Caste, Conversion, and Collective Resistance

Understanding Religious Conversion to Islam in South Malabar

(1850 - 1930)

Dissertation Submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University in Partial

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled ***"Caste, Conversion, and Collective Resistance: Understanding Religious Conversion to Islam in South Malabar (1850 - 1930)"*** submitted by me in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of this University is my own work and has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other University.

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I

Introduction

This study is a social history of Mappila Muslims, who had accepted this identity by converting into Islam in the nineteenth and the twentieth century colonial Malabar. There have been several studies about religious conversions in Kerala, especially about conversions to protestant Christianity.[1] The Muslims of Malabar, the Mappilas, were socially, economically and culturally belonged to different groups. Regional differences could be seen in their religious ceremonies and everyday lives. There were differences between rural and urban Mappilas, as well as between Mappila Muslims who were farmers and merchants. Huge regional differences were there between Mappilas of south Malabar and north Malabar. Most of the Mappilas in north Malabar were associated with commerce and there were many landlords among them. Mappilas in south Malabar were associated with agriculture and majority of them were tenants.[2]

The Mappilas of Malabar constituted mainly of converts from lower castes like Cheruma, Tiyya and Mukkuva and a small number of them were descendants of Arab traders. This study is about the rural Mappilas of south Malabar: the area was described as 'fanatic zone' and the people as 'jungle Mappilas' by the British. In 1921, sixty percentage of Mappila population was concentrated in three taluks of south Malabar --

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[1] Dick Kooiman, *Conversion and Social Equality in India: The London Missionary Society in South Tavancore in the 19th Century* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1989); J. W. Gladstone, *Protestant Christianity and People's Movement in Kerala, 1850-1936* (Trivandrum: Kerala United Theological Seminary, 1984); R. N. Yesudas, *A People's Revolt in Travancore: A Backward Class Movement for Social Freedom* (Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Society, 1975); T. M. Yesudasan, *Baliyadukalude Vamshavali: Separate Administration Movementinte Vamshavum Avirbhavavum* (Thiruvananthapuram: Prabath Book House, 2010); and P. Sanal Mohan, 'Religion, Social Space and Identity: The Prathyksha Raksha Sabha and the Making of Cultural Boundaries in Twentieth Century Kerala', *Journal of South Asian Studies* (Vol. 28: 1, April, 2005), pp. 35-63.

[2] Stephen F. Dale, *Islamic Society in the South Asian Frontier: The Mappilas of Malabar 1498-1922* (Oxford: Calarendon Press, 1980), p. 71.

Eranad, Walluvanad, and Ponnani.[3] It was the conversions from the lower castes that had facilitated the growth of Islam in these rural taluks of south Malabar.

There are a number of studies on the multiple origins of Muslims in north India than in south India. Studies by Asim Roy, Richard M. Eaton, Barbara D. Metcalf, Shail Mayaram and others treat Muslims as diverse and of different origins.[4] By adopting such a method to study the Mappila history of Malabar, one can account for the multiple sources of Mappila identity. Major studies on the growth of Islam through conversions were mainly on Bengali Muslims.[5] According to Rowena Robinson, 'Social structure, political context and historical conditions framed the modes and motivations of conversion in different regions.'[6] There are basically four approaches to the growth of Islam in India.[7] First one is the immigration theory; second, the religion of the sword thesis; third, the religion of patronage theory; and finally, the religion of social liberation thesis.[8] The first one, i.e., the immigration theory does not entirely concord with religious conversion. Eaton has argued that the immigration theory is not really a theory of conversion at all since it views Islamisation in terms of the diffusion, not of beliefs, but of peoples.[9] According to this theory, the bulk of Indian Muslims are descended from other

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[3] K. N. Panikkar (ed.), *Peasant Protests and Revolts in Malabar* (New Delhi: People Publishing House, 1990), p. xi.

[4] Asim Roy, *The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal* (Princton: Princton University Press, 1983); Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Shail Mayaram, *Myth, Memory and the Shaping of a Muslim Identity* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[5] Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims, 1871-1906: A Quest for Identity* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981); Asim Roy, *The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); and Barbara D. Metcalf, Rafiuddin Ahmed, and Mushirul Hasan, *India's Muslims* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[6] Rowena Robinson, 'Modes of Conversion to Islam', in Robinson and Clarke (eds.), *Religious Conversion in India: Modes, Motivations, and Meanings* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 24.

[7] Lewis R. Rambo, 'Theories of Conversion: Understanding and Interpreting Religious Change', *Social Compass* (vol. 46: 3, 1999), pp. 259-271; and Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam*, p. 113.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

Muslims who had either migrated overland from the Iranian plateau or sailed across the Arabian Sea.[10]

In the case of Malabar, those who had immigrated from Arabia for reasons of trade and commerce played a vital role in the growth of Islam. Those Arab immigrants married Hindu women of Malabar and their descendents followed Islam.[11] This growth of Islam by means of immigration was more conspicuous in the coastal regions of north Malabar, which had commercial centres.[12] Though the immigration of the Arab traders had resulted in the origin of Islam in Malabar, it was not the only reason behind the numerical growth of Muslims.

The colonialists, the orientalists and the Hindu nationalists used the Religion of the Sword thesis to evaluate the growth of Islam in the Indian subcontinent.[13] According to this theory of the colonial historians, Islam took root in India either through forced conversions or through militancy. But, there have been many counter arguments as well.[14] Peter Hardy has observed that those who argue that Indian Muslims were forcibly converted have generally failed to define either force or conversion.[15] This theory of colonial historians has been applied to understand the growth of Islam in Malabar. Colonial records have documented that widespread forced conversions had happened

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Stephen F. Dale, 'Trade, Conversion, and the Growth of the Islamic Community in Kerala', in Rowena Robinson and Sathianathan Clarke (eds.), *Religious Conversion in India: Modes, Motivations, and Meanings* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 54-74.

[12] Parappil Mammadkoya, *Kozhikkote Muslimkalude Charithram* (Calicut: Focus Publishers, 1994; Reprint, 2012), p. 45.

[13] See the works of William Muir, *The Caliphate: Its Rise, Decline, and Fall* (London, 1898; Reprint, Beirut: Khyats, 1963); Preface by H. M. Elliot, *History of India as Told by Its Own Historians* (London, 1849; Reprint, Allahabad: Kitab Mahal, 1964); and M. S. Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (Nagpur: Bharat Publications, 1939).

[14] Peter Hardy, 'Modern European and Muslim Explanations of Conversion to Islam in South Asia: A Preliminary Survey of Literature',' in Nehemia Levtzion (ed.), *Conversion to Islam* (New York: Homes & Meier, 1979), pp. 74-86; and Zawar Hussain Zaidi, 'Conversion to Islam in South Asia: Problems in Analysis', *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (vol. 6:1, 1989), pp. 93-117.

[15] Peter Hardy, 'Modern European and Muslim Explanations of Conversion to Islam in South Asia,' p. 78.

during the reign of the Mysoren invasion in the eighteenth century.[16] But, Logan has noted that the numerical growth of Islam in Malabar had occurred during the colonial rule.

Though the Religion of Patronage theory is relevant in the case of north India, it is not that much relevant in the case of Malabar. Religion of Patronage theory says that Indians of the pre-modern period converted to Islam in order to receive non-religious favor from the ruling class—relief from taxes, promotion in bureaucracy, and so forth.[17] There was not many Muslim dynasties in Malabar that lasted for a long period as in the case of north India.[18] An exception is the rule of Mysorean dynasty from 1766 to 1792. During this period, some higher caste men from places like Nadapuram in north Malabar had converted to Islam expecting patronage or fearing the new rule.[19] But, these conversions from the higher castes were not significant in the numerical growth of Islam. Many lower caste people too had converted to Islam during the Mysorean rule. Their conversion was not for the sake of participation in the administration; but it was regarded as a liberation from the slavery imposed by the caste system.[20] On the patronage theory, Eaton argues, 'Although this thesis might help to explain the relatively low incidence of Islamisation in India's political heartland, it cannot explain the mass conversions that took place along the political fringe- as in Punjab or Bengal.'[21] He notes that one needs to explain the phenomenon of mass Islamisation on the fringe of Muslim power and not just in the heartland, and among millions of peasant cultivators and not just among urban

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[16] William Logan, *Malabar Manual* (Madras, 1887; Reprint, Calicut: Mathrbhumi Books, 2012), p. 295.

[17] Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam*, p. 115.

[18] Peter Hardy, 'Modern European and Muslim Explanations of Conversion to Islam in South Asia,' pp. 80-81.

[19] Roland E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends* (Madras: Orient Longman, 1976), p. 81.

[20] Ibid., p. 94.

[21] Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam*, p. 116.

elites.[22] This observation of Eaton is relevant in understanding the mass religious conversion by lower castes to Islam in rural south Malabar.

Social Liberation thesis is the appropriate explanation for the Islamisation process or conversion process which occurred in 19th century south Malabar. The lower caste conversion to Islam was a socio-political engagement by the lower castes who were the victims of a caste-based social system. The proponents of the Social Liberation theory argues that the Sufis had acted as the mediators in the social liberation.[23] Dale states,

> The conversion process was largely a steady and prosaic one, probably beginning with the first appearance of Muslims on the Malabar coast and continuing primarily because of the dramatic contrast between these two societies rather than as a result of the intervention of Sufis or other popular religious figures who are often thought to have played crucial roles in the spread of Islam in Asia.[24]

The lower caste slaves had converted to Islam to escape from the slavery imposed by the caste system. Conversions to Islam had taken place both during the Mysorean reign and even after the abolition of slavery during the colonial period under the mediation of the Sufis. This had helped in the numerical growth of Islam in Malabar.[25]

The abolition of slavery was enforced in 1843 due to the pressure from the protestant missionaries. It was after this that majority of lower caste conversions to Christianity and Islam occurred in north Malabar and south Malabar respectively. According to Kooiman, 'The abolition of slavery loosened the old bonds between master and servant. But since it was not followed by any economic reform, the situation remained largely unchanged and the possible benefits of abolition did not become manifest to the newly liberated. In the following years, many ex-slaves went over to

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[22] Ibid.

[23] See J. S. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

[24] Stephen F. Dale, 'Trade, Conversion, and the Growth of the Islamic Community in Kerala', p. 71.

[25] Hussain Randathani. *Mappila Muslims: A Study on Society and Anti Colonial Struggles* (Calicut: Other Books, 2007), pp. 44-49.

Christianity.'[26] Panikkar observed that the decline in the lower caste population in Malabar occurred due to the religious conversion which was facilitated by the abolition of slavery in 1843.[27] Lower caste conversions were facilitated by the presence of Sufis like Mamburam Tangal in south Malabar and the protestant missions like Basel Mission and Chirakkal Mission in north Malabar.[28] It could not be said that religious conversion to Christianity and Islam occurred only because of the efforts of the missionaries. It was also because the lower castes had seen it as a 'liberation' from slavery. As T.M.Yesudasan, who has studied the lower caste converts to protestant Christianity, says, 'No matter what the intentions of the missionaries were, Dalit religious ascension was the strategy adopted by Dalits in order to redirect the western missionary activities against the slavery and caste system and to utilize it for their own benefit.'[29] Rowena Robinson also points out that conversion is often an expression of resistance, dissent and rebellion.[30]

India has witnessed both individual and mass conversions.[31] Individual conversion refers to the conversions by individuals. Mass conversion refers to the conversion simultaneously done by a large number of people of a particular region or community. On mass conversion by lower castes in India, Kooiman notes, 'The way out resorted to most frequently and by en masse was to adopt a new religion. It is this phenomenon that has come to be known as 'mass conversion' or 'mass movement'.'[32] Logan has recorded mass lower caste conversions to Islam in the nineteenth century

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[26] Dick Kooiman, *Conversion and Social Equality in India*, p. 201.

[27] K. N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar, 1836-1921* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 52

[28] Raina, C. R., *The Basel Mission and Social Change in Malabar* (Unpublished M. Phil Dissertation, University of Calicut, 1988); and Dhaneesh M. P., *Understanding the Work of Chirakkal Mission, 1937-1950* (Unpublished M. Phil Dissertation, University of Hyderabad, 2012).

[29] T. M. Yesudasan, *Baliyaadukalude Vamshaavali*, p. 4.

[30] Rowena Robinson and Sathianathan Clarke, 'The Many Meanings of Religious Conversion on the Indian Subcontinent', in Robinson and Clarke (eds.), *Religious Conversion in India: Modes, Motivations, and Meanings* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 15.

[31] Ibid, p. 14.

[32] Dick Kooiman, *Conversion and Social Equality in India*, p. 3.

Malabar.[33] There was, however, no organized mass movement of conversion, but a small groups or individuals converted to Islam at different time.

After 1920, there have been attempts for mass conversions by the lower castes of Kerala, especially from the Ezhava community to convert into Islam, Christianity and Buddhism.[34] The conversion of the Ezhavas and other lower castes is an important factor which had led to the Hindu religious reformations.[35] M. S. Jayaprakash observes that the Temple Entry Proclamation of 1936 November was an attempt to prevent the Ezhavas' conversions to Islam and Christianity.[36] T. M.Yesudasan says, 'The reformations adopted by the upper caste Hindus to overcome the obstacles created by the fear of religious conversion and its consequences are mainly called as the Kerala Renaissance.'[37] Ezhava leaders like K. Sukumaran, K. P.Thayyil, P. K. Kunhiraman, K. Ayyappan and A. K. Bhaskaran had published a book entitled *Asavarnarku Nallathu Islam*, to promote the idea that Ezhava people should convert to Islam to escape from the evils of the Hindu caste system.[38]

Yesudasan classifies the Hindu reform movements into five forms.[39] 1) Community reformation movements; 2) Sanskritisation of the lower castes; 3) Shuddhi Movement to bring the converts back to Hinduism; 4) Certain developmental programmes in favour of the lower castes; and 5) Change of attitude of the Travancore government towards the missionaries. Hindu reform movements began in Malabar only

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[33] William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Vol. I (Madras: Government Press, 1887, Reprint; 1951), p.149.

[34] Cyriac K. Pullapilli, 'The Izhavas of Kerala and Their Historic Struggle for Acceptance in the Hindu Society', *Journal of Asian and African Studies* (Vol. 11, 1987), pp. 24-45.

[35] M. S. Jayaprakash, 'Forward Note', in K. Sukumaran, K. P. Tayyil et.al, *Asavarnarku Nallathu Islam*, (Cochin: Kerala Tiyya Youth League, 1936, Second Edition by Kerala Dalit Sahithya Academy, 1988, New Edition by Bahujan Sahithya Academy, 2005), p. 9.

[36] Ibid.

[37] T. M. Yesudasn, *Baliyadukalude Vamshavali*, p. 7

[38] K. Sukumaran, K. P. Tayyil et al., *Asavarnarku Nallathu Islam* (Cochin: Kerala Tiyya Youth League, 1936).

[39] T. M. Yesudasan, *Baliyaadukalude Vamshaavali*, pp. 67-68.

after getting strengthened in Travancore and Kochi.[40] This study tries to understand the lower caste conversions to Islam in the nineteenth and the twentieth century Malabar. Generally, two kind of approaches are used in the studies on religious conversions: normative or descriptive.[41] Rambo explained that in the normative approach of religious conversion, a genuine conversion is formulated according to the theological convictions of a particular tradition.[42] The tradition is specific in elaborating what is expected or required for conversion to be valid. The descriptive approach of religious conversion seeks to define the forms of the process with little concern for what the ideology of groups is. The descriptive approach, thus, primarily observes the nature of the process.[43] This study is primarily descriptive in nature rather than being normative.

The socio-political circumstances of the lower caste conversions in Malabar, their identity formation after the conversion, and the socio-political changes and conflicts after the conversion are analysed in the three core chapters of this study.The first chapter assesses the two stages of the growth of Islam in Malabar. The nature of conversion in these two stages are discussed. The second chapter analyses the various stages and nature of the Islamisation process . The third chapter evaluates the organised armed resistances of the lower caste converts against the caste-based socio-conomic system.

Review of Literature

The first historical work dealing with the origin and growth of Islam in Kerala came out in the sixteenth century. It is *Thuhfathul Mujahideen* written by Shaykh Zainuddin Makhdum.[44] It discusses the social and economic conditions of the Muslims since the conversion of Cheraman Perumal until the Portuguese invasion of Malabar. Makhdum deals with the growth of Islam in the coastal areas of Malabar. He has

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[40] T. H. P. Chentharassery, *Ayyankali* (Thiruvananthapuram: Prabhath Books, 1979; Reprint, 2009), p. 130.

[41] Lewis R. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (London: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 6.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Shaykh Zainuddin Makhudum. *Tuhfat Al-Mujahidin: A Historical Epic of the Sixteenth Century* (Reprint; Calicut: Other Books, 2006), pp. 44-45. Original work was written in sixteenth century A.D. First English translation was written by M. J Rowlandson (London: J.L. Cox & Son, 1833).

recorded that conversions to Islam had occurred from both the upper and lower castes. He has also recorded that Muslim merchants had collected funds to help the new converts.[45] Though he mentions the Hindu caste system and the conversions to Islam as a challenge against it, there are no hints at the nature and motif of the conversions. It is also noticeable that Makhdum does not use the common term 'Mappila' to denote the Malabar Muslims.

Attempts to record the history of Mappilas as a native community had begun during the colonial period. Most of them were based on the colonial and Orientalist prejudices against natives especially Muslims. They were also studies based on administrative needs of the colonial government. Prominent among the colonial works is *Malabar Manual* written by William Logan, the then collector of Malabar.[46] It was a study of the Malabar society from a historical and anthropological perspective.

The first volume of *Malabar Manual* containing the four chapters is a significant work oin the history of Malabar. The origin of the Mappilas and the contemporary history are recorded in the chapters entitled 'The People' and 'History'. Referring to the census report, Logan notes that the number of the untouchable Cherumas[47] had decreased considerably due to their mass conversion to Islam since the Mysorean rule.[48] Logan has also observed that the conversion was facilitated due to the protection offered to the converts by the Mappilas and also due to the rise in their social status after conversion.[49] Under the theme 'Mohammedans', a long description of the conversion of Cheraman Perumal and a summary of the numerical growth of Muslims due to the conversions of Cheruma and Mukkuva[50] communities are given. A political history of modern Malabar

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[45] Ibid. p. 46.

[46] William Logan. *Malabar Manual*. Vol. I & II (Madras: Government Press, 1887, Reprint; 1951), pp. 108-153.

[47] Cherumas are lower caste Hindus those who settled in the Malabar region. They were treated as slave by upper caste Hindu landlords until the abolition of slavery in Malabar.

[48] Ibid. p. 197.

[49] Ibid.

is also given in the third chapter. Malabar Manual also contains the history of Mysore invasion and the armed resistances of Mappilas against British colonialism and the caste-based feudal system.

Most of the Mappila histories are written by popular historians rather than the academic historians. The first Mappila history in Malayalam is *Malayalathile Mappilamar* written by C. Gopalan Nair.[51] This book describes the family history of elite Mappilas. Gopalan Nair relates the family history of Cheraman Perumal, Arakkal dynasty of Kannur, Mooppan family, Naha family etc who as high caste Hindus converted to Islam. Along with them, the family history of the religious elites like Mamburam Tangals and the Ponnani Makhdums are also included.

Since 1960's a number of studies have been published by Mappila historians. The first comprehensive history of Kerala Muslims was written by a Mappila historian, P. A. Said Muhammad.[52] A common feature of the histories by Mappila historians is connecting religious conversions with the theological ideas of Islam. They observe that the growth of Islam was due to the principles of monotheism and simplicity. But, these studies neglect the political, economic and social factors which could be the motives of conversion. If conversions are approached from theological aspect alone, then all conversions will be read as homogeneous experiences.

The articles written by T. Muhammad in the *Prabhodanam Monthly* during the period 1977 to 1983 were recently published as *Mappila Samudayam: Charithram Samskaram*.[53] These include the long history of Mappilas from the origin of Islam up to the Malabar Rebellion of 1921. He also discusses the prevalent socio-political relations and economic background while dealing with the Mappila history up to the fifteenth

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[50] Mukkuvas are one of the untouchable castes and they were settled in coastal regions of Malabar. They engaged in fishing and related jobs.

[51] C. Gopalan Nair, *Malayalathile Mappilamar* (Mangalore: Basel Evangelical Press, 1917).

[52] P. A. Said Muhammad, *Kerala Muslim Charithram* (Thrissur: Current Books, 1961); and *Charithra Keralam* (Kottayam: National Books, 1963).

[53] T. Muhammad, *Mappila Samudhayam: Charithram Samskaram* (Calicut: Islamic Publishing House, 2013).

century. But, of the history during the period between the Portuguese invasion in the sixteenth century and the twentieth century, political conflicts alone are discussed. He does not say much about the lower caste conversions and its role in anti-feudal fights.

K. K. Muhammad Abdulkareem and C. N. Ahammad Moulavi are two popular historians who have written extensively on Mappila history. *Mahathaya Mappila Sahithya Parambaryam*, jointly written by them, is a concise description of the literal and cultural traditions of Malabar Mappilas.[54] They connect the historical tradition of Mappilas to Cheraman Perumal. They also attempt to assert the greatness of Mappila legacy by connecting Perumal with the history of Prophet Muhammad.[55] Trying to connect Mappilas with the 'great traditions' they leave out the origin and development of the lower class Mappilas. But, there are hints at the Islamisation processes after the conversions. This book also provides a description of the development of Arabic-Malayalam[56] language and the religious literature that were significant in the Islamisation process. This book is distinct from the Mappila histories written by other popular historians in the fact that this records the literal and cultural engagements of the Mappilas without being simply limited to the Mappila rebellions.

Several works related to the Mappila history were published since 1980. Important among them are: P. K. Muhammad Kunji, *Muslimingalum Kerala Samskaravum* (1982), A. P. Ibrahim Kunju, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: Their History and Culture* (1989), S. Muhammad Koya, *Mappilas of Malabar* (1983), Parappil Mammadkoya, *Kozhikkote Muslimkalude Charithram* (1994), K. M. Bahaudheen, *Kerala*

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[54] K. K. Muhammad Abdulkareem and C. N. Ahammad Moulavi. *Mahathaya Mappila Sahithya Parambaryam* (Published by the Authors, 1978).

[55] Ibid., pp. 23-24.

[56] Arabic-Malayalam which was a mixture of local Malayalam and other languages such as Tamil, Arabic and Persian was the medium of communication used by the *ulamas* to teach the illiterate lower caste converts of south Malabar about the modes of Islamic worship. It flourished among the rural Mappilas in the eighteenth century after the decline of Arab trade in the Malabar Coast.

Muslimkal: Cheruthunilpinte Charithram (1995), Hussain Randathani, *Mappila Muslims: A Study on Society and Anti-colonial* Struggles (2007), and K. T. Hussain, *Kerala Muslimkal: Adhinivesa Virudha Porattathinte Pratheya Sasthram* (2008).[57]

After 1980 Mappila history got into the studies of academic historians. The historiography of the Mappilas of Malabar mainly concentrates on their political history. The majority of the historical studies deal with the militant actions of the Mappila tenants against upper caste landlords during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.[58] Socio-cultural histories of Mappilas are fewer compared to their political history.[59] Studies by Stephen F. Dale, Roland M. Miller, J. B. P. More and A. P. Ibrahim Kunju and others deal with the social history of the Mappilas.[60] They deal with the origin and evolution of Mappila community. Dale traces the Mappila history from the period of Portuguese

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[57] P. K. Muhammed Kunji, *Muslimingalum Kerala Samskaravum* (Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi. 1982); Muhammad, S. Muhammad Koya, *Mappilas of Malabar* (Calicut: Sandhya Publications, 1983) A. P. Ibrahim Kunju, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: Their History and Culture* (Trivadrum: Sandhya Publishers, 1989); Parappil Mammadkoya, *Kozhikkote Muslimkalude Charithram* (Calicut: Focus Publishers, 1994, Reprint, 2012), K. M. Bahaudheen, *Kerala Muslimkal: Cheruthunilpinte Charithram* (1995); Hussain Randathani, *Mappila Muslims: A Study on Society and Anti-colonial Struggles* (Calicut: Other Books, 2007); and K. T. Hussain, *Kerala Muslimkal: Adhinivesa Virudha Porattathinte Pratheya Sasthram* (Calicut: Islamic Publishing House, 2008).

[58] See the works of, David Arnold, 'Islam, the Mappilas, and Peasant Revolt in Malabar', *Journal of Peasant Studies* (Vol. 9:4, July 1982), pp. 252-265; M. T. Ansari, 'Refiguring the Fanatic', in Shail Mayaram, M. S. S. Pandian and Ajay Sakariya (eds.), *Subaltern Studies XII: Muslims, Dalits, and Fabrications of History* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2005); M. Gangadhara Menon, *The Malabar Rebellion* (Allahabad: Vohra Publishers, 1989); C. Gopalan Nair, *The Moplah Rebellion, 1921* (Calicut: Norman Printing Bureau, 1923); K. N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar, 1836-1921* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989); and Conrad Wood, *Moplah Rebellion and its Genesis* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1987).

[59] J.B.P. More opined, 'The studies on the Muslims of Keralam was always very rare and far between. In the 19th century British administrators like William Logan and CA Innes had written about the history of the Muslims of Malabar as part of their general works on Malabar , which was then a district of the Madras presidency. The prominent Kerala historians starting from Shankunny Menon and K P Padmanabha Menon up to Sreedhara Menon have not given much importance to the origin and evolution of the Muslims of Keralam in their works.' See J. B. P. More, *Origin and Early History of the Muslims of Keralam*, (Calicut: Other Books, 2011), pp. 27-28.

