ADVENT OF ISLAM IN KERALA
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The story of the spread of Islam by the sword in India has been repeatedly told by some historians and it is difficult for the students of history to comprehend the complex nature and avenues of the introduction of Islam in the Peninsular India. There is a tradition that Islam reached especially on the Southwest coast of Kerala, known in medieval time as Malabar, during the lifetime of the Prophet. The contact between India and the Arab-World was established in the wake of Arab trade\(^1\). This became active after high sea trade in the 4\(^{th}\) C. AD. Arab colonies all over the trade centres were converted when the native people were converted to Islam during the Pious Caliphs (632-661 AD).

It was the flora and fauna of the rainforest and the tropical sun, especially the spices that attracted the Arabs, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Romans and the Chinese from the early times, which later led to the European advent, Colonisation and Imperialism. The Assyrians and the Babylonians of second millennium BC carried an extensive trade in cardamom and cinnamon for mummification and burning as incense. The ancient Egyptians prepared perfumes and other holy oils from the spice\(^2\).

According to the Jewish chronicles during the reign of King Solomon (974-932 BC) a navy equipped by Hiram\(^3\), king of Tyre made a voyage to the East

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\(^1\) S. Maqbool Ahamd, *Commercial Relations of India, with the Arab world*, IC, Vol. 36, 1964, p. 142.
every three years bringing back gold and silver. The destination of this expedition was Ophir\(^4\). Hourani mentions this port was located in India\(^5\). Some scholars have identified this port with Puvar in Trivandrum District and some others with Beypore in Kozhikode District. While some others consider that, the place was not located anywhere in Kerala. Shamsullah Qadiri holds the view that the port from which the goods like gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks with their Dravidian names were brought, was most probably a south Indian port which later fell into obscurity\(^6\). The Phoenicians traded with the Indians, and the Ptolomys of Egypt founded ports on the Red Sea to encourage the Indian commerce\(^7\).

Commenting on the cultural relations of West Asia and Africa (The Arab region) with India, Maqbool Ahmad points out that “contacts with these regions are known to have existed since the 3\(^{rd}\) millennium BC”\(^8\).

R.C. Majumdar with archaeological evidence such as the figures of Apes, Indian elephants and Bactrian camel on the obelisk of Shalmaneser 3\(^{rd}\) (860 BC) and the presence of logs of Indian Teak found in the temple of Moon at Mugheir (Ur of Chaldees) and in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar both belonging to 6\(^{th}\) century BC, thinks that the beginning of India’s relation with west Asia may be pushed back to at least to the 9\(^{th}\) C. BC\(^9\).

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The Greeks imported rice, ginger and cinnamon from the Malabar Coast. The Greek and Roman writers were acquainted with Indian geography and wrote about Indian exports and imports. For example, Hippalus and Pliny in the first century and the anonymous writer of *Periplus of Erythrean Sea* in the 2nd century AD. *Periplus* mentions that "Muziris is a city at the height of prosperity frequented as it is by ships from Ariake (Greek) and by Greeks from Egypt". The Peutingerian tables (3rd C.AD) mention about the Roman settlement at Cranganore, Crailam, (Chaliyam) and Ezhimala. The coins of all the Roman emperors from Augustus (63BC-14AD) to Zeno (474-491AD) are found in southern India, attesting to the large commerce of India with the west.

The Persians, Darius the Great (521-484 BC) appreciated the value of linking Persia with India and Egypt by sea as well as by land. Thus there existed at this period a regular commerce by sea from Persian Gulf to the mouth of Narbudda (Narmada) in one direction and South West of Arabia to another (Socotra Islands in Bahr-al- Habsh) and in this commerce the Arabs of Gulf were playing an important role. Thus Hourani admits that the Socotra and Aden were the centers of intercourse of Arabs with Indians on one hand and Egyptians on the other. Mrs. Freys Stark is of the view that the presence of teakwood in the ancient Yemen buildings attests the intercourse of Yemen with India. She also insists that Dravidian Alphabet is supposed to be of Himaritic (Sabean) origin.

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10 Quoted by K.M Panikkar, op.cit., p.3.
13 G.F Hourani, op.cit., p.11.
14 Ibid., p.17.
15 Ibid., p.23.
16 *Notes on the southern Incense Route of Arabia*, IC, Vol.10, April 1936, p.195.
The centuries old trade and commercial relationship between India and Egypt and the West Asian countries can also be corroborated etymologically. In Greek the word *Sandaloon* is used in place of the Sanskrit *Chandana*. Like wise the word *arisī* (arz) is used for rice, for *ape* it is *kopī* most probably form sanskrit *kapi* and for peacocks tamil *tokei*\(^1\).

Sayed Sulaiman Nadwi mentions some Indian words were used in Arabic language; which proves their close contact with India. Among the Arab Sailors of Persian Gulf a word *nakhoda*, a mixture of Hindi *Nao* and the Persian *Khuda*, meaning master of the boat; a caption. Similarly Arab sailors of the Mediterranean Sea were known *Nuti* and *Navat* (sailors). In south India, on the Konkan coast the *navayats* are still a large prosperous and endogamous business community\(^2\).

Pliny complains of the drain of gold during the reign of Nero 54-68 AD as he spent it for purchasing the frankincense for use in the funeral of his 2\(^{nd}\) wife Poppæa\(^3\). He estimated that the Roman Empire paid out annually a hundred million Sesterus (about 1,08,7500 $) to India, China and Arabia for Purchase of luxuries. The Greek and Roman ships were mostly manned by the Arabs. Arab merchants passed along the Coromandal coast on their way to China. Thus the remains of Pre-Muslim Arab settlement are found on the Coromandal coast and even in Canton\(^4\).

