 1852, CMO, pp. 270-76.
• To avoid the usual polite form ‘Thankal’ (You) while addressing a high caste and to use ‘Nee’ (you) like a high caste addressed a Muslim.

• Not to eat food left over by the rich and upper caste Hindu.

• And not to go out for ploughing on Fridays.¹¹⁴

By these steps, the Tangal was initiating a socio-economic and political revolution. On the one hand he tried to discard the social and economic injustice and inequality and on the other he offered equal status and humane treatment to the backward. By advising the Mappilas to refrain from work on Fridays he meant the Mappilas to enjoy a day off in a week and to participate in the Friday congregation.

T. L. Strange often refers to the name of Tarammal Tangal in connection with the outbreaks of the 19th century. He produces the statement of the relatives of the assailants who some way or other sought the blessings of the Tangal. He altogether investigated thirty-two outbreaks in which he found the direct involvement of the Tangal in seven,¹¹⁵ his mediation in two,¹¹⁶ and sanction in nine.¹¹⁷

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¹¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 274-76.
¹¹⁵ Strange Report, p. 448, Outbreaks Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 17, 31.
¹¹⁶ Ibid, Outbreak Nos. 16, 30.
¹¹⁷ Ibid, Outbreaks Nos. 7, 10, 13, 14, 15, 20, 24, 25, 27.
During the enquiry, when Sayyid Fazl was called before Strange, a huge mob of 10,000-12,000 assembled at Tirurangadi,\textsuperscript{118} which alarmed the authorities. Strange in his report observed that the ideas behind Mappila uprisings had originated from Mamburam Tangal.\textsuperscript{119} The authorities tried to conciliate the Tangal. The government appointed C. Kanaran, the Deputy Collector, Kuttoossa, the Tahsildar of Ernad and Attakoya Tangal, a relative of the Sayyid Fazl for the purpose. They appealed to him to withdraw his \textit{fatwa} against the \textit{janmi}' and the government in turn promised not to take action against him.\textsuperscript{120} But the Tangal did not succumb to their machinations.

The British government seriously discussed the issue of Sayyid Fazl. W. Robinson, the Malabar Assistant Collector suggested the arrest and trial of the Tangal.\textsuperscript{121} Connolly, the District Collector, realized that the arrest would cause strong resistance, and he even feared that, besides the forces of Cannanore, forces from Bangalore and Madras would be needed to face the consequences.\textsuperscript{122} Thus the government was reluctant to take any strong step against him. Finally the British authorities diplomatically persuaded him to leave Malabar. A huge mob of 10,000-12,000 gathered at Tirurangadi, ready to do anything for their master. But Sayyid Fazl persuaded them to disperse.

\textsuperscript{119} Strange to Connolly, 29\textsuperscript{th} July 1852, MJP, No: 154, 16\textsuperscript{th} March 1853, p. 1610.
\textsuperscript{120} Letter from Logan to Chief Secretary, Government of Madras, No. 33, Calicut, Dated-Dec. 13, 1880 (Judicial), Dept. G.O. No: 281, Dated 15\textsuperscript{th} Feb. 1881, T.N.A.
\textsuperscript{121} CMO, Vol. I, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 260, T.N.A.
\textsuperscript{122} M. Gangadharan, \textit{Mathrubhumi}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 32.
peacefully. Accordingly, on 19th March 1852 Sayyid Fazl with his relatives left Malabar for Makkah.

The banished Sayyid Fazl was very active in Makkah. He took up the powerful posts of Governor and Advisor under the Turkish Sultan. During his career he always exhibited his wrath towards the British imperialism. Though banished, his mind was with the people of Malabar. He made continuous efforts to return to Malabar and to lead the people in their struggle against the colonialists. But the authorities had decided not to permit him to enter Malabar. Connolly wrote to the Governor of Bombay to check the entry of the Tangal in any part of his state. Even the port authorities were alerted about the homecoming of Sayyid Fazl or any of his family members to Malabar. Thus the whole British missionary was used to check the return of Sayyid Fazl. It shows that he was still treated a source of danger to the British. The authorities feared that the presence of Sayyid Fazl would arouse the Mappilas into action. Even long after his death in 1925, Sayyid Ali, one of the descendants of Sayyid Fazl, was denied permission to come to Malabar.