[60] Roland E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A study in Islamic Trends*(Madras: Orient Longman, 1976), Stephen F. Dale, *Islamic Society on the South Asian Frontier: The Mappilas of Malabar, 1498-1922* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), A. P. Ibrahim Kunju, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: Their History and Culture* (Trivandrum: Sandhya Publication, 1989), Asgharali Engineer (ed.) *Kerala Muslims: A Historical Perspective* (Delhi: Ajantha, 1995)

invasion to Malabar rebellion of 1921. On Mappila community, he argues, 'An armed society with a militant religious ideology, a society, that is, with the means to use violence in social disputes and a disposition to perceive social violence as religious conflict which was sanctioned by the tenets of Islamic law.'[61] Criticising the view of Stephen Dale, Dilip Menon has observed, 'Instead of locating the militancy of the Mappilas in their religious susceptibilities or a history over the *longue duree* of being beleaguered by the Portuguese or Hindu landlords, it may be fruitful to look at the origins of militancy in the peculiar circumstances of warfare.'[62]

The militant actions by the Mappilas against the Portuguese under the leadership of the Zamorin were for their economic and political existence. These confrontations, led by merchant Muslims known as the Marakkars, were to protect their hegemony in trade and commerce. The Mappilas who worked in the agrarian economy, especially the lower class Mappilas, were not part of these confrontations. But, the lower caste converts to Islam were the major participants in the militant actions in the rural south Malabar that began in the nineteenth century and continued till the second decade of the twentieth century. In this period, militant actions of rural Mappilas were not supported by the elite Muslim families such as the Nahas, Marakkars, Mooppans, Edathol and others who were supposed to be the upper caste converts to Islam. Whereas the first stage of Mappila militancy during the period of Zamorin was motivated by the economic security of elite Mappilas of coastal area, the second stage was for ensuring the economic rights of and social justice to subaltern Mappilas of inland area.The political, economic, social and religious positions of Mappilas in the two periods were different. The origins of the Mappilas of the two areas were also different. Dale's study fails to account for the multiple origins of Mappilas and instead, treat them as homogeneous.

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[61] Stephen F. Dale, *Islamic Society on the South Asian Frontier*, p. 34.

[62] Dilip M. Menon, 'Houses by the Sea: State-Formation Experiments in Malabar, 1760-1800', Economic *and Political Weekly* (Vol. 34: 29 Jul. 17-23. 1999), pp. 1995-2003.

Roland Miller's book gives a comprehensive history of Mappilas. He does not treat Mappila community as a homogeneous group.[63] The study locates the socio-political engagements of the Mappilas in varying political milieus of different periods. He has divided his study into two parts: 'the heritage of the past' and 'encounter with the present'. He documents the long history of Mappilas from the ninth to the twentieth centuries. The book argues that the numerical growth of Kerala Muslims was a result of lower caste conversion in south Malabar in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. However, these lower caste conversions are not given as much historical importance as that of the conversion of Cheraman Perumal or other upper caste converts to Islam. Studies including that of Miller do not study in detail their origin. Similarly, J. B. P. More, who has studied the early Mappilas from eighth century to the seventeenth century, while focusing on the elite Mappilas of the coastal areas, does not say much about the lower caste converts to Islam such as the Mukkuvas.[64]

As mentioned above, most of the studies on Kerala Muslim history are associated with the anti-colonial and anti-feudal armed resistances led by rural Mappilas of south Malabar in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Such militant resistance had been subjected to various analyses. While colonial historians depicted Mappila resistance as 'fanaticism', Marxist historians assessed them as landlord-tenant conflict based on the Marxian concept of class struggle. Historians like Stephan Dale and Miller evaluated them as the consequences of Islamization and the tradition of Mappila militancy.The works by the British Marxist historian, Conrad Wood and the Indian Marxist historian K. N. Panikkar are two major studies of Mappila resistances from the Marxian perspective.[65] Though both these works take into account the role of religion, it is limited to the local priesthood only. Putting forth the concept of traditional intellectuals, Panikkar stated that

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[63] Roland E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A study in Islamic Trends* (Madras: Orient Longman, 1976).

[64] J. B. P. *Origin and Early History of the Muslims of Keralam* (Calicut: Other Books, 2011).

[65] Conrad Wood, *The Moplah Rebellion and Its Genesis* (Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1987); and K. N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar, 1836-1921* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).

the Mappilas got their political awareness for resistance from the ulamas.[66] According to Panikkar, 'The ideological world of the Mappila peasantry came to be circumscribed by the religious notions elaborated and projected by the traditional intellectuals who had close links within the community. It was within this ideological world that the Mappila peasantry sought sustenance for their social actions.'[67] Through this, he put forward the reading that lower class/caste peasant resistances are possible only with the help of external interventions or consciousness from above. According to Sanal Mohan, 'All the materials generated by primary, secondary and tertiary discourses on colonial peasant rebel suffer from the same problem of the denial of the agency to him/her in so far as they do not understand the rebel as an individual with will and reason.'[68] This reading of K. N. Panikkar is a rejection of the agency of the lower class Mappilas and a continuation of the colonial reading of Mappila resistance as a religious project by external interventions and factors. The inability to understand it as anti-caste engagement and that the lower class Mappilas were politically utilizing their religious conversion, was due to not acknowledging their subjectivity. Panikkar and Conrad Wood understood the role of religion in the Mappila resistances on the basis of the colonial archive records. Stephen Dale comments on Conrad Wood thus: 'The British were almost completely ignorant of Mappila religious organization; this is reflected in their records and consequently Wood's own comments. However, Dr. Wood's lack of interest in these topics also seems to reflect his own ideological proclivities, which make it difficult for him to imagine that illiterate, nineteenth century Muslim peasants do not act like twentieth century secular intellectual.'[69] Working within a secular analytical framework, Panikkar and Wood fail to

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[66] K. N. Panikkar. *Against Lord and State*. p. 59-65.

[67] Ibid.. p. 60.

[68] See P. Sanal Mohan. 'Understanding Subaltern World View and Culture: Some critical issues in Historiography'. The paper presented in the national seminar on 'Subaltern Hermeneutics and Social Transformation', by Department of Christian Studies. University of Madras. 19-20 September. 2006. And P. Sanal Mohan. 'Keezhala Padanangalum Dalit Charithravum'. in *Malayalam Weekly* (Vol. 15: 52. 25 May 2011). pp. 48-58.

[69] Stephen F. Dale. 'The Moplah Outbreaks: A Reply to Wood'. in *The Journal of Asian Studies* (Vol. 36: 2. 1977). p. 400.

understand the possibilities of liberation by means of religion and the religious conversion of the Mappilas in a rigid caste-based society. Though Marxist historians like, Conrad Wood, and K. N. Panikkar deal with the militant resistances of lower caste converts, they tell nothing about the reasons of religious conversion. According to M. T. Ansari, 'An analysis that enables a reading of Mappila rebellion in the background of the Hindu Caste system alone can explain the silence of the lower castes.'[70]

The engagement of the lower castes by converting to Islam and thereby challenging the caste system in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, is not given a rightful place either in the Mappila history or in Kerala's social history. This study is an attempt to find out the conversion of the lower castes in Malabar and the consequent social changes.

[70] M. T. Ansari. *Malabar: Desheeyathayude Ida-padukal* (Kottayam: DC Books. 2008). p. 89.

II

Aspects of Religious Conversion to Islam in Malabar

The spread of Islam in Malabar through religious conversion of the natives had two phases. The first phase of conversion between the ninth and the sixteenth centuries was facilitated by trade links. In this phase, the natives were attracted to the new religion by the cultural and economic presence of the Arabs. The native conversion to Islam was made easier by the favourable political milieu under the Zamorin.[1] The second phase was the period of mass conversion by lower castes of the rural Malabar in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, when the Muslims had lost their political and economic influence due to the decline of trade. Whereas the first phase was mainly marked by the conversion of the upper caste to Islam, the second phase was marked by the religious conversion of those who suffered the caste disabilities.

Origin of Islam and formation of Muslim community in Malabar

Malabar, with its natural and agricultural resources, was an important commercial centre in Indian Ocean trade. The region had wide trade networks across the Arabian Sea. The period between the eighth and the eleventh centuries was a period of expansion of Arab trade and trade routes in Indian Ocean.[2] Thus, the Arabs became the predominant commercial power in the Malabar Coast. Their hegemony in trade continued till the Portuguese attacks which occurred in the sixteenth century.

The process of religious conversion by the native ruler Cheraman Perumal to Islam is one of the important themes of debate among the Kerala historians. Considering the

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[1] Stephen F. Dale, 'Trade, Conversion, and the Growth of the Islamic Community in Kerala', in Robinson, Rowena and Clarke, Sathianathan (eds.), *Religious Conversion in India: Modes, Motivations, and Meanings* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 54-74.

[2] Pius Malekandathil, *Maritime India: Religion and Polity in the Indian Ocean* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2010), pp .110-125.

various traditional sources, historians agree to the possibility of this event.[3] The story of Perumal's conversion claims that the ruler went to Mecca and converted to Islam. Following his conversion, a group of Arab religious propagators came to Kerala for preaching Islam.[4] The group under the leadership of Malik bin Dinar included twenty two Sufis. They landed at Kodungallur and constructed the *Jum'a Masjid*, the first grand mosque built in India. The material and human resources for the construction of Mosque were provided by kings of the Cochin Dynasty.[5] Under the influence of Arab Islamic propagators, the people of coastal areas of Malabar began to convert to Islam.[6] This is considered as the first organized effort to propagate Islam in Malabar.[7]

In the mid-fourteenth century, when the North African traveller Ibn Battuta had visited Kerala on his way to China, he recorded valuable information on the character, size and institutions of contemporary Muslim community in Kerala.[8] He observed that the Kerala Muslims shared the Arabic and Islamic culture which characterized most of the Muslim communities which were scattered along the Indian Ocean trade routes.[9] Battuta observed that most of the Muslims who settled in the coastal line of Malabar were

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[3] Roland E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends* (Madras: Orient Longman, 1976), pp. 46-51.

[4] Hussain Randathani, *Mappila Muslims: A Study on Society and Anti-colonial Struggles* (Calicut: Other Books, 2007), pp. 24-29.

[5] M. S. Husayn Nainar, 'End Notes', in Shaykh Zainuddin Makhudum, *Tuhfat Al-Mujahidin: A historical Epic of the Sixteenth Century* (Calicut: Other Books, 2006). Translated from Arabic with annotations by Muhammad Husayn Nainar, p. 114.

[6] Shaykh Zainuddin Makhudum, *Tuhfat Al-Mujahidin: A historical Epic of the Sixteenth Century* (Reprint; Calicut: Other Books, 2006), pp. 44-45. Original work was written in sixteenth century A.D. First English translation written by M.J Rowlandson (London: J.L. Cox & Son, 1833).

[7] Parappil Mammadkoya, *Kozhikkote Muslimkalude Charithram* (Calicut: Focus Publishers, 1994. Reprint. 2012), pp. 44-45.

[8] Ibn Batuta, 'Muhadhdhab Rehlat Ibn Batuta' (Cairo: Wizarat Muarif Umumiyeh, 1934), P. 181. Cited in Stephen F. Dale, '*Trade, Conversion, and the Growth of the Islamic Community in Kerala.*' p. 55.

[9] Stephen F. Dale, '*Trade, Conversion, and the Growth of the Islamic Community in Kerala,* ' p. 56.

either merchants or ulamas from Arabia or Persian Gulf region.[10] During this period, the largest settlements of Muslims were found in the principal commercial centers such as Quilon in the south or Calicut in the north. According to Dale, 'The size and prosperity of this remote Muslim settlement in the fourteenth century is as unambiguous an example as these could possibly be of the direct connection between commerce and the foundation of Muslim settlements in Kerala.'[11]

In the coastal regions of Malabar, there were three groups of Muslims who engaged in commercial activities. They were known as Paradesis, Marakkars, and Mappilas. These three categories of Muslims were held together by the commonality of religion and common shafi'ite[12] tradition of the Arab origin.[13] Duarte Barbosa noted that the Muslim merchants and the ulamas who came from West Asia and settled in Malabar Coast were called by the natives as Paradesis.[14] The Paradesis were the mercantile and religious elites of Malabar Coast who returned to their native West Asia due to the Portuguese attack in the sixteenth century. The Marakkar Muslims were natives of the coastal region between Kunimedu and Nagapattinam on the Coramandal coast. The ancestors of the Marakkars were from Arabia and they reached Calicut during the eighth century.[15] Marakkar Muslims became the second major commercial group and they were also the naval power of Zamorins of Calicut. Mappilas were the local Muslims who engaged in small scale trade activities and were employees of Arab traders till the

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., p. 57.

[12] Shafi'ite is an Islamic jurisprudence which is school of thought or method of interpreting religious thought in the three major areas: belief, religious practices and shariah (Law). Shafi and Hanafi Islamic school of jurisprudences are two sections of Sunni Islamic faith. Shafi School of jurisdiction founded by al-Shafi (767-820 AD). Hanafi Islamic school of jurisprudence was founded by Abu Hanifah an-Nu'man ibn Thabit (699-767 AD). In India, Shafi School predominated in Kerala and some parts of Tamilnadu only.

[13] Pius Malekandathil, *Maritime India: Religion and Polity in the Indian Ocean*, pp. 126-127.

[14] Mansel Dames (ed.) 'The Book of Duarte Barbosa' (London: Hakluyt Society, 1918), p. 74. Cited in Stephen F. Dale, *Trade, Conversion, and the Growth of the Islamic Community in Kerala*, pp. 58-59.

[15] Parappil Mammadkoya, *Kozhikkote Muslimkalude Charithram* pp. 61-66.

sixteenth century.[16] Through the West Asian mercantile groups and ulamas, Islam was established in the Malabar region and Muslim community has been sustained through marital relation and religious conversion of natives.

Understanding Mappilas: Forms of religious conversion in coastal Malabar

The term 'Mappila' is used as a common honorific word to call Christians and Muslims in Kerala. There are various interpretations regarding the origin of the term .[17] The term includes the majority of Muslims in Kerala who are part of the native society. The long-term Arab commercial engagements and settlement in coastal Malabar led to the marital relation of Arab merchants with native women. Through these inter-marriages and conversions, Muslim population increased in Malabar. This religious community was called by the local people as Mappilas.

Mappilas can be distinguished by five major features from the non-Mappila Muslims.[18] Firstly, their mother tongue is Malayalam. The coastal Muslim communities adopted the mother tongue from their maternal side as they were left behind by their original Arab ancestors. Although Malayalam is the language of Mappilas, its religious usages is heavily influenced by Arabic. This provided a separate linguistic identity for Mappila Muslims; and this hybrid language is known as Mappila Malayalam or Arabi-Malayalam. As a special literary form, Arabic- Malayalam utilizes Arabic script and Malayalam vocabulary in combination.[19] Mappila literature and popular culture were presented in this linguistic form.

Secondly, they are generally found in the Malabar or their ancestral residence is traced to Malabar. Thirdly, though they are generally called as Mappilas, they are also referred to as 'Jonkan' (jonon) Mappila so as to differentiate them from the Christians

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[16] Pius Malekandathil. *Maritime India: Religion and Polity in the Indian Ocean*, p. 127.

[17] Roland E. Miller. *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends*, pp. 30-33.

[18] P. R. G. Mathur, 'Social Stratification among the Muslims of Kerala', in Vinod K. Jairath (ed.) *Frontier of Embedded Muslim Communities in India* (Delhi: Routledge. 2011) p. 113-133.

[19] Roland E. Miller. *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends*, p. 7.

who are known as 'Nazrani Mappilas'. Fourthly, in North Malabar, they used to follow matrilineal and matrilocal residence after marriage. But in south Malabar, generally, Mappilas had been following the patrilineal system but for a few families of upper caste converts in the coastal region.[20] Fifth, they are Sunni Muslims and followers of Shafi School of Islamic jurisprudence.[21] Except Kerala Muslims, most of the Indian Muslims follow Hanafi jurisprudence.

In the initial period of Malik bin Habeeb's missionary work, four Nambudiri Illams converted to Islam.[22] They were Mammatharayan Illam, Puzhakkare Illam, Emmassarayan Illam and Pokkakkala Illam.[23] During the same period, the Islamic missionary works extended among the Mukhuvas or Kadappurathukaar of Malabar coast.[24] Early mosques in Malabar were situated in the coast line and most of them were in commercial centers.[25] There is no evidence of mosques in rural Malabar except in Tirurangadi which is located close to the coastal region of Parappanangadi. Construction of mosques and presence of ulamas in rural Malabar could be seen mostly after the decline of Arab trade and when the Mappilas had started to migrate to rural Malabar.

During the fourteenth century, Muslims of Malabar had attained special privileges from the native rulers. It was the period of growth in the number of the Mappilas in Malabar. The important factor accounting for this phenomenon is the political change which happened, followed by the economic development, in the region. According to Pius Malekandathil, 'The revitalization of trade by the Muslim merchants in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the maritime exchange centres in Kerala began to get

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[20] Ibid., p. 30.

[21] Hamid Ali, 'The Moplahs' in T. K Gopala Panikkar, *Malabar and Its Folk* (Madras: G. A Natesan & Co., 1900), p. 273.

[22] Households of Nambudiri Brahmins in Kerala known as *illam*. See Parappil Mammadkoya, *Kozhikkote Muslimkalude Charithram*, p. 45.

[23] Parappil Mammadkoya, *Kozhikkote Muslimkalude Charithram*, p. 45.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Shaykh Zainuddin Makdhum., *Tuhfat Al-Mujahidin: A historical Epic of the Sixteenth Century*, p. 32.

activated... Consequently, by the middle of the fourteenth century, a new phenomenon characterized by the shifting of the headquarters of rulers from inland agrarian regions to maritime centres of exchange started appearing in Kerala in the attempt to carve out independent states with the gains acquiring from trade.'[26] One of the important political changes was the transfer of the royal residence of the Nediyirappu Svarupam from Eranad (inland region in south Malabar) to the maritime trade centre of Calicut.[27] The motivation of Zamorin in shifting his royal residence to Calicut was to prmote economic development through commerce. For reasons of the economy, he treated the Muslim merchants and their religious associates in Malabar with great respect. Zamorins' positive attitude towards Muslims and their religion opened new possibility for religious conversions. According to Zainuddin Makhdum, 'Muslims enjoyed great respect and regard from the Hindu rulers. The main reason for this is that the construction and development of the country is taking place largely through the Muslims.'[28]

In coastal Malabar, the conversion of native to Islam was due to at least three sets of reasons: spiritual, material, and social. In some cases, all these three aspects had come together. Unfortunately, we have no written evidence to explore the lower caste conversion to Islam that occurred before British colonialism. On the other hand, we have detailed descriptions of the conversion process by the elite section. The debate over Cheraman Perumal's conversion is one such example.[29] His conversion is treated as a great historical event by historians; and Muslim theologians used it to claim an elite connection to Kerala Muslims and the origin of Islam in Kerala.[30] The conversion of Perumal seems to have been spiritually motivated. When he was approached by a Sufi, he decided to convert and went to Mecca. There is no evidence of material or social

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[26] Pius Malekandathil, *Maritime India: Religion and Polity in the Indian Ocean*, p. 84.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Shaykh Zainuddin Makdhum, *Tuhfat Al-Mujahidin*, p. 45.

[29] Ibid., pp. 29-31.

[30] K. K. Kochu, *Kerala Charithravum Samuharupikaranavum* (Thiruvananthapuram: The State Institute of Languages, Kerala, 2012), pp. 213-214.

motivations in the case of Perumal to convert from Brahmanical Hinduism to Islam. There were also many upper-caste Hindu families who were converted to Islam for a similar reason.[31]

There were a few Illams in Calicut which collectively converted to Islam during the proselytizing period of Malik bin Dinar.[32] It is difficult to conclude that their conversion was due to trade relations with Arabs. They were not directly part of agricultural or trading activities. The mass conversion process which happened in coastal Malabar is generally understood in terms of trade relations with Arabs.[33] The Arab Sufis, as mentioned earlier, worked as mediators for religious conversion in the early period. They were also not part of any trade groups but followers of the tradition of Hasan al Basari Sufism.[34] Thus, theological conviction might have motivated this conversion where the Sufis were mediators.

One of the important kinship groups among the Mappila Muslims is 'Moopans' of south Malabar. Origin of this Mappila kinship group is related to religious conversion to Islam which occurred in the eighteenth century. This kinship group originated through the conversion of Krishna Menon, the minister of Vettam dynasty in South Malabar.[35] His conversion had occurred when he was attracted by the 'niskaram'[36] of some Muslims that was conducted in open ground.[37] He was attracted by the meditation, collectiveness, and simplicity of 'niskaram' which was performed by Mappilas.[38] Along with Krishnan

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[31] Parappil Mammadkoya. *Kozhikkote Muslimkalude Charithram*. p. 45.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Stephen F. Dale. Trade. *Conversion, and the Growth of the Islamic Community in Kerala*. pp. 54-74.

[34] Hussain Randathani. *Mappila Muslims*. pp. 34-35.

[35] C. Gopalan Nair. *Malayalathile Mappilamar* (Mangalore: Basel Evangelical Press. 1917). pp. 57-60.

[36] *Niskaram* means *salat*, ritual prayers of Muslims and the second most important pillar of Islam. The word derived from the Malayalam word *Namaskaram*.

[37] C Gopalan Nair. *Malayalathile Mappilamar*. p. 58.

[38] Ibid.

Menon, his elder brother and sisters also converted to Islam. Their conversion ceremonies were held under the guidance of Maqdoom, the Qazi of Ponnani, in the presence of the Vettom ruler.[39] Menon was rechristened as Moideen after his conversion to Islam. The Vettom ruler gave the honorific title 'Moopan' along with the name Moideen. Since then his family members have been known by this title and they settled at Kalpakancheri in south Malabar. In this religious conversion also, the spiritual content could be observed. In fact, religious conversion was not a complicated process in the region either for upper castes or lower castes during this period. Even after the conversion to Islam, Menon could continue with the same royal position under the Hindu ruler.

Material motivation for religious conversion in Malabar could be seen during the period of Zamorins when the Arab trade was flourishing in the Malabar Coast. Long term settlement of Arabs was a necessary factor for continuous trade engagements. For this purpose, the native rulers arranged for Arab merchants all facilities including residence, religious places, and matrimonial relations.[40] According to Makhdum, 'The rulers made it convenient for the Muslims to organize Friday congregation prayers and the celebrations like Eid. The remuneration for the *mu'adhins* [those who call to prayer] and the *Qazis* were paid by the government. The government made special arrangements for implementing among the Muslims their religious rules and regulations.'[41]

The marital relations of Arab men with native women started as a result of trade treaties. The conversion of native women due to their marriage with Arabs resulted in the increase of the population of the Mappilas. According to various sources, there were four hundred Nair women who got married by Arab merchants in Malabar from households like Ambadi Kovilakam, Valiya Kovilakam, Cheriya Kovilakam, Eraambira Kovilakam, Padinjare Kovilakam, Kizhakke Kovilakam, and Kuttichira Thamburatti Illam with the

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[39] Ibid.

[40] P. C. Manavikraman, 'Mappila Review', 1942, pp. 16-17, cited in Parappil Mammadkoya, *Kozhikkote Muslimkalude Charithram*, p. 47.

[41] Shaykh Zainuddin Makdhum, *Tuhfat Al-Mujahidin*, pp. 45-46.

permission of the Zamorin.[42] The 'Nahas', one of the elite Muslim families in south Malabar, also emerged through such marital relation.[43] There were a number of conversions that took place in the region because of the social conditions in Malabar. Many people considered Islam as a solution to escape from caste ridden Hinduism and its disabilities.[44]

In the case of Mukhuvas, the nature of religious conversion was different. It occurred mainly out of the economic interest of Zamorin. According to Innes, 'The Zamorin of Calicut, who was one of the chief patrons of Arab trade, is said to have encouraged conversion to Islam, in order to man Arab ships on which he depended for aggrandizement, and to have ordered that in every family of fishermen in his dominion, one or more of the male members should be brought up as Mohammedans.'[45] Zamorin ordered that one or two members of fisherman families should be brought up in Islam. Following the order of Zamorin, there was a large number of conversions to Islam from the Mukhuva community. The basic idea behind converting fishermen was to build a naval power with the support of Arabs and to create a labour force in coastal region for merchants.[46] By the middle of the nineteenth century, out of eight hundred and fifty nine fishermen families in Malabar, four hundred and sixty had already converted to Islam.[47] The Mappila fisher folks are called 'Pusilam' or 'Pusilan' which means neophytes or new converts.[48] The Mappila fisher folks of Malabar occupy the lowest social position among

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[42] Parappil Mammadkoya. *Kozhikkote Muslimkalude Charithram*, pp. 47-48.

[43] *Naha Anubandha Kudumba Snaghamam Souvenir*, 2006, pp. 9-10.

[44] Shaykh Zainuddin Makhudum, *Tuhfat Al-Mujahidin*, p. 42.

[45] C. A. Innes, Madras District *Gazetteer: Malabar* (Madras: Government Press, 1908, reprint, 1951), p. 190.

[46] Roland E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends*, p. 55.

[47] *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages*, p. 447.

[48] P. R. G Mathur, *The Mappila Fisher folk of Kerala* (Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Historical Society, 1978), p. 12.

the Muslim society of Kerala.[49] They are excluded from marriage alliance with other Mappilas.

Mappila Migration to Rural Malabar: Religious Conversion from Below

By the end of the seventeenth century, a large number of Mappilas who were settled in Malabar Coast migrated to the rural areas due to their impoverishment following the hundred years' war with the Portuguese.[50] Their involvement in agriculture started from this period onwards. The decline of Arab trade badly affected the social life of Mappilas in Malabar. Whenever the Portuguese invasions succeeded, both the Portuguese and the native rulers treated Mappila Muslims with hostility. This political and economic situation compelled the Mappila Muslims to migrate to inland areas.[51] The social and economic relations in the rural area were different from that of the coastal area. In rural Malabar, the socio-economic relation was informed by the complex caste system. The Mappila migration and the consequent lower caste conversion to Islam challenged the caste-based Hindu village system in Malabar. Here, conversion functioned as a medium for the social mobility of lower castes.

It cannot be said that mass conversion had happened in all regions of Malabar. Whereas mass conversion took place in south Malabar, in north Malabar it was comparatively individualistic. The social and economic relations of the two regions played different roles in the modes of conversion. Ravindran Gopinath has argued the agrarian relations in north and south Malabar varied with respect to the cropping patterns.[52] In north Malabar, garden crops like pepper, coconut and areca-nut were

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[49] Ibid., p. 2.

[50] Pius Melekandathil, *Maritime India: Trade, Religion and Polity in the Indian Ocean*, p. 141.

[51] P. K. Muhammed Kunji, *Muslimingalum Kerala Samskaravum* (Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi, 1982), pp. 71-78.

