‘How best do we survive?’ – This is how Kenneth McPherson begins his book while tracing the political evolution of Tamil Muslims. When we look at the overall history of Muslims in Tamil Nadu we can infer that ‘survival’ has become their modus vivendi. First of all it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the term ‘Tamil Muslims’. I categorize here Muslims whose mother tongue is Tamil and who live in the modern day Tamil Nadu as Tamil Muslims. It must be highlighted here that the Tamil Muslims live in other parts of the world like Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, Burma, etc. but I restrict myself to the geographical location of Tamil Nadu where most of the Tamil Muslims are living today.

**History: From the Beginning to the 17th Century**

In this chapter the history of Tamil Muslims is delineated based on the books that have been published on the subject in English. Interestingly, many books that give a comprehensive account of the Tamil Muslims and their evolution are written in English and that is the reason for choosing only English. Let me begin with Susan Bayly whose book published in 1989 (Bayly, 1989) which is one of the earliest accounts of Tamil Muslims in English. Though she doesn’t give enough historical evidences on the early origins of Tamil
Muslims she tries to give a comprehensive history of the Tamil Muslims based on some recent books and evidences.

How did Islam take root in South India? How did the spread of Muslim faith affect the regional culture? What are the key historical development in the history of the Tamil Muslims during the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth century? These are some of the questions for which Bayly is trying to find answers in her book. In the early period, around seventh or eighth century, Islam came to India through the maritime trading networks. In fact, many authors who wrote about Tamil Muslims, like J. B. P More, M. A. K. Fakhri and Kenneth McPherson, agree on the point that the maritime trading networks are the major source through which Islam spread in South India. Even before the inception of Islam, there were trade contacts between Arabia and South India, and when Islam began to spread around the seventh and eighth century it reached South India through the merchants and the missionaries who came to South India. According to Bayly the missionaries\(^\text{18}\) who came from the Islamic heartland played a major role in the spread of Islam. The missionaries were similar to the regions’ saints, so the people did not hesitate to listen to what the missionaries had to say. More than the mosque, the shrine invited crowd because of its flexibility and accommodative nature. Places like Pulicat, Kilakkarai and Kayalpatanam were some of the early settlements of Muslims.

\(^{18}\) Bayly considers these missionaries similar to the later year Sufis.
Around the thirteenth and fourteenth century the Navaiyats, Pathans and Rowthars from North India started to come to Tamil Nadu. The Moghul invasion of south India also increased the inflow of the North Indian Muslims. Urdu was their mother tongue. When the British came to India they did not consider the Tamil speaking Muslims as ‘real’ Muslims, instead they considered only Muslims who use Persian, Urdu or Dhakhni as real Muslims. According to Bayly, the Tamil Muslims had a sense of togetherness based on their religious as well as linguistic identity.

The Nawabs of Arcot were the first Islamic rulers of South India. They were Navaiyats who belonged to an elite population of Dakhni trading and service people. The early Nawab of Arcot was Saadatullah Khan (1651 – 1732) who held the post of subahdar or chief military and revenue officer under the Mughal rule. Later he became independent and started an independent rule in the Carnatic region. Arcot, Vellore and Gingi were the major cities of this kingdom. After Saadatullah Khan, members from the Walahjah community took over the kingdom. It was very difficult for the Nawabs to form a powerful rule because of its distance from Mughal centre of power and the rise of the western powers. ‘Fitna’ – rebellion was very common. Trichy played a major role as a capital fortress. The Walahjahs forged a link between all the powerful pirs\textsuperscript{19} of South India. The Nawabs were well known for their friendliness towards Hindus. Sacred sites such as Tirupati, Srirangam, Nathar Wali Dargah\textsuperscript{20} in Trichy, Nagoor Dargah, etc. were major source of revenue to the rulers and were also the repositories of sovereign power and authority. Whoever controls or

\textsuperscript{19} A religious instructor, especially in mystical sects.
\textsuperscript{20} The tomb of a Muslim saint; a Muslim shrine.
patronizes these places was considered the most powerful person in the region and the Nawabs not only supported the dargahs but they supported even temples and pilgrimage sites of the Hindus too.