\(^1\) S. Maqbool Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p.4.
\(^3\) Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* cf. G.F Hourani, *op. cit.*, p.29
The temple of Augustus at Muziris attests the settlement of Greek and Roman merchant communities in these areas\textsuperscript{21}. There also existed Roman settlements in Arecamedu and Alagamkulan on the East Coast.

After the decline of the Roman Empire the Arabs who were already in the realm took over the control of spice trade. Indians’ reluctance to cross sea made the eastern trade almost an Arab monopoly\textsuperscript{22}. The inferior social status assigned to Chinese merchants in Taoism\textsuperscript{23} was also helpful for the Arabs. Yet the fact can’t be denied that the Gujrati, Konkani and the Tamil merchants had significant role in trade of medieval times who were organised under trade guilds\textsuperscript{24}.

Ibn Rushta (1126-1198 AD), the Arab geographer attests the brisk Arab trade, “Before Islam, seagoing ships from India used to sail up to Tigris as far as Al Madain”. Also the Pre-Islamic name of Al Uballah as \textit{Farj-ul-hind} i.e, the ‘marches of India’ used by Al-Tabari corroborates Ibn Rushta’s observation. Al Tabari also mentions of the conflict of Persian governor against Indians in the Gulf of Uman\textsuperscript{25}.

The Arabs had settled in Sumatra and Ceylon by the 1\textsuperscript{st} century AD\textsuperscript{26}. It is also believed that the Arabs and Persians had formed settlements on the western coast of Sumatra\textsuperscript{27}. By 750 AD the colony of Arabs in Canton (China) had become large enough to attack and pillage the city\textsuperscript{28}. Reference of Roman ships in Sangam

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{21} G.F. Hourani, \textit{op.cit.}, P.29.
\bibitem{22} G.F. Hourani, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 61-63.
\bibitem{23} Taoism condemned merchants as parasites.
\bibitem{25} G.F. Hourani, \textit{op.cit.}, p.41.
\bibitem{26} A. Nafees, \textit{Arab knowledge of Ceylone}, IC.Vol. 19, 1945, p. 23.
\bibitem{27} S.M.H. Nainar, \textit{Java as Noticed by Arab Geographers}, p.23.
\bibitem{28} G.F. Hourani, \textit{op.cit.}, p.63.
\end{thebibliography}
literature adds further evidence\textsuperscript{29}. A verse in the Akananooru refers to the thriving town of Muzri, where the beautiful large ships of Yavanas bringing gold come splashing the white foam in the waters of Periyar, which belongs to the Cera, and return laden with pepper\textsuperscript{30}.

Unquestionably existence of continues commerce between Yemen and South India can be asserted from early times\textsuperscript{31}. Thus the location of Malabar between two international trade routes is the dominant economic factor, which contributed to the spread of Islam in Kerala and the Peninsular India\textsuperscript{32}. When the Greco-Roman intervention disturbed the Arab trade in the Mediterranean they carried on their trade with South and Southeast Asia.

The nature of contacts of Arabs with North and South India was different. In Sind the contact of Islam was established by the invasion of Muhammed Ibn Qasim in 711/12 AD while in the south the relation was mainly established through trade. Cordiality and friendship was the basis of relationship rather than political antagonism\textsuperscript{33}.

The period of cultural exchange witnessed the migration and settlement of large numbers of scholars and scientists from Sind and Southern India in Southern Arabian ports like Hadarmaut, Aden and Uman and they got Arabised. They were referred as Al-Zutt by the Arab historians and were considered as a part of Banu

\textsuperscript{29} A.P.Ibrahim Kunju, \textit{Vidhesha Vanija Bandangal}, in Kerala Charitram (Malayalam) Vol.2, Kerala History Association, Ernakulam, pp. 41-42.
\textsuperscript{31} Edkins, \textit{op.cit.}, p.39.
\textsuperscript{33} S.Maqbool Ahmad, \textit{op.cit.}, p.7.
Tamim Clan\textsuperscript{34}. Thus it may safely be assumed that the Arabs of Hijaz, Uman, Yemen and Hadarmaut were the “Progenitors of the Moplas”\textsuperscript{35} (Muslims of Kerala).

It is noticed that the references to South India in the Arab literatures are larger in number compared to that of North India\textsuperscript{36}. It proves that the relationship of South India with the Arab world was cordial. It also reflects the differences in the attitude of rulers of North and South\textsuperscript{37}.

Pepper of Malabar, ginger, clove, ivory and teak occupied prime position in Arab merchandise, along with the transshipment of Chinese Silk, and porcelain, herbs, gems, and pearls from Ceylon and Far East. C. N Ahamd Moulavi, a well-known Arabic scholar of Kerala had noticed the Malayalam numerals on the beams of the roof of Ka‘ba, though he was not sure of its antiquity.

At the same time the legend of the conversion of a Cera ruler to Islam is still a mystery. This tradition is contained in Keralolpathi (Origin of Kerala). The tradition current among both native Hindus and Muslims represents the conversion and migration of the last Cera ruler to Arabia.