[52] Ravindran Gopinathan, 'Gardens and Paddy Fields: Historical Implications of Agriculture Production Regimes in Colonial Malabar', in Mushirul Hasan and Narayani Gupta (eds.), *India's Colonial Encounter* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 372-373.

predominantly cultivated. In south Malabar, paddy was the main crop.[53] In south Malabar, in general, Nambudiris and Nayars were landlords; but in north Malabar, most of the Mappila Muslims were also landlords. In south Malabar, Mappila Muslims were tenants under upper caste landlords. Dale has observed that in rural south Malabar, 'The Muslim settlements were located in a largely Hindu countryside, dominated by Hindu Nambudiris and Nayar landlords. These landed aristocrats did not grant janmam[54] lands to the Muslims, neither Muslims were economically capable of acquiring janmam rights. This general economic condition created a sense of economic insecurity within the Muslim tenants of south Malabar.'[55]

The Mappila Muslims possessed janmam lands by consequence of early mercantile capital, which provided social and economic security for north Malabar Muslims.[56] These zonal differences reflected in the social relations of Mappilas. In south Malabar, they started to mingle with lower caste groups who were working as agricultural labourers or bonded slaves. But in north Malabar, they continued their relation with landed aristocrats. The social relation of Mappilas with lower caste was the main factor in the mass religious conversion by untouchable Hindus in south Malabar. Before going into the details of religious conversion by lower castes to Islam in south Malabar, it is necessary to understand the socio-economic relations of the natives in the region.

Social and Economic Relations in Rural Malabar

Social system in Malabar was marked by interdependence among castes and religious groups. The concept of purity and pollution governed the relationship among various caste groups. In Malabar, the caste system deviated in significant ways from the

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Traditionally agricultural land was the inheritance of individuals, whose absolute private property was recognized under the name of '*janmam*'. The person who holds the absolute right on *janamam* land called '*janmi*'.

[55] Stephen F. Dale, Islamic *Society in the South Asian Frontier: The Mappilas of Malabar 1498-1922* (Oxford: Calarendon Press, 1980), p. 71.

[56] Ibid., p. 72.

textual Varna schema. Kshatriyas were rare and Vaisya non-existent in Kerala. The Nayars took the place of the Kshatriyas but they were regarded as Sudras by the local Brahmins called Nambudiris.[57]

Nambudiri Brahmins were at the top of caste hierarchy and they performed rituals of Brahmanical Hinduism. They enjoyed absolute ownership of large extent of land.[58]According to the 1881 Census Report, there were 1017 Nambudiri Illams in Malabar.[59] Out of these, 70 percentages of Nambudiri Illams were situated in south Malabar. In Malabar, the Kshtriyas were small in number and there were only 362 Kshtriyas.[60] The families of the Kottayam and Parappanad chieftains belong to this caste group.[61] The next caste group in the caste hierarchy was Nairs who were considered as Sudras.[62] In 1881, the population of Nairs in Malabar was 3, 21,674.[63] They claimed themselves to be a martial group and enjoyed the ownership of agricultural land.[64] Their status as of the militia continued until the British occupied Malabar.[65]

The next in the hierarchy, Tiyyas or Eazhavas were considered as inferior to Sudras and superior to Cherumas.[66] In 1881, the population of the Ezhavas were 5, 59,716 in

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[57] William Logan, *Malabar Manual*. Vol. I (Madras: Government Press, 1887. Reprint; 1951). pp. 108-153.

[58] Francis Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras through the countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar*, Vol-II (London: Bulmer & Co.. 1807). P. 360.

[59] Census Report of India. Provincial Series - Madras. 1881.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid.

[62] William Logan, *Malabar Manual*. Vol. I. pp. 133-143.

[63] Ibid.

[64] P. K. Balakrishnan, *Jaathi vyavasthithiyum Keralacharithravum*. pp. 115-125

[65] William Logan. *Malabar Manual*. Vol. I, p. 132.

[66] Shaykh Zainuddin Makhdum., *Tuhfat Al-Mujahidin*, p. 43.

Malabar.[67] They were larger than any other caste groups during the period. In Malabar, most of the Tiyyas inhabited the north zone of the region between Mahe and Tellicherry,[68] and engaged in jobs like climbing the coconut tree, making toddy and working in agriculture.[69] Cherumas occupied the bottom of the caste hierarchy.[70] According to the census of the slave population taken by British administration in 1857, there were 1, 87,812 Cherumas in Malabar.[71] About seventy five percentage of them lived in south Malabar and they were treated as agrestic slaves by upper caste landlords.[72] Two thirds of the paddy cultivation in Kerala depended on Cheruma labour.[73]

According to local customs, members of different caste group should maintain a fixed distance of superior caste. For example, the Nair may approach, but must not touch a Nambudiri Brahmin. An Ezhava must remain thirty-six paces off, and a Pulayan or Cheruman slave must stay at a distance of ninety-six paces from a Nambudiri. A Shanar must remain twelve steps away from a Nair, a Pulayan sixty-six steps and so on.[74]

The land ownership and cultivation in Malabar depended on the caste system.[75] Traditionally, all lands in Malabar were controlled by individuals as private property. It was recognized under the category of 'janamam' right.[76] The Nambudiris were the

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[67] Census Report. Provincial. 1881.

[68] William Logan. *Malabar Manual*. Vol. I. p. 144.

[69] Ibid.. p. 143.

[70] Ibid.. pp. 147-153.

[71] Census Report of 1857. Cited in William Logan. *Malabar Manual*. Vol. I. p. 111.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Balakrishnan . P.K.. *Jathivyavasthayum Kerala Charithravum*. pp. 169-184.

[74] Samual Mateer. *The Land Of Charity: A Descriptive Account of Travancore and Its People* (University of Michigan. 1870). p. 32.

[75] William Logan. *Malabar Manual*. Vol. I. pp. 596-621.

[76] L. R. S. Lakshmi. *The Malabar Muslims: A Different Perspective*. (Delhi: Foundation Books. 2012). p. xxiii.

owners of janmam land. The Nairs were the intermediaries between cultivators and landlords and were known as 'kanakkar'.[77] In South Malabar, the tenants were composed of lower castes and Mappila Muslims, known as 'verumpatakar'. The Cherumas were treated agrestic slaves or bonded laborers.[78]

Before Mappila migration to the rural area of South Malabar, upper caste landlords could exploit and control lower caste tenants by means of caste customs. But it was challenged by Mappila tenants and they started to resist the upper caste effort to evict them from the land in the nineteenth century.[79] During the period of Mysorean invasion in the eighteenth century, the caste-based agrarian relation was challenged in Malabar.[80] The Mysorean rulers' stance against landlordism and their economic reforms led to the emergence of political consciousness among the peasants against upper caste landlords in south Malabar. During the same period, the region witnessed massive conversion to Islam by Cherumas.

Understanding Cherumas: Slavery and Religious conversion

In the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, the south Malabar witnessed large-scale religious conversion to Islam by Cherumas. As a subject of the present study, the social and economic condition of Cherumas requires attention. In William Logan's understanding, the Cherumas, the early inhabitants of the Malabar, were not slaves and landless before the advent of Brahmanical Hinduism. His hypothesis on the origin of the term Cherumas is that it is drawn is from the Malayalam word 'cheru' which means small. According to him, the word referred to the physical stature of contemporary Cherumas who lived in Malabar. Logan argued, 'Size and stature depend more upon conditions of food than upon anything else, and a race which has for centuries continued to be fed by its masters on a minimum of what will keep body and soul together is pretty

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid., xxiv

[79] Ibid.

[80] William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Vol. I. p. 610.

sure in the long run to degenerate in size.'[81] According to Padmanaba Menon, 'Cheruman or Cherumakkal was derived from the Malayalam word 'cher' which means soil and 'makkal' mean children. The term thus meant 'sons of the soil'.'[82] The Travancore State Manual notes that the Cherumas are 'supposed by some to be the descendants of the aborigines who preferred slavery in the plains to freedom with starvation in the jungles. Others say that they were Dravidian immigrants. The tradition current among the Pulayas themselves points to their having been an influential community in the distant past.' [83]

Colonial accounts refer to the Cherumas and similar castes (like the Pulayas and the Parayas) as 'slave castes' whose members are were bought and sold along with land.[84] The owners had the right even to kill their slaves if they did not wish to sell.[85] The Cherumas toiled hard for meagre food as wages and lived in huts built in the fields.[86] There are three modes of transferring of slaves in Malabar: Jenmum, Canum, and Patom.[87] By Jenmum, the absolute ownership on the slave is transferred to a new master permanently for fixed amount. Canum is transferring the labour of slave as mortgage. Patom is the master gives the slaves for rent to another person.[88]

According to Anti-Slavery Reports, 'In Malabar alone, under the Presidency of Madras, there are upward of one hundred of thousand slaves, who are absolute property,

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[81] Ibid., p. 111.

[82] K. P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*, vol. III (Cochin: Government Press, 1937), P. 33.

[83] T. K Velu Pillai, *The Travancore State Manual*, Vol. I (Thiruvananthapuram: Government Press, 1940), p. 861.

[84] P. Sanal Mohan, 'Religion, Social Space and Identity: The Prathyaksha Daiva Sabha and the Making of Cultural Boundaries in Twentieth Century Kerala', in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* (Vol. 27: 1, April, 2005), pp. 35-63.

[85] Ibid.

[86] P. K. Balakrishnan, *Jathivyavasthayum Kerala Charithravum*, P. 350.

[87] Francis Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras through the countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar*, Vol - II, p. 370.

[88] Ibid., p. 371.

as much as the cattle upon a man's estate, and in a condition of moral and physical degradation as abject as can be conceived.'[89] Sheffield, the District Collector of Malabar, noted that the number of slaves who belongs to Cheruma castes were 95,096, exclusive of Wayanad; Pulayar Cherumar, 48,579; Kanakka Cherumar, 20,798; Terrawa Cherumar, 20,058; Kallady Cherumar, 2,279; Vallowa Cherumar; and Wettovar, 3,347.[90] According to T. H. Baber, the district collector of Malabar, the Cherumas, 'the agrestic slaves of Malabar were marked by caste distinctions, may be considered as under bondage to all Hindu upper caste persons, these are, however, confined to leaving the public road, and other external marks of inferiority, and in this point of view, more of religious than a civic obligation.'[91]

Slavery treated Cherumas as socially dead. That is, they were alienated from all kind of social relations and denied all possibilities of social mobility.[92] The caste system denied Cherumas land ownership and justified slavery as a means of sustaining the paddy cultivation.[93] The pay of Cheruman was less than that allowed to other agriculture labourer like Mappilas.[94] Ananthakrishna Iyer has observed, upper castes approaching the Cherumas with fear and disgust as if they were plague-inflicted.[95] Sanal Mohan says, 'Being that they were chattels, the low castes did not generally have the benefit of stable family environment. And oral narratives available in missionary records show how they

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[89] '*Papers Related to Slavery in India, ordered by House of Common in 1834*', extract from a booklet, 'An appeal to the Christian women of Sheffield, from the Association for the Universal Abolition of Slavery' (Sheffield: R. Leader, 1837), pp. 5-6.

[90] 'Report of District collector on Slavery by Sheffield', cited in T. H. Baber, *An Account of the Slave Population in The Western Peninsula of India; Especially on the Coast of Malabar* (London: Parbury, Allen and Co., 1833) p. 10.

[91] Ibid., p. 28.

[92] Vincent Brown, 'Social Death and Political life in the Study of Slavery', in *American Historical Review*, (December 2009), pp. 1231-1249.

[93] P. K Balakrishnan, *Jathivyavasthayum Kerala Charithravum*, P. 350.

[94] Judicial, 24 November 1843, Madras Judicial Proceedings, No. 277, 20 April 1844, p. 1339.

[95] L. K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, *Cochin Tribes and Caste* (Madras: Higginbothams, 1909), pp. 95-96.

lived in constant fear of impending separation.'[96] Yet, it cannot be said that the lower castes accepted their slavery. T. M. Yesudasan, who has studied the Pulaya conversion to Christianity in central Kerala, opines that their obedience to the system was not consent to slavery, but a strategy of survival.[97] According to him, 'The history of Kerala's slavery is that of many protests that were left suppressed due to lack of favourable conditions.'[98] The religious conversions by Cherumas in Malabar to Islam and in south Kerala to Christianity are to be understood as their own attempts at liberation.

Three Phases of Religious conversion in Rural Malabar

Religious conversion by lower caste people to Islam in rural south Malabar occurred in three phases. First phase is the period of Muslim migration; second phase is during the period of Mysorean rule; and third phase, during the British colonial period.

Muslim Migration to Rural Malabar:-

According to M. Gangadharan, who has studied Mappilas, the migration of Mappilas from coastal areas to rural Malabar began in the eighteenth century.[99] The Mappila migration to rural Malabar happened through the Tirurangadi. Tirurangadi was the only rural settlement of Muslims towards the end of sixteenth century which was mentioned in Thuhfat Al-Mujahidin.[100] This can be understood by analyzing the geographical relation between Tirurangadi and the coastal area. Tirurangadi is located south east of Calicut on the southern bank of Kadalundi river about ten miles from the sea.[101] Chaliyaar river is the transport route connecting the inlands and coasts of Malabar.

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[96] P. Sanal Mohan. *Religion, Social Space and Identity*, p. 40.

[97] T. M. Yesudasan. *Baliyadukalude Vamshavali: Separate Administration Movementinte Vamshavum Aavirbhaavavum* (Thiruvananthapuram: Prabhath Books, 2010). p. 37.

[98] Ibid.

[99] M. Gangadharan. *Mappila Padanangal* (Calicut: Vachanam Books, 2004), pp. 49-59.

[100] Shaykh Zainuddin Makhdum. *Tuhfat Al-Mujahidin*, p. 44-45.

[101] Stephen F. Dale. 'Trade, Conversion, and the Growth of the Islamic Community in Kerala', p. 64.

In other words, the Mappila migration to rural Malabar happened through Chaliyar River.[102] In first decades of eighteenth century, there were fights between Mappilas of Tirurangadi and Zamorin's soldiers.[103] Dale has argued that the Muslim population in Tirurangadi during the eighteenth century was probably less than 2,000. In 1745, about hundred Mappilas gathered to protect the Tirurangadi mosque when the Nair army of the Zamorin tried to attack it.[104]

In the eighteenth century, Muslims had started migrating to the riverside villages of Malappuram, Omannoor, and Peringathoor. There were rumours regarding the conversion of a woman from Zamorin's kinship at Omannor in 1715 and this resulted in fights between Mappilas and her relatives.[105] The tombs of three Mappilas who got killed in the fight are situated in Omanoor mosque near Kondotty. 'Nercca', a regional Muslim ceremony, is held annually at those tombs. There was a conflict between Paranambi, a Hindu landlord, and Mappilas in Malappuram in the first half of eighteenth century. Paranambi had attempted to evict Mappilas and to destroy their mosque in Malappuram following a quarrel with Alimarakkar, his revenue collector. This paved the way for fights between the Mappilas and the Paranambi's Nair troop.[106] The aforementioned events suggest that Mappilas had to involve in fights with Hindu landlords at the beginning of their migration itself.

In the eighteenth century, there formed a new habitation in south Malabar, comprising of the migrated Mappilas, the converted ones, and other lower castes.[107] Untouchability and unapproachability were challenged by the Mappila migration. The upper castes could neither keep Mappilas away from public life nor could they make

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[102] M. Gangadharan, *Mappila Padanangal*, p. 54.

[103] *Tellicherry Consultations*, XVI, 1745-46 (Madras: Government Press, 1935), pp. 8, 12, 17 and 51.

[104] Stephen F. Dale, *Trade, Conversion, and the Growth of the Islamic Community in Kerala*, pp. 64-65.

[105] Hussain Randathani, *Mappila Muslims: A Study on Society and Anti Colonial Struggles*, p. 96.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid.

them obey like the Cherumas. In 1738, the Mappilas of Peringathoor village in north Malabar had made a treaty with French officials to mediate in the clashes regarding ceremonial obligations.[108] An event that had happened in 1789 on a riverside in south Malabar was an instance of cultural conflict. When two upper-caste men asked the Mappilas to go away from the river bank so as not to get polluted, the Mappilas disobeyed the order taking it as an insult.[109]

The religious conversion by lower castes to Islam in the eighteenth century was mediated by Ba-Alawi sufis[110] who migrated from Hadaramouth of Yemen to Malabar. The Ba-Alawi sufis influenced the social and cultural life of Mappila Muslims of Malabar.[111] Dale has argued that the Alawi sufis did not ever seem to have conducted organizational or evangelical activity in Kerala. However, while the Alawis' lineage gave them special status in the Kerala Muslim society, their contribution to the growth of the Mappila community was more due to their taking up social and economic grievances.[112]

Sufis' activities began to spread beyond the village of Mamburam during Sayyid Alavi period. Sayyid Alavi unified Mappilas in south Malabar by uniting the coastal Mappilas, who were the part of Muslim identity formation even before rural migration and the lower caste conversion.[113] The constructions of mosques played a significant role in building the spiritual and political unity of Mappila Muslims.[114] Tanur north mosque, Kodinhi Juma' mosque, Kanancheri mosque, Chappanangadi mosque, Muttiyarakkal

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[108] M. Gangadharan. *Mappila Padanangal*, p. 55.

[109] *Proceedings of Second Malabar Commission*. 1798. Cited in M. Gangadharan. *Mappila Padanangal*, p. 55.

[110] The Ba- Alawi Sufism is an offshoot of Qadiriya sufi trends which do not denounce worldly activities and not limited in the spiritual kind of activities.

[111] Hussain Randathani. *Mappila Muslims*, pp. 44-48.

[112] Stephen F. Dale. *Trade, Conversion, and the Growth of the Islamic Community in Kerala*, p. 66.

[113] K. T. Hussain. *Kerala Muslimkal: Adhinivesa Virudha Porattathinte Pratheya Sasthram* (Calicut: Islamic Publishing House, 2008), pp. 62-77.

[114] Ibid., pp. 67-68.

mosque, Koyappa mosque, Ponmundam mosque, Munnoor Odungatt Chinakkal Mosque etc., were built under the supervision of Sayyid Alawi.[115] Along with facilitating the unity of the Mappila Muslims, the presence of mosques increased the possibility of religious conversion in rural areas.[116] The spiritual activities of Mamburam Sayyids could spread through the mosques in various villages. Sayyid Alawi passed away in 1844 at the age of 90. His tomb is situated in Mamburam mosque. After his death, his son, Sayyid Fasal Pookkoya Tangal, became the leader of the Mappilas in south Malabar.[117]

Political Invasion of Mysore Rulers:-

The second phase of religious conversion in rural Malabar occurred during the period of Mysorean invasion (1766-1792). Mysorean invasion under Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan challenged the social and economic structure which was mostly dominated by the Nambudiris and Nairs of Malabar. Srirangapatnam, the capital of Mysore rulers, was located only 130 miles away from south Malabar.[118] M.M. De La Tour has observed that the political motivation of Hyder Ali's invasion to Malabar in 1766 was a plea for help from the Ali raja of Cannanore who had suffered an attack by the Nairs.[119] However, there are other arguments regarding the motives behind the Mysorean invasion. C. K Kareem, for instance, argues, 'Haidar Ali wanted to enlarge his domain and to establish his sway over this resourceful country with many natural harbours that were centres of world contact.'[120] It is claimed, to fulfill his wish to control Malabar, he employed various political reasons.[121]

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[115] Ibid.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid., pp. 78-87.

[118] Ibid., p. 50.

[119] M. M. De La Tour, *The History of Haydar Ali Khan* (London: J. Johnson, 1784), pp. 100. cited in Roland E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends*. p. 87.

[120] C. K. Kareem, *Kerala Under Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan* (Cochin: Kerala History Association, 1973), p. 19.

[121] Ibid., 20.

The Mysorean invasion and policies should be evaluated on political terms rather than on religious terms.[122] When the land survey had been carried out by Tipu Sultan and a land tax was imposed against the Brahmanical practices of Malabar, the Nambudiri landlords felt the pressure on their caste superiority.[123] C. K Kareem argues, 'They sold their lands to the Mappilas and others who eagerly agreed to the transactions and left for Travancore.'[124] The landlords who had received protections under the Travancore Raja were not only Hindus, but there were some Muslim too.[125] The case of Moideen Moopan of Kalapakancheri is one of the examples of the Muslim landlords who had left for Travancore.

Many Nambudiri Brahmins from Farookabad, the administrative centre of Mysorean rule in Malabar situated in Kozhikode Taluk, migrated to different places fearing servitude under Muslim rulers.[126] Not all migrated to Travancore. Many migrated to places like Nellur and Thalipparambu in Kozhikode Taluk and also to north Malabar.[127] Many Nairs, especially in north Malabar, had converted to Islam during the Mysorean rule.[128] Miller observes, 'Family names, the existence of wealthy Muslim landowners, and the prevalence of the marumakkathayam (matrilineal) system of inheritance among north Malabar Mappilas is a sign that such conversion as there was in Hyder Ali's time largely took place in that region.'[129] The motives behind the Nair conversion to Islam are vague. Perhaps, the high social and economic status of Mappilas

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[122] Roland E. Miller. *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends*. p. 88.

[123] Ibid.. 184.

[124] C. K. Kareem. *Kerala Under Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan*. p.138.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Parappil Mammadkoya. *Kozhikkote Muslimkalude Charithram*. p. 67.

[127] Ibid.

[128] *Judicial Report by F. Fawcett. Judicial Department, Government of Madras, C. No. 1790, 5th June 1896.*

[129] Roland E. Miller. *Mappila Muslims of Kerala*. p. 89.

in north Malabar, the safe existence of Muslim dynasties such as Arakkal and the possibilities of financial favours from Mysore dynasty could have been the motives behind the Nair conversion. Another factor could be the possibility of economic and political security through conversion under the Mysorean rule. It is said that the only occasions of forced conversions in Malabar were the Mysore-Nair conflicts in the eighteenth century and the landlord-tenant conflict in 1921.[130] In both the occasions, the victims were the upper caste.

Many lower castes had converted to Islam during the Mysorean reign. It was the first time when the Nambudiri and Nair domination of Malabar had to face challenges from a political power.[131] When Hyder Ali reached Thirunavaya on his way to Coimbatore, the lower castes informed him of the golden treasure of Thirunavaya temple.[132] The upper castes were asked to utilize this treasure for the common good irrespective of caste. Consequently, conflict between Nairs and Mysoreans had taken place in Thirunavaya.[133] The order of Mysorean rulers that asked the upper castes to bow before the lower castes has to be understood as an attempt to demolish the caste system.[134]

The conversion of lower castes had caused an increase in the Muslim population in Malabar during the Mysorean rule.[135] Miller opines, 'Although statistics are not available, the size of the Mappila community must have increased sharply during this period despite the relatively short reigns of the Muslim rulers... more significant was the number of low caste and outcaste Hindus who joined Islam, which asserted their equality, gave them

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[130] K. P. Padmanabha Menon, *A History of Kerala*, vol. II (Ernakulam: Cochin Government Press, 1934), p. 267.

[131] A. Sreedara Menon, *Kerala Charithram* (Kottayam: DC Books, 2011. First Published 1967), p. 300.

[132] Parappil Mammadkoya, *Kozhikkote Muslimkalude Charithram*, p. 69.

[133] Ibid.

[134] P. K. Muhammedkunji, *Muslimingalum Kerala Samskaravum*, p.108.

[135] Roland E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends*, p. 89.

freedom from their traditional masters, and provided new possibilities for economic improvement.'[136] Through religious conversion, the lower castes were using the new political situation for their mobility. Whether any religious missionaries had accompanied the Mysorean rule is unknown. Moreover, they had no known contacts with the Muslim scholars within the Malabar region. Tipu had once visited the Qazi of Kozhikkode and the Kondotty Tangal.[137] But, there is no evidence to show that the visit was with missionary purpose. If their aim had been missionary work, then they would have built mosques in Malabar. Only one mosque is known to have been built during their period. And it was a small mosque in their administrative centre, Farooqabad.[138] Mysore rulers were the followers of Hanafi jurisprudence.[139] But, Mappilas and Islamic scholars of Malabar are traditionally the followers of Shafi jurisprudence.[140] Had religious conversions been a part of the religious policies of Mysorean rulers then the presence of Hanafi jurisprudence would have been there in Malabar at least minimally.

The British Colonial Period

The third phase of religious conversion in south Malabar started in the period of British colonialism. In 1792, with the Srirangapattanam treaty between Tipu Sultan of Mysore and the East India Company, the region was brought under the control of the British. During the British reign, the upper castes' right over the land which was removed by the Mysorean rulers was reinstated. The upper caste landlords who had fled Malabar returned back with British assistance.[141] They utilized the British rule as a means to avenge the Mappilas and the lower castes. The revengeful actions of the landlords had financially enervated the Mappilas. Few groups of Mappilas offered militant resistance

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[136] Ibid., p. 94.

[137] Parappil Mammadkoya. *Kozhikkote Muslimkalude Charithram*, pp. 71 & 91.

[138] Ibid.

[139] Ibid.

[140] Hamid Ali. 'The Moplahs' in T. K Gopala Panikkar. *Malabar and Its Folk*, p. 273.

[141] Roland E. Miller. *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends*, pp. 100-108.

because of the confidence they got during Mysorean period.[142] In the backdrop of the conflicts between Mappilas and the upper class landlords during the British rule, collective religious conversion by Cherumas took place in the region.[143]

The numbers and the nature of the religious conversions during the British rule are clear compared to the earlier religious conversions.[144] The rate of growth of Islam in Malabar and statistics on the lower caste religious conversion are available from various census reports produced by the British.[145] Colonial writings evaluated the religious conversions under the Mysorean dispensation as forced conversions. But, the census reports from 1871 onwards and the British administrative manuals such as Malabar Manual, the religious conversions during the British period were presented as the lower castes' attempts for social advancement.[146] According to Innes, ' Number of recruits also come from time to time from the ranks of the Tiyyan, and the Cherumans and serf castes to whom the honour of Islam bring enfranchisement from the all disabilities of an outcaste.'[147]

Logan has analysed the population growth of Mappila Muslims of Malabar with regard to the religious conversion.[148] He mentions that religious conversion was not a complicated process during the period and that it was not restricted by the caste system.[149] According to him, the Muslims maternity rate was not much more than that of the Hindus; and he suggested that the high Muslim population was due to the mass

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[142] Ibid., p. 115.

[143] William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Vol. I, p. 149.

[144] Ibid., p. 33.

[145] Roland E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala*, pp. 34-36.

[146] William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Vol. I, pp. 191-199.

[147] C. A., Innes, *Madras District Gazetteer: Malabar*, p.186.

[148] Ibid., p. 197.