Muhammad Ali Khan was the last Nawab ruler. He moved the capital from Arcot to Madras in 1766. During his rule the English were establishing their power over these parts and they were in conflict with the Nawab. The Nawabs patronized artists and architects of western origin in order to maintain their relationship with the westerners. Despite such efforts, the power of the Nawabs went on decreasing. In the early 19th century the control of the Carnatic region was completely taken over by the British. Though there were descendants of Nawab, they were reduced to just philanthropists and patrons of art and literature. In the early 19th century, the Faqirs and Sufi saint tradition was also losing its sheen, mainly because of the British influence and the declining power of the Nawabs and other Muslim rulers who were supporting the Faqirs and Sufis.

According to Bayly, the Sufis/missionaries played a major role in spreading Islam in Tamil Nadu. More than the egalitarian nature the ‘supernatural’ powers of the Sufis (as the people believed) attracted more people towards Islam. She compares these Sufis to the saints of Hinduism. They were similar in characteristics just that their belief system was different and this made conversion easier. In her book she reveals some of the similarities between the Muslim cult practices and the Hindu tradition, with particular reference to Shaivism, Vaishnavism and South Indian Goddess tradition. She says that the Muslim tradition alludes
and intersects with the Hindu tradition. She insists throughout her book that the Hindu and Islamic traditions in Tamil Nadu is interrelated and have contributed to each other in many ways.

Compared to Bayly, J.B. Prashant More gives a more elaborate history of the Tamil Muslims (More, 2004) with enough historical evidence. In his book titled *Muslim Identity, Print Culture and Dravidian Factor* he begins by historically tracing the evolution of Tamil Muslims. He gives enough historical evidence in order to show that there was Muslim presence in South India as early as the 13th century. Then More goes on to analyse the different groups of Muslims in Tamil Nadu. He is trying to trace the historical origin of the terms like ‘Ravuttar’, ‘Tulukkar’ and ‘Sonagar’. Though there are different groups among the Muslims, the author points out that there is no hierarchy among the Tamil Muslims.

Mattison Mines is another scholar who tried to locate the historical origins of Tamil Muslims (Mines, 1975). He says that they are the offspring of Arab traders and local converts. While talking about the Muslims of the Northern Part of India, there is a tendency to mention that Islam was spread through force, but Mines clearly mentions that it was not the case in the Southern part of the country. Their conversion was not because of force or war, but of ‘mercantilism and integration’ (Mines, 1975).
**Tamil Muslims: Sub-Divisions**

The Tamil Muslims are divided into various sub-divisions. Though some scholars like Mattison Mines and Susan Bayly, categorize them as caste and attribute caste-like characteristics to the divisions among the Tamil Muslims, it cannot be compared with the caste divisions of Hinduism. Eventhough among the Tamil Muslims class hierarchy can be seen, caste-based hierarchical division is absent. Labbais, Maraikkayars, Rowthers and Kayalars are some of the major subdivisions of Tamil Muslims.

**Labbai**

They are Dravidians or Hindus who were converted into Islam. They are basically traders, betel vine growers, mat weavers, petty shopkeepers and skin traders. Their Tamil contains less of Arabic than that used by the Marakkayars. The word ‘Labbai’ might have emerged from the Arabic word ‘Labbick’ meaning ‘Here I am’. Tamil is their mother tongue and for educational purpose they use Arabic-Tamil. The books which are written in Arabic-Tamil are called ‘kitabs’ and are given respect equivalent to the Qur’an. Most of the Tamil Muslims are Labbais. They are mostly found in the coastal strip between Kayalpatanam and Pulicat, north of Chennai. As they used mostly Tamil for their day-to-day activities, the British considered them ‘Quasi-mahomedans’ (McPherson, 2010).
**Marakkayar**

They are sea traders of Hindu and Muslim origin. The word ‘Marakkayar’ is considered to be a derivation from the Arabic word ‘Markab’ which means ‘a boat’. Parangipettai is considered to be the place of origin for the Marakkayars. Nagore and Nagappattinam are their major areas of settlement. Like the Labbais, the Marakkayars write Tamil in Arabic characters which is called Arabic-Tamil, in which the Qur’an and other books have been published (Thurston, 1987). Some scholars consider them as elites compared to the Labbais because of their economic prosperity and their claim of lineage from the Arabs.