The earliest recorded version of this legend comes from the travel accounts of Duarte Burbosa, who compiled his work in 1515. Ibn Battuta also partially referred to this tradition. He describes this anecdote as follows;

\textsuperscript{34} Maqbool Ahmad, \textit{Indo-Arab Relations}, \textit{op.cit.}, p.8.
\textsuperscript{36} S.Maqbool Ahmad, Arabic source Material on Indo-Arab Relations, MIQ Vol-8, 1957, p. 107.
\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Ibid.}
They say that in ancient days there was a Heathen King whose name was Crimay Pirencal, a very mighty lord; And after the moors of Mecca had discovered India they began to voyage towards it for the sake of the pepper of which they first began to take cargoes at Coulam (Quilon), a city with a harbour. Where the king off times abides. "This will not be less than six hundred years ago, for the Indians of that period adopted the era by which those moors are ruled". And continuing to sail to India for many years they began to spread out therein and they had such discussions with the king himself and he with them that in for and they converted him to the sect of abominable Mafamede, wherefore, he went in their company to the house of Mecca and there he died as it seems probable on the way thither; for they say the Malabarese never more heard any tidings of him. Before he started this king divided his kingdom among his kinsfolk in to several portions as it yet is, before that time all Malabar was one kingdom.

Barros, writing after Barbosa,

In the land which they call Malabar, there was a king named Sarama Perimal whose state was all the land along the coast... which king was so powerful that in memory of his name they used to make a reckoning of the period of his reign... making it the starting point of their era...; and in his time the Arabs now converted to the sect of Muhammed, began to trade with India... when they were settled in the country this king Sarama Perimal became a Moore and showed them great favour and assigned them a place of habitation... Then they persuaded him

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38 In Spanish, Semaperimal (Cheraman Perumal).
39 Two places known as Coulam in Early Portuguese works (a). Best known South port Quilon (b). Northern one just worth of Quillanday.
that for his salvation he ought to end his life at the house of Mecha. He agreed... and determined to make a partition of his state among his nearest kindred

The Arabic author Shaikh Zayn-ud-Din of *Tuhfatul-Mujahideen* 1583 (The earliest indigenous written history of Kerala) has also recorded the tradition in details who thinks the conversion might have happened 200 years after the prophet.

There arrived at Kodungallore, a party of Muslim fagirs with a Shaykh intends on pilgrimage to the footprint of Adam in Silan (Ceylone). When the king heard about their arrival he sent for them, entertained them, and made kind enquiries for them. Their Shaykh informed him of our Prophet Muhammed the tenets of the religion of Islam, and the miracle of the splitting of the moon. Allah glory be to him and exalted be he, had caused to enter in his mind the truth of the mission of the Prophet and the king believed in him. The affection for the Prophet took possession of his heart. So the king of Kodungallur requested the Shaykh that he and his companions should return to him after their Pilgrimage to the footprint of Adam, for the reason that he might go with them. At the same time he commanded the Shaykh not to divulge his (king’s) secret intention, to the inhabitants of Malabar.

On their return from Ceylon the king joined the pilgrim group. Before his departures he made arrangements for administration of the empire by partitioning and appointing governors for provinces and sailed to Mecca along with the Shaykh and he

41 *Decadas I Book IX, Chapter 3. F. 180* (Extracts from Decades in Appendix-I), *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, op.cit., P.239.
reached at Suhur. After a long-time a party of men accompanied the king on his return journey to Malabar for the purpose of erecting mosques and propagating the faith of Islam. However the king fell ill and died. He had entrusted a letter addressed to his relatives in Malabar introducing the party who had accompanied him, asking the rulers to grant them facilities for the propagation of the faith and erection of mosques. The party led by Malik Ibn Dinar came to Kodungallur and they erected ten mosques in different parts of Malabar.

The local Hindu tradition recorded in Keralolpathi (Origin of Kerala) also agrees in general with the Muslim tradition and the conversion of Cheraman, the last Perumal ruler. The main difference is that according to Keralolpathi Cheraman partitioned his empire among his relatives and dependants before his departure to Mecca.

According to another tradition it was in commemoration of the partitioning of the kingdom that a new era known as Kollam Era was started in 824-25 AD. Calicut Granthavaris and one of the Cochin Granthavaris also give almost the same story.

The Dutch priest Canter Visscher writes in his letters from Malabar in 1717 AD.

The great Cheraman Perumal who partitioned Malabar and made laws for it about to undertake a journey either to the Ganges in fulfilment of a vow or as they say to visit Mahamet for the purpose of embracing their religion, divided among his favourites the whole Malabar.

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45 Kozikode Grandhavari (Malayalam Treaties) compiled in 15th Kanni 986 Kollam Era (1810 AD), cf., K.V. Ksrishna Ayyer, op.cit., p.70.
46 Ibid., p.72.
Francis Buchanan (December 01-1800 AD) while describing the story of the establishment of the rule of Cheraman Perumal writes,

About this time the Arabs had settled on the coast, where they carried on a great trade and were called by the natives Moplaymar some of their priest seems to have converted Cheraman Perumal, who came to the resolution of retiring to Mecca\(^4\).

Though the native Muslim and Hindu traditions as well as the foreign accounts are in consensus on the migration and conversion of Perumal, we notice serious chronological disorder in different versions. However, the period in which oral history i.e., a tradition always with a kernel of truth\(^4\) attained historicity, it is not justifiable to discard such a persistent tradition, which was prevalent among almost all communities of Malabar during fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Here it is worth quoting M.G.S Narayanan, “There is no reason to reject the tradition that the last Cera king embraced Islam and went to Mecca, since it finds a place not only in Muslim chronicles, but also in Hindu Brahmanical chronicles, like Keralolpathi, which need not be expected to concoct such a story, which in no way serves to enhance the prestige or further the interests of the Brahmin or Hindu population\(^5\).

So this tradition can’t be rejected simply because Ibn Battuta (1342-45) did not mention it in his Rehla. After Ibn Battuta visits to Jarfatan (Cannore) and Dahfatan (Dharmapattan) he writes, “the sultan of these towns is called Kuwayls and

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\(^5\) M G S Narayanan, *Political and Social Conditions of Kerala under the Kulashekhara Empire* Unpublished thesis submitted for Ph D in Kerala University 1972, pp 185-90
is one of the most powerful sultans of 'Mulaybar', at Dahfaltan there is a great ba'in and a cathedral mosque which were built by Kuwayls’ grandfather, who was converted to Islam”⁵¹. It confirms that Ibn Battuta was also aware of the tradition.