124 Strange Report, p. 487.
126 Letters from Secretary to Govt. (Judicial) to C.I.O. Cole, quoted in Ibid.
127 Telegram Government of India at p. 40 of GO No: 1216, public dated 17-12-1925, quoted in public (Gen) Dept. No: 1232. Dated 29-7-1935, B. No: 1A S. No. 2. RAK.
All these illustrate that the British authorities were afraid of even the shadow of Mamburam Tangals in Malabar after the deportation.

Again, on 12th February 1934 Sayyid Ali without any prior information landed at Calicut. But the authorities did not allow him to stay there and compelled him to leave for Colombo. A huge mob from different parts of Malabar rushed to Calicut after reading the report of his arrival from the newspaper.\(^{128}\)

The deportation of Sayyid Fazl had a two-fold effect in the Mappila community. Firstly the centre of the leadership shifted from Mamburam to Calicut and the Qazis of Calicut became the spiritual leaders. Secondly, the attention of the ulama diverted to flimsy issues like Ponnnani-Kondotty Kaitarkam,\(^{129}\) Qazi power controversy\(^{130}\) and so on. At the same time the British authorities took steps to create a loyal group in Mamburam under Sayyid Attakoya Tangal and in Calicut under the Qazis.

Even in the absence of Sayyid Fazl, some of the members from Ba Alawis, Sayyid Hussain Tangal of Panakkad worked against the landlords and

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\(^{128}\) \textit{Al- Ameen}, 12th February (Special Supplement) and 13th Feb- 1934, in public Dept, No: 240, Dated 13- 3- 1934, B. No: 1A, S.NO: 25. RAK.

\(^{129}\) On certain issue of religious observances, the ulama group of Kondotty and Ponnani entered in dispute.

\(^{130}\) Dispute between the two Qazis of Calicut on the question of certain flimsy issues like beating of drum at the time of marriage. People of Calicut divided in two groups and made arguments and counter arguments on it. For details see P. P. Mammad Koya Parappil, \textit{op.cit.},
the British. He was a contemporary of Sayyid Fazl Pookoya Tangal who joined hands with him in the anti-British campaigns and issued fatwas. The deportation of Sayyid Fazl made him a sworn enemy of the British. He excited the people to revolt against the British imperialism.  

The British authorities had clear evidence of his involvement in the outbreak of 1882 led by Kalangadan Kutty Hasan. The police reported that the fatwas and amulets issued by the Tangal instigated the Mappilas for the outbreak. The Mappilas believed that the amulets would make them immune to bullets. Consequently the Tangal was arrested. The copies of his fatwas were confiscated. Considering his status in the Malabar society he was persuaded by the authorities to deny the charge against him before the Court of Law. But he did not succumb to the persuasion. Subsequently he was sentenced to life imprisonment. He remained in central jail, Vellore till his death in 1885.

Yet, the Mappilas continued their resistance against the British at the inspiration of the ulama. Many outbreaks were reported to have taken place during this period also. Strange reports that many of the Sayyids, Qazis and others of the order of Mohammedan priesthood in Malabar played an active

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role in these outbreaks. He even states about the presence of the ulama like Awukoya Musaliar and Pocker kutty Musaliar in these outbreaks.  

In the absence of a spiritual leadership, the youths also undertook certain outbreaks by getting inspired from the soul of Sayyid Alawi at his tomb (Mamburam Maqam). Thus the dead Mamburam Tangal became more powerful than the living Tangals. As William Logan refers,

“The Arab Tangal or High priest was generally credited with having incited the Mappilas to commit these outrages. The Tangal died shortly afterwards and was buried at the Mamburam mosque situated on the riverbank opposite to Tirurangadi. Fanatics who intent to commit outrages, and those who have committed them do, as a rule even now, proceed to this mosque to pray at the Tangal’s shrine.”