**Rowther**

A title used by Labbai, Marakkayar and other Muslims. The Muslims who deal with horse trade or the Muslim cavalry men were known as Rowthers. The word ‘Rowther’ might have been derived from the Tamil word ‘irauttar’, meaning ‘horse’.

**Kayalar**

They are Tamil speaking Muslims, closely allied to the Marakkayars and living at Kayalpatnam in Tirunelvelly. They are mostly money lenders and merchants dealing with skin and hide trades.
Urdu Muslims

Among the authors who had dealt with the Muslims of Tamil Nadu, Kenneth McPherson is the only person who had done a detailed analysis of the Tamil Muslims in comparison with Urdu Muslims of Tamil Nadu. Urdu Muslims (those who speak Urdu or Deccani as their mother tongue) form a considerable part of the overall Muslim population of Tamil Nadu. They are mostly concentrated in the northern part of Chennai and other parts such as Salem, Coimbatore, Chingelput, North Arcot and South Arcot. Although they were considered as Urdu-Muslims they spoke only ‘Deccani\(^{21}\)' and only the elites spoke pure Urdu. In the Madras Census Report – 1901, it is mentioned that Dakhni is a territorial name meaning a Musalman of the Deccan, and it is also a name loosely applied to the people who converted to Islam. In the Tanjore district they are called Dakhnis/Dakanis and in other places they are called Patanigal. These people came from the north as an outcome of the Muslim invasion of the south and settled in the southern part of India. Compared to the Tamil Muslims they are not clearly divided into sub-divisions, and they are not as close to the Tamil society as the Tamil Muslims. According to McPherson, the Urdu Muslims had a strong identity consciousness compared to the Tamil Muslims (McPherson, 2010).

\(^{21}\) A variety of Urdu modified grammatically by contact with Dravidian languages such as Tamil and Telugu.
Other Categorizations

There are others who categorize the Muslims of Tamil Nadu using different terms based on their own understanding. M. Abdul Khader Fakhri divides them into three groups: Tamil Muslims, Dakhni Muslims and Tamil Dakhnis. According to him, Tamil Muslims are those whose mother tongue is Tamil and they constitute a major part of the Tamil Muslim population. Dakhni Muslims are Urdu speakers who came to South India after the invasion of the Bahmani Sultans. The last category, the Tamil Dakhnis, emerged in the early 20th century as an outcome of the migration of Muslims from Thanjavur to Vaniyambadi and elsewhere. According to Fakhri, trade, famine and caste-conflicts might have been the reasons for this migration. Though they were Tamil Muslims, they learned Urdu and started using it in their day-to-day life.

Mattison Mines follows a different kind of categorization in his article. He divides them into Tamil Muslims and Muslim Tamils. He uses the term Muslim Tamil in order to denote the Muslims who are readily distinguished from Hindus by appearance and attitudes. They are more orthodox in nature. And Tamil Muslims, he notes, are those who are more liberalized and have not Islamized their customs.
Different aspects of Tamil Muslims

There are many aspects of Tamil Muslims that has been analysed in detail by different authors. J.B. Prashant More has written the highest number of books and articles on Tamil Muslims. Starting from their historical origin he goes on to talk about the contribution of Tamil Muslims in the field of literature. While analysing the literature written by the Tamil Muslims, he divides them into two groups, the works written before 1835 and the works written after 1835. The reason for choosing the year 1835 as the break was that it is the year in which printing restrictions were loosened by the British and the indigenous people were allowed to print. He divides the bulk of Tamil Muslim literature into six different groups. They are:

1. Histories of prophets and other major personalities,
2. Poems and works in praise of the prophet and other famous personalities,
3. Islamic doctrines, prayers, laws, ethics, theology, rituals, marriage and other aspects of Muslim culture,
4. Translation of Qur’an and Hadith into Tamil,
5. Mystical works and other religious works and
6. Stories, novels, dramas, and books on maxims.