The conventional analysis of the different versions of the aforesaid tradition bought out four probable periods for the conversion and migration of Cheraman Perumal⁵².

1. During the life time of Prophet (622-633 AD.)
2. During the 8th century
3. During the 9th century
4. During the 12th century

If the Muslim tradition that Perumal visited Prophet Muhammed and accepted Islam at his hands is correct, it must have happened between 622-633 AD. The view that, if such a well-known king visited Prophet, it should have been mentioned in the Hadith literature is not a sufficient reason to suspend the aforesaid view. As mentioned earlier we have the reference of the visit of in Indian king to the Prophet⁵³. A remark of Prophet that 'he received sweet fragrance from India' also strengthens this view. More over Hadith literature rarely mentions of the conversion of different rulers of the world. The circumstantial evidences prove that Indians had intimate relationship with the Prophet. For instance Imam Bukhari has cited an incident when

Hazrat Aisha, wife of Prophet Muhammed fell ill her nephews called Indian Physician for her treatment\textsuperscript{54}.

Due to the absence of specific epigraphical evidence\textsuperscript{55} some scholars overlooked the importance of Perumal legend in the advent of Islam in Kerala. The circumstantial evidences support the fact that Islam reached Malabar soon after its origin in Mecca\textsuperscript{56}.

The circumstantial evidence supports the second probability, that the introduction of Islam and the conversion of Perumal took place in 8\textsuperscript{th} century AD. The numismatic evidence has truly attested the presence of Arabs in Malabar (Kerala) at the time when Islam was being preached and propagated in Arabia. Gold coins found at Poonjar, near Kothamangalam, provide sufficient details to the spread to Islam in Kerala.

According to N.W. Lawick, Assistant keeper of British Museum, London, who examined these gold coins (dated 736 AD). They were minted by Muslim merchants residing in Kerala for use of their overseas trade, and he declares it to be a unique one\textsuperscript{57}. This fact indirectly supports the 7\textsuperscript{th} century tradition. The existence of a merchant group with their own minted coins proves that they might have established their trade and settlement even much before the actual year of minting the coins.

\textsuperscript{54} K.A. Nizami,(Forward) in Muhammed Zaki (ed.,) Arab Accounts of India, Delhi, 1981. Azad Bilgrami in Subhat-ul- Marjan dealt with many traditions of the Prophet Muhammed in which reference is made to India, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{55} Sanskrit Chronograms gives different dates regarding the partitions of empire and Perumals conversion, K.V. Krishna Ayyar, op.cit., pp. 77-80.
\textsuperscript{56} Iqtidar Husain Sidiqui, Islam and Muslims in South Asia, Historical Perspective, Delhi, 1987, p 1
\textsuperscript{57} Indian Express, Sunday Standard, New Delhi June 1979, p.10, Iqtidar Husain Sidiqui op.cit., p. 1.
This part of tradition is further attested by the inscriptions found on the tombstone in the ancient graveyard (Mayytt-Kunnu) at Pantalayani Kollam58 dated 166 Hijra (782 AD).

The 9th century tradition traces its evidence in the Terisappalli copper plates (849 AD). It was the land grant made by Sthanu Ravi Varman of Quilon to Christian merchant chief Mar Sapir Iso to build a church. It reads:

And witness to this Maimun son of Ibrahim, and Muhammed son of Mani and ... (? Sulk) son of Ali, and Uthman son of Al-Marziban, and Muhammed son of Yahya and Amr son of Ibrahim, and Ibrahim son of At-Tay and Bahr son of Mansur, and Al Kasim son of Isa and Ismail son of Yaqub59.

The signatories of this important document are the local Muslim merchants. To be called to witness an important royal order acknowledges the prestige and dignity enjoyed by the Muslim merchants who had settled in that region.

Tuhfat-ul-Mujahideen supports the view that the conversion of Perumal was in 9th century AD. Its author states

As for exact date there is no certain information with us, most probably it must have been two hundred years after Hijra (632 AD) of the Prophet50.

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58 It is an important port in the Northern Malabar Coast between Muziris and Quilandy. (Fandarins of Idiris and Ibn Battuta).
59 R.E. Miller, Mappila Muslims of Kerala, Madras, 1976, p.43.
60 Tuhfat-ul-Mujahideen, op.cit., p.39.
If we agree with the Keralolpathi tradition, that Cheraman Perumal partitioned his empire among his chiefs before his departure, it could have happened in the 12th century. Since it is a well established fact that a flourishing all Kerala empire existed between 800-1122 AD. Then Perumal dynasty came to an end with the mysterious disappearance of the last Perumal Rama Kulasekhara in 1121 AD. This view has the support of an inscription found in the Mattayi mosque dated 518 AD (1124 AD). This is the one among ten mosques believed to be constructed by Malik Ibn Dinar and his companions, who accompanied Perumal on his way back to Malabar. This would mean that the mosque was erected two years after the departure of Cheraman Perumal to Mecca. Two years gap between his departure (1121 AD) and the erection of the mosque (1124 AD) is sufficient time for their arrival and to establish the Mosques. Mattayi mosque is the third mosque constructed after the establishment of Kodungallur and Kaulam (Quilon) mosques respectively.