Umar Qazi

Umar Qazi of Veliyancode was another bitter enemy of the British. He was a contemporary and companion of Sayyid Alawi Tangal. The Qazi

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134 Strange Report, op.cit., p. 146.
135 Ibid, p. 432.
137 He was born at Veliyancode in the family of Kakkathara as son of Ali Musaliar. He studied in the Dars of Tanur and Ponnani. He served the mosques of Valiyakulangara and Ponnani as Mudarris. During this time, he wrote number of works in prose and
advocated the theory of non-taxation long before Gandhiji thought of it.\textsuperscript{138} He was quite agitated by the heavy taxes imposed upon the people and stood for non-taxation.\textsuperscript{139}

The \textit{Qazi} wrote several works both in prose and verse concerning social and religious issues. He issued \textit{fatwas} against the British and gave intellectual guidance to the early non-co-operation, non-taxation and resistance movements in Malabar.\textsuperscript{140}

During his lifetime he was never prepared to pay taxes and he sensitized the people through his poems about the injustice of the British authorities in their tax collection. He said, "He (the Collector) illegally increased and imposed the taxes on us. On the contrary, reduced the taxes on the properties of \textit{Adhikarin} (village officer) and \textit{Menon} (assessor in the village office)."\textsuperscript{141} He himself refused to pay taxes and issued \textit{fatwas} to the effect that the British had no legal right to impose taxes on the people as they destroyed the native rulers of the country.

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\textsuperscript{139} K. N. Panikkar, \textit{Against Lord... op.cit.}, p. 60.
\textsuperscript{141} \textit{Veliyancode Umar Qazi...op.cit.}, p. 60.
\end{flushright}
He himself did not pay taxes and ran up huge amounts in arrears. Once, some officials approached him for the collection of taxes. Refusing the demand he mocked at them and called them traitors as being the supporters of the British. The officials felt insulted and threatened to report the matter to the higher authorities. Sensing danger, one of his friends and bodyguards, Zainudhin Marakkar approached the revenue officer and stated, "The Qazi would never pay tax, as he firmly believed that assessing tax on God's land is illegal. Thus here onwards, I would pay tax on Qazi's behalf."142

On the death of Zainudhin Marakkar, the officials met Qazi and demanded the tax. He got annoyed and cried, "You are the destroyers of our dynasties like Mysore, Cochin, Calicut etc. Even to accept job under the white Nazaranis is haram (forbidden); God is the real lord of all lands. So I will not pay the tax."144

The revenue officials felt insulted and reported to the Tokdi (sub-Magistrate), "Umar Musaliar, S/O Kakkathara Ali Musaliar, the local leader and alim, of 48 years old, declined to give tax on his properties. When we went to his house for the collection of tax he scolded the British government and us. If we made an attempt to realize it by force, we fear that it would

142 Ibid, p. 45.
143 Term for Christians.
144 Veliyancode Umar Qazi... op.cit., p. 47.
cause a Mappila uprising. So your good self may take necessary actions for the realization of tax from him."¹⁴⁵

On receipt of the letter, Neebu, the Tokdi of Chavakkad summoned the Qazi to his office. Without any reluctance the Qazi went to the Tokdi’s office at Chavakkad. On the way a large number of people followed him to the office. But near the Kacheri he persuaded them to disperse and leave him alone. At the office, Neebu Sahib enquired about the incident. In the course of the talk there occurred a slip of tongue and a quarrel ensued between them. The Tokdi threatened to arrest the Qazi if he did not pay the tax. The Qazi challenged the Tokdi, “Do as you like.”¹⁴⁶ The Tokdi lost temper and shouted, “What do you say?” The Qazi retaliated, ‘Mada thaqulu ya Bathal’ (what do you say? Oh! fool!) and spat at Tokdi’s face. When the police officers tried to check the Qazi, they were beaten with his stick. Finally the Qazi was arrested.¹⁴⁷

The news of the arrest of the Qazi spread like wild fire. Soon the jail premises got filled with a violent mob. The British authorities were frightened to see the mob. But the Qazi appeased the mob and directed them to disperse in peace.¹⁴⁸ He spent the night in the jail in prayers and invocations. The next

¹⁴⁷ Velyyancode Umar Qazi... op.cit., p. 49.
¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 50.
day dawned with the news of Umar Qazi’s miraculous escape from the jail. It is said that, the lock on the jail door remained untouched but the Qazi was not seen inside. According to K N Panikkar, the Qazi was looked upon as a divine with miraculous powers. Popular belief credited him with the ability to disappear from police lock-up and to force police officials to act according to his wishes.\textsuperscript{149} The whole British missionary was excited and the case was reported to the Collector Mac Lean at Calicut.