After providing a brief history of print in general and in the Indian subcontinent, More moves on to talk about the involvement of Tamil Muslims in the print culture. Though the Tamil Muslims were late in adopting print technology, later they used it to the full extent. Particularly after 1835 when the print restrictions were lifted, Tamil Muslims started
publishing books and journals. The most important work written by a Tamil Muslim was *Sira Puranam* by Umaru Pulavar and was the first book to be printed (1842).

Arabic as a religious language played a major role in the Islamic world including that of the Tamil Muslims. Though the Tamil Muslims never took to Arabic completely, they used it sparingly in their writings. They used Arabic and Persian words in their writings and this made it difficult for the non-Muslims to comprehend. The Tamil Muslims even used Arabic script\(^{22}\) to write their works. Many of the early journals published by the Tamil Muslims were written using the Arabic script and many other books were also written using this script.

In the early 20\(^{th}\) century, the Tamil Muslims took to printing to the full extent. They published many books and journals. They translated many works into Tamil, like the Qur’an and Hadiths\(^{23}\). The first attempt of translating parts of the Qur’an into Tamil was in the Arabic Script, translated by Mustapha Alim Hajyar of Kayalpattinam, published in the year 1873 from Bombay. A complete translation of Qur’an into Tamil in the Tamil script was done in the year 1948 – 1950 by A.K. Abdul Hameed. One interesting fact about the Tamil Muslim printing history is that some of the earliest lithographic works done by the Tamil

\(^{22}\) *Arwi* (*lisān-ul-arwī* or *lisān al-arwī*; lit. "the Arwi tongue"; *arabu-tamil* or *Arabo-Tamil*) is a written variety of Tamil that uses an Arabic alphabet. It uses many Arabic word. Arwi was used by the Muslims of Tamil Nadu and many other parts of the world.

\(^{23}\) the collected traditions, teachings, and stories of the prophet Muhammad, accepted as a source of Islamic doctrine and law second only to the Qur’an
Muslims were published from Mumbai. The reason or factor behind such an endeavour is yet to be analysed.

**Arabic Tamil/Arabuttamil/Arwi**

Tamil Muslims had the tradition of writing Tamil in the Arabic script. Not only the script, but many words from Arabic and Persian were also used in this variety. Many scholars have used many names such as Arabic Tamil, Arabuttamil, Arwi, etc. to identify this variety of writing. As proper historical evidence is not available, a clear account of the origin and development of this variety is not yet available. Tayka Shuayb Alim and Torsten Tschacher were some of the authors who tried to trace the origin of this variety. It was considered to have been regularly used by the Tamil Muslims till the mid-20th century. Though many works and journals have been published using this variety, authors like J.B.P. More and S.M. Abdul Khader Fakhri dismiss it as a futile effort by some Ulema who had no proper knowledge in either Tamil or Arabic. Fakhri claims that in the mid-20th century, the Tamil Muslims moved on to Tamil from Arabic Tamil because of many technical difficulties and the political situation which demanded a move towards Tamil. Torsten Tschacher was one of the authors who tried to trace the historical origin of this variety and its importance among the Tamil Muslims. But in one of his later articles he too dismisses this variety as insignificant.

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24 A group of Islamic scholars who were considered to be the authorities on legal and social matters.
Social and Political Aspects

J.B.P. More is one of the pioneering authors who wrote extensively about the social and political aspects of Tamil Muslims. His first book on Tamil Muslims was *The Political Evolution of Muslims in Tamil Nadu and Madras (1930 – 1947)*. This book is a revised version of his doctoral thesis. In this book the author gives an historical account of the political activities of Tamil Muslims. As Madras (Chennai as it is known today) was the political center for the Tamil Muslims, More focuses on this city. He begins with a historical account of the Madras City. It was founded by the British in the year 1639 as a port city and later when its importance started growing many people migrated to this city. As Urdu Muslims were predominant in the northern part of Tamil Nadu, they were the first of the Muslims to migrate to this city. Later Tamil Muslims too realized the importance of this city and migrated to it.