Another shortcoming of the 12th century tradition comes from the statement of Shaykh Zayn-ud-din. He says that it was many years after the death of Perumal, Malik Ibn Dinar and his friends sailed for Malabar. Hence it is presumable that the so called statement of Merchant Sulaiman that, "I have never known any one in either Hind or China, who has embraced Islam or anyone who could speak Arabic" is ill judged.

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63 Tuhfat-ul-Mujahideen, op.cit., p.38.
64 Ibid.
This statement is always quoted against the early advent of Islam in Kerala. William Logan author of ‘Malabar Manual’ cited this statement to support his argument that Islam was not introduced into Malabar till 200 years after the Hijra.\(^66\) Since the main target of Sulaiman’s voyage was China rather than India, it is defective to propound a theory and to reach in a conclusion based on his statement.

Ronald E. Miller, in his renowned work *Mappila Muslims of Kerala* cited another reference from Sulaiman’s account to show that, Arabs were domiciled in the places he visited.

Most of the princes ... believe that the length of their lives is granted in recompense for their kindness to the Arabs. In truth there are no princes more hearty affectionate to their Arabs and their subjects prefers the same friendship for us.\(^67\)

And Miller concludes, “no theory can be established on the basis of this source”\(^68\).

Nainar discussed in detail the date of compilation and the authenticity of *Sinsilat-at-Tawarikh*\(^69\) and he observed that it will not be useful to establish any theory on the strength of Sulaiman’s statement because the exact date and the name of the narrator of this remark in the account of Sulaiman are not known to us so far.\(^70\)

Though we leave aside the conversion legend of Perumal and the subsequent partition of his empire to prove the early advent of Islam in Malabar, the numismatic

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\(^68\) R.E. Miller, *op.cit*, p.47
\(^69\) S.M.H. Nainar, *op.cit*, pp. 7-12
evidence leaves no room for the argument that Islam appeared in Malabar during the eighth or subsequent centuries. It is now obvious that, the Arab traders who were in close commercial and mercantile ties with the Malabaries played crucial role in bringing the teaching and ideology of Prophet Muhammed to the land of cultural symbiosis i.e. Kerala\(^1\). I.H. Qureshi observes that Islam therefore entered within a few years of the proclamation by the Prophet of his mission\(^2\).

In Kerala, Islam spread as it began peacefully and it grew steadily, because of the policy of toleration which its rulers followed towards other religions. The rapid growth of Islam in Kerala as observed by Shykh Zayn-ud-din:

Allah glory to him and exalted be. He made the faith of Islam spread in most of the inhabited regions of the earth. Allah has been gracious to the people of Malabar in Hind in making them accept the faith of Islam spontaneously and willingly and not out of fear or compulsion\(^3\).

Though Quranic injunctions discourage forcible conversions and it encourages proselytization\(^4\). And it has given instructions to its followers and provided with well-defined dogmas in the proselytization\(^5\). It promotes persuasion and preaching rather than power and persecution. To the context the epitome of the Quranic approach is the oft-quoted verse.

“Let there be no compulsion in religion”\(^6\).

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\(^1\) M.G.S. Narayanan used the term *Cultural Symbiosis* to the nature of accommodating different religions, culture, ideologies and practices by the Keraites since the origin of their land.


\(^3\) *Tuhfat-ul-Mujahideen*, op.cit, p.12.


\(^5\) The Holy Quran, 16: 125.

\(^6\) The Holy Quran, 2: 256.
Defying these very ideals of Islam, generally colonial historians used to project that the basic qualities of Islam as Sharia and Jihad, the Holy law and Holy war, help in its spread and protection from internal and external enemies.\textsuperscript{77}

One of the most interesting and important factors of the spread of Islam on the Malabar Coast was the role played by Zamorin rulers of Calicut, who ordered that, “In every family of fisherman in his dominion one or more of the male members should be brought up as Muhammadans.”\textsuperscript{78} The purpose of this deliberate encouragement of conversion of lower castes of sailors was to obtain mariners to man his warships and to conduct his sea-trade.\textsuperscript{79} This Policy of Zamorins contributed to the large-scale conversion of fishermen community now known as Puislan, poosalan evidently a corruption of Pudu Islam (New Muslims).\textsuperscript{80}

The reason was, during this period the Hinduism did not permit to cross the sea and engage in sea trade. They left such vulgar professions either to the lower castes or to the foreigners. The new converts were also called Marikkars (Navigators). Some Marikkars of Zamorin, like Kunhali Marikkars of Kottakkal were highly influential under the rulers of Calicut. The attitude of Zamorins towards Muslims as perceived by Shaykh Zayn-ud-din:

The rulers have respect and regard for the Muslims, because the increase in number of cities was due to them. Hence the rulers enable


\textsuperscript{78} Innes, \textit{Malabar and Anjengo}, Dist Gazetteer, p.190; T.W. Arnold, \textit{The Preaching of Islam}, Lahore, 1961, p.266.

\textsuperscript{79} Tara Chand, \textit{op.cit}, p.36.

\textsuperscript{80} M.G.S. Narayaran, \textit{Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala}, Kerala Historical Society, Thiruvananthapuram 1972, pp.6, 40.
the Muslims in the observation of their Friday prayers and celebration of Id. They fix the allowance for Qazis and *muadhins* and entrust them with the duty of carrying out the laws of Shariat. No one is permitted to neglect the prayer on Friday. In greater part of Malabar whoever neglects it, is punished, or made to pay a fine.\(^1\)

This fact corroborated with the stone inscription found in the Muccunti mosque at Kuttichira in Kozhikode.\(^2\) The encouragement given to merchants by Zamorin verily attracted merchants, especially Muslims from different parts of the world in large numbers.\(^3\) The Muslim historian further attests this liberal policy of Zamorin.