The Collector issued orders for the arrest of the Qazi. Police forces reached Veliyancode for the arrest. The Qazi’s followers brought a palanquin for his travel, but the police objected to it. But the disciples insisted on the Qazi being carried in the palanquin. It made the situation tense. The Qazi interfered and said, “I am going to see the Collector; I am not carried to the Collector. So I have every right to choose the means of my journey.” The police stood numbed before his argument. The Qazi travelled on his palanquin to Calicut. Thousands of people followed him on the way. When the Qazi reached Calicut, the whole Collector’s office was crowded with spirited youth. The Collector, MacLean, received the Qazi with respect and advised the people to disperse peacefully. He told the people that Qazi was his guest and wanted some friendly talk with him. On the request of the Collector, the Qazi advised the people to disperse peacefully and the Collector also sought

\textsuperscript{149} K. N. Panikkar, \textit{Against Lord...} op.cit., p. 60.
the help of Qazi Muhiyiddheen, the Qazi of Calicut to pacify the mob. He reached the spot and controlled the situation.150

The Collector paid him due respect and talked to him a long time, and persuaded him to give a written apology for his conduct to Neebu Sahib and the police officers. The Collector also demanded an assurance from him to pay taxes then onwards. But Umar Qazi was not prepared to accept these terms and refused to relent on the question of paying tax to the government. He was therefore arrested and detained indefinitely.151

During his stay in jail, he wrote a letter to Sayyid Alawi Tangal of Mamburam narrating the treatment that he faced in the jail. He wrote, "We should not allow such oppression to continue. It is better for the Mappilas to fight and die against those oppressive rulers."152

On receipt of the letter, Sayyid Alawi wrote to the Collector warning him of the consequences of the detention of the Qazi. He also warned of an unprecedented Mappila outbreak in Malabar. Realizing the threat the Collector issued orders for his release.153

151 Veliyancode Umar Qazi... op.cit., pp. 56-57.
153 Ibid, pp. 61-62.
Umar Qazi had a sharp pen and a powerful tongue. With these weapons he fought boldly against the oppressors. His fight against the inequalities was uncompromising. He criticized the inequalities that existed in the society. His works reflected on the need of equality among different castes, religions, and regions. He refused to accept superiority on the basis of class, colour or caste. In one of his poems he wrote: “Oh! Those who boast about family status; think of your origin, you were converts from such low castes as Tiyyan, Nayar, Asari (carpenter) Musari (Mason), Mannan (Dhobi), Panan (Basket maker), Kusavan (pottery maker), Chetti (Bangles maker), Nayadi, and Parayan. After his death he became a cult figure among the rural Mappilas.

Construction of Mosques

To the landlords and the British authorities, the mosques were the bulwark of the ulama and the bastion of the Mappila solidarity and political awakening. So the constructions and renovations of mosques and acquisition of graveyards were looked upon as against their interest. The mosques were the nerve centres of the life and activities of the Mappilas. It served as the centre of community interactions, place of invocations, congregation and

154 Ibid, p. 143.
155 C. N. Ahamad Maulawi and K. K. Muhammad Abdul Kareem, Mahathaya... op. cit., pp. 196-203.
social ceremonies like weddings, funerals, nerchas etc. All these socio-religious functions were conducted under the direction and supervision of the ulama. Besides, mosques also were the centre of learning with a number of mudarris and muta'llims (students). The mudarris was invariably the ulama who made use of this position to mobilize the ordinary Mappilas.

The congregations in the mosques also had a great appeal on the community. Considering the importance of mosques in the mobilization of the Mappilas, K. N. Panikkar observes, “The congregation brought them together at the mosques and many an uprising was conceived and planned and recruits enlisted there, particularly at the time of festivals.”

A large number of outbreaks occurred on the question of the construction of mosques. The issue of a mosque caused the Malappuram revolt. Paranambi, the chieftain of Zamorin at Malappuram, on account of some revenue issue, turned against the mosque of the region. It aggravated to an open fight in which large numbers of people were killed on both sides.

Thachu Panikkar, the Tahsildar, of Ernad Taluk, objected to the construction of a mosque at Mannur. The Mappilas questioned the Tahsildar,

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which ended in the murder of the Tahsildar and a peon on 19th November 1841. The culprits were captured.¹⁵⁸

Many of the outbreaks of south Malabar were caused by the construction of mosques. The objection of its constructions by the authority turns tensions and revolts in the area.¹⁵⁹ Such occurrences of revolts on the issue were noticed at many places like Kolothur¹⁶⁰ and Wandoor.¹⁶¹

The constant conflicts and confrontations related to the mosques paid the attention of the authorities. They issued strict orders regarding the construction of new mosques and the renovation of the old ones. Strange advised the government to take stringent actions against the construction of new mosques and graveyards. The ulama were in the forefront of the struggle for the protection of mosques and graveyards.