[149] Ibid.

religious conversions by lower castes.[150] According to the Census Report of 1856, which enumerated the number of slaves in Malabar, the population of the Cherumas was 187,758.[151] In the provincial Census Report of 1871, the number of Cherumas was reduced to 99,009.[152] In other words, a 65 percent decrease was witnessed in the number of the Cherumas within twenty five years.[153] In the Census Report of 1881 the number of Cherumas had come down again to 64,725.[154] The general rate of population growth in Malabar was 5.71 percentages.[155] But, the decade between 1871 and 1881 saw a decrease of 34.63 percentage in the population of Cherumas. However, the number of Cherumas, in the normal course, should have increased by 40,000.[156] On this phenomenon, the District Census Officer remarked that almost 50,000 Cherumas had converted to Islam in Malabar.[157] In this period, the population of Mappilas had increased in Cheruma-inhabited taluks such as Eranadu and Valluvanadu. The Mappila population had increased by eight percentages during the period 1851-1921.[158] According to the report of *Mannat-ul-Islam Sabha*, in between 1905 to 1908, the average numbers of individual conversion in Malabar were 750 in each year.[159]

Why such a mass conversion of lower castes took place during the British period? There is no evidence for organized Muslim proselytizing in Malabar during the colonial period. Thus, the collective religious conversion to Islam by lower castes was an

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[150] Ibid.

[151] Ibid.

[152] Census Report- Provincial. Madras. 1871.

[153] Ibid.

[154] Census Report- Provincial. Madras. 1881.

[155] Ibid.

[156] Ibid.

[157] Ibid.

[158] Ibid.

[159] The Sabha report has been cited in C.A. Innes, *Madras District Gazetteer: Malabar, p. 186.*

self-motivated action. Firstly, it was facilitated by the abolition of slavery by the British . The Protestant Christian Missionary groups, like the London Missionary Society (LMS), raised the issue of abolition of slavery in Kerala.[160] In the 1840s, the L M S together with other missionary societies started the campaign for abolition of slavery in south Kerala.[161] In 1847, they presented a joint memorial to the Raja of Travancore, urging the abolition of slavery in the region.[162] The campaign for abolition of slavery had faced opposition from both the upper caste slave holders and the colonial officials.[163]

Finally, slavery was abolished in 1843, when the Board of Directors of the East India Company had suggested to the Indian government to prohibit slavery through legislative measures. The board became aware of the pathetic situation of Malabar slaves from the Collector of Kozhikkode, E.B.Thomas.[164] But, they were not for the complete abolition of slavery in the British-controlled Malabar.[165] The slaves who were under the ownership of colonial estates alone were freed. They not only denied freedom to the slaves under upper castes, but also urged the slaves to obey their masters.[166] Logan argued that the measure was to be carried out in such manner 'as not to create any unnecessary alarm or aversion to it on the part of other proprietors, or premature hopes of emancipation on that of other slaves.' [167] Mass conversion of lower castes occurred after

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[160] Dick Kooiman, 'Conversion from Slavery to Plantation Labour: Christian Mission in South India -19th Century', in *Social Scientist*, Vol. 19 (August - September, 1991), pp. 57-71.

[161] Ibid.

[162] General Cullen, letter to the Dewan of Travancore, March 1849, in Crown Representative's Records R /2 (899/369) vol. 2. Cited in Dick Kooiman, *'Conversion from Slavery to Plantation Labour'*, pp. 57-71.

[163] Dick Kooiman, *Conversion from Slavery to Plantation Labour*, pp. 57-71.

[164] William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Vol. I, pp. 149-152.

[165] Ibid.

[166] Ibid.

[167] Ibid., 150.

the official declaration of the abolition of slavery.[168] Thus, the lower castes converted to Islam using the social and political situation.

Secondly, the Hindu lower castes' contacts with the formerly converted lower castes and the Mappilas of coastal areas had also led to further conversions.[169] Mappilas of south Malabar resided in areas inhabited by lower castes. So, mutual dependence and attraction had caused religious conversion.[170]

Thirdly, the presence of Muslim scholars in the south Malabar also had resulted in religious conversion. [171] The prominent among them were Mamburam Tangals and Umar Qazi of Ponnani. Though well known Muslim scholars like Zainuddin Makhdum had described the caste system in the sixteenth century, they did not dare to speak against it.[172] In his work entitled Tuhfath Al-Mujahidin, he had discussed customs and social conditions of the upper castes like Nambudiri and Nair.[173] But Makhdum said nothing about the untouchables like Cherumas. It implies that either Makhdum was unaware of Cherumas or he might have found it irrelevant to mention them in the work. Mamburam Tangals were the first among the Muslim scholars who spoke against the disabilities under the caste system. [174] Umar Qazi is important in criticizing the class-consciousness prevalent among Muslims of the coastal taluk of Ponnani. Instead of proselytizing activities, they gave importance to nourishing social relations of Mappilas with other communities in rural Malabar. This too had attracted the lower castes to Islam.[175]

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[168] See the comparative study of population which discussed in above paragraph.

[169] M. Gangadharan, *Mappila Padanangal,* p. 56.

[170] M. Gangadharan Menon., 'Mappila Outbreaks of Nineteenth Century Malabar', in *Journal of Kerala Studies*, Vol. II, Part II (June, 1975), P. 150.

[171] Stephen F. Dale, *Trade, Conversion, and the Growth of the Islamic Community in Kerala,* p. 66.

[172] Shaykh Zainuddin Makhdum. *Tuhfat Al-Mujahidin,* pp. 39-46.

[173] Ibid.

[174] *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages in Malabar for the years 1849-59*, Vol. 1 (Madras: Government Press, 1863), p. 276.

[175] Stephen F. Dale, *Trade, Conversion, and the Growth of the Islamic Community in Kerala,* p. 66.

Fourthly, there was the collectivity of Mappilas to retaliate against the upper caste violence. Even in the beginning of their migration, as mentioned earlier, Mappilas had to fight.[176] The conflicts with the landlords escalated during the British rule. The Mappila-upper caste landlord conflicts were not only due to economic reasons, but the Mappila also fought against the attacks on the new converts.[177] The Muslim community collectively came to the rescue of those who were threatened or attacked.[178]

The motivation of lower castes towards religious conversion in south Malabar is not merely economic. Had economic benefits been their motive, then conversions would not have been possible during the British reign when the Mappilas were financially at a loss. Religious conversions were comparatively less in north Malabar where the Mappilas enjoyed a high economic status. Mass conversions had taken place wherever the Mappilas were financially most backward and Cherumas population was high. Such taluks in south Malabar were Eranadu, Valluvanadu and Ponnani.

The religious conversion of the lower castes to Islam in Malabar was a complicated process.[179] They had to abandon many of their traditional beliefs and had to accept many new things.[180] Along with that, the lower caste slaves had to suffer opposition and punishment from their masters.[181] Traditional beliefs do not imply the only customary duties imposed on the Cherumas by the Brahmanical Hinduism. The beliefs and places of

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[176] M. Gangadharan, *Mappila Padanangal*, p. 54.

[177] *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages*, Vol. 1, p. 276.

[178] William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Vol. I, p. 149.

[178] Ibid.

[179] T. M. Yesudasan, *Baliyadukalude Vamshavali*, p. 35.

[180] Ibid.

[181] *Moplah Outrages Correspondence*, P. 276.

worship of the Brahmanical Hinduism were strange to the lower castes.[182] According to K.K. Kochu, the Dravidian-based lower caste beliefs aim at improvement of the physical life and protection from natural disasters, severe diseases and other casualties.[183] Yesudasan writes, 'It was not easy to bid farewell to the burials of their ancestors, demigods and lifestyles. But, the lure of the new path to be accepted was greater than that of the things to be abandoned. The major attraction of the religious conversion was liberation from slavery.'[184]

The lower caste religious conversion is to be understood as a political action rather than as a theological one. Until the twentieth century, Islamic scholars did not insist on conversion in Malabar.[185] After the religious conversion, for the converts, only source to receive the idea of Islamic theology was mosques.[186] Religious conversion by lower castes to Islam provided them with a new identity by incorporating them into the Mappila community and negated their demeaning old identity which was imposed by Brahmanical Hinduism.

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[182] Kancha Ilaiah,*Why I am Not A Hindu: A Sudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy, culture and political Economy* (Calcutta: Samya, 1996) p. 1-17; and K. K. Kochu, *Kerala Charithravum Samuharupikaranavum* (Thiruvananthapuram: The State Institute of Languages, Kerala, 2012), pp. 215-224.

[183] K. K. Kochu, *Kerala Charithravum Samuharupikaranavum*, p. 220.

[184] T. M. Yesudasan, *Baliyadukalude Vamshavali*, p. 35.

[185] Stephen F. Dale, *Trade, Conversion, and the Growth of the Islamic Community in Kerala*, p. 66.

[186] K. T. Hussain, *Kerala Muslimkal*, pp. 67-68.

III

Religious Conversion and Islamisation in South Malabar

This chapter analyzes how the lower caste converts in south Malabar were treated within Islam and how they had formed a new self through their religious conversion. The term 'Islamisation' is used here not only for the process of religious conversion but also to denote the consequent process of identity formation also. Asim Roy argues, 'The strong social urges underpinning conversion not only reveal special meaning of Islamisation in relation to conversion but also add a further dimension to Islamisation in relation to social mobility of Muslim groups.'[1] The process of Islamisation in south Malabar was informed by three trends. The first trend is Islamic syncretism, the second is Islamic revivalism and the third is Islamic movements.

The first phase of Islamisation in rural south Malabar started with the conversion of Hindus, especially of lower castes, which was mediated by the Sufis and the *ulamas*. The second stage was a consequence of theological debates. In the nineteenth century, there were two kinds of theological engagements occurring in the region. One was among the Muslim theologians themselves and the second was in the encounter between the Muslim theologians and the Christian Missionaries. Muslim theological debates intensified in Malabar by the emergence of revivalist thoughts like *Wahabism* or *Salafism*.[2] The third stage is a result of different organisations being formed as a result of the differences among the Mappilas due to those debates. This chapter analyzes how these three phases had influenced the identity formation of the converts and the further conversion activities in south Malabar.

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[1] Asim Roy. 'Islamization in South Asia with Special Reference to the Bengali-Speaking Region: A Conceptual and Historical Re-evaluation'. in Geoffrey A. Oddie. (ed.) *Religious tradition in South Asia: Interaction and Change* (London: Curzon Press. 1998). p. 31.

[2] 'Wahabism' is an Islamic movement within Sunni Islam founded by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahab (1703-1787) deriving from a radical interpretation of Hanbali School of law with the attempt to eradicate all syncretistic and innovative trends. 'Salafism' is a neo-orthodox branch of the Islamic reformist movement of the late nineteenth century in the times of weakened Ottoman Empire with its centre in Egypt. Salafism opposed westernization as well as conservative clerics and jurists.

Islamic Syncretism in South Malabar

Sufi Traditions and Syncretism:-

In the eighteenth century, the presence of immigrant Sufis from Arabia was strong in south Malabar. Balakrishnan Vallikkunnu, who has conducted studies in Arabic-Malayalam literature, notes that the Mappila literature from the seventeenth century onwards is closer to the Sufi mysticism than to the Qura'nic.[3] On the growth of Muslim society by the influence of Sufi saints, Francis Robinson has observed that the Sufi saints shared their knowledge of religious experience with men of other spiritual traditions. They helped to propitiate the supernatural forces which always seemed to threaten the lives of the common folk.[4] According to him, 'They interpreted dreams, brought rain, healed the sick and made the barren fertile. They mediated between the rulers and the ruled, the natives and the newcomers and between the weak and the strong. In fact, by accommodating themselves to local needs and customs they gradually built a position from which they could draw people into an Islamic milieu, and slowly educate them in Islamic behaviour.'[5]

The role of Sufis in the numerical growth of Mappilas is significant.[6] In the coastal region of Ponnani in south Malabar, there was a renowned Muslim scholarly clan called 'Makhdhum' who followed Qadiriya Sufi order.[7] It is one of the earliest Sufi orders that were founded by Shykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (A. D. 1077-1166) in the

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[3] Balakrishnan Vallikkunnu, *Mappila Sahithya Patanangal* (Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Basha Institute, 2011), p. 27.

[4] Francis Robinson, 'Islam and Muslim Society in South Asia', in *Contribution to Indian Sociology* (Vol. 17:2, 1983), pp. 186-203.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Nehemia Levtzion observed, "The frontier of Islam were extended not through the work of learned urban 'ulama', but by the efforts of the rural rustic divines, many of whom were mystics and often also members of institutionalized sufi orders." Nehemia Levtzion (ed.), *Conversion to Islam* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1979), p. 17.

[7] C Gopalan Nair, *Malayalathile Mappilamar* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1917), p. 38.

twelfth century Iraq.[8] Qadiriya Sufi order was highly influential in the religious life of the rural Mappilas. Makdhum Sufis, who had migrated from Arabia to the Coromandal coasts of Tamil Nadu in the fifteenth century, had major role in the religious conversions in the areas such as Kilakarai, Kayalpatinam, Madurai, Tiruchirappalli, Nagore etc.[9] Shaykh Ibrahim Ibnu Ahmad Mahbari, a member of the Makhdhum clan, took over the position of the Qazi of Ponnani, honouring the invitation of Mappilas of Ponnani.[10] Ponnani and the Makdhums had played significant roles in the socio-religious life of the Mappilas of Malabar.[11] The principal authorities of the Mappilas were Makhdhum Tangals of Ponnani. They were the heads of the Ponnani religious seminary and conferred the title of Musliyars on Mullas who have qualified to interpret the Qura'n and the commentaries or *Hadit*.[12]

In the eighteenth century, Muhammad Shah of Kondotty, who was the follower of Qadiriya Sufi order among the Shia, had migrated to south Malabar.[13] It was also in the eighteenth century that the Sufis who were the members of Ba-Alawi Sufi tradition, a sub-group of Qadiriya Sufi order, had arrived at south Malabar. The members of the aforementioned three sub-sects of Qadiriya Sufi order were popularly known as Ponnani

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[8] Jens Kreinath. 'Glossary of Islamic Terms' in *The Anthropology of Islam* (London: Routledge. 2012). p. 396.

[9] K. T. Hussain. *Kerala Muslimikal: Adhinivesa Virudha Porattathinte Pratheya Sasthram* (Calicut: Islamic Publishing House. 2008). p. 23.

[10] Ibid.. p. 24.

[11] Francis Buchanan. *A Journey from Madras Through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar*. Vol. II. 1807 (New Delhi: Asian Education Services. Reprint- 1988). pp. 419-420.

[12] C. A.. Innes. *Madras District Gazetteer: Malabar* (Madras: Government Press. 1908. reprint, 1951). p. 188.

[13] Muhammad Shah popularly known as Kondotti Tangal. was born at Bombay in 1687. See Hussain Randathani. *Mappila Muslims: A Study on Society and Anti Colonial Struggles* (Calicut: Other Books. 2007). p. 49.

Tangals, Kondotty Tangals, and Mamburam Tangals among the south Malabar natives.[14] Among them, the Mamburam Tangals played the crucial role in the lower caste conversions.[15] Gopalan Nair says, 'Mamburam is an important place not only to the Mappilas but to the native Hindus also. Mamburam Tangals have been treated with utmost reverence; and offerings are done at the holy shrine at Mamburam.'[16]

The first Ba-Alawi Sufi who came to Malabar was Sayid Shaykh Jifiri. He arrived in 1746 and settled in Calicut. Parappil Mammadkoya claims, 'Shaykh Jifiri's spirituality, scholarship and miraculous powers had spread in the nearby places. People flooded to Calicut for spiritual instructions. He was honoured by all, irrespective of caste and creed. Many people accepted Islam under his effect.'[17] Following Shaykh Jifri, his brother Hassan Jifiri arrived at Calicut in 1754. Allama Jamaludheen Makhdoom, the Qazi of Tirurangadi, invited him to Tirurangadi. He married the daughter of Kammu Mollah, the supervisor of Tirurangadi mosque and settled in Mamburam, a village.[18] He was the first Sufi to have initiated the spread of Islam in rural south Malabar. He could gain popularity among the poor through charity. Gopalan Nair says that the poor from the nearby areas had approached Jifri to find solutions for their problems.[19] Jifri's presence had resulted in the mass conversion of lower castes of Mamburam and nearby places. As the Muslim population increased in Mamburam, he built the Jum'a mosque.[20] The mosque later became the spiritual and cultural centre of the rural Mappilas. He passed away in 1764 at

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[14] The title *Tangal* is merely the honorific plural of the personal pronoun, commonly used in addressing religious elites. For Kerala Muslims it should be confined to the descendants of the Prophet, who are distinguished by the title of Sayid. See C.A.. Innes, *Madras District Gazetteer: Malabar*, p. 188.

[15] Hussain Randathani. *Mappila Muslims*. pp. 44 – 47.

[16] C. Gopalan Nair, *Malayalathile Mappilamar*, p. 50.

[17] Parappil Mammadkoya, *Kozhikkote Muslimkalude Charithram* (Calicut: Focus Publishers, 1994). p. 91.

[18] C. Gopalan Nair, *Malayalathile Mappilamar*, pp. 47-50.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

Mamburam.[21] His tomb is known as 'Mamburam Jaram', which was later treated as the holy place of religious conversion.[22] In the Ba-Alawi Sufis' lineage, there were two influential religious scholars who worked in rural Malabar. They were Sayyid Alawi and his son Sayyid Fasal Pookoya. Sayyid Alawi reached Mamburam in 1769 and later became popular by the honorific title of 'Mamburam Tangal'.[23] He married Hasan Jifiri's daughter Fatima. His son Sayyid Fasal was born in 1824 and went to Mecca for religious studies.[24]

Hussain Randathani remarks, 'In southern Malabar, it is a common practice among the Hindu peasant class to visit the *dargah*[25] of Sayyid Alawi Tangal of Mamburam in order to fulfil their wishes and to get blessings.'[26] *Kaliyattam* is one of the agricultural or cultural festivals of the Cheruma community of South Malabar.[27] It is believed that it was Sayyid Alavi Tangal who had fixed the date for the festival and it was conducted only after getting his blessings. At present, they go to the *Kaliyattakkavu* after paying tributes at the holy shrine of Mamburam and later at the Muttiara mosque. Eulogies of the Mamburam Tangals can be heard at the festival of *Kaliyattam*.[28]

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[21] Parappil Mammadkoya. *Kozhikkote Muslimkalude Charithram*. p. 94.

[22] C. Gopalan Nair. *Malayalathile Mappilamar*. p. 49.

[23] Ibid., p. 50.

[24] Parappil Mammadkoya. *Kozhikkote Muslimkalude Charithram*. p. 95.

[25] The term used to denote sufi convent, shrine, or tomb.

[26] Hussain Randathani, *Mappila Muslims*, p. 68.

[27] Kaliyattam is a folk festival in south Malabar and it comes on second Friday of Edava masam or June month. This is celebrated in Bhagavathi temple. Kaliyattakavu, situated at Kaliyattamukku in Munniyur panchayat. Kaliyattam is also called "Kozhikaliyattam" because on the day of festival there is custom of sacrificing cock called 'Kuruthi.

[28] Lines from one Cheruma folk song or kaliyattam song has mentioned its relation with Mamburam Tangal, see the lines:
On 15th Edavam.
A good festival(Kaliyattam).
Was fixed on Friday, a good day.
By Sayyid Alawi Tangal.

Thurston documents, 'In the middle of the last century [19th century], there was a very influential Tangal [Mamburam Tangal], who was suspected of fomenting outbreaks, and who conferred his blessings on the murderous project of his disciples. Of him it is stated that he was regarded as imbued with a portion of divinity, and that the Mappilas swore by his foot as their most solemn oath. Earth on which he spat or walked was treasured up, and his blessing was supremely prized. Even among the higher class of Mappilas, his wish was regarded as a command.'[29]

The period when illiterate people could come into Islam through the mediation of Sufis is known as the period of popular Islam in south Malabar or Islamic syncretism. Though the Islamic rituals and religious beliefs were unfamiliar to the lower castes, the social relationship with the Mappilas and the formation of syncretistic Islam by the Sufis, provided new understanding of religion and culture. In another context, Levtzion argues, 'By the use of Muslim amulets, and under the influence of the Muslim divines, non-Muslims were drawn into the orbit of Islam, and set out on the long course of Islamisation. This was the attitude of Muslim divines, who were willing, at least temporarily, to accommodate themselves to other people's customs and beliefs.'[30] After the retreat of Mysore dynasty in the end of eighteenth century, the Mappilas and the lower castes had to face the violence of the upper castes and the British antagonism. In those trying times, the supportive attitudes adopted by the Mamburam Tangals helped to strengthen the communal feeling.

He launched the festival,
And it continues as.
Blessed by him.
Cited by Salim Idid, *Katha Parayunna Mambaram* (Chandrika Daily. 27.04.1991). p. 3.

[29] Edgar Thurston, *Caste and Tribes of Southern India* (Madras: Government Press, 1909), p. 461.

[30] Nehemia Levtzion (ed.) *Conversion to Islam*, p. 17.

Arabic-Malayalam or Mappila Malayalam: Vernacular Language and Islamic Syncretism

There is a crucial connection between the language and the caste system and between the language and identity formation in Malabar.[31] It was since the ninth century that Malayalam had formed as a new language different from Tamil.[32] Present Malayalam was formed out of the Sanskrit of the Brahmin Nambudiris and the Malayalam of the Nairs.[33] P. K. Balakrishnan talks about the relationship between the caste system and Malayalam language thus: 'Common names used to be different for each castes; Malayalam is a language that has no provision to use the pronouns 'I', 'You', 'He' etc universally or in the similar sense. In Malayalam, there is no common usages and addresses for the whole society. It was originated as a part of social formation of the caste ridden Kerala society.'[34] The caste system had assigned distinct vocabularies for different castes and communities.[35] To revoke them was considered as challenging the native caste system.

The Malayalam of Nambudiris was not spoken by Nairs; and, similarly, the Malayalam of Nairs was not spoken by Tiyyas and Cherumas. In other words, the lower caste people were forbidden to use the vocabulary and style of speech of the upper castes.[36] Similarly, the non-Hindu communities outside the caste system also had different Malayalam. In addition to this, Malayalam had regional stylistic variations as well. It was possible to recognize the community and the caste of a person from his

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[31] P. K. Balakrishnan. *Jathivyavasthithiyum Keralacharithravum* (Kottayam: D C Books. 2008. First print. 1983). p. 274.

[32] C. A. Innes. *Madras District Gazetteers: Malabar* – Vol. I (First Published in 1908. Reprint. Madras: Government Press. 1951). pp. 93-94.

[33] P. K. Balakrishnan. *Jathivyavasthithiyum Keralacharithravum*. p.274.

[34] Ibid.

[35] J. H. Hutton. *Caste in India* (Bombay: 1951). p. 275.

[36] Ibid.

language. Mappila Malayalam is to be understood as an effort of the Muslims for an independent collective self in the caste-ridden Malabar.

By converting to Islam, the lower caste could use Mappila Malayalam and thereby bypass the vocabulary and forms of address imposed upon them by the upper castes. Thus, the lower castes could free themselves from the ceremonial language denoting his or her inferior caste status.[37] Ceremonial language is informed by forms of address – both of respect and self-abasement.[38] Generally, the Sufis and *ulamas* came from the upper stratum of the Mappila community. Mappilas used to address these religious elites reverently as 'ingal' and members of the Sayyid family as 'Tangal'. But, after conversion, the lower castes were exempted from using words like 'adiyan' ('I am the slave') which was used to express self-abasement in the caste system. Instead, they could use 'njan' ('I') before the new religious authority as well as the community.[39] Moreover, Mamburam Tangal had issued a *Fatwa* that prohibited the use of such caste based ceremonial language.[40] He exhorted the lower caste Muslims not to address the high class landlords or others by using 'You' in the plural as a way of showing respect.[41] Mappilas used to address the upper castes by their caste titles such as Nambudiri or Nair, and the lower castes by their names.[42]

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[37] Jameel Ahmad, 'Mappila Vamozhiyum Samudayika Ghadanayum', in Haskarali E. C. (ed.), *Mappila Vasantham: Charithravum Varthamanavum* (Calicut: Piano Publications, 2012), pp. 105-120.

[38] Ibid., p. 107.

[39] C. A. Innes, *Madras District Gazetteers: Malabar*, p. 134.

[40] Fatwa is an opinion or decision on juridical matters by publishing a ruling or juridical order regarding a religious doctrine or law by a recognized religious authority. Although applying to all matters of civic and religious life, it is not legally binding, since it is an opinion, and the civic community can dismiss it when compared to the opinion of other religious scholar. See Jens Kreinath, 'Glossary of Islamic Terms', in *The Anthropology of Islam* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 381.

[41] *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages in Malabar for the years 1849-59*, Vol. I (Madras: Government Press, 1863), p. 276.

[42] Jameel Ahmad, *Mappila Vamozhiyum Samudayika Ghadanayum*, p. 107.

The flourishing of Arabic-Malayalam language is another factor in the growth of rural Islam in the eighteenth century. The interaction of the Sufis with the natives of rural Malabar had led to the growth of Arabic-Malayalam. Generally, the earlier Muslim scholars had adopted Arabic language as the medium of communication. In another context, on the flourishing of vernacular literature and its role in Islamisation, Nehemia Levtzion noted, 'Before the eighteenth century, knowledge of Islam had been the concern of an elitist minority, all of whom literate in Arabic or Persian. After the eighteenth century, the discourse of the elite continued in the classical language of Islam, while the vernacular language was important in building bridges with the common people.'[43] The contacts of the earlier scholars were limited to the elites of the coastal region who were literate in Arabic. Among the lower class Mappilas who had converted during the early period of Arab trade, the Muslim religious/cultural practices began to exercise their hold only in the eighteenth century.[44] Mappila Malayalam was the reason behind that and it provided the knowledge about the new religion in their own language. According to various scholars, similar phenomenon had happened not only in Malabar, but in other south Asian regions and African countries also.[45]

Sufficient evidence is not available to mark the exact period of the origin of Arabic-Malayalam script. One argument claims that it was formed as a means of trade communication between the Arabs and local Mappilas.[46] On the contrary, Basheer Chungathara argues that Arabic-Malayalam emerged out of religious needs. He notes,

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[43] Nehemia Levtzion, 'Islam in African and Global Contexts: Adventures in Comparative Studies of Islam', paper presented in the conference on *Islam in Africa: A Global, Cultural and Historical Perspective* (Binghamton University, 2001).

[45] Nehemia Levtzion, 'Patterns of Islamisation in West Africa', in McCall D. F. and N. R. Bennet (eds.), *Aspects of West African Islam* (Boston: Boston University Press, 1971), pp. 31-39; Asim Roy, *The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 54; and Torsten Tschacher, *Rational Miracles, Cultural Rituals and the Fear of Syncretism: Defending Contentious Muslim Practice among Tamil speaking Muslims* (Asian Journal of Social Science, 2009), pp. 55-82.