He states:

> The rulers take only tenth part of the income of their trade... They do not levy taxes on those who possess lands or fruit garden although they are of vast extent... This kindly treatment by prince of world emporium attracted Muslim merchants in large numbers.\(^4\)

The Muslims who settled in Kozhikode and the nearly converted Muslims enjoyed high influential positions in service of Zamorins. As mentioned earlier, the Kunhali Marakkars were the admirals of Zamorin’s Navy.\(^5\) Their role in the fight against the cruelties of the Portuguese power is discussed in the subsequent chapter.

Another best example, which shows the influence of Muslims, is mentioned in the

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\(^1\) Shaykh Zayn-ud-din, *op cit*, p. 51.

\(^2\) M.G.S Narayanan, *Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala*, *op cit*, pp. 38-42. The Bilingual inscription in Muccunti Mosque in Calicut registers one ‘Nali’ (a measure) of rice for the maintains of the mosque and land was set a part in Kunnamangalam and Pallikkal Villages, 10-15 miles from Calicut to North and East.

\(^3\) Ibn Battuta, *op cit*, p. 234

\(^4\) Shaykh Zayn-ud-din, *op cit*, p. 52.

pioneering works, 'The Zamorins of Calicut', in describing the coronation procession of Zamorin, K.V. Krishna Ayyar notes:

The Muhammadan 'Qazi' or Judge, Sabandra Koya\textsuperscript{86} as former of port duties, \textit{Tura Marakkyar} or Chief pilot and the \textit{Palli Musliyar} or eider in charge of Mosque should be at Jetti for akampati (escort)\textsuperscript{87}.

Also the Zamorin received betel leaf from a Muslim, dressed as lady of certain family\textsuperscript{88}. Another example of greatest honour was the right of 'Kozhikottu Koya' (The Muslim chieftain of Calicut) to stand on the right side of Zamorin in the prestigious Mamamkam\textsuperscript{89} Festival\textsuperscript{90}.

In short, three factors of mutual interest formed the attitude of Zamorin in helping the spread of Islam.

1. The great prosperity that the traders brought and “The increase in number of cities in his country”.

2. The financial support and manual assistance those traders gave him in fulfilling his political ambitions.

3. The trade interest of Calicut, for the Muslims made the Zamorin a vital link in the Chain of Moorish powers from Cordova in Western Europe to Malacca in the Far East\textsuperscript{91}.

\textsuperscript{86} Originally \textit{Shah Bandar Kwaya}, a highly influential officer in the port to look after import and export, and the title granted to the Muslims as an honour.

\textsuperscript{87} K.V. Krishna Ayyar, \textit{op cit}, p.39.

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid

\textsuperscript{89} The greatest festival held at Tirunnavayi once in 12 years.

\textsuperscript{90} K.V. Krishna Ayyar, \textit{op cit}, pp. 92-106.

\textsuperscript{91} V. Kunhali, \textit{op cit}, pp. 40-41.
Thus the need of the hour and political exigencies compelled him to create a congenial atmosphere, resulting in the increase of Arab trade and the consequent spread of Islam in Kerala.

The rulers of Kerala other than Zamorin also largely supported the Muslim merchants. Their generous support ultimately contributed to the steady growth of the Mappila community. In the north of Calicut, Ali Raja established the Arakkal Swarupom in Cannanore. The ‘Musaka Vamsa Kavya’ written by Atula, court poet of King Srikanta of eleventh century gives reference to the foundation of two cities of Marahi (Madayi) and Vallabhapattanam (Valapattan), “Where merchants of distant Islands were settled for trade”. These two cities and surrounding areas became important centres of Muslim activity. Here the Sufis also played a major role in propagating the religion.

As mentioned earlier the importance of Muslim merchant communities in Quilon (Kollam) is attested by the Terisapalli copper plates of Ayyan Atikal Tiru Atikal. We also noticed one of the ten mosques constructed by Malik Ibn Dinar. It shows the presence of a large Muslim settlement. Another mosque situated at Kodungallure (Muziris) and the influential presence of Muslim community in Cochin was a deciding factor in fixing the price of spices.

Moreover, the arrival of a new religion and ideology negating the existing caste, class and Varna division and the deep rooted untouchability, the concept of

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92 M.G.S. Narayanan, *Political Social Conditions under the Kulashekharas*, op cit, p.238.
93 V. Kunhali, *op cit*, p.42.
94 M.G.S. Narayanan, *Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala*, op cit, pp. 31-37.
pollution and other social evils further contributed to the spread of Islam in this land. The outcastes and Cherumars (Scheduled Caste of Kerala) people largely availed this opportunity and embraced Islam. The census reports of 1881 support the large-scale conversion of lower castes to Islam. According to William Logan, the Malabar collector, in *Malabar Manual*, the Cherumars numbered 99,009 in 1871 census and in 1881 it reduced to 64752 i.e., 34.63% loss against the increase of 5.71% in the total population. This was due to their conversion to Islam with fellow religionists. The concept of their interior status and pollution in the society and the social equality with in Islam was an unprecedented unique attraction to the Harijans and outcastes.

The role of Sufi Missionaries in the spread of Islam in Kerala is as important a factor as the help and assistance rendered by the local rulers. A recent study by Kunhali V. has well established the role of Sufis in prosylitization where he refutes I.H. Qureshi’s statement, ‘The extensive sufimissionary activity found elsewhere in Indian Islam is not evident in South India.’