Kenneth McPherson in his book *‘How Best Do We Survive’: A Modern Political History of the Tamil Muslims*, gives a very detailed account of the political evolution of the Tamil Muslims. He begins with a brief history of both the Tamil and the Urdu Muslims. After that he moves on to talk about the Muslims in the colonial period. When the British came, the position of the Urdu Muslims who were identified with the Nawabs of Arcot undergoes change. Their position as ruling class was taken away from them and when Urdu and Persian were replaced with English, their importance completely diminished. Similarly, the Tamil Muslims were also challenged in their sea trade, but soon they found other opportunities in skin and hide trade and tanning industry. McPherson points out that,
ironically, in terms of literacy, Urdu and Tamil Muslims were the most literate linguistic groups in the Madras Presidency after the Indian Christians and Hindu Brahmins. But it wasn’t enough to ensure the prestigious positions for the Urdu Muslims that they occupied before the Colonial period. Despite these differences, one important thing that united the Urdu and the Tamil Muslims was Islam.

By the late 19th century the British conducted the decennial census report and because of this every citizen of India were given an identity based on religious affiliation. As an outcome of this, the British considered the Urdu-Muslims as the natural leaders of the Muslim community. Prior to 1901, wealthy Urdu and Tamil Muslim merchants in Chennai and other parts of Tamil Nadu formed a ‘magnate network’ that controlled local Muslim political and religious life. But there was very little link between the Urdu Muslim leadership of Chennai and the Tamil Muslim magnates. The Urdu Muslims in Chennai were increasingly becoming western educated. Around the end of the 19th century, many Tamil Muslims also migrated to Chennai which led to an increasing interaction between Urdu and Tamil Muslims.

To counter the influence of the Western education, the Muslims too started their own educational organisations. In 1859, the last Nawab of the Carnatic established the Mahommedan Public Library which exists even today in the Triplicane area of Chennai. In 1884, the Madrasa Al-Baqiyat-us-salihat was established in Vellore by Maulana Shah Abdul Wahab. In 1885, Anjuman-i-mufid-i-ahl-i-Islam (The Anjuman) was established with
British help. In 1898, the Madrasa Jamalia (Jamalia Arabic College, as it is known today) was started by the Tamil Muslims in Chennai. It had Tamil and Arabic as the languages of instruction and not Urdu. But by 1901, all these institutions were in a bad situation – the reason for this was their indifference towards western education.

Amidst all these, the Tamil Muslims were growing under the leadership of Jamal Moideen, the wealthiest Tamil Muslim magnate of that time. Some of the Urdu Muslims also started gaining western education either in Madras University or in Mahommedan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh. But, as a whole, The Urdu Muslims considered western education as anti-Islamic, while the Tamil Muslims considered it irrelevant for their mercantile career.

From 1901 onwards, Muslim educational and self-improvement associations had encouraged the growth of Urdu Muslim solidarity. Similarly, the Tamil Muslims were developing on the economic front; they were not interested in either education or politics. The British perceived the Urdu Muslims as the natural leaders of all the Muslims in India. Still, the Urdu Muslims were very meagre in number at the higher levels of administration which was their major source of wealth in the earlier time. This was because of their aversion towards English education.

On 26th December, 1901, the Southern Indian Muhammedan Educational Association (SIMEA) was formed; it was the main platform for the expression of Urdu
Muslim concerns. The efforts of the SIMEA led to an increasing awareness among the Tamil Muslims of the importance of western education. The Tamil Muslims were not interested in joining this association as it was dominated by Urdu Muslims; they maintained a low profile and left the public arena to Urdu Muslims. At the same time, the Tamil Muslims also formed a distinct interest group under the leadership of Jamal Moideen and his son Jamal Mahomed.