[46] M. H Ilias argues, 'The language thus developed as a local lingua franca for trading Arabs to communicate with the natives and vice versa. On account of interaction between the Arabs and the local merchants, it got elevated to the status of the major trading language of the Malabar coast. So the first use of this language came from the local traders who were engaged in maritime trade with Arabs.' M. H. Illias, 'Mappila Muslims and the Cultural Content of Trading Arab Diaspora on the Malabar Coast', in *Asian Journal of Social Science* (Vol.35, 2007), pp. 434-456.

'Religious learning was an inevitability as far as the Muslims were concerned. It was not practical to teach everyone in Arabic language. Arabic-Malayalam script was a solution to this problem.'[47] Yet another claim is that Arabic-Malayalam was an imitation of Arabic-Tamil.[48] K. K. Abdulkareem, based on the presence of Persian scholars in Malabar and the presence of Persian words in the vocabulary of the Mappilas, notes that Arabic-Malayalam emerged by imitating Persian language.[49]

Arabic-Malayalam which was a mixture of local Malayalam and other languages such as Tamil, Arabic and Persian was the medium of communication used by the *ulamas* to teach the illiterate lower caste converts of south Malabar about the modes of Islamic worship. It flourished among the rural Mappilas in the eighteenth century after the decline of Arab trade in the Malabar Coast.

New Identity: Religious and Social Spaces

The mass religious conversion by the lower castes, the migration of the coastal Mappilas to inland areas, and the emergence of immigrant Sufi saints had resulted in the widespread social mixing that had, in turn, profound effects on religious practices and everyday life of rural society in south Malabar. As a result of their conversion to Islam, the lower caste converts got a new social self and social space. Mosques, the tombs and shrines of the Sufis and the religious schools had played a vital role in forging this social self. Though it was difficult for the lower castes to give up their earlier religious practices

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[47] Basheer Chungathra, *Ishal Chakravarthi* (Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi, 2010), p. 26.

[48] Balakrishnan Vallikunnu, 'Mappilappatinte Tamizharul Peruma'. in *Chandrika Daily* (Sunday Supplement- 09.09.2002 to 13.09.2002); P. A. Saidmuhammad., *Kerala Muslim Charithram* (Thrissur, 1961); and M. M. Mahroof, *Arabic-Tamil in South India and Sri Lanka: Language as Mimicry* (Islamic Studies, 32: 2, 1993), pp. 169-189.

[49] C. N. Ahmad Moulavi and K. K. Muhammad Abdulkareem. *Mahathaya Mappila Sahithya Parambaryam* (Paraspasarasahayi Co-operative Press. Calicut: Published by Authors. 1978). pp. 35-36; and Hussain Randathani, 'Mappila Samskarathile Persian Swadeenanngal', in E. C. Haskarali (ed.), *Mappila Vasantham: Charithravum Varthamanavum* (Calicut: Piano Publications, 2012), pp. 76-85.

and rituals, their entry to Islam was not difficult.[50] This was so due to the absence of a complicated sense of caste system among the Malabar Mappilas.

Mappilas were, however, not free of social strata and divisions. But, it was not caste-based as was seen among the Christians and the Hindus. The descendents of the Prophet's daughter, who had migrated from the Arab countries, were deemed having higher social status among Kerala Muslims.[51] Such 'racial' discriminations and divisions based on class and profession were prevalent among the Mappilas also. For instance, fishermen and barbers were considered as inferior groups.[52] Marital relationships with these groups were not generally entertained.[53] But the converts from Cheruma and Tiyya castes, did not suffer such social alienation. Their numerical strength in the Mappila community could have been the possible reason for this. As different from Christianity, the Malabar Mappilas were collectively known by the identity of "Mappila", not by their earlier caste titles.

Even though everybody was equal in religious spaces, differences were common in social relationships of Mappilas. Families and individuals converted from upper castes had limited their marital relationships within their own caste.[54] Umar Qazi, the renowned religious scholar in south Malabar, has satirized those divisions among the south Malabar Muslims in his poetry written in Arabic.[55] K. T. Hussain has argued that Umar Qazi's criticism of elitism among Muslims was out of the fear of its adverse effects upon the

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[50] Stephen F. Dale. 'Trade, Conversion, and the Growth of the Islamic Community in Kerala', in Rowena Robinson, Sathianathan Clarke (eds.) *Religious Conversion in India: Modes, Motivations, and Meanings* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 54-74.

[51] P. R. G. Mathur, 'Social Stratification among the Muslims of Kerala', in Vinod K. Jairath (ed.) *Frontier of Embedded Muslim Communities in India* (Delhi: Routledge, 2011) p. 113-133.

[52] L. R. S. Lakshmi, *The Malabar: A Different Perspective* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 16.

[53] N. P. Mohammad, 'Kerala Muslingal: Jevithavum Samskaravum', in *Farook College Golden Jubilee Souvenir* (2000), pp. 163-167.

[54] See Naha Anubandha Kudumba Sangam Souvenir (Parappanangadi, 2007 & 2010)

[55] Extract of the poem has cited in C. N. Ahmad Moulavi and K. K. Muhammad Abdulkareem, *Mahathaya Mappila Sahithya Parambaryam*, p. 198.

lower caste conversion to Islam.[56] The failure of such social divisions to influence religious spaces and the impartial approaches of various *ulamas* and Sufis had helped the lower caste converts to Islam to build a new social identity.

Spiritual and religious experiences also play a decisive role in the identity formation of the new converts. In religious terms, Islam considers one as a Muslim if he acknowledges the six fundamental beliefs and performs the five basic religious practices as prescribed by Qura'n. Out of the five basic practices, the first one was to avow his allegiance to the religion in public. This stage constitutes the formation of his new individual self by taking a decision all by himself. The other practices are to be done collectively and these form his social self.

The phrases *kuppayamiduka* (wearing upper cloth) and *thoppiyiduka* (wearing cap) were used to suggest the religious conversion to Islam in Malabar. Concerning the ritual ceremonies of conversion to Islam in Malabar, Stephen Dale has observed that apart from the brief public ceremony of reciting *shahada,* men and women would openly proclaim their new allegiance by wearing, respectively, caps and breast cloths and taking Islamic names, predominantly Arabic ones in Kerala.[57] Overt challenge against the regional caste system is implied in these acts. According to the caste system of Malabar, the lower caste women had no right to cover their breasts.[58] Dick Kooiman has observed that the dress restriction was the most conspicuous issue in the fight against civil disabilities in Kerala.[59] Regarding the Mappila dress style, Innes has argued that the ordinary dress of Mappila men was a *mundu* or cloth generally white with a purple border, but sometimes orange or green or plain white. It was tied on the left whereas the Hindus tied it on the right. And the Mappila women wore a *mundu* of some coloured

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[56] K. T. Hussain, *Kerala Muslimkal: Adhinivesha Virudha Porattathinte Prathyeya Sasthram* (Calicut: Islamic Publishing House. 2008), p. 92.

[57] Stephen F. Dale, *Trade, Conversion, and the Growth of the Islamic Community in Kerala*. p. 69.

[58] Mateer Samuel, *Native Life in Travancore* (London: W. H Allen & Co., 1883), p. 230.

[59] Dick Kooiman, *Conversion and Social Equality in India: The London Missionary Society in South Travancore in the 19th Century* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications. 1989). p. 149.

cloth (most often dark blue in colour), a white loose bodice, more or less embroidered and a veil or scarf on the head.[60] M. M. Narayanan writes, 'There is a revolt and defiance in one becoming a Mappila. The signs of his defiance were seen in his dress and looks.'[61]

Another privilege enjoyed by the lower castes who converted to Islam, was religious education. In the caste system, education was the privilege of the upper castes. Whereas the upper castes were provided Vedic education through 'Ezhuthupalli', Mappilas made use of 'Othupallis'.[62] They were also taught Arabic alphabets and made literates in Arabic-Malayalam. *Malappattukal* written in Arabic-Malayalam and comprehensible to both the literate and the illiterate, was adopted for religious instruction.[63] The Mappila historian K. K. Abdul Kareem has documented that these *Malappattukal* were very popular and were sung even by the non-convert Cherumas in Malabar.[64]

The *Malappattukal* had a major role in the identity formation of the lower caste/class Mappilas in Malabar. Umar Tharamel who has conducted studies in Arabic-Malayalam literature notes, '*Malappattukal* come under the category of devotional songs, the content of which is the eulogies of the saints. There is an opinion that *Malappattukal* were written following the 'bhajans' prevalent among the Shaivas of Tamil Nadu.'[65] Malappattu has two parts: the first part eulogises the Sufis and the second part contains prayers to God in which the Sufis become the mediators.[66] The most

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[60] C.A. Innes. Madras District *Gazetteer*. pp. 187-188.

[61] M. M. Narayanan. 'Malabar Kalapathile Mappila Manassu'. in *Farook College Golden Jubilee Souvenir* (2000). p. 78.

[62] C. N. Ahmad Moulavi and K. K. Muhammad Abdulkareem. *Mahathaya Mappila Sahithya Parambaryam*. p. 37.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Umar Tharamel. *Isalukalute Udyanam* (Kottayam: Rainbow Books. 2006). p. 17.

[66] Ibid.

prominent among this type was *mohiyuddinmala* written by Qazi Muhammad in 1607, which is considered as the first Arabic-Malayalam literary wok. The later 'Malappattukal' were written following this work.[67] *Mohiyuddinmala* contains prayers to Allah by eulogizing the famous Sufi, Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani.[68] The song claims that many were converted to Islam under the effect of Shaik Muhiyudheen in his home town.[69] Mappilas used to recite this song after the evening prayer. Learning *mohiyuddinmala* was suggested to the girls of marriageable age.[70]

Mappilas had made use of the printing technique introduced by the Basel Mission in 1868.[71] A Mappila named Kunhimuhammed had learned the technique from a press operated in Thalasseri by the Basel Mission and founded a press himself.[72] Following this, the Mappilas had started almost fifteen printing presses which facilitated the publication and spread of Arabic-Malayalam books. Several *malappattukal* and *kissappattukal* were written after *Mohiyuddinmala* for religious instructions. *Rifayimala, Nafeesathmala, Shadulimala, Shahulhameedmala, Suharavardimala, Mamburammala* etc had prominent roles in the religious life of the converted Mappilas and in the

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[67] Ibid.

[68] Arabic-Malayalam manuscript of *Mohiyuddinmala* is available at Moyinkutty Vaidyar Memorial Research and Reference Library, Kondotti-Kerala.

[69] See the 60th paragraph of *Mohiyuddinmala.*

[70] C. N. Ahmad Moulavi and K. K. Muhammad Abdulkareem, *Mahathaya Mappila Sahithya Parambaryam*, p. 44.

[71] The German Mission Society formed in 1815 was later come to be known as Basel Evangelical Mission. On 14 October, 1834 three missionaries named Rev. Sammuel Hebich, Rev. Laener, and Rev. Graner arrived at Kozhikode with the financial aid of German government. They were initiated various kind of activities such as economic, social, and spiritual in colonial Malabar. See, Ernest William Thayyil, *Malayala Basel Mission Sabhayude Charitra Samkshepam* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1934; Reprint, 1989).

[72] Ibid, pp. 45-46.

formation of their new identity.[73] These works were part of regional Islamic culture in addition to Qur'an and Hadit.

The conversion of the lower castes to Islam had created new notions of time and social space in them. This is somewhat similar to the story of the lower caste converts to Christianity. In the context of converts to Protestant Christianity in central Kerala, Sanal Mohan argues, 'There were definite instances of reorganisation of the space in which Dalits were located, including their small huts and places of dwelling and the newly constituted sacred space of the Church and the 'slave school', spaces which were not mediated by the caste hierarchy. The new notion of time was available in connection with daily prayers and attendance in Church and school. The coordination was besides the usual practices of labour, intensely familiar from pre-colonial times.'[74] The routinised religious rites and rituals of the new religion challenged the labour Time imposed upon the slaves by the caste-hierarchy.

The increased number of the Mappilas in south Malabar through conversion resulted in the increase in the number of mosques. Regarding the increase of mosques in the region, T. L. Strange reports, 'The Mohomedan priesthood has been zealous in reviving attention to the observances of their religion, and in strengthening the cause thereof. Conversions from among the slave and the lower caste Hindus have been frequent; the number of mosques have increased, and the priesthood has become more numerous and with higher pretentions. The mosques throughout Malabar in 1831 were 637, and in 1851 they were 1,058.'[75] Mosques and Madrassas had their role in re-arranging the time of rural Muslims. The observance of 'niskaram' five times a day, 'mawlid' during the night time every week, and the Friday congregation were time-

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[73] Arabic-Malayam manuscripts of these works are available at Moyinkutty Vaidyar Memorial Research and Reference Library, Kondotty- Kerala.

[74] Sanal Mohan, 'Narrativizing Oppression: Theorizing Slavery'. *South Asia Research* (Vol. 26: 1, 2006), pp. 5-40.

[75] Correspondence of Mappila Outrages, 1849-53 (Madras: Government Press, 1863), p. 444.

bound. Such occasions provided the religious converts the time to congregate and come together. Mamburam Tangal had declared a *fatwa* that no Mappila should work under the landlord on Fridays and it should be considered a holiday for the Mappilas.[76] This *fatwa* brought in the concepts of "holiday" and "prayer day" among the converts of south Malabar. Some folk songs were composed in Arabic-Malayalam to teach the times to observe the rituals like 'niskaram'. Before the spread of technologies like clock, the rural Mappilas of south Malabar depended on the positional changes of the sun and the moon.[77] The following is a folk song which was used to teach the time of 'Asar niskaram' (evening prayer) in various months:

Medam va chingam randilum samaniya

Fi idavam-menam karkidakaththilum thasia

Mithunam va kanni randilum ombathra

Kumbam-thulam akhdamudaini paththara

Vrishchikamva makaram randilum pathinonnekal.[78]

[Eight in Medam and Chingam

Nine in Idavam, Meenam and Karkidakam

Nine and half in Midhunam and Kanni

Ten and half in the months of Kumbam and Thulam

And a quarter past eleven in both Vrishchikam and Makaram.][79]

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[76] Ibid., p. 276.

[77] C. N. Ahmad Moulavi and K. K. Muhammad Abdulkareem. *Mahathaya Mappila Sahithya Parambaryam*, p. 38.

[78] This Mappila folksong taken from the work of C. N. Ahmad Moulavi and K. K. Muhammad Abdulkareem, *Mahathaya Mappila Sahithya Parambaryam*, p. 38

Mullas and *Musliyars*[80] were the native intermediaries between the converted rural Mappilas and their everyday religious practices. They were the rural Mappilas who had completed their studies either from religious institutions at Tirurangadi, Ponnani, and Tanur or those who had studied under other *Mullas* and *Musliyars*. Even the lower caste converts could reach that position. Moreover, the rituals and practices in most of the rural mosques and Mappila homes were conducted by these lower class intermediaries who had converted earlier.[81] Generally, upper caste and elite Mappilas did not become *Mullas*.[82] Comparing with southern Malabar, the influence of *Mullas* was minimal in the north Malabar where the elite Mappilas dominated. In the north Malabar, the lower class Mappilas became *Mullas* to overcome poverty.[83] In the south, the involvement of the native intermediaries had facilitated in presenting Islam as a 'liberation theology' among the lower castes. This could be one reason for the higher rate of conversion by the lower castes in south Malabar. These native intermediaries of south Malabar were also the organisers of lower caste/class Mappilas against the upper caste land lords and the colonial state.

Islamisation had brought changes in the food habit of the lower caste converts as well. After the conversion they gave up eating carcasses which Muslims consider as

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[79] Medam, Chingam, Idavam, Meenam, Karkidakam, Midhunam, Kanni, Kumbam, Thulam, Vrishchikam, and Makaram are the Malayalam months of lunar calendar. The song is composed in Arabic-malayalam language. This folk song teaches how to determine time by measuring human shadow during different months.

[80] *Mullah* is originally a Persian word meaning the teacher. A *mullah* is a person those who is reciting Qura'n or any other religious texts during the various occasions of Mappila religious life.*Musliyar* is an Arabic-Malayalam word derived from the Arabic *musalli*, means one who performs prayer and the Malayalam honorific suffix 'yar'. Originally 'Musliyar' was the name of the degree awarded from Ponnani religious academy and later it came to be used to all those performed religious duties.

[81] K. Moidu Moulavi, one of the eminent Muslim religious scholars in Kerala wrote a biography which deals with the social structure of Mappila Muslims. He gave a detail description on *Mullas* and *musliyars* of Malabar. See K. Moidu Moulavi, *Ormakurippukal* (Calicut: Islamic Publishing House, 1992; Reprint, 2001).

[82] Ibid., p. 25.

[83] Ibid., p. 26.

'impure food'.[84] *Malappattukal* were composed to teach the acceptable food habits to the converts to Islam. Famous among them is '*dabeehmala*', written by one Mappila *ulama* named Mayankutty Elaya in Arabic-Malayalam. The song describes the allowed and the forbidden meats as categorised by *Shafi* Islamic jurisprudence.[85] In the caste system, the lower caste slaves consumed scrapes of leftover left by the upper caste Hindus; and this continued even after the conversion. Mamburam Tangal had issued a Fatwa forbidding this habit.[86] Ceremonies like *nercca* and *mawlid* might have helped to reduce the food scarcity among the lower class Mappilas. Mappila Muslims had believed that the distribution of food among the poor was a virtuous act. Such local ceremonies have a social significance along with the spiritual.

Continuity and Discontinuity: The Customs and Practices of converted Mappilas

The converted Mappilas of the rural Malabar practiced three types of rituals and practices during the phase of syncretism. The first type constitutes the fundamental rituals such as *salath*, fasting and *hajj* which are performed universally by the Muslims. The other two were practiced by native Muslims according to their socio-cultural and economic background. The rituals which are universally practiced by the Muslims are not discussed here. The first of the two native practices was the continuation of their earlier beliefs and practices. Witchcraft, magic, and faith in supernatural powers come under the first category. The second category encompasses the beliefs and customs formulated by the Sufis and *ulamas* for their religious and spiritual growth. *Nercca, mawlid* and *ratheeb* are some of them. Though both sets of practices were challenged by revivalists, the latter survived as a part of the daily life of Mappilas.

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[84] In another context of lower caste conversion Sanal Mohan argued. "The food habits of lower caste were sanitized by following their religious conversion to Christianity. Many of lower castes ate the meat of dead animals and other refuse. But Dalits who joined the missions generally stopped eating 'unclean food'." See P. Sanal Mohan, *Religion, Social Space and Identity*, p. 43.

[85] Mayinkutty Elaya, *Dabeeh Mala* (Printed by Neeratipeedika Kunjahammad. 1873). Extract of this Mala has cited in C. N. Ahmad Moulavi and K. K. Muhammad Abdulkareem. *Mahathaya Mappila Sahithya Parambaryam*, p. 221.

[86] Correspondence of Mappila Outrages. 1849-53 (Madras: Government Press. 1863). p. 276.

As different from the obligatory customs and practices demanded by Brahmanical Hinduism, the lower castes lived in a world of non-Brahmanical Hinduism with its own customs and practices. *Pottan, Gulikan, Kutti Chathan*, and *Chamundi* were their important deities.[87] The lower caste beliefs were related to the problems of the mundane life.[88] Their beliefs and rituals were connected with finding solutions to problems related to agriculture, diseases, natural disasters and poverty.

The converted lower castes had not completely given up their past beliefs and customs. In addition to the fundamental beliefs and practices of Islam, they also had reshaped many of their past customs by giving them Islamic meanings. The ulamas and the Sufis were ready to consider those customs of the local agricultural labourers as Islamic. The numerical growth of Islam in south Malabar was made possible by such accommodation. For example, the lower class Mappilas like the lower caste Hindus depended on witchcraft for medical treatments instead of traditional or modern medicines.[89] The witchcraft treatment was done by either Tangals or other native priests. The Basel Medical Mission reports make clear how the beliefs in the supernatural had remained in the Mappila community even after the conversion. The Mission Report of 1907 says, 'The cholera and small pox were raging terribly in the months of August and September. It is regrettable that the people, during such epidemics, do not resort to hospital medicines, but ascribe them to the devil's scourge. Especially the 'ignorant and superstitious Moplahs' believe that cholera is due to demonic possession, and can only be cured by exorcism.'[90]

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[87] C. A. Innes, *Madras District Gazetteers: Malabar, Vol.* I (Madras: Government Press, 1908, Reprint; 1951), p. 134.

[88] K. K. Kochu, *Kerala Charithravum Samuharupikaranavum* (Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Basha Institute, 2012), p. 220.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Annual Report of the Basel Medical Mission, Calicut, 1907, cited in Edgar Thurston, *Caste and Tribes of Southern India*, p. 464.

The methods of treatment were not entirely based on exorcism. The presence of Muslim local apothecaries and the availability of books of medicine in Arabic-Malayalam language suggest the use of traditional methods of curing also.[91] For instance, the local historians have documented the visit of patients including non-Muslims to Mamburam Alavi Tangal. When a lower caste woman named Chakki visited Mamburam Tangal for treating itching, the Tangal uttered some Islamic prayers and suggested to her to use a herb called "ponnan". The local Mappila historian A. K. Kodoor documents the woman's subsequent conversion to Islam.[92]

F. Fawcett, a British employee and anthropologist, had documented that even the upper caste Nairs had been visiting the Mappila exorcists. He described the story of a Nair who approached a Muslim priest for witchcraft thus:

> Once he [a Nair] was frightened while being near water, and subsequently was troubled by beings called 'Putams', devils of a very inferior kind which haunt water. He had bad dreams; so consulted a Mappila priest who gave him *mantrams*. He also wore charms to entice the public as he explained, so that people will, as rule, like him, please him, flatter rather annoy him. He got this too from a Mappila priest.'[93]

Some Brahmin families of south Malabar also had resorted to witchcraft as a solution for their worldly problems.[94] Fawcett observed that every man, woman and child in Malabar

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[91] There are many Arabic-Malayalam scripts of medicines found in Malabar and it is available at Moyinkutty Vaidyar Memorial Reference and Library, Kondotti- Kerala

[92] A. K. Kodoor, *Anglo-Mappila Yudham* (Malappuram: Viplavanusmarana Samithi, 1999). p. 52.

[93] F. Fawcett, *Nayars of Malabar* (Madras: Government Press, 1915. Reprinted from Madras Government Museum Bulletin, Vol. III, 1901)

[94] In south Malabar, present Malppuram district, there is one Nambudiri family called 'Poonkootilmana', practices healing and Ayurveda treatment. See Hari Kumar Bhaskaran Nair, 'Marunnum Mantravum : An Ethnographic Enquiry into the Patterns of Affliction and Therapeutics in a Traditional Healing Practice in Malabar', in William Sax, Gabriele Alex and Constanze Weigl (eds.) *Health and Society in South Asia Series* (No. 9, February, 2010), p. 2.

wore some protective charm against evil spirits. Such charms were commonly tied around the necks of domestic animals also.[95] Cherumas and the lower class Mappilas were the important clients of the well-known Cheruma exorcist in south Malabar, Shankaran.[96] This social milieu cannot be seen as un-Islamic since it was facilitated by Muslim priests and religious justification.

In spite of the similarities in witchcraft and other such local beliefs, religious differences were there in their charms and forms. In other words, customs and beliefs were reworked among the lower caste Mappilas through the Islamisation. The Muslim priests made use of the Qur'anic verses as chants. They tied these chants onto their bodies after covering them in copper sheets and tying with a thread known as 'elassus'. Innes has observed that the Mappila *jins* and *shaitans* corresponded to the Hindu demons (gulikan and chatan etc.) and there were often traces of Hindu rituals, amongst the lower classes at least.[97] They followed their earlier beliefs and rituals in matters like birth, death, marriage and work even after the conversion.[98] Yet, the *ulamas* and the converted Mappilas took care to Islamise such rituals in order to make them different from that of other communities.

New Religiosity: *Nercca*, *Mawlid*, and *Ratheeb*

The nature of the new religiosity was not limited to the Islamisation of the former beliefs and customs alone. The new customs handed over by the immigrant Sufis also were part of the new religiosity. Rituals like *mawlid,* and *ratheeb* were introduced by immigrant Sufis. Similar rituals were also found among the people of the Arab-African countries. There were also some customs in Malabar which were introduced by the

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[95] Ibid.

[96] P. R. G Mathur, *The Mappila Fisher Folk of Kerala*, p. 326.

[97] C. A. Innes, Madras District *Gazetteer: Malabar*, p. 191.

[98] K. Moidu Moulavi, *Ormakurippukal*, pp. 20- 21.

Mappilas guided by the native ulamas. *Nercca* in Malabar is such a custom practiced by the lower class Mappilas.

Dale and Menon observe, 'These are expensive and elaborate ceremonies which nominally combine Islamic elements with certain features of indigenous folk festivals. Thus, while the focal point of each *nercca* is the reverence shown to *pir, shaykh*, or *shahid*, all the festivals are conducted within the ritual framework derived from the worship of folk deities in Kerala.'[99] Majority of the *nerccas* were held in south Malabar.[100] They were more popular in the taluks of colonial Eranadu and Valluvanadu, where the rate of lower caste conversion was high. Most prominent among them are the *nerccas* of Mamburam, Puthanpalli, Puthiyangadi, Koottayi, Malappuram, Kondotty, Cheroor, and Muttiara. Even though *nerccas* are conducted in the memory of some Sufis or the martyrs in anti-colonial and anti-landlord struggles, they are known by place names.

Nercca means the act of taking a vow; it is a Malayalam word derived from the Dravidian root *ner*, a word with several meanings including 'truth' and 'agreement'.[101] Dale and Menon argue, 'The Mappilas' use of the term is indicative of the two fundamental aspects of the ceremonies. First one is the idea of a vow that reflects the central religious purpose of each *nercca*, the ritualized worship of an Islamic saint or martyr. Second one is the fact that the word derived from a Dravidian root helps to emphasize that these *nerccas* are based upon an indigenous model which is neither Islamic nor even Brahmanical in origin.'[102] 'Vela' of the lower castes and 'Pooram' of the upper castes are similar to the *nerccas* celebrated by the Mappilas.[103] These are

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[99] Stephen F. Dale and M. Gangadhara Menon. 'Nerccas: Saint-Martyr Worship among the Muslims of Kerala', in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (Vol. 41:3. 1978). pp. 523-538.

[100] Ibid., p. 523.