It is a fact that the early propagators of Islam were pious and truly followed the tenets of Islam and were able to attract a large number of non-Muslims to the fold of Islam. But the customs and traditions practiced by their disciples verily deviated from the teaching of the Qu’ran and the Prophetic tradition. As mentioned in *Sufism in Kerala*, in the *Taifa* stage, a venerated *Pir* (Guru) became an intermediary between the disciple (*murid*) and God. Also a saint cult centered on spiritual power or Barakha

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97 *Sufism in Kerala*, *op cit.*, gives detailed study on its origin, orders and practices.
98 I.H Qureshi, *op cit.* p.15.
of a single individual became popular. In later stage it was believed that *Barakha* was transmitted to descendant of Pir (Guru) and even to the physical structure where they lay buried, leading to the veneration of tombs. In this stage a large number of common people were attracted to the spell and charm of the so-called ‘Sufis’. The basic need of the layman was to achieve relief from the anxieties and to get their worldly desires satisfied. They expected its possibility through the intercession of the saint between them and God (*Tawassul*)

The sources for the study of the early Sufi missionary activities are scanty in contrast to the available extensive materials on the same in north India. Whatever we have in Kerala are traditional works (*Tadkiras*) containing admiration and exaltation of the miracles of the Sufis. Also they are all preserved in Arabic Malayalam language. These available sources were not accessible to the scholars, which might have persuaded I.H. Qureshi to his above mentioned statement. However, latest studies on these sources brought Kunhali V. to the conclusion “Whatever historical materials had been there in *Malas* were later dropped, and more popular and fanciful *Karamat* being attributed in its place by the new composers”.

The arrival of Malik Ibn Dinar and his followers itself represents the evidence of early missionary activities in Kerala. As known Malik Ibn Dinar was a disciple of Hasan-ul-Basari who was a reliable Hadith reporter and calligrapher who died in 130

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99 V. Kunhali, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-60.  
100 *Ibid.*, pp.59-63. Scholar’s view with a strong conviction of progressive Muslim thought. “I have an aversion to veneration of tomb and *Pirs* (Custodians of Jarams) belief in Talisman, Astrology and Sorcery. As studies progressed it was cleared that these were exploitation of *Pirs* and character of its decadent stage and not real Sufism, which was originally an aristocratic and intellectual movement prefaced, p.8.  
101 *Ibid*  
After the arrival of Malik Dinar and his group they visited almost entire Kerala and established ten mosques with the support of local rulers. These were situated in Kaulam (Quilon), Muziris (Kodungallore), Shaliyal (Chaliyam), Fandarina (Pantalayani-Kollam), Darmfattan (Dharmadam), Jurfathan (Srikantapuram), Hili Marahi (Madai), Kajarkut (Kasarkode), Manjarur (Manglore) and Fakkanur (Barkur). After erecting the mosques, Malik Dinar appointed his companions as Qazis and entrusted to guide the Muslims and to propagate the religion among other communities. It was the missionary work of the group that facilitated the spread of Islam to larger areas.

Ibn Battuta’s travel accounts show that he met many theologians from different parts of the Arab world. At Hily (Ezhimale) Said at Kannur he stayed with a virtuous theologian named Sarsary from Baghdad and Shaykh Shahbuddin of Qazarun, a great saint at his hermitage. On his final visit to Kerala, Ibn Battuta stayed at Quilon with Saykh Fakruddin son of Shykh Shahabuddin al Qazaruni of Calicut.

In Baliaptam, Islam was spread by the coming of Ahmed Jalaluddin Bukhari in 900 AH/1494 AD. It is widely believed that Islam spread in Lakshadweep Islands from Kerala. Sayyid Muhammed Maula of Kavarati (b.1144 AH/1724 AD), who rendered his missionary service in Lakshadweep was the fifth descendant of Ahmed

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104 Shaykh, Zaynu-ud-din, op cit, p.39.
105 Ibid. Umar Bin Muhammed Suhrawarti in his Rihlat-ul-Muluk mentions 18 mosques which were erected by Malik-Ibn-Dinar and his companions, Abdul Samad, Islam in Kerala, Groups and Movements in the 20th Century, Quilon, 1998, p.3; K. M. Bahavuddin, Kerala Muslims, Long Struggle, Kottayam, 1992, p.23. See Appendix-III and XX.
107 KAN Sastri, Foreign Notices of South India, Madras, 1939, p. 127.
Jalaluddin Bukhari of Baliapatam\textsuperscript{108}. Jalaluddin Bukhari’s activities were centered between Manglore and Travancore. In Northern Malabar Purattel Shykh, who claimed to be Abdul Qadir al thani (The second Abdul Qadir Jilani, the famous Mujadid of Islam and the founder of Qadiriya Tariqa) was an active missionary\textsuperscript{109}.

In the second half of the fifteenth century Ponnani became the religious and culture centre of Kerala Muslims. There is also a view that religiously Ponnani had been active even before 50 AH\textsuperscript{110}. As in traditions, Thurston noted that Ponnani was established by an Arab emigrant\textsuperscript{111}. Makhdums originally came from Ma’bar in Yemen and first settled in Keelakkara and Kayalpattam in Tamilnadu. They propagated teachings of Islam in these areas and became highly influential in the society\textsuperscript{112}.

Shaykh Zain-ud-din Ibn Ali (1467-1521 AD) of Ponnani compiled the well-known mystic poem *Hidayat-ul-Adhkiyah ila Tariqat-al-Awliya* renounced as ‘Manual of Sufism in Malabar’. A commentary (Sharah) on Adhkiya by author’s son Abdul Aziz al-Ma’abari contains the biography of the first makhdum. It mentions makhdum as followers of Chisiti Tariqah\textsuperscript{113}. Shaykh Zayn-ud-din Makhdum (Junior 1526-1580 AD) who wrote Tuhfat-ul-Mujahidin, was the grandson of Shaykh Zayn-ud-din Ibn Ali\textsuperscript{114}.