From the beginning of the twentieth century, there was an increasing sense of Pan-Islamism among the Muslims of India. The Urdu Muslims of the Madras Presidency pressed for separate electorates in order to assert their identity. In order to enforce the Muslim interest the All-Indian Muslim League (AIML) was founded in Dhaka in the year 1906. After two years the Madras Presidency Muslim League (MPML) was established. By this time there was a strong relationship between the Muslims of the North and the South. But SIMEA and MPML were dominated by Urdu Muslims and Tamil Muslims didn’t support any of them.

Though AIML and MPML were Muslim organisations, as mentioned earlier, it didn’t get the support of all the Muslims. Some Muslims supported other lesser known organisation and some others supported the Indian National Congress (INC). The Khilafat Movement (1919 – 1924) was the first political movement which brought Muslims together from all

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25 The Khilafat movement (1919–1924) was a pan-Islamic, political protest campaign launched by Muslims in British India to influence the British government and to protect the Ottoman Empire during the aftermath of World War I.
over India. Though it was not a complete success, it tried to unite the Muslims of India under one organization.

Between 1917 and 1923, the Tamil Muslims entered the political scene under the leadership of Jamal Mahomed. Though he was a Tamil Muslim he had considerable influence among the Urdu Muslims because of his political and economic power. But, despite all these efforts the situation of the Muslims in the Madras Presidency was continuously changing and evolving. In the 1937 elections, though the Muslims won most of the seats that they contested, the Congress, as a majority political organisation, was not ready to form a coalition government. This sealed the fate of the relationship between the Muslims and the Congress. So, they were searching for a leadership in order to counter the influence of Congress and they found it in AIML under the leadership of Mohammed Ali Jinnah. The AIML started to recognize itself with closed boundary and completely communal identity. This overt antagonism towards Congress led ultimately to the partition. Though the regional Muslims, particularly that of the Madras Presidency had no benefit out of it, they supported their Urdu Muslim brothers because they had no other alternative. After the partition, the Madras Muslims once again united under Jamal Mahomed only because of his idea of conciliation and cooperation. This secured the continuation of the Muslim League in Tamil Nadu.

According to J.B.P. More and M.A.K. Fakhri, the Dravidian movement played a major role in the evolution of Tamil Muslims, a point which Kenneth McPherson completely
neglects. E.V. Ramasamy (also known as Periyar) who was the champion of the Dravidian Movement, started his Self-Respect Movement in the year 1925 in order to put an end to the sufferings of the lower caste people who were discriminated and exploited for a long time. He tried to unite all the lower caste people as Dravidians and he included Muslims too as Dravidians. Periyar considered Tamil Muslims as Dravidians who had converted into Islam in order to escape the caste atrocities. According to Fakhri, Periyar knew that religion is the main reason for the oppression of many people and found atheism as an alternative. But Periyar was also aware that it is impossible to do away with religion completely and suggested people to convert to Islam which he considered to be the least hierarchical of all religion. At the same time he was also critical of some of the practices prevalent in Islam. The Muslims too, following Periyar’s argument, tried to portray Islam as the most ‘rational’ and ‘natural’ religion. Even though they were Muslims, they didn’t hesitate to identify themselves as Dravidians. On many occasions, Congress tried separating the Muslims from the Dravidian movement, but they were unsuccessful.

As Periyar advocated Islam to be an escape from the caste atrocities of Hinduism, many Dravidians converted to Islam. Between the years 1920 – 1925 a major wave of conversion took place and this continued for the coming years. Both Muslims and the Dravidians were in good relationship until the demand for separate Islamic nation arose. At this stage the Dravidians also raised their claim of separate ‘Dravidasthan’ for the Dravidians. The Tamil Muslims were unable to decide whether to support their fellow religionists or the neighbouring Dravidians. At this juncture, either ‘Dravidasthan’ or ‘Pakistan’ were not of much direct help for the Tamil Muslims, so they maintained an
ambiguous position. Finally the inevitable happened and the partition took place. After the partition, the Muslims who were left behind in India and particularly the Muslims of the Madras Presidency were left without any political organisation to secure their interest. As an outcome of this situation, the Madras Presidency Muslim League was revived under the leadership of Jamal Mahomed. An Indian Union Muslim League was also formed under the leadership of Mahomed Ismail following the Madras Presidency Muslim League.