[101] Ibid., p. 525.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid., p. 526.

usually conducted after the harvest. This suggests their relation with the rural economy.[104] A rural market was a part of the *nercca* where the farmer could buy and sell their products. *Nercca* could thus possibly be the transformation of an agricultural festival by Islamisation, by the lower caste converts.[105]

The relationship between women and the socio-religious space offered by these *nerccas* is important. Muslim women got admitted to the mosques only in the second half of the twentieth century. The religious engagements of the converted women centered around the Sufi centres. Dale and Menon observe, 'Many of these people, particularly the women, rarely leave their villages, where they have few diversions of any kind, especially in the extremely poor agrarian areas of interior... for many... the *nerccas* do offer an opportunity to express genuine religious piety.'[106]

Customs like *mawlid* and *ratheeb* are deeply connected with the daily lives of the Mappilas of south Malabar. They were not local Islamic practices like the *nerccas*. Instead, they were prevalent in many Muslim societies, but with regional variations. *Mawlid* is associated with the birth of Prophet Mohammed. On that day, Muslims read the life history of the prophet, talks about his superhuman powers, and sing his eulogies.[107]

The custom was introduced in Malabar by the Sufis. P. R. G. Mathur who has studied the Mappila fisher folk of south Malabar, has categorized *mawlid* into five types.[108] They are the following: 1) those concerned with the birth of the Prophet Muhammad and ending of the fast; 2) those associated with the direct descendents of the

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[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid., p. 528

[106] Ibid., p. 538.

[107] Edgar Thurston. *Caste and Tribes of Southern India*, p. 467. This custom had not started at the time of the prophet. In west Asia. *mawlid* had begun in the twelfth century with the spread of Sufi thoughts. See. Marian Holmes Katz. 'Women's Mawlid Performance in Sanaa and the Construction of Popular Islam'. *Middle East Studies* (Vol. 40. 2008). pp. 467-484.

[108] P. R. G Mathur. *The Mappila Fisher Folk of Kerala*. pp. 305-306.

Prophet; 3) those concerned with the predecessors of the Prophet; 4) those concerned with the social integration of the village -- the *Nattu Mawlid* (ceremony for propitiating the village spirits); and 5) those associated with fishing.[109] Thurston comments, 'A *mawlid* is a tract or short treatise in Arabic celebrating the birth, life, works and sayings of the prophet, or some saints such as Shaik Mohiyuddin, eleventh descendant of the Prophet, expounder of the Koran, and worker of miracles, or the Mamburam Tangal.'[110]

Mawlid was held to ensure bountiful crop and good catch of fish.[111] It was also observed during birth and death ceremonies of Mappilas. *Mawlid* was also politically utilised in the resistance against upper caste landlords in south Malabar. Thurston observes, 'It is also a common practice to celebrate a *mawlid* before any important undertaking on which it is desired to invoke a blessing, or in fulfillment of some vows; hence the customs of *mawlids* preceding outbreaks.'[112]

Usually, *mawlid* was conducted in two places: in the mosques and in the Mappila houses. All the Mappila men took part in the *mawlids* at the mosques. Their main intention was to beget God's blessings and to find solutions for the collective problems like poverty and drought. But, the *mawlids* conducted in the houses were concerned with the Mappila women. Those were meant to find solutions for personal or familial issues.[113] Family members, neighbours and relatives participated in those *mawlids*. Sufi thoughts and customs had reached Malabar from Hadaramouth at Yemen. Similarities could be seen in the *mawlid* practices of Malabar and Yemen.[114]

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[109] Ibid., p. 306.

[110] Edgar Thurston, *Caste and Tribes of Southern India*, p. 467.

[111] P. R. G Mathur, *The Mappila Fisher Folk of Kerala*. pp. 305-306.

[112] Edgar Thurston, *Caste and Tribes of Southern India*, p. 467.

[113] P. R. G. Mathur. *The Mappila Fisher Folk of Kerala*, pp. 306-307. Sufi thoughts and customs had reached Malabar from the place Hadaramouth at Yemen. Similarities could be seen in the *mawlid* practices of Malabar and Yemen. See Marian Holmes Katz, *Women's Mawlid Performance in Sanaa*, pp. 467-484.

Regarding the domestic *mawlid* practice and role of women in that, Katz argues, 'The *mawlid* celebration sidestepped issues of ritual purity and mosque access, provided a religiously meaningful framework for women's sociability, and could be incorporated into the life-cycle occasions such as marriage, childbirth, and death that punctuated women's life.'[115] Further, she adds that the performance of *mawlids* could be harnessed to the personal and familial concerns such as marriage, fertility, and the health of family members that were often most vital to women.[116] The *mawlid* practice enabled women to get out of the purity restrictions applying to most religious activities. A menstruating woman cannot perform *salat, fasting*, and recitation of *Quran*, but she may attend a *mawlid*.[117] *Nafisathmala* was a prominent *mawlid* prevalent among the Mappila women of Malabar.[118] It was recited for marriage, fertility and normal delivery.[119] It contains the eulogies of an Arabian Sufi woman named Nafisath Al-Misriya (A.D. 760-824).[120]

Mankhus *mawlid* is a famous *mawlid* among the Mappilas which does not recognise gender distinctions.[121] It is authored by Zainuddin Makhdoom of Ponnani.[122] Mohammed Bakhavi has noted that it was written when he was asked to pray for the recovery of the afflicted during an epidemic in Malabar.[123] It is known as *mankhus* ('shortened') since it was written by summarizing prayers from various *mawlid* texts.[124]

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[115] Ibid., p. 468.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid., p. 475.

[118] Nafisath Mala is written by Nalakath Kunjimoideen. Arabi-Malayalam manuscript of Nafisat Mala is available at Moyinkutty Vaidyar Memorial Research and Library, Kondotti- Kerala.

[119] Hussain Randathani. *Mappila Muslims*, p. 41.

[120] For detail understanding on Nafisath al-Misiriya see. Camille Adams Helminski, *Women of Sufism, A Hidden Treasure* (Shambhala Publications, 2002).

[121] P. R. G Mathur. *The Mappila Fisher Folk of Kerala*, p. 309.

[122] Muhammad Bakhavi. *Mankhus Mawlid Vyakhyanam* (Tirurangadi: Ashrafi Book Centre, 2009), P. 8.

[123] Ibid.

Mappilas had followed some rules in practicing *mawlid*.[125] A day was fixed and the Mappila neighbours and relatives were invited. Feast was prepared for the participants. It was conducted sitting in a circle led by the local priest. Qura'nic verses were recited and they prayed for the prophet and the ancestors. The priest would recite mawlid and others would listen. Later, they ate together and prayed for specific things.[126]

Ratheeb[127] was another important ritual performance by the Mappilas. There were three kind of *ratheebs* performed in Malabar. One is in honour of Mohiyuddin Shaykh and the second one for Rifai Shaykh for receiving material gains.[128] The third one is Haddad *ratheeb* which was the most important one performed by the Mappilas.[129] It was generally conducted at the village mosques on the 11th day of every lunar month. The Rifai *ratheeb* was generally performed once a year. The striking feature of the ceremony was the use of weapons and musical instruments by the priest during the ceremony.[130]*Haddad ratheeb* was written by Abullahil Haadad of Hadaramouth in 1675 and it reached Malabar through the migrated ulamas. Mappilas had believed that the practice of *Haddad ratheeb* would be helpful in earning one's livelihood and in averting attacks by animals.[131]

In the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, south Malabar was in a crucial stage in the community formation of the Mappilas. Though there was no complete change in

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[124] Ibid., p. 11.

[125] See P. R. G Mathur, *The Mappila Fisher Folk of Kerala*, pp. 306- 309. Muhammad Bakhavi, *Mankhus Mawlid Vyakhyanam*, pp. 11-12.

[126] Muhammad Bakhavi, *Mankhus Mawlid Vyakhyanam*, p. 12.

[127] Its literal meaning is encoded prayers.

[128] P. R. G Mathur, *The Mappila Fisher Folk of Kerala*, p. 313.

[129] Abduswamad Faizi, *Haddad Ratheeb Paribhashayum Vyakhyanavum* (Tirurangadi: K. Mohammed Kutty & Sons, 2008), p. 31.

[130] P. R. G Mathur, *The Mappila Fisher Folk of Kerala*, p. 314.

[131] Abduswamad Faizi, *Haddad Ratheeb Paribhashayum Vyakhyanavum*, p. 34.

their beliefs and customs, religious conversion had brought about transformations in their lives. This period was one of continuity and discontinuity in the customary beliefs of the new converts and is known as the syncretistic period of Islamisation. The new language of Mappila Malayalam, the Islamised customary beliefs, the life under the new spiritual leadership, and the material changes helped them in creating a new self.

Islamic Revivalism in south Malabar

The emergence of Islamic revivalism challenged the syncretistic tradition prevalent among the Muslims of Malabar and the activities of the Christian missionaries. It took place as two stages: one was in the latter half of the nineteenth century, centred around individuals; and the other was in the beginning of the twentieth century through organised institutions.

Two external factors aided the formation of revivalism in Malabar. The first one was the Western modernity made familiar by Christian missionaries and the other was the Islamic revivalist thoughts which originated in west-Asia and in Egypt against traditional Sufism. They rejected the traditional *ulamas* and their *fatwa's* as 'un-Islamic' and claimed certain fundamental texts of Islam alone as representing 'the true Islam'. Everything else was regarded as un-Islamic and were categorised as *bida'th* and *shirk*.[132] Thus the beliefs and rituals retained by the newly converted Mappilas were also questioned. Hence, it resulted in the formation of two streams of beliefs among the Muslim community of Malabar.

The revivalist institutions and thoughts were influential in changing the nature of religious conversion and the identity formation of the converts. The presence of elite Mappilas who had acquired English education could also be seen in the Islamic revivalist institutions of Malabar. Whereas Islamic syncretism existed in the rural Malabar, Islamic revivalism originated in the coastal and sub-urban areas like Ponnani and Thalasseri.

[132] 'Bida'th' means the innovations of new rituals and beliefs which is not precedent from the time of the Prophet Muhammad. 'Shirk' is an Islamic concept related to polytheism or belief in and worship of any divinity except Allah.

New Understanding of Islam

Revivalist thoughts against the Sufi traditions got a hold on Arab Muslims in the fourteenth century. Ibn Taimiyah (A. D. 1262- 1327) and Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahab (A. D. 1703- 1792) were influential in the beginning of earlier Islamic revivalism. Their thoughts and activities challenged the Sufi thoughts. But, the Islamic revivalists of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries were determined to protect Islam from the Proestant missionary activities in Asia and Africa.[133] Such Islamic revivalist thoughts began circulating globally as a reaction against the European imperialism and the Christian missionaries in the nineteenth century -- with the spread of British and French colonialisms.[134] The Islamic revivalism in Malabar was against the Sufi tradition .[135]

The ideas of Afro-Arab revivalists like Jamaluddin Al-Afghani (A. D. 1839-1897), the proponent of Pan Islamism, Muhammad Abdu (A. D. 1849-1905), Afghani's disciple and a professor at Al-Azhar Islamic University, Egypt, and his disciple Rashid Rida (A.D. 1865-1935) influenced the Islamic revivalists in Kerala.[136] The revivalist Islam was a novel experience to the lower class. The revivalists were known as *puthan vadikal*[137] among the Mappilas. The sufis and majority of the local ulamas opposed the revivalists in the beginning itself. The Mamburam Tangals had strongly opposed the *wahabi* or *salafi* understanding of Islam which was conceptualised in Egypt. Sayyid Shaykh Jifri Tangal (A. D. 1726- 1808) had written an Arabic work entitled *Al Irshadat al Jifriyah-fi-raddi ala Dalalat* during his time against the Wahabi movement.[138] This work was written

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[133] David A. Kerr, Islamic Da'wa and Christian Mission: Towards a Comparative Analysis. *International Review of Mission* (Vol. 89: 353), pp. 150- 171.

[134] See David A. Kerr, Islamic Da'wa and Christian Mission: Towards a Comparative Analysis. pp. 153-156; and M. Abdul Samad. *Islam in Kerala*. pp. 23-38.

[135] M. Abdul Samad, *Islam in Kerala: Groups and Movements in the 20th Century* (Kollam: Laurel Publications, 1998). pp. 25-41.

[136] M. Abdul Samad, *Islam in Kerala*. pp. 23-38.

[137] 'Puthan Vadikal' means those who are preaching new concepts about the religion.

decades before the arrival of revivalist thoughts in Kerala. The revivalist thoughts arrived at south Malabar mainly through the activities of Sanaullah Makthi Tangal. His works engaged with Christian missionaries. Later, Mappilas like Chalilakath Kunhahammed Haji and Saidalikutty Master were drawn towards the works of Makthi Tangal.

Christian Missionaries and Mappila Encounter

As against the global and north Indian Islamic revivalism, in Malabar it had only two major aims.[139] They did not fight against the British, but defended it. But, they disapproved of the Christian missionaries and the local ulamas. The activities of the Christian missionaries passively helped the growth of Islamic revivalism. Their methods of evangelising were provoking to the local Mappila ulamas. Preaching of gospels in the streets, door to door campaign in the villages, and the prints in the vernacular languages had played a role in the conversion to Christianity in Malabar.[140] The missionaries preached individually and each of them selected different regions or villages for preaching the gospel.[141] The missionaries of the Basel Mission preached in the public places and distributed pamphlets introducing Christ and extracts of Biblical stories. Public preaching and distribution of pamphlets were supposed to be the first experience of its kind in Malabar.[142]

Local festivals and carnivals were other places selected for preaching Christianity. Mappila and non-Brahmin festivals related to agriculture were used by the Basel Mission

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[138] Wahabi movement was introduced by the revivalist thoughts of Ibn Abdul wahabm in Arabia, a contemporary of Jifri Thangal. See. K. K Abdul Sathar. *Ba-Alawis of Kerala* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Calicut. 1998), p. 24.

[139] Mahmoud M. Ayoub. *Islam: Faith and History* (Oxford: One World Publications, 2004), pp. 197-209.

[140] 39th Report of the Basel Evangelical Mission Society for the Year of 1878 (Mangalore, 1879), p. 57. Cited in C. R. Raina. *The Basel Mission and Social Change in Malabar* (Unpublished M. Phil Dissertation, University of Calicut. 1988), p. 69.

[141] Ibid.

[142] Ernest William Thayyil. *Brief History of Malyala Basel Mission Church* (Manglore: Basel Mission Press. 1934; Reprint. 1989), p. 49.

for preaching gospels.[143] On such occasions, the missionaries had to face both favourable and unfavourable responses. Gospels were preached in the vernacular languages. In 1905, they printed and distributed translation of the Bible in Arabic-Malayalam.[144]

Missionaries had to face protests from the native people, especially from the upper caste Hindus and Mappilas. The preaching of gospels was easier among the Hindus rather than among the Muslims.[145] Since most of the Mappilas had already converted to Islam, there were not for another religious conversion.[146] However, as the Basel mission reports record, isolated Mappila conversions to Christianity had happened in its early days.[147] The history of Basel mission claims that the converts from Islam to Christianity had to face life threats from Mappilas. Hence, the Mappila converts to Christianity were sent out of Malabar.[148] Whereas the socially and economically backward Mappilas challenged Christian missionaries with protests, the educated Mappilas engaged in debates comparing Christianity with Islam.[149] The missionaries had to face strong challenges from Hindus also, especially from the upper castes. But the lower castes of Malabar, especially the Tiyyas, were attracted by the missionary activities and utilized religious conversion as an opportunity against the caste system. The protest of Hindus and Muslims against the missionaries was due to their criticism of Hinduism and Islam and their depiction of Christianity as a better substitute.[150]

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[143] C. R. Raina, *The Basel Mission and Social Change in Malabar*, p. 37.

[144] *Injeelu Luka (Arabi-Malayalam translation of Luke-Bible)* - (Madras, 1905). Copy of this is available at Moyinkutty Vaidyar Memorial Reference and Research Library, Kondotty- Kerala.

[145] 57th Annual Report of Basel German Evangelical Mission for 1896 (Mangalore, 1897), p. 81. Cited in C. R. Raina, *The Basel Mission and Social Change in Malabar*, p. 72.

[146] K. K. N Kurup, *'Significance of the Studies Based on the Archival Collection in the Mission House in Basel with Special Reference to Kerala',Journal of Kerala Studies* (Vol. 5, December 1978), pp. 457-61.

[147] Ernest William Thayyi, *Brief History of Malyala Basel Mission Church*, p. 22.

[148] Ibid.

[149] 67th Report of the Basel German Evangelical Mission for 1906 (Mangalore, 1907), p. 78. Cited in C. R. Raina, *The Basel Mission and Social Change in Malabar*, p. 78.

Muslim revivalists faced the missionaries theologically through prints and debates. It cannot be said that the initial activities of Muslim scholars against the Christian missionaries were organised. The anti-missionary activities in Malabar were carried on by a few Muslim scholars and it was without the support of the Muslim public.[151] Anti-missionary activities in Malabar were initiated by the revivalist, Sanaullah Makthi Tangal.[152] K. N. Panikkar remarks, 'In the growth of a collective identity among the Mappilas the anti-missionary campaign of Makthi Tangal was not an insignificant influence.'[153]

Sayyid Sanaullah Makthi Sakhaf Tangal was born in 1847 at Veliyankode.[154] Makthi Tangal is supposed to be the first Muslim scholar who wrote and spoke in Malayalam.[155] His forefathers belonged to the Saqaf tribe of Arabia and he claimed himself as belonging to the Sayyid family.[156] His father, Ahmaad Makthi, was a translator under the British administration.[157] Thus he got an opportunity to enter Higher Elementary School at Chavakkad, Thrissur.[158] He had learned Malayalam, English,

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[150] In another context of Tamilnadu, M. S. S. Pandian argued, 'The business of convincing and converting was an act of verbalizing religions via comparison. The flood of words – spoken and printed-unleashed by Missionaries, and native responses to these were central to the formation of these identities.' M. S. S. Pandian, *Brahmin and Non-Brahmin: Genealogies of Tamil Political Present* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2002), p. 19.

[151] K. T. Hussain, *Kerala Muslimkal: Adhinivesa Virudha Porattathinte Pratheya Sasthram* (Calicut: Islamic Publishing House, 2008), pp. 96-107.

[152] M. Gangadharan, *Mappila Padanangal*, pp. 75-77.

[153] K. N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and State: Religion and Present Uprisings in Malabar, 1836-1921* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 65.

[154] M. Gangadharan, 'Sanaullah Makthi Thagal: Njanamkondu Poruthiya Parishkarthavu', in *Makthi Thangalude Samboorna Krithikal* (Calicut: Kerala Islamic Mission, 1981; Reprint: Vachanam Books, 2006), p. 12.

[155] Ibid.

[156] C. K Kareem (ed.), *Kerala Muslim History, Statistics, and Directory, vol. III* (Cochin: Charithram Publications, 1991), p. 412.

[157] M. Abdul Samad, *Islam in Kerala*, p. 43.

Hindusthani, Persian and Tamil.[159] Since he was a polyglot, Makthi Tangal was appointed as the Excise Inspector under the British administration.[160]

During the period of his service under colonial administration, Christian religious proselytism got strengthened in Malabar under the leadership of Basel mission. Their modes of propagation depicted a putatively distorted version of Islam.[161] In 1884, at the age of 36, Makthi Tangal resigned his job to oppose the anti-Islam propaganda by Christian missionaries.[162] To a great extent, he adopted the same methods of the missionaries.[163] He criticised the concept of trinity, the very basis of Christian theology.[164] *Kadora Koodaram* published in 1884 was his first work criticising Christian theology. When the missionaries produced counter arguments, he again challenged them through *Kadora Vajram*, *Parkkalitha Porkkalam*, *Sathyadarshini*, *Thrishivaperoor Vayadappu*, *Thandaan Kandamala*, *Thandante Konda Chenda*, *Makthi Samvada Jayam*, *Jayananda Kosham*, *Suvishesha Namam*, *Makthi Thangal Aagosham Mashiha Mathamoola Nasham*, and *Christiya Moodarppanam*.[165]

'Nabi Nanayam', his work pointing out the mistakes in the 'Muhammad Charitram' of Gundert, was the first history of prophet to be published in Malayalam by a Muslim.[166] In addition to the publications, Makthi Tangal initiated inter-religious debates. He gave newspaper advertisements for public debates and even promised reward for the winning

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[158] Ibid.

[159] M. Gangadharan. *Mappila Padanangal*. p. 12.

[160] Gangadharan, M., Sanaullah Makthi Thagal: Njanamkondu Poruthiya Parishkarthavu, p. 12.

[161] Ibid., p. 13.

[162] Ibid.

[163] Ibid.

[164] K. T. Hussain, *Kerala Muslimkal: Adhinivesa Virudha Porattathinte Pratheya Sasthram*, p.98.

[165] *Makthi Tangalude Samboorna Krithikal* (Collected work of Makthi Tangal). (Calicut: Islamic Mission. 1981. Reprint; Vachanam Books. 2006), pp. 27-387.

[166] Ibid., pp. 221-270.

opponents. As per his advertisement in *Keralopakari*, a newspaper from Kozhikkode, Christian missionaries engaged in a public debate with him in 1874.[167] Similar debates had occurred in various parts of Kerala. Usually such public debates ended up in conflicts.[168] Christian missionaries were beaten up in Malabar where Muslims were the majority and Makthi Tangal and his associates were beaten in southern Kerala where Christians were the majority.[169]

Makthi Tangal notes, 'Christian preachers speak in the streets and at the places of festivals. They denigrate other religions to praise theirs. They ridicule the Qur'an and the Prophet in front of the Muslims and ridicule the legends and its carriers of the Hindus. It is certain that this will create grief in the heart of the believers'. [170] Even then, he praised the missionaries' interest in religious proselytism: 'Actually, the missionaries' activities for their religion are laudable. They take care of the believers and teach them various skills. If one of them becomes adept, they send him for missionary activities.'[171] He further writes, 'They conduct comparative studies of religions, publish and distribute related books and teach them in schools. It is to be understood that their readiness for religious proselytism with both money and body is their right and a virtuous action.'[172]

Makthi's attitude towards colonialism is evident in his speeches and writings. He supported colonial rule in India.[173] He praised the British colonial rule thus: 'You think of the justice, rules and wellness of subjects under the rule of the earlier rulers and your

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[167] Makthi Tangal. 'Kadora Kudaram', in *Makthi Tangalude Samboorna Krithikal* . p. 96.

[168] Makthi Tangal. 'Thrishivaperur Krsitheeya vayadappu', in *Makthi Tangalude Samboorna Krithikal*, p. 182.

[169] 67th Report of the Basel German Evangelical Mission for 1906 (Mangalore, 1907), p. 78. And Makthi Tangal, *Thrishivaperur Krsitheeya vayadappu* . p. 183.

[170] Tangal, Makthi S., 'Kadora Kudaram', p. 29.

[171] Ibid., p. 30.

[172] Ibid., pp. 30-31.

[173] Ibid., pp. 29-30.

present happiness and wellness. Who else has enjoyed equality and happiness irrespective of castes and creeds as under this government?'[174] The government had invited Makthi Tangal to Malabar to end the violence of Mappilas against the British colonial rule and upper caste landlords in south Malabar.[175]

He asked the Muslims to distinguish between British colonialism and missionary activities as two independent entities.[176] But, the Malabar Mappilas saw Christian missionaries as a part of British colonialism. Mamburam Tangal had argued that the colonial reign and Christian missionaries were connected. The Mappilas of south Malabar who were the followers of the Mamburam Tangal also believed so. In a *fatwa* against the colonial rule, Sayyid Alawi Tangal stated, 'Europeans are the worst unbelievers. If any Muslims praise the Christians and their rule, it is a sin and he should repent for it. If one praises the Christian belief he becomes an infidel and God's anger fall upon him.'[177] Against the Mamburam Tangal's *fatwa*, Makthi Tangal argued, 'Our government's path is also Christianity. But, their consideration of the subjects without religious discrimination and legislation of laws for living in their own beliefs are clear... Some ignorants think that the missionaries are aided by the British government. This misunderstanding causes for the loss of impression among its subjects of our just government.'[178]

Makthi Tangal thought that the lower caste conversion to Christianity was out of their ignorance and desire for material gains.[179] He argued that the missionaries conducted conversion by providing various physical facilities such as hospitals, schools,

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[174] Ibid., p. 30.

[175] Makthi Tangal, 'Makthi Manaklesham', in *Makthi Thangalude Samboorna Krithikal* ,pp. 698-700

[176] Makthi Tangal, *Kadora Kudaram* ,pp. 29-30.

[177] Sayyid Fazal, *Uddat al-Umara wal Hukkam li-Ihannathil Kaffarath wa-Abadat al-Asanam* (Egypt, 1856). cited in K. K Abdul Sathar. *Ba-Alawis of Kerala*. p. 32.

[178] Makthi Tangal. *Kadora Kudaram* ,pp. 29-30.

[179] Ibid., pp. 92-96.

and factories.[180] Giving the possible reasons for the slower growth of Islam as compared to Christianity, Makthi claimed, 'Firstly, Kerala is not under Muslim political power. Secondly, there are neither funds nor an organised form for religious proselytism. Qur'an is not yet translated to the vernacular languages. Thirdly, there is the poverty-stricken life of the local Muslims. Fourthly, they had to get the assent of the government for conversion. Some government officers make disturbances and prohibit the conversion activities. Conversion to Islam is less due to these factors.'[181] He also criticised the Muslims for their lack of interest in propagating their religion: 'The lack of resources and ignorance hinder Kerala Muslims from religious propagation. Many changes are seen in the community as a result of my twenty-seven year long activities. Many orators came up from the community. Scholars collected resources for religious activities and an organisation named 'Islam Sahaya Sangam' was formed at Ponnani. Still, Muslims did not dare to conduct speeches of religious propagation or to write religious articles which were the need of the time.'[182]

Revivalist Criticism against Islamic Syncretism

This phase of Islamisation questioned the regional variety of Islam which assimilated the local beliefs and customs.[183] Differences on Islamic theology already existed among the Mappilas. Two groups, one led by Kondotty Tangals and the other by Ponnani Tangals, were the important ones.[184] Thurston had reported a fight between these two groups in 1909.[185] They quarreled on categorizing what was Islamic and un-Islamic. But the coming of Makthi Tangal challenged the native intermediaries, the *Mullas* and the *musliars*.

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[180] Thangal. Makthi S.. Thangal. Makthi S.. *Thrishivaperur Krsitheeya vayadappu* . pp. 208-210.

[181] Ibid.

[182] Makthi Tangal. 'Thandan Kondamala'. in Kareem. *Makthi Tangalude Samboorna Krithikal,* p. 273.

[183] V. P. Mappila Sahib Bahdur. *Sahadathudarain Adhava Iruloka Vijayam* (Thalasseri: Malabar Muslim Press. 1934).