\textsuperscript{109} A.P. Ibrahim Kunju, \textit{op cit}, p.25.
\textsuperscript{112} V.M. Abdul Hasan, \textit{op cit}, pp.2-8.
\textsuperscript{113} V. Kunhalli, \textit{op cit}, p.65.
\textsuperscript{114} V.M. Abdul Hassan, \textit{op cit}, p.24.
The Qadiri Tariqah was the most popular Tariqah in Kerala, formed after Abdul Qadir born in Jilan in 470 AH / 1077AD. However, he did not establish any Tariqah but was renouned as a Hambali preacher. By fifteenth century Abdul Qadir became the most popular saint in Islamic world and in India, this tariqah had been introduced by the coming Muhammed Gawth (d-1517), who claimed descended from Abdul Qadir. This tariqah failed to get grip in north India, though even before that it attained popularity in Malabar due to the activities of Purathel Shaykh, who himself styled as Abdul Qadir al thani (second Abdul Qadir) to whom reference has already been made. In all probability this order might have spread from the Deccan.

In 1159 AH / 1748, the first Ba-Alvi Saint, Sayyid Jiffri Tangal from Hadramaut arrived at Calicut and warmly received by Zamorin, who granted him house and property at Tekkumtala in Calicut. His later residence and tomb at Mamburam in Malappuram district became famous, and were called as Mamburam Tangals. They were great scholars and they provided spiritual and moral support to several mappila out breaks against the oppression of Hindu Janmies and British officials. Sayyid Fazal 1823-1901, alleged to be the spirit behind the out breaks was banished by the British government and he remained in the court of Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II of constantinople. Till his death.

Another influential family of saints in the Eranad Taluk was Kondotti Tangals, who were held greatly in respect but only second to the Mamburam Tangals. The founder Muhammed Shah an Iranian, arrived at Kondotti in 1718AD, from Kordan.

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115 V. Kunhalil, op cit., p.64.
116 R.M. Eaton, Sufis of Bijapur, pp.56-57.
(near Bombay). A cordial relationship had existed between Muhammed Shah and Haidar Ali and later continued by mission Tippu Sultan. They sanctioned rent-free lands (*Inam*) for the personal benefit of Tangal\(^\text{118}\).

The practices like *Muharram* festivals and the prostration of *Murids* (desciple) before Tangal caused suspicion, that the Tangals were Shias. The Sunni theologians turned against him and some times the hot disputes turned to armed clashes between the followers of Ponnani and Kondotti Tangals\(^\text{119}\), known in history as *Ponnani-Kondotti Kaitharkam*, which lasted for a long period. It resulted in the dropping of many such practices and the emergence of abundant Arabi-Malayalam literature. An annual *Urs* used to be conducted at kondotti related to the Shrine of Muhammed Shah\(^\text{120}\).

In Maldives, *Rifai Tariqah*, which spread from mauiland of Kerala had wide followers. Ibn Battuta noticed the presence of this order in Islands. *Rifa-i-Mala* an eulogy by the *murids* of *Rifa-i-Shaykh* used to be recited throughout Malabar to get relief from burns and to guard against snake bite\(^\text{121}\).

In a later stage *Nurishah Tariqah* arrived in Kerala from Hyderabad. As known among the followers of this Tariqah, Shykhuna Sayyidina Al Khaj Nurul Mashaikh, claimed to be a descendant of Abdul Quadir Jilani. This *tariqah* did not enjoy public acceptance in Kerala\(^\text{122}\).

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\(^\text{119}\) Kunhali V., *op. cit.*, p.6.
\(^\text{120}\) *Ibid*.
\(^\text{121}\) A.P. Ibrahim Kunju, *op. cit.*, p.27.
\(^\text{122}\) *Ibid*. 
The followers of ‘Kurur Shaykh’, the Naqshabandis of Kerala had their headquarters at Maruveetil Thazham (Wynad District). This Tariqah attracted little followers in Kizhisseri, Kondoty, and Chelembra of Malappuram District\textsuperscript{123}. There were regular ideological disputes between Naqshabandi scholars and orthodox Ulama which finally resulted in the excommunication of the former in 1921. In February 1979, two persons were killed in disputes between orthodox Sunnies and Naqshabandis\textsuperscript{124}. In this Tariqah Imam is held in high reverence and they believed that the hidden knowledge of Quran could be acquired only through an Imam. So it is the duty of every individual to get guidance from an Imam, and those who die without achieving the tasks will be in failure\textsuperscript{125}.

In Palaghat district, Sayyid Muhammed Mawla of Alattur carried the Sufi missionary activity. He devoted his life to the spread of Islamic teachings in eastern part of Kerala. And annual two days urs is conducted in commemoration of his memory at Teruvatte Palli, where his tomb exists and the dargha remains open for all devotees irrespective of caste and creeds\textsuperscript{126}.

We also have some other references about the activities of other saints in different parts of Kerala, who contributed to the spread of Islam in Kerala. Eminent historian M.G.S. Narayanan commented “Thus all available information go to show that Islam like Judaism and Syrian Christianity in earlier centuries came to Kerala not like a conqueror but as an honoured guest in the house”\textsuperscript{127} and contributed to the cultural symbiosis of the land.

\textsuperscript{123} V. Kunhali, \textit{op cit}, p.27.
\textsuperscript{124} E. Thurston, \textit{op cit}, pp.462-64.
\textsuperscript{125} A. P. Ibrahim Kunju, \textit{op cit}, p.28.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{127} M.G.S. Narayanan, \textit{Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala, op cit}, p. 89.