Reform Movements

In the early 20th century, there were many movements that influenced the evolution of Tamil Muslims. J.B.P. More lists some of them in his book *Muslim Identity, Print Culture and the Dravidian Factor in Tamil Nadu*. At the pan-Indian level the Ahmediyya Movement and the Nechari (Naturist) Movement influenced the Tamil Muslims. Ahmadiyya is an Islamic reformist movement founded in British India near the end of the 19th century, originating with the life and teachings of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835–1908), who claimed to have fulfilled the prophecies of the world’s reformer during the end times, who was to herald the end of the world as predicted in the traditions of various world religions and bring about the final triumph of Islam as per Islamic prophecy. Naturist Movement was initiated by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan in the late 19th century. According to Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Islam is the only religion which is more close to the Nature.
At the Pan-Islamic level there was Wahhabism and the Khilafat Movement. Wahhabism was a religious movement initiated by an eighteenth century theologian, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792) who proposed return to the primordial fundamental Islamic sources like the Qur’an, Hadith and scholarly consensus and to do away with the un-Islamic practices that had crept into Islam.

Finally at the local level, in the Tamil Nadu context there were some reformist movements which might have been influenced by the modern education and the Dravidian movement. One major figure among these reformist movements was Dawood Shah. He was described as ‘Muslim Periyar’. He published a journal named Dar-ul-Islam through which he spread his reformist thoughts and criticism against the orthodox Muslims. He was very critical of the Ulema who kept the Muslims in the dark concealed from the modern developments, and compared them to the Brahmin Priests of the Hindu religion. He also criticized Arabic-Tamil saying that it is a display of incomplete knowledge of the Ulema. According to him, incomplete knowledge both in Arabic and Tamil led them to use a mixture of Arabic and Tamil.

These were some of the Islamic movements that had shaped and influenced the thought process of the Tamil Muslims, S.M. Abdul Kader Fakhri talks about some other non-Islamic movements that also influenced the Muslims. The Hindu revivalist groups such as Arya Samaj, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sang are some of them. He also compares them with the Islamic revivalist groups such as the Ahmadiyya movement,
the Tabligh Jamaat and the Jamaat-e-Islami. The aim of these revivalist movements, the author says, was not to resurrect the ‘pristine’ religion, but to ‘reinvent’ or ‘re-imagine’ religion to play a role in modern politics. These revivalist movements functioned in such a manner as to construct ‘communities’ through mutual exclusion. The Dravidian movement tried to include different Muslim groups within the larger Tamil population, but the revivalist movements worked in the opposite direction. Because of these forces, the Tamil Muslims were forced to create and highlight their own identity.

**Economic Aspects**

Among all the aspects of Tamil Muslims, the economic aspect remains the least studied. Mattison Mines in his book *Muslim Merchants: The Economic Behaviour of an Indian Muslim Community* tries to compensate for this lack. In this book, he examines the social and economic behaviour of Tamil Muslim merchants in Pallavaram (a market town near Chennai in Tamil Nadu). His primary goal, he mentions, is to ‘ascertain the interrelationship that exists between the Muslim Tamils’ economic behaviour and their beliefs, values, aspirations and social structure’. Mines points out that the success of the Muslims of Pallavaram in the Economic field is basically due to their religious concerns. There are no restrictions for the Muslims from doing any kind of business as compared to the Hindus who are restricted from some business activities which they consider ‘polluting’. During the early colonial period when the sea trade was overtaken by the British from the Muslims, they took to other industries such as the tanning industry and prospered in it. Moreover, they were very accommodative towards their fellow religionists and kinsmen.
which helped them to improve their mutual economic status. But this also made them to neglect the importance of western education which they considered irrelevant for their economic activities.

In this chapter I have tried to present a brief historical review of the Tamil Muslims from their origin till the 1950s based on some of the books written by scholars in English. It must be kept in mind that this is just a brief account and in order to get a comprehensive view of the Tamil Muslims we need to look at the regional language sources.