[184] C. N. Ahmad Moulavi and K. K. Muhammad Abdulkareem. *Mahathaya Mappila,* pp. 318-321.

[185] Edgar Thurston. *Caste and Tribes of Southern India*. p. 461.

When revivalists like Makthi Tangal criticized many customs as un-Islamic, it created anxiety and confusion among the converted Mappilas. *La Mawjudin-la-Pointu* is an article written by Makthi Tangal criticizing the widespread Sufi thoughts among the Malabar Mappilas.[186] He argued for a centralised religious leadership and discipline as in Christianity.[187]As against his arguments, one *musliar* issued a fatwa saying that following missionary work and preaching like Christians was against the decree of Quran.[188]

The revivalists took up the question of education of the Mappilas.[189] Chalilakath Kunhahammed Haji (A. D 1866-1919) was a champion of reforming the religious education of the Mappilas. Later, he came to be known as 'Kerala Sir Sayyid'. He initiated shifting the religious education from 'othupalli' to 'madrassa'. 'Othupalli', as mentioned earlier, was an earlier religious education system and its well institutionalized form was called 'Madrassas'. This change in the mode of religious education was later known as Madrasa Movement.[190] In 1910, Vazhakkad Darul Uloom was built in south Malabar which was the first madrasa in Kerala. The goals of madrasa are said to provide religious education in Arabic and material education in mother tongue, and thus to inculcate virtue, piety and civilization among the Muhammadans.[191] In addition to theology, language and mathematics were also included in the syllabus.[192]

The Maunathul-Islam Sabha: New Modes of Religious Conversion

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[186] Makthi Tangal, 'La Mawjudin-la-Pointu', in *Makthi Tangalude Samboorna Krithikal*, p. 273.

[187] Makthi Tangal, 'Tandankandamala', in *Makthi Tangalude Samboorna Krithikal*, p. 273.

[188] Ibid., p. 274.

[189] The 2nd Anniversary Report of the Madurasthul Muhammadiya Secondary School, Calicut (Calicut: Lekshmi Vilasum Press, 1920).

[190] A. B Moideen Kutty, 'Moulana Chalilakathum Vazhakkadu Darul Uloomum', in *Prabodhanam Weekly* (Special Issue, 1998), p. 112.

[191] Booklet titled, *'Vazhakkad Madrasa Darul Uloom Enna Vivitha Vidyalaya Niyamangalil Ninnu'*, dated 1 January 1913. This was collected from the private collection of late K. K. Abdul Kareem.

[192] A. B Moideen Kutty, *Moulana Chalilakathum*, p. 113.

As part of Islamic revivalism, Christian missionary methods were imitated. These could be seen among the Mappilas from the beginning of the twentieth century. The activities of the Himayathul Islam Sabha and the Maunathul-Islam Sabha are instances of this. The nature of religious conversion changed with the formation of the Maunathul-Islam Sabha at Ponnani in south Malabar. Until then, converting to Islam was an easy practice that could be formalised by any local mullah or other Muslims. But, with the coming of the Sabha, conversions had to be done with the permission and under the supervision of the Sabha authority; and the Sabha was always under the control of elite Mappilas.

The foundation of Sabha was laid by Saithalikutty Master -- the editor of *Swalahul Ikhvan*, the first Mappila newspaper which was launched in 1899, a government employee hailing from south Malabar, and a proponent of Islamic reformation in the nineteenth century -- and Manadayapurath Bava Moopan, a school subinspector and a member of the Moopan family of south Malabar.[193] A meeting of the Mappila elites and religious leaders was held at Malappuram in 1900. The decision to found the Sabha was unanimously taken in the meeting.[194] The Maunathul–Islam Sabha was registered in 1900 under section 26 of the Indian Companies Act.[195] Its prime role was to mediate the religious conversion and to provide protection to converts. The Sabha records also state that the main objectives of the Sabha were the promotion of education among Muslims, the encouragement of charity, the removal of misconception and the inculcation of correct principles, the representation of the grievances of Muslims to the Government, the conciliation of differences among Muslims and imparting of essential instruction to the new converts to Islam.[196]

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[193] C. N. Ahmad Moulavi and K. K. Muhammad Abdulkareem. *Mahathaya Mappila*, p. 67.

[194] Ibid.

[195] Letter from Valiya Jarathingal Syed Aboobacker Tangal, the President of the Sabha to the Hon'ble Home Minister, Government of Madras, dated on 2. 10.1950.

[196] Ibid.

In the matter of conversion, the Sabha explained its policy thus: 'The arrangements made by the Sabha for initial services to the new adherents of Islam have been attracting people from different parts of the region, who voluntarily desire to embrace Islam, to come to the premises of the Sabha and undergo the course of religious instruction given there. A regular register of such people is being maintained by the Sabha and admission to minors is refused unless they are brought by their parents.'[197]

The official record says that 31,660 Hindus converted to Islam between 1900 and 1949. [198] The methods of conversion under the Sabha were different from that under Sufi centers and the mosques. Those who volenteered for conversion had to sign a testimony that the conversion was entirely his own decision and there was no external compulsion.[199] Men had to shave their heads, circumcise and wear a cap.[200] Women had to wear blouse and scarf like the local Mappila women. Books in familiar languages were given to them and religious practices were initiated by priests.[201] They would return to their villages after two months of initiation. Some would work in the firms under the Sabha.[202] The projects to rehabilitate the lower caste converts were started extensively in the 1930's.[203] The expenditure of the Sabha was met by the Mappilas. The upper class Mappilas were the heads of the Sabha. Several cases related to the authenticity of the sabha had come before the court. Quarrels between Abdurahiman Sahib, a Congress leader, and Attakoya Tangal, the President of the Sabha, lasted for a long period. Abdurahiman Sahib and his followers boycotted the 33rd annual conference of the Sabha

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[197] Ibid.

[198] Report of the Tahsildar, Eranad to the Joint Magistrate, Malappuram -Dated on 22.03.1950. G. O. No. 265- Confidential- Dated 05.02.1951.

[199] Letter from the District Superintendent of Police (Malabar- Calicut), to the Inspector General of Police, Madras. G. O. No. 265- confidential-Dated 05. 02.1951.

[200] Ibid.

[201] Ibid.

[202] Ibid.

[203] Welcome Speech by Khan Saheb V. Attakoya Tangal, the President of Sabha, 1934. Report of 33rd Annual Conference of Maunathul-Islam Sabha in *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 29 April 1934, p. 8.

in 1933 which was held under the presidentship of Shoukathali, one of the national leaders of the Khilafath Movement.[204]

Islamic Movements: Islahi Movement and Sunni Movement

The third stage of Islamisation started with the formation of Islamic movements in the 20th century. The first organized Islamic movement began at Kodungallur in the central Kerala. Kodungallur was mainly inhabited by upper class Mappilas. Familial feuds among the upper class Mappilas of Kodungallur, Mappila migration to Kodungallur following the Malabar revolt of 1921, the introduction of revivalist thoughts by Makthi Tangal etc., paved the way for the formation of an Islamic organization in 1922. It took roots in the southern Kerala but was not popular in Malabar, particularly in south Malabar until the 1930's.

Islahi movement, based on the Islamic revivalist ideas, was founded in Kerala under the leadership of Hamdani Shaykh and Vakkom Muhammad Abdul Qadir Moulavi, leaders of Muslim reformation in south Kerala. It became a Salafi movement or a Wahabi movement after completing various stages of evolution. It was first known as the *Nispaksha sangham*, and later as the Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham. The movement was founded by a group of Mappila elites and English educated men. The *Nispaksha Sangam*was launched in 1922.[205] Its primary aim was to resolve familial feuds among upper class Mappilas.[206] Its first annual meet was held at Eriyadu in central Kerala in 1923. It was renamed as the Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham since its branches were formed in different parts of Kerala. The first meeting passed a sanction against Islamic syncretism prevalent among Muslims.[207] This made the majority of Mappilas, especially

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[204] *Mathrubhumi Daily*. 1 May 1934. P. 7.

[205] E. K. Moulavi. 'Kerala Muslim Aikya Sanghavum Navodhanavum', in P. A. Syedmuhammad (ed.), *Kerala Muslim Directory* (Cochin: Kerala Publications. 1960). pp. 468-477.

[206] Ibid.

[207] Ibid.

in south Malabar, to turn against them. The members and the well-wishers of the league came to be known as *wahabis*.[208]

The four major goals of the Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham are: 1) to unite the Muslims for their common welfare by avoiding internal conflicts; 2) to educate the Muslims through pamphlets, books, public speech etc.; 3) to form a committee to resolve the quarrels among the Muslim elite families; and 4) to reform the community on religious, economic and moral matters by eradicating the un-Islamic rites and rituals.[209] The activities of Islahi movement in south Kerala spread to Malabar in the 1930's. In 1931, an organization known as *Muslim Majlis* was formed at Thalasseri by the upper class Muslims of Malabar and Madras. In 1934, the Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham merged with the *Muslim Majlis*.[210] As different from the Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham, *Muslim Majlis* tried to represent all the Muslims of Kerala. The pamphlet issued on the occasion of its formation says, '*Muslim Majlis* is not exclusively for some region or persons. All the fifteen lakhs of Kerala Muslims have rights to it. It welcomes all without making any distinction between traditionalist or revivalist, scholars or commoners and rich or poor.'[211] But, the members and the officials of the organization were English educated Mappilas, employees under colonial administration, and landlords and religious elites.[212] The Mappila representation in these organizations from south Malabar was only nominal. The Muslim organizations formed in the twentieth century failed to accommodate the rural lower caste Mappilas. Moreover, such organizations classified their beliefs and customs as un-Islamic and criticized their political fights against the landlords. Active members of the Indian National Congress and the Muslim league

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[208] M. Abdul Samad. *Islam in Kerala*. p. 81.

[209] *Muslim Aikhya Sangham Niyamangal* (Muslim Aikhya Sangham. 1923). p. 3.

[210] E. Moidu Moulavi, *Salafi Prasthanam: Adhyakala Charithram* (Calicut: Al-Huda Books, 1992). p. 35.

[211] Extract of the Pamphlet cited in P.P. Mammadkoya. *Kozhikotte Muslimkalude Charithram* (Calicut: Focus Publications, 1994; Reprint. 2012). p. 204.

[212] Parappil Mammadkoya. *Kozhikotte Muslimkalude Charithram*. p. 203-214.

shared the leadership of the *Muslim Majlis*. Their political quarrels adversely affected the activities of Muslim Majlis.[213]

Kerala Jam'iyyathul Ulama was an organization inspired by Islamic revivalist thoughts, formed in the second annual meet of the Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham in 1924.[214] Their prime aim was to conduct theological discussions and to issue *fatwas* based on revivalist thoughts. Opposed to such revivalism, *Samastha Kerala Jami'yyathul Ulama* was founded in 1925 by a group of scholars who followed Sufism.[215] Samastha could exert influence among the rural Mappilas of south Malabar since it acknowledged the traditional beliefs and customs and was actively working among the lower class Mappilas. Followers of the Samastha were known as 'sunni'.[216]

The three stages of Islamisation process in the nineteenth and the twentieth century Malabar are discussed in this chapter. The first stage marked the presence of syncretistic tradition based on Sufi tradition, the second stage was the origin of Islamic revivlism and the third stage was the formation of Islamic movements. The first stage was prominent in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The second stage began in the beginning of the twentieth century and the third stage happened after the 1920's. The first stage, that was based on Sufi tradition, Islamised the local culture and customs and simplified the new religion to attract the local society. The Sufis' readiness to engage socially without caste restrictions gained them social approval, especially among the lower caste Hindus. This social support of the Sufis also helped the growth of Islam in Malabar.

Islamic revivalism originated in west-Asia and Egypt in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries had its impact in Malabar also. Islamic revivalism entered Malabar by

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[213] Ibid.

[214] *Proceedings of Second Annual Conference of Kerala Muslim Aikhya Sangam* (held at Alwaye), 10-11 May 1924.

[215] *6th Annual Report of Samstha Kerala Jam-iyyathul Ulama*, 5 March 1933.

[216] P. P. Muhammad Faizee, *Samastha* (Tirurangadi: Samstha Kerala Jam-iyyathul Ulama Tirurangadi Taluk Committee, 2005), P. 16.

opposing Sufi tradition as un-Islamic and by rejecting Islamic syncretistic tradition. The ideological conflicts between the Sufi and the revivalist traditions in Malabar led to the formation of Islamic movements. The formation of Sunni and Salafi movements after the 1920's was a result of these ideological conflicts.

Several rituals and beliefs such as nercca, mawlid, rathib etc were formed in Malabar as a part of Sufi tradition. These rituals played vital roles in the community formation of the converted Mappilas. The origin and development of Arabic-Malayalam language was also related to the Sufi tradition and Islamisation of Mappilas. The identity formation of the Mappilas free from the caste system was facilitated by the engagements of the Sufis.

Though the revivalists could challenge the Sufi tradition in Malabar, it could not obliterate its influence and impact among the Mappilas. Whereas the Sufi tradition was influential among the lower castes, Islamic revivalism was centred around the elite Mappilas. Sufi tradition took root in South Malabar by opposing the caste-based socio-economic system and colonialism. But, the revivalists' aim was to oppose the Sufi tradition and the syncretistic tradition among the local Mappilas.

IV

Collective Resistance by South Malabar Mappilas

This chapter analyses the militant resistance offered by the rural Mappilas during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries against caste-based oppression and the role of religious conversion in the same. The Malabar rebellion of 1921 is deliberately excluded from this chapter since it was quite different in its nature, aims and participation from the previous resistances. According to Panikkar, 'The early uprisings were isolated incidents with limited participation, but later uprisings gained support which culminated in 1921 in one of the massive armed revolts of the colonial period.'[1] Whereas the revolt of 1921 was a collective militant action against the colonial rule, the earlier ones were mainly against the upper castes. The revolt of 1921 took place against the background of the Khilafath movement, the problems of the tenants, and the engagements of the Indian National Congress with the Mappilas.[2] But the resistances by the lower class Mappilas against the caste-based oppression had no external support. Their motivation behind their resistance was the collective memory or experience of enslavement by the caste system.

T. L. Strange, who was appointed to inquire about the Mappila resistances in 1852, has recorded thirty one such resistances.[3] He records that the first event of resistance happened in 1836.[4] But, many resistances went unrecorded by the colonial state since they were considered not relevant enough. The conflict on a riverbank in south Malabar in 1789 is such an instance. The conflict arose when two upper caste men ordered the Mappilas to go away to avoid 'pollution'. The Mappilas took it as an act of

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[1] K. N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar, 1836-1921* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. ix.

[2] K. Gopalankutty, *Malabar Padanangal* (Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Basha Institute, 2007), pp. 17-34.

[3] 'Report by Special Commissioner's Office, Tellicherry, dated on 25 September 1852', in *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages, 1849-53*, vol. I (Madras: Government Press, 1863), p. 399.

[4] Ibid., p. 400.

humiliation.[5] This chapter analyses instances of Mappila resistances in the colonial Malabar officially recorded between 1836 and 1919.

Early Resistance by Mappilas

The first instance of resistance by the rural Mappilas, according to Strange's report, had occurred on 26 November 1836. It was about the murder of an upper caste Hindu, Kanooshen Chaeko Panikkar, by a Mappila named Kallingal Cunjolen and his consequent death at the hands of the police.[6] The report does not identify the motive for the murder. It was on 15 November 1836, just ten days before that incident, that the government had issued the proclamation to exempt the slaves from paying the annual tax as a part of its attempts towards the abolition of slavery due to the pressure from Christian missionaries.

There had occurred nine Mappila resistances between the proclamation of the freedom of government-owned slaves in 1836 and the complete abolition of slavery in 1843.[7] The first resistance occurred in 1836, the second in 1837, the third and the fourth in 1839, the fifth in 1840 and the remaining four in 1841.[8] The colonial state enacted the Act of V in 1843 that abolished slavery in Malabar.[9] Subsequently, the district Collector Conolly took measures to circulate the terms of the law across the district.[10] The district Collector also advised the slaves to stay with their masters for 'their own good', if the masters were 'kind'.[11] The colonial state had foreseen the possibility of attempts by the

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[5] *Proceedings of Second Malabar Commission*, 1798. Cited in M. Gangadharan, *Mappila Padanangal* (Calicut: Vachanam Books, 2004), p. 55.

[6] *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages, 1849-53*, vol. I. p. 400.

[7] *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages, 1849-53*, vol. I. pp. 399- 401.

[8] Ibid.

[9] William Logan, *Malabar Manual*. Vol. I (Madras: Government Press, 1887; Reprint, 1951), p. 151.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

slaves to liberate themselves with the aid of the colonial law. So they were keen to avoid slave-master conflicts.

The order issued by the Company Directors' Court in 1845 had warned the officials of the discontentment on the part of landlords if the law was enacted by creating uneasiness between the masters and the slaves and that they might indict the state for injustice and breach of loyalty.[12] Thus, from the beginning, the colonial state was keen not to lose the support of the upper caste Hindu landlords. As T. M. Yesudasan comments, 'Since the Dalits were illiterate they remained as slaves for a long time even after the proclamation. This shows the strength of the traditional rules to resist and nullify the emancipatory possibilities of the civil laws (colonial laws) in favour of the interest of the traditional system.'[13]

William Logan notes in his Malabar Manual that the Cherumas could not understand the meaning of true freedom until and unless there was legislation for the permanent right over their tenancy.[14] It is indeed the right over the land that determines a slave's complete freedom. But, the notion that they did not have the desire for freedom is misplaced.[15] The massive conversion of Cherumas to Islam in Malabar had occurred in the background of the abolition of slavery. The first conversion of a Pulaya slave to protestant Christianity occurred in central Kerala in September 1856.[16]

The resistances of Mappila in the second half of the nineteenth century were comparatively more organised and stronger. It was mainly due to five reasons. Firstly, after the release of Strange's report in 1853, the Mappilas were suppressed by the

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[12] Ibid.

[13] T. M. Yesudasan. *Balyadukalude Vamshaavali: Separate Administration Movementinte Vamshavum Avirbhaavavum* (Thiruvananthapuram: Prabhatha Book House, 2010), p. 2.

[14] William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Vol. I, p. 151.

[15] T. M. Yesudasan, *Balyadukalude Vamshaavali*, p. 37.

[16] Ibid., p. 14.

colonial state by representing them as criminals or fanatics.[17] Secondly, the upper caste landlords began to evict the Mappila tenants from their lands using their power and the colonial laws.[18] Thirdly, there was massive lower caste conversion to Islam in the second half of the nineteenth century; and this challenged the caste rules.[19] Fourth, Sayyid Fazal Pookoya Tangal who had been the mediator of the political and social engagements of the lower class Mappilas of south Malabar, had to flee for Arabia due to the pressure from the colonial state.[20] This act of colonial state compelled Mappila to take revenge against the state. Fifth, the mosques had played a significant role in Islamising the converted subaltern Mappilas. After the publication of Strange's report, the construction of new mosques and mosque-centered conversions were brought under control.[21]

In order to understand the caste question in Mappila militant resistances, the nature and causes of the resistances are to be understood. The incidents at Cherur and Thuvur are significant in the history of Mappila resistances due to the length of duration and high participation. Knowledge of these two militant resistances would be helpful in understanding how the caste disabilities happened to be a provocation for Mappila resistances.

Mappila Resistance of 1843

The Cherur resistance took place in 1843, the year when slavery was legally abolished in Malabar. T. L. Strange described this incident as 'a case of pure

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[17] Report from the Special Commissioner in Malabar. No. 908, dated the 25th of September 1852; reporting on the Outrages committed of late years by Moplahs in that Province, and suggesting measures for their suppression, in *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages*, Vol. I. pp. 485-490.

[18] Correspondence regarding the Relations of Landlords and Tenants in Malabar. 1852-1856. p. 8. Cited in K. N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and State*. p. 40.

[19] William Logan, *Malabar Manual*. Vol. I. pp. 191-199.

[20] Letter from the Magistrate of Malabar, dated the 7th February 1852, relative to the seizure and deportation of the Tiruwangady Tangal. in *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages*. pp. 266-267.

[21] G. O. No. 170, dated the 25th January 1881, Judicial Department. Government of Madras. 1881.

fanaticism'.[22] It is the incident in which seven Mappilas murdered an upper caste Hindu landlord named Kaprat Krishna Panikkar.[23] The incident of Cherur resistance would help to understand the mode and motivations of lower caste women in religious conversion to Islam in south Malabar.

The family of Kaprat Panikkar belonged to a renowned upper caste clan in Venniyoor near Tirurangadi. His ancestors had worked as soldiers for the Zamorin of Calicut.[24] Kaprat clan could not be said to be in enmity with the Muslims for Kaprat Krishna Panikkar and Mamburam Sayyid Alavi Jifri Tangal were said to be friends.[25] But the clan's approach to the lower caste converts differed from that towards the elite Muslims. There were many Cheruma slaves under the control of Panikkar as his janmam right and otherwise. Two women slaves of his and their four children converted to Islam through Mamburam Tangal.[26] A. K. Kodur, a popular historian, narrates the circumstances of their conversion thus: 'Chakki, a lower caste maid of Kaprat family, consulted Mamburam Tangal when she was ailing from scabies. He prayed for her and suggested a local herbal medicine. She had sworn before Tangal that she would accept Islam if she's cured.'[27] Despite being in the midst of the complexities of the caste system, a lower caste woman could approach Mamburam Tangal. Also the social engagements of Sufis were evidently not limited to the Muslims only.

When she was cured, she along with another woman and their four children came before Tangal and accepted Islam.[28] As mentioned earlier, women converted to Islam

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[22] Report by Special Commissioner's Office, Tellicherry, dated on 25 September 1852', in *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages, 1849-53*, vol. I, p. 414.

[23] Ibid.

[24] A. K. Kodur, *Anglo-Mappila Yuddham, 1921* (Malappuram: 1921-Viplavanusmarana Samithi, 1999), p. 52.

[25] Ibid.

[26] *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages, 1849-53*, vol. I, p. 415.

[27] A. K. Kodur, *Anglo-Mappila Yuddham, 1921*, p. 52.

[28] *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages, 1849-53*, vol. I, p. 414.

used to wear upper clothes and scarf known as 'kuppayam and thattom'. The woman continued to work in the household of Krishnan Panikkar with these symbols of religious conversion.[29] Using her new social status, the converted woman addressed the landlord by his name and dared to stand in front of him.[30] As per the caste system, that was an infraction of caste rules and punishable. When she was ordered to be punished as per caste rules, she opposed it showing her new religious symbols.[31] A provoked Panikkar tore her dress and abused her calling by her old caste name. He imprisoned the converted women.[32]

The predicament of the converted women made Tangal upset and he expressed his anxiety over the safety of the lower caste converted Mappilas.[33] A group of Mappilas decided to kill Krishna Panikkar who assaulted the converted woman and thereby insulted Tangal.[34] On 19 October 1843, Panikkar was killed at his home by a group of Mappilas led by Kunnatheri Aliaththan.[35] Later, they prepared for an encounter with the colonial police at Cherur. There were about sixty policemen. Though the policemen were made to retreat initially, later all the seven rebels were killed.[36] According to the official records, four policemen also died.[37] The policemen's move to burn the dead bodies of the killed Mappilas was opposed by the community under the leadership of

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[29] Ibid., p. 67.

[30] *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages, 1849-53,* vol. I, p. 415. Stephen F. Dale, *Trade, Conversion, and the Growth of the Islamic Community in Kerala.* p. 67.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Zainudheen Mannalamkunnu. *Prathirodhathinte Verukal* (Calicut: Thejas Publications, 2007), p. 98.

[34] *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages, 1849-53,* vol. I, p. 416.

[35] William Logan, *Malabar Manual.* Vol. I, p. 355.

[36] *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages, 1849-53,* vol. I, p. 417.

[37] Ibid.

Mamburam Tangal and the bodies were buried with proper religious rituals.[38] The Mappilas killed in this resistance were honoured as 'Cherur Shuhadakkal' or Cherur martyrs by the Mappilas.[39] Cherur nercca is annually conducted to commemorate them. A Mappila resistance song entitled '*Sarasarguna Thirutharulamala*' was composed commemorating this incident and eulogizing the seven 'martyrs'.[40] This song was known as '*Cherur Padappattu*'in Malabar.[41] It was written by Mammed Kutty and Moidheen, two residents of Cherur, on 26 November 1844.[42] The song was banned by the colonial state soon after its publication.[43] Logan had noted that this *Padappattu* had stimulated many later armed Mappila resistances.[44]

Mappila Resistance of 1896

The Mappila resistance of 1896 at Eranadu is another instance that shows how caste disabilities and consequent religious conversion result in Mappila resistances. A landlord of Thuvur was murdered by a group of Mappilas led by Moidheen Kutti Musliyar, a local Mappila priest.[45] Before the incident, the colonial officials received an anonymous letter, supposed to be written by the Mappilas, complaining against the upper caste assaults:

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[38] A. K. Kodur, *Anglo-Mappila Yuddham, 1921*, p. 52.

[39] *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages, 1849-53*, vol. I. p. 417.

[40] Mammad Kutty and Muhyudheen. *Sarasarguna Thirutharulamala Padappattu, 1844*. Manuscript available at Mahakavi Moyin Kutty Vaidyar Smaraka Research and Reference Library, Kondotty.

[41] Balakrishnan Vallikkunnu. *Mappila Sahithya Patanangal* (Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Basha Institute, 2011), pp. 115-153.

[42] See Mammad Kutty and Muhyudheen. *Sarasarguna Thirutharulamala Padappattu, 1844*.

[43] C. N. Ahmad Moulavi and K. K. Abdul Kareem. *Mahathaya Mappila Sahithya Parambaryam* (Published by Authors, 1978). p. 300.

[44] William Logan. *Malabar Manual*. Vol. I. p. 355.