Conversions and apostasy

The process of conversions and apostasy had an important role in the outbreaks of the 19th century. The Omanoor incident of 1815 was an outbreak in connection with the conversion of a lady from the family of the Zamorin.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 563.
¹⁶¹ Hewesten, Dist. Magistrate to the Chief Secretary, Judl., 2nd March 1896, p. 38, Para 38.
The lady embraced Islam but soon she was persuaded to revert by his family members. When the Mappilas protested against the reversion, the Zamorin and his men retaliated and desecrated the mosque of Omanoor. It led to an open fight in which a janmi and three Mappilas were killed.162

Instances of reversion and subsequent outbreaks were reported from Chernad and Pandikkad also.163 An attempt to kill C. A. Inns, the Malabar Collector in 1915 was on the issue of his effort to recover a Hindu boy, who had converted to Islam.164 In three other instances lower caste Hindu converts to Islam were killed on charge of apostasy.165 In all these instances the ulama had been alleged to play a great role in inciting the community.166

The British authorities were quite annoyed by the increase in conversions and growth in the number of mosques. T. L. Strange accuses, “Conversion from among slaves and lower caste Hindus have been frequent; mosques have increased, in number and the priesthood have become more numerous with higher pretensions”. According to his statistics there were only 637 mosques in 1831. By 1851, the number of mosques increased to 1058. In other words, within 20 years the number of mosques in Malabar had almost doubled.

164 S. F. Dale, op.cit., p. 123.
165 Ibid.
166 For details see ‘Strange Report’- pp. 146-47.
Strange also has recorded the increase in the number of Mappilas from 2,69,624 in the year 1831 to 3,82,330 in 1851. The increase in the population of the Mappilas was mostly due to the conversion of the depressed castes of rural areas like Cheruma, Pulaya, Valluva and Mukkuva.

These two factors were reported as the main causes of many of the outbreaks. The low castes converted largely because they could not fight against the landlords due to the caste rules. Moreover, the salvation after death was also not possible to them. Excommunication and social boycott multiplied their sufferings. The ulama taught them that conversion to Islam would give them opportunity to fight against the landlords and to attain the eternal bliss. Besides, it offered them equal status in the society.

Mappilas have been struggling long for justice. Outbreaks were the last resort for them in the 19th century. They had made many attempts of peaceful nature like petitions and prayers before the authority. Logan remarks that when he asked the tenants to present their grievances in writing, he received 2200 petitions from 4021 tenants of whom 67% were Mappilas. This sense of response was also due to their constant contact with the ulama and the religious centres.

167 Strange Report, op.cit., p. 444.
By realizing the great role of the ulama in channeling the community, Connolly recommended to the government to take steps to propitiate them. He proposed to appoint the ulama as Qazis in different mosques with government salary. He also recommended the appointment of Mappila official, as revenue collectors so that friction between Hindu officials and Muslim tenants could be avoided considerably. The British also took pain to bring up a supporting group from among the ulama. They succeeded in creating such a group of ulama (Qazis) in Calicut. The Qazis who were pro-British defused the outbreaks of the 19th century and even issued fatwas against the revolts. Their influence was visible even in 1921. Calicut remained unaffected by the rebellion. The British government also generously conferred titles like Khan Sahibs and Khan Bahadurs to these ulama.

The powerful leadership of the ulama effectively filled the vacuum of leadership noticed in the beginning of the British period. It mobilized the outbreaks against landlords, the tools of the colonialists. They gave an ideological backing to the outbreaks which otherwise would have been isolated events as had happened in the case of the revolt of Athan Kurikkal in the beginning of the 19th century. Under the proper leadership of the ulama, the revolts gained meaning and direction.

170 Fatwa of Mussapla Akath Mulla Koya Tangal, Qazi of Calicut and fatwa of Palliveetil Muhammad Haji, Qazi of Calicut in the letter from Muthu Koya, president Himayathul Islam Sabha of Calicut to the District Magistrate of Malabar on 20th May 1894.