[45] *G. O No. 1567, Judicial, 30th September 1896. Government of Madras, p. 106.*

> In the recent outbreak at Pandikkad, mothers and sisters, after being stripped of their clothes, were severely tortured by painful pressure being applied to their breasts, and by introducing into their eyes, nostrils and anal and urinary orifices, thorny sticks, smeared over with ground chilly, sulphate of copper and similar terrible materials. By inflicting such terrorizing cruelties in the manner described, head constables 'Kumaran Nair. Krishnan Nair' and others extorted and amassed large fortunes and reduced us and our sorrow-stricken family and children to poverty. As these miseries were too hard for us to bear any longer, we have been forced to make preparations and to hold ourselves in readiness for an outbreak.[46]

As per the statement of Ambat Aidross who was captured with injuries during the encounter of 1896, three reasons were offered for the resistance.[47] They were: first, to avenge the physical assault of the Muslim women by the upper caste Hindus; second, a converted Tiyya woman had returned to her former self in which the Mappilas doubted the landlord had a hand; and finally, the landlord had tried to demolish the local mosque.[48] It is clear from Fawcett's report that the cruelties inflicted upon the Mappila women by the colonial police and the landlords resulted in anger and resentment.[49] Fawcett reported an incident when a Mappila woman said to her son, who returned wounded from the encounter, 'If I were a man I would not come back wounded.'[50] He has documented that almost all the Mappila women of the region had a similar attitude.[51]

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[46] *F. Fawcett, the Superintend of Police, Malabar, G. O No. 1790, Judicial, 5th June 1896, Government of Madras, p. 106.*

[47] *Statement of Prisoner, Ambat Aidross, Mophla, Aged about 50. Taken at Wandur, 16th March 1896, Judicial, Government of Madras.*

[48] Ibid.

[49] *F. Fawcett, the Superintend of Police, Malabar, G. O No. 1790, Judicial, 5th June 1896, Government of Madras, p. 104.*

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

As mentioned earlier, forty years old Thoppiyitta Kochu Kayan Moidheen Kutti Musliyar was the leader of the resistance.[52] A Cheruma, he had converted to Islam twenty six years before.[53] At that time, he was ill and was given asylum by a Muslim. He had taken an oath that he would convert to Islam, if he got cured. As he got cured, he converted to Islam and engaged in grazing cattle.[54] After his conversion to Islam, his Muslim employer gave him an opportunity to learn Islamic texts.[55] He went to Tanur, one of the coastal regions in south Malabar, and continued his religious studies there for two more years supported by native Mappila charity. After his studies in Tanur, he returned to Malappuram and became a 'mulla'. Few years later, he went to Ponnani, the centre of Islamic education under Makhdum ulamas, intending to obtain the degree of 'musliyar'.[56] But after a study of six months, following an attack of fever and itch, he abandoned his studies and returned to the village, where he made a living as a wandering priest and preacher. For twelve years until the murder in 1896, he lived close to the Thuvur mosque, and preached in that neighbourhood. He used the title 'Muslilyar', although he had not been invested with the title by the Ponnani Makhdum Tangal.[57] He was survived by his wife and three children. His wife and sixteen year old eldest son worked as coolies. He had no property of any description.[58]

The upper caste Hindus did not acknowledge the conversion and the resultant higher social status of the lower castes. It is this reason that led Moidheen Kutti Musliyar to commit the murder of upper caste landlord. Fawcett reported, 'There is the story of his

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[52] The word 'Thopiyitta'/'wearing cap' are suggestive of his conversion and he was called 'Kochu Kayan' for he was handicapped.

[53] *H. M. Winterbotham, Judicial, G. O. No. 791-92, 5th May 1896, Government of Madras, p. 51.*

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

anger against the Thuvur adhikari's (chief landlord) brother who, seeing him walking before him with wooden sandals -- him a Cheruman by birth-- threatened to kick him if he ever wore them again. There is no doubt the Musliyar (who had remained a Cheruman would have thought this quite proper: in fact he would not have dared either to wear wooden sandals or come near the Nair) felt this insult very keenly.'[59] The report of H. M. Winterbotham also says that the Nair landlord had assaulted the Musliyar for polluting his way.[60] According to various documents, the Musliyar expressed on many occasions to his wife his regret at his inability to avenge the insult.[61] This incident had happened a couple of months before the murder.[62]

Moidheen Musliyar began to campaign against the upper caste landlords after his own bitter experience.[63] He exhorted the Mappilas of Thuvur and Chembrasseri to fight against them.[64] He often reminded them of the religious justification for the same. J. T. Gillespie, Assistant Magistrate of Malabar, documented that Musliyar had preached on this at the homes of Mappilas.[65] Winterbotham stated, 'General report attributes to him [Moidheen Musliyar] a leading part in promoting the outbreak. His individual grievance was that a younger brother of the Thuvur Hindu Adhigari, had kicked him or threatened out of his path, as a Cherumarn would be bound to do.'[66] According to Fawcett, most of

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[59] *F. Fawcett, the Superintend of Police, Malabar, G. O No. 1790, Judicial, 5th June 1896, Government of Madras, p. 106*

[60] *H. M. Winterbotham, G. O No. 791-92, Judicial, 5th May 1896, Government of Madras, p. 51.*

[61] See *G. O. No. 1567, J. T. Gillespie, Acting Special Assistant Magistrate, 26th April 1896, Judicial, Government of Madras, pp. 26-27, F. Fawcett, the Superintend of Police, Malabar, G O No. 1790, Judicial, 5th June 1896, Government of Madras, p. 106, H. M. Winterbotham, Judicial, 5th May 1896, Government of Madras, p. 51.*

[62] Ibid.

[63] *J. T. Gillespie, Acting Special Assistant Magistrate, 26th April 1896, Judicial, Government of Madras, pp. 26-27.*

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid.

[66] *H. M. Winterbotham, G. O No. 791-92, Judicial, 5th May 1896, Government of Madras, p 51.*

the participants in the resistance of 1896 were lower castes converted to Islam.[67] A noticeable thing was that one Cheruma youth converted to Islam only fifteen hours before the resistance.[68] The conversion of the Cheruma community and their participation in the resistance are considered by the colonial officials as 'fanaticism', not as their resistance against the caste system. Fawcett wrote, 'A youth shot down in the outbreak of 1849, who recovered, was a convert of only a few months. Two of those shot in 1896 were Cherumans and converts: one had become Mappila only 15 hours before he was shot. The head and front of the last outbreak was a converted Cheruman. So it is with Tiyyans and others who join the Mappila's faith, but effect on those of the lowest 'races' is the strongest. The most dangerous criminals, the worst dacoits, are also to be found amongst this mixture.'[6970] The terms such as 'criminal', 'dacoits', and 'fanatic' etc mask how the slaves were utilizing the liberation possibilities of Islam to overcome their caste disabilities and avenge caste oppression.

With the increased lower caste conversions to Islam, the number of mosques in south Malabar also increased. The rural mosques made them an organised community, who were hitherto scattered by the slavery. An organised sense against caste system was thus made possible. The lower class Mappilas used to resist the upper caste Hindu moves against the mosques through armed resistances. Related complaints were given to the colonial state by the Hidayat-al Muslimin Sabha and the Manjeri and Ma'unat-al Islam Sabha, Ponnani, in 1901 and 1903 respectively.[71] According to Hussain Randathani, 'The construction of mosques and the objection raised by the landlords often aggravated the

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[67] *F. Fawcett, the Superintend of Police, Malabar, G. O No. 1790, Judicial, 5th June 1896, Government of Madras, p. 97,* K. N. Panikkar. *Against Lord and State*. p. 52. Conrad Wood. *The Moplah Rebellion and Its Genesis*. pp. 88-89.

[68] F. Fawcett. 'War Songs of The Mappilas of Malabar'. in *The Indian Antiquary* (Vol. 30. November 1901). pp. 499-508.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid.

[71] See G. O. No. 407. *Madras Judicial Proceedings 1902*. p. 22. and G. O. No. 1792. *Madras Judicial Proceedings 1903*. p. 210.

inimical relationship between the landlord and the Mappila peasants and sometimes the mosque itself became the centre of insurrection.'[72] One of the reasons of the above-discusssed rsistance of 1896 was related to the demolition of a rural mosque. The armed resistance at Mannur in Eranadu Taluk on 19 November 1841 was against the attempt of Tottasseri Tachu Panicker, an upper caste Hindu landlord, to demolish the mosque.[73] The resistance occurred on 22 August 1857 in Kolathur village was against Kolathur Varier who tried to interrupt the construction of a mosque.

Consequent to the flight of Fazal Pookkoya Tangal, the last Mamburam Tangal, to Arabia in 1852, many lower castes who converted under his influence had to return to their former selves.[74] It was due to upper caste pressures. Logan reported that the murder attempt of Kannu Kutty Nair just one month after the flight of Mamburam Thangal was due to such a reason.[75] Two of his Cheruma slaves had converted to Islam. But, the absence of Tangal and the pressure of the landlord persuaded them to return to their former selves. When the local Mappilas questioned this, Kannu Kutty Nair told that he was ready to free the Cherumas if the Mappilas could give him the amount he had spent to buy them.[76] Taking this as an insult to their faith, the Mappilas tried to attack the landlord. Since the colonial state offered asylum to the landlord, the murder was averted.[77]

Mappila Resistance: Religion and Popular Culture

The religion and the popular culture have decisive roles in the political resistance of the lower class Mappilas of south Malabar in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. But, whenever the question of the religion's influence in the political

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[72] Hussain Randathani, *Mappila Muslims: Study on Society and Anti-colonial Struggles* (Calicut: Other Books, 2007), p. 95.

[73] Report on Moplah Outrages by T. L Strange. in *Correspondence on Mophla Outrages*. Vol. I, P. 410.

[74] William Logan, Malabar Manual, Vol. I. pp. 549-567.

[75] Ibid., p. 549.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid.

engagements of the lower class Mappilas is posed, it is often limited to the ulamas or the religious elites.[78] The elite notion that the lower class Mappilas did not have political consciousness was behind highlighting the role of the ulamas alone. The political consciousness of the lower class Mappilas is read only in connection with that of the ulamas. The Mappilas utilized the Mamburam Tangals and their 'fatwas' for their political resistances.

The major role of the ulamas in the lower class Mappila resistance, was in issuing favourable 'fatwas', which either sanctioned their resistance or provided legitimization by religion. Mamburam Tangal had issued four major 'fatwas' regarding the daily lives of the lower caste Mappilas of south Malabar.[79] These fatwas were made use of by them in the political resistance against the upper caste landlords and the caste system. One fatwa forbade them from addressing the upper castes using any forms of respect impose by the caste system. The second fatwa forbade them from eating the leftovers of the upper castes and the third allowed them to resist the eviction by the upper caste landlord. The fourth one made Friday a holiday, as against the caste rule that one should work everyday.[80] These four fatwas by Mamburam Tangal were highly influential in the anti-caste resistances of the lower class Mappilas. But, there is no evidence for the direct participation or exhortation of Mamburam Tangal in any resistance. The interpretation by the Mappilas that the fatwas by Tangal had religious justification for militant resistance was the basis of the Mappila resistances of south Malabar.

Padappattukal

Padappattukal come under the category of resistance songs or war songs in *Mappilappattukal* (Mappila folk songs), written and popularized by Mappilas of south Malabar at various periods.[81] The colonial anthropologist, Fawcett claimed, '...those

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[78] See K. N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and State*, pp. 59-65.

[79] *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages, 1849-53*, vol. I, p. 276.

[80] Ibid.

[81] F. Fawcett, 'A Popular Mappila Song', in *The Indian Antiquary* (Vol. 28, March, 1899), pp. 64-71.

songs of the Mappilas which relate to war and stir up 'fanatic fervor'. In quantity they form probably about nine-tenths of their literature.'[82] They were composed in Arabic-Malayalam language.[83] Most of them were written in the context of the militant resistance of Mappilas in the nineteenth century.[84] *Padappattukal*, written in the nineteenth century, differ from the earlier Muslim compositions in some aspects. 1) They were written in the south-east Malabar and they were more popular among the lower class Mappilas of south Malabar. The earlier compositions such as *Fathaul Mubeen* written by Qazi Muhammad of Calicut and *Thuhfathul al-Mujahideen* by Shaykh Zainudheen Makhdum were more popular among the Muslims of the coastal areas. 2) Whereas the works like *Thuhfath al-Mujahideen* and *Fathhul Mubeen* were written by elite Muslims, *Padappattukal* were written by lower class Mappilas. 3) The works in the first category aimed at stimulating the resistances of the Hindu rulers against the European powers; the aim of the *Padappattukal* was to stimulate the resistances against the upper caste Hindus and the British colonial rule in south Malabar. 4) The works of the first category were written in Arabic, while the latter were in Arabic-Malayalam. Hence, they became a part of the popular culture.[85]

The famous *Padappattukal* of the Mappila culture include *Cherur Padappattu* (1844), *Cherur chinthu*, *Sakhoom Padappattu* (1848), *Malappuram Padappattu* (1883), *Badar Padapppattu* (1882), *Uhadu Padappattu* (1884), *Chakkeeri Badar Padappattu* (1907) etc.[86] *Cherur Padappattu* and *Cherur Chinthu* were composed in the background of the resistance of 1843.[87] *Cherur Padappattu* is also known as *Sarasarguna*

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[82] F. Fawcett, *War Songs of the Mappilas of* Malabar, pp. 499-508.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Balakrishnan Vallikkunnu, *Mappila Sahithya Patanangal*, p. 117.

[85] Ibid., pp. 118-119.

[86] Umar Tharamel (ed.), *Isalukalude Udayanam: Mappilappattukal* (Chengannur: Rainbow Book Publishers, 2006), pp. 65-85.

[87] Mammad Kutty and Muhyudheen, *Sarasarguna Thirutharulamala Padappattu, 1844*. Manuscript available at Mahakavi Moyin Kutty Vaidyar Smaraka Research and Reference Library, Kondotty.

Thirutharulamala Padappattu.[88] This was composed, as mentioned earlier, by Mammedkutty and Muhiyudheen, two Mappila natives of Cherur.[89] In this work, Cherur resistance is narrated in the form of an eye-witness account. The beginning of this *Padappattu* reads like this, 'This is *Sarasarguna Thirutharulamala Padappattu* which narrates the miraculous powers and such things of the Prophet's descendent, Mamburam Alavi Tangal.'[90] This is an example which shows how the Mappilas gave religious interpretation to their resistances. Mappilas were strongly convinced of the presence of the invisible power of Mamburam Tangal in the Cherur resistance.[91]

This *Padappattu* presents Cherur resistance as heroic. The aim behind writing this *Padappattu* was not only to present the event poetically, but also to instil confidence in the Mappilas in their anti-colonial and anti-landlord resistances. *Cherur Padappattu* uses the term 'kafir' meaning infidel to denote the upper caste landlord and the colonial police. At the same time, the term 'shaheed' meaning martyr is used to denote those who had got killed fighting against them.[92] The abundance of the Islamic terms in this *Padappattu* underlines the role of religion in this Mappila resistance. *Cherur Chinthu* is another work written by a Mappila named Khayyath, based on the Cherur resistance.[93] Both of these works were banned by the colonial state, soon after their composition. Subsequently, raids were conducted in Mappila houses for the manuscripts of these works.[94]

The wide acceptance of the *Cherur Padappattu* resulted in the compositions of more *Padappattu*. They are of mainly two kinds: One kind depicts the wars led by Prophet Mohammed and the other deals with the history of local Mappila resistances.

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[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Balakrishnan Vallikkunnu, *Mappila Sahithya Patanangal*, p. 134.

[92] See Mammad Kutty and Muhyudheen, *Sarasarguna Thirutharulamala Padappattu, 1844*.

[93] Balakrishnan Vallikkunnu, *Mappila Sahithya Patanangal*, p. 137.

[94] Moulavi and Kareem, *Mahathaya Mappila Sahithya Parambaryam*, p. 300.

Padappattu such as '*Badar Padappattu*', '*Uhadu Padappattu*', '*Sakhoom Padappattu*' etc. come under the first category, while *Cherur Padappattu*, *Malappuram Padappattu* etc. come under the second category. The author of *Sakhoom Padappattu*, written in 1848, is unknown.[95] Its plot is the war led by prophet Mohammed against Sakhoom, the ruler of Iraq.[96] This is in truth a romantic work for no war called Sakhoom war had happened in the history of the Prophet.[97] Balakrishnan, who has studied studied Mappila literary history, argues that forms of *Sakhoom Padappattu* can be seen in Bangali and Tamil Muslim literature.[98] It is a translation of the version written in Arabic-Tamil.[99]

The second half of the nineteenth century is significant in the Mappila literary tradition. The works of Moyinkutty Vaidyar (1852-1893), the most prominent contributor to Mappila literature, had come out in this period. Most of the *Padappattukal* were composed by him.[100] His grandfather had converted to Islam from the community of 'velan' or medicine-men.[101] On Moyinkutty Vaidyar, the colonial anthropologist Fawcett noted, 'He was distinctly imaginative, and he had studied the art of poesy, such as it was amongst the uncultivated Moplas -- but whence did he get his ideas? The poem seems to offer but an instance of how older stories are used, adapted and passed on, just as Boccaccio and Shakespeare, to go no further, handled older material and molded it into what they have left us.'[102] *Malappuram Padappattu* was written by Vaidyar in 1883 based on a local resistance.[103] It is about the encounter between Paranambi Nair, the ruler

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[95] Balakrishnan Vallikkunnu. *Mappila Sahithya Patanangal*. p. 52.

[96] Ibid., pp. 58-61.

[97] Ibid., p. 64.

[98] Ibid., p. 55.

[99] Ibid.

[100] F. Fawcett. *War Songs of the Mappilas of* Malabar, pp. 499-508.

[101] F. Fawcett. *A Popular Mappila Song*. p. 64.

[102] Ibid., pp. 64-65.

of Malappuram during 1728-29, and the local Mappilas who were formerly soldiers in his army.[104] Vaidyar depicts the martyrdom of forty-four valiant Muslims in *Malappuram Padappattu*.[105] It begins with prayers and hymns, and also summarizes the historical events during the initial stage of the spread of Islam in Arabia.[106]

After the prophet's history, this *Padappattu* also mentions the visit of Cheraman Perumal to Arabia and his subsequent conversion.[107] Through this, Vaidyar tries to connect the Mappilas of Malappuram with the prophet and the 'great Islamic tradition'. The poet has given a particular spiritual halo to this *Padappattu*. In its preface, the poet has even said that the frequent recitation of it would rescue one from diseases like cholera.[108] The poet has stated that the 'Shaheeds' are honoured by Allah and they have the power to intercede for us.[109] The poet urges to fight and become a 'shaheed' by referring to Malappuram resistance: 'The soul in our body is in the hand of God. Can we live forever in this world? Must we not die once? Everything will die, but God alone will not. Such being the commandment of God we will have no excuse when we are brought before Him after death; so determine earnestly to fight and die.'[110] *Badar Padappttu* and *Uhad Padappattu* were also written by Vaidyar. Both of them are based on two major wars in the history of the prophet.[111]

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[103] Arabic-Malayalm Manuscript of 'Malappuram Padappattu' is available at Mahakavi Moyin Kutty Vaidyar Memorial Research and Reference Library, Kondotty.

[104] Basheer Chungathara. *Isal Chakravarthy: Moyinkutty Vaidyar* (Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi, 2010), p. 98.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Moyinkutty Vaidyar. *Malappuram Padappattu*. 1883.

[107] F. Fawcett. *War Songs of the Mappilas of* Malabar. pp. 505-506.

[108] Moyinkutty Vaidyar. *Malappuram Padappattu*. 1883.

[109] Ibid.

[110] English translation of this song was done by F. Fawcett. See F. Fawcett. *War Songs of the Mappilas of* Malabar. p. 507.

Padappattukal influenced the Mappila resistances in various ways. First of all, they helped to foster religiosity among the lower class Mappilas. Secondly, *Padappattu* linked religion and 'shaheeds' as a political possibility against exploitation. Thirdly, *Padappattus* linked Mappila martyrs with the close associates of Prophet Muhammad who became 'shaheed' in wars like *Badar* and *Uhad* against the anti-Muslim force during the period of the Prophet. Fourthly, it fostered a belief that to gain paradise by being a 'shaheed' is better than living as slaves. Fifthly, the *padappattu* could preserve the collective memory of slavery and resistances against the same.

Popular cultures such as *mawlid* and *nercca* had greatly influenced the Mappila resistances in south Malabar. The socio-religious aspects of *mawlid* and *nercca* were discussed in the previous chapter. They had provided ceremonial support and added confidence to the Mappila, who had determined to be a 'shaheed' by fighting against the upper caste landlord.[112] Fawcett states, 'On the coast the favourite 'mawlid' ceremony is entirely spiritual in its essence as an Arab Mappila priest describes it; but in the interior, where we find 'fanaticism', it is to obtain some favour from a deceased person who is invoked.'[113] H. V. Conolly, the magistrate of Malabar, noted that the co-religionist of militant Mappilas expressed their sympathy and support in various ways.[114] According to Conolly:

> The 'fanatics' who died between 1841 and 1843 are still held in honorable remembrance by the country population. In one instance, a mosque was erected in their honor, and it is well known that in despite of the 'prohibitions of the authorities', ceremonies are from time to time secretly performed in their remembrance to an admiring audience. It seldom occurs that a Moplah of the lower order passes the grave, where any of these fanatics have been buried, but in

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[111] Ibid., pp. 507-508, Basheer Chungathara, *Isal Chakravarthy*, pp. 58-117.

[112] *Correspondence on Mophla Outrages*, Vol. I, p. 313.

[113] F. Fawcett, *War Songs of the Mappilas of Malabar*, p. 505.

[114] G. O. No. 17, dated 28th July 1849, in *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages*, Vol. I, p. 2.

silence and with an attitude of devotion, such as it is usual in this district in passing a mosque.[115]

During the Malabar Rebellion of 1921, the fighters had visited and prayed at the tombs of the 'shaheeds' of earlier resistances. Malabar District Collector had issued a decree banning this custom.[116] *Malappuram nercca, Omanoor nercca, Cheroor nercca, Pookkottoor nercca* etc. commemorate the 'shaheeds' who got killed in the local resistances.[117] These *nerccas* perpetuate the collective memory of Mappila resistances.

In short, while analyzing the Mappila resistances before 1921, one can understand that conversions happen for various reasons. Though Marxist academic historians like Conrad Wood and K. N. Panikkar and popular historians like E. M. S. Nambudiripad had just mentioned that the armed resistances were done by the lower caste converts, they tell nothing about the reasons of religious conversion or their socio-economic status before conversion.[118] The studies on lower caste or class resistance should seriously approach the role of religion and popular culture. Religion and popular culture played an important role in the political mobilisation as well as in the socialisation of lower strata during the 19th and 20th century Kerala. The Mappila militant resistances before 1921 needs to be read as part of the anti-caste movement.

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[115] Ibid.

[116] *Fortnightly Report for the Second half of May 1925 (Public), 2nd June 1925, No. 120/0-1.*

[117] Stephen F. Dale and M. Gangadhara Menon, 'Nerccas: Saint-Martyr Worship among the Muslims of Kerala', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (Vol. 41:3, 1978), pp. 523-538.

[118] E. M. S. Nambudiripad. *Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubhoomi* (Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 1948. Reprint; 2009), p. 273.

V

Conclusion

The numerical growth of the Mappila Muslims of Malabar can be divided into two phase based on the economic, political and social conditions of the region. The first stage is related to the Arab trade in the coastal Malabar. The second one is the growth of Islam through the migration of Mappilas to the rural Malabar after the decline of the Arab trade. The socio-economic and political conditions of the Mappila Muslims were different in these two stages. The community formation of the Mappila Muslims was not a singular process. The decline of Arab trade ended coast-centred community formation and initiated a community formation process of a different nature in rural Malabar.

During the first stage, the economic progress of the Arab trade had supported the growth of Islam in Malabar. The favourable attitude of the local political powers also facilitated this. The vital factor in Islam's growth is the conversions from the native Hindu communities. In the initial stage, majority of the conversions were from the upper castes, especially from the upper caste women. Religious conversions of this stage was, in a sense, connected with the political economy of Malabar. The encouragement given to religious conversions to Islam was a strategy of the upper caste Hindu political power to retain the economic progress made possible by the Arab trade.

Many Nair and Nambudiri women of north Malabar had converted or were made to convert to Islam. The decree of the Zamorin that asked fishermen or the Mukkuva caste to convert to Islam has to be read in connection with the same economic politics. The early conversions of fishermen caste were facilitated by Zamorin's desire to help the Arab traders and thus to build a naval force with their help.

The second stage of Islam's growth begins after the decline of Arab trade. Though Arab trade had declined in the sixteenth century itself, the migration of Mappilas to rural Malabar and the spread of Islam occurred in the eighteenth century. The conversion to Islam in the rural Malabar had happened in three stages. Though upper caste conversions

had happened on a large scale in the coastal Malabar, it did not happen in the rural Malabar. In the rural Malabar, where the caste system was stronger, mass conversions had occurred from the lower castes, especially from the Cheruma community who were treated as the slaves under the caste system. Mass lower caste conversions took place during the Mysorean invasion and after the abolition of slavery by the British colonial administration. These lower caste conversions are to be understood not as based on theological engagement, but as political and social. For them, conversion was a political engagement to escape from old slavery.

The Sufis of the eighteenth and the nineteenth century Malabar played a vital role in including the lower castes within the Muslim community without caste distinctions. It was due to their intervention that the lower caste converts did not suffer social humiliation. Since the lower caste conversion was a political engagement, it is important to enquire how the new religion treated them. Though social stratification was prevalent in the Mappila community, they did not have to suffer persecutions as in the caste system. Social and religious spaces were opened for them and they were freed from the disabilities of caste system. For the lower castes, conversion was not an easy process. They had their own beliefs and customs. After conversion, they were not able to give up their old beliefs completely and to accept many of the new religion.

The conversion to Islam and the consequent religious process can be called as Islamisation process. Islamisation process had three stages during the nineteenth and the twentieth century Malabar. The first one is the Islamisation done through the Sufis. Sufis made conversion simple by islamising the beliefs and customs of the local society.New customs and rituals based on Sufi beliefs were also introduced among the Mappila Muslims. Arabic-Malayalam or Mappila Malayalam developed at this stage. This language was used for religious teachings. The second stage of Islamisation begins with the appearance of revival movements. Islamic revival movements had started to hamper the proselytising activities of the Christian missionaries and against the Sufi practices in Malabar. Revivalists attacked the Islamic syncretistic tradition. Their aim was to 'purify' the Islamic practices of Mappila Muslims and to reinforce the 'textual Islam'. The third stage of Islamization starts with the formation of Muslim organizations. Different Muslim

organisations organised Mappilas and consequently 'Islamised' them based on the organaisations' theological understanding of Islam.

The mass lower caste conversions resulted in the numerical growth and the community formation of the Mappilas in rural Malabar. The conversion of the lower caste slaves had provoked the upper caste Hindu landlords. The lower caste conversions played a role in the anti-feudal resistances of the nineteenth and the twentieth century Malabar. Most of the participants in these resistances were lower caste converts. There are several reasons for this . The major reason is the economic exploitation of the lower castes by the upper caste landlords. Along with such agricultural issues, the derisive treatments of the converts and Islam by the upper caste landlords was the other reason.

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